

# Summary of *Freak the Mighty*

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## Chapter 1 – The Unvanquished Truth

- We are introduced to our narrator Max, and boy is he a handful.
- Back in the day, when he was in daycare, his nickname was "kicker." Why? Well, it turns out he had—and still has—"a way of saying things with my fists and my feet" (1.1).
- Max currently lives with his grandparents, who he calls Gram and Grim. When he was younger, they tried to put him in daycare to "improve his temper" (1.3). But instead, he invented a bunch of new games, all of which involved kicking other kids and sometimes teachers. Oops.
- It was in daycare where he first met Freak, a "fierce" boy who Max never got around to kicking. Sounds like the making of a beautiful friendship.
- Max was seriously jealous of Freak's crutches and the braces on his legs because they made Freak seem like a robot.
- One day, Freak disappeared from daycare and Max didn't see him again until 3rd grade. Even then, he only saw him from the window of what he calls a "cripple van" (1.9).
- Yeah, Max isn't exactly the most politically correct narrator.
- But it turns out Max has his own problems. One day, he overhears his grandparents talking about how much Max looks like "him."
- They're talking about Max's father, but they won't say his name. Dun dun dun.

## Chapter 2 – Up From the Down Under

- This summer starts like every other summer Max has ever known: super boring.
- He lives in the basement of his grandparents' house, which he likes because it gives him some privacy.
- He can tell his grandparents are really worried about him and think he is at a "dangerous age" (2.2), but mostly Max just hangs out in the basement reading comics.
- One day, Max is hanging out in the dirt patch he calls a backyard when he sees a moving van down the street. Exciting!
- He spots a really pretty woman who looks sort of familiar, and then... he sees Freak.
- Freak is super small for his age: "he's got a normal sized head, but the rest of him is shorter than a yard stick and kind of twisted in a way that means he can't stand up" (2.10).
- But this doesn't stop Freak from strutting around on his crutches ordering all the moving guys around.
- Freak is in the middle of shouting orders when he sees Max. He demands that Max identify himself or suffer the consequences.
- Max thinks Freak (whose real name is Kevin, by the way) is being serious, so he sort of panics and does what any mature 13-year-old would do—he runs away.

## Chapter 3 – American Flyer

- Max is back in the safety of his basement, which he calls the "down under," but he's a little embarrassed that he was so scared by a little "midget kid" (3.1).
- He decides to go back upstairs and stop being a baby. From his backyard, he can see Freak waving his crutch at a tree.
- Max watches as Freak throws his crutches down and crawls inside the house. Freak comes back with a wagon, climbs inside it, and tries whacking the tree again. Curious.
- By now, Max has figured out that there must be something stuck in the tree. He tries to sneak over to the tree, but since he's recently hit puberty, he's still feeling really awkward in his body. Translation: he's loud and clumsy.
- Freak hears him, and it seems like he is going to hit Max with his crutch. But before he can, Max grabs the plastic bird that was stuck in the tree and gives it to Freak.

- They spend the rest of the afternoon playing with the "ornithopter" as Freak calls it.
- Max notices that Freak doesn't talk in a way he's used to. When the ornithopter finally breaks, Freak says: "All mechanical objects require periodic maintenance. We'll schedule installation of a new propulsion unit as soon as Fair Gwen gets a replacement" (3.17).
- Huh? Yeah, Max doesn't really understand, but agrees anyway: "Cool" (3.18).
- Freak wants to see where Max lives, so Max grabs the handle to his wagon and tows him over.

#### **Chapter 4 – What Frightened the Fair Gwen**

- In the down under, Freak explains that he calls his mom "The Fair Gwen" because of the tale of King Arthur.
- As he tells Max the story, Max realizes that Freak is really smart. Actually, he's more than just really smart. He's a genius.
- Freak talks about knights and quests and explains that knights were the first robots. And when Max says he didn't think robots were real, Freak goes on a rant about robotics and the science of engineering.
- Freak also tells Max how important it is to read. Max doesn't want to have to tell Freak that he's an LD (learning disabled), so he just keeps his mouth shut.
- All the conversation is interrupted by the sound of The Fair Gwen calling for Freak. Oh, except she calls him Kevin, obvs. Only Max seems to refer to him as Freak.
- When they come out of the door to the down under, Gwen sees Max first and seems terrified. She grabs Freak and the wagon and practically runs home.

#### **Chapter 5 – Spitting Image**

- The look the Fair Gwen gave Max stays with him. He lays in the dark and just can't get her face out of his mind.
- Gram knocks on the door and asks if she can talk to him about a phone call from Gwen.
- Max's heart sinks. He figures she called to warn Grim and Gram about "a great hulking beast" in their basement (5.7). Poor Max.
- But it turns out Gwen was calling to apologize. She hadn't expected Max to be so big, and she's worried that she offended Max with her reaction. Yeah, running away from someone as fast as you can tends to have that effect.
- It turns out that Gwen was a friend of Max's mother, and now she wants to invite Max over for dinner. Max isn't too thrilled about this prospect, but Gran convinces him to go. She tells Max that *he* wasn't the one who scared Gwen, but stops short of saying who it was. Hmmm. Very mysterious...
- When Max goes over to dinner, it's not so bad. Gwen explains how she and his mother were friends until his mom married "that man."
- Seems like no one really wants to talk about Max's dad.
- She says she's sorry for how she reacted. Freak spills the beans and tells him it's because Max is the spitting image of his father.
- Aha.
- It turns out Max's father is in prison. No one talks about it, even though everyone knows why he's there. Unfortunately for Max, not only is he big for his age, but he also looks exactly like his dad. Which explains why people tend to run the other way when he's around.
- After the awkwardness about Max's dad, they all end up having a really great dinner.
- When Max gets home, he lies down on his bed and starts crying—happy crying. That's a feeling he's not used to.