

Little Max

by Tina Raborn

"It's not a bad preschool. You kinda get used to it. You ever been to one before?" Little Max asked the new boy, Sam. Sam shook his head no.

"Well, there's all the regular stuff: snack time, story time, play time, lunch time, and nap time. They have a real fetish for structure in preschools. You better not have the urge to go unless it's potty time." Max pushed the straw through the little foil-covered hole in his juice box. "Want one?" He asked Sam. "My mom always packs two for my lunch." Sam motioned no again.

"It's not a bad place to spend your days, though. Don't get me wrong. The kids are pretty cool. They've all had their shots. It's required you know. That doesn't mean we don't keep a case of the runny noses, because we do. We pass around head colds like a pack of chewing gum." Little Max sucked on his juice box straw and surveyed the lunch table. "You met any of the other kids yet?" He asked Sam. Sam replied with his usual.

"Well, that girl over there in the red dress; that's Rachael" He nodded towards Rachael, "She's our resident linguist. The girl is obsessed with words and meanings. She can't hear a new word without dedicating herself to discovering its proper usage. Last week she heard our teacher say the word schedule. I'll be damned if she didn't try out the word in about fifty different situations before she figured out what it was. The teacher commented on her play-doh creation. 'It's a schedule,' she said. I asked her what she had in her lunch bag that day. What'd she say? 'Schedule' of course. Crazy girl even started a game of schedule on the playground. She's obsessed. But that's not the worst one she's pulled. It was the biggest news of the year when Tyler's older brother dropped the f-bomb, and she heard him. She went home that day and walked right up to her mom while she was washing dishes and said, 'Mommy are you *fucking*?' Her mom didn't answer, but she did scream and drop a dish on the floor. Did Rachael stop there? No way. She waited

until her grandparents came over for supper to try it again. Her pap-pap had to give her maw-maw the Heimlich. She keeps us all in stitches." Little Max laughed.

"That kid over there," Little Max looked at curly headed Tyler. "He's pretty nice. His mom brings the best cupcakes to birthday parties. Keep your nose clean around Kelly, though" Little Max pointed at a chubby, freckle faced girl at the end of the table. "She's a tattletale."

Little Max stretched and yawned. "It must be almost nap time. I'm getting a case of the sleepys." Sam looked worried. "Oh, don't be nervous. It's only a little tough to sleep on a mat for the first week or so. Eventually, it's just like home. No worries. They'll let you bring your blankie if you need it." Little Max patted Sam on the shoulder.

"Oh, here comes my teacher. I'll see you after nap time, ok?" Sam nodded his assent. Little Max's teacher, Miss Belle took Max by the hand.

"Are you ready to go potty before naptime, Max?" She smiled down at him.

"I ah-wedy got some poopies in my puwl up." Max said in his littlest baby voice to Miss Belle. He grinned and winked at Sam. "I try to just go with the flow." He whispered to Sam. "Don't wanna shatter their preconceived notions of appropriate preschool behavior." Little Max took Miss Belle's hand and pitter pattered off towards the changing table.

