

EPISODE 3: ACCEPTING COPERNICUS

Written by

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INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Officers are seated around the room while DETECTIVE SMOKES gives his presentation.

SMOKES:

Suspect's name is Princess. Probably an alias. Last seen at a rope line and then the explosions started. I do not like bombs in my city, gentlemen. Suspect has a driver, possibly her husband. We're checking marriage licenses going back ten years. Who volunteers to oversee that?

(no hands are raised)

My favorite part: Suspect claims to be a time traveler. The first victim is an art dealer, Maxwell Hargitay. His offices were bombed. Linus Slate, another art dealer, is victim number two. He had his Rolls Royce blown up. Good news: We have tapes of Princess and her husband.

INT. POLICE STATION - SAME TIME

MAXWELL and SLATE are in conference.

SLATE:

I'm not going to agree to it with a gun pointed at my head.

MAXWELL:

You ever been through a divorce?

SLATE:

I have an army of lawyers.

MAXWELL:

That doesn't make it less painful.

GERARD interrupts.

GERARD:

Hey, Maxie, I've got Vance for you.

MAXWELL:

I've got to take this. I'm not going to consider any counter-offers.

SLATE:

Doesn't matter. The police
confiscated your man's videos.
You've got nothing but your word
and I don't think she believes in
you anymore. Didn't you sleep with
her cousin?

MAXWELL stands and walks away with the phone.

MAXWELL:

Vance, we're going to have to push
the show.

JAMAL:

(to SLATE)

Gerard does a great impression of
Max.

GERARD:

(self-conscious)

It's stupid.

JAMAL:

Come on, man, lighten up.

MAXWELL returns.

GERARD:

Is he going to delay?

MAXWELL:

He hung up on me.

GERARD:

No more favors then?

MAXWELL:

Your first loyalty is to your
artist. That's an ironclad rule.

GERARD:

Your artist isn't talking to you.

MAXWELL:

Yeah, I'm working on that.

SMOKES sticks his head out of the conference room.

SMOKES:

Mr. Slate, can you come in here?

MAXWELL:
(to the duty officer)
Are we free to go?

DUTY OFFICER:
Who are you?

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - DAY

GERARD and MAXWELL walk. A sedan pulls up against the curb next to them. They watch the window roll down. It is an old man in a US Navy cap.

OLD MAN:
Does one of you need a lift to the
recruiting station?

MAXWELL:
We're together.

The OLD MAN's eyes go wide. The car drives away.

GERARD:
Hey Maxie, what do we do if we see
her again?

MAXWELL:
Don't tell anyone.

GERARD:
What if she hurts you. What if she
hurts Faith?

MAXWELL:
Nobody's gotten hurt.

GERARD:
Slate lost his Rolls Royce.

MAXWELL:
He should buy American. It's
cheaper to replace.

INT. FAITH'S LOFT - DAY

MAXWELL and GERARD step off the elevator. FAITH is cleaning his brushes. He makes a point of ignoring them.

MAXWELL:
Faith, can you at least talk to
Gerard? He's never cheated on
anyone.

FAITH:

What bothers me most is that you don't even seem to think it's important.

MAXWELL:

It's not important. It was at the time. I had a better life and I ruined it. But now I have a new life and it doesn't have much to do with that time. So why does it matter to you?

FAITH:

Integrity matters.

MAXWELL:

I know that. I had to learn by trial and error and I'm sorry for that.

(beat)

She left me for my nemesis. I liked my life before I lost her. I don't like it as much now. That's the price I paid.

GERARD:

He's really sorry, Faith.

FAITH continues cleaning his brushes in silence.

MAXWELL:

You know, Faith, at some point you Christians have to accept Copernicus. So do you artists. If you just want to put everyone that disappoints you in a box, you're going to end up a lonely collector. Let's go, Gerard.

EXT. FAITH'S LOFT - DAY

GERARD:

I don't think you should have said that up there.

MAXWELL:

Every artist is an arrogant prick and it's what makes them great. But you tell one they're arrogant and they turn into 4-year-olds.

GERARD:
Four year olds? Like multiple
children?

MAXWELL stops and turns around. He rushes back inside.

INT. FAITH'S LOFT - SOON AFTER

MAXWELL charges off the elevator and heads for FAITH. FAITH doesn't look up. MAXWELL pushes him. FAITH backs away. MAXWELL pushes him again.

FAITH:
Hey, man, what's your deal?!

MAXWELL:
I just wanted to make you turn the
other cheek.

MAXWELL keeps pushing at him.

FAITH:
Get off me!

MAXWELL:
Get mad!

FAITH:
Get away from me!

MAXWELL won't let FAITH escape.

MAXWELL:
COME ON! PUSH ME BACK!

He finally lets FAITH retreat.

MAXWELL: (CONT'D)
They're going to push you around.
They're going to call you names and
question your sincerity and mock
your life story. And if you
present your spirituality as an
affectation the way you have-

FAITH:
It's not an act!

MAXWELL:
You need to start letting go of your
principles because you have to be a
whore before you can be rich.

(with sincerity)

I'm sorry, man. It's not fair; it's
business.

The elevator opens and MAXWELL steps on. GERARD is waiting, holding the phone out for him.

GERARD:
Violetta for you.

MAXWELL:
(to FAITH)
You know the worst thing about self-sacrifice? You actually have to give something up.

GERARD:
What were you doing up here?

MAXWELL:
I think he's talking to me now.

FAITH:
YOU'RE AN ASSHOLE!

The elevator doors close.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - DAY

GERARD pedals a bicycle. MAXWELL is wearing rollerskates and gripping the seat of the bike, being dragged.

INT. VIOLETTA'S OFFICE - DAY

VIOLETTA:
Evangeline Sinclair just outed you.

MAXWELL:
I'm not gay.

VIOLETTA:
She has it from an inside source that you're shopping around a new artist and taking cover behind a more successful agent.

GERARD:
Inside source?

MAXWELL:
Vance. Try to keep up. Also, for what it's worth, I don't think Slate is more successful than I am.

GERARD:
He's got money.

MAXWELL:

He's doing okay, but in my prime I was much more successful.

VIOLETTA:

Will you two shut up?

MAXWELL:

What's the next move?

VIOLETTA:

How does Evangeline feel about you?

MAXWELL:

Like all women, she hates me. Except you.

VIOLETTA:

I'm not very fond of you, Max.

MAXWELL:

But you don't hate me anymore.

VIOLETTA:

Do you have a plan?

MAXWELL:

I was thinking of having fish for lunch.

GERARD:

Like salmon or seafood? I'd like some shrimp but that's not really fish.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - DAY

GERARD is holding up the chain of his bike lock. It has been clipped. Pan down to show the bike is still there but the tires are warped and bent.

MAXWELL:

Well, that's the city for you.

GERARD:

Yeah. Have you ever seen the ball-licker on the subway?

MAXWELL:

Does the guy lick his own balls or the balls of strangers? Either way, I'd like to see it. Let's go have it out with Vance.

GERARD:
What about Evangeline?

MAXWELL:
She's a glorified gossip columnist.
She'll drop it if he retracts.

GERARD:
What about the bicycle?

MAXWELL:
(glances around)
Just throw it behind that car.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - DAY

MAXWELL and GERARD walk.

MAXWELL:
Hey, Gerard, you wanted to be an
artist didn't you?

GERARD:
How'd you-

MAXWELL:
They all do.

GERARD:
You too?

MAXWELL:
No. Learned my limitations
early.

GERARD:
I guess that's why I gave it up
too. That and poor timing. Like,
everything I wanted to say, I'd
find out someone else had said it
better than I could and they'd done
it before I could.

MAXWELL:
Yeah, timing is a lot of it. Did
you care about the fame or did you
just want to say something so you
could live forever?

GERARD:
Both, I guess. Don't you want
that?

MAXWELL:

You stop wanting to live forever
when the parts start breaking down.

GERARD:

I guess you've already said stuff
that will be there forever.

MAXWELL:

Yeah, well. Everyone gets maybe
one perfect moment in their life.
I've had several. I probably won't
get another.

INT. VANCE'S OFFICE - DAY

MAXWELL is greeted warmly by VANCE.

VANCE:

I've calmed down, Max. I'm not mad
at you anymore.

MAXWELL:

Did that happen before or after you
called Evangeline?

VANCE:

The Ice Queen? I wouldn't touch
her with yours.

MAXWELL:

But I thought-

VANCE:

You're doing me a favor. If your
artist has a great show at Le
Desenee, we're going to make more
selling him here. And if he flops,
you saved me damage control.

MAXWELL:

What changed your mood?

VANCE:

The stuff I just said. Hey, you
know what Le Desenee means in
English?

MAXWELL:

No.

VANCE:
It's gibberish. Desenee isn't a
French word. It doesn't mean
anything.

VANCE'S secretary knocks on the door.

VANCE: (CONT'D)
Yeah?

VANCE: (CONT'D)
There's a visitor for Mister
Hargitay.

INT. VANCE'S OUTER OFFICE - SAME TIME

It is PRINCESS.

PRINCESS:
I thought you could use a ride
home.

VANCE:
Hello, I'm-

PRINCESS:
Yes, nice to meet you, Vance. Can
we go, Max?

MAXWELL:
(to VANCE)
This is Princess. She's from the
future.

VANCE:
Oh. Wow. That's impressive.

MAXWELL:
You bet your ass.

INT. PRINCESS'S CAR - DAY

MAXWELL:
The police are looking for you.

PRINCESS:
You think I don't know that?

MAXWELL:
I guess you would.

PRINCESS:
Max, I need to make a confession.

The car pulls away.

MAXWELL:
You're leaving Gerard.

PRINCESS:
He doesn't need to hear this.

MAXWELL:
Where are we going?

PRINCESS:
NYU. I think we should talk in my office.

INT. PRINCESS'S OFFICE - DAY

The room is lined on three sides by chalkboards. These are filled with names and equations.

MAXWELL:
This is what you do?

PRINCESS:
I was hoping I wouldn't have to tell you. But circumstances have changed.

MAXWELL:
I get it. You're doing time travel experiments here. But why me? And be honest for once.

PRINCESS:
You're the test case. And there's no time travel involved. Let me explain. Would you accept that each instance in your life is preceded by an instant that influences the present instance? And this instance will have an influence on the next?

MAXWELL:
Sure.

PRINCESS:
Cause and effect, right?

MAXWELL:

Okay.

PRINCESS:

Well, in a system like that, if you break down the instances enough, you can start using statistical probability models to map a course of predictability. That is to say, we are able to map out large chunks of a person's life with good accuracy if we have enough data and have moderate control over variables. I know what you'll do tomorrow because of what happens today. I know what will happen today because of what happened yesterday.

MAXWELL:

I don't even know what will happen tomorrow. Every reaction I have is to something unexpected.

PRINCESS:

Yes, that's right. Have you heard of chaos theory? It's a system within game theory for predicting an order within anarchy, finding a structure. My algorithm includes chaos theory and restricts many variables. I call it Relative Predictability.

There is a long pause.

MAXWELL:

Are you a god?

She laughs.

PRINCESS:

I'm explaining this to a man who has never taken an advanced math or science course. I'm sorry if I can't put it into terms you understand.

MAXWELL:

So you found a way to see the future?

PRINCESS:

You're glorifying it. If you eat chocolate every day, will you be thinner in three months or heavier?

MAXWELL:

Do you exercise to burn off the calories?

PRINCESS:

No, Max. That's a variable. No variables. A person eats chocolate every day, they don't exercise. What is their weight like a few months later?

MAXWELL:

They're...heavier.

PRINCESS:

That's all this is. It's like that but with different data to form different conclusions.

MAXWELL:

What about perpetual motion? Have you invented that yet?

PRINCESS:

Not exactly but I can show you something that's similar. Here.

She reaches into a drawer and withdraws a small board with a magnet attached to the base. Four metal prongs each flank the magnet. She lays another magnet bar within the prongs and pushes it down to the base. The other magnet repulses it and it bobs up, settles, is levitating some inches above the base.

MAXWELL:

Did you just break the laws of gravity?

PRINCESS:

No. Perpetual motion approached from another direction. And my theory-

MAXWELL:

Fortune telling from a blackboard.

PRINCESS:

You're the first experiment, Max. There are no control subjects.

(MORE)

PRINCESS: (CONT'D)

And the head of research is quite a fan of yours.

MAXWELL:

Who's the head of research?

PRINCESS:

You're a perfect subject for this. Your circle of social contacts has shrunk so that narrows and contains the variables. You are incapable of escaping your surroundings, financially and philosophically. And we know what's in your best interest as much as you do. We began researching-

MAXWELL:

Researching how?

PRINCESS:

In depth.

MAXWELL:

Do you have a mole in my organization?

She puts the magnets away.

PRINCESS:

What our calculations have told me is that someone is trying to assassinate you. Of course this put us in a moral conundrum-

MAXWELL:

Wait, wait, wait. Assassinate me?

PRINCESS:

If we expose our research before the test is complete, we have interfered with the experiment and the results become useless. That's why I waited so long.

MAXWELL:

How long did you wait before you told me that someone was trying to kill me?

PRINCESS:

I saved your life for a while. And I think you deserve to know about this, despite the damage it does to my work.

MAXWELL:

There's really someone trying to kill me?

PRINCESS:

We may not be able to stop him. He's an X factor. It was my idea to try out the time travel story, for what it's worth. I hope that didn't disturb you. It seemed a feasible cover.

MAXWELL:

Go to the police.

PRINCESS:

We can't do that.

MAXWELL:

Why not?

PRINCESS:

He's watching me too, now. I would become a target.

MAXWELL:

Oh, right. It's okay for me though, right?

PRINCESS:

Did you see Philo die, Max?

MAXWELL:

I saw enough.

PRINCESS:

There's some possibility he is still alive. Would he have reason to want to kill you?

The door opens and a JANITOR looks in.

JANITOR:

Sorry. Didn't realize anyone was in here.

The JANITOR exits.

MAXWELL:
Is Faith safe?

PRINCESS:
He's fine. Here, I want you to go to this address. And just so you know, I had to call Evangeline and tell her about you and Slate. I didn't want to but it was for your own safety.

She scribbles on a notepad and hands the sheet to MAXWELL.

PRINCESS: (CONT'D)
You'll know what to do when you get there.

MAXWELL:
Can I borrow cab fare?

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - DAY

MAXWELL is riding in a beaten up Gypsy cab. It stops at a church. MAXWELL looks at the address.

MAXWELL:
This is it?

INT. CHURCH - DAY

MAXWELL enters and sits in a pew in the back. GERARD slides in beside him.

GERARD:
Hey, Maxie.

MAXWELL:
How'd you find me?

GERARD:
How'd you find *us*?

MAXWELL stands and walks to the front pew where FAITH is quietly praying.

MAXWELL:
Can I interrupt?

FAITH'S eyes open.

MAXWELL: (CONT'D)
I don't want to butt in on what
you're saying to him.

FAITH:
It's a dialogue.

MAXWELL sits.

MAXWELL:
Are your parents religious?

FAITH:
Baptist. From Mississippi.

MAXWELL:
How far back?

FAITH:
To the first freedom. And a little
before that. You wanna pray with
me?

MAXWELL:
Oh, I haven't done that in... I'm
really out of practice.

FAITH:
All the more reason.

MAXWELL:
Can you start me out?

FAITH:
Just start with "Dear Lord..."

MAXWELL goes silent for a long time. His eyes fly open and he
lunges out of the pew. He heads
straight for SLATE.

SLATE:
Hey, Max, I was just telling your,
uh, friend here-

MAXWELL:
We should be partners.

SLATE:
What?

MAXWELL:

I'm broke but I have an artist.
You're rich but I've got that film.
We each have what the other wants.

SLATE:

Are you blackmailing me in a house
of God?

MAXWELL:

No, I'm making a business proposal.
We will split the profits. I get
to have my name attached. You can
threaten to boycott the gallery if
they still cause trouble. They may
not like me but they need to do
business with you.

SLATE:

This is all one-sided in your
favor. And you don't have the
leverage to make me do what you
want. I have nothing but your word
and we'll probably still hate each
other after this.

MAXWELL:

I always play fair, Slate. A
promise from me is solid.

JAMAL scoffs.

MAXWELL: (CONT'D)

Gesundheit. Well?

SLATE:

Give me a minute to think.

MAXWELL:

Fine. Fine. I don't want to push
you into something you don't want
to do.

JAMAL scoffs again.

MAXWELL: (CONT'D)

You should get that cold checked.
Or you could die.

SLATE:

He's right. Without that tape, I
have nothing to lose. So I'm not
going to just give you what you
want because it exists.

JAMAL:
 Actually, I'll have it tomorrow.
 They just made copies.

MAXWELL holds out his hand to shake.

MAXWELL:
 Put your pride aside and let's get
 this done. You gonna throw away a
 winner because you hate me?

SLATE:
 Once you sell your soul to the
 devil, it takes a lot to buy it
 back.

MAXWELL:
 I'm willing.

SLATE:
 I need more. Give me a stake in
 the artist.

MAXWELL:
 Two percent. Of my share.

SLATE:
 What's your share?

MAXWELL:
 Irrelevant. You won't get more
 than 2% of it.

SLATE:
 I want five.

MAXWELL:
 Three percent. And no divorce.

SLATE shakes his hand. GERARD appears, all smiles.

GERARD:
 Did you make a deal?

MAXWELL:
 Yeah. We're partners in Faith.

GERARD presents a bottle of champagne and begins to unwrap
 the cork.

MAXWELL: (CONT'D)
 Where did you get that?

GERARD:
I put it on the company account.

SLATE:
Should we be drinking in a house of
God?

MAXWELL:
Don't be a baby.
(to FAITH)
Faith. You're going to be showing
at Le Desenee. Best gallery in the
world for emerging artists. You'll
have a solo show.

FAITH:
I don't do solo shows. I have a
deal with my boys.

MAXWELL:
What?

FAITH:
My boys. Grade F Movement. We all
show or none of us show. It's in
our charter.

MAXWELL:
This is what you wanted. We'll get
them a show later.

FAITH:
I made a promise to Grade F. I do
right by them or I back out.

FAITH walks out of the church.

GERARD:
Maybe it will be okay.

JAMAL:
I thought you guys were done
fighting?

MAXWELL:
Give me that camera. I'm going to
smash it over your head.

END