

EPISODE 07: BARREN

Written by

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INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

MAXWELL sits staring out the window. The PASSENGER next to him is gripping the arm rests with each hand, sweaty and nervous.

MAXWELL:

There's not even any turbulence. I don't think we're going to crash.

PASSENGER:

But we lost an engine. I didn't even feel it.

MAXWELL:

If you don't feel it on an airplane, it's probably not a big deal. And it was twenty minutes ago.

PASSENGER:

I have to get out of here. I need to be on the ground. Man wasn't meant to fly.

The intercom clicks on.

PILOT:

Uh, ladies and gentlemen, we're going to have to shut down a second engine because of an electrical hazard. We're still fine to fly on the remaining engine, it's what planes have always done. Unfortunately, this is going to add another hour to our flight time. We'll be arriving at Akron-Canton Airport at 11 PM rather than the 9:30 arrival that was scheduled.

PASSENGER:

God damn it. Can you believe this?

A MAN walks past them in the aisle.

PASSENGER: (CONT'D)

Stewardess, when are we going to...

(to MAXWELL)

She didn't even stop for me. What is with this airline?

MAXWELL:

That was a guy.

PASSENGER:
He still should have stopped.

MAXWELL:
I don't think he was a flight attendant. He was wearing a t-shirt.

PASSENGER:
God damn it. Man was not meant to fly. If we lose that last engine, we'll be up here all night.

MAXWELL:
Yeah, probably.

PASSENGER:
You're going to have to distract me.

MAXWELL:
What do you mean?

PASSENGER:
Distract me so I don't lose it.

MAXWELL:
I...uh...well...

PASSENGER:
BE ENTERTAINING.

MAXWELL turns on the overhead light and tries to make shadow puppets on the wall but there's no definition to the shadows.

PASSENGER: (CONT'D)
What are you doing? What is that supposed to be?

MAXWELL:
Abraham Lincoln.

PASSENGER #2 is seated in front of their row and turns fully around to enter the conversation.

PASSENGER #2:
Nah, nah. You're not even close. I know everything there is to know about Abraham Lincoln. I have read two books about him.

MAXWELL:
...Okay.

PASSENGER:
 (commanding)
 Distract me.

PASSENGER #2:
 Lincoln freed the slaves mostly to
 keep Britain and France from
 recognizing the Confederacy. That
 is why the Emancipation
 Proclamation only freed slaves in
 rebel states.

MAXWELL:
 (to PASSENGER)
 What do you do?

PASSENGER:
 I'm a factory supervisor for a
 sporting goods manufacturer.

MAXWELL:
 Wow. I have absolutely nothing to
 say about that.

PASSENGER #2:
 And did you know Lincoln and
 Kennedy had the same secretary?

MAXWELL:
 That can't be true. They lived 100
 years apart.

PASSENGER #2:
 I have read two books.

PASSENGER:
 What do you do?

MAXWELL:
 I groom artists.

PASSENGER:
 You're like a barber?

The MAN is passing again in the aisle on the way back to his
 seat.

MAXWELL:
 Can I be re-seated?

MAN:
 I'm a passenger, asshole.

There is a long, tense pause.

PASSENGER:

Whoa. That was embarrassing for you.

The intercom clicks on.

PILOT:

This is your captain again. Just wanted to advise everyone that the tower at Newark has alerted me that the ground crew made an error and the wrong luggage has been placed on several planes. There will be a delay of about an hour and a half while they search through our cargo area when we arrive in Akron. I'm going to have to ask that everyone remain seated for the length of the inspection and we really do apologize for the inconvenience.

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

GERARD and SLATE enter together. GERARD'S eyes have dark circles under them, his nose runs constantly, his skin is pale and sickly. He looks tired and worse for wear.

GERARD:

I can't even see the counter. Can you point me to it?

SLATE:

Nope. I need to get Torita the morning-after pill while we're here. Good luck.

GERARD:

Torita's pregnant?

SLATE:

I'll be in the pest control aisle.

INT. MAXWELL'S HOTEL ROOM - SAME TIME

MAXWELL'S cell phone rings.

MAXWELL:

Yeah?

GERARD:

You're pregnant?

MAXWELL:

Gerard?

GERARD:

Maxie?

MAXWELL:

Who are you trying to reach,
Gerard?

GERARD:

(sniffing audibly)
Torita.

MAXWELL:

She's pregnant?

GERARD:

I don't know. I'm at a pharmacy
with Slate.
(sniffing again)

MAXWELL:

Are you crying?

GERARD:

I took in a lot of perfume and
flowers last night.

MAXWELL:

I don't- Gerard, this is a work
day. Don't do drugs while you're
working. It's bad for business. I
also doubt you can afford them.

GERARD:

Wait, wait. How is Ohio?

MAXWELL:

It's Ohio.

OUT THE WINDOW - GRAY AND RAINY

GERARD:

It's fun getting out of New York
though, right?

OUT THE WINDOW - GRAY AND RAINY

MAXWELL:

You're upsetting me. I'm going to
go.

GERARD:

Wait. Max, I need to tell you something.

MAXWELL:

What?

GERARD:

I'm wearing your pants.

MAXWELL:

Please don't call again unless it's important.

(he disconnects the call)

The kid's losing it.

He picks up a brochure for the Akron Art Fair and leafs through it. He stops at a panel advertisement for the opening of THE FALL OF MAXWELL HARGITAY (AND ALSO THE SPRING) by JAMAL at Erosion Gallery. He immediately grabs the phone and dials.

MAXWELL: (CONT'D)

Why didn't you tell me about this?

VIOLETTA:

Who is this?

MAXWELL:

It's Max. Why didn't you tell me?

VIOLETTA:

Max?

MAXWELL:

Was there a plan? Is there a reason you didn't prepare me? Is this part of a strategy?

VIOLETTA:

Max, do I sound like I know what you're talking about?

MAXWELL:

Okay. Okay. Be ready Monday. I think there's going to be news.

VIOLETTA:

What the hell are you talking about?

MAXWELL:

I'm going to get asked about it. I don't know what to say.

VIOLETTA:
Asked about what? Did something
happen?

MAXWELL:
Not yet. But it's going to.

VIOLETTA:
Are you planning something?

MAXWELL:
I'm in Ohio.

VIOLETTA:
Oh god. What's wrong?

MAXWELL:
There's a film coming out. It's
not going to be flattering. I'm
going to get asked about it and I
don't know what I'll say.

VIOLETTA:
What film? You're in a film?

MAXWELL:
It's a piece. I'm the subject.
My, uh, my implosion. I'm not going
to make it. I met a psychic. I'm
falling apart.

VIOLETTA:
Okay. I want you to stop.
Breathe. Tell me every single
detail.

MAXWELL:
Her name is Sarah. She said she's
psychic but it's just more
information. I thought she was a
prostitute.

VIOLETTA:
Is that the film?

MAXWELL:
No, it's real life.

VIOLETTA:
What's the film, Max? I need
details.

MAXWELL:

It's about my life since Philo.
The collapse and everything.

VIOLETTA:

Does it say you killed him?

MAXWELL:

No, it's worse than that. It's me
being me.

VIOLETTA:

This is a disaster. People can't
see the real you, they'll tear you
apart.

(beat)

Who made it?

MAXWELL:

Jamal. You met him. He was
filming me when we got together a
few times.

VIOLETTA:

It's an art film?

MAXWELL:

I don't know what that means.

VIOLETTA:

Art film means: Who cares? Nobody
that matters pays attention to art
films.

MAXWELL:

It's a documentary as art piece. I
haven't seen it but I'm sure I said
things I shouldn't have. It also
had footage of me working a deal
that hasn't completed yet.

VIOLETTA:

Call your lawyer. Get an
injunction. Tampering with a
business deal without your consent
is probably illegal.

MAXWELL:

I think I gave consent. I signed a
release.

VIOLETTA:

Why didn't you tell me about this
before?

MAXWELL:

HE QUIT! OKAY? HE QUIT! I didn't think anything was going to come of it. I thought he gave up art and got a real job like a rational person. I didn't expect there to be a film to deal with.

VIOLETTA:

I need more information.

MAXWELL:

It's opening at Erosion. Call Sabrina and see if you can get her to go easy on me.

VIOLETTA:

You think she will?

MAXWELL:

She hates me. I was drunk at her husband's funeral.

VIOLETTA:

God damn it, Max.

MAXWELL:

That scene may be in the film, too.

VIOLETTA:

Why in the hell did you even consent to the filming?

MAXWELL:

I think I still wanted to be famous at the time.

INT. YELLOW CAB - SAME TIME

GERARD glumly stares out the window while SLATE fiddles with a cell phone. The phone is at least 10 years old.

SLATE:

I hate this damn thing.

GERARD:

Get a new one.

SLATE:

I don't want a new one.

GERARD:
That phone is older than I am. Get
a smartphone.

SLATE:
New stuff is out. We're
regressing. I should just get a
pager instead.

GERARD:
Whatever.

SLATE:
You should get on board with the
changes, you know. The details
matter.

GERARD:
You're not Max. Stop talking like
him.

SLATE:
Don't even compare us. He's a
loser.

GERARD:
He's your partner.

SLATE:
Only because he's blackmailing me.
It's fiendish.

GERARD:
Whatever.

SLATE:
Why are you so pissy?

GERARD:
I feel terrible. I'm sick, I'm
lonely, I've got no future...

SLATE:
Hey. Hey. Come on. Buck up. You
won't always be sick.
(to the DRIVER)
Can you pull around the corner?
Stop halfway down the block please.

GERARD:
Where are we going?

SLATE:

I'm letting you out. I have a press conference.

GERARD:

Can you drop me at home?

SLATE:

I'm not going to cross the bridge just to get you home, then cross back alone. That would be too symbolic. The subway's just four or five blocks.

(to the DRIVER)

Put the flag up until he leaves, please.

GERARD:

Can you at least just let me out when you stop?

SLATE:

Are you crazy? There will be people there. I can't be seen having a young man step out of my car and get on the subway, especially if he looks sick and desperate. The press would have a field day.

GERARD:

Why do your cabs have the old meters with flags?

SLATE:

I had them retrofitted. Old is the new new.

GERARD:

Is that legal? Don't you have to get permission from the city?

SLATE:

(a very long pause)

I'll check with my lawyer. Don't tell anyone, okay?

INT. MAXWELL'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

MAXWELL is smoking a cigarette at the desk, looking out the window. There is a tumbler of scotch by his wrist. He picks up the phone.

MAXWELL:

Sarah, it's Max. I need to see you.

(beat)

How'd you- Oh, right. Well, can you come to Ohio?

(beat)

I'm all alone here. I'm tired and I'm sad and I'm all alone. And I'm probably going to be hurting tomorrow. Can you just be here for me?

INT. FAITH'S LOFT - DAY

TORITA stands at the window, smoking a cigarette and staring at the building across the street. FAITH enters from the studio area.

FAITH:

Hey.

TORITA:

Hello, Faith.

FAITH:

Why are you in my place?

TORITA:

I wanted to talk to you.

FAITH:

About?

TORITA:

I feel like you're not prepared.

FAITH:

Max-

TORITA:

He taught you what you need to know to succeed but he didn't teach you how to live with success.

FAITH:

I'll be okay.

TORITA:

He didn't teach you that because he never learned how to live with it.

(MORE)

TORITA: (CONT'D)

The only thing he's worse at is living with failure. Do you mind if I smoke?

FAITH:

Actually-

TORITA:

Thanks. There's a film coming out. You're in it.

FAITH:

Huh?

TORITA:

Do you remember a young man that was videotaping Max when you first met him?

FAITH:

Jamal?

TORITA:

Yes. He was one of Max's artists.

FAITH:

Max said he was going to smash the camera over his head. He said that in church.

TORITA:

The film will not be flattering for Max.

FAITH:

Not surprising.

TORITA:

And you are in it.

FAITH:

Well. I was there. But I'm not Max.

TORITA:

I don't think you should stay with Max.

FAITH:

That's cold. That is cold, lady. You're coming around here to stab him in the back.

TORITA:

Faith, you really need to listen to me. I have been in this business for twenty years and I've learned a few things. You're at the most fragile point in your career and one wrong move could end it.

FAITH:

You learn anything about loyalty in twenty years?

TORITA:

I'm trying to help you.

FAITH:

Who do you think I should be with, then?

TORITA:

Right now Slate is the best-

FAITH:

Your husband?

TORITA:

Yes.

FAITH:

It sounds like you're trying to help you. And that guy is a liar anyway.

TORITA:

Max is a liar.

FAITH:

You like liars?

TORITA:

No, I left him.

FAITH:

But you haven't left Slate. And you still work with Max.

TORITA:

That's business.

FAITH:

I don't like the business.

TORITA:

No one does. You get people you can trust to handle it.

FAITH:

Max and Slate are liars. Why should I trust them?

TORITA:

Because they are all you have. No one else is interested in you.

FAITH:

You telling me to leave them after I'm established?

TORITA:

I'm telling you to leave Max now. And you'll stay with Slate because he's good at what he does.

FAITH:

You said Max was good also.

TORITA:

That film is going to ruin him. He's poison.

FAITH:

You know, seems like all of you people show up here and you're offering me the world. But you're only offering it so you can take it for yourself.

TORITA:

You're not stupid, are you?

FAITH:

Who said I was?

TORITA:

It's just what I've come to expect. You hadn't proved me wrong yet.

FAITH:

Well I'm not stupid. And I don't sell out my boys.

TORITA:

That's admirable. Are you aware the Grade F Movement is presenting in three months?

FAITH:

That's- Hey, you don't know about that stuff. You just heard a story.

TORITA:

I'm not judging you. You sacrificed them, 'back-stabbed' to use your word, so that you could advance your own career. It is a legitimate action. If they still want to be friends with you, then you are friends. That's personal. But you couldn't get to success with them on your back so you had to cut your professional ties. That is business.

FAITH:

I don't like what you're suggesting.

TORITA:

What do you think of Gerard?

FAITH:

He's a nice guy. He tried to doublecross Max too, you know. He's dishonest but we speak the same language. He's gonna turn out just like Max but he's okay right now. Why?

TORITA:

We are all trying to help you, Faith.

FAITH:

Yeah, I appreciate it. You do that for free?

TORITA:

Have a good day.

(she walks to the door and then stops)

By the way, someone in the building across the street has video cameras pointed at your window.

INT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

MAXWELL watches SARAH'S plane landing. She exits and is in front of him.

MAXWELL:

I wasn't sure you'd come.

SARAH:

I said I would. And you came to get me.

MAXWELL:

I'm an optimist.

SARAH:

No you're not.
(she looks around)
So this is Ohio?

MAXWELL:

I shouldn't be here.

SARAH:

How do you think I feel?

MAXWELL:

I can't believe you came.

SARAH:

You're making me feel unwanted. Am I stupid because I came right out when you called?

MAXWELL:

You are...beautiful.

SARAH:

Max, I'm not interested in-

MAXWELL:

That's okay. That's- I meant what you did. What you do. You just met me and I haven't been that nice to you but you got on a plane to Ohio. That's a beautiful thing.

SARAH:

Oh. I'm sorry. I- That was insulting. I shouldn't have jumped to that conclusion.

MAXWELL:

I didn't get you a room. I assumed you'd be sleeping with me. So I probably deserve the insult. I have a car waiting outside.

SARAH:
Did you rent one?

MAXWELL:
No, I conned a limo driver. If he
calls me Mr. Garrison, just go with
it.

INT. FAITH'S LOFT - NIGHT

FAITH and GERARD are crouched under the window ledge peeking
across the street.

GERARD:
What's in that building?

FAITH:
Lofts.

GERARD:
Why would there be a camera?

FAITH:
People spy on each other in this
city.

GERARD:
Don't they use telescopes?

FAITH:
I don't like it.

GERARD:
Should we call the police?

FAITH:
I don't know. Should we?

GERARD:
We should set up our own camera.

FAITH:
We should order a pizza.

GERARD:
And we should watch Die Hard.

FAITH:
Absolutely.

INT. MAXWELL'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

MAXWELL and SARAH are on the bed, but not in a sexual way. They don't even make contact.

SARAH:

How did you meet your ex-wife?

MAXWELL:

She was at some event.

SARAH:

It was that memorable?

MAXWELL:

There were a lot of big events at the time. And then right after I was the big fish.

SARAH:

Your lack of modesty is unattractive.

MAXWELL:

Let's not pretend I'm glorifying myself. Whatever I had I either lost or threw away. So I don't think I'm so great just because one time I stood at the top of the mountain.

SARAH:

Why did you split up?

MAXWELL:

I cheated on her.

SARAH:

Why did you do that?

MAXWELL:

I don't know. I was living every day like it was my last.

SARAH:

Oh. How was that?

MAXWELL:

It was exhausting.

SARAH:

Why did you marry her?

MAXWELL:

She was out of my league but she didn't know it.

SARAH:

And you cheated on her anyway?

MAXWELL:

Love didn't make me happy, acquisition did.

SARAH:

Who did you cheat with?

MAXWELL:

The one she caught me with was her best friend.

SARAH:

Why did you sleep with her best friend, Max? Are you that stupid?

MAXWELL:

Yeah, well, I sort of slept with most of the women that would have me. But she slept with me to make Torita angry.

SARAH:

That's troublesome.

MAXWELL:

I didn't want her to find out but you can't keep a secret alone.

SARAH:

Did you pay her?

MAXWELL:

To keep quiet? Of course I did.

SARAH:

For how long?

MAXWELL:

Too long. I spent a lot more on that than I ever did on making Torita happy.

SARAH:

Do you feel bad?

MAXWELL:
About the money? About the
divorce? About my life?

SARAH:
Yeah.

MAXWELL:
It hasn't been easy to live with.

SARAH:
Did you consider suicide?

MAXWELL:
That's not a suggestion is it?

SARAH:
(with a laugh)
No. Max. What have you done to
make it up to her?

MAXWELL:
I've been hostile and I've feuded
with her new husband.

SARAH:
That's predictable.

MAXWELL:
It doesn't make me feel any better.
It's just...I guess it's the
easiest response.

SARAH:
Sure. Being a jerk is always
easier. It's why so many people
are jerks.

They sit in silence for some time.

MAXWELL:
How about you? Have you ever been
married?

SARAH:
I was. We split up.

MAXWELL:
Why?

SARAH:
Our son passed away. Most
relationships don't survive that.
(MORE)

SARAH: (CONT'D)

We just couldn't make it work anymore. It was easier to break up.

MAXWELL:

I'm sorry. That must have been difficult.

SARAH:

It's still difficult. We loved each other, then we stopped being nice to each other. We just stopped trying. It's probably why I came out here.

MAXWELL:

What do you mean?

SARAH:

Because I went through that. When your life gets leveled, you get a chance to rebuild yourself as you'd like to be. I didn't want to be an average jerk anymore.

MAXWELL:

And you just did it? Changed who you are?

SARAH:

Sure. It doesn't happen overnight, but you learn. Pain teaches patience. And compassion.

MAXWELL:

I admire that.

SARAH:

Why don't you do it?

MAXWELL:

Become a good person?

SARAH:

Yeah. You've been through some stuff. You know pain pretty well. Why not use it to make some positive changes?

MAXWELL:

I'm not good enough.

SARAH:

You make yourself good enough. All the success you've had, did it just happen or did you make it happen?

MAXWELL:

Did you come to Ohio to tell me to be a better person?

SARAH:

No, I came because you needed help. But you have to be the person that does that for someone else.

MAXWELL stands up and walks to the desk. He picks up a tumbler of scotch and has a drink.

MAXWELL:

Let's go back to New York.

SARAH:

Can we? What about the art fair?

MAXWELL:

I don't have anything to display. I was having a silent auction of Faith's paintings.

SARAH:

I thought his paintings can't sell?

MAXWELL:

The winners aren't going to want his paintings. They want Philo's paintings. But they only get one if they buy Faith's paintings. It will give him money and at least a little legitimacy before he exhibits.

SARAH:

Are there many Philo paintings left?

MAXWELL:

As many as I choose to have made.

SARAH:

So this is what that discussion was about? I thought you were going to forge Faith's work for the exhibit.

MAXWELL:

I don't need to. He's alive, he'll make some new work. He exists. Philo never did.

SARAH:

What do you mean?

MAXWELL:

What do you think I mean? He was an invention. Paintings by others, an actor playing him, me pulling all the strings to make him a star. He was never real.

SARAH:

I can't believe that.

MAXWELL:

I have no reason to lie. In fact, you're one of the few that knows it was a lie. So you're involved in a huge fraud now. Don't tell anyone or we'll all go to prison.

SARAH:

Why did you tell me this? I didn't ask for that information.

MAXWELL:

I feel safe with you. You can't blackmail me because I don't have any money.

SARAH:

But why did you tell me?

MAXWELL:

I want to be a good person.

SARAH:

Then stop lying to everyone.

MAXWELL:

I can't quit cold turkey. We'll work up to it. Let's go back to New York and give Faith a break. It'll be my first good deed.

INT. FAITH'S LOFT - MORNING

FAITH and GERARD are sprawled across couches, asleep with the television on, when MAXWELL and SARAH enter. GERARD wakes first.

GERARD:

Oh, man, Max. Did you know that you can get high from cans of whipped cream? We were doing that half the night. Then we started a gang. We're the Cobras.

MAXWELL stares at him. FAITH'S head pops up, dried whipped cream caked all over his mouth and nose.

FAITH:

There's a camera across the street.

MAXWELL and SARAH look at each other.

FADE TO BLACK.