

The Knock

A TRUE STORY OF AN INNOCENT MAN,
A TWISTED ACCUSATION
& THE FIGHT FOR TRUTH

MAXWELL WINSHIRE



Seedwood Publishing

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*To my wife, I couldn't have got through this without you,
And to my son, whatever they say about me, I fought the good fight;
always fight for what you believe in, whatever the world thinks.*

Foreword

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

I.

‘Between 2015 and 2019, nearly 62,000 obscene publications offences against children were recorded across 39 police forces within England and Wales (Office for National Statistics, 2020). In the same time frame, 8,318,529 unique indecent images of children were added to the Child Abuse Image Database (CAID), with over 700,000 falling into the most severe category of image.

‘The actual number of IIOC offences is likely much higher due to the anonymous culture of the internet. Elliott and Beech (2009) also argued that offenders are only likely to reveal their identities by mistake, such as when using registered credit cards. Importantly, a substantial parallel has been identified between the volume, availability, and circulation of IIOC and the augmentation of the internet (Carr, 2003; Wolak et al., 2011).

‘While possession offences of this nature are not new (the Protection of Children Act 1978 first made IIOC possession offences illegal within England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, with similar provisions in Scotland), the number of recorded offences

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has been growing year by year (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, 2012).

‘Despite the true figure not being known, it has been suggested that in 2013, around 50,000 individuals within the United Kingdom downloaded IIOC (Giles & Alison, 2021). These growing figures have attracted public interest in recent years.’

Public perceptions of indecent image offenders

Taylor-Smith, J.S. (2021) *The Plymouth Student Scientist*, 14(2), pp. 636-650.

II.

‘Around 850 people, mainly men, are arrested each month in England and Wales for downloading indecent images or grooming children online. In 2010 there were only 407 arrests across the entire year; since then, there has been a staggering 25-fold rise that threatens to overwhelm UK police capacity.

‘One reason for this is the ease of accessing abusive material. Earlier this year, Rob Jones, director of threat leadership at the National Crime Agency, warned: “The prevalence on the open web of images of child sexual abuse – and the use of the web to groom and livestream abuse – represents a crisis for modern society.”

‘According to police figures, their UK database of known child abuse images has 17m unique entries on it, and it is growing by 500,000 images every two months.

“I felt like the world dropped away,’ Emma says of the evening police officers arrived to inform her of her ex-husband’s arrest.”

The knock that tears families apart

The Guardian

31st July 2021

Preface

To any pupils reading this, please stop, you really don't want to know the truth about some teachers. And to any teachers reading this, please stop and go outside and burn every memory stick, floppy or hard drive you have ever owned; disposal or deletion isn't good enough. For anyone accused of downloading indecent images, sell your house now, it will never feel like home again, change your name, and if you can, move to another country, permanently. You will soon find out who your friends are; None. If your face was in the papers, change your appearance, get a facelift, or glasses and a moustache—it's predominantly men—and never tell anyone what you did. Never. Your life will never be the same again; innocent or guilty.

For those remaining, please stop and pay close attention, class is about to begin.

I had to go back through painful events, like following a fine spider's web, to find the cause and effect because it felt like random events at the time, but, of course, a number of agencies were coordinating behind the scenes. When you suddenly become suspected of downloading indecent images you know nothing about the process, and you are only told what they think you need to know. Knowledge is power, as they say, and

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it felt like they wanted to keep it that way. I later gained access through freedom of information requests, among other things.

This book is about the darkest places and, by necessity, contains police descriptions of indecent images, and pulls no punches, which may be upsetting to some. Pure evil is not dressed up or glorified but faced head-on. Not everyone can handle that.

Much of it horrified me, made me physically and mentally sick, and I was depressed and suicidal, as you will see. This is a normal reaction, so if it has happened to you, you're not alone. And if I can get through it, anyone can. If you're guilty, plea bargain at the first opportunity, but if you're innocent, like me, never stop fighting. I still am, and, probably, always will be.

It is true I used to be a teacher. It is true I wrote a book called *What's Your Problem?* and published the first book online in 2009. It is true that I was accused of downloading indecent images. It is true that these indecent images were freely available online. This is what is out there, none are fictionalised. It is true I pleaded not guilty and opted for a jury trial. It is true Social Services voted to remove my son. All the references to news articles, police and legal procedures are also true, as far as I know.

But I had to change some personal things, so that it was almost unrecognisable for reasons that will become clear; in short, who likes living in the big house. So, I begged, borrowed and stole from anyone and anything before anyone shouts, 'He's lying: He made it all up!'

The truth is: it's the truth; And I made it all up. This is a dramatized account based on a true story, not a memoir, to entertain the general reader with an open mind and no prior prejudice.

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This is simply called ‘The Knock’ because that it is how it has become known to one and all, and it is the knock on my door that changed my life, and many other people’s lives too. You never stop hearing it.

The sad truth is if you’ve ever watched porn—and be honest, who hasn’t—it could happen to you.

Sorry, was that a knock at the door?

Max Winshire

July 2023

‘The books that the world calls ‘immoral’ are books that show the world its own shame.’

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

‘Someone must have been telling tales about Josef K., for one morning, without having done anything wrong, he was arrested.’

Franz Kafka, *The Trial*

‘If you have fortunes, you are hereby rendered incapable of enjoying them; if you have none, you are disabled from acquiring any, nay almost of procuring your sustenance; for no persons of character will receive you into their houses. Thus you are often driven by necessity itself into a state of shame and misery, which unavoidably ends in the destruction of body and soul.’

Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones*

Prologue

Tuesday, 11th September 2018

WHEN MAX WALKED INTO the staffroom at Brighton college at seven-thirty this morning, everyone he met eyes with, from teachers to students, returned his smile and wished him good morning—the last time they would—before his arrest, for something he couldn't remember.

Planning lessons until five-thirty, his head started making silly mistakes with dates which annoyed him and he left.

Max's arms weighed heavy on the steering wheel when he turned into Saltdean Park Road, pulled into the drive, windscreen wipers on full, rain hitting the fabric roof like pellets. He made a dash for the door with his case over his head.

Max changed out of his wet suit into a black T-shirt, jeans and trainers.

He saw his son, Tristan, watching The Mickey Mouse Clubhouse on his tablet in the lounge when he walked in and Tristan immediately got up and hugged Max around the knees. Max kissed him on the crown of his head and patted him on the back.

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‘How is the best boy in the world?’ Max took Tristan’s hand and walked to the kitchen. ‘Something smells good.’ Citra was cooking at the hob and smiled when she saw him. He kissed her on the cheek.

‘Thai pad krapow—sit—it’s ready!’

Lightening flashed outside the window, momentarily lighting the garden swing, followed a few seconds later by the rumble of thunder.

‘Yum, yum, yummy yum yum,’ Max sang to Tristan rubbing his belly to distract him from the storm, ‘ready for my tummy, tum tum!’

Tristan laughed and copied him, rubbing his belly.

Suddenly there was a ferocious loud banging on the front door. Max looked up and he could see the whites of Tristan’s eyes grow wide. Citra turned off the hob and started for the door.

‘Just watch your tablet,’ Max told Tristan and then caught Citra by the arm, ‘stay here with him. Let me deal with this.’

Max crossed the lounge to the hall, clenching and unclenching his fists, wondering whether he should grab a snooker cue, or call the police, but there wasn’t time to think when he heard the banging hard enough to break the glass on the door.

‘POLICE! OPEN UP OR WE’RE COMING IN!’

Max rushed to the door and opened it, eyeball to eyeball with a police officer, five Policemen lined up behind him in black body armour like stormtroopers, lit by flashes of lightning in the torrential rain, red and blue warning lights swirling on luminescent striped blue and white police cars behind them.

‘Are you Maxwell Winshire?’ A young-looking policeman asked him. He looked pathetic, Max thought, like he’d just left Cadet training college.

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‘Why?’

Thunder rumbled with an echo like it was advancing, getting closer.

‘We are here to carry out a search of the premises under Section 32 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984,’ he said.

Lightning flashed again.

‘ARE YOU MAXWELL WINSHIRE?’ A policeman behind growled menacingly.

‘Yes, but there must be some mistake.’ Max’s adrenalin was pumping and he tried to remain calm and talk it through. ‘Do you have a search warrant?’

The growling impatient officer pushed Max in the doorway and spun him round. ‘You’re under arrest. You have the right to remain silent but anything you do say may be taken down and used in evidence.’

Max suddenly saw Citra and Tristan at the lounge door as he felt the cold steel lock around his wrists like a solid watchstrap that was too tight.

Five policemen rushed into the hall and ran into different rooms, ransacking shelves, cupboards and drawers. Citra pulled Tristan aside as they entered the lounge, staring at Max helplessly.

‘It’s OK, honey, everything’s gonna be fine,’ Max said.

Tristan’s tablet played the calming tones of Mickey Mouse, incongruous in the surrounding chaos and sounds of trophies, picture frames and ornaments hitting the laminate floor, and Tristan began to cry.

‘It’s OK, Tristan,’ Max said, ‘look at me, it’s OK ... Remember your superpowers, be strong and brave for mama.’ But Tristan only sobbed harder, pretending to watch the tablet obediently.

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Citra's eyes suddenly flared and Max turned his head to see a tall woman march through the front door in a long black trench coat with her collar raised, long flaming red hair dripping wet. She turned on the spot in the hall, taking in the surroundings: the snooker table; the large gold mirror; the crucifix on the wall; and when she looked up at the chandelier, he noticed a scar across her Adam's apple and then spoke in a high lilting Scottish accent, 'How bonnie!' Like none of this was a surprise to her.

She walked up to Max, knees pulling against the slim navy pencil slit dress, high-heels tapping on the laminate floor, and flashed her I.D. and badge with long red fingernails, and in a low man's voice like a well-rehearsed almost different personality, 'DCI Dedrick. Where's the laptop?'

Max frowned in the direction of the study, 'In there,'

'I'll take see,' she said, resuming her feminine tone to the officer beside him, 'let him walk.'

Max walked to the door of the study but instead of following him she walked up to his son and snatched the tablet out of his hands, 'Safeguarding!'

Tristan fell to his knees sobbing harder. Max tried to pull his hands free but he felt the metal cut into the vein on his wrists.

'Your wee life is never going to be the same again,' she said to Citra, 'sit the bonny lad down there.' She pointed at the couch before crossing the hall with the tablet in her hands and opened the door of Max's study. She saw the laptop on the desk.

She pushed passed him into the study, took off her coat like she was planning to stay, and sat down in his leather chair, with Max's wet jacket around it, at his pentagonal desk, in front of his laptop, and powered it on, swivelling from side to side in the chair, and a login screen came up.

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‘What’s the password?’

‘I have the right to call a lawyer,’ Max said.

‘Oh, you do, do you? Need your phone?’

‘Yes. In my jacket behind you.’

She reached in the inside pocket and pulled out his folded timetable, with the mobile, and waved the latter at him.

‘The laptop password, please?’

‘One-nine-seven-eight,’ Max said without thinking.

She tapped it into the computer and the home screen opened.

‘Braw!’

Max could hear the crash of falling objects coming from the other rooms and panicked.

‘Can I make a call now?’

She stood up, walked slowly towards him, swinging her hips, like she had all the time in the world, and turned the mobile on. ‘Oh dear, you can’t reach. Let me help you, what’s the password?’

‘Nine-nine-nine-nine,’ Max said, staring at his phone which looked tiny in her long fingers and nails.

‘That’s original,’ she smiled at the phone and when the home screen came up, she cackled again, ‘Braw!’ Like an excited crow and showed him the open home screen, and walked back to his chair, pressing and swiping the screen.

‘What are you doing ... I gave you the password ...’

‘Thanks,’ she sat down, crossed her legs, and stared at her tights, before looking up, ‘don’t you think I’ve got great legs?’

‘Excuse me?’

‘A little fairy told me that you liked ladyboys,’ she gave him a hard stare and then in her deepest voice said, ‘or am I too old for you?’

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Lightning flashed through the window, but this time the thunder immediately followed; the storm was overhead.

‘I want to speak to a lawyer. NOW!’

‘What’s the rush? I’m not going anywhere.’ She walked over to his book shelf and pulled down one of his journals and flicked through the pages. ‘A writer?’

‘That’s personal. You can’t ...’

‘25th April 2017,’ she read out, ‘the truth is I went to the doctor for anxiety medication ...’

Max closed his eyes with embarrassment,

‘... pleading for Xanax or Diazepam, because I was terrified my money was ...’

‘You can’t. That’s *personal*.’

‘... about to run out and I couldn’t buy any alcohol’ ... Ooh, you’re right, it is personal ... ‘4th May 2017, it may sound like bitter grapes, but coming back on the bus, I really really really’—three reallys? Really? Not much of a writer, really—’was thinking, ‘Citra, please don’t make me work at that school.’ What school? Are you a teacher? Do you like kids, Max? Is that your bonnie wife, Citra?’

‘I want to speak to my lawyer.’

‘I bet you’re used to thinking you’re always right, with all those lovely wee kiddies looking up to you?’

‘That’s rude and unnecessary.’

‘Do you teach ethics? What’s the phrase—Those who can do, those who can’t teach—you’re not very ethical are you, Mr Winshire?’ She opened the metal filing cabinet, ‘and what do you keep in here?’

‘Nothing.’ She followed his eyes to the bottom drawer and pulled it out.

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‘What do we have here?’ She lifted out a hard drive, and then another hard drive and started piling them up on the floor. ‘Now why would anyone need so many hard drives?’ She nodded her head behind him as if he was suddenly of no interest, ‘Take him away.’

‘What are you doing?’ Max struggled against the policeman pulling him back into the hall, ‘I gave her the password. I need to make a call ...’

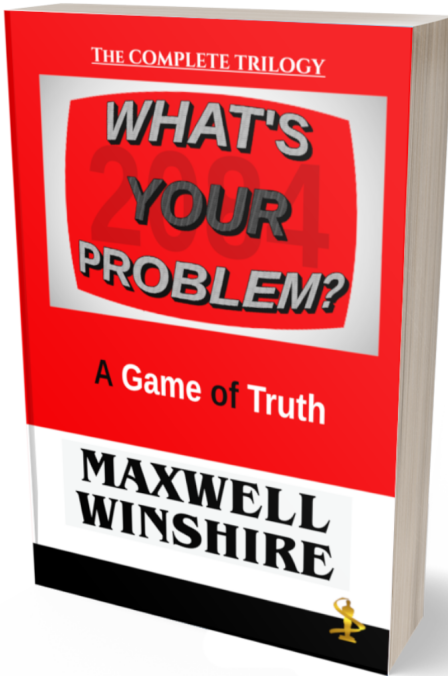
Tristan looked at his father from the sofa in the living room, like he expected him to do something, tears running down his face. His look killed Max. Max had always promised he’d be there for Tristan, no matter what, and now he was powerless to do anything to protect him.

Two officers turned him roughly around by the shoulders and pushed Max out the front door into the heavy rain. They opened the rear car door and gently pushed his head down, which seemed to him like an incongruous act of kindness, as they put him in the car and sat either side.

Max stared in dismay at their open front door—what if someone stole anything? Rotating red and blue lights flooded the empty street, taking him away to an unknown location, with no idea why he had been arrested, what to expect, or for how long.

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