The Latin Labors

by

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INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is small and tidy; there are Latin posters all over the walls and a chart of Latin Grammar on the headboard of the bed. On the desk is an array of Latin books. This is the room of someone thoroughly obsessed with the subject. An average sized boy is doing Latin homework. This is MAX.

Someone knocks on the door. This is Max's MOTHER. She peaks her head in the room.

MOTHER

(holding a phone)
Max! Guess who I just got off the phone with!

MAX

(irritated)
Mother! I've told you time and time again! Call me Maximus.

Max has an air of importance and stares off dreamily.

MAX

It's more stately and... Roman-esque!

MOTHER

Sure Maxy. Anyway as I was saying...

MAX

Maximus!

His Mother ignores his outburst and continues.

MOTHER

I just got off the phone with the Tennis Coach and he said that you are welcome to come to try-outs, they start tomorrow afternoon.

MAX

I have Latin club tomorrow and how do you think that I could possibly complete my studies of the history of Latin syntax if I wasted my time with physical activity?!

MOTHER

Well Max, I just thought ...

MAX

Whatever... I need to finish my work.

Max's mother reluctantly leaves the room.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

A Latin club meeting in MR. BAKALE's room. Bakale is lounging in the front of the room on a pillowed lounge chair. He is being catered to by small, subservient, freshman club members - SLAVES. Around him are seated older club members - CONSULS and SENATORS, busy with banquet preparations.

A GOLD CHALICE is carried to the front of the room on a plush pillow and placed on the table in front of Bakale. He watches the gold chalice on the table in front of him being polished by a slave.

The slave who had been polishing the chalice sets it down, having thoroughly shined its surface.

BAKALE

(to the slave polishing)
You missed a spot. Start again,
freshman slave. I want it to
glisten!

The slave immediately resumes feverishly polishing the chalice.

BAKALE

I'm thirsty. Maximus, my brightest protegee, fetch your master a drink.

Max scurries over to the drink table, holding the cup. He talks to a SLAVE.

MAX

Quick! Give me the emperor's beverage.

The slave hands Max the WRONG BOTTLE, and Max, without looking, pours it.

SLAVE

(to another slave)
Why does Maximus get to do
everything?

MAX

Because, pleb, I am the emperor's right hand man. You are but a lowly slave.

Max brings the drink to Bakale.

Bakale waits with an heir of pompous agitation as the juice is poured and grabs the chalice with a flourish, lifting it to his lips, and taking a sip. He immediately turns from the chalice with a look of displeasure.

BAKALE (incredulously) Is this...? Is this...?

Taking another taste to be certain, and staring accusingly at the liquid in the glass.

Bakale throws the contents of the chalice into the face of s nearby Latin club attendee.

BAKALE

(in disbeleif)
Juicy Juice?! Juicy Juice?! You
would dare to serve me Juicy
Juice?! I only drink organic
grape, I have a delicate palate!
Maximus how could you?

MAX

I... I... It was the slave's fault! He gave me the wrong bottle. I...

As Max is nervously defending himself, he backs into a table with TWO CERAMIC ELEPHANTS and knocks one over. It crashes to the floor.

The whole room stops and turns. There is a moment of silence, and everyone is aghast, there are undistinguished murmurs of shock scattered throughout the room. Bakale erupts.

BAKALE

Do you know what you have done?!? Those elephants are a symbol of Latin honor! Handed down from emperor to emperor since the inception of the school! And you have dared to desecrate them!

Bakale is now seething, and his anger is visible. His teeth are clenched as his hand comes crushing down on the table.

BAKALE

(through clenched teeth)
Your insolence proves your
irreverence for the Latin cultural
tradition! Imperial right would see
you fed to the lions!

His voice momentarily drops to a more pleasant monotone recitation.

BAKALE

...But seeing our lions have not yet grown into ferocious man eating beasts...

Bakale motions to a pen of three harmless cats on which a hand made sign reads "ferocious man-eating lions"

BAKALE

...and according to page 73 of the student handbook, paragraph 8, subsection L, clubs (with the exception of national honor society), are restricted from performing any executions or ritual killings.

Bakale resumes his angry rage.

BAKALE

You are hereby banished from Latin Club!

The class gasps.

BAKALE

Be gone!

Max stumbles as he turns and runs awkwardly from the room.

INT. HALLWAY

Max, out of breath, stops running and drops to his knees. In a fit of despair he throws his head back and lets out the deep mournful cry of a broken man.

Max is exhausted and desolate; he collapses to the floor, slumped against a locker having lost the only thing he had to live for.

MONTAGE -- MAX IS DEPRESSED

- -- Max wanders through the hallways in a desolate manner.
- -- Max cannot hear what other teachers are saying to him
- -- Max drags himself to Mr. Bakale's room.

END MONTAGE

INT. BAKALE'S ROOM

Bakale is still on his lounge.

Max bursts through the open door and throws himself at Bakale's feet.

Bakale is startled by this interruption but upon recognition shows displeasure.

BAKALE

Dare you anger me further by this intrusion!?

XAM

(groveling)
Oh noble Emperor! Show mercy on your humble servant!

BAKALE

(without looking down)

Get out!

MAX

Wise and honorable Emperor! Allow me to prove myself!

BAKALE

(looking down)

Go on.

MAX

(confused)

I want to prove myself ...

BAKALE

No, no. Not that! The compliments, continue with the compliments.

Max pauses slightly confused and awkwardly continues.

MAX

Oh, umm, wise and... err... Conqueror of Conjugations, Despot of Declensions, Nephew of Jupiter...

BAKALE

Enough, enough. There's no need to grovel.

Bakale thinks for a moment before speaking.

BAKALE

I believe there is a way to rejoin the club. To prove your worth you must complete the Latin Labors!

MAX

What do you mean Latin Labors?

BAKALE

Silence! Your first labor is to retrieve the sword of JEAN.

INSERT -- MR. JEAN

Mr. Jean, who wears an eye patch, is waving a yard stick animatedly, as if he was a warrior, while teaching class.

BAKALE

Your second labor is to capture the LUNCH THIEF of the third floor.

INSERT -- LUNCH THIEF

A small, masked, snarling, gollum-like creature peering from locker and growling as he holds a brown bag in his mouth.

BAKALE

Your third labor is to steal the SILVER CHALICE of Alan.

INSERT -- COFFEE CUP

Mr. Alan's coffee mug is sitting on his desk shining prestigiously.

Max who was taking copious notes on a small pad of paper, conceals his notes in his pocket. He nods once.

BAKALE

This is your only chance. Fail me, and you will never again regain our illustrious ranks.

XAM

I won't let you down Emperor!

Max turns and leaves the room with determination.

Off to the side out of Max's line of sight we see a group of students, standing complacently -- this is the CHORUS.

CHORUSMAN ONE

And so our valiant hero sets off to complete these seemingly impossible labors.

CHORUSMAN TWO

These tasks will test his nerve and bring him to the brink of madness.

CHORUSMAN ONE

Tomorrow he will return to begin his daring quest.

INT. MAX'S ROOM

Max sits at his desk jotting down his schemes to complete the labors.

He finishes writing, climbs into bed and falls asleep.

EXT. THE TRACK - NIGHT

Max is standing on the track, in a panic, seemingly unaware of his surroundings. He looks around frantically, and catches sight of a chariot racing towards him. He begins to run frantically in the opposite direction. As the chariot gets closer we see that it is lead by two freshmen in togas and being driven by a crazed Mr. Bakale.

BAKALE

(eerie and echoing)
You are forever banished! Feed him
to the pit of lions!

Max stumbles falling to the ground with the chariot nearly on top of him. He cowers whimpering.

INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Max bolts upright in bed. A cold sweat is dripping down his forehead as he pants looking around the room frantically.

Max calms down after a few deep breaths and lies back down.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

As soon as Max puts his head down on the pillow it is day and his alarm clock rings. He scurries out of bed to prepare for the day ahead.

Max prepares for school. He fills his backpack with a small straw with paper wads, duct tape, and various useless items.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Max marches determinedly through the History hallway.

INT. MR. JEAN'S ROOM

Mr. Jean, a veritable cyclops with his EYE PATCH, is waving his yard stick wildly as he teaches class. Max peeks his head through the doorway, and walks in timidly. Attempting futilely to get Jean's attention.

MAX

(barely heard) Mr...err, ahh...Jean?

Max approaches Jean still trying with no avail to catch his attention. Max, frustrated by Jean, reaches for the yard stick nervously.

Mr. Jean, now aware of Max, swats him away with the sword and because of Max's persistence continues to beat him.

JEAN

Ahh! What is the meaning of this?

MAX

Lay down your weapon.

Jean brandishes his sword and demonstrates his knowledge of martial arts.

JEAN

Ha ha ha. Come and get it!

As Jean continues to brandish his sword, threatening to strike Max, Max pulls out a straw and fires a spit ball, striking Jean in his remaining eye.

Jean falls and withers on the floor.

Max reaches down and collects the sword.

MAX

Ha ha. Yahtzee!

Max looks at the stunned classroom.

A STUDENT starts to speak.

STUDENT

Are you serious?. We were reviewing for a test and you just busted in and incapacitated our one-eyed teacher? All to steal a yard stick? Dude, you're a jerk.

Max, at a loss for words, leaves the classroom.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

Max sprints around the corner and gradually slows and starts walking. He is a bit out of breath but clearly satisfied with himself.

CHORUS-MAN ONE
Our valiant hero, has just
completed his first labor. He has
captured the sword and blinded the
Cyclops.

CHORUS-MAN TWO
He must now complete the second
task, and defeat the mighty lunch
thief.

Max continues down the hall oblivious to the chorus.

INT. HISTORY WING -SAME

Max stops at a row of lockers and sniffs the air: behind him down the hallway the LUNCH THIEF is stealing lunches from a locker.

He sprints toward the thief who, realizing Max is after him, drops the lunch bag from his mouth and tries to run away.

He leaps back behind the corner, back to the wall petrified. Max calms himself and runs towards the lunch thief.

Max catches up to the thief and tackles him to the ground.

Several punches are thrown and Max is able to unmask the culprit revealing him to be MATT MURPHY.

MAX

Murphy...

Murphy takes advantage of this pause and lands a strong swipe against Max and breaks his tackle.

He tries to run away again, but Max catches him and throws him against a locker, then throws him to the ground again.

He begins to choke the thief but the cunning Murphy grabs a book off of the ground and knocks Max on the head.

Murphy runs away and out of sight.

INT. ENGLISH WING

Murphy pauses to catch his breath.

He calmly walks toward the second story lobby when Max runs at Murphy at full speed, knocking him over on his back and causing the lunches stored in the thief's clothes too spill on the ground.

Max tries up the thief's hands and mouth and stores him in a locker.

As Max passes where the lunch thief had been he unintentionally kicks a lunch, the lunch bumps the feet of a FRESHMAN who had been searching through his locker frantically.

FRESHMAN (looking down)
My lunch! You found it!

The freshman rushes up to Max clutching the lunch to his chest and thanking Max from his knees.

FRESHMAN

You don't know what this means to me! It was my Mom's special tunabanana casserole! How can I ever repay you!

MAX

No really it's okay...

FRESHMAN

No! I am indebted to you! Whatever I can do!

MAX

(After a moment's thought) Well, there is one thing I could use your help with...

INT. ALAN'S ROOM

We hear the bell ring as the class takes their seats. Mr. Alan begins teaching class, coffee cup in hand.

ALAN

So in conclusion, this story is a clear metaphor for the darkness in men's hearts.

There is a knock on the door.

Alan walks to the door and opens it. It is AL BROWN.

AL BROWN

I have a delivery for you Mr. Alan.

Al disappears from the door and reappears pushing a dolly on which there is a giant box labeled "Mega Joe."

ALAN

Oh, sweet nectar.

As Mr. Alan is admiring the giant box, a small door opens on the back, and the freshman sneaks out.

Mr. Alan continues to hug the giant box.

The freshman stealthily crawls to the desk and snatches the chalice. He then starts to crawl towards the door.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE ALAN"S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

He quietly opens the door and quickly scurries out to the awaiting Max.

MAX

Excellent, young one. Now begone.

The freshman bows and goes on his way.

INT. HALLWAY INSIDE ALAN"S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Mr. Alan attempts to open the giant box.

ALAN

Alright, let's crack this baby open.

Mr. Alan unscrews the lid and peers inside. His happiness is instantly shattered as he realizes there is no coffee inside. He falls to his knees.

ALAN

(Shaking with rage)
Poseidon! You have forsaken me!

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

Max runs down the hallway and passes the Chorus.

CHORUSMAN ONE

Rejoice! Our hero has completed his last remaining task of stealing the chalice of Alan.

CHORUSMAN TWO

Our hero has exposed his Achilles heel, and now Alan has fallen like mighty Troy.

CHORUSMAN ONE

Now all our hero must do is deliver the objects to Emperor Bakale and reclaim his place in the Latin Club.

INT. BAKALE'S ROOM - SAME

Bakale is lounging. Max bursts through the door saber, chalice, and lunch thief in tow. Bakale is startled by this interruption.

MAX

(out of breath) Emperor! I've completed the tasks you assigned to me...

(Max looks at the clock) ...and with time to spare! Here is everything you asked for.

BAKALE

(waving slave away) Bring them here.

MAX

(holding it out and bowing) The sword of Jean.

INT. JEAN'S ROOM - SAME

Nurse Nashuwati tries to inspect Mr. Jean's injured eye which is swollen shut. Mr. Jean does not allow this and rages around the room growling and roaring while drool dribbles from his mouth.

BACK TO SCENE

Bakale takes the saber from Max and places it on a pillow held by an attending slave who turns to the back of the room with it.

MAX

(bowing)
The chalice of Alan.

INT. ALAN'S ROOM - SAME

Mr. Alan is furiously throwing and hitting the empty box.

BACK TO SCENE.

Bakale hands the coffee mug to the second slave who carries it to the back of the room.

Max drags the lunch thief from behind him, closer to Bakale.

MAX

And the infamous lunch thief.

The lunch thief still bound and struggling in his restraints, snaps at Bakale through his duct taped mouth.

Bakale recoils startled and shifts way on his coach.

BAKALE

(to a slave)

Uhh, uhh... just put it ...er, -- him over there.

Bakale motions to the back of the room.

MAX

So I'm back in the club?! I can come to the banquet tonight?

BAKALE

(chuckling)

You haven't completed all the tasks!

Max is floored by this comment.

The chorus looks on.

CHORUSMAN ONE

Our hero is crushed and desolate...

CHORUSMAN TWO

(eating popcorn)

shhh! I'm trying to watch!

MAX

What!? No! No! You assigned me three tasks, and that's what I did!

Bakale shrugs unconcerned.

BAKALE

Oh, it must have slipped my mind. There is a fourth task that you must complete before tonight's banquet.

MAX

(under his breath) You have got to be kidding me!

BAKALE

(to a slave)

Make sure the lions aren't fed before tonight; I want them to be nice and hungry.

MAX

(frantic)

Wait! That's not what I meant! What does his majesty wish?

BAKALE

Your fourth and final task...

Max breaths a sigh of relief at the words "final".

BAKALE

... is to find me the nougat.

MAX

Wait... What? That's it? Just a nougat?

Max reaches into his backpack and pulls of a 3 Musketeer Bar.

MAX

You mean like this?

Max attempts to give the candy to Bakale, who smacks it out of his hands.

The candy lands in the Lion's pen. The cats approach it.

BAKALE

Not that nougat, you Philistine!
Legend speaks of a Nougat so
delicious, it could keep a man from
dying for all eternity. I want...
nay, I crave this Nougat. Find this
Chocolate Nougat of Eternal Life,
and you be readmitted into the
Latin Club with full honors. Fail
me, and lions will be picking their
teeth with your bones.

MAX

(backs out of the room)
Your esteemed majesty! There's
nothing I'd rather do than serve
you!

Max leaves the room. Bakale walks over to the lion's pen.

BAKALE

Oh, you like nougat, do you, my pretties? Well, daddy will soon be feasting on a different sort of Nougat!

INT. CAFETERIA

Max walks up to a LUNCH LADY.

MAX

Hey... Uh, do you sell any nougat? Preferably of the chocolate and eternal life giving variety?

LUNCH LADY
I think we have some vani- wait,
did you say eternal life giving?

MAX

(Embarrassed) Yea... so do ya?

The lunch lady shakes her head and Max walks away dejected.

MAX

(thinking aloud)
If the cafeteria doesn't have it,
where else in the school would have
some Nougat?

Max starts to leave the room passing the Chorus without noticing them. He looks sullen and his head is drooped.

CHORUSMAN ONE Little does Max know, the answer to his question lies in the wisest soul in all the school.

Max looks up as he passes the chorus noticing them for the first time.

MAX

What?? What did you just say?! Do you know where the Nougat is?! You know something you' haven't told me? All this time you've been following me around knowing all along what I need and you haven't told me!!?

CHORUSMAN ONE

(confused)
Well... you didn't ask...

CHORUSMAN TWO

(upset)
Hey man, you didn't even care to
acknowledge our devotion to your
cause! Following you around,
meticulously narrating! You don't
appreciate us!

MAX

(in disbelief)
Do you know where I can find what I need?!

CHOUSMAN TWO Yea we can tell you that.

Max waits expectantly and irritated.

CHORUSMAN ONE

As I said before the answer to your question lies in the most wise in all the school.

MAX

(angry) Who's that?

CHORUSMAN TWO

(mystically)

You must consult... the oracle.

MAX

The Oracle? This school has an Oracle? Where's he?

CHORUSMAN ONE

Second floor. Science wing. Bathroom. Second stall from the right. Go now.

Max rushes off down the hall.

INT. BATHROOM - SAME

Max enters the bathroom, confused he walks past the stalls until he notices "Know Thyself" written on the door.

Slowly, he pushes it open.

MAX

Oracle?

The ORACLE is a frail, withered old man, half-asleep sitting on the toilet seat.

ORACLE

(confused and groggy)

Wha?! Wha??

He looks up and sees Max.

ORACLE

What is it you seek of the oracle, my son?

MAX

Where is the Nougat? How do I find it?? What do you know?

Long beat.

ORACLE

(quietly and calmly) What has cast you out will cast you in again, what once stood on eight legs, now stands on four. You shall find what you seek when it stands no more.

MAX

What does that mean?!

The Oracle has begun to snore.

Max shakes the Oracle.

MAX

(shouts) What do you mean?!

ORACLE

(mumbling in sleep) ... cast you out will cast you in...

Max steps back thinking.

(baffled)

Eight legs, four, none?

Max walks out of the bathroom where the freshman is standing.

FRESHMAN

So what'd the oracle say?

MAX

To find the Nougat, I have to find something with eight legs, then four legs, then none.

FRESHMAN

Wow, sounds tough. What are you gonna do?

MAX

I got to start looking for things with eight legs.

MONTAGE -- MAX LOOKS FOR THE NOUGAT

-- Max examines two tables that joined. He counts the legs. He pushes one away to make four legs. He then flips the table over looking for the Nougat, only to find dried gum.

--Max is at the field with a crowd of students about to start a race.

INSERT -- "Biannual Eight-Legged Race! Grand Prize: Tickets to the Four Legged Race!"

Max tackles the group.

MAX

Where are you keeping the Nougat?

--He sees an old man with a walker. He counts the legs and starts to run at him when he recounts the legs. There are only six, so he walks away dejected.

--Max sees two teachers fighting over a pull cart. He counts the legs and then dives at the table, tossing the paper and books aside looking for the Nougat.

END MONTAGE

He passes the lower gym where the cheerleaders are practicing.

He hears the cheerleading CAPTAIN giving instructions.

CAPTAIN

I want you four in a line, then you two in front.

Max cocks his head as he hears the instructions.

MAX

Four people? That's eight legs! NOUGAT!

Max bursts into the practice.

MAX

Where's the Nougat?! Give me the Nougat!

CAPTAIN

What are you talking about?

MAX

I need the Nougat!

He rushes the cheerleaders.

INT. MR. CONNORS' OFFICE -- SAME

Mr. Connors is holding hours slips.

MR. CONNORS

Okay... so, Max...

MAX (irritated)

Maximus

MR. CONNORS
Right, so before I give you these
five hours, could you say again why
you thought it appropriate to
tackle three members of the
cheerleading team?

MAX

I already told you, I need to find the Chocolate Nougat of Eternal Life!

MR. CONNORS
Ah. Okay here you go. I just had to make sure I was hearing this right.

Max grudgingly snatches the hours slips.

MAX

Fine whatever.

Max attempts to leave the office when he notices a poorly made octopus figurine.

MAX

(sheepishly)

Hey, uh... By the way...

Max knocks over the figurine, which smashes on the floor. Nothing is inside.

MAX

Just checking.

MR. CONNORS

Hey! My son made that for me!

MAX

(embarrassed)

Heh, yea, sorry. Gotta go.

Max leaves the office.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

Max meets the freshman in the hallway.

FRESHMAN

Did you find it?

MAX

(depressed)

No...

FRESHMAN

So what are you going to do?

Max looks at his watch.

MAX

The Latin Banquet starts in twenty minutes. There's no time. I'll just have to go down to the emperor and beg for his mercy.

INT. BAKALE'S ROOM --SAME

Max timidly approaches Bakale.

BAKALE

Well, Maximus? Have you found my Chocolate Nougat of Eternal Life?

XAM

Your majesty I tried! I searched everywhere!

BAKALE

You haven't found my Nougat!? Insolence! I'll have you eaten for this!

Bakale brandishes his arms violently in his angry tirade and knocks over the OTHER elephant.

Max dives and catches the statue.

MAX

Emperor! I saved your statue! Does that count at all? Will you let me back in the club?

BAKALE

You fool! That statue is a mere trifle compared to the Nougat I seek.

Max gazes at the statue. Bakale continues to berate him indistinctly.

MONTAGE -- MAX RECOUNTS PAST EVENTS

The statue falls to the ground.

ORACLE (V.O.)

What has cast you out will cast you in again.

Max is cast out of Latin Club.

ORACLE (V.O.)

What once stood on eight legs, now stands on four.

Max searches for the Nougat.

ORACLE (V.O.)

You shall find what you seek when it walks no more.

Bakale knocks over the statue.

BACK TO SCENE

Max has a realization.

Bakale sees the rage in Max's eyes as he is about to smash the ELEPHANT

BAKALE

Wait, what are you doing?

He smashes the statue on the ground.

BAKALE

What in Hades was that for?

Max stands and hands Bakale the Nougat.

MAX

Is this it? Is this what your majesty craves?

BAKALE

By Zeus, you found it! It was in the statue the whole time? Of course, it's so simple!

MAX

So... Am I back in Latin Club.

BAKALE

(not looking at him)
Yes, yes of course. Go join the feast.

Max runs out of the classroom with sheer joy. He passes the chorus.

CHORUSMAN ONE What joy! Our hero has completed the fourth and final task!

CHORUSMAN TWO He has reclaimed his rightful spot in the Latin Club.

CHORUSMAN ONE Our hero has overcome great adversity and anguish to complete these Four Latin Labors!

INT. BAKALE'S ROOM --SAME

Bakale gazes eagerly at the Nougat.

BAKALE

Finally, now time to feast on such a delicious Nougat!

He is about the eat in when a knock at the door startles him and he drops the Nougat.

Max comes through the door.

Oh, uh... I just wanted to say thanks again.

Bakale is about to answer when he notices that he has dropped the Nougat into the lions den.

BAKALE

Ki- Kitty? Lions!? Don't touch my Nougat! No!

The lions eat the entire Nougat.

Bakale anguishes and looks menacingly back to Max.

Max laughs sheepishly.

FADE OUT

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