

Max Dart

a graphic novel about a smart kid with round glasses, his best friend Yakov, who is training for a Spartan Race, his parents, older sister Jenna, younger sister Mae and eccentric Uncle Hou

矢 shǐ dart [n.]

宀+大

lying down + large

(Frame 1: Max lying on his bed throwing darts at a target on the ceiling in the shape of a large “大”)

Jenna: Hey, Know-It-All!

Max: Me?

知 zhī know

矢 shǐ+口

dart + mouth

姐 jiě older sister

女+且 qiě

woman + shelves

Max: I'm the Know-It-All? Look at you lost in your books.

Jenna: Well, your big mouth got me in trouble. The high school counselor called me in to take *another* career survey because apparently, not knowing your dream job as a senior is unheard of, and all she could talk about was how Max is already planning ahead, how Max's plan to be a physician is already squared away, how his path to success is basically already paved. So yeah, having a know-it-all brother is eating up my study hall free reading time.

医 yī physician

匚+矢

box + dart

Max: Have you seen Mom?

Jenna: No, why?

Max: The CVC keeps calling.

Jenna: What's that?

The Committee for the Vertically Challenged

矮 ǎi short of stature

矢+委 wěi

dart + committee

"We offer support for the short."

Jenna: Mom joined?

Max: She's thinking of our future.

Max: Mom?

Mother: Every mother needs a nap.

每 měi every

宀+母 mǔ

lying down + mother

Max's Dart Measurement System

one-bean darts

two bean darts

three bean darts

短 duǎn short [vs. long]

矢+豆dòu

dart + beans

(The family is sitting at the dinner table. Father is wearing a top hat.)

Mother: Any treaties signed today?

Father: No, just dug through emails.

Mae: Dad, no one at school knows what a foreign service officer is. Can I just call you a diplomat?

Max: But, does that explain the top hat?

Jenna: Well, we know Max is going to be a physician, but does that explain his idiotic sick note for skipping school yesterday?

痴 chī idiotic

疒+知zhī

sickness + know

Mother: You wrote your own sick note?

Max/Jenna: I/He didn't want to bother you.

疾 jí rapid

疒+矢

sickness + dart

Dear Mr. Flint,

Due to the rapid increase of movement in my bowels, I am avoiding school today.

-Max Dart

Jenna: Yeah, he's practically already a physician. Just needs to work on the rapid increase of his signature.

Mae: More believable than last time when he pretended to break his leg.

乔 qiáo pretend

夭 + *丌

die young + crutches

Jenna: Maybe next time he'll pretend to die young. How will he rectify that one?

矫 jiǎo rectify

矢+乔qiáo

dart + pretend

(Next scene: Mae is up in a tree.)

Jenna: Mae, what are you doing up there? Don't you think it's time to come down?

Mae: Not yet.

妹 mèi younger sister

女+未wèi

woman + not yet

Jenna: Uncle Hou is here. We're getting ready to eat. Come on in.

Mae: Did he bring his monkey?

(Next scene: in the living room)

Mae: Uncle Hou, are you really a marquis in Japan?

Hou: Well, if the imperial order was still recognized, I would be, but all it really means nowadays is I'll be buried in the family tomb.

Mae: Us, too?

Hou: If you die in Japan.

Mae: Oh, Mom, can we?

Mother: What is this talk about dying?

Mae: No, can we go to Japan? To see the family tomb!

(Jenna pictures the Dart Tribe's Tour of Japan)

族 zú tribe

扌+矢

banner + dart

After dessert, as Uncle Hou is leaving...

Hou: Hey, Max. I heard "Take Your Child to Work Day" at Main State is next week.

Max: Yeah, can't wait to learn all about the Deep State.

Hou: Well, I need a favor. This letter explains everything. Look at it when you are alone.

侯 hóu marquis

亻+侯+矢

persona + iron + dart

猴 hóu monkey

犛+侯hóu

pack of dogs + marquis

Dear Max,

I'm writing to you in full confidence that you will keep my story confidential. I trust that once you understand the details of why I acted the way I did, you will want to help me restore what was lost.

When your father and I were young men in Japan, his interests were always in studying abroad, and while I was fascinated with American culture, I thought I would have a better chance making it big in baseball if I stayed in Japan.

Our family descends from a line of marquises, and despite the war that decimated our grandfather financially, our father quickly regained his fortune during post war reconstruction. As baseball grew more popular in Japan, his company eventually purchased a team.

I excelled in athletics and was not especially interested in the family business. Although I was the oldest, I assumed your father would be chosen to carry on after our father retired, but he married an American and made it clear he wasn't coming back.

I had fallen in love with one of the family maids, having talked with her for hours while she ironed our father's shirts. We knew my parents wouldn't approve of us getting married, but we thought if my baseball career took off, maybe they wouldn't see the marriage as so beneath us.

Well, a series of unfortunate events prevented the marriage, killed my hopes of a career in baseball or business and almost destroyed our father's name.

It was spring training, and our team was looking great, especially in batting. We were all hitting better than we ever had. I noticed a few strange comments and questions from my father about the balls we were using, and I got curious. When talking to the pitching coach and hinting at a few of my suspicions, he assumed I was in the know, being the son of the team's owner, and let it leak that the team was using new "lively" balls that accounted for our increased batting averages.

I was appalled and had to know if my father knew. He caught me snooping through his files, exploded and quickly sent me to the U.S. to cover up the scandal.

I told your dad everything and tried to get him to do something about it with his government connections, but he wasn't anxious to scandalize father and kept the whole story quiet. With no allies, I gave up and started grad school in the U.S. like my father suggested.

Although I tried to tell my girlfriend in letters that my leaving had nothing to do with her, I also didn't want her to know too much and risk losing her job. In the end, she never understood why I left and stopped writing to me.

I've made myself a good life in the U.S., but I regret not ever finding her again and making amends. I figure if I can give her proof of the scandal, she'll understand and believe I didn't leave her on my own. The problem is I gave your dad the files I took from our father, and I'm sure he has them at work somewhere. I know you are going into his office for "Take Your Child to Work Day" next week. Can you take the opportunity to find then file for me? I'll leave it to you to restore my love's faith in me.

-Uncle Hou

(Yakov, who always wears a beret, and Max at the track)

ㄣ ya *beret

Max: Not to doubt you my friend, but the Spartan is next week. Are you really up for it?

疋 yǎ *Spartan Race

ㄣya+疋

beret + trail of footprints

疑 yí doubt [v.]

匕+矢+彳+疋

person sitting + dart + spear head + Spartan Race

Yakov: Ya! (thrusts with his spear)

束 cì *thorn

冂+木

hood + tree

周 zhōu circumference, *lap

冂+土+口

hood + soil + mouth

Max: Dude, slow down. There's something totally weird with my uncle.

Yakov: The mystery marquis?

Max: Yeah, he's caught up in something and needs my help.

Max: Dude, you are bleeding.

Yakov: Just a spear wound. Let's go home and get ice. It will congeal the blood.

凝 níng congeal

冫+疑yí

ice + doubt

Max: Doubtful.

(In Yakov's kitchen, a jar of Insect Protein Powder next to the blender)

蛋 dàn egg

疋+虫

Spartan Race + insect

Yakov: Want some?

Max: What is it? Raw egg?

Yakov: No, insect protein powder.

Max: Uh, no thanks.

Yakov: So, what's up?

Max shows Yakov the letter.

Max: "What do you think I should do?"

Yakov: It doesn't hurt to look. this was already more than 10 years ago. Sounds like he wants to find his lady love, and you could help.

Take Your Child to Work Day at the Department of State in Washington, DC

(Max, Jenna and their father looking at a large painting)

Max: So these are the foreign service officers who signed the Hawaiian-American Treaty of Friendship in 1849?

Father: They are just fathers, disguised as diplomats, mingling at a reception.

交 jiāo mingle

宀+父

top hat + father

Max: So, nothing has changed. Any chance of a bite of something to eat?

咬 yǎo bite [v.]
口+交jiāo
mouth + mingle

Father: Sure, let's go mingle in the cafeteria.

Jenna: Wow, Max, you seem to know a lot about the history of diplomacy.

Max: "To know your sun will set is wisdom."

智 zhì wisdom
知zhī+日
know + day/sun

Max's father is called into a meeting. Jenna decides to head home rather than wait, but Max knows this is his chance. He starts looking through filing cabinets, comes across a locked safe, and finally thinks to look through a box of awards, certificates, plaques and mementos from previous posts where his father had served. At the bottom is a large, brown envelope with some Japanese writing in the corner. He opens it and although his Japanese isn't great, he sees his grandfather's name at the bottom of a letter as well as some brochures advertising baseballs. He stashes the envelope in his backpack and nervously waits for his father.

(Back at the track with Yakov. Jenna, Yakov's biggest fan, is there with Max, too.)

Jenna: Don't wear yourself out warming up. The race starts in an hour.

Jenna: I made you this lei.

贗 bì *Hawaiian lei
卉+贝
plants + shells

Yakov: So, it's like for a vitamin boost before the race? (takes a bite and spits it out)

喷 pēn spurt

口+贲

mouth + Hawaiian lei

Jenna: No! You just wear it for good luck.

(Spartan Race Starting Line in a clearing in the woods)

楚 chǔ clear [adj.]

林+疋

woods + Spartan Race

Announcer: Fellow Spartans, the race trail starts here in this clearing, and will be marked along the way with whirling banners. Of course, food on the trail is sparse, which is why we've planted vegetables along the way, leading to the bridge behind the chapel where the race will end. Line up. Are you ready? Begin!

旋 xuán whirl

扌+疋

banner + Spartan race

疏 shū sparse

疋+尢

Spartan race + bridge

蔬 shū veggies

艹+疏shū

flowers + sparse

(Yakov is lying down in the field behind the chapel. The race is over.)

寔 dì stumble

(十宀) + 田 + 疋

chapel + field + Spartan race

Jenna: What happened?

Yakov: The lei! It made me sneeze, and I didn't see the tree root in the field behind the chapel.

嚏 tì sneeze
口+寔dì
mouth + stumble

Jenna: I'm so sorry.

Yakov: And, I lost my beret.

(In a pawn shop)

Max: Is this the place?

Yakov: Yeah, I bought my beret here.

买 mǎi buy [v.]
冫+头
beret + bust

Max: Here's one. It even looks like your old one.

Yakov: They are selling it for ten times the price!!

卖 mài sell
十+买mǎi
ten + buy

(next scene: Family Vacation to Visit the Dart Family Tomb)

Mae: What is that giant square with a dart on it?

This way —>

矩 jǔ square

矢+巨jù

dart + giant

Hou: It means we're here.

(the family tomb)

矣 yǐ *Dart family tomb

厶+矢

monument + dart

Mae: it's dusty.

埃 āi fine dust

土+矣yǐ

soil + Dart family tomb

Mother: I hope I'm buried close to you.

挨 āi get close to

扌+矣yǐ

hand + Dart family tomb

Jenna: Ai-ya, this is too much.

唉 āi sigh-ay-ay

口+矣yǐ

mouth + Dart family tomb

Max: So Uncle Hou, would she take you back? I know you've been waiting a long time. Did she believe your story?

候 hòu wait

侯hóu+ |

marquis + stick

Hou: Well, in fact she did. Here's the proof.

pre-purchased tombstones:

侯 姨