

Fearlessness

I stood there, on the edge of death, and stared it in the face. A twinge in my shoulder announced the fact that my mother had tied up my parachute too tight. Again. "Mum!" I exclaimed, the butterflies in my stomach distracting me from talking to her, "It's too tight!"

"I'm sorry, Max, I'm just so nervous." She sighed. "Why do you have to do this!"

Mum was always nervous about *everything*. It just so happened that Contact Parachute Racing from 45,000 feet is one of the most dangerous things in the world. Of course, compared to the people I was up against, it was easy. I was in the semi-finals of the World Championships, representing England. The worst of my opponents was Pat Bacross, the American representative, stage name: "The Smasher" because of how his main tactic was smashing into other people; midair and causing them to mess up.

I personally didn't know why my mum was so scared, after all, the drones would catch me if I fell and the parachute would disintegrate if I got wrapped in it, the special fibres releasing an electric charge, allowing me to open my spare one.

"It's as if you don't have your fear chip plugged into your brain properly." Mum muttered under her breath. Mum was always saying electronic metaphors like that, being a techno-genius. I, on the other hand, cared only enough about technology to know that the drones would catch me if I fell. On this count, though, I agreed with my mum. I have never felt fear in my life. While others said: "the feeling of fear is the feeling of butterflies in your stomach." I felt the butterflies only when I was excited.

"ONE MINUTE TO START. COMPETITORS, ON YOUR PLATFORMS!" the commentator bellowed through his microphone. Slowly, with a pneumatic hiss, the ramp at the back of the helicopter slid down. Bracing myself against the sudden influx of noise and wind, I swaggered down the ramp, showing off my Union Jack jumpsuit. I readied myself to leap. A neon red laser pointer between two drones showed where we had to pull out our parachutes. Anyone who didn't would be disqualified.

"10 . . . 9 . . . 8 . . ." yelled the commentator. My mother tottered down the ramp, holding a GoPro in her hand. "Max! You forgot the camera!" she screamed over the beating of the helicopter blades, as if it wasn't already obvious. She clipped it on my helmet and began climbing the ramp again.

"3 . . . 2 . . ." A sudden gust of wind blew my mum off the edge of the ramp. I stared in shock and horror.

". . . ONE!" hollered the commentator, so loudly that it reverberated in my skull. Without a second thought, almost out of instinct, I raced forward and fearlessly threw myself off the edge. For a second I flew, and then I was falling in the abyss of the sky, racing for an entire country and chasing after a parent in mortal peril . . .