

Max Vs The Hockey Gods

By Riley Soleway

A cold April night on the Prairie. The Stanley Cup playoffs are being played inside as dad watches them on the big screen. Outside, Max is practicing on his backyard rink, shooting cans hung from strings. He's dreaming of the day when he'll get to compete for the Stanley Cup. A storm is brewing overhead and there's lightning in the sky.

In the distance is the shadow of the hockey arena. It looks a little like the coliseum. It's where the Stanley Cup Playoffs are being played.

Max: Home team is down a goal, thirty seconds left. They fly down the wing. He's in all alone. He shoots.

HE SCORES!!!

Announcer on TV: He scores. It's all tied up. Looks like we're and going to overtime!

Lightning suddenly hits the arena. All the power goes out.

Max stops playing. He continues to look at where the lightning struck the arena. It's retreating back up into the sky in a strange way.

The power comes back on.

Announcer: Looks like the power is back on folks. We're ready to start over time.

Announcer 1: Wait a minute, the Stanley Cup...

Announcer 2: It's gone!

Announcer: This just in! The Stanley Cup has gone missing! Play cannot continue! The Stanley Cup must be found.

Dad is pulling his hair out inside. Max is watching through the open window. The stars twinkle mischievously overhead.

Dad opens the door.

Dad: Max, did you hear? The Stanley Cup has gone missing! What are we going to do?

Dad shuts the door.

Max stares down at the puck, looks at the Arena, back at the puck, and is surprised by a face staring back at him.

Ullr. Is underneath the ice.

Ullr: Max, thank heavens I find you first. Watch out, I'm coming through.

Ullr jumps then smashes through the ice and comes up on the other side.

Ullr: Max, it is an honour to meet you. I have come from the realms of the hockey gods. My name is Ullr, god of skating, hunting and glory. I come from Norse mythology, during the Viking age. Zeus and his team of hockey gods have stolen the Stanley Cup and have taken it back to Mount Olympus. You're the only one who can get it back.

Max: Me? But I'm just a kid.

Ullr: You're not just any kid Max. You were chosen by fate. The gods have great powers, but even they have no power over Fate.

Max: Fate? What is that?

Ullr: You must try to rescue the Stanley Cup from Mount Olympus. Or hockey will forever be controlled by the will of the gods.

Max: But what can I do against gods? I'm not good enough.

Ullr: Of course you are Max. The talent is inside you. The gods are very powerful but they did not practice for their skills. Nevertheless you will need a great blade to aid you on your quest.

Ullr: In 1892, Lord Frederick Stanley, Governor General of Canada, forged the Stanley Cup to be the ultimate prize of sport. I lent him my power to forge the cup and one other powerful weapon, Lord Stanley's Blade. You will need its power to defeat Zeus.

Max: But... but why are you helping me? Aren't you a hockey god?

Ullr: Yes, but Zeus has gone too far this time. The Stanley Cup is a trophy for mortals, and Fate has yet to be decided.

Max: But how? How can I beat the gods.

Ullr: With this...

He presents Max the glowing puck.

Ullr: The puck of destiny. You must take it to Mount Olympus. Only then will Zeus's power be broken.

Max: But how will I get there?

Ullr: I will help you. In Norse Mythology there is a bridge of light that connects the many realms called the Bifrost. It can take you to Mount Olympus, but you must face the gods without me. Now Max, I must ask you, Will you face the hockey gods and save the Stanley Cup from Zeus' control?

Max: I will.

Ullr: Then good luck Max. May Fate be on your side.

Ullr opens the light bridge that extends into the sky towards the clouds where lightning is flashing.

Max starts skating up the bridge. He turns around to take a last look at Ullr. But he is already gone. Max is all alone.

Max: Ullr? Ullr?

His expression changes between determined and apprehensive. It's quiet, too quiet.

He skates for a while. Until he's in the clouds.

Lighting strikes around the bridge.

Zeus's voice: Puny mortal child. You dare come after the god of gods? The Stanley Cup is ours, turn back now.

Max: I'm not scared of you Zeus. Come face me, if you think you can.

Zeus: Ha ha ha... A child like you? You don't have a hope.

A lighting storm ensues with strikes all around. It leaves behind a big puff of swirling smoke, and as the smoke dissipates Zeus becomes visible standing in the middle of the bridge.

Max has got the puck

Zeus: See. You think you can defeat me? In Ancient Greece I was the supreme god of the heavens. I defeated the titans and cast them into Tartarus, the underworld, where they suffer for all eternity.

Max: With the power of Lord Stanley's Blade, I will defeat you.

Zeus looks a little nervous.

Zeus: Lord Stanley's Blade... Where did you get that? No matter, you are still too weak to face me.

Max's stick blazes with fire, he starts stick handling up the bridge. Zeus starts to hurl lightning bolts at him. Smashing the bridge into millions of pieces. But Max is too quick. Max makes a move, tries to flip it around Zeus. And gets absolutely creamed.

Max slides across the ice. The puck of destiny comes to a stop somewhere near him.

Zeus: You actually thought you could defeat me, Zeus, Lord of Thunder? Go back to earth little one and tell them they must pray to the hockey gods if they ever wish to lift the Stanley Cup. Zeus skates back up the ice bridge towards Mount Olympus.

Max is still on the ground. Devastated.

Max: I can't do it. I can't beat him.

Crosby's Voice: Yes you can Max. You need to get up.

Max: Huh? Who said that? Sidney Crosby?

Crosby skates up to where Max is lying and offers him a hand up.

Max: But how did you get here?

Crosby: The Stanley Cup has a powerful defense against those who would misuse its powers. When Zeus stole the Stanley Cup he released the spirits of past Stanley Cup Champions. Now I'm here to help you get it back. What do you say?

Max: I say... Let's play some hockey.

They both skate up the bridge, passing it between each other. On one side of the bridge. Out of the clouds, deserts and pyramids begin to appear. On the other, forests and totem poles. Way off in the distance, a hockey net can be seen.

Crosby: Max! Watch out!

Isis swoops in from above and almost take Max out. Max passes it to Crosby. Out of the ice and snow, White Buffalo appears to smear him against the boards. Isis gets the puck. A net appears behind Crosby and Max.

Isis: You dare to defy the hockey gods? I am Isis, Egyptian goddess of magic. Thousands years ago I was worshipped in North Africa. Pharoahs built statues and pyramids in my honour. I gave women the gift of weaving and brought souls back from the afterlife. A place you will soon see.

She passes the puck over to White Buffalo.

White Buffalo: And I am White Buffalo Calf woman, Goddess of the nature and unity. I am a symbol of hope to the Lakota tribes of North America. I appeared in times of great hardship to lend my strength and inspire. But you have nothing to hope for.

White Buffalo skates up the wing. Briefly turning into a Buffalo. There's an open net at Max's end.

Crosby skates back and dives, just barely poking it from her reach. Max's stick glows as he retrieves the puck. He makes a laser pass up the middle to Crosby who is making a break for the net. He makes a nifty move to get around Isis and zeroes in on the open net. He winds up to take a clapper from the top of the circle. And just as the puck is about to enter the open net, buddha is suddenly there to stop it without seeming to have moved. Max and Crosby get a bunch of rebounds, but every shot is stopped.

Buddha: I am afraid scoring will not be that easy. I am Buddha, the enlightened one. I was once a prince in India, a long time ago. But I gave up my wealth and meditated until the day I awoke. I was freed from my material desires and mortal suffering. I achieved Nirvana and the secrets of the universe were revealed to me. You cannot upset the balance Max, turn back now.

Buddha slaps the puck up the ice to Isis, who is wide open at center ice. She gets the puck and goes on the breakaway. The Stanley Cup glows with Patrick Roy's name. And he appears out of the ice to defend the net.

Max: Patrick Roy!

Isis makes a move, but Roy makes an unbelievable glove save.

Patrick Roy: Max! We can't let them score. The Stanley Cup is depending on us.

Roy puts the puck down and sauces it way down the ice to Crosby, 2 on 1 with Max. Buffalo goes to hit Max, who dishes to Crosby in front. Who then gets creamed by Ganesh who appears by a beam of light.

Ganesh: You think you can face the hockey gods? I am Ganesha, god of wisdom and beginnings. I am the remover of obstacles, greatest among Hindu deities. I will block you at every turn and beat you in every battle. Turn back now or face my wrath.

Max looks at Crosby, who looks back at Max.

Crosby: He's not so big.

Max nods and skates towards him. Ganesh turns around and fires a slap shot all the way around the boards behind his own net to Isis up the wing who teleports behind Crosby with magic and goes two on zero with Buffalo, toward the goal. Patrick Roy looks tense.

The Stanley Cup glows the name Bobby Orr.

Orr: Looks like you're in need of some defense.

Max: Wow, Bobby Orr.

Orr pokes the puck into the corner, where Crosby and Buffalo battle for it. Crosby tries to flip it out but it's caught by Ganesh and passed through Max's legs to Isis, who is robbed once again by Roy. He gives is

to Orr who tries to pass it out to Crosby, but is stopped again by Ganesh. He winds up to shoot, but fakes it and passes it to a new player at the other point, the Jade Emperor.

Jade Emperor: Your path ends here Max. I am the Jade Emperor, one of the Three Pure Ones of Taoism. For many thousand years I have ruled the gods of China, and protected humanity. But now I will be your destroyer.

Jade Emperor takes his dragon stick, which swallows the puck. He winds up to shoot, and slaps it, spouting flames as the puck zooms towards the net. Roy sprawls out to block it. He just gets a piece of it and it rings off the crossbar. Ganesh gets it back and passes it back to Jade Emperor for yet another shot. Roy is still down, his glove has been knocked off. Jade Emperor has an open shot.

Stanley cup glows with Ray Bourque's name.

Bourque: No you don't.

He slides in to block the shot.

Max: Ray Bourque!

Bourque: Here to help Max.

Max gets the puck and fires it across the ice to Crosby, who takes a slapshot inside the line. Buddha stops it and it goes into the corner. Max goes and checks Ganesh, then passes back to Bourque, who shoots it. Stopped again by Buddha.

Buddha: Buddhism teaches that there is a constant cycle of death and rebirth. Nothing in this world is permanent. Everything has a beginning and everything has an end. The Four Noble Truths teach the way to recognize and to end suffering. But your suffering is just getting started.

Buddha passes to Jade Emperor.

Jade Emperor: For those who follow Taoism, “The Way” is the path to a greater understanding of the universe. It teaches the balance between all things and how to coexist in this world. But for you, Max, your path ends here.

Jade Emperor passes to White Buffalo.

White Buffalo: In Native American tribes, gods are the bridge between the natural world and the spirit realm. Gods can take the form of plants and animals, as well as mountains and rivers. We created dances and rituals to aide the cycles of nature. But now your cycle ends here.

She passes to Ganesh.

Ganesh: In Hinduism, lives are governed by ethics and responsibilities called dharma. Gods tell stories to teach these lessons and keep harmony on earth. By following dharma you will be born after your death greater than you were before. That is all you have to hope for now.

Passes to Isis.

Isis: When I came into being there was only the known and the unknown. Gods were used to explain things beyond the limits of human understanding. We gave you culture and stories to pass on your knowledge through the generations. Now it is time for you to pass into the underworld.

Crosby gets it again and throws it in front to Max, who shoots but is stopped again. Ganesh shoots it the length of the ice and Orr gets it behind the net.

Max: We can't beat them, they're too good.

Shot of the Stanley Cup from a distance with a glowing name that can't be read.

Gretzky: They're not that great.

Max: Wayne Gretzky? You're here.

Gretzky: You think I would let you face the gods without me? The gods are very strong, but they never learned to practice for their skill, or how to be a team and work together. Now Max, lets show them what hard work and dedication really means.

Gretzky skates behind the net to where Orr has the puck and picks it up for the breakout. He drops it back to Orr, who passes to Crosby, who gets hit and puts it into the zone. Ganesh gets the puck, but Max pick's his pocket and send it back to Gretzky, who sets up in his office behind the net.

Gretzky: Max to the front!

Gretzky and Max lock eyes. Gretzky flips it over the net and Max slaps it out of the air before Buddha can get it. Red light goes on with a siren. Then Max is sucked into the net along with the rest of the players, which transports them to Mount Olympus.

Zeus sits on the throne, Stanley Cup by his side. He's clapping.

Zeus: Well done young warrior, truly impressive. But I'm afraid this is the end for you. You beat my team of gods, but now you must face me, and you will not find me so easy.

Zeus: You have come to Mount Olympus to play for the Stanley

Cup.—————Across Culture and religion, three has always been a number of power, So three is what we will play to. I am fair, so you may keep the goal you already scored. It will not matter. Your destiny ends here.

Zeus: You have come to Mount Olympus to play for the fate of the Stanley Cup. Across culture and religion, three has always been a number of power, so we will play to three. I am a fair god, so you may keep the goal you've already scored. It will not matter. Your destiny ends here.

Score appears as 1 – 0.

Max: Bring it on, Zeus.

Champions: We got your back Max.

Zeus grimaces, and they face off. Max against Zeus. The puck of destiny drops from the sky.

Max wins the draw, but Zeus steps around him and catches it before it gets to the defense. He winds up for a massive slapshot and lasers it into the net past Patrick Roy with a lightning streak. Score changes to 1 – 1.

They line up again. Puck drops from the sky, this time Zeus wins the draw to Ganesh who chips it over Gretzky's head to white buffalo who chips it back to Zeus who one times it, into right through Roy's glove, burning a hole through it.

1 – 2

Zeus grins obnoxiously.

The next play Zeus tries to chip it past Max, but he uses Lord Stanley's Blade to beat Zeus back and knock him to the ground. Bourque gets the puck and dumps it in. Crosby goes to hit the Jade Emperor who gets it to Ganesh who gets it to Zeus. Gretzky picks his pocket and goes back the other way, only to get it stolen by Isis's magic. She tries to get it back to Zeus, but Bourque slides in and tips it to Orr at center ice. He takes one look and starts skating it back to his own end. White Buffalo chases him all the way behind the net. Isis goes to check him. Spin-a-rama passes to Gretzky, to Crosby, Drop pass to Bourque, Gretzky, Crosby, Goal.

2 -2

They line up for the face off, dark clouds are brewing overhead, turning to a storm.

Zeus: I defeated the Titans... I can defeat you!

Max: You're not a hockey god. You're just a god who plays hockey.

Zeus looks shaken.

Max chips it through his legs and skates down the ice. Saucer pass to Gretzky down the wing.

Gretzky skates past Ganesh and sets up behind the net.

Zeus: GET HIM!

Both Jade and Ganesh go for him. He passes to Crosby. Isis appears by magic, but Crosby chips it past her. Zeus readies a lightning bolt. And hurls it at him. Crosby passes it at the last second before he's zapped by lightning. The puck goes to Max at the hash marks, buddha is smiling at him, the cans are hanging from the corners of the net. He shoots, he hits the can. Mirror shots of him celebrating both in his backyard and on Mount Olympus.

Zeus: Nooooooooo!

Gretzky: You did it Max! You saved the Stanley Cup.

It all fades away as Max is left in his backyard.

TV Announcer: What's this? It appears as though the Stanley Cup has been returned. I think someone has been playing a joke on us, Grapes. Either way we're back and ready to start overtime.

Max looks down at the reflection of the stars in the ice and they twinkle back at him. In the ice, Ullr reappears.

Ullr: I knew you could do it Max, Lord Stanley would be proud. Tales of your heroic deeds will turn into legend.

Max: But no one will know.

Ullr: Then you must tell them. And let the stories of gods and mortals continue to be told.

Dad pokes his head out the door. He doesn't see Ullr in the ice.

Dad: Hey Max! You've got to come watch overtime with me. It's been a crazy game.

Max: Just a minute dad.

He looks back down at Ullr, who has his hand over his chest.

Ullr: Until we meet again, Max.

Ullr disappears into the ice and all the Max can see is the reflection of the stars. He takes off his equipment and goes inside.

Shot of Max on the sofa with his dad and the family pets. The pets all have hockey names. Doggy Orr, Ray Bark, Catrick Paw, Sidney Clawsby and Wayne Ferretzky.

They watch on TV as the Stanley Cup is hoisted above someone's shoulders.

Max: You know I had to beat Zeus in a game of hockey to get it back.

Dad tousles Max's hair.

Dad: 'Atta boy son.

Final shot of Max sleeping in his room under the stars. The arena is in the background and Lord Stanley's Blade is leaning against the door frame.

The End