

# MAX AND VOLTAIRE™

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU



**Mina Mauerstein Bail**

**Illustrated by Gabriel Choquette**

**Edited by Sigrid Macdonald**

The Max and Voltaire Series™ Book One

## CHAPTER ONE

### LEAVING HOME

*Where am I? Where are my parents? Where are my brothers and sisters?* thinks the kitten.

“Don’t be scared, sweet kitten,” says *Madame Cupcake*, the baker’s wife. “Would you like some milk, or maybe a small piece of cake? This is your new home. There was not enough room for you and all five of your brothers and sisters. Don’t be sad. All your siblings have found nice homes, and your mother and father are so happy that you will be well-cared for and loved.”

One of *Madame Cupcake*’s customers has a cat that recently had kittens. She could not keep them all. The customer asked *Madame Cupcake* if she would like to adopt one. Although *Madame Cupcake* has a dog, she loves cats and agreed to adopt one kitten. This morning, her customer arrived at the bakery with the little kitten.



*Madame* Cupcake is a middle-aged woman who welcomes all her customers with a big smile. She's in charge of sales. Her husband is the baker. The bakery has been there for more than twenty years and *Madame* Cupcake personally knows many of her customers.



*I miss my family, thinks the kitten. I want to go home and play with my brothers and sisters. I remember running around in a large room with a soft rug on the floor. From time to time, two little girls would come and play with me. They would cuddle me and pat me gently on my head.*

"What shall we call you?" asks *Madame* Cupcake. "Henri? No, you don't look like a Henri. How about Pierre? No. Let me think. Max—yes, Max sounds good. It's short for Maximus. Max is a wonderful name. In Latin, it means *greatest*. So you see, Max, you will grow up to be a great cat."

*Well, I suppose it's a pretty good name, thinks Max.*

"Have some milk and a piece of *croissant*, Max," says *Madame* Cupcake.

*Yum, this smells really good, thinks Max.*

Max takes a bite of the *croissant*.

*Wow, this is delicious, thinks Max. It's so good it makes me want to purr. Living in a bakery isn't going to be that bad. This is, after all, a French bakery!*



That evening, after the bakery is closed for the day, *Madame* Cupcake takes Max and puts him in the car. It's



early autumn and the air is getting cooler. Her husband drives them both to their house in the mountains above Ferney-Voltaire. When they arrive at the front door, Max hears a strange, loud noise.

“Don’t be afraid,” says *Madame* Cupcake. “It’s only the dog barking. He barks when someone comes to the door.”



They enter the house and walk into a large living room with a central fireplace and big windows. Max sees a scary looking brown dog running towards them.

"This is Rambo," says *Madame Cupcake*.

Rambo growls at Max. Her husband holds on to Rambo and tries to calm him down.

*He doesn't look very friendly, thinks Max.*



"Oh dear," says *Madame Cupcake*.

After a few months of living in the same house, Rambo no longer growls at Max, but he does like to chase him. Max spends a lot of time hiding from Rambo.

"I don't think it's a good idea to leave Max at home with Rambo," *Madame Cupcake* tells her husband. "Every time Rambo sees Max, he starts to chase him. I'm afraid that Rambo may hurt Max one day. I don't like leaving Max alone in a separate room when we are away. Maybe I shouldn't have adopted him. I'll take Max to the bakery. He can play there and I can keep an eye on him during the day. I'll clear out a small space for him in the back room and he can sleep there at night."

"It's worth a try," replies *Monsieur Cupcake*. "At least he'll have some peace and quiet in the bakery. Let's try this for a while and see how it works."

Later that week, *Madame Cupcake* goes to the back room in the bakery to look for Max. It's time for his snack. There's no sign of Max.

"Have you seen Max?" she asks her husband, who is busy making bread.

"No," he answers.

*Madame Cupcake* looks for Max everywhere, but she can't find him.

*I wonder if Max followed me outside when I took out the garbage,* thinks *Madame Cupcake*.

*Madame Cupcake* opens the back door and sees Max running around outside.

"There you are," says *Madame Cupcake*.

Max looks up at *Madame Cupcake* and dashes back into the bakery. A bell tinkles above the door, signaling a customer. *Madame Cupcake* walks to the front of the bakery. Max follows her and sits down by his bowl in the corner, near the cash register, where *Madame Cupcake* left a small piece of pastry for him.

"*Bonjour, Madame Cupcake,*" says the customer.

"*Bonjour, Madame Rosemarie.* What would you like today?"

*Madame* points to a long, thin bread called a *baguette* and an apple tart.

*Madame Rosemarie is very pretty,* thinks Max. *She's smiling, but I see a hint of sadness in her face.*

"Oh, and who is this?" *Madame Rosemarie* asks, smiling fondly at the kitten.

"This is Max," replies *Madame Cupcake*.

"What a lovely kitten. I see he likes to eat French pastries," says *Madame Rosemarie*.



“Oh yes, Max has a sweet tooth,” says *Madame Cupcake*. “He’s a very nice kitten. Is there anything else I can get for you, *Madame Rosemarie*?”

“No thank you, *Madame*. This is all I need today. Have a good day, *Madame*. Good-bye, Max.”