

Eli - Season 1, Episode 1

Volcanic Beginnings

Written and produced by Reactout Studios

Part 1: Mrs Harper's Science Class

Eli clutched his new backpack, a mix of excitement and nerves churning in his stomach. Intermediate school. It felt like a giant leap from the familiar halls of primary. He scanned the crowd, his gaze landing on two familiar figures weaving through the throng.

"Eli!" Zara's voice, as bright as ever, cut through the din. She and Jamie, their faces beaming, were making their way towards him. Relief washed over Eli. Seeing his friends made the daunting new environment feel a little less intimidating.

"Hey guys," he grinned, falling into step with them. "Ready for this?"

"As we'll ever be," Jamie said, adjusting his glasses. "Did you see the timetable? We have Science first period."

"No way! Me too!" Eli exclaimed.

"Looks like we're all in the same class," Zara chirped. "Maybe we can sit together."

They navigated the maze of corridors, the sheer size of the intermediate school overwhelming. Classrooms were numbered, not named, and the air buzzed with the chatter of hundreds of students. Finally, they found Room 3B, a large, airy space filled with tables and various scientific-looking equipment. They managed to snag seats together at the back, a small victory on this chaotic first day.

The teacher, a woman with kind eyes and a shock of curly red hair, introduced herself as Mrs Harper. She had a warm smile and a way of making everyone feel at ease. After a brief introduction to the school's policies and the upcoming curriculum, she clapped her hands together.

"Alright everyone, for our first project, we're going to be building model volcanoes," she announced. A murmur of excitement went through the class. "You'll be working in pairs. I'll call out the names."

Eli's heart thumped a little faster. He hoped he'd be paired with Zara or Jamie. Mrs Harper began reading out the pairings, and Eli listened intently. "Zara and Chloe. Jamie and Liam. And finally, Eli and Max."

Eli's brow furrowed. Max? He didn't recognise the name. He glanced around the room, his eyes searching for someone who might be Max. A boy with a mop of dark, unruly hair and a slightly bewildered expression was looking his way, a tentative smile on his face. He was sitting at a table near the front.

"That's me," Max said, a little shyly, as he approached Eli's table.

Eli stood up. "Hi, I'm Eli."

"Max," he replied, extending a hand. Eli shook it, a brief, firm grip.

"So, volcano project," Eli said, trying to sound enthusiastic.

"Yeah," Max agreed, his gaze drifting around the room. "I'm not really sure where to start."

"Me neither," Eli admitted. They gathered their materials from a cupboard at the front of the room: a large cardboard base, a plastic bottle, some modelling clay, and a small packet of baking soda and vinegar.

Back at their designated table, they surveyed the supplies. "We need to make the mountain shape first, right?" Eli suggested, picking up the clay.

"I guess," Max said, fiddling with the plastic bottle. "Maybe we can put the bottle inside the mountain."

"Good idea," Eli said, starting to mold the clay around the bottle, creating a cone shape. Max watched him for a moment, then picked up a small trowel and started scooping some of the clay onto the base.

"Do you think we need a lot of clay?" Max asked, his voice a little uncertain.

"Probably," Eli replied, his focus on shaping the slopes. "We want it to look like a real volcano."

They worked in silence for a while, the only sounds the squelching of clay and the distant chatter of other students. Eli found himself getting a little frustrated. Max seemed to be doing his own thing, not really contributing to the overall shape.

"Hey, could you try and make the sides steeper here?" Eli asked, pointing to a section of their volcano.

Max looked at it, then shrugged. "I don't know, it looks okay to me."

Eli sighed inwardly. This was going to be harder than he thought. He decided to focus on finishing the mountain, hoping Max would get more involved later. He was just about to smooth out a particularly rough patch when Max suddenly piped up.

"What if we made it erupt now?"

Eli blinked. "We haven't even finished the mountain. Mrs Harper said we need to make it look realistic."

"But it would be cool," Max insisted, his eyes lighting up. "We have the baking soda and vinegar, right?"

Before Eli could protest further, Max had already grabbed the small packet of baking soda and was unscrewing the cap of the plastic bottle.

"Max, wait!" Eli exclaimed, but it was too late. Max poured a generous amount of baking soda into the bottle. Then, with a mischievous grin, he grabbed the vinegar.

"Here goes nothing!" Max declared, and tipped the vinegar into the bottle.

There was a moment of stunned silence, followed by a violent fizzing sound. The mixture inside the bottle bubbled furiously, expanding rapidly. Eli watched in horror as the plastic bottle strained under the pressure.

Suddenly, with a loud POP, the top of the bottle blew off. A thick, frothy, brown liquid erupted upwards, spraying all over their table, their half-finished volcano, and a good portion of the surrounding area. Mrs Harper, who had been walking past, let out a startled yelp as a dollop of the "lava" landed squarely on her sensible shoes.

Eli stared, dumbfounded, at the mess. Their volcano project had, in a very unexpected and messy way, actually erupted. Max, however, looked utterly delighted.

"Whoa!" he breathed, a wide grin spreading across his face. "That was awesome!"

Eli, on the other hand, felt a wave of mortification wash over him. He looked at the sticky, brown mess, the bewildered faces of his classmates, and the slightly stunned expression on Mrs Harper's face. This was not how he'd imagined his first day of intermediate school science class. He had a feeling he and Max were going to have a very interesting time working together.

Part 2: Volcanic Escalation

Eli stood frozen, his cheeks blazing redder than the lava he'd hoped to create, staring at the frothy brown disaster that was once his and Max's volcano project.

Max, the new kid with spiky hair like a hedgehog who'd chugged too much energy drink, grinned like he'd just won a science trophy. "Whoa! That was awesome!" he'd cheered, oblivious to the goo dripping from Mrs. Harper's sensible shoes.

The class howled with laughter, Jamie shouting, "Epic fail—or win?" while Mrs. Harper's squelching footsteps echoed.

Eli, though, wanted to vanish into the classroom floor. His big dreams of a blue-lava masterpiece? Buried under Max's fizzy chaos. Day one of intermediate school, and Eli was already the king of fizzle-fails.

Mrs. Harper, shaking her head but with a tiny smirk, gave them the Look—the kind that teetered between detention and pity. “Eli, Max, clean this up and start over,” she ordered. “Presentation's tomorrow—make it realistic, or you'll be scrubbing desks instead of volcanoes.”

Max nodded, still buzzing like he'd invented explosions, while Eli mopped the sticky mess, his heart sinking. “*Why'd I get stuck with Mr. Bossy-Pants?*” Eli thought, picturing Jamie high-fiving him over a perfect blue-ocean volcano. Max, he decided, was a human bulldozer, flattening Eli's ideas into nothingness.

The next day, Eli dragged their lumpy clay volcano back to the science table, his mind bubbling with hope. He imagined a mega-cool volcano with steep sides and a shimmering blue food-coloring moat. “Hey, Max,” Eli tried, pointing at the model, “let's make the base stronger with an ocean layer. It'll look realistic, like Mrs. Harper wants.”

But Max, slathering red paint like a kid possessed, barely glanced up. “Blue's boring,” he scoffed. “Red's fiery. And I'm adding a dragon mouth at the top—way cooler.” He squished more clay, humming a victory tune that grated on Eli's nerves.

Eli tried again, waving a pencil sketch of his ocean idea. “But the base is wobbly,” he said, his voice squeaking with effort. “An ocean layer would—” Max cut him off, brandishing a paintbrush like a pirate's sword. “Trust me, Eli, I've done this tons. Just hold the tray steady, ‘kay?” *Hold the tray?* Eli's brain fizzed worse than their failed volcano. *I'm not a tray-holding robot!* he thought. *I'm Eli, idea guy!* But Max was sculpting his dragon mouth, piling on clay like he owned the whole mountain. Eli's awesome plan drowned in a sea of red paint. He felt like a tiny speck next to Max's giant ego.

That's when a mischievous idea sparked: Operation Prank Peak. If Max wanted to be the boss, Eli would shake things up. During break, while Max bragged about his “epic eruption” to anyone who'd listen, Eli swiped the vinegar bottle and hid it in his backpack. “*No vinegar, no boom!*” he thought, smirking like a cartoon villain plotting world domination. He could almost see Max's face when his precious lava fizzled out. “Take that, dragon-mouth dictator!”

But oh, Eli's prank went wrong fast. When Mrs. Harper called them to present, Max was all, “Time to blow their minds!” Eli played dumb, patting his backpack. “Vinegar? Uh, must've left it at home. Maybe the janitor needed it for his pickles?” Max's eyes narrowed suspiciously, and before Eli could blink, Max was rummaging through the bag. “Aha!” he crowed, yanking out a bottle. But—oh no—it wasn't vinegar. It was his homemade fizzy lemon drink from lunch!

Max, not even checking, poured the whole bottle into the volcano. “Watch this!” he shouted, dumping in the baking soda. For one glorious second, Eli thought he'd won. Then—**KAPOW!**

The volcano didn't just erupt; it exploded into a lemony geyser, spraying sticky foam across the room. Kids screamed, desks sparkled with soda, and Mia yelled, "Eli! Your volcano's burping lemonade!" Mrs. Harper slipped on the wet floor, her clipboard sailing like a frisbee.

"Eli! Max! Clean-up duty after school!" she bellowed. Max laughed like it was the best day of his life, pointing at Eli. "Your fault, fizzy fail!"

Eli sank into his chair, his face hotter than a summer barbecue. *Prank level: epic disaster*, he thought. *Max is still the hero in his head, and I'm just the kid who turned our project into a soda fountain.* He felt smaller than ever—like a crumb lost in a giant's lunchbox.

At youth group, Eli slumped into a beanbag, kicking at the floor. Pastor Pete, with his big grin and voice like a warm blanket, spotted him right away. "Eli!" he said, plopping down beside him. "You look a little deflated. What's up? Spill the beans."

Eli sighed, spilling the tale—Max's bossy takeover, the failed prank, the lemony volcano disaster. "He's like a giant, Pastor Pete," Eli mumbled. "I'm just... small. Invisible." Pete's eyes twinkled as he leaned in. "Ever hear about David and Goliath?" he asked. "Goliath was a massive warrior, scarier than a whole team of Maxes. Armor like a tank, voice like thunder"

"Everyone was terrified. But David, a shepherd kid smaller than you, wasn't only unafraid of Goliath, he defeated him with a single stone in his sling!"

Pete grinned. "Jesus said we can do all things through Him who gives us strength. Max isn't your Goliath, Eli. Fear is. Speak up with kindness and faith, and God will guide your words like he guided David's 'stone.'

Eli thought for a moment. *"Me, like David? Facing Max with a slingshot of ideas? Okay, God, let's try this."*

As Eli left youth group, he began to feel happier already.

Tomorrow, he'd face Max-Goliath, not with pranks, but with faith. Maybe their volcano could still be a team effort.

Part 3: Volcanic Victory

The next morning, Eli bounced into school with a newfound bounce in his step, his backpack slung over one shoulder.

Pastor Pete's words echoed in his mind: "faith over fear, like David facing Goliath". No more pranks or hiding—today, Eli was ready to stand tall, even if he felt a bit wobbly inside. "*Max might be bossy*", he thought, "*but he's no giant. And I've got God on my team. Time for Operation Team Eruption!*"

In science class, the air buzzed with excitement as groups prepped their final volcanoes.

Eli spotted Max at their table, tweaking his dragon mouth with more red paint. Taking a deep breath, Eli plopped down beside him. “Hey, Max,” he said, his voice steady but kind, like Pastor Pete’s warm advice.

“About our volcano... I’ve got an idea to make it epic. What if we combine your fiery red lava with my blue ocean base? It’d be like a real volcano erupting into the sea—super realistic, and Mrs. Harper would love it!”

Max paused mid-paint, his spiky hair tilting like a curious hedgehog. “Blue? I thought that was boring.” But Eli didn’t back down. He pulled out his pencil sketch, pointing with enthusiasm. “Nah, check this: the blue stabilizes the base so it doesn’t wobble, and when it erupts, the red lava mixes with blue for purple foam! Purple eruption—coolest in class!” *Like slinging a stone of kindness*, Eli thought, his heart thumping. *God, guide my words!*

To Eli’s surprise, Max’s eyes lit up. “Purple? Whoa, that’s genius! Okay, let’s try it. You do the ocean layer—I’ll handle the dragon top.”

They dove in together, Eli smoothing blue-dyed clay around the base while Max sculpted the peak. Laughter bubbled up as they tested mini-fizzles, high-fiving over each successful pop. “Your ocean idea rocks, Eli!” Max admitted, grinning. “Teamwork makes the boom, eh?”

When presentation time hit, Mrs. Harper called them up. Eli and Max poured the vinegar—real vinegar this time—into their baking soda core. “Here goes!” they shouted in unison. The volcano rumbled, then—*WHOOSH-BOOM!*—erupted spectacularly, red lava swirling into blue for a purple foamy cascade that sprayed safe, silly bubbles everywhere.

The class cheered, clapping wildly as foam dotted desks like confetti. “Outstanding, boys!” Mrs. Harper beamed, her shoes safely out of range. “Realistic and creative—A+ teamwork!”

Eli high-fived Max, feeling taller than Goliath himself. *Faith worked!* he thought, a warm glow spreading. *I spoke up kindly, and God turned our mess into a masterpiece. No more feeling small—I’m David-level brave now.* As the bell rang, Max turned to him. “Buddies?” Eli nodded, grinning. “Buddies. See you at lunch for more epic ideas?”

Walking home, Eli reflected on the wild week. From fizzle-fails to volcanic victory, all because he trusted God like David did. Challenges weren’t giants to fear—they were chances to grow with faith. [Narrator wraps up with a joyful *CHEER* fade.] And just like that, Eli’s first intermediate adventure erupted into something awesome.