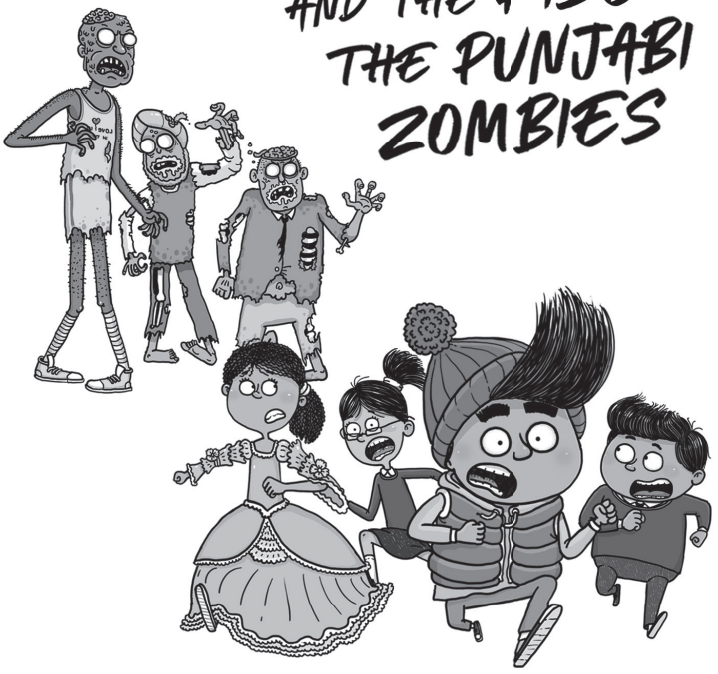
LITTLE BADMAN

AND THE RISE OF THE PUNJABI ZOMBIES



HUMZA ARSHAD & HENRY WHITE

Illustrated by ALEKSEI BITSKOFF

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I would like to dedicate this book to the fans!
Thank you for giving me a reason to create.
Thank you for your continuous love and support.
You guys are simply the best! Thank you
– Humza

To my dearest Archie (who loves a good zombie battle)
– Henry

CHAPTER ONE
CAR TROUBLE

Let me get straight to the point, yeah. Big school was **NOT** what I was expecting. I figured it was just gonna be like, you know . . . a *big* school. Sort of like my old school, but, well . . . bigger. Bigger kids, bigger buildings, bigger everything. But, believe me, that ain't the half of it . . .

I had no idea on that first day, as my dad drove me up to the gates, but I was about to begin one of the craziest years of my life. If you thought things got weird for me last year, just wait till you hear what happened next. Seriously, I can barely believe it, and it's *my* life!

I'm Humza, by the way. AKA Little Badman. The greatest hero/rapper/samosa-eater Eggington's ever known. That's my home town, by the way. It's ninety-nine per cent boring and one per cent alien invasions, spy organizations and radioactive mutations. I swear, though, one per cent is more than enough for me. Any more than that and I'd probably be dead already (or moving to Australia).

Oh, and in case you're not up to date with my recent adventures, lemme just break it down for you with a little recap-rap. Because, frankly, I've been neglecting my lyrical genius lately. I don't want to get rusty now, do I? After all, I'm still planning on making my billions the Kanye-way.



So sit tight while I spit a few rhymes . . .

(*clears throat*)

When aliens attacked, I saved my whole school.
Got hired as a spy cos I'm so damn cool.
Then I got framed by some unknown clown –
my dad found out and I got sent down.
'You need discipline!' yelled my dad
(he can't think straight when he gets too mad).
'I have come up with the perfect plan!
I'll send you to summer school in Pakistan!'

Luckily for me, Umer got punished too.
Off to Pakistan for the Badman Crew.
Little did we know it was our first mission:
hunt down a guy causing bare suspicion.

Mad-scientist-turned-summer-school-tutor –
dude named Malik, with a brain like a computer.
Gadgets in his lab were a straight-up mystery –
took the wrong one and got blasted into history!

Turns out time travel ain't much fun –
stuck in the past and we're still on the run!

Need to get home and sound the alarm,
before Mr Malik does serious harm.

Needless to say, we outwitted that fool.
Thought he was smart, so we took him to school.
Now he's in handcuffs and we're still free.
And that's how life's been for Umer and me.

If I had a mic right now, I'd drop it and the crowd would go wild. But of course my dad won't buy me a mic cos he's tighter than a submarine's door. I swear, you've never met a man so cheap. He can get six cups of tea out of a single teabag. When he's done using a plaster, he peels it off and puts it back in the box for later. I once saw him trying to sell a copy of *The Big Issue* he'd found on the bus . . . *to a homeless guy*!

And because he's so tight, it means that we own the worst car in the world. Maybe even the universe. I swear, our car is rank. It looks like the kind of thing detectives might tow out of a swamp. The only way it could be any dirtier would be to

write dirty words on it. Which of course people quite often do. Usually my best friend Umer. Stupid Umer.

All of which is why I didn't want my dad dropping me off at the front gate that morning. Other kids might see me in it! I didn't want to be known as the kid whose dad drove a skip on wheels.

Back at primary school, I'd spent years building my street cred. Working on my rep. I was a king around there. But here, at this new school, I was a nobody. And now, thanks to my dad, I was about to become the biggest joke in the place.

Which is where my story begins: sitting beside Britain's most unhinged parent, in a car made of garbage, heading to my new school. What could go wrong?

'Please, Abu-jee,' I begged, as we drove towards the gates. 'Just drop me here. Or better still, six blocks away. I'll walk in by myself.'

'Absolutely not!' yelled my dad. 'I am making

certain with my own eyes that you go through those gates!'

'Where else am I gonna go? There's nothing to do round here! I don't even have a bike to escape on.'

'Nonsense! I buy you top quality bicycle!'

'That ain't a bike! That's a *tricycle*! I've had it since I was three!'

'Very good tricycle. Made in Pakistan.'

Ah, man, if something's made in Pakistan, that's it. As far as my dad's concerned, it's amazing. Seriously, it could be on fire and my dad would still swear blind it was the best sofa/carpet/goat ever created, as long as it had come from Pakistan.

Don't get me wrong, I love Pakistan too – the food, the people, the culture – especially after spending my last summer holiday there. But it doesn't mean everything Pakistani is amazing. My dad for instance. He's Pakistani and he's got more screws loose than his car. I could already see kids looking at us and pointing.

Smoke was billowing out of the exhaust pipe

and students behind us on the pavement were coughing and rubbing their eyes. I lowered myself down in my seat, hoping not to be seen.

'Why are you sinking?' shouted my dad. 'Sit up straight! You are a Khan!'

Not this again! What's so great about being a Khan? It's just a surname. Why did my dad always have to act like the big man? I mean, we were surrounded by school kids. Who exactly was he trying to impress?

Dad leaned past me and wound my window down.

'This is Humza Khan!' he shouted. 'Look at him! Remember his face!'

'What the hell are you doing?' I hissed. 'Be quiet!'

'Nonsense!' said my dad. 'They must learn who you are! This is a fresh start for you. You can be respected here. Not a clown, like at your last school.'

'I ain't no clown!'

'Tell *them* that,' said my dad, beeping the horn.

'My son is not a clown!' he shouted out the window. 'He is a leader! He is a winner! He is the best of you!'

'Stop it!' I yelled. 'Why are you saying this stuff? *You* don't even believe it!'

'Of course I don't,' replied my dad, sitting back in his seat. 'You are ridiculous. But perhaps if we start you on the right track this year, you will finally stop embarrassing me.'

'PLEASE! I beg you – just let me out!'

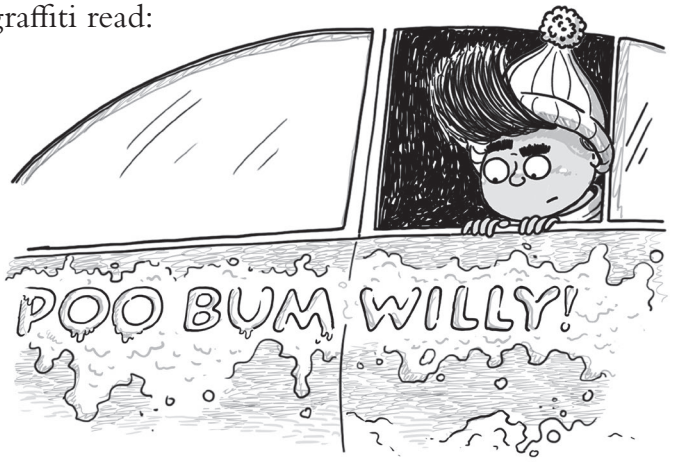
'See,' replied my dad, smiling. 'Already you are sounding more polite!'

Aw, man, this was awful. I hadn't even started school yet and I already wanted to drop out. I swear, my dad's the worst. For about a minute, over the summer, I thought things were getting better between us. He'd even taken me to where he grew up – this little village in Pakistan with an amazing waterfall and a cool little market. I figured that, finally, after twelve years of him treating me like a bin bag filled with daal, maybe we'd started to bond? Nope. Turned out though

he was just as big an idiot as ever.

I tell you, if the circus ever comes to Eggington, I'll be on the first elephant out of town. I don't care how much poo I have to sweep up to earn my keep. Anything's better than hanging out with my dad for another day.

As we came to a stop, I spotted Umer waiting by the gate, a huge grin on his big round face. He was looking at the dirty words scratched into the filth on my side of the car. That morning, the car graffiti read:



I was pretty sure it was Umer's handiwork, as they're his three favourite words. Umer's my best friend, by the way. I've known him since forever

and he's someone I can always rely on (to finish my lunch if nothing else).

Standing beside him was Wendy Wang. Man, I was glad to see them both. Wendy's my other best friend, though that's more of a recent thing. Growing up, I'd always figured she was too much of a brainiac to be mates with. Seriously, she's a proper genius. She can even play the violin without it sounding like someone stretching a cat. But unfortunately for Wendy, she'd never learned to misbehave, poor kid. So I'd taken her under my wing to teach her how to muck about, get in trouble, and really put that amazing mind of hers to terrible use. And now she was as much a part of the Little Badman Crew as anyone.

And listen, just cos Wendy's the smartest of us by a mile, doesn't mean Umer and I are stupid, OK? Sure, Umer may come across as the kind of guy you can keep busy for hours with a note saying 'please turn over' on both sides, but I'm starting to wonder if he might actually be a genius too. Not in the Wendy sense. More like a dog who learns

to bark the word 'SAUSAGES' and then goes on to win *Britain's Got Talent*. Hidden depths, you know what I mean? He's saved my life more than once this year. But I've also seen him eat drawings of food, so, you know – swings and roundabouts. Trick is to just keep your expectations low and Umer will never disappoint.

'Hey, guys,' I said, getting out of the car.

'Hey, Humza,' said Umer.

'Hi, Mr Khan,' said Wendy, waving to my dad.

'Shh,' I mouthed. 'Just ignore him and he'll go away.'

'Hello, Wendy Wang,' said my dad. 'You will continue to help my boy be less of an idiot this year, I trust?'

'Um . . . I, er . . .' began Wendy.

'Good!' snapped my dad. 'These boys need a friend like you. Someone smart and disciplined. Someone with spectacles.'

'Oh, right. Um . . . thanks,' replied Wendy, sliding her glasses a little up her nose.

'*Goodbye, Dad!*' I hissed. '*Time to drive away!*'

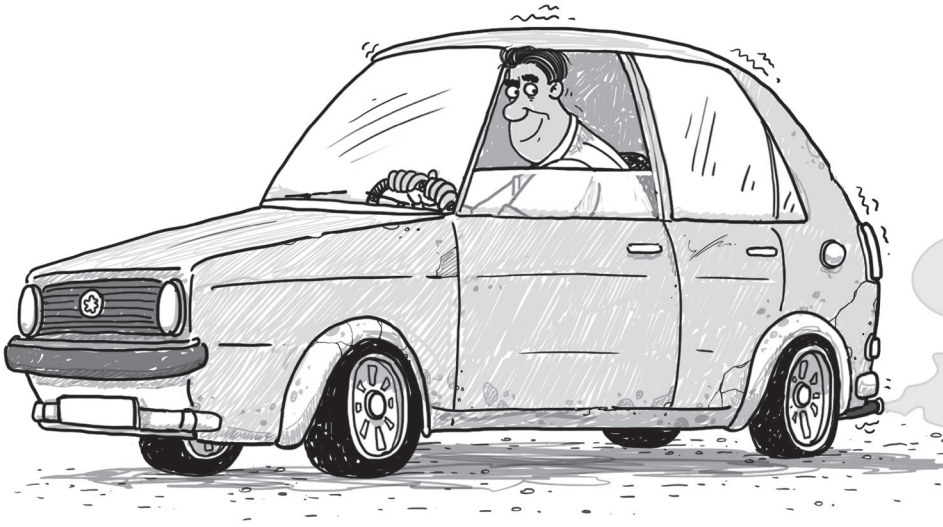
'*I* will drive away when I *want* to drive away!' shouted my dad, then sat there looking at us.

We all stared back at him.

'OK, *now* I will drive away,' he said, and drove away.

Smoke poured out of the exhaust pipe, and there was a huge *BANG!* as the engine backfired. Hundreds of kids turned round and watched as the garbage pile I'd arrived in pulled away from the gates.

'Goodbye, Humza Khan!' shouted my dad out the window. 'The strongest, most respected boy in his school!'



I hung my head and tried to pretend it had nothing to do with me, but I could already feel eyes staring my way. I could hear kids chuckling, see them pointing at the car. Pointing at me. Man, how could school already be *this* awful before it had even begun?

'It's OK,' said Umer, putting a hand on my shoulder. 'He probably won't bother driving you in again after today. No one will remember by tomorrow.'

'Thanks, man,' I said as we turned to walk in the gate. 'But from now on, just to be safe, could you stop writing "poo bum willy" on my car?'

'I'll try,' replied Umer, grinning.



We stopped at the gates and looked up. There in front of us was Eggington Comprehensive. I'd seen it a million times but had never stepped inside (I'd missed the class visit as Dad

had kept me at home that day trying to catch a squirrel in the loft). The school looked even bigger close up. Old red brick buildings with tall white windows towered over us. Smaller, newer, yellow brick buildings spread out on the other side of a wide path. A great big sports hall sat across from us on the far side of the playground and, beside that, a big grass playing field already full of students running about, playing football, screaming and laughing. This place was massive.

Kids flowed past us on either side. Some of them were huge. NBA huge. I suddenly felt real small next to them. They were all wearing the same uniform. *My* new uniform. I tugged at the red and black tie round my neck to loosen it. I'll be honest, it felt pretty weird to be here.

'You guys ready?' I asked.

'I think so,' said Wendy.

'Uh-huh,' agreed Umer, but he sounded nervous.

'OK then,' I told them. 'Let's start big school.'