LITTLE BADMAN AND THE TIME-TRAVELLING TEACHER OF DOOM



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I'd like to dedicate this to my beautiful wife, who I still haven't found yet. My parents, because I feel that they would want me to say that. Team Badman, my loyal crazy fans. And most importantly, God! – Humza

To my mum and dad, who made childhood funny, even when it wasn't – Henry

CHAPTER ONE
AGENT BADMAN

Let me get straight to the point, yeah. I'm a pretty big deal. It's just that no one knows it but me. Why? Cos I've got to keep it all a secret. And it ain't no small secret either, like when I set fire to my mum's wedding dress while trying to cook salad (though that is still a secret, so maybe don't mention it). This stuff is proper top-secret secret. I shouldn't even be writing it down.

But if I don't tell someone I reckon I'll go crazy, like my dad. He ain't got no secrets or nothin' – he was just born that way. Seriously, he once made me eat a book as a punishment. Who does that?

Anyway, point is, I'm massively unappreciated, all because I can't tell anyone how amazing I am.

Actually, that ain't true. I tell a lot of people how amazing I am. They just don't believe me, cos I can't tell 'em why. Like, for instance, did you know, earlier this year, I saved the Earth from alien invaders? That's pretty impressive, right?

Actually, you know what? If you ain't heard that story, you've got some serious catching up to do. Luckily, I just so happen to be a world-class rapper. So how about I bust out a quick lyrical recap? Kinda like one of those 'Previously on . . .' things that you get on TV shows, but this time delivered by Eggington's greatest living freestyler. Here goes:

This is the story of what went down,
the day that the aliens rolled through my town.
All of the teachers at school disappeared,
replaced by aunties, acting weird.

Aunties everywhere, feeding us like crazy;
kids getting overweight, tired and lazy –
turned out to be an invasion plan.
Someone had to save the day – *Little Badman*!

Big fat space slugs starting trouble,
brainwashing aunties to feed us double,
stretching our tummies so they could move in.
You can't fit a space slug if you're too thin.

Looks like a job for the Badman crew:
Wendy, Umer and Grandpa too.
Slugs sent packing, back to the sky.
Saved Planet Earth, so they made me a spy!

How's that for some tight lyrics? Three hundred action-packed pages, smashed into sixteen bars. As you can tell, it was a pretty big couple of weeks in Eggington. That's my hood by the way. And proper dangerous it is too. Kind of like gangland LA, but even deadlier. Seriously, I once got chased for three blocks by a goose, just for chucking acorns at him. If that ain't gangsta, I don't know what is.

Anyway, cos I did such a good job fighting off those aliens, I got recruited by this top-secret spy organization called the Agency. When they found out what I'd done, they made me a spy in training. That's right, me! I was about to become the Asian James Bond. The brown Jason Bourne. The Muslim Inspector Gadget. And about time too – my skills

were wasted at school.

Problem was, nothing happened. Seriously, not one phone call. Not one mission. Where was my training? Where was my licence to kill? Where were all my spy gadgets? I didn't even have a proper mobile phone!

And that's where this story begins. Twelve years old, one week into my summer holidays, and forced to use my dad's rubbish old Nokia to ring Agent Akbar . . .

'Hello?' said the deep voice at the other end of the line.

'Yo yo yo, wagwan, Agent Akbar?' I replied.



'Humza, is that you?'

'Yeah, bro, long time no speak.'

'You phoned me this morning.'

'Yeah, but it feels like longer, cos of our good relationship.'

'As I keep telling you.' Agent Akbar sighed. 'None of this happens overnight. The Agency will make contact with you when we are ready. This line is for emergencies only.'

'This is an emergency, man! I'm bored. If I'm gonna be a world-famous spy, I'm gonna need a mission.'

'There are no world-famous spies, Humza. That is the point. We are a secret organization.'

'You know what I mean. If I'm one of you now, you've gotta give me something to get my teeth into!'

'But you are not one of us yet. You are still in training.'

'But you ain't given me no training!'

'Have patience.'

'Like a doctor?'

'No, that's spelled differently.'

'Come on, man, *please*. This is torture!'

'When the time is right, we will contact you.

Until then, get on with your life. Enjoy your summer.'

'But –'

'I promise it will be soon,' interrupted Agent Akbar.

'Yeah, OK,' I groaned, not bothering to hide my frustration. 'But don't forget or I'll just call you again.'

'Yes, I imagine you will. Goodbye, Humza.'

'You mean *Agent Badman*.'

'What?' he replied, sounding confused.

'I figure I need a code name, like 007. Agent Badman's got a pretty good ring to it, right?'

'*Goodbye*, Humza,' he said wearily.

'Yeah, OK then,' I replied, and hung up.

As soon as I did, there came a booming voice from behind me.

'HUMZA!!!'

'Aargh!' I yelled, spinning round.

'Is that my phone?' demanded my dad, staring at the little red Nokia I was holding.

'What, this old thing?' I replied, looking innocent. 'Nah, probably just a coincidence. We must shop at the same Poundland.'

'Give me that!' he snarled, snatching it out of my

hand. 'If I catch you using my phone again, I will glue your hands to your feet, drop you into a barrel of daal, and ship you straight to Pakistan.'

'Why d'you even keep threatening me with that? We both know Mum ain't ever gonna let you ship me off to Pakistan.'

'Nonsense! She said I could not send you *in a crate*. She said nothing about a barrel!'

'Whatever. There ain't no way I'm going to Pakistan while Mum's got a say in it!'

'Don't count on it, boy! You keep acting like a hooligan and sooner or later she will come round to the idea!'

'Who you calling a hooligan?'

'Ha!' My dad laughed. 'Who do you think? Stealing my phone? Breaking my windows? Trapping a seagull in the kitchen?'

'Hey! That ain't fair! That was the seagull's fault!'

'You have been trouble since the day you were born. I have told your mother: you need discipline! Pakistan is the only place you will receive a proper upbringing!'

'What, like you did?' I said, and now it was my turn to laugh. 'Yeah, right! Just yesterday I saw you use a cat as a napkin!'

'He enjoyed it!' shouted my dad. 'He was smiling.'

'Cats can't smile!' I shouted back.

'Cats *can* smile!' he shouted, even louder.

'You're impossible!' I said, throwing my hands up.

'*You're* impossible!' he replied.

'Right, I'm leaving!' I said, storming towards the front door.

'Good!' he yelled.

'Good!' I yelled back.

Man, I was fuming by the time I walked through the park gates. And, thanks to my run-in with Pakistan's angriest man, I was late now too. That was five minutes of valuable tree-climbing time that I'd missed out on. Didn't my dad realize that my holiday was only six weeks long? Every minute I spent talking to him was a minute not spent having fun.

'Why so grumpy?' said Umer as I marched up to the tree he and Wendy were hanging from.

'*I* ain't grumpy. *You're* grumpy,' I replied grumpily.

'Maybe you're a *bit* grumpy?' suggested Wendy, dropping to the ground beside me.

'Yeah, OK, maybe a bit,' I grumbled. 'It's just my stupid dad. I can't believe he doesn't remember anything that happened last month.'

'Well,' replied Wendy, sliding her glasses back up her nose after her jump, 'the Agency *did* wipe his memory.'

'And everyone else's,' added Umer.

'I know,' I said, kicking a tuft of grass loose with my toe. 'I just thought some of it might have stuck, deep in that thick skull of his. I mean, we *did* save the world, after all. That ain't exactly *small*.'

'If it helps, my mum doesn't remember anything either,' said Wendy.

'Yeah, but your mum already liked you. My dad treats me like something the dog threw up.'

'I didn't know you had a dog,' replied Umer.

'What?' I said, turning to him, confused.

'Your dog. You said he threw up.'

'It ain't a real dog!' I snapped.

'Oh . . .' said Umer, looking lost. 'So why did your pretend dog throw up?'

'It didn't!' I yelled. 'There is no dog! I was just making a point about . . . Oh, forget it!'

Man, I tell you, sometimes Umer winds me right up. It ain't his fault – it's just how his brain works.

I mean, he may not be the sharpest prong on the fork, but he ain't stupid either. He's just kind of . . . Umer. What can I say? He's my oldest friend. I've known him since I was the size of a bag of rice and he was the size of a slightly bigger, less attractive bag of rice. I know him so well that I can tell what he's thinking before he's even said it (usually cos he's thinking about his next meal and I can hear his tummy rumbling). But, like I say, he's my best mate.

Here are a few reasons why:

1. He makes me laugh (sometimes even on purpose).

2. He can eat an entire family bucket from Uzbek Fried Chicken without being sick.

3. He's twelve but he still says 'hoskiple' instead of 'hospital'.

4. He never told anyone about the time I cried during *The Avengers*.

5. He's probably the nicest person I've ever met. You know, the kind of niceness you normally only get with grandmas and school nurses. He's like a chubby little Gandhi. Everyone should have an Umer.

Wendy, on the other hand, had basically been my enemy until about six weeks ago. Before I knew her properly, I'd have probably called her an egghead or a 'brainiac' – good at school, hard-working, never in trouble. Obviously, this meant that she and I could never be friends. Or at least that's what I'd thought, until those alien slugs came along. There's nothing like an extraterrestrial invasion to bring people together. And, if it hadn't been for Wendy, we'd have never beaten those nasty green slime-sacks and saved the world. Turns out, as well as being the smartest person I've ever met, she's also seriously brave and a ton of fun. She just needed some practice bending the rules, and I was happy to lend a hand.

Anyway, the three of us had been through a lot together recently. That's why it felt so bad not telling them about the whole trainee-secret-agent thing. See, the problem was, the Agency had only chosen me. They'd made me swear not to tell a soul – not even my best friends.

But, man, I hated lying to them. I mean, don't get me wrong – I love lying to Umer when it's funny. I once convinced him that his cat's fur would grow back overnight if he shaved it all off with his dad's

beard trimmer. For the next two months it looked like he owned a massive purring rat. Normally, though, my world-class lying skills are reserved for my parents, or teachers, or anyone in a position of authority – you know, people I actually *want* to lie to. Keeping something from my two best friends sucked.

It turns out I wasn't the only one with something to hide though. Wendy had been keeping a secret of her own, which slipped out halfway up the tree.

'Maths camp?' I spluttered, staring down at her. 'What the hell is maths camp?'

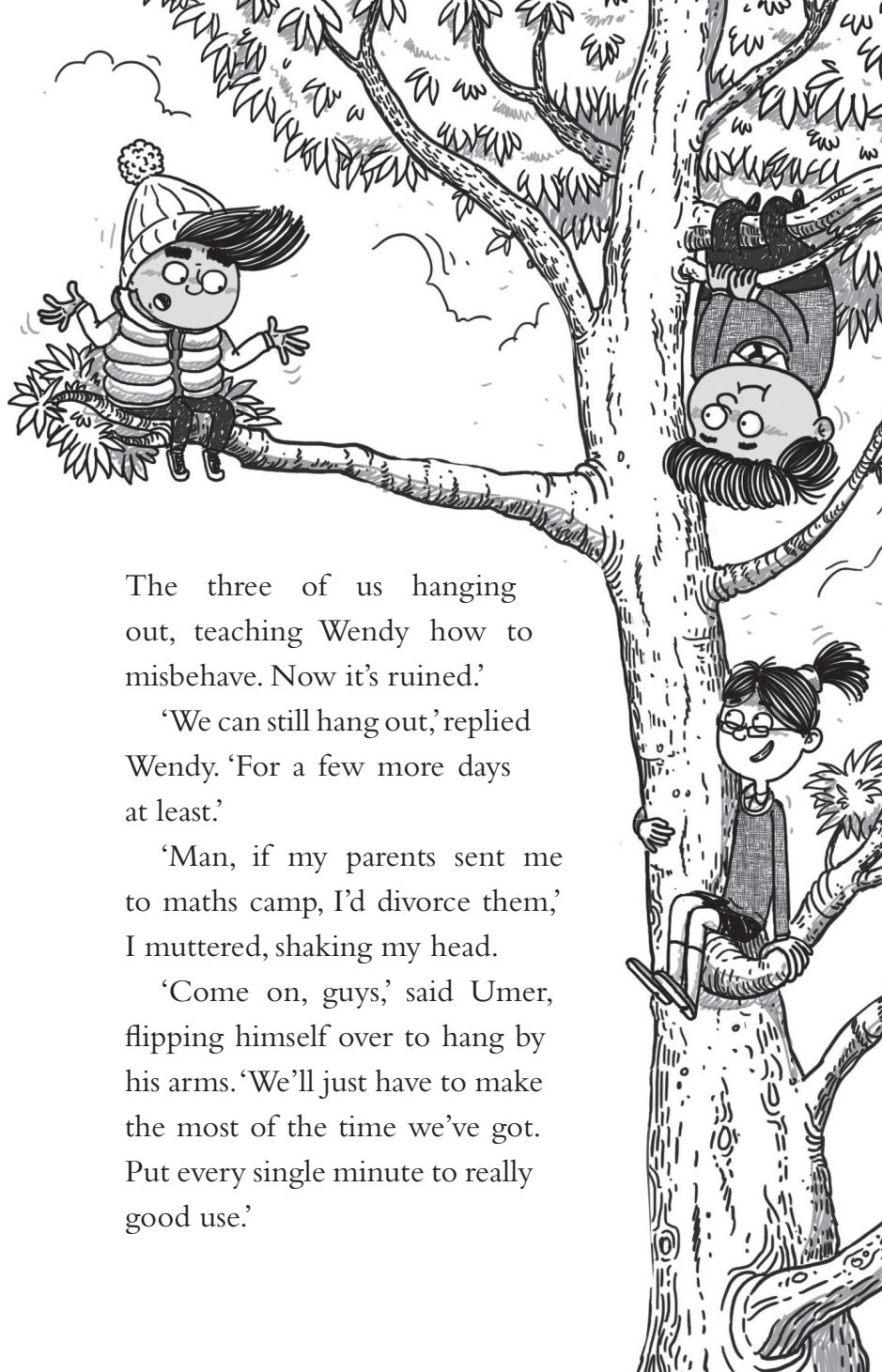
'It's a camp where you do maths,' said Wendy from a few branches below.

'That sounds terrible. Why would you go there during your summer holidays? It's the one time of the year you *don't* have to do maths!'

'My parents arranged it months ago,' she replied. 'It was before we all started hanging out together. And, anyway, I like maths.'

'I'm sure it'll be great,' said Umer, who was hanging upside down, so all the blood had gone to his big bowling-ball head.

'Damn it, man! Why are you supporting this?' I shouted at him. 'We had major plans this summer.



The three of us hanging out, teaching Wendy how to misbehave. Now it's ruined.'

'We can still hang out,' replied Wendy. 'For a few more days at least.'

'Man, if my parents sent me to maths camp, I'd divorce them,' I muttered, shaking my head.

'Come on, guys,' said Umer, flipping himself over to hang by his arms. 'We'll just have to make the most of the time we've got. Put every single minute to really good use.'

'Yeah? Doing what, exactly?' I asked.

'Ring and run?' suggested Umer.

'What's "ring and run"?' asked Wendy.

'It's when you ring someone's doorbell and run away,' he explained.

'Why would anyone want to do that?' replied Wendy, who'd obviously never experienced the thrill of being chased down the street by a stranger whose bell you've just rung for the sixth time in twenty minutes.

'Ah, Wendy Wang,' I said as I clambered down to pat her on her shoulder, 'there are some things they just don't teach you at maths camp.'

And, with that, we climbed out of the tree and set off to annoy anyone who had a doorbell.