

LITTLE BADMAN

AND THE
INVASION OF THE KILLER AUNTIES



HUMZA ARSHAD & HENRY WHITE
Illustrated by **ALEKSEI BITSKOFF**



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Penguin
Random House
UK

First published 2019

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HUMZA
PRODUCTIONS

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Set in 13/18pt Bembo

Printed in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-241-34060-8

All correspondence to:

Puffin Books

Penguin Random House Children's
80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL



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*To my mum and dad, my family, my three-and-a-half
fans (I may have more but that's just an estimate) and,
most importantly, to God – Humza*

For Ellen, who read with me – Henry

CHAPTER ONE

A BEE NAMED MUSTAFA

You've probably heard of me, right? Little Badman. No? Oh. Well. . . Doesn't matter. You will do one day. I'm gonna be big. And not like my Uncle Abdul, who ate his own bodyweight in samosas and ended up in hospital. The good kind of big. Rich, famous and respected. Like Jay-Z, or that old white man from KFC.

I was always destined to be big. Even when I was born my mum said it was like trying to fit a nappy on a dishwasher. I call it big boned. Whatever. Point is, I'm a big fish in a small pond. Like a shark in a fish bowl, or a pit bull in a hamster cage. Sooner or later, I'm gonna explode out of there and the world is gonna know my name. Humza Khan.

But you can call me Little Badman.

My path to greatness wasn't always clear. Even a ninja-rapper-gangster like me has to start somewhere. And I started in the hood. Proper gangland territory: the Little Meadows Primary School, Eggington. To say there was a lot of gun crime would be an understatement. There was loads. Just not in Eggington. Mostly in America, I think. Still, I reckon it shaped me into the twelve-year-old I am today.

But nothing, and I mean nothing, shaped me as much as my final year at primary school. I don't know if you've ever seen any war movies, about Vietnam or Iraq or the Galactic Empire, but none of that compares to what I went through in my final year at school. To call myself the greatest hero the world has ever known would be arrogant, so I won't do that. I'll leave you all to form your own opinion once you get to the end of my tale.

And, like so many of history's greatest conflicts, it all began with something so small. In my case, it was a bee named Mustafa . . .

I was sitting in class next to Umer, when his pencil case started to vibrate.

‘Is it me or is your pencil case ringing?’ I asked, watching the little metal box rattle along the desk.

‘Nah, that’s just my bee,’ replied Umer. ‘He’s always doing that.’

‘Why’ve you got a bee in your pencil case, man? Let that bee go!’

‘No way,’ Umer said, trying carefully to peer inside the lid without the bee escaping. ‘I’m keeping him. I’ve never had a pet before.’

‘A bee ain’t a pet. You can’t stroke a bee or teach it tricks. A bee’s a bee.’

‘Doesn’t mean it can’t be a pet,’ said Umer. ‘My cousin had a worm named Liam.’

‘Yeah, well, at least a worm ain’t gonna sting you.’

‘Mustafa wouldn’t sting me.’

‘Who the hell is Mustafa?’

‘My bee,’ replied Umer.

‘You called your bee Mustafa?’

‘Yeah, Mustafa Bee.’

‘Why?’

‘Because I . . . *must-av-a bee.*’

‘I don’t even know why we’re friends, man.’

See, this is the kind of thing I have to put up with. I’m not saying Umer’s an idiot, but you can only watch someone put their shoes on the wrong feet

so many times before you start to wonder. Still, he *is* my best friend. Not forever, obviously. When I'm a famous ninja-rapper I'll probably be best friends with Busta Rhymes or Dr Dre, or one of the Power Rangers. But, for now, I've got to put up with Umer.

'Ow!' shouted Umer, slamming the pencil case shut.

'Did you just get stung?' I asked.

'No,' replied Umer, rubbing his swollen thumb. 'Well . . . maybe.'

'Oh great,' I said. 'Now you've killed him.'

'"Killed him"?' gasped Umer, staring at the pencil case containing his bee. 'What are you talking about? I haven't touched him!'

'You don't have to. Once they sting you, that's it – they die.'

'What? I didn't know that!' cried Umer. 'Why did you do it, Mustafa? Why?'

'Quiet down, man – we're gonna get in trouble.'

'Oh, Mustafa! Why?' wailed Umer, tears filling his eyes.

'You two!' came a voice from the front of the class. 'What's going on back there?'

'Uh, nothing, miss,' I replied. 'Umer just got stung by a bee.'

‘He’s dying, miss! He’s dying!’ bawled Umer.

‘Who’s dying?’ said Miss Crumble, sounding panicked.

‘Mustafa!’ replied Umer.

‘Who on earth is Mustafa?’ asked Miss Crumble, arriving at the desk.

‘My bee! My poor dead bee!’

‘A bee?’ she said, looking a little nervous and taking a step back. ‘You’re sure he’s dead?’

‘He’s a goner, miss,’ I replied. ‘Umer basically murdered him.’

‘I didn’t mean to!’ wailed Umer.

‘OK, as long as you’re certain he’s dead,’ she said, looking relieved.

‘I’m afraid so, miss,’ I replied, shaking my head. ‘He’s buzzed his last buzz. Gone to the great beehive in the sky. He’s making honey for Tupac.’

‘For goodness’ sake,’ muttered Miss Crumble. ‘It’s always something with you two, isn’t it?’

‘Don’t blame me,’ I replied. ‘Blame Mr Bee-keeper here.’

‘Hey, look!’ Umer beamed, looking up from the open pencil case. ‘He’s not dead after all!’

Now it wasn’t long after that that I learned some important lessons about bees. Firstly, not

all bees die after they sting you – turns out that’s just honeybees. Secondly, big hairy Mustafa was actually a bumblebee and had no intention of dying anytime soon. And thirdly (and this one was probably most important of all), Miss Crumble is, and always has been, super allergic to bee-stings. Like crazy, serious, life-threatening allergic. Oops.

Miss Crumble let out a scream so loud and horrible that Wendy Wang’s glasses shattered right there on her face. Miss C began to flail her arms around like a windmill in a hurricane, desperately trying to swat poor Mustafa.



‘Calm down, miss,’ I said. ‘It’s only a bee.’

But Miss Crumble wasn’t listening. She was in a wild panic. No one in the class was laughing, because none of us could decide if this was hilarious or actually a bit scary. I mean, seriously, she looked insane. She was knocking over desks, pulling posters off the walls, spinning around so fast I felt dizzy just watching her. And then the inevitable happened. You can only imprison an innocent bee for so long before he cracks. And Mustafa had had enough.

Flying between Miss Crumble’s windmilling fists, Mustafa scored a direct hit, right on the end of her nose. Pow! You could almost hear the sting popping into that big red veiny target. Miss Crumble froze instantly. She stopped screaming, stopped swinging her arms. She just looked at the end of her nose until she went fully cross-eyed. Mustafa looked right back at her. He wiggled his bum, gave a short victorious buzz and then flew out the window.

‘Bye, Mustafa,’ said Umer, waving. ‘I’ll never forget you.’

Miss Crumble still didn’t move an inch – except for her nose, which was already growing at an alarming rate. It was like someone was inflating

a balloon in there. In an instant the swelling had spread to her cheeks, her neck, her hands.

She plonked down in her chair, looking dazed.

‘Mnnnggg nugg unggg,’ she said, which I think roughly translates as: *my tongue has swollen*.

‘Huh,’ I said, watching her slowly inflate. ‘Do you reckon she’s gonna burst?’

‘I hope not,’ replied Umer. ‘Maybe we should go get some help?’

‘I dunno. She’s had a pretty good innings.’

‘Humza!’

‘Yeah, yeah, OK,’ I said, pushing my seat out. ‘I mean, if you felt that bad about killing a bee, imagine how you’re gonna feel after killing a teacher.’

‘Humza!’ cried Umer, who was starting to look a bit ill himself.

‘Only playing, man. Come on – let’s go save the day.’

And with that we jumped up and ran off to look for a teacher who wasn’t about to explode.

When the ambulance took her away, Miss Crumble looked like a beach ball dressed as a woman. I couldn’t help but feel like maybe I was just a tiny

little bit responsible. After all, I was the one who had assured her Mustafa was dead. But, in my defence, if there are gaps in my knowledge about bees, who could be more responsible than my own teacher? So really, when you take that into account, it was all Miss Crumble's fault and I'm totally blameless. I felt much better after that.

'Come on, Umer,' I said. 'Let's go shoot some more scenes for the video.'

'I don't know, Humza. Aren't we meant to be in a lesson?'

'How we gonna go to a lesson when the teacher's dead?'

'Dead?' said Umer, looking shocked.

'Or sick, I don't know. I ain't a doctor. Now come on – if we're quick, we can film the whole chorus before lunch.'

'Not so fast, you two,' came a booming voice from nearby.

'Uh-oh,' said Umer, swallowing so hard you could hear it.

Before we could even turn round, a large hairy hand fell on each of our shoulders.

'What's this I hear about you two and Miss Crumble?' asked Mr Offalbox.

Now I don't know what your headmaster's like, but ours was big. King Kong big. Like a Volvo in a tie. Have you ever seen one of those cop shows on TV where there's a really angry sergeant? Well, ours looked like the sergeant that ate that sergeant. He had this huge moustache, like the head of a broom, that stretched and contracted like a caterpillar when he spoke. His head alone must have weighed the same as my sofa. He was not someone you wanted to get on the wrong side of.

'Uh, I can explain!' I said as fast as I could get the words out.

'No need for that, Humza,' said Mr Offalbox. 'The paramedics explained everything.'

Uh-oh. I had a sinking feeling I was about to get it, and get it bad. And, however bad Mr Offalbox could be, it wouldn't come close to the trouble I'd be in when my mum and dad found out. No one punishes like a Pakistani parent. They take courses in it. Evening classes on the subject of making their kids suffer. So, at this point, I figured I might just have to run away and join the circus. Or the Mafia. Whichever was easier to get into. And then something unexpected happened.

'You boys are heroes!' said Mr Offalbox. 'They

say that without your quick thinking Miss Crumble might well have died. Well done, the pair of you!

‘Oh, right,’ I said with a smile. ‘Yeah, I was about to say the same thing.’

‘Did they explain about Mustafa?’ asked Umer, before I could elbow him in the ribs.

‘*Shut up about Mustafa!*’ I hissed, then added a little louder: ‘What he means is, did they mention that we *must-have-a* reward for our bravery?’

‘Well, no, they didn’t,’ said Mr Offalbox. ‘But, now you mention it, I think that’s a very good idea.’

‘How about half a day off for good behaviour?’ I suggested.

‘HA HA HA!’ roared Mr Offalbox, leaning back with his hands on his hips. ‘Of course not! But I think I might just be able to convince the dinner ladies to give you a second helping of dessert.’

‘Yeah, good luck with that,’ I replied. ‘Those old girls are strict as. Have you even seen the healthy stuff they make us eat these days? I swear I’m turning into a rabbit.’

‘Just you leave it to me, Humza. I know a thing or two about charming dinner ladies,’ he said with a wink, and turned to walk away.

‘Urgh,’ I said to Umer after he’d gone. ‘Old

people shouldn't wink. I just swallowed some sick.'

'Still, double dessert. That's not a bad result,' he replied.

'Yeah, maybe we should nearly kill teachers more often!'

'Hmm, I don't know. One's probably enough for me.'

'Fair enough. Come on, then – let's go film that shot.'

See, school is just a place I go to every day. Sort of like prison, but with worse food. My *real* work is making the greatest rap music video ever produced. How else am I expected to become so famous that people fight wars over me? I'm gonna be so big Little Badman Impersonator will be a valid career choice. I'm gonna be so popular that cats'll learn to speak just to ask me for selfies. I'm gonna be so rich that even my butler's butler will have a butler. And the only way to do any of that is to make myself a smash-hit music video. Enter my cameraman, Umer.

Now, Umer may not have a lot of media training, and he might be shooting on his dad's old Nokia from the Stone Age, and he may shake quite a lot when he's nervous, but, all of that aside, he's got a

pretty good eye. And, more importantly, he's the only one I can get to do the job. But it shouldn't matter too much – after all, when you're pointing the camera at me, it's hard to go wrong.

'Uh, Humza,' said Umer ten minutes later, while looking through the tiny screen on his phone. 'I don't know how gangsta this feels.'

'What do you mean?'

'Well . . . it kind of looks like you're in a toilet. At a primary school.'

'Really? How can you tell?'

'Probably the little urinals. They're a bit of a giveaway.'

