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4 MARCH 2021

HUMZA ARSHAD
& HENRY WHITE

LITTLE
BADMAN

AND THE
RADIOACTIVE
SAMOSA



Illustrated by
ALEKSEI BITSKOFF

CHAPTER 1

DODGY DVD

Let me get straight to the point, yeah. I had ONE week of summer holidays left. One week to enjoy myself, hang out with friends and, most importantly of all, not have to save the world. Again!

I'm serious – there's been far too much world-saving going on this year for my liking. A kid needs his downtime. Aliens, evil geniuses, killer robots – this stuff's exhausting when you're twelve. All I wanted from my final week of holiday was to muck about around Eggington,

get in trouble for annoying my neighbours, and maybe go swimming (if they ever got the pool fixed up, that is). Does that all sound like too much to ask? No, it doesn't!

But do you think that's how it went down? Yeah, right . . .

It all began when my best friend Umer rang my doorbell.

'Humza! Come quick!' he said, as I opened the front door to find his big excited face peering in at me.

'No way, man,' I told him. 'My dad just got a dodgy copy of the new Marvel movie off Market Abdul. I think someone used their phone to film it in a cinema or something, so you can't really make out what they're doing or saying, but who cares? We've got popcorn.' I lifted the bowl to show him.

'There isn't time for popcorn!' said Umer,

reaching in and helping himself to a handful.
‘You need to see this right now!’

‘Ah, man,’ I said, shaking my head. ‘Are you sure? Is it really life or death?’

‘Humza,’ replied Umer through a mouthful of popcorn, ‘it’s bigger than that.’

‘Fine,’ I said with a sigh, and I dropped my bowl on the hall table. ‘Mum! I’m going out.’

‘OK,’ she replied from the living room. ‘Be back before dark.’

‘What about Captain Avengers movie?’ shouted my dad. ‘This cost me one pound seventy!’

‘It’s not my fault!’ I yelled back. ‘Umer’s making me go.’

‘Umer?’ shouted my dad.

‘Yes?’ called Umer, leaning into the doorway.

‘You want to stay and watch a film? Humza has to go out. You can have his popcorn.’

‘Hey!’ I yelled. ‘Stop inviting my friends round to replace me.’

‘Be a better son and I would not have to!’ yelled my dad.

‘Be a better dad and we could see films at the cinema!’ I shouted back.

‘WHY, YOU –’ he bellowed, and I could hear him knocking things off the coffee table as he tried to stand up.

‘Come on,’ I told Umer. ‘We’d better go before he figures out how to get off the sofa.’

Four minutes later we were standing in Umer’s bedroom, looking down into a little cage.

‘Aren’t they amazing?’ said Umer, beaming with pride.

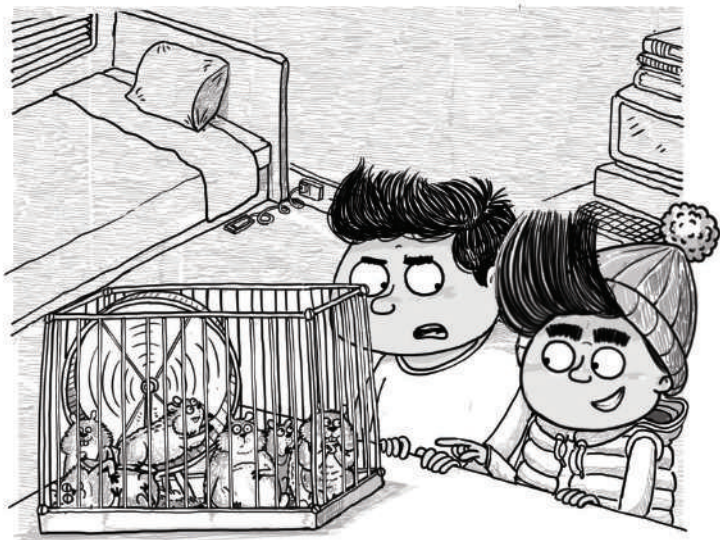
‘Um . . . I really hope you’re not talking about these rats,’ I replied, ‘cos I could be

eating popcorn and watching superheroes beating each other up right now.'

'They're not rats,' said Umer, looking offended. 'They're hamsters.'

They looked pretty ratty to me. They had ratty little faces, big ratty eyes, and they were crawling all over each other like . . . well . . . rats.

'This is what you dragged me round here for? To check out your plague rats?'



‘They’re *not* rats,’ said Umer, rolling his eyes. ‘My mum said I could either have hamsters or goldfish, so it was a no-brainer really.’

‘I thought *all* your decisions were no-brainers?’ I replied with a grin.

‘Ha ha, very funny,’ said Umer, without actually laughing. ‘It doesn’t really matter what you think. I *know* they’re brilliant. I’ve been training them all day.’

‘Training them?’ I replied, raising an eyebrow. ‘To do what? Poo and run round in circles? You can’t train rats.’

‘Hamsters!’ snapped Umer. ‘And yes you can. Watch this!’

He picked up a little silver whistle from beside the cage and gave it a small puff. The instant the shrill sound rang out, all six of the little rodents turned to look. They formed a line, standing up on their hind legs with their little arms held out, like they were begging.

‘Good hamsters!’ said Umer, picking up a pakora from beside the cage. He broke the little fried snack into pieces and gave each hamster an equal share.

‘You feed them pakora?’ I asked.

‘They love it,’ said Umer. ‘They like bhaji and samosa too. But not daal. They won’t touch it.’

‘Huh, maybe they ain’t so stupid after all,’ I said, grinning. I’d rather eat week-old unwashed pants than a bowl of daal.

‘Right, well,’ I continued, ‘as much as I’ve enjoyed your rat circus, I should probably be getting home.’

‘What, already?’ asked Umer, sounding disappointed.

‘Umer, we’ve got less than a week before school starts,’ I said, heading for the door. ‘We have to fill this time with the most exciting, memorable and dangerous activities we can

come up with. You whistling at rats *ain't* that.'

I opened the door and screamed:
'AARGHHHHH!'

Just inches from my nose, something with a great big face and bright yellow teeth was waiting to pounce!

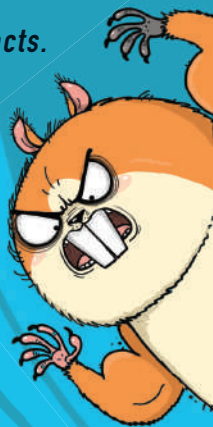
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