



'Funniest. Book. Ever.'
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Time Travelling with a Hamster

'Made me cry with
laughter and my heart ache'
Lisa Thompson, author of *The Goldfish Boy*

WORST HOLIDAY. EVER.

what ^(MORE) could possibly
go wrong?



Bestselling
author of the
YOUNG BOND
series

CHARLIE HIGSON

Illustrated by Warwick Johnson-Cadwell



What's the opposite of a bucket list? You know what I mean by a bucket list, right? It's a list of all the things you want to do before you die. Which when you're only a twelve-year-old boy could be quite a long list actually, as you haven't really done **ANYTHING** yet. But, to tell you the truth, I don't want to do anything much. It's easier and less scary to stay at home in my room on my computer.

So what would you call the opposite of a bucket list? A list of all the things you want to make sure you **NEVER. EVER. DO. EVER.** All the awful, terrible, horrible, embarrassing, dangerous, scary, dumb things you need to avoid. Like, I know I never want to do anything where you might have to use a parachute. I mean, why would anyone want to throw themselves out of an aeroplane? That's just stupid. And hot-air ballooning. How is it possible to make something that is

really boring and really dangerous at the same time? OK. Let's be clear. I want to avoid going up in the air in the first place. Actually, it's not so much the going up that worries me – it's the coming down.

What else? Anything where I might come across dangerous animals is right out. Obviously. Swimming with whales? No. Going anywhere near sharks? No. Canoeing up the Amazon? No. The Amazon rainforest is full of snakes, spiders, piranhas, crocodiles and those fish that swim up your willy if you have a pee in the water.

Backpacking in Australia?

NO. NO. NO. NO. NO.

Did you know that twenty-one of the world's twenty-five most poisonous snakes live there? And they have crocodiles. And spiders the size of footballs. And killer jellyfish. Plus they have a massive hole in the ozone layer so you basically shrivel up into a crisp and drop dead if you go outside. Australia is very far away and, as far as I'm concerned, it can stay there.

What else?

I definitely want to steer clear of octopuses.

And . . .

Well, maybe I should just show you my list.

Except I don't know what to call it.

Not a bucket list . . . The only words I can think of to call my list are a bit rude, but . . .

Oh yes. I know – duck it!

A DUCK-IT list.

So here's my duck-it list. Ten things to avoid at all costs (there's a law that says lists should always be ten things). Actually, I think most of the things on my duck-it list are things other people would probably put on their bucket lists, but I really hope I never have to do any of the following . . .

STAN'S DUCK-IT LIST

1. Bungee jumping.
2. Anything where you have to use a parachute.
3. Dancing.
4. Dancing in public.
5. Going on Strictly Come Dancing.
6. White-water rafting.
7. Fire-eating.
8. Alligator wrestling.
9. Kissing.
10. Going on holiday with people you don't know.
11. Octopuses.

All right, sorry – it's not ten things. I had to add number eleven in at the last minute. I panicked.

I panic a lot.

I'm panicking right now.

Why?

Because number ten is happening . . .

I'm going on holiday with people I don't know.

This shouldn't be happening to me. It's an absolute
DISASTER.

I keep thinking about how on earth I got here. 'Here' being the Shopping Maze Of Doom at Stansted Airport, completely lost at four o'clock in the morning. I wonder what I could have done differently – how I could have stopped this happening.

All right. Calm down, Stan.

Maybe I'm being overdramatic. I'm not actually going on holiday with complete strangers. I'm going on holiday with Felix, who is my best friend.

OK, to tell you the truth, Felix is not *exactly* my best friend. I don't really have a *best* friend. I have five friends and Felix is one of them. They're all about equal on the friend scale, I suppose. Sometimes I like one of them better than the others. You know how it is. Every now and then I'll have a fight with one of them and then we aren't friends for a bit, but it doesn't usually last long and mostly we forget what the fight was about. Right now, though, I'm having to pretend that Felix is my best friend, because his mum and dad are taking me on holiday to Italy for two weeks.

So, when I get there, if anyone asks me who I am, I've got to say, 'I'm Felix's best friend, Stan.'

Which will be a bit of a lie. To be honest, if I was forced to rank my friends in order, Felix would probably be number five. I don't mean to be rude, but we're not actually that friendly. And if you'd asked Felix before if I was his best friend, he would have said no.

Actually, what he'd have said would have been more like: 'What? Are you mad? Stan? Ha! No way.'

But you see what happened is that Felix was meant to be going on holiday with his *real* best friend, Archie (who is maybe my number four). Archie is really good at football and everybody wants to be his friend, even the girls, but Felix had to make a last-minute change of plan because three weeks ago Archie broke his leg playing football.

Well, he wasn't playing at the time. He was celebrating scoring a goal and tried to do a sort of somersault. He landed funny and there was a loud snapping noise. Like someone shooting a gun in a film. It was really horrible. His bone was sticking out of his leg. I felt sick looking at it. Although it was a little bit cool at the same time. I think Archie might not be able to play football for a while. I wonder if this will make a difference to how many people want to be his friend.

Anyway, Archie's still on crutches, so I've taken his place on the holiday. And I know I wasn't even Felix's

first choice of substitute. He asked a few other boys, but they were already going on holiday with their own families.

I didn't have any plans to go on holiday with my family. We don't really go on holiday in the summer because Dad says it's too expensive and crowded everywhere.

'The travel companies really rip you off,' he says every summer as he fills up the plastic paddling pool in our tiny garden with a hose. 'They totally put their prices up in the school holidays. It's criminal. All the airlines and hotels and holiday firms charge twice what they usually do.'

So we normally have our family holiday in the Easter break. We go to Wales. In case you don't know what Wales is, it's a country next to England where it rains all the time. We go to the same cottage every year. It belongs to my Uncle David. I think Uncle David rents it out in the summer, which is why we go at Easter. The cottage smells mouldy, and it never gets warm. Last time we went I recklessly decided to go for a swim in the sea and lost all feeling in my legs.

So this is all a bit different for me. Before today I'd only ever been on an aeroplane once before, when I was ten. Mum's dad, my grandad Johnny, died and left her some money in his will. She wanted to give us all a treat. We went to Spain for a week and Dad got the flu.

All he said about the holiday was: ‘Never again.’ Even though Mum really enjoyed it. Me too. You could get sausage and chips, it was warm, and you didn’t risk acting out the last scene from *Titanic* every time you went in the sea.

Whenever we go to Wales and Dad’s not around, Mum looks out at the rain and says, ‘Never again,’ and we both laugh. It’s ‘our little joke’ (that’s what Mum calls it). To tell you the truth, I don’t find the joke that funny any more.

So, as I say, we usually spend summer at home in London. But this summer is different because when Felix asked me if I wanted to go on holiday with him I panicked and said yes.

Oh god. What have I done? All I needed to do was to say no and none of this would have happened. I wouldn’t be lost in Stansted Airport in the middle of the night.

Maybe you don’t just need to avoid going on holiday with people you don’t know – maybe you need to avoid going on holiday altogether.

I definitely have to make a new list – REASONS NOT TO GO ON HOLIDAY.

Because this is hell.

'Charlie Higson is a comic genius.
This book is absolutely hilarious'
David Walliams

This is a disaster.

I'm going away to Italy with a load of strangers
and my (fifth) best friend, Felix. Mum's prepared
an emergency list of ten holiday dangers and
how to survive them. Like:

1. What to do if attacked by a shark.

Helpful. I've got my own list, though, of things
much more likely to happen, including:

1. What to do if the toilets are weird.
2. What do I do if I dive in the pool
and my trunks come off.

And now I'm panicking. I just know that
everything is going to go wrong. Send help.

A laugh-out-loud story of dealing with catastrophe, and how it's
OK to be anxious, shy and scared of life. Because, who knows,
you might just end up being braver than you thought.

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