

The TV Time Travellers

Pete Johnson

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About the Book

ENEMY BOMBERS

GAS MASKS

EVACUATION

WHAT WAS WORLD WAR TWO REALLY LIKE . . . ?

. . . Five modern children have the chance to find out. They are taking part in *Strictly Evacuees*, a brand-new reality TV show. For three weeks they will live, speak and act as though it is 1939 - and be filmed constantly.

For Zac, seeking to escape his miserable life, and Izzy, desperate for fame and fortune, this seems like an amazing opportunity. But tensions soon start to rise and things get nasty. The contestants have been told to expect the unexpected, but **nobody** is prepared for the truly astonishing way the show turns out . . .

An exciting new story from award-winning author Pete Johnson.

THE TV TIME TRAVELLERS

Pete Johnson

RHCP DIGITAL

I would like to dedicate this book
to all the people who shared their
experiences of the Second World War
with me, and who also took me on an
unexpected personal journey.

SOME EXCITING NEWS ABOUT TIME TRAVEL
TIME TRAVEL – just an impossible dream?

Not any more.

Not if you're aged between eleven and fourteen.
For REALITY PLUS, the brilliant, brand-new, 24-hour reality
channel, will take FIVE modern children back in time to the
start of the Second World War in September 1939.

Britain thought its cities were in danger from enemy
bombers, so at the beginning of September 1939, over one
and a half million people – including thousands of children
– had to leave their homes and families behind to go and
live in the country with people they'd never seen before.

WHAT CAN IT HAVE BEEN LIKE? HERE'S YOUR CHANCE
TO FIND OUT AND BE PART OF A MAJOR SOCIAL
EXPERIMENT.

FOR THREE WEEKS YOU WILL BE SENT AWAY TO THE
COUNTRY TO LIVE EXACTLY AS THOSE EVACUEES DID –
EXCEPT, OF COURSE, YOU WILL BE FILMED TOO.

And you will have the opportunity to win a holiday for you
and your family at a destination of your choice.

TIME TRAVEL – AND A FREE HOLIDAY. ISN'T THAT THE
MOST AMAZING PRIZE EVER? HOW CAN YOU WIN THIS
FABULOUS PRIZE? EASY.

Your fellow evacuees will NOMINATE who they wish to
leave. But the final decision will always be with the public.
They will decide which evacuee should leave and VOTE
FOR THEIR WINNER – WHICH COULD BE YOU.

But be warned – you will be tested and put under pressure. And during those three weeks, you will not have any contact with the outside world. So will you be tough enough to cope? Are you up to the challenge? If you are, see below for full details on how to apply for:

STRICTLY EVACUEES

EVERY YOUNG PERSON ATTENDING THE AUDITIONS
MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT.

Good luck – and happy time-travelling!

It sounds incredible, doesn't it? To be honest, it was incredible. An experience we'll never forget. But not in the way you might think. Time for two of those new evacuees, Zac and Izzy, to tell you a truly astonishing story . . .



CHAPTER ONE

How It Started

Zac

I WAS DESPERATE. That's why I jumped into the shower with all my clothes on.

I stood completely still, letting the water gush down over me. Of course, this made me splutter and gasp a bit at first. But it's amazing how quickly you get used to it. And it's nowhere near as bad if you shut your eyes.

So I closed my eyes - and waited. Finally, Aunt Sara burst in and shrieked, 'Get out of there at once.'

I opened my eyes and announced as calmly as I could, 'I'm afraid I can't do that, as I'm staging an official protest.'

She gaped at me.

'I shall continue to stand here until my one demand is met. And if you try and switch the water off, I shall only go away and do something even more shocking.'

I was talking in a wild way Aunt Sara had never heard before. She thought I was just this weird little mouse of a boy who'd been cluttering up her house since Easter.

And now she was staring at me as if she wished I'd just vanish away (she often looks at me like that) and then she

snapped, 'What a lot of fuss about nothing. All right, all right. I'll take you *now*. Just get out of there at once.'

So I switched off the tap, shook my head vigorously and then sloshed out of the shower. I dripped onto the large bath mat.

Aunt Sara wrinkled up her nose at me. 'You really are such a strange boy, making all this fuss about an audition for a TV show.'

'It's of vital importance to me,' I cried, wiping away the beads of water which were still running down my forehead. 'And Dad asked you specially to take me.'

'Well, if he was so concerned I don't know why he couldn't have taken you himself, instead of leaving everything to me as usual,' she said.

'He really wanted to,' I said, 'but then he had to go to this conference in France.'

'Oh, did he really?' she said with a disbelieving shake of her head, which made me hate her so much I had to look away. 'You'd better get changed right away or you'll catch a cold. And no doubt I'll be blamed for that too. No one appreciates how much I have to do. Now I've got to see who can look after my boys while I'm out.' She tutted with annoyance all the way down the stairs.

I heard her ring up her neighbour, where my two cousins - nine-year-old twins who daily whisper to their mum, 'Zac's not still here, is he?' and, 'When is he going home?' - were playing with a friend. And there was no trouble at all about them staying over for a few more hours.

Aunt Sara's phone call didn't even last for two minutes. She just couldn't be bothered to take me to the audition, could she? Although she'd pretended when Dad was here that it would be no problem at all. Then at breakfast today she'd announced airily that she was far too busy now.

Well, I'd have gone on my own if *Strictly Evacuees* hadn't written in big letters that every young person attending the auditions must be accompanied by an adult.

Of course, Aunt Sara didn't think I had a chance. She couldn't imagine anyone picking me to appear on a TV show. And normally she might have been right. But not this time. Not for a programme about evacuees.

I'd always been a little bit interested in the war years. But I'd become really fascinated these past two months. It had started when Mr Evans had given a lesson about evacuation and the Blitz. And afterwards I'd sat talking about it to him all through break.

I hadn't spoken to anyone for that long since Mum passed away. There was so much more to know too. That's why I started reading books and going on websites and watching DVDs. I wanted to collect every piece of information I could about those days.

What fascinated me was that this was a war which involved everyone. So I especially liked finding out about life on the Home Front. Soon I knew all about the things people had to put up with: like rationing and carrying gas masks everywhere and bombing raids in London, night after night.

I just lived and breathed those days, until the Second World War became all I could think about. And all I wanted to think about as well. And yes, some people did think that was a bit strange, including every single person in my class. I know they were saying stuff about how weird I was. But I honestly didn't care about that one little bit.

I tell you, these past months at Aunt Sara's - well, it had been like living in a grim, horrible waiting room. I didn't seem to have any future or past. I was just stuck in this horrible, dark void.

I didn't even know what we were doing there, as Dad and I had a perfectly good home of our own. Several times I'd ask him when we were going back and he'd turn this dead, tired face to me and say, 'I've had another very long day at work. And the last thing I want is to be cross-examined by you now.'

He'd say it kind of angrily too, as if he didn't understand why I was talking to him at all. Since Mum died, Dad had changed so much. He never laughed or had a joke with me any more. Instead, night after night he'd totter into Aunt Sara's house like a weary zombie.

And I'd think, I hadn't just lost my mum, somehow Dad had gone too. I'd get this horrible, hopeless feeling then, which hung over me all night, until I made my fantastic discovery. And all at once it didn't matter how miserable I was at Aunt Sara's any more.

For I'd found a secret door which took me instantly into another time. And it was a totally real place too, not a made-up one.

Sometimes Aunt Sara would glance at me and murmur disapprovingly, 'Oh, he's just daydreaming again.'

Just daydreaming! If only she knew. I was in a completely different era. And I was safe and happy there in my fortress.

I ask you, how incredible is that?

And now you see why I leaped at the chance of being on *Strictly Evacuees*. The moment I saw that advert in the local paper nothing mattered to me more than that.

After I'd changed out of my wet clothes I opened the top drawer of my desk and took out a gas mask. An authentic Second World War one, which I'd saved up to buy.

Then I put on a very smart 1940s hat. Everyone wore hats in the 1940s (and proper ones, not baseball caps. Yuck). And even though it was a bit big for me, it gave off such an air of the past I could have popped out of a 1940s black and white film.

Aunt Sara gave this odd whinny of laughter when she saw me. 'Oh, no, you can't go out like that, I can hardly see you beneath that hat.'

'That doesn't matter at all,' I explained, 'as the hat is of very deep, historical significance.'

She still didn't understand, but the two people doing my first interview for *Strictly Evacuees* did.

They said three other children had brought in gas masks, but no one else had come in wearing such a 'magnificent hat'.

The moment they said that I got a real hairs-on-the-back-of-my-neck feeling.

And right then I just knew I was going to be a time traveller.



CHAPTER TWO

How It Started

Izzy

NEARLY.

Isn't that the most horribly annoying word ever? It can stab you right in the heart too. So my dream nearly came true. I was nearly on Britain's Got Talent.

Mum and I waited in the queue for over five hours. Then I had two minutes in front of the show's researchers. They decide if you're good enough to appear on the telly.

I'd learned by heart this funny poem (which I'd also written). And afterwards the researchers asked me to stay behind. 'Such a good sign,' whispered Mum. My heart was thumping away now and Mum kept smiling at me so hopefully. Until this amoeba burst onto the stage and started shouting, 'Chitty, Chitty, Bang, Bang.' He had a great pair of lungs on him, I'll give him that. And of course everyone went, 'Aaah', and cried for a week and they chose the amoeba to go on the show rather than me, didn't they?

Just as I was leaving though, one of the researchers, trying to be kind, said to me, 'You did well, Izzy, you nearly got on to Britain's Got Talent.'

Yet what good was that? I think I'd rather have been hopeless and missed it by a mile. I was just crazy with disappointment.

And then, outside the studio, some girl thrust a leaflet into my hand. 'Just to let you know,' she said, 'there are some other auditions going on.'

'What for?' I asked.

'Strictly Evacuees,' she cried.

'Never heard of it,' I muttered.

'Yeah, a few people seem to have missed our adverts. But we're a brand-new TV channel called Reality Plus and we're holding auditions right now.'

Then Mum and I read the leaflet. It didn't sound at all the kind of show I'd be interested in. But neither Mum nor I wanted to go home. So we hopped into this taxi, which we really couldn't afford.

And I went into that interview in such a bad mood. I slouched back in my chair and didn't smile once. And when they asked me what I knew about the Second World War, I was totally honest. I said, 'Not a lot really. I know we won which I'm pretty pleased about. But I'm not big on history, because the past is rubbish, isn't it? And I'm so glad I wasn't a child in the war, because I'd just be waiting all the time for someone to invent computer games and mobile phones and Hollyoaks . . . I really couldn't stand it.'

Afterwards I thought, Well, I've totally blown that one. But it wasn't my sort of show anyway. Yet I got called back for a second interview. And do you know what they said? - this girl from Reality Plus rang me - they liked my attitude.

Now that was just incredible as I've got a terrible attitude. Ask anyone. I can get into strops over such silly little things too.

In fact, at school I got into so much trouble I actually had my own desk in detention. No, don't smile, because it was awful really. I was awful: loud and mouthy just about