

CHAPTER ONE

#3 Spend a night on
your own private
desert island



RICKY: We've sort of compiled a Top 100, which we've taken from loads of lists, and these seem to be the most popular 100 things to do before you die. So, anything you fancy there?

STEPHEN: What sort of things have you heard of in a typical bucket list?

KARL: Daft stuff like sky diving and bungee jumping.

RICKY: Why is that daft though?

KARL: It's not worth doing. There are certain things I wouldn't risk my life for.

RICKY: Well, crossing the road is dangerous.

KARL: Yeah, but I'm good at that. I'm more in control there. I don't like the idea of relying on other people.

STEPHEN: So, why do you think people do it then?

KARL: Because they're idiots. They're normally people that have, sort of, gelled permed hair. Australian types.

RICKY: You're not jealous of their hair, are you?

KARL: No, I just think they're the sort of people who haven't got enough problems.

STEPHEN: I think you'll probably find that jumping out of a plane is on here, as is bungee jumping, but obviously there are 100 options.

RICKY: Spend a night on your own on a desert island.

STEPHEN: You hate people for a start, so you're not going to have to associate with anyone.

RICKY: It will be sunny, there will be no people there, you just walk around naked . . .

KARL: No, I wouldn't do that.

RICKY: Why? There's no one there.

KARL: No, I still wouldn't do it. Robinson Crusoe didn't walk around with his knob out, did he? You think no one's about and then a cruise full of tourists comes round and I'm stood there with my knob and bollocks hanging out. And there's all the sand, it's not good to be nude in the sand.

(Ricky laughs)

KARL: Can I take stuff or what?

STEPHEN: What sort of stuff you wanna take? Bucket and spade?

KARL: Yeah, I'd take a bucket and spade. Something to do, innit.

(Ricky and Stephen laugh)

KARL: You can go a bit mad though, can't you?

RICKY: Not in a day. What if you were there and who came walking down the beach but me?

KARL: Yeah, that would be a nightmare.

STEPHEN: If you choose this one, we'd send you to the Vanuatu islands. They're in the South Pacific, it's a beautiful place, glorious weather, so it's not like we're sending you to the Isle of Sheppey. Alright . . . Interested?

KARL: No restrictions on what I can take?

RICKY: What are you thinking of taking?

KARL: Just enough to keep me entertained for the night.

RICKY: What's that though?

KARL: Bag of Revels.

RICKY: DVD player?

KARL: There's no power, is there?

RICKY: Well, you could have batteries. What film would you watch?

KARL: *Castaway*

STEPHEN: What book would you take?

KARL: Probably a crossword book or a wordsearch.

RICKY: I love that. He's on a desert island, the happiest place on earth, and he's watching *Castaway* and doing a crossword. That's amazing. Okay, so spend a night on a desert island. Tick.

How much have you learned from watching TV? I learned that vinegar is a good stain remover. It's something I picked up from watching Kim and Aggie off *How Clean Is Your House?*

A while ago, three British backpackers who got lost in a Malaysian jungle said they'd survived thanks to tips they'd picked up from watching the TV survival expert Ray Mears. They said they'd now watch every episode of Ray Mears in case the situation ever cropped up again! You'd think what they'd been through would have put them off the programme, as it would bring back bad memories of their near-death experience. It would be like Anne Frank watching *Cash in the Attic*.

The advice that saved the backpackers from being lost was that you should follow a watercourse downstream and that would lead you to the coastline. I'm just glad it was Ray Mears the backpackers had watched. If it had been Bruce Parry they'd still be lost but would now probably be off their tits after licking the back of a toxic toad. But this left me wondering if anyone had ever opted for the survival tactics offered up by Bear Grylls. Bear is a bit more extreme than Ray. If you said to Bear, 'I'm so hungry I could eat a scabby horse,' he'd probably say, 'Too late. I've eaten it all.' In one show he was covered in blood and guts after stripping a camel. He went on to explain that the carcass makes an excellent makeshift sleeping bag! I don't want to come across all Goldilocks here, but how much sleep are you going to get inside a camel? It must be the worst animal to use as a bed. It's got a hump on it, for a start. I have the feeling that if Bear missed the last bus home when in England he'd probably break into London Zoo and strangle a giraffe for a sleeping bag, then kill a couple of koala bears while he's at it to make a pair of slippers, rather than just get a cab. Anyway,

if you ever find yourself in this situation, having killed a camel to sleep in, and your clothes are covered in bloodstains, try vinegar.

I've never been in a position where I've had to use proper survival techniques. My brother and his mates took over the house when me mam and dad were on a holiday once. I came home from working nights to find some bloke and a woman in me bed, another pair of strangers in me mam and dad's bed, and a couple on the sofa, so ended up sleeping in the car. That's about as tough as it's got for me, so this is why I picked a night on a desert island from the Bucket List. I thought it would test me a little, plus, of all the things on the Bucket List, I'd say this is the one most people would like to do. I was imagining the TV advert for the Bounty bar. For anyone who hasn't seen the advert, it involved a woman on a really nice paradise-type beach. Nothing like the beaches we all spend our holidays on. There was no washed-up seaweed, plastic bottles or dead jellyfish, no donkeys leaving shit everywhere, or seagulls making a racket. It was just the perfect beach with light blue sea. A coconut drops from a palm tree and cracks open to leave a Bounty bar, which is a bar of coconut-filled chocolate. Now, by rights, I doubt the woman would have been up for eating chocolate on such a hot day. I think she'd have been more in the mood for a Magnum lolly, but putting that aside I reckon most people who have seen the advert would be imagining this same image as me if they were to pick this for their Bucket List.

Luke the director said I could take a few bits and pieces with me that might come in handy for my night on the island. I ended up packing a lighter, a roll of gaffa tape, a Stanley knife, a crossword/wordsearch book, some string, biscuits, toilet paper and a small shovel.

I would be staying on an island in Vanuatu, a place in the South Pacific. I'd never heard of the place. When I told people where I was going they hadn't heard of it either. Suzanne bought me a globe when I started travelling so I could put little stickers on all the places I had been to, but this globe didn't even include Vanuatu.

I was told that it wasn't possible to get a direct flight to Vanuatu due to a massive ash cloud from a volcano in Chile that was causing problems, so we ended up flying to Sydney and then on to New Zealand where we stayed the night. I thought we'd be getting on another flight first thing, but that was not to be the case. I woke up to a voicemail from Stephen.

STEPHEN: Hello, Karl. I know you're probably waking up in Queenstown and thinking what's going on here. I tell you what, Ricky and I were talking, and we just thought it would be mad for you to go all the way to the desert island and not stop off in New Zealand to experience what probably is the ultimate Bucket List classic – the bungee jump. Now, before you start screaming and shouting going, 'No, I'm not going to do it', just think about it. We've got a couple of dudes – adrenaline guys, you know, they know all about it – and safety is their optimum concern. I know you'll be reluctant, but I'm saying go with them, see what you think of it, don't judge it straight away. It's something that Ricky and I want to see, I know it's something the viewers want to see, so, just go with an open mind, alright. Rip off the plaster, it'll be over in seconds. And it will be painless and safe. Alright, so don't let us down, mate. Enjoy it. Bye.

This really annoyed me. He was the furthest away he'd ever been from me and yet he had still managed to annoy me more than ever. I'd made it clear to them at the very beginning that this was exactly the thing I was not up for doing. I remember being sat in their office when they told me about the Bucket List idea and Stephen mentioned bungee jumping, and I said, 'If that's the sort of things you'll be surprising me with, you're wasting your time 'cos I'm not interested.' If it's over in seconds, what's the point? I don't like party poppers 'cos the amount of enjoyment versus the time it takes to clean them up is not worth it. Same with confetti.

Luke the director tried to reinforce what Stephen's message had already said about it being safe and that the 'dudes' who would be taking me do it all the time and would help me beat my fears, which pissed me off even more as it's not a fear that needs to be beaten. I'm happy that my brain doesn't think it's a good idea to jump off ledges that are high up. To me that means it's doing its job, that's the reaction it should have. I know my brain isn't very interested in maths or politics, which annoys me at times, but that doesn't put the rest of my body in any danger, so as far as I'm concerned it's not a 'fear' that needs fighting. I've heard of koumpounophobia, which means your brain is scared of buttons. There was a woman on the news who had it so bad she couldn't even sit and watch the kids' TV programme *Button Moon*. It was like a horror movie to her, and she couldn't turn the TV off, or over, because that would involve more buttons. Now, that's a fear that needs beating.



#32 Paraglide from a mountain  

#34 Skydive from a plane   

#35 Experience base jumping  

#92 Jump from a cliff into the sea  

I'm convinced the reason they don't make James Bond movies like they used to is because the stunts he used to do no longer impress us as people do that stuff on a wet Thursday afternoon in an office team building session. Even sweaty Pete from IT manages to get his fat arse into a jumpsuit so he can do a tandem jump with his head of department. I also blame medical advancement – would people still risk injuring themselves if they knew no doctor would be able to repair their broken arms and legs? If I worked at A&E I would put anyone who has an accident doing any of the above at the back of the queue and sort out people who have had a genuine accident first.

I was arguing with Luke about my reasons for not wanting to do it when a few car beeps stopped my flow. I looked outside where two young fellas in a camper van were shouting my name. I went out on to the balcony.

BLOKES: We got a call from your mates Ricky and Stephen, and they want us to look after you today, show you a few sights in the adventure capital of the world, Queenstown.

KARL: Yeah? Well, I've just been saying, I'm definitely not bungee jumping.

BLOKES: We know you're not bungee jumping, but, hey, you'll be alright, mate. Just head on out. Come on, we'll show you around, mate. You're in this beautiful place, so come on down, bro.

Their names were Sam and Kyle. They stood looking up at me from their graffiti-covered camper van. They seemed friendly enough, but if there's one thing that doesn't work with me, it's people trying to force me to do something. The more they force, the more my brain fights against it. I've tried to teach my brain new things but then it just forgets them. Yet, I can remember postcodes of old addresses from years ago. My dad once bet me that by the time I got home I wouldn't remember the number plate of a car in front of us. I can still remember it now. It was a maroon Ford Orion, registration D189 ONB. Why has my brain chosen to store that bit of information? What use is it? I can't even remember my National Insurance number. My brain does what it wants.



SAM: I know you're not that keen on bungee jumping, but we'll tell you a little bit about it because it's fantastic – you'll love it!

KYLE: Safe as houses, mate. Nothing can go wrong.

SAM: Nothing can go wrong . . . most of the time.

KYLE: It's an absolute rush, total adrenaline rush – you'll love it.

KARL: I don't like it. I don't need it. Honestly, I'm not messing. I don't need adrenaline rushes.

SAM: Why is that?

KARL: Because I have enough stress in me life.

KYLE: This will ease all the stress out.

SAM: And that is the whole point. To take that shit out of your life.

KARL: No, it won't ease it, it'll make it worse.

SAM: It won't.

KARL: It will! You know nothing about me. You've just turned up here telling me what I like. You don't know. I don't like that kind of danger.

I came in from the balcony. Luke told me that Sam, the taller of the two, was a doctor, which surprised me, but then I suppose doctors and surgeons do have to have a bit of a mad streak in them to do the jobs they do. Normal people wouldn't be able to remove lungs from someone's chest and remain calm.

Luke the director asked me to go along for the ride with Sam and Kyle and witness them do a jump. As we drove we talked about my concerns. They tried to sell it to me by saying that it would all be over in eight seconds, but that isn't a good enough reason to do it. Eight seconds of joy isn't worth having. It's the same reason I don't understand why people eat oysters. They're only in the mouth for a second. Sam said I could discover who I really am by doing a bungee. I hope by now, aged 38, I know who I am. If I'm actually someone else what a waste all these years have been.

SAM: There is a point of madness to it, and that's it, just embrace the madness, and admit there's something wrong with me here.

KYLE: Embrace the idiot inside.

SAM: Yeah.

KYLE: Let the idiot out.

KARL: Maybe that's it though, maybe my idiot is always out – it doesn't need to do bungee.

KYLE: What you thinking, man?

KARL: Okay, I'm happy to stand on the edge 'cos I want to give myself the chance to do it if my brain wants to.

