**The World's Wildest People**

*The escape artist Harry Houdini*

Imagine this: Your arms and legs are tied together with handcuffs and chains. Then you're put into a box, which is locked with a padlock. And then the box — with you inside — is thrown into the sea. What would you do? You’d probably get really scared and panic. That’s understandable — I probably would too. But for Harry Houdini, that was just another day at work.

Welcome to The World’s Wildest People, a podcast for kids about… well, wild people. People who’ve done some pretty impressive — and sometimes dangerous or even disgusting — things.

Today, we’re going to talk about Harry Houdini.

Harry is born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1874 — that’s about 150 years ago. When Harry is four years old, he moves with his family to the USA, where he quickly realises that he loves performing. At the age of nine, he becomes a trapeze artist. A trapeze is a kind of swing that hangs high up from the ceiling, and you swing on it — and you have to be really good at it to avoid falling and getting hurt.

But Harry also discovers that he REALLY likes magic. At first, he mostly does card tricks — and he is... okay at them. But not great. Even though no one is that impressed, and he doesn’t make much money, Harry keeps going. And eventually, he figures out that if the magic is a bit dangerous, people pay a lot more attention.

One of the first wild tricks he comes up with is eating needles. (Please don’t try this at home!) Here’s how the trick goes: first, Harry swallows a bunch of needles — one by one. Already pretty crazy, right? How does he do it without getting hurt? But it gets even crazier. After eating all those needles, he swallows a long piece of string. Then he coughs and makes strange noises, and suddenly... he pulls the string back up — with all the needles threaded onto it!

It sounds silly and dangerous — and it really is — but the audience loves it. And Harry is just getting started.

Harry is incredibly agile and very good at picking locks without a key. So, he begins doing shows where he gets handcuffed — and then somehow manages to escape, even though he doesn’t have the key!

Soon, Harry is performing all over the world — in England, Holland, Germany, France, and Russia. One of the things he does is get the local police to handcuff him and throw him in jail. And every time, the same thing happens: Harry somehow escapes and stands outside the cell, uncuffed. Nobody knows how he does it.