

BILL MYERS

OOPS!



TJ and the
TIME STUMBLERS

Oops!

49 and the
TIME STUMBLERS

BOOK 3

Oops!

Bill Myers



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CHAPTER ONE

Beginnings . . .

TIME TRAVEL LOG:

Malibu, California, November 2

Begin Transmission:

All-school bully from the future stopped by. Despite his disguise, Tuna and I are positive it's Bruce Bruiseabone, winner of the Worst Breath in the World Contest. We fear he could really zwork things up for our subject (who, by the way, is still smoot to the max).

End Transmission

Thelma Jean Finkelstein, better known as TJ to her friends (all four of them—unless you leave out her

OOPS!

goldfish and pet hamster, which brings it down to two friends), ran through the empty cafeteria, screaming her lungs out.

"АННННННН!"

And when she wasn't

"АННННННН!"-ing

she was yelling,

"Why is he chasing us?"

Why is he chasing us?!"

Now, you might call her behavior a little weird (which may be why she has only two friends). But weirder than that weirdness is that the **HE** in her little screamfest just happened to be an African elephant the size of a Chevy pickup who, unlike a Chevy pickup, had some very bad breath.

Weirder than *that* weirdness was that the African elephant (complete with large tusks and

a crummy mood) was shouting in a very bad British accent,

"Excuse me, miss. If you don't mind, I should like to speak with you a moment!"

Weirder than *that* weird weirdness was the **US** TJ happened to be screaming about. And who, exactly, was the **US**?

Actually, they were nobody. (Unless you counted the two invisible teenagers from the 23rd century who were running beside her.)

First, there was Thomas Uriah Norman Alphonso the Third. Or for those who don't enjoy spraining their tongues, Tuna. On TJ's other side ran Herby, a tall surfer dude with long blond bangs and the exact same number of brain cells as TJ had friends (*after* you subtract the goldfish and hamster).

The boys had traveled back in time to do a history report on TJ because, believe it or not, someday when she was through screaming her lungs out and being chased by African elephants through school cafeterias, TJ would become a great world leader.

The top of Mount Everest! you say?

Yeah, that's what TJ was saying too. Only more like

"THE TOP OF MOUNT EVEREST!"

"How odd!" Tuna yelled over the howling wind.

"That we're on Mount Everest?" Herby shouted.

"Or that the elephant is still behind us?"

"Actually, I'm talking about the end of the giant glacier we're approaching."

"What end?" Herby shouted. "What glacier?"

"The end we've just reached and the glacier we are now jumping

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Wanting to be part of the conversation, TJ threw in her own comment—the always clever and very appropriate

"A
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And refusing to be left out, the elephant, who was falling beside them, added,

"I
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But thanks to Herby's great thinking (and accidental good luck), he tried the Transporter Beam Blade again and

chugga-chugga-chugga

instead of hitting the ground, they

BLING!-ed

back to school and were running down the hallway toward the auditorium.

That was the good news. But as you may recall, every time TJ gets a little good news, she gets a ton of bad. In this case, it came in the form of one

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African elephant (whose breath had not improved) who was still running after them. And (since we're having a two-for-one special in TJ's bad luck department) there was the added problem of Hesper Breakahart, star of her own TV series on the Dizzy Channel (and the richest, most gorgeous, most spoiled 13-year-old in the entire civilized world—and maybe Texas, too). At the moment she was inside that very auditorium holding auditions for her TV show.

* * * * *

"Now remember, kiddies," the TV director with a bad hairpiece said to nearly a hundred girls sitting in the auditorium, "we're looking for somebody to play Hesper's younger sister. It's going to be tough. You might have to memorize lines, remember where to move, and—" he lowered his voice—"the people in wardrobe may even want you to wear glasses."

All the wannabe actresses shuddered. "Eeew . . ."

"I know; I know," the director agreed. "Acting can be brutal. But it's the price one pays for stardom. Isn't that right, Ms. Breakahart?"

"That's right," Hesper said, flashing her perfect, glow-in-the-dark, bleach-toothed smile.

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All the girls grinned, flashing their own perfect, glow-in-the-dark smiles. (Malibu Junior High girls have a thing about perfect, glow-in-the-dark smiles. They also have a thing about perfect skin, perfect tans, and perfect anything else their rich mommies and daddies can afford.)

The director turned to Hesper. "So, Ms. Breakahart, who would you like to audition first?"

Every little-sister hopeful's hand shot up like they all had to go to the bathroom.

"oh! Oh! oh!"

"Please Please! Please"

"Me! Me! Me!"

Chad Steel glanced up from the homework he was doing at the back of the auditorium. Earlier, Hesper had asked him to swing by and give her some emotional support. It seemed Hesper always needed his emotional support. And since they were supposed to be "a couple" and since Chad was the nicest guy in school, he helped her out when he could.

At the moment “helping out” meant watching Hesper audition her fellow students for a tiny part in her TV series. Lately, she’d been making so many enemies (courtesy of the New Kid) that Hesper figured this would be a great way to play kissy-kissy to everyone.

And it seemed to be working.

Even Miss Grumpaton, their fossilized English teacher, was there. “I could play her *slightly* older sister,” she said. (I guess even old people have fantasies.)

But Mr. Beaker, the science teacher, had definitely gone too far. Honestly, who did the guy think he was fooling by wearing that wig and miniskirt?

The point is, *everyone* wanted to be a star. Which meant they were all slaves to Hesper Breakahart’s slightest whim.

“Let’s see,” Hesper said, tossing her perfect blonde hair held in place by 4½ cans of hair spray (and one full-time hairstylist). “How about . . . you!”

“Me?” A shorter version of Hesper leaped to her feet. “Really? Really, really?!”

“Yes, uh . . . what is your name?”

“Elizabeth.”

Hesper frowned.

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"You know, Elizabeth Mindlessfan. I've been your best friend since forever?"

"Oh yes, of course. Well, go up on the stage, uh . . . um . . ."

"Elizabeth," Elizabeth said.

"Right. Go up there and read the lines."

"Oh, goody," Elizabeth squealed as she raced to the stage and took her place. "Goody, goody, goody!"

"Are you ready?" the director asked.

"Oh yes! Absolutely, yes, yes, yes!"

"All right, then," the director said. "And . . . action!"

Elizabeth looked down at the script in her hands and read, "Oh, Hesper, you're so beautiful and talented and beautiful and rich and did I mention beautiful?" (If you'd guessed Hesper helped write the script, you'd have guessed right.) "I hope that someday I'll grow up to be just as beautiful and talented and beautiful and rich and—did I mention beautiful?—as you."

"And cut!" the director shouted. "That was wonderful, babe. You're a natural."

"Really?" Elizabeth squealed in delight.

"You bet," he said. "You were magic."

"Goody, goody, goody!"

Chad looked down, shaking his head. It was amazing how crazy people got when they thought

they could be on TV. He was about to return to his work when the auditorium door suddenly flew open and

"AHHHHHHH!"

one very loud and very frightened New Kid ran in.

To be honest, Chad wasn't entirely surprised. It seemed the New Kid was always doing unusual things—which in a strange way he found kinda cute. Not that he had a thing for escaped mental patients, but ever since she moved in next door to him, there'd been something about her he found . . . interesting.

And this was the perfect example. Because not only was she running down the aisle toward the front exit yelling,

"Why is he still chasing us?"

Why is he still chasing us?!"

but as far as Chad could tell, there was no **US** being chased. It was just the New Kid. But even more interesting was the fact that she was being chased down the aisle by an African elephant.

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Naturally, everyone screamed and panicked. And those girls who had been raising their hands like they had to go to the bathroom? Well, this time it was for real (and it might have been too late).

Without thinking, Chad leaped to his feet and ran toward the New Kid and her peanut-eating pet. He wasn't sure why. Maybe he thought even mental patients deserved protection from runaway elephants. Whatever the reason, he'd read that the best way to handle wild animals was to stand up to them and not be afraid. This would explain his running down the aisle, waving his arms, and screaming like a madman. Either that or he'd caught whatever mental disorder the New Kid had.

Still, it did not explain why the elephant stopped, turned on its heels (or paws or whatever elephants turn on), and said in a very poor English accent,

"Excuse me. You needn't be rude."

Chad's jaw dropped—either because the elephant spoke or because Chad had never been accused of being rude. (Though if he'd really wanted to be mean, he could have said something about the animal's breath.)

In any case, the elephant continued speaking.

**"I merely wish to warn the young lady
about the DANGERS of allowing these
two invisible boys floating beside—"**

He would have said more, but he was interrupted
by the New Kid screaming,

"Herby! Tuna! DO someth—"

And she would have said more, except it's hard
saying more when you suddenly

chugga-chugga-chugga

BLING!

disappear.

Instantly, everything was back to normal—well,
except for those girls racing to the bathroom . . . and
the lingering bad breath of an African elephant who
had just vanished from everyone's sight.