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HO-HO-NOOO!

Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events
and the
TIME STUMBLERS

Ho-Ho-NOOO!

49 and the TIME STUMBLERS

BOOK 4
Ho-Ho-NOOO!

Bill Myers



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CHAPTER ONE

Beginnings . . .

TIME TRAVEL LOG:

Malibu, California, December 18

Begin Transmission:

Subject is not fond of video games. I, on the other hand (spit-spit), am not fond of geraniums.

End Transmission

“Fire proton torpedoes!” Captain Tuna shouted.

“Aye, aye, Captain!” the ever-loyal (and always dim-witted) Lieutenant Herby called back. But before Herby could reach over and push the button labeled

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WARNING: Push only if you want to blow stuff up and make a real cool mess!

their spaceship was struck by a powerful explosion. The craft lurched violently to the left and was suddenly filled with the sounds of

"Row, row, row your boat—"

"Oh no!" Captain Tuna shouted.

"Oh what?" Lieutenant Herby shouted back.

"He hit us with the Stupid Song Bomb!"

"—gently down the stream."

Not only was the entire spacecraft filled with the silly stupidity, but so were the brains of the entire crew (i.e., Tuna and Herby—well, actually, only Tuna for sure, since medical science has yet to determine if Herby has a brain).

"Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily—"

"Augh!" Captain Tuna cried, grabbing his head in agony.

"Groovy!" Lieutenant Herby said, tapping his foot in ecstasy.

"Raise the deflector shields!" Captain Tuna shouted.

But Herby was too busy singing along to hear the orders.

Another explosion hit, throwing the craft to the right.

***"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you—"***

Captain Tuna leaped from his chair and staggered toward the control panel. "Must . . . stop . . . the . . . music!"

But before he arrived, they were hit again.

***"Jack and Jill went up the hill
to fetch a pail of—"***

And again.

***"Here we go round the mulberry bush,
the mulberry bush,***

the—"

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Just when Tuna was about to lose his mind (leaving the spacecraft with a grand total of zero minds), the singing was interrupted by an even worse sound.

“Greetings, zwork-oids!”

Tuna spun around and gasped. There, on the giant viewing screen, was the vilest of all villains, Bruce Bruiseabone. He stood on the bridge of his own spaceship, laughing his creepy

“moo-hoo-ha-ha-hee-hee-hee”

laugh.

Captain Tuna watched in horror as the villainous man put his villainous hands on his villainous hips and spoke (what else?) villainously.

“And so, my mini-micro-minds, we meet again.”

“What do you want from us, you fiendish fiend?”

Tuna shouted.

“I want you to hand over the keys to your spacecraft.”

“Never!”

“What?” Bruce shouted back. “You dare challenge me, the most villainous of all villains?”

"That's right!" Tuna yelled defiantly.

"We're the heroes of this story," Herby explained, "and heroes always win!"

"Have it your way." Bruce turned to one of his crew members and shouted, "Fire torpedoes!"

Once again the ship lurched, and Tuna's brain (and whatever there was of Herby's) filled with

***"The itsy-bitsy spider
crawled up the water—"***

"AUGH!" Tuna *ugh*-ed.

"Shh," Herby *shh*-ed. "This is my favorite part."

***"Down came the rain
and washed the spider—"***

"Not only will you hand over your keys," Bruce shouted again, "but you will give me those giant foam dice hanging from your rearview mirror."

"Oh no!" Tuna cried. "Not the foam dice!"

"Guys?" a female voice suddenly called from below. Another bomb struck:

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***“Are You sleeping, are You sleeping?
Brother John? Brother-?”***

“Guys!” The female creature stuck her head up through the spaceship’s floor. She had dark hair, wore glasses, and was incredibly smoot (at least according to Herby—well, all right, according to Tuna, too). “What are you two doing?” she shouted.

Immediately Tuna grabbed his Swiss Army Knife (sold at 23rd-century time-travel stores everywhere) and closed the blade. The holographic video game disappeared. No more spacecraft, no more Bruce Bruiseabone, and no more irritating music. The fancy starship had changed back into a dusty attic.

“Hey,” Herby complained, “I was really getting into that song.”

He got a frown from the female—a seventh-grade girl better known as Thelma Jean Finkelstein (TJ) to her friends—all four of them, if you count her goldfish and hamster). She’d just moved from Missouri to Malibu, California (which explains why she had only four friends). If that wasn’t bad enough, she had become the history project of Herby and Tuna, a couple of goofball teenagers from the 23rd century who’d traveled back in time to do a school

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report on her. Apparently she was going to grow up to become somebody important (if she survived junior high).

Unfortunately, the guys' time-travel pod had run out of fuel and they were stuck here.

Unfortunatelier (don't try that word in English class), TJ was the only one who could see them.

Unfortunateliest (the same goes for that word), people could still hear them.

"I told you," she whispered, "no video games after nine o'clock."

"We were just practicing." Herby flipped aside his surfer bangs and flexed his muscles. (He was always flexing his muscles to try to impress TJ.)

Tuna explained, "We need to be prepared in case Bruce Bruiseabone reappears."

"I thought he went back to the 23rd century," TJ said.

"He did," Herby agreed as he spotted a tiny fly buzzing around the room.

Tuna continued. "However, there's no telling when he'll show up again to torment us."

"Or—" Herby lowered his voice and watched the fly buzz toward the attic window—"what form he'll take when he does."

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“Listen, guys,” TJ said. “You can practice all you want when I’m at school and nobody’s home.”

“How can we protect you at school if we’re practicing at home?” Tuna asked.

“My point exactly,” TJ said. “I’ve told you a hundred times I don’t want you following me.” She paused to watch Herby tiptoe toward the window.

“Understood,” Tuna said. “However—”

“AHHHHHHH!”

He was interrupted by the sound of Herby leaping at the fly. But Herby’s leaper was a little lame and he was unable to stop at the window. Instead, he sort of

CRASH! BREAK!

tinkle-tinkle-tinkle

leaped through the glass and

roll, roll, roll

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"Ouch! Ouch! ouch!"

tumbled down the roof until he

THUD

"OOOFF!"

landed in the flower bed.

Tuna and TJ raced to the window.

"Herby, are you all right?" TJ cried.

"Wuaff mwabom!" Herby replied (which is the best anyone can reply with a mouthful of geraniums).

"What?"

"Mwi maid (*spit-spit*) false alarm," he finally shouted. He held out his hand and revealed one very squashed fly. "It wasn't Bruce after all!"

"Excellent news," Tuna shouted.

Of course it would have been more excellent if TJ's father wasn't shouting from downstairs, "What's going on up there? TJ, are you okay?"

Luckily, Tuna had an answer for everything. (The answer was usually wrong, but he always had one.) Without a word, he pulled open the Reverse Beam Blade of his Swiss Army Knife and

HO-HO-NOOO!

RAAAapha . . .
Reeeepha . . . Riilipha . . .

BOING-oiing-oiing-oiing!

everything

"!FFOOO"

DUHT

that had happened

"!hcuO !hcuO !hcuO"
llor, llor, llor

was put into

elknit-elknit-elknit

!KAERB !HSARC

reverse, until

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“!HHHHHHHA”

Herby was back in the attic having the conversation about not following TJ to school.

Not that TJ was surprised. It was just another average, run-of-the-mill evening for TJ Finkelstein and her time stumblers.

* * * * *

TJ climbed down the attic steps and headed toward her bedroom. As she passed Violet’s door, she saw that her middle sister still had the lights on. No surprise there. Violet always had her lights on. How else could she read 50 books a day, be president of every club in her school, and become dictator of the world before she was 16?

TJ pushed open the door to see Violet standing on a ladder. She was writing numbers on a big thermometer chart that stretched up to the ceiling.

“What are you doing?” TJ asked.

Violet answered without turning. “I’m checking to see how much more money I need to earn for Daddy’s gift.”

“Gift?” TJ asked. “For what?”

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“Christmas. It’s only 6 days, 2 hours, 6 minutes, and 46 seconds from now.” (Violet liked to be precise.)

“No way!” TJ cried in alarm. “It can’t be!”

“You’re right.” Violet rechecked her watch. “It is now 6 days, 2 hours, 6 minutes, and 41 seconds.” (See what I mean?)

TJ couldn’t believe it. She’d been so caught up in all her junior-high migraine makers that she hadn’t even noticed it was December. It would have helped to have a few clues . . . like maybe a little less sunshine or the temperature dropping below 70 degrees. Still, if she’d been paying attention, she’d have noticed that the beach babes had changed from SPF 69 to SPF 41.

“I’m getting him an 82-inch plasma TV and installing it right in his bedroom,” Violet said snootily. Violet didn’t try to sound snooty; it just came naturally. “What are you getting him?”

“Something better than that,” TJ said. TJ didn’t try to compete with her sister . . . it just came naturally.

“Yeah?” Violet asked. “Like what?”

“Like . . . well, uh . . . it’s a surprise!”

“Right,” Violet snorted and went back to coloring her money thermometer.

“What? You don’t think I can give Daddy a better gift than you?” TJ asked.

“Actually,” Violet said, “I don’t think you can do anything better than me.”

TJ could feel her insides churning. She knew it would do no good to argue with her sister. Violet always thought she was right. To make matters worse, Violet always *was* right. (Well, except that one time when she thought she was wrong.) But she couldn’t help saying, “Oh yeah?”

Violet gave no answer.

TJ pushed up her glasses and repeated, “Oh yeah?”

“Listen,” Violet said, “don’t take it personally. It’s in our DNA. I got all of Mom’s and Dad’s brains and you got all of . . . all of . . . Well, I’m sure you got something. I mean it’s not like you were adopted.” She hesitated, then turned to TJ. “Were you?”

If TJ was mad before, she was outraged now. So outraged that she returned to her favorite argument. “Oh yeah?”

Violet sighed. “Haven’t we already had this discussion?”

TJ wanted to fire back with a classy put-down, but somehow she knew another “oh yeah” wouldn’t do the trick.

“Guys?”

They both turned to see their youngest sister,

Dorie, standing in the doorway. She was as cute as a button and almost as small.

“Can I borrow some markers?”

“Hey, Squid,” TJ said. “Why are you out of bed?”

“I’m working on Daddy’s Christmas gift.”

“You too?” TJ groaned.

“Uh-huh,” Dorie said. “I’m making him a tie clasp.” Her face beamed with excitement. “I already found the clothespin. Now I just need to color it with markers.”

“You’re giving Dad a clothespin for Christmas?” TJ asked.

Dorie shook her head. “No. I’m giving him a clothespin *colored with markers* for Christmas.”

“I see.” TJ smiled. She always smiled when she talked with Dorie. Of course she tried to hide it. After all, Dorie was a younger sister, and younger sisters are supposed to irritate older sisters. (It’s like a law or something.) So TJ just tousled Dorie’s hair and said, “Let’s head to my room to see if I have any.”

“Yippee!” Dorie said as she skipped into the hallway.

But even as they headed toward her room, TJ’s mind raced back to Dad. She had to get him something. Granted, she had no money, but somehow

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the gift had to be bigger and better than Violet ever dreamed.

Unfortunately, some dreams turn into nightmares—especially with help from the 23rd century.