

BILL MYERS



Switched!



42 and the
TIME STUMBLERS

Switched!

TD and the
TIME STUMBLERS

BOOK 5
Switched!

Bill Myers



Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
Carol Stream, Illinois

Visit Tyndale's website for kids at www.tyndale.com/kids.

Visit Bill Myers's website at www.billmyers.com.

TYNDALE and Tyndale's quill logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Switched!

Copyright © 2012 by Bill Myers. All rights reserved.

Cover illustration copyright © 2011 by Peter Bollinger. All rights reserved.

Designed by Stephen Vosloo

Edited by Sarah Mason

Published in association with the literary agency of Alive Communications, Inc., 7680 Goddard Street, Suite 200, Colorado Springs, CO 80920, www.alivecommunications.com.

This novel is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons living or dead is entirely coincidental and beyond the intent of either the author or the publisher.

For manufacturing information regarding this product, please call 1-800-323-9400.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Myers, Bill, date.

Switched! / Bill Myers.

p. cm. — (TJ and the time stumblers ; bk. 5)

Summary: Twenty-third-century time travelers Tuna and Herby's fumbled attempt to repair their futuristic gadgets land TJ, the only person who can see them, in the body of her nemesis, television star Hester Breakahart.

ISBN 978-1-4143-3457-8 (sc)

1. Conduct of life—Fiction. 2. Identity—Fiction. 3. Junior high schools—Fiction. 4. Schools—Fiction. 5. Time travel—Fiction. 6. Family life—California—Fiction. 7. Malibu (Calif.)—Fiction. I. Title.

PZ7.M982345wi 2012

I Fic—dc23

2011031338

Printed in the United States of America

18 17 16 15 14 13 12

7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CHAPTER ONE

Beginnings . . .

TIME TRAVEL LOG:

Malibu, California, January 23

Begin Transmission:

Bruce Bruiseabone is closing in. Must find fuel for time-travel pod and begin journey home. No doubt subject will be brokenhearted. Someday, as hard as it'll be, she may get over me.

End Transmission

Chad Steel did his best to smile as the New Kid did her best to sing. He might have succeeded if her screeching didn't make his face cringe and his eyes water. And don't even ask about the dogs across the

SWITCHED!

street. The poor things were howling like they were being tortured. Honestly, you'd think the Humane Society would force the school to close their choir room windows.

It's not that the New Kid was bad . . .

She was TERRIBLE!

(Sorry, I didn't mean to yell, but it's the only way you could hear me over all her shrieking and screaming and, of course, Mr. Hatemijob's sobbing.) Malibu Junior High's cranky choir director had asked the New Kid to try out for a solo in their spring concert. She was pretty shy and reluctant about it, but Mr. Hatemijob kept insisting she try. So finally she agreed. It would have been better for everyone (including Mr. Hatemijob's breakfast) if she hadn't.

Once his ears stopped ringing (and his stomach stopped heaving), Mr. Hatemijob smiled at the New Kid and said the most encouraging words he could find. "Well, now, your singing is so . . . how can I put it? . . . the worst thing I've ever heard in my entire life!"

And since he was a teacher, he also felt he should give a little instruction.

"Maybe you should transfer from my class and attend another that would put your unique vocal skills to better use."

BILL MYERS

“Yeah—” Hesper Breakahart giggled from across the choir room—“like sign language.”

And since Hesper giggled, all the Hesper wannabes giggled. (When you star in your own TV series on the Dizzy Channel, you have lots of wannabes giggling whenever you giggle.)

But Chad could see how the New Kid’s cheeks burned with embarrassment. And even though he and Hesper were a couple (at least according to Hesper), he heard himself say, “Come on, guys, she wasn’t *that* bad.”

Of course everyone looked at him like he was nuts. Well, everyone but Hesper Breakahart. It’s hard to look at someone like he’s nuts when you’re busy shooting death rays at him from your eyeballs. *No one* disagreed with Hesper Breakahart.

But Chad kinda liked the New Kid. It wasn’t just because they were next-door neighbors. It was because there was something kinda wholesome and down-to-earth about her . . . well, except for the way she always got tongue-tied around him . . . and all the weird stuff that happened whenever she was around.

Weird stuff like—

“LOOK AT THAT!” Elizabeth Mindlessfan, Hesper’s best friend since forever, cried.

SWITCHED!

Hesper turned to see a stack of sheet music on the shelf by the open window begin to blow across the room. And we're not talking a single sheet of music at a time. We're talking the entire stack—as in a foot-high pile of paper that mysteriously floated past the kids and came to a stop directly above Hesper's head.

And if that wasn't weird enough, Chad heard the New Kid whisper, "No, Herby! Herby, no!"

He watched with everybody else as the stack started to tilt.

"That's not funny!" the New Kid whispered. "Tuna, stop him!"

But whatever weird spell the New Kid was chanting made little difference. The papers slid off the stack and crashed down on top of Hesper Breakahart's head.

"Augh!" she screamed. "My expensive Beverly Hills haircut!"

Everyone in the room laughed—well, except for Hesper's wannabes, who were too busy picking up the papers and throwing them on top of their own heads, screaming, "Augh! Our expensive Beverly Hills haircuts!"

And the New Kid? She was staring off into empty space, continuing to whisper at some invisible fish

BILL MYERS

named Tuna and some imaginary friend named Herby . . . until she caught Chad staring at her. That's when she stopped and looked away, her face growing even redder than before. Poor thing. If it weren't for all that weirdness, she would be completely sweet and normal.

* * *

Forty-five minutes later, the completely sweet and normal TJ Finkelstein was outside, walking on the school's track at lunchtime. She'd prefer to be inside, eating her lunch in the lunchroom at lunchtime, but she figured it was better to yell at her two invisible pals from the 23rd century where no one could overhear.

"How many times have I told you to stay at home?" she demanded.

Herby, a tall surfer dude, floated beside her with his legs crossed. "But if we stay at home, how can we secretly spy on you without you knowing it?" he asked.

TJ gave him a look. Herby's brainpower was as bad as her singing.

"What?" he asked, flipping his bangs aside and flexing his arm muscles. He always flipped and flexed

SWITCHED!

for TJ. (His flirting was as obvious as his lack of brain cells.)

Tuna, the smarter of the two (which is like comparing the intelligence of one tree stump to another), floated at her other side. "You must admit that Hesper Breakahart was incredibly rude to you."

"And you're going to fix that by dumping a stack of papers on her?" TJ asked.

"Actually, that was Herby's idea."

"Only because you wanted to use the Morphing Blade and turn her into an earthworm," Herby said.

TJ frowned at Tuna in disapproval. "An earthworm? Really?"

Tuna shrugged. "I was going to let her keep her pretty hair."

"Listen, guys, I really appreciate your trying to help. I can't stand Hesper any more than you. But shouldn't you be working on your time pod so you can get back to your own century? Haven't you done enough research on me for your history report?"

"We can never do enough research on the great TJ Finkelstein," Herby said, flexing his other arm.

"Remember," Tuna added, "someday you will be a great world leader."

"You keep saying that," TJ sighed. "But how can

BILL MYERS

I become a great world leader when I'm the seventh grade's worst loser?"

"Our history holographs don't lie," Tuna said.

"Everything about you will be great."

"Well, except for your singing," Herby said.

TJ shook her head. "Seriously, guys, you've been here for like five months now."

Herby glanced down at his shoelace and read the time. "Actually, 105 days, 14 hours, 24 minutes, and 12 seconds."

"Right," TJ said. "But my point is—"

"Make that 105 days, 14 hours, 24 minutes, and 18 seconds." (Herby liked to be precise.)

"Thank you. What I'm trying to say is—"

"105 days, 14 hours, 24—"

Raising her voice, she repeated, "What I'm trying to say is, after all this time, shouldn't your time pod be fixed?"

"Actually," Tuna said, "that is what we have come here to discuss."

"All our repairs are done," Herby said.

"Everything's de-zworked."

TJ couldn't hide her excitement. "Really?"

"Well, except for the Swiss Army knife," Herby said as he pulled it from his pocket.

"Not now," Tuna warned.

SWITCHED!

“Right.” Herby opened the blade. “I’m just saying that some of the features still cause major quod-quod.”

“Herby.”

“Like this fingernail clipper. Instead of clipping our fingernails, it—”

“HERBY, DON’T ENGAGE THE—”

Before Tuna could finish, there was a blur of action as the Swiss Army knife leaped from Herby’s hands and

***BUZZ-cut . . . BUZZ-cut . . .
BUZZ-cut***

everything in sight. And I mean *everything*. The trees, the grass, the two 23rd-century time travelers, who were suddenly and completely

“HERBY!”

bald. And one rather unhappy seventh grader who, fearing the worst, reached up to her head and felt her brand-new do.

"GUYS!!!"

Make that her brand-new *lack of do*. That's right, TJ Finkelstein looked like a beach ball that'd just had a close shave after drinking a bottle of hair remover.

TRANSLATION: She was bald.

TJ groaned. "Terrific. Just terrific."

"Sorry." Herby shrugged.

"It will grow back," Tuna said.

"We hope," Herby added.

As they spoke, a very upset and very bald squirrel, with a very nonbushy tail, scampered over to them and chattered angrily. After giving them a piece of his mind, he turned and raced for the nearest buzz-cut tree hoping to hide among the leaves. (Good luck with that.)

TJ took a deep breath and tried her best to stay calm (a technique you learn when haunted by 23rd-century time stumblers). "You say you'll be heading home soon?"

"That is correct," Tuna said.

"Just as soon as we find fuel," Herby said while

SWITCHED!

carefully—*very* carefully—closing the blade to the knife and slipping it back into his pocket.

“And the gas station down the street won’t do the trick?” TJ asked.

“Correct again,” Tuna said. “As we have previously stated, we will need one plutonium power pack from a nuclear submarine, one bowl of chili from a Texas housewife . . .”

“And one flock of African ostriches to digest the chili,” Herby finished.

“So how’s that coming?” TJ asked.

Both boys felt a sudden need to examine the ground or the tops of their shoes or anything that didn’t involve looking into her eyes.

“Guys?”

Tuna finally answered. “We have found a nuclear submarine. It’s docked down at Long Beach, not too far from here.”

“But . . . ?”

“It is well guarded and we can’t approach it.”

“But you’re invisible,” TJ argued. “No one can see you.”

“No one but you,” Herby said, flexing both arms and flipping his hair (which would have been easier if he had any hair to flip).

TJ ignored him and asked, "Okay, if you're invisible, why don't you just go to the submarine and take it?"

"You mean, 'borrow' it," Tuna corrected.

"Once we return to our century we'll send it back," Herby said.

"Okay," TJ repeated, "if you're invisible, why don't you just go in and *borrow* it?"

"Obviously," Tuna said, "because their thermal indicators will detect our radiant body signatures." (Sometimes Tuna gets a little technical.) "Which would indicate an intruder has compromised their security, thereby leading to our eventual and inevitable incarceration." (Sometimes Tuna gets *a lot* technical.)

Herby nodded. "Not only that but we'd get in trouble."

Before TJ could respond, or at least let out another groan, the ground began to

rumble . . . rumble . . . rumble . . .

under her feet.

"Do you feel that?" she asked.

"Perhaps it is a minor earthquake," Tuna said.

SWITCHED!

*rumble . . . rumble . . .
rumble . . .*

“Or a major one,” Herby said.

TJ would have agreed . . . if it weren’t for the far end of the track peeling up from the ground and rising high into the air. “Uh, guys?”

His back to the track, Tuna continued, “That’s another reason she should never have moved here from the Midwest.”

“Yeah, dude,” Herby agreed, “but what about their tornadoes?”

“You do have a point there,” Tuna said.

*rumble . . . rumble
. . . rumble . . .*

Not only was the track rising into the air, but the top of it was turning into a hideous-looking face.

“Uh, fellas?”

“If she had to move, she could have moved up north,” Herby offered.

“Too much snow.”

Now arms were stretching out from both sides of the rising track.

“Whoa, guys . . .”

“And the South?”

“Hurricanes.”

TJ watched as legs formed, then feet, with the left one

r...i...pp.....i.....n.....g

away from the ground, then the right one

r...i...pp.....i.....n.....g

away.

So just for the record, we’re talking about a piece of track, towering 30 or so feet above our heroes and wearing a rather unpleasant expression. Oh, and it talked. Let’s not forget the talking.

“Hello, boys.”

The voice stopped Tuna and Herby’s discussion. They turned, looked up, and saw the track leering down at them. Oh, and a foot rising up to pulverize them into the ground. Let’s not forget the pulverizing foot.

SWITCHED!

Tuna looked at Herby.

Herby looked at Tuna.

Then they screamed in two-part harmony:

"Bruce Bruiseabone!!!"

Now, for those of you taking your first trip into TJ's Land of Insanity, let me explain that Bruce Bruiseabone is Tuna and Herby's archenemy. For reasons you don't want to know (but will have to learn in chapter two), he has come back from the 23rd century to destroy the boys' history report on TJ (and the boys, too, while he's at it). And for other reasons you don't want to know, he always shows up morphed into something big and scary—a runaway elephant, an attacking UFO, and this, his latest and greatest: a monster track about to stomp them to their deaths . . . or at least into some very bad bruises.

All of this allowed our boys to show their true and heroic colors, which involved

"AUGH"-ing

their bald little heads off and racing away.

Needless to say (though I'm going to say it anyway), our heroes were running for their lives. But where exactly do you run from a track?

"The bleachers!" TJ shouted.

Without saying a word (unless you count hysterical yelling and screaming as words), the trio raced to the nearby bleachers and ducked underneath. Not a bad idea except wooden bleachers are no match for a 30-foot piece of track made of red crushed gravel. Red crushed gravel that

SLAM-ed

down on top of the bleachers and completely ruined them—except for the little pieces that might be useful as toothpicks. But being more in the mood for life-saving than teeth-picking, TJ looked for another escape. Spotting the school cafeteria ahead, she shouted something incredibly intelligent like

***"The school cafeteria
UP ahead!"***

SWITCHED!

Of course Bruce was doing his own shouting. Sweet little endearments like:

“I’m going to crush you. Then I’m going to smash you. Then I’m going to eat you. . . .”

This brings up an entirely different discussion about what red-gravel tracks eat. But TJ had no time for such small talk. She thought it was a better idea to keep running as the track stomped closer and closer.

The cafeteria stood just 20 feet ahead, but the stomping grew closer.

Now the building was 10 feet away.

Red gravel began falling all around her. He was right above her head.

Finally she ducked under the cafeteria’s porch roof, where she would be nice and safe.

CRASH

Okay, maybe not.

Reaching for the cafeteria door, she threw it open and stumbled inside. She turned to yank it shut but

BILL MYERS

Tuna and Herby were right behind. "Hurry up!" she yelled. "Come on!"

They finally dove through the door and TJ yanked it shut.

The good news was they were safely inside.

The bad news was the 327 students. The 327 students who stopped talking and turned to see TJ Finkelstein completely bald, yelling at two imaginary friends, and covered from head to toe with red gravel.

