

BILL MYERS

Yikes!!!



Ted and the TIME STUMBLERS

Yikes!!!

TD and the
TIME STUMBLERS

BOOK 6
Yikes!!!

Bill Myers



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CHAPTER ONE

Beginnings . . .

TIME TRAVEL LOG:

Malibu, California, February 22

Begin Transmission:

While sharing our awesome intelligence with our awesomely smoot subject, Tuna and I were visited by an old friend. It was majorly cool that he brought over some eats, but does anyone know what to do with 5,322 gallons of chili?

End Transmission

“All right, fine,” TJ grumbled as she faced the dirty dishes sitting in the sink.

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“Fine,” Violet repeated as she headed out the door for the library to do her homework.

“Fine,” TJ snapped, for no other reason than to have the last word.

“Fine!” Violet shouted back, for no other reason than that *she* wanted that word.

And so, after another deep and heartfelt conversation with her sister, TJ Finkelstein turned on the hot water and began rinsing the Mount Everest stack of dirty dishes. It made no difference that they had a dishwasher—no one in the family ever felt a need to rinse their plates and put them in it. Of course, Mom would never have put up with that, but Mom was gone. She’d died of cancer not long ago. Now it was just Dad, TJ, Violet, and cute-as-a-button youngest sister, Dorie.

Well, not quite *just* them. There were a couple of uninvited guests in TJ’s life. . . .

“Hey there, Your Dude-ness.”

TJ glanced around the room.

“Down here . . . in the sink.”

She looked into the sink and spotted it—the talking cereal bowl with two floating Froot Loops for eyes (one red, the other purple). Oh, and a yellow one acting as the mouth.

“Herby,” she sighed, “what are you doing?”

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“Just testing out the Morphing Blade on our Swiss Army Knife,” the cereal bowl answered. Then, glancing at a dirty spatula, he added, “Nice work, Tuna.”

“Why thank you, Herby,” the spatula said through one of its many holes. “Except for some minor adjustments to the Transporter Blade, I believe all our equipment is up and running.”

Now, if you’re new to TJ’s land of lunacy, let me explain that the cereal bowl and spatula are actually two bungling time travelers from the 23rd century. They’ve come back in time to do a history report on TJ because someday, if she survives the seventh grade (and their visit), she’s going to be a world-famous leader.

“So you’re finally going to leave,” TJ said as she angrily stuffed silverware into the dishwasher. (She was still pretty steamed over her fight with Violet, and for whatever reason, the boys’ presence never seemed to *unsteam* her.)

“We still need fuel for our time-travel pod,” Tuna said.

TJ frowned. “We got you that plutonium power pack thingy.”

“That’s right.” The cereal bowl grinned (though don’t ask me how). “All we need now is the chili from a Texas housewife—”

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“Who, at the moment, is about to turn three years old,” the spatula sighed.

“And an African ostrich to digest it,” the cereal bowl added.

“The chili, not the housewife,” Tuna explained.

“Listen,” TJ said firmly, “you’re not bringing ostrich manure into this house.”

“Not to worry,” Tuna answered. “We have obtained gloves for our hands.”

Herby nodded. “And clothespins for our noses.”

TJ sighed wearily as she finished filling the bottom rack of the dishwasher and began working on the top. “Well, the sooner you get all that stuff and head home, the better.” She wasn’t trying to be mean; she was just in a lousy mood.

Herby added, “Unfortunately, we got ourselves one minor problem.”

“What’s that?” TJ asked.

Herby brought his Froot Loop eyes together into a scowl. “We’re not sure you’re ready for us to leave.”

TJ gave him a look, then returned to the dishes. “Trust me, I’m ready.”

Tuna and Herby remained silent—a first for both of them.

“What?” TJ asked.

"We are concerned about your attitude toward your sister Violet," Tuna said.

"Attitude?" TJ snapped. She continued dumping the dishes in loudly. "I don't have an attitude!"

The spatula and cereal bowl traded uneasy glances.

TJ spotted them and said, "It's Violet's night to do dishes, not mine."

"But she has an outloopishly big report due tomorrow," Herby said.

"Right," TJ said. "She's always got some lame excuse—and so does Dad and so does Dorie. I'm sick and tired of always having to clean up after everybody!"

"Good thing she doesn't have an attitude," Herby observed.

TJ turned on him. "You're the ones who are always saying I'm going to be some great leader, right?"

"Correcto."

"Well, how am I supposed to lead if I'm always the one waiting on people?"

Both Tuna and Herby broke out laughing . . . a fact that didn't exactly improve TJ's attitude.

"What?" she demanded.

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Tuna answered, "History has proven that the greatest leaders are always the greatest servants."

"That's crazy," TJ argued.

"Crazy or not, it's the truth."

"Which is why you need gonzoid brains like us around to continue teaching you," Herby said.

Tuna nodded. (Well, as much as a spatula can nod.) "We must continue to instruct you so you don't reach any more of those half-baked conclusions."

"Half-baked?" TJ said, her anger growing even angrier. "Half-baked?!"

"We call 'em like we see 'em, Your Dude-ness."

Tuna agreed. "And from our vantage point we definitely see a need for improvement."

"Then maybe you need to change your vantage point." Before either the spatula or the cereal bowl could react, TJ scooped them up.

"What are you doing?" Tuna yelled.

"What are—?"

Which was all Herby managed to repeat before

Slosh-Slosh

Spill-spill

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glug-glug-glug-glug!

his Froot Loop eyes and mouth were poured down the drain.

Then, without hesitation, TJ dumped the spatula and cereal bowl into the dishwasher, slammed the door

CLICK

and started the

SWOOSH ... SWOOSH ... SWOOSH

wash cycle.

Of course, she knew the boys would transport themselves out of there in just a few seconds. But she figured a few seconds was all she needed to make her point.

Unfortunately, another point was being made by somebody else.

"TJ!"

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It was cute little Dorie, screaming at the top of her cute little lungs. She was upstairs, and she definitely sounded like she was in trouble.

TJ raced out of the kitchen. She ran through the living room and past Dad, who was in his chair

SNORE-ing

louder than a coffee grinder inside a jet engine in the middle of a thunderstorm.

"TJ!"

"Coming!" TJ raced up the stairs. She figured whatever was wrong couldn't be too wrong because Tuna and Herby were still in the dishwasher (and *too wrong* only happened when they were *too close*).

But when she reached the top of the stairs, she slowed to a stop. The good news was Dorie was just fine. The bad news was the upstairs hallway wasn't . . . unless your definition of *fine* is having a river of chili creeping across your carpet.

TJ did what she always did when weird stuff happened. She shouted, "Tuna! Herby!"

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But no one answered. (Apparently Tuna and Herby were still in the rinse cycle.)

"Are you talking to your ghost friends again?" Dorie asked.

Since the two guys were invisible to everyone but TJ (some girls get all the luck), every time Dorie heard the boys speaking, she figured they were ghosts.

"Dorie," TJ answered as calmly as possible when chili was flowing around her ankles, "you know there's no such things as ghosts."

"I know," Dorie said, her eyes growing wide as saucers as she pointed past TJ. "But do they?"

TJ turned to see Tuna and Herby floating behind her. They were still invisible to Dorie, but the soap and dishwater dripping from their clothes weren't.

"Tuna!" she whispered. "Herby! Do something!"

"No sweat, Your Dude-ness." Herby pulled out his Swiss Army Knife, sold at 23rd-century time-travel stores everywhere. He opened the Time Freezer Blade and fired its beam

*Zzoo . . . o . . . o . . . a a
a h h*

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directly at Dorie.

Immediately the little girl froze. Well, not really froze—more like began to move
**veeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeryyyyyy
sloooooooooooooowwwwwwwllllllly.**

TJ had seen this before and wasn't worried. Until the beam was reversed, everything would zoom past Dorie so fast that she couldn't see or hear it.

Now there was just that other little matter to attend to.

"WHY IS THERE A RIVER OF CHILI IN MY HALLWAY?!" TJ yelled.

"This is no ordinary river of chili," Herby said. He stuck his fingers into it and gave them a lick. "Here, Tuna, would you like a taste?"

"Thank you, Herby. I don't mind if I do."

"Guys?" TJ asked.

Tuna took a taste. "Hm, you're right, Herb—this isn't ordinary chili."

"Guys?!"

"I didn't think so."

"In fact I'd recognize it anywhere."

"GUYS!"

They both turned to TJ as the chili was now oozing around her knees.

"Where's it coming from?" she demanded.

"Why, from that portal right over there," Tuna said. He pointed to an opening that floated at the other end of the hallway. An opening that chili

plop . . . plop . . . plop-ed

out of like a chunky waterfall.

"Apparently your talk with Bruce Bruiseabone made quite an impression," Tuna said.

"What talk?"

"When you asked him to forgive and help us."

"He did this?" TJ sputtered. "You call this help?"

"I call it Texas chili made by a housewife in the future," Herby said as he gave his fingers another lick.

"He's bringing this in from the future?" TJ asked.

"Absotootley," Herby said. "Why else would he use a time portal?"

Tuna explained, "He knows we can't travel into the future to retrieve it ourselves, so he brought it back to us."

"Pretty cool dude."

"I told you he could be nice," Tuna said.

"You never said that."

"I most certainly did."

"Did not."

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“Guys?”

“Did too.”

“Not.”

“GUYS!”

They both faced TJ.

She pointed at the flowing chili. “How do we stop it?”

“First we must determine if we have enough,” Tuna said.

“How much is enough?”

“Oh, I’d say a cup, maybe two—wouldn’t you agree, Herby?”

“Yes, I would, Tuna.”

“Two cups?!” TJ tried to stay calm, but it’s hard staying calm when Texas chili has risen to your belly button and is starting to

blorp...glop...splop

down the steps.

“So how do you turn it off?” she demanded.

“No sweat, Your Dude-ness,” Herby said as he floated toward the portal. Only then did TJ notice the portal’s giant zipper. (Little details like that can be hard to notice when your house is being overrun

by certain food groups.) "Are you sure we got enough, Tuna?"

"Hm," Tuna said as he looked down at the chili rising toward TJ's shoulders. "I always like to be prepared."

"Tuna!" TJ cried.

"Well, all right," he said. "I believe we have enough, Herb."

"Okeydoke." Herby reached for the zipper, gave it a good, firm pull, and

ZIPPPPP-ed

it shut.

Of course, there were a few remaining

glugs

and

glops

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as the last of the chili fell to the floor. But eventually it stopped and everything returned to normal.

Everything except 5,322 gallons of Texas chili in the middle of TJ Finkelstein's hallway.