

Sixteen racers. Four prizes. Who will win and who will lose?





IMAGINATION ISLAND

←→ RACE TO ECHOES EDGE ←→



PRAISE FOR RACE TO IMAGINATION ISLAND:



'Bursting with incredible ideas and edge-of-your-seat action, Race to Imagination Island is a cannon-blasting, explosive whirlwind of fun.'

Jennifer Bell, author of *Magicalia*

'Pacy, funny, gloriously inventive and perfectly pitched for kids.'

Abi Elphinstone, author of *The Unmapped Chronicles*

'The most fun you can have sitting down unless you're riding on a cawhawk.'

Chris Smith, author of *Kid Normal*

'One of the most joyful books I have read . . . The only problem with Imagination Island is that you never want to leave.'

Jenny McLachlan, author of the *Land of Roar* series

'Brilliant, bonkers and visually spectacular. An incredible world of pure magical escapism.'

Laura Ellen Anderson, author of the *Amelia Fang*, *Rainbow Grey* and *Marnie Midnight* series

'A wildly inventive rip-roaring ride!'

Rashmi Sirdeshpande, author of *How To Change The World*

'Whipfast, thrilling and full of heart – the perfect escapist adventure!'

Ross Montgomery, author of *The Midnight Guardians*

'A brilliantly bonkers, ferociously fun, action-packed dive into the marvellously mad mind of Mel Taylor-Bessent.'

Jack Meggitt-Phillips, author of *The Beast and the Bethany*

'This book fizzes with creative energy.'

Joseph Elliott, author of *Nora and the Map of Mayhem*

'You'll LOVE racing to Imagination Island!'

Maz Evans, author of *Who Let The Gods Out?*

'A brilliantly engaging voice – kids are going to love this wild ride through Imagination Island!'

A fast-paced, fantastically fun adventure.'

Andy Shepherd, author of *The Boy Who Grew Dragons*

'The world beyond the lightstream is inviting, inventive and vividly imagined.'

Guy Bass, author of *Stitch Head*

'A wild and wacky race brimming with wonders, bursting with brilliance, and teeming with thrilling surprises around every corner.'

Jo Clarke, author of *Libby and the Parisian Puzzle*

'Brilliantly imagined, perfectly paced and so much fun!'

Justin Somper, author of *Pirate Academy*

'An exhilarating adventure, brimming with whimsical wonders.'

Nicky Smith-Dale, author of *Betty Steady and the Toad Witch*

'A riotously fun and colourful story guaranteed to entertain.'

Hannah Gold, author of *The Last Bear*

**For Mum, who always told me to believe in
dreams and the power of my imagination.**



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MEL TAYLOR-BESSENT
Illustrated by **ALESSANDRO D'URSO**



IMAGINATION ISLAND

AREA 2

WINDMILL WAY

CREATION CAVE

IMAGINATION OCEAN

BOUNCY
BALL BASIN

SHIVER
SPRINGS

STARDUST BEACH

SLEEPING
SWAMP

MYTHOS MAZE

FROST FOREST

AREA 1

PRACTICE PLAYGROUND

AREA 3



*'You are never too old to set another goal
or to dream a new dream.'*

– C.S. Lewis





INTRODUCTION

Many moons ago, an astronomer, a poet, a princess and a pirate stumbled into a magical land.

The astronomer observed the skies and stars.

The poet dreamed his visions to life in words.

The princess was an inventor with bold ideas and an eye for numbers.

And the pirate was an explorer of the deepest oceans and scavenger of the seas.

These four did more than just observe and dream and invent and explore. They *imagined* so deeply that real magic stirred within them. And they found themselves transported to a place where anything they thought of came to life.

They called it . . . Imagination Island. And they were its first four Protectors.

Others imagined their way to Imagination Island over the years. But time took its toll. All too soon, its Protectors grew old, and the magic was in danger of disappearing. And so a Race was devised, to ensure the island's survival. A Race to find four new Protectors.

The **SECOND** leg of that Race starts . . . NOW.



Chapter 1

A NEW CELEBRITY

“Tell us again, Luca!” Otis shouted, so enthusiastically he spat mashed potato across the table. “Tell us about Imagination Island!”

Luca laughed gently. His little brother Otis had been his shadow all week. He’d insisted on sleeping in Luca’s bed, on letting Luca choose their Friday night movie, and giving Luca extra helpings of pepperoni pizza and chocolate ice cream.

It was cute for a while, until Otis started pointing Luca out to the neighbours and shouting, “THAT’S MY BROTHER! THE ONE THAT WENT TO IMAGINATION ISLAND! DO YOU WANT HIS AUTOGRAPH?” Luca cringed at that.

Luca’s oldest sister Piper chucked a half-chewed chunk of bread at Otis’s head. “Do we have to listen to this again?” she complained.

Luca sighed. Standard Piper. If they weren't talking about *her*, she didn't want to talk about anything.

"Yes!" Otis shouted back. "You're just jealous that *you* didn't get to go to Imagination Island and travel on a skatetrain or fly a cawhawk to the top of a mountain!"

Piper sniffed. "Yeah, because those are *totally* the uncool things I'd bring to life if I was on a magical island."

Luca stared at his glass of water, his cheeks burning.

"I'd have imagined a mountain of chocolate," Luca's twin siblings Frankie and Felix said together.

"Or a tour of space!" added his other sister Ruby.

"Or free designer clothes, never-fading make-up and magic dust that makes your hair shine and not go frizzy in the rain," Piper said, keen to have the last word.

"I'll remember that for next time," Luca muttered, unimpressed.

Piper rolled her eyes so hard, they almost got lost in the back of her head. "It's so unfair that you get a 'next time,'" she said. "They should give other kids a chance to compete in the Race. Other kids that aren't so afraid of loud noises or big puddles."

"Hey," Luca's mum said, shooting Piper a look. "Dad finished work early so we could have a proper family meal, and you promised to make it through one dinner

without arguing."

Frankie pulled a face that made Ruby laugh and peas fly out of her nose. Felix turned his chair around and put his feet up on the windowsill. Piper ignored the *no devices at the table* rule and yanked her phone from her pocket.

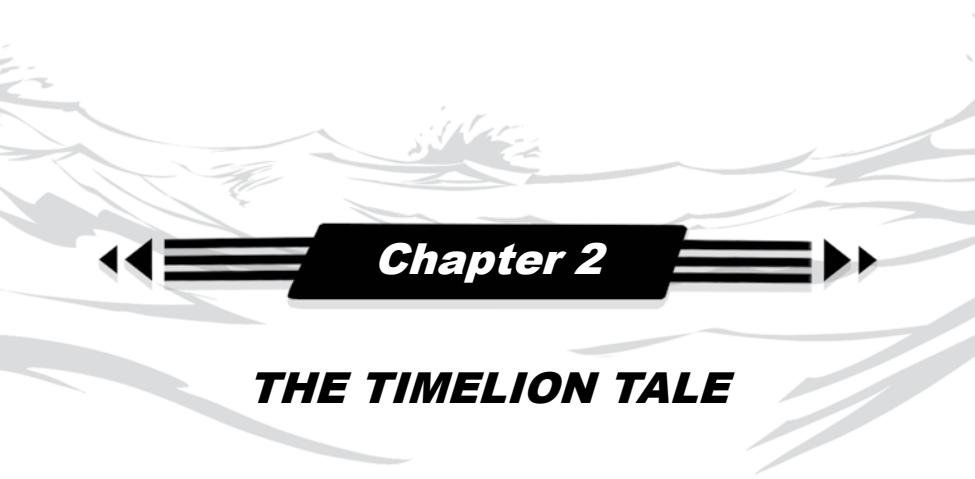
"Why are you all so mean?" Otis demanded, draping his arm around Luca's shoulders. "Luca's only got one more night here. Tomorrow he's going back to Imagination Island for the second leg of the Race. He might get lost in a jelly river or eaten by a spaghetti-haired monster. We might not see him for *weeks*!"

Luca wanted to shrink into his chair. Why was Otis making such a big deal about everything? Could he just stop treating him like some kind of celebrity?

"Tell us about Imagination Island again, Lulu. Don't leave any details out!" Otis urged.

"Yeah, *Lulu*," Frankie teased. "If this crazy island even exists."

Luca began to sweat as he felt everyone's eyes on him. What if he *had* made it all up? What if the Race *was* all a figment of his imagination? What if he had told everyone about a magical island that wasn't even *real*?



Chapter 2

THE TIMELION TALE

Otis climbed into bed with Luca and turned the Christmas lights on around his headboard. It was nowhere near December, but Luca was too old for a night light (according to, well . . . everyone), and he'd always found Christmas lights so cheerful and calming. He'd strung them around his bed on his sixth birthday and had never taken them down.

"Are you OK, Lulu?" Otis said, fluffing Luca's pillow for him. "Are you nervous?"

Luca was so nervous it felt like his brain was going to melt from the pressure. He nodded.

"But you're excited too?" Otis prompted. "To see your friends? Ali, Om aaaaand . . ."

"Fliss," Luca said.

The race itself felt fantastical and wild, but his

teammates had felt as real as his own heartbeat. Surely he couldn't have imagined them too?

"You'd like Fliss," he said, hoping his mind wasn't inventing imaginary friends again. "She's really good at gymnastics, loves blowing things up and leaps through the air like a ninja spider monkey."

"Cooooool!" Otis gasped. "And what about —"

"Actually, Oats, can we talk about something else?" Luca interrupted. "If I *do* go back to Imagination Island tomorrow, I should probably get some rest."

Otis nodded and snuggled in closer. "OK. Can you read me the story about the timelion instead?" He grabbed the old book from under the pillow and thrust it into Luca's hands

Luca stared at Otis's cheeky smile and puppy-dog eyes.

"Fine." He sighed. "If you promise you'll go straight to sleep after."

Otis punched the air in victory and laid his head on the pillow.

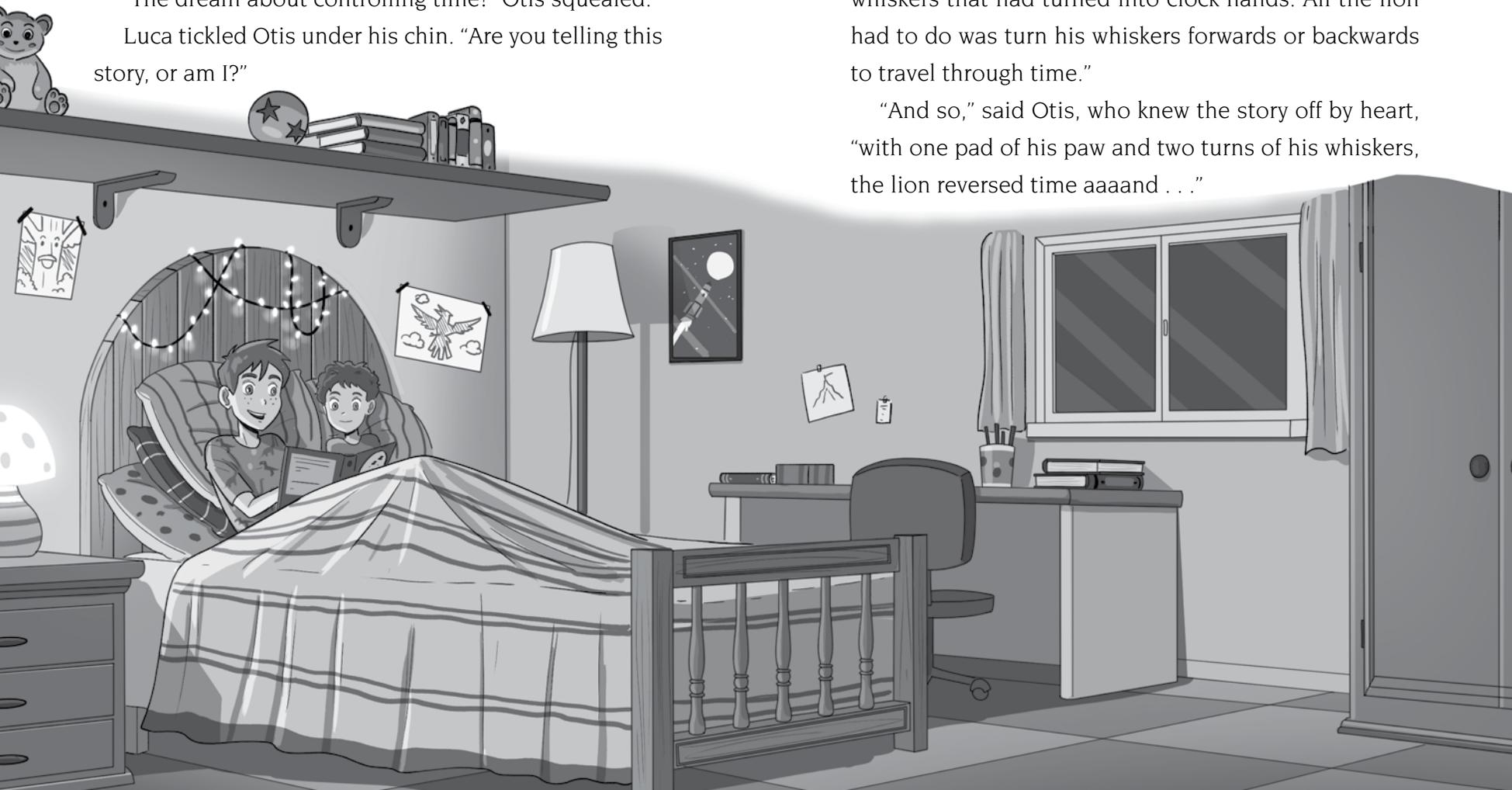
Luca opened the faded book. "Once upon a time, there lived a lonely lion who loved to sleep," he read. "He slept most of the day and most of the night, and when he was awake, he counted the minutes until he could sleep again."

He showed Otis the picture of the lion snoring.

"But this lion slept *too much*," Luca continued. "He barely ate, he missed every sunrise and sunset, and he didn't even have time to make friends. He slept so much, his dreams grew stronger and stronger. And one day, one dream found enough strength to become *real*."

"The dream about controlling time!" Otis squealed.

Luca tickled Otis under his chin. "Are you telling this story, or am I?"



"Youuuuu!" Otis squirmed, swatting Luca's hands away. "You! You! You!"

Luca waited for his little brother to get settled again.

"Where was I?" he said. "Oh yes . . . the lion woke up to find that his dream had come true. His mane had become a clock! With numbers around the edge and whiskers that had turned into clock hands. All the lion had to do was turn his whiskers forwards or backwards to travel through time."

"And so," said Otis, who knew the story off by heart, "with one pad of his paw and two turns of his whiskers, the lion reversed time aaaand . . ."



Chapter 3

THE PROMISE

“**T**he lion reversed time and saw his very first sunset,” Luca whispered. “Then he turned his whiskers a few more times and found himself under a sky filled with stars. Then he turned time back *even more* and felt rain on his fur, slurped water from the waterhole and played in the shade with some lion cubs.”

Otis held on to Luca’s arm, listening intently.

“The lion went back and back and back, seeing all the things he had missed,” Luca read on. “Until at last, he grew tired and he turned his whiskers forward again. But there was just one problem. He had been awake for so long, he had forgotten *how* to fall asleep.”

“This is it,” Otis whispered. “My favourite bit!”

“The lion tossed and turned for several hours,” Luca read. “Then he had an idea. He lay on a rock and focused

on his ticking whiskers. They moved forward, bit by bit, each second ticking gently in his head. *Tick, tick, tick.*”

Otis’s breathing grew heavier.

“His body relaxed and his head sank on to his paws,” Luca read on. “Then he closed his eyes and slowed his breathing. He started counting down. Ten . . . nine . . . eight . . . seven . . . six . . .”

Otis let out a gentle snore.

“And the lion finally fell asleep in three . . . two . . .”

Otis bolted upright. “LULU?”

Luca jumped. “You were nearly asleep!”

Otis looked serious and un-Otis-like. Even his big brown eyes had lost their sparkle.

“You know the timelion spent so much time travelling that he forgot how to fall asleep?” he said. “Does that mean you’ll forget about *us* if you spend too much time on Imagination Island?”

“I could *never* forget about you,” Luca said.

Otis looked at Luca with watery eyes. “You promise? Even if you’re having the BESTEST time?”

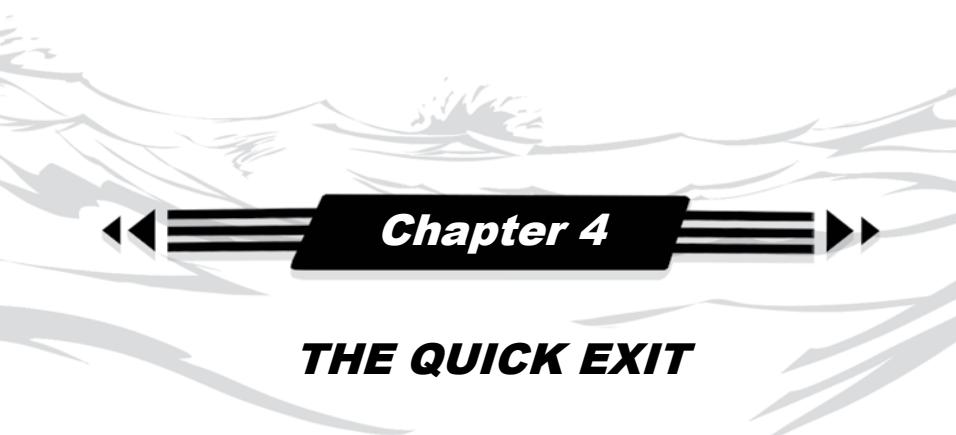
The fairy lights shone colourful dots around the room.

“Imagination Island isn’t as great as you think, Oats,” Luca said quietly. “It can be scary and dangerous. And it’s not just your dreams that come true – it’s your nightmares

too. There are traps and monsters, and some of the Racers will do anything to win."

Otis scrunched his forehead. "Then why are you going back?"

Luca had no idea.



Chapter 4

THE QUICK EXIT

Luca woke with a foot in his face.

Otis hopped out of bed and ran into the bathroom.

"Let's make breakfast together, Lulu!" he shouted.

"Mum bought stuff for pancakes with sprinkles and syrup. She wants to give you a special last meal before you go back to Imagination Island."

He flushed the toilet, then resumed his questions.

"What sort of food do you eat on the island? Do you have to cook it yourself? Is there an Imagination Island supermarket? And are you *sure* the lightstream is coming today? What time? Can we take photos with you before you go? Can we –"

Otis ran back into Luca's bedroom, hauling up his pyjama trousers.

"LUUUUUUCA?" he called, glancing at the empty bed.

"Where are you?"