
THE
UNLIKELY DIARY OF
PRINCE KAL
THE ALIEN

Books by Ross Welford

THE DOG WHO SAVED THE WORLD

THE KID WHO CAME FROM SPACE

THE 1,000-YEAR-OLD BOY

TIME TRAVELLING WITH A HAMSTER

WHAT NOT TO DO IF YOU TURN INVISIBLE

WHEN WE GOT LOST IN DREAMLAND

INTO THE SIDEWAYS WORLD

THE MONKEY WHO FELL FROM THE FUTURE

TIME TRAVELLING WITH A TORTOISE

THE UNLIKELY DIARY OF PRINCE KAL THE ALIEN



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CB
HARPERCOLLINS
CHILDREN'S BOOKS

First published in the United Kingdom by
HarperCollins *Children's Books* in 2025
HarperCollins *Children's Books* is a division of HarperCollins*Publishers* Ltd
1 London Bridge Street
London SE1 9GF

www.harpercollins.co.uk

HarperCollins*Publishers*
Macken House, 39/40 Mayor Street Upper
Dublin 1, D01 C9W8, Ireland

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ISBN 978–0–00-854480-5

Ross Welford and Harry Briggs assert the moral right to be identified as the author and illustrator of the work respectively.
A CIP catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

Typeset in 11pt leading 16pt by Avenir Book
Printed and bound in the UK using 100% renewable electricity at CPI Group (UK) Ltd

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NORTHUMBERLAND SOCIAL SERVICES

JUVENILE CASE REPORT

NO. L8990.1

DATE: 22 August 20—

NAME: Prince Kalimonka Evergreen Wildgore of the Imaginaria Forests

AGE (IF KNOWN): 11 (estimate)

HEIGHT: 61 cm. This is uncommonly small for a boy of his age. He seems uncomfortable with adults of average height, calling them 'giants'.

SEX: Male

ADDRESS: The Wooden Palace, Imaginaria

PARENTS: Her Imperial Highness the Empress Hay-Lee

ETHNICITY: Unknown

RELIGION: Unknown

LANGUAGE: Speaks English slightly strangely.
Unidentified accent.
Uses slang rarely and inaccurately.

NUMERACY: Good, although he cannot tell the time.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES: Very small in stature.

NOTES:

'Kal Prince' was found by a member of the public, Mrs Evie St Michael of Bamburgh, at dawn on the beach at Budle Bay. She said he was wet, 'like he'd been swimming fully clothed'. He appeared confused and claimed he had arrived in the 'Anywhere Cabinet'.

Kal will remain with a certified foster family, under the supervision of Northumberland Social Services, until his identity is established.

Investigations by official agencies are ongoing. A medical examination has revealed no health concerns, despite Kal's very small stature.

PROLOGUE

23 August, 2.10 p.m.
County Hall, Berwick-upon-Tweed

A man and a woman sat behind a desk in a white room with a low ceiling, facing a very small boy. They passed a note, in scratchy handwriting, between each other.

'Just write the truth, Kal,' the woman had told the boy a little earlier. She had iron-grey hair and glasses perched on the end of a sharp nose. 'And draw it as well if you want. There's a pad of paper and some pens there. Take your time.'

So Kal had.

Slowly, carefully – for he was not used to writing English, and in his little hands the pen felt enormous – Kal scrawled the strange words on the lined paper, amazed at his own ability to understand them. He covered two sides, and it was this that the woman – who had introduced

herself as Mrs Thorn – now read, squinting at the tiny letters.

NOTICE OF FRENDLY INTENTIONINGS TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERNING

May it be known that I, Prince Kalimonka Evergreen Wildgore of the Imaginaria Forests, am recently arrived in your land, and I come in pieces.

It is my dooty and honour to reekwest and reekwire, in the name of my mother, Her Imperial Highness the Empress Hay-Lee of Imaginaria, that you extend to me every assistance and proteckshun as may be ~~necesy~~ ~~ness~~ needed for the durashun of my stay and – when the time aryses – to assist me in my safe and swift return to my homeland.

So, kindly take me to your leeder.

Thank you in advance for your speedy co-operayshun.

Have a nice day!

Mrs Thorn peered at the boy, then back to the piece of paper, which she held cautiously, as though it might suddenly bite her.

On the other side of the sheet he had written more.

ABOUT ME

I am the only one son of the Empress Hay-Lee, the good, kindly and fair ruler of the small land what we are calling Imaginaria. I exspeck you have heard of it. It is far long away, beyond the Flaming Deserts of Mapopopo and the Ice Caves of Highly Probable Doom.

I have seen twenty-two flood seasons.

As the son of an empress, I am a prince. You may call me Prince Kal.

My mother is guided by a great wizard, the mighty and powery Lord Feliquoz, who is also my teacher. It is him what rebuilt the Anywhere Cabinet in which what I arrived in.

I travelled with an injured oofus called Gree. On arrival, Gree ran off, terry-fried, carrying the Fortune Crystal, without which

what I cannot return to Imaginaria.

I rekwire your assistance to retrieve:
1. Gree the oofus,
2. the Fortune Crystal and
3. the Anywhere Cabinet.

That is the short vershun.

Signed,
Prince Kalimonka Evergreen Wildgore of the Imaginaria Forests

The pair behind the desk sighed in unison, loudly. The man tutted and raised his hand to rearrange a straggly clump of hair over his nearly bald head, then he looked up to stare at 'Prince Kal' through tinted spectacles for a long time.

Sitting, he was a very small, straight-backed figure and his feet, in clompy toddler's trainers, came nowhere near the floor. He wore new jeans, rolled up at the ankles, and a plain white T-shirt – much too big for his tiny frame. Above this was a perfectly round head, pale brown and hairless.

He stared back at them defiantly with wide-spaced eyes of a vivid tangerine-orange. Now and then there was a slight wobble of his chin, but his

mouth would tighten again with determination, as if not to show his fear.

Mrs Thorn leaned forward towards him and gave a smile that did not reach her eyes. The boy shivered.

'Kal,' she said, pointing to the paper. 'This is very inventive. I bet you do well in creative writing, yes? But it's not the *truth*, is it? For a start, what's this "twenty-two flood seasons" business? You're not twenty-two, are you? And you're very . . . erm. That is, your height is less than, erm . . .' She coughed with embarrassment.

The boy interrupted in a high voice. 'Are you trying to say I'm very small? On the contrary, madam, it is you – indeed, everyone in this ghastly land – who is enormous.'

The two people exchanged glances before the man tutted again and smoothed down his hair.

Finally, he snapped, 'Look, Kal. Why don't you just tell us where you're from and how you ended up soaking wet in Budle Bay at dawn? You're not in any trouble.' He paused then added, 'Yet.'

The boy cleared his throat but said nothing. This was not the response he had been expecting when he'd been brought here. He had so many questions.

Who were these huge people?

Where exactly was he?

What sorcery had powered the metal beast-on-wheels he had been inside?

'What about your dad, Kal? Do you live with him?' asked the woman.

Kal took a deep breath through his nose, in preparation to speak in a language that still felt strange in his mouth.

'My father died like a hero in the violin, erm . . . *violent* struggle against the Salivator Alligaytors. I was very young. The head of the beast what swallowed him is mounted above my mother's throne.'

The man behind the desk uttered a squeak of frustration, fury . . . it was hard to tell. A quiet discussion began, which Kal could not understand well, for he was still absorbing the language that they spoke here.

'Kal,' said Mrs Thorn eventually. 'Kal!'

His wide-spaced orange eyes did not blink often and this made Mrs Thorn nervous. She spoke quickly. 'I wish you would stop messing around with us, Kal. Please. Right now we are authorising you to stay with a foster family, temporarily. Is that clear?'

'I must speak to someone in charge, please.

And you shall address me as Prince Kal,' said the boy.

'I am in charge, ah . . . *Prince* Kal. I am Deputy Head of Family and Youth Services for Northumberland County Council.'

'No, I mean *properly* in charge. Who is your leader? The one in the castle.'

She indicated the man on her left, who had folded his arms tightly and who kept moistening his thick lips like a snake tasting the air.

'That will be Mr Stephen Hepworth, here. My boss. But as for a castle—'

Kal's high voice became louder. He jumped down from the chair, knocking it over. 'By the eyes of the Great Rain-catcher, I mean the leader of your army! Or perhaps your king? Do you even have such a thing?'

Mrs Thorn shook her head. 'No, Kal. The king is . . . well, he is far too busy. You see—'

'Do you even know who I am? I am Prince Kal of Imaginaria!' His voice had become pleading, and he stopped himself and took a breath. 'Do I have your assurance that you will act immediately upon the instructions I have given to you?'

Mrs Thorn held up the piece of paper headed 'Notice of Frendly Intentionings'. 'These instructions?'

'Of course.'

'Yes, Kal. We will consider very carefully the requests you have made and we will make suitable arrangements for you.'

The boy's shoulders relaxed, then he said. 'Very well. I demand that you take me to your leader for a consultation!'

'Fine, Kal, but right now you'll go with your foster mum, Debbie MacDonald. She'll take you to Pret for a sandwich.'



Prince Kal's Diary

Part One

CHAPTER ONE

DAY ONE IN INGLE-LAND

By the Great Shoes of Sharoon, a mighty disaster has befallen me! Lord Feliquoz's Anywhere Cabinet has delivered me to Ingle-land, a place of hairy giants with very powerful and mysterious magic that I do not understand.

I have heard of Ingle-land, of course. My tutor, the great sorcerer Feliquoz, would tell me tales of his magical travels to other faraway lands. Once, maybe four hundred floods ago when he was a young man, he came here.

He described it as a terrifying place with enormous people, who rode on top of monsters called 'horsers'. There were loud sheeps who grew clothes on

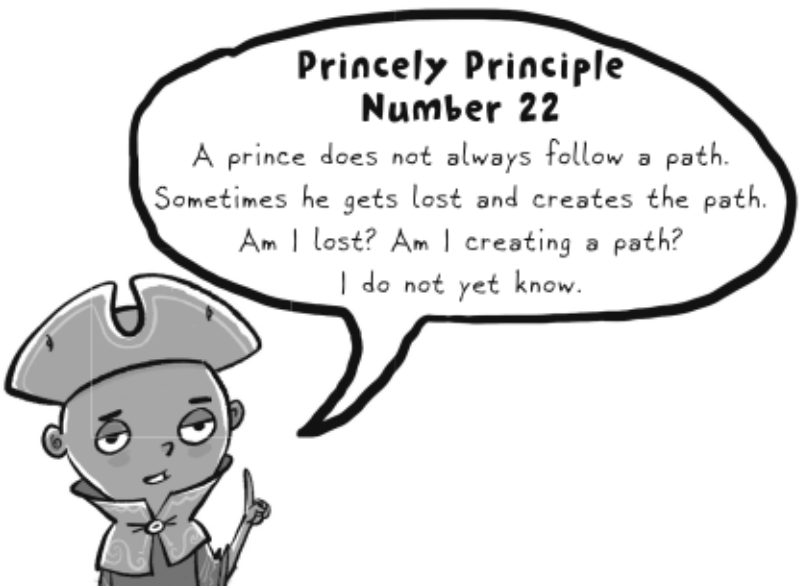


their backs, and the people ate something called 'cayk'. (He did not stay long. They accused him of being a 'goblin'.)

I have been given a book of paper and a stick filled with ink. It is here that I shall record the events of my time in Ingle-land, so that when I return I may report back to Mother and Feliquoz on my time here.

Truly this is a world with mechanical marvels and a knowledge of magic that far surpasses our own, although I wonder why Feliquoz did not mention cars or mobile fones or electrickery?

At times like these I try to gain comfort by remembering passages from *The Book of Princely Principles*, a slim volume that Feliquoz has long encouraged me to memorise.



Let me gather my thoughts.
There. That did not take long.

SOME EARLY OBSERVATIONS OF INGLE-LAND

1. I have been taken to the stone-built dwelling-box of my 'foster mum', a giant hairy woman called Debbie MacDonald.
2. I have been stripped of my princely robes (and silken underwear!) and forced to wear the garments of these strange-smelling people.
3. Oh, my moons, the food! Debbie took me to their Pret House, a large chamber with magical lights everywhere and shelves full of their food in little boxes. Much of it seemed to involve the dead, charred flesh of some poor ani-mule or other, such as a 'beef' or a 'bacon'. I told them as certainly as I could: 'I have no idea what sort of ani-mule a beef is and I have no desire to consume one, whether or not it has been near a flame.'

   I added (perhaps a bit too loudly), 'Go to the Ice Caves of Highly Probable Doom if you think I will be deceived by your dastardly deception!' but Debbie thought I was being funny and she laughed, which was mightily disrespectful if you

ask me. (I am a prince! A small amount of basic respect is hardly too much to ask, is it?)

In the end, Debbie took me to her dwelling-box and gave me something called Ebola Serial: crisp, warty things that hissed and popped when a white liquid was poured on them. I made Debbie eat some first (you cannot be too careful) and then, when she did not die, I tried to eat them too with a ridiculously large spoon until they gave me a smaller one.

4. The language here is called Ingle-lish: a dreadful, ear-peeling racket of *wha-wha-wha* and *foh-foh-foh*. Still, it is not too difficult to master and I expect I will soon be spooking and righting it without missed steaks.
5. I may actually dye of the stink in Ingle-land. Breathing only through my mouth helps. The people here cannot even know how rotting they smell. Everywhere is the stench of them: their hair, their revolting salty 'sea'. I saw two people touching each other with their lips and nearly threw up my crispy warts when I thought about it.

And finally . . .

6. A NOTE ON THE EMBER: The Ember here

appears to be very weak indeed. (I have felt it once only: a weak glow coming from the woman who found me on the beach, but I was so confused and fearful that I may have been mistaken.)

Perhaps it is all for the good. When I return home at last – as I surely will – they shall find me strengthened, defiant, unbowed and still . . .

A MIGHTY PRINCE OF HOME AND NOT AT ALL SCARED!

And now someboddy is coming up the stares to my chamber so I will stop writing.

The Ember

Since I began to walk, Lord Feliquoz has been instructing me in the ways of the Ember.

Feliquoz's reedy, raspy voice comes back to me without effort as I sit here righting these words.

'Your Young Excellency,' he said once after he had made an anfangle seed sprout in his closed palm, 'these are not tricks.' He spat the word out as though it had a sour taste. 'If you want demonstrations of tricks, then I suggest you take a trip to the Dry Woods with Minkle the Useless.

She can introduce you to tricksters who will fool you into believing almost anything. They can make a scarf change colour, or an empty pocket yield up gold pieces. They may even seem to tell your future, but trust me, young Kal, they are cheats, fit only to entertain children and drunkards. And Minkle.'

I puffed out my cheeks (the ones on my face) and said, 'Sure. But what does the Ember do?'

'It is a power, my young lord. It is the link between all living things, a glowing spark that never expires but which may be fanned into a mighty flame.' He strode up and down his cluttered workshop, his draggyn-scale cape billowing behind him. 'Like all flames it can illuminate, and it can provide warmth.' He stopped and turned. 'But used carelessly it can also . . . destroy!'

He had raised his arms and widened his eyes when he said 'destroy', almost shouting the word for maximum impact. His jewelled skullcap flew off his head, and his cape knocked over a glass jar on a shelf, spilling its contents, which sizzled on the wooden floor.

I sighed. 'But what does it do?' I persisted.

Feliquoz growled with frustration, replaced his cap and then stared hard at the spilt potion. The sizzling stopped, and the liquid seemed to crawl

back into its jar, which then righted itself on the shelf.

Feliquoz breathed out and said, 'If you know the power of the Ember, no explanation is necessary. If you know it not, then no explanation will ever be sufficient.'

So that is quite clear then.

He saw my frustrated expression. 'Most importantly, my young lord, without the Ember, my Fortune Crystal will never work.' As if from nowhere (although I think it was in a pocket of his cape), he withdrew a palm-sized disc, which glinted yellow in the sun. Then it vanished again (and that was a trick, I am almost certain). He grinned.

'No more questions, Kalimonka. 'Tis time you fed the livestock.'

Coming up the stairs was George, the oldest and easily the smelliest of my captors. He is the husband of Debbie, which makes him my 'foster dad'. Like everyone else here (and unlike everyone in Imaginaria), George has hairs all over him, at least on the places visible. Lots on his head, his face, in his nose and ears, on his forearms and hands, springing out of the top of his 'tee-shirt'.

He brought me something to look at: one of the

black, glass wrecked angles (rectangles? I am still learning Ingle-ish) that everybody seems to have.

'There you go, little fella,' he said.

I replied, 'Where?'

'Where what?'

'Where am I going?'

He smiled uncertainly, revealing huge yellow teeth. 'Just, erm . . . have a look at this.' He put the rectangle in my hands and touched it with his finger. And then – by the wobbling winds of Wox! – a picture appeared.

A real, moving picture, there in my hands!

I yelled and dropped the thing on the floor. It landed with the picture side facing up, still moving and talking. I backed away, keeping a wary eye on this contraption. It was not a drawing or a painting but a *real tiny man's head*, actually speaking!

George laughed a little as he picked it up. 'It's all right, mate,' he said. 'It doesn't bite! Look, I'll play it from the start.'

I suspected some sort of clever puppetry, but George was doing nothing with his hands and he was definitely not making the voice himself, like the entertainers in the Dry Woods with their funny dolls. So I held it cautiously and I listened to what the talking head – a man with reddish hair – was saying.

'Northumbria Police are appealing for help to

identify a boy who was found here on the beach near Bamburgh Castle, Northumberland, early this morning. Although only the height of a three-year-old, the boy is believed to be around eleven years old. He was found – alert and in good health – by a swimmer, who called the police. I spoke to Mrs Evie St Michael, the woman who found him.'

Then there were two heads! The second one was the woman I had met on the beach when I arrived. How did she get in there?

'It was just after dawn when I saw him. The poor little fella was sitting hunched up on the wet sand. Soaked through, he was, wearing some sort of dressing gown.'

Excuse me – '*poor little*'? As a prince, I am far from poor, and in my own land I am considered slightly above average height for my age. And '*some sort of dressing gown*'? That was one of my finest, most elaborate gowns of state! The one in draggyn's-egg blue with the high collar and the hand embroidery. The one that I have not seen since it was taken off me and replaced with the dreadful rags I have now.

Missus Evie St Michael was still talking on the black thing: 'I spoke to the lad, but I couldn't get no sense out of him. He kept sayin' he was a prince of somewhere, and he'd arrived in a cabinet, and askin' if I had seen someone called

Tree, who was a doofus. That's when I called the police. I thought he might be unwell.'

(It is Gree, and she is an oofus. More of her later.)

'He was ever so small. His skin was sandy brown, and when he took his hat off, I saw he had no hair anywhere on his head. Completely bald. His eyes were . . . well, they was orange, wasn't they?'

George grinned and slipped the talking-head device into his pocket. 'You're famous, Kal!' he said. 'But we're all dying to know what *really* happened.'

All right then.