

Adventures in  
**ODYSSEY**

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY PRESENTS

**18**

# THE **IMAGINATION STATION**



## **Trouble on the Orphan Train**

**MARIANNE HERING**



# ***Trouble on the Orphan Train***

**BOOK 18**

**MARIANNE HERING  
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In honor of Charles Loring Brace (1826–1890),  
visionary for the Children’s Aid Society,  
and Rev. Thomas H. Hagerty, a modest man  
who rode the Little Rock Express 7  
on January 31, 1874

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WHITS END



# ***Prologue***



At Whit's End, a lightning storm zapped the Imagination Station's computer. Then the Imagination Station began to do strange things. It took Patrick to the wrong adventure. The machine was also giving the wrong gifts.

At the workshop, Mr. Whittaker was gone. Eugene was in charge.

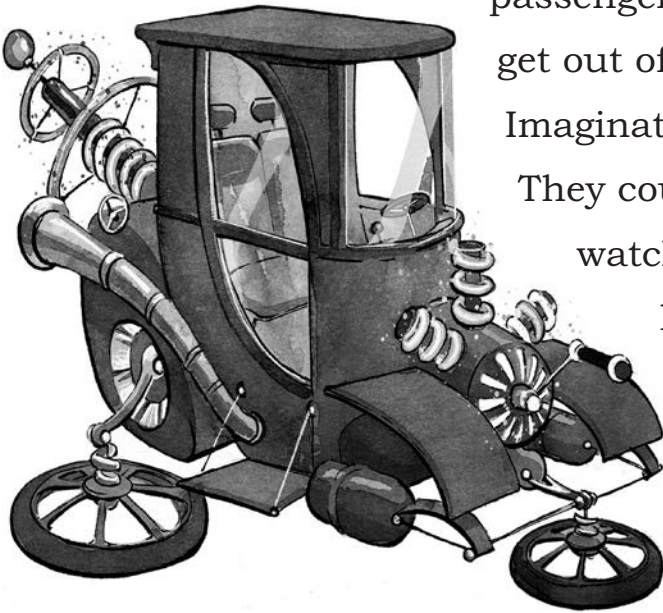
Beth uncovered an older version of the Imagination Station. It looked like a car. But



## TROUBLE ON THE ORPHAN TRAIN

this machine had some unusual features. It had lockdown mode. Lockdown mode took passengers to a new place. But the

passengers couldn't get out of the Imagination Station. They could only watch what was happening.



At the end of book 17, *In Fear of the*

*Spear*, Eugene was missing somewhere in history. Beth and Patrick were trying to find him. They didn't know which Imagination Station to ride in.

Here's what happened:

## *Prologue*



Patrick couldn't decide which one to pick.

"Let's go in the helicopter one," Beth said.

"No," Patrick said. "It's still damaged from the lightning strike."

"Well," Beth said, "why not the car one?"

"That one's worse. Eugene got in it with me, but he disappeared," Patrick said.

"The Imagination Station sent you on different adventures!" Beth said. "It's never happened before."

"I don't know where or when Eugene went," Patrick said.

Beth said, "Think, Patrick. What happened?"

Patrick closed his eyes to help him remember. "Right before Eugene disappeared, he said something weird," Patrick said.

"Tell me," Beth said.



## ***TROUBLE ON THE ORPHAN TRAIN***

Patrick looked worried. “I heard Eugene say, ‘Stop the train!’ He sounded scared.”

“So these are the choices,” Beth said. She held up her index finger. “Option one, get into a broken machine.”

Patrick looked at the helicopter Imagination Station. It had taken him to Pompeii by mistake. And it had taken Beth here instead of back to Whit’s End.

Beth held up a second finger. “Option two, get into an Imagination Station that lands on a moving train.”

“Or worse, on the train track,” Patrick said.

Patrick looked at the car machine. It had been working fine until this last adventure. But Mr. Whittaker had programmed it for the government to use. Maybe it had hidden features that were causing problems.



## *TROUBLE ON THE ORPHAN TRAIN*

“Maybe we should just stay here,” Patrick said. “Mr. Whittaker will come find us.”

“When?” Beth asked. “No one knows the day he’s coming back.”

Patrick sighed. “Let’s take the car one,” he said. “It has a lockdown mode. If it’s too dangerous, it won’t let us out.”

“And maybe it will take us to Eugene,” she said.

Patrick shrugged. “If it doesn’t separate us too,” he said.

The cousins sat in the comfortable black seats. They shut the doors.

Patrick gave the steering wheel a big spin. Colors flashed on the windshield. They whirled like a kaleidoscope.

Patrick heard the shriek of a train whistle. And suddenly everything went black.



# ***The Train Station***



Patrick watched the Imagination Station vanish. He quickly looked around at his new surroundings.

He was standing on a wood platform. He saw a nearby sign on a wood post. It was shaped like an X and said RAILROAD CROSSING.

Then he remembered he wasn't alone. At least he shouldn't be.

He turned around and saw a small

## *TROUBLE ON THE ORPHAN TRAIN*

gray wood building. It had a door and two windows. A wood sign was on the side of the building. It said Hogan Mountain.

But there was no Beth. He shouted her name twice. No one answered. He shouted for Eugene. But again, no one answered.

A mountain stood in the distance. Train tracks and dirt roads crisscrossed the area. Patrick saw nothing else except countryside. Pines, oaks, and rocky hillsides spread out before him.

Patrick looked down. His shoes were black boots. They laced up to his ankles. He had on black knee-high socks and black knickers.

He groaned. "I don't like knickers," he whispered to himself. "They're too short for pants and too long for shorts."

He stretched out his arms. He was

## *The Train Station*

wearing a jacket that matched the knickers. He was glad for the jacket. The air had a chill to it.

He felt his neck. A bow tie. “And bow ties look goofy,” he said louder.

Patrick moved toward the building. The building was obviously empty. There were posters nailed to the wall near the door. Most of the posters said WANTED at the top. All of them showed faces of scowling men.

One fellow had a straight nose with a thick moustache. The governor of Missouri would pay a ten-thousand-dollar reward for him, dead or alive. The outlaw’s name was Jesse James.

An off-white envelope caught Patrick’s eye. It had the words “To





## *TROUBLE ON THE ORPHAN TRAIN*

Patrick.” The words were handwritten in black ink. He pulled the envelope off the wall. It was sealed.

Just then Patrick heard the faint whistle of a train.

Patrick couldn't wait to open the envelope. He started to tear it. But the train whistle blew again. This time it shrieked much louder.

He would have to wait to read the letter.

Patrick rushed to the platform. The train was approaching the station. Smoke gushed from the engine's smokestack.

The engine car rolled past Patrick slowly. It had a large number seven on the front.

The engineer stuck his head and an arm out the window. He wore a gray cloth cap. He waved at Patrick.

Patrick waved back.

## *The Train Station*

Then the fuel car slowly rolled past. It was loaded with wood.

A long railcar was next. It said Adams Express Company on the side. The express-car door was open.

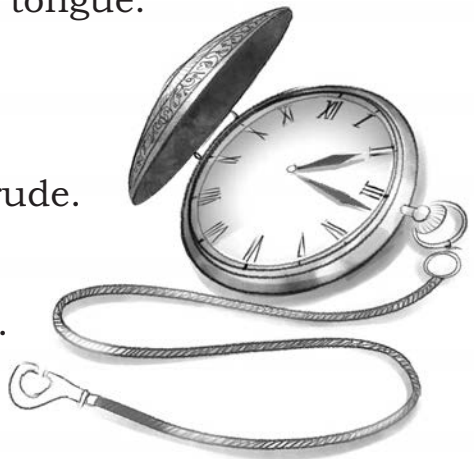
The train came to a full stop.

The passenger cars had lots of windows. Patrick saw faces looking out at him. Most people were smiling. *Could Beth or Eugene be on that train?* he wondered.

One boy in the last car stared at Patrick. The boy stuck out his tongue. Then he kept staring.

Patrick scowled. He thought the boy was rude.

A door on the passenger car opened. A tall, bearded man stepped off the train.



## TROUBLE ON THE ORPHAN TRAIN

He checked his pocket watch. His watch was gold too.

The man's blue uniform had gold buttons. He wore a matching blue cap.

"Hello," the man said to Patrick. "I'm Conductor Alford. May I punch your ticket?"

Patrick's heart sank.  
*Ticket?*

Patrick felt in the pockets of his knickers. There was something in his right pocket. He



## ***The Train Station***

pulled it out. He found three pieces of hard candy, but no ticket.

Patrick felt in his jacket pockets. Nothing was there except the letter. He gulped. “I didn’t know I needed a ticket,” he mumbled.

The conductor frowned. He said, “Young man, you can’t ride the train alone. Where are your parents?”