Helping your children choose books they will love

I reading

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

Opening extract from

The Forbidden City

Written by

John McNally

Published by

HarperCollins Children's Books

All Text is Copyright © of the Author and/or Illustrator

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

First published in Great Britain by HarperCollins *Children's Books* in 2015
HarperCollins *Children's Books* is a division of HarperCollins*Publishers* Ltd,
1 London Bridge Street, London, SE1 9GF

The HarperCollins website address is: www.harpercollins.co.uk

1

Copyright © John McNally 2015

ISBN 978-00-0-752165-4

John McNally asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of the work.

Typeset in Berylium by Palimpsest Book Production Limited,
Falkirk, Stirlingshire

Printed and bound in England by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

Conditions of Sale
This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form, binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser. All rights reserved.

FSC™ is a non-profit international organisation established to promote the responsible management of the world's forests. Products carrying the FSC label are independently certified to assure consumers that they come from forests that are managed to meet the social, economic and ecological needs of present and future generations, and other controlled sources.

Find out more about HarperCollins and the environment at
www.harpercollins.co.uk/green

FSC™
www.fsc.org

MIX
Paper from responsible sources
FSC™ C007454

FILE NO: GNTRC 9447549 [redacted] -OP/DRAKE~∞

TOP SECRET - MOST CLASSIFIED - RESTRICTION ULT9

FILE ABSTRACT: NARRATIVE ACCOUNT OF OPERATION FORBIDDEN CITY 操作故宫

(.1) BASED ON DEBRIEF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED BY [redacted], TECHNICAL SURVEILLANCE DATA FROM 来源 中国技术情报报告# [redacted] SUPPLEMENTED BY [redacted] UPDATED [redacted] (.2) TO REFLECT TESTIMONY AND INTERROGATION OF [redacted]. FULL OPERATIONAL DETAILS. DECISION-MAKING PATHWAYS. FULL PSYCHOLOGICAL/EMOTIONAL CONTEXT.

ACCESS: PRIME MINISTER/CABINET SECRETARY/SECRETARY OF STATE DEFENCE/SECRETARY OF STATE FOREIGN/CHAIRMAN JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF/CHAIRMAN GNTRC.

LIFETIME ACCESS: A. ALLENBY/ ∞DRAKE.

STUDY ACCESS: LEADERSHIP AND TACTICAL COMMAND LEVEL 009.

FILE MOST SECURE - NOT TO LEAVE REGISTRY

ONE

September 28 23:58 (GMT+1). Hook Hall, Surrey, UK.

Midnight in the heart of England. The witching hour. In the woods an owl screeched, then ripped through a mouse, beak blood-wet in the moonlight.

The great old house of Hook Hall stood empty. It had not been used as a home since the day it had been requisitioned by Her Majesty's Government to become the top secret headquarters of the Global Non-governmental Threat Response Committee[1]. It lay now at the heart of a complex of modern laboratories and military installations

[1] Aka the G&T, formed by an alliance of international powers in 2002 to deal with extraordinary threats to global civilisation.



that spread around it in the darkness like the still, silent courtiers of a grand old lady.

The silence did not last. A low hum penetrated the dark and along the great drive the largest of the buildings began to glow.

Inside the cathedral-like space, the massive Central Field Analysis Chamber (CFAC), power surged and a great stone circle of particle accelerators, each the size of a shipping container, came to life.

"My Henge," as Dr Al Allenby, the dishevelled genius behind the machine, called it. "Everyone should have a Henge."

From the windows of a laboratory overlooking the henge a very small boy sent up a mad private prayer.

Finn (full name Infinity Drake) was about to turn thirteen. He had sand-coloured hair that grew in several directions at once (like his father's) and deep blue eyes (like his mother's). He had been orphaned two years before. He was into gaming, mad science and most lethal pastimes, like any other boy. But unlike any other boy, thanks to getting caught up in Operation Scarlatti[2] the previous spring, Finn was now only 9.8mm tall.

With a deafening electrostatic crack and hum, white lightning began to spin like candyfloss around the core, the hoop of accelerators whipping up a cyclone of pure energy. With one last push they would form a perfect subatomic magnetic field.

Perched above the Henge, crammed into his cockpit command

[2] See FILE NO: GNTRC 9437549-OP/BLAKE~∞ TOP SECRET: an attempt by transnational terror czar D.A.P Kaparis to blackmail the G&T into handing over the secrets of the Boldklub process by releasing a doomsday bioweapon, the Scarlatti Wasp, and threatening Armageddon. The attempt was thwarted by a military kill team shrunk to hunt down the wasp, and by the heroic actions of Infinity Drake.

pod, Dr Allenby (known to all as Al), recited the snatch of poetry he used to remember the crucial sequencing equations he kept secret from the world –

"But at my back I always hear
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity..."

(... adding in his head: *where B is acceleration and E opens and closes brackets and where all other vowels are disregarded*).

Several calculations ran at once inside his brain and in an instant he typed a series of numbers into his control terminal... *WHOOOOOOOMMMM!*

The spun lighting became a continuous arc, then, with a flash, the Hot Area was created – a throbbing orb of white light within which the distance between the nucleus of any atom and its electrons would be reduced, thus shrinking all matter to a fraction of its original size. Called the Boldklub[3] process, it was a remarkable feat of physics that only Al really understood.

"OH YEAH, BABY!" he cried, incongruous given the surroundings and the presence of so many distinguished scientists, soldiers and political functionaries.

His boss, Commander James Clayton-King, Chairman of the Global Non-governmental Threat Committee, sighed and briefly lowered his eyelids.

[3] Named after the Danish football club Akademisk Boldklub, who Nils Bohr, the father of subatomic physics, used to play for.

It had taken months longer than Al had anticipated to reach this point and there had been many mistakes along the way, but finally he thought they'd got it right. In a few moments he would be able to prove that he could shrink a living mammal, then reverse the process and successfully return it to its normal size. Alive. Countless tests had been run with countless objects – up to and including living plants.

All that remained was a live mammal test.

A white mouse had been selected, sedated and encased in monitoring devices.

It had been named 'Fluffy'.

It was for his nephew Finn, and his three Operation Scarlatti team mates, that Al had worked so hard day and night in the hope of being able to return them to their normal size.

A technician up in the Control Gallery, on a command from Al, started the conveyor that fed items into the Hot Area. Fluffy moved along the belt and slipped into the perfect light.

Finn watched, transfixed, as the Hot Area rippled and the white mouse was reduced to 'nano' scale, just a 150th of its original size, just like Finn. Next, the process would be reversed, bringing Fluffy back to normal 'macro' scale. If it worked, the four nano-humans, including Finn, would be resized next.

They watched the show together, hopes looping the loop.

"Come on, Fluffy," whispered Captain Kelly of the SAS from where he stood beside Finn – six foot six of muscle and scar-tissue, currently reduced to 13mm, and so convinced the experiment would

work he'd booked a flight to Scotland where he planned to spend the next few weeks sailing around the Western Isles accompanied by a crate of whisky.

"Kick it, Fluff!" agreed 11mm-high Delta Salazar from behind her Aviator shades – the best and coolest pilot in the US Air Force. She'd grown as close to her nano-colleagues as she had to anybody in her life, but she couldn't wait to fly back home to see her younger sister, Carla.

Even 10mm-high Engineer Stubbs, ancient and given to doom and gloom, had boiled an egg in case things went well (party food would just upset his stomach).

"Reverse the polarity!" cried Al.

Finn's heart beat like a drum. He could not wait to be big again, to open a door, to hug his stupid dog, Yo-yo, to kick a ball around with his best friend Hudson. To—

Suddenly everything went purple as his view of the action was eclipsed by a gigantic, well-preserved lady of sixty-four in matching top and slacks.

"Now, does anybody want more Welshcakes?"

"GRANDMA! GET OUT OF THE WAY!" Finn screamed.

Nobody in the universe had a more uncanny ability to interrupt than Finn's grandma – and Al's mother – Violet Allenby. She was drawn like a magnet to hoover in front of any given TV and always asked too loudly who was on the phone.

"Oh, am I in the way?" she said, towering over them like a colossus.

