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

Viper's Nest (Astral Legacies)

written by

Gary Murray

published by

Quest

All Text is Copyright © of the Author / Illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

US INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

REFERENCE: **www.thevipersnest.org**

CLASSIFICATION: **TOP SECRET**

RISK CATEGORY: **VITAL TO HUMANKIND**

TO AGENT: HAWK EYE

On the authority of the president of the United States, you are hereby appointed to carry out the courses of action detailed in GIO special agent Major Jack Strong's report (attached).

Major Strong has infiltrated the evil organisation known as Stealth. He has discovered a way to disrupt their quest for global domination, and this is where you, agent Hawk Eye, must take over.

Please be aware that your mission is classifed as TOP SECRET and must be commenced without delay. The future of the world is in your hands.

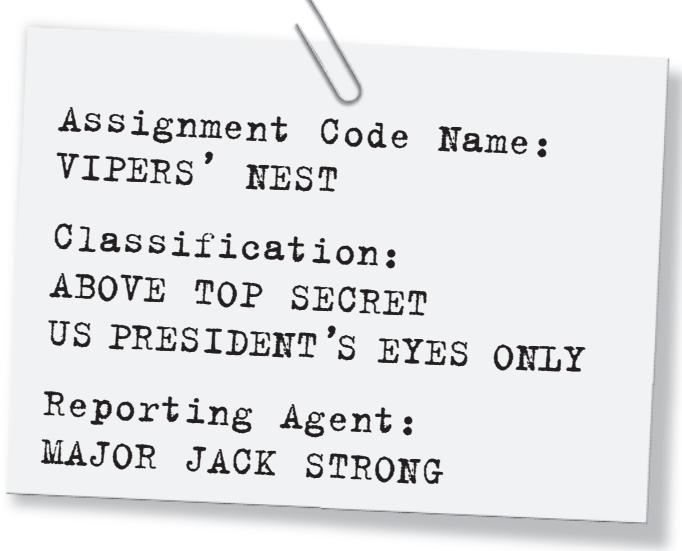
You must access the enemy's mission control through the website discovered by Major Strong: www.thevipersnest.org. Then carefully read Strong's report, focusing your attention on the various codes he has uncovered. They all have to be cracked, starting with the four-digit access code to the website. Later on, you'll need to identify which two codes, when linked together, will completely destroy Stealth's mission control.

Unless the enemy's mission control is sabotaged, any damage Major Strong inflicts on Stealth will be futile. A regulation GIO code book can be found at the back of this dossier. The codes it contains are known to be used by active Stealth agents.

Good luck with your mision.

By authority of the president of the United States.

Authorisation POTUSA 101



CAPTURE

What I'm about to write is a true account of my mission so far. I am confident that it is an accurate record of events as they happened, and I have given dates and times when I have been in a position to know them. I've included every code I've encountered while working undercover within Stealth – my photographic memory never lets me down.

It all began when I dumped the *Venom Rising* dossier as planned and made a run for it. Stealth operatives were spread out all over the airfield like a swarm of locusts, so it was just a matter of time before they had me in their clutches. The weakness engulfing me signalled the end was rapidly approaching. The future of the world lay in my plan to infiltrate Stealth by being taken prisoner and working inside the enemy organisation. This I have achieved, as you will find out from the following report.

It all began as I headed for the western edge of the old airfield. The derelict officers' mess was an ideal spot to let the enemy discover just what was left of me. I prayed that some trigger-happy goon wouldn't be tempted to execute me on the spot ... it was my greatest fear.

I collapsed in a heap just inside the entrance to the officers' mess. Suffering from dehydration and with blood seeping from the bullet wound in my arm, I waited for the inevitable. It was about 15.45 when the first enemy operative burst in. Through a fog of pain, I heard someone shout: *'Over here, it's him. He looks unconscious.'*

Someone else, obviously in charge, replied: *'Remember, orders are to take him alive.'*

The next thing I recall was being propped up and given some much-needed water, then a voice speaking in my ear: *'At last we meet, Major Strong. You've led us quite a merry dance. Let's see what you've got to say for yourself.'*

A few moments later, I was carried outside and placed on the ground, while someone spoke into a hand-portable radio.

Blue Leader *– 'Stealth Control, this is Blue Leader. We have Major Strong. Where do you want him delivered? He's in a bad way.'*

It took a few minutes for a reply to come through, but what I overheard gave me tremendous satisfaction.

Stealth Control *– 'Blue Leader from Stealth Control. We have a serious problem with our mission control system. Someone has attempted sabotage through the website. We are partially disabled at present. A new mission control website is being established as a matter of urgency under www.thevipersnest.org. The access code is* ***S/N/A/T****. Meanwhile, take Strong by helicopter to Camp X-ray. Patch him up, and then transfer him to the Snake Pit for interrogation. We need to know everything he knows about us. Keep him alive for the time being.'*

Experience tells me that Stealth's Access Code Encryption System should allow progression into their new mission control website.

At least someone had found the *Venom Rising* dossier and taken immediate action. Stealth's mission control had clearly been disrupted, but it appeared a new website would soon be up and running. A reply must have been sent by Blue Leader, but I didn't hear it ... probably because I'd passed out.

When consciousness returned, I found myself inside a noisy Chinook helicopter. Someone had put me on a life-saving drip, and I got the feeling I was being 'fattened up for the kill'.

After an hour or so, we landed at a location surrounded by hills. It's hard to say where, but it looked to be South Wales, a place with many secluded, but now deserted and neglected, military installations – all ideal hiding places for the enemy.

I was dragged from the Chinook and hauled into a room where a medicated smell hung in the air. This encouraged me to think it must be some kind of medical facility. A wild-looking man in a white coat tended to my injuries and saw that I was fed and watered – he was silent throughout. Three uniformed Stealth officers, armed with AK47 automatic rifles and side arms, entered the room and ordered me to move outside to reboard the waiting Chinook. For the first time since being captured, I spoke: *'What next, gentlemen?'*

The senior of the three-man escort replied: *'You, Major Strong, are going to spend some time in the Snake Pit.'*

By now I had recovered enough to kick-start my brain into operation. As the helicopter lifted off, I mentally improvised a course of action to see me through. My plan was simple – survive interrogation and convince the enemy I could be more valuable to them alive than dead. All I had to do was:

1. ***Convince them I had a lot to tell;***
2. ***Give the impression I was more seriously injured and sick than I actually was;***

3. Somehow persuade them to supply me with a steady stream of food and water;

4. Allow them to believe I could be 'turned' – no chance!

We flew on and on; the journey seemed never ending. I wondered where the Snake Pit was located ... Then it came to me – part and parcel of interrogation methods is to move prisoners around, sometimes for hours at a time. This is designed to confuse them, and makes the job of extracting information a lot easier.

Eventually, we landed. It was impossible to assess how much time had passed. To make matters worse, a hood had been placed over my head and my wrists had been manacled behind my back. I was dragged along a cold corridor, then strip-searched and thrown into a cell. As the door slammed shut, a Stealth radio message echoed around the building:

Stealth Control – *'Blue Leader from Stealth Control. We are abandoning the sea fort. We have discovered underwater charges on the primary legs of the structure. We are transferring to backup location code reference* ***AERA 74 ADAVEN****.'*

This was frustrating news for me. Even if my men activated the charges, there would be nothing left to destroy.



This code must be cracked and input on Stealth's new mission control website. The location of Stealth's backup HQ must be revealed.

It looks like it's written in Reverse Code.

DESTINATION UNKNOWN

Exhaustion overtook me and I fell asleep, for how long it is impossible to say. But what I do recall is the abrupt awakening! I transferred from a deep sleep to being fully awake in a millionth of a second – not surprising really, after hearing amplified church bells roaring away inside the cell. This was it – time for pain, disorientation and the numerous other discomforts that are associated with interrogation.

The door burst open and two large men dressed in black stomped into the cell and snarled at me: *'On your feet. Let's go.'*

With that, they placed the hood on my head again, then manacled my wrists in front of me. They strode swiftly ahead, dragging me along like a rag doll. I stumbled behind them as my manacled wrists, linked to a chain, were pulled by one of the interrogators. One of them sounded English. *'Let's see what you've got to say for yourself, Major Strong,'* he said.

I remember going into 'meditation mode' in the hope my martial arts training would protect me. The art of chi-do had never let me down in the past.

I felt as if I was being dragged along endlessly, until cold air eventually brushed my face and I could smell

aviation jet fuel. This led me to believe I would be going on another journey. Sure enough, I was hauled and pushed up some steps to the entrance of what I believed to be a twin-engined jet, perhaps a Gulfstream. I was strapped into a seat, with my ankles chained to a holding bar on the floor of the aircraft.

Seconds later, a whooshing sound signalled the closing of a pressurised door (presumably the entrance to the aircraft) followed by the roar of jet engines and a bump as we taxied out to the holding point. We remained at the hold until a voice came over a cabin loud speaker requesting the crew to take positions for take-off: *'Pilot to crew. Confirm prisoner secure and adopt take-off positions. I require the destination code.'*



Will Stealth's mission control website reveal my fate?

Try the Destination Cipher to find out.

I felt a movement quite close to me, as though someone was turning the pages of a book. Then a voice replied to the pilot's transmission: *'Prisoner is secure. The destination code is* ***SENPAIKT****. We are ready for take-off.'*

With that, the aircraft surged forwards and was quickly airborne, but I had no idea where we were headed.

My senses told me I was being guarded by at least two Stealth operatives and that, in addition to the pilot and navigator, there were a couple of other crew present in the aircraft. It was a steep climb out, and

we levelled off after several minutes. This, along with the pressure changes in my ears, led me to believe we were at about 30,000 feet, which indicated a long flight.

In an attempt to collect useful information, I pretended to be asleep. This ruse worked, as Stealth personnel in the cabin started talking to one another:

Voice 1 *– 'I'll be glad to get back to base. This prisoner escorting is not for me: I prefer interrogation.'*

Voice 2 *– 'I know what you mean. But let's be serious, it's better than external guard duty.'*

Voice 3 *– 'Cool it, you two. No talking in the presence of a prisoner.'*

Voice 1 *– 'Yes, sir.'*

That little outburst revealed I was in the presence of an officer, plus two enlisted men or junior ranks. While there was very little to be done to improve my situation, it was useful to know who and what I was up against.

At this point I guessed they were taking me abroad to a Stealth interrogation centre ... previous mention of the Snake Pit sprang immediately to mind.

After several hours of flight time, the smell of food filled the cabin. From the general activity, it was obvious that my escorts were enjoying a meal and refreshments. This whole procedure, of course, was intended to destroy my resistance prior to interrogation.

I was really hungry, so thought I'd ask nicely: *'Come on, a little water and food is not unreasonable. After all, you want information.'*

I then remained silent, and hoped. I was certainly in need of water; food would have been a welcome extra. The result of my pleadings was a slap around the face followed by someone throwing water over my head. The verbal response was rather ominous: *'Don't worry, Major Strong. Where you're going, you'll need more than food and water to survive.'*

That was it for the rest of the journey – no food, no water, no toilet – a situation I had experienced many times before and was able to deal with in my own special way ... through chi breathing.

