

MAJOR and MYNAH

TARANTULA TERROR

Karen Owen

Illustrated by Louise Forshaw



For my brother Ian, who loves spiders (not)

-KO

For my best friend and other half, Chad

-LF

With thanks to Paradise Wildlife Park in
Broxbourne, Herts.



Super Perceptive Undercover Detectives

Agent Files

Name:	Callie Major
Age:	Nearly 10
Code name:	CM1
Detective skills:	Spying Keeping secrets Remembering names and interesting facts
Talents:	Riding a bike Super sprinting Removing huge hairy spiders from the bath



Super Perceptive Undercover Detectives

Agent Files

Name: Grace Ambrose

Age: Nearly 10

Code name: GA1

Detective skills: Code breaking

Map drawing

Calculating numbers

Talents: Basketball

Bike riding

Reaching chocolate hidden on
the top shelf



Super Perceptive Undercover Detectives

Agent Files

Name:

Bo Mynah

Age:

??? (Bo said it's a secret)

Code name:

Spy in the Sky

Detective skills: Spying

Tailing suspects

Mimicking voices and sounds

Talents:

Flying

Eating (a lot)

Pooing (especially on suspects)



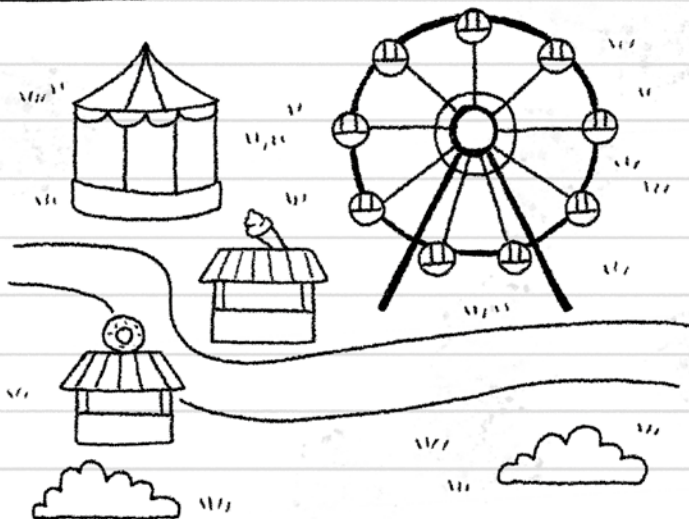
Roll Up! Roll Up! The Funfair's in Town!

SPUD CASE FILE: #111

Agents: Spy in the Sky

Mission: To report on the travelling funfair.

Location: Village playing fields.



‘Spy in the Sky is taking a long time to complete his secret mission,’ said Grace, checking her watch.

My stomach twitched with worry. Grace was right. Bo had been gone for ages but the playing fields weren’t very far away. Our village was small and it only took us eleven minutes to walk there, even when we were dawdling. So a mynah bird like Bo (aka Spy in the Sky) should get there much more quickly. I strode over to my bedroom window and used my binoculars to look for him. He was bigger than a robin but smaller than a crow, which made it tricky to pick him out in the sky.

Grace chewed the end of her pencil, which she always did when she was thinking.

‘Our village is too small for Bo to get lost,’ she said.

‘He’s probably got distracted again.’ I sighed. It happened a lot, especially if food was involved. There was likely to be lots of it at the funfair. Hot dogs, chips, candyfloss, ice cream... My mouth watered as I imagined it.

We waited for Bo for a bit longer.

And a bit longer still.

Then I couldn’t wait anymore. I leaned out of my bedroom window and shouted, ‘Bo! Bo!’

No answer.

‘Bo! Bo!’ I shouted again.

But I didn’t hear any response and nor did Bo appear. I frowned and my heart thudded a bit faster. Where was he? What was he doing?

Usually the playing fields were used for football and games but once a year the

travelling funfair set up there. For a week, it made our village feel like a place out of a movie!

Grace and I were desperate to go there as soon as possible and as many times as possible. So was my little brother, Luke. But Mum and Dad said we had to wait until next Saturday. Today was Sunday, so that was AGES away. That's why we'd launched Bo's surveillance mission. He could tell us all about it so we'd be able to plan in advance which rides to go on.

Suddenly, there was a whoosh of wings and Bo landed back on my bedroom windowsill. The yellow stripes on his small black head flashed like a beam of sunlight.

'Thank goodness! We were worried,' I said, gently stroking his warm head.

'Fear not! Mission accomplished!' Bo declared.

Grace looked puzzled. ‘What did he say?’

‘Sorry, Grace. I forgot you can’t hear him.’

It was the biggest secret of all the big secrets in the world that Bo and I could hear and talk to each other. For real! It only happened when I was wearing the Slugs, which was my nickname for my hearing aids. I called them that because when I first wore them it felt like something disgusting had crawled into my ears. Sometimes I still hated the feel of them but I couldn’t hear so well without them. And I could hear things no one else could. All Grace would have understood was **Chirp! Chirp!**

‘Here is my Spy in the Sky report,’ Bo announced. As he ran through what he’d spotted, I repeated it back to Grace so she’d be able to write it down in our highly confidential SPUD notebook.

'I spied a hot dog stand. An ice cream van. A burger van. A stall selling doughnuts: lots and lots of delicious doughnuts.' Bo had a dreamy look on his face.



'Bo, focus on the rides,' I said.
He made a birdy huff. 'I don't know their names. I'm a talking bird, not a reading one.'

‘That’s OK. Describe them instead,’ I said. I tried to sound calm but this was way too exciting.

‘There’s a thing with cars bashing into each other,’ he said. ‘A pirate ship. A ghost train. A big wheelie thing and flying chairs, and a train that whizzes around and up and down.’

Grace’s eyes shone. ‘A rollercoaster!’

We rushed downstairs and begged Mum to let us go to the funfair today but she said no, again. ‘Wait until the weekend when Dylan, Aunt Becky and Uncle Evan come to stay,’ she insisted.

‘That’s six whole days away!’ I moaned.

‘Be patient,’ said Mum. ‘You’ll have plenty of things to do.’

I sighed but Mum was right. Today was the first day of Grace’s epic Easter holiday

sleepover. This was because her parents were with her teenage twin brothers while they played at a basketball competition on the other side of the country. So we decided to try being patient together but it wasn't going to be easy!



Being patient turned out to be totally and utterly impossible.

We'd planned to do loads of things together, especially practising our SPUD codes. Grace was great at inventing them (and she's also amazing with numbers, which makes her the best person to sit next to in maths!). We have learnt to read words backwards and we use flashes on our torches to communicate. Now we're

learning BSL, which stands for British Sign Language. It's a way of communicating by signing using your hands and face. You have to learn what all the different signs mean. Some people whose hearing loss is much greater than mine use BSL all the time. Grace and I know the alphabet and how to count to twenty. Now we're learning simple phrases like 'hello' and 'how are you?'

But our plan didn't work out, for lots of reasons.

Monday

We had to go to the DIY superstore with Dad, where he spent forever pondering which colour paint to buy.

Do you know how many shades of white there are? Zillions! Chalky White, Milk White, Cream White, Fresh Coconut

White, Winter Bloom White, White Feather! The last one was our favourite because it reminded us of Bo.

‘This is sooooo boring,’ Luke moaned and threw himself on the floor.

‘As boring as watching paint dry?’ said Dad, and he chuckled loudly so we all knew it was a dad joke.

Luke stamped his foot and demanded we go to the funfair. Unsurprisingly, Dad said no.

Tuesday

Mum announced we were going to do some spring cleaning. Luke shouted, ‘boing boing boing’ and bounced everywhere. He’s five, so he burst into tears when he found out it meant there’d be lots of cleaning and tidying and no springing about at

all. Grace and I got the job of tidying the cupboard under the stairs. Mum said it was messy because people (she means everyone in this family except her) open the door and throw stuff in, instead of putting it away properly.

The good news was that I found my missing bicycle pump. The bad news was that we disturbed a spider. It scurried out of the cupboard, along the hallway, and onto Mum's slipper which she was wearing at the time.

'GET IT OFF!' she shrieked, waving her foot around like it was on fire.

Mum isn't good with spiders. Or pets of most descriptions. I'm still amazed she let me keep Bo.

'It's just a spider,' I said.

'It can find somewhere else to live.' Mum shuddered.

I cupped my hands around it and carried it to my den at the bottom of the garden so it could live there. Then I sniffed at the air. Grace sniffed. We looked at each.

‘Doughnuts,’ Grace announced. ‘I can definitely smell doughnuts.’

I tilted my face up and sniffed again. The sweet sugary smell of doughnuts was so deliciously close I could almost taste them.

‘You’re imagining it,’ said Mum when we told her.

She’s very boring and adult-y sometimes.

Wednesday

We’d had to buy a new tyre for the car. We were forced to sit in a cold and smelly waiting room watching a boring TV show about pensions while the mechanic fixed it. When Dad finally drove us home, we

passed the village playing fields. Music thumped loudly from the funfair.

‘Before you ask, no we can’t stop off at the funfair,’ said Dad.

We all sighed loudly.

When we arrived back, Bo was still asleep in his open cage. He liked sleeping (and eating) but it was unusual for him to be so tired that he didn’t wake up when I came home. For the past three nights, he’d been out so late that I’d had to leave my bedroom window open for him when Grace and I went to bed. Today he’d even missed breakfast, which he’s never done before! I asked him where he’d been all evening and, first of all, he pretended he couldn’t hear me but then he was very vague and muttered something about doughnuts.

‘Bo’s behaviour is quite suspicious,’ Grace declared.

I groaned. ‘I think he might have found a secret food stash.’

Luke barged into my bedroom without knocking. He was wearing his Spiderman costume and mask and had armed himself with a light sabre. He jabbed it right at my face.



I glared at him. ‘You need to knock before you come in!’

‘Mum and Dad want to speak to all of us downstairs,’ he announced, like it was the most important message ever.

‘What about?’ I asked.

‘Don’t know.’ Luke whooshed his light sabre around again and then ran off.

Grace smiled. ‘Your brother’s very cute.’

‘I’ll swap him for one of your brothers. At least they don’t pretend to be superheroes all the time.’ I groaned.

‘Deal!’ she replied.

We were still laughing together when we got downstairs to find Mum and Dad standing in the kitchen with serious looks on their faces. Quickly, I ran through what I might have done wrong or forgotten to do. Dishwasher? No, Grace and I had

loaded it together after lunch. I hadn't broken anything since Luke and I had a pretend fight on the sofa and knocked a lamp off the table. Oh no! Had Bo eaten another one of Dad's plants in the garden?

'So,' said Mum, 'we know that you haven't had the most exciting Easter holiday so far.'

Hello? That was THE understatement of the year!

'Dad and I have decided that we're going to have a day out tomorrow and you three can choose where we'll go,' said Mum.

'Really?' I could hardly believe it.

Luke jumped up and down like a bouncy ball. 'The funfair! The funfair!' he sang.

'NO!' Mum and Dad said together.

They left us alone to decide where we'd like to go.

Luke wanted to go to WaterWorld, which

has three swimming pools and a wave machine. It was a great plan except he's too small for some of the slides. I liked the idea of the seaside but it would take FOREVER to drive there and the weather was a bit chilly for building sandcastles and eating ice cream. So we went with Grace's suggestion.

'The wildlife park?' said Mum, when we told her. 'You mean ... animals?'

Grace nodded excitedly. 'There's wildlife there that we all like. Ferrets and goats for me. Snakes for Luke. Spiders for Callie.'

Mum and Dad looked horror-struck.

'I don't like the idea of spiders,' said Mum.

'I don't like the idea of snakes,' said Dad.

'But you promised!' said Luke, stamping his feet. 'And we've already done the boring things.'

Mum and Dad looked at each other. Then they nodded reluctantly. 'A promise is a promise,' said Mum.

Luke punched the air with his light sabre. 'Yes!'