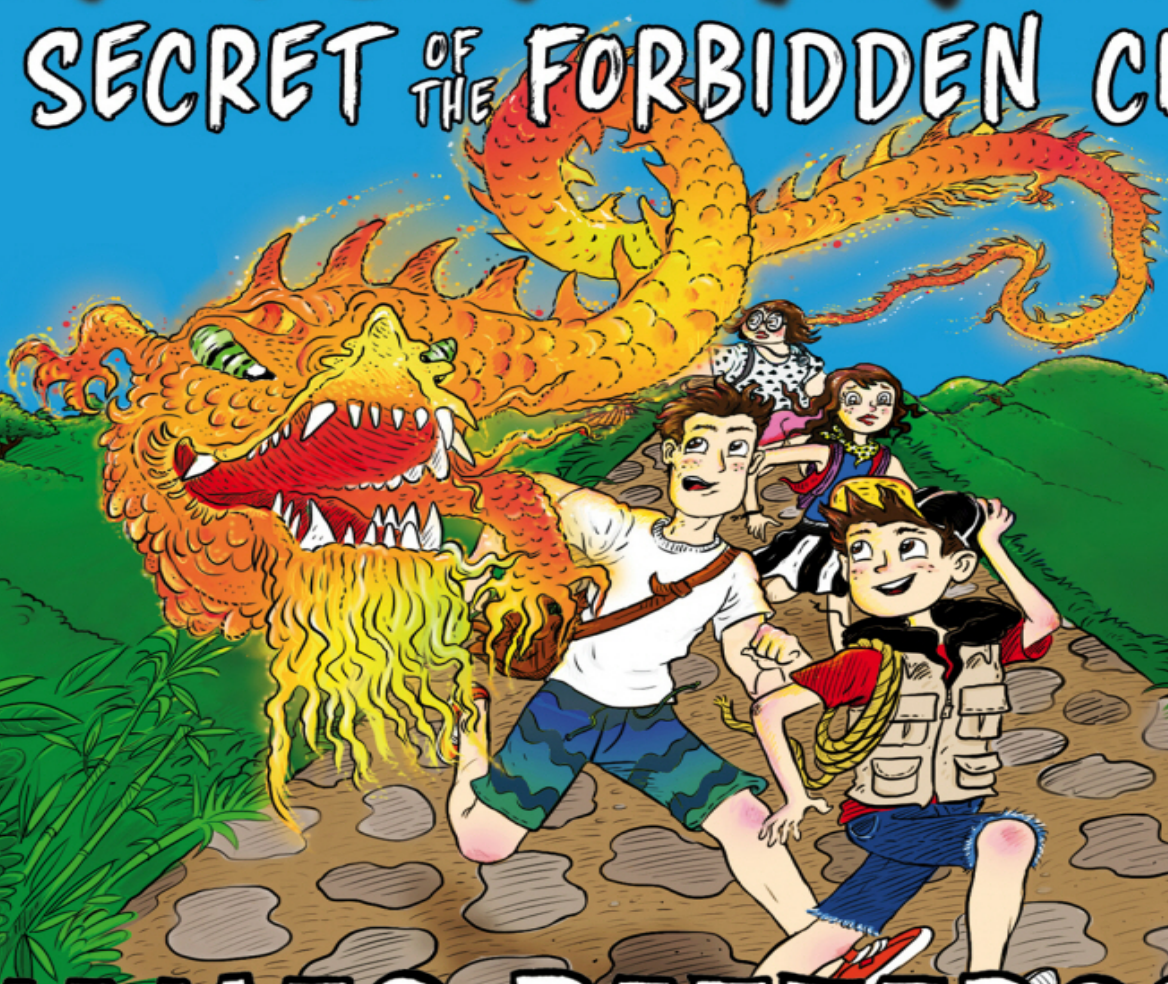


FROM THE AUTHOR OF

MIDDLE SCHOOL

TREASURE HUNTERS

SECRET OF THE FORBIDDEN CITY



JAMES PATTERSON

AND CHRIS GRABENSTEIN

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Sneak Preview

Copyright

About the Book

The Kidds - treasure hunting family *extraordinaire* - are heading to China!

Bick and Beck Kidd are desperately trying to secure the ancient Chinese artefact that will buy their mother's freedom from renegade pirates. But when the kidnappers force them to locate an even greater treasure - priceless paintings stolen by Nazis - the Kidds must rely on their own cunning and experience to outwit the criminals, all while their mom's life is on the line.

About the Author

JAMES PATTERSON is the internationally bestselling author of the highly praised Middle School books, *Kenny Wright: Superhero*, *House of Robots*, *Homeroom Diaries*, and the I Funny, Treasure Hunters, Confessions, Maximum Ride, Witch & Wizard and Daniel X series. James Patterson has been the most borrowed author in UK libraries for the past eight years in a row and his books have sold more than 300 million copies worldwide, making him one of the bestselling authors of all time. He lives in Florida.

Also by James Patterson

Treasure Hunters series

Treasure Hunters (*with Chris Grabenstein*)
Danger Down the Nile (*with Chris Grabenstein*)

Middle School books

The Worst Years of My Life (*with Chris Tebbetts*)
Get Me Out of Here! (*with Chris Tebbetts*)
My Brother Is a Big, Fat Liar (*with Lisa Papademetriou*)
How I Survived Bullies, Broccoli, and Snake Hill (*with Chris Tebbetts*)
Ultimate Showdown (*with Julia Bergen*)
Save Rafe! (*with Chris Tebbetts*)
Just My Rotten Luck (*with Chris Tebbetts, to be published October 2015*)

I Funny series

I Funny (*with Chris Grabenstein*)
I Even Funnier (*with Chris Grabenstein*)
I Totally Funniest (*with Chris Grabenstein*)

House of Robots series

House of Robots (*with Chris Grabenstein*)
Robots Go Wild! (*with Chris Grabenstein, to be published December 2015*)
Kenny Wright: Superhero (*with Chris Tebbetts*)

Daniel X series

The Dangerous Days of Daniel X (*with Michael Ledwidge*)
Watch the Skies (*with Ned Rust*)
Demons and Druids (*with Adam Sadler*)
Game Over (*with Ned Rust*)
Armageddon (*with Chris Grabenstein*)
Lights Out (*with Chris Grabenstein*)

For more information about James Patterson's novels, visit
www.jamespatterson.co.uk

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TREASURE HUNTERS

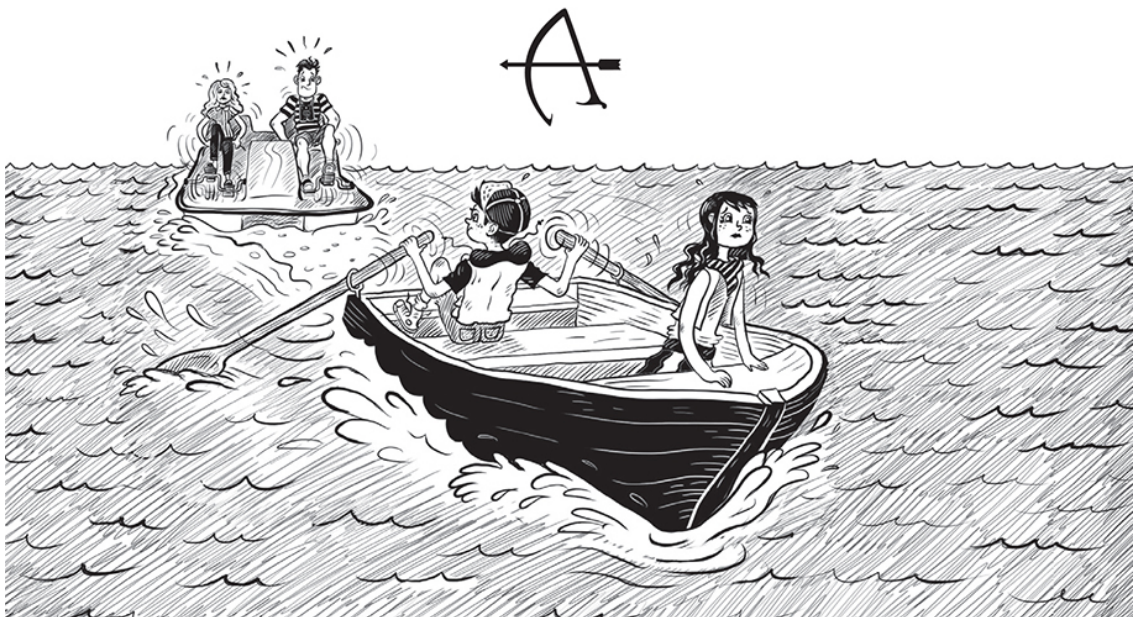
SECRET OF THE FORBIDDEN CITY

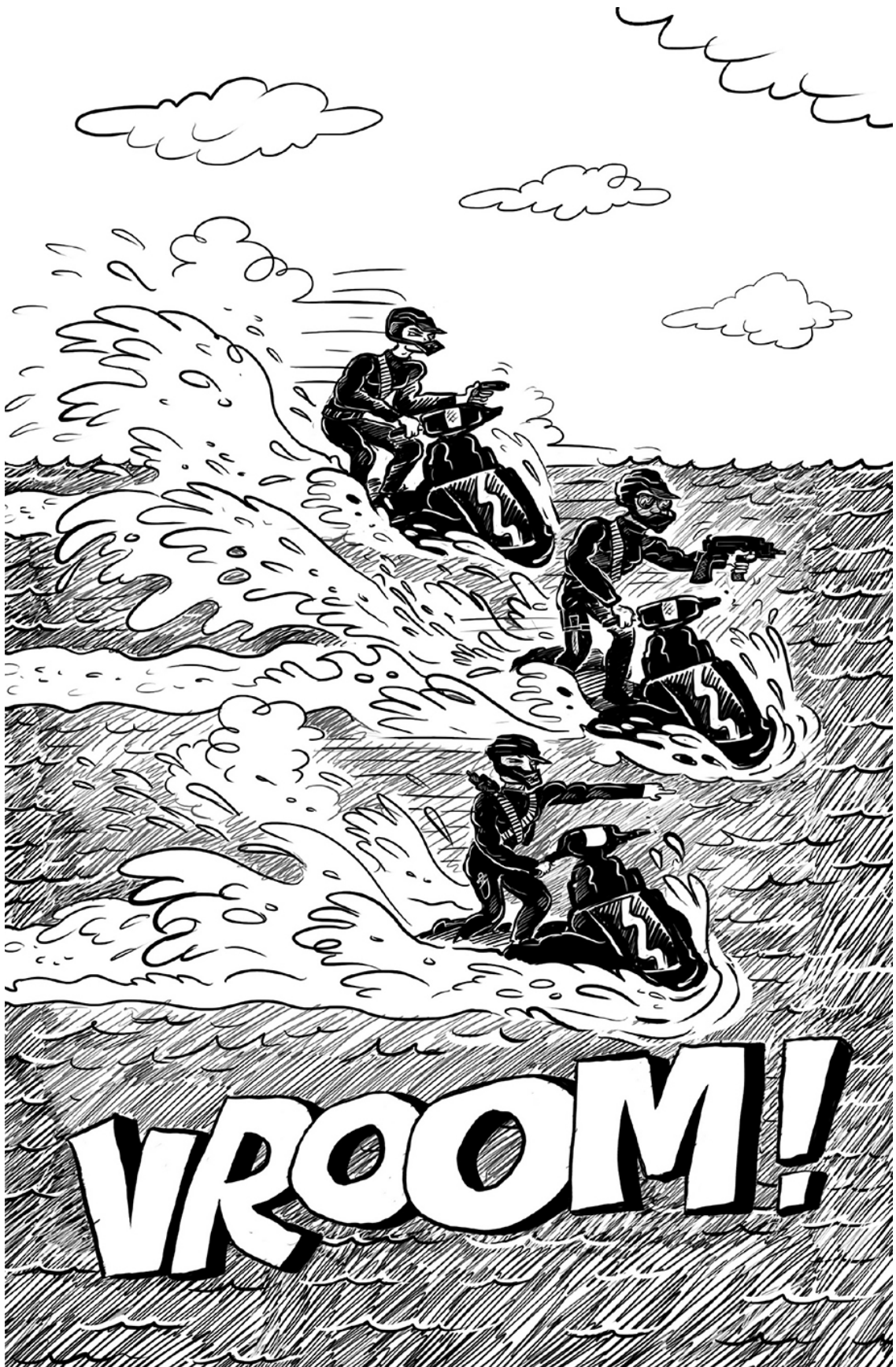
BY **JAMES PATTERSON**

AND **CHRIS GRABENSTEIN**

ILLUSTRATED BY

JULIANA NEUFELD





**THE WORLD
ACCORDING TO
THE KIDDS!**



NORTH AMERICA
THE UNITED STATES

★ **NEW YORK CITY (NEW YORK)**
WENT TO A "REAL" SCHOOL
HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME -
THAT DIDN'T LAST VERY LONG!

★ **CHARLESTON (SOUTH CAROLINA)**

THIS GENTEEL SOUTHERN
CITY HAS A SECRET BLACK
MARKET FOR ART - WHO KNEW?

ATLANTIC OCEAN

★ **MIDDLE OF NOWHERE**
WHERE DAD WAS LOST
FROM THE "LOST".

SOUTH AMERICA

BRAZIL

★ **RIO DE JANEIRO**

HAD THE BEST FRUITY
DRINK HERE - IT CAME
IN A COCONUT SHELL!

EUROPE

★ **BERLIN**

A HUGE WALL ONCE
SPLIT THE CITY IN TWO,
UNTIL IT WAS TORN DOWN
IN 1989.

★ **MUNICH**

DISCOVERED A BAKERY
WITH THE YUMMIEST
PRETZELS EVER!

★ **CYPRUS**

WHERE MOM IS BEING
HELD FOR RANSOM
BY PIRATES!

ASIA

★ **BEIJING**

THE CAPITAL OF CHINA

★ SO MUCH TO
SEE AND DO!

★ **CHINA**

PACIFIC OCEAN

AFRICA

★ **KENYA**



★ **LAMU ARCHIPELAGO**

THE SITE OF THE 600-YEAR-
OLD ZHENG HE SHIPWRECK.

★ **MOMBASA**

WHERE TOMMY FELL IN LOVE
... FOR THE 12,538TH TIME.

INDIAN OCEAN

SOUTHERN OCEAN

AUSTRALIA

★ **QUEENSLAND**

GOT IN A NASTY
ARGUMENT WITH
A KOALA HERE ONCE.

ANTARCTICA





QUICK NOTE FROM BICKFORD KIDD

OKAY, I'LL MAKE this fast because, as you can see, I look like I might hurl.

My twin sister, Rebecca, did that drawing of me being grilled by a criminal mastermind. In fact, Beck did *all* the drawings in this book. Wherever we go, no matter what happens, no matter how much treasure we find or how much danger her irreplaceable twin brother might be in, Beck keeps doodling in her sketchpad.

Meanwhile, I'm always scribbling in my handy-dandy spiral notebook.

Except when I'm upside down. Pens don't work upside down.

So that's the basic idea: I'm the writer; my twin sis is the illustrator.

This also explains why so many of her drawings have helpful notes like that one over there about my excess body odor. It's not really true. I bathe on a regular basis. Honest.

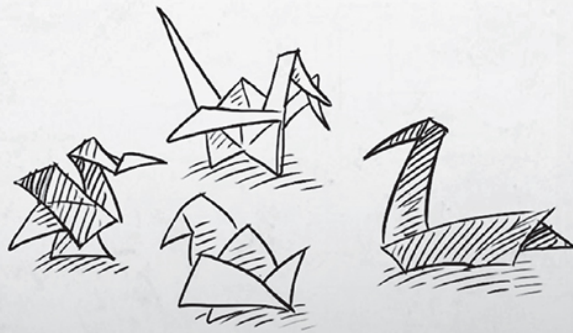
All right, already! Beck says I have to tell you that, sometimes, I make things up, too. In other words, don't believe everything you read or see. Adventures are like that.

You never know which way is up.

Especially when both your parents are CIA superspies and you're currently being tortured by being dangled upside down in a dungeon.

Yep. There's a lot to tell you about. Read on!

PART I
YEAR
OF THE
BIRD



CHAPTER 1



WE BEGIN OUR tale of hunting treasure while avoiding torture in a very tight spot.

Literally.

The four of us—me; my twin, Beck; our genius sister, Storm; and our way cool older brother, Tommy—were being held captive by the notorious Dionysus Streckting, his sniveling minions, and their snarling dog, Munch—a German shepherd with a toxic case of beef jerky breath.

Streckting was seriously evil.

Everybody said so, including him.



“I am seriously evil, children. Pure, undiluted, one hundred percent evil!”

Storm, who has a photographic memory, not to mention an IQ somewhere in the stratosphere, had told us that Dionysus Streckting is considered the most nefarious, despicable, and just-plain-nasty criminal mastermind in all of Europe, including the island country of Cyprus, where a band of thugs had kidnapped our mom.

Streckting kept saying that if we helped him find a certain treasure map, he'd help set Mom free.

He'd also been dropping some pretty heavy hints that he knew something about what happened to our dad.

“Tell me where the map is and, perhaps, I may give you some valuable information my spies have collected about your father! Then again, maybe not. As I said, I am enormously evil.”

It seemed as if my hunch could be correct: Dad hadn't been swept overboard when our treasure-hunting ship, *The Lost*, nearly capsized in a tropical storm off the coast of the Cayman Islands. He didn't drown or get devoured by sharks.



BICK MADE ME MAKE DAD SAY THAT. I STILL DON'T BELIEVE HE FLEW TO CHINA ON A SUPERSECRET SPY MISSION, EVEN IF BICK SAYS IT OVER AND OVER, WHICH HE DOES REPEATEDLY. STORM AND TOMMY DON'T BELIEVE IT EITHER. IN OTHER WORDS, THIS DRAWING WAS DONE ONLY TO HUMOR BICK.

Okay.

I wasn't absolutely, positively certain that Dad was alive and well and working undercover for the CIA. But Dionysus Streckting, the infamous criminal mastermind, was looking for him, too!

We couldn't *both* be wrong, could we?

CHAPTER 2



“UM, EXCUSE ME, Mr. Strepthroat?” said our big brother, Tailspin Tommy.

“Streckting! *Dionysus* Streckting. My mother liked grapes.”

“Sorry. My bad. Anyway, could you untie us for a couple minutes? I haven’t scrunched my hair in hours. Need to apply some product, pronto.”

“*Nein!*” snarled one of Streckting’s goons. (I got the feeling Streckting never did his own snarling; he paid people to snarl for him.)

“*Nein?*” said Tommy. “Is that German for *no*?”

“Yes!”

“Yes, I *can* go fix my hair?”

Streckting stepped forward. His boots creaked. “No one is going *anywhere* until one of you four children tells me everything I need to know.”

“Fine,” said Storm, who, like I told you, has a photographic memory. “You want me to start with the *A*’s? Aardvarks are...”

“Silence, *schreckliche Kinder!*” shouted the head German goon.

Munch growled and bared his glistening fangs. Tommy and Storm stopped yammering.



"Your father is not dead," hissed Streckting. "Would I be chasing him across two continents if he were dead?"

"Wait a second," said Beck. "How do you know our father is alive?"

"I don't. But I strongly suspect it."

Beck laughed. "Well, I strongly *suspect* you got that scar on your cheek from a kitty cat who didn't like you stomping on her tail, but I don't go around blabbing it to everybody, do I?"

"Silence! Where is it? Where is your father's treasure map?"

"Which one?" said Tommy, chuffing a laugh. "He had, like, a ton of them."

“They’re stashed in safe-deposit boxes all over the globe,” added Beck. “Asia. Africa. Europe. Not to mention New York, Chicago, and LA. Dad needed a key ring the size of a hula hoop.”

“But then he fell overboard and died,” said Storm, who can be kind of blunt.

“Enough!” said Streckting, raising a pistol with a very long muzzle. His minions raised their weapons, too. Munch, the German shepherd, probably would’ve done the same thing but he couldn’t hold a pistol in his paws.

“You miserable children will tell me where your father, the great treasure hunter Professor Thomas Kidd, has hidden the information I so desperately seek or we shall shoot you. None of you will ever see your mother or your father again because you will all be dead!”

You know, maybe Beck was right.

Maybe we should start at the very beginning. I understand it’s a very good place to start.

But, first, here’s Beck with a sneak preview of coming attractions.



YOU GUYS?
YOU'RE SERIOUSLY
OUTNUMBERED.

BUT THEY'RE
JUST DUMMIES.

THEY PROBABLY
FEEL THE SAME
ABOUT YOU, TOO.

THIS IS BIGGER THAN
THAT DRUM CEREMONY AT
THE OLYMPICS!!!

WOW. THERE
ARE A LOT
OF GIRLS
IN CHINA.

STOMP

STOMP



