

Pseudonymous Bosch

★ ★ BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF ★ ★
THE SECRET SERIES

BAD



MAGIC



This book is incredibly BAD.

It does NOT contain MAGIC. Or a mysterious ghost girl. Or
spontaneous combustion.

Or Spanish-speaking llamas.

Nope. None of these things.

Okay...maybe one of these things.

But certainly not MAGIC.

It's just an ordinary tale of a normal boy who goes to
summer camp on a desert island. Nothing exciting or weird
happens. The camp is definitely NOT for crazy, badly-
behaved kids, and there are NO SECRETS or MYSTERIES
at all.

And absolutely NO MAGIC whatsoever...



BAD MAGIC

Pseudonymous Bosch



USBORNE

For Natalia and India (now it's fair)

CONTENTS

[About Bad Magic](#)

[Dedication](#)

[This book begins with a bad word.](#)

[Chapter 1 - Magic Sucks](#)

[Chapter 2 - A School Play](#)

[Chapter 3 - The Writing on the Wall](#)

[Chapter 4 - A Family Meeting](#)

[Chapter 5 - A Summer Camp for Struggling Youth](#)

[Chapter 6 - A Loose Screw](#)

[Chapter 7 - Marooned](#)

[Chapter 8 - The Creature Who Came out of the Vog](#)

[Chapter 9 - Guard Bees](#)

[Chapter 10 - Circle](#)

[Chapter 11 - Magic Rocks](#)

[Chapter 12 - Weeds](#)

[Chapter 13 - Free Time](#)

[Chapter 14 - A Campfire Story](#)

[Chapter 15 - The Swimming Test](#)

[Chapter 16 - Nurse Cora](#)

[Chapter 16 Part 2 - The Back Way](#)

[Chapter 17 - Inside](#)

[Chapter 18 - The Custodian](#)

[Chapter 19 - The Journal](#)

[Chapter 20 - Twice Stolen](#)

[Chapter 21 - Fire Cabin](#)

[Chapter 22 - The Next Morning](#)

[Chapter 23 - Locked Out](#)

[Chapter 24 - The Lava Walk](#)

[Chapter 25 - Actors](#)

[Chapter 26 - The Hike](#)

[Chapter 27 - The Crater](#)

[Chapter 28 - Volcano Surfing](#)

[Chapter 29 - Curtain Call](#)

[Chapter 30 - The Library Inside the Library](#)

[Appendix](#)

[More Bad Magic!](#)

[Discover The Secret Series](#)

[Who is Pseudonymous Bosch?](#)

[Copyright](#)

This book begins with a bad word.

Can you guess which one?

WAIT! Don't say it out loud. Don't even think it to yourself. I get into enough trouble as it is.

In fact, if the only reason you opened this book is to find the bad words in it, you will be sorely disappointed. I learned the hard way to keep my writing clean. [**BOSCH:** *LET'S JUST SAY EDITORS AREN'T THE GENTLE BOOKISH CREATURES PEOPLE THINK THEY ARE, AND LEAVE IT AT THAT.*]

Alas, when the hero of this book, Clay, first pronounced this word that I just mentioned, or rather that I most definitely did NOT mention, this swear word, this curse word, this very, very bad word, this word that I am not repeating or in any way revealing, he didn't know there was anything wrong with it; he was only three years old.

Where would such a young boy learn such a grown-up word? I have no idea. *I* certainly didn't teach it to him.

Maybe his father yelled it when he stubbed his toe. Maybe his babysitter grumbled it into her phone when she thought Clay was sleeping.

Maybe an older boy taught him the word because the older boy thought it would be funny to hear a three-year-old say it.

It really doesn't matter where Clay learned the word any more than it matters what the word was; it only matters that he said the word when he did.

At the time of this fateful event, Clay was in a crowded elevator, leaving his first dentist appointment. As his brother would tell it later, Clay was happily sucking on the acid-green lollipop he had been given as a reward for his good behaviour [**BOSCH:** *Q: WHAT DO YOU CALL A DENTIST WHO HANDS OUT LOLLIPOPS? A: A VERY SHREWD BUSINESSMAN*] when all of a sudden he took the lollipop out of his mouth and

hollered this terrible, terrible word at the top of his little lungs.

“#&*%!!!”

[**BOSCH:** WHY DO WE USE RANDOM TYPOGRAPHICAL SYMBOLS TO REPRESENT EXPLETIVES? HOW THE *&%*^#& SHOULD I KNOW? I DO KNOW, HOWEVER, THAT THESE SYMBOLS ARE CALLED GRAWLIXES. (FOR MORE ON GRAWLIXES, SEE [THE APPENDIX](#) AT THE BACK OF THIS BOOK.)]

Needless to say, everybody in the elevator was shocked to hear such foul language come out of such a small child. A big kid giggled. An old lady frowned. Even her Pekingese lapdog seemed to whimper in distress.

Mortified, Clay's brother, who was twelve years older than Clay and who was in charge of Clay for the afternoon, leaned in to Clay's ear and whispered, "You can't say that - that's a bad word."

Clay looked at his brother in confusion. "Why? What did it do?"

Everybody laughed. The mood in the elevator, er, elevated.

But that isn't the end of the story.

On the bus ride home, Clay's brother couldn't get Clay's question out of his head. What did bad words *do*? What made them bad?

Finally, he had an answer: "Bad words are bad because they make people feel bad. That's what they do."

Clay nodded. This made sense to him. "And good words make people feel good?"

"Right."

"And magic words make people feel magic?"

Clay's brother hesitated. He was an amateur magician and said magic words all the time - mostly while practising tricks on Clay - but he'd never thought about them in this particular way. "Um, I guess. How 'bout that?"

“Accadabba!” said Clay, giggling. “Shakazam!”

Sometimes, between siblings or close friends, words take on meanings that can't easily be explained to other people. They become like inside jokes - inside words, as it were. After the elevator episode, *bad word* became Clay and his brother's inside word for *magic word*. Also for *code word* and for *password* and for any other word that had some unique power or significance. For any word that *did* something.

“Can you think of a bad word for me?” Clay's brother would ask before making a coin disappear behind his hand or before pulling a scarf out of Clay's ear.

“What's the bad word?” Clay would demand, blocking his brother's access to the refrigerator or bathroom.

As Clay grew older and became more and more adept at magic tricks himself (possibly more adept than his brother, although please don't tell anyone I said so), *bad word* maintained its special meaning.

“Hey, bad man, what's the bad word?” they would ask each other in greeting.

When they left coded messages for each other, they would leave hints about the bad word needed to decode the message.

When they did magic shows for their parents or friends, they called themselves the Bad Brothers.

Bad was their bond.

Then, around the time Clay turned eleven, his brother pulled off the biggest, baddest magic trick of all: he disappeared, with little warning and no explanation.

That was almost two years ago. And still Clay would sometimes wonder what he had done to drive his brother away. What had he said? What bad word had he uttered without knowing it?

And what bad magic would make his brother come back?

— Chapter 1 —

Magic Sucks



Clay was not the type of person who would want a book written about him. I may as well admit that now.

Go ahead, judge me. Call me names. Curse me and the horse I wrote in on. But there it is.

He wasn't shy exactly, but these days, at the age of twelve, almost thirteen, he liked to keep a low profile. He slouched in his chair. He hid his face in a comic book or skateboard magazine. He wore a hoodie, even on warm days. It wasn't that he had a big nose or funny ears or horrible acne; I may be biased, but I think he was almost handsome, in a dried-snot-on-his-sleeve sort of way. It was just that he preferred not to attract attention. Just being looked at for longer than a moment or two made him start jiggling his knee. I can only guess what Clay would have thought about being scrutinized for almost four hundred pages.

Still, it happens to everyone occasionally. Being looked at, I mean. [**BOSCH: AS FOR A BOOK BEING WRITTEN ABOUT YOU, THAT ONLY HAPPENS IF YOU'RE UNLUCKY ENOUGH TO MEET SOMEONE LIKE ME. BEWARE.**]

On the morning to which I now turn, the morning Clay's life began to tumble helplessly out of control, on *that* morning, kids kept looking at Clay, not just once or twice, but repeatedly, and he had no idea why.

It started as soon as he got to school. The staring and the whispering. The first few kids he caught turned away so fast that he almost thought he'd imagined it. But the next few were bolder; they openly ogled and snickered. One girl he knew just looked at him and shook her head. Two boys he couldn't remember seeing before gave him a thumbs-up. And that was even more alarming.

After he stowed his skateboard in his locker, Clay ducked into the bathroom and examined himself in the mirror. There were no boogers hanging from his nose. His fly wasn't open. His hair was a mess, as usual, but it was

hidden under his hoodie. He could see nothing wrong. Nothing that wasn't always wrong, anyway.

Had somebody been spreading rumours about him? Had he been mistaken for someone else? It made no sense.

Clay's first class, English, was on the ground floor with an entrance directly off the schoolyard next to the basketball court. When he walked up, a half-dozen kids were already standing around, talking in hushed voices.

While the others took a few steps back, Clay's best friend, Gideon, stepped right up to Clay.

"Okay, yeah, sure, it's kind of...awesome? And I'm kind of...impressed?" said Gideon. "And I know I'm always saying you should just do this, like what are you waiting for, but here? Now? At school? Seriously?" Gideon had this odd way of speaking so that it always sounded as if he were in the middle of a conversation; it was a little hard to follow, even for Clay.

"I mean, do you have a death wish?" Gideon persisted. "Or are you just totally certifiable?"

"What are you talking about?" Clay asked. "Why is everybody—?" He faltered. "What the—?"

Behind Gideon, on the outside wall of their classroom, there was a freshly painted graffiti mural, or "bomb" as they are sometimes called.

As soon as he saw the mural, Clay's leg started to jiggle. He felt dizzy. He thought he might puke.

MAGIC SUCKS!

it said, in big black bubble letters.

Underneath was a small tag, the signature of the artist:

CLAY

“Don’t worry - I took a picture,” said Gideon, holding up his phone. “Yeah, they’ll kick you out of school, and yeah, you’ll have no future, and yeah, your parents will kill you, but at least your words will live for ever, right?”

The name, the lettering style, the entire mural was unmistakably, unquestionably, undeniably Clay’s.

The trouble was, the mural *wasn’t* his. He hadn’t painted it. And he had no idea how it had got there.

It was as if the mural had appeared by magic.

Very *sucky* magic.

— Chapter 2 —

A School Play



While the mural might not have been Clay's, the now-immortal words *MAGIC SUCKS!* were very much his own. It was just that he'd written them elsewhere.

On paper. Not stucco.

Like many great works of literature - and for all I know, like many great works of graffiti art as well - Clay's words (all two of them!) were inspired by the greatest of all wordsmiths, William Shakespeare.

I'm not trying to impress you. Okay, maybe I am trying to impress you. But it's true nonetheless.

Allow me to explain:

Every spring, the sixth graders at Clay's school put on a Shakespeare play. Depending on the kind of student you were, it was either the highlight of your educational career or a major source of dread.

For Clay, as you might guess, it was mainly the latter.

Most years, the sixth graders chose to perform *Macbeth*, because it has witches and bloody hands; or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, because it has fairies and a man with the head of a donkey, or, as the students always delighted in calling it, the head of an "ass". [**BOSCH: HEY, DON'T LOOK AT ME...SHAKESPEARE SAID IT FIRST!**]

This year, a new English teacher, Mr. Bailey, had come to school. To his students' chagrin, he had insisted on choosing the play himself: *The Tempest*. He'd even cast himself as the lead!

It hardly seemed fair.

The Tempest

by William Shakespeare
starring
Mr. E. Bailey

and his sixth-grade students

By now I'm sure you've read every one of Shakespeare's plays many times over. (If you haven't, I insist you put down this book and start immediately.) But just in case you're experiencing an inexplicable lapse in memory, I will remind you that *The Tempest* is about a sorcerer named Prospero who is stranded on a tropical island with his daughter.

There is a storm. There is a shipwreck. There is a monster. There is romance. There is magic. There is mayhem.

The usual story stuff.

Clay liked the play well enough. At least he liked the opening, with all the crashing thunder and lightning and with the big cardboard ship that got destroyed in the first few minutes of the show. (Somehow, the fact that he'd painted the ship himself made the destruction all the more satisfying.)

What he disliked was his part: Antonio, Prospero's conniving younger brother.

In Clay's opinion, the best roles were Ariel, the tree spirit who casts spells on everyone (not that Clay wanted to wear Ariel's green sparkle tights!) [**BOSCH: AND NOT THAT IT WOULDN'T BE A FINE THING IF HE DID!**], and Caliban, the monster who is enslaved by Prospero.

Gideon played Caliban. On opening night, Clay watched in envy as his friend, his face caked with awesomely gruesome Halloween make-up, growled and scowled his way across the stage, cursing everyone in his path. [**BOSCH: CALIBAN CURSES CONSTANTLY IN THE TEMPEST. AT ONE POINT, THE MONSTER, WHO WAS TAUGHT TO SPEAK BY PROSPERO, TURNS TO HIS MASTER AND SAYS, YOU TAUGHT ME LANGUAGE, AND MY PROFIT ON IT IS, I KNOW HOW TO CURSE. THE RED PLAGUE RID YOU FOR LEARNING ME YOUR LANGUAGE! BASICALLY CURSING HIS ENGLISH TEACHER FOR BEING HIS ENGLISH TEACHER. WHICH WAS QUITE AMUSING FOR THE**

AUDIENCE AT CLAY'S SCHOOL, CONSIDERING MR. BAILEY, A REAL-LIFE ENGLISH TEACHER, WAS PLAYING PROSPERO.]

As Antonio, Clay didn't get to do much at all. In the play's last act, Prospero forgives Antonio for having stolen his dukedom, but Antonio never gets to apologize, or defend himself, or even curse like Caliban.

Instead, Clay had to stand on the side of the stage next to the smoke machine, listening to the old sorcerer's pompous speeches while trying to forget there was an audience watching his every move.

As the play went on and his eyes started to sting from the smoke, Clay felt increasingly fidgety. And increasingly strange.

Whenever he looked at Mr. Bailey, Clay didn't see his English teacher; he didn't even see the character Mr. Bailey was playing, Antonio's older brother, Prospero. He saw his own real-life older brother. The brother who had left almost two years earlier. The brother Clay was doing his best to forget.

He could almost hear that funny humming sound his brother made - *hmmgh* - and his brother's voice saying, "How 'bout that?" His brother was haunting him - through Shakespeare!

Towards the end of *The Tempest*, after Prospero has magically manipulated everyone into doing his bidding, as if they were all marionettes in his personal puppet show, the magician renounces magic for ever:

*This rough magic I here abjure,
I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And, deeper than did ever plummet sound,
I'll drown my book.*

[**BOSCH:** *THROUGHOUT THE TEMPEST, PROSPERO TOYS WITH THE PEOPLE AROUND HIM. HE MAKES THEM FALL IN LOVE, FIGHT WITH EACH*

OTHER, AND BELIEVE EACH OTHER DEAD, VERY MUCH AS IF HE'S THE WRITER OF THE PLAY. FOR THAT REASON, MANY BELIEVE PROSPERO'S GIVING UP MAGIC WAS SHAKESPEARE'S WAY OF SAYING I QUIT! INDEED, THE TEMPEST WAS THE LAST PLAY SHAKESPEARE EVER WROTE - AT LEAST, THE LAST ONE HE WROTE BY HIMSELF. I GUESS AFTER SHAKESPEARE GAVE UP MAGIC, HE STARTED NEEDING HELP WITH HIS HOMEWORK, JUST LIKE THE REST OF US.]

"Liar," blurted Clay. "You'll never give up magic. You don't care about anything else—"

"Shh!" Gideon whispered from the wings.

Clay blushed red. He hadn't realized he was speaking aloud. He wasn't even sure whom he'd been speaking to: Mr. Bailey or Prospero or his brother. He looked around. Everybody was focused on Mr. Bailey. As far as Clay could tell, nobody else had heard him.

He sighed - silently - with relief.

"And stop jiggling!" Gideon added.

Clay blushed redder. And willed his knee to stop bobbing up and down.

"You're jiggling again."

A week later, Clay and Gideon were sitting next to each other in Mr. Bailey's class, working on essays about the play. It was almost the end of the year and everyone was writing at top speed, as if every syllable brought them closer to summer vacation.

Everyone except Clay.

Gideon poked him in the leg. "Dude, your knee!"

"Sorry," Clay muttered.

Clay, as you may have noticed by now, was a juggler.

For as long as he could remember, he'd had a mysterious restless energy that kept him in constant motion. It wasn't just his knees. He twiddled his thumbs...tapped his toes...

"Clay, a pencil is for writing," called Mr. Bailey from across the room. "Not wiggling!"

...and wiggled his pencils.

“Um...thinking!”

The exception was when he was skateboarding. With wheels moving below, Clay’s body relaxed and his mind was able to focus. Unfortunately, skateboards weren’t allowed in the classroom.

Holding his knee down with one hand, and his pencil down with the other, Clay made himself look at the piece of paper on his desk. The paper was blank, and the essay was due in ten minutes.

“Nine more minutes, everybody,” Mr. Bailey said to the room.

Make that nine minutes.

Clay glanced at the chalkboard:

Discuss the role of magic in THE TEMPEST. Why does Prospero break his staff and drown his magic book at the end? If you had magic powers, would you do the same?

What was it about this question? Why was it so difficult for him to answer?

And why did it make his leg jiggle uncontrollably?

As the rest of the class filed out, Clay walked over to Mr. Bailey’s desk, which was piled so high with books that Clay had to look over them to see his teacher.

Mr. Bailey was a short, plump man with a pink face and a mutton-chop beard. Today, as was not unusual, he was wearing a knitted vest and leather sandals with purple socks. If he looked like a magical character, it wasn’t Shakespeare’s fierce wizard Prospero; it was Tolkien’s harmless hobbit Bilbo.

Mutely, Clay held up his empty sheet of paper.

“What’s this?” bellowed Mr. Bailey, standing up but not taking the paper. “Writer’s block?”

Despite his small stature, Mr. Bailey had a loud, booming voice, developed, he had bragged to his students more than once, during his many years on the stage.

“Uh-huh,” said Clay, bouncing on his toes (which is a double-leg jiggle, if you think about it).

Mr. Bailey nodded. “Actually, I’ve always thought *block* wasn’t the right word. It’s more of a knot, wouldn’t you say?”

“Uh-huh.”

“Or maybe a net,” suggested Mr. Bailey, philosophically. “A net one gets all knotted up inside.”

“Uh-huh.”

“But the point is, young man, you are unable to write.”

“Uh-huh.”

“Why?” asked Mr. Bailey, leaning towards Clay across the piles of books.

“Uh-huh,” said Clay, taking a step back. “Wait, what?”

“Why can’t you write?” asked Mr. Bailey, leaning further. A few books toppled over, but he took no notice. “Is it the subject?”

Clay squirmed. “I don’t know. I mean, I don’t even believe in magic.”

“Do you have to believe in something to write about it?”

“No, I guess not,” said Clay.

“Well then...?”

Clay hesitated. How to explain? “My older brother, when I was little, he used to do all these tricks – you know, card tricks, coin tricks, hat tricks. I figured them all out eventually. Magicians just say a bunch of stuff to make you think they’re doing something they’re not. They’re liars. Cheese-wizards.”

Mr. Bailey laughed, as if this were a great joke. “Cheese-wizards? What’s a cheese-wizard?”

“Um, somebody who acts cheesy? Magicians are masters of cheesiness. They’re the ultimate cheese-wizards,” explained Clay.

Mr. Bailey raised one eyebrow. "I think you're confusing magic-show magic with magic in Shakespeare's time. In those days, magic was taken very seriously."

"What's the difference? The whole idea of magic is fake. It's all cheese-wizardry."

"Well, write that, if you must," said Mr. Bailey.

"I can't," said Clay. "My...brain won't let me."

Mr. Bailey regarded Clay over his desk. "I've heard teachers complain that you are developing an attitude problem, Clay. Is this what they're talking about?"

Clay shrugged, forcing himself not to look away. He didn't think he had an attitude problem; he thought he had an honesty problem. The problem was, he didn't know how not to be honest.

Clay had exceptionally big eyes as well as wild, furry, half-curly hair. When he stared without blinking - a talent he had developed at a young age to irritate his older brother - the effect was quite startling. He looked like a forest animal.

Discomfited, Mr. Bailey was the first to look down.

"I think I have something that might help..."

From under his desk, Mr. Bailey slid out a large cardboard box. Spilling out of the top was the velvet robe he had worn in *The Tempest*, and sticking out of the robe was the gnarled piece of wood that had served as his magic staff. For a second, Clay thought his teacher might give him the staff - either that or hit him over the head with it. But Mr. Bailey put the staff aside and started pulling out more props from the play.

"Ah, here we are..."

Smiling, Mr. Bailey handed Clay a smallish book covered with cracked rust-red leather. Inset in the centre of the cover was a tiny triangular mirror.

It took a moment for Clay to recognize what he was looking at. Prospero's magic book. The book Prospero

drowns at the end of *The Tempest*. Clay had never seen it up close before.

“Thanks, but, um, are you sure you won’t need this?” asked Clay. “What if you do the play again?”

Mr. Bailey waved his hand dismissively. “Once I’ve played a role, it’s done. The character becomes part of me.”

Clay opened the book - or tried to. The pages of the book had dried together, and Clay had to prise them apart in order to look inside. Though old and worn, the pages were blank save for a few stains and some yellowing near the edges.

Mr. Bailey told Clay he didn’t have to write about *The Tempest*. As long as he wrote something - anything - in the journal, he would get class credit.

“Like what?” asked Clay, peering into the tiny mirror. His eye peered back at him. He had the odd sensation that he was spying on himself.

“It doesn’t matter - I don’t even have to read it,” said Mr. Bailey.

“But how can you not read it if you look at it?”

Clay thought his logic was irrefutable, but Mr. Bailey just chuckled. “Believe me, I have a lot of practice ignoring things that students write.”

He sat down and put his sandalled feet up on his desk, satisfied that the problem was solved.

“Did I ever tell you about the time I played King Lear? Now that was a performance...”

As Mr. Bailey told him about the trials and tribulations of playing Shakespeare’s mad king, Clay kept trying to excuse himself.

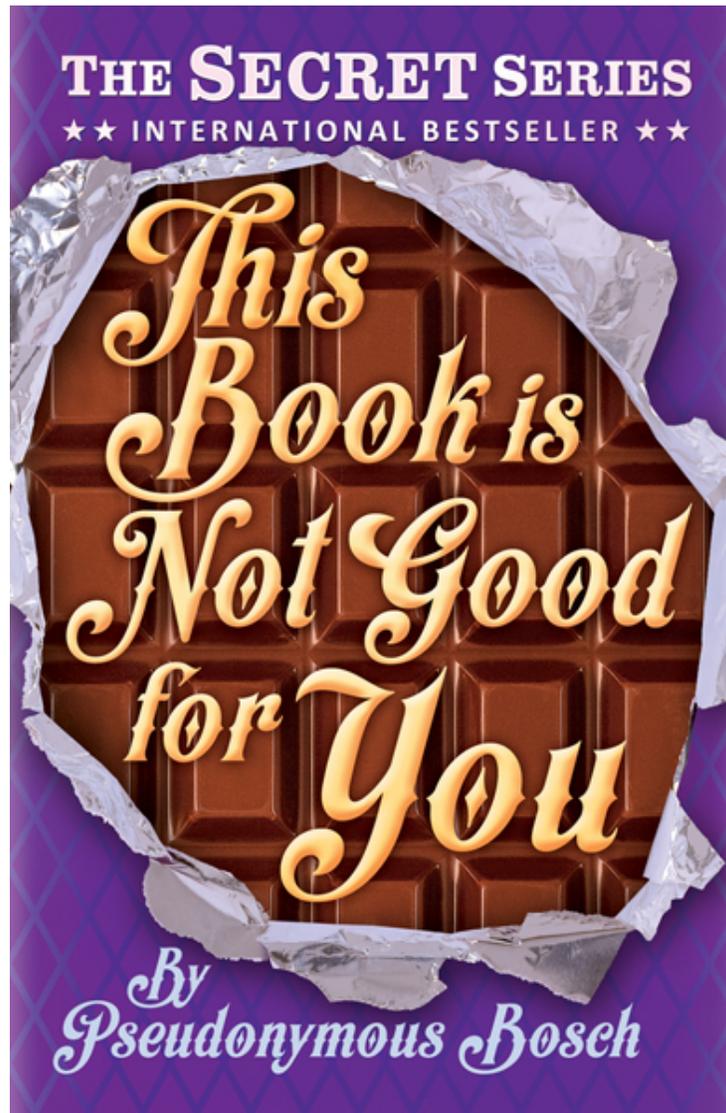
To no avail.

— Chapter 3 —

The Writing on
the Wall



IF YOU BRAVED THE FIRST TWO BOOKS, YOU
FACE YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE YET WITH THE
THIRD... TRUST ME.



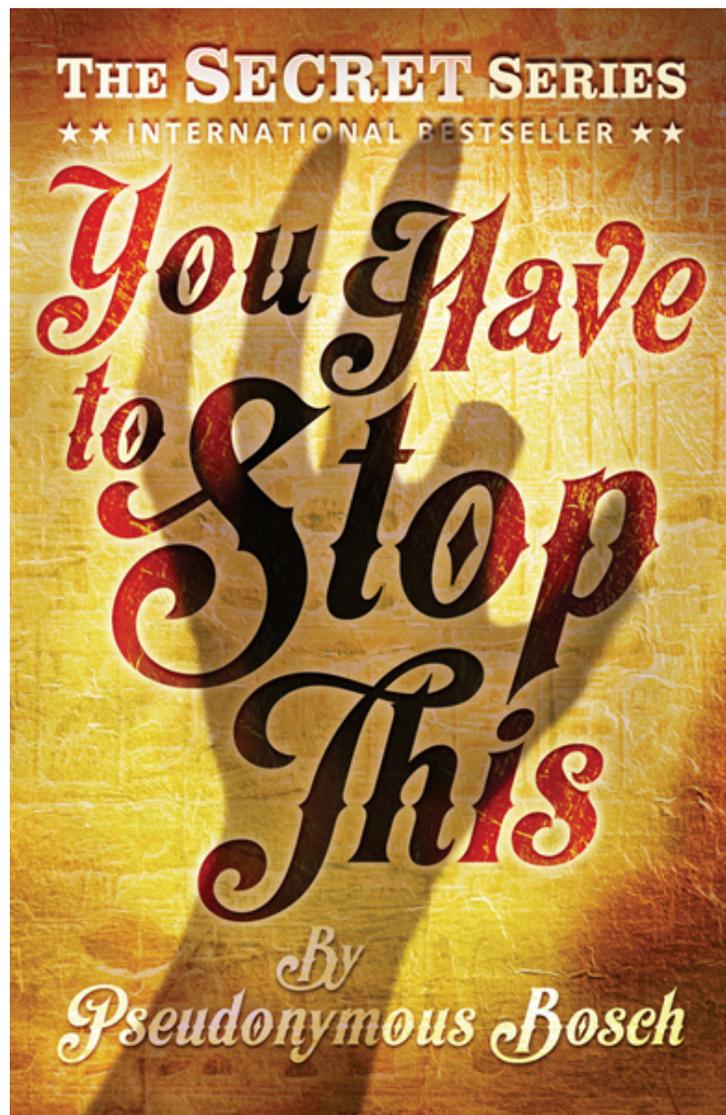
www.thisbookisnotgoodforyou.co.uk

I'M WARNING YOU! THIS ISN'T SOME KIND OF JOKE. ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE BRAVE ENOUGH TO READ THE FOURTH BOOK IN THE SECRET SERIES?



www.thisisntwhatitlookslike.co.uk

AND LURKING SOMEWHERE IN A FAR-OFF DUSTY
LAND, WITH TALES OF TOMBS, MUMMIES AND
ALL MANNER OF SECRETIVE DEALINGS, THERE
IS A FIFTH BOOK...

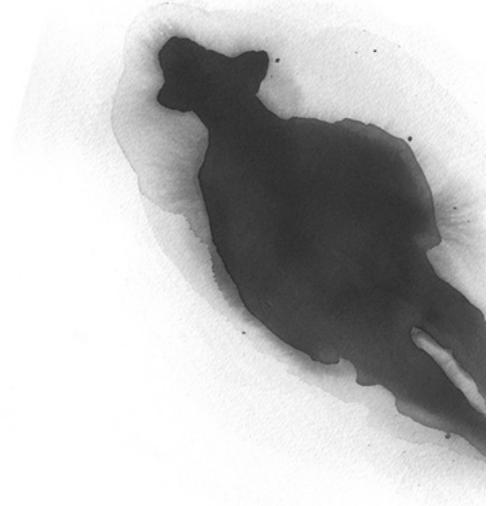


www.youhavetostopthis.co.uk

Who is Pseudonymous Bosch?

Pseudonymous Bosch is a pseudonym, or as he would prefer to call it (because he is very pretentious), a *nom de plume*. Unfortunately, for reasons he cannot disclose, but which should be obvious to anyone foolhardy enough to read this book, he cannot tell you his real name. But he admits he has a deep-seated fear of mayonnaise.

This is his sixth novel.



WWW.PSEUDONYMOUSBOSCH.COM