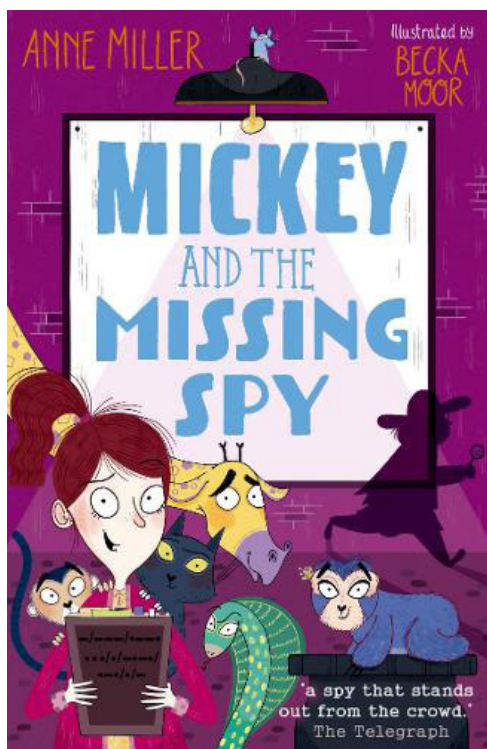
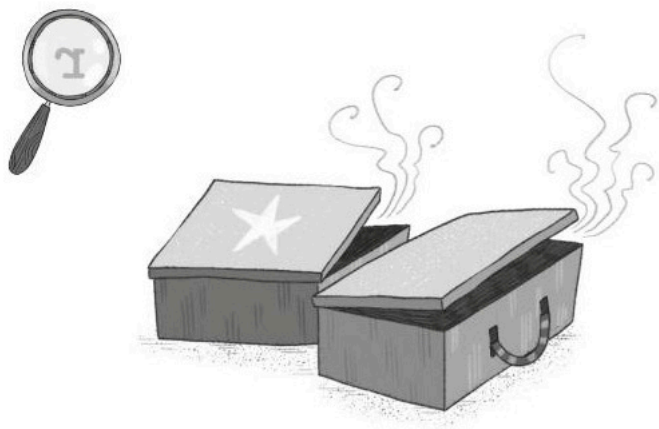


Sample pages from...





Chapter 3

Bertie was handing out the food as the other **COBRA** members were sitting at their meeting table, now moved back into the centre of the room.

Mickey opened the lid on her dish and jumped straight out of her seat in shock as the smell hit her nose.

‘Oh!’ she yelped, slamming the lid back down. Her box was full of what looked like peelings and scrapings from a kitchen bin that had been left to ferment.

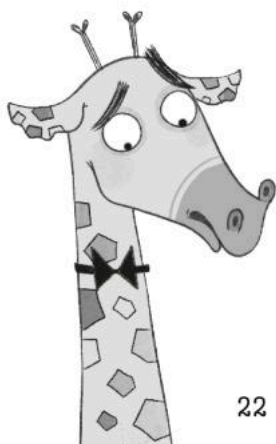
‘Oh, you’ve got mine,’ said Rupert cheerily. ‘I must have yours.’ He slid the dish that was in front of him down to Mickey and signalled to her to do the same. ‘Ah, bins! What a treat.’

‘Oh,’ Mickey shuddered, reaching gratefully for the new container. Cautiously she opened it and was immediately hit with the overwhelming scent of tuna. ‘Clarke, have I got yours?’ she called.

‘Fish!!!’ said the cat, his usually distinguished demeanour slipping as he caught sight of his favourite food. ‘And perhaps you know what this is?’ he asked as he rolled a large papaya between his paws.

‘My favourite!’ said Astrid, scampering over to grab it.

Mickey finally traced her own plate of cheese, crackers and an apple. It was in front of Bertie who was staring at it curiously.



Mickey spotted his platter of leaves sitting out in the corridor where he'd left it and went to collect it for him.

'Bertie, are you alright?' she asked as she approached him. The giraffe let out a long sigh and looked down at his feet, which were a considerable distance away from his head.

'I don't mind running the office security, but I so badly want to be an agent and work in the field with the rest of you. Sometimes I worry I'll never get there and the laser test today proved it. Perhaps I should just stick to desk duties.'

'Not at all,' said Mickey, setting down the plate of leaves in front of him. 'You're an excellent security guard, and I bet you'll make an even better agent once you get the hang of it. When I joined they said I'd never last and now we've solved two missions together—Operation Shiny Dog and Operation Mischievous Moles. You'll do it too, I just know it!'

'Do you really think so?' said Bertie.

'Yes,' said Mickey, smiling. 'Your dreams

will come true just like mine have. Did you know that I even got a letter from my favourite codemaker of all time—**Hildegarde L. McTavish?!**

‘Oh yes, I remember hearing that,’ said Bertie. ‘And she said she would be in touch again. Have you heard anything?’

‘Not yet,’ said Mickey, reaching for the letter which she had been carrying around in her pocket ever since it had arrived. It was quite crumpled now and had been read many, many times, but she still couldn’t quite believe her hero knew her name and had taken the time to write to her.

