

"Gripping  
and magical"

ANTHONY HOROWITZ

"Dazzling!  
An instant classic"

BEN MILLER



# THE BOOK OF STOLEN DREAMS

Let the hunt begin...



DAVID FARR

# THE BOOK OF STOLEN DREAMS

*"Listen to me carefully... Take the Book to the corner of Heine and Hopkins Streets. A man called Solomon will be there reading a newspaper and wearing a white flower in his lapel. Give the Book ONLY to him. Until then, keep the Book safe. Tell no one you have taken it. Promise me!"*

*Rachel promised. Robert just looked horrified.*

*Felix lowered his voice to a quiet murmur, his eyes burning: "This Book contains more secrets than you know. Now go!"*



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THE  
BOOK  
OF  
STOLEN  
DREAMS

DAVID FARR

Illustrated by Kristina Kister



USBORNE

**Let the true dreamer wake...**

# BOOK ONE





## Introduction

**I**f you are reading this book, or if someone is reading it to you, you will know we are living in strange times.

A shadow has passed over the land of Krasnia. And people are afraid.

The shadow has a name. It is President Charles Malstain.

He came from nowhere and now he is in control of everything.

You cannot fight him. Not if you value your life.

You cannot persuade him. Not if you value your tongue.

You can only stay and suffer – or flee.

Look up!



High in the night sky there is a great silver airship. The airship is heading west over the ocean. It is called the *Pegasus*. It is taking desperate fugitives away from Krasnia, from the cruel control of Charles Malstain to the welcoming arms of a foreign city – Port Clement.

Look closer, through the windows into the airship's first-class compartments. Those sad, lonely faces. They are leaving loved ones behind. Will they ever see them again?

Now move your gaze lower. Down through the shadows, past steel girders and ladders, to the second-class deck. It is open to the winds and bitterly cold. A single lantern at each corner barely produces a glow to ease the darkness. Thin grey blankets drape over thinner shoulders, hats are thrust down over ears.

Look closer still. Can you see a figure standing alone on the far corner, looking out into the night?

A girl!

She is twelve years old. She is skinny, she has dark hair and a freckled nose. She has fingerless gloves, carries a strangely elegant small travelling bag and she wears a worn woollen coat, under which is a red checked shirt, a grey jumper, and trousers that seem more likely to belong to a boy. Her black leather shoes are a size too big and could do with a clean.

And now look. There is another figure approaching her across the deck. Oh no! Is she in danger?

The man is slight, dressed in a shabby suit that no longer fits him. In his left hand he carries a battered violin case wrapped in a blanket.

And unless Rachel Klein is very much mistaken, he seems to have a penguin on his head.



### 3

## All About Rachel Klein

**M**y dear friend and reader, as you quietly read this book, hidden beneath the covers of your bed, do be careful. This book is banned by President Charles Malstain's censorship committee, and to read it is in itself an act of great bravery. Perhaps place a false cover on the book, just in case. If you are in public, in a park or a pizza parlour, wear an unusual hat and answer to a false name such as Maurizio. (Unless your name is Maurizio. Then use Deborah.)

Or are you not reading the story but listening to it? On a secret radio station? Oh, cherished but secret listener, there is truly nothing better than hearing a story told well out loud! But be careful what other curious ears are listening in. Maybe wear headphones. And if someone

asks what you are doing, pretend you are learning a language such as Finnish. (No one knows Finnish. Not even the Finns.)

There are enemies and informers everywhere.

And now, my dear, brave friend, it is time to find out all about our intrepid young traveller – our heroine, if we can call her that – Rachel Klein. And the secret of her socks. Or more importantly – what she is hiding in them.

In her left sock is a piece of paper. And on that piece of paper it says:

*CG gone. TG dead.*

*KRF broken.*

*Only RK.*

*He has hidden the BSD.*

*IDLAMIRC 342. 3rd.*

Let me tell you why.

Rachel Klein was born twelve years, two weeks and one day ago in a quiet northern suburb of the great city of Brava, capital of our fair country of Krasnia.

Ah, what a city it was back then! A riot of sunny avenues, palm trees and outdoor restaurants, all gently kissed by the blue ocean that surrounded the city on three sides. And populated by the happiest, cheekiest, most

devil-may-care people on earth. You know the saying: God created the world. And when he got really good at it, he created Brava.

Rachel's birthdate (April 8th, to be precise) was sadly not remembered for her arrival alone. For on the very same day that Rachel Anne-Marie Klein slipped, mewling and tight-eyed, into this world, the rebel army of Charles Malstain entered the city of Brava from the east.

Two arrivals: one a newborn child that brought untold joy to a family of pianists and writers; the other an army that introduced untold misery to an entire city.

Such is life, my friend. There is no joy without accompanying sorrow. There is no despair so dark that a sliver of light cannot abate it. Our sliver of light weighed seven pounds two ounces, and for a whole day after her difficult birth Rachel was cuddled and held tight in her mother Judith's arms.

Never one for dramatic shows of emotion, Judith Klein sang a quiet little song she had learned as a child, and kissed Rachel's pink, shiny cheeks.

Rachel's brother Robert, nearly two years old and already full of freckles, couldn't wait to rush in to see his new sister, to tickle her and gently throttle her in the way that affectionate brothers do.

And her father? Her father Felix stood by the top of the bed and, for the first time in his life, said absolutely nothing.

Felix Klein was a librarian. In his spare time he was a writer of articles, funny jokes, plays, gardening tips, recipes, one good novel, thirteen bad novels, hundreds of letters to his family, even more letters to the government, love songs to his wife, and a small Latin dictionary.

Felix loved words. He wrote words about words. He sang about words. He was pretty much a walking word himself.

He worked in a temple of words. Its official name was the North Brava Public Lending Library. But to Felix it was much more than that. It was another family, a family of thousands of precious leather-bound children, each to be cared for and loved and nurtured through its strange and difficult life.

As well as reading and writing words, Felix also loved to say them. He was quite simply the best talker on earth. And since his job at the library required almost complete silence, he saved up most of his talking for home. Judith was used to it and had long ago given up on ever having a quiet night in.

And yet as Felix Klein stared down at his baby daughter, his words caught in his throat and a little gulp of joy came out. But nothing else. He was, miraculous to say, speechless.

For days Felix wandered around their sunny apartment, holding baby Rachel and saying nothing. Tears filled his eyes, dripped on to his typewriter, splashed on to kitchen

surfaces as he made tea for Judith, or a hot crumpet for himself which he then forgot to eat.

Such was Judith and Felix's joy that it was five days before either left the apartment, five days before Felix went to get milk and a newspaper, five days before he lit his pipe and read in the *Bravan Daily News* that the east of the city was convulsed by fighting between the Emperor's defence guard and the invading rebel army of Charles Malstain.

Felix's eyes lowered to hide his feelings. He knew all about Charles Malstain, the military colonel who had gained popularity in the East of the country with his boasts of creating a greater, newer, shinier Krasnia. Malstain was a small man, with a love of brass bands and a loathing for children.

Felix rolled up his newspaper and said nothing to Judith about the fighting. It would only cloud his wife's happiness. That evening he quietly used the *Bravan Daily News* to kindle a fire.

For a month the family did not buy another newspaper nor listen to the radio. They therefore did not know that the soldiers of Charles Malstain had reached the old centre of Brava, laying waste to its sandy beaches, flower stalls, museums and gardens. One criticism of Brava's centre – that perhaps it had one too many statues of military horsemen – was swiftly corrected as Malstain's men toppled each and every one.

As Rachel celebrated her twentieth day on earth, the family drank tea, entirely ignorant of the fact that Malstain's soldiers had entered the royal palace, arrested the Emperor in his bed, executed his royal guard, imprisoned his wife and children, and set fire to the royal galleries.

But as Rachel approached thirty days old, the truth could be avoided no longer. For Charles Malstain's men had reached the north of the city. And the very streets where the Klein family lived.

One morning little Robert Klein peered out of his window from the third-floor apartment, to see black helmets below. When Felix anxiously went to the shop to buy bread, he was asked to show identity papers, and to hurry home once he had bought his "essential provisions". He asked why he was not free to go to the park and feed bread to the ducks, as was his habit (he would often return with less than half a loaf left, much to Judith's annoyance). But he was simply slapped on the cheek and told to stop asking irrelevant questions.

Felix Klein's life was based on asking irrelevant questions. He loved to ask "Why is the sky blue when you look at it but black when you're in it?" or "Why does a violin sound terrible until the moment it sounds wonderful?" or "What is the opposite of an opposite?" or "If there is nothing better than this, then what is better than nothing?" and all sorts of other utterly meaningless questions that would take up hours of his and his family's



life. These were the questions that would, under the regime of Charles Malstain, become signs of a dangerous mind and a rebellious spirit. Felix would have to learn to keep his chatty mouth shut if he was to last long in the New World Order.

Two weeks later, on a fine spring morning as the cherry blossom hung heavy on the trees, the deposed Emperor of Krasnia was marched out into the square where so often he addressed his mostly adoring citizens. And in that square, as the sparrows hunted for crumbs and the blackbirds chirruped their morning song, his crimes were read out, and he was shot.

Rachel Klein grew up in strange times. She never knew a world where neighbours came out of their doors and chatted to each other about the weather, the price of bread and the terrible smell of the city sewer. No one dared gossip about anything, for fear of who might be listening.

Worse than that, Rachel never heard laughter of children in the street, never played hoopla or football with her brother in the city parks. For within months of taking over, Charles Malstain had banned children from playing in public. *Keep them in!* was the cry on information posters. *A seen child is a bad child!* Forests and parks were designated “adults only” and the beaches had wooden signs with a child’s face crossed out in red.

For years Rachel and her brother Robert left the house only to go to the state school, for their learning and exercise. Rachel studied the same book as all the other children (all the textbooks had been reissued after Charles Malstain's instatement as President of the New World Order). She played the piano for seven minutes, did physical exercise for twelve minutes. She had lunch for fourteen minutes, always the same sandwich of cheese without butter, and a pale fizzy drink called Happy Hour that made no one happy at all.

Then she came home.

Robert, two years older and of a scientific bent, was determined not to get disheartened. Unable to explore parks or forests, Robert focused his energy on the natural kingdom within the apartment. God help any creature that came into his bedroom. Dead flies were dissected and studied, beetles had their wings examined. Judith Klein's gorgeous array of pot plants on the balcony were experimented on in groundbreaking ways. Gravy was applied to a rose bush. Hanging begonias reacted very well to a daily dose of cough medicine. Robert observed that when his mother played the piano, the wasps gathered. They seemed to love Schubert in particular.

So Robert got by, busying himself with his experiments. But Rachel Klein was different. She was a dreamer. And how can one dream if one is allowed to see so little of life? Felix's heart broke to see such a beautiful, joyous daughter

take so little pleasure in her education. And so, to make up for the grey dull sameness of every school day, he determined that evenings at home would be different. Life at home would be an adventure!

One evening, on Rachel's return from school, Felix was dressed as a pirate and informed her, quite calmly, that she should quickly put on her sea-clothes for they were going on an ocean voyage to do some pillaging.

And that's what they did, without once leaving their living room. The old leather couch that had been in the family for years became the good ship *Sofa So-good*, the ceiling above them became the infinite sky, Rachel's mother became Good Seawoman McDuff, Robert (who had got bored of his wasp studies) became second mate Kurtz, and Rachel was allowed to mount the crow's nest (the bookcase in the corner helpfully had a little ladder attached), and to cry out "Land ahoy!" just before supper.

Together they did some very good pillaging and drank strong rum (water with a sugar cube in it). And when Good Seawoman McDuff tried to mutiny and became Bad Seawoman McDuff, they made her walk the plank off the *Sofa So-good* into the shark-infested ocean (which looked a bit like the family rug). And when she went to bed that night, Rachel was sure she could hear the gentle crash of the waves and taste the sea salt on her tongue.

On another day they were all polar explorers and spent an hour with their feet in a bucket of ice cubes

(which really hurt and should not be attempted). On another they were the Bravan fire brigade, putting out fires caused by foolish firework manufacturers. They were butterfly collectors in Java (Robert's favourite) and gold-hunters in Peru. They even went to England, a land where no one smiles, and told jokes to cheer the people up.

And then one day something different happened.

"A new and  
important voice"

MICHAEL MORPURGO

"Dazzling!  
An instant classic"

BEN MILLER



# THE SECRET OF THE BLOOD-RED KEY

Unlock a door  
into danger...



DAVID FARR

A STOLEN DREAMS  
Adventure

**Use the key wisely...**



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DAVID FARR

THE  
SECRET  
OF THE  
BLOOD-RED  
KEY

Illustrated by Kristina Kister



USBORNE







## Introduction

**L**et me take you on an airship.  
By airship I don't mean the terrifying kind that a twelve-year-old girl once took, fleeing for her life, desperate to find her brother and save her beloved country from misery and terror.

No. This airship is called *Liberty*. It is bright orange with streamers falling from it like wonderful hair. It rises in the clear blue sky and floats happily over Brava, the great capital city of Krasnia.

Look down from it now. What do you see? Once empty streets are filled with life. Once boarded-up cinemas are open again, cafes are full to bursting. What has happened here?

Cast your eye west. Yes, that's the city park, with flower

beds newly planted. And just beyond, can you see the ornamental lake with its paddle boats, and its funny old stone swan? For years that swan was silent and sad. But now it's been fixed and joyfully hurls liquid diamonds from its beak like it's singing for freedom.

Now strain your ears. What is that sound floating across the grass to your left? It's coming from the brand-new playground, installed only two weeks ago by order of the freshly elected government.

It sounds like bells. But it isn't.

Could it be? Yes, it is.

It is the sound of laughing.

Why is that so strange? you might ask. I'll tell you.

Just a few weeks ago, to be in this park was highly dangerous. To be a child playing in this park was to be a criminal. Charles Malstain, the dreadful dictator of Krasnia, hated children so much that he banned them from playing outside. They were not to be seen on beaches, or in parks, or anywhere. To Charles Malstain, a child was like a rat – dirty, smelly and best kept in a sewer.

But now Charles Malstain is dead! Now a new joy has swept over the country of Krasnia and its elegant old capital city of Brava. And children are free once more!

Look at them. Dozens of small figures swinging on swings, laddering up ladders, hurtling down slides. How did it happen? Charles Malstain wanted to rule Krasnia for ever. How was he defeated?

Well, it so happens that the main engineer of the dictator's demise is right now entering the park, a schoolbag slung over her shoulder. She has dark hair, a small nose and brown eyes. She is not growing as quickly as she would like. She is on her way home, in a hurry to make tea and cake for her father. But that won't stop the dozens of children rushing to Rachel Klein, to embrace their national heroine.

"Here she is!" the children cry. "The saviour of Krasnia!" Rachel blushes. They're all around her now, smiling and jostling. They're a bit younger than her and full of questions.

"Hi there!" Rachel says brightly. She knows what's coming.

"Rachel, tell us one more time! What was it like? What was it *really* like? To be in there, in the Presidential Palace, surrounded by soldiers, all with guns; and with Charles Malstain sitting on his huge throne, staring at you with his snaky eyes. Was it terrifying? Was it the most frightening thing *ever* in the history of *all* time?"

Rachel agrees it was.

"And when Malstain said he was going to imprison you for all eternity – was that the scariest thing of all? And when you escaped! From under the soldiers' noses! With your brother! In the back of a meat van! From the palace that everyone said no one could ever escape from *ever*!"

A girl with simply enormous eyes takes up the story like a sprinter in a relay:

"And then you and Robert broke into the library and

Malstain chased you with his soldiers and they were going to kill you, but then Malstain collapsed and died! In the Rare Books Room! And his regime was toppled and all the prisoners were released from the dungeons under the palace and Constanza Glimpf took over as President and life in Brava became normal again, which is why we are free to play in this park for the first time in years, and all because of you, Rachel Klein! All because of you!”

The girl gasps for breath. Her eyeballs are popping out of her face as if on springs. Her friends applaud. Rachel smiles with a mixture of pleasure and embarrassment.

“That’s so kind of you,” she says. “But I didn’t do it alone. Everyone played their part. We all saved Krasnia!”

There’s a huge cheer now. Rachel laughs and hugs about fifteen children at once.

“And now I really have to get home. I have such a lot of homework and my father is waiting...”

“Of course! Let her go! She has important work to do! Hurrah! Hurrah for Rachel Klein! Heroine of Krasnia!”

And with another roar they let her go.

Rachel can’t help grinning as she walks on through the park to the echo of the children’s cheers. She gives them a wave and turns past the herb garden. Watch her now as she crosses the bridge over the lake, strolling past the funny spouting swan, towards the gate that will lead her home.

When suddenly a figure steps out of the shadows towards her.



1

## The Boy on the Bench

**T**he figure was alone. He was a boy, dressed strangely in a smart brown mackintosh coat and polished black shoes. He was about her brother's age, Rachel thought, perhaps slightly older. He had short, very dark brown hair. And he was not here for the playground.

The boy looked at her seriously and nodded. What could such a look mean? Rachel was about to take a different path when the boy made a strange movement with his right hand. She looked down.

He was holding something.

It was a blood-red key.

Rachel stared in astonishment. The key was identical to the one Rachel had been magically left after she destroyed

The Book of Stolen Dreams. But Rachel had hidden her blood-red key in the bedroom she shared with Robert ever since.

*So how did this boy have one?*

The boy signalled and walked on. Rachel followed him into an area of the park surrounded by rose bushes. He sat on a bench in such a way that left space beside him. Rachel stood by the bench but did not sit.

“Who are you?” she demanded. “What do you want?”

“I have something to tell you,” he said quietly. “Sit down.” Rachel sat but kept distance between them.

“How did you get that key?” she asked firmly, looking ahead so no one would know they were talking.

“The same way you did,” said the boy. “I closed a rip in the fabric.”

Rachel felt her breath stick in her chest. How did he know about that? Everyone in Brava was aware Rachel and Robert Klein had defeated Charles Malstain, but they had no idea that Rachel had destroyed The Book of Stolen Dreams and closed the gate to the Hinterland for ever. Constanza Glimpf had made it very clear: ordinary people must have no idea that the Hinterland existed at all.

*People cannot be trusted with such knowledge.*

“What fabric?” Rachel asked the boy cagily. She was keeping as much distance on the bench as possible.

“Anyone who closes the fabric between life and death, between our world and the Hinterland, joins our select

group and receives a blood-red key,” the boy said, glancing at her. “We are the Keepers of the Key. We know the truth of the Hinterland – the land where dead souls roam. We know its dark magic.”

There was such intensity in his honey-brown eyes.

“There are those like Malstain who wish to exploit the magic to bring the dead back to life. We must use the keys to stop them. *You* must use your key wisely, Rachel Klein.”

“But how will I know when to use it?” Rachel stammered. She couldn’t believe her ears.

“The key will tell you,” the boy said gravely. “Swear to me that when it does, you will not refuse it.”

Rachel wanted to ask *how* the key would tell her but instead she found herself swearing that she would do exactly as he said.

The boy stood.

“Tell no one about this. This knowledge is not for everyone.”

For a moment they watched as ordinary Bravans passed through the park, going about their daily lives in the new free Krasnia, utterly unaware of the strange conversation taking place among the winter roses.

Then very quietly the boy fished something out of his trouser pocket.

It was a small card with a red key imprinted on one side. On the other side was a six-digit number and an image of a telephone.





**634234**

## **Call only in Absolute Emergency**

He placed the card in her hand. He kept hold of it for a brief moment.

“You are not alone.”

Then he walked away across the grass.

“Wait,” Rachel wanted to say, but by the time she’d opened her mouth, it was too late. The boy in the mackintosh coat was gone.

And she didn’t even know his name.