

SIMON HAYNES

# HAL JUNIOR



THE  
SECRET SIGNAL

# The Secret Signal

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*Book one in the Hal Junior series*

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## THE SECRET SIGNAL

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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination, or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Dedicated to all my nieces and nephews



*There once was a lad called Hal Junior  
Who was gifted a plant by Aunt Lunia  
The best thing for me  
said Hal seriously  
Is a spaceship and not a petunia!*

## The Test Flight

*Captain Spacejock was patrolling the galaxy's deadliest sector in his sleek fighter, the Phantom X1. The enemy had been sighted near Ackexa, but he hadn't seen another ship all day. Now, with fuel running low, he decided to scan one last planet.*

*Spacejock dived towards the barren surface, and his powerful fighter raised a dust storm as it skimmed across the desert. The skies were clear, but he was puzzled by a blurry shape in the middle of his scanner. What could it be?*

*'Fizz! Fizz! FIZZ!'*

*Laser beams zinged the X1, spitting and crackling as they bounced off the hull. Captain Spacejock twisted his craft this way and that until he spotted the enemy: A sinister ship right on his tail.*

*The enemy was lining up for the kill. There was only one way out!*

‘Whoosh! Zoom!’ Hal Junior swept his arm through the air, fluttering the wings of a paper plane gripped in his hand.

*The X1 climbed into the sky, turned on its tail and dived on the pursuer. Catching the ship by surprise with his patented slam-roll, Captain Spacejock fired a burst from his triple-decker space-cannon.*

The paper plane swooped. ‘Neeee-ouuw! Fizz-fizz-BOOM! Take that, evil minion! You’re no match for Captain Spacejock!’

*The X1 performed a victory roll over the crash site, where a dumpy figure with toad-like eyes was escaping the wreckage of his ship. Captain Spacejock saluted his fallen foe, who returned the noble gesture with one of his own.*

*The Captain had barely set course for home when an angry voice crackled in his headphones.*

‘Will you hurry up! We’ll be late for lessons!’

Hal lowered the paper plane. Stephen ‘Stinky’ Binn was a good friend, but Hal sometimes wished he was a robot so he could switch his voice off. ‘Stinky! I was on patrol!’

‘If you don’t quit dreaming you’ll be on detention.’

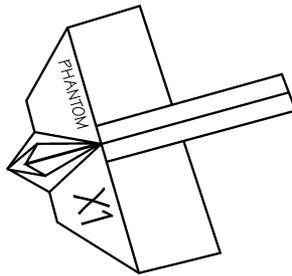
They hurried along the corridor together, with Hal still fighting imaginary space battles. ‘Zoom! Zzing! Ker-pow! Aaargh!’

Stinky rolled his eyes.

A lift carried them to the next level, and on the

way up Hal showed off his paper plane. His dad had found the diagram in an old ebook the night before, and after demonstrating the basics he'd left Hal to it. His dad was good like that - always there to lend a hand, but never trying to take over and do everything for you.

The plane had come out really well, but it wasn't finished until bed time and their quarters were too small for a test flight. Hal had been pretending to fly it all morning, but it wasn't enough. He was itching to try it for real.



'Teacher's not going to like it,' warned Stinky, gesturing at the plane. 'You were supposed to write your answers on it, not crease it into little squares.'

'Oh yeah?' Hal turned the plane over to reveal several lines of uneven handwriting. 'Shame you're not as smart as me.'

Stinky shook his head. 'You're still going to cop it. That stuff is really precious.'

The class theme for the week was ancient technology, and each student had been given a sheet of paper and a pencil stub for their homework. Paper was scarce aboard the space station, where everything had to be flown in at huge expense.

Hal figured the sheet was going to be recycled anyway, so why not make a plane out of it?

The lift doors opened and Hal launched the plane with a sudden flick of the wrist, almost hitting Stinky in the back of the head. At first it flew beautifully, sailing past doorways and weaving through pipes and struts as though Captain Spacejock were at the controls. Then ... *whoosh!* A recycling hatch opened with its distinctive sucking noise.

According to Hal's dad the rushing air was supposed to keep nasty smells in, but there were rumours of a giant space monster at the bottom of the shaft. It was supposed to live on scraps of metal and old food, and every time a hatch opened the monster took a gigantic breath, gulping down air to fill its leathery lungs.

Unfortunately, the whooshing air sucked the plane straight into the hatch. Fortunately, when Hal looked inside he found the plane stuck to the damp wall. Unfortunately it was just out of reach.

## Down the Hatch

‘Come *on*, you stubborn slice of tree pulp!’ Hal’s arms were at full stretch, but his grasping fingers couldn’t quite reach the paper plane stuck to the grimy metal wall.

‘Have you got it yet?’

‘What do you think?’ snapped Hal, twisting his neck to give Stinky an upside-down glare.

‘I think I can’t hold on much longer.’

Unfortunately Stinky wasn’t talking about his frequent trips to the bathroom. No, Stinky was braced against the recycling hatch, holding Hal by the ankles. His fingers were the only thing saving his friend from a headlong plunge down Space Station Oberon’s main recycling chute.

‘You can do it,’ said Hal. ‘Just a bit lower.’

‘I can’t. You’ll have to leave it.’

*Leave it . . . leave it . . . leave it!* echoed the chute.

Hal grabbed and missed. It was so annoying! He was close enough to read his own writing, but it could have been a light year away for all the use that was. ‘Scribbling on paper is a *stupid* idea. Why couldn’t we stick to writing answers in our workbooks?’

‘Instead of sticking them to the wall, you mean?’ Stinky shifted his grip. ‘It’s lucky Teacher didn’t give us stone tablets to write on.’

‘Don’t be an idiot. If he’d given us a slab of rock I’d hardly have made a paper plane, would I?’

‘No, you’d have lobbed it through a window instead.’ Stinky thought for a moment. ‘Why don’t we share my paper? You can write your answers on the back.’

Hal snorted. He rarely did his homework the first time, and doing it twice was out of the question. Frustrated, he scowled at the paper plane. Any minute now they’d be marked absent, and by the time he finished detention a fresh load of garbage would have brushed his homework straight down the chute. No, it was now or never. ‘Hey, I’ve got a brilliant idea. Let go of my ankles.’

‘You call that brilliant?’

‘Sure. I’ll drop a bit further if you hold my shoes.’

‘You’ll drop a lot further if they slip off your feet.’

‘They wouldn’t come off if you shot them with a

blast rifle. I used my patented triple knot.'

Stinky knew all about Hal's patented ideas, but nonetheless he shifted his grip to Hal's shoes.

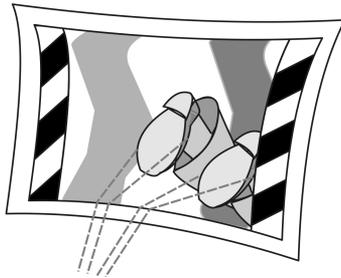
'Just a bit more!' cried Hal, as his outstretched fingers brushed the plane's wing.

'That's all, Hal. I swear.'

'The laces. Hold me by the shoelaces!'

By now Stinky was beyond arguing, and he obeyed despite his misgivings.

Unfortunately, Hal's original laces had been burnt to a crisp in the great model rocket affair. Fortunately his dad had replaced them. Unfortunately he'd used elastic.



Hal went down the chute like a bungee-jumping hamster – his arms outstretched and a look of wide-eyed shock on his face. The weight almost pulled Stinky through the hatch, but he just managed to brace himself.

*Boinnnnggg!*

Stretched to capacity, the elastic contracted, yanking Hal backwards up the chute. For a split second he was face to face with Stinky, and he couldn't help laughing at his friend's startled upside-down expression.

*Whoosh!*

Gravity reasserted itself, and Hal went back down the chute. This time he stuck his hand out, and with a triumphant yell he peeled the plane from the wall. 'I've got it, Stinky. I've got it!'

*Boinnnnnggg!*

Hal didn't bounce as far this time, or the next, and after bobbing up and down a few more times he finally came to rest, turning slowly in mid-air as he dangled by his extremely long shoelaces. 'I told you it would work. Now get me out of here.'

Stinky pulled, but Hal didn't move.

'Go on. Put some effort into it!'

'I can't!' said Stinky in alarm. 'Hal, you're too heavy. I can't pull you up!'

— 3 —

End Sample

This is the end of the sample.

Thanks for reading!

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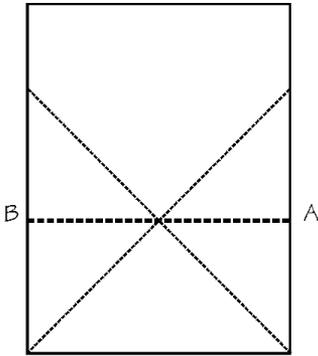
A couple more who shall remain nameless

... and the rest of my family

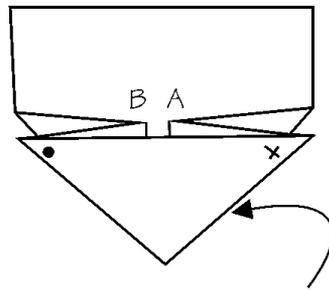
**Internal Art:**

*Blame that on the author*

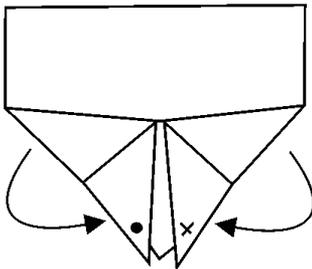
# Build the Phantom X1!



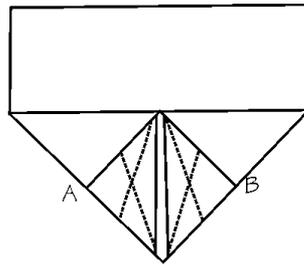
Fold and unfold along dotted lines



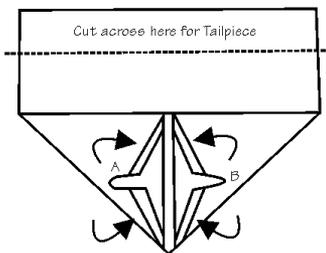
Pull points A and B to the middle



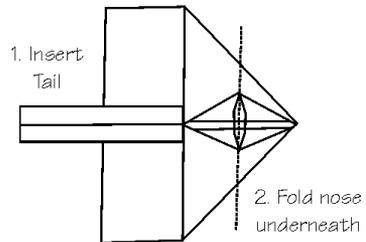
Fold marked flaps towards the nose



Crease and increase the flaps as shown



Pinch points A and B, folding flaps inwards



## About the Author

Simon Haynes was born in England and grew up in Spain, where he enjoyed an amazing childhood of camping, motorbikes, mateship, air rifles and paper planes. His family moved to Australia when he was 16.

From 1986 to 1988 Simon studied at Curtin University, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Film, Creative Writing and Literature.

Simon returned to Curtin in 1997, graduating with a degree in Computer Science two years later. An early version of Hal Spacejock was written between lectures.

Simon has four Hal Spacejock novels, one Hal Junior novel and several short stories in print. He divides his time between writing fiction and computer software, with frequent bike rides to blow away the cobwebs.

His goal is to write fifteen Hal books (Spacejock OR Junior!) before someone takes his keyboard away.

Simon's website is [www.spacejock.com.au](http://www.spacejock.com.au)