



# The Extraordinary Adventures of Ordinary Basil

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

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It is 1899 and Basil lives in a lighthouse on the Maine coast with his parents, but even a lighthouse is boring in January when all it seems to do is snow, then snow some more? It takes a philosophical reminder from his mother that you can really only appreciate the extraordinary against a backdrop of the ordinary for Basil to perk up and at this strategic point he welcomes adventure into his life. There is a gentle suggestion of **The Phantom Tollbooth** in this tale of a little boy who needs to rediscover his sense of joy and purpose.

In Basil's case, whistling a tune, which pops unexpectedly into his head ? yet which he seems to have heard before ? summons the jovial Professor Angus McGookin who appears outside his window in a wonderful contraption, half-boat, half-balloon, and whisks Basil off to a futuristic city in the sky called Helios. Basil discovers that Helios is really the remains of the lost Atlantis, whose Council is seeking to preserve the secrets of civilisation from war-mongering humanity, by hiding the city above the clouds. Here Basil meets Louise and her flying pet ?pteranodon? called Beatrice, just one of the amazing forms of transport the technically advanced Helios citizens use to get around their sky-city. An exploratory trip on Beatrice brings the pair to the attention of Von Röttweil, a legendary enemy of Helios and gives Basil a chance to prove his mettle.

Mixing up some engaging cardboard-villains, a spooky house setting with a workshop producing robot soldiers and a nod to the notion of a musical ninth dimension, Miller packs a lot into this short tale, but does so lightly and with verve. Extended from Miller's newspaper comic strip, the story clearly shows its cartoon antecedents, but will win new readers with its quirky take on a familiar Goodies v. Baddies theme. I greatly enjoyed the brightly coloured illustrations, which give life to the various inventions detailed in the story. A useful addition to the classroom shelf for young readers beginning to extend their reading stamina.

Running Order:

60

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