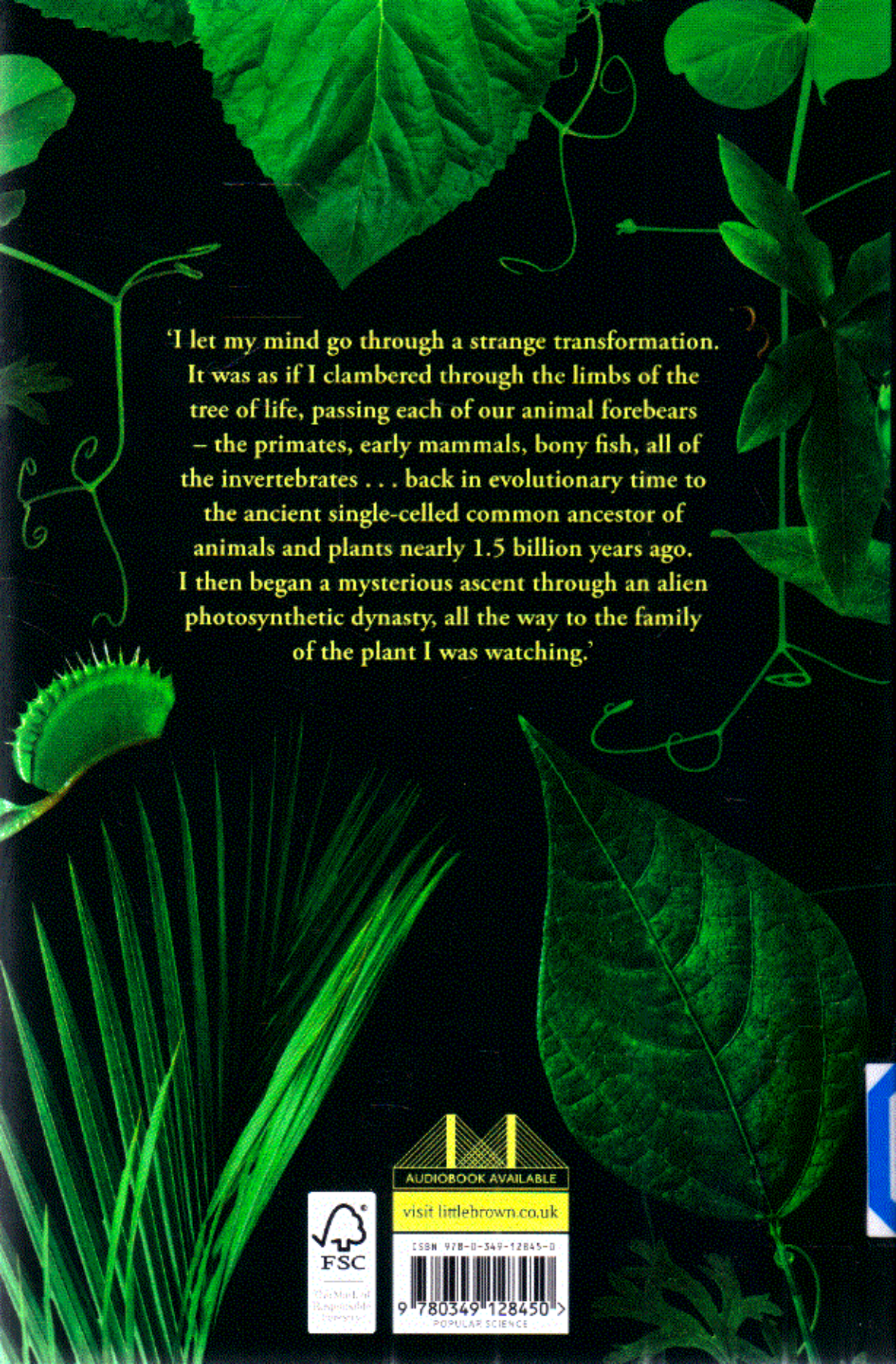

'I let my mind go through a strange transformation. It was as if I clambered through the limbs of the tree of life, passing each of our animal forebears – the primates, early mammals, bony fish, all of the invertebrates . . . back in evolutionary time to the ancient single-celled common ancestor of animals and plants nearly 1.5 billion years ago. I then began a mysterious ascent through an alien photosynthetic dynasty, all the way to the family of the plant I was watching.'

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