

MAC B.

KID

SPY

THE IMPOSSIBLE
CRIME



By **Mac Barnett**

Illustrated by **Mike Lowery**

Orchard Books

New York

An Imprint of Scholastic Inc.

"LIKE MOST PEOPLE, QUINN
KNEW ALMOST NOTHING ABOUT
CRIME... WHAT INTERESTED
HIM ABOUT THE STORIES HE
WROTE WAS NOT THEIR RELATION
TO THE WORLD BUT THEIR RELATION
TO OTHER STORIES."
- PAUL AUSTER, *CITY OF GLASS*

A NOTE ON THE ART

Astute readers may notice that sometimes an object described as having a certain color is shown in the pictures to have a different color. A blood-red letter might look black. Blue bits on a flag might be orange. A gold harp appears green. That's because we only use three kinds of ink to print the artwork in these books: black, orange, and green. So everything in this book, no matter what color it is in real life, looks black, orange, or green. Or white! That's where we didn't use any ink at all. You probably didn't need a note explaining all this. But you never know, you know?

—M.B.



For Liza B.

—M.B.

To my brother, Jon, who joined me in running out of the theater during *Gremlins*.

—M.L.

Text copyright © 2019 by Mac Barnett • Illustrations copyright © 2019 by Mike Lowery
All rights reserved. Published by Orchard Books, an imprint of Scholastic Inc., *Publishers since 1920*.
ORCHARD BOOKS and design are registered trademarks of Watts Publishing Group, Ltd., used under
license. SCHOLASTIC and associated logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Scholastic
Inc. • Game Boy is a registered trademark of Nintendo Co. Ltd. The publisher does not have any
control over and does not assume any responsibility for author or third-party websites or their
content. • No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted
in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without
written permission of the publisher. For information regarding permission, write to Scholastic Inc.,
Attention: Permissions Department, 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

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

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data available.

ISBN 978-1-338-14368-3

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 19 20 21 22 23

Printed in China 62 • First edition, January 2019

The text type was set in Twentieth Century.

The display type was hand lettered by Mike Lowery.

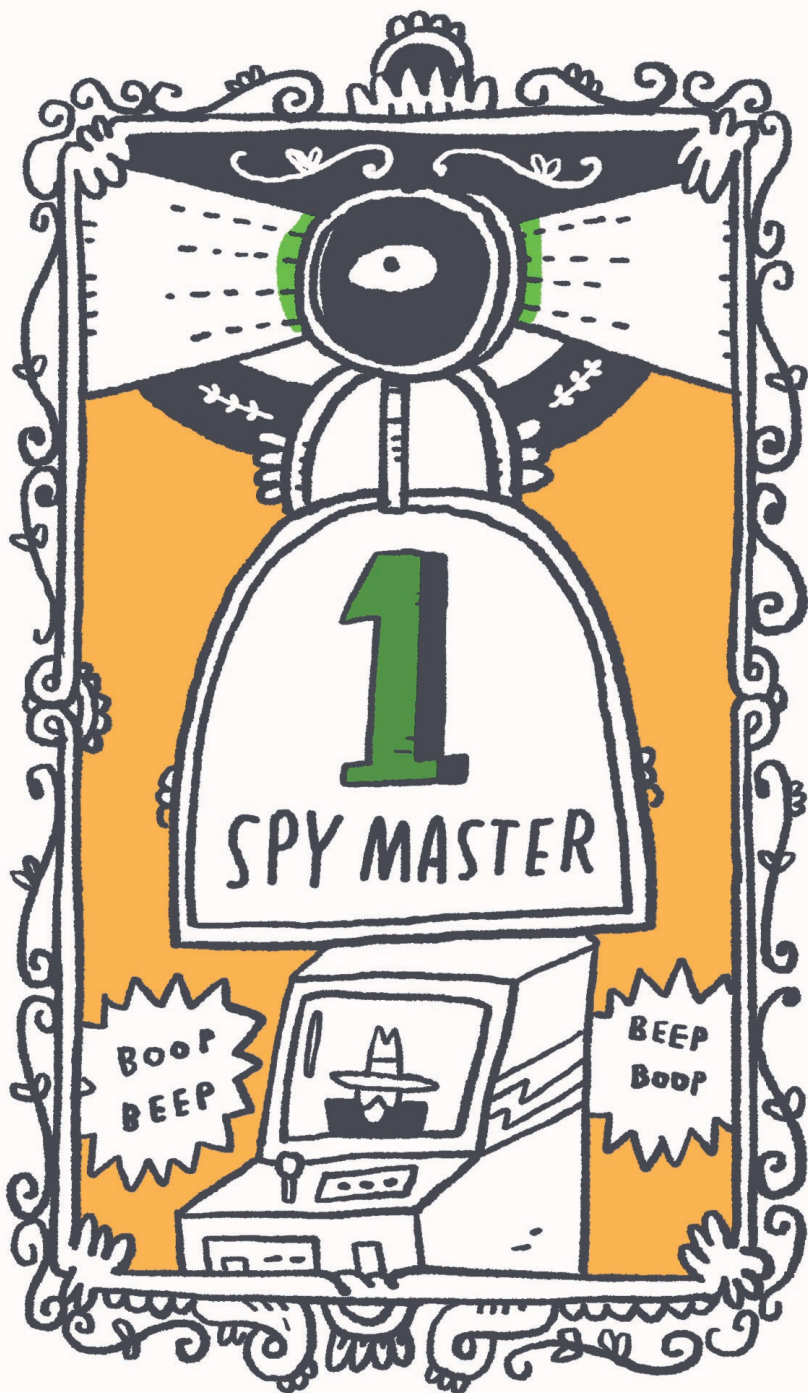
Book design by Doan Buu



ME AS A

~~KID~~

SPY!






It was 1989. It was Saturday.

I was somewhere I spent many Saturdays in 1989: Golden Tee Golfland.

Golden Tee Golfland is a real place, on a real street called Castro Valley Boulevard, in a real town called Castro Valley. You can look it up.

Golden Tee Golfland is a real mini-golf course, full of all the fake stuff you find at real mini-golf courses: real fake windmills, real fake pagodas, and three real fake dragons whose long necks poke out from a volcano.



Castro Valley is in California, a place with warm sun and wide blue sky. It is almost always nice to be outside, which is great if you love mini-golf.

When I was a kid, I liked mini-golf OK.

But I loved video games.

And Golden Tee Golfland had an arcade.

Outside the arcade it was a fine spring day.

Inside the arcade it was dark and smelled like old carpet. Above a counter in the corner, there was a pink neon sign that said SNACK BAR. They sold pizza slices for a buck. (The pizza wasn't good.) Plastic air hockey pucks clacked against tables. Hard rubber balls rolled up Skee-Ball alleys and thudded into the gutters. Machines beeped.





Kids screamed. Machines booped. Kids screamed some more. There was an area with games that spit out long strands of tickets you could trade in for plastic prizes: fake spiders, Super Balls. The prizes were cheap. Ticket games were for suckers. I was there to play video games, where a quarter got you three lives and the only prize was a place on the high-score list. You didn't play for Super Balls. You played to be the best.

Game cabinets stood in neat rows, like columns in a ruined temple. Their screens glowed. The words INSERT COIN flashed in the darkness. I was in the corner, past ALTERED BEAST, past EXCALIBUR, past TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES and GHOULS 'N GHOSTS.



Those games were all good. But I was playing SPY MASTER 2: ARCADE EDITION.

SPY MASTER 2: ARCADE EDITION was the arcade-only sequel to SPY MASTER. The graphics were better. The missions were crazier. But mostly the game was famous for being really, really hard. Impossible. Unbeatable.

And there I was, on the final boss, with three lives and a power-up.

Behind me, I heard someone say, “Hey, this kid’s going to beat SPY MASTER 2!”



Jump. Punch. Jump. Jump. Punch. I'd been hunched over the controls for three hours, sweating and smashing buttons. When my mom dropped me off at Golfland that morning, she'd handed me a five-dollar bill. I'd changed four bucks to quarters and spent the last dollar on a slice of pizza. The greasy plate was still perched on top of the game cabinet.



A crowd had formed behind me.

"He's still got three lives," said a kid.

"And a power-up," said another kid.

"I've never seen anyone beat this game," said a forty-year-old man in a tank top who was always in the arcade.

I tried to block out the commotion. The final boss of SPY MASTER 2 was the Spy Master himself, a giant KGB agent who wore a black suit and carried a metal briefcase. The showdown took place on the wing of a Russian airplane.



I was pounding away on the jump button, dodging the Spy Master's attacks.

"Hey, what's your name, dude?" somebody asked.

"Mac." I didn't take my eyes off the screen.

"Matt?"

This happened to me a lot.

"Mac," I said. "M-A-C."

"Hey, that's only three letters! You can put your whole name on the high score list!"

That was true. It was the best thing about having a three-letter name in the 1980s. And if I beat the game, I would have the number-one high score. Anybody who came to Golden Tee Golfland would know I was the best.

The Spy Master threw a stick of dynamite. I jumped over it and landed a punch on his belly.

The crowd was chanting my name.

"He's gonna beat it!" the man in the tank top shouted.

“Rad!” said a kid.

“Nah. He’ll choke.”

I recognized that voice.

It was Derek Lafoy.



Derek Lafoy went to my school. He called me “Mac Barn Head.” He threw my gym shoes on the roof of the school. He owned a pet snake, which he kept in a red, glowing, glass box in the corner of his room. I had heard about the snake from kids who had seen it. I had never been to Derek’s house. He never invited me to his birthday parties. (If he had, I would have gone.)

“Derek,” I said. “What are you doing here?”

“I’m having my birthday party,” he said.

“Oh,” I said.

I risked looking up from the game and recognized a lot of my classmates in the crowd around me. Tiffany. Brandon. Hendrick. Both Ashleys.



This could be my moment of glory. I had to win.
The Spy Master was throwing poison darts.
Jump. Jump. Jump.

“MAC! MAC! MAC!” chanted the crowd.

“MATT! MATT! MATT!” chanted a couple kids in
the crowd.

“CHOKE! CHOKE! CHOKE!” chanted Derek
Lafoy.

Now the Spy Master’s suitcase was glowing.

“Why is it glowing?” asked Mr. Tank Top.

“Uh-oh,” said a kid.

Now Derek was the only one chanting. “CHOKE!
CHOKE!”

Twelve rays of light burst from the Spy Master’s
suitcase and the screen went white.

“Aw, man! He used a nuke!”

I had never seen anything like it.

All three of my lives were wiped out.

The Spy Master put on a pair of sunglasses and
laughed.

