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PIXEL RAIDERS

DIG WORLD

**BY STEPHANIE BENDIXSEN +
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SCHOLASTIC INC.

For our friend and mentor Janet "Sydski" Gaëta,
who created *Good Game* and *Good Game: Spawn
Point*. It is because of her that we began to share the
wonderful, imaginative world of video games with kids
(big and small) everywhere.—**S.B. + S.O.**

Rocketpig, to our games past, present, and future.—**C.K.**

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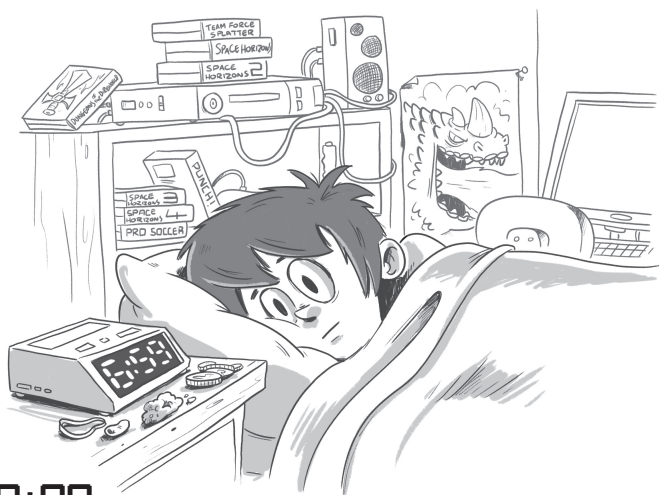
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THINGS ARE ABOUT TO GET INREAL

Ripley stared at the digital alarm clock on his bedside table. 6:59. He glared at the numbers from his pillow, willing them to tick over.

Any moment now . . .



7:00.

BLEEP! BLEEP! BLEEP—

Ripley slammed a hand down onto the clock, silencing the alarm. He leapt out of bed with such a strong burst of excitement that his foot got caught in the sheets and he tripped, almost landing on his face.

“Whoa!” he yelped, relieved no one saw his first act of clumsiness for the day. He gathered himself up, catching sight of his disheveled and slightly red-faced reflection in the bedroom mirror. His features settled into an expression of fierce determination.

“Today’s the day, Rip,” he said to himself. He smoothed his hair over, trying to coax back the flattened part that always seemed to get stuck in the same position when he slept, making him look like he’d been caught in a windstorm.

Today was the day of the school field trip.



Like everyone else, Rip liked getting the chance to spend a day out of the classroom. But most field trips didn't really thrill him beyond that. They were more fun for the kids who were good at math or science or sports or music.

But Rip—he was one of the best gamers in the school. Everyone knew it, and it was something he was very proud of. So that's why this field trip was a BIG deal for Ripley. Today they would be visiting INREAL GAMES—one of the biggest gaming companies in the world.

They were responsible for all the greats:

TEAMFORCE SPLATTER

DUNGEONS OF DIREWORLD

SPACE HORIZONS 1, 2, 3, and 4

... and so many others. He couldn't *wait* to see the very place where all these games were made.

Besides, who knows? Maybe today he'd be able to take a peek at some secret, unannounced game that INREAL was working on. He could show

off some of his skills, and they'd see what a dedicated, highly skilled gamer he was. "This kid has a bright future in video games!" they'd say. "Perhaps he should skip school altogether and come work for us!"

Caught up in the daydream, Rip quivered with glee at the thought. He hoped to create his own games for INREAL one day . . .

"RIPLEEEEEYY. I DON'T HEAR THE SHOOOWEER."

Ripley snapped back to reality.

"SORRY, MOM!"

He fished around for his towel amid the messy chaos of his room, managing to retrieve it from beneath a pile of video-game boxes (none of which had the correct games in them).

No more time for daydreaming. Today, he absolutely would *not* be late.



Mei Lin grabbed the last empty seat on the school bus and plonked her schoolbag down next to her. *Perfect*. With no one next to her,

she'd be able to just play on her portable gaming device without any fuss or interruptions. She liked it better that way.

Mei pulled out her Digi-Play and loaded up **DUNGEONS OF DIREWORLD**—it was her favorite, and she was on the second to last boss. So far, she hadn't been able to beat it, but she knew she was close.

As she waited for the level to load, she cast her eyes around the bus.

