

CHAPTER 1

Sci-Fi Wars



The giant battleship Potemkin hung in space. The planet MK340 spun like a huge blue ball before it. The missiles and laser beams shooting from the planet's surface were deflected by the battleship's impenetrable force-field.

"Are we doing the right thing?" asked Captain McNair, standing on the bridge of the Potemkin. "Do we have the right to attack this planet?"

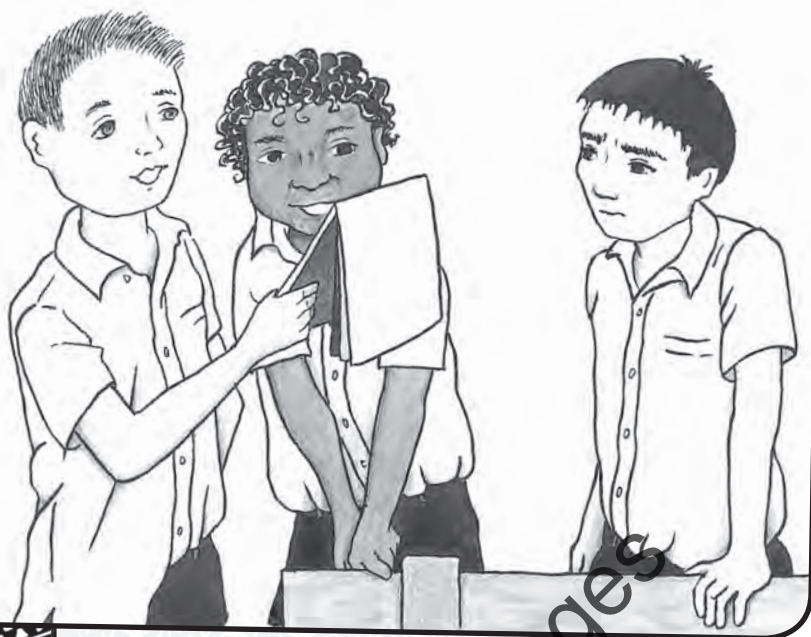
"We have our orders," said Phillips, McNair's second-in-command. "We have no choice. We must!"

"There are always choices," said the Captain, rubbing a hand over his tired eyes. "Always."

Suddenly the bridge was rocked by a tremendous explosion and...

Suddenly someone pushed Gary from behind and snatched the notebook he was writing in.





“What’s this, nerd-boy?” laughed Steve, waving the notebook, while Jake sniggered.

“G...g... give it back,” stammered Gary, jumping to his feet.

“N...n... no way!” said Jake, imitating Gary’s stutter, as he shoved him back onto the bench.

Gary hated the way he stuttered sometimes. He could usually control it, except when he was upset, or angry, or scared.

“If you want it back, it must be worth keeping,” said Steve. He held up the paper, pretended to clear his throat in a theatrical way, and began to read. “*The giant battleship Pot...Potem...*” He looked down at Gary. “What kind of stupid name is that for a battleship?”



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“It’s not stupid,” said Gary, losing his stutter. “It’s actually the name of a famous battleship from a famous film called—”

“Shut up,” said Steve. “Like I really care.”

“Yeah,” agreed Jake. “Shut up!”

“And what’s this about a planet?” Steve went on. “How can you have a battleship in space? This is stupid!” He ripped the page from the notebook and screwed it up.

“It’s n... n... not stupid!” declared Gary, his stutter returning. “It’s science-fiction.”

“Yeah,” said Steve, throwing the screwed-up piece of paper across the schoolyard. “Like I said... STUPID!”

“What’s going on here?” asked Ms Stefani, approaching from the staffroom.

“Nothing,” said Steve, as he and Jake began walking off.

“Is everything all right?” Ms Stefani asked Gary.

“Yeah,” said Gary, walking over to the crushed ball of paper. “Fine.”

He picked up the paper and began flattening it out.