
SPACE
DETECTIVES

Also by Mark Powers

The 

series

Illustrated by Tim Wesson

Spy Toys

Spy Toys: Out of Control!

Spy Toys: Undercover



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BLOOMSBURY
CHILDREN'S BOOKS
LONDON OXFORD NEW YORK NEW DELHI SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN'S BOOKS
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3DP, UK
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland

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First published in Great Britain in 2021 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: PB: 978-1-5266-0318-0; eBook: 978-1-5266-0316-6

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

Printed and bound in Great Britain by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY



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For Richard Lee

With thanks to Jo, Kate, Zöe, Lucy, Emily, Namra, Jessica and Jet

– Mark

To the memory of my good friend Glen, the most out-of-this-world person I know

– Dapo

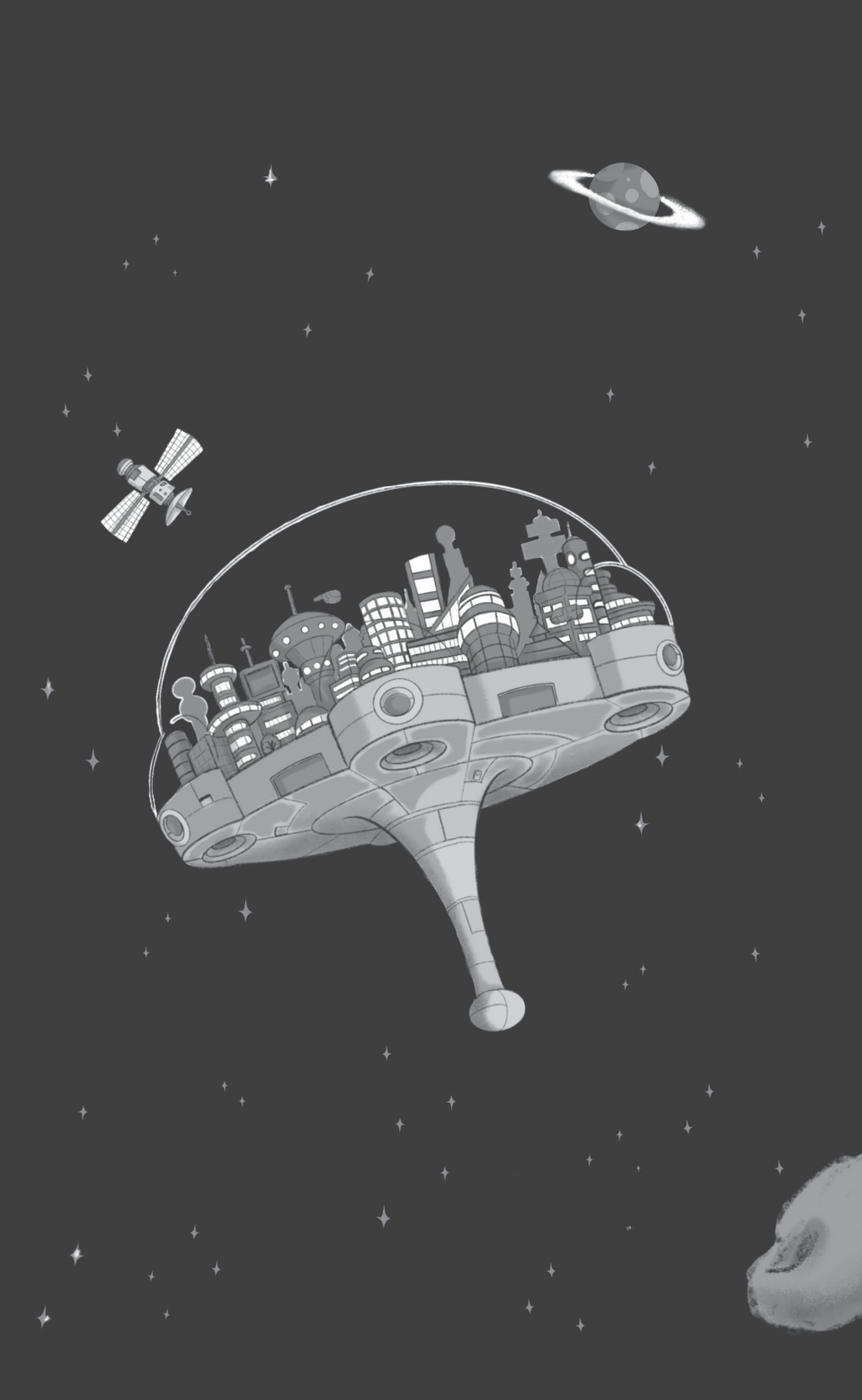
PROLOGUE

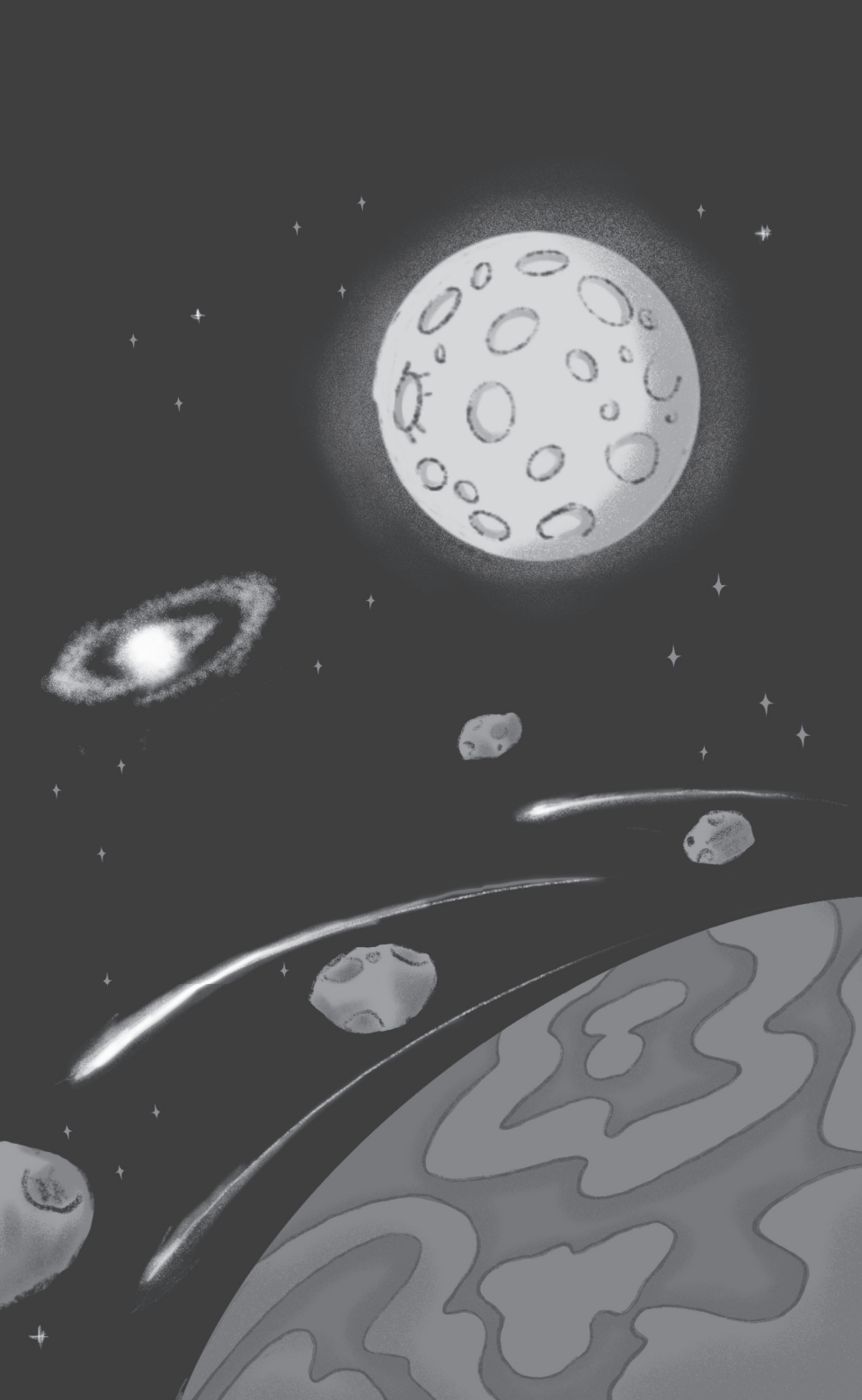
The lone figure stared at the laptop screen and gave a chuckle.

In the darkened room, it was impossible to tell whether the figure was young or old, male or female, human or alien. But there was no mistaking the pure evil in its laugh.

The task that lay ahead was difficult. A few details remained to be checked. But if the plan succeeded, the result would be unimaginable terror …

A muffled voice called, interrupting the figure's thoughts. The figure closed the laptop and went downstairs for dinner. It was fish fingers.





Chapter 1

Welcome to Starville

It was another perfect day on Starville – the most astonishing place in the galaxy. A gigantic space station, Starville sailed silently overhead in orbit around the Earth and was home to over a million humans and aliens. It was a single, vast city brimming with skyscrapers, lush green parks and even a sparkling artificial sea, all enclosed by a huge and incredibly strong glass dome. Seen through a telescope from the world below, it looked like a gleaming snow globe gliding majestically through the night sky.

At the edge of a wide, tree-lined square near the centre of Starville's fanciest shopping district, two ten-year-old human boys stood behind an ice cream stall. One was tall, gawky and looked a bit like an ostrich wearing glasses. His name was Connor. The other was short, squat and constantly bristling with energy like a terrier. This was Ethan.



The square was full of humans and aliens enjoying the sunshine. Business at the ice cream stall was brisk.

'Wow,' said Ethan as he watched their latest customers, a family of tall, two-legged, blue-skinned, cow-like creatures, walk away licking their lips. 'Those Neptunian Cow People really love our Extra Minty Grapefruit and Smoky Bacon flavour! That's the fifth lot we've sold to them today.'

Connor adjusted his glasses, a sure sign there was something on his mind. 'Actually, Ethan, the Cow People are from *Pluto*, not Neptune. You should try to remember that. We wouldn't want to offend any of our customers.'

Ethan had to laugh. 'Give me a chance, mate! We've only been on Starville a week. I haven't learned all the alien races who live here yet.'

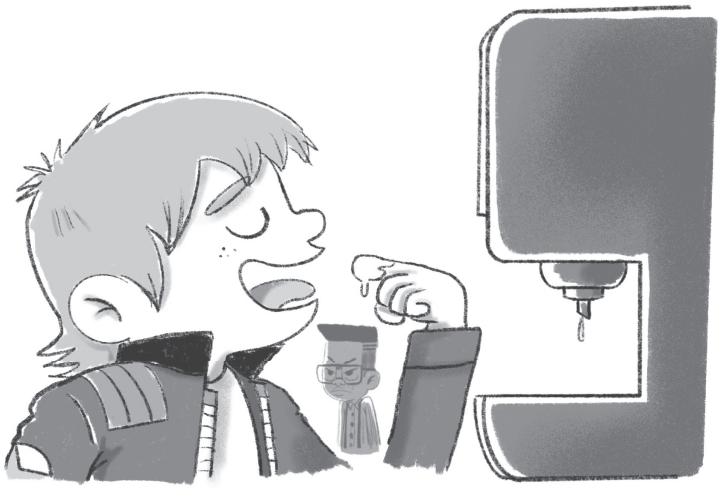


‘Well, you could have memorised them all on the rocket trip up here, like I did,’ said Connor. ‘What were you doing?’

Ethan shrugged. ‘Looking out of the

window and going, **"Blimey, I'm on a flipping rocket!"**

That and eating the cakes my mum baked for the trip. You can't learn everything in books, you know. Sometimes you need to just look around you. Or taste around you.' He scooped a stray blob of ice cream from the machine's dispenser nozzle with the end of his finger and popped it in his mouth.



Connor glared at him. 'For the last time, stop doing that. It's unhygienic. You'll get us closed down.'

'Oh yeah,' said Ethan. 'Sorry.'

'Anyway, I'd recommend getting to know all the different alien races now we're here,' said Connor. 'It might be handy for a case.'

'A case!' said Ethan, staring off into the distance. 'That's what we need!'

'Tell me about it,' grumbled Connor, folding his arms. 'I hardly think standing around all day selling ice cream is a good use of our skills.'

These boys were more than just ice cream sellers. They were **detectives**! Back home on Earth, Connor and Ethan had solved many mysteries together in their spare time, such as finding their head teacher's missing antique letter opener (long story short: magpie). As a result, the two boys had

got rather good at finding the solutions to people's thorny problems. So when Ethan's Uncle Nick had invited them to spend the long summer holidays working on his ice cream stall on Starville, the pair had accepted instantly. This was their chance to be ***Space Detectives***!

The only problem was that, so far, there didn't seem to be any mysteries on Starville to solve. Neither the impressive Space Detectives website they had created nor the adverts they posted online had brought them a single case. Well, that wasn't quite true. There had been the Case of the Stolen Priceless Fob Watch. But unfortunately this had turned very quickly into the Case of the Priceless Fob Watch That Someone Thought Was Stolen But Which Turned Out After Only Five Minutes of Looking Simply to Be in the Pocket of Their Other

Waistcoat, so there wasn't really much of a mystery to solve there. Was there no one aboard this space station who needed their help?

'One scoop of Triple Choc in a sugar-frosted waffle cone, please!' said a bright voice.

Roused from their daydream, the boys found they had a new customer. She was a human girl of about their age with two short pigtails, a T-shirt with an animated image of a cat on it, and a very expensive-looking striped bag slung over one shoulder.

'Sure thing,' said Ethan, and pressed the button on the ice cream machine labelled Triple Choc.

Ffffffzzzzsssssplatttttt!

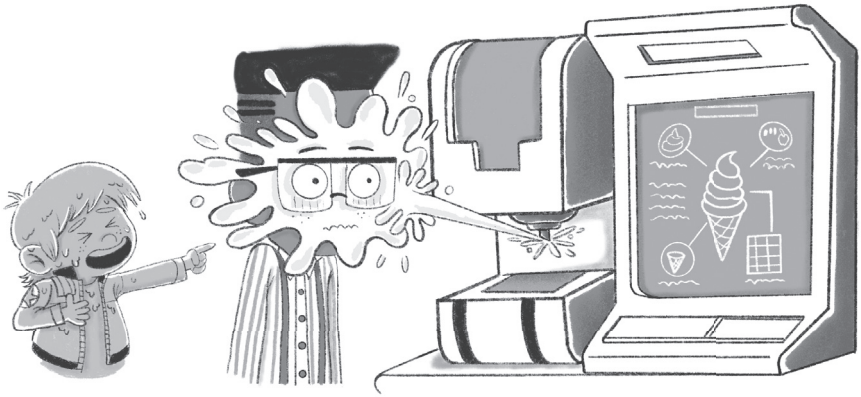
A jet of liquid ice cream sprayed from its nozzle straight into Ethan's face.



'Connor? Something's up with this thing! Uncle Nick will go barmy if we've broken his ice cream machine.'

Connor rolled his eyes at their customer. 'Excuse my friend. He isn't the most technical person in the world.' He swiftly examined a small touchscreen on the ice cream machine, adjusted a setting and pressed the button.

Ffffffzzzzsssssplatttttt!



He too received a jet of liquid ice cream in the face.

Connor removed his glasses and wiped the lenses on his shirt. ‘Ah. Obviously some kind of malfunction.’

‘Excuse my friend,’ said Ethan. ‘Turns out he isn’t the most technical person in the world either.’ He winked at Connor, who gave him a sheepish grin.

The girl leaned over the counter to

examine the touchscreen. 'Do you mind? I know a little about computers.'

'Be our guest,' said Ethan, waggling his head to dislodge ice cream from his ears.

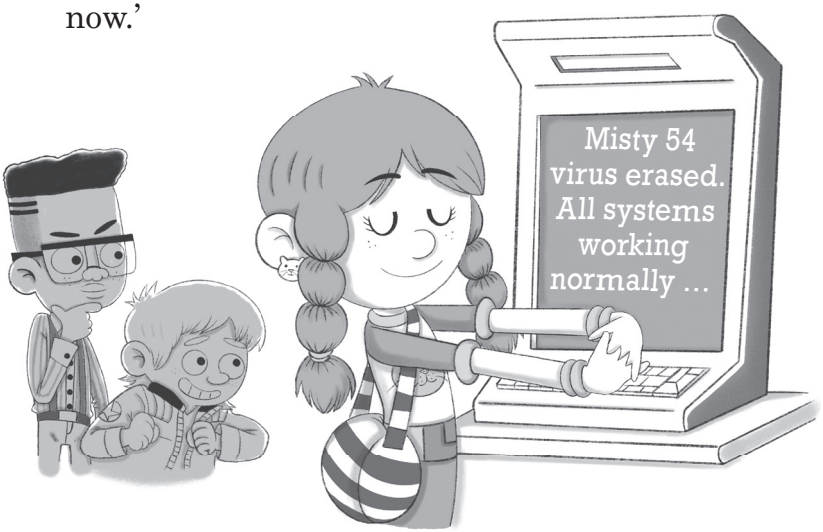
Swiftly, the girl's fingers danced over the touchscreen. 'Ah, *of course*,' she said. 'Your ice cream machine has the Misty 54 virus. It's a new one. Quite nasty.'

'A virus?' asked Ethan. 'So that's why it sprayed that stuff all over us? It sneezed?'

Connor shook his head. 'She means a *computer* virus. A rogue computer program that gets into people's devices and stops them working properly.'

'Fortunately for you,' said the girl, 'programming is my hobby and I'm a bit of an expert when it comes to computer viruses.' Once again her fingers tripped lightly over the touchscreen. There was a pleasing electronic jingle and a message

appeared saying, **Misty 54 virus erased. All systems working normally.** 'Try it now.'



Ethan pushed the Triple Choc button again and the machine dispensed one perfect scoop of Triple Choc ice cream in a sugar-frosted waffle cone. He handed it to the girl. 'Here you go! No charge!'

'My pleasure,' said the girl, and, with a friendly wave, she sauntered away.

Connor nudged Ethan in the ribs. 'How

are we supposed to make any money if you're just going to give the ice cream away?'

'You may be a genius in lots of ways,' said Ethan, 'but trust me when it comes to understanding people. A free ice cream is a *nice* way to thank her for fixing our machine. And she's probably going to tell all her friends how great we are, and then they'll flock here and buy bucketloads of ice cream.'

Connor adjusted his glasses. 'Hmmm. We'll see.'

Suddenly, an ear-splitting roar filled the air, followed by a terrified scream.

'What the heck was that?' asked Connor, startled.

Ethan gasped and pointed at something over Connor's shoulder. 'That, mate,' he said, 'is the sound of someone calling for the Space Detectives. Come on!'