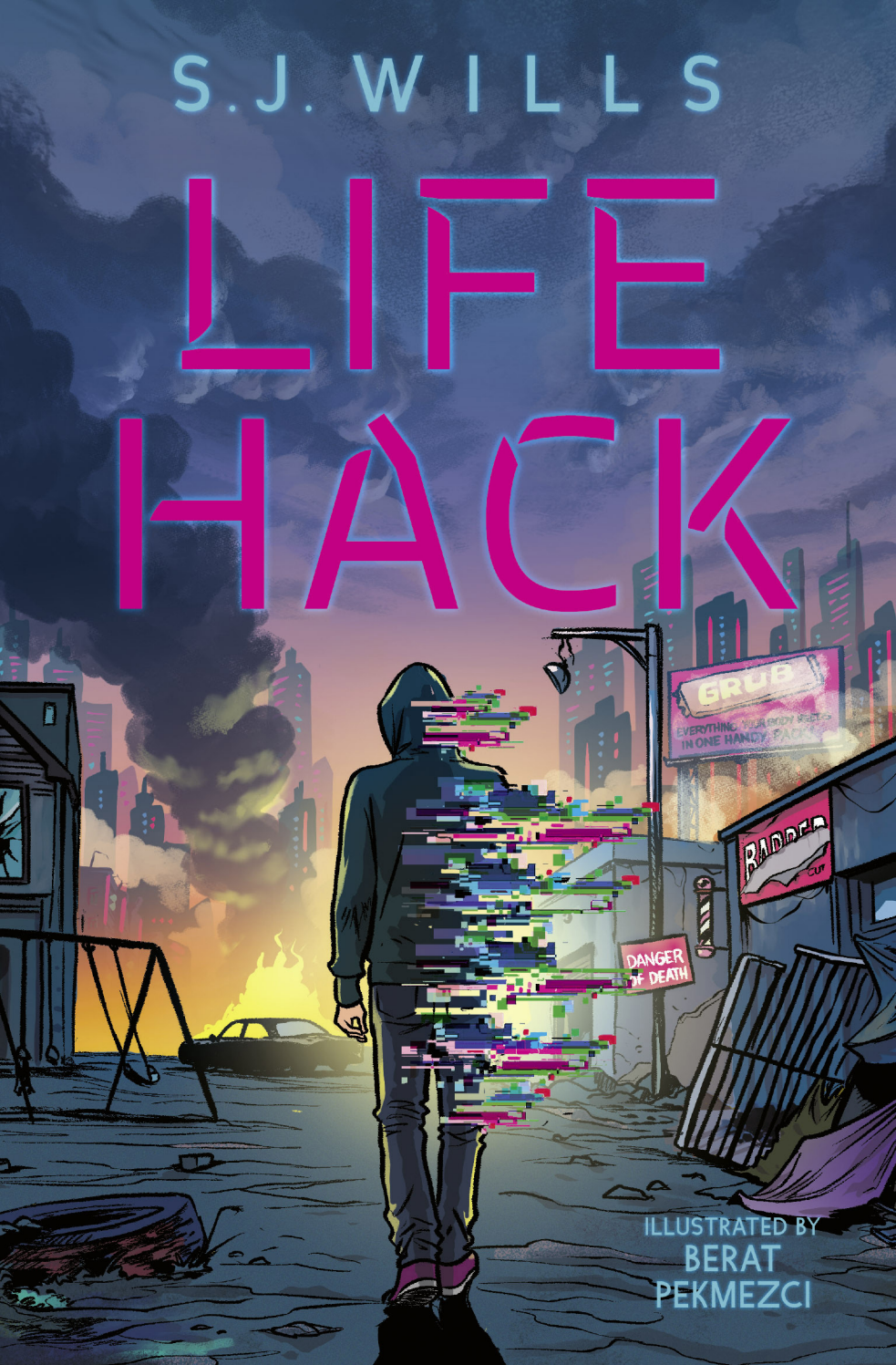
S.J. WILLS

LIFE HACK



ILLUSTRATED BY
BERAT
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FPO (fsc placeholder)

For Rob, Fraser and Cameron

CHAPTER 1

I find the blond NPC lying in a pool of blood in the street. He's been shot from the roof of the bombed-out cinema.

Most times I'd walk right on by, not stop to help. The tiny bit of XP it gets me isn't worth it. But I can get to him with cover from some empty fuel tanks. And today, I'm feeling good. I can afford it.

I have more health than I know what to do with. Plus extra speed. Top kit. Shields. And a whole bunch of other stuff too. At this point, I could be headshotted with a Legendary Diamond Rifle and I'd still walk away. I'm dizzy with power.

So, just for kicks, I heal the guy. He gets up without a word and walks right out into the open again.

That's the thing with NPCs: no common sense, no thank you.

Me, I stay hidden behind the fuel tanks and check my stats. They look great. An impressive array of weapons, full ammo. Money – a million Jars, the in-game currency. A million! Basically, if I see it, I can buy it.

I have twenty Grub packs too, which top up my strength and HP. They come in five flavours, but I've only got four – vanilla, chocolate, spinach and corn. The fifth one is

ERROR, so I'm hoping that'll be fixed in the next update.

This is a very cool game. It's called *Apocalypta*. It's brand-new, single-player survival, and I'm hooked. It's so detailed. There's a whole messed-up world to explore. The idea is that the world as we know it has basically ended, every country is at war and we've bombed each other to smithereens.

Souped-up mutants have escaped from labs and hide in corners to ambush you. You have to work your way up the levels, then defeat a Level 19 boss beast to get a place on a spaceship to New Earth.

It's the hardest thing I've ever played. No one's finished it yet. My friend Ruby is on Level 12. Until this week, there was no way

I could catch her up. When I first started, it seemed like I'd never get to Level 19, not in a million years. But now I've downloaded the cheats, it's starting to look possible.

The link popped up a couple of days ago – right in the middle of the screen during a battle. It nearly got me killed. "*Life Hack*," I read. "Click here for a unique gift, just for you! Jay: click and claim your gift right now."

Yeah, right – scam alert. How did they even know my name's Jay? I was about to get rid of the pop-up when I saw what I could get. A massive load of perks. They'd put me way ahead of Ruby. And everyone else. What

if everyone else had already downloaded it anyway and I lost out?

You know what they say: no risk, no reward.

Life Hack was only a few quid. So I borrowed Mum's credit card and clicked to download.

For a minute, I had a bad feeling. Could it be a virus? Or maybe it was a trick, and I'd get banned.

But it's all good. Two days on, and I'm killing it. I thought maybe Ruby would download the link too, but she still can't get

past the mutant penguins on Level 12. So far, I'm the only one who's got to Level 18. Amazing.