Virus

by

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Illustrated by Dan Chernett

To Claire and Stuart

Our books are tested
for children and young people by
children and young people.

Thanks to everyone who consulted on
a manuscript for their time and effort in
helping us to make our books better
for our readers.

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Chapter 1
A Site for Sore Eyes

M – y –

…

W – e – b – s – i – t – e –

…

b – y –

M –

...

...

"Where's the letter 'a'?" asked Max.

Nahim snatched the computer keyboard away from him before he could type any more. Why on Earth had Mr Lee made Nahim be Max's partner? Max was such a loser!

"Hey!" said Max. "Mr Lee said we had to work together on this project!"

"If you want to waste the next hour copying and pasting pictures, why don't you go and work with the girls over there?" Nahim asked. He turned to Amina and Polly who were working at the next desk. They were busy typing text and adding links to their own website.

"Do you two want to do a swap?" Nahim called out.

"What kind of swap?" asked Polly.

Nahim grinned. "You get Max, and I get a bit of peace to do something better than this stupid 'build your first website' rubbish!"

"Nahim!" Mr Lee bellowed from the other side of the room. "I have had enough of your lip! See me after class!"

Amina and Polly grinned as Nahim slumped back in his chair with a face like thunder.

"I can't work with the girls anyway," said Max. "They go to stage school on Saturday mornings. I don't want to make a website about dancing."

Nahim rolled his eyes. "So what do you want to make a website about?"

"War Zone World," said Max, with a huge smile. "You know, the role-playing game

where you make your own avatar and go on adventures? My mum lets me play it on-line every night for an hour after I've done my homework. I'm a 9th level wizard!"

"You're a 9th level loser!" muttered Nahim. He checked that Mr Lee wasn't watching, then opened a new Internet window and began to type.

"What are you doing?" said Max. "Mr Lee said we weren't to look at any other websites. He said you could get a virus, and – "

"You only get viruses if you click on links you don't know, stupid," Nahim hissed. "But you've given me an idea ..."

Nahim grabbed his schoolbag and began to root through the broken pens and sweet papers at the bottom. "Please be there," he said to himself. "Please be there ... Yes!"

Nahim pulled out what he was looking for – a USB flash drive. He smiled, pushed the drive into a spare slot and went back to typing. A few seconds later he attached a file called **thunderstrike.exe** to an e-mail.

Max stared at the screen. "What's that?" he asked.

"A little treat to show Polly and Amina what they get for laughing at me," said Nahim. Once the file was attached, he changed the name to **showtune.mp3**.

Max gasped, his eyes wide. "That's a virus, isn't it?" he said. "You've sent the girls a computer virus that looks like a song they can use on their website!"

Nahim spun to face him. "Keep your voice down!" he hissed. "I don't want Loony Lee over here before I'm done!"



"But the school computers are all linked together," said Max. "If the girls open that virus, every PC in this room will get infected."

"Not just in this room," said Nahim. "If I've written this thing right, the whole school network will grind to a halt – and they'll trace it all back to the computer the girls were using!"

He clicked 'send'.

Amina was typing the details of the next stage school show onto her website – it was going to be *The Wizard of Oz*. Just then, a window popped up on her screen. "**Showtune.mp3**?" she read. "Is this yours, Polly?"

Her friend peered at the screen. "Well, I did download some music," she said, and reached for the mouse.

Amina pulled at Polly's hand before Polly could click on the link. "Wait!" she said. "Your music file is still in the download window." She spun in her chair to face Nahim. "You sent this to us," she said, "didn't you?"

Nahim tried to look innocent. "Sent what to you?"

"You're such a liar!" Amina said. "I bet this is a virus, and you sent it to us so we'd open it and infect every computer in this room!"

"Not just this room – " Max began.

"Shut up, geek!" Nahim snapped.

"Well, I know what to do with this," said Amina, and turned back to her computer. "I'll forward it to Mr Lee so he can take a look at it."

Nahim dived for the girls' computer. "You're not going to do that!" he hissed. He grabbed the mouse and reached his finger out over the left button.

"He's trying to open the virus!" Amina said to Polly and Max. She clamped her hand down on top of Nahim's. "If he does that, we'll be the ones in trouble!"

Max looked over his shoulder, sure that Mr Lee would hear the racket and come running any second.

Click. Beep ... Beep ... Beep ...

Max turned back towards the sound, and his jaw dropped open.

Nahim, Polly and Amina had vanished.