



Photo by Tom Soper

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THE GOLDFISH BOY was one of the bestselling debuts of 2017 and was shortlisted for a number of prizes, including the Waterstones Children's Book Prize. Her stunning second book, THE LIGHT JAR, was chosen as the Children's Book of the Week in the *Times*, the *Guardian* and the *Observer* on publication, THE DAY I WAS ERASED was Children's Book of the Week in the *Times* and THE ROLLERCOASTER BOY was Children's Book of the Week in the *Sunday Times*.

Other books by Lisa Thompson

*The Goldfish Boy*

*The Light Jar*

*The Day I Was Erased*

*The Boy Who Fooled the World*

*The Graveyard Riddle*

*The Rollercoaster Boy*

# THE TREASURE HUNTERS



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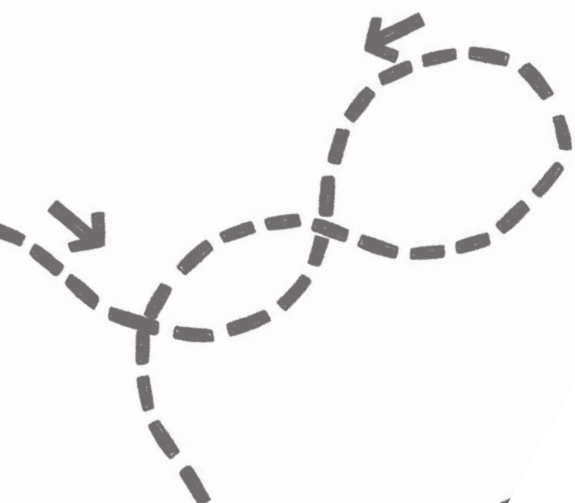
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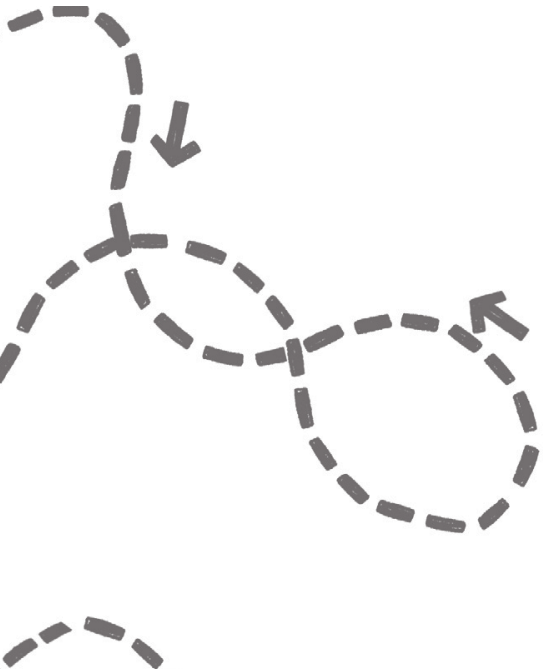
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For Claire, Emma, Kelly and Natalie







## Chapter One

# A Zombie Couldn't Solve a Rubik's Cube

Lots of people think that if you play video games too much you'll turn into a zombie. That's rubbish. Did you know there is real science that proves that gaming can actually make you smarter? Playing computer games can improve your coordination, decision-making and problem-solving skills. A zombie wouldn't be able to solve a Rubik's cube, would it? But a gamer probably could. So that is your evidence right there, as far as I'm concerned.

I guess you could say that, because of gaming,

I have two different names. First, there is my real name – Vincent Forbes. That’s the name my parents gave me and the one I’ve been known by for the past twelve years. But then there is my gaming name – butterfingers55. And, no, my fingers don’t resemble lumps of butter. I chose that name because of something my mum said when I was little. She and Dad had noticed that I was quite late at crawling and walking, and then as I got older I was always dropping stuff and seemed extra clumsy. My older brother, Ewan, wasn’t like that in the slightest so I guess that made it even more noticeable. Whenever I dropped something, Mum would say, “Oops, butter fingers!” as if I had buttery, slippery hands and that was why I was always having to pick things up from the floor.

Things got a bit more interesting when my teacher in primary school made a comment on my end-of-term report.

She wrote: *Vincent’s writing resembles a spider that has walked through ink before performing a waltz around the paper. He is always forgetting to bring things to school, loses his pencils and is generally very, very disorganized.*

Mum complained to the school about that, but I



thought it was a fair comment. My handwriting *was* shocking. I told Mum that I knew what I wanted to write, but my fingers wouldn't control the pen to make the letters come out properly. And I did struggle to remember stuff and be organized like everyone else. After an apology from my teacher, a few tests and lots of questions, it was decided that I had mild dyspraxia, also known as Developmental Coordination Disorder or DCD. It's not a big deal. I mean, I'll probably never be able to juggle, and I really, really do not like sports one little bit. It takes me a lot of effort to manage things other people find easy, like packing my school bag or remembering stuff, but I'm AMAZING at computer games. Well, one, at least.

I got my console on my birthday last year. Mum, Dad and Ewan sat on the sofa and watched me pull the wrapping paper from a big white box.

"Oh, wow!" I said when I saw what it was. "I didn't know I was getting one of these!"

"Your mum read an article about how it might help with your fine motor skills," said Dad. When I was little I thought that my 'fine motor skills' were something to do with driving a car, but in fact it means learning how to control the smaller muscles

in my hands. The ones that help you to hold a pen and use scissors.

“So, Vincent? What do you think?” asked Mum. I was almost speechless, partly because I knew how much games consoles cost but also because I was surprised that they felt I needed help. Did they think I was that bad?

“It’s amazing!” I said. I grinned at the three of them but inside I felt a bit panicky. What if I couldn’t do it, like all the other things I couldn’t quite manage, like riding a bike or hitting a ball with a bat? There was a very big chance that they’d just wasted a lot of money.

Ewan got off the sofa.

“I’ll set it up for you in my old room, if you like? There’s more space in there,” he said, brushing his fluffy ginger hair out of his eyes. Ewan had moved in with Dad not long before my birthday because Dad lived closer to Ewan’s college. When Ewan lived with me and Mum, he had to get two different buses, and if he missed one, Mum would have to do a long drive to pick him up. It was weird not having my big brother around. The house felt empty and I missed not seeing him every day.

It didn’t take long for Ewan to get all the fiddly leads into the back of the console and get it working.

Mum said she didn't want me to play online for now but I had two games to try: a football one that came free with the console and a driving game that Dad had bought for me. Ewan put the football game in first and I grabbed the controller and got ready. Ewan showed me where to click – he seemed to know exactly what to do – but when the game started I could only make my player go round in circles. I threw the controller down on the floor.

“Don't be like that,” said Ewan. “I'm sure the driving game will be easier.”

But it wasn't. I couldn't control the car at all and I just kept crashing into the barrier. Ewan said it was because I needed to practise and that I couldn't expect to play brilliantly straight away. Although that didn't stop him having a go and winning three races one after the other. But then my brother was like that. He was good at *everything*.

When I realized I wasn't any good I quickly lost interest in gaming. Occasionally Mum and Dad asked if I was enjoying playing on the console and I lied, saying it was great. But in reality it wasn't long before it sat untouched in Ewan's room, covered in a thin layer of dust. A couple of months later, however, I saw an advert on TV which changed everything.

The advert came on during the commercial break for a reality singing competition that Mum and I watched every Saturday evening. She got up to put the kettle on, and I kicked my legs up on to the sofa and sprawled out. A deep, thunderous sound caught my attention and I stared at the TV. On the screen was a CGI image of a man standing by the ocean and watching a galleon-style ship crashing into the waves. He was tall with dark skin and was wearing a long, grey coat that rippled in the breeze. The bottom half of his face was hidden behind a pale yellow scarf. A deep voice boomed over the graphics:

*“Fabian has made mistakes.*

*He’s walked alone.*

*Across continents and along coastlines.*

*Searching.*

*Looking.*

*Hoping.”*

The screen focused on Fabian’s haunted eyes as they stared out. He had a deep scar across one of his eyebrows, and he looked like a man who had seen things that no one else could even imagine.

*“Now he has the chance  
To make amends,  
To put things right.  
To return what was lost.”*

The graphics changed and Fabian was fighting a goblin-like creature. Now he was rolling on the ground wrestling with a giant black cat. The footage changed again to a close-up of a sword which had five empty holes in its handle, and then Fabian was jumping across the rooftops of a medieval-looking village. The advert slowed down and Fabian stood before a frail old woman who was behind the counter of an old apothecary shop. The shelves around her were crammed with bottles of different-coloured liquids. It then cut to the final shot: Fabian standing on the peak of a snow-capped mountain, his coat still flapping in the breeze and his eyes looking tortured as if he was carrying a great weight on his shoulders. Then the voiceover asked a question that made my stomach fizzle with excitement.

*“Are you brave enough to enter the world of ...  
‘BATTLE DOOM?’”*

I felt my heart pounding and I almost shouted back at the TV: “I AM! I’M BRAVE ENOUGH!” It looked utterly incredible. I *had* to have this game.

I had some money in my bank account that I’d saved from Christmas and my birthday, so the next day I asked Mum if she could order it for me. A couple of days later, when I got home from school, there was a brown jiffy bag with my game inside sitting on the kitchen counter. Mum said I had to do my homework and eat dinner before I played it. After dinner I wiped down the table and the kitchen counters (I’d dropped so many plates and mugs in the past that Mum said I didn’t need to help load the dishwasher) As soon as I’d finished helping clear up, I grabbed the envelope and ran up to Ewan’s old room. It still smelled of his deodorant spray, which wasn’t surprising because he used to put so much on that it was probably embedded in the walls.

I sat on his squeaky, twirly chair by the console and ripped open the jiffy bag. I took out the box and held the game in my hand. Fabian was on the front and, even though the pale yellow scarf hid half of his face, I could still tell by his haunted eyes that he was pained and troubled. I leaned to one side and looked into Ewan’s mirror on the wall. Did my eyes look

pained and troubled like Fabian's? I thought they probably did.

I switched the console on, and my fingers tingled as I put the disc into the machine. It whirred and buzzed for a few minutes while the game loaded, and then it began with an introduction to Fabian's story.

The story was pretty hard to understand, to be honest, but I got the gist of it: Fabian had been an important person in his town, like a mayor or something, but he was banished for doing something wrong. (I'm not sure what it was he actually did that upset everyone but I don't think it mattered.) He was really sad about not being allowed home so he decided that he was going to make it up to his fellow townspeople by finding the five missing stones of the Scorpion Sword. The sword was really important to them for some reason or another – I think they skimmed over that bit just so that the player can get to the end of the game to find out what the sword is actually for. Fabian has to travel the five regions of this fantasy world to retrieve each stone for the sword. Then and only then he would be accepted back home.

The screen moved on to the actual game and I found myself staring at Fabian's back. I pushed my joystick left and right and he turned in each direction.

Then he just stood there, the movement of his back telling me that he was breathing as he waited for me to decide where we were going to start on our adventure together.

It was easy to control Fabian and make him walk around and do things, and even when there were difficult parts, like climbing up things, I didn't get frustrated like I had with the other games. I was already too absorbed in the story. When I looked at the clock, it was hours past my bedtime. I saved the game and switched the console off, then ran downstairs. Mum had fallen asleep on the sofa in front of the TV.

"Mum? It's bedtime," I said, gently shaking her arm.

"Oh, Vincent. I must have dropped off for a bit," she said, her eyelids heavy. Fortunately she didn't notice that I was still dressed or how late it was.

That night when I closed my eyes I saw Fabian running across hillsides and through alleyways, jumping across moats and high rooftops, and I felt a smile spread across my face. I couldn't wait to play *Battle Doom*, after school tomorrow.

At last I had found something that I was good at.