

## Trouble at the Arcade (The Hardy Boys: Secret Files series Book 1)

By Franklin W. Dixon

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In *Trouble at the Arcade*, nine-year-old Frank and eight-year-old Joe Hardy discover trouble lurking at the local arcade and decide they make pretty good detectives—just like their dad!

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**Bibliography**

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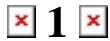
## **Editorial Review**

About the Author

Franklin W. Dixon is the author of the ever-popular Hardy Boys books.

Scott Burroughs started his career at Disney and has illustrated everything from children's books to advertisements and editorials. He is also the published author of several children's books. He lives in Denver, Colorado, with his wife and sons.

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Trouble at the Arcade



## **Alien Attack!**

*All humans will be destroyed!*" a metallic voice rang out.

Nine-year-old Frank Hardy gasped as yet another row of hideous aliens appeared over the horizon. There was no question about it. Earth was being invaded!

"Ha!" he shouted, and his dark hair fell in his eyes as he dodged a laser blast by doing a somersault through the air. Then he ducked around a huge pile of rocks.

Oh no! There were more aliens behind the rock pile. And these were even worse. They were spitting horrible blue goo!

*BLURP!* A wad of goo came flying at Frank.

He jumped up and did a flip in midair to avoid the goo. Then he karate-kicked a rock. It crashed down on one of the aliens.

*SPLAT!* Blue goo spurted everywhere.



"Gotcha!" Frank cried.

"Frank! Are you up there?"

For a second Frank thought one of the aliens was calling him. Then he realized it wasn't an alien. It was his mother. He blinked and looked up from the video game console.

*BLURP!* On the screen, the aliens were still coming. A few seconds later a big blob of goo took over the

screen, and then two words appeared:

“Rats,” Frank muttered. “I’ll never be ready for the contest if I don’t do better than that.”

His mother called his name again. He set down the controls and walked out to the top of the stairs to see what she wanted.

“Oh, there you are.” Mrs. Hardy was holding a large spoon in one hand and a book in the other. She was a librarian, and she almost always had a book with her. “It’s Joe’s turn to set the table for dinner,” she said. “But I can’t find him anywhere. Have you seen him?”

“Nope.” Frank started down the stairs. “But don’t worry. I’ll find him.”

He went out the back door and crossed the lawn, heading toward the woods at the back of the yard. Before he got there, he looked around carefully.

There were hedges on both sides of the yard, so none of the neighbors could see him. The sound of hammering was coming from the spare room over the garage. Mr. Hardy had been working up there for weeks during his free time. But Frank couldn’t see his father through the window, so he guessed his father couldn’t see him, either.

Frank ducked into a narrow path between two bushes. It looked like a trail that nothing but a deer or a rabbit would use. But it actually led straight to the tree house Frank and his younger brother Joe had helped their parents build in the woods. No one except the two of them (and their parents) knew the tree house was there.

The tree house was halfway up a huge old maple tree. Frank and Joe had painted the bottom of the platform green and brown. That way, even if someone walked right past, they probably wouldn’t notice it.

At least not most of the time. Right now anyone passing by would definitely see it. That was because Joe had left the ladder hanging down.

The ladder was made out of rope and planks. It had a pulley system so the boys could keep it rolled up out of sight whether they were in the tree house or not.



Frank grabbed the ladder and started to climb. Soon he was peering into the tree house. It was one big room inside. The back wall was the trunk of the tree, and the front wall had the door and a window cut out of it. One of the side walls was covered with posters from martial arts and monster movies, and the other had a dry-erase whiteboard where the brothers could leave notes for each other. There was no real furniture, but there were some cushions to make sitting on the floor more comfortable.

Eight-year-old Joe Hardy was sitting on one of the floor cushions, reading comic books. His dirty-blond hair was sticking up in one place like he hadn’t brushed it when he’d gotten out of bed. “Hi,” he said when Frank climbed in. “What’s up?”

“You forgot to pull up the ladder,” said Frank. “Are you crazy? We don’t want Adam to find this place.”

Adam Ackerman lived on the other side of the woods. He was in Frank’s class at school and was known as

the meanest bully in Bayport.

Joe just shrugged. “Well, he didn’t find it, did he?”

Frank frowned. Joe was always saying stuff like that.

“Mom’s looking for you,” he said. “It’s your turn to set the table.”

“Okay.” Joe tossed the comic book he was reading into the messy pile beside him. Then the two boys climbed back down the ladder and used the pulley to lift it back out of sight.

“What were you doing out here, anyway?” Frank asked as they pushed their way out of the woods. “You should be practicing for the video game tournament tomorrow. Otherwise you’ll never make it past the first round.”

That was why Frank had been playing Alien Blob Blaster. The tournament was being held at the grand reopening of the arcade at Bayport Fun World. The grand prize was a brand-new superdeluxe game system.

“Who needs practice when you have natural talent?” Joe bragged. “I’m not only planning to make the finals—I’m planning to win!”

“Don’t be so sure,” said Frank. “That VidPoint 3000 game is way better than the one we have. Tons of people will be there trying to win it. That’s why you need to practice. With both of us entering, we’ll have twice the chance of winning.”

“We?” Joe echoed with a grin. “Who says I’m going to share when I win that game?”

Frank rolled his eyes. “What choice do you have? We share a room, remember?”

“Maybe not for long.” Joe looked toward the garage. The sound of hammering was still coming from that direction. “Dad’s almost finished fixing up the spare room. And you know what that means!”

“No. What?”

“Duh!” said Joe. “It means we’ll finally get our own bedrooms!”

Frank cast a dubious look at the garage. “I doubt it,” he said. “The spare room is practically a whole separate apartment from the rest of the house. Mom and Dad aren’t going to let either of us live out there.”

“If you’re so sure, I guess that means you don’t mind if I’m the one who moves out there,” Joe said. “Cool. You can keep our tiny old room. You can even have both bunk beds all to yourself. I’ll just fill up all the space in my brand-new room with my brand-new VidPoint 3000.”

“Dream on,” Frank said. “I’ve been practicing all week for that contest. You’ll be sorry you didn’t want to share when I win that game system.”

They were almost at the back door by now. Joe stopped and grinned at his brother. “If you’re so sure you can beat me, why don’t we make a bet?” he said. “Whichever one of us wins that contest gets to move into the spare room—with the 3000 all to himself.”

Frank could tell that Joe was sure he was going to win. That made him kind of mad.

“You’re on,” he said. “It’s a bet!”

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