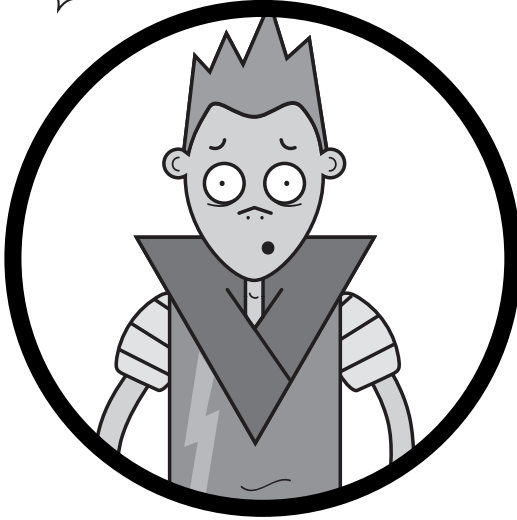


MEET THE



SAM

Age: 12

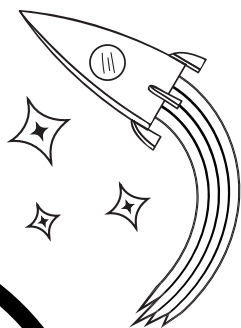
Hobby: astronomy, has his own telescope

Biggest Fear: doesn't like germs

Favorite Game: playing chess against the computer

Best Quality: adapts to change, but slowly

CHARACTERS



Linn

Age: 14

Big Secret: is afraid of snakes

Favorite Place: the Pacific Crest Trail

Career Goal: to open her own hiking tour company

Best Quality: would do anything for her family

1

NO SCHOOL



Sam stepped off the rolling walkway. He punched in the door code. His front door slid open. Sam stepped in and dropped his school bag. He clapped his hands.

“Last day,” he said with a grin.

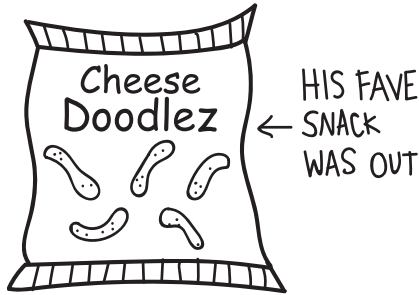
His dad was working at the desk. He turned off his vid screen. He looked at Sam.



“So, sixth grade’s finally over?” he asked.

Sam nodded. “Yep. No school for four weeks. Yay!”

Sam walked to the cookbot. He punched in a code. It spit out a snack strip.



His dad smiled.

“Nothing to do. No place to go,” Sam said with a grin. He sat on the sofa with a thud. He chomped on the snack strip.

“Well,” said Dad. “That’s not really true.”

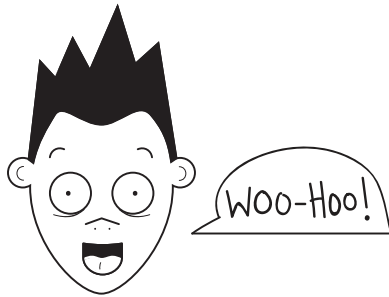
Sam stopped eating. What was Dad going to say? Sam didn’t want to work. He wanted a break. He frowned at his dad.



“You *do* have a place to go,” said Dad. “If you want.”

“What do you mean?” asked Sam. “Where?”

Dad grinned. “Your aunt and uncle called. They want you to visit.”

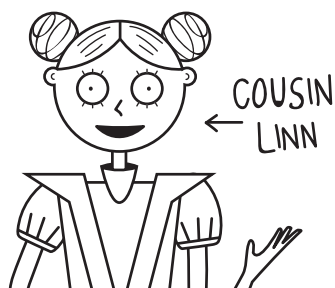


Sam jumped up. His eyes were wide. Aunt Meg and Uncle Ed! They lived off planet. Sam had never been off planet. He'd been on short trips. Trips to other cities on his planet. But he'd never been off planet.

This would mean a long trip in space. His first long trip in space!

“They visited last year,” said Dad. “Now they want you to visit them. They want you to visit for a week.”

“What about Linn?” asked Sam. Linn was Sam’s cousin. She was fourteen.



“She’s very excited,” said Dad. “She wants to show you around.”

Sam sat back down. This trip could be great. Or it could be awful. Would he like it? Or would it be bad?

“Wow,” said Sam. “Wow. I really want to go. But it’s a little scary. What if I don’t like it there?”

“You’ll love it,” said Dad. “They live near where Mom grew up. It’s a great place.”

“When do I leave?” asked Sam.

“How about tomorrow?” asked Dad.

Sam rubbed his chin. He scratched his head. He looked at his dad.

“Okay,” Sam finally said. “I’ll do it. I’ll go. It will be my first long trip in space. And it will be my first trip to Earth!”

