

***ZATHURA***  
*A Space Adventure*

screenplay by  
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based on the book by  
Chris Van Allsburg

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EXT      A BACK YARD      DAY

DANNY BUDWING, six and three-quarters years old, sits cross legged on the grass, staring to his left. He turns and looks to his right. Then his left. Then his right.

Sound creeps in and we hear the THWACK of ball on leather on each head turn. Danny follows the thwacks like a tennis match, left, right, left, right.

From behind Danny, we see what he sees -- DAD, in his late thirties, well okay, forty, and WALTER, Danny's nine year old brother. They both know baseball, that's for sure, healthy arms, good with the glove. They don't drop any.

Danny keeps watching -- left, right, left, right. He sighs, rests his chin on one hand. We move in tighter on his face, tighter still, that annoying "THWACK!" getting louder and louder, the high-spirited yells of his father and brother ("Nice catch!" "Great throw!" "Way to go!") rising up specifically to bug the crap out of him.

When he's all the way in close-up, Danny mutters the essence of his six year old viewpoint on life:

DANNY

Stupid game.

From offscreen comes his father's voice.

DAD (O.S.)

Okay, Danny, you're up!

Walter objects.

WALTER

I didn't get my whole turn!

DAD

Yeah, I counted, that was twenty-five.  
That's what we said.

WALTER

That's not fair!

DAD

It's exactly fair. Come on, Danny,  
time for your turn and then I gotta  
work for an hour.

DANNY

Walter can have my turn.

CONTINUED:

WALTER

Hey yeah!

DAD

Hey no.

WALTER

He said!

DAD

Come on, Dan, let's just try a couple.

Danny sighs and picks up his glove. He marches across the grass of their modest back yard as to the gallows, passing his sweaty, athletic brother, who gives him a look.

Danny reaches the middle of the grass and pushes the glove gamely onto his hand. He hits it a few times, stares in his dad's direction. Takes a deep breath.

Dad tosses him one underhand, gently.

Danny closes his eyes, turns his head away, and hears the ball THUD to the grass. He looks back, sees the ball resting by his feet.

DAD (cont'd)

Almost! Good try!

Walter just barely *begins* to roll his eyes, but Dad catches him, holds out a finger in warning.

DAD (cont'd)

Uh uh.

Walter makes an innocent face. But Danny knows the score. He picks up the ball and throws it back to his dad, gets it almost all the way there.

DAD (cont'd)

Ready? Watch the ball, not me.

Danny nods, but keeps staring at his father.

DAD (cont'd)

Danny? The ball, Dan, not me.

Danny looks down, stares at the ball hard, Superman using x-ray vision.

CONTINUED: (2)

Dad tosses another underhand one, puts a little more on it. This one sails higher, Danny looks up, raises his glove, closes just one eye this time and the ball actually *hits* his glove, he opens his other eye in excitement, but the ball bounces off his glove and falls behind him --

-- where it's caught by a diving Walter, who has leapt in from the side. He rolls on the grass, holding the glove over his head, a spectacular snow-cone grab.

DANNY

(furious)

WALTER!

Danny hurls his glove at Walter as hard as he can, it hits his brother in the head.

WALTER

DAAAAD!

DAD

Danny...

But Danny storms off across the yard and into their house.

Dad sighs and looks at Walter -- did you have to?

WALTER

What?

CUT TO:

INT HOUSE - DANNY & WALTER'S BEDROOM DAY

This is the bedroom of two imaginative, busy kids, their interests wildly divergent. The walls are covered with posters, on one side, basketball players and athletes, on the other it's heavy on space themes. There's also a pair of pet geckos in a cage and a bright red school banner for Fieldston Elementary School on the back of the door.

Danny lies on the top bunk. He's curled up facing the wall, sucking his thumb, idly flipping the pages of a favorite book, brightly colored drawings of exotic and ferocious creatures.

He hears a CREAKING sound and whips his thumb out of his mouth, doesn't want anyone to see. Behind him, Dad's head rises up as he takes a few steps up the ladder.

DAD

Hello dere.

No answer.

CONTINUED:

DAD (cont'd)

You know, when I was six years old I-

DANNY

(still facing away)

Six and three quarters.

DAD

When I was six and three quarters,  
catching was hard for me too.

DANNY

It's not hard for Walter.

DAD

Walter is nine.

DANNY

So? He's still better.

DAD

Hey, look at me.

Danny does, reluctantly.

DAD (cont'd)

Walter is different. He's good at some  
things, and you're good at some things.  
And they're not the same. That's how  
people are.

DANNY

He beats me at *everything*.

DAD

Danny, listen to me, because this is  
important. You know how you always  
want to make up games and pretend to be  
characters and stuff like that? You  
know what you have, Danny? You know  
what you have that's just incredible?  
An *imagination*.

INT HALLWAY DAY

Just outside the door to the bedroom, Walter lurks, listening to  
them and licking a popsicle.

DAD (O.S.)

(still to Danny)

A *great* imagination. An incredible,  
unstoppable, has-no-borders *universe* of  
an imagination.

INT BEDROOM DAY

DAD

I'm amazed by the things you make up,  
and, you know, I make things up for a  
living, so I know what I'm talking  
about. You're *great* at it.

Danny sits up and looks at him.

DANNY

Am I better than Walter?

INT HALLWAY DAY

In the hallway, Walter stops mid-lick, listening intently for  
the answer to that one.

DAD (O.S.)

What?

INT BEDROOM DAY

Danny persists.

DANNY

Is my imagination better than Walter's?

Dad smiles and lowers his forehead against Danny's.

INT HALLWAY DAY

Walter leans in closer, straining to hear.

INT BEDROOM DAY

DAD

(whispers to Danny)  
You're *different* than Walter.

INT HALLWAY DAY

Walter, frustrated, couldn't hear.

INT BEDROOM DAY

DANNY

See? I'm not better at *anything*.

He flops back down on the bed facing away.

CONTINUED:

DAD

You have a future in acting. But I can tell you're not still mad.

Danny sits up, looks at him.

DANNY

I won't be mad if we play Smash Brothers.

DAD

I have to work.

DANNY

Okay, read to me.

He thrusts the book he was holding at Dad and we dimly catch the title -- "Greek and Roman Monsters & Myths."

DAD

I have to *work*.

Danny flops back down with panache.

INT LIVING ROOM DAY

Dad comes down the stairs and into the living room, just as a football flies at his head. He manages to catch it.

DAD

Don't *do* that.

Walter, who threw the football, is in a chair facing the TV, which is tuned to Walter's favorite show, "Carl Mayhew's Sports Roundup." Carl Mayhew is a big wild-eyed sports nut.

Walter's finished his popsicle and is drinking a big glass of red fruit punch.

WALTER

Wanna play catch?

DAD

We already did.

WALTER

No, *football* catch.

DAD

I have to work for an hour.

CONTINUED:

WALTER  
(sacrilege)  
But it's *Saturday!*

The phone RINGS in the other room.

DAD  
Tell me about it.

He tosses the football back to Walter and walks into --

INT OFFICE DAY

-- his office, a small room off the living room. He drops down at his desk, where an array of art supplies is laid out, an ad layout in progress. Walter's behind him, in the doorway.

WALTER  
All you ever do is work.

DAD  
Nice try.  
(answers phone)  
Hello?

WALTER  
This is *so* unfair.

DAD  
(into phone)  
Hi. Yeah, can you hang on just one second? Thanks.  
(to Walter, covering the phone)  
I have a meeting this afternoon, Walter, and I have to be ready. Nothing I can do about it.

WALTER  
(double sacrilege)  
You're going *out?!!*

DAD  
I'm going to a meeting. You'll already be at Mom's, she's picking you up at three.

WALTER  
We go to Mom's tomorrow.

DAD  
No, today.  
(into phone)  
Just one more second, okay?



CONTINUED:

WALTER

But this is a four-day Dad week.

DAD

(fast)

No, three-day Dad week. Four-day last week, four-day next week, three-day this week. Four-day Mom's house this week.

Walter sets his glass down dramatically.

WALTER

That's not fair!

DAD

(thinks)

To whom?

WALTER

To anybody.

Pause.

DAD

(into phone)

I'm sorry, Richard, can I call you right back? Two minutes.

He hangs up and slides his chair across the floor, gliding to a stop in front of Walter. He holds his son by the arms.

DAD (cont'd)

Walter, I love you. And no, it isn't fair, to anyone. But you have *got* to learn another sentence.

WALTER

Do you want to play catch?

DAD

*I have to work.*

INT LIVING ROOM DAY

Danny has come down the stairs and wandered over near the door to the office. He lurks outside, listening.

WALTER (O.S.)

Ten throws.

DAD (O.S.)

I have to work!

INT OFFICE DAY

Dad starts to turn around in his chair. Walter bites his lip, but can't help himself:

WALTER  
(super innocent)  
Dad?

DAD  
Hmm?

WALTER  
Do I have a good imagination?

Dad turns around in his chair and studies Walter. This is suspicious.

INT LIVING ROOM DAY

Danny leans closer, outside the door, listening hard. Almost unconsciously, he puts his thumb back in his mouth.

DAD (O.S.)  
You have a wonderful imagination.

Danny scowls, doesn't like that answer at *all*.

INT OFFICE DAY

DAD  
Why do you ask?

WALTER  
No reason. How about five throws?

He throws the football to Dad, who catches it instinctively.

DAD  
I... how can I put this? Have to work.

Danny appears in the doorway, holding up two Nintendo remotes, their cords dragging behind him.

DANNY  
Dad, I could play Smash Brothers if you want.

DAD  
(singsong)  
I have to wo-ork.

CONTINUED:

DANNY

You said you'd play Smash Brothers!

WALTER

(an overreacter)

*What?!* You told him you'd play Smash Brothers?!

DAD

No, I didn't.

He throws the football back to Walter, to be done with it. He is attempting to keep his patience. Walter catches the ball and Danny points hysterically at this outrage.

DANNY

*You're playing catch with Walter!*

DAD

(rubbing his head)

Guys...

WALTER

He might, if you weren't here.

DANNY

(to Walter)

YOU ARE SO MEAN!

(to God)

EVERYBODY WANTS TO RUIN MY LIFE!

DAD

Guys, please...

WALTER

(to Dad)

You never keep your promises!

DANNY

(to Dad)

ALL YOU CARE ABOUT IS WALTER!

Dad finally snaps.

DAD

*THERE'S ONLY ONE OF ME!* Okay?! I don't like this situation either, it sucks, is what it does, but it wasn't my idea! *None* of this was my idea, I'm just the idiot it happened to, so climb off my back and give me about two inches of space, will you please?!

CONTINUED: (2)

They both just stare at him, wide-eyed. Walter sets the football down on a bookcase, as if to apologize for pushing so hard. Danny drops the remotes, starts to put his thumb in his mouth but catches himself and drops his arms to his sides, his lower lip quivering.

Dad feels horrible. He sits back down and stares out the window, takes a breath. When he starts talking he's still facing away from them. He talks softly.

DAD (cont'd)

Do you boys remember that time I ate that bad chicken they keep under the lights at the supermarket and I was sick all night throwing up?

(they nod)

And the next morning we had to get on the plane to go to Grandma's and I was still so sick I could barely stand up?

More nods. He turns around and faces them now.

DAD (cont'd)

Remember before we left, when I told you guys I needed you to grow up a few years, right then in that very moment, so that you could help me on the trip instead of me helping you? Otherwise we wouldn't make it?

(more nods)

Remember what happened?

Pause. Danny and Walter look at each other.

DANNY

We grew up?

DAD

There are some days, guys, when you gotta grow up all at once. I need today to be one of those days.

CUT TO:

INT BEDROOM DAY

SLAM! The door to their bedroom closes and Walter and Danny flop down on opposite sides. Bored. Mad. Not looking at each other.

Walter tosses the football, up and down, up and down, up and down.

CONTINUED:

DANNY

Please stop that.

Walter sighs dramatically and collapses into a chair next to the pet lizards' cage. Beside him is a picture of a cute ten year-old girl and Walter, taken at a theme park.

DANNY (cont'd)

Do you want to play Chutes and Ladders?

WALTER

No. You'll cheat.

DANNY

Stratego?

WALTER

You cheat at board games, Danny. I'm not going to play with you ever again.

INT OFFICE DAY

Dad drops back into his office chair. Rubs his face with his hands. Picks up the phone and dials.

DAD

Hi, sorry about that.

(pause)

No no, it's fine, I'm not meeting him till three-thirty, I can finish by then.

INT BEDROOM DAY

Danny, back to us, is rummaging through a toy chest, tossing out boring stuff, looking for something good. He comes up with two expensive-looking walkie-talkies, space themed. He turns one on, static comes out.

Walter turns around suddenly from the geckos.

WALTER

Excuse me, could you please put those back right now? They belong to me.

DANNY

You never play with them.

WALTER

They're still mine.

Danny looks at him.

CONTINUED:

DANNY

Why are you so mean to me?

WALTER

I'm not mean, Danny. I'm in third grade. I have a girlfriend. Things get complicated when you get older.

Danny holds out one of the walkie-talkies invitingly.

DANNY

Play astronaut?

Walter heaves a theatrical sigh and takes the radio.

CUT TO:

INT OFFICE DAY

Dad is shuffling through the layout materials on his desk, talking on the phone.

DAD

I understand his concern, but I think if we foreground it we make it worse. We might want to allude to it in the copy, but the shot plays so strong I wouldn't-

There is an angry SHRIEK from upstairs. He looks up at the ceiling.

DAD (cont'd)

So strong I wouldn't want to, uh...

Still from upstairs, he hears the bedroom door BANG open --

WALTER (O.S.)

DAAAAAAD!

-- and feet THUDDING on the stairs.

DAD

(trying to wrap up fast)  
...we'd be foolish to change at the eleventh hour. Uh, can I call you back one more time real quick? Small domestic emergency here. No, I know. I know. Not a problem. Not a problem. Okay. Okay. Okay. Thanks.

He hangs up the phone just as the door to the office bursts open to reveal Walter, holding one of his walkie-talkies in his hand.

CONTINUED:

He displays its newly broken antenna like a prosecutor showing a murder weapon.

WALTER  
LOOK what he did!

DAD  
I was on the phone.

WALTER  
He breaks *everything!*

Danny is behind him, hands shoved in pockets, ashamed.

DANNY  
... was an accident...

WALTER  
He is *such* a baby!

DAD  
Walter...

DANNY  
I'm NOT a baby!

WALTER  
He breaks all my stuff --

DANNY  
... said it was an *accident*...

WALTER  
-- he can't catch a ball --

DAD  
That's enough.

WALTER  
(whirling on Danny with a  
flourish).  
*And he still sucks his thumb!*

DANNY  
YOU SHUT UP!

Livid, Danny grabs Walter's football from the bookcase next to the door and hurls it at Walter's head as hard as he can.  
Walter ducks --

-- Dad's eyes pop wide, he lunges for it --

-- but the ball sails past his outstretched fingertips, SMACKS into the glass of red fruit punch Walter left on the desk --

CONTINUED: (2)

-- and spills all over the layout.

Dad leaps to his feet.

Walter GASPS.

Danny's face turns white.

DANNY (cont'd)

I'm sorry!

Dad doesn't reply, just stares down at the desk, defeated, as the ruby-red fruit drink seeps into the layout materials.

DANNY (cont'd)

I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry  
I'm sorry I'm sorry!

DAD

Okay.

(pause)

Okay, Dan.

Walter just looks at Danny and shakes his head. Which is pretty much worse than anything he could say.

Dad sags into the office chair, staring at the ruined artwork.

CUT TO:

INT LIVING ROOM DAY

Walter and Danny sit next to each other in the middle of the couch, watching guiltily as Dad pulls on his jacket, gets his wallet and keys, etc.

DAD

(fast)

You know my cell phone number, you know Deirdre-next-door's number. Call me if anything comes up. It's only ten minutes to the office, I just have to grab the duplicates from the art department and I'll come right back.

WALTER

Why can't we come?

DAD

Because then it'll take longer.

WALTER

No it won't.



CONTINUED:

DAD

Yes it will.

WALTER

No it won't.

DAD

Yes it will, and I don't have time.

WALTER

No it won't.

DAD

Shh.

DANNY

I don't want to go.

WALTER

It won't take longer!

DAD

Yes it will.

DANNY

There's no way I want to go.

WALTER

Why would it take longer?!

DAD

Because you will argue, much as you are doing now. You'll argue about who gets the front seat, about who gets to enter the garage code, about, I don't know, which ocean is better. Trust me.

He stops in the doorway, turns back.

DAD (cont'd)

I'm asking you guys politely -- please do not kill each other.

And he's gone.

Danny and Walter, on the couch, both turn away from the door. They look at each other. Walter rolls his eyes. He gets up, flops into the chair in front of the TV, and flicks it on, right back to Carl Mayhew's Sports Roundup.

Danny stares at him.

Pause.

CONTINUED: (2)

DANNY

All you care about is TV.

Walter holds the remote out and turns up the volume.

Pause.

DANNY (cont'd)

I hate this guy. Can we watch Sponge  
Bob?

WALTER

Sponge Bob is for babies.

DANNY

You used to like it.

No answer, Walter just turns Carl Mayhew up some more.

Danny sits and thinks for a very long moment. He stares off  
into space. The gears are grinding away behind those blue eyes.

*The big wheel of a great imagination starts to turn.*

Danny gets up and walks out of the room.

INT BEDROOM DAY

Danny's rummaging again. He's bent over the big chest, toys  
flying out left and right.

INT LIVING ROOM DAY

Danny comes back into the living room with two baseball gloves  
and a ball. He drops them on the floor in front of him. He  
stands there, hoping Walter will notice him.

Walter doesn't.

Danny clears his throat.

Still no response.

Danny picks up the ball and tosses it gently into the chair next  
to Walter. Never taking his eyes off the TV and Carl Mayhew's  
incessant peppy blathering, Walter picks it up and drops it on  
the carpet, rolling it almost back to Danny in a most un-  
catchlike manner.

Undeterred, Danny picks it up. He tosses it again, a little bit  
harder. Walter sees it coming and takes his eyes off the tube  
just long enough to catch it. Again, he drops it on the carpet.

CONTINUED:

Danny marches forward and picks it up again, goes back to where he was. He looks at Walter, frustrated.

Walter just stares at the TV, eyes glazing over.

*The baseball hits Walter in the head.*

WALTER

OWWWWWW!

DANNY

(sensing his imminent  
destruction)

I'M SORRY I'M SORRY I'M SORRY I'M  
SORRY!

WALTER

You're DEAD!

Danny takes off. Walter bolts out of the chair.

Danny races up the stairs two at a time down the upstairs hallway.

Walter bounds up the stairs three at a time and closes in.

INT      BEDROOM      DAY

Danny runs into their bedroom and slams the door behind him. There's no lock so he pushes against it as hard as he can.

But Walter's right behind him, now he's pushing on the other side of the door.

WALTER

Open up, Danny! You're only making it  
worse!

He's shoving, Danny's shoving back, but it's a losing proposition, Walter is stronger and heavier and the door's coming open so --

-- Danny jumps back, hiding behind it as it swings open. Walter tumbles into the room and Danny races around the door and --

INT      LIVING ROOM      DAY

-- back down the stairs. He hears Walter THUNDERING behind him, turns and runs down the hallway toward the kitchen --

-- but sees a flash of Walter through an open doorway, circling around ahead of him to cut him off in the kitchen.

CONTINUED:

Danny turns the only way he can and finds himself at the top of a flight of stairs that lead to the basement. There is a closed door at the bottom.

IN THE STAIRWELL,

Danny hesitates at the top, staring down at that doorway fearfully, that is the *last* place in the house he wants to go.

WALTER (O.S.)

DANNY?! I'M GONNA FIND YOU, DANNY!

Danny takes two steps down the stairs. Then two more. He stares at that closed door, at the streaks of uneven light coming from under it. He freezes, trembling.

WALTER (O.S.) (cont'd)

What's the matter, Danny?

Danny whirls around, sees Walter standing at the top of the stairs, staring down at him triumphantly.

WALTER (cont'd)

You're not still scared of the basement, are you?

DANNY

No!

WALTER

Liar.

Danny bounds up the stairs, shoving Walter back against the wall. Walter lunges for his foot and grabs it --

INT HALLWAY DAY

-- and Danny crashes to the floor in the hallway. He wriggles free, leaps to his feet, and heads for the kitchen door that leads outside.

EXT BACK YARD DAY

Danny BANGS through the kitchen door, Walter hot on his heels. He races across the yard and scrambles through a break in the bushes, reaching a garden wall. He climbs it.

Walter closes in. Danny reaches the top of the wall, Walter gets hold of him again but Danny wriggles free, drops over the wall and lands --

EXT        CEMETERY        DAY

-- in the cemetery on the other side.

Danny GASPS, realizing where he is, and it's a creepy graveyard too, several hundred years old, the tombstones leaning every which way like rotting teeth.

He starts to get up but Walter drops on top of him, OOFING the wind out of both of them. Walter rolls Danny over and pins his arms with his knees.

DANNY

I hate you!

WALTER

I hate you back!

DANNY

I wish you didn't exist!

WALTER

I was happier when you didn't!

DANNY

I DON'T WANNA BE WITH YOU ALL THE TIME,  
I WANNA BE WITH MOM AND DAD ALL THE  
TIME!

WALTER

Well I'm what you got.

And with that he rolls off of Danny and faces the other way, chest heaving.

Danny lays there for a moment, staring up at the clouds. There are two big puffy ones, they look like they used to be one, but now they're pulling apart, headed in opposite directions.

He sits up, brushes a few tears from his cheeks. Neither of them speaks. Too tired to fight anymore, too mad to talk.

Danny notices something a short distance away. It's a shadow, leaning against one of the gravestones.

He gets up, approaches it cautiously. He circles around the grave, looks at it from the front. He cocks his head, curious.

NEARBY,

Walter is every bit as upset as Danny was, but the tears on *his* cheeks are the last thing he wants his brother to see. He barely hears when Danny calls to him.

CONTINUED:

DANNY (O.S.)

Hey Walter.

Walter ignores him.

DANNY (cont'd) (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Hey, hey *Walter*. Look at this.

WALTER

(completely uninterested)  
Look at what.

DANNY

Well you gotta *look*.

Put upon, Walter drags himself to his feet and walks over to where Danny is. They're standing in front of a faded old tombstone, a big one, six feet high. Engraved at eye level:

*CONSTANTIN MINOS*  
*1796-1891*

Above the engraving is a glass cameo, one of those old frames with a faded picture in it that they used to put on tombstones. Constantin was elderly but fierce-eyed when the picture was taken. He looks vaguely familiar.

WALTER

So? He was old.

DANNY

Not that. The *box*.

Walter looks down. Leaning against the base of the tombstone is a rectangular cardboard box. There's a space scene across the front, childlike drawings of rockets and starfields. In plain block letters, the word

*ZATHURA*

Beneath it, in smaller letters:

*A Jumanji Game*

Danny sinks to his knees in the grass in front of the game, Walter remains standing, suspicious.

Danny picks up the game, holds it in his hands.

DANNY (cont'd)

It's a game!

CONTINUED: (2)

WALTER

A space game? Looks stupid.

DANNY

I like it.

WALTER

Yeah, it's for babies like you.

He walks away across the cemetery and climbs over the wall.

Danny runs one hand over the game board. He looks both ways, to see if anybody's watching him. Checks out Constantin Minos's tombstone -- well he knows it doesn't belong to *him*. He looks around again, realizing where he is, and that he's alone now.

He shoves the game box under one arm and takes off across the cemetery.

DANNY

Walter, wait!

CUT TO:

INT LIVING ROOM DAY

Walter is slumped in the chair in front of the television, watching his dumb show again. (For the record, even Walter's getting tired of his show. But habits are habits.)

Behind the comfy chair, Danny sits cross-legged on the carpet by the window, the box in front of him. He opens it.

There isn't much inside, just a folded game board, a pair of dice, and a few game pieces -- a rocket ship, an astronaut, a robot, a green lizard-lookin' guy, a weird bull with a long torso. The design is decidedly retro, this thing probably came out in the early sixties. Everything is well-worn.

WALTER

(staring at the TV but talking  
to Danny)

You shouldn't have taken that, you  
know. It's stealing.

DANNY

Be quiet, Walter.

WALTER

You're probably gonna go to jail.

DANNY

I can't hear you, Walter.

CONTINUED:

Danny opens the game board. It's a starfield, like on the front of the box, with a path of colored squares leading to a large purple planet labelled "Zathura."

WALTER

You might only get five or ten years,  
though, cause you're a kid.

DANNY

I can't hear Walter.

There are no instructions. Danny looks through the game pieces, picks out the astronaut. He places it on the earth, which seems to be the starting spot.

DANNY (cont'd)

(to himself)

First one to the purple planet wins, I  
guess.

(to Walter)

Will you play with me?

WALTER

(eyes on TV)

Of course not.

DANNY

I won't cheat.

WALTER

Yes you will.

Danny sighs and rolls the dice. He gets a four. He moves the astronaut four spaces along the path, and when he places it on the fourth square --

*-- a buzzing sound comes from the board.*

Danny's eyes widen as a small white card pops out of the edge right in front of him with a smart little CLICK.

He looks at the board again, doesn't touch the card yet. He picks the board up and looks under it.

DANNY

Where are the batteries?

Walter ignores him. Danny takes the card and looks at it. It has a big Z on one side, words on the other. Danny furrows his brow. Tries reading it.



CONTINUED: (2)

DANNY (cont'd)

"Meet... meaty... meetor shoe... meat  
or shoe..."

OVER WITH WALTER,

His view of the television is suddenly blocked by Danny's face.

DANNY (cont'd)

Read this for me?

He holds the card out in front of him. Walter sighs and takes it.

WALTER

"Meteor shower, take evasive action."

DANNY

What's "evasive action?"

WALTER

It's when you get out of the way of  
something.

Danny looks around, takes one step to the side. Looks around again.

DANNY

What exactly am I supposed to get out  
of the way of exactly?

WALTER

I don't know, all it says is-

He looks back at the card for further information, but stops mid-sentence. There's a small, smoking hole right in the middle of the card.

WALTER (cont'd)

Huh?

He bends down and peers more closely at the hole. Through it, he can see another hole, also small, also smoking, in the floor between his feet.

He looks up, sees a matching hole in the ceiling directly above the card.

WALTER (cont'd)

Oh... wow.

Up above them, they hear a RAT-A-TAT sound on the roof.

CONTINUED: (3)

WALTER (cont'd)  
It's a hail storm!

DANNY  
It's not hail!

He grabs the card and waves it in front of him.

DANNY (cont'd)  
*IT'S METEORS!*

BAM! BAM!

There are two sharp raps on the roof, then --

BAMBAMBAMBAMBAMBAM!

-- a furious POUNDING, like a thousand golf balls hammering down on them. Danny and Walter SHOUT to one another, but their words are lost under the cacophony.

The skies outside the window suddenly go dark, plunging the room into gloom. Walter stumbles to the wall and flicks a light switch.

ZZZZZZZZ-CRASH!

A golf-ball sized meteor SMASHES through the ceiling, BLASTS right through the coffee table in front of Danny, and CRUNCHES through the floor below it, burrowing deep out of sight.

Danny leaps back.

DANNY (cont'd)  
*TAKE ERASIVE ACTION, TAKE ERASIVE ACTION!*

He does, which consists of running around in circles.

But it doesn't seem to be a bad plan, as one golf-ball sized meteor after another SMASHES through the ceiling and craters in the floor. They seem to be landing right behind Danny no matter where he goes.

Walter, on the other hand, is wide-eyed and nearly paralyzed. He staggers backwards, no idea what to do, until he bumps into the TV set (which is still on), leaning against it for support.

Above them, a low whistle rises higher and higher, sounds a lot like a falling bomb. Walter stays frozen where he is, looking up in horror; Danny, still leaping around the room, looks up too and sees through one of the holes in the ceiling.

CONTINUED: (4)

DANNY (cont'd)

WALTER!

The whistle gets louder and louder, Danny throws his whole body at Walter, hits him in the chest and knocks him out of the way just as --

*-- a huge meteor, six feet across, smashes through the ceiling and crushes the television.*

Actually, "pulverizes" is more accurate, it turns Carl Mayhew's Sports Roundup into so much sports dust.

Walter lands on the living room floor a few feet away from the crater, Danny on top of him. Everything goes quiet as the meteor shower stops and the dust settles. Danny and Walter sit up, chests heaving.

DANNY (cont'd)

Told you. Meteors.

Walter looks at him.

WALTER

Danny, you... you...

"Saved my life" is the rest of that sentence, but he can't quite bring himself to say it. Danny puts a hand on his brother's shoulder.

DANNY

I took erasive action on you, Walter.

In shock, Walter looks at the giant meteor that is now buried in their floor. He sits there, shaking, truly at a loss for how to interpret this strange series of events. He looks up, through the gaping hole in the floor of what's left of Dad's bedroom, and out through the corresponding hole in the roof above it. Outside, there's a night sky, brilliantly dotted with starlight. He's freaked out.

WALTER

H-how'd it get so dark so fast? It's nighttime already!

Danny, on the other hand, takes this completely in stride. He stands up and dusts off his pants calmly.

DANNY

It's not night, Walter. It's outer space.

CONTINUED: (5)

Walter looks at him, aghast for a moment, then shakes himself out of it.

WALTER

Yeah, right. Outer space. What are you talking about?

He stands up too, collecting himself.

WALTER (cont'd)

We just lost track of time, that's all. We must have got knocked out or something. We got turned unconscious for a while and now it's night, that's what happened.

He goes to the front door, throws it open --

-- and stops in his tracks.

There's no outside there anymore. At least, not the one he expected. It's as if the front door has opened up directly on the outer reaches of the solar system, like the view screen of a spaceship, if they had such things. The planet Saturn is clearly visible ahead of them, its icy, brilliantly colored rings lit up like a billion jewels.

Walter's jaw drops and he teeters on the edge of the door frame. Danny reaches out and grabs his belt, pulling him back inside. They stand there for a moment, staring in amazement out the open door.

DANNY

We're in outer space, Walter. Get used to it.

WALTER

But -- but -- how -- how -- HOW?

DANNY

(shrugs)

We started playing a dead guy's board game, what did you expect?

WALTER

How did we get here?!

DANNY

Some sorta space engine.

WALTER

How come we can breathe?

CONTINUED: (6)

DANNY  
Some sorta space air.

(shrugs)

WALTER  
What are we gonna eat?

DANNY  
Some sorta spa-

WALTER  
WE'RE MOVING!

They turn back to the doorway. Saturn has, indeed, drawn closer, much closer, and as they watch they travel past it, right through the jade-colored crystals of its outermost ring. It's a spectacular vision, they are both hushed, awed, wide-eyed at the sight.

Not daring to take his eyes off the vista, Walter leans over to Danny and lowers his voice to a near-whisper -- we're not sure why, but his reverent tone seems appropriate.

WALTER (cont'd)  
Where are we going?

DANNY  
(whispers back)  
Zathura.

CUT TO:

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

*(House in outer space scenes now referred to as night scenes.)*

CLOSE ON a big purple blob, the drawing on the game board that represents the planet Zathura.

DANNY (O.S.)  
First one of us has to get here...

Pulling back slowly from it, we find Danny and Walter, sitting cross-legged on either side of the game board. Walter holds his head in his hands, but Danny seems unruffled.

DANNY (cont'd)  
... and then we can make our way  
back...

Danny's finger is on Zathura (the planet), we follow as he traces it all the way around the path of colored squares that lead back to earth.

CONTINUED:

DANNY (cont'd)

... home.

WALTER

Wait a minute, Daniel. You expect me to believe that just because you rolled the dice and started this stupid *board game* that we found in a *cemetery*, just because of that our house, I mean, our *HOUSE*, Danny, I am talking about a house, for God's sake, that it's somehow flying through *OUTER SPACE* toward a planet called *ZATHURA*? And you *ALSO* expect me to believe that the only way we can get ourselves and this *FLYING HOUSE* of ours back home is if we keep playing and move these dumb, cheap little *GAME PIECES* around this dumb, cheap little *GAME BOARD* until somebody lands back on the planet earth and *THAT* will get us home? You expect me to believe *THAT*?!

DANNY

Yes.

Walter stares at him for a moment --

WALTER

Okay, I'll be the astronaut.

-- and picks up a game piece.

DANNY

No, I'm the astronaut.

WALTER

Okay, I'm the rocket ship.

DANNY

Your go.

Walter puts the rocket ship on earth, picks up the dice and rolls them around in his hand. He looks back over his shoulder, at the planet Neptune, which they can see approaching through the still-open front door. He looks back at Danny, shaking his head.

WALTER

You know we're dreaming, right? I mean, it's the only real explanation. And we're gonna wake up from this, I mean, you *know* that, don't you?

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

WALTER (cont'd)

That's the only reason I'm playing along, I just want to make sure you know that.

DANNY

Try not to roll a three, that space has a scary monster head on it.

Walter starts to roll again, then stops himself.

WALTER

You're not gonna cheat, are you?

DANNY

No!

WALTER

'Cause even though this is only a dream, I still don't like to be cheated on.

DANNY

I don't cheat! Anymore.

WALTER

Okay, then.

He starts to roll the dice again, but notices the look Danny is giving him.

WALTER (cont'd)

What are you smiling at?

DANNY

You're playing a game with me, Walter.

WALTER

Only to get back to earth. Or wake up. Whichever comes first.

He shakes the dice and rolls them out onto the game board.

Danny leans forward excitedly.

DANNY

Six! I'll move for you!

WALTER

I'll move it, Danny.

DANNY

(counting with him as he moves)  
One, two, three, four, five --

CONTINUED: (3)

WALTER

Six.

He puts the rocket ship on a blue square. The board BUZZES and a card pops out in front of him. Walter takes it and reads.

WALTER (cont'd)

"The polarity on your...

He scoffs and tosses the card on the board.

DANNY

What's it say?

WALTER

It's stupid.

Danny picks up the card and squints at it.

DANNY

(trying to read)

"The polarity on your gr-grave-your grave?" No, GRAVITY! "The polarity on your gravity belt is re-rev-rev-"

(looking up)

What's the last word, Wal-

But Walter has vanished, he's no longer sitting across from him.

DANNY (cont'd)

Walter?

WALTER (O.S.)

REVERSED!

Danny drops the card and looks up. Walter is spread-eagled against the ceiling like a runaway balloon at a birthday party.

WALTER (cont'd)

"The polarity on your gravity belt is reversed!" I've got no gravity! Danny, they took my gravity!

Danny stares at him in shock -- and a little impressed.

DANNY

Cool!

WALTER

Not cool, Danny! Not cool at all! Get me down from here!



CONTINUED: (4)

DANNY

How am I supposed to do that?

Walter is slowly drifting across the ceiling, despite his best attempts to claw at it to stay in place.

WALTER

I don't know, grab me!

Walter holds one hand down low, Danny jumps up to try to catch it, but Walter's too high up. Danny keeps jumping, but their hands can't reach.

WALTER (cont'd)

Jump higher!

DANNY

You jump down here!

Good idea! Walter twists himself around so his legs are beneath him and pushes off the ceiling. As he is weightless, a strong push from his legs is far more oomph than he needs and he blasts off the ceiling --

-- slams into Danny, knocking him to the floor --

DANNY (cont'd)

OOOF!

-- and bounces right back up to the ceiling, which he SMASHES into --

WALTER

OOOF!

-- and bounces back to the floor, a bit softer, but still moving plenty fast to slam into Danny, who is knocked to the ground again just as he's trying to get up.

DANNY

Knock it off, Walter!

Walter BOUNCES into the ceiling for a third time, softer this time, and after two or three more bounces he comes to a rest.

WALTER

Wasn't my idea!

DANNY

Try again but not so hard!

CONTINUED: (5)

Walter coils his legs again and reverse-jumps. This time he doesn't push as hard and he doesn't really smash into Danny so much as *bump* into him. But they don't manage to grab hands, and Walter bobs back to the ceiling.

They keep trying, a series of jumps that bring them closer and closer.

We notice (but Walter does not) that on every jump, he's drifting closer and closer to the hole in the ceiling, the one made by the meteor when it crashed through the ceiling.

WALTER

Okay, Danny, when I bump into you this time --

Danny sees the hole and points.

DANNY

Uh, Walter --

WALTER

-- I want you to tackle me, got it?  
One --

DANNY

Walter --

WALTER

TWO THREE!

He pushes off the ceiling and shoots downward, SMACKING into Danny, who throws both arms around him. But Walter's momentum is too strong and he bounces off Danny, shoots back up toward the ceiling --

-- and sails right through the hole.

INT DAD'S BEDROOM NIGHT

Up in Dad's bedroom, we see Walter fly up through the hole, SCREAMING, feet first. Feet, legs, torso, head, outstretched hands all fly up through the bedroom (in that order) toward the ceiling.

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

DANNY

WALTER!

He races over beneath the hole and looks up. Through the hole, he can see Walter fly out the hole in the roof, headed into deepest space.

INT DAD'S BEDROOM NIGHT

At the last second, Walter just manages to grab hold of a roof joist sticking out of the jagged edge of the hole in the roof, which saves him from sailing out into the blackness beyond, but unfortunately --

EXT HOUSE - OUTER SPACE NIGHT

-- he's still dangling upside-down over the house as it moves through outer space. It's a pretty funny image, actually, the house motoring along like Dorothy's in the tornado, and the little boy hanging upside-down out the hole in the roof, holding onto the broken joist with one hand, SCREAMING at the top of his lungs.

INT DAD'S BEDROOM NIGHT

Danny races into Dad's bedroom and runs over to stand beneath the hole. He stares up at Walter and puts his hands on his hips, furious.

DANNY

Walter, get back in this house!

WALTER

I'm not doing it on *purpose*, you bozo!

DANNY

You're gonna get in trouble. You're not supposed to be in outer space.

WALTER

Throw me something and pull me down!

Danny looks around for something rope-like. He takes a lamp from the bedside table and unplugs it. The outlet is a ways away, and the lamp is plugged into an extension cord, so he's got a good ten feet of length.

DANNY

Catch!

He tosses the plug end of the cord up to Walter, who catches it with his free hand. He goes to the hole in the floor and tosses the lamp --

INT LIVING ROOM DAY

-- which drops through, stopping short just before it hits the floor. Danny comes THUNDERING down the stairs --

CONTINUED:

DANNY  
HANG ON WALTER!

-- and starts pulling the cord, hand over hand.

INT DAD'S BEDROOM NIGHT

Walter, both hands now on the cord, is pulled head first back down through the hole in the roof, through the bedroom --

INT LIVING ROOM DAY

-- and through the hole in the ceiling of the living room. Danny goes to the leg of a heavy armoire and wraps the cord around it several times, securing Walter in the air upside-down above him. Both their heads are at the same height, more or less, just one is upside-down and one is right-side up.

WALTER  
Now what?!

DANNY  
Not it's my go.

He drops to his knees in front of the game board and picks up the dice.

WALTER  
You can't keep playing, get me down!

DANNY  
I can't get you down if I don't keep playing.

He rolls the dice.

WALTER  
Stop that!

DANNY  
You're not the boss of me.

WALTER  
Danny!

DANNY  
You don't even have your gravity.

He checks the dice, counting the number of dots that came up.

DANNY (cont'd)  
-- three, four, five, six, seven.

CONTINUED:

He moves his piece seven squares on the board. It BUZZES and another card pops out. Danny squints at it.

DANNY (cont'd)

"Your... your... your -- "

He gives up, holds the card up over his head for Walter to read.

WALTER

"Your gyroscope is malfunctioning."

Walter, for some reason, covers his ears.

DANNY

What's a gyroscope?!

WALTER

(panicky, ears still covered)  
I DON'T KNOW!

Danny, always game, looks around. But nothing seems to be happening.

DANNY

Huh. That one's not very --

He stops in the middle of his sentence, cocking his head as he stares at the floor. Walter's baseball, which was lying in a corner of the room, has started moving of its own accord. It rolls out of the corner, across the floor, between Danny's legs, and THUNKS against the far wall.

DANNY (cont'd)

Well you don't see *that* every day.

WALTER

L-look!

Danny turns, follows Walter's pointing finger. The dining room table is moving too. Just a few inches, but definitely sliding. Toward him.

DANNY

That either.

Now the rest of the furniture starts to slide too, all in the same direction.

WALTER

The room! It's tilting!

CONTINUED: (2)

It sure is. What started as an almost imperceptible increase in the angle of the floor is now quite apparent, the whole place is cantilevering up, up, up on one end. *Everything* is sliding, tables, chairs, lamps, Danny, and as the angle gets even bigger the stuff starts tumbling.

WALTER (cont'd)

Danny, look out!

A huge china cabinet BANGS across the floor right toward Danny, who's staring at it wide-eyed, frozen with fear.

WALTER (cont'd)

Grab me!

Danny looks up at Walter, who's still dangling above him, and reaches up for his outstretched hands. Walter grabs hold of his brother's arms and lifts him off the floor.

Danny's weight pulls Walter off to the side and they swing, just out of the way of the china cabinet as it SMASHES into the growing pile of junk at the "bottom" of the room.

Walter holds on tight to his brother, holding him above the fray as the entire contents of the living room SMASH and CRASH into the far corner.

The only thing left in its original place is the big comfy chair Walter sits in to watch TV, but now that's moving too, spinning around, THUNDERING across the living room floor.

The chair goes airborne, Danny loses his grip on Walter's hands just as it passes underneath him --

-- he PLOPS down into it --

-- and the whole thing, chair and Danny, SLAM to a stop on top of the pile of junk that used to be home furnishings.

Silence as the dust settles.

Danny looks up at Walter.

DANNY

Excellent!

WALTER

ARE YOU OKAY?!

DANNY

(why wouldn't I be?)

Sure.

CONTINUED: (3)

He jumps out of the chair, clambers down the pile of ju  
climbs the heavily raked floor of the living room to th  
fireplace, roughly in the center of the room, where the  
board, dice, and game pieces fell during the chaos.

INT LIVING ROOM DAY

A few minutes later, one end of the game board rests on the  
still-angled living room floor. Danny slides a stack of books  
under the other end of the board, propping it up and making it  
relatively level.

DANNY

Okay, I was here, and you were... here.

He holds the dice up to Walter, who's still hanging upside down  
over his head.

DANNY (cont'd)

Your go, Walter.

WALTER

Are you crazy?

Danny waves the dice enticingly.

DANNY

(singsong)

You'll get your gravity baaaaack...

Walter sighs *and takes the dice*

ON THE GAME BOARD,

the dice tumble to a stop, a five and a five.

WALTER

Move for me?

Danny counts off spaces.

DANNY

One, two, three, four, five, six...

His eyes race a few spaces ahead, to where there's another space  
with that scary monster head on it. It looks kind of like a  
bull's head, but slightly more human.

Danny sucks his breath in nervously --

DANNY (cont'd)

... seveineightnine ten!

CONTINUED:

-- and exhales in relief as he lands Walter's piece on square just past it.

The board BUZZES, a card pops out --

-- and Walter CRASHES to the floor right next to Danny, OOFING painfully as his gravity returns.

DANNY (cont'd)

(cheerful)  
Told you!

Walter rolls over, GROANING in pain. He holds up his forearm, which has a small cut on it, a thin line of blood oozing from it. He touches the blood with his fingers, then looks up at Danny in amazement.

WALTER

(softly)  
This isn't a dream, is it? This is really happening.

Danny looks around, not understanding why Walter can't grasp such a simple concept.

DANNY

Yes.

*Of course.*

WALTER

And anything can happen.

DANNY

Yep.

WALTER

Good or bad.

Danny just shrugs.

DANNY

Games are scary, Walter. But that's no reason not to play 'em.

Walter turns and looks at the card sticking out of the slot in the board. He reaches out a shaking hand and takes it gingerly. He holds it up in front of his face, but closes his eyes.

Can't read it that way. He opens one eye, scans the words.

WALTER

"Your robot is defective."

*CALL DAD!  
(Of course  
phone doesn't  
work)  
"We are in  
SO much  
trouble."*



CONTINUED: (2)

From the hallway outside comes the sound of rattling metal and a steady CLANK CLANK CLANK.

Both boys leap to their feet, staring at the source of the sound. A shadow falls on the floor in the hallway, growing larger. It's a very scary shadow, all hyperextended arms and claws, and it's growing, growing --

WALTER (cont'd)

DANNY!

DANNY

WALTER!

-- growing, *growing* --

WALTER

WHAT?!

DANNY

I DON'T KNOW!

WALTER

ME NEITHER!

-- they grab onto each other as the shadow completely fills the hallway outside the door, this thing must be absolutely --

-- well, turns out it's tiny. A shiny metal robot about a foot tall rolls into the doorway and stops.

Danny and Walter laugh in relief.

WALTER (cont'd)

It's just a toy.

The robot's upper body rotates toward them. Its eyes light up, faint red search beams come on and scan the room. The beams pass over Danny without stopping, but then they fall on Walter and fixate --

-- on the card he still holds in his hands.

ROBOT

EMERGENCY.

Walter drops the card as if it were on fire.

WALTER

No no!

ROBOT

EMERGENCY.

CONTINUED: (3)

WALTER

No it isn't! There's no emergency!

ROBOT

ALIEN LIFE FORM. ALIEN LIFE FORM.

DANNY

Walter, he's talking about *you*.

ROBOT

MUST DESTROY.

WALTER

(trying to act tough)

Okay, very funny, Robot, don't make me  
come over there and kick your-

Walter stops as suddenly, the robot begins to *grow*, fast, the best transformer you've ever seen. Its lower section extends, its arms telescope out, twenty-four additional layers of metal shielding WHIP-WHAP-WHIP around its midsection, its head quadruples in size, whole metal sections unfurling from within. In about five seconds, it stands six feet tall and four feet wide.

WALTER (cont'd)

-- *large butt.*

The robot's clawlike hands extend, SNAP open and shut several times quickly.

DANNY

*RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!!!*

They bolt in opposite directions, just as twin turbo jets on the back of each of the robot's feet suddenly spit blue flame and the robot rockets across the floor toward Walter. He lunges out of the way just as the robot SMASHES into the wall behind where he was standing.

It pivots around.

ROBOT

ALIEN INVASION. MUST DESTROY.

Walter gets up off the still-angled floor, turns to face the robot --

-- which takes off again, straight at him --

-- and Walter leaps again, this time landing on the pile of trashed furniture.

CONTINUED: (4)

DANNY

WALTER! WHAT DO I DO?!

Walter's too busy to answer, trying to climb out of the enveloping pile, but his foot is stuck in the torn webbing of the underside of the couch.

WALTER

I'm stuck!

Across the room, the robot has driven itself completely into the far wall and is now using its claws to extract itself from the dry wall and broken joists.

Walter pulls on his foot, harder, harder, but just when he gets it free the pile shifts, settling, and *more* junk falls on top of him. Danny lunges toward him, but --

WALTER (cont'd)

NO! Stay back!

Danny does, helpless and not happy about it. Across the room the robot pivots, its red beams search for Walter again --

-- Walter hurls stuff off himself --

-- the red beams lock onto him --

-- Walter tears himself free and somersaults backwards, rolling down the pile just as --

-- the robot BLASTS across the room, SMASHING into the pile with a deafening CRASH.

Walter jumps to his feet, breathing hard. This can't go on much longer. He looks around frantically for something, anything, thinking, thinking. He sees a door out of the corner of his eye, out the corridor near the kitchen.

WALTER (cont'd)

(to Danny)

The basement door! Open it! We'll lock the thing in there!

DANNY

Right!

He turns and starts toward the door, then stops and turns back.

DANNY (cont'd)

Really? The basement?

CONTINUED: (5)

WALTER

Danny!

The robot is out of the pile of furniture and pivoting toward Walter.

DANNY

How about if I open another door?

WALTER

DANNY!

DANNY

All right, already!

Danny races out of the room. Walter turns toward the robot.

WALTER

Hey. Hey *Robbie*.

The robot's torso whips around, light speed, finds Walter, and fixes its beams on his chest.

WALTER (cont'd)

Yikes.

INT BASEMENT STAIRWELL NIGHT

Danny stands at the top of the stairway to the basement, staring down at the door. Behind him, he can hear chaos as the robot takes off after Walter again.

WALTER (O.S.)

. Danny!? Is it open?!

Danny takes a deep breath and runs down the stairs to the basement door. He reaches up, puts one hand on its deadbolt lock. Starts to turn it.

But he can't. He turns and looks up at the top of the stairs.

Above, he sees Walter go running past the doorway SCREAMING, followed a second later by the robot, blue turbojets spitting flame as it pursues him through the house.

There is a tremendous CRASH from the kitchen. Danny winces.

WALTER (O.S.) (cont'd)

*Really gonna need that door open, Dan!*

CONTINUED:

Danny turns, determined, *definitely* gonna do it this time. He reaches up to the door, puts his hand on the deadbolt, flicks it to unlocked, puts his hand on the knob, turns that too, hey, this is going well, he's got some real momentum here, he turns the doorknob, pushes the door open a crack --

-- gets one peek into the murmuring blackness of the basement --

-- and SLAMS it shut. Couldn't do it.

He turns and races up the stairs as fast as he possibly can.

INT        HALLWAY        NIGHT

Danny bursts out of the stairwell and heads for the living room. The robot can be heard SMASHING around in the other room.

WALTER (O.S.)

DANNY?!

INT        LIVING ROOM        NIGHT

Danny races back into the living room and drops to his knees in front of the game board. He snatches up the dice and rolls, gets a six. He moves, fast.

INT        BASEMENT STAIRWELL        NIGHT

Walter appears at the top of the basement stairs, breathless, and looks down at the closed door.

WALTER

*Danny!*

He races down the stairs, three at a time, toward the door at the bottom.

INT        LIVING ROOM        DAY

The game board BUZZES, spits out a card, Danny snatches it up and leaps to his feet. The room starts to level out, the effect of the malfunctioning gyroscope apparently counteracted when Danny moved again.

He tries to read the card, but can't.

DANNY

(intensely frustrated)

*I don't know what this means!*

We zoom in fast on the words, maybe he can't read, but we can, and what we read says:

CONTINUED:

*YOU PASS TOO CLOSE TO TSOURIS 3  
GRAVITY INCREASED.*

INT BASEMENT STAIRWELL NIGHT

Walter turns the handle on the basement door, pushes it open wide, revealing the blackness beyond. He turns to race back up the stairs --

-- and stops dead in his tracks. The robot is at the top of the stairs.

No way out.

WALTER

Whoops.

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

Danny, still staring at the card, looks up, feeling funny.

Truth is, he looks funny too, he seems shorter and wider, like somebody went and changed the lens on us.

But it keeps going, he keeps shrinking, getting rounder and rounder until he is approximately the size and shape of a large beach ball. And heavy too, the living room floorboards underneath him GROAN and CRACK from his greatly increased weight.

He speaks, with an extremely low voice:

DANNY

Oooookkkaaaay, soooo noooooowww I  
knnnoooooowwww.

From the other room, he hears Walter SCREAM his name --

INT BASEMENT STAIRWELL NIGHT

At the top of the stairs, the robot's eyes glow red.

Walter looks down in horror as the red beams find their mark on his chest.

WALTER

DAAAAAANNNNNNYYYYY! I'M TRAPPED!

INT LIVING ROOM DAY

Danny calls out in his newfound baritone.

CONTINUED:

DANNY

I'mmmmm coooooommmingggg, Waaaalterrrr!

The living room is still moving, settling back down to a level plane, and Danny takes advantage of the change in angle, swinging his chubby little beach ball arms once, twice, three times, wobbling like a weeble --

INT BASEMENT STAIRWELL NIGHT

-- the turbo jets on the robot's feet spit blue flame --

-- Walter covers his eyes and SCREAMS --

INT HALLWAY NIGHT

-- and Danny comes *rolling* out of the living room, CRYING OUT a massive war cry as he thunders down the hallway, CRACKING and SPLITTING the floorboards as he goes, a great big heavy six and three quarter year old bowling ball with the specific gravity of Tsouris 3.

The robot's torso pivots, it looks straight at this rolling menace, its eye beams focus on him, but it's too late, there's no stopping Danny now, he SMASHES into the robot --

-- it goes flying off the top step --

IN THE STAIRWELL,

-- and sails, ass over teakettle, down the stairs.

Walter sees it coming and hits the deck. The robot somersaults right over him and SMASHES to the cement floor of the darkened basement.

Walter bolts out of the basement, SLAMS the door behind him, and throws the deadbolt.

UP IN THE HALLWAY,

Bowling-Ball-Danny keeps rolling, end over end, caroming off the walls of the hallway away from us.

DANNY

(each time he hits the wall)

Ow. Ouch. Ow. Oh my.

He bounces off a wall at the far end and rolls through a doorway, out of sight.

Walter comes bounding up out of the basement stairwell.

CONTINUED:

WALTER

Danny, that was *awesome*!

No answer.

WALTER (cont'd)

Danny?

DANNY (O.S.)

Could you give me a hand here?

Walter goes down the corridor toward the sound of the voice --

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

-- and finds Danny in the living room, where he has rolled into a corner, upside down. Still a bowling ball.

DANNY

(still low voice)

Diiiiidd I geetttt hhhiiimmm?

WALTER

You sure did, Buddy.

He goes to pat Danny on the back, can't quite find where it is exactly, and sort of polishes a spot on him instead.

WALTER (cont'd)

You were terrific.

DANNY

Thhhhaannkkksss.

WALTER

I better go and get you back to regular.

OVER AT THE GAME BOARD,

the dice tumble onto the board and come up with a pair of threes. Walter moves his rocket ship six spaces, lands on a green square --

-- and Danny immediately begins to thin out. He grows taller, slimmer, and in a few seconds is back to his normal self. He takes a deep breath of relief.

The board BUZZES and spits out a card, but Walter's not going anywhere near it for the moment. He slides back against the wall, exhausted. Danny drops down beside him, just as tired.

They look at the absolute wreck that is their living room.

Doesn't take  
card yet.

Walter gets



CONTINUED:

They look at each other.

They look at the room again --

-- and slide deeper down against the wall.

DANNY

*eat macaroni* ~~need some~~ macaroni and cheese?

*W*

CUT TO:

INT

KITCHEN

NIGHT

*W*

The kitchen is just about the only room in the house that is relatively intact. Over at the stove, Walter studies the directions on the side of a box of Kraft Macaroni & Cheese carefully.

WALTER

I've seen Dad do this a million times.  
It can't be *that* hard.

He takes out the packet of cheese and sets it aside, then pours the contents of the box into a pan of boiling water on the stove. He looks at it, gives it a bit of a stir. He stirs a touch too hard and a few drops of water splash up onto his hand.

WALTER (cont'd)

Ouch.

He winces, it hurts. He stirs more gently.

WALTER (cont'd)

Now Danny, I want you to be very, very careful, this is boiling water. You could hurt yourself very badly.

No answer.

WALTER (cont'd)

Danny?

He turns around. Danny is sitting up on the counter next to the sink. He's cross-legged, his chin resting on his hands, staring out the windows at the star field outside.

The stars seem to be moving, but of course it's them that's moving, sailing across the universe at the speed of light.

DANNY

What do you think it's like, Walter?

Walter steps up beside him.

*What do we do? we're lost in space, we're hungry, we're a million miles from home. We're starving, what do we do?*

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CONTINUED:

WALTER

What what's like?

DANNY

Zathura.

Walter looks out at the stars too.

WALTER

I don't know.

DANNY

Guess.

WALTER

I think... I think it's this really dangerous place, and everything you're afraid of is there, because it, like, *knows* what you're afraid of.

DANNY

We'll be okay, though. Right?

WALTER

Yeah. Sure.

DANNY

We'll make it. Together. You and me.

WALTER

You and I. And no we won't.

DANNY

What do you think Dad's doing right now?

WALTER

Well... it's weird. It's been a couple hours, and he said he'd only be gone for twenty minutes.

Danny looks up at him alertly.

DANNY

You mean he abandoned us?

WALTER

Abandoned. No, I don't think that.

DANNY

Dad would never do that!

CONTINUED: (2)

WALTER

Relax, Danny, I didn't say he did. I think he came home, and he saw the house wasn't there anymore, and...and, or he came home, and maybe the house *is* there, it's there and it's here too at the same time, and he came home to the house-that's-there but we weren't in it, so he... uh...

DANNY

He what? What did he do then?

WALTER

Well, *I* don't know, why do I have to do all the thinking all the time? What do *you* think?

DANNY

I think, I think he drove up and the house was gone and so he went and he got Mom and then they both went and got the government to give them a space ship and that they're chasing us and almost caught up to us right now, Mom and Dad both in the same rocket.

WALTER

Yeah. That'll be the day.

Danny looks at him piercingly. Walter looks back at him, trying to put on an innocent face.

WALTER (cont'd)

What?

DANNY

You. Are. *So*. Mean.

WALTER

Look, I just-

There is a sudden splash and HISS from the stove behind them. The macaroni is boiling over. Walter rushes over and turns the flame down.

MOMENTS LATER,

Walter dumps the finished macaroni into a strainer in the sink.

WALTER (cont'd)

I know you think I'm kind of a jerk lately, Danny.

CONTINUED: (3)

Danny, still sitting on the counter, just shrugs. He unwraps a whole stick of butter and tosses it in.

WALTER (cont'd)

It's just, I'm under a lot of pressure. Because this thing happened. This thing happened to me at school. You know Jennifer?

Walter opens a milk carton and pours in a splash.

DANNY

(resentful as hell)

Yeah, your *girrrrrl*friend.

Danny rips open the cheese packet, too hard, sending cheese dust flying all over the place. Most of it goes into the concoction, so that's okay.

WALTER

Yeah. I mean no. I mean, she *was* my girlfriend. But like about two weeks ago she told me she doesn't want to be my girlfriend anymore.

DANNY

Good.

WALTER

No, Danny, it's not good, okay?! She said she wants to be *Matthew's* girlfriend.

DANNY

(is she crazy?)

Matthew has stupid hair. Matthew thinks he's cool.

WALTER

I know, so I asked her how come, and she said it's because when we had playground the other day and that one fifth grader was teasing her? That guy with the army jacket? She says I didn't say anything to him, but Matthew did. She said I was afraid and Matthew wasn't.

DANNY

But you *did* say something! You told him to leave her alone! You told me all about it, you-

CONTINUED: (4)

WALTER

(a shameful confession)

I didn't say a word, Danny. I just said I did. Anyway, I don't have a girlfriend anymore.

Danny looks at him. Puts a hand on his shoulder. And hands him a wooden spoon.

DANNY

You can have my dessert.

They both begin to stir.

INT KITCHEN NIGHT

A few minutes later, they sit at the table with two big, sloppy, oozy, cheesy, runny bowls of macaroni and cheese, two forks, and two cans of forbidden Coca-Cola.

WALTER

What do *you* think Zathura's like?

DANNY

Okay, I think? I think it's like this place? It's like this place, where, this place where bullies aren't allowed to even go. And the guy who invented evil gets in really big trouble. And when Kobe shoots he never misses, and the Lakers never lose. And when I play a game I don't always have to be the worst one at it, and you and me and Mom and Dad all live in one house together, and you probably don't think there's any place like that in the entire universe, Walter, but I do, and you're gonna make fun of me for it so that's all I want to say about that.

What started out beautiful and hopeful has, in the end, made him sad. He takes a big forkful of macaroni and cheese, shoves it into his mouth and chews morosely.

Walter can't think of anything to say, so he does likewise. They chew in silence for a while.

WALTER

It's good.

Danny is still morose, and he still has a mouthful of food, but he mumbles through it anyway.

CONTINUED:

*I don't want to play anymore.*

*53. We have to. I'm afraid. So am I.*

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DANNY

It's the best macaroni and cheese I've ever had in my life.

CUT TO:

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

The planet earth -- but on the game board. We fly low over it, snake along the path of colored squares (every seventh one a scary monster/bull's head).

We pass over Danny's astronaut game piece, huge and silver up close. We keep flying, three squares ahead is Walter's towering rocket ship game piece, more than halfway across the board.

We keep flying, faster and faster, until the planet Zathura swims before us in all its menacing purpleness.

Walter's game card hovers in the slot of the game board, still waiting for him to take it.

Walter and Danny sit down on either side of the board and look at each other.

WALTER

Ready?

DANNY

Nope.

WALTER

Me neither.

Walter holds his breath and snatches his game card out of the slot. He moves it sloooowwwly up in front of his eyes, cradles it in the palm of his hand, lays eyes on it --

-- AND SCREAMS AT THE TOP OF HIS LUNGS!

Danny leaps to his feet.

DANNY

WHAT WHAT WHAT?!?!?!?

WALTER

I'm just yankin ya.

DANNY

You are so not hilarious.

Walter turns the card over and reads the words. He gets a puzzled look on his face.

CONTINUED:

WALTER

"Recharge fuel cells. Prepare for next turn."

DANNY

What does that mean?

WALTER

(shrugs)

Means I don't do anything, I guess.

DANNY

Lucky.

WALTER

Great.

Danny reaches for the dice, but Walter grabs them away.

WALTER (cont'd)

Wait a minute. What's my next turn?

DANNY

I don't know.

WALTER

Why do I have to prepare?

DANNY

(reaching for the dice)

I don't know.

WALTER

What's my next turn?!

DANNY

I don't KNOW!

He lunges for the dice now, but Walter holds them as far away as he can.

WALTER

WHAT'S MY NEXT TURN?!

DANNY

I DON'T KNOW!

Danny tackles Walter and they roll around on the carpet, Walter's hysteria rising.

WALTER

IT'S GONNA BE SOMETHING HORRIBLE I CAN  
JUST TELL!

CONTINUED: (2)

DANNY

Walter, let me GO!

WALTER

NO THEN IT'LL BE MY TURN WHY DO I HAVE  
TO PREPARE WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN WHAT'S  
GONNA HAPPEN WHAT'S GONNA-

DANNY

What are you, *afraid*?

Immediately, Walter stops wrestling and becomes one very cool  
and collected pre-teen.

WALTER

No.

He tosses Danny the dice.

WALTER (cont'd)

Not even.

Danny picks up the dice.

DANNY

Okay, then.

THE DICE

tumble across the board and roll to a stop.

The astronaut, lifted by Danny's hand, rises up off the board  
and space-walks ahead five squares, landing on a green square.

THE CARD spits out.

Danny rips it out and reads this one himself. It takes a while,  
he has to move his lips and sound out the words.

WALTER

Oh, let me see it.

He reaches for the card but Danny pulls back; he wants to figure  
this one out himself.

Finally, he looks up.

DANNY

What's a Zorgon?

Walter doesn't answer, but his eyes pop wide, staring at  
something over Danny's shoulder.



CONTINUED: (3)

WALTER

Uh...

DANNY

I don't suppose it's a *good* thing, is it?

WALTER

I DON'T THINK IT IS!

Walter points and Danny whirls around.

OUTSIDE THE WINDOW,

he sees what Walter sees -- a sleek, nasty-looking spaceship has pulled up alongside the flying house and is measuring its pace. Bizarre guttural SQUAWKINGS are blasting from external speakers, somebody's trying to tell them something in tones so loud the windows rattle.

IN THE LIVING ROOM,

Danny stares in shock and the card slips from his hand. We swoop in to read it:

*ZORGON PIRATES ATTACK YOUR VESSEL.*

The barrel of a laser cannon emerges from a porthole on the side of a ship, a white hot light glows from within it and a ball of searingly bright light fires out, headed straight for the house.

WALTER (cont'd)

TAKE COVER!

He grabs Danny and they dive into the only place that looks remotely like cover -- the fireplace.

The photon blast SLAMS into the chimney at the top of the house. Walter looks up, sees a cascade of bricks dropping right towards them.

WALTER (cont'd)

TAKE COVER SOMEPLACE ELSE!

They both dive out of the chimney just before the bricks CRASH to the hearth where they were crouching.

OUTSIDE THE WINDOW,

the laser cannon adjusts its aim and fires another blast at the house. Danny and Walter throw themselves to the floor and cover their heads. The blast --

INT UPSTAIRS BATHROOM NIGHT

-- EXPLODES through the wall of the upstairs bathroom.

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

Back in the living room, a spray of water springs from a new hole in the ceiling.

Terrified, Danny and Walter uncover their heads and look out the window. The Zorgon ship rises up, toward the second story of the house, out of their field of view.

DANNY

They're going away!

Walter narrows his eyes. He isn't so sure.

It's suddenly quiet, except for the sound of the now-dripping water.

DANNY (cont'd)

They're-

WALTER

Shh.

He stands, listening carefully. Not a sound in the house other than drip-drip-drip.

Then, *very soft*, a THUD from upstairs. Barely audible.

WALTER (cont'd)

(whispers)

You hear something?

DANNY

(whispers back)

No. I only heard a thud.

WALTER

(still whispering)

That's what-

(oh, never mind)

Holding out a hand for Danny to be quiet, Walter creeps over to the hole in the living room ceiling and peers up through it, through the second floor bedroom and through the hole in the roof.

THROUGH THE HOLE IN THE ROOF,

he can't see the stars anymore. What he sees instead is a hatchway on the underside of the Zorgon ship. The hatch irises open silently and a dark shape slithers out of the ship, through the hole in the roof, THUDS to the carpet upstairs, and crawls quickly out of sight.

DANNY

(regular voice)

Now *that* I heard.

WALTER

SHHH!

INT BASEMENT NIGHT

In the basement, the robot is still sprawled out on the floor. Moving in close on its face we see its eyes light up, glow a fierce bright red. Suddenly --

-- the robot sits up. *Fast.*

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

The boys cower under a table as another THUD comes from upstairs, a *second* intruder has made his way into the house.

DANNY

What do we do?! What do we do?!

WALTER

I don't know! I don't know!

Above them, they see the dark outlines of two reptilian heads, eyes glowing bright and green. The heads peer down through the hole in the ceiling and GRUNT at each other with their horrifying guttural voices.

This one is just too much. For the first time since the adventure started, we see Walter and Danny revert to the little boys they are, absolutely scared out of their minds.

Danny slides backwards on the floor, pushing up against his brother, who puts his arms around him.

INT BASEMENT STAIRWELL NIGHT

At the bottom of the basement stairwell, the door handle glows red, then white-hot --

CONTINUED:

-- and then drops off entirely. The door swings open to reveal the robot, who looks fiercer than ever. As if things weren't bad enough...

INT LIVING ROOM OFFICE

In the living room, two ropes drop down through the hole in the ceiling.

The boys are quivering with fear, unable to move.

Danny puts his thumb in his mouth.

Walter begins to cry.

The Zorgons turn around, to crawl down the ropes. First things through are their long lizard tails, thick and muscled, green with slime.

WALTER  
(choked with tears)  
Danny, I never-

Zorgon lizard-legs start to slide through the holes, blood-encrusted swords hanging at their sides.

WALTER (cont'd)  
I never told you this, but I-

There is a BLAST of turbojets and the robot suddenly appears in the doorway to the living room.

ROBOT  
ALIEN LIFE FORM. MUST DESTROY.

The robot's red beams fall squarely on Walter's chest. Walter looks down at them in horror.

WALTER  
DANNY, I-

Suddenly the beams shift, and split, they land on two new targets --

-- the Zorgons, still just halfway through the hole in the ceiling.

ROBOT  
ALIEN LIFE FORMS! MUST DESTROY!

The robot's tentacle arms shoot out, its heavy metal claws CLAMP down hard on the Zorgon tails and take hold, biting in.

CONTINUED:

The Zorgons SCREAM in fury and pain.

The robot's turbo jets blast to life, the robot ROCKETS across the room, its arms telescoping in as it SLAMS into the Zorgon tails.

FRANTIC SCREAMS come from the Zorgons as they're rapidly pulled back up, through the hole, the robot still clamped onto their tails.

Walter lets go of Danny and rushes over underneath the hole, just in time to see the Zorgons and the robot pulled all the way up into the belly of the Zorgon ship. The hatchway irises shut and the ship blasts off.

Walter and Danny run over to the window in time to see the Zorgon ship as it flies away into deep space, twisting and turning, barely in control as the robot wreaks whatever havoc it's wreaking inside. Two problems flying away at the same time.

The boys breathe a huge sigh of relief.

Danny turns, looks at Walter.

DANNY

You never told me what?

WALTER

Huh?

DANNY

What were you gonna say?

Walter is suddenly embarrassed. He wipes away his tears.

WALTER

Oh... I can't remember.

DANNY

(disappointed)

Okay.

Walter gets up and walks away.

DANNY (cont'd)

Okay, Walter.

CUT TO:

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

Walter and Danny sit in the living room, beleaguered as hell. They're facing the board again, and Danny has his arm extended, holding the dice out to Walter.

Walter just stares at them. He doesn't want to take them.

DANNY

You have to.

WALTER

I know.

He grabs the dice, throws them, and gets an eleven. He picks up the rocket ship and starts counting off the spaces.

WALTER (cont'd)

(to himself)

... six, seven, eight...

He stops, his hand frozen in mid-air. He looks at Danny, wide-eyed. Danny looks down at the board, counts the next three squares, and draws in his breath sharply.

WALTER (cont'd)

... nine, ten... eleven.

He sets the rocket down on a certain square. Unlike the others, which are multi-colored and blank, this square has a symbol on it.

*The head of the monster.*

They've passed over it before, but this time there's no getting out of it. The board BUZZES and spits out a card.

The card is red.

Walter picks it up with trembling hands and reads it aloud.

WALTER (cont'd)

"Your ship crash lands on planet  
Minos."

DANNY

Is it getting hot in here?

It's not only getting hot, there's an orange glow flickering in the room, and growing brighter.

The boys turn, look out the windows, and GASP.

the house is almost completely engulfed in flame, huge wild  
tongues of it licking up around the windows. The boys SCREAM,  
and on the scream we cut --

-- outside the house. The boys' screams can be heard out here too, all the way out in space, but we're not in outer space anymore, the house is plummeting through deep blue sky now, through an *atmosphere*, searing flames licking all around it as it enters the gravitational pull of the brilliantly green and blue planet below.

The house spins and twirls, buffeted by the flames.

Bright light suddenly bursts through the windows of the falling house, flooding the living room. But it's not fire anymore, it's *sunlight*.

Through the windows, they see the house is still falling, but it's through the outer atmosphere now and dropping fast toward the massive ocean far below.

DANNY  
HOLD YOUR BREATH!

Through the windows, they watch helplessly as the house falls, drops, plummets toward the endless expanse of bright blue sea below, no hope now, they'll drown for sure --

-- but wait, maybe not, there's a green speck in the middle of all that water, it's just the size of a penny, but then it's a quarter, then a baseball, then a basketball, that is definitely an *island* down there, and that's where they're headed!

CONTINUED:

The island suddenly grows huge and before they know it the sky is gone and the house is dropping through foliage, dense green rainforest, branches and leaves and vines and stuff all SLAPPING at the windows.

Danny and Walter are thrown off their feet as the house BASHES through the jungle canopy, bouncing off the final branches before SLAMMING to ground on the jungle floor.

All at once, it's quiet.

Danny and Walter sit up. It's *not* quiet. Now that they listen, jungle sounds surround them -- birds, animals of all kinds.

DANNY

Wow.

Walter looks down at the board, sees his rocket ship resting squarely on the monster's head.

He scrambles across the room, scoops up the dice, and shoves them into Danny's hand.

WALTER

Okay, go.

DANNY

What?

WALTER

GO, it's your turn, come on, go, go.

DANNY

Are you sure you're done?

WALTER

Yes, I'm done, it said "Crash land on planet Minos," and we crash landed already. Now go.

DANNY

Don't you want to look outside?

WALTER

(imitating him)  
"No, I don't want to look outside."

DANNY

Well, I do.

He starts to get up, but Walter yanks him back down roughly.



CONTINUED: (2)

WALTER

Roll the dice.

DANNY

I don't think that was your whole turn.

WALTER

*Roll the dice!*

DANNY

All right, already.

He throws the dice listlessly onto the board. A one and a two.

DANNY (cont'd)

(moving)

One two three. There.

He looks down at the board.

But no card pops out.

He moves his piece back where it was, moves it again.

DANNY (cont'd)

One. Two. Three.

He places it down more firmly. Looks at the board again. Still nothing.

He looks up at Walter.

DANNY (cont'd)

(ominously)

The game says you have to play.

THE FRONT DOOR,

and we're moving toward it. It's been thrown a bit off its hinges in the crash and there's light spilling around its edges and through its cracks.

Walter approaches it warily, puts his hand on the knob, and throws it open, revealing --

EXT JUNGLE DAY

-- the moody, dripping jungle beyond. Walter and Danny step outside. Exotic birds CAW. Strange animals HOWL and MOAN in the distance. Long shadows fall from ancient trees, sunlight fanning out between the branches.

CONTINUED:

DANNY

Cooooool.

WALTER

Yeah. Great.

DANNY

What are we supposed to do?

Walter looks around. There's a very narrow trail that leads off into the jungle, it seems to be the least dense area.

WALTER

Follow that trail, I guess.

DANNY

Me first!

He marches forward. Walter follows, grumbling.

WALTER

Be my guest.

EXT JUNGLE TRAIL DAY

A large boulder blocks the middle of the path, covered with moss and vines. Danny, still in front, clambers over it. Walter follows, but when he gets up on the rock he hooks a foot in the snakelike vines and trips.

WALTER

Woah!

He falls, tearing the interconnected vines off the rock as he falls. Danny turns around and runs back as Walter pulls himself to his feet.

DANNY

Walter, are you okay?!

WALTER

Yeah, I'm...

(cocks his head)

That's weird.

Danny turns. Walter is looking at the boulder. In the fall, he's cleared all the foliage off it and wiped a big smear through the moss, revealing the original surface of the rock itself.

WALTER (cont'd)

There's something carved in it.

*Entrance  
to  
labyrinth*

CONTINUED:

He wipes some more of the moss off, revealing four deep, connected gouges in the rock.

WALTER (cont'd)

It's a letter. Somebody carved a big M into it.

Danny, who is on the opposite side of the boulder, looks up at him and smiles.

DANNY

That's no M, that's a W. For Walter!

WALTER

No, Danny, it's an M. And that's final.

But he knows darn well it isn't.

DANNY

There's something under it!

He drops to his knees, his attention drawn by something small and shiny that protrudes from under the rock. He clears around it, but yanks his hand back suddenly.

DANNY (cont'd)

OW!

He's cut his finger.

Walter, intrigued now, drops down next to him, gently pushes Danny back.

WALTER

Careful, Danny.

He spits on the bit of protruding metal, rubs it with his sleeve. Now it *really* gleams.

DANNY

Gold!

MOMENTS LATER,

two pairs of feet kick in midair, Walter's and Danny's.

They're hanging over a large branch that they've wedged under one end of the boulder. They've put a log under the middle of the branch and are using it to pry up the boulder.

Clearly, there's something buried in the dirt underneath it, the rest of that golden tip that was sticking out.

*looks around it,  
move comedy  
here.*

CONTINUED: (2)

Hanging off the branch, Walter stretches out an arm, reaching, reaching, almost close enough to grab whatever it is, but he has to keep his weight on the branch.

WALTER

... almost...

Danny starts bouncing on the end of the branch, the boulder tips up higher, higher, Walter's fingers are

WALTER (cont'd)

... almost...

there, Danny makes one final bounce --

-- the branch SNAPS --

-- Walter falls, making one lunging grab as he drops --

-- and the rock SLAMS back down to earth.

Danny, who's fallen into the undergrowth, rolls over, but his view is obscured, he can't see Walter anywhere.

DANNY

Walter?!

He leaps to his feet and sees Walter bent over the ground next to the boulder, holding something in his hands.

DANNY (cont'd)

Walter, are you okay?!

Walter stands and turns around --

-- *holding a gleaming golden sword!*

He looks at Danny, looks at the sword. They are awestruck. Danny speaks with awe and reverence.

DANNY (cont'd)

Are you allowed to have that, Walter?

WALTER

Look at it, Danny. It's so... it's so *beautiful!*

DANNY

Because I could hold it for you.

Walter is transfixed, his eyes locked on the sword as he slowly passes it through the air.

CONTINUED: (3)

WALTER

No. No, Danny.

DANNY

You know, if you get tired.

Walter raises the sword up over his head, catching a beam of sunlight as it falls through the trees. The blade's glow is blinding.

WALTER

(rapturously)

This sword is mine!

~~A COLLECTIVE GASP comes from the nearby jungle. Walter and Danny whirl and see --~~

~~-- AT LEAST A DOZEN NATIVES, clustered at the edge of the jungle, staring at him in shock.~~

~~Walter's rapture disappears and he quickly holds the sword out to his brother.~~

WALTER (cont'd)

Actually, it's his.

Danny puts his hands behind his back.

WALTER (cont'd)

(hisses to Danny)

Take it!

DANNY

(hisses back)

No way.

WALTER

Take it!

DANNY

(imitating Walter)

"This sword is mine, this sword is mine."

He steps away, leaving Walter alone with his sword. Walter looks back at the Natives and we get a closer look at them. It's an odd group, closer to twenty in number, multi-racial. Fourteen of them are boys and girls of no more than ten, the remaining half dozen are adults armed with spears who seem to be escorting them.

All of them stare at Walter in awe, MURMURING something to one another. The crowd parts, revealing a vision.

*They find the little girl crying.*

CONTINUED: (4)

Or, more specifically, an eleven year old girl of such fair beauty that she takes our breath away. She's the kind of girl a boy falls in love with in fourth grade, which pretty much ruins all his relationships for the next sixty years or so.

ARIADNE walks forward to Walter slowly, the MURMURING behind her growing louder. As she draws up to him:

WALTER

What are they saying?

ARIADNE

They're saying you have returned at last. That you are the son of Aegeus.

WALTER

No, no, no. I'm just Walter. Walter Budwing.

Inexplicably, the entire group bursts into wild APPLAUSE and RAUCOUS CHEERS.

WALTER (cont'd)

What?! What'd I say?!

Ariadne drops to her knees in front of the rock and wipes the moss from the half of its surface that's still covered. There, underneath the large carved W, the following words are etched in the stone:

NO, NO, NO.

I'M JUST WALTER.

WALTER BUDWING.

Walter sighs and covers his face as the entire group rushes forward and surrounds him, the boys pounding him on the back and the girls covering his cheeks with kisses.

Walter turns and catches eyes with Danny through the crowd.

WALTER (cont'd)

Now what have you gotten me into?

CUT TO:

EXT JUNGLE DAY

Danny and Walter have joined the group and are marching through the jungle, God knows where they're headed. The Guards who protect them ring the outside of the group, presumably ready to fight off vicious jungle beasts.

Are you here  
to save my  
sister?!

CONTINUED:

Walter, who still carries the sword, has fallen in alongside Ariadne. Danny is just behind them.

ARIADNE

Aegeus is our king, and he is wise and kind. For many years, our island lived in peace. But ten years ago, Aegeus was overthrown by Lord Minos, who renamed our island and the entire world after himself. Lord Minos took power when he traveled to the underworld and returned with a Minotaur, a vicious beast, half man, half bull. Minos built a home for the Minotaur, a labyrinth from which no one has ever returned.

Walter is shocked. Danny steps forward, butts in between Walter and Ariadne.

DANNY

Hey. What are you guys talking about?

WALTER

Danny, please.

He pushes him back behind them, doesn't want Danny to hear.

ARIADNE

(back to Walter)

Every year, a sacrifice has to be made to the Minotaur, or it will emerge from the labyrinth and kill everyone in the land.

Walter looks around, at the Guards who are escorting them through the jungle. He furrows his brow, noticing something for the first time.

WALTER

Aren't those guys holding their spears the wrong way?

ARIADNE

What do you mean?

WALTER

Well, they've sorta got their swords pointed at us instead of out at the jungle.

ARIADNE

Of course.

CONTINUED: (2)

She looks at him, sees that he doesn't understand.

ARIADNE (cont'd)

Walter, we are the sacrifice.

Walter's eyes widen as he gets the big picture, and now we see it too, drawing further back and above them, we get that this is a *forced* march, these fourteen young boys and girls are being prodded through the jungle at spear-point by the Guards who ring them on all sides.

Again, Danny tries to butt in between them.

DANNY

You know, if the sword is heavy I-

WALTER

Danny, please!

He shoves him back again, *definitely* doesn't want him to hear this. But Danny's feelings are hurt.

DANNY

Sor-ree.

WALTER

(to Ariadne, low voice)

What do you mean?

ARIADNE

On a day of Lord Minos' choosing, seven boys and seven girls are taken from all over the island and led into the labyrinth. They never return.

WALTER

You mean the thing-

She nods, silently.

ARIADNE

But there is hope!

WALTER

Hope? There's hope? What hope?

ARIADNE

You!

WALTER

(disappointed)

Oh. Right.



CONTINUED: (3)

ARIADNE

For as long as I can remember, we've been told that one day the son of King Aegeus would appear and find the magical sword that was hidden for him. With that sword, it is told, the son of Aegeus will kill the Minotaur and free us all.

WALTER

I see.

He holds the sword up, checks it out.

WALTER (cont'd)

And what, exactly, is the magical part here?

ARIADNE

That, alas, we do not know.

WALTER

Alas.

Danny catches up to them, falls into stride alongside Walter.

DANNY

Everybody's weird, what's going on around here?

WALTER

You're not gonna like it.

And as Walter begins to tell Danny the bad news, we rise up above and burst through the foliage, coming out into the bright sunlight on the edge of --

EXT CITY OF MINOS DAY

-- the city of Minos. (Everything's called Minos here.) It's a densely green place, a sacred jungle city. Lush green steppes with ancient structures on them lead to a towering, newer edifice at the top, horrible and forbidding.

The labyrinth.

There doesn't seem to be any dominant race here, the people of the city, like the group of children being led through the jungle, are of all shades. Picture a multi-cultural Machu Picchu with slightly hipper clothes.

At the base of the steppes, KING AEGEUS sits on a throne, surrounded by GUARDS.

CONTINUED:

Aegeus isn't that old, probably no more than forty or so, but he's haggard, beaten-down, beset by troubles which make him look much older. GUARDS surround him, and not for his protection.

A flash of brilliant light plays across his face and he winces, shields his eyes from it. But he looks closer, finds the source of the light, the brilliant reflection --

-- from Walter's sword. Walter, Danny, and Ariadne are at the front of the group of children as it is led out of the jungle and brought to the base of the steppes.

King Aegeus GASPS and rises to his feet, almost involuntarily. The CROWD around him falls silent and they turn, as one, to look at Walter. You could hear a pin drop.

Aegeus walks forward, toward them, and the group of children stops. No one says a word. Aegeus continues to approach, awestruck.

He reaches them and bends down in front of Walter, holds him by his arms to get a look at his face.

AEGEUS

My son? Is it you? Can it be?

(You know, the more we look at Aegeus, he kinda looks familiar. He kinda looks like Walter and Danny's dad. Maybe it's just coincidence.)

WALTER

Um... I don't think so.

AEGEUS

But you must be... you hold the very sword I hid on the day I spirited you away to safety. I knew one day you would return.

He throws his arms around Walter and hugs him, hard. Danny appears over Walter's shoulder and holds out a hand to shake.

DANNY

Hi, I'm Danny. I'm his brother.

AEGEUS

(confused)

Brother? He has no brother. I have no second son.

DANNY

Well, you don't have to be mean about it.

CONTINUED: (2)

A long shadow falls over all of them.

MINOS (O.S.)

So. The Son of Aegeus has returned.

They look up. LORD MINOS, a particularly nasty piece of work, towers over them, six and a half feet tall if he's an inch, fierce-eyed. He looks vaguely familiar, and now it's starting to add up that a lot of things have looked vaguely familiar so far.

MINOS (CONT'D)

Have you come to slay my Minotaur?

WALTER

Well, it's kinda news to me...

Minos gestures to the labyrinth at the top of the hill.

MINOS

Go, then. Neither I nor my men will stop you. Take your sword, if you wish. Go.

Walter doesn't move.

WALTER

It's just, I haven't had a chance to really think about it all that much yet and-

MINOS

(shouting)  
GO!

His voice is so deep and so loud it seems to shake the very ground under their feet. Walter flinches and draws away. He catches eyes with Ariadne, who looks at him, confused. Why doesn't he go?

Minos reaches down and grabs Walter by the collar, actually lifts him off his feet and brings him to eye level. Aegeus lunges forward to stop him, but two Guards are there immediately, spears pointed at his throat.

Lord Minos peers deeply into Walter's terrified eyes. Minos says nothing, just pulls Walter closer, closer, closer to his cruel face.

Walter is trembling. Minos bends his head in close to Walter's and gives him --

-- a deep sniff.

CONTINUED: (3)

MINOS (cont'd)

As I thought.

Walter's hand is shaking so badly the golden sword slips from it and CLATTERS to the stone platform.

MINOS (cont'd)

A coward

He releases his hold on Walter and he CRASHES to the stone as well, next to his sword. Danny drops beside him.

DANNY

Walter, you gotta do it!

WALTER

It's a *monster*, Danny, okay? I'm nine years old! I'm barely strong enough to carry this sword, I'd never be strong enough to stab the thing with it!

DANNY

Well it's not like you're gonna die. It's a board game, you don't die in games. Or if you do, you get two more lives.

WALTER

You have *got* to get a grip on reality.

MINOS (O.S.)

Let the sacrifice begin!

Terrified CRIES rise up from the crowd as the Guards begin to herd the children into a group.

DANNY

Fine, I'll do it.

He grabs the sword with both hands and stands, but it's much too heavy for him. He starts to drag it toward the steps that lead to the labyrinth, dragging it behind him.

King Aegeus steps in his way and lays a hand on the sword.

AECEUS

No. The sword's magic will emerge only for the true Son of Aegeus.

DANNY

I told you, I'm his brother, so I-

Ariadne

CONTINUED: (4)

AEGEUS

I have but one son.

DANNY

I am getting *really* tired of this guy.

He steps around Aegeus and reaches the first step but drops, exhausted. He can't do it. He looks back at Walter.

DANNY (cont'd)

You can do it.

AEGEUS

(also to Walter)

Trust the power of the sword.

DANNY

I know you can.

AEGEUS

It *will* protect you.

DANNY

You're brave, Walter.

Walter, still on the ground, looks around at the faces, all staring at him. He hangs his head in shame.

WALTER

No, I'm not.

Minos steps forward to the group of children.

MINOS

And let the first to be sacrificed --

With his long staff, he points directly at Ariadne.

MINOS (cont'd)

-- be her.

Ariadne gulps in fear and a Guard pushes her forward roughly to the base of the stairs.

King Minos smiles.

King Aegeus looks away.

A hand picks up the golden sword, its metal SINGS off the stone as it's lifted away --

-- and a brilliant streak of light nearly blinds them all.

Well, if you  
weren't  
scared,  
They wouldn't  
call it being  
brave.

CONTINUED: (5)

WALTER

Over my dead body.

They all turn to see Walter, standing tall with the sword in his hand, its golden surface reflecting the setting sun.

Ariadne smiles.

So does Lord Minos.

MINOS

That *is* the idea.

He gestures to the Guards, who step away from Ariadne and fix their spears in Walter's back, pushing him forward to the base of the steppes. He looks up at the towering labyrinth at the top of the hill.

Ariadne hurries up to him and presses something in his hand. She hugs him and whispers in his ear.

ARIADNE

Take this spool of thread. Lay the thread behind you as you enter the labyrinth, leave a trail to follow so you may find your way out.

She kisses him on the cheek and he flushes bright red.

ARIADNE (cont'd)

Otherwise you will be lost forever in its passageways.

She turns and hurries away. Walter turns and looks at Danny, irritated.

WALTER

This is so unfair. My turn is really *long*.

The Guards' spears poke him in the back, forcing him up the first few stairs. Walter takes a deep breath and starts the long climb.

A THIRD OF THE WAY UP,

Walter stops for breath and looks down at the crowd below, all watching him. He turns and looks at the sun setting on the horizon just as the last glow of its light disappears. He keeps climbing.

TWO-THIRDS OF THE WAY UP,

the sword is heavy and Walter is tired. But he keeps climbing. Twilight settles in over the landscape.

EXT THE LABYRINTH NIGHT

Darkness falls as Walter reaches the top of the stairs, breathless. Evening's mad shadows loom strangely before him, the entrance to the labyrinth looks like a skull, the arched entrance its toothless mouth. Over the entrance is the carved head of a bull, the same one that was on the Zathura game board.

Walter mutters to himself.

WALTER

... trust the power of the sword...  
trust the power of the sword...

or a  
joke.

Remembering Ariadne's instructions, Walter takes the spool of thread from his pocket and unfurls a length of it, laying it out behind him as he steps inside.

INT LABYRINTH

~~NIGHT~~

DAY, but dark.

Walter squints as his eyes adjust to the light. There is light, irregular beams thrown by torches along its walls. The walls of the labyrinth have many doors in them, but which one to open? It's hopelessly complex.

We stay where we are, near the mouth of the corridor, as Walter starts down its seemingly endless length.

DISSOLVE TO:

ANOTHER CORRIDOR,

as Walter comes around the corner and confronts another infinite row of doors and passageways.

DISSOLVE TO:

YET ANOTHER CORRIDOR,

it goes on and on. Still, Walter keeps moving.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT LABYRINTH NIGHT

CLOSE ON the spool in Walter's hand as the very last bit of thread comes off it.

It's  
always  
night in  
here

CONTINUED:

He drops it on the ground where he's standing. Finds a couple rocks and piles them on top of the end of the string.

He takes a few tentative steps into the gloom ahead. Stops and looks back. Then keeps going, turning right at the next end.

IN THAT CORRIDOR,

Walter turns back, looks at the corner he just turned.

WALTER  
(making a mental note)  
Left.

He goes on.

IN THE NEXT CORRIDOR,

Walter comes around another corridor, from the other direction.

WALTER  
(another mental note)  
Right.

IN THE NEXT CORRIDOR,

another turn, from the same direction.

WALTER  
Left.  
(catching himself)  
No, right.

He's getting tired. And the sword is getting very heavy. He stops and leans it against the wall for a moment so he can rub his shoulders, which ache terribly.

SNORT.

Walter stops rubbing. Listens. Did he hear something?

Guess not. He goes back to rubbing.

SNORT.

He snatches up the sword. Definitely heard it that time. He backs into the middle of the corridor, spinning around and around, trying to place the source of it.

We rise up above Walter, higher and higher, above the very tops of the walls themselves. We keep rising, we see the hopeless maze of corridor upon corridor, way that leads to way, we see the tiny figure of a nine year old boy standing dead center in the middle of it --



CONTINUED:

-- and we see the dark black spot that's slowly moving toward him.

IN THE HEART OF THE MAZE,

Walter spins around, horrified, still trying to face the source of the sound. He's quivering with fear, but mumbling to himself, over and over:

*This is Danny  
something  
told him,*

WALTER (cont'd)

... trust the power of the sword. *↗*  
~~trust the power of the sword... trust~~  
the power of-

*later turns  
out Danny  
11ed.*

Suddenly, we're

CLOSE ON A BULL'S NOSTRILS

as they flare wide and snort, sand and blood and mucous flying out of them.

BACK IN THE HEART OF THE MAZE,

Walter's courage breaks --

*HECK*  
WALTER  
THE ~~HECK~~ WITH THAT!

-- and he takes off running as fast as he can, back into the mouth of the last corridor he came out of.

INT CORRIDOR NIGHT

Walter barrels around the corner, sword still in hand, SCREAMING to himself now.

WALTER  
RIGHT LEFT RIGHT! RIGHT LEFT RIGHT!

He barrels around a corner, but we stay where we are, because we that's not the way it went, is it?

Walter reappears at the end of the corridor, running the other way, because as we know it's supposed to be:

WALTER (cont'd)  
LEFT RIGHT LEFT! LEFT RIGHT LEFT!

He barrels around that corner --

IN ANOTHER CORRIDOR,

-- we're with him, running behind him now, and he dares a look back, but he shouldn't, because he misses the entrance to another corridor, but he catches himself on the corner, nearly falls to the ground --

WALTER  
RIGHT LEFT! RIGHT LEFT!

-- but keeps his footing and keeps going.

BEHIND WALTER,

we're close on the MINOTAUR'S HOOVES, four of them pounding the sand hard as they chase him.

IN ANOTHER CORRIDOR,

Walter runs past us SCREAMING --

WALTER  
LEFT LEFT LEFT LEFT LEFT!

-- because he can hear the hooves too, so he goes even faster, comes around a corner and sees his pile of rocks, sees the end of the spool of thread.

He follows it now, running right over it, and we race ahead of him, impossibly fast through the labyrinth, our eyes fixated on that string on the ground, following it at amazing speed through turn after turn in the labyrinth. We make a final turn and come into

THE ENTRANCE CORRIDOR,

the one Walter first came into, and we still follow the string, and now we see Walter's eyes as he runs, and he's staring down at the string, following it, following it all the way to the entrance arch where the end of the string is just feet from freedom but suddenly Walter slams on the brakes, stops so hard he nearly falls, dead in his tracks, because --

-- *the string runs right between the legs of THE MINOTAUR!*

Half man, half bull, it stands about six feet tall and as many long. Its thick, rippled black flesh must weigh a thousand pounds or so, and its fierce, oddly intelligent head is crowned by curling horns at least a foot and a half long.

Walter quivers in his shoes. The Minotaur paws the earth and lowers its head.

CONTINUED:

Walter runs.

And the Minotaur charges.

Walter races away down the corridor, turns --

INT ANOTHER CORRIDOR NIGHT

-- but this is a losing proposition and he knows it. So when he rounds this corner, he turns to the first door he finds, turns the knob and throws it open. He ducks inside --

-- just as the Minotaur rounds the corner behind him and barrels past.

INT SAND ROOM NIGHT

Walter races into the middle of the room, looking for another door to get out, but there isn't one, this is a large walled-in area with only one exit.

INT CORRIDOR NIGHT

The Minotaur stops, realizing Walter gave it the slip. It SNIFFS the air. Turns around and prowls back the way it came.

INT SAND ROOM NIGHT

Walter turns in a circle, looking at this odd room he's in. It's the last thing he expected -- there's a swing-set, a large sand area, a slide, monkeybars.

WALTER

A playground?

On one of the walls, he sees a large crimson banner with a symbol and white letters on it:

FIELDSTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Walter reads it.

WALTER (cont'd)

The playground at school?

SLAM!

Walter whirls. The Minotaur has smashed itself into the door he came in through. The door holds, but barely.

Walter looks around, desperate for an idea.

SMASH!

*checks doors,  
no way out,  
then  
The  
slamming  
starts*

*Finds  
red  
banner.*

CONTINUED:

The Minotaur does it again. The door cracks.

Walter spots a large crack in the wall behind him. Wide enough to shove something in. He looks at the sword in his hand, the sword he can barely hold.

SMASH! The door begins to buckle.

Walter sees the school banner. He looks up, sees the monkeybars above him.

His eyes widen with an idea.

INT CORRIDOR NIGHT

In the corridor, the Minotaur paws the dirt. It lowers its head and charges the door, nearly taking it off its hinges.

But not quite. It backs up for one last charge. Paws the dirt. SNORTS a few times. And it takes off.

We're on top of the thing this time, its horns in the foreground, pounding toward the door, and then SMASHING into the door, *through* the door --

INT SAND ROOM NIGHT

-- and into the sand room. The Minotaur stops, searching for Walter, and he's not hard to find.

He's standing not far away, under the monkeybars, over which he has *draped* the school banner he must have torn down from the wall.

The *red* school banner.

The Minotaur sees the red, its eyes widen, it *fixates* on the red.

WALTER

That's right, big fella, red! You hate red, don't you?! Well, I put it here! So come and get me!

He shakes the red banner, which infuriates the Minotaur.

WALTER (cont'd)

Come and get me, I *dare* you! I-

CONTINUED:

No preamble this time, no ground-pawing, no head-lowering, the Minotaur just takes off at top speed, straight toward Walter, who's standing right in front of the red banner, and as we draw close we see he's got *no sword*, he must have dropped it, is he crazy?!

The Minotaur's on him, it drops its head --

-- Walter leaps up, grabs hold of the monkeybars and lifts his legs out of the way --

-- the Minotaur plows right through the red banner --

-- *and straight into Walter's sword* --

which sticks out at a ninety degree angle from the crack in the wall where he wedged it!

Walter lands in the sand and rolls over in time to see the Minotaur's huge bulk, now wrapped in its red shroud, as it twists over and collapses to the sand, the golden sword protruding from where its head must be.

*outside labyrinth* CUT TO:

EXT MINOS CITY NIGHT

Danny lies on the ground, half-asleep next to a fire that burns at the base of the steps that lead up to the labyrinth. A hand reaches in and shakes his shoulder gently.

Danny opens his eyes and looks up. ~~He breaks into a wide smile.~~

DANNY

Walter! It's so cool you're not dead!

Walter puts a finger to his lips, "Shhhh!"

WALTER

(whispering)

I think we'd better go.

Danny gets up and they start to move through the crowd, but as Walter passes people, they start to wake up, to notice, to point to him and MURMUR excitedly.

Walter casts a nervous look up to the platform, where Lord Minos confers with his Guards, unaware of what's going on.

WALTER (cont'd)

Shh!

CONTINUED:

But now the crowd is talking among themselves excitedly, swarming forward.

Ariadne breaks through the crowd and sees Walter alive. She turns and SHOUTS to the crowd.

ARIADNE  
THE MINOTAUR IS DEAD! HE'S DONE IT!

The crowd erupts into a great CHEER. Walter cringes but they swarm over him, offering delirious thanks.

DANNY  
All right, already. We gotta go.

Lord Minos turns, hurries forward.

But the crowd keeps cheering, and now they hoist Walter onto their shoulders. Danny now looks more than vaguely annoyed.

King Aegeus steps forward through the crowd, looks up at Walter on the shoulders of the crowd. He reaches up and lifts him down gently.

AEGEUS  
My son... I am so proud of you.

Another great cheer, and Aegeus throws his arms around Walter. Danny, nearby, rolls his eyes.

DANNY  
Oh, brother.

WALTER  
I did what you said! I trusted the power of the sword!

Aegeus smiles.

AEGEUS  
The sword? My son, the only power the sword ever had --  
(puts his hand on Walter's heart)  
-- was in the heart of the man who held it.

Lord Minos races to the edge of the platform, flanked by his guards.

MINOS  
SEIZE HIM!

A K I

This is Danny

CONTINUED: (2)

WALTER

*Really gotta go!*

He tears away from Aegeus and grabs Ariadne by the arm.

WALTER (cont'd)

Can you take us back where you found us?!

ARIADNE

Follow me!

And she takes off into the jungle. Walter and Danny follow.

CUT TO:

EXT JUNGLE NIGHT

Walter and Danny follow Ariadne through the jungle brush, scrambling as fast as they can, up, over, and around the vines and stones. If it wasn't for the full moon they'd have no light at all.

They race along, leap over the rock where they found the sword.

EXT HOUSE IN JUNGLE NIGHT

Walter, Danny, and Ariadne burst through the trees and come out in front of the Budwing house, beaten and battered but still sitting where it landed in the middle of the jungle. Danny races up to the front door, throws it open, and goes inside.

But Walter stops, turns back to Ariadne. They stand there, looking at each other, no words coming out. Between them, we can see Danny standing in the doorway to the house.

DANNY

Walter!

In the nearby jungle, VOICES can be heard, the sounds of their pursuers.

Walter turns back to Ariadne.

WALTER

I- I-

ARIADNE

I knew.

She blunts all further conversation by kissing him, full on the lips. It's a tender kiss, doesn't last too long, completely age-appropriate.

CONTINUED:

~~But Walter's gonna remember it the rest of his life.~~

~~The VOICES are louder, the men chasing them closer.~~

~~Ariadne waves goodbye and disappears into the jungle foliage just as --~~

~~-- a spear THUNKS into the house, right next to the front door.~~

DANNY

TIME TO COME INSIDE, WALTER!

Walter snaps out of it and runs for the house.

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

Walter dashes inside, Danny SLAMS the door behind him and throws the deadbolt. Immediately, the VOICES are right outside, hands POUNDING on the door.

Walter and Danny drop to their knees in front of the game board and Danny scoops up the dice.

A spear CRASHES through one of the windows and SLAMS into the molding right above where they're sitting.

WALTER

HIT THE DECK!

Danny hurls the dice and they flatten themselves on the floor, hands over their heads. The dice come up four, Danny SLAMS his astronaut down on the squares --

DANNY

ONETWOTHREEFOUR!

-- lands on a space, BUZZ, card, he snatches it up --

-- and immediately everything is silent.

Walter and Danny just lie there, hands covering their heads for a moment. They don't dare look.

Walter peeks. And sighs in relief.

Danny looks.

Once again, only starfields are visible outside their windows.

They roll over, exhausted. They lie on the floor, staring up at the ceiling.

Walter is exhilarated, Danny is morose. After a long pause:



CONTINUED:

DANNY (cont'd)

Why, Walter?

WALTER

Why what?

DANNY

Why did he pretend he didn't even know me?

WALTER

Who?

He turns and looks at Danny, and now we notice there are tears running down his little brother's cheeks.

DANNY

Dad.

Walter sits up.

WALTER

Dad? What are you talking about?

Danny sits up too, crying, his face streaked with tears.

DANNY

King Aegeus. It was Dad, don't pretend like you couldn't tell.

WALTER

Danny, that's ridiculous.

DANNY

No it isn't, it's the truth! It was Dad, and he said he only had one son. That was all he cared about. You were the Son of Aegeus, and I wasn't, and that's all any of them cared about! "Walter's a hero, Walter killed the Minotaur!" but *nobody cared about me!*

Walter sighs heavily and waves a hand, too tired to have this argument.

WALTER

That's stupid, Danny.

DANNY

(he's just getting warmed up)  
No it isn't, *you're* stupid! This game is stupid! Our whole stupid family is stupid and I hate it!

CONTINUED: (2)

WALTER

Will you just read your card? I want  
to go home.

DANNY

I don't.

Frustrated, Walter grabs the card and shoves it at Danny.

WALTER

Take it!

DANNY

(gets up and runs away)  
I won't play!

WALTER

(chasing him)  
Take the card, already!

DANNY

You can't make me!

Walter corners him next to one of the living room windows (an unbroken one). There is a white speck visible in the distance outside the window, a white speck that is growing larger.

WALTER

*Take the card, Danny, I want to get  
home!*

The white speck, unseen by either of them, is larger still.  
It's a human form.

DANNY

I don't care! I don't want to go home  
if you're there!

WALTER

Read the card, Danny! Don't be a  
child!

DANNY

I *am* a child!

WALTER

Fine, I'll read it! "Rescue stranded  
astronauts." There.

DANNY

What stranded astronauts?

BOOM BOOM BOOM!

CONTINUED: (3)

They whirl and see the white speck we've been watching, but it's no longer a white speck, it's an ASTRONAUT, dressed in a NASA space suit, his life line dangling behind him.

And he's knocking on their window.

DANNY (cont'd)

Who is it?!

WALTER

How should I know?!

The astronaut keeps POUNDING on the window, and now a SECOND ASTRONAUT floats into view, drifting up above the first one.

WALTER (cont'd)

We have to let them in!

The First Astronaut tries to open the window, to no avail.

DANNY

No! They could be bad guys!

WALTER

Well how do we know?!

DANNY

Don't take any chances!

From upstairs, they hear more POUNDING. The Second Astronaut is at an upstairs window.

WALTER

The other one's upstairs!

DANNY

Go lock the window!

Walter takes off.

INT STAIRWELL NIGHT

Walter dashes up the stairs.

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

Danny yells to the First Astronaut.

DANNY

Go away, you're scaring everybody!

INT KIDS' BEDROOM NIGHT

Walter runs into their bedroom and sees the Second Astronaut at the window, also trying to open it. He runs over and flips the lock at the top.

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

The First Astronaut is pointing to himself, then to Danny, trying desperately to signal something.

DANNY

What?! I don't know what you mean! Go back to your ship!

INT KIDS' BEDROOM NIGHT

The Second Astronaut is also frantically trying to communicate something to Walter, gesturing as much as he can.

Walter cocks his head, curious, there's something familiar about this astronaut. He leans closer to the window but he can't see the astronaut's face through the reflective visor on his helmet, he just sees a big, distorted image of himself.

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

The First Astronaut presses his helmet right up against the window near Danny. His visor reflects Danny back too, but the astronaut reaches up, fumbles for a switch on a control panel on his chest, searching for a button.

He flicks the button, a light goes on inside his helmet, Danny's reflection vanishes, and suddenly the Astronaut's face is clearly visible.

DANNY

DAD!

INT KIDS' BEDROOM NIGHT

Up in the bedroom, the Second Astronaut's helmet lights up too, revealing another face. The Second Astronaut isn't a man at all, she's a woman, it's --

WALTER

MOM!

Walter throws open the window and helps her inside. She collapses to the floor and pulls off her helmet, COUGHING for air.

*It's  
The  
Zorgons!*

CONTINUED:

WALTER (cont'd)

Mom, are you okay?!

She raises a hand, give me a minute, breathes the fresh air deeply.

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

In the living room, Danny has thrown the window open too, and Dad is clambering through. He falls onto the floor, takes his helmet off, and gulps air greedily.

DAD

Danny... Danny, you saved my life.  
Thank you, son. Thank you so much.

WALTER

(racing)

Dad, you're not gonna believe what happened, me and Walter started this game and we gotta go to Zathura and there was a robot and I'm sorry the house is wrecked but I knew you would come and this game, Dad, this game is-

Dad, who has taken off his gloves, laughs and holds a hand up to Danny to calm him.

DAD

I know, Dan. I know all about it.

DANNY

You do?

DAD

Sure I do. That's my job, isn't it?

DANNY

I *knew* you'd come!

He throws his arms around his father and they hold on tight.

INT KIDS' BEDROOM NIGHT

Walter's mom has slipped out of her space suit and is in a NASA jumper. She and Walter are having a similar conversation.

WALTER

How did you get here?!

MOM

I'll tell you all about it, Walter.  
But first I-

CONTINUED:

WALTER

I gotta go tell Danny you're here!

He starts to get up, but Mom puts a hand on his arm, stopping him

MOM

Hold on a second, Walter. I want to talk to you about something first.

She sits him down on the bed, takes a seat next to him.

WALTER

About what?

MOM

It's about Danny. And about you.

WALTER

What about us?

MOM

Seems to me you guys haven't been getting along too well lately. Have you?

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

Danny hangs his head, he seems to be answering the very same question from his father.

DANNY

Well, no... I guess not.

DAD

Why do you suppose that is?

INT KIDS' BEDROOM NIGHT

Walter replies to his mom.

WALTER

It's hard. No, it's, it's almost impossible! He drives me crazy. He gets so jealous, he gets so mad. I can't help it if I'm good at sports and stuff, that's not my fault!

MOM

I know. I know, it's hard to be the oldest.

CONTINUED:

WALTER

Tell me about it.

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

Dad has an arm around Danny.

DAD

It isn't easy to be the youngest. I  
was the youngest too, you know.

DANNY

I know, you always tell me that.

DAD

I know what it's like for you. I guess  
that's one of the reasons I love you so  
much. And you know I love you, Danny.

DANNY

I know.

(knows he's not supposed to ask  
this, but what the hell)

Do you love me more than Walter?

Dad looks up at the stairs, then looks at Danny. He lowers his  
voice and leans in close.

DAD

Yeah. I guess I do, kiddo.

DANNY

Really?

DAD

Sure I do. Couldn't you tell? Don't  
tell Walter, though. It might hurt his  
feelings.

DANNY

(confused but excited)  
Okay.

DAD

Yeah, I sure do know what you're going  
through. When I was a kid, I never  
used to win *any* of my family's games.  
It was always my brothers or my sister.

DANNY

I win when I play games with you.

CONTINUED:

DAD

That's true, you do, don't you? Gosh,  
if only the two of us could play  
together more often. You know, just me  
and you. *Two* guys, instead of three.

INT KIDS' BEDROOM NIGHT

With Walter, Mom continues Dad's thought:

MOM

Three's an awfully odd number, isn't  
it? You know, I wonder... what if  
there's a better way for everybody?

WALTER

What do you mean?

She takes a look over her shoulder to make sure they're still  
alone.

MOM

Well, Danny always complains about  
never winning any games, doesn't he?

WALTER

Yeah?

She slides closer to Walter and lowers her voice.

MOM

So what if you let him win?

WALTER

I do sometimes.

MOM

No no. That's not what I mean. Let  
him win *this* game. Let Danny go to  
Zathura.

WALTER

Why?

INT LIVING ROOM DAY

Dad and Danny are still in the living room. Dad has also  
lowered his voice.

DAD

Say, you know, that's got me thinking,  
Danny.

(MORE)



CONTINUED:

DAD (cont'd)  
(leans in close)  
Why don't you let Walter win this one?

DANNY  
Why would I do that?

DAD  
Let him land on Zathura. Send *Walter*  
to that planet.

Danny looks at him suspiciously. This doesn't seem quite right.

DANNY  
Well... I don't know...

DAD  
Why not?

DANNY  
What's it like?

INT KIDS' BEDROOM NIGHT

Walter is listening to his mother, skeptical.

MOM  
Oh, it's a beautiful place. He'd be  
very happy there. In a lot of ways,  
he'd be much happier than he is now.

Walter shakes his head, as if snapping out of a trance.

WALTER  
Wait a minute...

MOM  
Do you think I'd even suggest it if it  
weren't the most wonderful place in the  
universe?

WALTER  
This doesn't make sense...

She puts both arms around him, holds him tight and WHISPERS in  
his ear.

MOM  
It's perfect for Danny. He's not happy  
the way things are, and neither are  
you. Let him win, Walter. Send your  
little brother to Zathura.

WALTER  
How did you get here, anyway?

CONTINUED:

MOM

*Then it can be just me and you.*

All at once, Walter pushes her back and leaps to his feet.

WALTER

Stop it! You shut up, just shut up right now!

MOM

Walter...

WALTER

My mother would *never* say something like that! My mother can't stand being away from us, either one of us! She loves Danny and she loves me and I love her! You're a fake, that's what you are! I don't care if you look like her, lady, I don't care if you talk like her, *you are not my mother!!!*

Mom smiles and reaches up to run her hand through her hair. But she grabs hold of it instead and pulls, pulls so hard her hair comes off, in fact her whole face comes off, revealing --

-- the lizard head of a Zorgon pirate!

ZORGON PIRATE

(a horrible voice)

Smart kid, aren't you?

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

Walter's SCREAM is a loud one, it's audible downstairs, where "Dad" is bent over Danny, holding him by the shoulders. Danny's face is wide-eyed, rapt, he's been listening to what he thinks is his father and he likes what he's been hearing.

WALTER (O.S.)

DAAAANNYYY!

Dad glances up to the stairs, hears Walter coming. He bends down to Danny quickly.

DAD

Just you and me, Danny. Think about it.

INT STAIRWELL NIGHT

Walter bounds down the steps, two at a time, calling out to his brother.

CONTINUED:

WALTER

DANNY, DANNY, DON'T LET IT IN! GET  
AWAY FROM IT WHATEVER YOU DO, IT'S NOT  
WHO YOU THINK IT-

He leaps around the corner and into --

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

-- the living room, expecting to see something horrible, but  
it's just Danny, all by himself, standing alone near the window,  
staring off into the stars.

WALTER

Are you okay?!

Danny turns around and looks at him calmly.

DANNY

Of course I am.

WALTER

Danny, I saw Mom, but it wasn't Mom, it  
was a Zorgon, it was a pirate, Danny,  
it was a Zorgon pirate in a mask  
pretending to be Mom and when I figured  
it out he took off out the window!

DANNY

*Yeah,*  
~~Yes~~ I know.

WALTER

You do?

DANNY

Uh huh. Mine pretended to be Dad. But  
I knew all along he wasn't.

Walter looks at him. Danny is calm. Too calm.

WALTER

Oh. Well... well, good.

DANNY

Let's play some more.

He goes and sits down at the board. Walter follows, watching  
Danny carefully. He sits across from him.

WALTER

Are you sure you're okay?

CONTINUED:

DANNY

Oh, definitely. I just want to play.  
I just want to get home. Here.

He picks up the dice and holds them out to Walter.

DANNY (cont'd)

Your turn.

Walter gives him one last funny look, then takes the dice. He rattles them around in his hand.

WALTER

It's just, it kinda scared me, that's all. I thought you'd be scared too.

DANNY

No, not really.

Danny looks down at the board. At the purple planet of Zathura. And at Walter's rocket ship, just two spaces away.

DANNY (cont'd)

Looks like you'll get there first, Walter.

WALTER

Maybe. You need the exact number to win.

Walter keeps shaking the dice in his hand, staring through squinty eyes at Danny, who just looks at him blankly. What exactly is going on here?

WALTER (cont'd)

Okay, you're freaking me out.

DANNY

Roll the dice, Walter.

WALTER

(shrugs)  
Whatever.

He hurls the dice, a little too hard. They fly through the air, tumbling over and over in space, then land hard on the board with a SMACK.

But they collide with one another and bounce wildly, off in opposite directions... one toward Walter and one toward Danny.

Walter's bounces off his leg, but Danny's bounces right past him and rolls across the floor.

CONTINUED: (2)

Walter's comes to a stop in front of him, one single white dot showing on the red face.

Danny turns and crawls after the other one, fast, he's hovering right over it as it spins and comes to a stop.

A six.

But Danny's body is between Walter and the die, there's no way Walter could see, and what's the harm, and wouldn't they all be happier this way anyway? Danny bites his lip, thinking, torn, he reaches out toward it...

OVER WITH WALTER,

Walter is looking at Danny's back.

WALTER (cont'd)

What'd I get?

Danny turns around, holding the die in one hand. He places it softly on the floor, next to the other one.

*The six that Walter rolled is now a one.*

WALTER (cont'd)

Two ones! Snake eyes! I win!

Danny looks down, can't bear to look Walter in the face. He sees Walter's hand as it picks up the rocket ship, moves it two spaces with a distinctive THUNK, THUNK, and sets it down --

-- smack in the middle of Zathura.

The board BUZZES and Danny turns his head to watch as Walter's card spits out of the slot. Danny stares at it, just sitting there in the slot, it's big black Z waiting to be flipped over. He still can't look Walter in the face.

DANNY

Don't you want to read your card?

No answer. Danny takes the card for him and looks up.

DANNY (cont'd)

Walter, don't you want to read-

But Walter is gone.

Danny is alone in the living room.

WHAP!

CONTINUED: (3)

The front door flies open and a powerful wind blows inside. Danny has to cover his eyes, but he can see out the door a giant purple blob in the distance, a planet, a *huge* planet, growing bigger all the time.

Zathura!

The house flies straight toward it, Danny covers his face, they're going to crash, the house flies *into* it and starts spinning, around and around, the contents of the house flying everywhere, it's a Pottery Barn tornado. Still clutching the Zathura card, Danny grabs onto the leg of a chair and holds on for dear life, he closes his eyes and all of a sudden --

-- everything is quiet. Danny, still clinging to the leg of the chair, opens his eyes and looks around.

*The house is perfectly restored!*

Everything is the way it was before the adventure started, trees and sunlight outside the unbroken windows, furniture just where it ought to be, nothing smashed, nothing ruined. Maybe a little messy, but that's the way it always is. And Danny's sitting in front of the still-set-up Zathura board.

DANNY (cont'd)

Walter?! Walter, we did it!

He runs into his dad's office --

INT OFFICE DAY

-- and finds the ruined artwork, juice still spilled all over it. He's overjoyed.

DANNY

HAH! We're back! Walter, we made it!

INT LIVING ROOM DAY

Danny runs back into the middle of the house.

DANNY

We did it, Walter, just like we said we would! Together, we did it together!

But there is no answer from the empty house.

DANNY (cont'd)

(soft)

Walter?

(softer)

Walter?

CONTINUED:

Uh oh.

Suddenly the kitchen door swings open. Danny turns, a huge smile on his face, expecting to see Walter --

-- but it's Dad, carrying a bowl of popcorn and two cans of orange soda.

DAD

(cheery)

Hey, could you keep it down to a dull roar in here?

DANNY

Dad! Where's Walter?

Dad sits on the couch with his back turned, setting out the popcorn.

DAD

Who?

DANNY

Dad, knock it off! Where is Walter?

Finally, Dad turns around, completely calm.

DAD

Well, on Zathura, of course.

Danny just stares at him for a long moment as it sinks in.

DANNY

You mean... I did it?

DAD

Yep. Hey sit down, let's watch the show.

Danny walks over in a daze and sits next to his father.

DANNY

Is he... you know, is he okay?

DAD

Sure! Happier than he's ever been. Popcorn?

He puts a bowl in Danny's lap.

DAD (cont'd)

And here's some soda.

CONTINUED: (2)

He puts a glass in front of Danny, who doesn't know *what* to think.

DANNY

Dad?

DAD

Um hm?

DANNY

What if I... well, what if I wanted to get Walter back?

DAD

Gee, I'm pretty sure it's too late, son.

DANNY

Yeah, but what if I made a mistake and I want to take it back?

DAD

Well, Dan. I'm afraid the game is over.

DANNY

It is?

DAD

Take a look around. We're back home, aren't we?

DANNY

But...

DAD

Sorry, son. That's how it works.

Dad flicks on the TV, which is playing a commercial. He sits back, throws an arm around Danny and sighs contentedly.

Danny turns slowly, looks up at Dad. Watches him chew. A very dubious, Invasion-of-the-Body-Snatchers stare.

The TV comes back from commercial and the show resumes -- it is, of all things, Carl Mayhew's Sports Roundup, that big annoying Carl Mayhew yammering away.

DAD (cont'd)

Whoops! Guess we don't have to sit through *that* anymore!

He punches a button and the TV switches to Sponge Bob.



CONTINUED: (3)

DAD (cont'd)

That's better.

But Danny sits bolt upright, staring at the screen, a look of alarm on his face, and if any of us have been paying attention there should be an odd look on our face too. Because Carl Mayhew looked familiar, *very familiar*.

DANNY

Wait! Go back!

DAD

Huh?

DANNY

Go back to that show!

DAD

Nah, come on. Let's watch this.

DANNY

No, seriously, turn it back!

Dad turns and looks at him, an odd, authoritarian look on his face, a look we haven't seen before.

DAD

No.

And he turns the volume up loud. Danny turns away, now he *knows* something is up. He notices something -- one of his hands is still clenched, there's something in it. He opens his palm.

It's the Zathura card, the one the board spit out after Walter's last turn. Danny turns it over and reads it:

YOU CHEATED, DANNY.  
IT'S STILL YOUR TURN.

Danny turns around, looks back at the game board, which is still on the floor where he left it. Walter's piece is missing, but Danny's is still there, five spaces away from Zathura.

He looks back at his father soberly. Suddenly, he grabs the remote from his father's hand --

DAD (cont'd)

Hey!

-- and leaps off the couch, diving across the room and crawling under the coffee table.

CONTINUED: (4)

DAD (cont'd)  
Give that back to me!

But Danny points the remote at the TV and changes the channel back to the sports show. He GASPS, because as he gets a good look at Carl Mayhew, he realizes why he looks so familiar, and we realize at the same time, because Carl Mayhew is in fact --

DANNY  
*LORD MINOS!*

Suddenly, the entire room darkens. Danny turns, looks between the chair legs and sees out the living room windows, where once again black starfields have replaced the sunny skies of home.

DANNY (cont'd)  
This isn't real! The game is still  
going on!

SMASH! There is a thunderous CRASHING sound on top of the table and it CRACKS right over Danny's head, but does not break. A thick green, scaly thing slithers through the crack and feels around underneath the table for Danny, it's a *Zorgon's tail!*

Danny rolls out from underneath the table, stands facing the Zorgon posing as his father, with the table in between them.

Dad looks pretty much as he always does, except for the reptilian tail that hovers menacingly over his head like a scorpion's stinger.

DANNY (cont'd)  
What did you do with Walter?! Where is  
he?!

DAD  
Somewhere you'll never find him, little  
boy.

SMASH! The tail hits the table next to Danny, who dodges it.

DAD (cont'd)  
A place *you're* too afraid to go.

SMASH! Another hit. Another dodge.

DANNY  
WHERE?!

DAD  
The place you fear the most.

SMASH! Another hit.

CONTINUED: (5)

DANNY

*Get out of my house, Zorgon!*

The tail flies right at Danny this time and he dives backwards out of the way as it SMASHES through the table in front of him, breaking it in half this time.

Danny's thrown backwards, he rolls into a corner. He hears a loud CRASH and looks up just in time to see the Zorgon dive through the living room window and disappear into the black space that is once again outside the windows.

Danny stands, chest heaving, in the middle of the empty living room. He's all alone this time.

He thinks wildly.

DANNY (cont'd)

... the place I fear the most... the  
place I fear the most?... the place I-

He stops abruptly, eyes popping wide.

CUT TO:

INT STAIRWELL DAY

Danny stands at the top of the stairs to the basement, staring down at the locked door he was too afraid to open earlier.

He takes a deep breath.

And starts down the stairs. As he nears the bottom, he sees light seeping from around the edges of the door, an eerie green glow.

Danny reaches the bottom. He unlocks the deadbolt. He turns the knob.

And he throws open the door.

INT BASEMENT NIGHT

There isn't a real basement there at all, there's a cold, gloomy, dripping place. As the little boy's eyes adjust, he sees he's standing at the top of a massive stone staircase that leads down into the murk.

He looks around, sees a torch in a holder on one of the walls.

He picks it up and begins his descent.

HALFWAY DOWN THE STAIRCASE,

CONTINUED:

Danny pauses, turns around and looks up. The open door to the basement stairwell is visible from here, but tiny and far, far away.

Up ahead, he can see that green glow he saw around the edges of the door, much brighter now.

He marches on.

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS,

Danny's foot steps off the very last step. He's in a throne room of some kind, but there's only one person in it, a dark, hulking figure seated on a stone mount, turned half away from him.

Danny looks around, waits to be noticed. The figure doesn't turn. Finally:

DANNY

Ahem.

The figure turns. It's Lord Minos. He breaks into a cruel grin.

DANNY (cont'd)

I want my brother back.

MINOS

Your brother? You mean the boy who killed my Minotaur?

DANNY

Yep.

MINOS

You mean...

He waves his staff, lighting up an area near his throne. There, Walter stands, surrounded by the green glow, which appears to imprison him.

MINOS (cont'd)

... *this* boy?

DANNY

Hi Walter, I'm sorry I sent you to Zathura. Actually, I cheated, actually, so it's still my turn. Let's get out of here.

*lured to  
step into  
my galaxy?*

CONTINUED:

He turns to go, but Walter does not follow. Minos's deep LAUGH does, however. Danny turns around. Walter is struggling but can't escape his green, glowing prison

MINOS

I'm afraid it isn't that simple.

He stands up, approaches Danny.

MINOS (cont'd)

Many years ago, the god of the sea gave a gift of a beautiful white bull to the people of Minos. Our Queen adored this bull, but foolishly she gave no thanks to the sea god who had sent him. The god was angry and he punished the queen, cursing her to give birth to a monster, half man, half bull, who ate only human flesh. That monster was the Minotaur. And that poor Queen was my mother. So you see, the foul beast that your brother killed... was in fact *my* brother.

Danny winces. This isn't good.

MINOS (cont'd)

So I would say the score between us is now even.

He sits back down.

MINOS (cont'd)

But if you would like to make a wager...

Danny steps forward angrily.

DANNY

I can't do that!

MINOS

Why not?

DANNY

Because I don't know what a wager is!

MINOS

A bet. A game.

DANNY

Well okay, then!

CONTINUED: (2)

MINOS

The game is this. I will release your brother. He will follow you back up the stairs to your world. You may not run, and he will not be able to speak until the top, but he will be there. If you reach the top with him, he is free. But if you should look back, even one time, to make sure your brother is there -- he will stay with me forever.

DANNY

Fine. That's easy. Big whoop.

Immediately, Minos turns and points his staff at Walter. The green shield evaporates from around him and Walter falls forward.

He regains his footing, opens his mouth to try to speak to Danny, but he can't.

DANNY (cont'd)

Come on, Walter. I'll take you home.

He gives Walter one good last look.

DANNY (cont'd)

Walter, I'm not gonna look back, but don't be scared, okay?

Walter nods.

DANNY (cont'd)

I'll get you out of here. I promise.

Walter smiles and nods again -- I know you will.

Danny takes a deep breath and turns toward the steps. He puts his foot on the first --

-- and begins his climb.

We stay with Danny, closely, looking at his feet or at his face, but we never get a glimpse of Walter. And neither does Danny, because he is *determined* not to turn around.

He climbs. He's up ten steps.

DANNY (cont'd)

Well, I can't hear you back there, Walter, but I know you're there.

CONTINUED: (3)

He keeps climbing, steadily. Further. Further.

DANNY (cont'd)  
It's just kinda weird that I can't hear  
you, is all.

Step. Step. Step.

DANNY (cont'd)  
But I guess that's part of the game,  
right?

No answer, of course. Step. Step. Step.

Danny is starting to get rattled.

DANNY (cont'd)  
You did follow me when I turned around,  
right?

No answer. Step. Step. Step.

DANNY (cont'd)  
'Cause what if that wasn't, like, when  
the game *actually* started? What if I  
was supposed to wait a second?

No answer. Step. Step. Step.

DANNY (cont'd)  
Walter, can you like step harder or  
something? So I know you're there?

Danny is starting to crumble. He *really* wants to turn around.  
In fact, he puts his hands on either side of his face to keep  
himself staring ahead, so he must be going through something  
awful.

He looks up. He's more than halfway.

But this is getting impossible.

DANNY (cont'd)  
Walter, are you mad at me?

No answer.

DANNY (cont'd)  
Is that why you're not making any  
sound?

No reply.

CONTINUED: (4)

DANNY (cont'd)

Walter, I'm sorry. I'm sorry I told you I hate you, and I'm sorry I said I hate our family, and I'm sorry I sent you away... just don't be mad at me, okay, Walter?

Close to the top now, only twenty steps away.

DANNY (cont'd)

Walter? Walter, *please*, can you make a sound?

Fifteen steps. Danny doesn't notice as he kicks a stone, it bounces off the step in front of him and falls to the next one, teetering on the edge of a precipice.

DANNY (cont'd)

Walter, you *have* to be there...

Ten steps. Danny is shaking, but the basement door is so close.

On the step behind him, the stone is still teetering.

DANNY (cont'd)

You *have* to be, because, because, you're the only one, Walter! I have Mom half the time and I have you half the time, but Walter, you're the one I have all the time and I don't want you to go away, Walter!

Eight steps away!

*And the stone falls, BANGING off the stone steps.*

Danny hears it --

DANNY (cont'd)

WALTER?!

-- *and whirls around!*

Walter stands there, just three steps behind Danny, he *was* there, he was there all the time.

WALTER

DANNY, *NO!*

From down on his throne, Lord Minos' evil LAUGH rises up again, it fills the stone chamber, it's deafening.

*more  
Sad  
Than  
moving,  
Dad should  
get to say this  
at the end?*



CONTINUED: (5)

WALTER (cont'd)

You were so close!

DANNY

Wait! It's still my turn!

The green glow starts to rise up around Walter again. Walter sees it and his face fills with sadness.

WALTER

Danny, before, what I wanted to say...

DANNY

No! No, don't do this, it's still my turn!

The green glow rises higher, to Walter's chest.

WALTER

... what I wanted to say is that...

DANNY

It's still my turn!

The green glow is just about up to Walter's neck.

WALTER

I wanted to say I love you, buddy.

DANNY

IT'S STILL MY-

He stops suddenly, as if the thought is occurring to him for the first time, and speaks quite calmly.

DANNY (cont'd)

Hey, it's still my turn.

And as the green glow closes over the top of Walter's head, imprisoning him completely, Danny turns and bolts up the last ten steps --

DANNY (cont'd)

I'LL SAVE YOU, WALTER!

INT BASEMENT STAIRWELL NIGHT

-- races up the stairs of the basement, two at a time --

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

-- and falls to his knees in front of the game board for the last time.

maybe by  
cheating he  
got caught &  
punished  
already &  
now he goes  
in ~~loop~~

INT BASEMENT NIGHT

In the basement, Lord Minos raises one hand up, toward the green dot that is Walter at the top of the stairs.

AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS,

Walter starts to be pulled backwards, down the stairs, flying toward Minos. Walter SCREAMS, Minos LAUGHS.

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

Danny picks up the dice and hurls them onto the board, they fall and roll.

DANNY

Come on five, come on five, come on five!

INT BASEMENT NIGHT

Walter flies toward Minos's outstretched hand, closer now.

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

The first die lands, it's a four, Danny's eyes dart to the other, which bounces --

INT BASEMENT NIGHT

Walter is almost to the bottom of the stairs, still SCREAMING, and as he gets closer, Minos is *growing*, taller, bigger in every way, his hand is enormous, and Walter's being sucked toward it --

INT LIVING ROOM DAY

-- the die falls, spins around twice, and settles --

-- ON A ONE!

DANNY

FIVE!

He BANGS his astronaut five squares over to Zathura, SMACKS him down in the center of the purple planet, and leaps to his feet, SHOUTING.

DANNY (cont'd)

I WIN! I WON A GAME! WALTER, I  
FINALLY WON A GAME!

I DIDN'T  
CHEAT OR  
ANYTHING!

INT BASEMENT NIGHT

But Walter can't reply, he's got problems of his own, he lands in Minos's huge hand, fingers the size of small tree trunks start to close around him --

INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

The Zathura board spits out its last card, all the way out this time, it spins onto the floor and the slot SNAPS shut with finality.

Danny snatches up the card and reads it (perfectly this time).

DANNY

"Congratulations! Take nearest black hole back to earth!"

Danny looks down, sees he's standing in the middle of a black disk which is rising quickly up his body, *erasing* his body.

Danny SCREAMS and the black hole rises fast, past his waist --

-- the Zathura game pieces fly through the air as if possessed and land in the box, the dice do the same thing --

-- the black hole rises up to Danny's head --

-- the lid SLAMS back onto the Zathura box hard, so hard the whole game spins away under the couch, we go in tight on Danny's face as black closes in all around it, he SCREAMS --

INT LIVING ROOM DAY

-- and we pop out just as tight, Danny's still SCREAMING, but he's sitting on the couch again, and the living room is brightly lit like it was at the beginning, and Walter's sitting with his back to Danny like *he* was at the beginning, slumped in the chair in front of the TV set, that dumb sports show playing again.

Danny looks around, *completely* disoriented. He looks down. The baseball gloves and baseball are in his lap, like they were before this all started.

He holds his hands up, flexes his fingers, makes sure they're still there.

He looks at Walter, who's slumped over the arm of the chair.

DANNY

Walter?

No response.

hand extended  
over board, holding  
onto it

CONTINUED:

DANNY (cont'd)

HEY WALTER!

Walter jerks and turns around sleepily.

WALTER

Whaaaat? What are you yelling about?

Danny leaps off the couch and onto Walter.

DANNY

Walter, you're back, I did it, I did it!

WALTER

Danny, I was sleeping.

DANNY

I saved you, I got you back, I did it!

He's hugging Walter so hard they both roll out of the chair and fall to the floor.

DANNY (cont'd)

Oh Walter, Walter, I love you, Walter!

WALTER

I love you too, you little creep, now get off me!

Walter, fully awake now, wrestles Danny off of him and they roll around on the floor, but it's playful this time, Walter is laughing, they're both laughing --

-- when Dad hurries through the door.

DAD

I distinctly remember asking you guys not to kill each other.

DANNY

DAD!

DAD

Grab all the stuff you want to take to Mom's, okay, we're running late!

And he breezes through the room, dashing upstairs.

The boys stop wrestling and Danny looks at Walter.

DANNY

You do remember, right Walter?

They wrestle happily, they both remember.

CONTINUED: (2)

WALTER

Remember what?

Danny looks over at the floor behind the couch, where the game board was laid out. But it's not there anymore.

DANNY

Walter, the... the game! It's gone!

WALTER

What game?

DANNY

So... it didn't happen?

WALTER

Danny, what didn't happen? I fell asleep in front of the TV.

Danny eyes him suspiciously. Hey. What's going on here?

DAD (O.S.)

Guys, go get your stuff! Books, games, whatever you need, it's almost three!

INT KIDS' BEDROOM DAY

A book lies on Danny's bed, where it was at the beginning, but this time the title means more to us -- "Greek and Roman Monsters and Myths."

Danny picks it up and looks at it, thinking. There's a picture of a Minotaur on the front.

He puts it in his backpack, still thinking, and walks over to his desk, where he gets his Game Boy. Next to it he sees the picture of Danielle, Walter's girlfriend. You know, if Ariadne put on contemporary clothes and changed her hair a bit, she and Danielle could be twins.

*Subtle*

DANNY

(mumbles to himself)

What's going on around here?

He hears a RATTLING beside him and looks at the cage, the one where they keep their two pet lizards. They could be Zorgons, with a little imagination.

Danny looks up at the walls, covered with space posters. One of them has a robot on it, a dead ringer for the one that menaced them before.

Danny hears a HONK from outside.

CONTINUED:

DANNY (cont'd)

Mom!

He races to the window and sees a car pull up.

EXT HOUSE DAY

Mom parks in front and comes around to the sidewalk. She waves, friendly, at the front door --

INT HOUSE DAY

-- where Dad waves back, standing in the open doorway. He turns, bends down to help Danny put on his backpack.

DAD

Got everything, buddy?

DANNY

(still confused)

Um, yeah.

DAD

Attaboy. I'll miss you, but I'll see you on Wednesday.

*tells them  
moving  
thing.*

Danny is having trouble zipping his jacket, so Dad helps. Danny looks at him.

DANNY

Dad?

DAD

Um hm?

DANNY

I have a good imagination, right?

DAD

Big enough for all of us, Dan. Big enough for all of us.

He brushes Danny's hair out of his eyes and kisses him on the forehead. Walter hurries up, zipping his own coat, backpack already on.

DAD (cont'd)

Be good. Continue not to kill each other, okay?

They both nod. Dad kisses Walter.

CONTINUED:

DAD (cont'd)

I love you.

(kisses Danny)

And I love you too, exactly the same amount.

Danny turns and heads out the door, walking down the sidewalk toward his mom, who waits smilingly at the car.

He looks back over his shoulder, to see if Walter is following.

WALTER

Don't worry, Danny. I'm right behind you.

DANNY

I know.

He turns around, smiling, happy.

DANNY (cont'd)

I know you are, Walter.

We pull back across the yard to take in the whole scene -- Dad standing in the doorway, Mom waiting at the car, and the two little boys walking down the sidewalk, closing the space between.

INT LIVING ROOM DAY

Dad's at home alone now, in the living room cleaning up the mess that follows in the kids' wake.

He sees a corner of something sticking out from under the couch. He pulls it out. It's a game box. *Zathura*, of course.

INT TOY CLOSET DAY

A door opens on a jam-packed toy closet and Dad flicks on the light. One whole wall of shelves is board games -- Monopoly, Chutes and Ladders, Candyland, Stratego, Snail Pace Race, Hi-Ho Cherry-O, Clue, the list could go on forever, there must be a million of 'em.

Dad finds a sliver of room, shoves *Zathura* in with the rest of them, a whole wall of imagination waiting to be imagined next time the door is opened.

Dad looks fondly at the games, already can't wait for Wednesday.

He pulls the chain on the light bulb and we --

CUT TO BLACK.

finds game not cleaned up starts throwing it in box?  
or Sucked under couch?