

Recurring Nightmares

“Recurring Nightmares”
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RECURRING NIGHTMARES.

MEET THE PLAYERS.

DR. WILLIAM CUMBERLAND.

In the past, he was purely a man of science. Ever since the night of his abduction, William Cumberland has only been trying to return to a normal state of life. His great struggles now come from his own post-traumatic state of mind, in the form of nightmares every night.

LAURIE.

Will's wife of roughly two decades. Though she's used to her husband's usual odd behavior, she also knows when things are growing worse than usual.

DR. STINE.

William Cumberland's therapist. As a person who has dedicated years of time to psychological study, including the analysis of dreams, Dr. Stine is here to help get Will back onto the right path of a clear and healthy mind.

PETE.

A good friend of Will's going back a number of years; Pete is another source of normalcy and balance in bad times.

NIGHTMARE VOICE.

A recurring voice heard in all of Will's nightmares. Although the dreams come entirely from Will's own mind, the nightmare voice represents a figment within that dream which explains the tests to Will.

RECURRING NIGHTMARES.

ACT ONE.

Scene 1.

INT. SCIENCE LAB

FADE IN on the Dream Machine placed directly in CENTER STAGE.

Surrounding the machine, in a circular arrangement, are six scientists, all facing the audience. Five of them are wearing white lab coats, and are standing up straight and tall, still as a statue. One is not dressed in white, however – William Cumberland is dressed in regular clothes.

He's puzzled by the present moment. This scene just began, and he just woke up here, with no idea how he got here. He looks around, feeling his body, inspecting the scene around him, thoroughly confused.

WILL: Wha . . . what is this? Where on Earth *am* I?

He looks around, and spots the Dream Machine, much to his shock and surprise.

WILL: The . . . jeez! The *Dream Machine!*

SCIENTIST 1: The Dream Machine is the exciting, revolutionary new technology from Dosan Laboratories – taking you beyond today, and into tomorrow! After 10 years of vigorous hard work, we are pleased to announce that this project is coming closer to the light of day!

WILL: Wait! Wait, no! This isn't right! This isn't –

The other five scientists, who, so far, have never broken their fixed gaze to the audience, suddenly appear disrupted. All five turn their heads to give Will a funny look.

SCIENTIST 1: Dr. Cumberland! Pleased to see *you* here!

WILL: (*walking up to the other five*) My fellow scientists – look. This isn't right. The Dream Machine *can't* be released to the public! Not *now* . . . the human testing was done without the participants' permission, we can't –

SCIENTIST 3: Oh, I'm well aware of what was done during human testing, Dr. Cumberland. I'm well aware of the whole – *ordeal* you went through.

WILL: (*surprised*) Wha . . . really?

SCIENTIST 3: Yes, you see, with the Dream Machine, we *had* to test the five basic emotions in human test subjects. But we *had* to do it without the subjects' prior knowledge! You see, if people knew they were to be tested, it would affect the outcome. Then you would end up with hindsight bias; you would end up saying, oh, you knew it all along. No, you see, if you *truly* want to make a discovery, you must . . . startle some rabbits here and there.

WILL: (*confused*) What? What are you trying to say?

SCIENTIST 1: Well . . . just . . . uhh . . .

SCIENTIST 2: I mean . . .

SCIENTIST 3: Well, like . . .

SCIENTIST 1: Look, Will. We needed to test the five basic emotions, among five different test subjects. You were only *one* of them. Happiness, sadness, anger, shame . . . with *you*, we chose fear!

All the spotlights across the stage FADE TO RED.

WILL: Hey, what-what's happening?

SCIENTIST 5: You didn't think it was all *over*, did you?

SCIENTIST 3: True science is *never* over! Nature is an ongoing machine! Science never stops!

SCIENTISTS 1-2-3-4-5: Science never stops! Science never stops! Science never stops!

The sound of an ambulance siren suddenly blares over the whole scene. There are quick flashes of the color blue. The siren continues to blare, gradually getting higher in both volume and pitch.

WILL: What? Whaaaat? You can't do this, not again!!

The scientists all run at him at once, and grab him by different parts.

SCIENTIST 1: Get him!

SCIENTIST 2: I got his legs!

SCIENTIST 3: Get his arms! Get his arms!

WILL: Let me go! Let me go! *LET ME GO!*

Will struggles, and finally manages to break free. At the speed of lightning, he bolts away.

Except he can't walk right. He falls to his knees, and starts to fall forward; his arms lash out involuntarily, and he starts moving his hands around in rowing motions to regain a decent balance.

Still on his knees, he can't get far – the scientists grab him by the shoulders, and one by the ear, and pull him back.

SCIENTIST 1: *You're not going anywhere, Dr. Cumberland!*

WILL: AAAAAAAAAAAHHHHH!!!

LAURIE'S VOICE: Will! Will!

The red spotlights on the stage begin to FADE OUT. We still hear the sounds of thrashing and struggling, but the five scientists disappear from the scene.

Will lays down on a bed, and Laurie appears and starts shaking him by the arm.

LAURIE: Will! Will! Come on, man, wake up!

Scene 2.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE – BEDROOM – AFTER-HOURS

Will closes his eyes again . . . then opens them. Finally, he is awake for good.

Regular lights FADE ON again as he reawakens.

WILL: NOOOO GET OFF ME! GET OFF ME!

Laurie keeps trying to keep him down. He thrashes a little more, and grabs for his right ear . . . and then, finally, he regains his grip.

WILL: Get off me, you can't . . . can't . . .
 . . . *do* that.

He breathes heavily. Exhausted – both physically, and mentally.

LAURIE: You're sweating. Badly.

WILL: (*being avoidant*) I-I'm all right . . . I'm fine. Just . . . you know . . . another one of those nightmares.

LAURIE: I could tell!

WILL: (*getting up, out of bed*) I'll be all right, though. Now that it's over.

LAURIE: You kept screaming something about “It’s not right, it’s not right, get off me” . . . I could see you're still having these *night terrors*.

WILL: (*pacing around as he talks*)

No. Not this time . . . it wasn’t “*night terrors*” this time, but . . . *nightmares*.

LAURIE: You’re *sure* they’re not night terrors?

WILL: Yeah. Positive. Because this time, *stuff happened* in it . . . it was an actual dream, an actual . . . “sequence of things”, a story . . . I just . . .

(*sigh*) I just don't remember any of it.

He starts walking away.

LAURIE: And where are *you* going?

WILL: I can't sleep.

LAURIE: Will, it's 2 a.m.

WILL: Of course. It *always* happens at 2 a.m., doesn't it!

LAURIE: It's all right! You can just go back to bed! You can't get by on zero sleep like this!

WILL: No – actually, I can. It's really easy.

LAURIE: No, you *really can't!*

WILL: I'll just watch TV or something. I'm gonna be *fine*.

LAURIE: Aaaaargh . . .

Will flips off the lights. We hear the sound of the light-switch flipping, and the lights fade out as he exits STAGE RIGHT.

Scene 3.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP – OUTDOOR TABLES – MORNING

FADE IN on William Cumberland and Pete, seated at an outdoor table at CENTER STAGE, drinking coffee and talking. Both sip coffee, and set it down on the table. We hear the sounds of clattering; of walking around; of random strangers having conversations; cars driving past.

William Cumberland does not look good. He's restless. He's tense and on-edge, twitching, looking like he's always fighting to stay awake. He looks like he hasn't slept in at least two days!

WILL: Hey, thanks so much for being here, Pete . . .

PETE: Yeah, hey, no problem, man. It's always good to get caught up, and stuff.

WILL: (*still uncomfortable*) Yeah man, where's that fucking waitress, where is she??

PETE: Hey. Hey! (*snaps his fingers*)

Will twitches, suddenly snapping out of it.

PETE: You all right?

WILL: (*his head sinking onto the table, but still maintaining eye contact*)
People keep asking me that.

PETE: . . . Are you *sure*?

WILL: Please don't ask that question, phrased that way.

He takes a few seconds.

Then regains his normal composure.

WILL: Yeah, you know what, I *am* all right, basically. It's just hard, you know, trying to recover . . .

PETE: How long has it been?

WILL: Two weeks. Two weeks since it happened.

PETE: Wow. And you're still out of work?

WILL: (*nodding his head*) Dosan Labs allowed me some time off . . . "until I could get my head straightened out again." When it was *they* who had done the whole Dream Machine . . . (*sighing, not even wanting to get into it again*) Whatever. Yeah, I'm out of work. They recommended me a *month* of paid time off. They figure that should be enough time.

PETE: Heh. And you're planning to return to work after that?

WILL: . . . I'm not sure. I'm not sure what to do. All these years, *years* of my life, my whole – my whole *dream* in life – was that Dream Machine project. Studying the marvelous possibilities of the *virtual-dream-state*.

(*shaking his head*) But I want it all closed off. I don't want to return to it anymore. I don't know . . . I don't even know if I can keep being a scientist.

PETE: Wow. So, what exactly do ya *do* all day, now?

Will thinks about that . . . and can't seem to come up with an answer . . . so, he just makes a face and shrugs his shoulders.

WILL: You know, just hang out at the house . . . play Nintendo . . .

PETE: Well, heh heh, that's something to be thankful for! Little vacation!

WILL: Ha ha. Yeah. Well, till the wife and daughters come home; then, I apply myself more to *that* area of my life. Which is good.

A moment of silence in the conversation.

WILL: It was weird . . . my first session, with therapy . . . I thought at first I would have to keep everything secret, you know, and not talk about what happened with human testing, the abduction . . . I don't know . . . I don't know. Apparently, I got there, I started talking about it, and she didn't stop me . . . she listened to the whole story!

PETE: Yeah, probably thinks you're delusional.

WILL: Yeah, see, that's exactly what I was afraid of! I thought . . . what if she cuts me off midway through the story, and just locks me up immediately? What if I'm just *instantly* a classified nutcase?? God, my science career would be over, finished! Like it never existed to begin with, I . . . I . . .

(*calming down*) . . . all right, well, everything went fine, actually. I was real surprised.

PETE: Yeah, man, that *was* a pretty out-there story you told me! That whole human testing thing! Wow . . . the world we live in.

WILL: Yeah . . . well, that's just the downside of science. Thanks to science, our world is in a constant, never-ending state of revolution. And this can be the greatest thing on Earth, sometimes . . . and, other times, to a *person*, like me, it can be the worst. (*shakes his head*)

PETE: Wow.

WILL: Did I tell you? About all ten tests?

PETE: I – I’m *pretty* sure. The . . . ones with the minotaur creature?

Will nods his head.

PETE: . . . Yeah. I was thinking about it the other day.

WILL: Yeah.

PETE: Hmm. I don’t know. Only thing I didn’t really get about it . . . only part I couldn’t really understand . . . hmm. Well, you were in a *dream*?

WILL: Yep.

PETE: Didn’t you say, the whole dream actually happened within three, four seconds –

WILL: Well closer to one minute, but yeah.

PETE: . . . Right. So . . . hmm. If you’re lying on a table, or – or strapped to the chair, or whatever . . . if *you’re* in the dream . . . and *they* are not in the dream . . .

(*a moment of silence*)

. . . Well . . . then, how could *they* be talking to *you*, in real-time?

WILL: Hmm. The same way you and I are talking to each other, right *now*, in real-time.

PETE: I . . . heh.

What I meant was . . . if *you’re* in the dream, and it takes, okay, one minute . . . and *they* are *outside* the dream, in real-time, talking to you across an hour or two . . . well, see, that doesn’t make sense, to me.

WILL: I – I’ve thought about this, too. And, see, nobody has come along to just outline and explain it to me. So, I end up having to come up with my *own* theories, and approaches . . . I mean, I’m a scientist, that’s what I’m good for, right? See. I realized the one way it must be.

Another few seconds of silence.

PETE: Yeah?

WILL: *They* must have plugged me in. Put me into the virtual dream-state. Three of them. But they must have then plugged *themselves* into the same exact dream as me . . . leaving us *all* set into the same time-span, together. So, *they* were in the same virtual zone as myself . . . except, they must have been working in some kind of digital simulation, or re-creation, of their own van laboratory.

PETE: . . . Theeeeen?

WILL: . . . Then, well, I also think there must have been one person left alive and awake, outside the dream – so that he could un-plug the other two at his will, then un-plug me, a minute later. Probably, ejecting them from the software first, then being removed from the hardware unit . . . you know, like, like a USB thumb-drive.

PETE: Aaaaa what?

. . . Well, all right. Fair enough. I guess that answers my question enough.

WILL: I'm still trying to piece some of it together myself.

PETE: Maybe it *is* a good thing I didn't end up going down that Science path.

WILL: It could be. This . . . this field can drive you insane sometimes.

PETE: (*shrugs*) You'd be surprised, substitute teaching can drive you just as insane.

WILL: Ehh, I wouldn't know.

Fade to black.

Scene 4.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE – MIDDAY

Will is lying on his therapist's couch, talking.

WILL: And, I don't know, the cops, I guess what they said to me was, they never seemed to *find* anything. No van, no Dream Machine chair, nothing – whoever did it to me, whoever took me there, just . . . just . . . vanished without a trace.

Dr. Stine writes things down, but doesn't talk yet.

WILL: I guess all they needed was a minute or two of time. One minute with me in the chair, and they conducted all ten tests . . . but . . . *was* it just me? Were there *others* out there too? I really don't know! I would think yes, but . . .

DR. STINE: Will. Let's not let ourselves get sidetracked again.

WILL: Uhh . . . right. Right.

DR. STINE: What is it, in particular, that bothers you about your experience?

WILL: Hmm . . . well . . . I don't know! Just the fact that someone else would actually just *use* me as human testing for their damn test! Not – not just *one* test – *ten!* Without my knowledge, without my permission . . . (*sigh*)

DR. STINE: But you *did* say that, *whatever* this experience really was . . . for the most part, you are over it?

WILL: Yeah. I'm over it. Sure. I'm over it, so long as those same exact Dream Machine people don't just come right *back* into my house and – and try to do it all *again!*

DR. STINE: I see. Now, do you feel that *that's* the situation? That they're still hounding you?

WILL: *Do I?* . . . No. I – I know they stopped. It's just, I can't stop having *nightmares* about it happening again . . . I – I don't know, I think it's more like *post-traumatic* nightmares, than anything else.

DR. STINE: How long, now, has it been?

WILL: Since what?

DR. STINE: Since the traumatic event.

WILL: The abduction . . . it was, I guess, two and a half weeks ago.

DR. STINE: I see. And did you have nightmares about it right away?

WILL: No . . . not at first. For several days, I didn't really *have* any dreams. Just a bunch of static – silence.

DR. STINE: Well, *everyone* has dreams. Each time that we sleep, we have dreams. Most of the time, we wake up, we don't recall any of it. We don't have any *conscious recollection* of the dreams . . . but, *every* night, they are there.

WILL: Yeah?

(*nodding his head*) I mean, yeah, yeah . . . because of me working with Dosan Labs, they said that was my whole specialty . . . how *dreams* work . . . I'm *supposed* to know we all dream in six dream-cycles every night, that there's always some dreams . . .

(*shrugs*) I don't know, I guess I just can't ever remember em, when I'm interrupted from sleep.

DR. STINE: When did the nightmares start? The ones you can sharply recall?

WILL: Maybe about four, five days after the abduction. And then, every night, they kept coming back. I mean – it's never the *exact* same dream twice. Never *exactly*. It's just always the same one basic idea, happening again each time . . .

DR. STINE: And which "idea" is that?

WILL: "Oh, shit, it's happening again!"

DR. STINE: You dream of being abducted again?

WILL: (*nodding his head*) Yeah. Kind of. I dream of being thrown *right back into* that damn Dream Machine chair again . . .

DR. STINE: And . . . ?

WILL: And . . . each time . . . I'm convinced it's really happening.

DR. STINE: (*swallowing*) Most alarming.

She starts writing notes on her clipboard.

WILL: I had so much to say, I could barely fit even half the story in the first session . . .

DR. STINE: Okay. Now. It's been about, you said, two and a half weeks since your traumatic event. And this is our *second* session so far. Last week, I believe I suggested a night-light. Have you used one?

WILL: Yeah. I always sleep with the lights on now.

DR. STINE: And does this help?

WILL: . . . No. Not really. Whatever nightmares I'm gonna have, I end up having anyway.

DR. STINE: That's unfortunate.

WILL: Sometimes I just go to the living room. Watch TV for a while. I end up dozing off on the couch. I figure that, maybe, somehow *that*'ll help with the nightmares . . . but, it doesn't.

DR. STINE: And you've been *losing sleep*?

WILL: I've been getting two, three hours of sleep per night . . . which, to me . . . well, *one hour* can be more than enough, when you have recurring nightmares.

DR. STINE: William, if you are depriving yourself of sleep because you're scared of your own bad dreams, then that's not good. Lack of sleep is more than just a minor annoyance. At some point, it becomes a physical health concern.

WILL: But I'd rather be awake all the time, than to have more of these nightmares.

DR. STINE: Do you have these dreams only on days, or nights, where you're still upset?

WILL: No. Actually . . . actually . . . that's the thing. Some days I still feel bothered and upset – and some days I *don't*. Some days, I just *can't stop thinking* about it . . . but, other days, I'm all ready to move forward, and leave all that Dream Machine stuff in the past, and just not care anymore. But, whichever the case – whether I had a good day or a bad day – either way, the nightmares come. And – again – never the *same* nightmare twice, but, always on the same concept.

DR. STINE: I see. I had also recommended keeping track of all this in a *dream journal*?

WILL: Yeah. I've been using *that*, too. Trying to keep track.

DR. STINE: Has it helped?

WILL: . . . Well, at first, you know, I couldn't remember my dreams. I would just remember the basic *feeling* of terror, of – of *dreading* something terribly – but, no real clear details. It took a *while* for me to be able to write down what I remembered.

DR. STINE: Well, then, let's start with the ones you can recall.

WILL: Uhh – uhh, sure, sure.

Will opens up his dream journal and starts reading.

WILL: Okay. Thursday night. This was *right* after our first session, last week. I dreamed that I woke up in my bed, and for some reason my wife, Laurie, was not next to me. Except, for some reason, in the dream, her name was Michelle.

(*setting the book down for a second*) Yeah, dreams – it's weird, her name was Michelle . . .

DR. STINE: Keep reading.

WILL: Right. (*clears his throat*)

I started wondering, where is she, where is she, where did she go. All then – all of a sudden – I really wasn't expecting it! – all the lights in the room turned blue. And – and right away, I knew what that meant. I knew that I was trapped. I knew that *they* were coming for me again! Things would start out normal, but there would always come that terrible moment where the nightmare physics took over!

DR. STINE: When you use the word “they” . . . “they” were coming for me again . . .

WILL: . . . the *same* guys who had put me through the whole Dream Machine chair experiment.

DR. STINE: Right. But, this is still just the dream, right?

WILL: (*shakes*) *What?!*

. . . I mean . . . y-yeah, still this is just in the *dream* . . . this one voice goes “Will! We know you’re in there!”

Scene 5.

INT. WILL’S DREAM

Blue spotlights FADE ON all across CENTER STAGE. The therapist leaves the scene.

VOICE 1: WILLIAM CUMBERLAND! WE KNOW YOU’RE IN THERE! WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE SURROUNDED!

WILL: AHHHHH, gotta stay locked!!

He bolts across the room. Gets to the door.

He quickly locks the door from inside – we hear the loud sound of the lock clicking shut.

He grabs a blanket that happens to be laying around, and starts trying to drape it up over the window on the wall. (This “window” is a square that directly faces the audience.)

At first, he has no luck. He can’t cover the entire window with the blanket.

VOICE 1: Putting a blanket on the window ain’t gonna help you, pal!

VOICE 2: Look at him! He’s perspiring!

VOICE 3: Yeah! Perspiring a *lot!*

Will crouches down and hides under the window.

Then, he goes to lying on his side, pulling the blanket over himself completely.

WILL: P-p-p-please leave me alone . . .

We hear the loud sound of a helicopter building up.

Will starts shaking badly.

WILL: Just wake up. Wake up. Wake up, wake up, WAKE UP!!

Then, the lights FADE OUT across the stage.

Will returns to the therapist's couch. Dr. Stine returns to her chair. The lights FADE IN again.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE

WILL: And that was it. I just kind of stayed there, hidden under the blankets, for a while, and just waited to wake up.

DR. STINE: For how long?

WILL: I don't know. Maybe seven, eight minutes. Ten, at the most.

DR. STINE: I see.

WILL: I thought it was actually *happening* again . . . at the time. I thought, dear God, they've done it again. They've abducted me again, they've taken me again – this time *without* me waking up in time to fight my way out! This time they got me right in my sleep and . . . and . . . I was positive I was *in* the 11th test!

DR. STINE: And how did this dream *end*?

WILL: It . . . it . . . ended the same way as the others, I guess . . . me trying to hide, me trying to get away from them . . . until I woke up in a cold sweat. And slowly found out it was only a dream, and I was back to being awake.

A moment of silence.

WILL: Man. If not for me keeping this dream journal, I would never even *remember* most of these dreams!

DR. STINE: Then, it's a *good* thing. Now, that was Thursday night's dream. That was from one week ago, today. So what about Friday's . . .?

WILL: Yeah? Hmm. Okay. Let's see . . .

(reading from the journal) "At bar. 2 a.m. Clock on wall. Sandshake Drink."

Oh! Right! I remember now. Okay, so I was at this *bar*. And, supposedly, it was 2 a.m. And I remember sitting there, thinking to myself . . .

The lights all FADE OUT across the stage again.

Scene 6.

INT. WILL'S DREAM – BAR

Will walks to the edge of CENTER STAGE, and sits down on a barstool, facing the audience.

WILL: Man. I'm just so glad to go out to a *bar* again, and just get away from *work!*

A sudden, terrible realization hits him.

WILL: Do I have any money on me??

He stops to feel his pockets.

His eyes go wide as he realizes he's broke. He pulls out the inside of both pockets – both completely empty. No wallet, no keys, nothing.

WILL: (*whispering to himself*) Keys . . . where did they . . .

He shakes his head.

WILL: Wait. I *have* to have my keys on me! How did I even *get* here?

He looks around the scene of the bar.

WILL: Wait. How *did* I get here? How – who brought me here?

The bartender starts laughing very loudly.

BARTENDER: Buddy, you must be *awfully* smashed if you're asking *that* question!

Will's head sags down suddenly. He clutches both sides of his face.

The bartender talks to other folks, whom we can't see, as he sets two bottles down onto the counter, along with an enormous paper receipt.

BARTENDER: Ooooorder up! Two Kentucky Cussins!
(*to Will*) Hey *you* there – *Will*. You gettin' anything?

Will's eyes go wide with terror.

WILL: W-what?? . . . Uhh . . . I mean . . . why, what good drinks *are* there?

BARTENDER: Hmm. A Sandshake Drink should make you feel *incredible!* Give you extra strength!

WILL: Yeah? . . . Hmm, I'll try it out, I guess.

BARTENDER: Thaaaat's the spirit!

Will hands the bartender a dollar bill, from his back pocket.

WILL: You have any change for a single? Uhh . . . I mean . . . never mind.

BARTENDER: You're gonna *like* this drink!

The bartender takes a bottle of a drink, and starts shaking it up and down.

Will shrugs his shoulders. Sitting on the barstool, he shifts from one mindless “doing nothing” pose to the next, but can't ever seem to get completely comfortable.

BARTENDER: SANDSHAKE DRINK! Orrrrrder up!

Red spotlights FADE ON all across the stage.

VOICE 1: Don't drink that drink just yet, Will.

WILL: What??

He starts squealing, already uncomfortable.

VOICE 1: Don't worry, Will. We only want to run the 12th test – and then we'll leave you alone, and you'll wake up in your bed again.

WILL: No, no. No 12th test. Please! No 12th test!

VOICE 1: That bartender has made you a drink. Except there are *three* drinks. One of them is the precious Sandshake Drink, which will endow you with great energy and power. But the other two . . . are explosives.

WILL: *What?* That's just . . . (*chuckles*)

Several seconds of silence pass.

WILL: Well, anyway, I'm not doing this. I'm not participating in your little *test* this time. You already got ten of em, you don't *need* more.

VOICE 1: We don't *need* to. Sure. But, then, did man *need* to walk on the moon?

WILL: Stop it. This is all just my subconscious.

Another several seconds of silence.

WILL: This isn't *you* saying that, it's just . . . it's just *me* . . . in *my* head. That “moon” comment.

VOICE 1: But, Will . . . sitting here *talking* about it, is one thing. Why *not* just go through this test real quick, and get it over with?

Will stops to think about that.

WILL: (*sigh*) Okay. So – so you’re saying, if I just do this little “bottle game” test . . . what, if I pass, then the dream is over?

VOICE 1: Correct.

WILL: And if I fail, do I die?

VOICE 1: Not at all. There is no threat of death here, Will – these are just living *tests*.

Will thinks about it again.

WILL: Okay. Fine. Let’s do this little “test”.

INT. THERAPIST’S OFFICE

Normal white light FADES IN again across the stage. Will lays back onto the couch, and Dr. Stine resumes her role on the chair.

DR. STINE: So you agreed to it.

WILL: Yeah. I felt that “bring it on” type attitude kicking in again. So, I said *yes* to the 12th test – the one that was just in my dream.

DR. STINE: Good. *Good*. I’m glad you said that. Because that’s just what I wanted to get at: confrontation, of these nightmares you’ve been having.

WILL: Hmm?

DR. STINE: You see, Will, I noticed something about Thursday night’s dream that you told me about. You were *hiding* from the monsters – the three shadowy figures who, in your dream, were back to haunt you. You were *hiding*, under the window, under the blanket. But . . . this next dream . . . you don’t seem to be *hiding* anymore – but *confronting*. You said *yes* to the offer for the 12th test.

WILL: What?

. . . I . . . I . . . *wow! Yeah!*

DR. STINE: And that’s the right path. Tell me. What happened after you decided to take on this 12th test?

WILL: Hmm . . . well . . .

He walks to STAGE LEFT, where the rest of the flashback plays out.

Scene 7.

INT. WILL'S DREAM – BAR

The bartender appears, this time wearing a top hat and tuxedo suit. There is a big red curtain or drape covering three bottles on a table.

The bartender pulls the drape off the table, revealing all three bottles.

BARTENDER: *Are you ready?*

WILL: Ready as I'll ever be.

BARTENDER: (*touching the middle bottle*) This is the Sandshake Drink. The other two, will explode if chosen.

He clears his throat.

Then begins to quickly switch two of the three bottles around. He makes one switch. Then another. And another. He continues to mix them around, and Will continues to keep a fixed gaze on the bottles.

WILL: Wow, it's like a training session, in a way.

He chuckles.

WILL: Is *all* of this in my head? This whole dream? Because, wow –

BARTENDER: And, *time*.

WILL: (*gulp*) Umm . . . okay.

Game show-style sound effects come over the scene: the sound of time ticking.

WILL: UmMMM . . . uhHHHH . . . okay.

He chooses the middle bottle.

Ding-ding-ding! We hear the sound of a studio audience applauding!

BARTENDER: AND, A WINNER!

More wild, roaring applause!

WILL: *What?* What's going on?

Haaaa ha ha ha ha ha ha! We hear the sound of sitcom-style laughter.

WILL: (*laughing*) Heh heh. Ha ha ha. What?

He looks around. Then back to the three bottles.

WILL: Okay, so I can just get my drink now, right?

Haaaa ha ha ha ha ha ha! More laughter!

WILL: *Right?*

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! An alarm clock starts going off! It doesn't seem to stop.

WILL: What? Huh? What's that noise?

The beeping doesn't stop. He looks around the scene, to his right, further right, to his left, up . . . yet can't seem to pinpoint the source of the noise, even up at the ceiling.

WILL: What's that noise? What's making that noise?

The lights all FADE OUT.

Scene 8.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE – LIVING ROOM

Now the bar scene is over completely. At STAGE LEFT, Laurie is lying in bed.

Will returns to bed. The lights FADE IN on the sight of him laying asleep.

LAURIE: Hmm? Not waking up at 2 a.m.?

WILL: Huh? I didn't . . . Michelle?

Laurie's eyes go wide.

LAURIE: *What?!*

Will sits up. It hits him all at once: the nightmare is over, and he's back home.

WILL: Whoaaa. (*shakes his head*) What a crazy nightmare I had.

Laurie reaches over and turns off the alarm clock. The sound of the alarm beeping finally stops.

WILL: Whew. Okay. (*feeling his face*)

LAURIE: What *kind* of dream did you have?

WILL: It's . . . I . . . I hard . . . it's hard to remember.

LAURIE: (*sigh*) Well, all right, then, bar none –

WILL: *THAT'S IT!* That was it! A bar!

Quickly, he looks around, then finds a pen and paper at the side of the bed. He takes both items, and quickly starts writing down quick notes.

WILL: At bar. 2 a.m. Clock on wall. Sand . . . hmm . . . Sandshake Drink.

Whew! All done. He sets the items down, and starts walking away from the bed.

He walks to the therapist's couch at CENTER STAGE.

Scene 9.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE

WILL: And that's the end of *that* nightmare, the *bar* one. The 12th test – it ended with me winning.

He shrugs his shoulders.

WILL: I don't know. Am I *always meant* to win? If it's in my dream, then, maybe I'll just always win.

(*shakes his head*) No. I don't know. I had failed the 11th test, supposedly. I just sat around hiding, and nothing really happened, or got accomplished.

DR. STINE: Will, I'm sorry, but we are running out of time again.

WILL: Dang.

DR. STINE: Do you feel any better, yet, than you did at the start of today's session?

WILL: Yeah. I feel *real* good now. Feel like – like I finally got out all the stuff I wanted to say.

DR. STINE: Yes? You feel these two therapy sessions were beneficial?

WILL: Sure!

DR. STINE: All right, then! But – as you continue to try to get more sleep, remember one thing.

WILL: Hmm?

DR. STINE: Remember that when you *confront* these nightmares, these dream tests, head-on, you conquer them – and, eventually, they cease to exist. Then, you won't have nightmares anymore.

WILL: Ha ha.

They shake hands; he leaves the scene.

The lights all FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT TWO.

Scene 1.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE

Will is pacing around the dining room table as Laurie sets it.

WILL: *Now* what, is the question.

(*shrugs*) There's nothing important going on at all, I've realized . . . really. So what, to one more life going along, one more person "having bad dreams". It's so *small*, in the greater scheme.

LAURIE: Yeah, this *greater scheme* involve getting your laundry out when it's done?

WILL: Of course it does.

He starts walking away, quickly. He gets all the way offstage.

Laurie continues to set the table alone, for several seconds, humming a tune.

Will comes back into the room.

WILL: Well, there it is. No more time spent on unimportant nightmares. No more time spent on "the greater cause" of science, that I've been so obsessed with. No. Now it's more about *this* type of stuff: the house. The family.

LAURIE: Okay, so, we're not gonna have you continuing to wake up at 2 a.m. each and every night, with the worst nightmares ever?

WILL: Not anymore.

LAURIE: No more thinking it's all *happening again*?

WILL: Nope. Never again.

LAURIE: Well, then. Good! I married a genius.

WILL: (*shrugs his shoulders*)

The lights FADE OUT across the stage.

Scene 2.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE – BACKYARD – STAGE RIGHT

Will, wearing a catcher's mitt over his right hand, tosses a baseball gently to his daughter Julie. She tosses it back, and he catches it in the mitt.

JULIE: So. You never told me yet. You told me about Tests 11 and 12, but not 13 on.

WILL: Hmm. Well, let's see. Test 12? . . . That was the one with the bar, and the Sandshake Drink, right? . . . All right, well, it went kind of like this.

Will walks to CENTER STAGE. Julie exits, STAGE RIGHT.

Scene 3.

WILL: Hmmm, then. Yes, then. Well. Ya see here, this excellent new book, Interdimensional-Time Theories, is just the best . . .

The lights FADE OUT.

(*Will walks away.*) The lights FADE ON again.

WILL: Toaster oven, we need a new toaster oven. We need a new toaster oven . . .

The lights FADE OUT.

Then, BACK ON, as Will is twirling around the room.

WILL: It's all over, it's all over! It's all over!

The lights FADE OUT.

At STAGE LEFT, Will returns to bed – with Laurie.

The lights FADE ON – as Will is sound asleep. Even snoring.

WILL: (*still asleep*) Nyeh, hmm!

He thrashes around a little. Then wakes up.

He seems completely exhausted, and wanting to return to sleep.

All at once, it hits him, that it was just a dream, and now it's over. He shakes as he contemplates it all.

LAURIE: Hmm? Wham?

WILL: AHHHHH!!!

Laurie is startled completely awake.

LAURIE: My God, Will, we've been *over* this.

WILL: I – I'm sorry . . . I just . . . had some nightmares, I guess.

He shrugs, smiling.

WILL: Oh well! It's over now!

LAURIE: What happened in it?

WILL: Hmm . . . I . . . I don't remember. But, that's all right.

He takes a shoe near the bedside, and starts walking around the room.

WILL: WAIT! Now I remember it again!! It . . . it was just . . . several random dreams about . . . a bunch of meaningless nonsense.

(chuckling) "We need a new toaster oven, we need a new toaster oven".

LAURIE: *(arching one eyebrow)* You trying to tell me something?

A few moments of silence. She chuckles.

WILL: Well . . . well, no, I guess I don't . . . SHIT!!!

The lights ALL TURN RED across the stage.

Will crouches down on the ground. Laurie throws three knives at him, all of which miss; we hear a very loud sound as they are thrown, like the sound of shurikens.

WILL: Damn it, I should have known!

LAURIE: L times X plus 4 equals five three pi!

WILL: What??

NIGHTMARE VOICE: Hello again, Will.

WILL: No! . . . No. This is just some stupid nightmare. *(clutching his head)* THIS IS NOT HAPPENING!

NIGHTMARE VOICE: You may have failed the 11th test, Will . . . but, you DID pass the 12th one. Let's see how you fare on this, the 13th.

Will says nothing for a second.

Then he shakes.

WILL: If this is all in *my* head, then –

NIGHTMARE VOICE: Oh, don't worry about the nightmares, Will. Trust me – the best thing to let them do is just *run their course*, on their own.

Will flinches again.

WILL: . . . I was not kidnapped today.

NIGHTMARE VOICE: No, you were not. But, in this nightmare, that's exactly what's going to happen to you, all over again, in about ten seconds. The same life event which triggered everything . . . now you get a chance to do it again.

WILL: *What??* No! This isn't good!

He hears the sounds of footsteps approaching.

He flinches.

Hears footsteps run from STAGE RIGHT toward CENTER STAGE.

From STAGE LEFT toward CENTER STAGE.

He flinches again. His own door is knocked open!!

Three shadowy figures – men in suits – enter the room. One is holding a “HAPPY BIRTHDAY!” balloon.

One, wearing a birthday party hat, blows a noisemaker.

WILL: Okay, no! You – you're not gonna get to me this time!

NIGHTMARE VOICE: This is the 13th test, Will. How you will fare on the real-life event, the *second* time around?

Will flinches again.

WILL: (*looking at the three shadowy figures*) Are – are *you*, them??

NIGHTMARE VOICE: No, I am completely separate, you can rest assured.

He flinches one last time. Then thinks about something.

WILL: When I did this in real life, there was a baseball bat lying around.

He thinks about it again.

WILL: LIGHTNING STORM!!

Kra-KOW!! There is a white flash of light, and we hear the sound of raining outside.

SHADOWY FIGURE 1: . . . He's *gooood*.

SHADOWY FIGURE 2: Yeah, he's *starting* to learn. But let's see.

WILL: All right. So. I can make a lightning storm happen at any time. So, I will *not* be taken into the Dream Machine, this time! So . . . so . . . so you'd best just leave me to go back to bed and back to real life again!

He laughs about it.

WILL: Look, see? It was just some stupid dream –

Their friendly act ends; the three figures run up to Will, grabbing him by all sides, dragging him away.

SHADOWY FIGURE 1: You think we give a fuck that it's raining outside?

WILL: What? What, hey!! You guys don't even exist! This is just some stupid dream! Come on, just *wake up!*

SHADOWY FIGURE 1: Oh, come on, aren't you gonna bitch and complain about how *you have rights, we can't do this, this time?*

WILL: Get off me! Get off me! I hereby decree that I have three times my regular strength!

One of the figures pins him down real quick, to the ground.

SHADOWY FIGURE 2: Yeaaaaah, don't try to get ahead of us, Will.

WILL: What . . . what's even going on?? I don't even know if –

He thinks about it again.

WILL: Wait a minute. *Lightning storm.*

Nothing happens.

WILL: BASEBALL BAT! Baseball bat! There was a baseball bat, where . . . I need it –

He reaches his hand out. Shakes it around. Tries to get the bat that way.

SHADOWY FIGURE 1: There's *lots* of bats where *you're* going.

WILL: What?? Pleeeaaase! Please just leave me alone!

They drag him all the way to the Dream Machine chair, at STAGE RIGHT.

Scene 4.

INT. DREAM – VAN-LAB

SHADOWY FIGURE 1: *You* check his vitals!

SHADOWY FIGURE 2: Well *you* fax the medicine over!

SHADOWY FIGURE 3: Well *you* burnt the food, cooking!

SHADOWY FIGURE 2: Yeah, well, you're not supposed to know about that!

Haaa-ha-ha-ha-haa! More sitcom-style laughter.

WILL: *What?* Feel like I'm losing my mind . . .

NIGHTMARE VOICE: All right, Will. This is it. You're gonna be plugged into the Dream Machine chair again. Looks like you have *failed* the 13th test.

By now, the three shadowy figures are finishing the process of plugging him in.

WILL: No. NOOOOOOOOOOO!!

BRIGHT LIGHTS FADE ON across the stage.

Then, they all FADE OUT, to PITCH BLACK.

(The shadowy figures leave the scene, bringing the Dream Machine chair with him. Will and Julie return to STAGE RIGHT.)

Scene 5.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE – BACKYARD

The lights FADE IN on the sight of Will, holding the baseball, but focused completely away from the game of catch, wrapped up in his own story.

WILL: Yeah. So. The 13th test ended like that, I guess – they just – they plugged me into the dream-chair again, and that was it.

JULIE: *Wow*. It's like – it's like you're able to keep on, I don't know . . . living these dreams, along pretty much the same course that the *original* ten tests might have kept going in.

WILL: Yeah. Pretty much. It all just depends, though. The first 10 were mostly *externally*-driven dreams – it had more to do with *their* input, than just me, alone. Well, this – this *new* batch of nightmares – these ones are *all* internal.

JULIE: A brain that just never stops.

WILL: Yeah . . . I guess that's all dreams are, just the body going to sleep, and the mind just going on, still up and running. (*shakes*)

JULIE: I don't know. You work at a science lab, don't you?

WILL: Worked at. Yeah.

JULIE: So? How much of this is just you, getting yourself into – really *into* – the subjects you're interested in? Dreams, nightmares . . . maybe some of it is you thinking your own way into it.

Will says nothing for a moment, then nods his head in agreement.

WILL: That could be true. This is a matter of personal bias versus scientific objectivity. (*shrugs*) I guess, yeah, I know *scientifically* . . . or, perhaps I should say, *physiologically* . . . from the job, that the dreams come from left-brain activity. So, me knowing this, does this affect the dreams? Eh.

(*shrugs*) I'm just a human being having dreams. This happens to everyone. I'm just going through a phase of nightmares at the moment that I'm trying to be done with.

JULIE: Hey, what about that Sandshake Drink?

WILL: Hmm?

JULIE: Whatever happened with that Sandshake Drink you won?

WILL: Oh, the Sandshake? From the bar? I don't know. I had ended up waking up before I could actually drink it. (*shrugs*)

JULIE: That sucks. So, *then* what? Then, the next night, you had like a 14th test?

WILL: (*shudders*) Yeah . . . that one was bad.

Will walks on to CENTER STAGE, leaving Julie at STAGE RIGHT. (*Soon, she exits from the scene altogether.*)

Will slows down the speed of his moving to a near-halt. Every step that he takes, seems to be filled with tremendous struggle. We hear numerous sound effects of metal, silverware clanking together, giant thudding steps going across the floor.

We hear the loud sounds of an airplane's engine running. Turbines building up.

A red light FADES ON across the stage.

Bing! We hear the sound effect, like one in a subway train.

MALE VOICE: This is your captain speaking. I mean – I mean *pilot*. *Pilot* speaking. Soon we will be arriving into the Middle of the Atlantic Ocean. That's right, the Middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Have a nice flight, and enjoy your in-flight movie.

A stewardess roller-skates into the scene.

STEWARDESS: Tee hee hee! Anything I can get you, Will?

WILL: Yeah – a – a ticket *outta* here!

STEWARDESS: Ooooooh. There's really not that many ways out of here, Will.

WILL: Yeah, well, I . . . hey. Wait. How did you know my name?

He looks around, inspecting the scene.

WILL: Wait, is this *real* or . . .

(*scoff*) Of course. What am I thinking. Of *course* it's real.

STEWARDESS: Look, if you want a return ticket, I suggest you take it up with the captain. He's over in the cockpit area.

WILL: Yeah? . . . Hey. Wait. Answer me one question. How did I *get* in here?

STEWARDESS: (*pointing to the audience*) You came over from *that* way. I saw you. I saw you. You had walked in, from over *there*, then entered here, and then the pilot started speaking over the intercoms.

WILL: Okay. All right.

He walks on.

WILL: Hey. Wait a minute. Then how . . .

He looks around again.

WILL: (*sigh*) All right. Just tell me. What is it? What's going on?

NIGHTMARE VOICE: Welcome to the 14th test, Will. Since you got plugged into the Dream Machine again in your *last* nightmare, you should feel right at home with another test here.

WILL: Yeah? Well, I'm in control of the weather.

Kra-KOW!! We hear the sound of rainfall. The sound of thunder and lightning.

WILL: Uh-oh. Shit. NOT good.

NIGHTMARE VOICE: For the 14th test, you will need to maintain a sense of self-control. Can you do that, Will?

WILL: Uhhh – I – I guess.

He looks around. Waves his hands around a little.

WILL: I command the lightning storm to *stop*.

We continue to hear the sound of rain. But no more lightning, for right now.

WILL: Huhhhh . . . *whew*.

The stewardess enters the scene again.

STEWARDESS: Hey! Will! What would you do, if I did thhhHIS?!

She grabs an imaginary window, pulling it open with her hand. We hear the sound effect of the window opening.

Then, the sound of intense, lightning-fast wind traveling LOUDLY!

Will's eyes bulge open! He moves uncontrollably toward STAGE RIGHT!

WILL: NOOOOOOOOOO!

NIGHTMARE VOICE: This is what it's like . . . to FALL OUT OF AN AIRPLANE!

Will continues to stagger around the stage.

Then, he sits on a black beanbag chair, or any other black prop, meant to be camouflaged against a black wall or curtain backdrop. With his feet leaving the ground, he continues to remain suspended in what appears mid-air, slowly moving his body to curl up into a fetal position.

We hear the sound effect of wind picking up, and getting steadily louder, as he continues to “fall” down through the air. His body moves slowly while he talks.

WILL: This . . . this . . . isn't . . . what I . . . had . . . in mind!

The lights FADE OUT.

(He returns to STAGE RIGHT – and so does Julie.)

Scene 6.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE – BACKYARD

WILL: Yeah. That was it. Falling out of the airplane . . . I woke up at some point.

JULIE: . . . *Wow*.
. . . And *then* what?

WILL: Uhh . . . I dunno . . . I . . . I guess it was more like I started the dream all over again, from the beginning. Just *repeated* it a few times . . . yeah . . . sometimes dreams do that.

JULIE: . . . *Wow*. Hmm. I don't think I've had nightmares in a *long* time.
(shrugs) Most of the time, I just don't remember em.

WILL: Well, I just wanted to never fall asleep again after the airplane dream. Anything but that airplane dream.

JULIE: I don't think I've *ever* had the *airplane* dream before.

WILL: Well then good.

JULIE: . . . So, was that it, for the nightmares?

WILL: No, there was one last one, after that.

A moment of silence. They continue to play catch.

JULIE: All right, well, let's hear it.

WILL: Really?

JULIE: Yeah. Really.

WILL: I mean . . . like . . . I just kinda feel like I'm dragging myself on and on . . .

JULIE: (*shrugs*) I don't know. Let's hear it.

WILL: Well, all right, then.

Scene 7.

Will walks to CENTER STAGE.

A small crowd of strangers – perhaps a dozen or more in number – enter the stage from all sides at once. Once the crowd is walking around, Julie joins them.

The lights fade to DIM BLUE.

INTERCOM: Flight 14-B, soon departing. Flight 14-B, soon departing.

WILL: (*holding up his boarding pass*) That's ME, that's MEEEE!

He rushes, quickly, to get to his plane.

WILL: I've got a flight on there!

Two security guards stop him.

GUARD 1: You got anything on you, sir?

GUARD 2: Anything illegal?

WILL: (*holding up both hands*) Nope. Nothing on me.

The two guards screen him with a magnetic sweeper. After scanning him for several seconds, he seems to be all right.

GUARD 2: (*to Guard 1*) I think he *looks* suspicious.

GUARD 1: Sir, would you mind just stepping through this X-ray machine for me.

WILL: *Certainly*, I . . .

As he steps through it, WHITE LIGHT flashes across the stage! We hear a BZZZT! sound, and Will acts as though struck by electricity!

WILL: WHAT? What was that?? I –

Beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep! The security alarm goes off!

WILL: What just went on?

GUARD 1: (*nodding his head*) Mmmm-hmm. *Mmmm-hmm.*

GUARD 2: It's what we thought.

GUARD 1: It's *worse* than we thought.

Will remains still for a second.

Then starts to step away.

GUARD 1: HALT!

GUARD 2: Where do you think you're going??

WILL: Y-you know what – I – I just remembered I don't even *want* to go on this flight anyway. I don't even *want* to go on airplanes. Not after I had that nightmare where I fell out of the plane! So, no thank you!

A woman in a business suit walks to CENTER STAGE.

WOMAN IN SUIT: X-Cell Shampoo is the number one shampoo and conditioner for you – meant just for *your* needs!

She holds a shampoo bottle up in the air, and starts showcasing it for the audience.

WOMAN IN SUIT: While other shampoos might *wash* your hair, only X-Cell Shampoo gets rid of ruffs, wrinkles, and other wet spots the others can't reach.

WILL: (*during her dialogue*)

Wait a minute, what the Hell? What's going on *now*?

NIGHTMARE VOICE: This is the next test, Will. How will you fare, in such a crowd of strangers?

WILL: What? (*approaching the shampoo lady*) Hey, *excuse* me, could you tell me what –

But she turns away, impossible to reach. She leaves.

Will takes a second to stop and observe the area around him. Strangers surround him in this airport. Every single one of them is making eye contact as he walks around.

WILL: . . . Am I in a nightmare?

NIGHTMARE VOICE: Either you *really are* physically here, Will, or you are having the 15th test.

WILL: (*shrugs*) Let's just say I'm really, physically here.

STRANGER 1: Tonight on Channel 30 BC News, you *won't* want to miss this! Guess what ordinary household product *could* turn out to be very useful? Tonight at 11!

WILL: *What?* What are you guys talking –

STRANGER 2: When I first heard that one single pill could cure all my heartburn, I said, pal, no way! But then I tried Mepsid Max for myself. And now I stand convinced –

WILL: *What is the point* of this test??

NIGHTMARE VOICE: The point of this test is to get onto that airplane, Will. If you get onto the airplane, it *won't* be like last time. You *won't* fall out again. If you make it there, alive, in one piece, then the test will be over, and you will have passed.

WILL: . . . Okay.

STRANGER 3: Tonight, the season premiere, of *You're Not Allowed To Say That!* What happens when Susie Maxwell is asked to be queen of the prom scene? Would you BELIEVE?

WILL: *What's going on here!!*

Most of the people stop talking.

STRANGER 4: This guy all right?

STRANGER 5: What's going on with this guy?

STRANGER 6: Does he have anger management issues?

Will walks, quickly, all the way to STAGE LEFT.

Grips an imaginary doorknob. We hear the sound of a doorknob being slowly opened. He steps through it.

(After exiting the scene STAGE LEFT, he walks all the way around, and back to STAGE RIGHT, with Julie.)

Scene 8.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE – BACKYARD

Back to Will and Julie.

WILL: Yeah. That was it. I stepped through the door. I made it out there alive. Therefore, I passed the test – end of the dream.

JULIE: . . . Where did the door lead?

WILL: . . . Blackness. End of the dream. Then, I guess the dream got really blurry, and just kind of repeated, looped itself back a few more times. But each time, it seemed fresh, new, somehow. Like – a loss of memory, every time . . . somehow, eventually, in mid-dream, I guess I would re-remember again. Heh.

JULIE: *Damn.*

WILL: I woke up, I realized I was asleep in front of the tellytube again. You know – the TV. And, uhh . . . I guess I had heard all those TV shows and commercials, in my *sleep*.

JULIE: HA. I've had that happen one or two times. Asleep with the TV on.

WILL: Yeah?

She laughs again.

WILL: Is it that funny?

He thinks about it. Then he, too, starts chuckling.

WILL: I guess so. Heh heh.

He starts laughing, too! The two laugh together.

JULIE: It *is* pretty funny.

Will tosses the baseball, gently, to Julie.

WILL: Yeah, I guess so. (*sigh*) Wow. So, I guess that's it, huh? That was Tests 11 through 15. And that was the last one I'd had.

JULIE: So . . . so bizarre. Maybe you could write a book about all your dreams.

WILL: (*shrugs*) I don't know. I *could*. But, I probably won't.

(*shrugs again*) I *still* don't really know the full truth! I don't really know if I'm the only one who was in the Dream Machine human testing, or if there were others out there, too. I don't know! . . . But, it's over.

JULIE: Yeah. It's all over.

A brief moment of silence.

JULIE: Really? It's over with?

WILL: Yeah. That night I had the airport dream . . . that was Monday night . . . I woke up and just *stopped sleeping* altogether for a while. Let in maybe an hour or two a night.

JULIE: That doesn't sound healthy.

WILL: I'd have some night *terrors* for a few days; I'd wake up just *feeling* it, but no – no *conscious dreams* that I could recall . . . hmm . . . yeah, that's it. And now we're playing catch.

JULIE: Now we're playing catch.

Julie tosses the baseball several feet up into the air, claps her hands twice, and catches it.

WILL: I feel like *never* talking again. *Never*. I'm so over-talked.

JULIE: (pretending to quickly throw the ball at him) *Catch!*

WILL: *Gahh!!*

He crouches a little, shielding his face with his forearms.

WILL: That's not funny!!

Julie starts laughing again.

WILL: Damn it, that's not funny. (*sigh*)

Scene 9.

INT. LIVING ROOM – SOON

Will lays on the couch, facing the imaginary TV screen (the audience).

He's holding a remote control. Every time he changes the channel, the sound of the TV show changes, and so does the lighting across the stage.

Will is just laying silently, not saying a word, resting.

We remain in the silence for a good ten seconds, uninterrupted.

During this time, Will stretches a little bit as well. Lays comfortably.

He closes his eyes. Shifts a little. And starts nodding off.

The lights FADE OUT.

We stay in pitch black for a good five seconds.

Then, very gradually, the sound of drums begins to build up, faintly, in the background. It builds up progressively, until it becomes an unquestionably real noise.

WILL'S THOUGHTS: Is . . . is that a noise?

The sound of drums dies down.

A few more seconds of silence.

Then the drums return. The sound builds up, becoming louder, and louder.

Cymbals begin to play!

Drums and bongos are added to the music!

The lights FADE ON. Will is still on the couch. He sits up.

WILL: All right, now WHAT'S that noise?

(looking at the TV, toward the audience) . . . TV's off. Okay, then.
(as he looks around) Is it coming from outside?

He walks closer to the walls.

WILL: Is there a live concert being blasted next door, or something?

(as he goes to pound his fist on the wall) HEY!

He's startled by an unexpected sight!

WILL: A door?? *(laughs)* You mean – you mean we had a *door* right here this whole time, and I didn't even *know* about it?

We hear the sound of five people laughing at Will.

VOICE 1: You are *stupid* if you didn't know about this before!

VOICE 2: Ohhhh my God! What?

VOICE 3: This guy serious? He didn't know about it?

VOICE 4: And he's lived there for how long?

VOICE 5: Whooooo, hoo hoo hoo! This guy is STUUUUUUUUUUUPID!

Will flinches.

Then starts to grow depressed.

WILL: What, so I didn't know there was a door here. So what.

He opens the door and steps through.

We continue to hear the sound of a dozen people laughing at once.

The sound then fades away. It's back to the drums. The cymbals.

Over two dozen people enter the scene at once. Every person is talking, wrapped up in their own conversations, at the same time.

WILL: Wow! I *knew* it! I *knew* there was some kind of concert going on over here!

STRANGER 1: WHOOOO, buddy, you bet there is! The Magic 8-Ball Skate Day is gonna blow your mind, man! Best music to get performed on stage, ever!

WILL: Really? . . . Wow!

He looks around himself again.

WILL: Ohhhh wait, it's just a dream. (*sigh*)

Nonetheless, everyone else around him continues to walk around and talk at once.

Will doesn't really listen to their words, at first. But then, as he's walking, something hits him.

WILL: Wait. This is just a dream.

. . . So why aren't I just waking up, right now?

He shakes again.

WILL: Wait a minute. All of THIS?? All of THIS is in my head?!

The rest of the scene goes on uninterrupted – so many faces, so many people, all dressed in their own unique ways.

WILL: My own *mind* is capable of making all *this*??

Something else hits him.

WILL: Wait a minute. What could people possibly be saying, in a dream?

He looks around himself again.

WILL: So if I just *stop and listen in*, and don't give myself any time to make something up, *then* what?

He stops, and just listens.

STRANGER 1: Ow now, brown cow. Ow now, brown cow.

STRANGER 2: Ow now, brown cow! Ow now, brown cow!

STRANGER 3: (*angrily*) OW, NOW, BROWN COW! OW, NOW, BROWN COW!

VOICE 1: Stapler to the chest barn, brought it out to the closet break . . .

VOICE 2: *Math* teacher, has to go to a real *scholar*, getting a *degree* from the barnyard with the red orange over the painted television . . .

VOICE 3: Radical tension, bringing it to the crib waves, unplugging all the earplugs, put into the shampoo bottle. Time bottle to spin the bay-ward . . .

VOICE 4: Ohhhhhhh, yeaaaaaaaah, I remember that apple traffic way in the barn-staple of the wall splatter, when we had to go to the paint jar, so we could get to the cookie buttering up in order to have the waffle bread.

VOICE 5: Reminds me of the time that we had to take the shuttle vehicle to the transport module in the upper-left section. Whether or not this works remains yet to be seen.

VOICE 4: Absolutely, in that sense, it's hardly a wonder we're not *all* molecular experts in the solar field.

VOICE 1: Solar glass panels. It's all real calculational.

WILL: Okay, what? What's going on?

RED SPOTLIGHTS shine all across the scene.

VOICE: Welcome to the next test, William Cumberland. You performed pretty amazingly in the 15th test, we *will* give you credit.

WILL: No. No. Okay, no. This type of stuff *doesn't* happen anymore!

VOICE: Oh, but it does. You should know that even *your* own mind would not be enough to make up all *this* detail!

Will looks around himself again.

WILL: Y-yeah?

. . . All right, so, so what is this? Test 15?

VOICE: This is Test 16.

WILL: Oh . . . and what are the rules?

VOICE: You must talk to exactly the right people. But if you talk to the *wrong* person, something *bad* may happen. You have three minutes. Go!

WILL: What? (*looking around himself again*) What on Earth is going on??

VOICE 1: *I* think he did it.

VOICE 2: Oh, I *definitely* think he did it.

VOICE 3: Look. Look. All I'm saying is, the pornography that is on his hard drive . . . he *knows* what's on there. He *knows*. We *all* know.

VOICE 4: Did you *see* the e-mail? Can you *believe* what he said?

VOICE 5: But what *she* had said was pretty shocking too. I didn't think she *would*.

VOICE 6: Do they really think they can just do whatever the fuck they want?

VOICE 7: Really think this guy needs to die. Now.

WILL: Okay, wake up! *Wake-up!*

Another few seconds pass by.

WILL: So just *wwwwwwake up!*

Another few seconds pass by. Still nothing happens.

VOICE 6: What the Hell is *wrong* with this guy?

WILL: Where was that door? I need it . . .

He starts to step through the door. But A TERRIBLE GROWLING NOISE alarms him, and he jumps backward, gasping for breath.

WILL: No. No! It couldn't be!

As we hear loud, thundering footsteps approach, a monstrous LIGHT GREEN MINOTAUR steps forth through the door, and growls again!

WILL: WHAT! No!

He looks around, and grabs a baseball bat that happens to be lying around.

WILL: Yeaaaah, that's right . . . I've got this –

The green minotaur growls and roars again, swiping a claw at Will to knock the bat out of his grip.

It pushes him backward, onto the ground. Then, as the lights dim, it continues slashing its claws at him.

WILL: I'm gonna wake up. *I'm gonna wake up.*

The minotaur holds Will's right foot, and begins to devour Will foot-first as all the lights FADE OUT across the stage.

END OF ACT TWO.

ACT THREE.

Scene 1.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE – BEDROOM

At STAGE LEFT stands Will's bed. The lights FADE ON as Will wakes up in the bed, alone, feet toward the pillows and head on the opposite end.

He leans up, waking up at last.

WILL: Huh . . . oh. Whew.

He gets up, and starts walking around the room.

WILL: Laurie? . . . Laurie? . . . Guess I'm alone, then.

He walks over to CENTER STAGE.

Then stops as he hears the sounds of music building up from next door again.

WILL: Huh? . . . Ahhh, that damn racket again!

He goes to bang his fists on the wall.

WILL: Hey, do you MIND . . .

(in total shock, as he notices something) What? What's *this*??

As he grips an imaginary doorknob, we hear the loud sound of the knob turning.

WILL: This door . . .

(remembering again) Oh! Right. Ha ha. *This door!* *(chuckling)* I'm so stupid.

Will steps through.

On the other side, he walks around a little, and over two dozen people once again enter the scene from all sides of the stage at once.

WILL: What? Is this – this some kind of concert or something?

All the different people continue to talk to each other at once.

WILL: Hey, have I somehow been here before?

He continues to walk around and check out the scene. Everyone remains wrapped up in their own conversations.

After about seven seconds, it becomes clear that every person is simply yelling random nonsense words endlessly.

Will continues to walk around the scene, toward STAGE LEFT. But there's nothing more to do. None of the people are walking around anymore; everyone is just staying still, talking in a series of nonsensical words and phrases.

An ongoing frozen moment of mindless talking.

WILL: Wow. What do I do, once I realize there's no point.

He continues to walk around a little . . . and bumps right into the monstrous green minotaur, who is facing away.

The minotaur turns to face Will. Both gasp loudly.

WILL: You!!

He bolts away, toward STAGE RIGHT.

The chase begins immediately. All at once, the sound of concert music returns. We hear the loud sound of roaring as the minotaur runs toward Will, one claw raised high up in the air.

WILL: Okay! Okay! There must be a way out of this!

He runs through the crowd of people, between some people, around others . . . the minotaur continues to give chase through all this time. Nobody seems particularly terrified of the minotaur.

CROWD PEOPLE: Hey! Watch it! Look out! Beat it!

WILL: Wait. Yeah! The *Sandshake Drink!*

Will stops running. He crouches down on the ground, and reaches his hand into the floor . . . and stands back up with a mug in his hand.

WILL: I knew it. The Sandshake Drink! There's only one.

He spends a few seconds getting himself ready.

WILL: I'll *need* this good luck.

He chugs down the drink. When he's done, he sets the mug down on the ground. Then spins around to face the minotaur again.

WILL: Hey *you!*

Taking a normal step forward, Will chops the minotaur, using his right hand, to the chest, then uses his left hand to chop him again and push him back a little, and finally raises his right foot to the monster's chest to *push* it away.

The minotaur flies several feet backward.

Will stands in place.

Looks at his hand. The drink is gone.

He sighs as he realizes it's over.

WILL: Okay, so I *passed* Test 16.

(as something major hits him)

. . . And it only worked because of that thing Julie had said . . .

He continues to walk around. The lights all across the stage FADE OUT, as everyone exits the scene.

(Will walks to a couch at CENTER STAGE.)

Scene 2.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE – LIVING ROOM

The lights FADE ON to the sight of Will lying on the couch. Slowly, groggily, he gets up. Starts to walk around.

WILL: All right, well, *now* I know I'm awake, right?

(as he slaps himself on the cheek) Yep. Awake.

He continues to walk away.

WILL: Wait, what time is it??

(as he glances at the wall) 3 a.m. *(shrugs)* Better.

He walks all the way to STAGE LEFT, where Laurie is asleep in bed.

As Will gets to the bed silently, she turns toward him and wakes up.

LAURIE: Will?

WILL: Hey.

He lays down in bed.

LAURIE: Time?

WILL: 3 a.m.

LAURIE: Mm. You staying in bed for good?

WILL: Yep.

The lights FADE OUT.

WILL: Night, Laurie.

Scene 3.

INT. DR. STINE'S OFFICE

The lights FADE ON in CENTER STAGE, as Dr. Stine resumes her role in the therapy sessions.

Will walks to the couch at CENTER STAGE, and lays down.

WILL: Yeah, that's pretty much how my sleeping patterns work. Now, once I conquer the dreams for the night, I just go back to the bedroom to sleep, in bed, next to Laurie. Things *do* go back to normal at that point.

DR. STINE: (*in an English accent*) I see. So, things *are* a bit different than the older nightmares, aren't they, love.

WILL: . . . Hmm?

Something strikes him as being unusual . . . but he can't seem to pinpoint what.

DR. STINE: Yes, then. So, these *newer* dreams. They tend to take on different rules of physics than the first ten, I take it.

WILL: Yeah.

DR. STINE: Do you feel like your one and only true goal, all this time, was to help contribute something amazing to science, and yet everything has gone farther and farther away than ever from your one true goal? Look how long it's been since you've talked about true science. Now the most "scientific" thing you even *talk* about is the psychology behind nightmares.

Will gulps.

WILL: Wow, it's, uhh, it's kind of like you read my mind.

DR. STINE: Tell me about your next dream. This – this Test 16.

WILL: Well, yeah, sure. I was – uhh – hmm. Dreams are so weird. It was like this *series* of dreams, this ongoing thing, where – where, in my house, I had a door, right in the middle of the wall, that I'd never noticed or known about before.

Dr. Stine appears shocked. She gasps.

WILL: . . . What, is that a, a big deal, or something?

DR. STINE: Well, yes. The “door in the wall” thing *is* a common thing in dreams. But – we'll explore all of that a little bit later. Continue.

WILL: Well . . . all right. So, uhh, so in these dreams, the door leads me to this other place. Like, an outdoor concert place, I don't know . . . just some kind of dirt road, surrounded by trees, that seems to go on and on for miles. And there's *dozens* of people around me – in the dream – all just walking along.

DR. STINE: Yes?

WILL: I eventually found that minotaur again. Sort of like the minotaur from the original ten nightmares – he had been in the very final, tenth test, I recall . . . except now he was, I don't know, a little different-looking. Light green color. I don't know.

DR. STINE: (*scribbling down some notes*) Mm-hmmm . . . most interesting.

WILL: The first time, I get eaten alive, killed, by the minotaur. Then I wake up on my own couch, and I get up, and walk around, only to find that door again – the same door in the wall. So I go back into the concert type place thing. Find the minotaur again, somewhere. And, uhh, and then I finally cash in some old chips – I, uhh, I use the Sandshake Drink that I'd won in an earlier test. The bar one . . . hmm . . . Test 12, I think it was. Yeah.

DR. STINE: So the Sandshake Drink helped give you the confidence you needed to defeat the minotaur, is that correct?

WILL: . . . Uhhh . . . hmm, well, I guess I had thought of it in less psychological terms, and more scientific, but, yeah.

DR. STINE: What happened when you woke up from *that* dream?

WILL: Hmm, well, I guess I woke up on the couch. And I was like, you know what, this is lame. Sleeping on the couch like this. Every time I have the nightmares, when I wake up, I go back to bed – back to sleeping next to Laurie.

DR. STINE: And then? You're able to get back to sleep?

WILL: Yeah. No dreams then. I just go to sleep, blank out for a while, get up, do a normal day. Like this one!

DR. STINE: Ahh! So, gradually, the nightmares *are* being phased out.

WILL: Yeah –

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

Will checks his pockets. Feels his sides. Arms. Looks left, right, on the couch.

WILL: What's that – that *noise* coming from?

DR. STINE: Hmm? Oh, I'm sorry, Will, I'm afraid that's my phone.

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! The sound of the alarm clock continues to play.

Dr. Stine feels around on her own coat, her sides, her pockets, yet, bafflingly, can't seem to find the source of the noise either.

DR. STINE: Am I going mad?

MINOTAUR: ROOAAAARRR!!!

Now the light green minotaur is back, running in from nowhere at STAGE RIGHT! It grabs a lamp off a desk, and holds it up in the air, as it races toward Will!

WILL: No! No!! . . . Wait a minute. You mean . . . this was all just a . . .

The lights FADE OUT. (*Will returns to the bed at STAGE LEFT.*)

Scene 4.

The lights FADE IN on the sight of Will laying sound asleep in bed, snoring. He awakens abruptly.

WILL: . . . Nyuh! . . . *dream?*

Laurie reaches over and turns off the alarm, finally stopping the beeping sound.

LAURIE: Yep. "Dream." You have pleasant dreams?

WILL: Uhh . . . not quite. I mean . . . I don't know . . . they *did* get better.

He slaps himself on the cheek, then pinches himself on the arms.

WILL: Is this real, and am I really awake?

LAURIE: I'm positive that the answer to that is yes.

WILL: All right. *Whew.*

LAURIE: *I had some weird dreams myself. Something about . . . I don't know . . . there was a hurricane coming? A hurricane was about to hit our city? But I really don't remember anything else.*

(laughing) Isn't that the weirdest thing? Dreams!

She gets all the way up, and starts walking around the room.

LAURIE: But. *I've* got a lot to do today. I can't just go right on back to sleep.

WILL: The way *I* can.

LAURIE: But, at least – your nightmares got better?

WILL: Yeah.

LAURIE: Think you'll be returning to work soon?

WILL: A different field of work, maybe. I don't know. *(shrugs)* Maybe I'll try out that substitute teaching thing.

LAURIE: What, teaching science?

Will sighs.

Then he just throws his hands up in the air for a second, shrugs his shoulders, and goes back to sleep.

WILL: Night. Love you.

LAURIE: *Morning.* Love you too.

She exits STAGE LEFT; Will goes back to sleep.

The lights FADE OUT at STAGE LEFT.

Scene 5.

INT. DREAM – DR. STINE'S OFFICE

(Will returns to the couch at CENTER STAGE.)

The lights FADE IN, at half the level from before, with a dim shade of the color GREEN, on the sight of the couch turned over to its side, covered in several streams of toilet paper.

Will walks around, investigating the scene of the wreckage.

WILL: What on Earth *happened* here?? I was just here, a minute ago!

No response. He continues to walk around.

WILL: Seriously, what has happened here? Dr. Stine?

Still no response. He reaches his arms out and feels his way to the walls.

WILL: Shit. It's never as much fun going back into the dream.

He continues to walk slowly in the darkness.

The lights FADE OUT. We hear the sound of a doorknob turning.

WILL: All right. This must lead me somewhere.

The lights FADE IN again, with the color RED, to light up a new scene happening at STAGE RIGHT.

Large trees are laying sprawled across the ground (stage).

Will walks around the scene, inspecting the incredible, impossible sight of the trees, with all their branches and leaves, laying on their side on the street.

WILL: What . . . what *happened* here??

He reaches down to touch a fallen tree for himself. He pulls on one of the branches a little, then lets go.

WILL: What on Earth happened here, an earthquake? A hurricane?
. . . Where *is* everybody?

We hear the muffled sound of one person screaming.

Will looks around, left, right. He tries to find the source.

He finally lifts one fallen tree up off the street, from its trunk, to find one man laying on the ground, yelling.

MAN: Whooooo! (*wheezing*) Can't believe I let it all happen . . .

WILL: Who are you? And what are you doing here?

MAN: Ohhhhhh, man. I think it's *not* good for you to be here.

Three black silhouettes walk across the stage from STAGE LEFT.

Will looks at them. They duck out of sight.

He stays frozen for a few seconds. Then he turns back to the man and the tree.

WILL: I don't really know what's going on.

MAN: Well, I'll tell you. A hurricane hit. The tree fell on me. They're coming for you.

WILL: What? That doesn't make sense!

MAN: Garrrrrk! (*grabs his own throat*)

WILL: What's happening??

We hear the sound of a drumbeat being played very quickly.

Will leans in closer. He reaches his hand to the fallen man's neck, and pulls from it a dart, with a small piece of paper attached.

WILL: You've got a . . . a . . . (*gulp*) dart in your throat.

He takes the piece of paper attached to the dart, and quickly reads it.

WILL: "We Are Ahead Of You."
What? What's that supposed to mean . . .?

The fallen man starts choking again. Will races toward him.

WILL: I tried to save you! I – I didn't expect for that dart . . .

He looks toward STAGE LEFT.

And immediately crouches down to the ground. The three silhouettes are walking around again. We hear the loud sound of *shurikens* being thrown as Will raises his hands to his face, to protect himself.

At STAGE RIGHT, another tree falls, from an upright position, to lying on the ground.

WILL: Am I being attacked by *ninjas*?

VOICE: Test 17, Will. This is Test 17. How will you fare?

He races over to a fallen tree, and lies down on the ground, back to the floor, to attempt to hide.

But he turns his head toward STAGE RIGHT and sees another ninja, dressed in all black garments, leaping into the scene from that direction.

The ninja flicks his wrists quickly, and we hear the sound of more *shurikens* being thrown. He then lands on the ground, and is quickly out of sight.

Will grabs for his own neck.

He shakes a few times, then tries to stand up. Halfway there, he falls down again. He holds his throat with one hand. He makes some gargling noises.

VOICE: Oooh. Looks like you didn't do too well there, Will. Better luck next time . . .

The lights FADE OUT. (*Will returns to his bed at STAGE LEFT.*)

Scene 6.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE – BEDROOM

Will wakes up in bed. He thrashes, and grabs for his neck, as if he had been struck there.

WILL: Noooo, ahhh, my neck . . . I'm . . . I'm all right!

He walks on to CENTER STAGE, holding in his hand a journal and a pen.

As he continues to walk on to STAGE LEFT, we hear Will's own voice (a recording) narrate what he's writing.

WILL'S VOICE: "Test 17 began in therapy. I was talking to Dr. Stine about my recent dreams. Then I learned it was a dream, and woke up. Went back to the dream. Hurricane had struck. Outside. Red sky. Ninjas. Struck in throat with ninja stars."

He closes the journal shut, and sets it down somewhere.

Walking on to CENTER STAGE, he starts talking into a cell phone.

WILL: (*looking at his wrist*) Yyyyeah, it's 3:00 p.m. now.

(*shrugs*) I don't know, I mean, for the most part, I'd say everything weird is all over, or at least it's coming to an end now. I think Test 17 was the last one.

Pete appears at STAGE LEFT, also talking into a cell phone.

PETE: Yeah? That's good. Cause no offense, but you were not looking all that great there when I saw you in the coffee place!

WILL: Yeah, I guess not. (*sigh*) It's just *time*, ya know? All it takes, logically, is enough time, and I'll have gone through all these dumb dreams, and just not care anymore. The real underlying issue is, of course, the abduction . . . I don't know. I guess it's coming to a close.

PETE: Exactly. Now if only *I* could wish away my nightmares like that. But, no, I still keep substitute teaching anyway.

WILL: (*snortle of laughter*) I used to love my job. Before all this happened.

PETE: Do you want me to see what I can do about trying to get you a position teaching?

WILL: Hmm . . . I . . . I'm not sure anymore. I wanted to, earlier, but now I don't know. Teaching a bunch of kids? Now I'm thinking, maybe I *could* just go back to Dosan, y'know, just explore other, different scientific ventures, outside that Dream Machine.

PETE: Well . . . just let me know.

The lights FADE OUT. Will returns to STAGE LEFT, still talking into the cell phone. He picks up a container of Chinese food, and the lights FADE IN again as he multi-tasks by eating the food while talking into the phone.

WILL: Just eating some Chinese food now, yeah.

PETE: Yeah? What kind?

WILL: White rice.

PETE: Ahh.

WILL: I am *glad* the normal days are back. This wasn't that hard, really.

PETE: Superbowl Sunday ain't for another two weeks.

WILL: No way I'm missing *that*.

PETE: Yeah? If you want, perhaps we could do what we did last year.

Scene 7.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE – DINING ROOM

At CENTER STAGE, the family gathers around the dinner table. The therapist's couch is now facing away from the audience.

Will, Laurie, Erica, and Julie are all sitting down to eat.

WILL: Ahhh, the normal life again. This used to be *all* there was.

ERICA: Wow. The whole entire Dream Machine project thing is over?

WILL: I'm pretty sure it is, yeah. But, there was a time *before* that project, too.

ERICA: Yeah. That's true.

WILL: Well, it doesn't matter, really. In the end, my whole entire story, really, has just been "some guy sitting around having dreams", which means, nothing.

LAURIE: My hurricane dream, honestly, had me a bit freaked.

WILL: Really?? . . . Sorry to hear. What happened in it?

LAURIE: Oh, well just, I dunno, we were in this house, you know, (*pointing*) over there by the couch. And I was there, and I was real nervous, real worried, you know, "When's this hurricane supposed to arrive, when's this hurricane supposed to arrive". The news had said it was *devastating* weather.

. . . I don't know. That was it. I don't remember the rest.

JULIE: I usually don't have any dreams, but, *last night I did*.

LAURIE: Yeah? . . . Let's hear it.

JULIE: Well, it was like . . . hmmm . . . well, we were in the shopping mall, to do all the Christmas shopping.

LAURIE: Christmas? (*chuckling*) *That's* a little far off, don't ya think?

JULIE: I know. And it was weird, we walked by this little miniature playground, *inside* the mall. I don't know, like, *inside* . . .

The lights FADE OUT.

Scene 8.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE – BEDROOM

(Will exits STAGE RIGHT, and, backstage, changes his outfit to a full-body pair of pajamas. He re-enters at STAGE LEFT, and lays in the bed in his bedroom.)

Will and Laurie are laying in bed; the lights FADE IN.

WILL: Well *now* I'm exhausted. And, good night.

The lights FADE OUT again.

(Will climbs out of bed, moving toward CENTER STAGE.)

Scene 9.

INT. DREAM-WORLD

The lights FADE ON to the sight of Will walking around, still dressed the same way he fell asleep – in PJs.

A man wearing a white Easter bunny costume enters from STAGE LEFT and moves all the way to CENTER STAGE, waving his hands around, jumping up and down in the air.

A second man walks up beside him from STAGE LEFT and does the same thing.

Two Santa Clauses, one red and one blue, enter the scene side-by-side from STAGE RIGHT.

SANTA 1 & 2: *(endlessly)* Hooo ho ho! Hooo ho ho! Hooo ho ho!

WILL: *(confused)* Hmm? What is this place?
(as it all hits him) Is this another nightmare?

He thinks about it . . . then shakes his head.

WILL: Nahhh. No way.

He walks around, finding another door on the wall. By this point, everyone else is exiting the scene at STAGE LEFT AND RIGHT.

Will grips the imaginary doorknob, and we hear the loud sound of it turning, as he steps through an imaginary doorspace.

At STAGE LEFT, a large image appears, facing the audience: the image of a giant twisted mess of children's playground equipment, a series of tunnels and slides gathered around in impossible perspectives.

WILL: What?? What is all this?

An unknown man runs up behind Will and hits him on the back.

He falls forward, lying sprawled on the floor. The unknown man is holding a rock in his hand, which he tosses up into the air and catches.

WILL: (*looking at the unknown man*) What was all *that* for?

A second unknown man quickly runs up to Will, making apologetic motions.

UNKNOWN MAN 2: Oh, I-I-I-I'm SO sorry about that!! He – he just – he really doesn't get along well with strangers, that's all.

WILL: (*feeling his own back*) What *is* all this stuff you've got up here??

UNKNOWN MAN 2: Oh, that's – uhh – that's just our playground equipment that we own. We close after dark at 5:00.

WILL: Yeah? (*pointing up to the equipment*) Well, look up at that one.

UNKNOWN MAN 2: What about it?

WILL: Well right there, the slide just – just *stops*, halfway through! Dozens of feet up in the air like that!

UNKNOWN MAN 2: And?

WILL: Well . . . well, then any person who gets onto that slide, will just fall dozens of feet to their death!

UNKNOWN MAN 2: (*shrugging his shoulders*) And?

Will is shocked!

WILL: You mean you know about this, and you'll just let it go on??

The first unknown man starts giving Will an angry glare, and begins walking directly up to him.

WILL: Wait a minute. This *might* be a nightmare. It *might* be.
(*looking around again*) If this is another nightmare, then it's possible the ninjas could reappear!

He stops, realizing something new . . . something profound.

WILL: Wait. If it's my dream . . . I *am* the ninja.

And he opens his right hand, revealing a ninja star.

He quickly moves his wrist and hand to throw the star at the first unknown man, who quickly closes his eyes, grabs for his throat, and staggers backward.

The second unknown man throws his hands up into the air.

UNKNOWN MAN 2: Okay! Okay! I surrender!

WILL: You'd better make this place safe for kids! . . . Cause I . . . yeah.

He exits the scene, at STAGE LEFT.

Scene 10.

INT. DREAM-WORLD

Will re-enters the scene from STAGE LEFT, still wearing the same PJs.

A man wearing a white Easter bunny costume enters from STAGE LEFT and moves all the way to CENTER STAGE, waving his hands around, jumping up and down in the air.

A second man walks up beside him from STAGE LEFT and does the same thing.

Two Santa Clauses, one red and one blue, enter the scene side-by-side from STAGE RIGHT.

SANTA 1 & 2: (*endlessly*) Hooo ho ho! Hooo ho ho! Hooo ho ho!

WILL: What?? What's going on? Wasn't I just . . . where was I just now?
(*shakes his head*) It's like I've been here *before* or something.

VOICE: Congratulations, William. You've gone through many tests. This will be Number 19.

WILL: Yeah?

A few moments of silence.

WILL: I'm not really scared of it anymore.

He walks around the stage a little.

WILL: So what are the rules?

. . . Oh, wait. If this is all just a dream, then I guess there *are* no rules.

VOICE: There *are* rules to the test, Will.

A moment of silence.

WILL: Yeah, like what? I haven't thought of any complex rules or tests or objectives.

Another moment of silence.

WILL: Yeah. That's what I thought.

He walks onward, toward STAGE RIGHT.

There, he finds several people facing away from him, looking toward STAGE RIGHT. Everybody's faces are covered up by their hands.

WILL: Hello? . . . Hello??

Nobody responds.

WILL: . . . All right, then.

He continues to look around himself.

WILL: All just my dream, I guess. My unimportant dream.

He looks back at CENTER STAGE. Both Santa Clauses, one red, one blue, are there, circling each other in a merry dance.

RED SANTA: Ohhh ho ho!

BLUE SANTA: This is Test 19, Will! Will you be a good – or a *baaa-a-ad* – little boy?

WILL: Okay, that's it. THIS IS ALL OVER! The place gets hit by lightning!

Kra-kow!! The lights flash on and off a few times, as we hear the sounds of rumbling thunder and cackling lightning!

Will is flicking his hands repeatedly, to command more lightning strikes.

WILL: End of my dream! End of my dream. I pass Test 19.

He looks around again.

WILL: Now. You guys will all be behaving like normal!

He snaps his fingers.

Then he begins walking around the stage normally, with the two Santa Clauses doing the same.

RED SANTA: So, yeah, I read in the Sports section today, the Bureaucrats won the Super Bowl.

BLUE SANTA: *What??* No way! They couldn't have beat the Jetskins!

RED SANTA: Well, I guess they did, though.

Will walks to STAGE LEFT, where a sign is now visible that reads "SHOES ON SALE". Will exits the scene. The lights FADE OUT.

Scene 11.

INT. WILL'S DREAM – BEDROOM

At CENTER STAGE, we see a window, leading us to the outside.

From the other side, a dog pokes his head up, into view, from the bottom.

Will enters the scene from STAGE RIGHT – crawling on the ground.

WILL'S VOICE: Don't you remember that dream you had when you were *five* years old? Come oooooon . . . take a second . . . you remember it.

Will looks at the window. The dog just as quickly ducks out of sight.

WILL'S VOICE: Yeaah, that's right. You're sleeping over in your grandparents' house. And you're looking out the window. And you see it.

The dog slowly brings his head up into view again, this time smiling.

Will shudders.

WILL'S VOICE: But you don't know what move to make next. Whether to talk. Or whether to move around . . . will you be seen?

Will shrivels up a little more, trying to somehow stay out of sight.

He continues to crawl across the floor, trying to remain unseen.

WILL'S VOICE: You've come a long way since Test 11, huh? Hiding under the window. Hiding in fear of those stupid three figures who had brought you into the testing. And yet, look: it's the exact same thing again, right now.

Will looks up again. He sees the dog, once more, duck out of sight.

He turns his head toward STAGE RIGHT.

WILL'S VOICE: Ohhhh, shit, you left the door open.

BARK, BARK, BARK! Viciously, the dog barks and growls.

A dog-like, man-like BEAST enters the scene from STAGE RIGHT, growling.

Will scoots backward. Backs up toward the wall.

WILL: Bad! Bad creature! No!

The beast growls some more. And walks closer to Will.

Will quickly runs toward STAGE LEFT. The beast quickly runs after him, then stops. Shortly thereafter, it hides behind something.

Will looks back to the window on the wall, only to see an ordinary sight, without the beast there at all.

Soon, the beast's head slowly slides itself back up into view from the other side of the window.

WILL: Damn it, STOOOOOP!

We hear the loud sound of rumbling. The loud sound of fireworks going off.

WILL: So this is it, Test 20, The End, because I'm declaring *no more* to these dumb nightmares. I'm not scared of them anymore, and I'm not falling for them anymore.

The lights FADE OUT. Will walks to STAGE RIGHT.

Scene 12.

Three unknown people sit in chairs at STAGE RIGHT.

STRANGER 1: Wow! So – so tell us, *then* what did you do?

STRANGER 2: You just – *declared* the end of Test 20?

STRANGER 3: Just said good-bye to that dog-beast?

WILL: Oh, well, yeah, I just declared I was done with the dream and I just . . .
Heeeeeey! I ain't fallin' for this!

The three strangers start making nervous gestures while talking nonsense words.

WILL: All right, so I know this is just a dream. But . . . yeah.

The people in the chairs all exit STAGE RIGHT.

WILL: (*sigh*) Alone again.

He walks around a little. Then stops, at CENTER STAGE, to look at the window one more time.

The dog-beast's head is back. It looks at Will silently for a few seconds.

Then, screaming as loud as it can, it jumps through the window! We hear the loud sound of GLASS SHATTERING!

The beast is crouched on the floor, on all four claws! It's growling angrily, gnashing its jaws at Will!

WILL: No. No! Wake up! Wake up!

NIGHTMARE VOICE: You refused to believe it, Will. But here it is: test 20. This dog, from your nightmares, has come in through the window.

WILL: No. No. MmmmmMY DOG!

The dog whimpers, and starts to walk away.

Will walks back to STAGE LEFT – where the bed is.

The lights FADE OUT.

Scene 13.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE – BEDROOM

At STAGE LEFT, Will and Laurie are lying in bed. The lights FADE ON as Will wakes up again.

WILL: Hmm. Yeah.

LAURIE: Will?

WILL: Yeah?

LAURIE: It's 8 a.m. . . . hey, you really *must* be over that whole nightmares thing.

WILL: What? What do you mean?

LAURIE: You don't wake up at 2 a.m. having panic attacks anymore.

WILL: Yeah. Yeah! Heh heh.

He starts walking around the room.

WILL: Uh-huh. I got over and done with all that nightmare nonsense. I just got done having Test 20 . . . and it was the final one.

LAURIE: You going somewhere?

WILL: Yeah, to get a new job.

LAURIE: What's wrong, Dosan's not satisfactory to you somehow?

WILL: (*shrugs*) Different chapter of my life.

And Will leaves the scene, headed toward CENTER STAGE.

From the other side of the window, we see a dog poke his head into view again.

END OF ACT THREE.

END OF PLAY.