

This Is Just
A Nightmare

“This Is Just A Nightmare”
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ISBN#: 978-0-557-71441-4

MEET THE PLAYERS.

DR. WILLIAM CUMBERLAND.

For the last 10 years, William Cumberland has been absorbed into his work as a scientist at Dosan Laboratories. Soon enough, once the Dream Machine project is finished, he will have time for his wife and two daughters again.

WILL'S FAMILY: LAURIE, JULIA, ERICA, TOM, & SAM.

The circle of people that Will considers his immediate family: his wife, first daughter, second daughter, Laurie's brother, and Will's Dad. Will is definitely the odd one in his family: his wife, daughters, Dad, and Tom are never be able to follow what he says about science.

SHADOWY FIGURES 1, 2, & 3.

Almost no information is known about the three shadowy figures who abduct Will from his own bed. The only thing we know is that they work in the United States government, they have a keen eye for science, and they do not come from this world.

MINOTAUR.

A monster that exists only in the virtual nightmare world.

DAVID BOOTH, DRIVING INSTUCTOR.

Will's instructor from the three Driver's Ed courses he took when he was 16; but he seems a bit more twisted, perhaps evil, in the nightmare . . .

DREAM-WORLD PEOPLE 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5.

Several times, inside the dream-world, Will meets as many as five people – at least two of which are women – who exist only within the dream.

THIS IS JUST A NIGHTMARE.

ACT ONE.

Scene 1.

STAGE LEFT, CENTER STAGE, and STAGE RIGHT are the sets for three simultaneously-occurring scenes.

STAGE RIGHT: a bedroom, with an empty bed in it. The lights are low here.

CENTER STAGE: the dining room. The time is mid-evening. The room is well-lit here. The Cumberland family – Will, Laurie, Tom, Julia, Erica, and Sam – are eating at the table.

STAGE LEFT: a small scientific experimentation room set up inside a van.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE – DINING ROOM – EVENING – CENTER STAGE

WILL: Man . . . this is so good.

SAM: You haven't been around the house much, to have dinner, have ya?

WILL: Not in *this* century, no.

SAM: See? Now you see what you've been missing all this time. Always being gone, always busy with work, work, work. How often do you just stop and have dinner with your own family?

Will shrugs.

WILL: Yeah. I mean . . . I don't *plan* for it to happen like that . . . I just get –

LAURIE: You just get busy.

Another few seconds of silence. Will shrugs again, then nods his head.

WILL: Pretty much, I do. What we're creating . . . it's major.

JULIA: Yeah, I'll say. You must have been working on that project for at *least* 10 years, Dad. I think I was still in elementary school when you started disappearing.

ERICA: Yeah. I mean, nobody has still even *seen* it . . . what could be so . . . big and important?

WILL: What could be so big and major, that your father would just sink into his work and not emerge for this many years?

LAURIE: Oh, come on, now. You girls know what happens when you ask your father these questions. He just says:

WILL & LAURIE: The Dream Machine Project has been taking a lot of time and hard work . . .

WILL: . . . but with a little more patience, I expect it to be finished relatively soon.

ERICA: "Relatively soon", huh?

WILL: Well, actually . . . I may have said that before . . . but . . . see . . . today something *happened*.

Now Will stops talking.

He's not sure what to say next.

LAURIE: So, what happened?

He's still not quite sure how to say it.

LAURIE: I'm gonna assume the worst if you don't say.

WILL: Something *good* happened. I mean – even though they canceled animal testing. They've approved human trials. Then, if it succeeds, this Dream Machine project may be open to the public by the end of the year.

JULIA: R-really?

SAM: Yeah, say that again? I musta had something in my ear.

Will looks around at the other faces at the table, and smiles.

WILL: I've been wanting to say that for years. Man, that was great.

LAURIE: Wait – you're not joking, right? Were you joking?

WILL: Fraid not. The first working model of the Dream Machine Project is finished. Its construction is complete. I mean, that's the thing – it's completed, but not really tested out yet, so it's hard to say.

SAM: So if it's done, then what's the problem?

WILL: It's not been tested yet. They canceled animal testing. They're not going to be testing the machine with animals, because, you see . . . the animals don't talk. If they don't talk, we basically have no findings, nothing concrete. However, today, they set the appointment for the start of human trials – in two more weeks.

ERICA: That's amazing!

WILL: Yeah. Isn't it?

ERICA: This is a major breakthrough!

WILL: Of course it is! Now, if it were up to me, I'd just call it case closed and fork over the Nobel Prize already. But, it's not. Still another two weeks until human testing begins. Then the whole Dream Machine project may soon be finished and over with.

SAM: Now . . . what exactly is this Dream Machine project all about?

WILL: Well . . . you see . . . it's about this. See, every animal – human, dog, cat, even mice – all animals have dreams. Now, when you look at mice . . . certain areas of the *brain* seem to go *up* in their electronic activity, while the mouse is asleep, while it's dreaming. This indicates that those areas of the brain, that are seeing increase of activity, are the dream-areas. Yet an autopsy of a mouse is not necessarily an autopsy of a human being. Still, scientists have been searching, for many years now, for the areas of the brain that are the dream-areas.

SAM: Oh, okay! So you want to see what area of the brain processes dreams. But what happens if you remove that part of the brain?

WILL: . . . Good question. Dear God, I . . . never really stopped to ask that.

SAM: Would you stop dreaming forever?

WILL: I . . . don't think it's possible. Next question.

SAM: So, so that's it! That doesn't sound like much of a dream-recorder camera to me!

WILL: . . . Well . . . it's the start. Once we learn what areas of the brain process dreams, we try to *project* this electricity out onto a glass TV screen. We try to display a person's dreams, when they're asleep, onto this TV screen.

Phase Two: if we could achieve that, then could we put images onto that TV screen to go back into a person's brain? Then, your human brains could be used as a way of watching TV. And if you could watch TV in your sleep . . . could you also get into a more computer environment? Could you use the human brains as a means of entering virtual reality? The digital environment of CGI? . . . That's Computer-Generated Imaging, of course.

TOM: Will, who in their right mind would plug their brains into a computer? To enter a virtual reality when they're asleep? I mean . . . who in the Hell would be willing to fry their own brain like that?

WILL: Fry your brain? Jeez. Were you this much against TV when it first came out?

TOM: We're not talking about TV. We're talking about wires plugging into the *brain*.

WILL: Oh, come on. It's not that bad. It's not wires plugging into the *brain*, it's just . . . wearing a helmet over your head.

TOM: Yeah, no thanks. Where my electricity goes, I'll take my chances watching my TV from a far distance. Not all around my head on a helmet. I mean – who would do that?

WILL: My team. Or – the team that I'm on.

TOM: No, I mean . . . who, as a . . . a customer . . . would voluntarily *put* their head into that kind of electric helmet?

WILL: (*tension rising a little*) I don't know, maybe someone who wants to achieve something significant?

TOM: So, this is about *you*, achieving something?

Will clenches his teeth and fist, but doesn't go any farther into it.

WILL: Look, just forget I said anything!

TOM: It ain't *my* fault your machine is a –

WILL: (*hitting the table*) No. Fuck it. You're right. We don't have successful human trials to show yet, we don't have anything, until two more weeks. Damn it all. See, this is why I don't talk about work at the table.

SAM: (*to Tom*) I think you really struck a chord this time.

TOM: Oh, *me*? I just say one thing.

WILL: I don't know.

LAURIE: Look, Will, sweetie, it's all right. When you win that Nobel Prize for Science by the end of the year, they'll see.

WILL: Mm-hmm.

JULIA: Well, the thing is. I don't *have* dreams. So there would be nothing to record.

WILL: Yeah you do.

JULIA: No I don't. I just go to bed, I get up the next day . . . don't really *have* dreams.

WILL: Well . . . the thing is . . . even when your body is asleep, your brain's activity is always going on. You always end up having dreams. Your mind is just pacing around in circles. See, people forget that they actually spent an entire 8 hours inside a single bed. People forget that they had all these *weird dreams* that you forget upon waking up.

JULIA: Wow. That's cool, Dad.

LAURIE: See, now. You've finally said it to your family, Will. Now don't you feel better?

WILL: I sure do! It's been in my head for years. The Dream Machine project. The Dream Machine project. I've been doing this thing since both girls were in grade school! Oh, but once human testing is done – then I'll *really* feel complete! Another two weeks.

Will chuckles.

WILL: Wow. So many years . . . I just can't believe it. It feels like . . . like . . .

LAURIE: Like what, dear?

WILL: It's all like a dream.

The lights FADE OUT.

(The scene at CENTER STAGE clears away to become the exterior of Will's house.)

Scene 2.

INT. WILL'S HOUSE – BEDROOM – LATE AT NIGHT

At STAGE RIGHT, Will and Laurie are sleeping in bed. Laurie is sleeping, at least – Will is tossing and turning restlessly. Nothing he does works. He just can't fall asleep. With an irritated groan, he gets up and starts walking around.

LAURIE: *(groggily)* Where you going?

He's startled! But, when he turns his head and sees Laurie, he cools down.

WILL: You gave me a start there.

LAURIE: You're not going somewhere, are you?

WILL: No, no! Of course not. I just . . . I can't sleep.

LAURIE: Baby, it's . . . (*as she checks the time*) 2 in the morning??

WILL: Look, don't worry about me . . . just, you know, me being a mad scientist.

LAURIE: Is this gonna persist for the next two weeks and three days?

WILL: No, no . . . I just . . . I don't know. I can't sleep. Look, just don't worry about it . . . I'll be back in bed after a while. All right?

Will hears the sound of a doorknob turning.

He turns.

WILL: Whoa, did you hear that? Was that just me?

LAURIE: Probably just a neighbor.

WILL: Man, I thought I was losing it. Wait – you heard it too, though, right?

The same sound repeats.

Then, we can hear the sound of a door being kicked open.

WILL: What the Hell? Hey! Is someone at our door?

Laurie sits up in bed – no longer trying to sleep.

Will looks around for something he can use against a burglar.

WILL: Someone's trying to break in. We've got a burglar!

LAURIE: What are you doing? What are you looking for?

Finally, Will finds a baseball bat. He grins.

WILL: Ha haaa . . . come to Daddy.

LAURIE: *Will!!!* What are you doing?

WILL: Somebody's trying to break into the house.

LAURIE: Baby, we have an alarm system – nobody could get past it! Just stop freaking out and –

WILL: (*as he gets the bat ready:*) Whoever's breaking in, somehow was able to bypass the alarm. Well, they won't bypass me.

His own bedroom door is kicked open!

Laurie screams, and jumps backward, as three men walk in!

This is not the moment Will expected. These are three men in black suits – standing perfectly straight and tall, emotionless.

WILL: Is . . . there something I can help you with?

Figure 2 points at Will. Figures 1 and 3 walk his way.

Will takes charge again.

WILL: You'd best tell me what's happening, right now! I have the right to know, before anyone *touches* –

1 and 3 grab him by the shoulders.

WILL: *What the Hell are you doing??*

Laurie screams again, and scoots backward against the wall.

WILL: Identification! Tell me who you are! Tell me right now!

Figure 2 points toward the door.

WILL: *Who on Earth are you people??*

Figure 2 walks up to Will, and stands directly in front of him.

FIGURE 2: We are *not* from Earth.

That sentence has a particular impact on Will, who stops like a deer in headlights.

WILL: You're not human. *You're not human!*

Figure 2 leaves. 1 and 3 follow shortly behind – dragging Will with them, kicking and screaming.

WILL: They're not human! *Where are you taking meeeee??*

Right as they're about to get out . . . Laurie bolts out of bed and breaks open a glass bottle against the back of Figure 3's head!

He doesn't move. He doesn't react. After a second of silence, he turns around to look at Laurie. Though she's still standing upright, her arm is starting to shake.

LAURIE: You touch my husband and I'll –

FIGURE 3: You are not a factor in the experiment.

He uses a spray can on Laurie . . . and she collapses, unconscious.

With Laurie down, the shadowy figures resume their business. Figures 1 and 3 drag Will away, kicking and screaming.

Number 2 looks around the room, one final time.

He heads out. The lights FADE OUT.

(Clear the scene at STAGE RIGHT to be replaced with the dream world.)

Scene 3.

EXT. WILL'S HOUSE – FRONT

CENTER STAGE. Outside of Will's house, Figures 1 and 3 continue to drag Will away, toward a van parked directly out front. He keeps thrashing, trying to break free.

WILL: Hey! Hey! Get your hands off me!! You inhuman ffffreaks!

Figure 2 climbs inside the van, and 1 and 3 follow shortly after, carrying Will with them.

WILL: Why do you keep doing this?? I'll kill you! You hear me?? Ahhh ha ha haaa!! I'll get outta this and I'll find a weapon and *I'll kill you all!! Ahhhh* ha ha ha!

They drag him to STAGE LEFT, the inside of the van.

Scene 4.

INT. VAN – STAGE LEFT

STAGE LEFT: the interior of the van.

CENTER STAGE: the exterior of Will's house.

STAGE RIGHT: the dream world.

(The exterior of Will's house, at CENTER STAGE, does not disappear, but the lights do FADE OUT.)

At STAGE LEFT, we are inside the van. The shadowy figures are bringing Will into the laboratory set up inside. They throw him onto a table. All three shadowy figures stand over him.

We can hear a lot of sounds at once: electronic hissing and cackling of wires; sounds of super-computers at work; the van's engine starting up and driving. Through all of this, Will struggles and thrashes about, but doesn't break free.

Figure 2 presents a metal object – similar in shape to a horseshoe – and holds it over Will's head.

Will stops thrashing around, looking at the horseshoe-like object, mesmerized, like a baby.

WILL: Jesus, that's . . . that's . . . the Dream Machine Project . . .

Figure 2 places it onto his head, like a crown.

The men continue to work the wires with their hands. Then they drag Will away from the table, and onto a big metal chair.

WILL: Dream Machine. The Dream Machine. Why . . . why would you guys . . . make it happen this way?

FIGURE 2: Virtual dream-state to commence in 3 . . . 2 . . . 1 . . . begin.

WILL: Hey wait, no!

Figure 3 takes two wires and presses them together.

Instantly, Will begins convulsing. Too much energy is hitting him at once for him to handle. Then he stops moving, and his pupils roll up in his head.

The lights FADE OUT.

Once all the light is gone, the actor playing Will exits the scene at STAGE LEFT, and soon re-appears at STAGE RIGHT, inside the dream-world, to lay down on the floor on his back.

In the darkness, a second actor enters STAGE LEFT to take over the role of Van-Will – the body of Will inside the van, connected to the chair. Van-Will should dress and

appear very similar, if not identical, to the regular Will, who is in the dream-world at STAGE-RIGHT and remains the original actor.

Scene 5.

INT. DREAM WORLD – STAGE RIGHT

The lights FADE IN to the sight of Will in the dream-world at STAGE RIGHT, laying on his back, and Van-Will at STAGE LEFT, still plugged in, while, at CENTER STAGE, the exterior of his house remains in darkness.

STAGE RIGHT, the dream-world, is lit with a blue spotlight that shines down from above.

At STAGE LEFT, Figure 2 is looking at Van-Will, and he talks into a microphone so that his voice is heard at STAGE RIGHT, by Will in the dream-world.

VOICE: William Cumberland.

Will sits up, and assumes the same position as he just had in the van-lab, sitting in an invisible chair. His breathing is convulsive.

After a few seconds, the instinctive reaction settles down, and he finds himself sitting calmly. He breathes a little slower.

He looks at the floor and inspects both of his hands.

WILL: Am I alive? Am I alive?

VOICE: You are alive. You are unconscious.

WILL: . . . But, I'm alive?

Another few seconds to regain his composure.

WILL: Okay, I'm alive . . . and . . . I'm unconscious . . . thus . . . I'm having a dream.

VOICE: Correct.

WILL: I'm dreaming. All right, how much of this is a dream? How much of this – did those men really come in . . . hey, where am I? Tell me where I am!

VOICE: Your body is inside our smaller laboratory, inside a van. You are being driven away to a remote location. You will undergo a series of tests within the virtual-zone.

WILL: This is just crazy. You turn your machine off right now, and we'll have a little talk. I know my legal rights, and I know I can get your ass charged, either in court, or otherwise in *jail!*

VOICE: Do you feel raised levels of aggression now, Will?

That question makes him have to stop.

VOICE: Do you realize where you are?

Will gulps.

WILL: I'm inside a van . . . strapped to the Dream Machine chair.

VOICE: Correct – and you are now inside the zone of the virtual-dream-state.

WILL: Son of a gun. The virtual bubble. It does exist.

VOICE: We will need to conduct 10 tests before we let you go.

WILL: 10 tests?

VOICE: The rules will be explained to you along the way.

WILL: No! Fuck that, no they're not! I never signed up to volunteer for human testing! You have me *all* wrong! You can't just treat me like another lab mouse! Jesus, I helped *design* this thing – I helped *build* it!

VOICE: So did we.

A moment of shocked silence and awe, on Will's part.

The truth finally begins to sink in: that this amazing technology was created in part by humans, and in part by intelligent alien life beyond that which he was aware of.

VOICE: Are you ready to begin your first test?

WILL: Yes. Begin.

VOICE: Very well. To your right, you will find a door. Open the door, and you will enter testing area number one.

Will faces the audience – looking at an imaginary door at CENTER STAGE.

WILL: Okay. I see it.

Looking directly at it, he steps closer slowly.

WILL: S-so . . . yeah . . . I guess I'll just . . . have a look-see here.

He moves all the way through the open doorspace.

Scene 6.

INT. DREAM-WORLD

Right now, there are still two scenes happening:

STAGE LEFT: the interior of the van, where Will is still sitting;
CENTER STAGE AND STAGE RIGHT: the dream-world.

Will, walking toward BACK-STAGE CENTER, turns to his side and inspects his hands again, turning them around and waving them to see that unreal blue glow.

WILL: Whooo, hooo! What a crazy dream!

VOICE: This is more than just a dream, as you're certainly about to learn.

The blue spotlight shines at CENTER STAGE, revealing a blue brick wall, with black cement, which stops Will's walking abruptly.

WILL: (*startled, at first*) Whoa! . . . Brick wall. Hmm. Gotta say, I've never seen it in blue-and-black before. But that's pretty cool.

VOICE: Welcome to the Maze.

Will looks around himself.

WILL: Whoa, what? There's walls everywhere! How . . . wait, I start out in the *middle* of a maze? What?

VOICE: Your goal, in this test, is to find the end of the maze. The walls follow the layout of a perfect grid design. They can only be positioned in two different directions. This maze was randomly-generated, and thousands more could be . . . but there *is* a pattern to this, and if you figure it out, you *will* find the end.

WILL: Dear God, I've . . . I've *seen* this . . . on a screen! I've *seen* this, as an electronic computer program! Like a tiny little Atari game! It's so much *bigger* here . . .

VOICE: Your time limit is five minutes.

WILL: Why, what happens in five minutes?

Now we hear the screaming sound of a wild animal, roaring loudly.

VOICE: In five minutes, you will meet the Minotaur of the Maze.

It all hits Will at once.

WILL: W-what? What kind of fucked up test is that?

VOICE: Begin.

Will looks around himself one more time. But he doesn't know what to do to solve this test.

WILL: What kind of sick test *is* this?

He starts walking around, feeling the walls with his hands.

WILL: Jesus Christ, what kind of sick, depraved lunatics would just do this to a person?

With both hands on one wall, he continues walking toward STAGE RIGHT.

WILL: Randomly-generated maze. Man! This isn't FAIR.

He continues to walk around several imaginary walls.

All the lights FADE OUT over CENTER STAGE and STAGE RIGHT.

The lights FADE IN again. A few minutes have passed for Will.

WILL: I think I'm close.

VOICE: 45 seconds.

WILL: And I'm still in the game. See – I've got this. I've got it. I learned a little trick about mazes, as a kid. All you have to do . . . is just follow the left wall. Then you eventually get to the end.

Finally, Will finds a giant glowing red X that marks the end of the maze.

VOICE: Congratulations, Will: you made it to the end of the Maze. 37 seconds still remaining on the clock. This is good.

Will smiles. Then he examines the red X a little closer.

WILL: X marks the spot, huh?

He reaches out, to touch it. Nothing happens when he does so.

VOICE: To your right, you will see a door. Step through the doorway, to enter Test Two.

Will looks at the imaginary door at CENTER STAGE.

Looking left and right one last time, he walks all the way through the open doorway. Then he spins on his heels to walk out the door, toward STAGE RIGHT.

Scene 7.

INT. DREAM-WORLD – DOSAN LABORATORIES

The lights FADE IN on the inside of Dosan Laboratories, as it exists in the distorted nightmare world, at STAGE RIGHT.

Five other scientists are standing around, wearing white lab coats, pacing about frantically in a slightly nonsensical manner.

VOICE: Welcome to Dosan Laboratories.

WILL: Oh, the irony.

. . . Wait a minute. You said this was a *test*?

VOICE: You see, Will, of these five scientists, *one* is not really a person – one is *the Devil*. In five minutes, the Devil plans on setting off an explosion to destroy everything in this room. You have two minutes to identify which one is him.

Will shakes his head.

WILL: This is nonsense.

He laughs a little.

WILL: You're sitting here putting me into VR. And feeding me this fictional situation with the minotaur of the maze. And now a fictional situation about the Devil posing as a person . . .

(*shakes his head*) Are you trying to use human literature against me or something?

Walking around a little, Will spots all five of the scientists. Neither one looks particularly menacing or evil, except for Number One, whose head and neck are hunched downward badly, one shoulder raised high over the other, one eye opened very wide.

Will approaches Number One, to ask him a question.

WILL: Okay. Are *you* the Devil?

Number One smiles, laughs, and puts his hand on Will's shoulder.

NUMBER ONE: Ha ha! My dear boy, you need to learn, the Devil does not exist! You, of all people, should know that the first thing that does not belong in a science lab is religion!

WILL: Okay. (*as he approaches Number Two*) Are *you* the Devil?

NUMBER TWO: If you ask me that again, I'll kill you.

WILL: . . . Hmm. Okay. (*as he approaches Number Three*) Are *you* the Devil?

NUMBER THREE: (*walking away*) Nah, nah, nah, I'm not a part of this test, I'm not a part of this test. I've got my own life. Don't talk to me.

WILL: . . . Huh. All right.

(*as he approaches Number Four*) Are *you* the Devil?

Number Four suddenly has a giant wad of Monopoly-like money that he's holding with both hands and arms! He starts throwing it at Will!

NUMBER FOUR: Free money! Free money! Free money!

Will's eyes go wide. He starts to wander over to the free money from Number Four. But the closer he advances toward Number Four, the farther back the man walks.

Then, an attractive lady enters the scene and brushes her hand against Will's side as she passes by. He looks at her, taken by surprise.

LADY: There's no way *that* exists in the nightmare!

Will is shocked – the words taken right out of his mouth!

LADY: Yeah, that's right! I'm just a figment of the dream, aren't I? Except in your dream, I can be anything you want me to be.

. . . Do you recognize me? Do you know who I am?

WILL: Uhhh –

LADY: I'm that new receptionist at Dosan. I've been there for about five weeks. You know – you get pissed off sometimes, because you think I don't know what I'm doing. But, at the same time, you secretly think I'm hot.

Will gulps.

LADY: And *now* what are you gonna do?

WILL: (*sigh*) It's the lady. SHE is the Devil!

He looks around.

The four scientists in white lab coats seem to murmur amongst each other.

LADY: Will. Listen. You could have *whatever you want* in this dream.

Will gulps.

She steps closer.

LADY: What would you do, if you *could* do anything?

Will shrugs.

WILL: This isn't even "real" . . . it would be . . . kind of pathetic.

LADY: (*coming still closer*) How do YOU know this isn't *real*?

Will gulps. He looks around himself again, in a full circle around himself.

WILL: You're saying . . . how do I know I'm *not* awake right now? And this is all real, and *you're* real?

LADY: *Exactly!*

WILL: But . . . but . . . I know this is a dream. I mean . . . I remember . . . the Maze.

He hesitates.

WILL: No. Forget it. Game's over! SHE is the Devil! SHE is the one!

LADY: Why do you say *that*, Will?

WILL: Because. Temptation. (*nodding his head*) That's why I think it.

The lights FADE OUT over STAGE RIGHT.

Ding! Ding! Will hears the sound that signifies a correct answer.

A blue spotlight shines on Will.

VOICE: You have passed the second test, Will. You will make it to the third test.

WILL: Okay. Was there any POINT to all that?

(a moment of silence)

Come on, now. That was just stupid! Oh, look, “We’re putting you into the Maze with the Minotaur”. Oh, look, “One of these five scientists is the Devil”. That ONE lady wasn’t even a scientist anyway.

(shrugs) What exactly was the POINT of all that?

VOICE: To your right, you will find a doorway. Enter it.

WILL: Yeah, yeah, magic doorway.

So he enters the door, the same way he did twice before.

Scene 8.

INT. DREAM WORLD – BLACK LIMBO

A spotlight stays on Will, but only him. Nobody else is around anymore.

WILL: I don’t believe in the Devil anyway. Or “angels”. No more than I do the existence of the minotaur. So I don’t get what that whole test really accomplished, exactly. What, you studied Earth literature or something?

He stands in place for several seconds.

. . . And the silence continues.

WILL: Okay, so, now what?

There still remains nothing but silence.

WILL: *(looking around)* Hello?

He looks up at the ceiling, extending both hands up, stretching, reaching.

WILL: Hello? *(as he looks down at his feet)* Hey, guys?

More silence.

WILL: *(looking up at the ceiling)* Guys? Isn’t the next test supposed to start now?

For the next five seconds, there still remains nothing but the infinite vacuum of this part of the virtual zone.

WILL: What's going on?? Hey. GLITCH! I think there was a glitch!

He shudders.

WILL: Dear God, I think there was a glitch in the . . . in the software . . . FUCK!!

He grabs his head.

WILL: Kidnapped into the virtual bubble . . . fuck . . . virtual limbo. HEY! HEY, GUYS! I'M RIGHT HERE! The third test didn't load! I'm trapped here in limbo now!!

He starts to walk in a big circle, talking more.

WILL: (*shaking his head*) Oh, man . . . I feel so bad now . . . testing on all those mice . . . (*holding his forehead and face*) How could I do that to those poor mice . . .

Finally, he snaps, turning angry.

WILL: WHY DO I GOTTA BE IN THIS?? Huh? WHY WOULD YOU PICK ME FOR THIS AND JUST . . . THROW ME IN HERE?!

No response.

Will gets down on the ground and starts smashing it with his fists.

WILL: Ahhhhhh!! I'll kill you when I find you! I'll track you down and kill you! You can't fucking do this to me!!

No response. So he stops moving, finally, and sighs.

WILL: . . . I think something got messed up with the code of that doorway. You need a bug-tester . . . like me. (*shrugs*) Oh, what's the point now.

Silence. Sighing, he gives up.

He lays on his back on the floor. After seeing that it works, that he can still do this, he gets comfortable.

WILL: Fine, then: I'll just catch some rest. Good.

He relaxes, breathing in slowly through the nose, holding his breath, waiting a few seconds, and then breathing out through the mouth.

The lights FADE OUT.

The lights all FADE IN again much later.

WILL: 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299 . . . and . . . finally . . . 300.

VOICE: Congratulations, Will – Test Three is over.

WILL: (*sigh*) You never even told me when it *began*.

VOICE: Correct.

Will finally realizes it.

WILL: I guess you look at me and all you see is just another mouse.

He begins to walk around, but the lights all FADE OUT to total darkness.

(Will walks about three meters closer to STAGE LEFT.) The lights FADE IN on Will, still walking around.

Scene 9.

INT. DREAM WORLD – EXT. WILL'S HOUSE

Suddenly, he eyes the sight of STAGE RIGHT, as light shines on an image of a house.

WILL: Hey, what? That's . . . that's my house.

(*a brief pause, as he holds his face*)

Jesus, you have the architecture of my *home* mapped out on the Dream Machine? What, do you have the whole neighborhood, or just . . .

An idea hits him.

WILL: Wait a second. (*looking away from the house*) That's my *car*. Does *that* work?

He gets no answer from the voices. So, he walks up to his car and starts feeling around on it with his hands.

WILL: I can feel it. My car, it's here . . .

He puts his hands on and off the car a few times.

WILL: How can I FEEL it? The sense of touch? How does THAT work?

(*feeling it again*) I mean, the SIGHT of it, that could be computer-generated imaging. But the FEEL of it . . . oh . . . oh. Right. Left-brain activity.

He raises one knee and touches the car, awed by the fact that he can “feel” everything that's happening inside the dream.

He runs his hands down to the backseat's door, and then a little farther.

WILL: Okay, yeah, it's got the gas cap . . . yep, it does. Spare key.
(*walking toward his house*) All I needed to know.

He walks on, and is shocked to find that he stumbles into, almost falling over, a kid's bicycle.

WILL: What the . . . huh! That bicycle! That . . . that was the bicycle I bought for Julia . . . back when she was in third grade.
(*looking up to the sky*) How did THIS get here?!

He gets no answer. So he takes the bicycle by the hand, walking it away.

WILL: Wow. Does it work? (*climbing on, and starting to ride it around*)
It works, son of a gun. It feels so real.

He gets off the bike, gently setting it down.

WILL: Wow. So I can even ride a bike here. But I can't eat food. I can't drink.

He walks up to the front door of his house. Gripping the imaginary doorknob, he opens the door – unlocked – and steps inside.

He exits the scene at STAGE RIGHT, to enter his house. The lights FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT TWO.

Scene 10.

INT. DREAM-WORLD – INT. WILL'S HOUSE

There are three scenes going on at once right now:

STAGE LEFT: the interior of the van-lab, with Will and the 3 shadowy figures.

CENTER STAGE: the interior of Will's house, his living room.

STAGE RIGHT: Erica's bedroom, darkened with no light yet. Here, we see a rolling chair, and a desktop computer, complete with a monitor and keyboard.

At STAGE LEFT, Van-Will continues to respond to the actions of Will in the dream, thrashing at times and remaining calm at others.

At STAGE RIGHT, Will enters the scene, bypasses the bedroom entirely, and walks on to CENTER STAGE, where he finds a dream-world replication of his own dining room, now lit with blue light.

The dining room looks distorted from how it did at dinner. The table is laying on its side. The chairs are randomly facing different directions in illogical non-patterns. This could not possibly be the same place he just saw hours ago.

He walks by the table, running his hand across it.

WILL: God, it feels . . . so . . . so *there!* So *right here!* But it's not! Right?

No answer.

WILL: This is the secret to VR sensory touch illusion. The left brain. I used to think vibrations were used to simulate the sense of touch. Hff. Vibration technology was just barely the beginning.

Will continues to walk around the scene. He uses his foot to move a chair, then brings it back.

The next time he talks, he addresses the blue spotlight again.

WILL: Why are you doing this to me, man??

He shakes his head. This situation is getting to be hard to take.

WILL: What kind of person would just – *abduct* a guy out of his house? His own house?? And just drag him into this nightmare!

VOICE: You are being counterproductive, Will.

Five people make sounds of giggling. Will's spine straightens.

WILL: Who's there??

The light shines on the five people entering the room from STAGE RIGHT. They are: Laurie, Julie, Erica, Tom, and Sam.

Will is shocked. He doesn't know how to react. He doesn't say a word.

WILL: Laurie?

All five people start smiling. All five people start laughing. Slowly, they dance around the room, keeping eye contact with Will.

This moment doesn't change. It just continues for at least five seconds: the Cumberland family laughing, with Will frozen still, looking left and right, unable to figure out what to do.

WILL: Okay. This is supposed to scare me, right? This biiig, scary nightmare of yours, it's supposed to have me *catatonic* and scared right now, right?

As he talks, his family members come closer.

WILL: Wow. That's it. That's the whole test. Well, this ends now!

Will finally looks directly at his family members.

WILL: Everyone!

He *slams* his hand onto the table!

WILL: You guys don't exist! *None* of you!

No reaction from any of them; they continue to move toward him.

WILL: Well, this is *my* dream, and *you* guys are in it. And, hereby, I'm taking control of the dream. So, all of you, will just go about a normal dinner. (*he snaps his fingers*)

Everything falls into place. The blue spotlight becomes regular white light again. All the members of the family walk to the table and chairs, and right them.

LAURIE: Okay, let's get this dining room back into gear. Let's make this place presentable again.

ERICA: I'll help. I'll get the table.

Will shudders. Everything is becoming a little too real for comfort.

Finally, with everything set straight again, everyone walks to their chairs and has a seat.

VOICE: Impressive. You are in control of the internal part of the dream.

WILL: But the EX-ternal, that would be the VR . . . neighborhood . . . house . . . city.

He clutches his head.

WILL: I don't even know what to think now. Everything I know is all fucked up and messed around.

Ice cream truck music begins to play.

It continues to get louder and more intense. Will is uncertain. But his family members all seem to light up with delight over the music.

LAURIE: The ice cream man! The ice cream man!

An ice cream man, dressed in a nice white suit, enters from STAGE RIGHT!

LAURIE, JULIA, & ERICA: THE ICE CREAM MAN!

WILL: Guys . . . guys . . . look. I need five minutes. I'll come back in five minutes. I've just got one little thing to take care of. All right?

A moment of silence.

WILL: All right. Good.

He leaves the living room, toward STAGE RIGHT. Fade to black.

Scene 11.

INT. DREAM WORLD – WILL'S HOUSE – ERICA'S BEDROOM

FADE IN as he enters Erica's bedroom at STAGE RIGHT.

He locks the door shut. CLICK.

WILL: I can't stay here long. I just need a minute . . .

VOICE: What are you doing, Will?

WILL: You mean you don't know? You can't just . . . read my mind?

VOICE: No, we cannot.

Will chuckles.

WILL: That's right. You can all *see* me . . . you can all *see* what I'm doing . . .
(*tapping his forehead*) But you can't *see* the thoughts I've got up here.

VOICE: We are entitled to know.

WILL: Well I choose not to tell you.

VOICE: We will eventually find out, one way or another; you may as well tell us.

WILL: (*sigh*) All right, creepos. This is my daughter's bedroom. And I know that she's got a computer in here. I had a feeling it would be here . . .

VOICE: This computer exists only in the dream.

WILL: Yeah. So does the layout of the house. Which is connected to electronic computer information. If I can find a computer here . . . I can reprogram stuff.

Will sits down in a chair, and starts typing on a computer. He continues to type, around 100 words per minute, and doesn't stop until further notice.

WILL: Hmm . . . yep . . . I had a feeling. It works.

VOICE: The computer is not real, Will. It may look like it is there, but it is only a replica. A perfect replica, possibly, but a replica nonetheless.

WILL: I don't care. A computer, inside this . . . this video-game world, it still acts and functions as a computer. So if I could just get myself onto the same system that *you* guys are in, perhaps, I could . . . reprogram things around.

He keeps typing, looking more irritated now as he tries to get things to work.

WILL: C'mon, c'mon, how long's this gonna take . . . system directory, damn it!

VOICE: There is nothing you could do to change your environment, Will.

WILL: Hmm. I think I have it all figured out. ALL, figured out.

This dream is half-internal, half-external. The internal part is from my own left brain. The external side is the computer video-game-like digital environment.

(*nodding his head*) And if I type enough programming code into the computer, I could . . . who knows.

VOICE: You don't have the software necessary to control the dream.

WILL: And I don't need it. All I need is the Cretaceous-era technology in my daughter's bedroom. Just give me a black screen, white letters, and the ability to enter commands. I know my ABCs, and six programming languages; I'm all set.

VOICE: You still cannot possibly overwrite our system.

WILL: Hmm. Well let's just get into the lighting and color system real quick. Hmm. Change the RGB value of this room, let's say. Let's just change the value of Blue down to zero, and Red up to 255. See if it works . . . and . . . (*as he presses a button*) Enter!

The spotlight in the room changes color from blue to red!

Will stands up, lit up with excitement, a light bulb flashing through his head.

WILL: *Yes!* Success! . . . You know what, this kind of looks like a warehouse.

VOICE: Congratulations, Will. You are playing this game very well.

WILL: You do realize who you kidnapped, right? Someone who helped *design* parts of this machine. And what I just did with the colors . . .

He continues to type, making his next move.

VOICE: What use do you have for red lighting? How has your move helped you?

WILL: It didn't, really.

VOICE: Then, why exert yourself to do it?

WILL: That red lighting trick? That was just a test. I wanted to see . . . if I could do *that* . . . then what *else* could I do?

He stands up again, and walks while talking.

WILL: So I just told the computer to make a *chair* appear outside the door. So, let's just see if it worked.

He unlocks and opens the door, then pulls from the other side a chair.

WILL: And, yep, just like I thought. There are now *two* of these chairs in here.

He types on the keyboard again, quickly, frantically.

WILL: Now . . . let me see . . . another command . . . EXIT!

Will stands still, waiting, for several seconds.

WILL: . . . Damn it!

VOICE: Did you really think that would work?

WILL: . . . You know what, not really.

He tries typing some more.

WILL: Quit. Eject. System eject. Nah, what was I thinking . . . that would never work.

He thinks of a new trick.

WILL: I'll generate one *copy* of a baseball bat to match every chair in the house. That's what I'll do.

Finishing his typing, he walks away from STAGE RIGHT, to get back to CENTER STAGE, where his family is eating dinner with the ice cream man.

Scene 12.

INT. DREAM WORLD – WILL'S HOUSE – DINING ROOM

LAURIE: So, you're done with – whatever you were just doing?

WILL: Yep.

ERICA: Dad, what on Earth *was* all that about? What important business could you have to conduct from inside my room?

WILL: Erica, take a look under your chair there . . . tell me if you find anything.

She has a strange look on her face.

ERICA: Wwww~~what~~ are you talking about?

WILL: Never mind, then, *I'll* do it.

He pulls her chair back, then kneels down and takes a baseball bat from underneath.

WILL: See this? This baseball bat? It wasn't here before. But, you see, I programmed this baseball bat to appear. I programmed one baseball bat to appear for every one *chair* that exists.

He looks at the ceiling again.

WILL: So *you* there. *You*, keeping me abducted into your creepy van with no windows – see that I'm getting the hang of it.

He takes the baseball bat into his own hands again.

WILL: So. I guess Test Four is kind of solved, right? I have the unfair advantage.

VOICE: If you can surprise us, we can surprise you.

All of Will's family members suddenly present knives from their pockets, which they hold up in the air, as if about to use them.

Will is silent for three seconds.

WILL: Okay, *that* I did not see coming.

VOICE: This is the situation that's happening, Will. What are you going to do?

Will doesn't talk, at first.

WILL: Well . . . I think I'm gonna . . . *run like Hell!*

He bolts away, toward STAGE RIGHT. He's still holding on dearly to the baseball bat. His family members waste no time running after him.

LAURIE: Get him!

JULIA: He's getting away!

Every person runs all the way out of sight at STAGE RIGHT.

The lights FADE OUT. In the darkness, people move the table offstage at STAGE RIGHT. All the chairs – except two – are taken away.

Both chairs are at STAGE RIGHT, the back facing STAGE LEFT, the front facing STAGE RIGHT. A steering wheel prop is put onto the chair closer to the audience.

Scene 13.

INT. DREAM WORLD – EXT. WILL'S HOUSE

The lights FADE IN. At STAGE RIGHT, Will enters the scene again, now running out the door of his house to get into his car.

He feels the car with both hands.

WILL: Shit! There's no keys!

He seems to have hit a dead end. His family is somewhere shortly behind him.

WILL: Wait a minute. *Spare key!*

Quickly, he races to the gas-cap, pulls it open, and takes from it the spare key.

WILL: (*smiling*) Ha haaa!

He races back to the driver's seat. He unlocks the door. Opens it. Climbs inside. Sits down on a chair. Pulls it shut. Locks the doors – we hear the sound of *locking*.

He looks around. And sets the baseball bat down onto the chair next to him.

Quickly, he gets the key in and starts the engine. He goes into Reverse, looks behind him while reversing, and turns the wheel to back out of the driveway. Keeping one hand on the steering wheel, he shifts the car into Drive, and floors the gas, while spinning the steering wheel left twice.

Scene 14.

INT. DREAM WORLD – INT. ROADWAY

Will, still inside his car, keeps driving quickly down the road, steering his wheel to drive straight ahead.

His family members appear at the edge of STAGE RIGHT, waving their fists in the air, back and forth, angrily while yelling nonsensical words.

Soon, they back out of the scene, at STAGE RIGHT. Now we are down to just Will in the driver's seat of his car.

Already, he's getting out of breath. Driving his car is yet another new experience in the VR zone.

WILL: This is just a nightmare, Will! Just a nightmare!

VOICE: You are running away.

WILL: This is true.

VOICE: Why is this so?

WILL: I don't wanna die!

We hear the incredibly loud, heavily-amplified sound of a bat's screeching!

Will flinches, while driving, and we hear the sound of tires swerving and he steers left, then right again, to get back to normal!

Will doesn't say a word for three seconds.

Then, finally, he speaks up:

WILL: *WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?*

VOICE: Be careful while you're driving, Will.

He pushes the PRNDLE a little bit into Neutral, and lets go of the gas.

Soon, he applies the brakes a little, to slow down his driving speed.

Looking left and right one more time, he slows down all the way to a stop, puts the car in Park, and steps out of the car.

WILL: (*getting out of the car*) Christ! You guys are too much!

VOICE: But Will, where are you going? The fourth test is not concluded.

WILL: Yeah, well – I ain't stickin' around to see how it pans out!

VOICE: You haven't answered the question, Will . . . where are you going?

Will pauses, then climbs back into the car. He starts driving off again.

WILL: You don't know? No, of course not . . . all right, I'm trying something new. I'm gonna go to the store.

VOICE: Where are you going?

WILL: The *store!* The, uhh – the *grocery store*, where Laurie and I always go shopping.

VOICE: Then, you have been here before.

WILL: Yes, yes I have. I know the place in and out. I'm assuming, if I could find my *house* in this nightmare – and if you guys have the layout of a city fully duplicated in VR – then maybe I can find the grocery store.

VOICE: What do you expect to find here?

WILL: . . . Not my family members!

VOICE: What are you looking for?

WILL: Weapons. Whatever I can find.

VOICE: How do you expect to find weapons here?

WILL: Well think about it, they must sell knives here, right? Or other things that could be used to help me defend myself.

Suddenly, Will slams on the brakes, parks, and hops out.

WILL: Okay. We're here.

VOICE: I would advise you to be careful.

WILL: Way ahead of you there.

VOICE: You never know what you will find.

WILL: I realize that.

VOICE: Will . . . stop for a second . . . listen.

Will stops. He listens.

A roaring sound is heard . . . the sound of a vicious, angry bear. This sound is different from anything we've heard so far.

VOICE: Do you hear that?

WILL: . . . Y-yeah . . .

VOICE: It's coming from inside the store.

WILL: No it's not.

VOICE: I order you to turn back.

WILL: Well you can forget that. I guess I'm disobeying orders.

VOICE: You don't recognize that sound. You don't know what it is. But will you still enter the store to find out?

Will shivers heavily.

VOICE: This is your situation, Will. Behind you, your family is still coming after you. Ahead of you is the store. It may have weapons inside . . . but it most certainly also has the monster.

WILL: Well, still. I'm going in!

VOICE: Then Test Four is over. Congratulations, Will: you have survived it. Your family did not kill you. You ran away. Test Five will begin when you enter the store.

WILL: And my mission is to survive the . . . the bear, or whatever?

VOICE: Correct.

WILL: (*nodding his head*) Sure. It's better than SIX people at the dinner table.

He begins to walk into the store at CENTER STAGE. The lights FADE OUT.

Scene 15.

INT. DREAM WORLD – GROCERY STORE – FRONT ENTRANCE

(Small shelves loaded with grocery items are placed at CENTER STAGE.)

FADE IN as Will enters the store – lit the same way as everything else, dim shades of black and blue.

We continue to hear the sound of footsteps against tile floor being played. Something else is here with us.

WILL: Jesus, you are freaking me out with that.

VOICE: I warned you to turn back.

WILL: Not till I find my supplies.

He starts taking things off shelves, and putting them into a pile on his shirt, held with his left hand.

WILL: Hmm . . . this should be good . . . yeah . . .

VOICE: What are you expecting to accomplish?

WILL: Homebrewed weapons.

VOICE: You already have your bat.

WILL: Well . . . it may not be enough. I mean, you heard the sound of that thing!

VOICE: What weapons are you finding in the store?

WILL: Not "finding", necessarily . . . *making*. A spray bottle of deodorant. A cigarette lighter. That's all I need to make me a flame-thrower.

VOICE: How is this a weapon?

WILL: Deodorant, and a cigarette lighter? Easy. You light up a flame, you spray it with deodorant, instant fire.

VOICE: This sounds dangerous.

WILL: Yes. You're right. It's dangerous – *very* dangerous. Honestly, I shouldn't even be messing around with this.

VOICE: Then, why are you?

WILL: Because just taking my chances with dragons or whatever you have in store for me, might be worse.

Will kneels down, and drops everything to the floor, sighing with relief as he does so. He holds up the deodorant can and cigarette lighter, and creates his first flame. We either see an actual flame, or, at least, hear the sound effect of flames.

VOICE: Are you truly ready?

WILL: Ready as I'll ever be!

We hear banging noises. We hear the sound of that inhuman roaring again.

VOICE: Be warned. The monster is zeroing in on you. The monster is on the other side of that shelf.

We hear the sound of footsteps moving from right to left.

VOICE: It will be upon you in five . . . four . . . three . . . two . . . one . . .

. . . nothing happens.

Will looks around.

There is nothing.

WILL: (*sighing with relief*) That's all? Ha ha! That's all there is?

Suddenly, the monster knocks down one of the shelves!

Will runs at it, screaming a war cry! He unleashes the flames! We can hear the sound of flames being shot, while also seeing the monster scream while moving backward.

WILL: Yeah, that's right! What now!

He goes for it again, spraying another flame.

The monster thrashes an arm at him, striking him in the side; he is flung back, dropping his tools on the way.

He lands several feet back, groaning in pain as he does so.

He tries to feel around for his weapons. He feels his chest, side, pockets . . . no, they're gone.

WILL: I . . . dropped it . . .

The monster walks his way.

WILL: No . . . I dropped it . . .

He finds the baseball bat, and stands to his feet again.

WILL: No problem. Don't need one! I still got the bat!

He runs forward again, screaming another war cry.

He hits the monster with the bat!

It screams in agony again as it moves backward!

WILL: Yeah, that's right!! No one messes with me!! No one!!

The monster leaps forward, grabbing him by the shoulders! Will falls backward, lying on his back on the floor! The monster tries to eat him while he writhes around helplessly!

VOICE: This is not looking good.

WILL: SHUT UP! I don't need to hear that!

The monster gets in *really* close.

WILL: Oh, that's it. No choice now.

Will uses both hands to push the monster's face back.

He deals the final blow with the bat!

The monster turns to the right, fatally hurt by that last blow. It falls to its knees.

Will drops the bat.

The monster groans, and finally collapses to the floor.

WILL: . . . Did I do it? Did I kill it?

VOICE: Congratulations, Will. You passed the fifth test.

WILL: I did?? I did! Yeah! I did!

VOICE: The monster is down. You have won the fight.

WILL: I passed the test! I beat that guy! But it's just VR, so no harm, no foul.

VOICE: Now that you have passed, you are halfway through the ten tests. Five are down, and five still remain.

WILL: Well, then. I guess I'm gonna take this flame-thrower with me.

He takes his cigarette lighter and deodorant with him.

WILL: Now that's what I call shopping.

He exits STAGE RIGHT. The lights FADE OUT.

Scene 16.

INT. DREAM WORLD – INT. WILL'S CAR

The lights FADE IN to the sight of Will inside his car, driving off again.

WILL: Doo, do-do-do-do. Hey, you know what? I still haven't done a lot of DRIVING in this VR-zone yet . . .

(suddenly alerting to attention) Whoa! I'm in the car already? How . . .?

He looks around, confused at first. Then he shrugs his shoulders. Turns on the radio. At first, we hear the sound of static. Will looks confused again.

Then the sound of static fades away – and the voice of one of the three shadowy figures comes through.

VOICE: Where are you going now?

WILL: Oh, *you* again, huh? Hmm . . . coming out of the speakers . . .

He turns the volume down.

VOICE: *(with half the volume as before)* William Cumberland.

He turns the volume up again.

WILL: Wherever I feel like, basically.

VOICE: *(at normal volume again)* You are not answering the question.

WILL: Exactly. Where I'm going is my own little secret.

A moment of silence. Both sides have reached a stalemate for the moment – they can't look into his mind, and he has some kind of trick up his sleeve.

VOICE: Whatever you're planning, know this: we are still in control of this zone.

WILL: You're not in control of Earth.

VOICE: No, but we *are* in control of *this* zone.

Will shrugs.

WILL: The layout and architecture of the city somehow draws from the real-life information. The arrangement of the roads. And everything else. Jeez, I'm even *driving a car* . . .

He steers left, then right, a little bit as he drives.

WILL: The roads are EMPTY. They are EMPTY. There are NO other cars . . . well . . . I mean . . . a *few* . . . but the place is largely empty. I love this. This is how driving should always be.

He lets go of the gas, going into Neutral to let the car coast for a while.

He continues to coast for a good seven seconds, craning his neck forward and looking left and right to get a scan of the area.

He finally uses the brakes to finish coming to a stop, and the sound of quick, and relatively light, brakes-screeching plays. He puts the car into Park.

WILL: I guess I can just park anywhere. No one's gonna stop me in VR, right?

VOICE: I find it amusing how you refuse to tell us where you're going.

WILL: Oh, all right, fine. You gotta know. You guys have the whole city mapped out, I figure. So, here I am: the bank.

He takes off his seatbelt, gets outside, and walks to the bank at CENTER STAGE.

Scene 17.

INT. DREAM-WORLD – BANK

Will approaches an ATM, and starts pressing buttons.

VOICE: What are you doing, Will?

WILL: Using the ATM. I mean, if there's an ATM here, there must be another computer terminal, right?

VOICE: But you cannot program things from this.

Will looks visibly angry as he realizes this.

WILL: Damn it! I thought I could! I thought there would be a keyboard or something and I could use . . .

He sighs.

WILL: Well, fine, whatever. At least I can withdrawal some money.

(He stops for a second to think.)

Wait a minute. Is this gonna affect my real-life bank account, if I do this?

(He thinks about it again.)

Could that happen?

. . . Okay, *this* ATM machine is not real . . . it's just VR . . . except, the Dream Machine hardware unit is also connected to computers . . . and the Internet . . . therefore, maybe, real-life bank account information. Wait, no. This can't affect my bank account. No way.

Behind him, a small line of people – four of them – begins to approach the ATM.

Tension is building up. He doesn't look behind himself, but they are all drawing near. After a few seconds, they all take another step closer to Will. Looking straight at him. Glaring.

Will gulps. He keeps pressing buttons, but remains aware that they're staring.

GUY 3: Hey, pal, you wanna speed this up?

GUY 5: Should kick this guy's ass!

WILL: (*pressing more buttons*) Withdrawal . . . one . . . million dollars.

The machine starts whirring as it gets into use.

Will smiles, and chuckles. The whirring sound repeats. Then it repeats again. And again. Finally, we hear the sound of money coming out of an ATM!

A pile of green dollar bills falls to the ground. (One possible suggestion: Will empties, up-side down, a shoebox filled with Monopoly-like green money.)

WILL: Ha ha. Unlimited funds! Unlimited cash!

VOICE: What are you trying to achieve here, Will?

WILL: (*grabbing the money from the ground, to hold it with his shirt*)

Well . . . I thought I'd be able to type in commands at this ATM . . . but I can't. Still. I'm just trying to get *something* out of it.

VOICE: Your money will not help you.

WILL: No, it won't. *But*, money can brainwash people! Like this.

Will starts throwing money onto the floor.

WILL: Look, everyone, free money! *Free money!* Don't question it, just take your money and run!

Chaos ensues; Will runs off, making his getaway to his car at STAGE RIGHT.

Scene 18.

INT. DREAM-WORLD – INT. WILL'S CAR

Will starts driving again. He starts putting some of the money into his pockets.

VOICE: I must commend you for a clever trick.

WILL: Yeah. Well, don't, actually . . . I really just got the idea from that guy . . . you know, from the *second* test, the five scientists . . . one of those guys did that.

VOICE: I notice you're still keeping some money.

WILL: Yeah.

VOICE: It's not real.

WILL: Oh, fuck you, pal, let me enjoy it while I can.

He slams his foot onto the brakes. We hear the sound of *screeeeeching*.

He holds one dollar bill up to the light. Closes his left eye.

WILL: It's . . . BLANK! (*dropping the dollar*) BLANK green money! Like Monopoly!

Letting go of the brake, he brings his foot to the gas pedal. We hear the sound of the car revving up, a sound which then dies down.

VOICE: The sixth test is upon you.

Will shifts uneasily.

VOICE: Go. (*Ding!*)

INSTRUCTOR: Hi there!

Will turns his head.

Dear God, he just now realizes that there's a second person in the car with him.

INSTRUCTOR: (*extending a handshake*) I'm David Booth, your Driver's –

WILL: (*pointing at him*) Driver's – Driver's Ed, yeah . . . oh my God! I remember you! I did three Driver's Ed sessions with you when I was 16!

The instructor is silent for a second, and then he widens his eyes with surprise.

INSTRUCTOR: Really?

WILL: All right, no, I'm *not* going through this.

VOICE: Welcome to Driver's Ed, Will. Your goal here is to make it all the way through five miles of streets and the highway. But be warned. At the end of the five miles of driving, your instructor will try to kill you.

WILL: This is insanity.

INSTRUCTOR: *Yes*, now you're getting the picture.

Will shakes again as he continues to drive. He looks shocked by something.

WILL: Whoa, what? We're on the highway already?

The sounds of heavy traffic are heard: the sounds of other cars zooming past us.

WILL: Jesus Christ, everyone's going 90! (*picking up his speed, to keep up*) Everyone's weaving in and out! This is all wrong!

INSTRUCTOR: Today we're gonna learn about "keeping up with traffic" . . .
(*Will gulps*) . . . when the road is *up-side down*.

Will's eyes go wide, and he quickly jerks backward. He looks like he's being forced backward into his seat, with gravity pushing against him.

INSTRUCTOR: (*making hand-motions while talking*) You see, this road is twisting up-side down! Pretty soon, we're gonna be about 100 feet up off the ground! Now, don't worry. The car itself is metal. The road is filled with magnetic plates. So the car is *magnetically bound* to the road, even as it goes up-side down!

WILL: Oh! Thank God!

INSTRUCTOR: But – make sure not to get hit by any car. Then you would most definitely fall off the track, and down to the ground 100 feet below.

WILL: (*terrified*) *This* wasn't in Driver's Ed!

INSTRUCTOR: Remember, little William . . . it's all about *keeping up with traffic*.

WILL: And if I keep up with traffic, I'll live?

INSTRUCTOR: Basically.

The sound of a siren is heard! A chill takes over Will.

Red light flashes across the scene as an ambulance pulls up behind him. The red light continues to fade in and out repeatedly.

INSTRUCTOR: Remember that when ambulances are approaching, you should look in your rearview mirror, but *not* look behind you. I won't advise looking behind you until after you've been driving for a few more months, and have more of a feel for it.

WILL: What's that ambulance doing? *What's that ambulance doing??*

INSTRUCTOR: It's coming for you, Will.

WILL: STOP IT! Stop doing that! (*starting to become sad*) Please. I don't wanna die. I don't want this to be the end.

The instructor smiles, and chuckles.

INSTRUCTOR: Heh heh . . . of course ya don't, Will. Nobody does.
(*suddenly turning very serious*) Wait, no, Will LOOK OUT -!!

CRASH! The ambulance crashes right into Will, knocking him off-track!

Both Will and the instructor start to move about wildly inside the car as the whole thing falls down through the air. We hear the sound of wind flapping past us as we follow Will and the instructor through their fall.

WILL: Okay. Okay. We're falling. This is it. Game over. We're gonna die.

The lights FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO.

ACT THREE.

Scene 19.

INT. DREAM-WORLD – STREET

At this moment, there are still just two scenes going on at once:

STAGE LEFT: the interior of the van, with Will and the shadowy figures;

STAGE RIGHT: Will in the black-and-blue dream world.

The lights FADE IN on Will at STAGE RIGHT, lying in the street, laying down comfortably. Suddenly, he bolts up out of sleep.

WILL: WHOAAA!

. . . Oh! It was just a dream . . . just a dream . . .

He starts breathing heavily.

VOICE: Welcome to the site of the seventh test, Will.

Will sits around and thinks about it.

WILL: The part where I wake up?

Silence.

WILL: Okay, let's stop and review.

(feeling his chest, sides, pockets) Okay, I've still got all this “money”. I've still got all the cash. I've still got the lighter . . . and the deodorant. Yes. But I've lost the bat.

He thinks for a second.

WILL: All right. So. I am still here. Still inside this Virtual Bubble.

(counting the facts on his fingers)

A, I never get tired. I am at one constant level of energy.

B, I don't eat, and I don't drink. So, I'm all set there.

C, as long as I can find another computer, I can . . . do tricks . . . hmm . . . where would I find another one?

He sighs.

WILL: I have no idea where I am right now.

The true mysteriousness of this moment finally hits him.

WILL: Where *am* I?

(*holding his head*) I can just die in a car crash, and just wake up in a . . . a new dream, I guess?

VOICE: Your mind is entering its fourth of six dream-cycles for the night.

WILL: . . . Really?

That gives him something to think about.

WILL: Wait, so . . . everything I've been through . . . wait, have there been dream sequences that I can't remember?

VOICE: Do you know where you are, Will?

Will looks around himself.

WILL: Dear God, I'm . . . at college. I haven't been here in years.

VOICE: Do you remember this place, Will?

WILL: Yeah, I mean . . . well, no, I haven't really been here since I was a student. I don't really remember everything about college.

As he walks on, the spotlight shines on more of the area.

WILL: But seeing it in person is starting to bring it all back! Ha ha! Oh, man! I *kind* of remember it now!

The spotlight shines on a banner showing the school's name:

PALIN OBAMA UNIVERSITY.

WILL: (*eyebrows scrunched*) *That's* not what it was called!

Suddenly, and unexpectedly, 2008's Republican Vice Presidential Candidate, Sarah Palin, and Democrat President-Elect Barack Obama, both enter the scene from STAGE RIGHT . . . as a loving interracial couple wrapped up in one another.

Will's eyes go wider than ever.

WILL: Just stop the nightmare right here.

PALIN: Well, Will, we both wanted to greet you personally for the seventh test.

OBAMA: We know just how difficult it is to have incredible challenges thrown your way. Challenges you sometimes feel you can't handle.

WILL: Great, when's Abraham Lincoln gonna pop out?

PALIN: And that's why . . .

OBAMA: . . . we have come bearing gifts.

They both reach into a Christmas stocking, pulling out two gifts.

OBAMA: These are X-Ray glasses . . . which actually work.

PALIN: And this is a gun, dear.

WILL: Wait, really? A gun? And . . . X-Ray glasses that actually work?? . . . Wow! *Thanks, guys!*

Will puts on the glasses, and looks around. Immediately, the scene becomes lit with green light, as though we are seeing the world through the glasses.

PALIN: We wish you the best of luck, dear.

Palin and Obama exit the scene at STAGE RIGHT. Will takes off the glasses. The green light turns off.

WILL: Okay. So. Yeah. Now I've got a gun, *and* X-Ray glasses that actually work. Didn't see that coming.

He walks on . . . and suddenly gets another idea.

WILL: Wait a minute. I remember how to have a basic walk around this campus! I remember where things are! *The computer lab!* I could go there . . . program myself some more stuff . . . maybe even a helicopter! Yeah! I'll make myself a helicopter!

He begins to walk away, toward STAGE RIGHT. There, he grips an imaginary door.

WILL: Okay. So, can you guys who are *in charge*, just, unlock all the doors of the campus, please?

Beeeeeep! Click. It is done.

WILL: (*gripping a door and pulling it open*) Thank you!

He slowly starts to enter – by exiting STAGE RIGHT.

The lights FADE OUT. (Two people bring in a table prop, and a mirror.)

Soon, Will re-appears at STAGE RIGHT, now walking on the inside of one of his school's buildings.

WILL: Wait a minute.

He looks at the mirror, stepping closer.

WILL: A mirror! What happens if I look at it? Or touch it? Will I go somewhere else?

He brings his face closer to the mirror.

WILL: Could I just command that I go to the girls' locker room, by touching this mirror?

And it is done. He looks around himself.

WILL: Wait. This IS the girl's locker room!

Scene 20.

INT. DREAM-WORLD – COLLEGE LOCKER ROOM

Footsteps! He looks around. The footsteps draw closer.

WILL: Oh, shit. Oh no, oh no, now what!

He looks around again.

The footsteps are coming still closer.

WILL: Would I fit in one of these lockers?

With no more time to waste, he opens one up, steps inside, closes it shut, and ducks down. We hear the sound of a locker closing.

Two hot girls walk in, appearing to be wearing nothing but towels. They're both laughing about something. But Will is not sure what.

WILL: I can't . . . see a thing!

So he puts on the X-Ray glasses.

Then, green light takes over the stage. The girls are lit green.

WILL: Thank you, X-Rays!

He stops talking as the girls, towels wrapped around them, start getting their clothes out of their lockers.

GIRL 1: God, all I can say is, as soon as we find this guy, he's *dead*.

GIRL 2: Oh, you're telling me. D-A-E-D-D, *dead*.

GIRL 1: Oh, why do you think I had my Mom buy me a gun? So that as soon as we found this guy, we could kill him.

Both girls look toward Will.

GIRL 2: By the way, Will, we're talking about *you* –

BANG! Without warning, Girl 1 suddenly whips out a gun and shoots Will!

The lights FADE OUT.

Scene 21.

INT. DREAM-WORLD – STREET

The lights FADE IN as Will wakes up at STAGE RIGHT . . . lying, on his back, in the middle of the street – again.

He convulses, as though having been shot at.

Then he realizes that, really, he's just lying on the ground, waking up from a dream.

WILL: . . . Wait . . . so . . . *that* was all the dream?

(*No response.*)

So I woke up?

(*No response.*)

Wow. So . . . I keep on dying . . . but I just can't seem to actually die?

Will gets up, and walks around.

WILL: Okay. I'm here at the college. (*checking his pockets*) Okay, I've still got the gun, and the X-Ray glasses that actually work.

He thinks for a second.

WILL: Am I dreaming this?

He can't be sure.

He pinches himself.

WILL: Okay, I can feel me pinching myself.

He tries it again.

WILL: But . . . even this could be a dream. Well, either way, what's up? With the tests?

VOICE: The eighth test is only a revisit of the seventh. How will you fare, trying the same challenge . . . a second time?

WILL: . . . Hmmmm.

Okay, I recognize this. This is the main campus. Same place I started out at before. Only, instead of going into the girls' locker room, no, this time I'll go somewhere else . . . like . . . like the computer labs! And program myself some new guns and a helicopter!

He smiles, nodding his head.

WILL: Yeah! Just like the last dream! . . . Only this time, I'll do it *right*.

He walks off, toward STAGE RIGHT. The lights FADE OUT.

Scene 22.

INT. DREAM-WORLD – COLLEGE LOBBY

He re-enters the scene at STAGE RIGHT.

WILL: So, this time around, I do the lobby.

A radio suddenly kicks in.

RADIO: *chhk* Ahhh, attention Officer 13, this is Officer 12, do you copy? Over.

chhk Copy that, this is 13. Over.

chhk Yeaah, that William Cumberland fellow is around . . . Will goes down *now*. Got it? Over.

chhk Copy that, we're coming to kill him right now. Over.

Will grabs his gun desperately.

WILL: Thank God I got this!

Will tries to duck down and remain hidden behind things. He suddenly notices that a red laser-pen dot is being shined on a wall nearby.

It's coming closer to him.

Two . . . three . . . four red dots are moving down the black wall at once.

RADIO: *chhk* He can't be far. We must be near him. Over.

He aims his gun.

He crouches down, and tries to remain hidden, out of sight . . .

. . . Suddenly, he gets up, and starts running!

RADIO: THERE HE IS!! Get him!!

The sound of a siren is heard.

Red lights flash on and off.

WILL: NOOOOOO, no. Not good!

He dives out of sight, toward STAGE RIGHT . . .

Blam-blam-blam-blam-blam! Bullet holes fill the walls! But they seem to miss their target.

Scene 23.

INT. DREAM-WORLD – HILL

(Start out in blackness.)

FADE IN on Will sitting on a sled. Suddenly, he's wearing a fleece cap and coat normally meant for sledding.

His body is shaking back and forth, indicating that he's sledding down a hill.

WILL: . . . What . . . the fuck. Why am I sledding. In the snow.

RADIO: *chhk* Damn, I think we've lost him. Over.

chhk He was just here a second ago, where could that little fucker have gone?

Will continues to slide out of sight, still terrified by the experience of sledding but relieved to see that he is making his exit.

WILL: Thank . . . God.

VOICE: You are getting away from them successfully, Will. But, notice that the weather is changing. It's suddenly much more snowy here.

WILL: You. Crazy. Bastards.

VOICE: Be aware of who controls the weather here. Today's forecast calls for some heavy thunderstorms in a very . . . unusual manner!

Light suddenly shines on the image of a red thunderbolt, for one quick second! The sounds of thunder and lightning are heard, and then the light fades out.

Will flinches.

WILL: Okay. No. That missed me.

VOICE: The red lightning will strike the ground many times. You must steer your sled to avoid the lightning.

WILL: As soon as I find you guys . . .!

VOICE: The red lights on the ground are a warning. The red lights indicate where the lightning is about to strike. You have a fair shot at winning this game.

WILL: What could you *possibly* have to gain from this?!

VOICE: Begin.

Three red spotlights appear at the ground – starting out aiming toward STAGE RIGHT, then all moving at once toward STAGE LEFT. They are the red circles of light Will sees on the snowy ground as he sleds downhill.

WILL: So that's where the lightning strikes, huh?

Will steers his sled toward the right. Immediately, all three circles of light move away, toward STAGE RIGHT, until all are out of view; but, only a few seconds later, three new circles begin at STAGE RIGHT.

All the while, the sound of thunder is heard. Occasionally, lightning strikes, shining light on the image of the red bolt for one second, while the sound effect of a lightning strike is heard, before the light fades away.

RADIO: *chhk* Wait a minute, I see him! I see him! He's been sledding down that hill this whole time! Over.

A red spotlight shines on Will!

A new siren noise is heard – a horn that one would normally expect to signal the end of a basketball game!

Will's eyes widen, and he notices immediately that the speed of his sledding seems to slow down, then stop.

WILL: I've reached the bottom of the hill.

RADIO: *chhk* All units, contact. Repeat, all units, contact. William Cumberland has just been spotted at the bottom of a hill. Attention, everyone in the city: kill this man. Kill this man immediately.

With mere seconds, right there at the bottom of the hill, Will starts to notice five strangers staggering into the scene at once.

STRANGER 1: Kill Will!

STRANGER 2: Kill Will!

STRANGER 3: Yeah! Kill Will! Exactly!

STRANGER 4: I say we kill him.

STRANGER 5: I get dibs!

Will flinches.

WILL: I think I'd rather be going through the lightning than this.

Stranger 5 runs toward Will, in a crooked and curved path, while smiling.

STRANGER 5: *Hi, Will! My name is Loxar!* I'm gonna kill you!

Will backs up.

WILL: You don't exist. You're just a figment of my dream. You don't exist!

STRANGER 5: (*swinging at him with a knife*) Ohhh, but I'm just real enough to do this!

Will backs up, and leans backward to dodge the knife.

STRANGER 5: I'm gonna kill you! I'm gonna kill you!

Will suddenly leaps forward and punches the stranger!

The stranger staggers backward. Will grabs the man's arm, pulls his knife out of his grip, and –

– the stranger kicks him and pushes him back, stopping him for the moment. His smile never fades.

Will runs up to a red circle on the ground. He gets a red light beam aimed at him. He runs up to the stranger, then runs behind him. Now the spotlight is shined on the stranger.

Immediately, the stranger is shot.

The red light moves on.

WILL: Whoa, man, you all right?

No response.

WILL: Well, this *is* just a dream, so . . . that didn't really happen.

Will's wife Laurie, dressed as a cheerleader, enters STAGE RIGHT.

CHEERLEADER LAURIE: I'm so proud of you, Will! You passed the eighth test! I knew you could do it, baby!

WILL: What? You're dressed as a cheerleader . . .? (*shakes his head, then shrugs*) Whatever.

CHEERLEADER LAURIE: You *did* it, baby, you've made it all the way to the ninth test!

WILL: Is that the final one?

CHEERLEADER LAURIE: Huh? No – there's ten altogether.

WILL: Awww, man.

CHEERLEADER LAURIE: But the good news is, you get to redo the exact same “college” test again, as Test Number Nine!

WILL: What? Again?

CHEERLEADER LAURIE: Remember: learn from your mistakes! Bye-bye now!

Cheerleader Laurie jumps away, eventually getting out of sight.

The lights FADE OUT.

Scene 24.

INT. DREAM WORLD – FRONT ENTRANCE TO COLLEGE

FADE IN as Will wakes up yet again.

WILL: Okay. New dream. New . . . test?

VOICE: The ninth test is only another retake. How will you do, moving through your school for the third time?

Will looks around himself.

WILL: Yeah, this is the Circle . . . that's the lobby over there . . . no, *bad* idea, the snipers . . . hmm, no, I'll go into the guard booth this time. Yeah. That's what I'll do.

Light shines on CENTER STAGE at a lit guard booth.

WILL: The guard booth . . . there's no guards around . . . (*chuckling*) Perfect.

He climbs inside.

Surprisingly, light shines at STAGE RIGHT to show an entire classroom, with five students sitting in chairs, being taught by a professor!

WILL: What?

PROFESSOR: All right, class, today we study . . . oh, look who's decided to join us!

WILL: What? . . . Oh. Sorry.

PROFESSOR: It's all right, just take a seat.

Will sits down, and excitedly begins typing on a computer.

WILL: All riiiiight! Finally! I've been looking for a computer for so long. I need to type some stuff in.

PROFESSOR: Mr. Cumberland!

Will looks at him.

PROFESSOR: (*very sarcastically*) Weeelll, don't let me interrupt your little game time!

WILL: Huh? Oh, I just want to program a helicopter to appear, that's all. Uhhh . . . it won't take long.

The professor gives him a strange look.

PROFESSOR: My dear boy, you care to run that by me again?

Will stops typing for a second, irritated to be torn away.

WILL: (*sigh*) I'm programming a new helicopter to suddenly appear right here in this classroom. So I'll just take off and fly around. What's so hard about that?

He shudders.

WILL: Wait, then it could hurt people. Okay. I'm gonna program a helicopter . . . to appear on the roof. And then I'll get up there somehow and fly around . . .

PROFESSOR: What if there's bad weather? What if a lightning storm starts up?

WILL: . . . (*a pause*) . . . Shit, that's true! Lightning storm! That would be such a bad nightmare! (*shivers*)

PROFESSOR: My dear boy, I do advise you to understand how to pilot such a vehicle as a helicopter *before* trying to create one yourself.

Suddenly, the professor staggers back, falling off-balance and being caught off-guard! Everyone begins to shake and rumble, reflecting what's happening to the world!

WILL: . . . Shit. Whoops. I didn't mean to hit Enter then.

Loud sounds of a propeller begin to build up.

PROFESSOR: My dear boy, what did you *do??*

WILL: I . . . I kind of created some propellers, like on an airplane . . .

PROFESSOR: Propellers??

WILL: . . . and – they're kind of attached to the roof . . . so we're all just flying away.

The other students begin rolling around on the ground, uncontrollably affected by the heavy levels of gravity.

WILL: Yep. Okay, we're taking off. The building is taking off. With propellers.

STUDENT 2: (*panicking, grabbing Will's collar*) What are we gonna do??

WILL: Well . . . uhh . . . if you're planning on making a jump for it, now would be the time.

STUDENT 3: You can't be serious.

Will starts running toward the window.

WILL: Ahhh, man, we've floated away too far already. Ahh, man. No. No.
(*grabbing his head with both hands, walking away*) Ahhh, this is not good.

STUDENT 3: Hey, hey! I just got an idea!

Will looks at him.

STUDENT 3: Why not just program some parachutes for us all?

Will thinks about that.

WILL: Oh my God. Say that again?

STUDENT 3: Program some parachutes, for all of us!

WILL: (*gasp*) Now *how* did you think of that?

STUDENT 3: (*shrugs*) I don't know, I – I just *thought* of it, suddenly.

WILL: Oh, you're a genius!

He immediately sits down and starts typing.

He types away furiously. He never seems to be able to type enough; the more he does, the more into it he gets, and the more he tries to do.

He keeps at it, whispering to himself.

Finally, it's done.

WILL: *Done!* Okay, look behind you –

Bing! Soon, one of the five classmates walks offstage and returns with a parachute in hand.

WILL: Okay, good, you've got it.

STUDENT 3: But what about the other –

Bing! Bing! Bing! Bing! Bing! Five duplicates are immediately created.

STUDENT 3: Oh, okay.

STUDENT 2: (*walking up to Will, smiling*) Wow! So now we all have parachutes, and we can land safely on the ground! I'm proud of you, Will! You saved us all!

WILL: Heh heh. Well, you guys don't really exist anyway, so, I dunno . . .

Everyone else starts exiting the scene.

The lights FADE OUT.

Scene 25.

INT. DREAM WORLD – BLACKNESS

FADE IN on Will lying on the ground at STAGE RIGHT.

WILL: Huh?

He stands back up.

VOICE: Congratulations, Will. You have made it all the way to the final challenge. This is the tenth, and final, test. After this, you will be released.

WILL: What? Tenth and final?

(after he gets no response) Did you say tenth and final?

(after he gets nothing but silence again) Tell me where to go! Tell me what to do! I'll pass this test blindfolded!

VOICE: You have learned.

The color of the spotlight above changes from blue to green; not just in the grocery store, but inside the van scene at STAGE LEFT as well.

Will walks around a little, searching for the tenth testing area . . .

Scene 26.

INT. DREAM WORLD – VAN-LAB

. . . and he walks right into the van.

WILL: What the . . . ?

VOICE: Your tenth, and final, test has begun.

WILL: Is that . . . is that . . . me?

(Figure 2 continues to talk into the microphone – right in front of Will.)

VOICE: You are still unconscious. This is still a dream.

WILL: Wait a minute. This? This . . . this van? We're STILL in the VR now?

VOICE: This is what you have looked like throughout all these dreams. You were really just sitting in this chair.

Will puts his hands on his knees, and breathes deeply.

WILL: You really had me confused for a second there. We're still in VR.

VOICE: Your objective in this test is to find a way to exit the dream world, and return to the real world.

WILL: What?? But – but I tried that already! Nothing worked!

VOICE: It is all a matter of how you play your cards.

WILL: But – I can't! I'm just in a dream right now! This is just a nightmare – I can't just make myself *exit* at will!

Will walks around the van-lab.

WILL: How is this possible? How can I be . . . ?

VOICE: All your questions have answers within this van.

Will looks around.

He inspects things.

He reaches down and taps his double on the forehead.

WILL: Yoo-hoo? . . . Nothing happened.

He inspects the wires on his double's head.

WILL: My God. All these wires. I don't feel these wires at all!

He feels his own forehead.

WILL: Is this really real? Wow . . .

Another screaming roaring sound happens.

At STAGE RIGHT, the monster from the grocery store slowly enters the scene.

VOICE: You'd better hurry up, Will. The creature you encountered in the grocery store is back.

WILL: No he's not. *No he's not!*

Will looks around himself. He feels for the stuff in his pockets.

WILL: Crap. What do I do now. What do I do?

VOICE: The tenth test has begun.

Will – both of him – are still at STAGE LEFT. But now the monster is making its way from STAGE RIGHT to CENTER STAGE.

The sound of a clock's ticking begins.

WILL: Okay, okay, think. Think. How do you get out?

He paces around, frantically, trying to come up with something.

He shakes his head. There are just no answers. Tick, tock, tick, tock.

WILL: I can't do this.

He looks up at the ceiling.

WILL: THIS IS A TRICK QUESTION!

VOICE: But there *is* a way out of this, Will.

WILL: Well then what is it?? Tell me what it is!!

VOICE: You must find the answer on your own.

WILL: BUT I CAN'T! I'm only in a dream! I can't do anything that affects the real world!

The monster roars inhumanly again. The sound of goliath footsteps hit the floor.

Will looks around – and, finally, spots a computer.

WILL: (*gasp*) A computer! That's it!

He races toward it, and starts typing as fast as he can.

WILL: Computer, computer! Oh, thank God! Just one quick moment, that's all I need!

Suddenly, Will stops talking as he comes to an important realization. For the first time, everything becomes calm and serene for him.

WILL: Oh . . . wait . . . *that's* the answer. *That's* what I do. It's so simple.

He reaches into his pocket, and pulls out the gun.

WILL: This is all I needed to do, all along.

VOICE: (*Ding!*) Your time is up.

The monster roars again.

WILL: POWER OUTAGE!

Will starts shooting all the computers!

Blam! Blam! Blam! Blam! We hear the *hiss* and *cackling* sounds of wires and circuits breaking apart.

The lights FADE OUT. Then back in. The lighting becomes unstable.

WILL: System failure! System shutdown!

He shoots at the computers another couple times.

The lights FADE OUT. The sounds of machinery fade away.

(The actor who was playing Will's plugged-in body in the van exits, STAGE LEFT. The actor playing Will in motion lays down to become the one who is plugged in. The three shadowy figures exit the scene, STAGE LEFT, as well.)

Now the scene is just Will sitting in the chair.

Scene 27.

INT. REAL WORLD – VAN-LAB

The lights FADE IN to the scene of Will, alone.

He gets up. He looks around, inspects the scene a little, and breathes slowly.

WILL: I'm awake.

He pulls himself away from the grip of the chair and the wires.

WILL: ALL RIGHT, people . . .

As he looks around the van, he finds that it is empty.

WILL: . . . Where are you?

(walking around) Guys? I did the ten tests. I did what I was supposed to! So where *are* you?

He continues to search, with no luck.

WILL: Oh, that's it? I get myself out of the dream-world and you're not even here to congratulate me?

(sigh) Well, human testing is over . . . for me, at least.

He opens the van's doors and jumps out (toward STAGE RIGHT).

Scene 28.

EXT. WILL'S HOUSE

Will remains out of our sight until he re-enters the scene at STAGE LEFT.

We can hear the sound of crickets chirping. The sound of leaves being crunched as Will walks. He is walking around outside his house at night.

Red and blue lights flash on.

Will's whole body jolts in shock.

OFFICER: FREEZE!

WILL: Whoa!

OFFICER: Freeze right there!

A police officer walks toward Will, aiming a flashlight at him.

OFFICER: Show me your hands!

WILL: Hey! Hey! Hold on a second – this is my house! I live here!

OFFICER: (*walking over to him with a flashlight*) Yeah? Yeah, tell me, sir, what's your name?

WILL: Will. William Cumberland. Jeez, how do I know *this* isn't just another dream . . .

OFFICER: *What??* . . . Look, you have any ID on you?

WILL: Uhh . . . I . . . I don't know, I'd have to check my pockets.

As Will starts to feel around in his pockets, the officer stops him.

OFFICER: HANDS WHERE I CAN SEE EM! Jesus . . .

WILL: Whoa, whoa! Hey! I told you – I live here! I'm William Cumberland! *Dr.* Cumberland, a scientist at Dosan Labs!

OFFICER: Okay. Tell you what. Bout ten minutes ago, we got a report in a call coming from *this* house. Now, I don't like being out and about like this at three in the morning . . . but, I got the call.

WILL: This house here? Yeah, I –

OFFICER: *I'm talking.*

Will swallows.

OFFICER: I was told that three men:

(*counting the crimes on his fingers*) broke into this house; assaulted a woman who lives here, and rendered her unconscious; and dragged a man out of bed, kicking and screaming, to be abducted.

Will is silent.

OFFICER: And, the caller from this house said this man was her father, Dr. William Cumberland.

Will exhales, sighing with relief.

WILL: That's me.

OFFICER: Tell me. What's been happening the last ten minutes?

WILL: Ten minutes? More like two hours.

OFFICER: (*shaking his head*) The call came in eight minutes ago. I've only been out here the past *two* minutes.

WILL: Eight minutes . . . ? Oh . . . of – of course, the dream . . . dreams happen in only a second or two . . .

OFFICER: I wanna hear your story. Start talking. Where did you just come from?

Will points toward the van.

WILL: That van over there . . . they pulled me into there.

OFFICER: Who's "they"?

Will laughs.

WILL: The three people that are gonna find themselves *very* arrested.

OFFICER: Start all over. Start from the beginning.

WILL: It's gonna be a long story.

OFFICER: I've got all day.

Will sighs, feeling relieved.

WILL: All right. I don't even know where to start, but I'll try . . . wow, it's just so . . . so unreal now. Like a bad dream. A nightmare.

He looks up at the sky.

WILL: It's all over.

The lights FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE.

END OF PLAY.