



# The Silver Dollar

Game Design Document

By: Lauren Cunningham

*Follow the tale of a boy who goes out to find a precious keepsake, but ends up finding himself instead. . .*

**Concept:**

In this realistic adventure game, you experience the mundane in extraordinary ways by playing as a preteen with an overactive imagination.

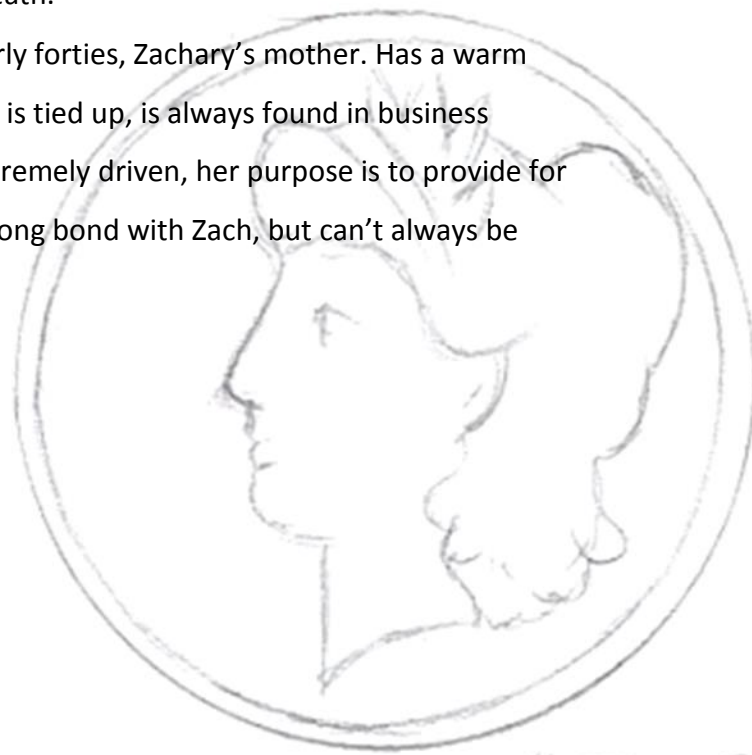
**Overview:**

This is a first person point of view (POV) adventure game. Using nothing more than running, jumping, crawling and items you find out in the field, you conquer challenges and proceed on your quest to find the lost coin. Being observant, taking in your surroundings, and moving deliberately is often more important than making quick decisions, however, fast-paced sequences exist as well.

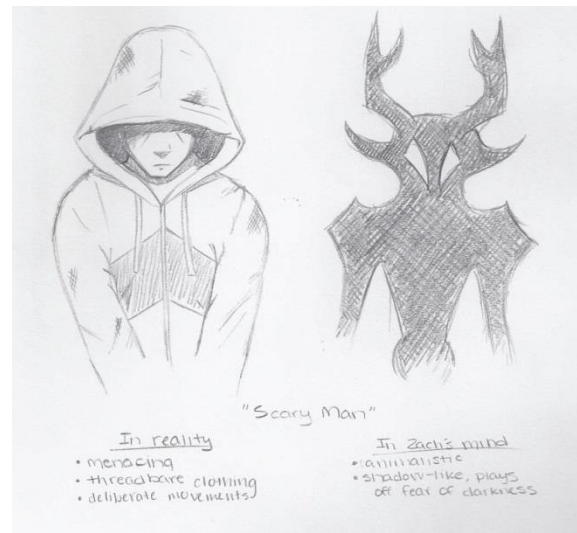
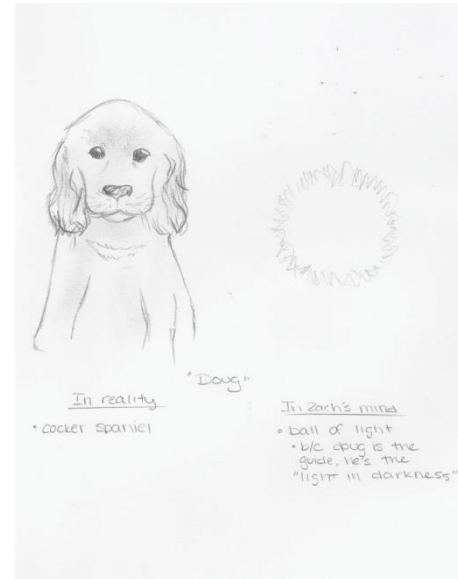


**Characters:**

- **Zachary Sanders:** 11-year- old male protagonist with overactive imagination. He's skinny, has dark, mid-length hair and always wears loose clothing. Silent hero type (doesn't ever actually talk) and extremely shy. Emotionally vulnerable and naive, but wants to experience the world nonetheless. Driven by the want to connect with other people, despite his ineptness in social situations. Grows and develops emotionally throughout the story. This is the player character.
- **Bill Sanders:** Zachary's father, accountant. Deceased at the time of the game. Tall man in his early forties with cropped dark hair, deep voice, and a bit of a gut. Wears jeans and a loose Hawaiian shirt. Cares about his family more than anything, also known for sarcasm, loving to talk and being somewhat of a dreamer. Strongest influence in Zach's life, even long after his death.
- **Anne Sanders:** Woman who is also in her early forties, Zachary's mother. Has a warm yet quiet voice, long, honey-blond hair that is tied up, is always found in business casual clothing and always appears tired. Extremely driven, her purpose is to provide for Zach, working extremely long days. Has a strong bond with Zach, but can't always be there for him because of work.



- **Doug:** Cocker spaniel, the Sanders' family dog. Extremely loyal, serves as Zach's guide throughout the story. Manifested as a ball of light in Zach's imagination.
- **Scary Man (name unknown):** Menacing man who goes around in a threadbare hoodie with the hood up. Has a booming voice that always has a touch of reluctance in it. Desperate, is responsible for providing for his loved ones. Chases Zachary at various points in the story in an attempt to take the silver dollar so he can sell it. Helps story progress, pushes Zach into new areas. Manifested in Zach's imagination as a ruthless, shadow-like monster.
- **Other NPC's:** These include people you can help, and others you can simply interact with.



Zachary Sanders has never been quite able to fit in. Growing up, he was always an outcast. Nervous, shy, and afraid of people, he spent his days being a wallflower, skirting bullies and classmates alike, and talking to few. Picking up on his son's unconventional behavior regarding people, Bill Sanders set out to give Zach a means to escape, a place where no one could bother him; the world of imagination. One day, he pulled Zach aside, gave him a large silver coin and said, "all you have to do is squeeze this in your hand, and you can go to a different place." Soon, days were spent exploring vast crystal caves, and at night he and his father teamed up to fight monsters, and for the most part, he was happy.

One would never expect that such a magical and terrifying world would reside right behind those eyes.

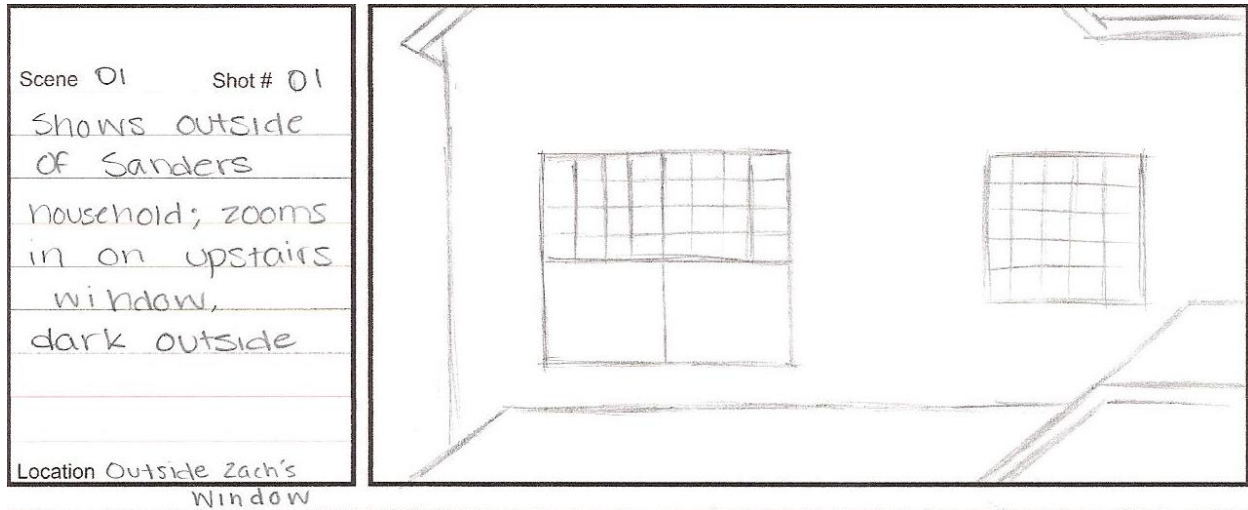
Then, the Sanders house got a disturbing call. Bill had been in a car accident, and he was in a coma. The doctors said he could potentially recover, but he never did. From then on, Zach's mother, Anne Sanders, was forced to work long hours to support Zach and herself, and Zach was left truly alone. Following this development, the silver coin became a reminder of better times, and the one tie to the only relationship Zach had ever had.

*The whole story begins with a rough day at school. . .*

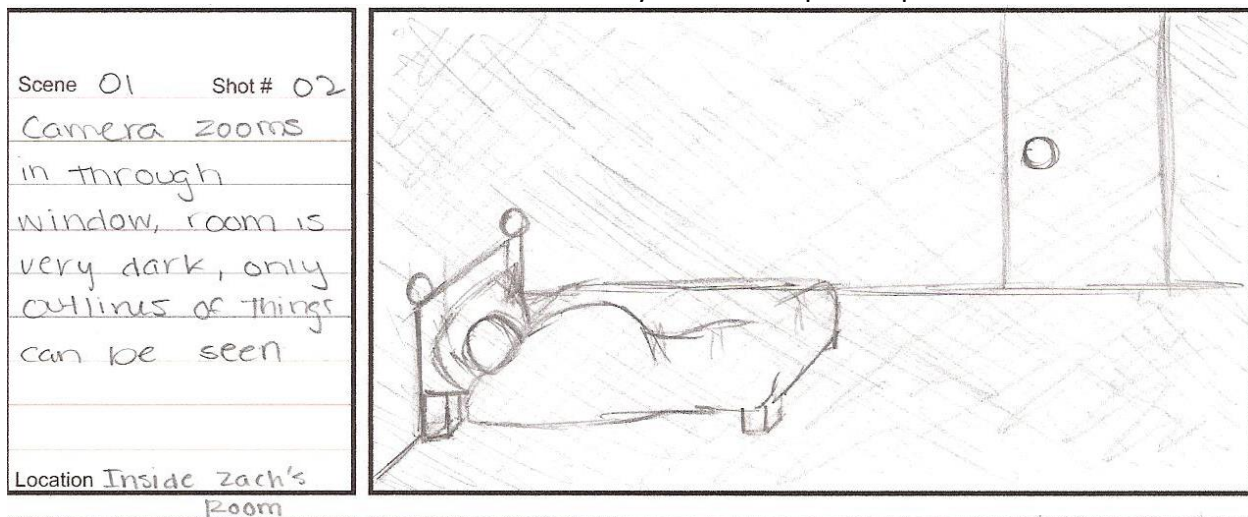


### Scenario

The following is the introductory cinematic:



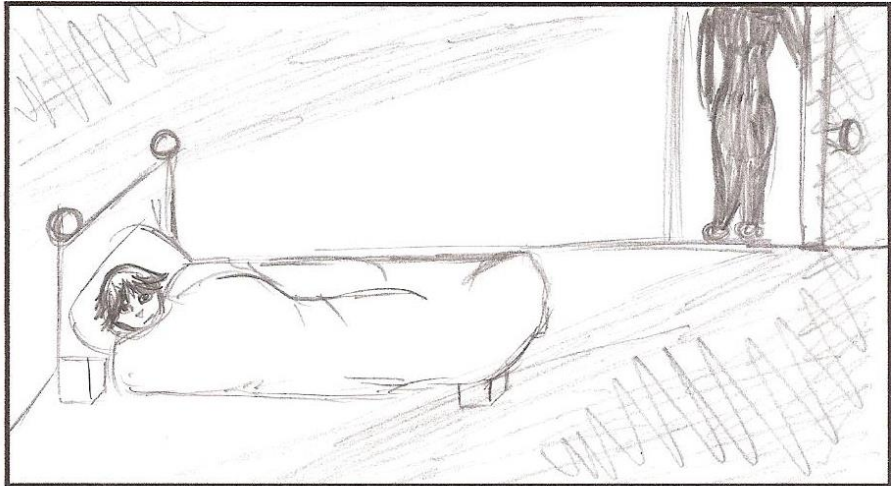
Scene opens to the interior of Zachary's Room. The lights are off and the door to the rest of the house is closed. The twilight outside the window paints parts of the room in a soft red light, otherwise the rest is dark. You can barely see the shape of a person on the bed.





The door opens, casting bright yellow light across the bed, revealing Zachary, facing the window.

Scene 01 Shot # 03  
Door opens,  
light comes in  
open door,  
Anne Sanders  
enters  
Location Inside Zach's  
Room



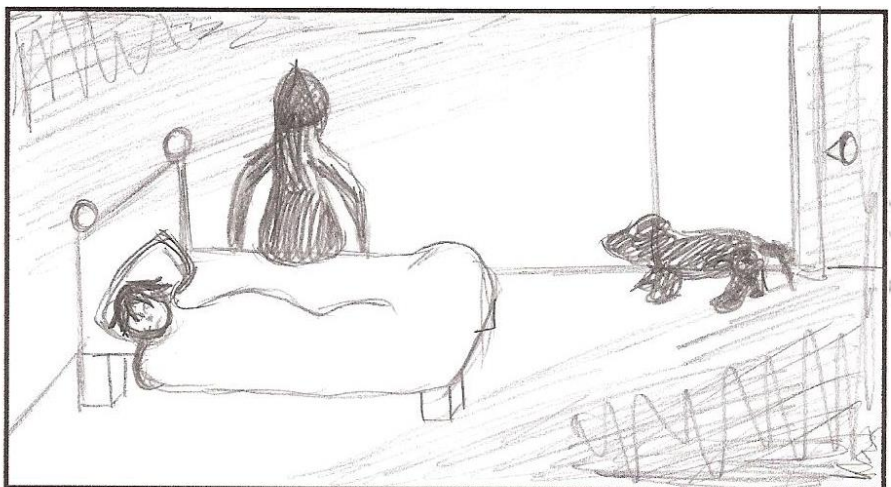
His mom enters through the opening and sits on the side of the bed behind him, the bed sagging slightly.

**MOM:** So I heard you had a rough day at school today...

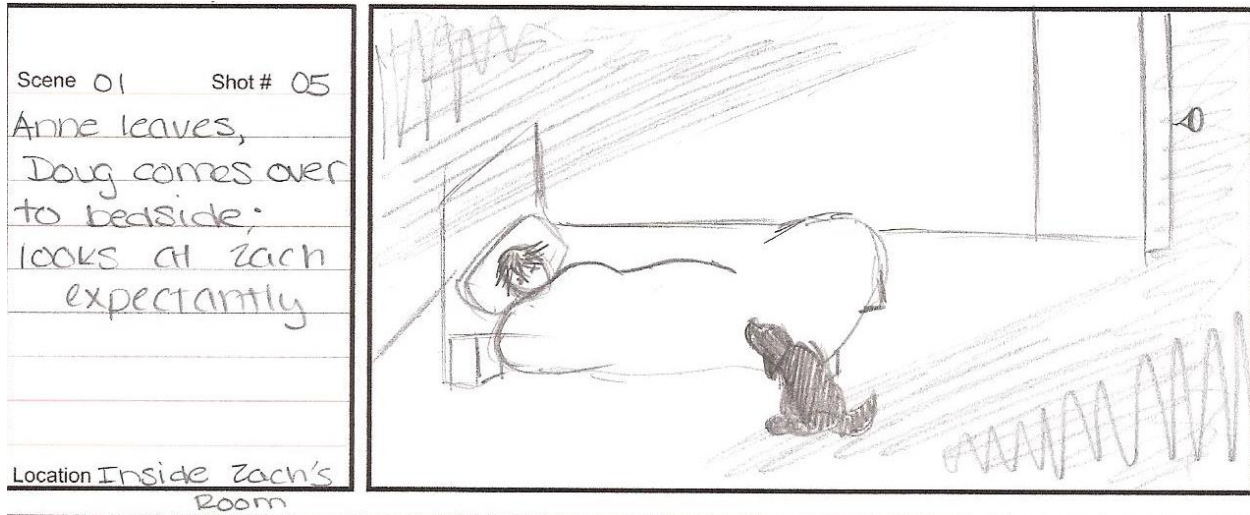
Zachary shifts a little bit on the bed, but otherwise there is silence. After a rather long pause:

**MOM:** Zach, I know it can be an ugly world out there, but you'll pull through. Just remember this house will always be here and so will I. If you need anything just call. I'll be right down the hall.

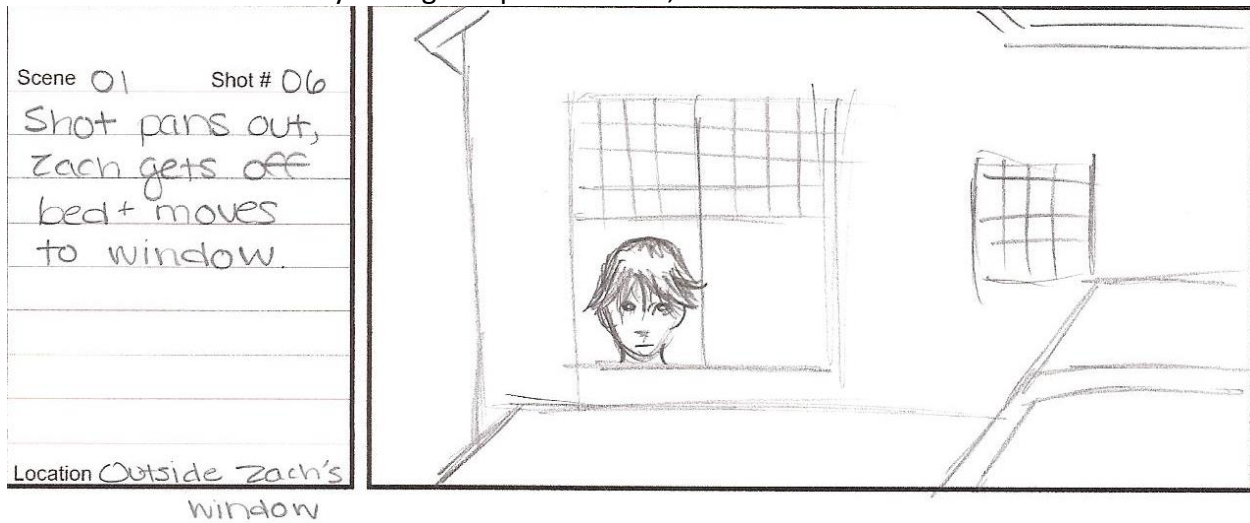
Scene 01 Shot # 04  
Anne moves to bed,  
says, "So I  
heard you had a  
rough day at  
school today..."  
→ more dialog←  
Dog enters room  
Location Inside Zach's  
Room



Zachary's mother gets up off the bed and leaves through the open doorway, leaving it open.



Zachary then gets up off the bed, and walks to the window.





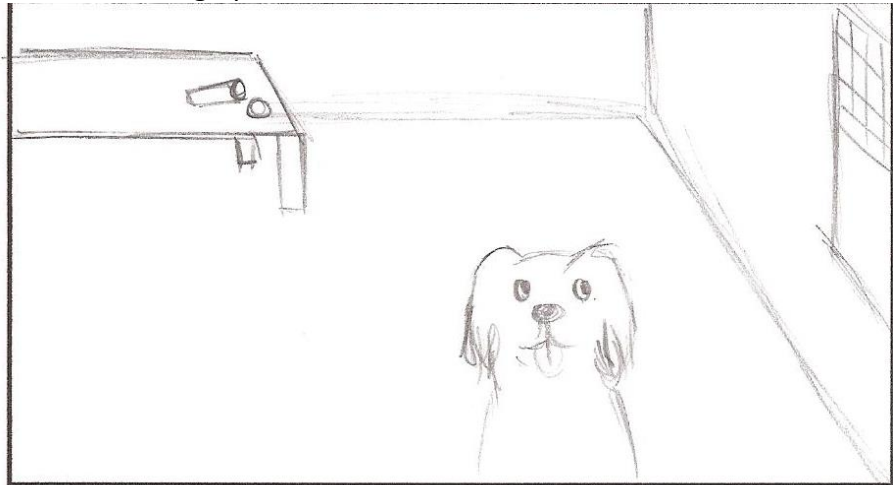
The sun has just gone down and the city off in the distance has just come to life, resembling a shining metropolis in the middle of darkness. He looks out with longing in his eyes, green showing in the darkness.

Scene 01 Shot # 07  
 changes to Zach's  
 POV - turns to  
 view outside  
 the window.  
 City shining in  
 the distance  
 can see outlines of  
 houses in darkness  
 Location View from Zach's  
 Window

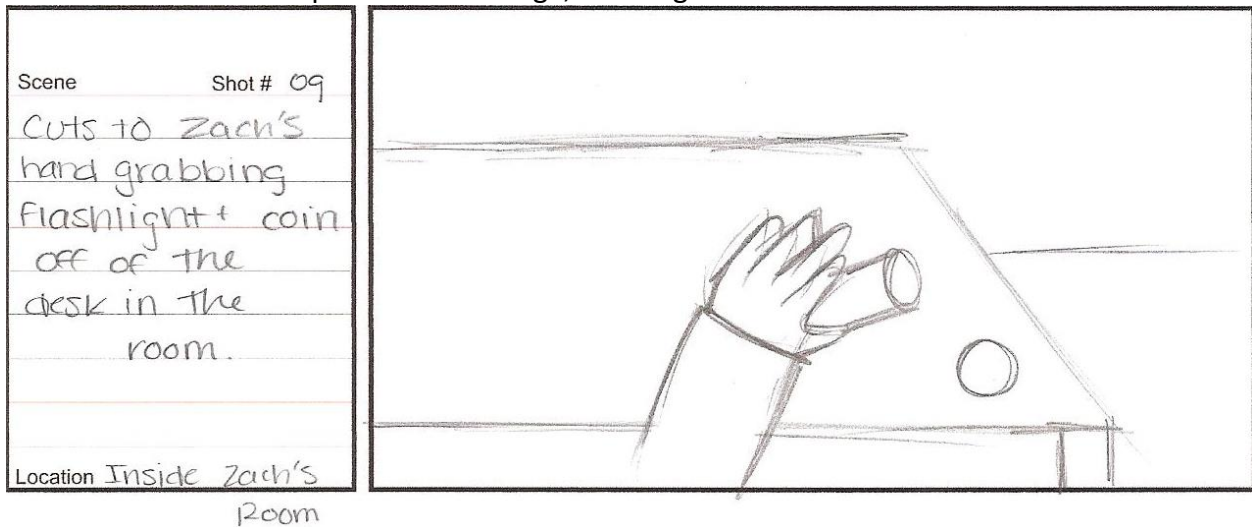


He slowly turns around and finds his dog sitting on the floor looking at him. The dog sits there and wags its tail a few times while Zachary stares at it. It then appears to look out the window and back at him, following up the action with one loud bark. It seems to know.

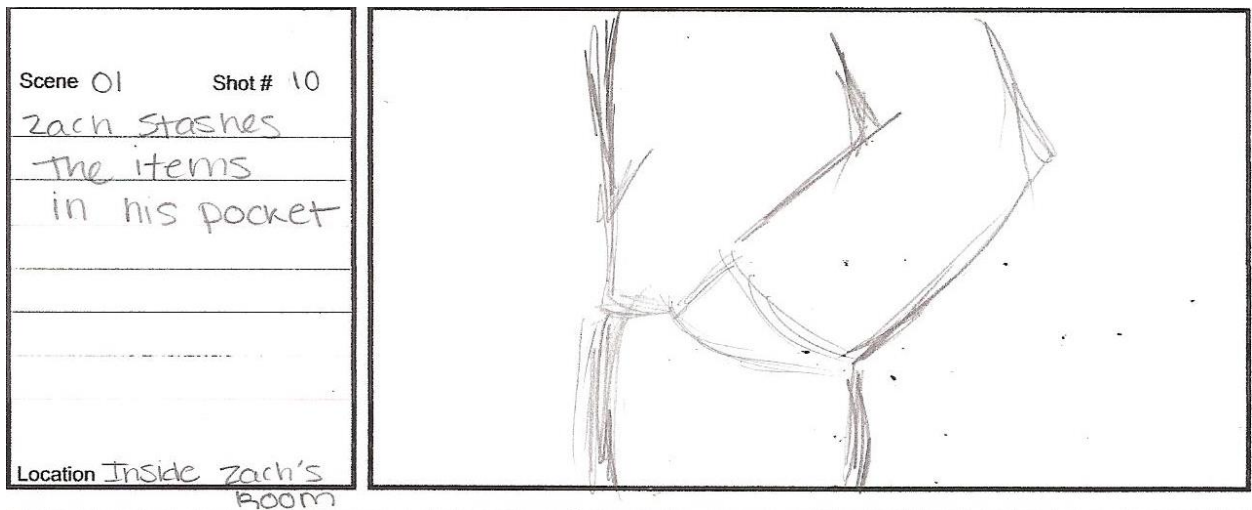
Scene 01 Shot # 08  
 Pans away from  
 window to the  
 room  
 Doug looks outside  
 window, to cam-  
 era, and then  
 barks.  
 Location Inside Zach's  
 Room



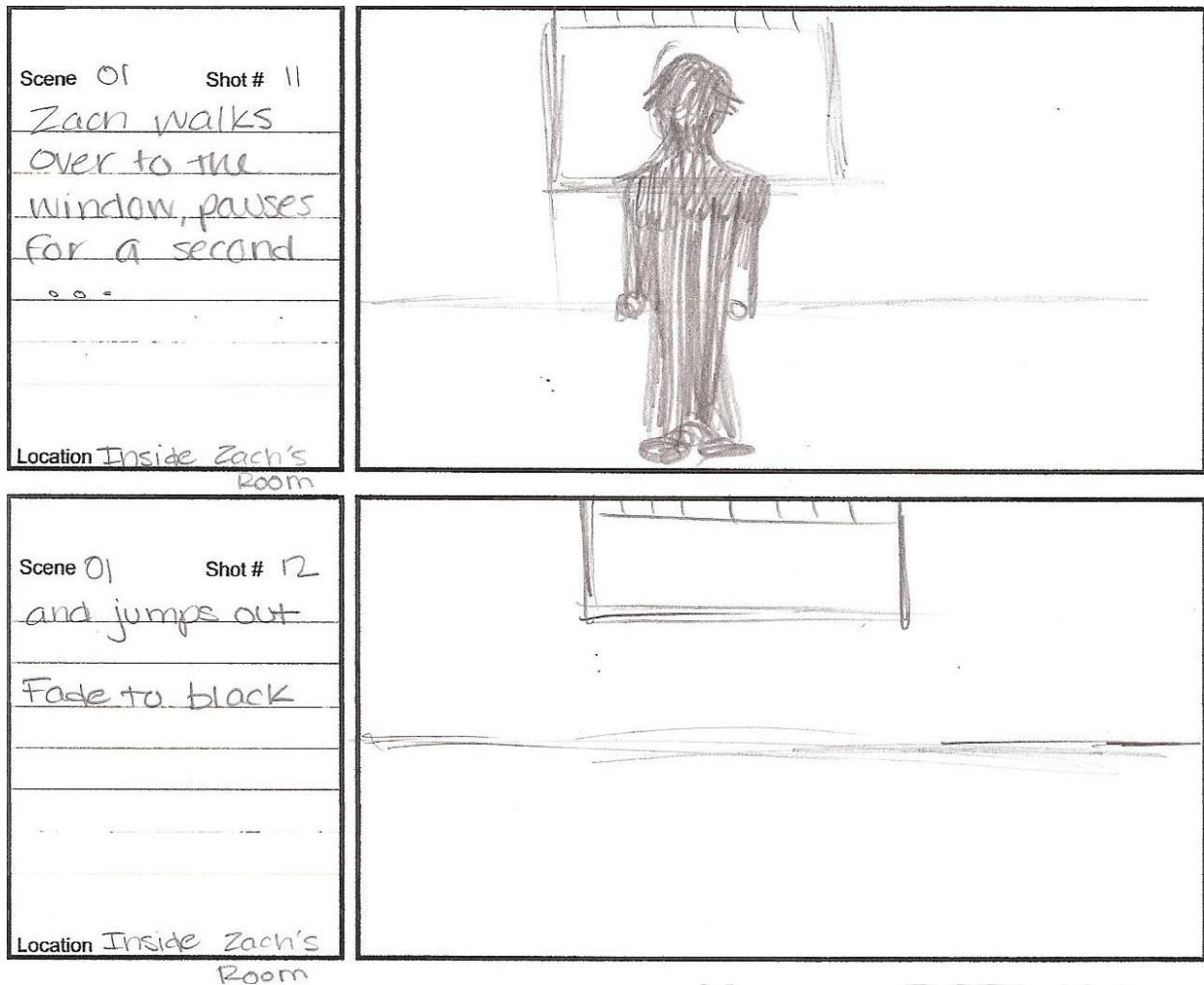
Moving quickly, Zachary grabs his flashlight from his nightstand before moving to the window. He pauses on the edge, seeming to think for a moment.



Then he grabs a small gold coin from his desk, shoves it in his pocket and jumps out the window.



He then disappears into the darkness, one hand playing with the coin in his pocket.



*Now it's time to step into the shoes of Zach as he starts a great adventure...*

**Objective:**

Steer Zach on his quest to find adventure and himself. On your way, you'll make friends and enemies, find people you can choose to help, and loose the coin. Eventually, you must regain your keepsake and make your way home.



**Gameplay:**

Run, jump, crawl, pick up items found in the environment, and use those items to your advantage. The most common of these is candy, which allows you to regain health. Some items can be used conjunctively to fashion new items, such as the grappling device (which is created from a rock and rope). Items will be stored in an inventory of finite size, simulating pockets. Certain key items such as keys and rope can interact with parts of the environment, allowing the player to progress. (A full list of items and their interactions can be found in another document).

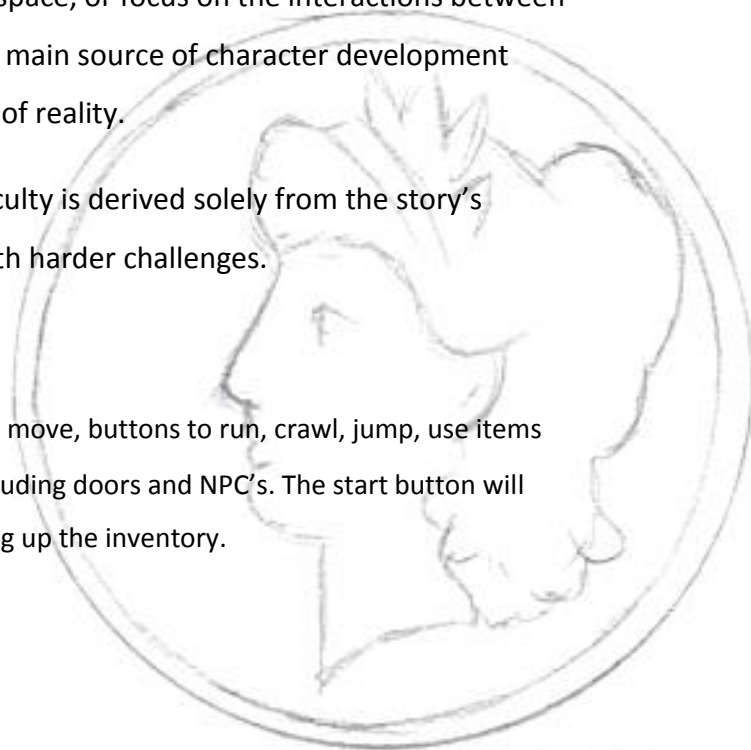
All aspects of gameplay are in first person POV, as Zach would see the world. Because of this, events during gameplay always have a fantastic spin on them, meaning virtually anything, from superheroes and rainbows to darkness and monsters, can show up in the game. However, all things in gameplay correspond to something real outside of Zach's mind. This is shown through subtle similarities in appearance and sound between imaginary and real-world objects. For the most part, people will retain the same voice in the imaginary world that they have in the real one. Similarly, distinctive behaviors and/or clothing items will also show up on the character in both worlds.

Cut scenes will appear at pivotal points throughout Zach's adventure, most often when he encounters new people or an important enemy. They will always be in third person POV, and will either include large portions of environmental space, or focus on the interactions between Zach and other people. That way, they serve as the main source of character development (particularly for Zach), as well as remind the player of reality.

Since there is no real level system, the game's difficulty is derived solely from the story's events. As the player progresses, they are faced with harder challenges.

**Controls:**

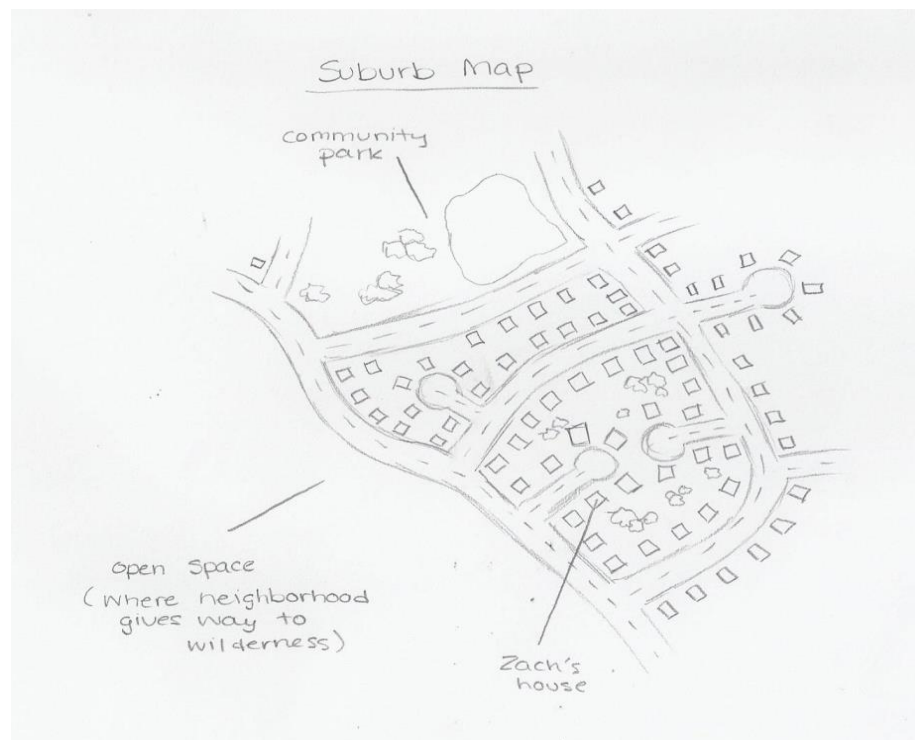
Settings for a standard controller. Joystick to move, buttons to run, crawl, jump, use items and interact with things in the environment including doors and NPC's. The start button will pause the game, while the select menu will bring up the inventory.



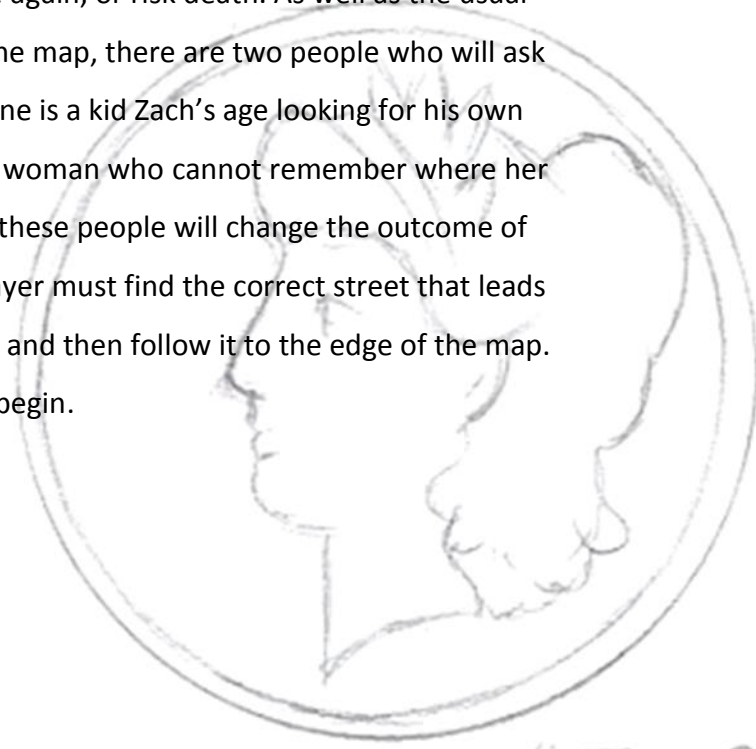


**Levels:**

- The Suburbs:** The neighborhood around Zach's home. Relatively safe and relaxed, except for a few loose dogs. This level is intended to get the player acclimated with the world, controls, and idea that they need to find their own way through, just like Zach (the player is never expressly told what to do or where to go; it is up to them to get to the end). Most of the houses along the streets are decorative, however, a few of them can be entered. Items such as candy can commonly be found in less obvious places, like behind fences and in flower pots. You also have the choice to help a cat out of a tree. Doing so can affect the game's ending. Eventually, the player must make their way to the community park, where they will meet the "Scary Man" for the first time. A cut scene plays in which the man tries to take Zach's coin. Zach then sees a mysterious floating ball of light fly down the street. He follows it till it stops in front of a large storm drain, goes past it, and slips down into it and out of the man's reach.



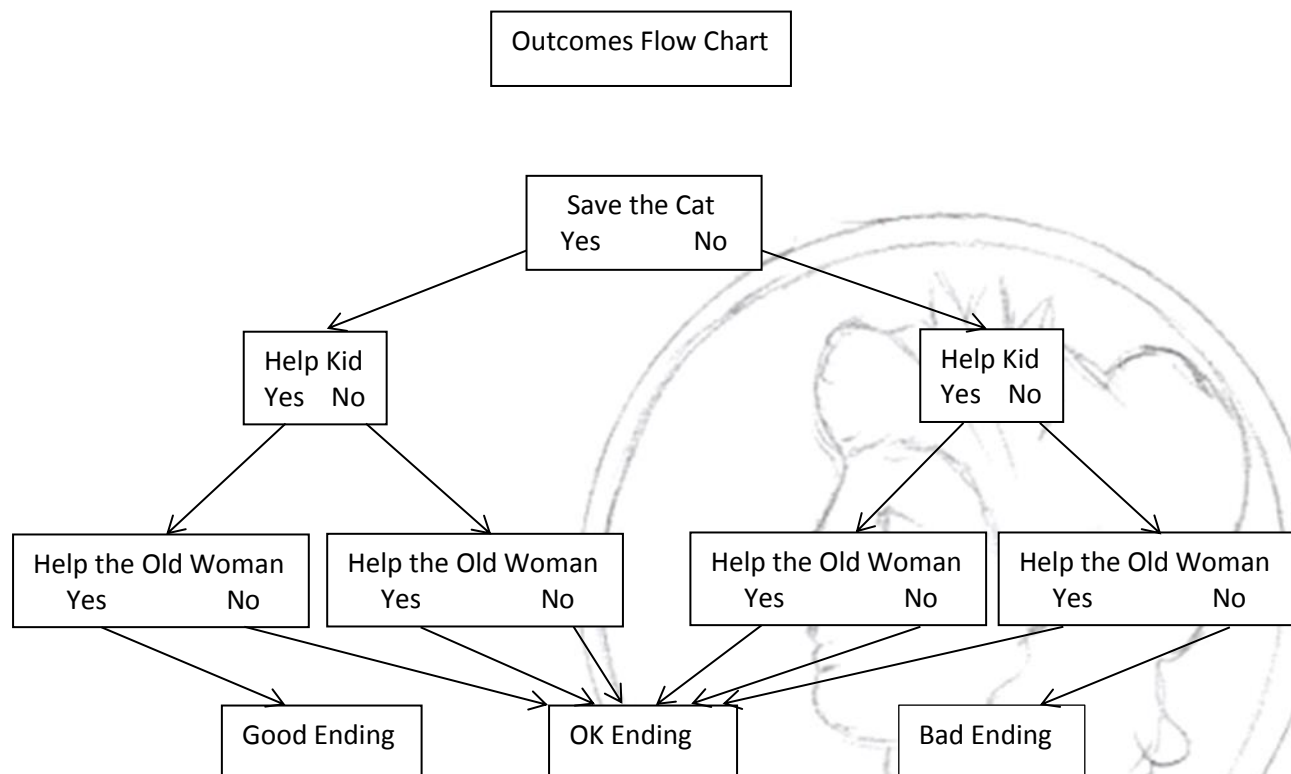
- **The Sewers:** After slipping down into the storm drain, the silver dollar falls out of Zach's pocket. It is picked up by a rat that disappears into the darkness. So, the player must go in search of the coin and eventually a way back to the surface. There are no people or animals to help in this level, however, items are very important. Within the labyrinthine maze that is the sewers, you must find a rope and rock, so you can create a grappling device. This allows you to get to the area where the rat is hiding. All dangers in this area are environmental. The player must be careful not to fall down into the pits scattered across the map. After retrieving the coin, the player continues on to find a ladder leading to the surface.
- **The City:** Upon reaching the surface, Zach once again runs into the "Scary Man". The player must then go through a bit of structured gameplay in which the player must follow the glowing ball of light as it leads them away from the man, moving as fast as possible, while he gives chase. Upon escaping, the player is then allowed once again to explore an urban map at their own pace. This time, however, the "scary man" wanders the map as well, so being careful about your movements is key. If discovered, the player will have to escape again, or risk death. As well as the usual items scattered throughout the map, there are two people who will ask help of Zach if approached. One is a kid Zach's age looking for his own keepsake. The other is an old woman who cannot remember where her home is. Once again, helping these people will change the outcome of the game. Eventually, the player must find the correct street that leads back to Zach's neighborhood, and then follow it to the edge of the map. Then, the final cut scene will begin.

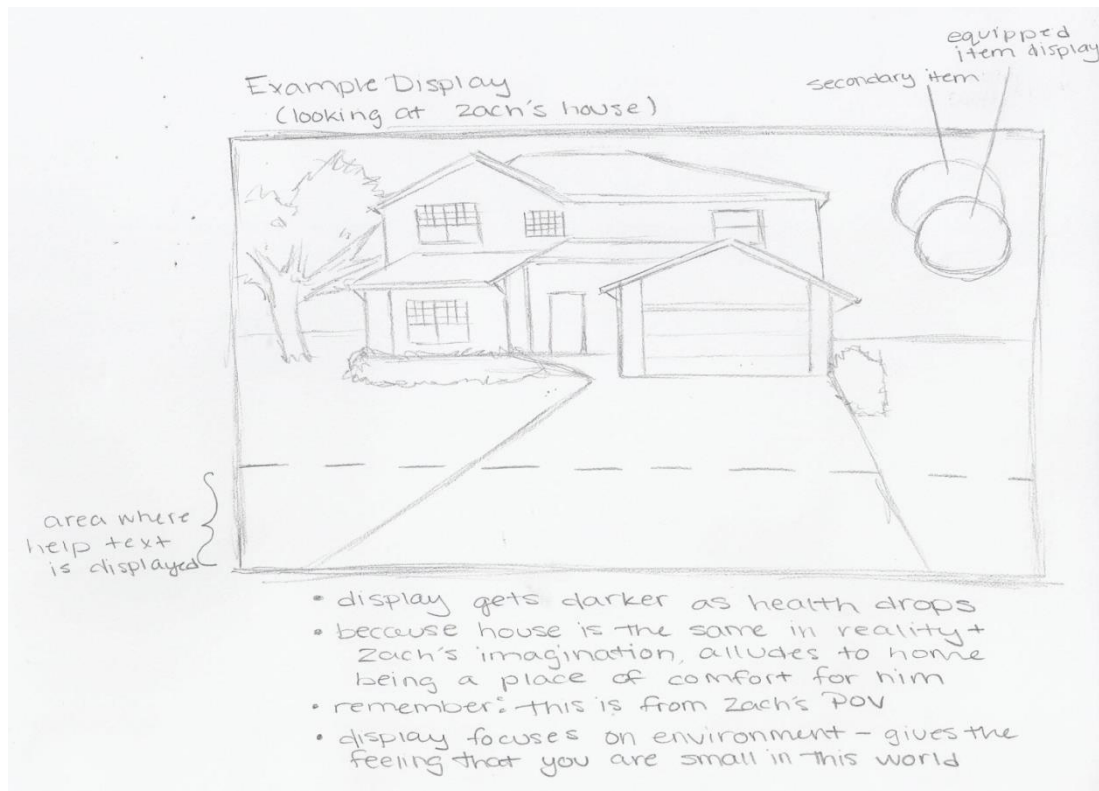


**Outcomes:**

What you decide to do or not do affects the ending of the game. There are various outcomes, which one achieved is dependent on the choices you make throughout the game.

1. **Good Ending:** If you help all of the people you can, you return home with a bunch of new friends (the people you've helped), and they help you face the "Scary Man." They stop him from chasing Zach and after some talking you learn about the "Scary Man" and his situation. Zach ultimately decides that he needs the coin more, so you give it to him and live happily thereafter. You've grown substantially as a person.
2. **OK Ending:** You help out a few people and so you return home with one good friend. Hereafter, you face the world together. Once again, you decide that the "Scary Man" needs the coin more than you do. You've shown the makings of a good human being, but there is still growing to do. This is where your new life begins.
3. **Bad Ending:** You return home with nothing but the coin. You return to life just as you left it. Nothing is lost, but nothing is gained, rendering the whole adventure pointless.



**HUD:****Gameplay Aids:**

Occasionally, small text appears at the bottom of the screen when the player gets near objects that are inactive. Screen starts to get dark when health runs low. Otherwise, very realistic (almost nothing text-related)

**Audio:**

- **Sound Effects:** Realistic for Zach, such as heavy breathing when running. Other noises are distorted versions of real noises, hinting that the objects correspond to distinct things in reality. (Sound effects list contained in other document).
- **Music:** All music is orchestrated cinematic-type music that is highly dependent on Zach's mood. Fast-paced, with deep notes and ominous undertones for chase music, music towards the middle of the scale with longer notes when Zach is experiencing wonder, and light, melodic scores when in a place of safety. (A full list of music is contained in another document).

**Graphics Library:**

- Backpack Icon: after the inventory is accessed, shows for a few seconds while the inventory screen loads.
- Rope Icon: graphical representation of rope in the inventory
- Rock Icon : graphical representation of rock in inventory
- Grappling Device Icon: graphical representation of the grappling device in the inventory
- Candy Icon: graphical representation of candy in the inventory
- Two Overlying Circles: always on the screen, used to display what two items are equipped at the time. The circle on top shows the one that can currently be used.
- Coin Icon: graphical representation on the silver dollar in the inventory
- Flashlight Icon: graphical representation of the flashlight in the inventory
- Question Mark Icon: shows up on the screen when Zach gets near an object in the environment that is interactive.
- Talk Bubble Icon: shows up on the screen when Zach gets near a person that he can talk to.

