

## Pac-Man Escape

By Andrea R. Waller

with characters from *The Red Pyramid* by Rick Riordan

My name is Carter. I have dark skin and brown hair with brown-black eyes just like my dad. My sister Sadie (who keeps telling me to get on with the story) looks nothing like me. She is more like our mom with green eyes, pale skin, and red hair that used to be blonde. Sadie is more of a drama queen than an angel. Every time something magical or weird happens, she thinks it's totally normal. She's also fast at solving problems. I think I am smarter and also a brave person, but my sister says I'm a wimp. We had a normal life until our dad got us something he said came from the back of a red van.

We were in the arcade playing old classic games. We were playing Pac-man, and Sadie was about to break the record dad made when he was a little kid and beat the past players. We are gaming experts, and people respect us like we rule the world. This talent passed from my grandfather to dad to us like a kingdom.

"Bing!"

My sister won with the best score in the arcade. We celebrated quietly to ourselves, but the people behind us yelled, cheered, and were screaming Sadie's name. As we walked back home, dad rushed toward us beaming with joy and gave us a big hug.

"I got you something," he said.

I was confused as he pulled out what looked like an old box with buttons until I realized it was a gaming system. Sadie snatched it out of dad's hand as if the gift was food. We were a little hungry because we hadn't eaten anything in a while.

"Dad, what is this? Some type of preschool toy?" Sadie said.

"No, it's a gaming console from back in the day," I said.

"Ok, nerd," Sadie replied. "Go on."

Dad had already left the room. Sadie and I jumped onto the sofa, turned on the console, and waited. Nothing happened.

Wow, I thought to myself, what a waste of time.

“Boom!”

A big flash went off and almost blinded me.

“Stage 1!”

“What is this, Sadie?” I said. “It looks like we’re stuck inside some dark place.”

We walked around a bit until we found a big red button that said “start.”

“Wait! Don’t press the...”

My sister ran towards it and pressed.

“Too late!” she said as she laughed with joy.

A great big black and blue maze started rising. Sadie and I turned yellow. Yellow coin pebbles started popping up. We heard the music and saw the background.

Is this Pac- Man? I thought to myself. “I think we are in the game.”

I started to panic, but my sister acted like it was completely normal.

As my stomach filled with butterflies, she reached out and found another button.

“Whoosh.”

Two ghosts appeared.

As I pushed Sadie out of the way, I screamed, “We need to collect all the pebbles before we...”

Before I could speak again, she had already started.

“Zoom.”

As fast as lightning and already finishing the first level, I came up by the ghost who trapped me.

“Whoosh!”

I was gone, and then back again.

"Carter!" Sadie said. "Stay focused!"

I could not believe she was telling me what to do because I didn't feel like I was losing.

"Oh, it's like Donkey Kong," I said as I ran straight for the pebbles and got point after point.

"Done!"

Sadie shouted with joy. We had one more stage and were already at the highest score anyone had ever had. We had 2 lives left and could not mess up now. We came to the last pebble.

"Almost had it!"

Sadie and I both hit a ghost. One life left.

"What happens if we die?" Sadie said with concern.

"We probably will perish in the real world, too, or worse, we'll have to restart the game from the beginning."

With all our might, we finally got the last pebble.

"We won!" I shouted with relief.

We came back in a blinding flash and landed right on our sofa. Our dad came in on time, too.

"Dad!" I screamed, jumping to my feet. "You won't believe what happened."

"I know, son, I know."

Sadie and I looked at each other. I started to wonder, did he set us up for this?