

Parents' Music Resource Center

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Dear Dr. Gerbner:

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate on the Advisory Team of our film project, "Media Mania." Your letter of July 23 has helped us immensely to isolate some of the problems with the original treatment - namely, the situation of sensory overload being a quantitative lesson rather than a qualitative lesson. We want children to "think" about wise choice as you accurately pointed out, not just reducing the flow.

Enclosed is a script which reflects changes based on your comments. I'd love to hear what you think about the updated version. Additionally, I did not receive the pages you said were enclosed that had further comments and questions.

To address the questions that you asked in your letter, there are several shifts in reality and fantasy. First, Elliot undergoes an electric shock from which he really doesn't wake up until the end. While in this dream phase, he believes himself to be the victim of "media mania." He eventually wakes up in the hospital, thinking his adventures with the aliens were just a dream. He finds out that he was not dreaming when he sees the animated word "Think" on his cap. He then wakes up into "reality," again in the hospital after the showdown with Voidoid. In the end, the audience does not see what Elliot sees on his cap, so we don't know if he actually views "Think" when he wakes up the second time in the Medical Center.

The negative and mindless portrayal of the parents in the fantasy sequence is used to show the distortion that Elliot undergoes between fantasy and reality. His dream becomes very mixed up with the characters in his entertainment. Everyone he encounters during the fantasy sequence is reminiscent of a television or music star. The parents are reinforced in the beginning and end reality sequences as loving and caring adults so children will not go away with a negative impression.

Page 2

I hope this version has a clearer demonstration of wise choice. Our dilemma was to avoid frightening children away from television and entertainment media, to show that it can be used wisely. We tried to stress this especially at the end and with the scene where the family sits down to watch together.

I look forward to your comments.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Norwood

Synopsis: Media Mania

We FADE IN on a middle class family's living room, the home of eleven year old ELLIOT PORTER. It is mid-October, and the room is full of the current generation of boys and girls of varying races, their clothing representative of their entertainment idols. They are bathed in the shifting pale-blue light that emanates from the television set.

The sounds of a rock video fill the room, the scene of this group of kids' frequent video parties. We see that some of the kids are wearing headsets, listening at an obviously increased volume, and are pretending to play guitars. The cables to the headsets create a spiderweb entanglement, in which the kids maneuver with ease.

We meet Elliot's friends: COLIN, a twelve-year old bully who fancies himself as some kind of "Rambo Commando." He is insulting to many of his friends and is known to pick on ROGER, an overweight child who Colin refers to as, "that couch potato." Colin excludes MISSY, a "Madonna-wanna-be," from many of his games, telling her she isn't "smart" enough to play with the boys and should go play with her Barbie dolls instead. JACK, a boy they call "Metal Head," is a loner who seldom joins in with Colin's warlike games. He always wears the T-shirts advertising his favorite metal group, prompting the other kids to get into a screaming match about which groups are better than others. PETER is a soft-spoken, bespectacled black boy who often mediates the

arguments Colin causes. He therefore often becomes a target of Colin's sarcastic humor.

Colin jumps up and grabs the remote control away and starts switching through the channels quickly. Jack, who had been watching the the rock video with interest, grabs his Walkman and goes to the corner to intently read the album jacket to his favorite metal group. He seems to be searching the lyrics for some hidden meaning. Colin's channel switcher stops on a cooking show. "Ugh, that stuff's for girls," Colin chortles contemptuously, throwing a glance at Missy. He switches some more channels and pauses at a commercial for expensive athletic shoes, featuring Michael Jordan. "Peter, why don't you own a pair of these shoes?" says Colin. "Come to think of it, you don't even play basketball. Well, Michael's cool. I can't understand why you wouldn't want to be like him. Are you sure you're really black?" Peter turns calmly to Colin and replies, "Just because I'm black doesn't mean I have to play a certain sport. And Missy doesn't have to play with dolls just because she's a girl. You can be such a jerk, sometimes."

Colin jumps up menacingly just as Elliot's parents enter the room. Both parents encourage the children to play outside, instead of watching so much television on such a beautiful day. Elliot's mom watches as Elliot remains glued to the television, watching a scene where two people are locked in physical combat. "Really, Elliot, you shouldn't watch so much junk T.V. Some of these shows are way too violent," she says. "Aw mom," replies Elliot, "It doesn't scare me. I don't even think about it. I

just watch it for the action scenes and the car chases, anyway."

The parents exit, and after a few moments, the TV screen turns to visual and audio noise! The kids tear off their headsets in order to escape the unwanted screaming sound of static. The video tribe goes crazy! Colin suddenly jumps up and grabs Elliot's little brother, MICHAEL PORTER (age 6), by the collar and says threateningly, "Fix it, dweeb!" Elliot intervenes, saying, "Back off Colin, I'll fix it!" He starts fiddling with the television. He reaches behind the entertainment center to adjust the cables.

ZAP! CRACK! Elliot receives the full force on an electric shock! He is knocked to the floor. We see his point of view as the screen starts to fade out. Just before it fades to black, we see through Elliot's eyes, a darkening force that emanates from the television screen, stereo speakers and audio headphones. It is a formless dark smoke that begins to coalesce into a shape, just as the screen goes dark.

[We now enter a fantasy sequence that takes place in Elliot's mind.]

The image fades back in. The TV set is playing again, but something is different. Elliot's friends are decked out more colorfully. A subtle difference in lighting exists. A wide angle lens distorts the images. It is like we are in a slightly out of kilter dimension. There is no mention from his friends about what just happened. Elliot shakes his head to clear the cobwebs. Jack puts a headset on Elliot and then begins to play "air guitar," mimicking the performer on the rock video.

We dissolve to the exterior of Elliot's house. The sounds of the kids and the rock video continue. We dissolve again to a high altitude view of Elliot's neighborhood. The sounds from Elliot's house are joined by various sounds from the other homes.

Through a series of dissolves, we continue to move up and away from earth, until we see the planet rotating fully. The sound has built to a crescendo of totally confusing noise. We pull away as the earth disappears into the blackness, the noise growing fainter as the stillness of deep space envelopes it.

Out of the depths of space appears a rotating planet, ZORK. Our Narrator explains the location of Zork in a humorous way, as we take in the wondrous vista of this alien planet, a world not unlike our own. We finally settle on two alien companions, RAY GAMMA, and his little friend ZIP [an animated creature]. The pair are tuning in the planet Earth which is slowly turning on their television screen. A noise is emanating from their screen: the sounds of Earth. The sound becomes a cacophony, totally unintelligible.

Gamma and Zip become extremely excited about their discovery. They leave their laboratory in search of their superior, THE BRAIN. As they pixilate down a long hallway, we become aware of massive doors at the far end, ala "The Wizard of Oz." Gamma and Zip enter the "Throne Room." The Brain materializes and hovers above them. He is a big, friendly, pulsating alien entity, who is always ready to assimilate their data.

Gamma and Zip are breathless with their discovery. "I think this is it!" says Gamma. "A planet so full of electronic sound

and picture signals that we feel certain this is what we have been looking for!" In a dazzling display of pixilation and animation effects, Gamma and Zip demonstrate a rapid representation of Earth's music, sounds and images. We recognize our own popular TV shows, music videos, and entertainment stars, from the opening theme music of well-known sitcoms, to the "Heeere's Johnny" introduction of the "Tonight Show." The Brain suddenly calls the display to a halt and in order to settle down the overly excited duo, he creates a "calm zone" in the center of the room.

"You must be careful," warns Brain. "It's important to keep these signals separate from your own brain signals - otherwise they could affect your central nervous system and you'll end up with noise, just like you are receiving on your screens. It is something that we have long avoided in Zork."

A more serious, attentive and quieter atmosphere now exists. The Brain then produces an image in the center, a variety of stereotypical representations of people from Earth. A music video shows women as identical sexual objects. Movie action scenes depict glamorized violence. Commercials show stereotypical blacks and elderly. Brain observes that, "These earthlings describe themselves as 'humans.' However, their own transmission equipment presents a very narrow view of their humanity!" They are candid shots of them talking about their favorite music, and television programs. We hear children describe their favorite scary shows, without commenting on the sadness of violence. We hear them discuss their favorite stars,

without realizing that the images they portray are not real. These interviews are intercut with shots from TV shows and other appropriate images, as well as shots of trance-like kids and family members watching television. We finish with a view of a TV show reflected on a child's eye. Suddenly the image darkens as a shadow flicks across the child's retina.

"Look, there!" exclaims Gamma. "Did you see it? It's just as I feared. I think we've located the next target for VOIDOID." The Brain explains to the duo how the evil creature Voidoid travels the galaxy looking for civilizations that are vulnerable to his sorcery. "Voivoid preys on cultures that are slowly losing the ability to think for themselves. When they lose sight of the need to use their minds, when they consume their entertainment mindlessly, rather than critically, they are most vulnerable. And Voivoid is always there to take their minds, to use them to enhance his own power."

The Brain explains to the duo that it is their mission to combat Voidoid, to try and teach the people of this civilization to think for themselves so they will not come under his spell. He instructs our heroes to go to Earth and quietly observe the conditions there firsthand: he wants to understand the power of music and entertainment on the human psyche, and its impact on their emotions, desires, actions and reactions.

"You will find one human," says Brain, "who will be the key to Voidoid's attack. You must find this person who is closest to losing his mind and teach him. Only then will Voidoid be defeated."

Meanwhile, back on Earth, we are at a Friday night party that is being thrown by Elliot's parents. Elliot is maneuvering through a cluster of mobile, talkative adults. Their conversation reminds us of many TV commercials. Elliot's parents, especially, are radically different from how we saw them before.

Elliot's father makes a toast: "Here's to good times, tonight is something special!" Elliot wanders through, overhearing one couple's discussion: "Tastes great," she says. "No, less filling," he replies. Elliot appears disoriented. Ignored by the adults, he sits down in front of the TV, and plugs in his headphones. A buzzing fills his head, unheard by those around him. It grows louder and louder, drowning out the tinkle of cocktail glasses and party laughter until it reaches a crescendo. A black shape forms out the light emanating from the TV and the headphones on Elliot. It begins to take shape in front of Elliot's unblinking eyes. It evolves into a human-like shape, shrouded in darkness that moves closer and closer until it blocks out Elliot's form entirely. Small lightning bolts of static flicker from the shape that is now Elliot and the alien Voidoid. The crescendo of noise crackles with static and then suddenly goes dead.

We cut to Gamma and Zip, who find Earth without mishap. Once in Earth's atmosphere, Gamma flips on the scope just into time to see a concentration of static energy located in the region marked Washington, D.C. "Look, Zip," exclaims Gamma. "There he is!"

In his excitement, Zip bumps into the controls and causes their navigation to become a thing of the past. Out of control, the ship barely avoids colliding with a variety of Earth's landmarks. We see the ship fly over the Statue of Liberty and dip down into the Grand Canyon. It finally makes an extremely low pass over Washington, D.C., flying zany past the Capitol building and the Washington monument. They fly past a billboard captioned, "Satellite Parking" which causes Gamma to do a double take with Zip. They fly down a city street right over a variety of people who are so wrapped up in their portable headphones and other entertainment distractions that they don't notice the spaceship at all.

The ship finally crashes through the side of a huge warehouse marked "The ACME Outdated Fad Merchandise Storage Co." The ship comes to rest upon a pile of no longer popular toys and merchandise, such as hula hoops, transformers, cabbage patch dolls and Batman and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle paraphenalia.

In the warehouse office a large SECURITY GUARD is snoring in front of a television set with its picture rolling. The remains of a junk food feast litter the room and his rotund belly. The sound of the crash awakens him. He turns on his flashlight and heads out to investigate.

Gamma and Zip spill out of their open hatch onto a sea of toys. Zip curiously scans the sea of now useless objects and scratches his head. Gamma sees the huge crash-hole they made in the side of the building and gasps! He frantically instructs Zip to fetch the "Reconstruction Generator." Zip picks up a toy ray

gun and hands it to his flustered friend. Gamma tries to use it to no avail. Once aware of the prank, he admonishes Zip, who darts into the ship and back with the alien device. With the security guard getting nearer, Gamma activates the device, putting the wall back to its original undamaged condition.

The guard is now fumbling with his keys to unlock our heroes' section of the warehouse. Gamma uses the reconstruction generator to put the toys back where they belong. Suddenly the door behind them starts to open. They look at their huge ship, clearly visible, then at each other, and gasp! The burly guard enters the room, his flashlight sweeping the shelves and aisles. All is as it should be! There is no sign of the ship or our alien friends. The confused yet still suspicious guard scratches his head as he scans with the light. Finally his beam falls on a trio of toys: a tiny spaceship, a stuffed Zip doll, and a Gamma action figure. The guard does a double-take and exits with a less than satisfied expression. Gamma returns to normal size.

"Where do we start?" queries Gamma. We see the Brain appear in a holographic image. He directs the duo to the local cable station, explaining that they must track Voidoid through the electronic signals that attract him. At the cable station, they will have access to all the signals that connect that neighborhood. In that way, they will be able to find Voidoid's intended victim.

We cut to Elliot's neighborhood. The morning sky serenely illuminates a neatly kept community of middle class houses. We approach one home where we see a mailbox that reads, "Porter."

Inside the house, Elliot sits frozen in front of the TV. The frenzy of Saturday morning programming dances across the screen. A battle scene is taking place, where one combatant overcomes the other. Elliot's eyes are wide and glazed. Michael comes into the room and plops in front of the TV beside Elliot, accidentally bumping him. Elliot springs into action, taking a combative stance similar to that which he just viewed, armed coiled and ready to strike. Michael jumps back in fear and Elliot, coming to his senses, dazedly shakes his head. "Michael, I don't know what came over me. I guess I just wasn't thinking." The static in his head is now a constant buzz. Michael, worried about his brother, goes to get his parents.

Alone in the room, Elliot hears the telephone ring. He dazedly picks up the receiver but appears to have forgotten what to do next. He stands there in confusion as we see the familiar shadow that is Voidoid pass over his face.

Elliot's parents enter, reciting rhetoric reminding us of dialogue from popular TV commercials. His dad offers him a handful of candies for "fast, fast relief." His mother holds up a box of Ram-O's junk food cereal, saying, "They get little soldiers up and running in the morning with sugar and over 400 vitamins!" Elliot's parents' attitudes, mannerisms (obviously changed from the beginning of the story) and in fact their entire house epitomizes the effects of unbridled media bombardment. Though not offensively messy, the entire home is jam-packed with the byproducts of electronic media. Some rooms even have more than one TV set. Stereos and headsets abound. Michael

accidentally steps on a remote control device which turns on numerous televisions and stereos throughout the house. Elliot jumps, startled out of his lethargy from the sudden bombardment of noise. "Mom, Dad," he says, "I think I need to see a doctor. I don't feel well."

At the cable station, Gamma and Zip enter a studio just as a TV commercial is being shot. A "Rambo" like character with muscular arms is holding up a box of Ram-O's breakfast cereal. He says, "It would be your worst nightmare if you don't try my new breakfast cereal!" At this point, ADRIAN, a high-strung ad executive type charges in and starts complaining loudly about the lighting being wrong. Gamma is disguised as a custodian, attentively sweeping around the set. With a less than graceful move, his broom knocks over the product setup, spilling the contents of the cereal box around Rambo's feet. Adrian screams, "You idiot! Do you know how long it took to set that up? No, of course you don't! Hours and hours! Dollars and dollars! Do you know what this means?" Gamma, backing up and confused, says, "No." Adrian, clenching his fists and moving toward Gamma says, "It means we lose dollars and dollars!"

Rambo grabs Adrian's arm, saying, "Take it easy, Adrian! You take this stuff too seriously!" Adrian, pursuing Gamma says, "If I don't get this commercial done, the children won't see it! If the children don't see it, the parents won't buy it! If the parents don't buy it, the Ram-O's Breakfast food people will lose dollars and dollars and dollars!"

Rambo says, "Yo! Adrian! Calm down!" Adrian says to Gamma, "If the Ram-O's Breakfast food people lose dollars and dollars then I'll lose my job and dollars and dollars and dollars!" Adrian drops to his knees, repeating "Dollars and dollars and dollars!" over and over again.

Gamma makes his way over to the studio door and escapes. Rambo loudly yells, "ADRIAN!", which echoes through the building as Gamma (with invisible Zip on his shoulder runs down a hallway.

After he is sure of being a safe distance from the crazed madman, Gamma slows to a fast walk. Talking to himself, he says, "Dollars and dollars and dollars!" mockingly.

Suddenly, in a burst of sparkling "Disney-dust drippy-downs," Zip materializes in front of Gamma, startling him. Gamma admonishes Zip, warning that he has been told not to scare people and other life-forms like that before. Zip makes a "I'm sorry" sound and flies behind Gamma as they move on down the hall. Gamma says, "I'm not sure what 'dollars and dollars and dollars' are, but they appear to be the cause of irresponsible behavior in some earthlings!" Zip nods in wide-eyed agreement.

Meanwhile, at the Medical Center, Elliot is being examined by Dr. Howard, Dr. Fine, and Dr. Howard. They are reminiscent of the three stooges. They each have a prognosis:

- 1) Procrastination
- 2) Pass-the-buck-itis
- 3) Who-knows-aphobia

After a stooge-style procrastination in regard to diagnosis, Dr. Howard says, "CALL IN A SPECIALIST." Dr. Fine then says, "A SPECIALIST!" Dr. Howard says, "A SPECIALIST! Nyuk, Nyuk, Nyuk!"

Back at the cable station, Gamma and Zip round a corner and find themselves at a set of double doors: Studio #2. Not noticing the red flashing "Shooting in process" light over the door, they peek into the studio and see a talk show in progress.

From behind the talk show host, we can see the guests, the cameras, and Gamma (entering in the far corner of the studio). The host says, "Welcome back to "Is Too, Is Not". Our guests tonight are opera superstar DONNA PRIMA and I.M. FRESH AND THE HOMEBOYS rap group, whose hit song, "Mop 'n Glow Baby" is based on the Cinderella fairytale. Gamma picks up a toolbox and clipboard to look busy.

I.M. Fresh, the rap musician, with his Homeboys adding rap symphonics in the background, raps, "Cinderella, met her fella, dissed the dude 'cause he was yella!" Donna Prima sings back, in a high operatic soprano, "Noooo, nooo....she fell in love...they lived happily ever aaafter!"

Meanwhile, in the control room, we see the switching control panel and monitors, with I.M. Fresh visible on them. He says, "It's a brother's tale. She done him wrong!" Donna Prima says, "It is not! It's a fairytale! They fell in love!" "Is too!," says I.M. Fresh. "Is not!," says Donna. The dialogue degenerates into the "Is too, Is not" of the show's title. The DIRECTOR says, "Take wide shot, Camera 2." On the monitor we see Gamma enter, obviously ruining the show, but looking around

trying to blend in (unsuccessfully, of course). The director says, "What's going on? Bobby, who is that guy? Get him out of there. Cut! This show's a bust!!"

Gamma darts out the door before they can throw him out. As he flees down the hall, the door to Studio #1 opens and a grey-suited man bustles out, running into Gamma without apology. Through the open door, Gamma can see a bewildered group of black-clad, aging rockers in the midst of shooting a music video. The stage is set with symbols reminiscent of pentagrams and goats' heads. The obviously older rock group is bewildered because they're clutching new costumes consisting of sneakers and baseball caps. Gamma overhears the record executive on his portable phone as he moves slowly down the hall: "Yeah, Irv!," he says excitedly, "I've got this great new concept for the group. Nobody wants to hear those old depressing songs anymore - that whole devil thing went out in the seventies. The kids today want clean, wholesome entertainment like that 'New Kids' group. They're selling like crazy. So, I figured, we just remake the image for Uzzy and the gang. You know, like 'New Kids Over The Hill.' We'll make a killing! The kids'll eat it up!" His voice fades as he rounds a corner. Gamma looks back into the studio to see the lead singer in long hair, T-shirt and baseball cap shaking his head, saying, "I don't think this is gonna work."

Gamma shuts the door to the studio and turns to Zip. "We've got to find the computer core, which is a central corridor of many banks of electronic circuit panels. We can track Voidoid

from there." Zip gives him a "Why didn't you say so" look and speeds off down the hall to the computer core. Gamma follows.

When they arrive, Gamma scans the control circuit with his locator device until he finds the concentration of static energy that marks Voidoid's presence. He discovers the highest reading at a building called the Medical Center. The Brain then appears as a holographic image and instructs Gamma to seek out Voidoid and his intended victim while Zip should investigate any other cases of possible Voidoid contamination. Zip will enter the computer core system, locate and interface with the transmission carrying programming to neighborhood homes and travel into the TV sets of those with the most Voidoid contamination. He will be able to observe the victims from the inside looking out. No big deal, Zip does this kind of thing all the time. But we know that Zip will find himself in a comical situation, dodging the projected energies of the TV's electron gun, bounced around by the bombardment of sound waves and the like. This also provides an opportunity for the Brain to give a brief lesson on the inner workings of television.

Zip spins around playfully and transforms into a comet of electrical impulses. He flies into the circuit panel, causing a beautiful display of electrical sparks and "Disney-dust drippy-downs." Outside the TV station, "Zip-the-comet" flies straight up out of the microwave dish, bounces off a satellite and heads back towards earth.

Back at the Medical Center, our trio of stooge-doctors have Elliot seated in front of a projection TV. Elliot has an

outlandish "Rube Goldberg" style electronic helmet on his head, one which no doctor except a stooge would use to study him. It is an amazing conglomeration of megaphones, lenses and antennae that would make Dr. Seuss proud. One of the stooges uses a remote control clicker to change the channel. One at a time, the doctors say, "No response." Elliot is now more vacant than ever before. He is not responding to any of the doctors' comments.

The doctors then wheel a fluoroscope (X-ray device) in front of Elliot. They gasp as it reveals an empty skull where his brain should be. They place stereo headphones on his head and gasp again as a swirling frenzy of musical notes dance inside his body, bouncing off the walls of his empty skull, moving down through his body and causing his organs to flee in the opposite direction. The doctors exclaim in unison, "This boy has no mind!"

We now find ourselves at a microwave relay station. Zip-the-comet suddenly flies down and hits the relay station's microwave dish. He travels into the dish, and then into the above-ground cables. We see the cables light up as he quickly flies through dozens of them. We see Zip stop suddenly at a junction, materialize, and take out a map to consult. He is looking for the strongest evidence of Voidoid's work and the map shows a strong concentration of energy at the Medical Center. Now sure of his route, he turns back into energy and shoots down one cable after another, headed toward the Medical Center.

Inside, Elliot is still undergoing zany examinations. The wacky headgear is even bigger now. The stooge-doctors are

huddled in the background ignoring Elliot. Suddenly, in an explosion of light and sound, Zip erupts from the TV set, partly in his electrical comet form, and comes face-to-face with Elliot! One of Elliot's eyes flinches in response to Zip's appearance! Then a dark shadow begins to form over Elliot's face, its features distorting Elliot's. It is Voidoid! Zip gasps in fright and disappears as quickly as he arrived.

As soon as Zip disappears, the door opens and Gamma enters, dressed as a medical technician. His scanner that indicates Voidoid's presence is in his hand and it emanates loud crackling noises as he points it toward Elliot. The stooge-doctors look curiously at his hand-held gadget, but laugh mockingly at its inadequate stature compared to their massive headgear on Elliot. Gamma introduces himself as specialist Dr. Figmen Solo and asks the doctors to leave so he can examine Elliot alone. The stooges grouse and argue typically as they exit the room.

Gamma maneuvers close to Elliot, moving aside intricate doodads on the helmet, finally to clear an unhampered pathway to Elliot's face. Again, Elliot's eye flinches as Gamma fixes him with a close stare. The shadow across his face darkens, and begins to take shape. We see a struggle take place on Elliot's features, as our view of him is simultaneously clear then obstructed.

Gamma says loudly, "Think! Use your mind, think for yourself!" He shouts question after question: "What's your name? What's three times five? Who wrote 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn?'" Suddenly the dark image begins to separate

from Elliot, as we see Elliot struggle to think. The shadow moves out and begins to take shape in front of Gamma. We see a figure develop, dark and fuzzy, then acquiring more definition around the edges. Out of the darkness, a face emerges. It is a face similar to Gamma's. The two stand face to face, mirror images, yet Voidoid's features are darker, somehow different. He erupts in bursts of static. Lightning images of videos and TV images appear in the dark folds of its clothing. Bursts of static noise emanate from the images. Suddenly, Elliot screams, "MY NAME IS ELLIOT!" Voidoid bursts in a scatter of dark clouds and disappears with a wisp of darkening smoke into the nearby TV screen.

Elliot's eyes blink as he becomes conscious. "Who are you?," Elliot asks. "I'm Ray Gamma. I've come to help you," Gamma replies. He explains to Elliot that he is an alien from the planet Zork. He describes his mission to follow Voidoid, a renegade from Zork who long ago discovered the power to steal people's minds when he found them not using them. He tried to take over Zork, but was defeated when the Brain took over and taught everyone to think for themselves. Voidoid now preys on new civilizations who are just beginning to discover the wonders of electronic entertainment and are not advanced enough yet to know how to use them wisely.

Elliot asks is this is real and Gamma points out that reality is easy to distort when you spend so much time in a fantasy world. "How do I learn to think for myself? How can I stop Voidoid from stealing my brain?" asks Elliot. "You must

first learn not to let others, especially those transmitted on your sensory stimulus equipment, think for you," replies Gamma cryptically.

Meanwhile, we find Zip framed by dancing phosphor-dots, and we hear the sounds of war. Zip is observing Commando Colin, one of Elliot's friends from the video party, who is playing war, imitating the violent acts of combat. He is decked out in khaki combat clothing and has a variety of toy weapons at his disposal. We see Zip watching, captivated, as the sounds of war grow louder.

We cut back to the Medical Center, where Gamma and Elliot are still talking. Elliot is confused about the practice of thinking for himself, so Gamma stops him and says, "Here, let me show you." With his hand-held enlarger, he magnifies the TV screen until it fills an entire wall. He picks up the remote control and presses reverse. Elliot watches the last two days of his existence speed by in reverse until they are at the scene where Elliot was watching TV during his parents' party. The video now moves in real time. "What are you watching, Elliot?" asks Gamma. "I dunno," says Elliot. "Just some show." We now see the frightening moment when Voidoid forms from the electronic signals (more clearly now than before) and moves into Elliot's mind, slowly draining him. Elliot turns his head in fear, so Gamma fast forwards the screen to the present.

We now see Elliot's little brother Michael playing on a playground see-saw with a friend. Other kids are playing on various slides, jungle gyms, etc. "Why, there's Michael,"

exclaims Elliot. "What are we doing watching him?" "You are not the only one among your friends who is vulnerable to Voidoid," replies Gamma.

Then a group of older kids arrive: Commando Colin and his "Army Task Force." Colin puts his foot on the low end of the teeter-totter and pushes Michael's friend off, leaving Michael way up in the air. He tells Michael that he warned him to stay out of his territory. Michael protests, so Colin bounces the see-saw with his foot, making it hard for Michael to keep his balance. Elliot starts up with anger. Michael finally gives in, addressing his tormentor as "Commando Colin, SIR." Colin and his friends then start blasting Michael with their big, battery-powered, automatic (1 quart backpack reservoir) squirt guns. Michael loses his grip on the wet teeter-totter handle and falls to the ground. Colin kicks the low end of the teeter-totter up in the air, causing it to come crashing down, barely missing Michael. The task force continues to blast him with water as they mouth the sounds of real gunfire. Michael finds his glasses on the ground. They are broken. He cannot hold back any longer, and begins to cry. We see Elliot, wide-eyed, breathing heavy and extremely concerned.

We see Zip-the-comet shooting down another above ground cable, and into a house. Once inside the TV set, (bouncing around), he shrinks down to tiny size, and enters the electron gun on his way to the picture tube. He dodges the electron-projectiles as they impact the back of the TV screen, creating an image of Madonna. Inside the house we see MISSY and

two of her friends (DEBBIE and MOLLY) dressed up like a parade of Madonnas, dancing and singing along with their video idol, a take-off of "Papa Don't Preach" (early Madonna song); "Teacher don't preach/I'm in trouble deep/I'm makin' all 'F's'/I've been losin' sleep/But I made up my mind/Ain't goin' to summer school!" They throw their schoolbooks in the air and dance around. One of the girls, Debbie, who is black, turns to watch herself in a full length mirror. The reflection she sees in the mirror is not herself as she really is, but a fantasized view of herself as a blonde and banged Madonna. Zip looks worried!

Back at the Medical Center, Gamma is comforting Elliot, who is still upset about Colin's treatment of Michael. Elliot says, "I'm beginning to understand. But how can I help Colin and Michael and all my friends understand, too? And how will that protect us from Voidoid when you aren't around?" Gamma smiles mysteriously and pulls Elliot's cap from his back pocket. He flashes a hand over it as a shower of "Disney-dust drippy-downs" sparkle from his fingertips to land on the cap's brim, forming the word "THINK" in animated letters. Elliot smiles broadly and plops his new "magic" cap on his head.

Meanwhile, Zip flies down a cable into another house, ending up looking through the television's vibrating phosphor-dots into the living room of ROGER, the overweight child from the video party. Zip sees Roger rapidly, like in a silent movie, stuffing his face with junk food. Zip rubs his eyes, and looks, to see Roger looking larger. He rubs his eyes again, in disbelief, and looks to see Roger even larger still. This continues until Roger

becomes so incredibly huge, that he achieves "critical mass," and suddenly vibrates, changing himself into, literally, a giant potato! The giant "couch potato" eyes (visual pun) turn toward the television set to watch. Zip looks horrified, gasps an "Oh, no!!" sound, and rockets out of the house and down the overhead cables to escape.

Back at the Medical Center, Elliot, wearing his magical cap, becomes aware of Gamma's now serious attitude. The smile drains away, and he asks, "What's wrong?" Gamma says, "There's something else I have to show you. Look!" He gestures toward the big screen as he switches the remote control to fast forward.

They see the images move quickly, until they slow down and settle in Elliot's living room. But now it is Christmas time and there are decorations all around. Little Michael is sitting in front of the TV watching a "900 number call Santa" commercial, which is followed by a plethora of holiday toy ads. Elliot says, "Hey, Michael, it's Christmas time. That little guy loves Christmas." The smile on Elliot's face fades quickly as he sees the TV screen that Michael is watching darken and the familiar shadow of Voidoid cross the screen to form a presence that moves threateningly toward Michael. A shocked expression takes over Elliot's face. "No! NO! NOT MICHAEL!" Gamma hugs him to provide some measure of comfort. Elliot cries, "Help him, please! Help him, help us, help me!" Elliot's words echo into the distance as we see his face very closely.

We start to hear different words, faint at first, then louder. "Elliot, Elliot. Elliot!" He opens his eyes to find

himself in the Medical Center. Confused, he looks around to see SANTA CLAUS, who says, "Elliot, can you hear me?" Elliot says, "SANTA CLAUS!!" Santa Claus says, "No, Elliot. I'm Dr. Howard. I'm one of Santa's helpers at a benefit tonight. I just stopped to check on you on my way out. Elliot, you've been gone for a long time. Welcome back!"

It is now two weeks later: the night of Christmas eve. We are back at Elliot's house. Elliot has been very depressed since regaining consciousness because he now believes that Ray Gamma was just a dream. He still fears all electronics because of his vivid memories of Voidoid. His family sits in front of the TV after dinner, watching and enjoying a show together. They ask him to join them, but he is still afraid and goes to his room alone. He lies on his bed, dejected, listening to the laughter from the family room and then suddenly spies his cap hanging on the hook by the door. Curious, he picks it up and places it on his head. He moves to the mirror and stares when suddenly, in a swirl of "Disney-dust" the animated word "THINK" reappears on the cap's brim. He jumps up excitedly just in time to see Zip spill out of the electric light socket and tumble at his feet. "I remember you from the Medical Center," exclaims Elliot. "You must be with Gamma, right?"

Zip nods his head a frantic 'yes' and through a series of excited motions communicates to Elliot that Gamma is in trouble and needs Elliot's help. Zip has come to lead Elliot to Gamma. With his cap firmly on his head, Elliot takes Zip's hand,

minaturizing into Zip size and follows him through the electrical socket.

After a swift journey through electrical cables, Zip and Elliot spill out at the ACME Outdate Fad Merchandise Storage Co. warehouse. Zip disappears in a swirl of "Disney-dust drippy-downs." Elliot enters the main storage center of the warehouse through a door at the far end. He calls out, "Ray? Zip? Where are you?" Suddenly the large bay door starts to open with shafts of light streaming in. A figure appears in the bright mist. It is the security guard, who says, "Hey? Kid! What are you doing in here?!" (He starts walking toward Elliot). "You're in big trouble, mister!"

The guard moves closer, very threatening, but suddenly in a flash of Disney dust, he freezes in mid stride. Elliot watches in amazement, and then, turns quickly as a miniature spaceship on the storage rack begins to move. The tiny ship takes off, and flies around the warehouse, leaving a trail of sparkling Disney dust. Then the ship lands in the open center of the warehouse and in a swirl of Disney dust flourish, it grows to its full size. The hatch on top opens, and Gamma rises up in a formal version of his spacesuit, making a grand entrance. Zip appears on his shoulder.

"Ray!" yells Elliot. "Are you okay? Zip brought me here."
"I'm fine," says Gamma. "There's one more thing you must learn. You must not be frightened of your sensory stimulus equipment,"
["Huh?," says Elliot.] "Your television, your stereo, your music and your entertainment. You must learn to discern and use it

wisely rather than consume mindlessly. Then, it can show you many wonderful things. The power of music and television on the human species is a strange thing to behold. It can make you laugh, it can make you cry. It can sometimes teach and sometimes distort the truth. You must use it rather than let it use you."

At this point, Gamma goes into a pixillated song and dance animation sequence. The song and animation will involve the objects in the warehouse, assuring us of no shortage of props. It will involve a sequence with televisions and stereos moving about, the Cabbage Patch dolls and transformers will come to life and use the entertainment equipment, demonstrating the joy of entertainment when the viewer is in control. One toy dances up to a chalkboard and writes amazing equations with captions like "Patterns of thought = Patterns of action." As one errant Batman doll breaks with the other toys to demonstrate poor choice, a buzzing sound will break into the song and dance, the toys scatter in fear and in a dark cloud, Voidoid materializes. Gamma steps up to face off with the creature, who is revealed completely, a mirror-image of Gamma, but dark and menacing. Gamma and Voidoid begin to do battle, whirling and dodging each other. Gamma shouts to Elliot, "Elliot. YOU have the power to defeat him. THINK!" Elliot, distressed, says, "But won't my magic thinking cap work?" "No, Elliot, you must think for yourself. That is what it's all about."

Elliot sits down and begins to concentrate. As a look of cognition appears on his face, we see Voidoid begin to fade.

Eventually, Voidoid disappears in a cloud of dark smoke. Elliot jumps up in delight and runs to Gamma.

We hear the words, "Elliot, Elliot! Wake up, Elliot!" The picture fades in on Dr. Howard, this time in his doctor's smock. We see his face as he looks down at Elliot. The doctor says, "Welcome back, son! You're okay! You're in the Medical Center because you suffered a pretty nasty electrical shock!" Elliot's parents are there. They are glad to have Elliot back. They hug him, and tell him how much they love him. Michael is there too, and the two siblings embrace and express that they have missed each other. The Porter family now realize how fragile and precious their time is together.

Dr. Howard lifts up a dry cleaning bag containing a Santa suit, and drapes it over his arm, explaining that it's Christmas Eve and he is one of Santa's helpers for a benefit that night. He states that this is a time to share with one's family and upon wishing a "Merry Christmas" to Elliot, he exits, almost running into an arriving visitor. Elliot's parents turn to the visitor and turn back to Elliot to say, "Look, Elliot, your teacher has come to visit." The teacher comes in and we see it is Gamma! He brings Elliot a Christmas present. They unwrap it together and we see that it is a remote control.

Elliot suddenly thinks of something, reaches into his bedside table drawer and pulls out his cap. He puts it on his head, looks into the mirror and smiles mysteriously. We cannot see what he sees. We fade to black.

We then hear the director yell, "Cut! Print! That's a wrap!" From the shadow of a camera, we pull back to see the hospital set, actors and technicians start shaking hands, congratulating each other. We roll our end credits over a behind-the-scenes montage of this production, which reveals many of the tricks and illusions that were used in this show's creation.

Following the credits, we flash on the word, "THINK," with highlights and Disney dust. Fade out.

The End.