

Replay

By Tom Moran

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Place: a city sidewalk

Time: afternoon, present day

### Characters

PAC-MAN, 40's - 50's, a faded videogame superstar

BLINKY, 40's - 50's, former co-worker of Pac-Man

BLINKY 2, 40's - 50's, "body double" for BLINKY

PASSERBY, 20's

Scene 1

(PAC-MAN sits against a wall on a city sidewalk, looking disheveled and downtrodden. His costume need not be elaborate, just yellow clothing. A battered knapsack is at his side. A yellow baseball hat sits upside-down in front of him. A PASSERBY enters stage left.)

PAC-MAN

Hey, you got anything to eat?

PASSERBY

No, sorry, I - hey, don't I know you from somewhere?

PAC-MAN

Could be.

PASSERBY

Yeah. I know you. Did you used to be on teevee?

PAC-MAN

Yeah. Well, teevees, anyway.

PASSERBY

Yeah. I've played your game before. With the maze and the ghosts, right.

PAC-MAN

Yep, that's me. You play me on your Atari? In the arcade?

PASSERBY

Atari? What's an Atari? I did it on my computer. I have an emulator.

PAC-MAN

(spits)

Emulators. Don't get me started. Lemme guess, you move me around with those arrow keys?

PASSERBY

Yeah, I guess.

PAC-MAN

Where's the fun in that? No spirit in keys, son. When they got rid of the joystick, they got rid of the joy. (scoffs.) Emulators. You know how much royalties I get off emulators? You know how much? Nothing. Getting played all over the world, and not one goddam red cent goes to old Mr. Pac. The man who started it all.

PASSERBY

Sorry. Look, I gotta -

PAC-MAN

Best-selling arcade game of all time, son. *Of all time.* Roll that around on your tongue. And what do I get out of it? Not even a gold cartridge or some crap to hang on my wall. Not even a wall to hang it on.

PASSERBY

Right, well, I-

PAC-MAN

It ain't over, though. My day is coming. You can't keep a Pac-Man down. So you got any food, anyway? Cherries, maybe? A peach?

PASSERBY

Umm.

(PASSERBY fishes in pockets, pulls out a "power pellet" [a plum or apple painted white] and drops it in the hat.)

PASSERBY

Sorry, that's all I got. I gotta go.

PAC-MAN

Yeah, thanks.

(PASSERBY starts to leave, and stops.)

PASSERBY

You know, I always thought you'd be bigger.

PAC-MAN

I am big. It's the processors that got small.

(PASSERBY exits. PAC-MAN takes a bite from the pellet, chewing slowly. He is looking at the ground when BLINKY walks in stage left. BLINKY wears a red sheet with eyeholes cut out of it and carries a briefcase. He makes a "wocka-wocka-wocka" noise when he walks. He notices PAC-MAN and stops.)

PAC-MAN

Hey, mister, can you spare a -

(PAC-MAN looks up at BLINKY, screams and scrambles up in alarm.)

BLINKY

Pac! There you are!

PAC-MAN

Now, I don't want no trouble, you hear?

BLINKY

Pac, it's me - Blinky! I'm not going to hurt you.

PAC-MAN

(agitated)

You! You want after my life! I ain't only got but one left now and I'm not about to let you take it.

BLINKY

What? Why would I want to hurt you, Pac?

PAC-MAN

Why? That's what you do! You chase me around and around and kill me, and kill me, and kill me.

BLINKY

(laughs)

Pac, that was three decades ago! I haven't chased you or anyone else around for years. I work for Sony now. Artist relations.

PAC-MAN

Artist ... what?

BLINKY

Here's my card. (BLINKY produces a card and moves toward PAC-MAN, who shrinks away warily.) I'll just put it down here. (He puts it in the hat.)

PAC-MAN

(picks up and reads card)

I don't understand.

BLINKY

I went back to school and got my MBA. Ghost's got to earn a living, right?

PAC-MAN

You're my nemesis. You're supposed to chase me to the death.

BLINKY

Pac, it was a game! It was a paycheck!

PAC-MAN

It wasn't a game! It was my life. It was my life!

BLINKY

Was, Pac - was. What happened to you? You used to be king of the world. I heard about some of those parties. Out in the Hollywood Hills, you in the hot tub, a babe on each arm, laying into power pellets the size of watermelons.

PAC-MAN

While Frogger and Pitfall Harry did lines in the bathroom. Yeah, those were good times.

BLINKY

The whole world had it. Pac-Man Fever. Where did it all go?

PAC-MAN

You know as well as I do. Everybody blew me off. Namco. Midway. Suddenly they've got 8-bit processors out there and wandering endlessly around one screen isn't good enough.

BLINKY

Nobody appreciates the classics anymore.

PAC-MAN

Mario, he was the smart one. Jumped over to Nintendo right before the bubble burst. Now look at him - bigger than ever. I mean, except for the dwarfism.

BLINKY

(shrugs)

Doors close, Pac. At least there were residuals for a while and the pension helped a little ... you joined the union, didn't you?

PAC-MAN

Pac-Man works alone.

BLINKY

You got anything left?

PAC-MAN

Some sorta tiny royalties. My agent shows up every six months, hands me a check and disappears. (scoffs.) Agent. Hasn't found me a part since a walk-on in Madden Football '96.

BLINKY

I had heard you were a little down on your luck.

PAC-MAN

It - it wears you out. All that running and darting around, those sharp turns, and the eating - all the eating. First there was the bulimia. Then the jaw surgery. I'm out of the game for a few months, then one day I wake up and Zelda and Metroid are all over the trades.

BLINKY

And Mrs. Pac-Man?

PAC-MAN

Is back to being Miss Pac-Man.

BLINKY

Oh. (brief silence.) Pac, I can help you.

PAC-MAN

Don't need no help.

BLINKY

I talked to Pinky and Clyde the other day.

PAC-MAN

Heard Pinky was dead.

BLINKY

We're ghosts, Pac.

PAC-MAN

Oh, right.

BLINKY

Sony has an offer, Pac. They want us to get the gang back together.

PAC-MAN

They what?

BLINKY

Nostalgia, you know, it's really big right now. All these middle-aged guys suddenly have money, they have kids, they're rediscovering their youths. We've become symbols, Pac. Of a simpler time.

PAC-MAN

Morning in America.

BLINKY

Exactly. They want us to do a reunion tour, Pac. We'd be opening for Donkey Kong.

PAC-MAN

What? Oh man, that ape is such a royal pain in the-

BLINKY

I know. I know.

PAC-MAN

What about Inky? You need him too.

BLINKY

He moved to Bahrain. Calls himself Sharif Abdul now.

PAC-MAN

Guess he's out then?

BLINKY

We've signed one of the mushrooms from Super Mario Brothers. Throw a sheet over his head, you can't tell the difference.

PAC-MAN

Huh.

(BLINKY produces a paper from his briefcase and places it in front of PAC-MAN along with a pen.)

BLINKY

I've been authorized to offer you this. It's a one-year contract. Good money, Pac, all guaranteed. All the power pellets you can eat. Plus royalties.

PAC-MAN

Thirty years too late.

(PAC-MAN takes a look at the contract. He goes to the knapsack and pulls out some reading glasses, sits down, and starts reading.)

PAC-MAN

Mighty small type you got here.

BLINKY

I wouldn't worry about the fine print, Pac. Just sign it and we'll get you cleaned up and back in the spotlight.

PAC-MAN

(reading)

Hmm. Hmm.

BLINKY

(nervous)

Pac, why don't you just go ahead and sign it. We'll take care of the particulars later.

PAC-MAN

Why don't I just take this to my agent, have him take a look-see.

BLINKY

You don't need to do that.

PAC-MAN

Wait, what's this here? "Ms. Pac-Man Reunion Tour?"

BLINKY

Oh, that must be a typo.

PAC-MAN

Hell of a typo. (looks at document again.) Especially since it's in here again. And again.

BLINKY

All right, truth is we had a tour lined up with your ex, but she reneged. So you're plan B.

PAC-MAN

Really.

BLINKY

Yeah.

PAC-MAN

Except that a minute ago you acted like you hadn't heard about her in years. You lying to me? What is it I'm signing here? Is there going to be a tour or not?

BLINKY

Pac, just sign it. Don't force my hand here.

PAC-MAN

I knew it. What are you really up to?

BLINKY

All right, you want to know?

PAC-MAN

Yeah.

BLINKY

Paragraph 19C.

(PAC-MAN finds the paragraph and reads it.)

PAC-MAN

"I, the undersigned, do hereby relinquish all claim upon the name Pac-Man and all representations thereof in perpetuity." You bastard. My name is all I have left!

BLINKY

And it's about time you gave it up, you broken-down sack of pixels. That way the Ms. Pac-Man tour can get rolling without any messy legal entanglements.

PAC-MAN

I knew I couldn't trust you.

BLINKY

What do you expect? You think it was fun being a villain? Bouncing around that stupid little box center screen most of the time, only set free to follow you around. Always the same pointless chase down the same dark, tired corridors. Death was no escape, because there you are five seconds later. And it never ended, the level numbers just changed.

PAC-MAN

And I got all the glory, I suppose.

BLINKY

And the money. And the magazine covers. And the chicks - including all the ones we never told Mrs. Pac-Man about. Well now she gets the last laugh.

PAC-MAN

Like that harpy hasn't taken enough from me already.

BLINKY

At least she sent us Christmas cards. Still does. Do you remember those electronics shows they'd invite us to? There you'd be signing autographs on the main stage, 200 people waiting to meet you, and we'd be stuck in some conference room panel discussion with a couple of Space Invaders and the snake from Q\*Bert. And you would never even so much as wander over and say hello.

PAC-MAN

That was 30 years ago! Now who's dwelling!

(PAC-MAN has begun to slowly inch toward his knapsack.)

BLINKY

It was our life too. And it can be again, after you sign that contract.

PAC-MAN

Or else what?

BLINKY

Or else you're down your last life and I bet you're fresh out of quarters. Never piss off a ghost, Pac. We got nothing to lose.

PAC-MAN

Guess you've got me in a corner, huh?

BLINKY

You could put it that way.

(PAC-MAN has inched his way to the knapsack and now grabs an object out of it - a large power pellet [a cantaloupe or other large round fruit painted white, but also partially covered with mold.] He brandishes it at BLINKY.)

PAC-MAN

Nobody puts Pac-Man in a corner.

BLINKY

Is that what I think it is?

(PAC-MAN nods and slowly advances. BLINKY suddenly takes off running and exits stage left, his "wocka-wocka" noise fading as though he were getting farther away offstage. PAC-MAN gives brief chase, then stops and turns in the other direction. The "wocka-Wocka"

noise begins to come from stage right, then BLINKY appears stage right - it's actually a body double, dressed the same and indistinguishable under the sheet. PAC-MAN looks at him, smiles and gives brief chase. The BLINKY double turns and exits stage right, after which the original BLINKY reappears stage left, sees PAC-MAN waiting for him, and gives up.)

PAC-MAN

(casually tossing pellet in the air)

We could go on like this.

BLINKY

(gestures at pellet)

How long have you had that thing?

PAC-MAN

I was saving it for a special occasion. I think this qualifies.

BLINKY

What are you going to do with it?

PAC-MAN

Well, I'm just going to hold it in abeyance here while we take a walk over to Sony and see about this here reunion tour.

BLINKY

They're not going to listen to you.

PAC-MAN

Time was, the whole world listened to me. I think I can maybe bend the ear of one of those Sony execs for a little while, if you get me back in the door.

BLINKY

And if I refuse to cooperate?

(PAC-MAN brings the pellet to his mouth.)

PAC-MAN

Game over, man. Game over.

BLACKOUT - END OF PLAY