

Mathew Rusky Presents:

This Isn't A Game

Characters:

SAM (*Teenager*)

SAM'S DAD (*Woodworker, traditionalist. Sassy.*)

INSTRUCTIONS (*Knowledgeable, innocent, rule-following sidekick. A bad Kermit the Frog impression enhances this role.*)

WHITE KNIGHT (*Chad-like. Dude-bro energy. Moves like a hopping **Chess** piece.*)

MILBURN PENNYBAGS (*Corrupt, wacky, and wealthy. Dawns a handlebar mustache.*)

HAT-PIECE (*A top hat of stoic nature. Thrown in jail by MILLBURN PENNYBAGS after the mercury inside HAT-PIECE induced a looney madness in his previous wearer. Shocked by the betrayal, HAT-PIECE remains silent and meditates on what freedom truly means. On his insides, he stashes an acquired file he intends to use to escape his prison cell one day. Behind his cold demeanor, he swears revenge on the Monopoly man, MILBURN PENNYBAGS.*)

AUTHOR'S NOTE: These notes on the characters are a guiding interpretation. Feel free to interpret those characters any way you see fit.

Mathew Rusky Presents: *This Isn't A Game*

SCENE ONE

INT. Home

SAM returns home from high school, where SAM'S DAD is distracted whittling a piece of wood.

SAM'S DAD is unaware of SAM'S presence.

[SAM]: (*Slings backpack off*) Happy birthday, Dad!

[SAM'S DAD]: (*Terrified*) AHHHH!

[SAM]: (*Attempts to calm his dad down*) Dad. Dad. (*Gestures to self*) It's me—your son. I'm home from school.

[SAM'S DAD]: (*More terrified than the last time*) AHHHH! (*Screaming tapers off*) Oh, son. It's you. You scared me.

[SAM]: I was hoping we could play some board games for your birthday.

[SAM'S DAD]: Now you're really scaring me.

[SAM]: Dad, you can't sit here all night whittling away at a piece of wood.

Mathew Rusky Presents: *This Isn't A Game*

[SAM'S DAD]: (*Scoffs*) We come from a woodworking family. You're gonna end up just like you're old man one day!

[SAM]: Oh, no.

[SAM'S DAD]: What was that?

[SAM]: Well, I don't want to take the nail and the hammer (*incorrectly and awkwardly uses the hammer like a saw*) and do the thing with it. (*Continues awkward motioning*) Is this right?!

[SAM'S DAD]: (*Carefully helps SAM hammer the nail*) One step at a time, Sam. We could spend the evening making a birdhouse.

[SAM]: We've already built four! (*Gestures to the outside*) We are running out of trees!

[SAM'S DAD]: Son, your board game obsession is getting out of hand. If this keeps up, you'll have to sleep in the kitchen.

[SAM]: What?

[SAM'S DAD]: Come now, son. (*Opens fridge*) Get it in the fridge.

[SAM]: Dad, no!

Mathew Rusky Presents: *This Isn't A Game*

[SAM'S DAD]: (*Closes fridge*) Fine, grab one game. But only one.

SAM runs into his room and opens the closet. He looks through his collection of board games.

SAM pulls on a gift-wrapped box, which is stuck. Each pull is more aggressive until the gift-wrapped box bops SAM on the head, which causes him to fall back on his bottom.

[SAM]: (*Rubs head*) Ouch! What the-?

[INSTRUCTIONS]: Hello! I'm the Instructions. (*Flashes SAM with his "pages"*) See?

[SAM]: (*Covers eyes*) Ah!

[INSTRUCTIONS]: Don't be scared. (*Closes his "pages"*) All game rules are tucked away here (*pats belly*).

[SAM]: (*To self*) Dad always said I was delusional.

[INSTRUCTIONS]: I'm here to take you on an adventure. (*Grabs button*) Press this button!

[SAM]: Alright. (*Presses button, teleports*)

SCENE TWO

BOARD GAME: **Life**

[INSTRUCTIONS]: Welcome to **Life**.

[SAM]: Wow, this place would be perfect for my dad and me. **Life** seems oddly peaceful.

[INSTRUCTIONS]: Yeah, it *seems* that way. Let's get started. You can choose between college or career. Pick one.

[SAM]: I'll go with the smart option: College!

[INSTRUCTIONS]: Great. *(Pause)* That puts you \$60,000 in debt.

[SAM]: Wait! That's not fair.

[INSTRUCTIONS]: **Life** *(nods head somberly)* is not fair. *(Regains enthusiasm)* Spin the spinner to move!

[SAM]: Alright. *(Spins for a long time, watching as it goes around and around)* Wow, this is great. *(continues to spin until a slow stop)* One. *(Steps forward)* 'Life space.' What does that mean again?

Mathew Rusky Presents: *This Isn't A Game*

[INSTRUCTIONS]: (*Reads scribbled rules on his forearm*) It means that you draw a card from that deck of cards there. These cards could decide your job, family, or even your salary.

[SAM]: (*Draws, reads*) 'Occupation: Woodworker.' (*Rips card*) That's what my dad does. *Lame.*

[INSTRUCTION]: This game seems like fun. I wish I had a job (*pause*) or a dad.

[SAM]: I'll just spin again (*spins*) One. 'Life space.' Again? Instructions, you draw for me this time. Maybe you'll have better luck.

[INSTRUCTIONS]: (*Gestures to self*) Me? Oh, wow. Sure.

[SAM]: What is **Life** offering me now?

(*INSTRUCTIONS hesitates to tell SAM, who shouts for INSTRUCTIONS to tell him.*)

[INSTRUCTIONS]: (*Blurts*) You now have children.

[SAM]: What?! (*A baby spawns in each arm*) Twins?! I never wanted to be a father!

[INSTRUCTIONS]: Here! Press the button! (*Looks at the twins*) The babies?!

[SAM]: (*Frantically throws the children in desperation, slaps the button*)

SCENE THREE

BOARD GAME: **Chess**

[SAM]: (*Runs in panic, frantic and disgusted*) Did we teleport to the 1950s? Why does color separate everyone?

[INSTRUCTIONS]: It's **Chess**.

[SAM]: (*Shook*) Oh...

[INSTRUCTIONS]: Yeah, (*pats SAM on the shoulder*) that's okay. That's just the color of their armor. Look, someone's hopping over to say hi.

[WHITE KNIGHT]: (*Hops up*) What's happening, bro? I am (*pounds chest*) the White Knight. Are you here to steal my queen?!

[SAM]: No, no. I'm looking for a board game for my dad and me.

[WHITE KNIGHT]: (*Shocked*) Oh! Wow... (*Says under his breath*) I shouldn't have asked. I'm here because- Look over yonder, it's my fair lady. Watch this. (*Calls to her, attempting to swoon here*) Hey lady! You are (*slaps chest*) my queen!

Mathew Rusky Presents: *This Isn't A Game*

[SAM]: You're so lame.

[WHITE KNIGHT]: (*Offended*) You trying to diss my queen? Do you want to fight?! Let's go, bro! Come on! Let's go! (*Starts hopping in L form, as a knight in **Chess** would*) One. Two. Three. Four. Make your move!

[SAM]: What?

[WHITE KNIGHT]: One step at a time now, (*mocks*) p a w n.

[INSTRUCTIONS]: (*Whispers to SAM*) Pawns can only move one space at a time-

[SAM]: I know how **Chess** works! But a pawn? I've been moving one space for all of **Life**. I thought these games would provide escapism.

[INSTRUCTIONS]: Shall we adventure on?

[SAM]: We shall.

(*SAM presses the button, which causes them to teleport away*)

[WHITE KNIGHT]: This won't be the last you see of the White Knight! (*Gets distracted*) Hey, wait! My queen, I'm coming (*hops away*)!

SCENE FOUR

BOARD GAME: **Monopoly**

[SAM]: **Monopoly?**

[INSTRUCTIONS]: **Monopoly.**

[SAM]: This was the first game I played with my dad as a kid. (*Serious*) Now, this is personal.

[INSTRUCTIONS]: Well, here's a refresher on how to play. First, get on the board. Then, go to Go. Then, Die!

[SAM]: Die?

[INSTRUCTIONS]: (*Aggressive*) Die!

[SAM]: (*Backs away*) I like living, thank you.

[INSTRUCTIONS]: No. Die, dice. (*Hands some dice*)

[SAM]: Oh. I knew that. (*Grabs die and roll them*) I rolled a 10! 1. 2. (*Looks around*) 10.
'Visiting Jail.' Cool.

Mathew Rusky Presents: *This Isn't A Game*

[INSTRUCTIONS]: There are already some pieces here, like the Car, Shoe, and Hat-Piece.

Wow, that must be one evil tophat.

[MILBURN PENNYBAGS]: (*Holding sacks of money. Deep inhale, smelling the air*) Ah, the prison smell is so delightful this time of year.

[SAM]: You're the **Monopoly** man, where's your top hat?

[MILBURN PENNYBAGS]: (*Ignores*) My name is Mr. Pennybags.

[SAM]: Alright, Mr. Mustache. I've been playing this game for years. We should be on a first-name basis by now. I'm Sam (*extends a hand for a handshake*).

[MILBURN PENNYBAGS]: (*Reluctant*) Milburn.

[SAM]: Your first name is Milburn? (*Begins to laugh*) That's so dorky.

[MILBURN PENNYBAGS]: It was my mother's name.

[SAM]: (*Bursts out laughing louder. While still shaking MILBURN PENNYBAGS' hand, he gets his arm twisted behind his back and cuffed.*) What're you doing? (*Gets thrown in jail*) You can't throw me in jail!

Mathew Rusky Presents: *This Isn't A Game*

[MILBURN PENNYBAGS]: Do you know how rich I am? I own this board, and I make the rules (*walk away while laughing maniacally*).

[SAM]: Darn! Foiled again by capitalism. (*Stern*) Fine, I'll get out of here myself. (*Struggles with the bars. Shifts his mood, whispers*) Hey, Hat-Piece. A little help?

[HAT-PIECE]: (*Hat*)

[SAM]: Well said. Instructions help me out.

[INSTRUCTIONS]: Pay the fine or roll doubles.

[SAM]: Milburn Jr. took the dice, and I'm still \$60,000 in debt from college.

[INSTRUCTIONS]: \$70,000 now. You've accumulated interest.

[SAM]: (*Throws fist into the air*) Capitalism! Instructions, please. Hand me the keys over there.

[INSTRUCTIONS]: Sorry, Sam. Those are the rules.

[SAM]: That's stupid. Right, Hat? (*Worried*) Hat? Hat?! (*Picks up Hat-Piece, shakes*) Hat-Piece, are you okay?! Say something!

Mathew Rusky Presents: *This Isn't A Game*

[HAT-PIECE]: (*Hat, a file falls out of Hat*)

[SAM]: Wow, a file! See, Instructions? The hat gets it. (*Holds file fondly*) This reminds me of something my dad told me.

FLASHBACK

[SAM'S DAD]: Remember, son, filing takes patience. (*Begins filing for an extended, awkward amount of time, stops to smile, then continues on filing*)

FLASHBACK ENDS

[SAM]: And then he said other things after that.

FLASHBACK

[SAM'S DAD]: (*Still filing, filing slowly stops. He looks up, concerned.*) I was about to say something. (*Thinks for about a second. Shrugs, continues filing.*)

FLASHBACK ENDS

Mathew Rusky Presents: *This Isn't A Game*

[SAM]: And he was so right. (*Begins rushing to file the bars; the bar snaps off quickly*) Wow, those bars were thinner than I thought. (*Crawls out of cell*) I'm free!

[INSTRUCTIONS]: Sam, you're supposed to stay in prison for another turn.

[SAM]: I don't want to!

[INSTRUCTIONS]: I thought you wanted to play your games. You have to play by the rules!

[SAM]: I thought I could play board games my entire **Life**, I thought I could take the **Risk**. If only there were a **Clue** I wouldn't have gotten into so much **Trouble**. I wish I could have an **Operation** to get these feelings off my **Chess** and tell my dad I was **Sorry**. If only I had (*looks up dramatically*) **Uno** chance.

[INSTRUCTIONS]: Wow, here, press the button, and I'll take you back.

[MILBURN PENNYBAGS]: Now, hold on! (*Takes the button*) You ain't going anywhere!

[HAT-PIECE]: (*Thrown on MILBURN PENNYBAGS' face, who stumbles out of sight where he is suffocated.*)

[HAT-PIECE]: (*Dies*)

Mathew Rusky Presents: *This Isn't A Game*

[SAM]: No! Hat's dead!

[INSTRUCTIONS]: That Hat piece wasn't evil after all. Just misunderstood.

(SAM slaps the button and teleports back home)

SCENE FIVE

INT. Home

[SAM]: *(Wakes up, under a pile of board games)* I'm awake!

[SAM'S DAD]: *(Unimpressed)* So am I, it's like 4:30 in the afternoon. *(Drops his judgment)*

What do you have there, son?

[SAM]: Dad, I thought I could play board games my whole life, but I want to spend time with you—especially on your birthday *(hands his father a gift-wrapped box)*.

[SAM'S DAD]: *(Unwraps gift)* It's a **Chess** set. *(Examines)* And the pieces are whittled out of wood. How did you do this?

[SAM]: I learned from watching you. As you said, we come from a woodworking family.

[SAM'S DAD]: But you hate woodworking.

Mathew Rusky Presents: *This Isn't A Game*

[SAM]: But I like spending time with you. And unlike the **Chess** set you have in your hands, not everything is black and white: life and death, board games and woodworking. I know we don't always see eye to eye, but the quality time we spend together matters. You wanna play some **Chess**?

[SAM'S DAD]: Of course, Sam.

(They hug, and while they hug, SAM'S DAD studies one of the WHITE KNIGHT)

[SAM]: Happy Birthday, Dad.

[SAM'S DAD]: Your craftsmanship is terrific. You really are my son, after all. The queen is beautifully detailed, but I think there's something wrong with this knight here.

[WHITE KNIGHT]: *(Hops out)* Unhand my queen!