

*An excerpt from*  
**The Freakout Zone**  
by Jeff Edmond

Pages 10-13 from “Dust Bunnies”  
(Story #1 in the volume)

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Danny stood in the doorway of his room. He knew that once he entered, he must complete a task that went against his very nature. *Hey, isn't it just going to get dirty again?*, he thought. But adults had not grasped the essence of this logic. All Danny wanted to do was to play video games. He was convinced that video games were the best inventions ever. Why couldn't his mom understand? He was not *obsessed*, as she often accused him of being. He just wanted to play video games for the rest of his life.

Danny entered his room slowly, dreading the task at hand. Suddenly, he felt a little dizzy. He leaned against the wall for support. He shook his head. He stood straight again. The dizziness was dissipating. Then he thought he heard something. No, he *did* hear something. It was video game music, very faintly in the distance. He was not sure what to make of it. It wouldn't stop. He shook his head but it didn't go away. He shrugged and chalked it up to playing at the arcade so much that the tunes were stuck in his head.

Danny scanned the room. Books, papers and clothes were strewn all over. He sighed and scooped up his clothes off the bed. He shuffled over to the dresser and opened a drawer. Not fully comprehending the benefit of folding, he carelessly rolled his clothes in a ball and thrust them in. He shut the drawer while a sock was still poking out a bit, looking as if it was trying to escape.

Danny glanced at the floor next to the dresser. Moving gracefully to the air currents were some dust balls. When Danny was little, his mom referred to them as “dust bunnies.” Danny had always found dust bunnies fascinating since they seemingly formed from nothing and moved around almost as if alive. One moment they were miniscule particles, the next they were swirling swatches. If it were up to Danny, he would leave them alone to let them grow bigger and bigger to see what shapes they would form. After a time, they would form some monster type shape, he was sure of it. He knew that his

mom, however, did not share his desire to leave them churning around the room.

Danny went to his closet and pulled out a small hand broom and dustpan his mother had put there many months ago in an attempt to encourage Danny to clean more often.

The video music still playing in his head, he proceeded to sweep up the dust bunnies – all except the ones where he had to reach too far around the furniture. That would have to do. Clean enough. Danny put the broom and dustpan by the closet and turned to his desk. He pulled the chair away and leaned over, hands resting on the desktop. He stared at the mess of papers on his desk. Time to tackle the paper monster.

A few dust bunnies were resting on the window sill. The air currents moved them slightly until they began to cling to each other, forming little clumps. Suddenly, a puff of air carried them to the floor. They swirled and turned and began to move in Danny's direction.

Danny finished stacking his papers neatly. He picked up some books and carried them over to his bookcase. He was about to open the glass door to the bookcase when he saw something reflected in the glass. Something was crawling on the floor, moving steadily towards him. He whirled around. It was just a large clump of dust bunnies he had missed. He grinned at how easy he was spooked. Maybe his mom is right – too many video games promoted an overactive imagination. He opened the bookcase, thrust in the books, and closed the glass door. Again, he saw something reflected in the glass. Something moving. Something getting closer.

He spun around again and looked down at the floor. It was the dust bunnies and they were bigger and closer now. The video music grew louder in his head. He grabbed his head in an effort to stop the music. If he didn't know any better, he would swear that the dust bunnies were going to attack him. Just as he thought this, they stopped moving.

*Ah, ha!*, he thought. *They are waiting for me to make the next move.* He felt a surge of power just like when he was in the arcade. So be it! He would fight the dust bunny "monsters!"

He headed for the broom and dustpan next to the closet. The dust bunnies moved closer to him. Danny moved swiftly to grab his "weapons." The dust bunnies dove for his feet. He turned and faced them. They stopped a few inches from him and frantically backed up.

The dust bunnies could sense they were in danger. They stopped and appeared to be thinking. *This is incredible!*, Danny thought.

Danny was a little scared – it all seemed so real – but at the same time, he was amused. It was like playing one of those 3-D video games where you use headgear, goggles and gloves to mimic a three dimensional world. But this was better! This was real 3-D! With his heart racing, he slowly approached the clump of dust bunnies. Suddenly, they separated into smaller groups. They were planning to surround him! *I can out-wit these guys*, Danny reassured himself. *Their brains are made of dust, after all.*

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