

Tinker

A 1-Hour TV dramedy, *Tinker* is a family-friendly supernatural adventure story, which captures the spirit of *Stranger Things*, *Dr. Who* & *It's A Wonderful Life*

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Awards:

- *The short script won the Film 168 Contest's \$1000 first prize*
- *The pilot was an Austin Film Festival quarter-finalist*
- *The feature adaptation was a Page Contest quarterfinalist*

Story Summary

Tinker is an hour-long family dramedy that follows the adventures of Prince Catharnoch, one of heaven's mightiest angels (picture Thor), who is sent to earth incognito as a simple school maintenance man (picture Mr. Rodgers) to protect a young teen named Josh who will save the world as an adult.

Prince Catharnoch adopts the name of Jonathan Tinker. It's a playful name, deliberately chosen, because tinkering is the primary power that angels and demons have over humans. They can touch their minds and send them on flights of the imagination – the way Clarence did with George Bailey – to teach them or tempt them.

Tinker is part of a larger supernatural community of both angels and demons that battles behind the scenes in people's lives, trying to sway them toward good or evil.

Protecting Josh is no simple thing. Not only must he help Josh navigate his way through the ordinary challenges and temptations of growing up, but he must also intervene in the lives of those who will influence Josh – such as his parents, friends, teachers and pastor.

But the greatest threat is Tinker's mortal enemy Melchorn, a mighty demon who is every bit his equal. Should Melchorn discover Tinker's whereabouts – and mission – Josh's life would be in unspeakable danger.

Though occasionally reworked in films such as *"The Family Man"* or *"Big"*, the central plot device of *"It's A Wonderful Life"*, of an angel giving a human an alternate view of reality to teach them lessons about life, leaves much untapped story potential on the table to be explored.

In an age filled with crime shows and superheroes, *Tinker* is a rare family-friendly drama that could bring old and young together around the TV in a way that seldom occurs today.

Season 1 – The Big Picture

Prince Catharnoch, one of heaven's most powerful angels (an arch-angel, or *seraphim*), returns to earth after a long convalescence from wounds suffered while facing his enemy Melchorn in defense of the earth during World War II.

Though in natural appearance Catharnoch is a glorious and powerful warrior, he takes on the form of an unassuming 50-year-old maintenance man who enjoys Dr. Suess, and adopts the playful name of Jonathan Tinker. Not even the angelic council presiding over Bedford Springs is aware of who is in their midst at first.

He is sent to the suburban town of Bedford Springs (along with his lion Rasha) where he is to remain undercover while he protects a young teen named Josh, who as an adult will do something great for the earth.

Angels and demons cannot force a human to do anything against their will. Their primary power lies in influencing a person's mind, by giving them images and suggestions of what they might do and how they should think. They "tinker" with a person's thoughts and imagination.

The 10-episode arc of Season 1 begins by showing how Tinker first wins Josh's friendship and trust. Josh is "breaking bad" into petty crime and wrong choices when they first meet. As Tinker enters the orbit of Josh's family, friends, church and school, he helps them sort through a variety of threats and problems.

Early on, we also delve into Tinker's supernatural community, and how it interacts with the physical universe. Like humans, Tinker's fellow angels have varying levels of gifts and abilities, and struggle with a variety of fears and weaknesses, which Tinker helps them to work through.

He himself is not immune from these. His recovery from his battle with Melchorn is not yet complete, and memories of that conflict still haunt him. The thought of Melchorn "looking for him", and what he might do to Josh, unsettle him.

The final section of the season concerns Melchorn's discovery of Catharnoch's hideout, and the inevitable showdown between them.

The beauty of the *Tinker* universe is that stories can unfold along two tracks. Episodes can be developed which serve the central mythology of the Catharnoch vs. Melchorn battle fought in defense of Josh. But there can be a second track of entirely independent episodes where Tinker meets a variety of hurting people and "works his magic" over them.

The World

Bedford Springs is a fictional bedroom community of 60,000, with most of the accoutrements of contemporary, suburban life – an outdoor mall, city college, modest diversity, parks, and recreational opportunities.

Josh Baxter comes from an ordinary, middle-class intact family.

Tinker's mythology is a biblically-inspired world of angels and demons, not the supernatural world of Harry Potter or *Twilight* or Marvel comics. Beyond the attempt at thematic consistency, a TV show that is “faith-friendly” – not “faith-based” (there is a considerable chasm between these) could attract a huge audience that is usually overlooked for commercial TV.

The supernatural world of *Tinker* overlays the natural world in a seamless fashion. (Viewers know we are in the spiritual world when a green-hue comes over the screen.) Humans can't see angels and demons, but are definitely seen by them. *Tinker* can play a bit with physical matter (e.g. opening car doors, snapping drive belts), but like the archetypal Clarence from “*It's A Wonderful Life*”, the singular gift of angels (and demons) is to touch a human's mind and give them alternative versions of reality, either good or bad.

In the spiritual universe of *Tinker*, there are three orders of both angels (cherubim, angels, seraphim) and demons (imps, demons and arch-demons) with a greater range of powers the higher the level. Humans can only be influenced by the spiritual realm, not coerced. Human free-will and the power to reason remain fully operational. Humans can likewise influence the spiritual realm through practices like prayer and sacrificial love.

In the supernatural world, angels and demons fight in very real battles, where swords of light are used and the number and strength of respective combatants matter. *Tinker* faces a dilemma early on when he must suppress some of his power as an arch-angel for the fear of arousing Melchorn's suspicion that it's him.

Human warfare and fighting usually occurs alongside of parallel clashes in the spiritual realm. Episode 2 – “*All For One And One For All*” – attempts to depict this in both chilling, and comical, ways. One example: there's a scene where Josh's pastor weaves in and out of sexual temptation depending on whether angels or demons are winning the battle for his soul.

The DNA of the classic movie “*It's A Wonderful Life*” is in the series, in that the atmosphere is serious but with comical elements. As a “dramedy”, *Tinker* will confront real-life issues such as family dysfunction, divorce, political correctness, bullying, addiction, etc., yet do so in a way that is definitively family-friendly, even *fun*.

The Characters

JONATHAN TINKER is a powerful angel (known in heaven as Prince Catharnoch) who comes to earth after a season of being “behind a desk”, recovering from wounds received in a heavenly battle fought during World War II against his nemesis Melchorn.

He hints at being around in horse-and-buggy days. One episode reveals him giving courage to a soldier at Normandy by showing him the family his sacrifice will save 75-years in the future (a family Tinker will then subsequently show the valor of their relative from the past).

Tinker never speaks of himself as an “angel”, and refers to God as his “Boss”, except around fellow angels. While Tinker clearly wishes to draw people to God and his value system, he does not preach or proselytize. The faith-friendly atmosphere of the series runs in the background like an operating system, never obvious or intrusive.

Though powerful, Tinker is not omnipotent. He can appear and disappear between the natural and spiritual dimensions, but travels no faster than humans, and gets about by driving a car and riding buses. He cannot read minds, and is frequently in the dark as to what his heavenly Boss is doing. He speaks openly and honestly with God, but with no more special knowledge or experience than a human in prayer.

Elements of mystery surround Tinker. In his human form, he is unassuming in appearance (picture Simon Pegg), but when he pulls back the curtain on his true identity, the awe-factor goes up considerably (picture *Thor*).

Though he plays at being simple, he’s not nearly as childlike as Clarence from “It’s A Wonderful Life”, but is clearly in command of situations he finds himself in. Dr. Suess paraphernalia adorns his home and he owns a pet lion name Rasha (reasons for which we discover over the course of season 1). He often appears as a character in the visions he gives to people.

His primary assignment is to protect and guide Josh through his formative teen years. Secondly, Tinker serves as an “adviser” to the nine-member angelic council of Bedford Springs, providing encouragement and training, especially in preparation for Melchorn’s feared arrival.

JOSH BAXTER is a 13-year-old eighth-grader who becomes Tinker’s closest confidante and friend (picture Kevin Arnold from “Wonder Years” or Harley Keener from “Iron Man 3”). Though an ordinary kid, Josh is impulsive, imaginative, full of questions, and stout of heart.

He’s the middle child of three, and when Tinker meets him, he is in a dark place, feeling forgotten by his parents because of their attention given to a 3-year-old sister and a brother heading off to college.

As such, Josh begins to act out with petty crime and misbehavior. He and Tinker first cross paths when Josh and his two best friends attempt to vandalize Tinker's house, till Rasha literally pokes his head through some hedges, and sends them running for their lives.

DAMON MASON is a 14-year-old eight-grader – who with his size and athleticism is a more natural leader than his friends Josh and Scott. A product of a broken home, Damon is on the verge of making a dark turn when Tinker first meets him.

SCOTT RODRIGUEZ also 13 and eighth grade, is a Hispanic friend of Josh and Damon. Quieter, and more a follower, Scott is the tech-wizard of the trio.

STAN MILLER, 50, gruff and heavy-set, is the head of the Bedford Springs School Maintenance Department and hires Tinker. Divorced, with a college son too coddled by his ex-wife, Stan is a no-nonsense, anti-PC, straight shooter who likes to yank on the chains of his staff. But hiding behind his tough exterior is a drinking problem that is gathering steam.

FRANK STAFFORD, early 60s, has worked with Stan for years – and so knows how to dish it out right back at his friend. He's counting the days till he can retire.

JEFF HANSON, mid-20s, is a mildly autistic member of the maintenance team. Jeff has learned to compensate for his shyness by usually only speaking in movie lines, but has great intuitive skills when doing repairwork.

ALLENA, 30s, is a fellow angel, who leads the angelic council of Bedford Springs. She wrestles with the need to play things safe, an insecurity which is turned on its head when she realizes that Bedford Springs is about to become the center stage for a great heavenly battle between good and evil. Tinker helps her discover her conviction and courage.

ANGIE THOMPSON, 15, a ninth grader who struggles with her sexual identity. Angie and Josh grew up knowing each other, so Josh – who has a crush on her – isn't too keen with her sexual struggles. Through her tom-boy prowess, Angie forces her way into Josh's inner circle, and becomes a D'Artagnan to their Three Musketeers.

BILL BAXTER, 40s, is Josh's father. Churchgoing and hard-working, Bill is a good provider for his family. But Josh feels an emotional distance from his dad, whom he finds overly invested in the life of Josh's brother, Sam, about to head off to college. Secretly, Bill struggles with a porn problem which drifts down to his two sons.

EMILY BAXTER, 40s, is Josh's mother. Though she is kind and steady, Josh believes she is too consumed with raising Josh's 3-year-old sister.

PASTOR DAN FERGUSON, 40s, the pastor of the church where Josh and his family attend. Ten years into his ministry, Dan is exhausted by its challenges. To the point of being vulnerable when an alluring secretary begins to massage his hurts.

Marketing “Tinker”

There are numerous reasons for why *Tinker* could stand out as a TV series.

1. Its pedigree.

Sharing a link with a movie so deeply cherished as *“It’s A Wonderful Life”* should automatically create interest in the series.

2. It’s a show the family will watch together.

Shows watched by the entire family are few and far between. *Tinker*, like *Stranger Things*, has enough magic to draw younger kids, and enough edge to keep teens and adults entranced.

3. Its “magic”.

The premise of *Tinker* taking his subjects on wild rides of the imagination open up endless possibilities for what the show can depict.

4. It’s relevant and contemporary.

The show will not be afraid to wrestle with ideas and themes filling headlines and chatrooms today. The episode “PC Land” is written to illustrate how complex, controversial themes can be explored. “The Beauty Is A Beast” deals with bullying and body image issues, and school violence.

5. It’s faith-friendly.

Not faith-based, but *faith-friendly*. The series will talk openly and respectfully of religion, of church-going, of pastors, etc. Many wish to know how to tap more effectively into this huge market. This show will do it.

6. It’s fun, yet serious.

Tinker will be a true dramedy, filled with roll-on-the-floor-laugh-out-loud exchanges, followed by hide-behind-the-chair thrills, followed by reach-for-the-Kleenex moments.

7. Its “bingeable” structure.

The 10 episodes of Season 1 flow inexorably to a cataclysmic, and highly anticipated, showdown between Catharnoch and Melchorn in the season finale. We progressively learn more of their fierce combat on D-Day, and why Catharnoch dreads the rematch.

Episodes 1-5 and 6-10 are self-contained units. Melchorn sends out spies in Episode 2, looking for signs of Catharnoch. In Episode 5, Catharnoch goes full-on arch-angel to prevent a girl from killing herself, which betrays his location...and sends Melchorn heading in his direction.

The suspense builds in Episodes 6 to 10 as Melchorn draws ever closer, then chooses a character we meet in Episode 5 as his “host” through which to unleash his evil. Protecting Josh will require all of Catharnoch’s power, the help of the Council, and tragic sacrifice.

Completed Episodes – Season 1

Turbo Jam Boosters (Pilot)

Tinker helps Josh – who’s heading down a wrong path because he feels like a fifth wheel in his family – appreciate the love his parents for him.

All For One And One For All (Episode 2)

When a growing number of demons and imps show up in Bedford Springs to attack Pastor Dan, Tinker turns to Allena and the eight members of the Bedford Springs angelic council, to fight them off.

Seven Year Itch (Episode 3)

Believing his bad marriage is all his wife’s fault, a man meets Tinker who gives him the chance to go back to the day he proposes – and marry someone else.

PC Land (Episode 3)

When Tinker is suspended for using “hate-speech”, he gives a merciless superintendent a frightening taste of what happens when political correctness runs amok.

The Beauty Is A Beast (Episode 5)

A bullied girl, who sees herself only as ugly and worthless, contemplates suicide while Tinker and Allena try desperately to help her see her true beauty.

Episodes In Progress To Fill Out Season 1

Breaking Bad

Tinker simultaneously helps Bill, Damon and Stan who are on the road to disaster with three different addictions.

Tinker Hears A Who

Comedy episode which explains Tinker’s fascination with Dr. Suess.

Glory Forgotten

Tinker learns that Damon is the great-great-grandson of a young soldier he gave courage to at Normandy during the D-Day invasion.

What Lurks In The Shadows

As Melchorn draws closer to Bedford Springs, Tinker attempts to help Allena face her fears of danger, while struggling with his own foreboding about his past – and future – battles with Melchorn.

Something Wicked This Way Comes

Melchorn appears in Bedford Springs to threaten Tinker’s work, Josh, and the entire town.

Pilot Episode Treatment

Turbo Jam Boosters

Three mischievous teenagers – Josh Baxter, Damon Mason and Scott Rodriguez – converge one night at the home of Jonathan Tinker who has just moved in to Bedford Springs. The boys intend to spray-paint some ‘Welcome to the neighborhood’ graffiti on his house.

But just as Josh prepares to write, a lion pokes its head through Tinker’s hedges and sends him and his friends running with a booming roar. Tinker comes out of the house and pats the lion’s head as the boys run off screaming. *“That’s the boy we’re here to protect,”* he says with a smile.

The next day, Josh is brought back to Tinker’s house by his father Bill and two police officers. In his panic, Josh had confessed to his parents. Tinker agrees not to press charges as long as the boys clean up their mess. As they drive home, Bill chews out his son for his growing misbehavior.

Tinker meanwhile, walking to a job interview, passes through an outdoor mall and “stretches his muscles” (after complaining that he’s been behind a desk too long). Using his power to “tinker”, he helps a homeless man find a new coat and shoes in a garbage can, directs a blast of thunder over the head of a man lying to his wife, and knocks out a thief who rushes out of a jewelry shop. (Each of the people we meet in this scene appear in future season 1 episodes.)

At his interview, Tinker meets Stan Miller, the head of the school maintenance team, who hires him on the spot, and invites him back the next day.

Later that day, Josh, Scott and Damon come to Tinker’s house to undo their damage. When Tinker leaves to bring back a pizza for them, Josh rushes into the house – against Tinker’s wishes – to prove to his friends that he saw a real lion.

When they walk down into the basement, they are amazed to find a state-of-the-art game room filled with every machine a teen would want. Finding a door in the far corner, they open it up and find a huge in-home theater in the next room. Another door takes them into a room with a spacious Jacuzzi and sauna. There’s yet another door, and behind it they find a dark forest. Josh can’t resist going through and exploring. Reluctantly, his friends follow.

Suddenly, Josh sees the lion stalking them in the woods. When the boys turn to run, they discover to their horror that the door is gone. As the lion charges, the boys frantically scramble up the trees. But Josh’s branch breaks. Just as the lion is about to leap on him, a voice calls for him to stop. It’s Tinker, who sends the lion away shame-faced.

Tinker tells the boys to follow him back through the door which has reappeared. When Josh protests that his leg is broken, Tinker insists it isn’t, and Josh suddenly feels his pain leave. After lunch, the boys discover that the paint-repair – which they had left half-completed – is finished.

The next day, Tinker meets his mates in the maintenance department: Frank Stafford, who is nearing retirement, and can give back all the playful abuse that Stan heaps on him, and Jeff Hansen, a young autistic man in his 20s who only quotes movie lines to ease his shyness.

Back in the school cafeteria, the three boys process what they experienced at Tinker's house. Though Damon and Scott agree to stay clear of Tinker, Josh is intrigued by him, and confesses that he likes him. When Damon threatens to tell his parents, Josh says, "Big whup. My parents don't know I exist."

Sure enough, when Josh sees Tinker on the school lawn later that day, he runs right out to him, and begins to pepper him with questions about who he is. But Tinker will only tell him that he's like a magician who works for a boss, that is "not safe, but can be trusted...sort of like parents that way", but Josh frowns at the comparison.

A few days later, Josh, Damon and Scott are playing an imaginary "Star Trek" game in a tree house, when Josh's father interrupts them and calls Josh home to babysit his sister. Josh sulks the whole way home, especially when his father announces that he is grounded. Later that evening while poking around his older brother's room, Josh comes across his brother's senior project left open on the computer. Without a second thought, Josh deletes his brother's project from the computer.

When Damon comes over a short time later, they begin talking about their parents, and Damon – who comes from a broken home – rebukes Josh for thinking his parents don't care for him, and tells him he'd trade places with him in a heartbeat. Feeling contrite, Josh realizes what a bonehead thing he had done with his brother's project.

Unable to retrieve it, they invite Scott over, but he can't get the document back either. Suddenly, the boys see Josh's parents pulling into the driveway. Desperate, Josh finds Tinker's number and calls him on the phone, begging for his help. Though Tinker claims he doesn't understand computers, even as they're talking, the computer screen flashes, and the project reappears right before the boys' eyes.

A short time later, Josh's father finds the boys "studying" in Josh's room. He invites them down for ice cream, and as he leaves, Josh thanks his dad for caring enough to ground him.

The next day, Josh thanks Tinker, and they discuss how hard it is to be a parent, having to decide when to show sternness or mercy to a child. "Sometimes sparing your child pain is the unloving thing to do," Tinker says. When Josh agrees, Tinker offers to re-delete his brother's paper if he wants to feel more loved.

"That's okay. I'm good," Josh says with a smile. As they part, Josh asks if Tinker is alone.

"No, I have family," Tinker replies. "But thanks for asking." As Josh leaves, other angels appear in the schoolyard, visible only to Tinker.