

TINKER

Written by

Bear Clifton

Bear Clifton
860-462-3565
Lexington Park, MD
pastorbearclifton@gmail.com

FADE IN:

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

THREE EIGHTH-GRADE BOYS pick their way through a thick woods - whispering, giggling, clearly up to no good. The lead teen, DAMON MASON, 14, Black, accidentally snaps a branch back into the face of his Hispanic friend, SCOTT RODRIGUEZ, 13.

SCOTT
Thanks a lot, jerk!

Damon, who's taller and more muscular, looks back threateningly.

DAMON
Excuse me? Whadya call me?

SCOTT
(apologetically)
Damon.

DAMON
I thought that's what you said.
Don't follow so close.

As they bend over to walk under a low-hanging limb, Scott farts in the face of JOSH BAXTER, 13, White, and the shortest of the three, who recoils in disgust.

JOSH
Keep your gas out of my face!

SCOTT
Keep your face out of my gas.
Unless you like it there.

Josh pokes him hard with a stick. Scott reacts, then rips another one. They joust for a few seconds with sticks. Damon looks back with the flashlight he's holding.

DAMON
Quiet! We're almost there.

They poke forward through the bramble, until they come to a clearing. Damon pulls back a large branch, revealing a modest bungalow with its lights on, and the sound of classical music wafting out through the windows into the small yard.

DAMON (CONT'D)
 (whispers)
 He's home! Welcome Wagon is open
 for business.

They kneel down stealthily and Damon opens a satchel he's been carrying. Inside are three cans of spray paint which he passes out.

DAMON (CONT'D)
 Now remember -- puke is spelled P-U-K-E, not P-U-C-K. *YOU MAKE ME PUKE*, not *PUCK*.

JOSH
 Hey, what are you lookin' at me for? Scott wrote it wrong last time.

SCOTT
 You told me it was spelled right, moron. M-O-R-N, moron.

JOSH
 You're pathetic. Spell that.

DAMON
 Shhh! All right, I'll take the front, Scott you get this side, Josh takes the back. Meet back here in five minutes. Let's do it.

EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The boys spread out to their designated places. Damon snatches a peek through the shade of a front window and sees a person's feet in Dr. Suess-style slippers keeping time with the music. He starts to spray.

Scott approaches his side of the house and begins to spray, muttering letters to himself.

Josh tip-toes to the rear, and picks a spot beside the back deck that is hidden behind a six-foot hedge. He starts to shake the can, and looks around as the ball starts to rattle.

Just as he raises his arm and begins to spray, he hears a rustling in the hedge. A MASSIVE LION pushes its head through, and lets loose an earth-shattering roar.

Josh shrieks, drops his can and runs for his life. The other boys dash toward the woods, startled by the noise.

JOSH

Run! Run! It's a lion! A real lion!

They hear a second roar, and all three fly toward the woods.

JONATHAN TINKER, 50s, short and unassuming, steps out onto the deck and looks out in their direction.

The lion steps toward him, and he strokes its head. As he hears the boys' screams tail off, the slightest smirk appears on his face. The lion growls playfully and nibbles at his hand. Tinker points toward Josh.

TINKER

Yes Rasha. That's the boy. He's the one we've been sent to protect.

EXT. TINKER'S HOUSE - DAY

A police car and a sedan pull into Tinker's driveway. TWO OFFICERS step from the squad car. Josh and his father, BILL BAXTER, 40s, come out of the sedan.

Tinker kneels before a flower bed in his front yard. Above him on the house siding are painted the letters "WELCOME JE". He remains on his knees as they approach.

TINKER

Ah, have you caught one of my vandals?

OFFICER #1

Jonathan Tinker?

TINKER

That's me.

OFFICER #1

Officer Banning. Officer Melendez. This is Bill Baxter and his son Josh. So Josh has confessed to being one of the artists who visited you last night.

TINKER

Artists, eh? More like novelists.

He stands and points to the graffiti.

TINKER (CONT'D)

Although I can't say for sure, I think this writer was religious.

(MORE)

TINKER (CONT'D)
 "Welcome Jesus" wouldn't you say,
 is where he was heading?

Bill looks down angrily at Josh, demanding an answer with his look.

JOSH
 (meekly)
 Jerk. Damon was writing 'JERK'.

BILL
 Why? Why would you even --

TINKER
 There's more over on this side.

Tinker walks to the side of the house, where the letters, "YOU MAKE ME PUCK" are written.

TINKER (CONT'D)
 This one must be more the romantic
 sort. I think he was after, "YOU
 MAKE ME PUCKER"?

Josh frowns and looks down. Bill looks at him angrily.

BILL
 What does that even mean?

JOSH
 (embarrassed)
 Scott wrote it wrong. It was
 supposed to be PUKE.

BILL
 Oh for crying out loud, Josh!

Tinker walks to the rear of the house.

TINKER
 And this author was more the
 thoughtful type. He was only
 beginning his composition. But he
 left his pen.

He points to the can of spray paint that Josh dropped.

BILL
 Mr. Tinker. I'm so sorry that my
 son was part of this. I assure you
 this is not how my wife and I --
 well, Josh, what do you say?

JOSH
 (unenthusiastic)
 Sorry. But what about the lion?

OFFICER #2
 Mr. Tinker, all three boys insist that you, well -- they say that you had a lion on your property.

TINKER
 Oh did they now? Well, there are these lions.

He steps further back and points to two ceramic lions bordering the steps leading up to this deck.

TINKER (CONT'D)
 And I was watching a show last night with lions in it. Maybe the sound carried out into the yard.

JOSH
 Dad, a lion stuck his head out right here, as I was -- well, it was there. I know what I saw.

OFFICER #2
 Mr. Tinker, you don't --

TINKER
 I wish I had. Might have kept these rascals from doing their mischief.

OFFICER #1
 Would you like to press charges?

TINKER
 Oh no, no, no. Heavens no. As long as the boys are willing to put things right, we'll give them a mulligan on this one.

BILL
 Oh, they'll put things right, Mr. Tinker. I assure you of that.

TINKER
 Then we'll be fine. You give me a call later on, we'll set up a time for Josh and his friends to come over. I've just moved in. We don't want to get off on the wrong foot now, do we? Here's my card.

Bill takes the card, and looks curiously at it.

BILL
Dr. Suess?

Tinker's name and info is splashed across a Suessian landscape.

TINKER
Oh, I love Dr. Suess. Don't you?
What's your favorite?

BILL
I don't really remember --

JOSH
Mom reads Sarah Dr. Suess all the
time, Dad.

TINKER
Well, there you go. *Horton Hears A
Who*. Check it out. Masterpiece.
Always has me on the edge of my
seat. *We're here! We're here!*

Josh smiles as Bill and the officers look at each other.

LATER

Tinker watches from the front door as everyone gets back into their cars. He overhears Josh and his dad.

JOSH
I know there was a lion.

BILL
Josh, you mention a lion one more
time, I'll feed you to one.

Tinker snatches a glance heavenward.

TINKER
Well, that's an interesting way to
get things started. Never a dull
moment with you, is there? Talk
about a novelist.

He watches them pull away.

TINKER (CONT'D)
I think I need to go out and flex
my muscles some. I've been behind
that desk so long.

He cracks his knuckles with a smile.

INT. BAXTER'S CAR - DAY

Josh and his father duke it out on the drive home.

BILL

What the hell are we gonna do with you, son?

JOSH

I know it was dumb.

BILL

No. Letting the air out of your brother's tires was dumb. *This* is illegal! When you shoplifted last month, illegal. Vandalizing someone's house, illegal. What's wrong with you?!

JOSH

I don't know.

BILL

Obviously, these two boys aren't good for you to be hanging around with. What are their names?

JOSH

Scott. Damon.

BILL

It's time for some new friends, if you ask me. That Damon seems like nothing but trouble.

JOSH

He's fine.

BILL

His arms are loaded up with tatoos. Your mom overheard him cussing out his dad on the phone the other day.

JOSH

His step-dad.

BILL

You don't talk to *any* adult the way he did. I suppose you've started drinking with these boys. Are you drinking?

JOSH

No.

(beat)

Not much.

BILL

You're drinking on top of it?!

JOSH

I said not much. Just a few sips.
At a birthday party last month. I
didn't like it.

BILL

Nobody likes it. But they do it
anyway because they think it makes
them look cool. Until they smash
their parents' car into a telephone
pole. Or kill somebody.

JOSH

All you do is yell at me anymore.

BILL

All you do is get into trouble
anymore! Why can't you be like your
brother? I don't know what to do
with a son that's on the fast track
to Leavenworth. Well I'm damn well
not going to let you stay on that
train, I promise you that.

JOSH

What's Leavenworth?

BILL

Google it!

Bill pauses to catch his breath then starts up again.

BILL (CONT'D)

Why would you vandalize the house
of a nice, old man like that?

JOSH

I don't know. But he did have a
lion.

BILL

Shut up about the lion already!

EXT. OUTDOOR MALL - DAY

Tinker walks casually through a bustling marketplace teeming with people. He looks to his left and sees a HOMELESS MAN with duct-taped shoes and a threadbare jacket poking through a garbage can.

As Tinker continues watching, the man suddenly cries aloud in joy, and pulls out from the can a new pair of tennis shoes which he holds alongside his feet. A perfect fit.

TINKER
(under his breath)
Keep looking.

The man returns to the garbage can and his eyes light up again. This time he pulls out a jacket in mint condition.

Tinker slowly walks past a MAN and WOMAN seated at a table tangled in a heated quarrel, him yelling, her crying.

MAN
As God is my witness, I never
kissed her.

WOMAN
That's not what Rebecca told me.

TINKER
(looks up)
And what's the witness say?
(nods head after a beat)
I thought so.

MAN
Well Rebecca doesn't know what
she's talking about. She's never
liked me. Look. If I'm not tellin'
the truth, may lightning strike me.

At that, a deafening boom of thunder explodes over his head, sending him straight out of his chair. He tries to recover and pull himself back up.

MAN (CONT'D)
That doesn't mean a thing.

WOMAN
We're through, Jerold!

Tinker presses on. Fifty feet ahead of him, a PUNK rushes out of a jewelry store and scrambles away, followed by a SHOPKEEPER desperately screaming out.

SHOPKEEPER

Stop him! He stole a diamond ring.
Stop him!

As the punk hightails down the sidewalk, a large wooden sign hanging above a store entrance suddenly loosens on one side and swings directly onto the thief's head, laying him out cold on the sidewalk.

A crowd gathers around him, as the shopkeeper rushes up to get his ring.

TINKER

My, oh my. So much work to do.

INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - DAY

200 WORSHIPPERS gather on Sunday morning for a service at Bedford Springs River Of Life church. The congregation - which includes JOSH BAXTER and his parents BILL and EMILY, and little sister SARAH, 3 - joyfully sings a vibrant song.

PASTOR DAN FERGUSON, 40s, stands in the front row, clapping with his wife and two children.

Tinker stands in the back row, also enjoying the music. A woman, ALLENA, 30s, stands ten rows ahead on the other side. She looks back and waves at Tinker, who nods.

Suddenly, a bright luminescence fills the back corner of the church near Tinker. He looks back nearly blinded, and sees KILLIAN, a young, muscular angel, 20s, dressed in simple but elegant pants and pullover shirt, with a sword at his side.

He nods respectfully toward Tinker.

Allena also looks back, shielding her eyes. Yet everyone else in the church is oblivious to what has happened. She steps out and walks to the back of the room, and joins Tinker and Killian who walk into a foyer.

ALLENA

Well Killian, what a surprise. Out for a Sunday stroll?

KILLIAN

Allena.

ALLENA

Do you know Jonathan, our newest member?

KILLIAN

Yes, I know...Jonathan, is it?
Quite well.

Tinker, looks down and shields a smile.

KILLIAN (CONT'D)

Apparently you don't know...
Jonathan...as well as I do.
(to Tinker)
She doesn't know?

Tinker shakes his head.

ALLENA

(confused)
Know what?

KILLIAN

Allena, this is Prince Catharnoch.

She gasps and looks at Tinker.

Tinker nods, but she cocks her head to the side doubtfully.

Suddenly for just the flash of a second, Tinker transforms before her eyes into a MAJESTIC, TALL ANGEL, shining gloriously with light, then quickly returns to his mild-mannered self.

Allena screams in awe, and falls to her knees.

ALLENA

Why has one of our greatest
warriors come to Bedford Springs to
be with us?

TINKER

Stand up, Allena. Don't look at me
any differently than before.

ALLENA

(stands)
That's not possible.
(beat)
You were wounded in the war.
Fighting *him*. No one has seen you
for years.

TINKER

Well I'm back. Almost at full
strength. A few kinks to work out.

ALLENA

Why are you here? With us?

TINKER

See that young teen who was sitting
across from you, in the red shirt?

The song has ended, and people are greeting each other. Josh turns and shakes a few hands, allowing Allena to see him.

TINKER (CONT'D)

That young man is going to do some
very special things a few years
from now as an adult. I've been
sent to keep an eye on him. And try
to stay hidden if I can while I get
my strength back. Which is why we
didn't tell you at first. I'm sorry
for that. As the head of the
Council, you should have known.

KILLIAN

That's why I have come, my lord.

Tinker nods for him to go on.

KILLIAN (CONT'D)

Melchorn has heard you've returned
to earth. That you've recovered.
He's looking for you. Seeking his
vengeance.

ALLENA

Melchorn!

TINKER

It'll be a long time before he
looks in this direction. Our enemy
always thinks Rome. Our Lord
chooses Bethlehem.

KILLIAN

It may not be as long as you think.
Melchorn has spies everywhere. And
human media is far more advanced
than when you last were on earth.
News of great events spreads fast,
and far. If you show your full
power, Melchorn will become
suspicious. Michael urges you to be
cautious. Let the Council do the
heavy lifting.

TINKER

Which is why they should know now that I am here. Tell Michael I'll be careful.

KILLIAN

We'll keep in touch. Good to see you back in action...Jonathan.

He disappears. Allena is still dumbfounded. Tinker pats her encouragingly on the shoulder, as he looks back toward Josh, then at Pastor Dan.

ALLENA

I guess I'll let the Council know we need to have a meeting.

TINKER

In the meantime, shall we get back to work? If I'm going to help Josh, we need to help his pastor also. I hear he's in trouble.

ALLENA

What kind of trouble?

TINKER

The worst. He's discouraged.

Allena nods and returns to the sanctuary. Tinker pauses at the door and looks up.

TINKER (CONT'D)

Melchorn? That didn't take long.

EXT. CHURCH FRONT DOOR - DAY

Pastor Dan greets parishioners as they leave after worship. Tinker steps up and greets him.

DAN

Jonathan Tinker, if I remember. Good to have you back with us.

TINKER

Good to be here, Pastor Dan. I heard you had a rough week. Please know I'm thinking a lot about you.

DAN

Thank you, Mr. Tinker.

TINKER

Pastors need encouragement too. My father, I guess you could call him a shepherd as well.

DAN

Oh? Big congregation?

TINKER

(eyes widening)
Oh yeah.

DAN

Well, it's good to have you with us. I hope we'll see you again.

TINKER

I'll be around. I promise.

LATER

As Tinker walks alone on the sidewalk outside the church, his eyes suddenly narrow with concern.

He pauses and looks around him to be sure he's alone, then closes his eyes for a second. When he opens them again, everything around him - trees, stone, and sky - all have a greenish tint covering them.

He is seeing the world from the spiritual dimension.

He kneels down on the sidewalk and touches a blotch of black slime. Then he looks down the sidewalk and sees a line of footprints, leading up to a side door, made of the same slime.

TINKER

I knew I smelled something in the church.

INT. PASTOR DAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Dan walks into a large office area where his secretary, KAREN, 30s, and very attractive, is at a computer.

KAREN

G'morning Pastor Dan.

DAN

Hey Karen.

He begins foraging through a stack of mail.

DAN (CONT'D)

I think I'm gonna have to
reschedule my appointments today.
I'm just beat.

KAREN

I thought you were looking a little
wore out yesterday in church.

DAN

That obvious I wasn't on top of my
game?

KAREN

Well, no. I didn't mean that.
You're always on your game, Pastor.

DAN

The funeral last week for Julie's
son just took it out of me.

KAREN

So awful. Why anyone so young would
just take his own life?

DAN

Hard to figure out.

KAREN

Well, I'll be happy to reschedule
for you.

She smiles affectionately, maybe a little too affectionately.

DAN

Thank you, Karen. Well, I think I'm
going to head home then.

She pops out of her chair.

KAREN

Here before you go. I used to work
for a chiropractor as a trained
massage therapist. Why don't you
sit down and let me work out some
of that tension.

DAN

Oh that's okay, Karen.

The moment suddenly turns awkward for him.

KAREN

No, really. I insist. I don't have much to offer my pastor, but I do have this. Now sit down!

She directs him to take a chair at a small conference table. He squirms a bit but complies, and before he can resist further, her hands attack his neck.

KAREN (CONT'D)

There, now isn't that good? Doesn't the Bible talk about the laying on of hands?

DAN

Yes it does.

He melts in her hands.

Unseen to either of them, the office transitions into the same green-tinted condition as before.

Several feet away, near the window, stands a small ghoulish creature, known in the spirit world as an IMP. It's covered with dark clothing, its arms smeared with black streaks, its skin giving off bursts of dark light.

Suddenly, Tinker walks in the office, unseen to Dan and Karen but very obvious to the imp. Shards of white light sparkle off of Tinker's clothing.

TINKER

What are you doing here?

IMP

It's none of your business.

TINKER

Oh, but it is. This is my territory.

IMP

I've never seen you here before.

TINKER

And you won't again, because you're leaving now for good.

IMP

You have no power over me. You're just a --

Tinker looks down for a moment, deciding "if he should or shouldn't". He lifts his head, then scowls at the ghoul.

Suddenly, an intense burst of light rockets from his fingers and strikes his foe.

The imp shrieks and jumps through the window.

Tinker steps past Dan and Karen still in massage-mode (and oblivious to what's going on), and looks out the window.

A large blotch of goo is on the sidewalk where the creature landed. Tinker catches the last glimpse of the imp fleeing out of sight.

He looks back into the office, where Dan is enjoying himself too much.

TINKER
Boundaries, Pastor.

Dan's face registers sudden alarm.

DAN
(stands)
Thank you, Karen. That's good.
Appreciate it.

Karen notices his concern.

KAREN
Oh, Pastor. I keep forgetting I'm
not at the chiropractor's anymore.
I'm sorry if I overstepped my
bounds.

DAN
It's good to know you have that
skill. I'll have you come over and
work your magic on my wife
sometime. She's still a little
dinged up from a car accident last
year.

KAREN
(half-smile)
I'd be happy to do that.

Tinker shakes his head and looks back out the window, concern overspreading his face.

EXT. LARGE OUTDOOR GARDEN - DAY

Tinker walks along a quiet, flower-strewn path with Allena.

TINKER

It was nothing more than an imp.

ALLENA

But imps report to demons, and before you know it, word will get around.

TINKER

I barely flexed any muscle at all. It'll think I'm nothing but a cherubim on steroids. They'd never suspect --

ALLENA

-- that one of the great seraphim is among us. I don't believe it myself. Nor will the rest of the Council.

They step through a rose-covered lattice doorway into an open lawn surrounded by hedges, and find EIGHT OTHER ANGELS, men and women, in ordinary clothes, seated on benches.

They all rise respectfully.

ALLENA (CONT'D)

My lord. The high council of Bedford Springs. Everyone, this is Prince Catharnoch.

One of them, LAWRENCE, 40s, steps forward slightly.

LAWRENCE

With all respect, sir, might we have some...proof that it is you.

ALLENA

Lawrence! I saw him myself.

LAWRENCE

Believe me, I want to believe.

TINKER

(smiles)

Unless I place my hands in his side.

LAWRENCE

Yes, exactly. If that's weakness, then I am weak.

TINKER

Such weakness is often a strength,
Lawrence. Good for you. One can't
be too careful, especially these
days.

(beat)

Have any one you ever held the
sword of the seraphim?

GLORIA, 60s, a second angel speaks.

GLORIA

It's not in our power to hold such
a weapon.

With a flash of light, Tinker suddenly brandishes a massive golden sword that glows with the glory of heaven. He places its tip on the ground, and lets the hilt fall into Lawrence's hands.

To Lawrence, it is as unwieldy as Thor's hammer. He comically struggles to keep the sword from falling, let alone being able to lift it.

Tinker steps in, grabs the sword, thrusts it aloft and swings it, before placing it back in its scabbard, where it disappears.

LAWRENCE

It is you.

TAMARA, 40s, speaks.

TAMARA

Then you've recovered?

TINKER

Enough to rejoin the fight.

BENJAMIN, 20s, pipes up.

BENJAMIN

He's here to do his rehab.

TINKER

No --

BENJAMIN

Benjamin.

TINKER

No, Benjamin. This isn't the minor leagues, and soon as I find my swing, I'll be called up.

Some of them look at each other bewildered.

TINKER (CONT'D)
None of you watch baseball?

TAMARA
Boring.

Tinker rolls his eyes.

TINKER
Well the Lord doesn't think so. He was very tickled when they came up with that game. Anyway, no, I'm not here to practice up, and then get swooped away to the battle somewhere else.
(beat)
The battle is coming here.

He lets that sink in.

ALLENA
Melchorn is looking for the Prince.

GLORIA
Melchorn is coming here?

TINKER
Now, now. This is only the second inning. We won't worry about the eighth and ninth innings just yet.

More bewilderment.

TINKER (CONT'D)
(exasperated)
We don't have to worry about Melchorn for awhile. He doesn't even know I'm here.

LAWRENCE
So why have you come?

TINKER
There's a boy we have to keep safe.

EXT. PIRATE SHIP - DAY

Josh, Scott and Damon, in prison rags, are on their hands and knees swabbing the deck, under a blazing sun.

JOSH
(exhausted)
I don't know how long I can keep
this up.

SCOTT
Me either.

DAMON
There's three of us and one of him.
I say we just tackle him the next
time he's distracted. Tie him up.
And throw him in.

SCOTT
Send him to Davy Jones locker.

JOSH
Davy Jones locker!

PIRATE VOICE (O.C.)
What's with all that muttering over
there, ye good-for-nothing
varmint!

CONTINUOUS

It's Bill Baxter, sporting a full-on Jack Sparrow look. He
charges over to them, and leans in.

PIRATE BILL
Something you'd like to say,
mateys?

JOSH
It's hard, Captain Bill. We're worn
out.

PIRATE BILL
Worn out already, are ye?

DAMON
The sun's too hot!

PIRATE BILL
Why you soft-bellied crab cakes.
Maybe a little swim with the fishes
would cool you off!

SCOTT
How much more do you expect us to
do?

PIRATE BILL

When it's done you fools! And don't forget once you've finished the deck, you still have the outside to do.

The words "YOU MAKE ME PUCK" are painted in large letters across the ship's hull.

As Bill walks away laughing, the boys cry out, "NO!" and charge him. They gang-tackle him.

LATER

Bill, tied up in mast rope, stands at the edge of a plank.

PIRATE BILL (CONT'D)

Scoundrels! Ye can't do this to me!

Josh, now wearing the captain's hat, stands on a railing, with a rope in hand.

JOSH

To Davy Jones's locker, Captain Bill!

Josh swings out with the rope and kicks Bill straight into the drink. The boys cheer.

EXT. TINKER'S HOUSE - DAY

Josh, returning from his imaginary thoughts, pushes laboriously on a brush, trying to wash the graffiti off the side of Tinker's house. Scott works beside him while Damon labors on the front of the house.

JOSH

My arms are falling off.

SCOTT

Why'd you ever say anything to your dad? We would've gotten away with it.

JOSH

He got it out of me when I came home scared. The stupid lion.

SCOTT

You're the one who's stupid. There was no lion.

JOSH
You heard it!

SCOTT
(yells out)
Did you see a lion, Damon?

DAMON
No lion.

JOSH
Well, what was the roar?

DAMON
He said he was watching TV.

JOSH
Yeah, well I didn't write out, "You
make me puke". Twice in a row!

TINKER (O.C.)
But you meant to write *puke*.

Tinker walks around the side from the back.

TINKER (CONT'D)
That's hardly a nice thing to say
to someone you haven't met.

DAMON
(walks around)
Didn't mean anything by it, Mr.
Tinker.

TINKER
Oh, the paint you used was
imaginary paint?

DAMON
Well no, but --

TINKER
And it was going to cause imaginary
damage to my house?

The boys squirm a bit.

TINKER (CONT'D)
Which would have cost me imaginary
money to fix it, if you boys hadn't
been found. But since you were
found, now you're doing imaginary
work to undo the damage.

(a beat)

(MORE)

TINKER (CONT'D)

Well, I for one am glad you didn't mean anything by it.

(smiles)

Well, I mean to go downtown and bring back a large pizza and some soda. Would anybody mind if I did that?

JOSH

Not at all, Mr. Tinker. That'd be awesome.

TINKER

Well then, carry on men. I'll be back in a half-hour. If anyone needs a drink, I left the back door unlocked.

They nod.

TINKER (CONT'D)

Oh and just a small favor. I'm still moving in. If you do go inside, just stay in the kitchen area if you don't mind.

LATER

The boys wave as Tinker drives away. Josh looks at his buds.

JOSH

Come on.

DAMON

What?

JOSH

I'm gonna prove to you there's a lion.

SCOTT

How?

JOSH

We're exploring his house.

Josh runs toward the back.

SCOTT

He said stay in the kitchen. Josh!

But he disappears. Damon shakes his head.

DAMON
He's brainless.

They run after him.

INT. TINKER'S HOUSE - DAY

Josh charges into the kitchen full of purpose. He waits in the entryway to the living room for his friends who dash in.

JOSH
Come on!

DAMON
Why do you have to be such a
nimrod. What if he's got cameras?

SCOTT
He's getting us pizza. The least
you can do is be nice to him back.

JOSH
I know what I saw, and nobody
believes me. Not even you. We won't
touch anything. Just look around.

Josh plunges into the living room, furnished with the basics, but piles of unopened boxes are in the corners, and each of the paintings on the wall are scenes from Dr. Seuss books.

DAMON
What's with the Dr. Seuss stuff?

SCOTT
Well that's kinda...strange, but
cool. I don't know what it is.

They walk down a small hallway past two bedrooms and a bathroom, peering in each.

Josh walks into Tinker's bedroom, turns, and screams, seeing a life-size Cat-In-The-Hat stuffed figure standing guard in the corner. The other boys walk in.

DAMON
Maybe that's your lion.

JOSH
It wasn't Cat-In-The-Hat!

SCOTT
There's no pictures of people
anywhere. Suppose he's all alone?

Josh heads back toward the kitchen.

JOSH
Let's check the basement.

DAMON
Maybe he's one of those crazy guys
with thirty personalities and when
he comes back he'll be like Jack
the Ripper.

SCOTT
Or maybe he'll put some drug on the
pizza that'll knock us out, and
then he'll tie us up and lock us in
the --

They arrive at the basement door and peer down the dark
steps.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
-- basement. Sure about this?

Josh flicks on the lights, which are dim.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
That didn't help any.

JOSH
Come on.

Josh heads slowly down the stairs that creak eerily.

SCOTT
'Course now that you think of it,
why would our parents just let us
come unsupervised to the house of a
guy that nobody knows?

JOSH
My parents could care less what I
do. All my dad has time for is my
brother Sam, getting ready to go
off to USC, just like him. Sam's so
perfect. Anything I do is always
wrong.

DAMON
Well, you do a lotta wrong stuff,
you idiot.

SCOTT

Let's see, caught shoplifting,
suspended for fighting, vandalizing
property. Now breaking and
entering. Not bad for one month.

JOSH

He said we could come inside.

Damon cuffs the side of his head.

DAMON

He said stay in the kitchen, you
knucklehead.

At the bottom of the steps is another light switch. Josh
flicks it on...and gasps.

DAMON (CONT'D)

Whoa!

The basement is a boy's wonderland with a pool table, a
jukebox, several pinball machines and --

SCOTT

-- A Skee-Ball machine!

They spread out mesmerized.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

It's a dollar. Anybody got some
quarters.

JOSH

We said we weren't going to touch.

SCOTT

Yeah, but --

DAMON

When he comes back, we'll find a
way to get him to show us his
house. Just act surprised when he
brings us down here.

SCOTT

I don't care if he's Jack the
Ripper. This guy's the bomb.

As they continue inspecting the equipment, Josh stops.

JOSH

Look. There's another door on the
other side of the room.

DAMON
Probably just the furnace room.

JOSH
I wanna have a look.

Josh scoots toward it.

DAMON
Come on, enough's enough. He'll be coming back soon.

JOSH
It takes longer than that for pizza.

Josh pulls it open and acts equally astonished.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Ain't no furnace room. Check it out!

They come over and look through the doorway, and see a complete in-home theater set up with at least ten plush seats facing a wall-sized screen.

SCOTT
Are you kidding me!

Without hesitation they push inside.

Again they spread out to investigate. Damon scans a bookshelf filled with DVDs.

DAMON
He's got like every awesome DVD known to man.

SCOTT
(trying out a seat)
I want him to adopt me.

JOSH
And look.

Josh points to the end of the room.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Another door.

SCOTT
What's he got in there? A swimming pool?

Josh pulls it open.

JOSH

No. Just a jacuzzi and sauna.

Sure enough, the room is gorgeously equipped with an eight-man hot tub and steam room, with towels laid out like a four-star hotel. In they go.

That's not all. Damon runs behind what looks like an ice cream counter, and sure enough, discovers a Baskin-Robbins lookalike, with a dozen flavors of ice cream.

He dips in a finger and marvels.

DAMON

Look guys. All the ice cream in the world. This is the best chocolate chip I've ever had.

As they walk around, Josh peers behind him to spy out the door leading back to the game room.

SCOTT

This house shouldn't be this big.

JOSH

It's underground. It can be as big as his shovel. And look. There's another door.

He points to yet another door beckoning them.

DAMON

Maybe we'll find your lion after all.

SCOTT

What if we do?

DAMON

We run. But seriously, we should stop already.

JOSH

One more look. This is gotta be the furnace room.

He opens it up and looks.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Nope.

SCOTT

What?

JOSH

(hesitates)

Just a big, dark...forest.

They all come to the doorway, look through, and peer into a thick forest of pine and redwood lifting upwards as far as their eyes can see, toward a dark, foreboding sky.

DAMON

It's not possible.

SCOTT

But I'm seeing it with my own eyes.

JOSH

Only one way to know for sure.

They reach out to try and stop him but he steps inside.

JOSH (CONT'D)

It's cooler. Like a forest would be. And there's a breeze through the trees.

He walks up to a tree and picks at its bark. The other two remain locked inside the door's frame.

JOSH (CONT'D)

It's bark. See, it's flaking off.

Damon closes his eyes and steps inside. Scott is close to a heart attack.

SCOTT

Oh, this is insane.

He follows after.

DAMON

There's nothing to see here Josh. We're going back.

JOSH

But look.

He points through the mist, and sure enough - another door is a hundred feet away.

JOSH (CONT'D)

I gotta know what's there.

DAMON
No you don't.

JOSH
We've already come this far.

He sets off, and they follow, though looking frantically about them as they step.

DAMON
Maybe he drugged us before he left.

Josh, fifty feet ahead of them, suddenly freezes in place, peering deeply into the woods to his right.

JOSH
Shhhhh!!! Don't move.

DAMON
(whispers)
What?

Josh looks more closely and sees the silhouette of a lion walking stealthily behind the curtain of trees.

JOSH
It's the lion. I'm not kidding.

SCOTT
All right, I'm heading back now.
You guys do what you want.

He quietly turns and starts to head back, then comes to a dead stop.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Where's the door?

Damon looks back and sees that it's gone. Just forest.

DAMON
It was there a minute ago.

SCOTT
This can't be happening.

Josh remains frozen, aware that he's being stalked. Suddenly, a low growl bellows out, that each of them hears.

DAMON
Josh, come back.

Petrified, Josh shakes his head as he catches just fleeting glances of the beast, drawing closer. Finally in a panic, he flees to a pine with low limbs, and begins to climb.

JOSH

Get up into a tree! Now! Climb!

Damon and Scott don't waste a second, as they choose trees and scramble up for their lives.

The lion charges toward Josh, and as it enters the clearing, it dives forward, claws extended, just narrowly missing Josh's dangling legs.

Josh climbs a big further, then rests, gulping in mouthfuls of air. He looks over and locks eyes with his friends, who are now high enough and out of harm's way.

The lion begins to pace hungrily back and forth between them.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Told ya there was a lion.

DAMON

I believe you.

SCOTT

So now what do we do? Cry for help?

DAMON

Who's gonna hear us?

JOSH

Wait till the lion gets tired of us, then run for the door.

SCOTT

There is no door, you idiot.

JOSH

What?

Josh, who had missed that exchange, looks back, and sees nothing but woods.

JOSH (CONT'D)

I'm sorry guys. I got us into this mess. Guess, Mr. Tinker will come back and find us here.

SCOTT

What if Mr. Tinker *wanted* us here? What if he means to lock us away in here for the rest of our lives?

Suddenly, the limb Josh straddles makes a slight cracking sound, and shifts downwards a few inches.

DAMON

Josh!

The lion circles back. The limb cracks and shifts some more. Josh delicately lifts up and tries to reach for the branch above him, while his friends look on in terror.

More cracking. Just as Josh secures his grip, the limb gives way, but Josh is able to cling to the new limb, while the lion waits.

Though Josh tries to pull himself up, he can't.

JOSH

I can't hold on.

DAMON

Don't let go!

Suddenly, his fingers slip from the bark, and Josh plummets earthward, his body crunching on the hard soil.

The lion coils to spring when suddenly a voice rings out.

TINKER

Rasha!

Tinker emerges out of the darkness. The lion freezes.

TINKER (CONT'D)

You know better than that.

The lion looks downwards in shame, as Tinker comes and strokes behind his ears.

TINKER (CONT'D)

He wouldn't have harmed you. He was just playing. You can come down boys.

Josh moans.

TINKER (CONT'D)

Are you hurt?

JOSH

(nods, almost in tears)
My leg hurts real bad. I can't move it.

Damon and Scott step timidly toward them.

DAMON

What do ya mean he wouldn't of hurt us? He would've eaten Josh if you hadn't come.

TINKER

(laughs)

Rasha would make you think that. His name means *gazelle*. He's as fast as one, but also as gentle. Strong, yet gentle. The way every man ought to be. Go on, you can pet him.

The two boys reach out with trembling fingers, and touch the lion's fur.

TINKER (CONT'D)

Of course, the more important question is...what are you boys doing here?

JOSH

It was me, Mr. Tinker. I led them down here.

He looks at Damon.

TINKER

Just because someone leads, does that mean you have to follow?

DAMON

No sir.

TINKER

Well, the pizza's getting cold. Why don't we head upstairs.

JOSH

I don't think I can move. My leg's gotta be busted.

TINKER

Oh your leg isn't broken.

Tinker begins to walk away.

TINKER (CONT'D)

Come along now.

Josh's face suddenly softens. Astonished, he starts to shake both his legs, and slowly, he rolls over and stands up. Damon and Scott remained fixed in amazement.

SCOTT

But Mr. Tinker, there's no door.

Tinker acts perplexed and points a few feet ahead of him. The door is there, just as it was at first. More amazement. The three boys follow after, and everyone pauses at the doorway.

DAMON

But it was gone.

TINKER

Of course it was gone.

JOSH

I don't understand.

TINKER

Early on when you do the wrong thing, it's always fun and exciting. And it's also easier to turn back around. Later on, the further in you go, the doorway back disappears. And someone else must come along and help you to find it.

Tinker steps through the doorway, but rather than find themselves in the jacuzzi room, they find themselves in a boring old concrete basement with lots of moving boxes, and an old furnace, with stairs on the other side.

The boys' minds are about to blow.

TINKER (CONT'D)

Come along now.

He heads up the stairs.

TINKER (CONT'D)

Pizza's getting cold.

They mechanically follow him.

TINKER (CONT'D)

Oh, and I see that you finished while I was gone. I appreciate the fine work you did.

JOSH

Finished?

TINKER

Well, didn't you? It looks like new.

EXT. TINKER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Both the front and side of the house are bright, shiny and free of any graffiti.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

The three boys huddle around a school lunch table. All of them poke at their food quietly.

DAMON

Any of you tell your parents?

SCOTT

Tell my parents what?

DAMON

That Lord Voldemort has moved into town.

JOSH

He's more like Dumbledore, not Voldemort.

SCOTT

And what exactly are we supposed to tell our parents? They'll never believe us, and we'll never prove it.

DAMON

I'm staying as far away from him as I can. I don't know who -- or *what* -- he is, but he's dangerous.

JOSH

He's not dangerous. I like him.

DAMON

I swear your brain is disconnected from the rest of you.

SCOTT

I don't think he has one. It's empty up there. Anything that just floats in, he goes ahead and says it or does it.

JOSH

We're still here aren't we? If he was dangerous --

DAMON
Keep your voice down.

JOSH
-- I don't think we're be eating
fishsticks right now.

Damon suddenly looks down.

DAMON
Oh no. That Angie is heading our
way. She always wants to hang out
with us. Heads down!

It's too late. ANGIE THOMPSON, 15, tomboyish with a cropped
hairstyle, but pretty, comes up to them, with a lunch tray in
hand.

ANGIE
Hey guys. Can I sit with you?

DAMON
We're just getting ready to leave.

She notices their half-filled plates.

ANGIE
You haven't finished your lunches
yet. I'll stay till you go.

She plops next to Josh.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
Hey Josh.

He grunts, though shyly.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
How was your suspension?

Josh nods.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
Well, I thought that was a raw
deal. You were just defending
yourself. Those guys are idiots.

The boys are purposefully silent.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
Scott, did you get your science
project done?

SCOTT

Still working on some of the electronics.

Damon scowls at him with a do-not-encourage-this look.

ANGIE

Yours is going to be the best one, I bet. You're the smartest kid in the class.

More silence.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Heard you scored like thirty points in the basketball game the other day, Damon.

He nods with three fishsticks poking from his mouth.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Hey, there's always popcorn leftover at the food stand right after the game. If you get over there fast, I can get you some.

They all three nod. She takes the hint.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Well, looks like you're done eating. Great to talk to you guys. If you ever need a fourth for basketball or football, let me know.

She walks away. Damon sees both Scott and Josh looking down.

DAMON

Sometimes you gotta be mean. If you don't shoo a fly away, they land on you.

SCOTT

She's not a fly.

JOSH

Our pastor preached a sermon yesterday about loving people you don't like. I don't think I did very well.

EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL LAWN - DAY

As school is dismissed, Josh scampers out the doors with dozens of other students. He pauses to adjust his book bag, and as he looks out across the lawn, he notices Tinker on a riding mower, cutting the school lawn.

Intrigued, he meanders out of the crowd and walks out to Tinker, who smiles and powers down the machine.

JOSH

Hey, Mr. Tinker. Whatcha doin' here?

TINKER

(holds out his arms)
Just got a job at the school. How do you like my new office?

JOSH

Cool.

TINKER

I guess we'll be seeing some of each other every now and then. Is that okay with you?

JOSH

Okay with me. Don't know how Damon and Scott are gonna like it. I think they're afraid of you.

TINKER

Now why's that?

JOSH

Well, ya know.
(beat)
Are you like a magician or something?

TINKER

I guess you might say that.

JOSH

Are you safe?

TINKER

Depends what you mean by that.

Josh takes a step back.

TINKER (CONT'D)

It's like my Boss once said to me.
Not my new boss. I have another
boss I work for also. He said, 'I'm
not safe, but I can be trusted.'

JOSH

I don't understand.

TINKER

Kinda like parents that way. They
do things we don't always
understand, but come to find out
later on, it's usually for the
best.

Josh scowls.

TINKER (CONT'D)

You don't believe me?

JOSH

My parents are -- Mom only cares
about my baby sister. Dad only
cares about my older brother. I
give up tryin'.

TINKER

There are lots of bad parents in
this world, Josh, I'll give you
that. But having met your dad, I
don't think he's one of them. Don't
give up on them.

(beat)

Anyway, I'd best get back to it.
Don't want to disappoint my old
boss, or my new boss. We'll see you
around.

He fires up the machine again.

JOSH

(yelling)

Who's your old boss?

But Tinker smiles broadly, kicks the mower into gear and
waves, as he takes off.

INT. PASTOR DAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dan is catatonic in front of the TV, as his wife PATTY comes
in.

DAN
Kids down?

PATTY
You should go and give 'em a kiss.

DAN
Okay.

She sits by him. He struggles to get up.

DAN (CONT'D)
If I can get up.

PATTY
Need a push?

She pushes on his back.

DAN
Oh, right there. I'll take a little
of that rhomboid action.

She digs in but half-heartedly.

DAN (CONT'D)
Come on. Put some oomph into it.

She presses harder but five seconds in, stops and pats him on
the back.

PATTY
There -- oomph.

DAN
That was more oops than oomph.

PATTY
This is the first I've sat all day.
Ain't got no oomph.

Dan starts to head out of the room.

PATTY (CONT'D)
Oh, my sister called earlier today.
She's goin' ahead with that surgery
Friday.

DAN
She still needs you to come for the
weekend?

PATTY

I know there's that concert
Saturday night. Church won't start
rumors if I'm a no-show?

DAN

As long as you take the kids.

PATTY

They'll want to see their cousins
anyway.

DAN

Fine.

He steps into the kitchen, and pauses at the sink for a
drink. He stares at his reflection in the window.

DAN (CONT'D)

(mutters)

You never have enough oomph.

He closes his eyes, holding the cup near his mouth.

INT. PASTOR DAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The doorbell rings, and Dan goes to open the door. Karen
stands there with a bubbly smile, wearing a blouse with one
too many buttons open.

DAN

(friendly)

Well hi there Karen.

KAREN

I never heard back from you on
coming over, so I was in the
neighborhood. Thought I'd pop by.
You mentioned your wife could use a
little massage.

DAN

Oh right. Well Patty's gone for the
weekend. Maybe we should make --

KAREN

Oh that's too bad. Well, how are
you doing? As long as I'm here --

DAN

No, I don't think --

KAREN
Strictly professional.

She walks in.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Just what kind of person would I be
to hit on the pastor? Here, just
sit down on the chair right here.
We'll keep the front door open.

She directs him to a nearby chair, and pushes him into it,
though he needs no convincing. At once she starts to massage
his upper back.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Still way too tight. Oh my
goodness, Dan. Breathe and relax.
Breathe in. Hold it. Now relax.
Breathe out. That's better.

She reaches into her purse.

KAREN (CONT'D)
You know I just happened to have
with me some massage oil. Why don't
you take off your shirt and --

INT. KITCHEN SINK - NIGHT

Dan opens his eyes with a start, the cup still near his
mouth. He's daydreamed it all.

He shakes his head, and empties the cup, then turns and walks
toward the bedrooms.

He fails to see (because he can't see) the large evil figure -
- a DEMON -- standing along the kitchen wall, larger than the
imp, but with the same oozing oil streaked on its arms and
face.

The demon smiles.

EXT. OUTER SPACE

A loud explosion vents from an engine of a spaceship which
flies perilously close to a massive sun.

INT. SPACE SHIP BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Josh, Damon and Scott, wearing Star Trek-style uniforms, lurch left, then right as the ship tries to stabilize from the explosion.

Josh, sitting at a control panel, looks back to Damon, who stands behind him, looking at a large viewscreen filling ominously with sunlight.

DAMON

What was that, Josh?

JOSH

We lost another engine, Captain! It can't take the heat. If we lose one more, we'll be sucked into the sun!

DAMON

Scotty, you've got to give me more power now!

Scott stands at a computer behind the captain, punching buttons feverishly.

SCOTT

(with a weak brogue)

I'm giving you everything I've got, Captain!

DAMON

Everything is not enough. Activate the Turbo Jam Boosters!

JOSH

(spins around in shock)

But Captain, they've never been tested!

Each of them shield their eyes from the brightening sun.

DAMON

We don't have a choice. Don't you see how close we are to the sun?

Damon nods bravely at Scott.

SCOTT

Activating the Turbo Jam Boosters now!

A loud screeching sound is heard, and a door-shaped hole filled with sunlight suddenly seems to pull open out of thin air beside the viewscreen.

The silhouette of a man steps into the light and his voice booms with anger.

SILHOUETTE

Josh. You need to come home now.

The light on the boys' faces washes away, along with the bridge and the space uniforms, which are replaced by blue jeans and t-shirts. The boys are in a tree house.

In the doorway stands Bill Baxter.

JOSH

Dad! You're interrupting us.

EXT. OUTER SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The spaceship flies straight into the sun and *poof!* - it blows up into a molten mushroom cloud.

EXT. TREE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

BILL

You were supposed to be home an hour ago. We had an agreement. You were going to watch your sister.

JOSH

I forgot what time it was.
(turns to his friends)
Sorry guys.

Josh and his dad climb down a ladder.

BILL

Your mom's been trying to reach you. Where's your phone?

Josh walks to a picnic table and picks up his phone from a pile of gadgets. He looks down, grimacing as he sees the number "4" over both his text and phone icons.

He reaches for his bike lying on the ground.

BILL (CONT'D)

Let's put your bike in the car. Mom and I are already late for dinner.

JOSH

Why can't Sam watch Sarah tonight?

BILL
 (loads up the bike)
 Stop already. You know your
 brother's trying to finish his
 senior project. He needs to be at
 the library.

Josh makes a face - hidden from his dad - as he slinks into
 the car.

JOSH
 (under his breath)
 Sam's so perfect.

FLASHBACK - BAXTER'S HOUSE - DAY

Josh sits around the dinner table with SAM, 18, and his dad
 and mother EMILY, who holds SARAH, 3, in her lap. Sam holds
 aloft an envelope in his hands.

BILL
 Well, go ahead and open it son.

Sam with a smile, slices open the envelope with a knife.

BILL (CONT'D)
 Drum roll!

Josh joins his parents in making a drum beat on the table.
 Sam pulls out the paper and reads from it.

SAM
 Dear Sam. On behalf of the USC
 collegiate community we wish to
 congratulate you on your acceptance
 into the University of Southern
 California!

They all break into a boisterous cheer.

BILL
 A second generation of Trojan
 Baxter's! I'm so proud of you son!

Josh's smile slowly dims as he watches his parents shower
 their accolades on Sam.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. BAXTER'S CAR - DAY

Josh and his father drive home.

BILL
We're getting tired of this
behavior of yours.

JOSH
Said I'm sorry.

BILL
Sorry's not good enough anymore.
You're old enough to start being
responsible. And on top of
everything else that's going on,
yesterday we heard from your
teacher that your grades are still
down. That's it! We're grounding
you for a week. At least. I want
you straight home from school every
day, and --

Josh starts to protest.

BILL (CONT'D)
-- you're not to go anywhere.

JOSH
Dad! No! I'll get my homework done.
I stopped with all the video games.
I went outside like you said.
You're right. It's fun.

BILL
Sorry. End of discussion.

JOSH
Whatever happened to forgiveness? I
thought we were Christians.

BILL
Oh no, don't you play the church
card on me, young man. When I
messed up with money years ago, God
let me feel a lot of pain and
that's how I learned. And that's
how you'll learn.

Josh looks sullenly out the window and vents a huge sigh.

INT. BAXTER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Josh looks sullenly out the window - from the living room -
and vents a huge sigh.

He turns away and walks down the hallway, peeking into a bedroom. Sarah sleeps soundly in her bed.

He pulls the door shut, then shuffles to the end of the hall to another bedroom. "Sam's Cave - Enter At Your Own Risk" is plastered boldly on the door.

He pushes open the door and stares inside at his brother's room. A small clip lamp over his desk is on, illuminating a computer screen and a small island of papers and books on the desk. Josh saunters innocently into the room.

He walks up to the desk and picks at some of the papers. Seeing a photo, he lifts it up. It's of Sam and his girlfriend.

FLASHBACK - SAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Josh peers secretly through a crack in the doorway at his brother, who kicks back at the desk talking to his girlfriend, stroking one of his biceps.

SAM

Hey babe...Oh nothing much...Trying to work on my project. I think I've written about as much as I can tonight.

Josh inspects his own biceps.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'd love to see ya too, but I'm pretty tired...I'll dream of you tonight though. Dream of you in that yellow dress you wore the other day.

Josh blanches.

SAM (CONT'D)

K. Sounds real good. All right. See you after math...Love you too.

Sam makes a big smooching sound, and looks back at the doorway, which is black and empty.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Josh looks away from the photo, and picks up a piece of paper - Sam's letter of acceptance from USC. He studies it.

INT. BAXTER'S HOUSE - DAY

Josh sits around the kitchen table with Sam, his parents, and Sarah in Mom's lap. Josh excitedly holds an envelope.

BILL

Well, go ahead and open it son.

Josh rips open the envelope with pre-teen fervor.

BILL (CONT'D)

Drum roll!

Everyone raps on the table, as Josh reads the letter.

JOSH

Dear Josh. On behalf of the USC collegiate community we are sorry to inform you that your application was not accepted. Your 1.97 GPA did not meet our standards for admission. You should have listened to your father the day in the tree-house.

BILL

I'm so sorry son. Better luck next time.

EMILY

(exaggerated Mom-tone)

But at least we still have our wonderful Trojan son, Sam. We love you!

Mom and Dad press against Sam like a hamburger bun, squeezing his cheeks and ruffling his hair.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

JOSH

Sam's so perfect.

As he puts the letter back down, his hand brushes the mouse on the desk which wakes the computer out of sleep-mode. On the screen pops up a Word project.

JOSH (CONT'D)

(reads)

Final Senior Project - Sam Baxter.

His eyes suddenly flash with an idea - forbidden, daring and evil. He leans over with the mouse, and peers at the screen.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Close...Recent places...There you are. Oh my. A whole folder called 'Senior Project'. That's so creative. Right click...Delete...Minimize...Recycle bin...Empty the recycle bin.

A sinister smile creeps over Josh's face.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Josh stares down smugly at Sam's computer. Just then, the doorbell rings, startling him.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Josh pulls open the front door and is surprised to see Damon.

DAMON
Heard you were babysitting tonight.

JOSH
It's all I'm good for anymore.

DAMON
I heard you were good for video games.

Josh smiles and signals for Damon to come in.

INT. FRONT OF TV - LATER

They're thick into an xbox game.

JOSH
You're so lucky man. Go anywhere you want. Whenever you want. I've always got my parents breathing down my neck.

DAMON
You think I'm lucky? Seriously? I'd love to have a dad who worried where I was at. My step-dad could care less. In fact, the less I'm around, the better.

JOSH
You mean that?

DAMON

Heck yes. That was so cool the way your dad came charging in today, 'cuz you'd screwed up, and he needed you. You're the one who's lucky.

JOSH

Sure don't feel lucky.

DAMON

Well, you're just a moron. I'd trade places with you in a heartbeat.

Josh's heart sinks, and as he loses focus, Damon finishes him off.

DAMON (CONT'D)

Gotcha. What's the matter?

JOSH

I think I did something really, really dumb.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Damon seated at Sam's desk looks intently at the computer screen with Josh behind him.

DAMON

I have no idea how to get it back. Once you empty recycle, you need someone with some super-duper computer skills.

Damon and Sam suddenly look at each other.

DAMON AND JOSH

Scott!

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - LATER

Scott sits in the captain's chair with Josh and Damon looking hopefully over his shoulder.

SCOTT

I have no idea how to get it back.

JOSH

What?

SCOTT

You'd have to send the hard drive out and they'd hook up one of those FBI gizmo machines. Are you sure he didn't save it anywhere else?

JOSH

We checked while you were coming over. He might have a flashdrive but it's not here.

DAMON

You better hope for your sake. Or you're dead meat.

SCOTT

All drains lead to the ocean.

JOSH

(irritated)

What's that supposed to mean?

SCOTT

Try and hide something, it all comes out in the open in the end. That's what my mom always says.

DAMON

Did he put it on the cloud?

Scott leans closer and clicks around with the mouse.

SCOTT

He's got Dropbox here.

More clicking. He frowns.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

It's password protected. Has he written out his passwords?

JOSH

Dunno where he's got 'em.

Scott pokes through some of the loose papers on the desk. He sees the picture of Sam with his lady.

SCOTT

Is this his girlfriend? Bet she knows.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - LATER

Now Josh is in the chair with the house phone in his hands.

DAMON

You can do this. Come on. Your
parents or your brother are going
to be home any moment.

JOSH

This is insane. I've never talked
to a girl before.

He hits the send button and waits. The muffled voice of a girl can just be heard through the phone. Josh puts on his best imitation of his brother's voice. It's pathetic.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Hi babe.

Damon and Scott fall back on the floor in hysterics. Josh glares at them.

JOSH (CONT'D)

It's Sam...I got a cold or
something...Right? I sound like
Josh don't I?

More laughter.

JOSH (CONT'D)

(in his own voice)

So I was like...

(resumes fake voice)

So I was like working on my paper
and we had a power outage. And the
computer just swallowed up the
file...Swear to God.

SCOTT

(whispers)

All drains lead to the ocean.

Josh's eyes bug out, screaming at Damon to stop.

JOSH

And I'm like brain dead...

JOSH (CONT'D)

I totally forgot my Dropbox
password.

The voice gets decidedly heated all of a sudden.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Right. It's our anniversary.

He pauses, hating to ask.

JOSH (CONT'D)
When's that again?

More fuming from the phone. Josh holds the phone away from his ear.

JOSH (CONT'D)
I told you. Brain dead. Tomorrow
I'll make it up to you. Biggest ice
cream sundae ever. Just help me out
here.

He scribbles something down.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Thanks. You're the best. I'll --

She hangs up on him. Josh hands the paper to Scott.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Here.

They swap positions.

JOSH (CONT'D)
She hung up on me. I don't
understand girls.

DAMON
Nobody does.

Scott types.

SCOTT
102517. Enter. I'm in. Scanning
files.
(beat)
No 'Senior Project' anywhere.

JOSH
What?!

SCOTT
Lemme search for it.

Damon snatches a look out the window. A car's headlights turn into the driveway.

DAMON
Somebody's home! Car turning into
the driveway!

SCOTT
Nothing. If he's saved it, it's not
here. Sorry man.

Josh looks forlorn and desperate.

DAMON
Car is stopping! Scotty, we need
that file in two minutes or we're
all dead men!

SCOTT
(with his brogue)
Got nothing, Captain.

DAMON
Lights off! Scotty, activate the
Turbo Jam Boosters.

JOSH
This isn't funny guys.

SCOTT
Captain, they haven't been tested!

DAMON
We have no choice! Door opening.
Two doors opening! Parents!

JOSH
Wait!

Inspired by an idea, Josh rushes out of the room. The other
boys watch him, then look at each other.

SCOTT
I think it's working, Captain!

Josh flies downstairs and rummages through some table litter
by the house phone. Suddenly, he finds what he's looking for -
Tinker's Suessian business card.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Josh dashes in.

JOSH
Quick. Hand me the phone.

Scott passes it to him.

SCOTT
Who ya calling?

DAMON
Better make it fast. They're
pulling groceries outta the trunk.

While Josh dials, he tosses Scott the card.

SCOTT
Mr. Tinker?

Damon reacts with a shiver.

DAMON
Are you nuts?

Josh screams out with hopeful desperation as Tinker picks up.

JOSH
Mr. Tinker, Mr. Tinker. It's me
Josh Baxter...Say, I did something
really, really stupid, and I'm
wondering, well, I could really use
some help right now...I was jealous
of my brother and I accidentally --
Well, it wasn't accidental, I did
it on purpose, but I, I deleted
like his entire senior project that
he's been working on for months,
and if I can't get it back, then --
well, I was hoping, you know how
you said you were sort of a
magician?

DAMON
Coming up the walkway!

JOSH
I'm praying to God that there is
some sort of thing you could do to
help me out, because I don't wanna
die, and I don't want my brother to
get hurt. 'Cuz even though I'm
jealous of him, I really do love
him, and this isn't going to be
good. Please Mr. Tinker, I'll do
anything. Is there anything at all
you could do to help?

DAMON
At the door!

Scott's eyes bug out as the entire computer screen temporarily flashes with light. What replaces it, and the Dropbox screen, is the original Word document of Sam's senior project.

SCOTT
 (reading)
 Final Senior Project - Sam Baxter.

All three boys step toward the computer and look in amazement at the screen.

JOSH
 (quietly, into the phone)
 What's that again, Mr. Tinker? You say, you're not very good with computers. Hardly know how to turn one on. That's too bad, Mr. Tinker. I'll have to show you sometime. Yes, you too, Mr. Tinker. Good night.

The boys look awe-struck at each other.

INT. JOSH'S BEDROOM - LATER

Bill Baxter knocks, then opens Josh's door and finds him "studying" with Scott and Damon.

JOSH
 Oh, hi dad.

BILL
 Josh. Boys.

JOSH
 Hope you don't mind them comin' over. Got a science test tomorrow. And since I'm grounded --

BILL
 No. But it's probably getting late. Everything go all right tonight with Sarah?

JOSH
 Yeah. She went right to sleep.

BILL
 Okay. Well, we brought some ice cream home from the store. Why don't you boys wrap up, and we'll do some sundaes before you go.

DAMON
Sounds great, Mr. Baxter.

SCOTT
Appreciate it, Mr. Baxter.

He starts to leave.

JOSH
Hey Dad.

He father returns to the doorway.

BILL
Yeah.

JOSH
Just wanted to thank you for today.

BILL
What do you mean?

JOSH
For like, grounding me. I didn't
know you cared.

A perplexed smile comes across his father's face.

BILL
Okay.

JOSH
Okay. Well love you. We'll be down
in a minute.

Bill leaves.

DAMON
(elbows Josh)
Told you you're lucky.

EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL LAWN - DAY

Josh walks out of school with Damon, Scott and several other friends. He sees Tinker on his mower out in the school lawn. He stops and waves the others on, then walks out to Tinker, who powers down the mower.

TINKER
Well, hello there Josh.

JOSH
Mr. Tinker.

Sheepishly, he stumbles about.

JOSH (CONT'D)
I...a...well, wanted to thank you
for, you know, last night.

TINKER
What do you mean?

JOSH
Oh come on, Mr. Tinker. That had to
be you.

TINKER
Oh, the computer. Everything work
out okay with your brother?

Josh nods.

TINKER (CONT'D)
Did you tell him?

Now he shakes his head just as fast the other way.

JOSH
Should I?

TINKER
Confession is never a bad thing.
Maybe you can begin by telling him
with the way you treat him. Actions
weigh more than words anyway.
(beat)
And your father?

JOSH
You were right. Just because he's
tough on me doesn't mean he doesn't
care.

TINKER
I wouldn't know by experience, but
it must be very hard work to be a
father.

JOSH
Yeah.

TINKER
To have to decide each time your
child breaks your heart, do you let
it go, and hope they learn, or do
you get tough and make them face
the music.

(MORE)

TINKER (CONT'D)

Seems to me, sometimes sparing your child pain is the unloving thing to do.

JOSH

I guess I can see that now.

TINKER

I can re-delete your brother's paper, if you want to feel more loved.

JOSH

That's okay. I'm good. But thanks.
(beat)
Mr. Tinker, are you alone? 'Cuz --

TINKER

Because what?

JOSH

We didn't see any pictures in your house. Damon, Scott and me. Just all that Dr. Suess stuff.

TINKER

I come from a large family, actually. But that's nice of you to ask.

JOSH

Well, I hope you didn't mind. But I mentioned it to my parents. And they both want you to come over for dinner.

TINKER

Why Josh. That would be lovely. You tell your parents thanks. I'd be delighted to come.

JOSH

What's with the Dr. Suess stuff?

TINKER

Oh, he was a good friend of mine. Back in the day.

JOSH

You knew Dr. Suess?

TINKER

I gave him some story ideas.
(beat)

(MORE)

TINKER (CONT'D)

A person's a person no matter how small.

JOSH

Wow. That's cool.

Josh smiles and runs off.

CONTINUOUS

Allena, watching this from beneath a nearby tree, walks over to Tinker.

TINKER

Allena. Hello!

ALLENA

How's it going with young Josh?

TINKER

He's actually a very fine young man. So far, this assignment has been easy. Maybe too easy. That's what worries me.

ALLENA

Not to be the bearer of bad news. We asked Lawrence to keep an eye on Pastor Dan. He brought a troubling report this morning.

TINKER

I hate it when I'm right.

ALLENA

The imp you chased off has been replaced -- by two demons. Lawrence couldn't get close to the pastor.

TINKER

Then it's as I feared, even worse. The pastor's not just being harassed. They're coming after him. They see a vulnerability.

ALLENA

Obviously he's not praying.

TINKER

Don't be harsh on him, Allena. It's hard to pray when your spirit's depleted. We need to get others to pray for him. I'll work on that.

(MORE)

TINKER (CONT'D)

Send Lawrence back with reinforcements. This might be a good assignment for Benjamin. And Gloria should be waiting in the wings. We need to find out what those demons are up to. I have a feeling it will have something to do with his secretary.

ALLENA

I've never observed any of that weakness in him.

TINKER

You forget your David. *That* weakness is in most every man. And if our pastor would fall in that way, the wreckage would be immense. Certainly the faith of young Joshua would be devastated.

ALLENA

Of course, you could just do some razzle-dazzle, and the problem would all go away.

TINKER

(smirks)
You better be joking, young lady.

ALLENA

Only partially.
(beat)
At the least, I trust that you'll take over the leadership of the Council.

TINKER

You've never seen battle up close, have you?

ALLENA

I'm ashamed to say, no.

TINKER

There's no shame in that. We don't choose the time and place in which we live.

ALLENA

Oh but there is, my lord. I'm not here in Bedford Springs by accident.

(MORE)

ALLENA (CONT'D)

I've spent my life accepting assignments that would keep me as far away from danger as possible. I've worked my way up by looking good, not by doing good.

TINKER

Your name means *light*. It seems as if light is coming into your soul as we speak.

ALLENA

The thought of Melchorn coming terrifies me.

TINKER

It should.

Tinker loses himself in a memory.

EXT. NORMANDY CROSSING - DAY

Tinker is clad as an Allied soldier in a landing boat with EIGHT OTHER SOLDIERS. He looks in the distance beyond the beaches and above the cliffs.

Above the din of battle, above the outbursts of light from mortar shells and bullets, a far darker, bigger clash of light takes place, imbedded with the green tint of the spirit dimension, reaching all the way to the heavens.

END VISION

Tinker looks compassionately at Allena.

TINKER

The courage and strength to face him will grow in you as you overcome lesser threats. Which is why I'll remain only an adviser. And you'll remain the leader of the Council.

ALLENA

I was afraid you'd say that.

TINKER

Besides. My hands are full. I've gotta keep Master Josh out of harm's way.

EXT. LAWN IN FRONT OF A HOUSE - DAY

A fist smashes into Josh's face, knocking him to the ground.
A foot comes in and kicks him in the stomach.

THREE HIGH SCHOOL PUNKS converge on Josh, yelling and punching.

PUNK #1
Remember me, punk? Thanks for
getting me suspended!

JOSH
(screaming)
Get off! Stop!

They continue pummelling him.

A rock suddenly flies in and careens off the first punk's head. Then a second hits the back of a second teen.

PUNK #1
Hey stop that!

He turns and sees Angie, standing by the road. She hurls a third rock.

ANGIE
Get off him you cowards.

The boy charges up to her.

PUNK #1
What are you doing? Leave us alone
bitch. Or is that butch?

He raises a fist but stops. She stands there with her arms down.

ANGIE
Takes a lot of courage to gang up
on a junior higher. And a girl.

PUNK #2
I thought you wanted to be a guy.

PUNK #1
Put up your fists and I'll teach
you to fight like one.

Josh kicks the third boy off once he gets the chance.

JOSH
Jerks. Buzz off.

They run off.

JOSH (CONT'D)
I'm glad you got suspended. You started it!

PUNK #1
(points back threatening)
We're not done with you, punk.

JOSH
Asshole!

PUNK #1
Watch your back! 'Cuz we'll be back.

He stands up. There's a gap of silence between them.

ANGIE
Well aren't you gonna thank me?

JOSH
Thank you?

ANGIE
For coming over and saving your hinie?

JOSH
I woulda beat 'em off. But thanks.

ANGIE
That's my house.

She points across the road.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
I saw 'em running you down from behind. You're bleeding. Wanna wash your face off?

JOSH
Naw. I'm heading over to Scott's house. I'll do it there.

ANGIE
Can I come?

JOSH
Umm -- we're just hanging out. Him, Damon and me. Scott's got a treehouse.

ANGIE
If you don't mind.

JOSH
Umm, sure. But --

ANGIE
What?

JOSH
Could we not tell them --

ANGIE
How I saved you?

JOSH
You didn't save me. But yeah. That.

They start walking.

ANGIE
Well, then I won't save you next
time.

JOSH
You didn't save me this time.

EXT. SCOTT'S TREEHOUSE - DAY

Josh, Scott and Damon sit on the floor on one side of the treehouse while Angie sits on an adjacent wall.

The treehouse is not cheaply done. It's spacious and sturdy with a trap door that leads out to a larger limb, from which dangles a tire swing.

The four hold an awkward silence.

ANGIE
So...what do you guys do when
you're up here?

DAMON
(miffed)
We talk about girls.

ANGIE
Girls are strange. I'd rather hang
out with guys. The stuff they do is
more fun. Like football. I'm really
good at football.

SCOTT

We just kinda mess around. Make stuff up.

ANGIE

Like what?

SCOTT

Like, you know, Star Trek.

DAMON

(scowls)

We don't *play* Star Trek.

SCOTT

Well what do you call it?

ANGIE

That's cool. I always pictured you guys being like the Three Musketeers, 'cuz you're always hanging out together.

JOSH

Why would you picture us wearing mouse hats and junk?

ANGIE

No! The musketeers. You never saw any of the movies?

They're clueless.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

I'm reading the book right now. It's amazing.

Damon continues to scowl.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

The three musketeers are three great sword fighters who protect the French king from the plotting of the evil Cardinal Richelieu. And then a young, courageous sword fighter named D'artagnan joins them. And their motto is *All for one, and one for all!*

JOSH

That's dumb. What's that mean?

SCOTT

It means whatever happens to one of 'em happens to all of 'em.

ANGIE

If you pick on one of them, you're picking on all of them.

They all look at Josh and his banged up face.

DAMON

But notice. It's not called the *four musketeers!*

ANGIE

'Cuz becoming a musketeer is hard work. Not just anyone can join. You have to prove your valor first. D'artagnan has to prove himself worthy by doing something courageous to *save his friends.*

She says the last three words slowly, and looks at Josh who gives her the evil eye.

She spies out a football, then crawls over to get it.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Anybody wanna play football? You can't do two on two without me.

She flies out the door. Damon slams Josh in the arm.

DAMON

Why did you bring her? *Fart-anion.*

JOSH

She just saw me while I was walking here, and tagged along.

DAMON

You have her on your team. And only this time.

MONTAGE - THE FOUR KIDS PLAYING FOOTBALL

-- Josh sends Angie out for a pass, with Damon defending her. He bites as she feints right, then she slashes left for an easy touchdown pass.

-- Angie chases down Scott as he runs, and knocks the ball loose, then recovers it. Damon chews Scott out.

-- Angie, defending Damon, makes a nifty interception, and jukes Scott on the runback for a touchdown.

-- Josh high fives Angie in the endzone.

EXT. SCOTT'S YARD - DAY

Angie heads for home.

ANGIE

Thanks guys. That was a lot of fun.

She disappears around the house while the three boys look on dumbfounded.

SCOTT

What just happened?

DAMON

I hate that chick.

JOSH

(eyes sparkling)
I'm in love.

INT. BILL AND EMILY BAXTER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Emily yells down a hallway.

EMILY

Josh. Supper's ready.

Josh comes out into the dining room, where Tinker is seated at the table with Bill and Sarah. Josh takes the chair next to Tinker but is shielding his bruised face.

TINKER

Hello Josh.

Josh grunts. Suspecting something, Tinker pushes away Josh's fingers from his face, unveiling the welt.

TINKER (CONT'D)

What's this?

JOSH

I dropped the math book on my head
while I was studying in bed.

TINKER

Oh I see. Homework is dangerous.

BILL

He tried that one on me yesterday.

Emily puts a large casserole dish on the table.

EMILY

Shepherds pie tonight.

TINKER

Lovely.

EMILY

(to Bill)

Honey, would you pray?

Hands get folded and Sarah looks as cute as a bug as she opens and closes her eyes, and looks around.

BILL

Father in heaven, thank you for the gift of this day. I thank you for my family, for good friends like Mr. Tinker, for your church, for your love, and of course for this food. Use it to strengthen us in our service to you. Amen.

They begin to pass plates to Emily who dishes out the food.

TINKER

(to Josh)

So your face came into contact with some object or another. It wouldn't by chance be a --

EMILY

-- fist. He was fighting again.

JOSH

I didn't start it. I haven't started any of these fights. And I didn't even have a chance to throw a punch. Three of them just came out of nowhere.

BILL

I still wanna know who they are. This needs to be reported.

JOSH

They're high schoolers. I don't even know their names.

EMILY
Isn't this bullying, Bill?

BILL
Yes, this is bullying.

JOSH
But it'll just get worse if you do something about it, so just let it go.

EMILY
Let it go? Mr. Tinker --

TINKER
Jonathan.

EMILY
Jonathan. He shouldn't just let this go, should he? What do you think?

TINKER
Well, there's a time and place for fighting back. But if there's three of them and one of you, those don't sound like the fairest odds. So you might wanna listen to your parents on this one. Certainly a lot of prayer, and asking for wisdom, wouldn't be the worst idea either.

EMILY
Here, here.

Emily tends to Sarah who's playing with her food.

TINKER
Speaking of prayer, another person I think needs a lot of prayer these days is your Pastor Dan. He's a real fine man.

BILL
Yes he is.

TINKER
I just get a sense that he's under a whole lot of pressure these days.

EMILY
Oh really?

Tinker grunts and nods as he takes a bite.

EMILY (CONT'D)

He's such a good man. We're lucky to have him. Oh that reminds me Josh. Pastor Dan says he has a football to give you if you want it. Leftover from a garage sale.

JOSH

That'd be awesome.

EMILY

Said just come by anytime.

TINKER

Pastors carry a lot of cares in their heart that most don't even know about. So I hope you'll take some time to pray for him every day.

BILL

That's a good reminder. I'll do that.

(to Emily)

Shall we do that hon?

EMILY

I'm in.

SARAH

I wanna pray too!

EMILY

Sarah and I are in.

SARAH

Dear Gawd. Please help --

She's pauses with the childlike expectation that the others pay attention and bow their heads. They smile, and comply.

SARAH (CONT'D)

-- Pease help Pastor Dan. I love him so much. Amen.

They laugh.

BILL

Out of the mouth of babes.

INT. PASTOR DAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Karen sits at her desk typing at the computer when the phone rings. She picks up.

KAREN

Bedford Springs Community
Fellowship. This is Karen.

(beat)

Oh hi Patty. No, he's out at a
lunch with some other pastors.
That's probably why he's not
picking up. Can I give him a
message?

(beat)

Remind him to get the oil change.
'Cuz you're away this weekend,
driving up to San Francisco. Got
that. I'll be sure and tell him.
Thanks. You too.

She hangs up.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Well isn't that interesting. Pastor
Dan is all by his lonesome this
weekend.

She rolls it over in her mind, as she resumes her typing.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Interesting.

EXT. GARDEN OF THE COUNCIL - DAY

Tinker with the other nine angels sit in a circle. Lawrence and Benjamin are excited as they tell a story.

BENJAMIN

Here the demon was chasing me out
of the church, when suddenly
Lawrence came up behind him and
POW! It was amazing! He never saw
it coming.

TINKER

I thought there were two demons.

They point toward Gloria.

GLORIA

(proudly)

I kept it occupied.

ALLENA

Nice job everyone. So what did we find out?

LAWRENCE

The pastor will be alone this weekend. And the secretary knows it.

BENJAMIN

And she's in their grip, all right. She cried all over the pastor's shoulder this afternoon. And he just lapped it up.

GLORIA

That poor girl's so wounded in her soul, she's an easy pawn for evil.

TAMARA

So we just have to keep them apart.

Nigel, 50 speaks.

NIGEL

That might be easier said than done. Stephen and I --

He points to Stephen, 30s, next to him.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

-- were watching the perimeter of the town. There's more activity. We saw at least a dozen imps and demons coming in.

STEPHEN

It's like a family reunion.

TAMARA

Why is this happening all of a sudden?

TINKER

Oh, it's not all of a sudden. The Enemy plays the long game. The pastor's let himself drift. She's let herself burn. I've seen this movie a thousand times.

LAWRENCE

It might be something else.

ALLENA

What?

LAWRENCE

What if Melchorn knows you're here?
And this is like, you know, the
start of the attack.

This draws a collective gasp from the group.

TINKER

Trust me, when Melchorn comes,
you'll know it. But it could be his
spies poking around. To see if he
can draw me out, so I blow my
cover.

Audrey, 40s, speaks.

AUDREY

I don't understand.

ALLENA

The Prince could clear the town of
every demon and imp with a wave of
his finger.

AUDREY

Then why don't you?

STEPHEN

Then Melchorn will know for sure
it's him.

TINKER

So we have to do this together.

NIGEL

What's the plan?

Tinker looks squarely at Allena.

ALLENA

Umm, I think Friday night is when
they attack.

BENJAMIN

Because --

ALLENA

Saturday there's a church event.
And on Saturday, the pastor is so
focused on getting ready for
Sunday, that he's virtually
untouchable.

Catherine, 40s speaks.

CATHERINE

So we need to protect him during
the worst of the attack. It'd be
nice to give him a way out.

ALLENA

Provide some sort of diversion.

TINKER

Josh will be at his friend's
basketball game Friday night. I
think I can arrange for him and his
friends to swing by Pastor Dan's
house after the game. But the boys
will need a fighter escort.

BENJAMIN

Then let's give 'em one!

ALLENA

And the rest of us keep the pastor
safe until Josh and his friends
arrive.

EXT. PASTOR DAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Patty and their TWO CHILDREN, 8 and 10, are in the car. Dan
leans in and gives Patty a kiss.

DAN

Drive safe. Give me a call when
you're there.

PATTY

Will do. Love you.

DAN

Love you too. Kids --

He makes the "I'm watching you" gesture.

DAN (CONT'D)

-- behave.

They copy the gesture, then he blows them a kiss. They pull out of the driveway and head out.

Dan walks back inside the house.

The green tint of the spirit dimension appears, and six hulking dark figures approach the house, encircling it from one side to the other.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - DAY

Josh and Scott walk out of the gym at halftime with a stream of other people. They walk to a food booth where Angie is working. There's one customer ahead of them.

SCOTT

Now don't ask her out. Don't ask her over. Just ask for food.

They step up.

ANGIE

Hey guys. How's the game?

JOSH

Damon's shooting bricks. We're losing big.

ANGIE

Oh dear. What can I get you?

JOSH

M and Ms for me.

SCOTT

Popcorn.

ANGIE

(as she grabs the food)
Whatcha guys doin' after the game?

SCOTT

I'm doin' homework.

JOSH

Yeah. Me too. Homework.

ANGIE

Friday night homework. Sounds like fun. Can I do homework with you?

JOSH

Well, it's --

ANGIE

I get to bring home all the
leftover popcorn. Just sayin'.

Josh and Scott look at each other.

JOSH

Homework and popcorn sorta works.

SCOTT

It helps you think.

JOSH

Sure.

ANGIE

I have to clean everything up
afterwards. But swing by. I'll give
you the popcorn. Then catch up with
you.

They pay and walk back to the gym.

SCOTT

Damon's not gonna be happy.

JOSH

He can't say no to free popcorn.
All for one and one for all. Right
Fart-anion?

SCOTT

I'm not Fart-anion. You're Fart-
anion.

INT. PASTOR DAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Dan sits on his back deck as the sun begins to set, drinking
a cup of coffee. His phone is in his hand. He's scrolling
through phone numbers. Karen's name and number is on the
screen.

Seated around him on chairs are three demons, doing all the
talking.

DEMON #1

You know you deserve this. Every
good man deserves a fling now and
then.

DEMON #2

Your wife takes you for granted. You wait for the weekend 'cuz you know that's usually your time for getting close, and what does she do? She takes off. Leaves you high and dry.

DEMON #3

Just have the secretary over for dessert and coffee. Ask her how she's doing. You're just being a good pastor, following up on a hurting soul. Invite her over. No one's watching.

A voice calls out from the side of the house.

ALLENA (O.S.)

And tell me Pastor, what scenario can you come up with where any of this ends well?

Allena appears in the back yard. A fourth demon stalks her but she keeps it at bay with an uplifted hand which holds a shield of light. With her other hand she points to Dan.

ALLENA (CONT'D)

Come to your senses, Pastor!

INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - DAY

Dan stands before his church, looking broken and ashamed. Many in the congregation are weeping. Anger clouds other faces.

DAN

I have broken the trust you placed in me. I have broken the covenant between me and my wife. And broken the heart of the Savior who died for me. There are no words I can say to change any of this. Or excuse any of this. If I could, I would, but it's not possible now. I am so sorry to have brought you to this awful place. I'm sorry it had to come to this.

He struggles to know how to finish, then steps down from the platform and disappears out a side door.

EXT. PASTOR DAN'S HOUSE - DAY

The three demons on the deck rise up.

DEMON #1

Stop her!

One of the demons waves his hand at Dan, and transports him to another flight of imagination.

EXT. GORGEOUS POOL - DAY

Dan suns himself beneath a crystal blue sky. Karen's voice calls out above him.

KAREN (O.S.)

Hey Sleepy Head. Got you a drink.

He opens his eyes and sees Karen in a slim bikini, looking amazing. She hands him a tropical-style drink.

DAN

Thanks. Have I told how incredible you look?

KAREN

Just about every hour on the hour. But don't stop for me.

EXT. PASTOR DAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Benjamin and Lawrence walk around the other side of the house.

LAWRENCE

You better stop us first.

They motion at Dan as two demons from the back deck move toward them.

INT. TINY APARTMENT - DAY

Dan sits alone in a dark, miserable room, with the shades drawn. His hair is disheveled, and his face unshaved.

He looks down at a Christmas card in his hand. It's a picture of Patty with another man, and two college-aged girls. The card reads, "Merry Christmas Daddy. Love Jessica and Samantha."

He drops the card to the floor and sobs.

EXT. PASTOR DAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Dan's phone chimes. He looks down. It's a text from Karen.

ON DAN'S PHONE

"Hi Dan. Thanks for listening yesterday. I'll be over on that side of town in a bit. Mind if I stop by quickly? I have something to give you."

Dan sighs, then smiles, then prepares to text back.

Allena is at a standoff with a larger demon, both with swords drawn, circling each other. Two demons drag Lawrence away from the house. A third has wrestled Benjamin to the ground, and is pulling him away. He yells out.

BENJAMIN

Go for a run, Pastor! Go for a run before the sun sets! You need some exercise!

As Dan looks down at his phone, he tugs at a small layer of fat on his belly and frowns.

DAN

I think it's time for a quick run.

Benjamin lifts his hands triumphantly as he's being accosted by the demon.

BENJAMIN

Yes!

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Dan jogs along. A few feet behind, Stephen runs as well, shadowing him. Twenty feet behind Stephen, a blob of a demon huffs and puffs trying to keep up, soiling the pavement with its goeey sweat.

STEPHEN

Give it up. You're pitiful.

Looks up toward Dan.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

Hey Dan. Put on some worship music.

As he runs, Dan puts in his ear buds, reaches down to his arm and pulls up a song to play. The demon stops out of breath, its arms on its hands and knees. Stephen laughs and runs after.

EXT. DAN'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

Dan finishes his run and walks up his driveway. But there are now more than TWENTY DEMONS positioned around the house. Stephen runs up, but one of the demons shakes its head at him, and he must stop.

Dan, clueless to it all, walks inside his house.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL - NIGHT

Tinker waits on a bench outside the school with Nigel and Catherine. Nigel points out Josh, Scott and Damon as they leave the building, with three large bags of popcorn in hand.

Tinker's phone rings. He puts it on speaker.

INTERCUT - TINKER/ALLENA

TINKER

Allena, how are things?

ALLENA

We've lost the house.

TINKER

Lost the house?

ALLENA

We were overrun. There must be two dozen of them here. The place is crawling with imps and demons.

CATHERINE

Gloria just called and said the same thing. Imps everywhere. The secretary drove off. Probably coming your way.

ALLENA

Sir, I love Jonathan Tinker, but I think we need Prince Catharnoch right now. I know you're trying to lay low but we're going to lose the pastor. They're bringing everything they have against him.

Tinker pulls back his jacket an inch or two, revealing the brightest light, just waiting to burst forth. He covers it back up.

TINKER

No. I can't. Melchorn will know for sure then. Call all the others back to you. The boys are on their way. Hang on as best you can. We'll be there soon.

He ends the call.

NIGEL

How do you know the boys will go to his house?

TINKER

I reminded Josh of something this afternoon. Not even Melchorn could dislodge a boy from his football. But a pod of imps on the other hand could present a problem.

He points Nigel and Catherine toward the three kids.

TINKER (CONT'D)

Go with them. I'll catch up with you. Get them to the house!

He climbs into his car, parked on the roadside.

CATHERINE

Where are you going?

TINKER

We need help.

CATHERINE

What kind of help?

TINKER

Something that eats imps for dinner.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

The three boys walk along after the game.

DAMON

Look. Just because she gives us a ton of popcorn doesn't mean she's in. She can be a part of one movie night. That's it.

JOSH

I think you're scared of her.

DAMON

Why would I be scared of her?

SCOTT

'Cuz she schooled you in football.

DAMON

That's the dumbest thing I ever heard. I wasn't gonna play hard with a girl. I mighta hurt her.

SCOTT

Or touched something.

JOSH

Hey that reminds me. Pastor Dan said he had a football to give me. His house is like a block over. Mind if we pop over there?

SCOTT

For a free football? Come on.

Suddenly, three high school boys step out of the darkness and block their way. It's the three from before.

PUNK #1

What's the hurry? Remember me? I see you brought friends. So did I.

Two more step in behind them.

EXT. PASTOR DAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Karen pulls her car into the driveway and shuts off the lights. She calmly looks into the rear view mirror and plays a bit with her hair -- failing to see the two imps sitting in the back seat.

She tugs on her blouse then gets out of the car.

CONTINUOUS

Dan pulls open the front door and sees Karen standing there.

DAN

Karen. Hi.

KAREN

Hey Dan. I whipped up some coffee cake for you and Patty. Just thinking of you with all you're going through.

DAN

Oh thanks. Actually, Patty's gone for the weekend.

KAREN

Oh, is she?

DAN

It looks good. I'll try and save some for her. It's still warm.

KAREN

You should try a piece now. Gotta get it while it's hot.

DAN

Actually, I just got back from a run.

KAREN

Oh we can sit on the step.

DAN

Umm, sure. I'll go get a couple of spoons so we can enjoy a few bites.

KAREN

Would it be okay if I used your bathroom?

DAN

(hesitates)

Sure.

They walk in the house. He points her down the hallway, and heads for the kitchen.

CONTINUOUS

Catherine and Nigel run closer and see the boys surrounded.

CATHERINE

Oh no.

Suddenly out of the darkness appears a mob of EIGHT IMPS who block their way.

IMP

Where are you going?

NIGEL

Back off.

Nigel tries to push through but is stopped.

IMP

No one gets to the pastor's house tonight.

Nigel moves for his sword.

IMP (CONT'D)

Put it away. You know you're outnumbered.

CONTINUOUS

JOSH

Look. You had your fun. It's over. What do you need to prove? That a high schooler can beat up a junior higher?

SCOTT

Bet Dad's real proud of you for that.

DAMON

(moves forward)

How 'bout me and you go at it?

Damon -- bigger than his friends but still shorter than the punk -- shoves his hands in the punk's chest.

PUNK #1

Bring it on. You ready?

He shoves Damon backwards. Damon eyes his friends and whispers.

DAMON

All for one?

He flies back at the punk, along with Scott and Josh, who scream out and the melee begins.

CONTINUOUS

Nigel and Catherine hoist high their swords and at once start swinging at the imps, who raise their weapons. As their swords clash, sparks fly off into the air.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Dan's in the kitchen fetching silverware, trying to scoot back out. But Karen comes out of the bathroom and plops down on a stool by the center island.

KAREN

I've never worked for a church before. I never would have guessed how much is on your plate. It never stops does it?

DAN

It's a different sort of job, that's for sure.

He accepts the piece of cake she hands him.

KAREN

I've only been at this a few months, but I don't think the people appreciate half of what you do.

DAN

I'm not in it for the accolades. As long as I make God smile, that's what counts.

(beat)

And my family.

KAREN

You even said your wife takes you for granted most of the time.

DAN

I shouldn't have said that.

KAREN

A man like you who gives and gives -

She suddenly reaches out and touches the top of his hand, and keeps it there.

KAREN (CONT'D)
-- deserves more than that.

EXT. OUTSIDE PASTOR DAN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Allena, Lawrence, Benjamin and Stephen spy out the house from a field across the street. Dan's front yard is covered with imps and demons.

STEPHEN
We can't wait. They've been in the house too long.

BENJAMIN
There's too few of us.

STEPHEN
It's not about winning! It's about doing the right thing. I'd rather do the right thing and lose, than go down without a fight.

LAWRENCE
Maybe our assignment is just to get the pastor to hang on a bit longer.

Allena wrestles with her fears, but then shakes them off.

ALLENA
Then let's help him hang on. Do we spread out or go straight in?

STEPHEN
Straight up the gut, I say. Maybe we can even get into the house.

ALLENA
Let's do it.

They lift up their swords, shout out, and charge across the road. The demons and imps throw up a line but the four make a wedge of light and plow right through it, toward the house.

INT. BILL AND EMILY BAXTER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Bill comes into the living room with a cup of tea which he hands to Emily who is on the couch.

BILL

It's the weirdest thing, but before we watch the movie, I just had the thought that we do what Mr. Tinker asked. And pray for Pastor Dan.

EMILY

Sure. You asking *me* to pray? This might be a first.

BILL

Stop.

He sits by her and takes her hand.

EXT. TINKER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tinker squeals into his driveway, jumps out of his car and flies into his house from the back patio.

TINKER

RASHA! Here boy!

A growl is heard coming up the stairs.

TINKER (CONT'D)

Imps, Rasha. Imps! Hunt for imps.
Fly as fast as you can!

The silhouette of a lion charges out of the basement through the back door with a ferocious roar.

Tinker smiles.

CONTINUOUS

The boys punch, claw, and shove back at the punks as best they can.

Nigel and Catherine are surrounded by imps, though they fight back furiously.

Josh is on his knees with two of the punks kicking and punching at him. The two boys in the rear are more or less watching.

Suddenly, there's a loud cry and Angie runs and jumps straight upon one of the boys in the rear. She pulls him out of the way and then kicks the other boy directly in the groin. He doubles over.

She then tackles the first punk who is leaning over Josh and begins hitting his face and tearing at his hair.

Simultaneous with her attack, Gloria, Tamara and Audrey appear and begin to swing their swords around Nigel and Catherine, clearing space for them to catch their breath.

Angie's attack has cleared space around the three boys.

JOSH

Run to Pastor Dan's house!

The three friends with Angie bolt and run up a sidestreet as the five punks follow after them.

The five angels break free and run after, with the pod of imps chasing them.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

KAREN

I've always been a believer in taking advantage of opportunities when they come your way. I think we were meant to meet each other, don't you?

Dan looks down trembling. His imagination takes over.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dan suddenly rushes over to her and they embrace and kiss.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dan shrugs off the thought. But he's buckling.

KAREN

I've discovered that spontaneous moments like this can be so beautiful. Even if they only happen once. It'll be a memory we'll carry forever.

CONTINUOUS

Allena, Stephen, Benjamin and Lawrence fight and scream their way to the front door, and with one concentrated push, Allena squeezes through into the house.

She sees Karen leaning close to Dan. Allena raises her hand toward them.

CONTINUOUS

Dan still looks down but is focused on Karen's cleavage. He looks up and screams.

Sitting before him is the ugliest hag from the scariest stories he ever heard growing up. He recoils and spins away.

KAREN

Dan, what's wrong?

DAN

(looking away)

Get out! Get out now!

Suddenly, they hear the a jumble of voices, and Josh, Damon, Scott and Angie all fly in to his house.

JOSH

Pastor Dan! Pastor Dan! We need your help! We're being chased!

Dan looks around bewildered, but concern and authority quickly wash back into his face. He waves off Karen, who picks up her things and leaves.

CONTINUOUS

The other five angels arrive on the scene and at once, a massive battle lights up the front yard.

Out of nowhere, the sound of a roaring lion rings out over the neighborhood, and Rasha jumps into the mix, with fury and vengeance. Imps and demons begin running away in all directions.

EXT. OUTSIDE PASTOR DAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tinker drives slowly up to the house and parks on the roadside.

All the demonic powers have fled. The nine angels are clustered together on the front lawn, all sitting down or leaning back, exhausted but exhilarated.

Rasha sprawls out among them.

Tinker steps out and leans over the car. He waves at Allena, and laughs.

TAG #1

Tinker is on his riding mower when he sees Josh, Damon and Scott walk by. He pulls up and shuts the mower down.

All three boys have black eyes and bruises.

TINKER
You look like a bad punk band.

Angie runs up from behind.

ANGIE
Hey guys. Wait for me.

She pulls up beside them and Tinker shakes his head. She also has a black eye.

TINKER
And this must be the lead singer.

JOSH
All of us swear that we heard a lion that night.

TINKER
A lion in Bedford Springs -- that would be illegal.

SCOTT
Tell Rasha thanks for us.

TINKER
So is Angie part of the group?

DAMON
(smiles)
Yeah. She's our D'Artagnan.

Tinker looks confused.

JOSH
Three musketeers. You know. All for one and one for all.

TINKER
Best way to get through life. Talk to you all later.

They run off. Tinker can hear them throwing "Fart-anion" back and forth to each other.

Allena walks up.

TINKER (CONT'D)
All for one and one for all.

It's Allena's turn to be confused.

TINKER (CONT'D)
A lesson the kids just learned.

ALLENA
Sounds like something we've all been learning. Thank you Catharnoch for believing in me, when I wouldn't.

TINKER
You did well, Allena. Ready to face Melchorn?

ALLENA
(laughs)
Bring him on!

TINKER
How's our pastor?

ALLENA
Chastened. Quiet.

TINKER
Good. He'll be stronger for this in the end.

ALLENA
That was a lot of work for a tiny battle.

TINKER
Tiny battle? Allena, sometimes you save the world by saving a marriage.

She pauses to consider his words.

ALLENA
So how long till Josh fulfills his destiny and does this great thing for the earth?

TINKER
Oh years from now yet.

ALLENA
It's frightening how close we all
came to losing. Is it always that
way?

Tinker returns to Normandy in his memory.

EXT. NORMANDY CROSSING - DAY

Tinker, still in the boat with the eight soldiers, peers at
the hillside, watching the flare of mortars and rifles
bursting out.

Again he raises his look to the skies, as the very heavens
tremble with explosions and light.

END OF VISION

Tinker returns to himself.

TINKER
The Lord often likes to keep the
outcome on the edge of a knife.

ALLENA
Why?

TINKER
Keeps us close to him, doesn't it?

END OF TAG ONE

TAG #2

INT. DARK SINISTER CAVERN - DAY

TWO DEMONS enter a cave illuminated only by a large firepot
in the center of the room. Behind it is a large throne where
a MASSIVE, WARLIKE CREATURE sits with his back to them -
MELCHORN.

They approach the throne trembling.

DEMON #1
My lord, the scouts from Bedford
Springs have returned.

MELCHORN
 (deep and dark)
 Yes.

DEMON #2
 The entire battalion we sent in was defeated and pushed out. But no one reported any signs of an arch-angels's presence.

MELCHORN
 How could they be so easily defeated then?

DEMON #1
 The resistance was surprisingly strong. The stench of prayer was everywhere.

Melchorn scoffs.

MELCHORN
 So we'll continue our search.

The two demons whisper to each other.

MELCHORN (CONT'D)
 Is there something else?

DEMON #2
 There were scattered reports about -

MELCHORN
 About what?

DEMON #1
 It was probably nothing.

MELCHORN
 About what!!

DEMON #2
 There was chatter among a handful of imps that, that, a lion was there. But no one saw it. Just a few growls. Likely nothing with all the noise.

MELCHORN
 A lion. And you almost neglected to tell me.

DEMON #1
 But lord --

MELCHORN

Go!

They scamper from the hall. Melchorn's eyes narrow with evil intent.

MELCHORN (CONT'D)

A lion. The pet of the seraphim.

FADE OUT