

TINKER

"Turbo Jam Boosters"

Written by

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. NORMANDY CROSSING, JUNE 6, 1944 - DAY

A Higgins boat carrying 20 ALLIED SOLDIERS plows through the churning water of the English channel.

Near the back sits JONATHAN TINKER, 50, staring stoically at the horizon. The silhouette of cliffs appears in the distance through the dawn mist. A black soldier sitting next to him, ROGER SAMUELS, 25, leans over and yells above the noise.

ROGER

Captain Tinker, I want to thank you for what you said to me the other night. It helped a lot.

TINKER

(nods and smiles)
That's good.

ROGER

I'm still scared. But...

TINKER

...the fear is gone?

ROGER

The fear is gone. I'm ready to do this. In fact, I had the wildest dream last night. It was so vivid. I could see my family plain as day. Only it wasn't my wife and boys. It was my family, like a hundred years from now.

TINKER

Oh really?

ROGER

Swear to God. I saw like my great-great-grandson or something. And he was strong and happy. And free. Captain Tinker there were no black this and white that. Everybody was together. It's like you said. We're fighting for a new world to be born. And I saw it. Plain as day.

TINKER

(laughs)

I wish my words had that sort of power with everyone.

ROGER

I'm still scared. But when that door opens up, I'm ready. Whatever's out there, it's gotta get through me to get to my family.

Tinker slaps Roger's leg.

TINKER

I'm scared too. But that's the spirit, young man.

He turns forwards, then lets his gaze drift upwards, past the approaching beach, to the top of the cliffs.

TINKER (CONT'D)

(whispers)

Whatever's out there.

Suddenly, strangely, the sky above the cliffs darkens into a heavy green haze. Out of the murk in the background steps the shadow of a giant hulk of a man, seven feet tall, but growing larger to Tinker's vision. The creature lifts in the air what appears to be a massive sword, illuminated with shining yellow light, which it then points straight in Tinker's direction.

TINKER (CONT'D)

You have to get through me.

Tinker's hand secretly reaches over and pulls aside the opening of his jacket, exposing the smallest bit of what appears to be the hilt of a sword, glowing in blue light.

EXT. WOODS, PRESENT DAY - NIGHT

THREE SEVENTH-GRADE, 12-YEAR-OLD BOYS pick their way through a thick woods - whispering, giggling, clearly up to no good. The lead teen, DAMON MASON, Black, accidentally snaps a branch back into the face of his Hispanic friend, SCOTT RODRIGUEZ.

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, 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, oddly adorned 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 into the woods.

The back door opens, and Jonathan Tinker walks out, still 50ish, now sporting a Mr. Rogers-style sweater.

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

Yes Rasha. The one you saw is the
boy. He's the one we're here to
keep safe.

ACT ONE

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. "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?

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. I do have a bit of a hearing problem. 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? Speaking of which, I have a job interview to get ready for, gentleman. 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 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! Shoplifting, illegal. Vandalizing a neighbor's house, illegal. I'm through, Josh. What's wrong with you!

JOSH

I don't know.

BILL

Look, I know moving here wasn't easy for you. It all happened pretty fast. It's hard making friends. Starting a new school. I get it. But 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

For cryin' out loud, Josh. 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 someone.

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

It wasn't about him. 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 God 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! 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 be done.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Tinker ambles up to a closed door with a glass window that reads MAINTENANCE. He's about to knock when he hears a loud voice in full scream mode.

VOICE (O.C.)

Enough with the excuses, Martha! If you weren't so soft on him, he'd stop quitting things the second they get tough. You tell that boy to get his butt in there and take that class...Oh don't you put this back on me. Who asked who to leave, huh?...He's not dropping that class! He's not dropping out of school! He's getting that diploma. End of discussion. I've gotta go. Bye. Bye!

The phone slams shut. Tinker tentatively knocks.

VOICE (O.C.) (CONT'D)

What do ya want?! I mean, come in.

Tinker pushes open the door and sees STAN MILLER, 50, gruff, unkempt with a sizeable belly, sitting behind a desk.

TINKER

Excuse me. I'm Jonathan Tinker.

STAN

Tinker, right.

He dives into a messy stack of papers and pulls out a resume, which he starts to scan.

STAN (CONT'D (CONT'D)

I suppose you overheard some of that.

TINKER

Not my business if I did.

STAN

Stupid boy of mine. Wants everything handed to him on a silver platter. And has a mother who's glad to give it to 'im that way. Rushes off to his safe space and cookies the moment he feels uncomfortable. It wasn't like that when you and I were his age. I'm Stan, by the way.

He directs Tinker to take a chair, then points to the paper.

STAN (CONT'D)

This is how it's done. You work and earn your keep.

TINKER

That's what I believe.

STAN

I can tell. Plumber. Electrician. Gardener. Is there anything you can't do?

TINKER

Not particularly good with computers.

STAN

Who is, when you're our age? You like to...tinker then?

TINKER

Oh yes sir, I do.
(sees Stan's amusement)
Oh, that's very good, sir. Tinker, like my name.

STAN

I'm sure you get that all the time.

TINKER

Actually, never thought of it that way before.

STAN

You've never had anyone --?

Tinker shakes his head.

STAN (CONT'D)

(mystified)

So the crew you'd be joining looks after both the middle school-high school complex, and also the city college. You mind having a different work space each day?

TINKER

Not at all sir. Sick of desks.

STAN

Like different challenges?

TINKER

That's why I'm here.

STAN

Maybe you'll cross paths with that son of mine. Knock some sense into him.

TINKER

Maybe I will. Cross paths with him. I won't knock him around. Leave that to you.

STAN

You have my permission, believe me. When can you start?

TINKER

Tomorrow?

STAN

We'll see you in the morning, Tinker. Nobody has had fun with your name?

Tinker shakes his head, as he stands and shakes Stan's hand.

STAN (CONT'D)

We might have to fix that.

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 puck". 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, if you boys hadn't been found. But since you were found, now you're doing imaginary work to undo the damage.

(a beat)

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 porch 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.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

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. Three heads 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?

DAMON
My mom could care less what I do.

JOSH
Same with my parents. All my dad
has time for is my brother Sam,
getting ready to go off to USC,
just like he did. Sam's so perfect.
Anything I do is always wrong.

SCOTT

Well, you do a lotta wrong stuff.
Let's see, since you moved here:
suspended for fighting, caught
shoplifting. Vandalizing property.
Now breaking and entering.

DAMON

You're catching up with me.

JOSH

He said we could come inside.

Damon cuffs the side of his head.

DAMON

He said stay in the kitchen.

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 scoots toward it.

DAMON (CONT'D)

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 movie 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
(deadpan)
Yup.

Sure enough, the large room is gorgeously equipped with an Olympic-sized swimming pool. 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.

Josh peers behind him to spy out the door leading back to the game room.

JOSH
This house shouldn't be this big.

SCOTT
It's underground. It can be as big as his shovel. And 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

(swings open the door)

It's a big...forest.

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

DAMON

Okay then. Dude's got a redwood forest under his house.

SCOTT

I think he's found a way to drug us already.

JOSH

Only one way to know for sure if it's real.

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)

See, it's flaking off.

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

SCOTT

Oh, this is just insane.

He follows after.

JOSH

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. Let's go back.

JOSH
We've already come this far.

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

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

JOSH (CONT'D)
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 start 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

You gotta hold on.

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

The lion coils to spring.

ACT THREE

As the lion prepares to jump on Josh, 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. Rasha purrs.

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 transfixed.

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 room with the swimming pool, 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.

EXT. SCHOOL MAINTENANCE GARAGE - DAY

Tinker walks with Stan toward a sizeable garage. The bus-sized door is open, and outside it, two men are working on a riding mower, FRANK STAFFORD, 60, and JEFF HANSEN, mid-20s.

STAN

Men, I'd like you to meet Jonathan Tinker. He'll be joining us on maintenance. This is Frank Stafford.

Tinker and Frank shake hands.

FRANK

Stan conned you into this, huh?
(Tinker looks quizzical)
Did he tell ya he's chased away the last three people that he's hired?

TINKER

We didn't get to that in the interview.

FRANK

In a month!

STAN

Yet I can never seem to get rid of you, can I? Why won't you quit?

FRANK

'Cuz I'm too old. Retiring next year. And Jeffrey here is too dumb to quit.

Jeff snickers, and does appear to be a taco short of a combination plate.

JEFF

I could've been somebody, instead of a bum. Which is what I am.

STAN

Jeff here's a little --

He makes a circling-by-the-head gesture.

STAN (CONT'D)

-- on the spectrum. ADHD.

FRANK

Autism, you dope.

STAN

Autism, whatever. Strange form of it though. He pretty much only speaks in movie lines.

JEFF
They call me Mr. Tibbs!

STAN
That's all he did, growing up.
Watch movies. But he's a hell of a
mechanic. Figures everything out.

TINKER
Nice to meet you, Jeff.

They shake hands.

JEFF
You had me at hello.

STAN
You'll get used to it.

FRANK
If you're here long enough.

STAN
All right, lay off, or I'll lay you
off.

FRANK
I could only dream.

STAN
Whatcha workin' on?

FRANK
Mower keeps slipping a belt. The
new one's a bugger to get on.

JEFF
I'm as mad as hell and I'm not
going to take this anymore.

STAN
The other mower good?

He points in the garage to another mower.

FRANK
Yeah. Fine.

STAN
I thought I'd get Tinker cutting
the lawn first. Break him in slow.

FRANK
 So, you like to tinker with stuff,
 eh?

Tinker and Stan exchange a look.

STAN
 Told you. That name's a slow-
 hanging curve.
 (to Frank)
 Says nobody's ever teased him about
 it.

FRANK
 (scoffs)
 Gonna ride that bull all the way to
 market.

STAN
 Tellin' ya. You're fine with a
 little good-natured ribbing, aren't
 you, Stinker? Er, a...Tinker.

TINKER
 As long as you can take anything I
 give back.

Both men perk up at this.

STAN
 Wo-ho-ho! Maybe you'll last longer
 than a week after all.

JEFF
 (to Tinker, with pity)
 May the Force be with you.

Tinker winks, and places an assuring hand on Jeff's shoulder.

As Stan and Tinker walk toward the good mower, the belt
 suddenly snaps in Frank's hand.

FRANK
 Son of a -- !

Tinker smiles.

INT. MIDDLE 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
Sure. 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 fish sticks right now.

DAMON
If you know what's good for you, you'll stay away from him. And if you don't...*I'll* tell your parents.

JOSH
Big whup. My parents don't know I
exist.

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 the rider.

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)
This is my new office. How do you
like it?

JOSH
You work at the school?

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
Kinda sorta.

JOSH
Are you safe?

TINKER
For the right people I am.

JOSH
I don't understand.

TINKER
You know, like parents. Sometimes they do things that seem mean, but come to find out later on, it's because they care for us.

Josh scowls.

TINKER (CONT'D)
You don't believe me?

JOSH
My Mom only cares about my baby sister. Dad only cares about my older brother. Ever since we moved here, it's like I don't exist.

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. Change isn't easy for them either.
(beat)
Anyway, I'd best get back to it. Don't want to disappoint my new boss. Or my old boss.
(points a finger upwards)
He cares about you for sure. I know that for a fact. 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.

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's at the library
 every night this week.

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 MOM, 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
 Baxters! 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
put me over his knee big time. He
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 on his phone, 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.

MOM

(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 desktop 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', floating there on the cloud. That's so creative. Right click...Delete... Minimize... Recycle bin...Empty the recycle bin.

A sinister smile creeps over Josh's face.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

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

Hell 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 FBI-level computer skills.

Damon and Josh 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

Once you erase it off the cloud,
it's gone. Unless he's saved it
somewhere else. Does he have a
laptop.

JOSH

That's his only computer.

SCOTT

External hard-drive?

They rummage around the desk, and find a flash drive.

JOSH

(excitedly)

That's what he uses!

Scott plugs it in to the USB drive.

DAMON

You better hope for your sake he's
saved it there. 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.

(beat)

Here we go. Crap. It's password
protected. Think he's written it
out?

JOSH

Doubt it.

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

SCOTT

Is this his girlfriend?

SCOTT AND DAMON (IN UNISON)

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 my desktop's fried or something.

SCOTT

(whispers)

All drains lead to the ocean.

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

JOSH

So I'm using my flashdrive instead, but I forgot my 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)
Tomorrow I'll make it up to you.
Promise. 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. Damon snatches a look out the window. A car's headlights turn into the driveway.

DAMON (CONT'D)
Somebody's home! Car turning into
the driveway!

SCOTT
Okay, I'm in.

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. Okay,
scanning. Recent files. "Senior
Project"...File Not Found. Looks
like he only had it on the cloud.
It's been nice knowing you.

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! Parental units!

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 forever, 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. The original document of
Sam's senior project appears.

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.

(MORE)

JOSH (CONT'D)
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.

END OF ACT FOUR

TAG

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, the other 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. 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.

He starts to walk away, then turns around again.

JOSH (CONT'D)

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

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.

JOSH

You knew Dr. Suess?

TINKER

I gave him some story ideas.

(beat)

A person's a person no matter how small.

JOSH

Wow. That's...weird. So you're not alone or anything?

TINKER

I come from a large family. But thanks for asking.

Josh smiles, waves and runs back to his friends.

As Mr. Tinker fires up the mower and sets it into motion, he waves at TWO ANGELS standing fifty feet away, set apart by a luminescent glow around their frames.

As Tinker continues on his way, other angels appear in view.

FADE OUT