

The Tinkerer

by

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OVER BLACK

Sparks flicker in darkness.

Flicker again, now concentrated. Behind a large DIAMOND.
Wait no, actually...inside it.

Lights up the--

INT. LABORATORY - NIGHT

--as a reflection gleams off protective goggles worn by
FRANCIS "PINKY" KING (34, black, science nerd, decent shape)
who takes in the spectacle of his work. *Proud.*

SUPER: LOCKHEED MARTIN FACILITY - 1984

The once pitch dark lab now lit up in a radiant glow which
emanates from the small object in the vacuum chamber. A
shadow steps forward from the darkness behind him as--

OVERHEAD LIGHTS flood the room and the vacuum chamber powers
down, surprising Pinky, who turns and yanks off the goggles,
royally pissed.

PINKY

What's going on?! You just ruined ten
years of resea--

The shadow steps forward. Decorated GENERAL MORGAN FREEMAN
(42, not THAT Morgan Freeman, but played by, you guessed it,
THAT Morgan Freeman), is all business and directs everyone
around him with authority.

FREEMAN

That will be all, Mr. King. You have
been reassigned. Follow me.

PINKY

Reassign--? What are you talking--

FREEMAN

This project is over.
(to awaiting security)
Transfer all files to Alpha branch.
Wipe the drives clean.

A phalanx of armed SECURITY fans out across the lab and
gathers notebooks, disk drives, computers as Freeman guides
Pinky toward the hallway door along with more armed GUARDS.

PINKY

NO! You can't do this! I just--

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The armed guards stand post outside the lab doors as Pinky turns and tries to go back in. The guards block his way.

FREEMAN

That's enough! This way, please.

Resigned, Pinky swallows his anger and follows Freeman as they head down a nondescript hallway at a brisk clip.

PINKY

You going to tell me what the hell is going on, Freeman?

FREEMAN

General.

PINKY

Fine. General. What the actual fu--

FREEMAN

You signed an exclusive contract with my branch in exchange for your service as a Ranger because you refused lethal combat, did you not?

PINKY

To work only on non-weapons research, and that's what I've been doing!

FREEMAN

We pulled a lot of strings for that. It gives us the right to direct your research as we see fit.

PINKY

But you just saw it, clean energy! Enough power for a city block but--

FREEMAN

We have a new direction for you.

PINKY

You can't just yank me around like...

They turn another corner and Freeman steps through a set of double doors into--

INT. MAINTENANCE AND MODEL SHOP - CONTINUOUS

--a state-of-the-art tool shop with 5-axis CNC machines, grinders, milling machines, and walls of raw materials.

PINKY
You gotta be kidding me.

FREEMAN
You will put your skills toward every
project that comes through this door
until your contract ends.

PINKY
(eyes agog)
But that's forty years!

Freeman's gaze could melt steel. Turns to him.

FREEMAN
That's damn right. You wanted to
serve your country, now get to work.

Freeman leaves the shop with Pinky standing in the middle,
as a time-lapse montage of activity begins all around him.

SERIES OF SHOTS - PASSING OF TIME IN MODEL SHOP

- people come and go around Pinky at super speed as Pinky
moves in slow motion, first over to a milling machine, helps
a worker with a project in progress...

- then over to a work bench, lays down solder on an electric
circuit board, visibly older as years pass by in seconds
while he moves slowly to replace the iron...

- now in his 50's, Pinky helps an engineer operate the CNC
machine, and another, and another...more years pass by as
his time marches on...

- now well into his 60's as he heads to his desk, unmoved
over thirty years, and sits. People come and go all around
him at speed, while he stares off.

- a final shot as a banner reads 'Happy Retirement!' from
the corner above his desk, a party of workers and students
to celebrate Pinky, who seems appreciative but melancholy.

- lifts a cardboard box of memories from his desk, and exits
the model shop, turns off the lights.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. PINKY'S GARAGE - DAY

A garage door opens and lights up this immaculate shop and work-out room, benches with tool organizers hanging from the walls, a 3D printer, a floor so clean you could eat off it.

A cardboard box lands on a workbench, filled with electronic goods and appliances. Wrinkled hands lift out a toaster.

Pinky, now 74, silver hair but still chiseled, flips the toaster over, sees a hand-written Post-It Note that reads "Alice Newberry. House 10B. Call me." with her phone number.

He sighs, plugs in the toaster and pushes down the handle; it doesn't lock in place. Shakes his head and smirks.

Reaches up and grabs the Philips head screwdriver without looking, then in moments has the toaster open. Sees the unconnected spring, re-attaches it. Replaces the casing.

Pushes down the handle and it catches. He pushes another button at the bottom of the toaster, and it pops back up.

He sets the toaster back into the box, then pulls out ANOTHER toaster. This with a recipe index card taped to the side which reads "Carmen. 14A. Pisces." as he sets it down.

A kids voice from the driveway breaks his concentration.

LUPI (O.S.)

You know they keep bustin' them just
so you'll fix 'em up, right?

LUPITA RAMIREZ (12, nosy, knows everything) steps inside and looks over Pinky's shoulder as he continues to tinker with the open toaster. He's used to this daily interruption.

PINKY

That so?

LUPI

She even said she's a Pisces. It's
like Silver Singles dotcom in here.

PINKY

Why don't you go play with your
friends?

LUPI

I don't have any.

PINKY

I can see why.

(MORE)

PINKY (cont'd)
(points to bench)
Grab me a #6, quarter-inch machine
screw from those trays.

Lupi turns toward an array of carefully labeled individual trays marked with their contents; wood screws, metric bolts and washers, machine screws. His own Ace Hardware.

She finds the machine screw tray, pulls it out, lifts open the lid.

LUPI
Which one is that?

PINKY
The one that says number 6.

LUPI
There's a hashtag 6.

PINKY
Hashtag means number.

LUPI
Why don't you call it hashtag, then?
That's weird.

PINKY
Just get me a hashtag 6 in the bin
marked quarter inch. That's the one
slash four quotation marks.

She finds the screw and pinches one out, hands it to him with sass all over her face.

LUPI
I know fractions, smart guy. Here.

PINKY
Set it right there, see?

He points to a threaded hole, below the spring release on the toaster frame.

Lupi sets it in place, as Pinky directs.

PINKY (cont'd)
Good, now connect that clip there.

And in less than a moment, it's done. Pinky flips over the toaster, points to the handle.

PINKY (cont'd)
See if it clicks in place.

Lupi presses it down, and it holds. A slight hum as the filaments heat up inside.

LUPI

Maybe you can help me with my science fair project. Can I go grab a soda?

PINKY

Sure. I'll close this up, but then I need to get ready for tonight. We'll drop them off tomorrow.

LUPI

You headed to the common area for the social, too? Nana's gonna be there.

PINKY

I'm on refreshment duty. That's all.

LUPI

It's Silver Singles, I tell ya.

PINKY

It's not like that. Get your soda.

Lupi opens the kitchen door and disappears into--

INT. PINKY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

--the clean and modest kitchen of this simple single-level home. She heads to the plain refrigerator, with hardly any magnets or photos at all. Just a few.

One of Pinky and an pretty older woman on a beach, smiling. Another of a younger him and a little girl, not much older than ten. And a condolences card stuck with a magnet.

She opens it. It reads 'Sorry for your loss. Emily.'

PINKY (O.S.)

Come on, Lupi. I gotta go!

Startled, Lupi knocks the card off the fridge, as it and the magnet slide across the floor.

She scoops them both up, hurriedly sets them back on the fridge, opens the door, grabs a soda, closes it behind her and hurries out.

LUPI

Coming!

INT. REGINALD'S HOUSE - LATER

REGINALD LARSON (84, white, scruff on his chiseled face), sits at his office desk, studying his laptop, glasses halfway down his nose, oversized monitors aglow with files.

Words like TOP SECRET and CONFIDENTIAL catch our attention on the monitors, but Reginald spots something in the data and clicks on it.

On the monitor, a cascade of files opens up, pictures and schematics of a cube-shaped device, personnel files, bank accounts, transactions.

REGINALD
What's this?

Looks at the monitor as we see a familiar name. KING.

He opens his desk, pulls out a micro-SD card, slips it in the laptop; click.

Reginald reads while a red light blinks and data transfers.

REGINALD (cont'd)
Oh...my...god.

INT. CIA MONITORING CENTER - LATER

A mostly darkened room filled with high-tech computers and monitors, a map on one of the screens starts to BLINK RED.

An OFFICER snaps to life and zeroes in on the activity.

Officer taps the phone and speaks, watching the screen.

OFFICER
Sir, Icarus file is active.
(beat)
Sending coordinates now. Yes, Sir.

Officer hangs up and types into the computer.

INT. COMMUNITY HALL - LATER

The common area that houses the neighborhood's gym, pool, and recreation area is plain but nice. Taupe painted walls decorated with streamers and balloons. Nothing fancy.

Pinky mans the punchbowl and fills cups on the table, nodding and greeting the other residents as he does.

PINKY

Help yourself. Thanks for coming.

RITA RAMIREZ (late 70's, Latina, trim, short silver hair)
picks up a cup and toasts Pinky.

RITA

Lupi told me to come say hello. I
hope she's not a bother.

PINKY

Good to see you, Rita. And nah, she's
a good kid. Welcome over anytime.

RITA

Anything to get her off that damn
phone. What is it with kids and their
damn phones anymore? It's like
attention deficit disorder 24/7.

Pinky chuckles, but becomes melancholic. Sips his drink.

PINKY

Yeah, I guess so.

RITA

How've you been? Getting enough to
eat? Need a casserole? You look thin.

PINKY

No, no. I'm just fine, thank you.

RITA

I'll make a casserole.

PINKY

No, really. I'm--

Reginald walks up and interrupts.

REGINALD

You're Pinky King, isn't that right?

Pinky greets him, surprised. Extends his hand.

PINKY

Why, yes. And you're...

REGINALD

Reginald Larson, 9 B Street. Love the
street names here, so easy, right?

PINKY

You're new here?

REGINALD
More than some, less than a few, I
suppose. People here are just lovely.
(to Rita)
Like you, hello. Reginald. Pleasure.

Rita and Reginald shake hands and smile while he continues.

REGINALD (cont'd)
But, you Pinky, I hear you're a man
that can fix things.

PINKY
I tinker from time to time.

RITA
He's underselling. He's our resident
handyman. Faster than maintenance,
that's for damn sure.

REGINALD
(leans in to Pinky)
Can we chat quick?
(to Rita)
Excuse us, sorry.

RITA
No problem.

Reginald heads toward the end of the table as Pinky follows.

PINKY
What can I help with?

REGINALD
Isn't it funny no matter how hard we
work all our lives to do the right
thing we all just end up living
together in a pool of regret?

PINKY
I'm sorry, what?

REGINALD
You were an engineer, right?

PINKY
Yeah. How'd you know that?

REGINALD
You can take an old reporter out of
the newsroom, but can't stop him from
poking around, am I right?

PINKY
Look, Reginald, what's this--

REGINALD
Man flies too close to the sun, he's
gonna get burned.

Pinky steps back. Understands the reference.

REGINALD (cont'd)
Look, we need to talk. But not here.

PINKY
Talk about what?

REGINALD
The past. Biting you in the butt.
Come by tomorrow. I'll explain
everything. Two pm?
(extends hand)
I'm so glad we met. It's like kismet.

He shakes his hand and dashes off, leaving Pinky scratching
his head. Rita walks back over.

RITA
What was that about?

PINKY
Hell if I know. Find out tomorrow, I
guess.

RITA
He's not bad on the eyes, I'll tell
you what.

Pinky chuckles and looks at her. Her empty glass.

PINKY
Come on, let me get you a refill.

INT. REGINALD'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Reggie transfers files to the micro-SD card as he scours
screens in the dimly lit room. Screen says DOWNLOAD 100%.

He pops out the card, pockets it, then types commands into
his computer. Hits enter.

Monitors show the erasing files, pictures, screen after
screen, disappearing from view as he leaves the office.

EXT. REGINALD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A white van labeled VALENCIA SECURITY SERVICES drives slowly outside and idles across from Reginald's house.

The headlights go out.

Wait.

The back door opens and lone MAN IN BLACK scurries across the shadows toward the front door.

Jimmies the lock and disappears inside.

INT. REGINALD'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Reginald flips the light on in the bathroom, picks up his old Norelco three-head razor, turns it on, puts it to his face as he looks in the mirror.

Sees a shadow move in the reflection in the other room. Thinks quickly, as he closes the bathroom door and locks it.

Puts down the razor and opens the drawer quick, rummages through it, pulls out a pen and scribbles a note on paper, turns off the razor. Pries one of the heads open.

Pulls out the razor, throws it in the trash. Fishes the SD card out of his pocket. Sticks it inside. Snaps it shut.

Puts the razor in a drawer with the note.

The door knob turns slow as the lock POPS open.

The door opens as the Man in Black enters.

Reginald puts up his hands.

REGINALD
Well, looks like you got me.

The Man in Black takes a syringe out of his pocket. Steps forward quickly and deliberately.

Reginald tries to make a run for it, poorly, as the Man in Black pokes the syringe into Reginald's neck. Then gently lays him onto the floor.

Turns off the light and leaves.

EXT. SILVER CITY NEIGHBORHOOD - AFTERNOON

Pinky and Lupi drink sodas as they walk the cookie-cutter Senior Living community just outside Valencia.

Lupi tows a wagon filled with repaired toasters.

LUPI
So, who's Emily?

Surprised, Pinky almost chokes on his last sip. *Coughs.*

PINKY
S--sorry?

LUPI
You know, the card on the fridge?

PINKY
Yeah, well...she's my daughter.

LUPI
Was that her as a kid?

Pinky changes the subject, points toward a red doorway.

PINKY
Here's Fourteen-A. Why don't you
deliver this one for me?

LUPI
No way. I don't mess with no Pisces.

Lupi hands him the toaster as Pinky exchanges his empty bottle for it and heads to the front door.

PINKY
Oh, for Pete's sake. Stay put.

Before he arrives, it's open...CARMEN D'ANGELO (68, fiery red hair, champagne glass in hand) steps out to greet him. Her New Jersey accent heavy and thick.

CARMEN
Oh, Pinky, you are a lifesaver! Let
me repay you with a drink. Come in!

PINKY
Thanks, but no. I'm still making the
rounds, got my helper with me.

Carmen looks over his shoulder, sees Lupi. Disappointed.

CARMEN
Aw, that's too bad. Maybe next time.

PINKY
(hands over toaster)
Hopefully not too soon, but thanks.

Missing the insult, Carmen takes the toaster and gently touches his hand.

CARMEN
Horrible what happened to Reginald in 8B, isn't it?

PINKY
(retracts hand)
Reginald? What happened?

CARMEN
They found him dead in his bathroom this morning, the poor thing.

PINKY
Wait, what? They say how he died?

CARMEN
Natural causes, but I don't trust 'em. Glad we got all those outdoor security cameras installed last year, you know?

PINKY
Yeah, well, see you around.

CARMEN
Until next time!

Pinky ignores her as he heads back toward Lupi.

Gets to the wagon, looks at the toaster inside. The address, 10B. Then glances up the street.

LUPI
They're breaking 'em on purpose, I tell ya. Just look at her.

Lupi looks over at Carmen, who sips her champagne and holds her toaster like a chihuahua, watching Pinky the whole time.

PINKY
Why don't you head home and tell your Nana I said hello. I'll deliver this last one.

LUPI

Yeah, okay. I got homework anyway.
See you later?

PINKY

Sure thing. Any time.

Pinky watches Lupi head off as he looks back toward the next street. Pulls the wagon past a streetlamp with security cam.

EXT. SILVER CITY NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

Pinky rings the bell at 10B, then glances at the police car nextdoor, as the door opens to reveal ALICE (76, nicely dressed, silver-haired), and her warm inviting smile.

ALICE

Oh, Pinky. So nice to see you.

PINKY

Hey Alice, heard about Reginald. You doing okay?

ALICE

It's just awful, isn't it?

PINKY

Just talked to him yesterday, for crying out loud.

ALICE

He was a good neighbor too. Didn't make a ruckus.

PINKY

The best kind. Anyway...
(extends toaster)
...got this fixed for you.

ALICE

Hope it wasn't too much trouble.

Alice takes it and smiles, somewhat guilty.

ALICE (cont'd)

Would you like to stay for a drink?

PINKY

Thanks...no. I best get back home.

ALICE

Rain check then. And thanks for fixing my toaster.

She looks over at Reginald's and the police cruiser.

ALICE (cont'd)
Just never know when our time comes.
Only hope we get a chance to fix
things before we go, you know?

PINKY
Yeah, I guess so. Take care.

Pinky waves goodbye and heads back to the wagon.

Glances at the squad car packing up. Pensive.

INT. PINKY'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Pinky sits back in his chair and rubs his chin.

PINKY
Flying too close to the sun. Past
biting me in the butt. What were you
sticking your nose in?

Opens the only unlabeled workbench drawer, pulls out a small leather case, closes the drawer.

PINKY (cont'd)
Only one way to find out.

EXT. REGINALD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Pinky sneaks up outside Reginald's house and pulls out the leather lock-pick kit. Jimmies the lock. Pops the door open and disappears inside.

INT. REGINALD'S HOUSE

Shrouded in darkness and shadow, Pinky slips into the house, unsure of what he's searching for. A penlight SHINES through the darkness, scans the room.

The light shines across a bookcase, as various awards and plaques glisten while he scans across the family room, over to the--

OFFICE

-- as Pinky sits in the office chair, penlight in his mouth, opens up drawers, ruffles around looking for information.