

TIN-JA

A tinker play experience for wee-ones and not-so-wee-ones

By: Brendon Allen

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Note to the reader/performer:

This play is best performed as a story time or weekend play experience. The performance is meant to inspire activities and fun on a sunny day when maybe you do not have any plans yet.

If you do not have access to a laptop or tablet that all the actors can read from, just print off as many copies of the script as you may need.

The stage directions are written with a participatory feel. This is an attempt to make the experience feel playful. Play along if you can. If the stage directions ask you a question, feel free to answer out loud.

The play works best with a cast of four, but can be done in any way you choose. The casting is flexible to allow for name changes, gender flexibility and ways to personalize to match your household. It is up to you.

This play presents the opportunity for the actors to engage in making scavenger hunts, building tin can telephones and more.

I hope you enjoy this “tinker play experience.” Break a leg!

CASTING

Jinx: Is a precocious 11 year old who would really like to step into the world of phone ownership... like, yesterday. Jinx often likes to commandeer their mother's phone to make a point.

Mama: Is the mother of Jinx and neighbour to Mrs. Singh. She works as a high level consultant and spends a great deal of time on her phone. She is a loving mother and has been separated from Jinx's father for 2 years.

Izzy: Is Jinx's best friend. They live on the same floor of an apartment, but 3 doors down.

Stage Directions: It can be fun to have a separate performer read the stage directions.

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The scene opens in an apartment. Mama is rummaging around looking for her phone in the kitchen.

Mama: Where did you put my phone Jinx?! Jinx? *(sees her phone on the kitchen counter)* Oh, here it is. *(sees a note beside it)* What is this? Oh, what are you up to now?

Have you ever written notes to your parents in the house? Jinx likes to play games with notes. How about you?

Mama reads the note.

“Go to where you play stuff on your phone. I recorded a message. Don’t worry, there are no swears.” *(Laughing to herself)* Ha, no swears. Play stuff on my phone? I guess it’s a Voice Memo. Let’s see.

Have you ever recorded your voice on a phone or recorder? Often people talk about not liking the sound of their voice on a recording. Do you like your voice on a recording? You’re about to hear Jinx’s voice, the hero of this story’s voice. Here we go.

Jinx: Psst...Mom? Are you in here? I thought this might be the best way to get the message across. I know you’re doing a lot of stuff with work and messages and voice memos and meetings. So, I kinda snuck a meeting in. This is kinda fun actually...Roger that, roger, Roger. I heard you talking in your meetings about deliverables and proposals, so I looked up the words online and I think I have a proposal for you and perhaps even a deliverable, I think.

I hope this is working...

Now, everybody knows, like the whole building knows, that I really want my own phone. You know it, everybody knows. But I know you’re scared of me having one. And I used to think it wasn’t fair. But I’ve been talking to some middle schoolers and Curtis, who has a phone because he walks home alone from school. I don’t think it’s unfair, I actually think it was pretty smart.

You’re a smart mom.

And my proposal is for a smart mom who’s in charge of my allowance.

This really is about Izzy.

Izzy is my best friend, which you know, but what you may not know yet is that Izzy is going to a new school next year.

I bet you are missing some of your friends that you haven't seen since March Break. Have you ever had a friend leave to another school or move completely? It can be really hard and sometimes technology can make that shift easier.

Since March Break we haven't really had a chance to hang out because of this Covid thing and because she has her grandpa living with them. We have been chatting on the iPad and the computer, but I miss her a lot.

That's part of my proposal. Did you get it? It's like the first part. Ok? K, good.

The next part sort of involves moving around. So it's good you can walk and listen. Right?

It's like a riddle.

You ready?

The proposal continues in a place where all the things to put away, end up. Where it can be pretty shadowy, and one time I left a bowl of porridge for like a year.

Did you get it?

You want a hint?

It's my closet.

Oh, that's not really a hint, I kinda just told it to ya.

Wait, how do you...? Ugh, I don't know how to erase on this thing. Oh well! There you go.

Go to my closet. There you will find the next clue.

Jinx is making a short scavenger hunt around the house. This is a fun thing to do and can be a great way to pass some time. Take a few things that you have permission to hide and write little hints to people to follow. The hints and stops, the more fun it can be. What are the best places to use for a scavenger hunt where you live?

Are you there? I know I walk faster than you. Are you there yet?

(Pause)

Are you?

Mama: *(Talking to her phone)* I'm here.

Jinx: OK, let's move on.

Mama: Man, oh, man! You need to tidy this closet, kid!

Jinx: First of all, I know you'll want me to clean my closet. That is not part of this proposal. Don't get distracted.

Mama: I may build that into the negotiations.

Jinx: The next part of the riddle involves my favourite clothes. In a way this is a test of how well you know my flair for fashion. I know you love clothes and you get a lot from how you feel in clothes. I have those feelings too.

Do you think about your clothes at all? Do you connect with them, or do you feel like they are just something you throw on? Do you have favourite pieces? Why are they your favourite? If you had to pick an outfit that defines you, what would it be?

Can you find my favourite t-shirt? This is kind of a get-to-know-Jinx experience. Here's a hint, this is not something you have bought for me. Sorry...

Mama starts to rummage through Jinx's closet.

Have you found it yet?

Mama: I'm thinking while I rummage, Jinx!

Jinx: Maybe I will give you more time to think.

Mama: Thank you.

Jinx: I'll give you another hint. It is a hand-me-down from our clothing swap last fall.

Mama: Aha! I knew it! *(she grabs a t-shirt from the closet)* The Dwight Yoakam concert T-shirt!

Jinx: By now I think you have picked something. If the hanger has a string attached to it, you're right.

Mama looks at the hanger and sees that there is a piece of brown string tied to it.

Mama: Yes!!!

Jinx: If you guessed wrong, you should keep looking 'til you find my favourite. I can give you some time.

Mama: Ha, I don't need it. I know you pretty well! "You can give me more time," huh! This is your mother you're talking to.

Jinx: OK, time's up! It's my rebel cowboy shirt. I like it because kids always look at his name and try to sort it out like a puzzle. The number of different pronunciations of Dwight, D-wit, De-we-get,...Don't even get me started on how people say "Yoakam." I also think he holds a guitar like a gun. I like the idea of music being a weapon. Dwight Yoak-kaboom! I also like all the city names on the back of the shirt, it makes me feel like a superhero who's touring the world with my superhero guitar exploding evil and tipping my hat, Yoak-kaboom!

Mama: You're hilarious! *(starts to pull on the string and she realizes that it leads her somewhere)* What are you doing here, kid?

Jinx: OK, now you can follow the string to the next phase of this proposal.

Mama: *(She follows the string, it leads her along the floor)* Geez, you really hid this string. Where are you taking me?

Jinx: Now, comes the deliverable. I think.

Mama: OK, so you've brought me to the window sill.

Jinx: This is command central for why I need my own phone. Open the window.

Mama: Here we go...

Mama opens the window.

What she sees is a double phone line made up of tin cans and string.

Have you ever made a tin can telephone? If you want to try and make one all you need is enough string to run from one room to another, a safe way to poke holes in a can (I suggest a hammer, an awl, and a grown up to supervise) and two cans.

Here are [some instructions](#) if you want.

If you have different kinds of string at home, it's fun to test which one works best.

Test to see how far you can go in your home before you cannot hear anything anymore. You can also experiment with making [Ear Guitars](#).

Once you have made a telephone and a guitar, you can also make [Tin Can Stilts](#) with all the same materials.

Mama: Oh, man!

Jinx: This is my direct line to Izzy from our house. You will see that it has written “No-Can-Do” on it. That is Izzy’s code name. I don’t know if you knew you could do this with string and tin can. It’s pretty cool.

Mama: Like, was I raised in a cave? *(She picks up the can and speaks into it)* I know how a tin telephone works, Jinx!

Izzy: *(her voice over the tin telephone)* Hello Tin-ja! I’m here. Over!

Mama: Sorry, Izzy, I was trying to say something to Jinx.

Mama pauses Jinx’s message.

Izzy: Tin-ja is not here. Is that you Mrs. Stanley? Over.

Mama: Yes, Izzy, it’s Mrs. Stanley. Of course, that makes sense that Jinx isn’t there. I guess the whole point of this proposal is that Jinx can’t be at your place.

Izzy: Sorry, I couldn’t hear you, over!

Mama: *(Not speaking into the tin anymore)* Oh, you’re using “military-talk”...That’s so cute.

Izzy: I still can’t hear you, over!

Mama: I was saying, you’re very cute Izzy.

(brief pause)

Izzy: You need to say “over” when you’re done talking. Please call me by my code name. No-Can-Do. Over!

Do you have a nickname or code name? These can be lots of fun, especially if you are on a secret mission, like a scavenger hunt or an elaborate proposal to convince your parent to buy you a phone. What would your code name be?

Mama: *(speaking louder and into the tin can)* Don’t worry about it Izzy... I mean, No-Can-Do. Over!

Izzy: How did you get access to this network, Mrs. Stanley? Over!

Mama: Umm, I found it hanging on a hook on the window sill. Over.

Izzy: Alright. Can you make sure that you keep it top secret. Over!

Mama: Top secret. Of course. Umm, affirmative! Over.

Izzy: OK, I'm gonna go back to my Zen tangles, OK? Over!

Mama: That sounds great Izzy, sorry for interrupting...Over.

Izzy: Signing off, Over and Out!

Mama: Tell your Mom I say "Hi".

Izzy: When I say "Over and Out!" that means I'm gone from the tin can. So you should stop talking.

Mama: *(small laugh)* You're right Izzy, sorry...Over and Out. *(She puts the tin can down)* I can't believe the sound carries that far. That's like two apartments away! I better un-pause this message, otherwise I might never discover where you're hiding.

(She un-pauses the voice memo)

Jinx: Now you probably don't want to talk into the can, cause Izzy can be pretty intense about security on the network.

Mama: Too late for that.

Jinx: Now on the other side of the sill you'll see a second hook with a second tin can. It has "Can-sult" on it. That's what you do, right, you consult? Well, it's time to discuss my proposal.

Mama: I regret getting you that Joke Book from the library. The wordplay as of late is just too much.

Jinx: When you're ready to negotiate you can pick up the Can-sult line and give your response to my proposal. You need to know that I am willing to offer my savings, which is 38 dollars and 72 cents, and Izzy's dad offered all his beer store returns, which is estimated at about 26 dollars last they counted. I am also willing to fold all the laundry and put away all the dishes until Covid is over. I know you're worried about YouTube and other nasty online stuff. So, I can even start off with just a phone with WiFi with YouTube Kids and Kids Messenger. These are my terms. The Internet tells me that the terms of my proposal should be clear for my proposal to be accepted. So, I hope that they are. If you feel ready to discuss, pick up the can.

Mama: *(picking up the can marked "Can-sult")* Am I talking to No-Can-Do? Over!

Jinx: *(from the tin can telephone)* No, my code name is Tin-Ja. Over!

Mama: Well, Tin-Ja, you've been very detailed with your proposal. I think I need some time to think about it and talk it over with all the adults in charge of this decision.

Jinx: Who else do you need to consult?!

Mama: Jinx, I'm not the only adult in charge of these kinds of decisions.

Jinx: Well, you can call right now and talk it out! I can stay on the line.

Mama: *(small laugh)* Like a conference call via tin cans.

Jinx: Dad's apartment isn't that far away, I could run the string with my scooter.

Mama: I'm sure for this choice, you would set up a string network much faster than Bell Canada could.

Jinx: I already have Ms. Singh's permission to run string down her fire exit.

Mama: How did you get permission to encroach on her garden oasis?

Jinx: Well, I've been using some of my allowance to rent the space.

Mama: You're giving our 75 year old neighbour cash to have access to her fire escape for your tin telephone?!

Jinx: No! I have been getting her Hot Rods from the corner store, I give them to her when I deliver her Sunday paper.

Mama: You're navigating some complicated stuff to stay connected to Izzy. We thought that the Zoom calls we arranged were enough. You could have asked me to schedule more times. You guys wrote a few letters, wasn't that more fun than bribing Mrs. Singh with Hot Rods?

Jinx: Mrs. Singh didn't make me bring the Hot Rods, I just liked to see her smile when she would pick up the paper at the end of the hall.

Mama: You are sweet.

Jinx: Writing the letters was fun, but we really liked being able to talk whenever we wanted.

Mama: Like when she was in the middle of doing Zen Tangles?

Jinx: Oh no, I don't mess with her Zen Tangle Time.

Mama: You're wise.

Jinx: I'd be wiser with WiFi!

Mama: Skip the phone, I'm gonna hire you to do negotiations with me.

Jinx: You get a work phone at your job, right? I'm in.

Mama: I think Izzy may be calling for you on the Tin-line.

Jinx: Izzy can wait, I still haven't heard a real answer.

If you were the parent in this situation, what choice would you make? Would you give Jinx a phone? What are the arguments for and against having a phone when you are young?

Mama: Where are you anyway?

Jinx: I'm on Mrs. Singh's fire escape, she's coaching me with her fingers crossed through the window.

Mama: Well, I want to commend you for a very convincing proposal and I will discuss the repercussions with the other stakeholders.

Jinx: When will I know?

Mama: We will get back to you by the end of the week. I hereby bring this consultation to a close.

Jinx: Uh, uh, uhhh... That's not how we end things, Over!

Mama: Jinx, you drive a hard bargain and I love you to bits. Now come in from the fire escape. Over and Out.

The End