

Director  
by  
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INT. SIXTH GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

Rows of children write in their journals. The whiteboard displays a prompt: "What did you do this summer?"

CLARK (11, shaggy hair) hunches over his desk. On his paper festers a single written sentence, "I moved here."

Further down the page, he doodles. Adventurers battle monsters, ninjas scale the margins with grappling hooks, a brave KNIGHT fights a DRAGON.

Clark feels a hand on his shoulder. It belongs to MS. PANELLA (early 30s, warm demeanor).

MS. PANELLA

Clark, you're going to have to write more than that.

Clark curls his shoulders to conceal his drawings.

CLARK

Sorry.

Ms. Panella grants him a sympathetic smile and continues on.

Clark's eyes drift down to the front zipper of his backpack. He surveys the other children in the room and quivers as he reaches in to pull out a fistful of INVITATIONS. He raises his hand.

MS. PANELLA

Clark?

CLARK

I have something to share with the class.

MS. PANELLA

Sure, Clark, come up front.

Clark shuffles to the front of the classroom with his eyes glued to his feet.

CLARK

It's my birthday next week and I want you all to come.

Clark lurches his arm forward, revealing the thick stack of invitations to the class. He opens his mouth to speak but notices AIMEE (11, with striking eyes) peering up at him. He freezes as other children in the class eye each other and snicker in embarrassed confusion. Ms.

Panella marches forward to rescue Clark and grabs the invitations. She distributes them.

MS. PANELLA

That is so nice, Clark! Everyone,  
thank Clark for inviting you all to  
his birthday party.

CLASS CHORUS

(disjointed)

Thaaanks, Clark!

One child rolls her eyes at Aimee. Aimee returns to her work and snickers.

Clark returns to his seat, head hung low to avoid eye contact.

INT. CLARK'S DINING ROOM - DAY

Clark is alone. He wears a party hat. Birthday decorations surround him. Goodie bags slump before each chair at the dining room table, untouched.

Clark's MOM and DAD enter with a cake, brandishing wide fake smiles. They sing "Happy Birthday" and place the cake in front of Clark. It's too large for the three of them.

Clark's eyes turn red and puffy as he stares at the cake. Mom and Dad turn to each other with a concerned look. Clark sobs.

MOM

Honey, I'm sorry.

DAD

Hey I have a great idea! Let's get  
in the car and-

Clark leaps out of the chair and sprints up the staircase. The door to his room slams. Mom and Dad slump down into seats, defeated. Mom plucks a candy from a goodie bag and pops it into her mouth.

INT. CLARK'S BEDROOM - DAY

Clark's body splays across his bed, face-down in a pile of pillows. Muffled sobbing comes from beneath. He lifts himself up to witness the dark wet imprint of tears and snot he left behind. His feet hang over the bed as he stares down at his shoes, wiping his nose, face red.

Clark reaches into a drawer in his desk to produce a SKETCHBOOK. He flips through pages as we see drawing after drawing: heroes, imaginary worlds, magical weapons. He stops at a particular drawing, similar to the one he drew earlier in class. A strong hero brandishes a sword and charges towards a large dragon.

A KNOCK comes from his door.

CLARK

Go away!

There's no response. Clark inches off the bed and opens the door. A BIRTHDAY PRESENT awaits him in the hall. He grabs it and retracts back into his room.

The tag on it reads, "Love, Mom and Dad". He unwraps the gift to find a VIDEO CAMERA.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

With one hand, Clark films with the camera. With the other, he animates a collection of action figures.

CLARK

(as the Queen)

Oh brave, Sir Knight, you must save the Village! Kromlin the Destroyer has brought fire raining down from the sky!

(as the Knight)

Never thou worry, O Majesty! For I shall slay thine beast almighty.

A pair of legs enters the camera's viewfinder. Clark looks up to see GRAHAM (10, small, eccentric) beaming down at him.

GRAHAM

Cool camera!

CLARK

You're in my shot.

GRAHAM

Oh sorry! I just saw you making a movie over here and I wanted to help.

CLARK

Do you know me?

GRAHAM

I saw you move in down the street.  
Sorry I couldn't make your party.  
Piano recital. But I know a bunch  
of kids in the neighborhood if you  
want to use real people instead of  
action figures!

Clark's gaze drifts over to Aimee on the other side of the  
playground.

CLARK

Who else in the neighborhood?

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Clark slides the DRAWING into Aimee's field of view. There's  
an extra character now: a female archer.

AIMEE

What's that?

CLARK

(pointing to the archer)  
That's you. I'm making a movie. I  
want you to be in it.

AIMEE

(unimpressed)  
What kind of movie?

Clark fumbles with his hands, unsure of where to put them.

CLARK

A dragon-fighting movie. See, this  
dragon here? You're gonna be the  
archer.

AIMEE

Who's going to be this knight?

CLARK

(shrugs)  
Somebody.

AIMEE

Who's going to be the dragon??

CLARK

A bunch of people!

Clark catches himself in his excitement.

CLARK (cont'd)  
(nonchalant)  
We're gonna make a big dragon  
costume.

AIMEE  
We?

CLARK  
Me, Graham, the Chandler twins,  
people from the neighborhood.

Graham waves at them from across the room. Aimee waves back,  
but returns to Clark.

AIMEE  
I have dance rehearsal after  
school. I won't have time to be in  
your movie.

CLARK  
We can film it on weekends?

AIMEE  
I go hiking with my family on  
weekends.

Aimee's head dips back down into her journal. Clark pulls  
the picture away and folds it up.

CLARK  
Ok.

Clark starts back for his desk.

CLARK (cont'd)  
Graham was really hoping you could  
help us.

Aimee turns to see Graham finishing his writing prompt with  
his tongue sticking out.

EXT. CLARK'S BACKYARD - DAY

A handful of children armed with goofy props await Clark's  
orders including Aimee, arms crossed. Clark motions from  
behind a camera.

CLARK  
Everyone get into their places for  
the knighting scene!

SANDY and ERIC CHANDLER (10, twins), dressed as a knight and queen respectively, saunter in front of the camera.

CLARK (cont'd)  
Wrong costumes. Again.

The twins realize their costumes are reversed and exchange outfits.

CLARK (cont'd)  
Action!

SANDY  
Oh brave, Sir Knight, you must save  
the Village! Kromlin the Destroyer  
has brought fire raining down from  
the sky!

ERIC  
Never thou worry, O Majesty! For I  
shall... umm.

CLARK  
(script in hand)  
Slay thine bea-

ERIC  
Slay thine beast almighty!

Eric kneels down as Sandy knights him with a plastic sword.

CLARK  
Exit Queen, enter Wizard!

Graham's head perks up at "wizard," finger still in his nose. He flicks the booger behind his back, hoping no one noticed.

GRAHAM  
Here be me pot o' potions! I'll  
make ye an elixir to end that  
fiendish beast.

Graham stirs air in a large metal bucket with a stick.

CLARK  
Cut! Ok, the next scene-

RONNIE and AMANDA (11, matching friendship bracelets) pull themselves out of the haphazard makeshift dragon costume.

RONNIE  
When does our scene happen? It's  
like a billion degrees in here.

CLARK

The next scene is going to be where  
the Knight meets the Archer, so-

The children ignore Clark as they joke, giddy from their  
recent performances. Clark's

shoulders sag and he buries his face down in his script.  
Aimee notices, and her arms plant themselves on her hips.

AIMEE

Hey, guys! Shut up!

The kids stiffen immediately. Clark and Aimee share a look.  
Clark nods.

CLARK

The Knight is going to meet the  
Archer, but they think they're  
enemies at first.

AIMEE

But then they make a pact to slay  
the dragon together.

CLARK

You already read the script?

AIMEE

It's not that long.

CLARK

(clearing his throat)  
Action!

Aimee and Eric fight in a crudely choreographed battle  
scene. Aimee wins and offers Eric a hand up. They lock arms,  
forming a union to fight the dragon. Aimee shoots Clark a  
smile. Clark peers out from behind the camera to smile back.

EXT. CLARK'S BACKYARD - LATE AFTERNOON

Clark's Mom brings out cookies for the group. Aimee and  
Clark eat together on the grass. Mom and Dad look out the  
window at the kids and Clark enjoying themselves. They both  
FIST PUMP when no one's looking.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

A handful of kids stand around waiting, some with handheld  
games, some kicking rocks. A GROANING KID hangs his head,  
groaning to the heavens in boredom.



Clark rustles through his backpack to pull out the SCRIPT. He sits on the ground and flips through pages until CLYDE (12) notices.

CLYDE  
Hey, you're the sixth grader making  
the movie!

CLARK  
(clutching the script)  
How do you know that?

CLYDE  
We know Aimee.

Clyde motions to BART (12, large for his age) who looks up from his DS and nods with middle-school coolness.

CLYDE (cont'd)  
There's gonna be a dragon?

Clark returns to his feet. His posture is significantly more confident.

CLARK  
Yeah, knights and queens, too. Me  
and Graham are-

CLYDE  
Wait, Graham Anderson? Dude, that  
kid is a total spaz.

CLARK  
He's not a spaz. He just skipped a  
grade.

CLYDE  
Yeah, skippers are weirdos.

BART  
(not looking up from his  
DS)  
Mhmm. Real weirdos.

Clark looks back down at his script.

The bus churns and wheezes up to the stop.

GROANING KID  
Finally!

Clark boards, deep in thought.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Clark and Graham are surrounded by a horde of classmates in front of the lockers.

CLARK

And then the Knight is gonna finish  
the dragon right through his skull!

Clark motions a sword going up into his mouth and out the top of his head. The kids recoil in disgusted awe.

Aimee walks by and watches Clark pantomime the script. She waves and continues into the classroom.

GRAHAM

Yeah and I'm a wizard who gives the  
Knight the potions he needs for the  
dragon! I cast spells over it like  
boom! bam! bzap!!

Graham is way too into it. He fumbles as he acts out his spell casting. The crowd of kids stare at him in silence. Kids walking down the hall glance at him out the corner of their eyes.

CLARK

We better get to class.

Clark bolts into the classroom.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Clark doodles after finishing the morning's writing prompt. Graham saunters up to him and slides a sheet of paper into his field of view, a list of nonsensical phrases.

GRAHAM

I had a few ideas for some other  
cool spells the wizard could cast!

CLARK

Graham, I don't know if-

Graham begins his wizard dance.

GRAHAM

Bajank! Malakadora! Hargathra mori!

CLARK

Graham, stop!

Graham deflates.

CLARK (cont'd)  
These ideas are stupid.

Clark thrusts the sheet back at Graham who sulks back to his seat. Clark refocuses. We see that Aimee witnessed the whole thing.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Clark devours his lunch as he writes notes in the margins of the script. Aimee sits down in front of him with her lunch.

AIMEE  
That really wasn't cool what you  
said to Graham earlier.

CLARK  
Huh?

AIMEE  
He wanted to help, and you were  
acting like a jerk!

CLARK  
His ideas were lame. I didn't want  
them in my movie.

AIMEE  
I guess, but you could've been way  
nicer.

CLARK  
I don't get why this is such a big  
deal.

AIMEE  
Because he's your friend.

CLARK  
Look, can you just leave me alone?  
(gesturing to the script)  
I'm busy.

There are daggers ready behind Aimee's eyes. She gets up and leaves. Clark's gaze follows her out the door.

EXT. WOODEN PLAYGROUND CASTLE - LATE AFTERNOON

CLARK  
And... action!

The Knight and Archer run headfirst at the Dragon which jiggles and flounders about, eventually falling over. Ronnie and Amanda climb out of the costume bickering.

RONNIE

I'm the head, so I attack them first!

AMANDA

No way! What kind of dragon attacks headfirst? They should get hit with a tail swipe.

RONNIE

That's stupid. Dragons breathe fire from their head.

AMANDA

As a last resort, you idiot!

Clark trudges between them, CAMERA in hand.

CLARK

Both of you are totally screwing this whole thing up! This isn't rocket science. It's a dragon fight!

Graham wobbles over.

GRAHAM

Hey, what if-

CLARK

(without looking at him)  
Shut up, Graham. I don't want to hear another dumb idea.

Aimee grabs Clark's wrist.

AIMEE

This isn't fun anymore, Clark. It's just a movie.

CLARK

Hey, let go!

AIMEE

No, you're acting ridiculous. Give me the camera!

Aimee and Clark wrestle with the CAMERA.

CLARK  
It's my movie and it's my camera!  
Cut it out!

They pull back and forth and back and forth until Aimee lets go. The CAMERA flies through the air. The kids all stare in horror. It falls to the ground. It breaks.

The kids are silent. Clark's eyes are wide in terror. He sinks to his knees and inspects the damage. Tears stream down his face.

AIMEE  
(slowly approaching Clark)  
Clark. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I  
didn't mean to.

CLARK  
Leave me alone...

AIMEE  
This is totally my fault. My  
parents can pay you back. Get you a  
new one.

Aimee places her hand on Clark's shoulder.

CLARK  
I SAID LEAVE ME ALONE!!

Clark whips around to shove Aimee's hand off him. As he turns and pushes away, he ELBOWS Aimee in the face. Aimee collapses onto the grass. Clark freezes at the realization of what he's done.

Aimee picks her head up and puts her hand to her nose. It's BLEEDING.

CLARK (cont'd)  
(reaching towards her)  
Aimee, I...

AIMEE  
Get away from me, you FUCKING  
WEIRDO!

The word "fuck" is received with gasps from the other kids.

The word "weirdo" echoes in Clark's ears. A chorus of whispers surround him.

AMANDA  
He hit a girl...

Clark backs away. The tears come faster. He trips over the CAMERA and falls down. He scurries to his feet, grabs the broken chunks, and runs.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - EVENING

Clark runs and runs and keeps running. He runs into his house's driveway.

INT. CLARK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Clark sprints past his parents and up the stairs, slamming his door shut.

INT. CLARK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Clark is curled up under his covers, clutching the pieces of the CAMERA tightly. His parents enter.

MOM  
Sweetie, what's wrong?

Clark pulls the covers tighter. We hear muffled whimpering. Mom inches toward him, but Dad lays a hand on her shoulder as if to say, "Not right now." They exit the room, and close the door.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Clark curls over his journal entry and drawings. His head is down low so he doesn't see the other kids whispering to each other and looking at him.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Clark eats alone. He sees Aimee's back far across the cafeteria. She doesn't turn around.

Graham wobbles past his table. He turns to invite Graham to sit, but he keeps walking. Clark stares back at his cold lunch.

From across the cafeteria, Ms. Panella has seen the exchange.

INT. CLARK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Clark flips through his sketchbook. He comes across the drawing of the Dragon, Knight, and Archer. He glances at the BROKEN CAMERA on his dresser.

Clark fumbles with the camera until he dislodges the SD card, still intact. He inserts it into his computer and pulls up his editing software.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Clark shoots his hand into the air, clutching a DVD.

MS. PANELLA  
Yes, Clark?

CLARK  
I finished my movie. I would like  
to show it to the class.

The kids around him glance at each other and murmur. Aimee glares. Graham stares down at an unanswered writing prompt.

MS. PANELLA  
Everyone, hush.  
(grabbing the DVD)  
Sure, Clark.

Clark stands up to the front of the class. He's frozen again, but then he clears his throat.

CLARK  
Originally, I wanted to make a  
movie about a brave knight fighting  
a dragon. Y'know, like medieval  
warrior stuff. Knights of the Round  
Table.

The attention of the classroom weighs on him. Graham refuses to look at the screen, focusing intently on his blank sheet of paper.

Clark catches Aimee's gaze. He can feel the daggers.

CLARK (CONT.)  
But I changed my mind.

Graham's head perks up.

Ms. Panella presses play on the DVD. Clark's dragon movie doesn't play. Instead, a montage of the b-roll footage is shown on screen.

Sandy and Eric roll around on the grass in the wrong costumes. Graham's wizard hat falls over his eyes and they all start laughing, including Graham. Aimee makes a funny face at the camera. Amanda and Ronnie dance together as a separated top and bottom of a dragon. Graham tests out his made-up spells on the dancing dragon.

Sandy and Eric lean back in their chairs, soaking in the stardom. Amanda and Ronnie air-five when the class laughs at the dancing dragon. Aimee's desk neighbor nudges her in the shoulder when she appears. Clark's hands sit deep in his pockets as he watches from the front of the classroom.

Graham smiles and returns to his paper to write more spells.

Clark and Aimee lock eyes.

THE END