

The Tyler Problem

Written By

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FADE IN

BLACK SCREEN

The sound of running water is heard and someone is washing their hands.

INT. HOUSE - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

A hallway. The sound continues and then the sound of a door opening is heard. Suddenly, a boy steps into the center of the frame with his back to the camera. From what we can see, he has messy-ish hair and a simple t-shirt on. This is BAILEY. As Bailey walks throughout the house, the camera follows him from behind.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He sits at the kitchen table. At the table is his brother, sister, mom, and DAD. Dad, sporting reading glasses and reading the newspaper, looks up.

DAD
Good morning, son.

BAILEY
Morning, Dad.

Bailey pours himself some cereal as the table is quiet for a moment.

DAD
I went to parent teacher conferences last night.

BAILEY
Yeah?

DAD
Yeah.

Bailey starts to eat as the conversation falls quiet again.

DAD (CONT'D)
Talked to some of your teachers.

BAILEY
Yeah?

DAD
Yeah.

Again, it's quiet. Then:

DAD (CONT'D)

Ms. Walleston had a few things to say about you.

BAILEY

(without looking up)

Good or bad?

DAD

Both.

Bailey looks up for a second and makes eye contact with his father.

DAD (CONT'D)

She says you've been fooling around a bit too much in class.

BAILEY

Dad, you don't understand, she's literally the meanest teacher in the school and--

DAD

Bailey, I don't care. All I'm saying is it's your senior year. You can have fun, but you better not get yourself into trouble.

Bailey nods, defeated, and looks down to his cereal for a brief moment.

MOM

(trying to lighten the mood)

What are you doing this weekend, sweetie?

BAILEY

Not sure. Steve called me, asked if I was around. He's coming to pick me up soon.

The camera cuts to a wide shot of the family eating quietly.

EXT. FRONT YARD - LATER

The door opens and Bailey walks to the pickup truck parked in front of the house. The camera still has not cut yet. Bailey reaches the truck and opens the door. The camera follows him into the car.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Bailey gets in and the camera follows. As Bailey reaches to shut the door, the camera pans over to a kid wearing a snapback cap. This is STEVE.

STEVE
Hey, what's up?

The camera pans back to Bailey, who just shut the door and is turning to Steve.

BAILEY
Nothing much, how about you?

STEVE
Oh, same old. How's Elizabeth?

BAILEY
Good, we just—WHOA!

Something in the backseat catches Bailey's eye as he cuts himself off mid-sentence and turns to the back. The camera follows his eyesight and shows the backseat: someone is lying down, motionless.

STEVE
(seeing what Bailey is
freaking out about)
Oh. THAT. Right.

BAILEY (CONT'D)
Dude...WHAT—

STEVE
So remember last night how we were
supposed to have that bro hiking
trip?

BAILEY
(still in shock)
Is that Tyler?!?!

STEVE
(speaking quickly)
Well it ended up being just me and
Tyler, and we were pulling pranks
the whole day, embarrassing and
scaring each other but...

BAILEY
(after waiting a beat for
a response)
But what?!

Steve simply focuses on the road and says nothing.

BAILEY (CONT'D)
(sarcastic)
Well did he die of fright?!

STEVE
What?! No! I tied his shoelaces
together and he fell down the
rocks! He didn't die of
fright...geez don't be ridiculous.

BAILEY
(calmly)
Oh, well that changes things.

Bailey looks back at the body quickly and then back at Steve.

BAILEY (CONT'D)
Are you positive he isn't dead?

STEVE
Oh no, he's definitely dead. Not of
fright though.

Bailey puts his head in his hands.

BAILEY
You need to drop me off.

STEVE
What? Dude, you gotta help me or
else I'll be labeled as a suspect!

BAILEY
Well you did do it, so yeah,
labeling you as a suspect would be
on the right track.

STEVE
Dude. Listen, we're bros. You gotta
have my back here.
(seriously)
Think of what Tyler would want.

BAILEY
Tyler is dead, our best friend is
dead, man!

STEVE
(upset)
Hey, don't disrespect the deceased,
(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

dude, Tyler's in the car, don't talk about him like that.

BAILEY

Forget it, man. Drive me home.

STEVE

Listen, I hate to tell you this, but you don't have a choice. Think. If i get caught and you knew, you're screwed. We have to screw Tyler, bury him, and save ourselves. Or you could turn me in and screw me over. So who would you rather screw over—your living best friend, or your dead one?

EXT. STEVE'S HOUSE - DAY

Steve's house is in view, and the truck is seen parked in the driveway. From a distance, Steve and Bailey can be seen in the doors of the truck.

BAILEY

How do you even bury a body?

STEVE

We can figure it out, bro! Been diggin holes in my backyard since like age 4, no difference.

PORCH ACROSS THE STREET

An OLD MAN sits in a rocking chair and squints at the scene across the street.

TRUCK

Steve, nervously checking over his shoulders, stands next to Bailey, who is reaching into the truck.

STEVE (CONT'D)

C'mon, man, hurry up.

Bailey struggles as he pulls out the body with a white sheet over it. He fumbles with it as he tries to hand the upper portion to Steve.

BAILEY

(whispers)

Can you not nag me while I'm carrying a dead body?!

The camera cuts back to the wide shot of the driveway to see the two hauling the dead body around the house.

STEVE
 (whispers)
 I'm sorry!

PORCH ACROSS THE STREET

The old man squints at the scene across the lawn.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. STEVE'S BACKYARD - SUNSET

Two shovels pack the last of the dirt onto the pile in the backyard. Steve steps back and wipes the sweat off his brow as the two stare at what they have just done. There is a long beat of silence before Steve nonchalantly raises his fist to Bailey, awaiting a fist bump, still looking at the crime scene. Bailey turns and just stares at the fist for a moment before turning back to the hole.

BAILEY
 (quietly)
 Yeah, probably not appropriate
 right now.

Another moment of silence.

STEVE
 When you think I can get that sheet
 back?

BAILEY
 What sheet?

Steve looks at the mound of dirt.

BAILEY (CONT'D)
 Is this a joke?

STEVE
What? No, man, I'm serious! I need
 that sheet back, my mum'll kill me
 if she finds out it's gone! Plus,
 it's white, I don't want it to
 stain or anything. You know how it
 is, trying to wash white sheets.

They stare at each other.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. STEVE'S BACKYARD

Steve and Bailey are digging. Steve throws his shovel down and reaches into the hole to pull up the white sheet.

STEVE
(to himself)
How am I supposed to sleep in this
tonight?

BAILEY
(sighs)
Alright, let's do this again.

STEVE
(abruptly)
Wait...we should say something,
shouldn't we?

Bailey stares for a moment.

BAILEY
Huh, yeah, you're probably right.

They stand together, clasp their hands, close their eyes, and bow their heads. There is a moment of silence.

STEVE
(keeping his eyes shut)
Did you wanna start?

BAILEY
(doing the same)
You wanted me to start?

They begin to talk over each other, keeping their eyes shut.

STEVE
Only if you wanted—

BAILEY
Well I just figured since you
brought it up—

STEVE
I don't have a preference, just was
giving you—

BAILEY
But I mean if you don't want to—

A phone rings. They both open their eyes, look to each other, and then look to the hole. They hop in after a moment

and grab the ringing phone.

BAILEY (CONT'D)
 (panicking)
 What do we do?

STEVE
 Answer it!

BAILEY
 Are you sure?!

STEVE
 Yeah!

BAILEY
 What do I say?!

STEVE
 Say hello! I don't know!

BAILEY
 (answering phone)
 Hello?

GIRL (O.S.)
 (through phone)
 Hey, Tyler?

Bailey pulls the phone down from his face and stares at Steve with a look of panic, and then without hesitation chucks the phone into the woods and gets out of the hole.

STEVE
 DUDE!

BAILEY
 I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY!

STEVE
 EVEN I WOULDN'T DO THAT!

BAILEY
 YOU GOT ME INTO THIS AND I DON'T
 KNOW WHAT I AM DOING!

STEVE
 WELL IF THEY FIND THAT PHONE WE ARE
 DEAD!

BAILEY
 SO WHAT DO WE DO?!

They stare at each other for a moment with frustrated confusion before calming down and getting the same idea.

BAILEY (CONT'D)
Bury the phone.

STEVE
Bury the phone.

They get up and go towards the trees.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. STEVE'S BACKYARD

The two boys are sitting in lawn chairs, sipping lemonade, watching the unfinished business. After a moment:

STEVE
Should we finish?

BAILEY
Might as well.

They get up and begin to pile the dirt back into the hole. This goes on for a bit before the old man from the porch comes into frame between them. He watches silently.

OLD MAN
What are you boys doing?

STEVE
(childish)
Burying a dead body, what does it look like, old man?

OLD MAN
(plainly)
In your backyard.

Steve stops in frustration and turns to the old man.

STEVE
Well, yes...

Steve trails off. His face gives the impression that he is mentally questioning himself, and then he crosses his brow and scratches his head.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE

The two boys slam the body down and stand over it.

BAILEY
So what do we do with it?

STEVE
Well we can't bury him inside
either.

There is a moment of silence as Steve moves into the kitchen
and Bailey crouches down over the body.

BAILEY
(examining body)
I know what we can do, every great
serial killer does it. We gotta
chop him up. You have a saw, or a
knife or something?

STEVE
(from kitchen)
I've got a butterknife.

BAILEY
(not looking up)
Yeah, I think that'll work.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE

The two boys are on their knees, Steve crouched over the
body and Bailey hunched over him. Steve comes up into frame
and we see he is holding a butterknife.

STEVE
Can't get anything.

BAILEY
(taking the knife)
You're not doing it right. Like
this.

Bailey leans over and starts to scrape away at the body.

STEVE
(taking the knife back)
No, see, you've gotta be more at an
angle. Watch.

Steve returns to his spot on the body, attempting to cut
through the flesh.

BAILEY
(grabbing the knife back)
(MORE)

BAILEY (CONT'D)

No, it's more of a slicer, you
really gotta-

Bailey starts to thwack at the body with the knife, using it
almost like a hammer.

STEVE

(grabbing the knife)

WHOA WHOA WHOA.

They stare at each other.

BAILEY

What?

STEVE

Don't be so aggressive.

BAILEY

Steve, we are chopping him up.

STEVE

Yeah but he is still our friend.

BAILEY

(frustrated)

There's gotta be a quicker, more
humane way of doing things.

STEVE

(looking up, excited)

Let's burn him.

BAILEY

Burn him?

STEVE

Yeah, that's a thing isn't it?

BAILEY

Hm, yeah I suppose so. Let's do it.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE

The two boys are hunched over the body, and Steve slowly,
carefully passes a lit match to Bailey. As Bailey goes down
to light the body, it goes out.

BAILEY

(quietly)

Pass me another one.

Ever so slowly and dramatically, Steve takes out a match, strike it, and carefully passes it to Bailey.

Bailey takes it and slowly lowers it to the body, but nothing lights and it just goes out. Bailey straightens up.

BAILEY (CONT'D)

Dammit.

STEVE

Why won't it work?

BAILEY

I dunno.

STEVE

Maybe we need to kindling.

BAILEY

Ah, true.

SMASH CUT TO:

The two boys are stuffing logs and twigs and paper under the body—which lays in the middle of the floor still. After placing the last few bits of kindling under the body, the boys get exchange a glance and Steve takes out the matchbox, grabs a match, strikes it, and hands it to Bailey. Bailey slowly reaches down but the match goes out as it makes contact with the wood.

STEVE

Dude! You can't just light the wood!

BAILEY

Why not?!

STEVE

Have you ever made a fire?

BAILEY

Yeah, I've made, like, so many!

STEVE

Really? Cuz everyone knows you have to light the paper first, bro!

BAILEY

Yeah, I know!

Just then, the door opens. STEVE'S MOM walks in.

STEVE'S MOM
Hey, boys, what are you up to?

STEVE
We're trying to start a fire, mum.

His mom pays no attention to them and continues to the kitchen.

STEVE'S MOM
(nonchalant)
Okay, just not in the house,
sweetie.

The boys look to each other.

STEVE
(frustrated)
Ughhhhh, damn, we gotta move all
this.

BAILEY
Yep.

STEVE
Well...that's a hassle.

Just then the phone rings.

BAILEY
Is that...

STEVE
Did we...

They fiddle with Tyler's body before pulling out his phone.

BAILEY
Shoot. You answer it this time.

STEVE
(pulling back)
What? No!

BAILEY
Dude!

STEVE'S MOM (O.S.)
(yelling)
Honey, is that the phone?

Fed up, Bailey answers. He doesn't say anything.

RICH (O.S.)
 (through phone)
 Hello?...Hello?...Tyler?...Tyler,
 it's me, Rich. Mom's pissed, just
 so you know. You were supposed to
 call when you got back to Steve's
 house. Hello?...You better not be
 drunk again, mum's gunna kill you.
 I'm on my way to Steve's right now
 to pick you up, and if you aren't
 there, get there. You're screwed,
 Ty.

Rich hangs up. Bailey looks at Steve with pure fear.

STEVE
 What? Who was it??

BAILEY
 Dude...Tyler's brother is on his
 way here right now, holy mary
 mother of God what the hell are we
 supposed to do, Steve?! We're
 SCREWED!

STEVE
 (yelling)
 Alright, let's not panic!

BAILEY
 WHAT DO WE DO?!

STEVE
 CALM DOWN!

BAILEY
 We need someone else's help, man!
 We can't do this by ourselves,
 we're not cut out for this!

STEVE
 Like who?! My mom couldn't burn a
 fire.

BAILEY
 We're not getting your mom to help
 us cremate our best friend!

STEVE
 (oblivious)
 Agreed!

BAILEY

We need a stranger, an outsider.
What about that man across the
street?!

STEVE

The old man who saw us burying
Tyler? He probably already forgot-

BAILEY

Which means he'll forget again.
Dude-

(grabbing Steve's
shoulders)

We need his help.

They get up and the camera follows them as they out the door
and

EXT. STEVE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

run across the street to the

PORCH ACROSS THE STREET - CONTINUOUS

Out of breath, they stop and bang on the door. An old lady
answers.

OLD LADY

Hello-

STEVE

(gasping for air)

Hi, is what's his face home?

OLD LADY

(confused)

Wh-

STEVE

Alright, listen, lady, we ran into
a bit of trouble and your husband,
the one who lives here, saw us-

BAILEY

(also out of breath)

-Saw us trying to...bury a body
and-

STEVE

-cuz we killed our best friend
Tyler-

BAILEY

-He killed our best friend-

STEVE

-And so we tried to bury the body,
and your husband there saw us and
we realized it was a poor decision
to bury a dead body in my backyard,
so we decided to burn the body-

BAILEY

-We gotta burn the body so the cops
don't find the evidence-

STEVE

-And we can't do it on our own, we
really need your husband's help on
this one or else we'll be screwed
and-

OLD LADY

Oh pipe down, you crazy kids. Come
on inside.

Steve and Bailey, clueless, walk in.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The old lady shuts the door behind them and ushers them into
the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

OLD LADY

I'm so glad you guys are here!

Steve and Bailey walk into the kitchen and stop dead in
their tracks upon glancing at the floor: There lies the
corpse of the old man.

OLD LADY (CONT'D)

I have a couple of shovels in the
back, you two sit tight and I'll go
grab them.

She leaves. Steve and Bailey give each other a horrified
look.

FADE OUT