

"Small Potatoes"
an original screenplay by
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FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

The film opens in black and white. A poster board and pinhole star field is the backdrop for the opening credits. 1950's 3D sci-fi type graphics are used for the titles. At the close of the credits, a flaming meteor, obviously flown on a wire, roars across the screen.

WIPE TO:

EXT. BERNARD'S HOUSE - MORNING

Still in grainy, scratchy, black and white.

A "Brady Bunch" ranch-style is nestled in the middle of a suburban-like New Hampshire neighborhood. Quiet until...

The cheesy special effect meteor screams across the sky and explodes in Bernard's backyard.

TITLE OVER:

LATE SPRING 1963

EXT. BERNARD'S HOUSE - DAY

Black and white continues.

A montage with BERNARD AS A TODDLER and BERNARD'S FATHER, a necktie-wearing, pipe-smoking, pocket-protector of a dad with a capital "D".

Bernard's father examines the meteor and the torn earth path it has cut in the otherwise pristine lawn.

Bernard as a toddler pokes at the smoldering meteor with a twig. When the twig ignites, the boy's father takes it from him.

BERNARD'S FATHER
(shaking his head)
No, no, no.

He uses the burning twig to light his pipe.

Bernard's father scratches his head as he sizes up the situation.

Bernard as a toddler tugs at a melting pink flamingo in the patch of over-turned and scorched earth. His father lifts the boy away from trouble.

BERNARD'S FATHER (CONT'D)

No, no, no.

Bernard's father scans the neighborhood street full of immaculately groomed lawns. Then, a view of his own stretch of torn yard.

Bernard as a toddler blows dandelion fuzz at the meteor.

BERNARD'S FATHER (CONT'D)

No...

His father is about to scold him, but stops when he sees...

Where each fluffy seed lands, a plant sprouts immediately to the delight of the child.

This gives dad an idea and he smiles himself. We practically see the light bulb appear above his head. In fact, if we do actually see the light bulb, that's okay too.

Garden tools and seed packets are thrown to the ground.

Bernard's father raking and planting, turning the meteor site into a prize garden.

In a series of shots, the garden grows before our eyes.

Bernard as a toddler is yanking on a weed with all of his might. When it finally gives way, he goes flying back then...

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. BERNARD'S HOUSE - DAY

In glorious Kodachrome color.

The garden is full of huge healthy plants. A twelve-year-old BERNARD, in the middle of it all, has just landed on his butt with uprooted weeds in hand -- a MATCH-CUT on the action he started as a toddler pulling weeds in the previous scene.

Clearly, he is the same boy, now older, on the cusp of being a teenager.

TITLE OVER:

SUMMER 1974

PEACHY

(off screen)

C'mon. If we're gonna go, let's go.

A change in angle and we see two other boys, PEACHY and DEWEY, obviously waiting on Bernard. Both appear to be roughly the same age as Bernard.

Behind all three in the yard is a canvas-style "pop-up" camper trailer.

BERNARD
 (throwing down the
 weeds)
 Alright. Hold on. If I don't finish
 weeding, my dad won't let any of us
 sleep out.

EXT. DIRT PATH SHORTCUT - AFTERNOON

Peachy, Bernard and Dewey are walking along. Bernard is a perfectly average boy in every way. Dewey, smaller, is clearly a tag-a-long. Peachy, though a child of the mid-seventies when long hair reigned, sports a buzz-cut, thus earning his nickname.

BERNARD
 C'mon Dews, it ain't a sleep-over
 unless you get junk food. Besides,
 you know you'll want something later.

PEACHY
 You got any money, Dewey?

DEWEY
 Nope.

PEACHY
 I'll float you.

DEWEY
 Thanks.

EXT. THE DAISY MARKET - AFTERNOON

The Daisy Market is a tiny, independent, grocery store of the type that used to exist in every neighborhood before 7-Eleven and gas station convenience marts drove them out of business. Bernard leads the way into the store.

INT. THE DAISY MARKET - CONTINUOUS

Bernard is in front of a large, glass counter trying to choose among a wide variety of 1970's novelty candy -- Pixy Stix, Razzles, Pop Rocks, and Turkish Taffy.

OFF-SCREEN, Peachy and Dewey break into squeals of laughter as Bernard wheels around to see what they are doing.

He sees them over at a magazine rack, looking at skin magazines. The cover of the magazine Peachy is holding has a picture of a large-breasted girl with black boxes neatly positioned over the dirty parts.

DEWEY

Oh man, if I was a girl, I'd just sit there and play with myself all day long.

PEACHY

You don't have to be a girl to sit around and play with yourself all day...

EDDIE BAZUKAS, the proprietor, emerges from the back room. He's a true "Hey you kids, get off my lawn" kind of guy.

PEACHY (CONT'D)

...ain't that right, Mr. Bazukas?

EDDIE

This ain't no library. You kids gonna buy something?

PEACHY

(to Bernard about the magazine)

I definitely think we should get one of these tonight.

BERNARD

No way, not after last time. Remember "small potatoes"?

EDDIE

Snotnose brats.

EXT. DIRT PATH SHORTCUT - LATER

Bernard, Peachy, and Dewey are on their way home. They've already broken into the brown paper bags containing their munchies.

BERNARD

Wait, tonight's Friday night.

DEWEY

And?

BERNARD

Alright, "Creature Feature's" on and I think they're running "The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms".

Peachy reaches behind himself as if to scratch an itch and then begins pulling his shirt out of his jeans.

PEACHY
(bringing a small
package out from
behind his back)
Cool. You know, I can't think of
anything quite as relaxing as a good
flick on the tube and a couple of
smooth cigars.

The package Peachy has produced is a box of White Owl cigars.

DEWEY
Holy smokes! Ceeegars!

BERNARD
(NOT pleased)
When did you swipe those?

PEACHY
What?

BERNARD
It's not your house we're sleeping
over.

PEACHY
So?

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - CONTINUOUS

The conversation continues as the boys short-cut across the school playground. They scramble through, under, and over playground equipment as they talk.

BERNARD
So if you wanna do something that's
gonna get my dad pissed off at me,
you could at least ask me first.

PEACHY
Look, we're not sleeping over your
house, we're sleeping over in the
camper in your backyard. Your dad's
never gonna know.

BERNARD
He's gonna know. Remember "small
potatoes", Dewey?

DEWEY
Oh man, that's right.

PEACHY

What?

DEWEY

It's unreal. If you do anything to make trouble in that camper, I don't care how quiet you are or how late at night it is, Bernard's dad always knows about it the next morning.

BERNARD

He calls it "small potatoes". Bad stuff that's no big deal, but it adds up...

DEWEY

...like if you do stuff when you're a kid that gets you grounded, you'll keep going and do stuff as a grown-up that'll get you sent to jail.

PEACHY

Oh man, and you bought that?

DEWEY

It's like he's got the camper bugged or something.

PEACHY

Well, you just don't have any experience. Tonight, I show you how it's done.

Peachy performs an acrobatic flip off of a swing and lets loose with a werewolf howl.

EXT. BERNARD'S BACKYARD - EVENING

The camper is about halfway between the house and the garden. The boys race around the side of the house, laughing and shoving and enter the camper.

INT. CAMPER - NIGHT

The camper has a cooler, a sink, small cabinets and a miniature dining table which folds down into a bed. The camper also has AC power running to it from the house. A small, black and white television set is plugged into one of the outlets.

Bernard is unzipping the window flaps, Dewey is unrolling his sleeping bag and Peachy removes a support pipe which allows him to fold down the dining table into a bed.

BERNARD

Better stash those cigars good.
Sometimes my father comes out to see
how we're doing before he goes to
bed.

PEACHY

Think he'll find 'em if I stick 'em
in my Fruit of the Looms?

BERNARD

I'm not smoking anything with a skid
mark on it.

EXT. CAMPER - NIGHT

DEWEY

(off screen)

Man, my mom hates the smell of cigars.

Off screen laughter.

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

Under a moonlit sky, the sounds of the night can be heard.
But there are other sounds as well -- low, unnatural, yet
somehow organic sounds. The sounds of the garden growing.

INT. CAMPER - NIGHT

"Creature Feature" is ending and the credits are crawling up
the screen. Empty potato chip bags and soda cans are strewn
about the camper. The Coleman lantern is hissing in the
corner, its filament bags glowing white. Dewey is in his
undies, brushing bar-b-que potato chip crumbs out of his
sleeping bag.

PEACHY

Well, how about now?

BERNARD

(looks briefly out
the window toward
the house and then
back)

OK, but we have to be quiet.

PEACHY

I'll try not to puff too loud.

BERNARD

And it's got to be outside.

Dewey stops brushing the crumbs.

Peachy digs the cigars out of his sleeping bag.

Bernard gets up and lowers the volume on the TV set.

Dewey dims the Coleman lantern and the hissing gas noise tones down to an even softer volume.

The three boys head for the camper door.

EXT. CAMPER - CONTINUOUS

Save for the gentle chirping of crickets, the neighborhood is quiet.

Bernard looks to the house and the windows are dark.

A soft breeze causes the curtains to dance ever so lightly.

BERNARD
(finger to lips)
Shhhh.

As the narrow camper door opens, the aluminum hinge lets out a screech that the boys are sure will wake the dead. They calm down and walk out onto the grass.

PEACHY
(hissing)
Where?

BERNARD
Over behind the garden.

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

The boys walk slowly and carefully to the end of the garden. The grass is tickling their feet and they are marveling at the atmosphere of the night which surrounds them. In the distance, a door slams and a dog barks. Dewey rubs his arms to rid them of the goose-flesh which has been caused by the slight chill in the air. As the boys reach the end of the garden...

DEWEY
Man, I really gotta tinkle.

At "tinkle", Bernard and Peachy crack up.

BERNARD
(motioning to a large
globular bush)
Go ahead and "tinkle" behind the
bush.

PEACHY
 (working at the cigar
 package)
 I don't have any matches.

BERNARD
 There's some blue-tips back at the
 camper in the drawer under the sink.
 And for god's sake, be quiet.

Peachy leaves Bernard standing by himself. The night sounds continue. Bernard has now begun to rub his arms as he feels the chill.

Suddenly, something makes a loud rustling noise in the garden. Bernard sucks in a breath. He crouches down slightly and peers into the plants, straining his eyes in the dark.

A hand touches his shoulder. Bernard jumps convulsively.

DEWEY
 Where's Peachy?

BERNARD
 Went to get matches. I wish he'd
 get back; I heard something in the
 garden.

The rustling in the garden is much louder this time.

DEWEY
 Is that what you heard?

PEACHY
 What who heard?

Peachy comes plowing through the garden toward the other two boys. He's carrying a brown paper bag.

PEACHY (CONT'D)
 (to Bernard)
 When was the last time you went
 camping?

BERNARD
 You mean camping, camping? We haven't
 been all summer. Why?

PEACHY
 The camper's been parked here in
 your yard all year?

BERNARD

A guy from my dad's work borrowed it to go to the mountains a couple weeks ago. Why? What've you got?

PEACHY

You guys aren't going to believe this one. You're not going to believe it!

From the bag, Peachy begins pulling out dark brown bottles. He hands one to both Dewey and Bernard. Bernard smells his...

BERNARD

Smells like plastic.

(dawn)

You got these out of the cooler!

DEWEY

Oh man, brewskies! Sitting there the whole time and we didn't even know it.

BERNARD

They're going right back.

PEACHY

Are you crazy?

BERNARD

Are you? If my dad finds these missing...

PEACHY

They're not even his. You said that guy borrowed the camper.

BERNARD

It doesn't matter whose they are; when he finds them missing...

PEACHY

He doesn't even know they're there.

Bernard looks to Dewey for support. Dewey just shrugs.

DEWEY

If your dad know about 'em, I don't think he would have left them there with us sleeping out.

PEACHY

If we put these back in the cooler and your dad finds them and takes

(MORE)

PEACHY (CONT'D)
 them, we're going to kick ourselves
 for the rest of the summer.

Bernard is on the brink. Peachy senses this and pushes...

PEACHY (CONT'D)
 It's a once-in-a-lifetime shot.

Peachy leans in to whisper in Bernard's ear. It's an
 impossibly CLOSE SHOT.

PEACHY (CONT'D)
 (the effect is more
 that this thought is
 running through
 Bernard's head rather
 than Peachy speaking
 it)
 Sure, they'll be other beers when
 you're older, when you're legal...
 But those'll never taste as sweet as
 these.

Peachy has hit the mark.

BERNARD
 What are we gonna do with the bottles
 afterward?

PEACHY
 (smiling)
 We'll just chuck 'em down in the
 empty field. Now c'mon chum, it's
 the boys' night out.

Still smiling, Peachy holds up one of the bottles and there
 is a ZOOM IN to an EXTREME CLOSE-UP of the dark brown glass
 with the moon sparkling off of it.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GARDEN - LATER

The boys are sitting at the base of the garden and drinking.
 Peachy is lying flat on his back, stargazing.

Dewey finishes a last gulp and is studying the inside of his
 beer bottle with great interest.

PEACHY
 Slow down or you'll have to "tinkle"
 again.

Bernard begins peeling shreds of label off and dropping them to the ground. After a moment, he realizes what he is doing and it dawns on him that his father may find the scraps of paper in the morning, so with some effort, he concentrates on gathering the mess.

There is a loud rustling in the garden which sounds like three or four small animals running simultaneously. The boys are sobered out of their buzz by a jolt of adrenaline.

BERNARD

It's back!

The rustling stops for three seconds and then heads straight for them.

PEACHY

(getting to his feet)

C'mon!

Peachy and Dewey scramble toward the camper. Bernard leaps up and then dives back down to retrieve the bottles before running himself.

Halfway back to the camper, Bernard trips over something and pitches forward, the bottles go flying but don't break.

He looks back to see that he has tripped over Dewey, who is sprawled out behind him.

DEWEY

Help me! I think I got cord or barbed
wire or something caught around my
leg!

Bernard crawls back and discovers that a vine is wrapped tightly around Dewey's leg. He tries pulling it free but it won't give. The rustling in the garden sounds closer.

Bernard brings his foot around and drives the lower part of the vine into the dirt, breaking it in two. Bernard helps Dewey to his feet and they run to the camper.

INT. CAMPER - CONTINUOUS

Bernard and Dewey burst through the open door. Peachy is standing there clinging to a baseball bat he has found.

PEACHY

What happened?

BERNARD

(helping Dewey sit on
the bed)

Dewey tripped over a plant. I think
whatever it was, is still out there.
You think it's a raccoon?

Dewey begins examining his leg. The physical damage is
minimal, he is mostly just shaken-up.

PEACHY

I don't know but it scared the piss
out of me.

DEWEY

Me too.

BERNARD

Oh man, I dropped the bottles out
there.

PEACHY

Give it a couple of minutes. We got
all night and I ain't going back out
there 'til I'm sure...

Peachy stops short. He is staring intently at something
just over Bernard's shoulder. What he sees is just outside
the camper window. It is a snakelike vine/root of some sort
and raised up off the ground, cobra-style, about six feet.

Bernard turns to see what Peachy is staring at.

Dewey hasn't noticed what's going on; he's still fussing
with his leg.

Bernard is in awe of the shape outside the window. As if
hypnotized, he slowly reaches a hand up toward it. His hand
inches up at the double-fist-sized blob the thing has for
head.

Before Bernard touches the thing, though, Peachy springs
forward, pushing the other two back. He swings the bat in a
home run arc against the fabric camper wall and billowing it
out enough to make solid contact with the head of the thing
on the meaty part of the bat.

The head obliterates and small pieces go spraying all over
the yard. Some fragments stick to the nylon mesh window and
some stick to the bat.

Peachy examines the bat for a moment, then turns to the
others.

PEACHY (CONT'D)

It's a goddamn potato!

DEWEY

(laughing nervously)

That's how he always knew what we did. That's how he knew. The potatoes in his garden were spying on us.

Another potato appears in the window on the opposite side of the camper. Blank potato eyes stare in at the boys.

The potato eyes blink and the boys recoil.

Peachy steps forward and swings again. The vine falls limply to the ground once the potato head has been smashed.

Peachy turns to look at the others.

PEACHY

C'mon.

EXT. CAMPER - NIGHT

Bernard opens the camper door. Peachy and Dewey are right behind him. Bernard and Dewey have also found weapons now, Bernard, a large French knife, and Dewey, the pipe support from under the dining-table-turned-bed.

The boys look out and see the lawn covered with writhing vines/roots. Bernard leads the way out.

After a few steps, Bernard, still in his bare feet, steps on a vine. It pulses under his foot and he jumps away. The vine has sensed his touch, though, and it begins wrapping itself around his leg.

Bernard slashes the vine with the knife and it falls to the ground, mere vegetable matter now.

Peachy and Dewey have been watching this, but now they see that vines are closing on them as well. Like chain gang members busting rocks, they swing their weapons downward, smashing potato heads.

EXT. CAMPER - LATER

On and on the boys are still swinging. Potato heads are smashing. Bernard is cutting up pieces of vine and throwing them in the field at the edge of the garden.

The impossibility of what they are doing combines with the beer they drank and it almost becomes a game.

Peachy swings low, golf-style. Potato fragments splatter all over Dewey's back.

PEACHY

Fore!

DEWEY

(digging potato
fragments out of his
collar)

Cut the crap!

Peachy snorts, trying to hold back his laughter.

EXT. GARDEN - LATER

Bernard has finished with the vines and is going after the beer bottles to bring them inside.

While picking up the last bottle and putting it in the paper bag, he notices the granddaddy of all the vines.

It is as thick as his arm and pushing a potato head the size of a small pumpkin.

It edges toward him and he steps out of its path. It turns in his direction, still trying to advance.

Bernard looks down at the beer bottles he is holding and then to the eyes of the potato. The CAMERA PANS from the bottles to the eyes of the potato as Bernard makes the connection.

BERNARD

All witnesses are to be killed.

He squats down and cleanly slices the vine just behind the head, using the French knife.

INT. CAMPER - LATER

Peachy and Dewey are just putting their weapons away as Bernard comes through the door carrying the knife, the bottles, and the granddaddy potato head.

He sets the bottles back in the cooler, closes the lid and sets the potato on top.

BERNARD

We'll get rid of the bottles tomorrow.

DEWEY

What've you got there?

BERNARD

(to Dewey)

Open the bottom left cabinet under
the sink.

Dewey opens the cabinet and pulls out a deep fryer. Bernard begins slicing the potato into rectangular wedges.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Put it in the sink and plug it in.

INT. CAMPER - LATER

EXTREME CLOSE-UP of the hot oil as raw, sliced, steak fries are dropped into it. The oil boils furiously.

INT. CAMPER - LATER

The boys are kicked back, finishing up eating the steak fries and puffing on cigars.

PEACHY

(blowing a smoke ring)

Ahhhhh.

BERNARD

This is what I call a smooth ceegar.

EXT. CAMPER - LATER

The CAMERA starts on the camper, but DOLLIES toward the garden.

The boys can still be heard talking inside. Their voices are echoing strangely through the night air.

PEACHY

(off screen --

finishing a joke)

So, he says to the guy, "Do you smoke
after sex?". And then the guy says,
"I don't know; I never looked."

The sound of the three boys laughing.

DEWEY

(off screen)

My old man says there's nothing like
a smoke after a good meal.

PEACHY

(off screen)

He's got that right.

BERNARD

(off screen)

You know what? That small potatoes
stuff is a lot of crap.

The CAMERA comes to rest in the middle of the garden.

Featured in the shot are ears of corn.

As Bernard finishes his last line, the stalks lean closer to
the camper and the husks open and fold in the fashion of a
hand being cupped to an ear in order to make out a faint
conversation.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

(off screen)

What really matters is that you don't
get caught.

ROLL CREDITS over the ears of corn.