

THE APPLE STORY

By Marnie Mitchell-Lister

An impoverished woman tells her son a bedtime story while her husband faces danger in order to get them food.

FADE IN:

EXT. TENT CITY - NIGHT

A sea of tents, some store bought, some make-shift.

There are no campers here. The HOMELESS live in this depressing display of despair.

A dining area made of crates and a boy's bike secured to a tree are just outside a neatly kept nylon tent. A light glows inside.

INT. NYLON TENT - NIGHT

A decent attempt has been made to make this cramped space homey.

EMMA BROWN (25), bandanna over mussed hair, warm eyes illuminated by a dim lantern, smiles at her son NICKY (5), fighting sleep atop a small air mattress.

His eyes plead with her. She caves.

EMMA

Fine. One more story, then you have to go to sleep. What do you want to hear?

NICKY

(smiling victoriously)
The apple story.

EMMA

I don't think that's a good bedtime story, Nicky. Especially tonight.

NICKY

It has a happy ending, Mom. It's perfect for tonight.

EMMA

How did you get so smart?

Pushing aside Nicky's hair, Emma leans down, kisses his forehead.

EMMA

Okay, then. The apple story it is.

Nicky nuzzles into his pillow, watches his mother adoringly.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

A male figure stands before a large, fenced-in orchard. Signs bolted to the fence; "RED'S APPLE ORCHARD", "NO TRESPASSING" and "BEWARE OF THE DOGS".

This is JASON BROWN (25), caring eyes, weathered, worried face. Empty sack over his shoulder, he walks toward the fence.

EMMA (V.O.)

One night, little Annie Mills grabbed her cape and snuck to the orchard to pick apples for her sick grandmother.

As Jason walks, he morphs into a little girl, ANNIE MILLS (10). Cape around her shoulders, basket in hand.

The fence disappears. It's replaced by a wall of bushes with razor sharp thorns that look like teeth.

EMMA (V.O.)

Venturing into the orchard was very dangerous, but all Annie could think about was helping her grandmother.

Annie pulls a pair of shears from her basket and clips a path through the bushes. Branches HISSING as they're cut.

Carefully she scoots through to the other side.

EXT. APPLE ORCHARD - NIGHT

A full moon hangs overhead.

In front of Annie are rows and rows of apple trees. Their crooked branches cast scary shadows, like arms reaching to grab her.

Startled, she turns to leave but the path she cut suddenly grows back together, sealing her in.

Eyes wide with fear, Annie starts toward the trees. She tries to reach the hanging apples, even jumps, but they're too high.

Further down the row there's a tree with low branches, boasting an abundance of apples.

She heads toward it, eyes darting nervously.

The knots on tree trunks begin to look like eyes. Her body tenses as she feels their angry stare. Her breath quickens. She walks faster.

As she approaches the abundant tree, the branches begin to sway.

The closer she gets, the faster they move.

Annie stops, watches in horror as the branches thrash and whip. One branch reaches for her, grabs her basket away.

She screams, tries to run but a root pops up from the ground. She trips and falls.

The root winds around her ankle. She kicks it off with all her might and quickly crawls to safety.

A branch tosses the basket. It lands next to her. She grabs it and sprints away.

Annie desperately searches for a way out.

She's stuck in a maze of trees, every turn, every path, every row looks the same.

Hopeless, she lets out a cry. It echoes, sounding more like a HOWL. More howls follow. Howls so loud she covers her ears.

Then suddenly, they stop.

She begins to walk. Leaves crunch under her feet, sounding louder than normal.

In the darkness ahead, something moves. Annie stops. She gasps in terror as glowing eyes appear.

Then SNARLS and more glowing eyes surround her.

WOLVES!

Desperate, Annie spins around. More wolves! They close in.

She spots a small opening in the base of a nearby tree.

With no time to spare, she sprints toward it.

As she takes off, so do the wolves.

Their white teeth gnash wildly as they chase Annie.

Cape waving behind her, the wolf closest to her snaps at it, tearing a piece right off.

She arrives at the tree, quickly ducks inside the opening.

A wolf grabs her basket. She fights him for it.

Finally, she lets him have it.

INT. APPLE TREE - CONTINUOUS

From the darkness, Annie watches in horror as the wolf rips the basket apart.

Just as she catches her breath, another wolf shoves his head into the opening. His face comes dangerously close to hers.

She cries out as his razor sharp teeth nick her arm.

Backed up as far as she can, the wolf's teeth get closer with every attempted bite.

She looks up. The tree is hollow and a dim light shines from above.

Using decayed, jagged wood for footing, she scoots herself up to the opening.

EXT. APPLE TREE - CONTINUOUS

A small hole leads out to a long branch.

Annie's head appears. Holding her breath, she manages to squeeze through the hole.

Seated on the branch, she watches below as the wolves fight over the remaining pieces of the basket.

An apple dangles next to her. She plucks it, tosses it down, clunking a wolf on the head.

She chuckles, but her smile disappears as the branch starts to CRACK. It lowers a few inches. Cracks again.

The wolves look up.

The branch begins to break away. Annie grabs for the branch above and pulls herself up just as the branch falls.

Safely seated on the next branch, she lets out a sigh of relief until that branch begins to crack.

On the ground below, the wolves circle as they watch her. Their snarls sound like evil laughter.

She heads up to the next branch. Immediately it begins to crack.

The higher she climbs, the more unstable the branches are.

At the top, she has no other choice. She crawls toward the end of the branch. The further out she gets, the more it cracks.

She reaches for a branch on the next tree but it's too far away.

CRACK! The branch bends, almost breaking.

Annie slides, loses her grip. She falls.

Seconds later, she lands with a THUMP on a pile of canvas bags.

On her back, she looks up. Her eyes widen. She quickly rolls off the bags as the branch comes crashing down, just missing her.

Annie catches her breath, stands up and dusts herself off.

She looks around and realizes, she's on the other side of the bushes. She smiles proudly.

EXT. CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER

Annie fills a canvas sack with apples from the fallen branch.

She smiles, flings the sack over her shoulder.

As Annie walks away, her body morphs back into Jason, full sack over his shoulder.

EMMA (V.O.)

Annie made it out, and because of her
bravery, her grandmother got better.

INT. NYLON TENT - CONTINUOUS

Nicky sleeps.

EMMA (V.O.)

(whispers)

And they lived happily ever after.

Emma smiles as she pulls the covers snug under Nicky's chin.

She grabs the lantern and heads for the tent opening.

EXT. NYLON TENT - NIGHT

Emma sits on a crate, lantern next to her.

Worried, she searches the darkness.

Footsteps approach. Hopeful, nervous, she watches until Jason appears.

Relieved, she runs to him but stops short when she sees his tattered shirt and bloody bite mark on his arm.

He smiles reassuringly.

JASON

It's nothing. Only one got me this
time. A small price.

He shows her the full sack of apples.

She kisses his cheek and they enter the tent.

FADE OUT.