

SCAREGROUNDS

an original script
by Morgan Cooper

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FADE IN:

EXT. NORTHWEST COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS - NIGHT

The Fairgrounds are alive with activity as CARNIES prepare the final details. The Octopus, Roller Coaster, and contest booths are set.

Golden eyes watch from the shelter of the woods. There is movement in the bushes. The eyes blink yellow, blink, and are gone.

EXT. WINDING WOODED ROAD - DAY

Amber, filtered sunlight sneaks through the swaying branches of tall fir trees that line the road.

An SUV bounces and sways on the uneven surface.

EXT. MANNING HOUSE - DAY

STEPHANIE MANNING, a tall, pretty blonde, late 20's, grabs a grocery bag from the SUV, closes the door with her hip.

STEPHANIE

Come on Jake! We have a lot to do before the festival tonight. Jacob, baby, be careful with the pumpkin.

JACOB MANNING, soft blue eyes, 3, tugs on his jacket. He purses his lips as he carries the pumpkin in his little arms.

JACOB

Ok mommy. This punkin' is heavy.

Stephanie turns and tousles his blond hair.

STEPHANIE

That's because it's almost as big as you, champ. You can put it down on the porch, baby. Right there.

Jacob places the pumpkin next to the door and pats its round surface a few times for good measure.

INT. MANNING HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Jacob, dressed in a green Robin Hood costume, sits on the couch, takes a bite of string cheese.

TAYLOR MANNING, 8, huge blue eyes, long blonde curls, twirls in her ballerina costume.

TAYLOR

Mommy, can we go now? It's dark outside and we're supposed to meet up with Samantha at the fair.

Stephanie adjusts the skirt of her "Fairy Princess" outfit. She smiles at herself in the mirror as she presses her lips together to smooth out her lipstick.

STEPHANIE

Pretty soon, honey, we're waiting for your dad to get ready. Did you get out the sleeping bags for your sleep over with Sam?

TAYLOR

Yep. They're in my room. I'll let her use the one with Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs on it.

PETER MANNING, early 30'S, appears dressed as Frankenstein's Monster, complete with bolts sticking out of his neck.

Mouths open wide, the kids stare at the big monster as he walks stiff legged toward them.

PETER

I'm going to get you!

His arms reach out for them, awkward and slow.

The children giggle and squirm as he gets closer. His hands grab for them, but miss.

PETER (CONT'D)

GRRRRRR... Ok little ballerina and Robin Hood, everybody to the car.

EXT. NORTHWEST COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS - NIGHT

Pumpkin lights splash an orange glow over everything. The air is filled with a mixture of LAUGHTER and SCREAMS.

A live band plays "Monster Mash" from the center stage.

GHOULS and GOBLINS of all ages are everywhere.

A big banner reads: "NORTHWEST COUNTY'S 89TH ANNUAL HAUNTED HOUSE, PREPARE TO BE SCARED!"

The Manning family arrives.

SAMANTHA, 10, tall, smiles a black, toothy grin, and adjusts her pointed witch's hat.

She waves her tickets in the air to get Taylor's attention.

SAMANTHA

Come on, Taylor...can you?

TAYLOR

Mom, can I go with Sam in the Haunted House? Pretty please?

Stephanie and Peter look at the girls. Their eyes plead for approval.

STEPHANIE

Yes, honey. But are you sure you won't be scared? Remember last year? I thought we'd go together.

Taylor puts her hands on her hips, rolls her eyes.

TAYLOR

Mom... I'm not a baby anymore. Last year I was only seven and now I'm eight. I promise I won't be scared.

PETER

What a difference a year makes...eight is certainly all grown up.

Peter and Stephanie exchange looks. Peter nods his approval.

STEPHANIE

Ok...but wait for me at the exit. Girls...No exceptions.

Taylor dodges under the rope, takes Samantha's hand, as they give their tickets to the JIMINY CRICKET ticket master at the door.

Peter picks Jacob up, plants him on his shoulders.

PETER

I'm going to take Robin Hood over to the shooting range and see if we can win a prize.

Stephanie laughs, as she blows the boys a kiss.

STEPHANIE

You boys have a good time. I'll wait for the girls and catch up with you later.

EXT. BACK OF THE OLD POLE BUILDING - NIGHT

Two DARK FIGURES, black hoods hide their faces, huddle at the back of the building in quiet conversation. One of the figures takes a puff of his cigarette and flicks it off...it glows red on the ground.

They open a door and disappear inside.

INT. HAUNTED HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Strobe lights create fractured light, as Taylor and Samantha stare at their figures in distorted mirrors.

They laugh at their reflections, posing and making faces. Slowly they move off through the dark, narrow corridor.

TAYLOR

This is goofy, not scary.

Samantha reaches out and touches Taylor's nose with her rubber witches finger.

SAMANTHA

(gravely witch's voice)

If I offered you a juicy apple you'd eat it, wouldn't you, my pretty?

Taylor rubs her nose.

TAYLOR

Na-uh. No, I wouldn't. I don't like apples, not even when they're coated in caramel. So there!

A horrific SCREAM followed by BANGING sounds in front of them.

The girls jump and laugh nervously. PEOPLE move past them to the right.

Samantha tugs Taylor's arm.

SAMANTHA

Let's go this way, there's less people.

TAYLOR

Maybe we should stay where the people are...

SAMANTHA

You just said it wasn't scary. Come on...we'll be fine.

A SKELETON drops in front of them. His bones SHAKE and RATTLE, before he disappears. Up ahead, a cauldron boils.

INT. WITCH'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Smoke drifts from the bubbling cauldron.

A WITCH flies across the room on a broom as she laughs wickedly.

The girls SCREAM.

EXT. NORTHWEST COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS TARGET BOOTH - LATER

Peter and Jacob shoot rubber darts at metal targets shaped like rabbits. Jacob sits in Peter's lap. Peter takes aim.

PETER

Okay Jacob....nice and steady, pull the trigger.

JACOB

POW! I got it, daddy...I got it.

A ringer goes off, lights blink and flash, "YOU WIN!"

Jacob, his eyes bright, picks out a shiny red top.

PETER

That's a cool top! I had one like that when I was your age. I'll teach you how to spin it when we get home.

JACOB

I want to win somtin' else daddy. I want to get a feesh'.

Jacob points to a booth lined with fishing poles. A sign reads, "Catch a Big One".

Peter smiles down at Jacob.

PETER

Ok son. Let's go catch a feesh'...but remember what happened to Caesar the goldfish last year?

JACOB

I know. But I promsi' to take care of him and not to drop ALL the food in the wadur'.

EXT. NORTHWEST COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS - FISHING BOOTH - MOMENTS
LATER

Excited, Jacob sets his red top on the ground, picks up a fishing pole. A magnet is attached.

A spindly fingered hand with sharp claws reaches for the top...it disappears.

INT. HAUNTED HOUSE - LATER

The girls hear ANGRY VOICES, CRIES. They stop, listen, then inch their way through the dark tunnel, to a curtain. They peek in the next room.

INT. HAUNTED HOUSE - COFFIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

DAMON, 16, dressed in black, his face painted in a distorted expression, holds duct tape in his hands.

DAMON

Just a little scared now, are we?
You'll remember this for a long time
I'll bet...I'll teach you to break
up with me.

FARRAH, 16, hands behind her back, duct tape over her mouth, cries. Tears roll down her cheeks. She lets out muffled SCREAMS as she tosses her head back and forth.

INT. HAUNTED HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The girls huddle close together. The white of Taylor's eyes are twice their size.

SAMANTHA

(whispers)
We've got to help her.

Taylor gulps. She pulls hard on Samantha's black cape.

TAYLOR

(whispers)
They'll hurt us. I'm a scaredy-cat,
just like my dad said.

SAMANTHA

(whispers)
We can scare the poop out of them,
Tater.

Samantha quickly puts her hand over her mouth, laughter in her eyes.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
We'll surprise them. I do it to my
brother and his friends all the time.
They're stupid boys...that's all.

INT. HAUNTED HOUSE - COFFIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CARTER, 16, wears a MICHAEL MYERS mask. He wraps Farrah's feet together with duct tape.

CARTER
You still want to stick her in the
coffin, Damon? That's pretty sick.

Farrah's body vibrates, fear in her mascara blackened eyes.

DAMON
She's super claustrophobic...aren't
you, pumpkin?

Damon puts his face close to Farrah's.

DAMON (CONT'D)
(whispers)
I want you to remember this
SCAREGROUNDS for a long time.

Damon makes a spooky, wicked LAUGH as he opens the coffin lid.

DAMON (CONT'D)
Come on. Help me lift her up, Carter.

They take her arms and legs, lift, roll her into the coffin. She lands face down. Damon shuts the lid.

INT. HAUNTED HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Samantha pulls free of Taylor, turns and looks into her big, round, eyes.

SAMANTHA
(whispers)
When I say...SCREAM at the top of
your lungs. You'll see...they'll
run. We have to do it now. Ready?
Set. Go!

Samantha pulls the curtain down.

INT. HAUNTED HOUSE - COFFIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Samantha races at the boys, covered in the black curtain. Her arms wave high above her head.

Taylor SCREAMS as she runs in manic circles around the boys.

DAMON

What the... Let's get out of here
before someone comes to save these
little brats.

CARTER

I'll second that.

Samantha pulls free of the curtain and wags her witch's finger
at the boys.

SAMANTHA

We're going to tell on you, stupid
boys! You're going to be in big
trouble before this night is through.

The boys scramble past the girls and disappear.

Samantha turns to Taylor with a glint in her eye.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

See...what did I tell you. Boys ARE
stupid.

The room glows red. The girls look at the coffin in the
middle of the room. Skulls and bats swing from the ceiling.

Samantha opens the lid.

Farrah has managed to roll over. She looks up. Her scared
eyes meet Samantha's smiling ones.

EXT. HAUNTED HOUSE - LATER

Stephanie searches the faces as they come out of the haunted
house. She looks at her watch.

STEPHANIE

Where are they...it's been too long.

She heads to the exit, looks for the attendant.

EXT. NORTHWEST COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS - NIGHT

Peter and Jacob laugh as they pull the fishing line up with
a sign attached to the magnet.

PETER

Let's see if we won. Cross your
fingers.

The sign reads, "PRIZE". Jacob claps his hands.

Peter and Jacob watch, as a small fish plops into a bag. Peter takes the bag with the goldfish.

PETER (CONT'D)
Get your top Jake and let's go.

Jacob searches the ground for the red top. His lips begin to quiver as tears swim in his eyes.

JACOB
My top is missin'.

Peter bends down, looks around. No top. He gives him a hug.

PETER
Don't cry son...it's okay. You've got a fish now. See?

Peter holds the fish up as Jacob wipes his tears away. He reaches, takes the bag in his small hands. The goldfish sloshes back and forth in the bag.

JACOB
Can we name him Caesar, daddy?

PETER
Of course we can...at least we won't forget his name.

They both laugh as they head to the Roller Coaster.

EXT. HAUNTED HOUSE - LATER

Stephanie stops the attendant at the exit of the Haunted House.

STEPHANIE
Excuse me. How long does it take to go through the haunted house?

The ATTENDANT #1, smiles at her.

ATTENDANT #1
Oh...fifteen to twenty minutes tops, why?

STEPHANIE
My eight year old daughter went in with a friend and it's been a lot longer than that.

Attendant #1 presses the button on his walkie-talkie.

ATTENDANT #1

Two missing girls in the house. Can someone run a check? Copy?

ATTENDANT #2 (O.S.)

Roger that but we had a mishap in the house. I think the girls you're talking about are on their way out right now.

Stephanie paces with her arms crossed.

EXT. NORTHWEST COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS - NIGHT

Peter and Jacob stand in line at the roller coaster with FRIENDS. They watch the people fly by on the ride.

Something furry, with a mask, runs past the ride and into the woods. Peter catches the movement.

Peter taps CULLY, early 30's, dressed in a pirate costume, on the shoulder.

PETER

Can you watch Jacob for a minute?

CULLY

Sure...no problem, what's up?

Peter looks down at Jacob.

PETER

Jacob, you stay here with Cully and Caesar. Just some masked bandits stealing from little kids.

Peter winks at Jacob, runs to the tree line, and disappears.

EXT. HAUNTED HOUSE - LATER

The door opens and Stephanie sees Taylor's anxious eyes.

Taylor runs to her mom. Her arms fly around her waist.

TAYLOR

MOMMY! We saved a girl in a coffin. She's clastra...of...ic'. These mean boys tied her up and put her in it. I thought they would kill us.

SAMANTHA

Taylor was very brave.

TAYLOR

No I wasn't...even I know that, Sam.

Stephanie circles both girls with her arms, hugs them tight.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

I know I said I wouldn't be scared,
but I was. Mom, I was really scared!
I SCREAMED my head off and the boys
ran away.

STEPHANIE

It's okay. You're safe now.

Stephanie turns to ATTENDANT #1.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Do we know who did this? Did they
get the boys?

ATTENDANT #1

They have two boys in custody. The
girl they put in the box used to
date one of them...imagine that.
We've called in the SHERIFF. He'll
make sure they get a good scare for
their behavior tonight.

STEPHANIE

Thank goodness. Thank you for all
your help.

She looks down at the girls who still hold her tight.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Come on. Let's go find the boys.
It's time to go home.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT - NIGHT

Peter moves fast, through the bushes. Golden eyes, like
reflectors, shine in the night.

PETER

I bet you pesky little creatures
have been stealing prizes. You just
can't resist shiny things.

He laughs as he reaches down, picks up a stick. The sounds
of the carnival are muffled by the trees.

Something GROWLS. Peter spins, a RACCOON shoots past him.
Another stands his ground, upright, his Raccoon hands, up
like a boxer.

Peter swings the stick in the air and hollers, as the raccoon
backs up, runs away.

He sees something sparkle on the ground by the tree. He moves closer and finds a shiny gold ring with a red stone, a blue satin first place ribbon and...a red top.

Peter smiles as he loads the treasures into his pocket.

EXT. NORTHWEST COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS - LATER

Peter walks out of the forest, back to the roller coaster. He wears a triumphant grin.

Jacob sits on the ground, his chin in his small hands. The goldfish, in the bag, sits on the ground in front of him.

PETER

Jacob! Look what I found.

Peter tosses the shiny red top in the air, catches it, bends down, the top in his hand.

Jacob's eyes light up when he sees the red top.

JACOB

Daddy you found it! How Daddy?

PETER

There were a couple of masked bandits in the woods.

Peter's big monster hands, make grabbing motions at Jacob.

Jacob giggles as he wipes slobber from his chin with the back of his tiny hand.

JACOB

Raccoonsn'?

PETER

Raccoons Jake...like the ones from the woods by our house. They liked your shiny top.

JACOB

Can we go tell mommy?

PETER

We sure can...but don't you want to ride the roller coaster first?

JACOB

Nah. It will make the goldfish sick.

PETER

Okay then little guy. Let's go find the girls.

EXT. NORTHWEST COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS - MOMENTS LATER

Peter sees a Fairy Princess, Ballerina, and Witch as they walk by the cotton candy booth. Taylor runs to her dad.

TAYLOR

Daddy! We saved a girl's life. She was stuck in a coffin. I was pretty brave.

PETER

You what? You were?

Peter looks at Stephanie with a puzzled look. She smiles.

STEPHANIE

I think that's a story for the ride home. What do you say we get going so we can make some yummy popcorn balls and have some hot chocolate?

JACOB

I like popcon' balls! Mommy...a raccoonsn' stole my new top, but daddy got it back. He scareded' the raccoonsn'.

STEPHANIE

What's this about? There's been a lot of excitement going on tonight. It must be the full moon.

She smiles at her young son.

JACOB

Mommmm'...we also got a new goldfish. See. Daddy won it for me.

Jacob holds the goldfish up for everyone to see.

JACOB (CONT'D)

His name is Caesar...just like the udder' one.

Everyone starts to laugh. Stephanie turns to Peter.

STEPHANIE

(whispers)

Poor fish...

Peter shrugs his monster shoulders as he slides his arm around her waist and gives her a kiss.

INT. SHERIFF'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

The boys sit in the back seat of the SHERIFF's car, next to the exit. They glare at Taylor and Samantha.

EXT. NORTHWEST COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS EXIT - CONTINUOUS

Taylor and Samantha stick their tongue's out at the boys as they walk by the car.

SAMANTHA

I told you boys are stupid.

TAYLOR

At least those boys are.

Taylor and Peter's eyes meet. Peter winks. Taylor smiles.

FADE OUT: