

Cumbara

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FADE IN:

EXT. PUMPKINTOWN, SOUTH CAROLINA - DAY

A rolling valley filled with bright autumn foliage surrounds the small town and adjacent farms.

EXT. FESTIVAL SITE - DAY

The festival takes place on a farm a few miles outside of town. A banner proclaiming "Welcome to the Annual Pumpkintown Festival" hangs over the entrance.

FARMERS offer hayrides through the giant maze in the acres of corn. VENDORS display their crafts, food and trinkets.

PUMPKIN FARMERS wait in their booths full of all things pumpkin: A carving area, pies, butter, bread and more.

FARM BOYS run the pumpkin bowling, pumpkin toss, seed spitting, and pumpkin catapult events.

Cars fill the parking area at mid afternoon.

EXT. PUMPKIN PATCH - DAY

A small pumpkin field hides inside a thicket of trees a short distance from the festival.

Indistinct NOISE from the festival fills the area.

A pumpkin moves. It struggles to get free of the vines.

SEEDSPITTER looks like a combination of an old leathery basketball and a pumpkin. Its face has flattened feminine features.

SEEDSPITTER

Trellum, come on now. Let's go see  
what all this racket is about.

Out of the vines jumps TRELLUM which looks like a large three-legged tarantula spider.

Seedspitter glows a subdued yellow in her bottom half. Trellum chirps urgently at her.

SEEDSPITTER (cont'd)

Don't worry Trellum. We'll be back  
before the blossoming.

Trellum scrambles underneath Seedspitter and balances her firmly on its back. They saunter toward the noise.

EXT. FESTIVAL SITE - DAY

Seedspitter and Trellum arrive in the late afternoon at a quiet corner of the festival.

SEEDSPITTER

Let's see if someone will talk with us.

Trellum chirps nervously.

MOLLY, a ten year old girl, sits by a table with a handwritten sign: "Molly's Jewelry." Her slight build makes it easy for customers to pass her and her stand.

SEEDSPITTER(OS)

What is all this?

MOLLY

Who said that?

SEEDSPITTER(OS)

Down here.

Startled, Molly jumps back. Her eyes center on a strange basketball-sized pumpkin smiling at her.

MOLLY

Muggins! Heel!

MUGGINS, a large playful mutt, runs to Molly's side. He sniffs Seedspitter and Trellum then ignores them. Molly relaxes.

MOLLY (cont'd)

He likes you. Hi, my name is Molly.

Trellum chirps a greeting.

SEEDSPITTER

I'm Seedspitter. And this is Trellum. We have no idea what this gathering is all about...

MOLLY

This is something we do here in Pumpkintown at Halloween. There are games, things to eat--

SEEDSPITTER

--So its a celebration?

MOLLY

Yup. My mom and dad work here every year. This is my jewelry stand...

She gestures toward the stand filled with poorly made items.

MOLLY (cont'd)

I don't sell much cause it's not that good.

SEEDSPITTER

They're beautiful...

MOLLY

No, they're really not. It's okay. I'll be better when I'm older. But thank you for saying so.

SEEDSPITTER

Molly, my home is nearby. All this noise and activity has me worried it'll be trampled.

MOLLY

People don't come to this corner very often. It should be okay. Can I see your home?

Trellum chirps.

SEEDSPITTER

I know Trellum. Time to go. You too, Molly. A short trip for you.

The group heads into the cornstalks.

EXT. SWAMP - DAY

A damp and dark area not far from the festival.

BRAMBLETHORN, a swamp scarecrow, stands atop an earthen mound. Instead of straw, he consists of briars, thorns and other swampy stuff. Quite ugly.

In a deep voice, Bramblethorn yells at SNIPE, a large rat.

BRAMBLETHORN

Snipe, of all the days you can't find Seedspitter! I ought to--

Bramblethorn kicks Snipe across the mound with a thud. Snipe brushes off and casts a dark look at Bramblethorn.

A rat lieutenant approaches Snipe and whispers in his ear. Snipe's whiskers quiver as he receives the report.

                  SNIPE

          We found Seedspitter. She's talking  
          to a girl near the festival.

                  BRAMBLETHORN

          Talking? Mm. That can't be good.  
          Let's go introduce ourselves.

EXT. FESTIVAL SITE - DAY

Seedspitter, Trellum, and Molly wade through the cornstalks on the way to Seedspitter's home. Muggins bounds ahead.

Muggins yelps. Molly runs.

                  SEEDSPITTER

          Let's go Trellum!

Trellum and Seedspitter rush after Molly.

EXT. OLD WELL - DAY

An old well with crumbling stonework sits in a small clearing in the trees.

Molly freezes at the edge of the clearing.

Bramblethorn holds a struggling Muggins over the well.

                  BRAMBLETHORN

          Hello. My name is Bramblethorn. I'm  
          a friend of Seedspitter. Well,  
          actually more of an acquaintance--

                  MOLLY

          --Blah, blah, blah. Let go of my  
          dog. He hasn't done anything to  
          you.

Muggins whines as Bramblethorn tightens his hold.

                  BRAMBLETHORN

          You and your dog should go back to  
          the festival. Snipe, where are you?

Snipe crawls out of the well followed by dozens of rats.

SNIPE

Bramblethorn, you promised us  
cumbara pumpkins, not a girl and  
her pup.

Muggins whimpers as Seedspitter and Trellum enter the clearing.

Trellum attacks the rats. It twirls like a small whirlwind sweeping the rats out of the way. The rats scurry away.

                  BRAMBLETHORN

You have been warned.

Bramblethorn drops Muggins into the well.

                  MOLLY

No!

Trellum springs into the well. Molly hurries to the well and looks down, Trellum and Muggins hang just below the rim of the wall.

Muggins stiff legs against the side of the well hold them up until Molly can pull him out.

                  BRAMBLETHORN

No matter. Tonight will be the end  
of the cumbara... and it will be  
glorious.

Bramblethorn laughs. He then shortens himself into a prickly pile of briars and scuttles away.

                  MOLLY

Gross. What was that all about?

                  SEEDSPITTER

Come with us and I'll tell you the  
story of the cumbara.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT

The moonlight reflects off of the swamp water. Once again, Snipe and Bramblethorn stand on the earthen mound.

                  SNIPE

Do you think Seedspitter suspects  
trouble tonight?

BRAMBLETHORN

She hasn't got a clue.

SNIPE

I wonder what cumbara tastes like?  
I love pumpkins. But what swamp rat  
doesn't?

BRAMBLETHORN

Snipe focus and follow the plan.

Bramblethorn vanishes into the darkness. Snipe stares after Bramblethorn and heads in the opposite direction.

On the other side of the swamp, hundreds of rats jostle and fight. The skirmishes stop when Snipe appears and stands on his two rear haunches. His fat belly jiggles as he talks.

SNIPE

Brothers and sisters! Tonight we  
feast on cumbara. The tastiest and  
liveliest of all pumpkins.

The rat pack shout approval as they swarm out of the swamp toward the festival.

EXT. PUMPKIN PATCH - NIGHT

The moonlight shines on the secluded patch of pumpkins. Molly paces while Trellum and Seedspitter sit nearby. The festival noise fills the night.

MOLLY

So let me get this straight. Number  
one. You're not really a pumpkin.  
You're a cumbara. You're the last  
one of your kind.

SEEDSPITTER

Number two. A long time ago the  
Cherokee embraced us as friends.  
Not much is remembered before that.

MOLLY

Number three. The blossoming is  
tonight and you have to be here in  
your patch.

Molly bounces and catches Trellum like a rubber ball. Trellum chirps with delight.

SEEDSPITTER

Number four. Every cumbara has a  
Trellum as a protector and helper.

MOLLY

Anything else? Oh yeah, Snipe and  
Bramblethorn are like your sworn  
enemies--

Molly catches Trellum and puts it next to Seedspitter.

SEEDSPITTER

Bramblethorn's kind are dark  
creatures who have always pursued  
us.

MOLLY

Look, I'm only ten years old. I  
don't know what to do. I think my  
parents will be able to help us.

SEEDSPITTER

You already know what to do. Stay  
and help.

MOLLY

No, we need real help. I'll be  
right back. Promise.

Molly exits. Muggins follows with a whimper.

Seedspitter glows a brighter yellow than before.

SEEDSPITTER

Oh dear. Trellum follow her. Make  
sure she's safe. Ask Tiberius if  
he'll take you.

Trellum twitters and tweets in concern.

SEEDSPITTER (cont'd)

So you keep telling me. The  
blossoming will wait for a while  
longer. Hurry back.

Trellum mimics the hoot of an owl. TIBERIUS, a large barn  
owl, swoops in and picks up Trellum.

A few moments later, Bramblethorn strides into the clearing.

BRAMBLETHORN

I thought they'd never leave.  
Friends, always running off when  
you really need them.

SEEDSPITTER

Anything I can say that will soften  
your heart?

BRAMBLETHORN

Nope. Never had one.

Bramblethorn picks up Seedspitter and holds his thorny hand  
over her mouth. He and Seedspitter melt into the night.

EXT. FESTIVAL SITE - NIGHT

Molly and Muggins crash through the cornstalks and enter the  
festival area. The celebration has taken on a garish  
carnival atmosphere. Gas generators provide light. PEOPLE  
drink pumpkin ale, eat and play games.

SEEDSPITTER

Molly. Help! Trellum--

Molly looks around and doesn't see Seedspitter anywhere.

MOLLY

She's nearby Muggins. Find her!

Muggins barks and races to the corn maze. Molly attempts to  
follow but becomes lost. She returns to the main festival  
and continues to look for Seedspitter.

MOLLY (cont'd)

Think Molly. Think. What did  
Bramblethorn say? It would be  
(imitating Bramblethorn's deep  
voice) glorious!

Molly looks everywhere. Every pumpkin looks like  
Seedspitter.

Molly focuses on the:

-- Carving table. A gleeful CARVER inserts a shiny, sharp  
knife into a pumpkin.

-- Juicing table. A YOUNG WOMAN laughs as juice bursts all  
over her from a pumpkin being squeezed in the pumpkin press.

-- The seed table. A HUSKY MAN rips the guts out of a  
pumpkin to get to the seeds.

-- Pie table. A SERVER uses an oversize knife to slice the  
pies. Several PEOPLE eat pie from paper plates.

MOLLY (cont'd)  
OMG! We're cannibals.

Molly's attention turns to the catapult.

MOLLY (cont'd)  
That's it! Bramblethorn would love  
the catapult.

Molly dodges through the crowd to the catapult. She sees the yellow glow of Seedspitter in the ammunition pile of pumpkins.

Molly grabs the cumbara.

MOLLY (cont'd)  
You're okay. I gotcha. How much  
time before the blossoming?

SEEDSPITTER  
It's almost time. Is Trellum with  
you?

MOLLY  
No. He might be with Muggins in the  
maze.

SEEDSPITTER  
Then have these farm boys help you  
turn the catapult around so it  
fires over the trees by my patch.

MOLLY  
But you'll be squashed!

SEEDSPITTER  
The blossoming is also the  
beginning of my next life. It was  
always going to be this way Molly.

MOLLY  
I figured. Doesn't mean I have to  
like it.

She commands the farm boys gawking at the pumpkins launched from the catapult.

MOLLY (cont'd)  
Okay boys! Let's turn this thing  
around and shoot one above the  
trees.

The farm boys scoff at the ten year old girl.

MOLLY (cont'd)  
 This is a special pumpkin. It's got  
 fireworks inside. See the glow?  
 It's going to go off in...

SEEDSPITTER  
 Five minutes.

The farm boys hoot as they turn the catapult around. It is  
 in position and ready to fire. Molly carries the brightly  
 glowing Seedspitter to the catapult.

BRAMBLETHORN  
 Oh Molly, look what I have.

Molly faces Bramblethorn. She gasps when she realizes he has  
 Muggins surrounded by countless rats.

The farm boys run from the rats.

Seedspitter's face strains as she resists the blossoming.

Molly walks towards Bramblethorn with the cumbara in her  
 arms.

MOLLY  
 My dog for Seedspitter?

BRAMBLETHORN  
 You catch on quickly.

MOLLY  
 Threatening my dog twice in one  
 day? Really Bramblethorn? Not very  
 original.

Snipe snickers.

MOLLY  
 And Snipe, why do you need  
 Bramblethorn to help you get  
 pumpkins? There's hundreds of them  
 at the festival. And only one  
 cumbara.

Snipe squints at Bramblethorn.

SNIPE  
 Only one?

Bramblethorn ignores Snipe's question.

## BRAMBLETHORN

Now Snipe! I want to hear the splat  
when Seedspitter hits the ground  
far from her precious patch.

The rats swarm to Molly. She can't run. Seedspitter weighs too much.

The rats pounce on Molly quickly forcing her to the ground. She still holds on to the glowing Seedspitter.

The rats nip and scratch into the skin of both Molly and Seedspitter. More rats fight to get closer.

## MOLLY

Help!

Tiberius swoops low over the catapult. Trellum jumps to the ground near Molly chirping and twisting like a small tornado. Trellum busts up the rat swarm.

Muggins knocks down Bramblethorn and stands over him growling and slobbering like a wolf mad with rabies.

Snipe approaches Bramblethorn with his angry minions.

## SNIPE

Only one cumbara? You failed us.  
You may not need us but we don't  
need you. And that makes you rat  
food.

Bramblethorn finds his escape blocked by still more rats.

## BRAMBLETHORN

I should have squashed all of you  
when I had the chance.

Bramblethorn screams as the rats chew their way from end to end of his swampy body.

A satisfied Snipe stands on a pumpkin to address his troops.

Tiberius swoops in like an enemy aircraft and snatches Snipe in his talons.

## SNIPE

Let me go. Let me--

Tiberius releases Snipe. THUD! Snipe hits the ground hard but hobbles away.

The farm boys return with pitchforks to chase the escaping rats.

Molly realizes its her turn to act. She dodges over the escaping rats and gently places Seedspitter on the catapult.

Seedspitter smiles at Molly and glows like she's being consumed by a warm yellow flame. A true jack o' lantern.

MOLLY

Good bye.

Trellum and Molly push the release lever together.

WHOOSH! The catapult accelerates the glowing cumbara into the night sky.

Once Seedspitter is over the thicket of trees, she blossoms into a warm yellow light and showers glowing seeds into the cumbara patch.

SEEDSPITTER (VO)

May you be blessed with the spirit  
of the cumbara.

Molly, covered with scratches, cries as she hugs Muggins. Trellum sits on Molly's shoulder and makes slow sad chirps.

EXT. PUMPKIN PATCH - EIGHT MONTHS LATER - DAY

Molly sits on a stump with a sketch pad and pencil. She draws jewelry inspired by the little cumbara. Muggins and Trellum nap with their legs in the air.

Molly laughs as a dozen little cumbara ride miniature twittering versions of Trellum.

FADE OUT.

EXT. SWAMP - CONTINUOUS - DAY

A small patch of swamp dirt. Suddenly, a small vine just like Bramblethorn shoots out of the dirt. Bramblethorn laughs off screen.

FADE OUT.

THE END