

APPLES

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Kid's feet, on tiptoes, struggle precariously on a rickety ladder.

We pull back to see that it's a boy, THOMAS, 10 yrs old. He's reaching for an apple on a tree over an old fence. The fence is tall and worn. Behind Thomas is a wildly overgrown yard, buzzing with life on this perfect summer day. On the other side of the fence, back beyond the apple tree, is a strange old house. It shimmers in the warm sun.

A VOICE (O.S.)
Hello! Young sir!

A smiling doorman in a faded purple uniform appears by the tree. Shoes shine like crazy in the dry grass. Hands fold neatly into waistcoat pockets.

THE DOORMAN
Please! Be my guest!

The boy's fingertips have paused inches from the apple.

THOMAS
Where'd you come from?

THE DOORMAN
Secret!

THOMAS
Why do you have those weird clothes on?

THE DOORMAN
I'm a doorman!

THOMAS
Where's your door?

THE DOORMAN
It's a secret door! Only good kids can see it.

Thomas looks at the apple.

THE DOORMAN (CONT'D)
Not kids who steal apples from their new neighbors!

Thomas blushes. The Doorman winks and nods at the apple.

THE DOORMAN (CONT'D)
Go on!

He nudges the apple those precious extra inches and Thomas grabs it, takes a bite, instant bliss.

THE DOORMAN (CONT'D)
Most delicious apple ever, right?

Thomas looks almost supernaturally lost.

THE DOORMAN (CONT'D)
Right?

His voice, suddenly strange, from somewhere else.

Shaken, Thomas falls from the ladder. He lands in long grass and is surprised to see a goat staring at him.

THOMAS
What are you staring at, goat?

He looks defiantly back up the ladder, nobody. He looks back at the goat. The apple lies between them. Thomas cheekily tries to grab it. The goat makes an odd noise in its throat and takes a savage snap at the apple, nipping Thomas' hand.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Stupid old goat!

There's a strange rattling noise from over the fence. Thomas leaps to his feet and runs back up the yard to his house.

The goat watches him go, a glint in its eye.

INT. OLD HOUSE - DAY

In a darkened room, by a window, the silhouette of a figure watches quietly as Thomas runs out of the bushes.

EXT. OLD HOUSE - DAY

Thomas leaps up the back steps.

THOMAS
Ma! Ma!

He pauses to look back down toward the fence but it is obscured by vegetation.

INT. OLD HOUSE - DAY

Thomas's mom CLARE is sweating, surrounded by piles of removalist boxes. She is holding a family picture up against the wall, searching for a place to hang it.

CLARE
I'm here honey.

He crashes in, kicking boxes on the way.

CLARE (CONT'D)

Hey you! Careful! Did you take a look around?

THOMAS

Yeah I met this weird guy out over the back fence and there's a creepy goat.

CLARE

Agent said nobody's lived out back for years. And I certainly didn't buy a house with a goat in it! Don't you go talking to anyone weird, ok?

She comes closer to him, takes his hand and sees the cut.

CLARE (CONT'D)

Hey what's this? Nasty. Be a big boy and go put a plaster on ok? And wash your hands first!

He walks out, disappointed, negotiates the boxes in the hall.

He stops to sneak a glance through a half open door. We see the dark person, still watching by the window.

THOMAS

Hi dad.

No response.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Thomas rummages through a box and pulls out a pack of sticking plasters.

As he washes his hands over the basin he notices a strange movement. A tiny tail suddenly pokes out of the cut. Horrified, he gently pulls the tail. Blood and wriggling worms come gushing out into the sink.

THOMAS

Maaaaa!

He screams and runs.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

There is a crash as Clare drops the picture. We see glass fracture on the floor. Thomas comes screaming in, hand in wringing hand. He falls to the floor and stares wildly at his mom.

She looks angrily at the smashed frame.

CLARE

Baby what's wrong?

He lifts one shaking hand from the other but now it's just a small cut again. He looks at his mum's face. He looks out the window down toward the back fence. Before he can attempt to explain anything Clare kneels and holds him gently to her.

CLARE (CONT'D)

Thomas, calm down sweetie. Don't worry. We won't be moving again for a while. We're going to be happy here.

Thomas just blinks and cries on her shoulder.

Clare looks up to see her dishevelled husband standing in the doorway, staring at the floor.

CLARE (CONT'D)

Everyone knows moving house is the most stressful thing you can do.

EXT. FRONT YARD - LATER

Thomas is looking up at the sky, eyes closed, cleansing himself in the summer sun. His toes curl gently in thick freshly mown grass. We hear lawn mowers and laughter. A bird lands in front, catches his eye, races off.

He looks down the side of the house towards the back yard.

He looks down at the cut, neatly dressed now. He squeezes it nervously, winces, but nothing comes out.

We hear the sound of bicycle bells. He turns to watch 5 cool kids rattle past. One of them looks at him and smiles, Thomas smiles shyly back.

He turns suddenly to see a pale thin girl quietly watching him. She's in a fancy dress and white stockings.

THOMAS

Hi I'm Thomas. We just moved in.

She turns and walks silently down the side of the house towards the backyard.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Hey, you can't go there!

She unlocks the side gate and continues down back.

He starts after her, hesitantly.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
PLEASE don't go down there.

He waits by the gate, fear rising again.

We hear the young girl talking and giggling, indistinct in the distance. Curiosity wins and he pushes himself through the gate.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Flies buzz crazily at his face as he makes his way down the yard. He clears the last bush and looks towards the fence.

The apple tree is now dead and bare.

Whimpering a little, he walks to the ladder, climbs and peeks over the fence. The house out back is now derelict, a hint of movement in the shadows.

Thomas climbs back down the ladder, terrified. He notices the goat snuffling at something in the corner of the yard.

THOMAS
(crying)
Stupid old goat!

He picks up a stone and throws it at the animal, it ignores him. He picks up a branch and throws it.

The goat looks around angrily. Its mouth is covered in blood. Now we see the white stockinged legs of the girl, lying in the grass.

Thomas jumps back in terror. His legs get tangled in the ladder and it tumbles down, trapping him.

The goat lunges at him from the end of its chain.

The girl sits up and smiles at him, covered in blood.

LITTLE GIRL
Hello Thomas...

CLARE (O.S.)
Thomas? Thomas? Where are you baby?

He turns to see his mother clawing through the bushes and he blacks out.

INT. OLD HOUSE - LATER

Clare fades in, damp cloth in hand.

CLARE

No broken bones, you had me worried there.

Thomas shudders and reaches for her.

THOMAS

We gotta go we gotta go we gotta go...

She looks at her watch.

CLARE

I told you to be careful down there, now I'm late for my meeting.

He clutches her tighter.

THOMAS

No ma it's evil there's a girl she's dead and the goat and the apples have gone and that weird door guy in the house out back...

Clare, tender now.

CLARE

Baby I'm so sorry to do it to you, moving all the time. You know your dad's sick.

THOMAS

He's not sick he's drunk!

CLARE

He's good today, he'll look after you. I have to go. If I lose this job we're in big trouble. We won't be able to live anywhere anymore, goats or no goats.

She strokes his head. He's still terrified but he really is exhausted and we fade to black again.

INT. OLD HOUSE - LATER

The sun is low now, streaming through dusty windows. Warm colors that could bring a tear to your eye.

Thomas rubs his face and climbs out of bed. He picks a well worn toy from a box and squeezes it comfortingly. Back-to-normal neighborhood sounds bounce about the house as he makes his way downstairs.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

His dad is in a chair staring at the window. An empty bottle is on its side on the table in front of him. Thomas picks it up, disgusted.

THOMAS

Nice one dad.

Dad stares out the window, no response. Something catches Thomas's attention and he moves in close to his dad's face.

A worm pops out of the corner of his father's eye.

Thomas screams, the bottle drops and smashes. He jumps back, falls on the floor on broken glass. He looks at the door, he looks at the cuts on his hands. He looks at his dad, no worms, staring back impassively.

There's a knock on the window above his head. The girl's face appears.

He shrieks and scrambles to his feet.

She smiles, a cheeky smile.

LITTLE GIRL

Thomas, look! I brought you an apple!

Her voice is from somewhere else. The apple glows in gorgeous light. Calm slowly washes across Thomas's face. He is beguiled.

She giggles softly.

LITTLE GIRL (CONT'D)

You love them, don't you Thomas!

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Thomas twitches strangely as he follows her down toward the fence. The backyard is a garden now, beautiful. The apple tree is green again and covered in juicy fruit. She stops at the bottom of the yard and beckons with the apple. He walks slowly to her, takes it, bites it.

He is suddenly, ravenously overcome and falls to the ground, devouring it.

LITTLE GIRL

Slow down Thomas! Look, there's a whole tree full of them!

As he eats, the worms come. Out of his mouth, as he's chewing, out of everywhere. His skin bulges strangely and they burst through.

Now he is aware, but it's too late. He tries to scream, tries to rise, to look at himself, but he doesn't have enough structure left.

LITTLE GIRL (CONT'D)

Don't talk with your mouth full
naughty!

She is squatting down beside the goat. They watch patiently as Thomas becomes indistinguishable from the worms.

Crime scene tape flutters about them like ribbon, magical. She playfully snatches at a piece.

Thomas is now just a pile of worms. The worms disappear into the grass. The goat walks forward and gently pads the empty ground with its hoof.

INT. DARK ROOM - DAY

Over black we hear crisp, confident footsteps on a creaking wooden floor.

A door cracks open and light comes blinding in. As our retinas settle the doorman comes into focus, smiling by the door.

THE DOORMAN

Hello young man! You really do love
those apples huh?

Thomas, confused, checks his hands, his limbs. He crawls to his feet and makes his way groggily to the door.

THE DOORMAN (CONT'D)

See?

The doorman points outside. Thomas follows his lead and walks slowly into the glare. He sees an apple tree. Behind it, over the fence, his house. The doorman strides away through the crackling grass.

Suddenly a boy appears over the fence. He looks around and reaches for an apple. He looks exactly like Thomas.

Thomas tries to run but space stretches like bubble gum. He's not going anywhere. The doorman is nearly at the fence now and he winks back cheekily as Thomas screams.

FADE OUT.