

Bark

by

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FADE IN:

INT. WOODS - NIGHT

ANDIE HARPER and JEFF SNOOCH, female and male, both sixteen and dressed in black, creep through the dark forest. A pouch at Jeff's side contains some rolls of toilet paper.

JEFF
We're almost there.

ANDIE
This is a bad idea.

JEFF
Scared?

ANDIE
No! I just think we're too old to
be toilet-papering some poor
lady's --

A murmur of singing wafts through the woods, a greenish glow ahead.

ANDIE
What's that?

JEFF
Don't know.

They both look through the trees toward the glow.

EXT. CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER

They exit the forest. In the clearing a glowing greenish orb floats as it dances around a lone tree. Andie and Jeff hide from the glow, behind a tree at the clearings edge.

JEFF
(whispers)
Is it a fairy?

Andie shakes her head then moon comes out from behind a cloud and the scene is lit.

ANABELLE SAMOZA, a very old woman, dances around a lone barren tree in a black hooded robe. She holds a green glowing vial in her hand.

JEFF
Misses. Samoza?! What's she
doing?

ANDIE
Senile Dementia, she can't help
herself, the poor old woman. She
probably doesn't even know --

Annabelle stops her dance and glances toward them. They press themselves closer to the tree. Then Annabelle raises her arms showing the glowing orb to the sky.

ANNABELLE
 (chants)
 From Abaddon, Eurynome,
 Beelzebub and then to me, An
 offering I make to thee, Upon
 this ancient elder tree.

JEFF
 She really is a --

Annabelle looks toward them again. Andie cups her hand over Jeff's mouth.

ANNABELLE
 Who's there?

No answer. Andie silently shhh's Jeff. Jeff nods.

ANNABELLE
 I know you're there.

She takes a few steps toward them. Andie heads into the clearing toward her.

ANDIE
 It's Andie Harper, Misses Samoza.

ANNABELLE
 Andie Harper. Bess's girl.

Andie nods.

ANNABELLE
 I never liked your mother.

Andie laughs nervously.

ANDIE
 She can get on your nerves --

ANNABELLE
 I don't like you either.

Andie lowers her head.

ANNABELLE
 As a matter of fact, I don't like
 anyone in this town. Every last
 one of them. They call me names,
 laugh behind my back --
 (she leers at Andie)
 Toilet paper my house.

ANDIE
 I wasn't going to -- we should
 get you home, Misses Samoza. It's
 cold and --

Andie approaches but Annabelle points a shaking finger at her and backs away.

ANNABELLE
 And you think I'm just a poor
 crazy old lady, don't you? Well,
 I'll show you, I'll show all of
 you.

Annabelle brandishes the greenish glowing vial.

ANNABELLE
It took decades of suffering to
make just a few drops.

ANDIE
Misses Samoza, what's in that
bottle?

ANNABELLE
My revenge!

Annabelle raises the glowing vial above her head.
Perplexed, Andie watches.

ANNABELLE
(chants)
From Hallow's eve to Hallow's
day, the time for spirits all to
play, but on this night I'll have
my way, and they will do just as
I say.

Annabelle cackles as she tosses the vial toward the elder
tree. Her cackles stop abruptly when Jeff runs out of the
forest like a quarterback and catches the vial mid-flight.

Andie's alarmed.

ANDIE
Jeff!

Jeff looks up and smiles, distracted by Andie he fumbles
the vial. The vial falls against the elder tree and
breaks. Annabelle cackles once more.

From where the vial broke a wave of sparkling green glow
envelops the tree and just as quickly dissipates. Jeff and
Andie watch with amazement.

ANNABELLE
Thought you could stop me, didn't
you. Now you're both tree food!

Annabelle cackles as she hurries from the clearing.

JEFF
(pointing at tree)
What just happened?

ANDIE
I don't -

And suddenly Jeff is lifted in the air. He screams. His
pouch full of toilet paper falls to the ground, a few rolls
jump out and bounce along the ground. Andie stares up at
him.

Jeff squirms and sways from the top of the tree, hanging
from the end of a branch by his pointing arm. The other
tree branches move around independently. They swat at him,
twigs snapping on him like little whips. One makes a welt
on his cheek.

Andie watches, bewildered.

JEFF
Help! Ow! Get me down!

Another branch swipes at Andie. She jumps back, out of its reach.

ANDIE
I can't reach you!

JEFF
Do something! Ow!

She scans the ground for anything to throw. She grabs a rock and throws it up into the tree. It hits Jeff.

JEFF
Ow! Something softer! Anything!

ANDIE
Hang on!

The twigs whip at Jeff.

JEFF
Ow! Hurry!

Andie spies an escaped roll of toilet paper. She grabs it and holds it up toward Jeff.

ANDIE
I don't think it will work!

Jeff doesn't look down.

JEFF
Try it anyway! Ow!

Andie shrugs and throws the roll of toilet paper up into the tree. It unfurls as it heads through the air leaving a white streamer behind it.

The tree reacts immediately as the toilet paper hits. It recoils, dropping every thing. Jeff falls to the ground with a thud. Andie runs toward him.

The toilet paper drapes over a branch of the tree. The tree squirms and wiggles using every twig to remove the unwanted paper. But the tree isn't very coordinated and the paper tangles itself more and more into the tree's branches. The result, the tree becomes even more frantic to remove it.

Jeff sits up.

ANDIE
You alright?

JEFF
I think so.

Andie notices the ring of trees around the clearing sparkle green.

ANDIE
It's spreading. We gotta go.
Get up! Get up!

She helps Jeff stand, grabs the toilet paper pouch, and then they hurry toward the edge of the clearing.

The trees at the clearing's edge reach their branches out toward them, swiping at them, trying to snatch them with the tips of their twigs.

JEFF

How we going to get past that?

Andie holds up a roll of toilet paper.

JEFF

Toilet paper?

ANDIE

It seems to keep them occupied.

She points at the elder tree. It is hopelessly tangled with toilet paper. It no longer frantically tries remove it. It's branches simply tremble, like the tail between the legs of a whimpering dog.

Andie throws a roll of toilet paper toward one of the trees at the edge of the clearing. It connects. With the rolls stuck in the crook of its branch, the tree freaks, it flails as it tries to free itself of paper.

ANDIE

Run!

They bolt from the clearing, taking a path under the busy tree. As they pass the first ring of possessed trees, the trees behind them glow.

Andie and Jeff run further into the forest.

From above, a widening circle of green sparkles outward at increasing velocity - one arc heads toward a small town.

EXT. STREET

Jeff and Andie run out onto the sidewalk. Jeff grabs her arm and spins her toward him.

JEFF

You were fantastic in there.

ANDIE

You really think so.

Jeff nods. Andie smiles. She glances down at the welt on his face. She touches it and Jeff winces.

ANDIE

Does it hurt?

Jeff nods and gazes in her eyes. They move closer, awkwardly about to kiss, but a greenish flash catches their attention.

They turn toward the forest and watch the glow approaching through the trees.

ANDIE
We've got to tell people.

Jeff nods and they run off down the street.

EXT. MR. SAMUELS HOUSE

A young group of TRICK OR TREATERS walks up to the house. One of them rings the bell.

The door opens. MR. SAMUELS stands in the open doorway, bowl of candy in hand. He feigns fear.

TRICK OR TREATERS
Trick or Treat!

In the front yard a tree sparkles green. Then its branches reach down toward the unaware Trick or Treaters.

Jeff and Andie run into the yard, then stop.

JEFF
Watch out!

The Trick or Treaters turn around, but don't see the monstrous tree. Instead they watch Jeff who grabs a toilet paper roll. He brings his arm back. He throws.

The tree swings at the airborne roll and connects. It knocks the roll right back to Jeff's feet. Then the tree taunts Jeff to come closer, beckoning him with its twig fingers. Jeff is mesmerized.

Andie reaches for the roll. She brings her arm back. She --

A short blast of a police siren.

Andy freezes. A spotlight shines on her. SHERIFF BESS HARPER, late thirties, is the spotlight operator.

BESS (O.S.)
No you don't young lady!

Andie turns to see Bess silhouetted behind the sedan-mounted spotlight.

ANDIE
Mom! The trees! They're alive!

JEFF
They're invading the town!

Bess shines the spotlight on Jeff. Then back to Andie.

BESS
In the car! Both of you!

ANDIE
But Mom!

BESS
Now!

Andie stomps toward the sedan and enters passenger side. Jeff looks nauseated as he opens the back door.

One of the Trick or Treaters lifts her mask, CINDY LOU SNOOCH. She's twelve.

CINDY LOU
Dad's gonna kill you.

JEFF
Shut up, Cindy Lou!

Cindy Lou sticks out her tongue at Jeff.

BESS (O.S.)
In the car!

JEFF
Go home, and stay away from the trees. That goes for all of you!

The Trick or Treaters laugh him off.

INT. SEDAN

Jeff closes the sedan door. Andie is agitated.

ANDIE
It's true. The trees. They're -- they're possessed.

BESS
Look at me.

ANDIE
Mom! We've got to -

BESS
Look at me right now!

Andie does but in a mocking sort of way.

BESS
Are you on something?

ANDIE
No!

She looks at Jeff.

BESS
You better not have given my daughter --

Outside of Jeff's window the Trick or Treaters stare in as they pass. Cindy Lou makes a nah, nah face.

JEFF
I didn't give her anything, Misses Harper. It was Misses Samoza, she -

BESS
Misses Samoza, Annabelle?! The
old --

ANDIE
She did some kind of spell on the
trees, for revenge!

JEFF
The only way to stop them is
toilet paper.

ANDIE
That's why we were --

Bess has major belief problems.

BESS
Enough! I know what's going on
here. You two wanted to toilet
paper some trees, thought it
would be fun but then you got
caught, so you made up --

ANDIE
It's not like that. The trees --

BESS
Not like that? Not like the time
you had Mister Malkovich ready to
leave town when you kept ringing
his doorbell and running away or
the time you water ballooned
Misses Walker in the middle of
math class?

Through the windshield the Trick or Treaters pass by a
large tree on the nature strip.

BESS
Do you have any idea how your
behavior looks? Do you even stop
to think how it might reflect on
me, on my job?

A branch of the tree sweeps down and knocks Cindy Lou's
candy bag from her hands. The bag lands next to the trunk.

BESS
I have enough trouble trying to
get the respect of people in this
town --

Jeff notices Cindy Lou as she back tracks toward the tree
to get her bag.

BESS
Without having to --

JEFF
Misses Harper.

BESS
Not now, Jeff. Without having to--

A branch of the tree creeps down behind Cindy Lou.

JEFF
Misses Harper!

Jeff doesn't wait, he opens the door and exits the car.

BESS
You get back here this --

Cindy Lou screams as the branch grabs her and pulls her half way up the tree. Twigs from other branches wrap around her holding her tight.

BESS
What the --

EXT. STREET

Cindy Lou is being held about halfway up the tree in a tight fitting cocoon of twigs. She screams as the tree shakes her about.

The other Trick or Treaters watch in disbelief.

Jeff tries to get closer but one of the branches keeps swiping at him.

Andie and Bess run from the car. Andie carries a roll of toilet paper. Bess looks a bit frightened.

BESS
The trees -- They're alive!

Andie nods smugly, then she hurries over to Jeff. Bess follows. Jeff calls to them.

JEFF
I can't get close enough!

Cindy Lou screams as the cocoon shakes. Bess takes out her gun and points it at the tree. She sights then...

She lowers the gun.

BESS
I can't get a clear shot.

She shoots a worried look at Jeff.

Andie brings back her arm, toilet paper in hand, then she throws. A white streamer of paper follows the roll through the air. And it's a perfect shot, hitting the tree dead center.

The tree panics, unweaving the cocoon around Cindy Lou in order to tangle itself in the toilet paper. Cindy Lou falls to the ground and she cries. Jeff runs to her and throws his arms around her.

BESS
Well, I'll be damned.

ANDIE
People need to be told.

Bess nods her head and then smiles.

BESS
I have an idea. Andie, you and
Jeff call your friends. Tell them
to meet us at --

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE PARKING LOT

Bess stands near the sedan and speaks into a radio handset. Rolls of toilet paper are stacked on the hood. Numerous SIXTEEN YEAR OLDS hang about.

BESS
I know how it sounds, just do it!
Rendezvous, City Hall, twenty-one
hundred. And Peter?

PETER (V.O.)
(filtered)
Sheriff?

BESS
Be careful. Those trees are
dangerous. Over.

Andie comes out of the store carrying a load of toilet paper. SAYID, in his orange uniform, follows behind her with a worried look.

ANDIE
This is the last of it.

SAYID
And who will be paying?

Bess reaches into her pocket and pulls out a wallet.

BESS
I will. How much?

Sayid show her a check. Bess' eyes open wide.

BESS
For toilet paper?

Sayid shrugs. Bess angrily counts the bills in her wallet then she pulls out a credit card and thrusts it at Sayid.

BESS
Here!

Sayid takes the card and then heads back into the store. Bess watches him for a moment then...

BESS
Kids! Kids! Gather round -- I bet
you're all wondering why I asked
you to come here --

Nods all around.

EXT. PARK

An ELDERLY WOMAN walks her dog. The dog sniffs around a tree. Suddenly the dog is high in the branches yelping.

Jeff enters and throws a toilet paper roll into the tree.

The tree recoils and the dog falls out and into Jeff's arms. Jeff hands the dog over to the Elderly Lady. She hugs Jeff and gives him sloppy kisses - much to his distress.

EXT. STREET

Twigs of a tree tug at the phone wires and they spark. A Sixteen Year Old throws toilet paper into the tree. The tree looks like it might die of shock.

EXT. OLD WOMAN'S HOUSE

A deputy, PETER, steps closer and closer toward a tree. He isn't sure what to expect. He touches the trunk, then pulls his hand back quickly. No response. He turns away from the tree and strikes a thoughtful pose.

The tree glows green. Then it grabs Peter between its twigs, scratching at his face. An old lady runs out of the house and covers her open mouth with her hand.

Andie runs in and tosses a toilet roll into the tree. The tree flails its branches and Peter is pushed away. He looks up in horror at the tree as it tangles itself with paper.

BEGIN MONTAGE

- Sixteen Year Olds hurrying around town.
- Trees wave their branches about.
- Toilet paper rolls fly through the air.
- Trees tangle themselves in paper.

END MONTAGE

EXT. STREET

All of the trees are tangled with toilet paper, Bess surveys the damage and smiles bitter-sweetly. She turns around and walks away.

END MONTAGE

EXT. CITY HALL

A crowd led by Bess, Andie and Jeff converge on City Hall. A giant tree, likely the biggest and oldest in town, threatens them with its waving branches.

A number of toilet paper rolls are in hands, above heads, at the ready, then...

Annabelle appears in a sparkle of green in front of the tree.

ANNABELLE

Wait!

JEFF

Move out of the way, Misses Samoza!

Annabelle puts on a frail old voice.

ANNABELLE

Why harm this poor old tree? It hasn't hurt anyone, has it? It grown here for years and years and all you've done is ignore it or carve your initial in it. Doesn't it deserve your respect?

Some of the toilet paper rolls are lowered but not those belonging to Bess, Andie, or Jeff.

ANDIE

You did this Annabelle. I saw you. You're the one responsible.

ANNABELLE

Me? To blame? Why I'm nothing more than a kindly old woman.

BESS

Ha. Kindly?! You're nothing but an old bi-

ANDIE

Mom!

BESS

Witch! You're an old witch! You always were.

ANNABELLE

Alright then, have it your way. Sick 'em Charlie!

Annabelle cackles and the tree becomes even more lively. There is a rumbling sound. The ground starts to shake. Everyone panics. The cement at the base of the old tree cracks. The crack works its way along the sidewalk. It heads toward Bess.

A root breaks through at Bess' feet and coils around her like a snake. It lifts her and shakes her around, knocking her into other crowd members as the rest of the root loosens itself from the ground.

Andie panics, she throws her toilet paper roll at the tree but instead hits Annabelle. Annabelle stumbles backwards into the base of the tree.

Then the air is full of toilet paper rolls, streaming in formation, thrown by everyone in the crowd.

They all hit the tree, covering it and Annabelle with strips of white paper.

The crowd cheers.

The tree recoils. It thrashes about pounding against nearby walls in an effort to free itself from its paper torment.

The giant root flaps against the ground. It release Bess, throwing her into the crowd. Andie runs to Bess, helps her stand and gives her a tearful hug.

EXT. CITY HALL - MOMENTS LATER

The crowd disperses. Andie, the limping Bess, and Jeff stand near the tree.

ANNABELLE (O.S.)
Help! Help!

They look around trying to find the voice. Andie puts her free hand on a roll of toilet paper. Jeff looks up.

JEFF
It's Misses Samoza.

Up in the tree, tangled inside trembling branches and toilet paper is Annabelle looking quite distressed.

ANNABELLE
Help me please!

ANDIE
Maybe we should get her down.

JEFF
Are you kidding? After what she did to us?

ANDIE
Mom?

Bess stares directly at Annabelle and vice versa.

ANNABELLE
Please help a poor old lady?

BESS
Let her stay up there for a while. At least until she learns her lesson.
(Loud enough for Annabelle to hear)
Toilet paper doesn't grow on trees, you know!

Annabelle frowns.

FADE OUT.