

AVOCADO GROVE

Written by

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EXT. TEMECULA HILLS - AVOCADO GROVE *

There are rolling hills of avocado groves. *

INT. RANCH HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY *

The Crozier's sit in their living room unpacking boxes. *

EMILY, 38, homely, unwraps family photos. She kisses DERRICK, 45, brawny ex-cop while he lays relaxed on the couch. *

BROOKE, 4, JASON, 7, and SAM, 10, play with legos. *

EMILY *

This house is perfect! *

Derrick looks over at the box labeled television. *

DERRICK *

You gonna set up the TV, hun? *

EMILY *

Sure, I'm just gonna finish these boxes. *

DERRICK *

Emily, just stop. The television is more important than the photos. *

The children stop playing. They look at Derrick in astonishment. *

JASON *

You shouldn't be so mean to Mommy. *

Derrick grabs a cigarette from a pack in his shirt pocket and walks out of the room. *

EXT. RANCH HOME - FRONT - DAY *

Derrick goes to light his cigarette and from the corner of his eye he sees BETHANY, 30s, the ghost of a black-haired beauty in 1940's style clothing. She stands by a wagon. *

DERRICK *

Hello? *

Bethany backs into the shadow and disappears. Derrick picks up an old glove off the wagon and puts it in his pocket. *

INT. RANCH HOME - OFFICE - NIGHT

Emily sits with her legs crossed on her desk. Unpacked boxes litter the room. A small lamp light is on and her corded phone is up to her ear.

EMILY

(whisper)

Susan, it's perfect. It's so much safer than the city. Our closest neighbor is down the hill and there's plenty of room for the kids to play.

SUSAN (O.S.)

How's Derrick taking the move?

EMILY

I think the move is good for him. He needed to get away from the memories.

SUSAN

What exactly happened? Was he fired?

EMILY

I can't really talk about it. There was a drug bust where a kid got hurt and, well, he had to retire early.

The shadow in the door entrance shifts. Derrick walks in.

DERRICK

Who are you talking to?

EMILY

It's my sister.

DERRICK

What happened is not her business. Emily, it's time for bed.

EMILY

Goodbye, sis. I'll call you in the morning.

Emily hangs up the phone.

EXT. RANCH HOME - FRONT - DAY *

Brooke plays in the sandbox. Jason assembles a toy airplane and uses a controller to launch it, while Sam pesters him. Derrick stands by the house and watches. *

SAM *
Let me try, it's my turn! *

JASON *
No! I just started playing with it. *

SAM *
Fine, I'll play with someone else. *

Sam storms toward the avocado grove. *

DERRICK *
Jason, look at what you started. *

Derrick runs after Sam. *

EXT. AVOCADO GROVE - CONTINUOUS *

Children's LAUGHTER lofts in the wind. Derrick turns to see a YOUNG BOY and GIRL. *

DERRICK *
Sam? Where are you? *

The children's bodies morph into trees, their arms slide into branches and their faces become a horror of roots and dead leaves, they crawl toward him. *

YOUNG BOY AND GIRL *
Daddy? *

DERRICK *
Sam, where are you? Sam! *

Sam runs toward Derrick, followed by Emily. *

SAM *
Dad! *

EMILY *
What happened? *

Sam wraps her arms around Derrick as he trembles and sweat rolls down his forehead. *

DERRICK *
I... I was looking for Sam. *

EMILY

Come on guys, let's get back to the house.

*
*
*

INT. RANCH HOME - ENTRANCE - DAY

*

Derrick walks down the stairs while Emily stands by the doors and Jason, Brooke and Sam enter. Derrick throws Jason a cap.

*
*

DERRICK

Jason, let's go into town and get some groceries. We can whip up that lasagna you like so much.

*
*
*
*

EMILY

That sounds nice. You boys go into town and we'll finish unpacking.

*
*
*

Derrick puts on his cowboy hat and leaves with Jason. Emily follows Brooke and Sam up the stairs.

*
*

EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

*

Derrick and Jason walk toward the entrance. A HOMELESS WOMAN, 50s, sits on a bench with her pushcart.

*
*

HOMELESS WOMAN

Hey! You are the ones that moved into the house in the grove.

*
*
*

DERRICK

I don't know who you are lady!

*
*

Derrick pushes Jason forward.

*

HOMELESS WOMAN

Those groves are fertilized by the missing. Haunted by a revengeful mother. You are going to die.

*
*
*
*

JASON

What is she talking about, Daddy?

*
*

DERRICK

I don't know, Son.

*
*

The Homeless Lady watches them as they enter the store.

*

HOMELESS WOMAN

(faint)
Your families going to die.

*
*
*

EXT. RANCH HOME - FRONT - DAY *

Brooke runs toward the avocado grove, her braids trailing in the wind. Sam follows behind her. *

SAM *
Wait up, Brooke! *

EXT. RANCH HOME - GROVE - CONTINUOUS *

A 6-year-old GIRL, in tattered clothing, runs from behind a tree and a 7-year-old BOY peeks around another. Brooke runs after the Boy. For a second, Sam is left alone. *

Brooke returns and tags Sam. *

BROOKE *
You're it, Sam! *

The Boy runs in the opposite direction and Sam follows. She chases him through the trees. The light seeps past the leaves and the branches reach out. Sam is about to tag him when she trips and falls to the ground, she looks up with her face covered in dirt but no one is around. *

EXT. RANCH HOME - GROVE - CONTINUOUS *

Brooke runs after the boy until he disappears into an old burnt house covered in black ash. On the ground is an old rag doll. She brushes it off. *

EXT. RANCH HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT *

Derrick and Jason enter the house. Emily is asleep on the couch. *

DERRICK *
Emily, wake up! *

Emily doesn't move. Derrick grabs her by the arm. She shudders awake. *

EMILY *
What's wrong? *

DERRICK *
Where are the girls? *

EMILY *
I don't know? They were just here. *

EXT. RANCH HOME - FRONT - NIGHT

Derrick runs outside. Sam and Brooke walk toward him, GIGGLING, hand in hand.

DERRICK
Girls where were you?

SAM
We played in the grove.

DERRICK
What were you thinking?

Sam and Brooke are wide-eyed. Derrick steams with anger.

DERRICK (CONT'D)
Into the house, now!

INT. RANCH HOME - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

It's dark in the hallway. Brooke and Sam tiptoe over to Jason's room.

INT. RANCH HOME - JASON'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jason, JUMPS up, grabs his flashlight from the drawer and points it at them.

BROOKE
It's just us.

SAM
We wanted to tell you, there are other kids here. A lot of them.

JASON
As soon as I thought this place was getting boring.

BROOKE
Look, she left me this.

Brooke holds out a dirty old rag doll.

JASON
We can go check them out in the morning.

Jason turns off his flashlight. *

INT. RANCH HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT *

Emily and Derrick are asleep. Derrick looks troubled, his
breath quickens. *

Bethany opens her eyes, serene and calm. She floats over
Derrick, as her facial features become angry, her skin melts
onto him. His eyes are wide open but his body is stiff. *

BETHANY
(moaning)
My husband. *

Derrick jolts up. Sweat drips from his forehead as he begins
to breathe slower. *

EMILY
Are you okay? What happened? *

DERRICK
It was nothing, maybe sleep
paralysis. *

EMILY
It seems serious Derrick. Should I
call the doctor? *

DERRICK
Emily. Just go back to sleep. *

Emily turns off the light. *

INT. RANCH HOME - KITCHEN - DAY *

Emily stands in the kitchen while Brooke, Sam, and Jason wolf
down their food. *

JASON
Can we go out and play? *

EMILY
Okay, just don't go far. *

Sam, Brooke and Jason go outside to play and Derrick enters. *

DERRICK
Where did the kids go? *

EMILY
They went outside- *

DERRICK

You can't watch them for a god damn
second, can you, Emily?

EMILY

What has gotten into you?

Derrick pushes toward Emily than stops. His eyes soften.

DERRICK

There was this woman in town, she
said there was a family that died
in the barn. I don't think it's
safe for the kids to be out there.

Outside the trees dance in the wind.

EXT. AVOCADO GROVE - DAY

Derrick follows the sound of children's laughter. He runs
through the sunlit rows and catches the sight of a Young Boy
that runs ahead, so he follows.

In a meadow Bethany picks avocados into her basket and
whistles a soothing tune. Derrick approaches her.

DERRICK

Who are-

BETHANY

You've come home.

Derrick relaxes to the sound of her voice.

DERRICK

I was looking for my-

BETHANY

Shhh... now. I've been waiting for
you. Time, after all, is ticking.

DERRICK

Time?

GIGGLES come from the wind.

BETHANY

Summer is almost over. It's almost
time to fertilize the grove.

DERRICK

Right, fertilize the grove.

Bethany puts her hand on Derrick's cheek. She leans in for a kiss and disappears. *

JASON *

Dad *

DERRICK *

What is going on son? It's time to get back to the house. *

JASON *

Who were you talking to? *

DERRICK *

No one, I was looking for you guys. Where's your sisters? *

JASON *

They're over here, come on. *

INT. RANCH HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT *

Derrick sits on the couch with Emily while she reads a book. *

DERRICK *

Have you met our neighbors yet? *

EMILY *

I can't say I have. *

DERRICK *

Their kids play in the grove. *

EMILY *

That's great Derrick, the kids will have friends. Have you thought about what the Department suggested, that you go see a therapist for a while? *

DERRICK *

No, Emily. I'm going into town. I'll be back later. *

Derrick puts on his cowboy hat from the hook and leaves. *

His car PULLS OUT of the driveway. Emily falls asleep with a book in her hand. *

CONTINUOUS *

The digital clock displays 12:00 AM. The floor creaks and Emily jumps awake. Sam is at the bottom of the stairs. *

EMILY *
Jesus. *

SAM *
It's Brooke, she's... gone. *

EMILY *
What do you mean she's gone? *

SAM *
I woke up and I looked over and she *
wasn't there. *

EMILY *
You have no idea where she went? *

Sam starts to cry. Emily searches upstairs. *

INT. RANCH HOME - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS *

Jason comes to the doorway in his pajamas. *

JASON *
What's going on? *

EMILY *
It's your sister. Just sit tight. *
Please, don't leave the house. *

Jason and Sam huddle together. They stare out the window. *
Emily STOMPS down the stairs. The FRONTDOOR opens and shuts. *

Through the window, Emily runs into the grove. Sam looks away *
but Jason walks closer. He squints to see Brooke, staring up *
at him. Jason bolts out of the room. *

SAM *
Jason! *

Rain hits the window and Sam runs out after him. *

EXT. RANCH HOME - FRONT - NIGHT *

A Mercedes pulls up. Derrick gets out of the car and the *
lights in the house are on. Derrick stumbles inside. *

INT. RANCH HOME - ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS *

Derrick enters and puts his hat on the rack. *

DINING ROOM *

Emily sets the table in a 1950's dress and the kids talk playfully at their seats. The lights are bright. There is a large turkey and side dishes on the table.

DERRICK

You've outdone yourself, Hunny.

Derrick walks over to Emily who has an oven mitt on her hand. He grabs her by the waist and kisses her. When he opens his eyes Bethany is in his arms. She turns into a skeleton and deteriorates. All the lights are off and the room is empty.

Derrick grabs his face and begins to cry and scream.

DERRICK (CONT'D)

What's happening?

Bethany's LAUGHTER echoes in the house and Derrick darts out.

EXT. RANCH HOME - FRONT - NIGHT

Derrick rushes into the avocado grove.

DERRICK

Emily!

EXT. AVOCADO GROVE - CONTINUOUS

The Young Boy dashes ahead of him and an OLDER BOY comes from behind.

YOUNG BOY

Hide and seek!

DERRICK

Brooke! Sam! Do you know where my children are? Hello? Slow down!

He follows the Young Boy and on the ground lay a lifeless body.

DERRICK (CONT'D)

Jason is that you? Jason? Fuck!

He holds Jason in his arms. A stream of blood seeps from the top of his head.

Derrick cries hysterically. He makes a motion to throw the boy over his shoulder when Jason's ghost appears ahead. He motions for Derrick.

Derrick drops Jason's lifeless body and follows Jason's ghost. He stops in front of an old burned house and enters.

INT. BURNT HOUSE - NIGHT

Sam's and Jason's Ghosts, along with seven other ghost children, circle Emily lying on the floor. Holding hands, they skip and smile at Derrick. Brooke sits to the side shy.

Behind them is Bethany.

BETHANY

You've come for us.

DERRICK

What have you done with my wife?

Brooke stands up with her doll in her hand and points to a broken ridge.

BROOKE

Mommy followed me up the stairs and she fell.

Bethany seductively floats toward Derrick.

BETHANY

I am your wife. These are your children. Look, yours have already joined us.

DERRICK

Jason? Sam? Brooke? Brooke, come here baby.

Brooke squeezes her rag doll and doesn't move.

BETHANY

All they need is a good father, to protect them.

Derrick grabs for Sam's ghost as she walks away. His hand goes through her. She holds the Bethany's hand.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

Take the seed out of Emily and plant it in the grove. You can fertilize the soil and protect us forever.

DERRICK

Emily wake up!

Derrick shakes her. Bethany's LAUGHTER fills the room. *

BETHANY *

The essence of the young keeps the *
avocado grove alive. You've come so *
far, come home with us. *

INT. BURNT HOUSE - 1940'S GHOST ROOM - CONTINUOUS *

The house is full of light. The ghost children are gone and *
fresh victorian wallpaper is on the walls. Sam sits on a *
lounge chair while Jason stands with confidence. A bucket of *
avocados is on the floor. *

SAM *

Daddy, how do you open an avocado? *

DERRICK *

Sam? What's going on? *

Brooke cradles herself in the corner. Sam gets up and Derrick *
takes a seat. Jason passes Derrick a knife. *

JASON *

Can you show us how you eat it? *

DERRICK *

Sure, Jason. You cut it open- *

Derrick grabs an avocado and the knife. *

DERRICK (CONT'D) *

And take out the seed. *

BROOKE *

Daddy, stop! *

INT. BURNT HOUSE - CONTINUOUS *

Derrick is in shock. The lights in the house are off. *

Emily is limp in Derrick's arms. He holds a knife close to *
her belly. Brooke screams. Derrick drops Emily and walks *
toward her. *

The Ghost Children appear next to the Bethany. Sam and Jason *
hold her hand. *

BETHANY *

My husband, join us. *

She motions him over with her hand, *

DERRICK

Brooke!

Brooke takes off and runs up the stairs. Ahead the rain pushes through an open wall. Burned wood and debris scatter the floor. A wild look is in Derrick's eyes.

DERRICK (CONT'D)

I didn't mean to scare you Hunny,
just come here.

Derrick grabs for her. She continues to walk along a wood beam. He hesitates and almost falls through the open ground. A child's LAUGHTER echoes.

DERRICK (CONT'D)

Come here, Brooke. I'm not going to
harm you.

Brooke looks back to see the knife still in Derrick's hand.

EXT. BURNT HOUSE - NIGHT

Brooke climbs onto the roof from the window. The roof is tattered and she climbs effortlessly through the debris.

Derrick follows her, trips on the ledge than catches himself.

DERRICK

Come to Daddy, Brooke. Come, now!

Brooke climbs up to the point of the roof. She stands still in the rain with the rag doll in her hand.

Derrick knocks a piece of debris out of his way. He plods up the wood roof as the rain pours down on him. Brooke looks down at him, unafraid.

Bethany appears and screams in agony to his face. Derrick slips and tumbles off the roof, his body sprawled on the ground.

EXT. RANCH HOME - FRONT

Emily cries and shakes uncontrollably. Brooke sits still in the back of an ambulance while a NURSE, 20s, checks her vitals. Five cop cars surround the house. Emily talks to police OFFICER PRICE, 50s.

OFFICER PRICE

I'm afraid your husband is dead.

EMILY

Have you found Jason and Sam? I was looking for them in that burned barn and I must have fallen. I woke up to Brooke standing over me, she hasn't said a word.

Brooke's facial expressions are blank and her arm hangs limp in the nurse's hand.

OFFICER PRICE

A woman named Sandra was locked by her husband in that barn and burned alive with her seven kids. It's not a place for children. You guys should have demolished it when you bought the property.

EMILY

I thought we'd eventually remodel it. I hardly noticed it there.

OFFICER PRICE

We'll have a search team look for your kids. I'm sorry Ms.Crozier for your loss.

The wind blows through the lush avocado grove. Derrick holds the wagon with the Young Boy and Girl piled inside. Bethany hangs on his shoulder with her hand in his hair. Jason and Sam wave at Brooke, accompanied by the other children.

Brooke waves back. The nurse glances over to an empty field.

THE END