

THE WOOD

By Tatiana Bears

FADE IN:

INT. BACKYARD - DAY

A boy, LUCAS, age 13, twirls a stick in the air, stabbing at invisible enemies. EMMA, age 9, sits near him giggling at his charade, she holds a doll in her arms.

Another girl, APRIL, age 13, takes part in the game.

LUCAS

...And he stabs valiantly at the dragons, saving the fair maiden April from their wrath!

April laughs, and jumps to the side as Lucas stabs an invisible enemy behind her. Emma giggles at them and turns a key in her dolls back and soft MUSIC plays.

APRIL

Sir Lucas! Look, there in the sky!

Lucas looks up in mock fear.

LUCAS

No! The fiercest dragon in all the land! Quick, fair maiden, into the forest!

Lucas grabs April's hand and they run into the trees. Emma gets up and runs after them. She stops at the edge of the grass.

EMMA

No! April, Lucas! Get out of The Wood!

Lucas and April come into sight.

EMMA

April, what are you doing? You know the rule.

APRIL

Don't freak, Emma. Mom's not home.

LUCAS

What rule?

EMMA

You know what happens in The Wood, April. Even the birds don't go in.

APRIL

That's just a stupid story to keep us out of trouble.

Lucas looks over at Emma, who is obviously distraught.

LUCAS
Right. It's just woods, right?

EMMA
It's The Wood.

APRIL
It's a bunch of trees, and I'm going in.

Lucas thinks for a moment.

LUCAS
Okay, then. Dragon's thattaway, come on, Emma!

April smiles and they turn their back on Emma. Emma looks down at her doll, turns the key in its back, and the soft MUSIC plays again.

She looks back up at Lucas and April who are quickly disappearing into The Wood. She takes a breath, and walks into the trees, her doll's soft SONG still playing.

EMMA
Wait, you guys!

Lucas and April can be seen darting through the rows of trees up ahead, and Emma begins to run after them.

EMMA
Wait! You guys, slow down!

Emma's doll suddenly falls from her arms, and she stops to pick her back up. When she looks into her doll's perfect face, one of its pale green marble eyes is missing.

When Emma looks back up, April and Lucas are gone.

EMMA
April?

Emma walks forward, hesitantly. Lucas and April suddenly step out from behind a tree.

Emma CRIES OUT, startled.

APRIL
Where were you?

EMMA
I dropped Miss Susan.

LUCAS
Look, stay close, ok, Em? You could get lost.

Emma nods and walks close to April as they continue forward. A WHISPER carried by the wind blows through the forest. Only Emma seems to notice.

LUCAS

Why doesn't anyone ever come in here? It's really cool.

EMMA

It's not right.

LUCAS

What?

EMMA

It feels wrong in here.

APRIL

Shut up, Em.

Emma closes her mouth and looks at her feet. April turns to Lucas.

APRIL

It's our parents. They tell us this stupid story about The Wood, and she believes all of it, because she's a stupid second grader.

LUCAS

What's the story?

APRIL

If you get lost in here, you become Annabelle.

LUCAS

What does that mean?

APRIL

I'm not telling it again, she'll get nightmares.

LUCAS

Fine, then. Are we going to play or what?

APRIL

I'm trying to!

LUCAS

How did I start it? I just wanted to come take a look!

APRIL

You just did...

April looks down for Emma, but she's not there.

APRIL

Em?

She looks around

LUCAS

Oh, great.

APRIL
Emma!

LUCAS
Emma!

APRIL
If I wanted to play hide and seek, I could have done
that at home!

Something LAUGHS in the distance; a figure flashes through the trees ahead.

LUCAS
She's running from us!

APRIL
Brat! Come back here!

INT. FURTHER INTO THE WOOD - DAY

Lucas and April see the end of the trees in sight, beyond is a river, that's
TRICKLING quietly. Soft MUSIC can be heard.

Lucas stops suddenly and pulls April to a stop with him.

LUCAS
Do you hear that?

APRIL
What?

LUCAS
That noise? That singing?

April nods

LUCAS
Where-

APRIL
That's Mis Susan's song.

LUCAS
What?

APRIL
The song that Emma's doll plays when you turn the key
in her back. I think she's that way.

LUCAS
Come on.

Lucas and April walk forward, and stumble out onto the shore of the river.

About ten feet out, on a rock in the water, Emma sits cross legged singing to Miss Susan, who is cradled in her lap.

APRIL

Emma! Come here, right now!

Emma doesn't respond.

LUCAS

Emma, come on!

APRIL

Mom and Dad are going to be home soon, we need to go back.

Emma still doesn't respond; she just keeps singing to Miss Susan.

April starts toward Emma, angry that she's just sitting there being weird.

APRIL

Emma!

The music coming from Dolly stops abruptly, and so does Emma's SINGING

LUCAS

Come on, Em, let's go.

Emma looks up.

EMMA

(in a sweet voice younger than her own)
But I'm not done yet.

APRIL

I don't care if you're done. We're going home right now!

EMMA

No.

She turns the key in Miss Susan's back, and the MUSIC starts playing again.

EMMA

My mommy needs to find me. So I have to keep singing.

APRIL

Mom is at home! Quit being a freak and get over here now!

APRIL (CON'T)

Lucas frowns at April for being such a jerk; he turns to Emma, earnest.

LUCAS

Emma, come on, for real.

Emma looks confused.

EMMA

Why do you keep calling me that?

April is starting to freak out a little. You can hear it in her voice.

APRIL

It's your name!

Emma's head snaps back to April as the MUSIC stops abruptly.

EMMA.

I'm Annabelle.

APRIL

Oh please!

(frustrated; to Lucas)

Do you see what I mean?

EMMA

I'm Annabelle.

APRIL

Emma, seriously, stop it!

April begins to wade out to the rock Emma is sitting on.

LUCAS

April, let's just tell your mom and dad. They can come and get her.

APRIL

I'm not getting in trouble because of her!

EMMA

No! I'm Annabelle. I have to stay so she can find me!

LUCAS

April!

EMMA

Stay so she can find you.

April stops halfway to Emma, confused and scared by what her sister is saying.

EMMA

See, it's not so bad. It doesn't hurt. I promise. Now just wait. She'll find you.

APRIL

Emma, you're scaring me.

EMMA

(LAUGHING a little) Don't be silly. I'm Annabelle.

LUCAS
April, please, get back here.

APRIL
No. We have to get Emma.

EMMA
(in a SING-SONGY voice) She's almost he-re! Now you
can be Annabelle too.

April turns on her heel and wades through the water back towards Lucas.

Emma gets up. She's angry.

EMMA
No! Wait! Where are you going?

Lucas has his hand stretched out over the water, waiting for April.

EMMA
No! Don't go! Wait! Come back!

April is almost to the shore.

EMMA
April!

April stops. Lucas's hand still reaches out, almost to April.

LUCAS
April, please...

April doesn't move.

EMMA
April. Won't you play with me?

April stands with her back to her sister, not moving.

EMMA
Don't ignore me. Please, don't ignore me.

April starts to turn around to face her sister.

LUCAS
April, no, please. Don't look at her. I don't know
what happened, but something isn't right. I know you
love her, but if you look back now, you'll be pulled
in too.

Lucas looks eagerly into April's eyes.

LUCAS
Don't look back.

EMMA

Come be Annabelle with me.

LUCAS

April, please. Just trust me.

April's eyes begin to fill with tears.

APRIL

She's my sister!

LUCAS

(beat) Not anymore.

EMMA

(excitedly) I'm Annabelle.

Illumination dawns of April's face. She has made her decision. She reaches out and grabs Lucas's hand. he pulls her ashore.

EMMA

No!

Lucas and April start to run with Emma CRYING OUT behind them.

EMMA

No! If you don't stay still she can't find you! Come back!

LUCAS

If you don't stay still, she can't find you. Keep running April, just keep running.

EMMA

Please! Please!

She is screaming in tears now.

EMMA

Don't leave me behind! Please, stop ignoring me! No! April!

April and Lucas keep running. Finally they burst through the edge of the trees and collapse on the asphalt. April rolls over and Lucas wraps his arms around her.

LUCAS

It's all right, we're safe. It's over...

A strong wind blows the tops of the tress and soft MUSIC can barely be heard. A pale green marble doll's eye rolls onto the asphalt and stays, staring at them.

FADE OUT

THE END