

Don't Look in the Vents
an original screenplay by
Vicky L. Neal

3024 Apple Knoll Lane
Middletown, Ohio 45044
(513) 539-0258
vickyneal5@yahoo.com
www.vickylneal.com

FADE IN:

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY - 1892

A fairly new structure, three stories tall on thirty acres of flat farmland. A barn stands off to the side of the house.

Out front, a horse attached to a wagon waits patiently.

INT. FARMHOUSE - PARLOR - SAME TIME

NOTE: The house has large vents built into the walls near the bottom.

CAROLINE MARTIN (30) speaks with MARY REYNOLDS (28) as they sip on cups of tea from the sofa.

CAROLINE

I can't thank you enough for looking after Peter while we're away.

MARY

No need to thank us, Caroline. We're happy to do it, and Charles is excited to have a playmate.

CAROLINE

We have never left Peter before.
(looks off; worried)
I hope he'll be all right.

MARY

I'll look after him just like he was our own.

WILLIAM MARTIN (30s) enters with CARL REYNOLDS (30s). Each puffs on a pipe.

CARL

Let me know how you like the lake. Maybe I'll take my family on holiday there sometime.

WILLIAM

Certainly. Caroline, are you ready?

CAROLINE

(stands)

I would like to tell Peter good-bye
first.

Running FOOTSTEPS and boys' LAUGHTER come close. Two boys race into the room. CHARLES REYNOLDS (10) and PETER MARTIN (9). Peter chases after Charles in a game of tag, the boys running around and around their parents as they play.

CAROLINE

(to Mary)

I don't think I need to worry.

She catches Peter.

CAROLINE

Peter, your father and I must go.

PETER

Bye.

(to Mary)

Can we play outside?

MARY

Of course.

The boys run off to the back of the house.

MARY

(yelling after them)

Stay away from the old well!

CAROLINE

(concerned)

Well?

CARL

It went dry last year. Had to dig a
new one.

CAROLINE

It's not dangerous, is it?

MARY

Goodness no. Besides, Charles knows
to stay clear of it.

William takes Caroline by the arm.

WILLIAM

We need to be going, dear if we want
to make it before nightfall.

CAROLINE

Very well.
(to Mary)
We'll return on Friday.

William escorts his wife out of the house. Carl and Mary follow.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

William assists Caroline up to the bench seat of their wagon. He climbs up beside her.

Carl and Mary stand back.

MARY

Have a good time.

CAROLINE

We will.

William sends the horse into a trot. The wagon takes off down the dirt road leading away from the farmhouse.

Carl slips an arm around Mary's shoulders. They share a smile and return to the house.

IN THE BACKYARD

The boys continue their game of tag. Peter grows winded and stops to catch his breath.

PETER

I quit.

Charles looks off at something with a sly grin.

CHARLES

I know what we can do. Ever play
"who's the biggest coward"?

PETER

No.

CHARLES

You're gonna love this.

He leads Peter to the:

ABANDONED WELL

A few weathered boards lie across a large hole in the ground, the remnants of an old well. The boys stop to the side.

CHARLES

Whoever crosses the well wins.

PETER

Your mom said to stay away from the well.

CHARLES

Do you always do what you're told?

(smiling)

I bet you do. Don't worry. I've done it lots of times.

PETER

What if we both cross it?

CHARLES

Then we do a tie breaker. I'll go first.

Without hesitation, Charles steps out onto a board. Arms out to his sides to help him balance, he walks across the board. It bows somewhat under his weight and CREAKS.

Peter watches on pins and needles.

Charles hops off the far side.

CHARLES

Your turn.

Peter stares in fear at the old boards. Charles makes chicken sounds.

CHARLES

You're a chicken.

PETER

Am not.

CHARLES

Then prove it.

Peter swallows hard. He steps out with one foot to test a board. Seems solid enough. He walks across the board quickly and jumps off the other end. A proud smile comes to his face.

PETER

I did it.

CHARLES

You sure did. Now we gotta have a tie breaker. Whoever stands on the boards the longest wins.

Peter looks like he might hurl. Charles makes more chicken sounds. Peter straightens.

PETER

I'm not a chicken!

CHARLES

I know I'll stay on longer than you so you go first. I'll count for you.

The color drains from Peter's face as he moves to the end of the boards. He strains to look through the cracks between boards into the well. It's too dark below.

Peter chooses the strongest looking board and steps out with one foot. Tests it a little.

CHARLES

Both feet.

Peter steps completely out and remains still.

CHARLES

One... two... three...

He continues counting.

Peter watches the board he stands on very closely. The longer his weight stays in the one spot, the more the board starts to bow. It shifts from its hold on one end, startling Peter.

CHARLES

... Nine... ten...

Peter chickens out and jumps off to the safety of the ground. Now he is free to breathe a sigh of relief.