

SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES

1983

Walt Disney Productions. Screenplay by Roy Bradbury, based on his novel. Directed by Jack Clayton. Produced by Peter Vincent Douglas.

Setting: Rural Illinois, 1930s

This story of a father's love for his son begins on a perfect autumn day in mythic Greentown, Illinois. Young Will Halloway and Jim Nightshade are best friends. Together they know every inch of Greentown. Will's father is the town librarian, a quiet man who is somewhat old to have such a young son. Jim's father disappeared several years before, leaving his son to fantasize that his father is a daring adventurer who will someday return.

The two boys sneak out of their beds one night and discover that a mysterious carnival has come to town. They creep up to the fairgrounds and watch, horrified, as the rides and attractions are set up. The sign reads: "Dark's Pandemonium Carnival."

The next day, everyone from Greentown goes to the carnival and strange things begin to happen. Mr. Crosetti, the town barber who always dreamed of meeting exotic women from faraway lands, disappears into a tent of belly dancers. Ed, the old football hero who lost an arm and a leg, sees himself whole in the House of Mirrors. Miss Foley, the old spinster school marm who was one of the most beautiful women in Greentown, becomes young and beautiful again. Young and beautiful and blind. It seems that all these gifts come with a price.

MR. HALLOWAY

Will's father speaks of the day by the river when Will nearly drowned as he just sat and watched. He is filled with bitterness and shame for his weakness.

Well, about that picnic down by the Indigo River. Now you sit, son. Sit until it's finished; done with. This talk we were trying to have last night. This one we should have had a long time ago. 'Bout that strong old current that swept you way out in the middle of the river and I stood there and watched, tied to the riverbank; helpless, because I had a dad who didn't think it was right to teach boys to swim. Well, there was a man standing, drinking out of a stone bottle on the other side of the river, and he dove in after you. Dove in without even taking his boots off and pulled you out of danger. I guess you must have been all of four years old at the time. No one else knew who it was, but I did. It was Harry Nightshade's son. Your friend Jim's dad; a couple of years before he lit off across the seas and was never seen in this town again. Mr. Nightshade did your father's work. I can't forgive myself for that — or him either, I guess. Well, I'll tell you something, son. When you see the end of things coming close and staring at you, it's not what you've done that you regret — it's what you didn't do. And most of all, that afternoon at the river, there was nothing I could do. Well, blame my father. If you like, blame me. We've got to stop blaming sometime.