

SMELLS LIKE FALL



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Smells Like Fall!

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It's Friday afternoon at the Townsend household. Jack wakes up from a nap after working all day. He hears throughout the house that no one is home. He grabs a pair of shorts and a shirt, wipes his eyes and walks to the kitchen to grab something to drink. His head picks up a bit as he smells a striking fragrance throughout the house. He thinks for a minute and says out loud, "Ah...smells like fall." He looks out the kitchen window to see the neighbor across the street burning leaves on a cool October day. He takes another big whiff and enjoys the smell...fall is his favorite season. He loves the colors of the leaves, the smell of the air and the cool crisp weather.

Jack decides to clean up the house and prepare the evening meal for his wife Sarah and the three kids Tyler, Kylie and the newest edition to the family, Seth. Jack can't help but stair out each window as he picks up items and cleans the house. The trees are filled with an array of vibrant colored leaves, colors of bright red, yellow, orange and even some that look like purple. Leaves are scattered about the ground and when the breeze blows, the leaves come off the trees like a dazzling leaf colored water fall.

As Jack prepares a dinner of cider beef roast, potatoes and carrots, the door bursts open with the kids and Sarah pilling through. The house is now filled with voices and laughter along with the smells of dinner and the burning fall leaves. Jack walks to the door to greet his delightful

family and the kids surround him with hugs. They all talk at once about their day at school. Jack looks up at Sarah and they both share a smile. Sarah puts her purse away as Jack helps the kids put their coats and school bags away. As the kids make their way to the living room to watch some after school programs on the television, Sarah and Jack embrace and kiss to say hello. Sarah tells Jack about her day as they go into the kitchen to check on dinner. Sarah compliments Jack on how great dinner smells as they embrace and kiss again. Jack tells Sarah of the wonderful family plans that he has for everyone this weekend, but does not reveal them to her, to keep things a surprise.

After dinner, the kids work on homework they received at school to get it done before the weekend. Jack and Sarah finish up the dishes and decide to finish up the night with a nice movie. The family sits in the living room to watch a movie together while munching on popcorn and chocolate. Tyler and Kylie fall asleep before the movie is over and Seth is not far behind. Once all the kids are asleep, Sarah and Jack enjoy another movie together, and then decide to go to bed. Sarah still pesters Jack about Saturday's events, but Jack just laughs and teases her.

Saturday morning starts off with the Tyler popping through Jack and Sarah's bedroom door at seven a.m. He is bored and figures mom and dad should get up to entertain him. He crawls in bed and snuggles in between Jack and Sarah. They shower him with kisses, hugs and tickles that send him fleeing from the bed and bedroom. Jack and Sarah

laugh and kiss each other good morning. They get up and Jack goes into the master bathroom to take a shower. Sarah goes to Kylie and Seth's bedroom to check on them. Kylie is awake playing with her dolls, but Seth is still fast asleep.

Sarah takes Tyler to the kitchen to start making breakfast. Jack then joins them after his morning shower. Jack mixes waffle batter as Sarah fries up some sausages. Tyler is on the dining room floor playing with his cars. Kylie makes her way to the kitchen with the half-awake Seth behind her. The kids find their seats at the table to enjoy the hot morning breakfast. Sarah pours five glasses of orange juice and Jack dishes out the waffles, and then everyone digs in.

Breakfast is over and every one's tummies are full. Sarah takes a shower and Jack gets Tyler ready for a bath. Kylie takes a bath after Tyler and gets dressed to enjoy the day's activities...whatever they are? The day starts out with everyone helping out in the yard raking leaves. Not so much for clean-up, but for jumping in and playing around. Jack and Sarah rake a huge pile of multicolored leaves and watch as Seth gets a running start from across the yard. He runs as fast as she can and leaps into the air. His body comes crashing down on top of the leaf pile sending leaves flying everywhere. He screams in delight and begs to do it again. Everyone is laughing and having a great time. Next, Kylie runs across the yard and jumps into the leaf pile headfirst and disappears into the colorful mountain of leaves. Her brother Tyler hops in to rescue her.

Soon everyone was rolling around in the leaf mound, including Sarah and Jack. Everyone was covered from head to toe with red, yellow and orange leaves.

Later that afternoon, once the leaves were brushed off everyone, Jack has the family stack into the minivan to go on a little outing. The first stop was to McDonalds for a little lunch, after that was to the cider mill and pumpkin patch to collect cider for later and pumpkins for Halloween. Pulling into the cider mill and pumpkin patch farm, the kids eyes lit up. They began to squirm in their seats getting excited about the pumpkins they get to pick out and later carve. As the van stops, the seatbelts click off and the kids pour out of the doors. They rush to the pumpkin patch to touch all the pumpkins. The pumpkin patch is overflowing with pumpkins big and small, light orange to very dark orange and all shapes and styles. About a dozen other families are there with their kids picking out pumpkins. The field is alive with people, laughter, and excitement.

Tyler sees a pumpkin that he desperately wants and runs towards it. He tries to wrap his arms around it, but the pumpkin is twice as big as he is. As he stands behind it, he disappears and the only sight is the top of his hat and his tiny hands grasping the huge orange orb. Sarah and Jack laugh so hard they have tears in their eyes. Kylie and Seth are laughing as well. Jack and Sarah know that Tyler wants that pumpkin and will not settle for anything smaller, so Jack picks it up and carries it

and sets it next to the pay counter. Tyler wants to stay with it and Jack has to pry him away. Kylie and Seth pick out pumpkins, only much smaller than the one Tyler chose. Jack and Sarah pick a few out themselves for decoration and carving for Halloween. Once the pumpkins are chosen and a few gallons of cider are purchased, Jack surprises the family with a spooky hayride and nighttime marshmallow and hotdog roast. The kids are excited once again and Sarah hugs Jack for his thoughtful surprises.

After the family takes a tour through the cider mill and the rest of the pumpkin farm, they see a hay wagon drawn by two horses pull up to a large barn door. A large man with a scruffy beard, blue jean overalls and a smile on his face, fills the wagon with loose bails of hay. He grabs a few flannel blankets and gears up for the night's ride. The horses take a drink and enjoy a few carrots and apples before their journey. Jack and Sarah lift the kids onto the hay covered wagon as other parents do the same with their kids. All of the kids are excited and talking non-stop. The adults climb aboard and get ready to go.

The old man operating the horse and wagon passes a few gallons of cider and cups to the wagon's occupants along with a few boxes of fresh made doughnuts. The smell of the fall leaves, the cool air, the cider and doughnuts puts a huge smile on Jack's face. Sarah joins him in enjoying the atmosphere and the day's events. The cider and doughnuts are passed around to each person as the wagon begins the journey through

the spooky orchard and pumpkin patch. The sky is now getting dark and the air is crisp and cool making everyone snuggle under the blankets and hay. The moon is almost full and the stars are slightly covered by drifting gray clouds. The setting is perfect for a chilling Halloween hayride.

The family filled hay wagon travels down the one lane dirt trail through the apple trees. Torches are lit along the way giving an eerie feel to the night. The children are talking, but ever so quietly. The trees are decorated with plastic bats and rubber spiders. The cider mill employees are dressed up in Halloween costumes such as witches and goblins to make the scenery more thrilling. Some of the kids, as well as adults, jump and scream as some characters jump out from the trees and bushes. Everyone huddles close together as the ride seems to get more and scarier. Along parts of the trail, carved pumpkins light up the way with bright candles and scary faces. Skeletons hang from tree branches and sounds of wolves wail from hidden speakers. The children with eyes wide open look around anticipating when the next monster will creep out of the dark. They are scared, but know its just part of the fun.

Up ahead, the wagon pulls into a large clearing in the woods. In the center is a large roaring fire with logs laid around as seats. With hearts still pounding, everyone leaps out of the wagon and finds a seat around the fire. The old scruffy bearded man climbs off the wagon and joins the group. Other cider mill employees join the crowd and hand out

more cider, hot coffee, marshmallows and hotdogs. A few adults gather sticks and the roasting of marshmallows and hotdogs begin. Jack and Sarah attach large fluffy marshmallows to the sticks and hand them to the kids. Seth needs a little help from Jack, but Tyler and Kylie seem to have the roasting under control. Sarah holds Jack's stick and before he notices, she eats his roasted marshmallow. He looks at her and sees her sitting there with a bit of marshmallow on the side of her lip, grinning ear to ear. They both enjoy a laugh and Jack playfully grabs for Sarah's roasted marshmallow stick. She shares her blackened marshmallow with him and they prepare for the batch of hotdogs. Seth's face is sticky with the white fluffy sugary snack and Tyler and Kylie are hungry for more.

As the group enjoys the warmth of the fire and the sweet taste of the roasted marshmallows and fire-grilled hotdogs, the old man begins to tell a scary story. His voice is very deep and powerful as the fire lights up his wrinkled face. He begins his story with descriptions of a cold stormy night on Halloween. His story chatters on about ghosts, monsters and little kids. The kids move closer to their parents and start to grab anything they can get a hold of. Even most of the adults are captured and mesmerized by the old man's frightening story. The air is quiet except for his rumbling voice and the crackle of the fire. Everyone is holding their breath waiting for the high point of the story. Suddenly his story comes to a bloodcurdling climax scaring everyone. They jump

and their hearts pound sharply and rapidly. The children are gripping their parents and siblings tighter than ever before. The old man laughs, enjoying the response to his tall tale. Everyone breathes a sigh of relief and enjoys a comforting smile with each other.

As the fire grows smaller and the marshmallows and hotdogs are all eaten up, the conversation proceeds to getting back on the wagon and heading for home. The banter between everyone, once on the hay wagon, is of the day's events and the exciting hayride. The children are starting to get tired and the adults are ready to call it a day. Stomachs are full of good fall food and minds are still entertained by spooky stories. The hay wagon makes its way back to the cider mill and the people depart for the night. Thanks are given to the performers and the staff of the cider mill, kids are stuffed into vehicles and the family heads for home.

On the way home the kids fall asleep in the van with their pumpkins by their sides. Jack and Sarah enjoy discussing the kid's reaction to the hayride, pumpkins and bon fire. They both express the good time they had and hope to do it again next year. Once home, the kids are put to bed, then Sarah and Jack enjoy the rest of the quiet night together. They step outside to enjoy the memorable night before going to bed. Jack holds Sarah's hand and takes a deep breath, talks of the crisp night air, the picturesque leaves, and his magnificent family. He looks at Sarah and tells her how lucky he is and states, "Ahh...smells like fall."