

SOUL TROLL

By

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EXT. FOREST BIKE PATH - AFTERNOON

Three kids bike down a path that runs through a forest.

JESSICA, 12, is a tall and confident tomboy. She wears a backwards baseball cap and holds a metal bat in her non-steering hand.

Alongside her rides TOMMY, 11. He's big, athletic, carrying a sports bag on his shoulder.

Trailing behind them is ERIC, 11, a nerdy, scrawny kid with a gentle demeanor.

EXT. FOREST BRIDGE - ENTRANCE - AFTERNOON

They ride along, approaching a SMALL BRIDGE that spans a river stream twenty feet below.

TOMMY

(while riding)

Did you guys know there's a crazy,
like-- psycho guy that lives under
this bridge?

JESSICA

(sympathetic)

Oh yeah... I heard about him. It's
really sad...

Eric stops his bike, just short of the bridge entrance.

The others, already biking on the bridge, stop. They turn back to Eric.

JESSICA

C'mon. It's fine.

Eric is afraid, but caves to peer pressure. He gets back on his bike and pedals forward onto the bridge.

EXT. UNDER THE BRIDGE - AFTERNOON

We are underneath the bridge, looking up at wooden boards that make up the bridge path and rails.

TOMMY'S FACE drops down from above, into view. His head is upside down.

Below, twenty feet down, he sees:

A hunched silhouetted figure, barely visible between bridge pillars and piles of trash.

Tommy whispers to the others, above him.

TOMMY
(whispering)
Guys, check it out.

JESSICA
(off-screen, above)
Leave him alone.

TOMMY
(whispering)
Just look!

The heads of Jessica and Eric descend from above into view.

They look down, seeing:

The silhouette of a decrepit middle aged man, MR. JENKINS. He walks in a circle, pushing a rusty shopping cart full of leaves, MUMBLING TO HIMSELF. He COUGHS and SPITS up something disgusting.

TOMMY
Weirdo's talking nonsense to himself.

They watch Jenkins silhouette ramble around, flailing, as if in a manic sleepwalk. Jessica watches with sympathy, Eric-- with fear, Tommy-- with amused judgment.

As if sensing a presence, Jenkins suddenly LOOKS UP.

He stares directly at us.

The three kids, terrified, pull their heads above the bridge.

EXT. BRIDGE EXIT - AFTERNOON

The kids bike quickly, exiting the bridge.

EXT. PARK - DUSK

The three have set up a makeshift baseball diamond in a small-town forested park, using hats and bags as bases. Nobody is around but them. Cicadas buzz loudly-- it's almost dusk.

Jessica stands ready with a ball on the 'pitching mound', a dead patch of grass.

Eric kneels at home base, tying his shoes before he bats.

Tommy, the catcher, kneels behind Eric.

We are coming in mid-conversation, as Tommy speaks to Jessica.

TOMMY

That guy was so friggin' creepy.

JESSICA

His name is Mr. Jenkins.
I'm telling you, he's not crazy-
he's just had a hard life. My mom's
a social worker, and she says he
had a car accident and lost his
wife.

TOMMY

Whatever. He's still disgusting.

JESSICA

Don't be so soulless, Tommy.

TOMMY

(to Eric)

Come on, you gonna take all day??

Eric hurriedly finishes tying his shoes and picks up a bat.
He examines it in his hands, as if unsure how to hold it.

ERIC

Jessica, do you want to bat? You
haven't gone yet.

TOMMY

(to Jessica)

He knows he'll just embarrass
himself.

Eric looks away from Tommy sheepishly.

JESSICA

Come on Eric, just take a few
swings. I've seen you hit before,
you're really good.

ERIC

I guess so...

Eric steps up to the plate. Jessica winds up and tosses a
soft pitch.

CRACK! Eric knocks the ball out of the park, into the woods.

ERIC

Woah!

JESSICA

See, I knew you could do it!

They watch, losing sight of the ball.

Tommy is unimpressed, annoyed.

TOMMY

Yeah, well, I'm not going to get that. It went by the bridge.

ERIC

But, you're the catcher...

TOMMY

You hit it, you get it.

Jessica picks up another ball from the ground near her feet.

JESSICA

Guys, we have another ball. We'll get it later.

Tommy steps up to the plate. They go on playing.

EXT. FOREST BIKE PATH - NIGHT

The kids ride along the bike path, wielding FLASH LIGHTS.

EXT. FOREST BRIDGE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

They stop at the bridge entrance and hop off their bikes.

TOMMY

(to Eric)

Alright, come on, go get it.

Eric shines his flash light under the bridge. There is no sight of Jenkins, but they can hear COUGHING and RAMBLING.

ERIC

Uh... I don't know....

TOMMY

Yeah, I knew you'd be afraid. Wimp.

ERIC

Well if you're so tough why don't you go get it?

TOMMY

Because! It's not even my ball.

JESSICA

Ugh, I'll go.

Jessica walks down the muddy forest foot path that leads under the bridge.

ERIC

But it's dark, you don't know what could happen.

JESSICA

He's a nice person you guys, he's just misunderstood. I've got a flash light, I'll be fine.

Eric and Tommy watch as Jessica disappears below.

EXT. UNDER THE BRIDGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Jessica walks between large wooden bridge pillars and cross-beams, shining her flash light ahead.

JESSICA

Hello?

Jessica stops walking as her light settles on a huddled figure, facing away from her in the corner of a pair of cross-beams. She JUMPS, startled by his ghoulish presence.

JESSICA

Oh! Hi... Mr. Jenkins.

Mr. Jenkins has a COUGHING FIT and scurries away from her.

MR JENKINS

(coughing between words)

Get-- away from me!

Jessica tries to follow Jenkins, who frantically crawls from pillar to pillar, like a frenzied primate.

JESSICA

I'm sorry to bother you, Mr. Jenkins, I was just wondering if you happened to see a ball that we hit over here?

Jessica loses sight of Jenkins' figure in the darkness. She approaches the last bridge pillars before a river stream.

JESSICA
Mr. Jenkins?

Jessica stops by the stream and looks around. Mr. Jenkins is nowhere to be found.

A beat. The BUZZ of Cicadas.

THUNK. A baseball lands on the dirt next to Jessica.

She JUMPS, dropping her flash light. It points upwards, briefly illuminating the trollish face of Mr. Jenkins, who is perched high above on a cross-bar between bridge pillars.

The flash light CLICKS off as it THUMPS against the ground. Jessica is lit only by moonlight reflected off the stream.

Jessica quivers with fear as she picks up the ball and the flash light.

She tries to SHAKE the flash light back on. Unable to see Jenkins, she addresses the air.

JESSICA
Oh, thanks Mr. Jenkins... You know, it's funny, my friends are kind of afraid of you...

TROLL JENKINS
(Off-screen)
Oh really...

Jessica shakes the flash light frantically.

JESSICA
Yeah, but... I don't think you're a bad guy. I know what happened with the car accident, and how you lost your wife, so I understand if-

TROLL JENKINS
(Off-screen) (regretful)
That's half the story, kid...
(coughing) I was drunk. It was my fault. I'm a... a monster.

Jessica considers this, still shaking her flash light.

JESSICA
Oh... Well... It's been a long time since then, and I'm sure you're sorry, and really I think people can change you know?

MR. JENKINS
 (Off-screen)
 I've been to hell and back, kid...

Jessica RATTLES her flash light, begging it to turn on.

MR. JENKINS
 (Off-screen) (getting closer)
 But you know what...

Jessica's flash light sparks to life, pointing straight up-revealing Mr. Jenkins ghoulish face. He hangs upside down from a cross-bar, his face only a few feet from hers.

He has elongated ears, warts everywhere, with a palish lime green color-- a very Trollish appearance.

MR. JENKINS
 Hell's more fun anyway.

Mr. Jenkins LAUNCHES off of the cross-bar and LANDS on Jessica, tackling her to the ground. Jessica SCREAMS!

EXT. FOREST BIKE PATH - NIGHT

Tommy has Eric in a headlock- wrestling.

TOMMY
 (mocking)
 You had to send a *girl* to get your ball...

ERIC
 (trying to break free)
 Shut up, jerk!

A SCREAM from below the bridge.

They stop wrestling, both horrified.

EXT. UNDER THE BRIDGE - NIGHT

Mr. Jenkins has Jessica pinned, his face close to hers. They are illuminated by Jessica's fallen flashlight.

His mouth WARPS AND STRETCHES like a balloon, forming a huge suction cup that clasps around her head like a Facehugger. His mouth is like a stretchy silly putty that covers her whole face.

Jenkins' mouth turns on like a vacuum, sucking up DARK ENERGY, which glows neon purple, from Jessica's face.

She loses consciousness as the energy flows into Mr Jenkins. His head grows larger, inflating.

But then--

Mr. Jenkins is TACKLED from behind by Tommy.

Jenkins' stumbles but stays on his feet-- Tommy on his back.

Jenkins' hunched figure stands up fully, revealing a massive seven foot stature. He is almost skeletal, with long limbs and claws.

He lurches like a bucking bronco, trying to shake Tommy off his back.

Eric approaches them with his flashlight and a baseball bat, unsure what to do.

Mr. Jenkins lurches forward, slamming a shoulder into Eric, knocking him down.

Jenkins spins, knocking Tommy off his back to the ground.

Jenkins looms over Tommy and grabs him by the neck. Tommy CHOKES loudly as Mr. Jenkins draws his face nearer.

MR. JENKINS
GIVE ME YOUR SOUL, MAGGOT!

Mr. Jenkins' mouth stretches and envelops Tommy's face.

He SUCKS UP DARK ENERGY, causing Tommy's chest to collapse into a hole. Simultaneously, Mr. Jenkins' body GROWS LARGER from the energy being transferred.

Finally Tommy has withered into merely a head, legs, and arms, attached to an empty mid-section. Mr. Jenkins is invigorated, as though he's just snorted a line.

MR. JENKINS
WOO, boy, your soul packs a PUNCH!

Mr. Jenkins, now a foot taller, tosses Tommy to the ground like a used candy wrapper.

He moves towards Jessica, who has regained consciousness, but is in a daze.

Eric LEAPS and TACKLES Jenkins.

ERIC

I'm supposed to be the first one to
kiss her!

They wrestle, but Mr. Jenkins quickly gains dominance. He pins Eric down and looks deeply into his eyes.

MR. JENKINS

I can tell just by looking into
your eyes, that you're weak, boy. I
don't know if I even want your
pathetic soul...

Mr. Jenkins hovers his face near Eric's, thinking.

MR. JENKINS

Well, a soul's still a soul...

Mr. Jenkins SUCKS ENERGY from Eric's face. He drains him for a few moments, when---

CRACK! Mr. Jenkins' head is SMASHED with a metal baseball bat.

He falls to the ground, unconscious, and drops Eric- who is slightly drained and unconscious.

Jessica stands over Mr. Jenkins, scowling down.

JESSICA

I guess I was wrong about you...
Some people can't change.

Jessica hears a GASPING for air. She kneels down to Tommy's deflated half-body.

JESSICA

Tommy? Are you--

Tommy tries to speak, but can only mouth soundless words as he gasps for air.

JESSICA

Oh my god... I...

Jessica looks at his withered body, shocked.

JESSICA

I'm going to get you both out of
here. It's going to be okay.

Jessica looks back and forth between the unconscious Eric and the deflated body of Tommy. Finally she chooses, picking up Eric and hoisting him over her shoulder. Tommy looks up at her, mouthing the word 'Help'.

JESSICA

I'll come back for you. It's okay!

Jessica carries Eric away from the river, up to the top of the bridge.

Moments after she's gone, Mr. Jenkins' SNAPS TO LIFE!

He snatches Tommy's body... and drags it like an empty bag across the sand to the river. Tommy's face is horrified, gasping with breathless silent screams.

Jenkins walks into the river, dragging Tommy behind. The two sink like stones, disappearing below the murky water.

A beat.

Jessica runs back on to the beach where Tommy's body just was. She looks around, in a frenzy.

JESSICA

Tommy?? TOMMY?!?!

Mr. Jenkins' Trollish face emerges from the water. Jessica doesn't see him.

He watches Jessica silently, grinning.

FADE OUT