

The Lost Camp

FADE IN:

CLOSE ON: A weathered wooden sign that says, "Camp Ticonderoga."

PULL BACK: It's an old photograph from a summer camp.

ADULT TINO (V.O.)

That was our last summer at Camp Ticonderoga.

Leaning over the sign, three teenage boys pose with their arms around each other's shoulders. One Latino, one Asian and one African American.

ADULT TINO (V.O.)

We were city kids, bussed out for the summer to get a taste of country life.

More boys on either side of the sign, all posing like tough guys, but their childish grins betray their macho stance.

ADULT TINO (V.O.)

No one knows the truth of what happened here. No one would believe me.

The photo is blurred at the edges where a counsellor, Jack (Caucasian, early 20s) stands with a clearly forced smile.

ADULT TINO (V.O.)

That's what happens with ghost stories.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Fog rolls across the ground, swirling over the roots of gnarled trees, that glow in the light of the full moon.

Flashlight beams pierce the darkness.

Tino, who is a 15-year-old athletic-Latino, leads Lucas, a 14-year-old skinny-Asian and Kerel, a 13-year-old African American who is overweight. Tino holds a flashlight in one hand and a small FOLDING KNIFE, in the other. Tino and Lucas leap over a fallen tree. Tino points his flashlight back at Kerel, who is struggling to climb over it.

LUCAS

Jesus, Kerel. If I were a cheeseburger, you would have caught up

with us by now.

KEREL

Not funny.

Kerel, panting, rolls over the log.

ADULT TINO (V.O.)

It was our last night at camp. Getting caught by the counsellors wasn't a concern of ours. We could care less.

LUCAS

Are you sure Jack's stash is out here?  
Let me see the map.

Kerel pulls out a trail map and holds it under Tino's flashlight. A red X is hand drawn off where no trail goes.

ADULT TINO (V.O.)

Jack was the counsellor for our bunk house. We didn't hate him, not yet at least. But there was something off about him. Jack kept to himself mostly, and the other counsellors avoided him.

KEREL

It looks like a treasure map. What do you think he's hiding out here?

TINO

Well, what were you looking for when you broke into his locker?

KEREL

I didn't break in. He left it open.

LUCAS

It's probably just a map to a hut he jerks off in.

TINO

You think it's his porn stash?

KEREL

Treasure! Titty Treasure! Let's go.

The boys head off into the darkness with new energy.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

They reach the edge of a hill, and gasp when they see below them-- AN EMPTY VILLAGE.

Bathed in moonlight, a few remnants of old shacks, like an abandoned set from a Wild West movie.

LUCAS

That's creepy.

KEREL

I don't think I want to see titties that badly.

Tino lifts up his folding knife.

TINO

Don't worry, I got you.

Tino starts running down the hill. Lucas follows after.

KEREL

No guys. Let's go back.

Kerel waits for a moment, looks around and decides to follow. He grunts as the brush pricks his ankles.

EXT. ABANDONED VILLAGE - NIGHT

Flashes from their phone cameras pierce the foggy darkness, only a few of the shacks are still standing. Broken windows. Weeds growing through the floorboards. A ripped, "Don't tread on me" banner hangs on the wall inside what looks like an old saloon.

KEREL

That looks like the pin I found in Jack's locker. This must be it.

A flashlight beam hits Kerel in his face, startling him. Tino and Kerel look over to see Lucas going into the old stucco building with the words, "Credit Union" faded into the wall over the door. They race over to the building.

Inside the moonlight shines through the missing rear wall.

LUCAS (O.C.)

Check this out.

Lucas is sitting in front of a large iron safe.

ADULT TINO (V.O.)

We may have been city kids, but we knew there was no chance that we'd find treasure in that old safe.

Lucas slowly grabs the handle on the safe door.

ADULT TINO (V.O.)

But how could we get that far and not make sure.

Tino's flashlight shines into the safe as Lucas pulls the door revealing-- a hissing SNAKE!

Lucas falls back, right into Tino, who laughs.

TINO

It's just a gopher snake. Relax.

The snake slithers out leaving the safe empty.

TINO

Aww. The snake ate all the porn.

KEREL (O.C.)

Hey guys. I think we should go.

Tino and Lucas shine their flashlights at Kerel, who is standing in front of some graffiti. Kerel takes his phone out.

LUCAS

Stop being such a bitch.

Tino shines his light at the graffiti. It's an epitaph written in spray paint.

"1908-The last stand of Ruck Jones. May his soul live on through his followers."

TINO

Who the fuck is he?

Kerel pulls up an article from his cell phone and starts scrolling through it.

KEREL

It says in the late 1800s and early 1900s, Ruck Jones was a member of the Johnson Gang, who were responsible for the kidnapping of over 50 children.

Kerel's cellphone shows a sepia-toned photo of a grizzled bearded outlaw.

KEREL

Ruck Jones was kicked out of the Johnson Gang, after having killed several of the kidnapped victims after the ransom had been paid. Soon after, Jones joined the political terror group, the White Horses, kidnapping and murdering children of local minority families.

TINO

(annoyed)

I hate racists.

LUCAS

Does it say how he died?

Kerel continues scrolling through the article.

KEREL

No. It's rumored that a group of volunteers captured and executed him. But no one really knows.

TINO

Does it mention this place? Maybe that was here. You never know.

LUCAS

Bullshit. What site are you getting this from?

KEREL

Wikipedia. Can read for yourself.

Kerel holds his phone up for Lucas to read. Tino starts emptying his pockets.

LUCAS

Anyone can write on Wikipedia. Tino, tell him that anyone...

TINO

Guys!

Lucas and Kerel turn to Tino who is shining his light all over the floor.

LUCAS  
What are you doing Tino?

TINO  
I can't find my knife. It must have  
fell out of my pocket.

LUCAS  
Maybe the snake ate it, or Kerel.

TINO  
Help me look for it.

LUCAS  
Alright.

Tino, Lucas and Kerel get on their hands and knees, searching the floor. Kerel turns the flashlight on his phone and paces around.

LUCAS  
Where did you have it last?

A RUSTLING SOUND from outside the front door makes them freeze. They share a look of panic. They carefully make their way out the hole in the back wall and run for the bushes.

They sit quietly for a moment. Kerel is about to say something when they hear FOOTSTEPS. Creaky boots and jingling spurs.

Through the bushes they see the silhouette of a MAN standing in the moonlight, wearing a floppy-brimmed cowboy hat. The boys are frozen. The man walks down the main street, out of sight.

LUCAS  
That wasn't a counsellor.

TINO  
We have to keep looking.

KEREL  
No, we don't. We have to leave.

LUCAS  
For once I agree with Kerel.

TINO  
I'm not leaving without it. Let's  
split up and look.

KEREL  
We're not splitting up.

LUCAS  
I guess we can stick around a little longer.

They run off before Kerel can protest. Kerel follows Lucas.

EXT. FRONT OF CREDIT UNION - MOMENTS LATER

Kerel keeps looking down the street where the man with the cowboy hat walked. Lucas shines his light close at the ground, searching.

KEREL  
This is so dumb. Who cares about a knife?

LUCAS  
His dad gave him that knife.

KEREL  
Then ask him for another one.

LUCAS  
His dad died last Christmas.

KEREL  
Oh. I...

LUCAS  
Yeah. Now who's the asshole? Start looking poundage.

Kerel keeps one eye down the street and kicks his foot around in the dirt.

LUCAS  
It's not here. We'll look somewhere else.

Lucas and Kerel start walking past an old cemetery. Lucas shines his flashlight over the gravestones.

LUCAS  
What's that?

Lucas's light reflects off something shiny on one of the headstones, near the back of the hallowed grounds.



KEREL

It's obviously not there. We never went in there.

LUCAS

I want to check it out.

KEREL

You're wasting time. Let's find the knife so we can leave.

Lucas ignores Kerel and walks into the graveyard. Kerel isn't playing anymore and runs towards where he last saw Tino.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Lucas makes his way through the rows of graves. His flashlight is focused on the shining object-it's Tino's knife!

Lucas goes to grab Tino's knife, but accidentally knocks it to the ground. He slowly bends down and reaches for the knife. His hand gets closer...

A dusty, silver-toed, snakeskin boot crushes Lucas's hand into the dirt. His mouth opens but he's too scared to scream.

He looks up to his captor in time to see the darkened outline of the man with the cowboy hat standing over him. In the blink of an eye, the man raises a tomahawk and just as quickly plunges it into Lucas's neck.

CUT TO BLACK with the sound of the blade finding flesh.

EXT. ABANDONED VILLAGE - NIGHT

Tino is searching the ground for his knife. Footsteps approach. Tino jumps back. He looks up to see an out of breath Kerel.

TINO

Shit. Kerel. Is everything alright?  
Where's Lucas?

KEREL

We found a graveyard, and he decided to check it out.

TINO

We never went into the graveyard.

KEREL  
That's... what I said.

TINO  
We should go get him.

KEREL  
I'm not running back there.

JACK (O.S.)  
It'd do you good, Kerel.

The boys clench up in terror at the sound of the voice. Jack stands in the moonlight behind them.

JACK  
I've been trying to get you to run all summer.

The boys are relieved when they realize it's Jack, thinking he will keep them safe.

TINO  
Jeez, Jack. It's you. We got lost. We were just looking for...

Jack holds up Tino's father's knife.

JACK  
For this?

TINO  
Yes! I'll take that.

Tino puts his hand out. Jack flashes a devilish grin as he holds the knife away from Tino.

JACK  
Not so fast. I told you if you didn't store this little keepsake in your locker, I'd have to confiscate it.

Kerel jumps forward and pulls the knife from Jack's hand.

KEREL  
It's his fathers!

JACK  
Oh. You're a grabby little monkey, aren't you?

Kerel gives the knife back to Tino.

KEREL

Jack, we all have to get out of here.  
There's some guy walking around.

TINO

We have to get Lucas.

Jack's smile gets more sinister. A shadow of a man appears in the dark behind him. The boys freeze as the shadow speaks.

RUCK JONES

That little yellow boy has been sent home.

Out of the shadows steps RUCK JONES, an Old West wraith with a scar that travels from his chin up to his milky left eye.

He holds a bloody tomahawk in his left hand. It's clear to Tino and Kerel that he's the man with the cowboy hat that they saw walking down the street earlier.

JACK

Boys, I'd like to introduce you to a friend of mine... Ruck Jones.

Ruck smiles a nearly toothless grin. He claps Jack on the back. A bit too hard for Jack's liking but he rolls with it.

KEREL

What the fuck? You died.

RUCK JONES

That was temporary kid. Evil never really dies. My followers' sacrifices keep me alive. I take my vengeance out on this village by killing anyone who comes here.

RUCK JONES

(to Jack)

Good job, Jack. You kept your bargain.  
You can go now.

JACK

Can I watch?

Ruck's chuckle echoes from the deepest pit of hell.

Kerel tries to run, but Jack grabs him.

RUCK JONES  
Good catch, Jack. These mongrels can  
run like Jack Rabbits.

Kerel is crying, as Jack pins his arms behind him. Tino's  
bladder releases, as he sits in his own puddle.

JACK  
Who's first, Ruck?

RUCK JONES  
Well, the Beaner is stewing in his own  
juices, but I'm a man who likes his  
dessert first. I'm gonna carve me a  
slice of this chocolate cake.

Tino watches Ruck's tomahawk slice deep into Kerel's belly.  
Kerel's scream spurs Jack to laugh.

Tino charges at Ruck, driving his father's knife deep into  
Ruck's neck.

Ruck's body splashes down in the pool of Kerel's innards.

Jack grabs Tino by the throat with both hands. They scream  
into each other's face. Tino claws wildly at Jack's hands.

Jack's scream turns into an echoing laughter. Tino looks up  
to see Ruck's milky eye in Jack's left eye-socket.

ADULT TINO (V.O.)  
That's when I realized that Ruck  
wasn't lying... evil never really  
dies.

Tino's eyes begin to roll back in his head. His arms  
flailing, until the blade finds a soft spot in Jack's gut.  
Tino repeats the motion, stabbing again and again. They fall  
to their knees as Tino's arm goes limp.

Tino begins to lose consciousness.

FADE TO BLACK

FROM BLACK

INT. AMBULANCE - DAY

TINO POV:

The light from the inside of the ambulance is almost

blinding. EMTs are working feverishly over him.

A POLICE OFFICER pushes the EMTs out of his way.

POLICE OFFICER

Why did you butcher these people? What  
the hell is the matter with you?

The EMTs pull the officer away to continue their work.

An EMT puts an oxygen mask over Tino's face.

TINO

It was Ruck... Ruck Jones.

THE GROUP PHOTO - Panning across.

The same picture from earlier, but now we get a closer look  
at the blurry image of Jack. The blurs leave a spectral  
silhouette... almost like a cowboy hat.

FADE OUT.