

THE INTERLOPERS

Based upon the short story by
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Screenplay by
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"The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry."

- John Steinbeck

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Four furry legs glide silently past and through the forest. Everything else is still. A modest-sized farmhouse sits on the forest's edge to the east. On the west side sits another farmhouse of relatively equal proportions. The night wind blows gently.

Suddenly...

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

GEORGE (late-forties, bearded) bursts through the doorway with rifle in hand. He grinds his teeth angrily.

GEORGE
(contemptuously, to himself)
Richard!

INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

RICHARD (same age, portlier, also bearded) slams his front door closed. He too carries a rifle. He clenches his free fist in anger.

RICHARD
(spitting the word)
George!

GEORGE'S HOUSE

George tosses his rifle into a corner. It clatters noisily. He strides towards a drink table.

GEORGE
(muttering)
Richard.

RICAHRD'S HOUSE

Richard, drink in hand, sits down on a comfortable-looking chair. He shakes his head.

RICHARD

George.

GEORGE'S HOUSE

George drains his drink and walks into the bedroom.

GEORGE

Richard.

His wife, JANE (forties, tall with glasses) looks up from the bed and over the top of her book. George storms over to the window and stares out it with arms crossed. The forest can be seen through the window in the distance.

GEORGE

I swear. If I catch that
trespassing bastard one more
time, I'll...

RICHARD'S HOUSE

RICHARD

...kill'im. Shoot him right
between the eyes.

Richard turns from his bedroom window and sits down on the bed next to his wife, EUNICE (forties, no glasses).

RICHARD

Seriously. How hard is it
for him to stay on his side?

He throws his hands up in exasperation.

EUNICE

You know he's probably saying
the same thing about you, dear.

GEORGE'S HOUSE

GEORGE

He's not saying anything about
me. And you know why?

JANE

Why?

GEORGE

Because he only cares...

RICHARD'S HOUSE

RICHARD

...about himself! It's like my father
and grandfather used to say...

GEORGE'S HOUSE

GEORGE

...never trust a...

SPLIT SCREEN - BOTH HOUSES

GEORGE

Richard!

RICHARD

George!

TITLE OVER BLACK - 'THE INTERLOPERS'

EXT. FOREST - DAY

George hammers a wooden signpost into the ground. He lifts his hammer to give the post another whack when a similar smacking sound is heard in the distance. George frowns and looks around for the source of the noise. He hears it again and starts walking deliberately through the trees. After a few moments he comes to a clearing and finds Richard hammering a similar sign into the ground.

GEORGE

What do you think you're doing?

Richard looks up, startled.

RICHARD

What? What does it look like I'm
doing? I'm putting this damn sign
in to keep you from poachin' off my
land!

George gapes.

GEORGE
Poaching!? YOUR land!?

Richard continues hammering his sign.

GEORGE
First of all, you're not even
in the right place! The boundary's
back that way. I've already put a
new sign up.

Richard snorts.

RICHARD
Yeah. Just like the last one.
Always moving closer and closer
to my house it seems.

GEORGE
SECOND of all, it's been you that's
stealing my game; hunting where you're
not supposed to.

Richard stops hammering.

RICHARD
Oh come off it every one of those
critters has belonged to me!

GEORGE
They're not critters. They're
Buck. And you know what?

Richard stands to full height and faces George.

GEORGE
The buck stops here.

The men stare at each other for a few moments, eyes fiery
with hatred.

RICHARD
Does it now?

George nods.

GEORGE
Just like my father always—

RICHARD
Oh your father was such a George!

GEORGE
And yours such a Richard!

They glare for a few more seconds.

GEORGE
Fine. You know what? You put
your sign there and I'll put mine
over there and that will be that.

He takes one step closer to Richard.

GEORGE
But if I even think I see you
anywhere near my side, something
will be done about it.

He pats his rifle.

RICHARD
Well put, but we both know it's
impossible to watch the whole
border.

He pauses.

RICHARD
I mean what are you going to do,
organize some sort of band of
hunters to patrol the boundary
at regular intervals?

They stare at each other.

RICHARD
Or something like that?

They continue to stare. The wheels are obviously churning.
After several moments, both men suddenly take off running
in the direction of their respective houses. They return

to the screen a few moments later, walking quickly, if sheepishly, in the opposite - the correct - direction.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

George and Richard stand at opposite entrances to the woods. Each is surrounded by a small group of men - all bearing arms.

GEORGE
Alright listen up, men. As loyal friends of my family, you have been brought here today to defend what is rightfully ours.

RICHARD'S CAMP

RICHARD
Ever since my grandfather, the Great Richard, as he is now known, built this house and these woods with his bare hands...

GEORGE'S CAMP

GEORGE
...with his own...bare...hands.

He holds his palms upwards dramatically.

RICHARD'S CAMP

RICHARD
There has been a George trying to take it from us. But not anymore.

GEORGE'S CAMP

GEORGE
No, friends. Today the thieving and the trespassing must and will come to an end! So go! For the forest!

RICHARD'S CAMP

RICHARD
For glory!

SPLIT SCREEN - BOTH CAMPS

GEORGE
For George!

RICHARD
For Richard!

The men in each camp grumble and shuffle off
unceremoniously into the woods.

GEORGE
(calling after)
Oh, but do mind the trees. They
are old and some lean far too much.

LATER

George, rifle at the ready, walks stealthily through the
brush. He stops mid-stride to look down at the ground. He
sees Richard's sign standing in front. With a smile he
steps past it and continues walking.

A crack from behind him freezes George in his tracks. With
a swift pivot, he flings his rifle 180 degrees where it
smacks into something metal, producing a loud clang.
George looks up to see Richard, gun pointed straight at
him, standing a few feet away.

Richard smiles.

RICHARD
It would appear that you are
trespassing on my property.

He motions to the sign. George smiles as well and motions
to the other sign that he hammered in himself.

GEORGE
Ah, but I do jest, for I believe
it is you who are trespassing.

Both men keep their guns and eyes firmly pointed at the
other.

RICHARD
Retreat, vermin.

GEORGE

Only after you, you scoundrel.

They continue to stare.

RICHARD

Oh why don't-

A loud crackling sound cuts him off.

RICHARD

Do you hear that?

GEORGE

The only sound I hear is you not--

His eyes widen.

GEORGE

Wait, yes I do.

The crackling grows louder and more intense. A whooshing sound can also be heard.

RICHARD

What the devil?

The sound grows to a roar. Both men stare at each other, eyes widening even more. Their hair starts to blow slightly.

GEORGE

Windy, isn't it?

Everything goes black and a massive crash is heard.

LATER

George slowly opens his eyes to find that his whole body from the hips down is pinned under the trunk of an enormous tree. Blood trickles down his forehead and he blinks it away from his eyes. Richard lies unconscious a few feet next to him, his body similarly pinned. George starts to say something but ends up coughing instead. He clears his throat.

GEORGE

Richard!

Richard doesn't stir. George looks around but the woods are dark.

GEORGE

Richard!

Richard's eyelids flutter and his mouth begins moving.

RICHARD

(mumbling)

Mmm what? The buck stops here...

He opens one eye and sees George.

RICHARD

(mumbling)

Hey what are you doing on my side?

George sighs.

GEORGE

We're stuck under a tree you
Idiot. Open your eyes.

Richard blinks them open and takes in the scene. He winces in pain.

RICHARD

This is all your fault.

George tries to weasel himself out further but can't.

GEORGE

MY fault? How could this possibly
be my fault?

RICHARD

If you hadn't been on my side—

GEORGE

But no you were on my side! Look,
it doesn't matter. When my men find us,
you'll have to answer for this, you'll
see.

RICHARD

YOUR men? I think not. My men will

surely find us first, and when they do
I will have them finish off what parts
of you the tree missed.

GEORGE

Really? I've no fewer than ten men
out in the forest now as we speak.

RICHARD

I've eleven. And all with orders
to look for me after twenty minutes.

GEORGE

Fifteen for mine.

The men fall into silence. Each strains periodically to
see farther through the dark trees.

Richard continues to grimace. George tries to ignore him,
but the cries are too constant.

GEORGE

What's the matter?

Richard bites down hard in pain.

RICHARD

Nothing.

GEORGE

You probably got pierced by
A branch.

Richard grimaces again.

RICHARD

Yes. Probably.

They fall into silence again. George starts to wriggle one
of his hands around his body and into his coat. He winces
for a few seconds as his fingers grope around. Finally, he
smiles and pulls out a small leather flask. He holds it up
to his mouth and unscrews the cap with his teeth. He gulps
the liquid down for several seconds before putting it down
to regain his breath.

He looks over at Richard again and sees that his lips are crusted and caked with blood. He reaches out with the flask.

GEORGE

Here. Have some. I've enough for the both of us. At least until they find us.

Richard looks at the flask wearily for several seconds before shaking his head.

RICHARD

No. No drink of a George will ever quench my thirst. Take it away.

George brings the flask back and stares at it. He looks up from it to Richard and then back to the flask.

GEORGE

(haltingly)

You know. I've been thinking. We could stop this, you know? This feud.

Richard is silent.

GEORGE

Richard?

RICHARD

Give up the feud, you say? My father—

GEORGE

Yes and his father too. I know. Just like mine. Always fighting with each other. But we COULD stop it, you know.

Richard is silent again for a moment.

GEORGE

Just think. A George and a Richard living together...as friends. Peace.

Richard slowly starts to smile.

RICHARD
Peace. That would be something.

George nods, getting more excited.

GEORGE
In fact, if it is my men that find us,
I will make sure that they help you
first.

Richard looks over at him. A warm look crosses his face.

RICHARD
And I shall do the same! Think
of the talk in town when they
see us walking in together! They'll
think the world's gone mad!

Both men share in a laugh.

RICHARD
George?

GEORGE
Yes?

RICHARD
Might you offer the flask to me
again? I think this time I will
take it.

GEORGE
Indeed, friend!

He hands it to him. Richard holds it up.

RICHARD
From now on, this shall no longer
be my forest.

GEORGE
Nor my forest.

RICHARD
It shall be our forest.

GEORGE
True enough. For this forest
belongs to the both of us.

RICHARD
And together we are its master!
Cheers to that!

He downs a gulp and hands the flask back to George.

GEORGE
Cheers!

He drinks. Both men laugh.

RICHARD
If my men find us first, there will
be a great feast at my house and you
shall be the guest of honour.

GEORGE
And if mine men find us then—

He trails off as he squints behind Richard into the
distance.

RICHARD
What? What is it? What do you
see?

George smiles broadly.

GEORGE
Finally! I see men coming! Through
the woods there! Though I can't yet
tell if they are yours or mine.

Richard smiles.

RICHARD
Not that it matters anymore, friend.
From what direction do they come?

GEORGE
The east. And they're moving quickly!
Brave lads!

RICHARD

Then they are no doubt yours, for mine
would not stray far from the western
borders.

The footsteps can be heard now, their volume increasing.
George's smile falters a bit.

RICHARD

Can you see yet? Are they your
men?

George doesn't answer.

RICHARD

(impatiently)
Are they your men?

George starts to chuckle.

GEORGE

No.

His chuckling gets louder.

RICHARD

What? Then who are they?

George's laughter is now almost maniacal. He stops
suddenly and looks at Richard.

GEORGE

Wolves.

THE END