

THE JACK PINE

by

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EXT. WOODS AND RIVER -- DAY

By the edge of the river, TOM TOMLIN is seen sitting down with his easel and brush set, painting away as he scrutinizes the picturesque landscape in front of him. We see his painting in progress.

We then slowly MOVE IN on the small jack pine tree that he is painting. This image then DISSOLVES into an image of the exact same spot, but 75 years later. Therefore, the tree is no longer there but it is nonetheless recognizably the same spot.

EXT. WOODS AND RIVER, 75 YRS. LATER -- DAY

A wider view of the area now. KEVIN SHEPPARD, a young detective, walks into the frame, along with JONATHAN, a slightly older detective. They're surveying the area.

KEVIN

I dunno... if she's around here,  
she's really hidden.

JONATHAN

Yeah. Probably is. Might even be  
down there somewhere. (*JONATHAN  
gestures toward the river*)

KEVIN

She could still be alive, y'know.  
We dunno.

JONATHAN starts pacing around the area.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Maybe... maybe if I tried painting  
the area. Something might come up.

JONATHAN

C'mon, Kev... that was Katie's  
thing. You can't do that.

KEVIN

...I guess.

KEVIN and JONATHAN continue searching around the area.

EXT. FOREST EXPANSE -- DAY

1 week later. We see KEVIN kneeling down in the distance, dwarfed by the large forest area around him.

In closer, we see that he is using tweezers to carefully pluck some sort of fiber off of a rock. With the other hand, he has a cellphone up to his ear. He looks tired.

KEVIN

Yeah. I'm just... really running outta ideas here, y'know. There's just... so much space...

EXT. DIFFERENT AREA OF FOREST EXPANSE -- DAY

JONATHAN is searching around the forested area as he talks to KEVIN on his cellphone.

JONATHAN

We do have something to go on. This is where she was last seen.

EXT. FOREST EXPANSE -- DAY

KEVIN places the fiber into a tiny plastic pouch.

KEVIN

We got someone saying "around the forest," but look... that's no lead. Have you seen this forest? We've already scoured it.

JONATHAN (O.S.)

Maybe she's buried...

KEVIN

We can't just *dig up* every acre...

JONATHAN (O.S.)

No.

KEVIN begins walking off.

KEVIN

I might have something here... a hair... could be anybody's hair, I know... but what the hell...

KEVIN hangs up. He looks out in the distance, regarding the huge landscape. JONATHAN appears in frame.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Find anything!?

JONATHAN  
*(walking)* Nah... she's probably not  
 even out here...

JONATHAN walks up closer to KEVIN. He hangs up his phone.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)  
 ...Couple more days and if we still  
 haven't found her, the department's  
 gonna be cold casing it.

KEVIN  
*What?* No, we can't just give up on  
 her. We need more people.

JONATHAN  
 We already did the group searches,  
 Kev. Comes a point when... you just  
 gotta move on.

KEVIN continues to stare ahead. We see the expanse of the  
 forest area once again. From KEVIN'S fixed gaze, we DISSOLVE  
 into an image of his troubled face lying down in bed.

KEVIN (O.S.)  
 She's out here somewhere...

INT. KEVIN'S CONDO BEDROOM -- NIGHT

KEVIN is clearly not experiencing a comfortable sleep. From  
 this image of him, we enter his dream: rapidly-cut images of  
 areas around the forest and river area confront us. Over  
 this, we hear sounds of the voice in KEVIN'S head:

KEVIN (V.O.)  
 She's here, here, here, here... no,  
 she's here... here... here...

The pacing of the editing varies in coincidence with each  
 "here" in his voice. We now also see a series of photographs  
 that are being held in JONATHAN'S hands and then laid down  
 onto a table. They are profile pictures of three different  
 men: one with a black crewcut, one with highlighted hair, and  
 the third a shaved head.

JONATHAN (O.C.)  
 So... three suspects here, if you  
 wanna call 'em that. We don't  
 really have anything on 'em. We  
 just know they may've been in the  
 forest that day.

We MOVE THROUGH a path that leads out to the specific area of the forest by the river that we saw earlier: where TOM TOMLIN was painting the small jack pine tree 75 years ago.

Back in KEVIN'S condo now, KEVIN awakens, favoring his head. He makes some pained noises, then climbs out of bed.

INT. KEVIN'S CONDO LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

KEVIN walks out from his kitchen holding a glass of water. On his way back to the bedroom through the living room, he notices one of the paintings on his wall. He walks over to it. There are three different paintings placed together on the wall - the one in the middle being 'The Jack Pine' by TOM TOMLIN, which the frame reads at the top.

KEVIN stares on at the painting.

KEVIN (V.O.)

I dunno why but I... the more I think about this case, the more I keep thinking back to this one painting. I have a reproduction of it at my place. It was Katie's.

INT. JONATHAN'S CAR -- DAY

On a roadside near the forest, KEVIN and JONATHAN sit in the parked car. JONATHAN is in the driver's seat, KEVIN shotgun.

JONATHAN

How the hell is *art* gonna help us, Kevin? It might look pretty on a wall, but that's just about it.

INT. KEVIN'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

JONATHAN (V.O.)

Please... stop being distracted and start thinking about more important things.

KEVIN continues to stare ahead at the painting some more. We MOVE IN on a specific area of the painting to show the jack pine tree in close detail.

INT. THE MAN'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

The room is dim. We MOVE OUT from a specific portion of the wall: a reproduction of TOM TOMLIN'S jack pine painting hangs there. THE MAN walks by. We do not see his face, but he clearly has a black crewcut and is wearing a gray sweater.

INT. KEVIN'S OFFICE -- DAY

KEVIN is examining photographs of previous unsolved murder locations in a folder on his desk. JONATHAN walks in.

JONATHAN

So, your hair. Guess what that turned out to be. *Animal* hair. Probably a fox or something. Good sleuthing, Kev. (*noticing the photographs*) ...Why you looking at that stuff? They got other guys on those cases.

KEVIN

I dunno. I've just been getting this... they all seem kinda familiar to me, somehow.

KEVIN goes to the computer on his desk and logs online. He does a search for "Tomlin + Jack Pine". He clicks into an image of the Tomlin jack pine painting.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

And that painting... it's still on my mind for some reason.

As KEVIN scrutinizes the image of the painting, JONATHAN moves around the desk to look at the image as well. KEVIN reaches over to the folder again and picks up a photo of the recent crime scene. He holds it up next to the other image on the screen. They both stare closely at the images.

JONATHAN

Huh. They do look kinda similar, don't they?

KEVIN scans through the website some more. It lists a number of Tom Tomlin paintings. He clicks into a photo of a painting called 'Big Elm'... he grabs one of the older crime scene photos from the folder, and holds it against the computer screen image. These two locations also look similar.

KEVIN  
Can we find out exactly where these  
were painted?

EXT. WOODS AND RIVER -- DAY

KEVIN and JONATHAN approach the area by the river where the jack pine was painted. JONATHAN is holding two shovels. KEVIN is holding a paper printout in his hands as he looks around the area. The printout contains a photo of the jack pine painting, along with coordinates and a photo of where the present-day location is supposed to be.

KEVIN  
Sooo... this says it should've been  
painted around here.

KEVIN walks up to the edge of the river.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
The jack pine might've been around  
here, then... this general area...  
let's start digging.

JONATHAN tosses a shovel to KEVIN. They both start digging. Two hours later, we see that KEVIN and JONATHAN have made much progress in their digging. KEVIN hits something.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
Got something here.

KEVIN digs with the shovel some more, then tosses it aside and gets down on his knees to hand-shovel. We see the corner of a black garbage bag. KEVIN tears the bag and reaches inside. A female forearm is pulled halfway out from the opening.

EXT. WOODS AND RIVER -- DAY

Two days later. We see a wider view of the area now; it is isolated with police caution tape. JONATHAN and KEVIN are searching around the area for clues. KEVIN is crouched down at a rock near the site of where the body was. He is focusing on the rock with a stills camera. He takes the photo.

KEVIN reaches into his blazer pocket to pull out the three suspect profile photos. He looks at them.

KEVIN  
When can we bring these guys in for  
more questioning?

JONATHAN  
Not until we find more.

INT. KEVIN'S CONDO BEDROOM -- EARLY MORNING

"Find more" is echoed into the next image, which is of KEVIN lying down in bed. Once again, we enter his dream: we are MOVING THROUGH a pathway in the forest until we arrive at an image of the jack pine area again, but before the crime occurred there, 75 years ago. With the riverside in the background, it looks nice and painterly.

KEVIN (V.O.)  
So you find this helps, huh?

EXY. CITY SIDEWALK -- DAY

KEVIN and KATIE are standing in front of a city sidewalk crime scene. The chalk outline of a body is seen on the sidewalk. KATIE is painting this scene while KEVIN stands next to her, looking on.

KATIE  
Yeah. It helps, somehow... like, I start paying attention to the details in the scene when I paint it. And... things just come to me.

INT. KEVIN'S CONDO BEDROOM -- EARLY MORNING

KEVIN awakens. Propping himself up, he glances down at his left hand and with his right, feels the wedding ring on his fourth finger.

KATIE (V.O.)  
You should try it sometime. I'd love to see you give it a shot.

KEVIN (V.O.)  
Heh... naaah. I don't have that kinda talent.

INT. KEVIN'S CONDO CORRIDOR -- EARLY MORNING

KEVIN moves out from his bedroom and toward a closet in the corridor. He takes out from the closet an easel, a wooden panel, and a paint brush set.

INT. KEVIN'S CONDO KITCHEN -- EARLY MORNING

From his fridge, KEVIN is seen packing some food and beverages into a backpack.

EXT. FOREST EXPANSE -- DAY

KEVIN is seen walking into the forested area from a roadside. He is wearing the backpack and carrying the easel and wooden panel by his side. We then see KEVIN walking into the specific area of the crime scene. He finds a point at a distance from the scene and sets up his easel there. He places the wooden panel on it, then takes out his brush set from his backpack as he looks on at the scene.

We see images of KEVIN painting the crime scene in front of him. He makes mistakes and rubs out the paint to start over multiple times. Gradually, his look becomes frustrated. He sits down for a while to concentrate as he stares at the nature in front of him. Finally, he stands back up and returns to the painting.

After some hours, KEVIN finishes the painting. He wearily looks on at it for a while. We see the results, and KEVIN'S face again. Suddenly, KEVIN angrily snatches the painting off of the easel and tosses it out into the nearby river. It bangs against a rock and begins floating downstream but gets caught in another rock's crevice before it can drift away. KEVIN folds up his easel, grabs his backpack, and walks off.

EXT. WOODS AND RIVER -- EARLY EVENING

We see KEVIN arriving at the crime scene spot again. JONATHAN is already there, investigating the area.

KEVIN  
Find anything?

JONATHAN  
(startled) Hey... maybe...

JONATHAN gestures toward the river's edge, where KEVIN'S painting is lodged in a rock's crevice.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)  
That one of your paintings by any chance?

KEVIN

Oh... yeah, it is. You were right... it was pointless. Nothing came to me. I guess only Katie had that ability.

JONATHAN prods an area of the rock by his feet with a Q-tip.

JONATHAN

Not surprised. Some kind of a blood stain here, looks like.

KEVIN

What? How could we've missed that?

JONATHAN

Maybe we didn't. You know how these guys usually like returning to the scene, maybe looking for something or just outta curiosity. But it's probably just an animal again. Anyway, we'll at least check it against our three guys.

EXT. FOREST EXPANSE -- DAY

Flashback. We see THE MAN with the black crewcut from the first suspect photograph walking through the forest. He is wearing a gray sweater. He walks into the crime scene area where the body was found. He crouches down in front of the caution tape and looks on.

Flashback. We're confronted with a series of quick and violent images from the man's memory: pulling THE GIRL into the area and strangling her.

The man simply continues staring forward coldly until something catches his eye: KEVIN'S wooden panel painting stuck in the rock's crevice. It has been splintered from the throw. With a look of curiosity, the man walks up to the river's edge and kneels down to look at the painting. He then goes to pick it up, but it is tightly wedged in the rock's crevice and as the man pulls harder, his hand slides away and catches one of the splinters in the painting.

The man makes some noises of discomfort as he picks the splinter out from his hand. It is dripping blood now. The man quickly walks off from here, favoring his hand... but as he is leaving the area, a drop of the blood falls from his wound and lands on a rock on the ground. He doesn't notice this.

We MOVE IN closely on this final image: the small drop of blood on the rock.

THE END