

FICTIONAL FILM ADAPTATION

“Indian Camp” (1925)

Ernest Hemingway

(1899-1961)

from *Follywood* (2005)

In white letters the title Indian Camp appears on the screen. The cries of a loon introduce a dissolve into a dim master shot of a cabin standing beside a lakeshore at night. Two rowboats are pulled up on the beach, with two Indians standing beside them. In the darkness of early morning, John Huston as Doc Adams and Bobby Blake as his son Nick climb into the stern of a boat. One of the Indians gets in to row. Uncle Bogart, smooth shaven and wearing a windbreaker, scrambles into the other boat with the other Indian. They set off through the misty dark. The Indians row with quick choppy strokes and the only sounds are the oarlocks and splashes of water. Bobby is a round-faced kid with straight black hair, known for his role as the Indian boy Little Beaver in a western series. He lies back with his father's arm around him. Huston in glasses is properly stiff as Doc Adams, aloof and superior to his environment.

Across the bay, Uncle Bogart arrives first and is sitting on the bank smoking a cigar in the dark. The Indians pull the boats up onto the beach and Uncle Bogart gives them each a cigar. They all walk up from the shore through a dark meadow, following the young Indian with a lantern. They follow a trail through a dark wood until they come to a logging road that runs back into the hills. It is lighter here. The young Indian stops and blows out the lantern, then they walk on along the road through the forest until they come around a bend and are met by a dog barking. In the distance a woman screams. The lights of shanties emerge ahead. The woman screams again and more dogs come barking. Further in the distance, faintly visible under a tree, the village men sit on the ground together smoking, withdrawn from the screaming. In the shack nearest the road, a light sits in the window and an old Indian woman stands bent in the doorway holding a lamp.

Doc Adams does not listen to the woman.

They go on inside and find an Indian woman on a lower bunk, writhing in agony under a quilt. The toothless old woman holds up two fingers for the days the young woman has been suffering. In the upper bunk, the man smoking a pipe is the husband says the old woman. He cut his foot very badly with an ax three days before. Doc orders some water to be put on the stove and explains to Nick why the woman is screaming.

“Can’t you give her something?” Nick begs him.

“No, I can’t,” his father replies, preoccupied opening his bag. “I haven’t any anesthetic. Her screams aren’t important. I don’t hear them because they aren’t important.”

Shot of the husband lying face up in the upper bunk. He rolls over against the wall as though he is quietly throwing up. The camera stays focused on his back in the bunk while Doc Adams can be heard telling Nick why the screams are not important.

Closeup of Doc’s hands unwrapping bright sharp medical instruments from a handkerchief and putting them into the steamy water in a kettle. Next he washes his hands in a basin. His head fills the screen in the glinting wire-rim glasses. His lenses steam up as he explains to Nick why it is important that babies are born *head* first and how it makes a lot of trouble for everybody when they are not. He wipes the steam off his glasses. Then he asks Uncle Bogart to pull the quilt back for him so he does not have to touch it. He kneels down on the floor beside her bed and prepares to operate. Uncle Bogart and three Indian men kneel down, lean forward and try to hold the woman still.

She bites Uncle Bogart on the arm.

“*Damn squaw bitch!*” did not pass the industry censor and so he yells “Ow!” and shakes his arm.

The Indian who rowed Uncle Bogart laughs at him.

The Code prohibited a scene of childbirth, even in silhouette, and the censor wanted the operation changed to an appendectomy, but Sarah insisted. The birthing is conveyed by a shot of feet shifting and scuffling around on the floor while the mother screams. Nick holds the basin for his father, wincing and

looking away. The censor would not allow him to watch his father pick up the baby and slap it to make it breathe, he only hears the sounds. Then his father's big head fills the screen, widely smiling, his glasses fogged by steam as though he is blind.

"It's a boy!"

Doc asks his son how he likes being an interne, but Nick is looking away so as not to see what his father is doing. Something drops with a plopping sound into the basin Nick is holding. He does not watch his father sew up the incision. When his father is done and stands up, Uncle Bogart and the three Indian men stand up and Nick carries the basin out to the kitchen without looking at it.

Uncle Bogart looks at his arm.

The young Indian smiles and exchanges a look with another Indian. Doc says he will put some peroxide on that bite. He examines the Indian mother, then straightens happily. "That's one for the medical journal," he boasts. "Doing a Caesarian with a jack-knife and sewing it up with nine-foot tapered gut leaders!"

Uncle Bogart is standing against the wall, examining his arm.

"Oh, you're a great man, all right."

Doc returns to the bunk. "Ought to have a look at the proud father. They're usually the worst sufferers in these little affairs. I must say he took it all pretty quietly."

He pulls aside the blanket from the Indian's head. Then he looks at his wet hand. Holding up the lamp, he steps up onto the lower bunk and looks into the upper, where the Indian still lies on his left side with his face toward the wall. They could not show Doc tipping back the head and the throat cut from one ear to the other. They show a bloody open razor on the blanket. Doc asks Uncle Bogart to take Nick outside, but the boy standing in the kitchen doorway has already seen. Ryan said the look on his face reminded him of Davin after he opened the shed door just as Ryan cut the throat of a squirming rabbit.

When they come out of the shack, Uncle Bogart turns his back on Doc and walks away with some Indians. It is getting light as Doc and Nick walk back down the logging road to the bay. Since the Code would not allow a suicide except in the case of a Bad Person or insanity, Doc must explain to his son what happened by saying, "Went crazy, I guess."

In the rowboat, in shallow focus only, the young boy lies back complacently in the stern with his father rowing. The Code required evil to be presented clearly to everyone, but the censor did not use deep focus and movies were made for a comprehension level of age twelve. Nick blinks dreamily. The sun is coming up over the hills above his father's head, giving him so bright an aura that his features are obscured. He is a glowing shape without a face. Fade out on Nick trailing his hand in the water, squinting into the early sun with a smile as if what he has witnessed has nothing to do with him and he will never die.

Michael Hollister  
from Chapter 10  
*Follywood* (2005)



*Follywood* dramatizes the 1940s and 50s, with deep focus on directors, writers and politics. Soon after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the young 20th Century Fox director Ryan Easley films a documentary on women working in a defense plant, where he meets Sarah. They marry and settle down on a ranch in the San Fernando Valley with their two kids and their dog Boffo.

The Eisleys go on to make independent films adapting American classics, while Sarah tries to overcome Ryan's infidelities with scripts and actresses. Just after their film *Women in Hemingway* is released, the U.S. House Committee on Un-American Activities resumes investigating Communist influence in Hollywood, provoking their stars John Huston, Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall to fight back by joining a delegation of stars who fly to the hearings in an airplane named Star of the Red Sea. Some suspect the Eisleys are Communists and the hearings could end their careers. They hope to clear themselves by producing the anti-Communist film *Blithedale*, starring Tracy and Hepburn.

The Eisleys become involved on both sides of the Blacklist scandal, as Sarah resists the Communists who control the Screen Writers Guild and Ryan fights the conservatives who try to impose a blacklist on the Screen Directors Guild. Like the nation, their marriage is threatened by disloyalty and the prospect of war. Orson Welles takes over their *Pierre*, then Josef Stalin courts Judy Garland in their *Flowering Judas*. Their lives interwoven with their films, the Eisleys dramatize the dominant political and aesthetic conflicts in Hollywood.