



DARK LEGENDS
OF
ATACAMA

A J.G. BIGGS film

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PITCH

- **1540, Chile, Atacama Desert.**
- **The conquistador Don FRANCISCO DE FUENZALIDA and his men have for mission to find two Spanish deserters. Under an infernal heat, they are going to discover an enemy so mysterious as terrifying. Their survival is now at stake.**

TREATMENT

- Año 1540, Chile
- A night full of stars, two conquistadors run away through the Atacama Desert... They ignore that it's the driest area of the world.



- These two deserters stole some important documents belonging to the Spanish crown. Exhausted, thirsty, they find finally refuge in a cave. This is where a mysterious black shape kills them wildly.

- **On horseback, captain Don Francisco DE FUENZALIDA watches how a small Inca village is reduced to ashes by his soldiers. Screams, pain, tears of the natives. Spanish swords killing merciless, dead Inca bodies everywhere... and the blood dyes the river in... red.**
- **During his interrogation (and before a sword cuts his head), an old Inca talks, in his mother language, about a threat, evoking the "NIUSTA". After his clear-cut head falls and stops still on the ground, his eyes seem to fix FUENZALIDA who goes out immediately of his torpor. The captain ends the massacre by giving the order to his men to hit the road.**
- **Their mission: find as quickly as possible both deserters and stolen documents.**



- Under a crushing heat, the expedition starts again immediately. The caravan consists of armed to the teeth conquistadors and Inca prisoners. The latter, charged as mules, and chained between them, are tortured by the soldiers. In the Spanish ranks are VALIENTE, a black slave who becomes the right hand of the captain, and SANTA CRUZ, commander who is in direct conflict with Fuenzalida (because he cannot stand being managed by younger than him).
- FELIPILLO, a teenager prisoner, is the interpreter. Worried about the last words of the old Inca, FUENZALIDA questions him. The translator tells him then the legend of "NIUSTA" ...
- NIUSTA, girl of a high priest of the sun, returns every night from the dead to kill the "baptized" (Spanish), to avenge her people. FELIPILLO speaks also about a solar eclipse which approaches and would increase the avenging hatred of the resuscitated princess.
- Confused, FUENZALIDA and his soldiers do not know how to interpret this story. SANTA CRUZ, outraged by these words, beats violently FELIPILLO to silence him. Fuenzalida has to interfere to save Felipillo's life !
- Between both Spanish captains, the tension is tangible.

- **At freezing and silent night, a spanish soldier watches the surroundings. The mysterious « black shape » sneaks in the camp... It appears in front of guard, strikes him, then bends over the corpse and leaves him two marks on the neck. As soon as the sun rises, the mysterious « black shape », disappears behind a hill of sand.**
- **VALIENTE discovers the corpse of his brother of weapon and warns FUENZALIDA.**
- **A doubt invades the captain ... " And if FELIPILLO was right... told the truth about the NIUSTA? »**
- **To maintain the order in his troop, avoid the desperation and keep his men focus on their mission, FUENZALIDA orders VALIENTE to lie to the rest of the group: the “missing” soldier will have simply deserted.**

- **The manhunt starts again and the spread out indications show them that they follow the right track.**
- **In a narrow passage lined with rocks, Spanish fall in an ambush led by Inca rebels. Inca's lances and sharp axes against heavy arquebuses of the Spaniards. In both camps, warriors are « pierced » and die in atrocious sufferings. The conquistadors manage to push away their aggressors. Two inca rebels are made prisoners.**
- **Mad with rage, SANTA CRUZ chops off both Rebel's hands. He then releases them for "the example" and to deliver a message: » Nobody challenges the Spanish crown! »**
- **After burying the conquistadors and letting rot the Inca corpses at the mercy of the vultures, the caravan pursues its way. Morale is low and reserves are running out. After hours of exhausting walking, the camp is set up for the night.**

- **In the early hours, the shout of a carrier wakes soldiers and prisoners. Two Spanish are found dead, with curious wounds looking like bites. Spaniards argue, positions diverge. Some of them question the legitimacy of their mission and want to go back home. Some evoke "NIUSTA" whereas others accuse the carriers of these murders.**
- **The chaos reigns now in the soldiers' ranks. FUENZALIDA tries his best to keep the situation under control, even with all the doubts he has. It's a confused captain who begins to see all the inhuman, cruel and bloodthirsty aspect of the Spanish Conquista ... This confusion assails him, his thoughts get more and more mixed in the painful memories of his first expedition in these lands.**
- **But the captain knows that he cannot return without the stolen documents and thus orders to his troop to take back the mission. While SANTA CRUZ (wounded during the ambush) recovers, he is more and more aggressive to his captain and the slaves.**

- **The walk is endless. The worrying silence from everybody, the crushing heat of the desert, the sensation of vulnerability and the lack of food and water weaken morally and physically the convoy. The men, feverish, begin to have difficulty in distinguishing the reality of the imagination ...**
- **On the track of the deserters, the troop enters a forest of "Tamarugos", trees with tortured and threatening forms. They find decaying bodies, skeletons there. A logbook found on one of the corpses, makes understand FUENZALIDA that they are ... in the cave of the "NIUSTA".**
- **The danger turns then to nightmare when a total eclipse makes the daytime disappear. As FELIPILLO had predicted. Their survival is now at stake and the truth on the mysterious princess Inca soon revealed.**



DIRECTOR'S WORD

- **Historic thriller, DARK LEGENDS OF ATACAMA is a denunciation of all the horrors committed by the "civilized" on the "savages". By Europe on the New World. By the Christians on the "lost souls". It's a reminder of the rape and almost extermination of the big native cultures in Americas.**
- **This story also speaks about a man, FUENZALIDA. A man obliged to return in a country where he had sworn to never return. The deeper he goes in these lands, the more he is faced with himself, in his past acts, with the atrocities that he saw and had to commit. Love, Family, Origins and Fate, urge him to question on the sense of his life, in search for REDEMPTION.**
- **This search, one of the main themes of the movie, takes FUENZALIDA to a forced journey to the purgatory through a way that has only two issues: LIFE or DEATH. He can either stay a DAMNED SOUL or know FORGIVENESS. Our main character is constantly between these two possibilities.**

- **The movie draws from the Chilean urban legends, in particular the most known: THE LEGEND OF NIUSTA. Born in the region of Atacama, this myth tells the resurrection of an Inca princess, girl of a powerful priest of the sun, who kills the Spanish Christians and avenges her people. Today still, in July, we celebrate in Chile, the "NIUSTA".**
- **The parallel stories around FUENZALIDA and NIUSTA highlights another essential theme: THE LOST LOVE. For the conquistador as for the princess this is a source of vengeance.**
- **The blueprint of this movie is clearly paralyzing FEAR of the UNKNOWN, fear fed by the chivalry novels from the XVth century. The Conquistador and his men believe in any sorts of SUPERSTITIONS and crepuscular imagination. In the Atacama Desert, life flirts constantly between DREAM and REALITY. Mirages are mixed with fear, strong heat, thirst, and freezing nights. The thirst and the hunger become an invisible enemy.**

- **Visually, I'll put the focus on the faintness and discomfort, the perpetual fear and the uncomfortable silences to immerse totally the spectator at the heart of this expedition.**
- **There will be no escape, no « pause ». The constant TENSION is the mainspring of the movie. The D Day sequence of "SAVING PRIVATE RYAN" by Steven Spielberg is an undeniable reference of this movie. The public will feel the pain and the SUFFERING of the characters in a very intimate way. The « hand held camera » will increase this effect and give realistic feel. Almost as a real life documentary.**
- **However, some scenes will be visually more stylized (less shaky) to enhance the main characters feelings. The public will feel the DIRTY side and SOULS LOST of these men crossing the desert. They never wash themselves and some have even lost their teeth because of the scurvy. Their past, their personalities, their intimate stories but also the way they eat, they speak and think, find here their importance and are not simple details of the scenario.**

Welcome in the DARK LEGENDS OF ATACAMA.

**THANK YOU
FOR YOUR
ATTENTION**