

The background image shows three children in a dark forest at night. On the left, a boy with dark hair and a green shirt holds a flashlight. In the center, a girl with brown hair in a ponytail and an orange shirt looks forward with a worried expression. On the right, another girl with brown hair in a bun and a green shirt also looks concerned. In the distance, a faint silhouette of a person is visible on a path. A white rounded rectangle is overlaid in the center, containing the title and author's name.

The Camp of Lost Shadows

Ariana Velarde

The golden summer sun beat down on the dusty road as the crowded van made its way toward the distant mountains. Inside, Camila, Eli, Mateo, Sebastián, and Carlos laughed and shared snacks, their hearts brimming with excitement for the week-long camp ahead. Mateo captured the joyful moment on his camera, sealing their smiles in a timeless digital frame.



Upon their arrival, the five friends stood in awe of the sprawling camp, which was tucked away beneath a canopy of towering pine trees. Dozens of eager teenagers were already gathering near the rustic wooden cabins spread across the emerald grass. The fresh, crisp mountain air smelled of adventure, and the friends felt certain this would be the greatest summer of their lives.



The first few days flew by in a blur of exhilarating outdoor activities and newfound friendships under the clear blue sky. Camila led the group through challenging mountain hikes, while Sebastián eagerly dominated the friendly sports competitions. As dusk fell, they all gathered around a roaring central campfire, singing and sharing stories beneath a breathtaking blanket of stars.



One evening, after an exhausting but thrilling night-time scavenger hunt, the camp quieted down into a peaceful stillness.

The friends said their goodnights, smiling at how perfect everything felt, almost like a scene from a movie.

Each of them retreated to their assigned wooden cabins, completely unaware that this would be the last normal night of their vacation.





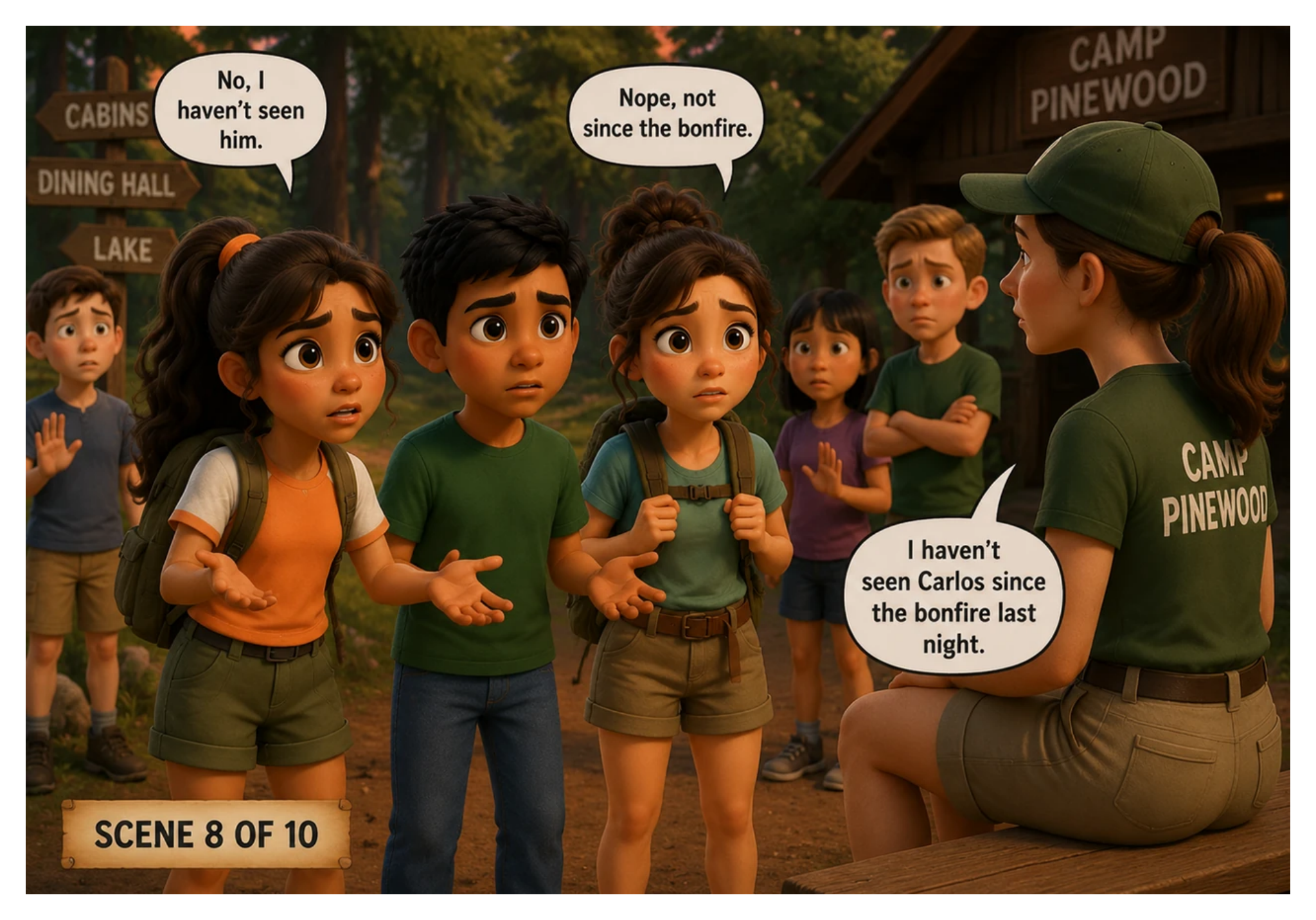
Camila knocked and stepped inside to wake him up, only to find his bed neatly made and completely untouched.



Thinking Carlos had simply gone out for an early morning walk, Camila joined Eli, Mateo, and Sebastián at the busy dining hall. They ate breakfast while keeping an eye on the door, expecting their friend to walk in with his usual cheerful grin at any moment. However, as the clock ticked away and the tables began to clear, there was still no sign of him.



Anxiety began to tighten in Camila's chest as the four friends split up to search the entire campsite, calling out Carlos's name. They checked the sports fields, the hiking trails, and the nearby lake, but the vibrant camp offered no answers.



No, I haven't seen him.

Nope, not since the bonfire.

I haven't seen Carlos since the bonfire last night.

SCENE 8 OF 10



Carlos was always responsible and would never run off without his belongings, let alone leave them all behind without saying a word. A heavy, suffocating silence settled over them as they realized something was terribly wrong.

Standing together beneath the shadows of the tall pines, Camila, Eli, Mateo, and Sebastián made a silent promise not to rest until they found the truth.

The picture-perfect vacation they had anticipated had vanished, replaced by an urgent and dangerous mystery.

With determination replacing their fear, they prepared to uncover the secrets hidden within the heart of the camp.

