

Lakeside



it isn't what it seems to be...

a screenplay
by
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LAKESIDE

Written by

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and

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"Scars have the strange power to remind us
that our past is real."

Cormac McCarthy

"Lakeside"

DARK SCREEN: AC/DC's *Highway to Hell* blares.

FADE IN:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A CORVETTE streaks along the highway of the countryside in New York. The car slides into turns, finally rounding a corner of an incline, where a LOGGING TRUCK suddenly appears, bearing down in the opposite direction. TRUCK BRAKES SQUEALING, the Corvette swerves across the other lane, off the road, flying into an open field, where it spins into a plume of dust and stops.

CAR RADIO

(AC/DC)

*I'm goin' down, All the way. I'm on
the highway to hell...*

INT. CORVETTE - SAME TIME

CHARLIE BLISS, 30, leans his head against the steering wheel. When he lifts up, he feels his forehead and finds blood. He wipes it away, grabs a t-shirt from a duffel on the passenger seat, holds it to his forehead as he restarts the engine.

CAR RADIO

(disc jockey)

Love me some AC/DC. Gets the
adrenaline going, am I right?
Twenty minutes past the hour...

Charlie throws the car in gear, blasting back toward the highway.

CAR RADIO (CONT'D)

(disc jockey)

...an' I'm askin' the same question
every New Yorker is: Where the hell
is Charlie Bliss?

Charlie slams his fist into the radio's face, smashing it.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Corvette swings back onto the highway, fishtailing and passing the JACK-KNIFED LOGGING TRUCK, its upset load and its pissed off DRIVER.

INT. NY GIANTS' LOCKER ROOM - FLASHBACK

It's half-time as COACH EARL HORNE, 50 -- his unfortunate face way too red -- paces amidst his disheveled PLAYERS, helmets off, leaning on lockers, sitting on benches, elbows on knees, heads hung, others watching the coach.

COACH EARL HORNE

...and I'd be delighted to hear one good reason why those sonsabitches are 17 points up at the half! They're walkin' through our line like it's goddamn butter!

FONT: "The Night Before"

CAMERA comes to rest now on Charlie, sitting on the floor, leaning on a locker.

COACH EARL HORNE (CONT'D)

And, Bliss, what the hell's up with you? We got a system, here. You have a problem with the play I call, we talk about it. You don't go off on your own like that.

Charlie rolls his head and looks away.

COACH EARL HORNE (CONT'D)

You got some shit goin' on in your head and either you get it straightened out or I'm taking you out of the game. You got me?

Charlie exchanges a look with the coach, grabs his phone and exits to the SHOWER ROOM.

INT. SHOWER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlie enters, the Coach blasting expletives behind him. He punches a number on his cell and slumps against the tile.

ANNE'S VOICE

Charlie? What're you doing? It's
the middle of a game.

INTERCUT

Charlie's wife, ANNE -- late twenties, attractive, speaking
from home.

CHARLIE

Where are you? I didn't see you.

ANNE'S VOICE

I stayed home.

(then)

I'm sorry, I didn't think you'd
want me there. I mean, after last
night. The way we argued. How
you've been acting... since we
found out about the baby.

(breaking)

I don't know what's going on with
you, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Look, Anne, we said... you said...

ANNE'S VOICE

I know we didn't think we were
ready. But maybe we are. C'mon
Charlie, I'm pregnant. It happens.
We can do this. Let's be happy
about it.

CHARLIE

Happy. Right.

ANNE'S VOICE

Why are you so angry?

CHARLIE

I... I don't know.

ANNE'S VOICE

We've gotta work this out.

CHARLIE

(a deep breath)

I know, I know.

Charlie ends the call. Stares at his phone, takes a breath
and punches in another number.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Caroline? I don't know if I can do this anymore. I feel like I'm lying to everyone. And now with the baby... it's too much.

COACH EARL HORNE (O.S.)

Bliss! Get in here! Let's go!

CAROLINE'S VOICE

Charlie, we can talk about this. I know we can work it out.

CHARLIE

I've gotta go.

Charlie ends the call, then drops his head and sobs.

EXT. METLIFE STADIUM - FLASHBACK

The game is back in play. The stands are full to capacity, fans waving TEAM SIGNS, PENNANTS and FOAM FINGERS, the NOISE IS DEAFENING.

On the field, Charlie and the offensive team break from the huddle and move to the line, Charlie taking his place behind the center. He looks to either side, then,

CHARLIE

(calling)

Set! Red eighty-one! Red eighty-one!

CHARLIE'S POV: Suddenly the world slows to a crawl, as Charlie looks down the line of men, as ALL GOES SILENT. Breath from the DEFENSIVE LINE curls out of their helmets like steam from a train. The CROWDS, the OTHER PLAYERS that flank the field, all waiting, watching. All of it becoming an out-of-focus blur that starts to blend with disparate cacophony of sounds... like fingernails on a chalkboard. All of it's too much for Charlie, as he stops. Stands. We see him blink back his confusion and tears, as the noise, the crowd and the expectation of the game press down on him like a steel plate. All he feels is pain, as the world around him bombards his psyche. He closes his eyes to shut it out... but it all only becomes louder. He steps back from the center now and hears, "Charlie! What the fuck?!" He shakes it off, opens his eyes and realizes he can't be where he is.

The CROWD, the PLAYERS, those on the SIDELINE, are stunned as they watch Charlie simply walk off the field.

He pulls off his helmet and drops it, passes other PLAYERS on the sideline, he hears, "What the hell are you doing, Bliss?"

INT. LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlie staggers in, pulling off his jersey, as a LOCKER ATTENDANT sees him.

LOCKER ATTENDANT
Hey, Charlie? You okay?

Charlie shakes his head and throws open his locker.

EXT. PLAYERS' PARKING LOT - A MOMENT LATER

Charlie's Corvette squeals out of the parking lot, past STUNNED FANS.

INT. OWNER'S BOX - SAME TIME

Everyone in the owner's box is on their feet, staring down at the field and asking what the hell just happened with Charlie Bliss. Everyone, that is, except the team's owner, EMMETT WORTH. The sixtyish billionaire stays seated and keeps his steely gaze focused straight ahead. A FRIEND of his turns to him.

FRIEND
Emmett? You're taking this awfully calmly.

Emmett continues to look straight ahead.

WORTH
(after a beat)
I'm going to find him.

The way he says it tells us that he's a serious man.

INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - FLASHBACK

Modern, upscale, a nice place befitting a successful pro ball player. A large FLATSCREEN TV dominates one wall, the game is on -- between plays now, COMMENTATORS opining on Charlie's extraordinary move -- "Never seen anything like it. And nobody seems to know what's going on with Charlie Bliss..." A LAND LINE RINGS, HIS WIFE, ANNE, hurries into the room, sees the calling party, picks up.

ANNE

No, my husband is not home! I don't know how you got this number, but please stop calling here!

She slams the phone down, just as the front door blasts open, and CHARLIE ENTERS, crossing through.

ANNE (CONT'D)

Oh, thank God, Charlie. Are you all right? What happened?

CHARLIE

Don't, Anne. Please don't.

The LAND LINE starts to RING again.

ANNE

Somehow the press got our number and the phone's been ringing off the hook.

(moves to him)

Charlie, please... tell me what it is. What's --

Charlie EXITS to the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlie starts throwing random clothes into a DUFFEL BAG. Anne enters, and takes in the scene.

ANNE

You're leaving?

CHARLIE

For now. I... can't do this, Anne.

ANNE

But...

CHARLIE

I'm sorry, but I can't stay here and let this destroy... everything.

ANNE

I don't understand, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I don't either. I just can't stop this... pain. I can't stop these thoughts. This guilt... it's like...

ANNE
Guilt? Why?

CHARLIE
Because I let this happen.
(then)
It's crippling me. I'm no good to
anyone. Not the team. Not to you. I
can't be a husband. I can't be a...

ANNE
...a father?

A CELL PHONE STARTS RINGING -- they ignore it.

A beat. Charlie just stands there.

ANNE (CONT'D)
So, that's it then? Are you coming
back?

CHARLIE
I want to.

ANNE
What do I do with that? You want
to.

A beat. Charlie shakes his head; he doesn't know.

ANNE (CONT'D)
So, after five years, I don't
matter?

CHARLIE
No. I mean, yes, of course you do.
It's not that. I just... Look, I
gotta go. I gotta get out of here.

He picks up his duffel, crosses to the door, looks at Anne.
He sees her tears and hesitates, but it's beyond him to offer
comfort.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

He turns and exits.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The Vette cuts a swath through a stand of pines, as the highway drops down into an idyllic small town, beside a lake. This is LAKE HAVEN.

Moving into town now, the Vette rolls past LAKE HAVEN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL. Charlie pulls the car to the side of the road beside the hospital entrance.

INT. CORVETTE - SAME TIME

He feels his forehead and its sizable lump. He thinks a moment, then pulls into the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL E.R. - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie approaches the desk. The ADMITTING NURSE stares at him.

ADMITTING NURSE
Charlie Bliss?

CHARLIE
Can we keep this quiet, please?

ADMITTING NURSE
Right. Sure. Of course...

EXT. LAKE HAVEN - NIGHT

Charlie's car now continues on, into the small Mayberry-ish Main Street: a grocery store, a bar, a coffee shop, auto-parts, a diner...

INT. CORVETTE - SAME TIME

We see that Charlie has a SMALL BANDAGE on his head now, as he drives past the edge of town, toward a lake.

The HEADLIGHTS PASS OVER A PRONE FIGURE beside the road. Charlie stops. Backs up until the HEADLIGHTS REST ON... A BODY. BLOOD smeared across its back. Charlie opens the door and steps out.

CHARLIE
(calling)
Hey...

No response. He walks toward the body. He looks around -- was this a fight, is someone else around? As he gets closer to the body, he slows cautiously...