

"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 and 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 towards 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 to be there. I mean, after  
last night. The fight. The way  
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.

CHARLIE

(a deep breath)

I know, I know.

Charlie ends the call. After a beat, he 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 just too much.

CAROLINE'S VOICE

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

COACH EARL HORNE (V.O.)

Bliss! We need you in here! Let's go!

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 NY GIANTS SIGNS 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 the world 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 huge 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. 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  
(into phone, angry)  
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 RINGS AGAIN. Anne picks up the phone and yanks it from the wall.

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

I have to.

ANNE

You're leaving me?

CHARLIE

For now, yes. 'Cause I can't do  
this.

ANNE

But...

CHARLIE

Anne, I have to go. I'm sorry, but  
I can't stay here and let this  
destroy us...

ANNE

I don't understand, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I don't either. I'm just in so  
much pain... and I can't stop it.  
I can't stop these thoughts... this  
guilt... it's like...

ANNE

Guilt? Why?

CHARLIE

Because I let this happen.

(then)

And now it's crippling me. It's  
ruining everything.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
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, 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 tries to shake it off, stops and then decides to pull into the hospital.

**INT. HOSPITAL E.R. - MOMENTS LATER**

Charlie approaches the desk, as the ADMITTING NURSE stares in disbelief.

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... Then, suddenly, the body SPRINGS TO LIFE, jumping up, laughing and running out into the trees. Charlie, a little pissed, a little relieved...

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
Fucking kids.

**EXT. CHARLIE'S CABIN - NIGHT - A SHORT TIME LATER**

Vette sidles in beside a small cozy CABIN next to the lake. Charlie gets out, looks out at the water, grabs his duffle bag. A SMALL FISHING BOAT is moored at the shoreline, it bounces gently on a streak of moonlight that envelopes a small island in the middle of the lake.

**EXT. CHARLIE'S CABIN - MOMENTS LATER**

DARK. Charlie takes out a piece of paper, checks it against the number on the cabin, #206, then satisfied he opens the front door.

**INT. CHARLIE'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS**

He flips on a LIGHT, enters with the duffel bag. He looks around. Spartan, a couch/hide-a-bed... it's enough. He drops his duffel bag. Then,

WADE (O.C.)  
Knock, knock.

Startled, Charlie turns. WADE LOWENS, 30s, dumpy, a noodge.

CHARLIE  
What?!

WADE  
Sorry, sorry. I thought you were... Where's Pete?

CHARLIE  
I don't know who Pete is.

WADE  
Sure you do. He lives here. I'm returning his books.  
(off bandage)  
What happened to your head?

CHARLIE  
I hit it. Look, I'm sorry, your friend's not here, but this is my cabin now.

WADE  
Yeah, okay. Pretty weird though that Pete would just take off like that.

Charlie moves Wade back toward the door.

CHARLIE  
So, listen, uh...

WADE  
(offering his hand)  
Wade. Wade Lowens. I live just up  
the way there...

CHARLIE  
Good to know. So I'll see you  
later.

He gives Wade a little push toward the door, when Wade turns  
and looks at Charlie.

WADE  
Wait a minute! You're Charlie  
Bliss, right? I'll be a  
sonofabitch, you're Charlie Bliss.

CHARLIE  
(annoyed)  
Yeah. But I'd appreciate if you'd  
keep your mouth shut about it.

WADE  
No problem. I get you. You  
probably don't want to talk about  
it, right? About how you just  
walked off the field. I never seen  
nothin' like that. You just stood  
up an' walked off --

CHARLIE  
Look, I'm sorry, I just need some  
time.

Charlie guides him to the door.

WADE  
You seem like you want me to leave?

CHARLIE  
Yeah.

WADE  
Okay, but any time you wanna hash  
this stuff out, I live just up --

Charlie CLOSES THE DOOR in his face.

**INT. CHARLIE'S CABIN - NIGHT**

Charlie's stretched out on the couch, starting to doze, when a FIGURE moves past a window, in front of the MOONLIGHT. Charlie sits up, looks toward the window. Decides to let it go. He starts to lay back down, when he HEARS SOMETHING KNOCKING AROUND outside. He gets up and moves to the window.

**CHARLIE'S POV:** In the moonlight, someone is at the water's edge, untethering the boat, loading the oars.

**EXT. LAKESIDE - CONTINUOUS**

A KID is standing in the water, pulling the boat away from its mooring.

CHARLIE (O.C.)  
What do you think you're doing?

BUDDY  
(startles)  
Jesus Christ! You scared the shit outta me.

CHARLIE  
Put the boat back.

BUDDY  
What's it your business? I take it out all the time.

CHARLIE  
It's my business because it's my boat. Came with the cabin.

The kid starts to hoist himself into the boat. Charlie steps into the water, grabs the back of his shirt to stop him.

BUDDY  
Let go! What're you, some kinda child molester.

CHARLIE  
(smells the kid's shirt & notices a stain)  
Ketchup? You're the kid fakin' being dead by the side of the road.

BUDDY  
No idea what you're talkin' about.

CHARLIE  
What're you, like ten?

BUDDY

Try eleven-and-a-half.

CHARLIE

It's after midnight. Where are your parents? Why aren't you at home, in bed?

BUDDY

Don't have a home. My parents died in a fire when I was at school. A gas main in our house exploded. They were incinerated.  
(on verge of tears)  
Was in all the papers.

CHARLIE

Right. So... eleven and a half, and you live alone out in the woods. That it?

BUDDY

(studies him)  
Like you got room to talk.

CHARLIE

What's that supposed to mean?

BUDDY

It means I know who you are. Big Charlie Bliss, middle of a playoff game, you get freaked and walk off? Who does that?

CHARLIE

You know something, kid...

BUDDY

That why you got that bandage? Somebody got pissed at you?

CHARLIE

Okay, look... if you don't have a home, I'm gonna take you into town, drop you off with the cops. They'll know what to do.

BUDDY

No way. I'm fine living on my own. But you... you're afraid of something, huh? That's why you left the game, isn't it? What're you so afraid of?

CHARLIE  
Okay, let's go.

He grabs the kid.

BUDDY  
Hey, look. There goes your  
precious boat.

Charlie looks and sees, indeed, the boat has drifted off. When he takes a step toward the boat, Buddy breaks loose and takes off running.

CHARLIE  
That's right, run! Get out of  
here!

Charlie moves to grab his boat.

**INT. CHARLIE'S CABIN - LATER**

Charlie's returned to the sanctity of his cabin and couch. Lies down and closes his eyes. But -- again -- HE HEARS BANGING outside. He sits up, pissed. Then HEARS A SOMEONE SCREAM for help. Quickly, he bolts for the door.

**EXT. LAKESIDE - CONTINUOUS**

Charlie runs to boat where SOMEONE IS THRASHING in the water beside it.

MAN  
Help me! Please! I can't...

As Charlie arrives at the water, he sees the person has slipped under the boat. He shoves the boat aside and sees a MAN BENEATH THE WATER, looking up at Charlie... though his face is indistinguishable as he claws and grasps for help, nearly pulling Charlie beneath the water with him.

MAN (CONT'D)  
Who are you?!

Charlie is fighting to keep from being pulled under.

CHARLIE  
I'm trying to help... you...

**SFX: HIS CELL PHONE RINGS**