

Fish to Fry

written by

Rob Herzog

Chicago, Illinois
robherzog@hotmail.com

FADE IN:

EXT. MEDIUM-SIZED LAKE - DAY

Sunrise over the water. Pink clouds. Morning breeze.

Passed out on a pier is ROLLIE DUGGLEBY, 40s. Alongside him: empty beer cans, a cooler, a whiskey bottle, a half-eaten taco, and a rod and reel--the bobber afloat nearby.

Onto the dock storms sturdy-jawed GEORGIA REDFERN, 40s. With hard eyes she assesses her piece-of-crap boyfriend.

GEORGIA
It's Monday, God dammit.

Rollie's tongue pokes out.

GEORGIA
They'll fire your ass for missing
your route.

Cough. Sniff. Rollie stirs.

GEORGIA
You sulk better than any man on
this lake. The word is out.

ROLLIE
(eyes still closed)
Stop talking.

Georgia grunts disapproval.

GEORGIA
I should quit? Oh.

She fishes out a submerged beer from Rollie's cooler, cracks it open, sips a few times while glaring at the sunrise.

Hunkering down, her thick knees cracking, she rolls Rollie off the pier into the water.

Splash. Gasp. Rollie flounders. Up his nose goes the lake water. He coughs, spits, reaches out for the pier.

Georgia shouts:

GEORGIA
I'm leaving you. I'm goin' to
Saginaw. Car's already loaded.

Rollie tries to climb on the pier, falls back, flails.

ROLLIE
This is murder.

GEORGIA
It ain't murder, dipshit. It's me
comin' to my senses.

She offers a hand and pulls him up. Drenched Rollie rolls
around the pier and wheezes.

ROLLIE
You like kickin' me in the balls
when I'm down?

GEORGIA
I ain't kicked you.

ROLLIE
Aw, you know damn well that I'm in
mourning right now.

GEORGIA
It's a stupid fish, Rollie. No
reason to mourn.

ROLLIE
Chuck Martin caught a muskie that's
fifty-two inches. It's been
confirmed. I don't have the record
no more, he does.

GEORGIA
So I should tolerate three straight
days of drinking an' abandonment?

Rollie nods. Yes. Sure.

GEORGIA
Aw, fuck old Chuck, and fuck
fucking muskies, even the big ones.

ROLLIE
Don't leave me, Georgia.

GEORGIA
Car's already packed.

ROLLIE
You don't love me?

GEORGIA
Ain't been love between us for a
long time. Fish love is all you
got.

ROLLIE

That's a hell of a thing to say.

GEORGIA

Your brain is all muskies an' beer,
Rollie. Can't nothin' else make an
impact on you. Your mind is stuck.

Water drips off his nose.

GEORGIA

You don't wanna marry me. We don't
have good times no more.

ROLLIE

More to life than good times.

Georgia kicks a beer can at him.

GEORGIA

Says the man who throws himself a
party every night.

ROLLIE

It's not a party. It's hell. It's
setbacks. It's nowhere to turn. The
rug gets pulled from under me.

She squints.

ROLLIE

Just don't leave me behind.

GEORGIA

Hurts to be forgotten, don't it?

He tries to stand, but slumps over.

ROLLIE

It hurts. Yeah.

GEORGIA

The only reason you ever wanted me
around is to bear witness to your
crap. To listen to your fishing
stories. To hear your drinking
stories. Your hunting stories. Your
work stories. Your football
watching stories...

ROLLIE

Those are damn good stories. Way
better than anything you've got.

Georgia watches the water drip off of him.

ROLLIE

Ain't nothing interesting about you, Georgia. You put people to sleep. Tell me one interesting thing you've ever done.

She thinks. No immediate answers.

GEORGIA

Well, I rolled you into this fuckin' lake. Ain't that a hoot?

Rollie grunts acknowledgement and crawls over to his tackle box. He opens it.

Inside is a small plaque. It says "Lake Record: Muskies" Inscribed below it: "Rollie Duggleby, 2016, 51 inches."

Rollie cradles the award.

GEORGIA

Jesus, did you steal that from the bait shop?

ROLLIE

I did. I don't want Chuck Martin's name on it just yet.

He looks at it with mixed awe and sadness.

ROLLIE

A beautiful award.

GEORGIA

Aw, leave it alone. Nobody even looks at that stuff. Nobody cares if its Chuck's name or yours.

ROLLIE

If it's on a plaque, it means something. I accomplished something in world, unlike you.

He sneers.

ROLLIE

Bein' ugly is the best you can do.

Georgia's jaw knots. She snatches the plaque from Rollie's hands and flings it into the lake, ten feet from the pier.

Horror spreads across his face.

ROLLIE
Are you crazy?

Splash. Into the water Rollie dives, desperate for his award.

He swims wildly, like a man fighting alligators. His clothes weigh him down, his hangover, his emotions.

He takes a deep breath and dives down.

Five seconds later he's back up, winded.

GEORGIA
Get back here, you fool.

Down he goes. Up he goes. Several tries. No luck for Rollie.

One more time. A deep breath. He disappears under the water.

Georgia throws up her arms in utter exasperation.

A minute goes by. Georgia shuffles. A minute and a half.

GEORGIA
Rollie?

Nothing. Two minutes now.

GEORGIA
Rollie?

He's still under there. Georgia grits her teeth.

GEORGIA
Son of a bitch.

She glances at her car. She could drive away if she wanted. No. She kicks off her shoes, strips away her sweatshirt.

She dives into the water and swims to where Rollie would be.

GEORGIA
Hang on, you stupid motherfucker.

A deep breath.

GEORGIA
I'm coming...

Under the water she goes, ripples and bubbles in her wake, sun glistening off the water, clouds on the horizon.

FADE OUT: