

LIVE BAIT

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. CIRCLE LAKE - DAY

Sky is clear, but a hazy red veneer coats the horizon. Bare trees along the shoreline as water laps against a small wooden fishing boat.

TED, 63, carefully selects a lure from his tackle box, ties it to the end of his line.

BOBBY, 46, taut, weathered skin, watches. He twists the top off a flask and drinks.

BOBBY
Live bait's the best.

Ted, an old hand, doesn't look up.

TED
These fish can't smell.

BOBBY
Nice fat bloodworm? They smell that shit a mile away.

TED
Not anymore they can't.

BOBBY
I don't buy that shit. I fish here all the time no problem.

Ted stares hard at Bobby, then drops his line. Bobby pockets the flask, does likewise.

They sit for a moment in silence.

TED
It's not like when I was younger, that's for damn sure.

BOBBY
What do you mean?

TED
Different times. The lake used to be so beautiful

BOBBY
Yeah?

Ted gestures ashore to an old bench in a clearing.

TED

Had my first kiss on that bench.

Bobby snickers, points to a --

SHUTTERED BUILDING

It's boarded and dilapidated. A large drain pipe juts into the water, yellow froth around it.

BOBBY

I banged a chick behind the factory once, so I know what you mean.

TED

That's not a factory.

BOBBY

No?

TED

It was a lab. They shut it 'bout ten years ago.

BOBBY

Why?

TED

Don't know. Something to do with the environment or--

SPLASH.

YOUNG GIRL (O.S.)

Help! Help!

Bobby and Ted jerk their heads up.

BOBBY

The hell!

TED

(points)

There.

A GIRL, 7, about fifty feet out, flailing frantically. Eyes bulging, she gulps a mouthful of water and submerges.

TED

Where'd she go?

She resurfaces, gasping for air.

YOUNG GIRL
I can't swim!

Bobby leaps into the water.

TED
Bob!

Bobby swims furiously, reaches out and grabs on just before she goes under again.

BOBBY
I gotcha, honey. I gotcha...

As Bobby swims back to the boat, Ted extends his hand.

TED
Bobby, take my hand. Take my--

He glances up --

MIDDLE OF THE LAKE

A misshapen, ink-black face breaches the surface. Two offset, crushed-marble eyes blink. Water sprays out from what can only be malformed gills.

Ted's jaw drops.

Bobby throws his hand on the edge of the boat.

BOBBY
Take her... Ted! Take her!

But Ted doesn't. Instead, he backs away.

BOBBY
What are you doing?

The girl slowly turns, clasps onto Bobby with an iron grip.

He struggles, but can't break free.

She speaks again. This time, her voice more robotic and glitchy:

YOUNG GIRL
Help! Help! I can't swim. Help--

She abruptly stops speaking. Her mouth spreads wider than humanly possible. A sharp, metal shaft slowly inches out.

TED
Bobby!

Paralyzed with fear, Bobby can't move. Can't speak. Can't--
THWACK!

The metal shaft harpoons his temple, goes straight through his head and out the other side.

The water churns red, and they sink beneath.

MIDDLE OF THE LAKE

The creature's gone. A swirl of water where it went under.

Ted yanks the cord on the motor. Once. Twice. Nothing.

He quickly searches the boat, finds a paddle and plunges it in the water.

MOMENTS LATER

Sopping wet and out of breath, Ted crawls to the bench where he'd had his first kiss.

When he dares raise his head, he looks out upon the lake. Eyes blinking. Darting all over.

The water is eerily still.

Somewhere, overhead, a bird screeches.

FADE OUT.