

The DeSoto Buzzer

(c) 2018

FADE IN:

EXT. ANCARROW RIVER - DOCK - DAY

A tied-up pontoon boat with three PEOPLE aboard floats at the end. A banner across the top of the craft reads:

30th Anniversary, Bass Masters Classic Champion!!

DENNY HIBDON (52), red face, skinny, stands at a narrow bar that forms the backside of a chilled hot tub. He wears a tee-shirt, ball cap, and shorts that appear too large.

He pours bourbon into a paper cup and offers it to TOM SULLIVAN (27), wire glasses, fly-fishing vest, khaki pants.

TOM

Not for me, thanks.

DENNY

You gonna melt in that vest. The sun's hot as hell out there.

He sips the bourbon.

TOM

I tend to block everything out when I'm fishing.

Denny points to a rod by the railing.

DENNY

What can you catch with that? I wouldn't even know how to use it.

TOM

Little brook trout, mainly. In the mountain creeks.

DENNY

How big?

TOM

Six inches.

Denny sputters, laughs.

TOM

They're a lot of fun on light line.

DENNY

Man, all I can say is: I hope you brought some heavier line today!

From the tub, INEZ HIBDON (31), sunglasses, short ponytail, wine glass in hand, calls out:

INEZ

Uncle Denny, leave Tom alone.

DENNY

What'd I do?

Inez, wearing a bikini, gets out of the tub.

INEZ

Never mind. They're here!

EXT. ANCARROW RIVER - DOCK PARKING LOT - DAY

CHERYL HIBDON (57), grinning, leads GREG HIBDON (65), blindfolded, past cars and boat trailers.

She wears a floppy hat and sunglasses. Greg, curly blond-gray beard, wears a Bass Masters cap and shorts.

EXT. ANCARROW RIVER - DOCK - DAY

As Cheryl and Greg approach, Inez turns on a CD player:

"We are the champions, my friend..."

GREG

What in the world?

Cheryl positions Greg in front of the banner, removes his blindfold. He shields his eyes.

GREG

Oh, my Lord. And I thought we were just going fishing!

CHERYL

We are! I got all your rods and gear. We're gonna go to the spot where you caught the big one.

GREG

(chuckles)  
In this?

CHERYL

Well, we're gonna party, too. You can't party in a bass boat.

They step aboard. Inez turns off the music.

Denny hands Greg a bourbon.

GREG

Thank you, Bro. Mama let you out the house, I see.

Inez hugs Greg.

GREG

Inez. How's my darling blue eyes?

INEZ

Hi, Daddy.

(pauses)

I want you to meet Tom. He works in my office. He's a fisherman, too.

Greg looks at Tom a moment, shakes his hand.

Cheryl pours a cup of wine for herself and Tom.

CHERYL

Everyone -- Thank you being here on this special day.

The others applaud.

CHERYL

Thirty years ago today, my dear hubby, Gregory Ray Hibdon, won the Bass Masters Classic right here.

INEZ

And fifty-thousand bucks.

CHERYL

Who could forget! Also -- as you all know, Greg turned sixty-five this month. But...

(pauses)

Sixty-five ain't retirement age for a national champion fisherman.

Everyone laughs, applauds.

EXT. ANCARROW RIVER - DAY

The pontoon boat lies anchored in bright, motionless water along a series of rusted ship hulls near the shore.

Under the canvas top, Cheryl, Inez, and Denny sit shoulder to shoulder in the tub. Each has a drink. They laugh and talk. A CD plays country music.

In the bow, Greg checks his bait-caster rod, then fires an eight-inch plastic worm into shady water by one of the hulls. He pauses to let the worm sink, then moves it sideways in a series of tiny jerks.

Tom, nearby, works his fly line overhead, the loops growing wider in the air behind. Finally, he lets it go. His fly touches down and tip-toes across the water near shore.

Denny leaves the tub to pour another bourbon.

DENNY

What's that crazy lure you got?

TOM

A DeSoto Buzzer.

Denny smirks, shakes head.

Greg reels in his worm, casts a bit farther along the hull.

GREG

(to Tom)

On a day like this, they're gonna be deep, where it's cool.

TOM

I got a drop-off over here.

GREG

Not deep enough. No offense.

DENNY

(to Tom)

Look out when you're slinging that thing around, Cowboy.

Tom brings his line in, starts another series of airborne loops. Denny ducks and laughs with each pass.

DENNY

You ain't gonna hold no bass with that itty-bitty line.

(to Greg)

(MORE)

DENNY (CONT'D)  
What pound-test you got, Brother?

GREG  
Fourteen. If I get hung up under there, I might have to break it.

Denny sips, turns back to Tom.

DENNY  
See what I'm saying? Your girlfriend ain't gonna be too impressed, I hate to tell you.

Tom grimaces, works the DeSoto.

CHERYL  
Denny, get back over here.

DENNY  
Hey, Cheryl, do I have to use the head or can I pee over the side?

GREG  
Just keep it away from my bait.  
(to Tom)  
How long you been seeing Inez? I didn't even know.

TOM  
Six weeks maybe? She works...

A largemouth breaks the surface, takes the DeSoto. Tom, rod raised, retrieves slack to keep the fish in check.

Denny zips up in a hurry, his mouth open in surprise.

TOM  
(to Denny)  
Hand me the net!

In a few moments, Tom has the bass in hand.

DENNY  
Well, shit-fire. Looks like she'll go two pounds, Cowboy.

Inez and Cheryl high-five each other, get out of the tub. Tom removes the DeSoto and tosses the fish back.

DENNY  
Hey, Greg, I ain't seen something like that since Mohammed left  
(MORE)

DENNY (CONT'D)  
Chicago. 'Course, two pounds  
wouldn't win no Bass Masters.

Inez kisses Tom's cheek.

DENNY  
Let me try that goddamn thing.

Before Tom can react, Denny grabs his fly rod.

INEZ  
Uncle Denny!

DENNY  
Y'all back up now.

Greg turns as if to object, but his body goes rigid for a moment. He watches, waits, then sets the hook with a powerful backward swing.

GREG  
All right, all right, all right!

He keeps his rod up and turns with the fish.

GREG  
Feels like a good-un!

The bass bursts to the surface, shakes its massive head, and throws off the lure.

GREG  
Goddamn it! Goddamn it!

DENNY  
That motherfucker was eight pounds!  
Maybe ten! Back up, everbody. I'll  
get him with this cuckoo rod.

GREG  
Denny, for God's sake.

With line gathered in one hand, Denny hurls clumsy loops over his head. Cheryl and Inez stand back.

On a final backward swing of the line, the Desoto Buzzer hits Inez in the eye. She screams.

CHERYL  
Denny, stop, stop! The barb's in  
her eye.

But Denny's momentum thrusts the line forward, and the hook yanks out Inez's eye.

The line lands in a heap along the hull. The eyeball floats on top, still attached to hook.

CHERYL

Oh, my God, oh, my God.

Inez, screaming, collapses on the floor. Cheryl, Greg, and Tom kneel around her.

GREG

(shouting at Denny)

You sorry son of a bitch.

Denny stumbles as he stares at the floating eyeball.

DENNY

I'll get it. I'll get it.

He dives in. At the same time, the largemouth surfaces, again, takes the DeSoto, goes under.

Denny follows.

Cheryl calls nine-one-one. Tom grabs the fly rod and tries to reel in what slack is left.

Soon, the line pulls taut. They wait.

TOM

He's been down there too long.

Greg springs toward the railing and dives in. After a minute, he surfaces, gulps air, goes back down.

Another minute passes.

CHERYL

Oh, dear God. Gregory.

At last, Greg resurfaces. He gasps for breath, yells:

GREG

Get some ice! I've got the eye.

Tom and Cheryl help him climb aboard.

Inez cries, moans.

CHERYL  
Where's Denny?

GREG  
I couldn't get to him.  
They'll...need a dive team.

TOM  
Maybe I can--

GREG  
(voice breaking)  
It's too late.

Cheryl takes the eyeball, the DeSoto still embedded, and places it in a bucket of ice.

A siren echos in the distance.

FADE OUT.