

DIVE

by

Brandon Lee Tenney

FADE IN:

EXT. HOME POOL - DAWN

Splash. Breaking the water's surface, tank first, a fully outfitted scuba diver.

The scuba diver floats in blue. His mask surrounded by bubbles, this is DALTON C. RILEY (17) in his element.

Surfacing from the above ground pool, we glimpse Dalton among the brittle, terrestrial landscape. This is an Arizona summer. Burnt-up-brown and flat. Dalton sinks back into his oasis.

EXT. HOME BACKYARD - MORNING

Dalton flip-flops across the barren lawn into his home, an isolated double-wide trailer. His wet suit clings to his lanky body. It's his uniform. His skin.

INT. TRAILER - A MOMENT LATER

Leaving large flipper footprints in his wake, Dalton walks through the kitchen, past his haggard MOTHER (44).

MOTHER

Dalton C. Riley! Were you out in that pool again! How are you supposed to make that bus if all you do is swim?

Dalton, without breaking stride reaches the threshold of his room with a pause.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

You answer me boy!

DALTON

Dive, Mom. I dive.

MOTHER

Whatever it is, shouldn't be done before you got to leave. And what have I told you about them flippers in this house?!

Walking through the doorway.

DALTON

Was it, you liked it?

MOTHER
You know damn well that is not--

INT. DALTON'S ROOM - DAY

With the slam of his door, alone.

MOTHER (O.C.)
You are in big trouble now young
man. Fine. You stay in there.
That's where you'da been anyhow
anyway if you didn't have to go to
school in five minutes. Dalton!
Dalton?

Stripping off his scuba gear his eyes wander along his walls,
blue and soaking with posters and pictures of life under the
sea. His eyes stop at his scuba certification certificate.

Clutching a picture of him and his father, he lays on the
floor, his eyes zone to the ceiling. Dalton's walls come to
life. Lapping at the floorboards are waves, fish and kelp
all around him. His ears are tuned to the tone of the ocean.
Heaven.

With a knock, the ocean drains away.

MOTHER (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Dalton. School. Now.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Dalton, still zoned out, stands outside in the barren
landscape. The school bus screams passed him. Dalton turns
to begin the walk toward school.

INT. CLASSROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Dalton, zoned out again, sits in class with 25 other high
school seniors. MR. KOOKEN paces at front.

MR. KOOKEN
...within poetry lies the ability
to say more, and say it more
intensely...

Dalton doodles undersea scribbles on his English book. His ears tune to the undersea hum. His feet are flippered under his desk tapping in a puddle of water.

Next to Dalton sits CHESTER. His gnarled pencil drips as it's inserted into Dalton's ear. His flippers are gone, Mr. Kooken's drone halts.

DALTON

Hey! Gross... come on.

MR. KOOKEN

Mr. Riley? Feel like learning today or forcing everyone in the class to sink to your level?

DALTON

But Mr. Kooken, Chester--

MR. KOOKEN

Alright. You may all thank Dalton here for the essay due tomorrow examining Robert Frost's poem 'The Road Not Taken' and how the speaker feels about the triumph of following the road less travelled.

Mr. Kooken's voice trails off as the class eye burns Dalton. His head hits the desk with a...

EXT. HOME POOL - DAY

...splash. Fully outfitted, Dalton sinks and assumes a meditative position at the bottom of the pool. Bubbles erupt around Dalton's face. His English book sits on the bottom of the pool next to him. He's writing on his underwater pad. More bubbles float from Dalton's respirator.

A fish slinks behind Dalton. It is slightly stiff, unpolished, as if made by a child. More pageant-like fish swim around Dalton. A piece of ribboned kelp reaches toward the surface. A crab climbs atop the book at Dalton's knee.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - THE NEXT DAY

Heads poke above the seats on the school bus as Dalton walks up the stairs in full scuba gear. His classmates are paper mache, pageant sea life. The seats are coral and kelp and clams. At the windows laps water. The bus is an inverted submarine. Dalton is in control.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Dalton flip-flops through his classmates who part for him. Their undersea forms are smaller in the larger space of the hallway. Now, in the open sea environment, a whale lumbers past Dalton. Spinning to watch it down the hallway of barnacled lockers, Dalton enters his classroom finding Mr. Kooken sitting stoic at his desk.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Floating in his seat, Dalton sits among his classmates, whose receding fish-form eyes are locked on him.

MR. KOOKEN

G'morning. If you'd please make a stack of your, I'm sure, stellar essays to my left.

Flip-flopping toward the front, Dalton has his paper in his gloved hand. It is sopping, dripping ink and water. He splashes it down on top of the stack of papers that has begun on the desk.

Mr. Kooken looks up with astonishment, then with anger.

MR. KOOKEN (CONT'D)

This supposed to be humourous?

Dalton, his respirator clogging his speech, shakes his head.

MR. KOOKEN (CONT'D)

Then what is it?

Dalton stairs at Mr. Kooken.

DALTON

My analysis.

MR. KOOKEN

Swim away Mr. Riley. Now.

Sea life gathers outside the window behind Mr. Kooken's desk.

EXT. HOME POOL - THE DAY BEFORE

All is still under the water. Dalton's face toward the sky. The marine creatures begin to gather around him.

Dalton spits out his respirator. A smile on his face. One last bubble pops. Heaven.

FADE OUT.