

DIVE

by

Brandon Lee Tenney

FADE IN:

BLACK

A scuba diver checks the flow of oxygen to his respirator.

Cleans his mask.

Splash. Another splash. A third.

EXT. UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

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

The still water surrounds Dalton as he levitates. Inside his mask, his eyes swell with the hint of tears. His fingers wipe his mask.

From above the water's surface, a face creeps into Dalton's view.

EXT. HOME - POOL - CONTINUOUS

Rising like a periscope, Dalton's head breaks the water.

The above ground pool sits antithetic to the brittle, terrestrial landscape that surrounds the oasis of blue. This is an Arizona summer -- burnt-up-brown and flat.

Leaning over the pool, ERNIE (9), freckled and gangly, gives a toothy smile.

Dalton sinks back into his oasis.

EXT. HOME - BACKYARD - MORNING

Dalton flip-flops across the barren lawn. Ernie scampers behind.

ERNIE

Hey Dalton. Big D. Mister D. Super
D. Scuba D.

Ernie's words are muffled by Dalton's wet suit, clinging to his lanky body. His uniform. His skin.

ERNIE (CONT'D)

Just doin' some diving there, D?
Looked to be a pretty good morning--

Dalton walks through the open sliding-glass door of his run-down, pre-fabricated home and slams it shut in front of Ernie.

INT. HOME - CONTINUOUS

Large flipper footprints trail behind Dalton as he walks through the kitchen, past his haggard MOTHER (44).

MOTHER

Dalton C. Reiley! Were you out in that pool again?! That's all you do. Swim swim swim. What have I told you about all that?

Dalton's mother motions up and down at Dalton's scuba gear.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

You answer me boy!

DALTON

Dive, Mom. I dive.

MOTHER

Whatever you call it, shouldn't be doin' it. Bad luck is all it is. And what have I told you about them flippers in my house?!

Dalton continues to walk toward his room.

DALTON

Was it, you like it?

MOTHER

You know damn well that is not--

INT. HOME - DALTON'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dalton SLAMS his door. He's 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. Which you're gonna be late for. Again. 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 surrounded by pictures of him and his father.

Laying on the floor, his eyes zone to the ceiling. Dalton's walls come to life. Lapping at the floorboards are waves. His ears are tuned to the tone of the ocean. Heaven.

With a KNOCK, the ocean drains away.

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

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Dalton pedals hard on his rusted bicycle down the cracked road. The land is bleak behind him. The school bus roars past him.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Dalton, zoned out again, sits in his crowded, English class.

MR. KOOKEN paces in front.

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

Dalton doodles undersea scribbles around the words of his English book. His ears tune to the undersea HUM. His feet are flippered under his desk, tapping in a puddle of water. A few kelp plants unfurl behind, Dalton -- now fully outfitted in his scuba gear.

A gnarled pencil drips with saliva as it is inserted into Dalton's ear. Dalton's scuba gear is gone. CHESTER cackles next to Dalton, wiping off the pencil on his shirt. Mr. Kooken's drone halts.

DALTON
Gross.. Come on! What the hell--

MR. KOOKEN
Am I interrupting, Mr. Riley? Feel
like learning today or forcing
everyone to sink to your level?

DALTON
But Mr. Kooken, Chester--

MR. KOOKEN
We all expect it from Chester.

Chester's face goes red.

DALTON
But I didn't--

MR. KOOKEN
Alright. You may all thank Dalton here for the essay now due tomorrow examining Robert Frost's poem 'The Road Not Taken' and explaining how the speaker feels about 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. UNDERWATER - DUSK

...SPLASH. Fully outfitted, Dalton sinks to the bottom of the pool. Sitting cross-legged, bubbles erupt around Dalton's face.

INT. HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Dalton's mother watches the still surface break into a gurgle. Ernie runs to the edge of the pool and peers over its edge.

INT. HOME - MOTHER'S ROOM - DUSK

Dalton's mother collapses on the edge of her bed. The room is dark until an old film projector spins to life, casting a soft glow on Dalton's mother's face.

The film crackles images of her husband, Dalton's father as a young man. On a boat out to sea, he dons the same scuba gear Dalton wears.

EXT. UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

Dalton writes on his underwater note pad. His English Book rests next to him on the pool's bottom. More bubbles erupt from Dalton's respirator.

Through the bubbles, a fish slinks in front of Dalton's mask. The fish lacks sheen, is stiff as if crafted for a school play instead of alive. More pageant-like fish swim around Dalton. A piece of ribboned kelp reaches toward the surface. A crab climbs atop the English Book.

INT. HOME - MOTHER'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dalton's mother cries as the film continues to play.

Dalton's father breaks the surface of the ocean, spits out his respirator, and smiles at the cameraman. The film cuts.

Dalton's father is now on deck, his face close to the camera. Grabbing the camera, he turns it on the cameraman. Dalton's mother, young and vibrant, smiles wide.

EXT. HOME - POOL - CONTINUOUS

Dalton rises to the surface.

Ernie jumps into Dalton's view.

ERNIE

Yo yo yo! What's up Dal-to! So, you think I can, you know, maybe dive today?

Dalton spits out his respirator.

DALTON

Ernie. Leave me alone. Every single day, every time I want to be alone, you are here. I don't want you here. I don't like you here. I don't like you.

Ernie is quiet. His chin starts to quiver.

ERNIE

I just thought--

DALTON

Leave me alone. Now.

Dalton re-inserts his respirator, adjusts his mask, and sinks again.

Ernie runs away.

EXT. UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

Dalton's eyes swell with tears.

INT. DALTON'S ROOM - MORNING

Dalton's eyes open wide awake.

Laying in bed, he's dressed mask to flipper in his scuba gear.

EXT. ROAD - MORNING

Pedalling fast down the road, Dalton continues to wear his scuba gear.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Dalton flip-flops through his classmates.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Dalton sits among the other students. Bubbles erupt around him.

Mr. Kooken walks through the classroom door.

MR. KOOKEN

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

The class begins to file toward the front. Dalton flip-flops in line, his essay held in his gloved hand -- it's dripping with ink and water.

Dalton splashes it down on top of the stack of essays.

Mr. Kooken looks up with astonishment, then anger.

MR. KOOKEN (CONT'D)

This supposed to be humorous, Mr. Riley? Supposed to be clever?

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

MR. KOOKEN (CONT'D)

Then, what? What is this?

Mr. Kooken spreads his arms, indicating his now leaking desk.

Dalton stares at Mr. Kooken. Spits out his respirator.

DALTON
My analysis.

MR. KOOKEN
Swim away, Mr. Riley. Now.

A few pageant-like fish gather outside the window behind Mr. Kooken.

EXT. HOME - POOL - DUSK

Dalton finishes writing on his underwater note pad. His eyes are wide inside his mask.

Rising like a periscope, Dalton's head breaks the water.

Removing his respirator, he calls after Ernie, sulking away.

DALTON
Hey, Ernie. Ernie!

ERNIE
I know, I know. I'm leaving you alone.

DALTON
No. I mean. I'm sorry, Ernie.

Ernie's face lights up. A toothy smile.

DALTON (CONT'D)
What do you say tomorrow we start with some breathing exercises?

ERNIE
Oh, snap! My main man D is back!

Ernie skips away, cheering.

INT. HOME - NIGHT

Dalton's mother is cooking in the kitchen. Coming through the sliding glass door, Dalton takes off his flippers and leaves them outside.

INT. HOME - DALTON'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dalton lays on his bed. The HUM of the ocean is dynamic, his walls alive.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

Dalton begins to swim in full scuba gear. As he swims deeper, further, his gear begins to shed. He's free.

Bubbles erupt through his teeth as Dalton smiles wide.

FADE OUT.