

DIVE

by

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BLACK

SUPER: Opening titles and credits.

An oxygen tank HISSES. A valve CREAKS loose. SHORT BREATHS evolve into LONG, STEADY BREATHING THROUGH A RESPIRATOR.

SPLASH.

FADE IN:

EXT. UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

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

The still water blankets Dalton as he levitates. Inside his mask, his eyes swell with the hint of tears.

EXT. HOME - POOL - CONTINUOUS

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

The above ground pool sits antithetic to the brittle, terrestrial backyard surrounding the blue oasis. 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.

ERNIE, a round, pudgy 9 year old runs out of his house next door and scampers after him.

Dalton's wet suit clings to his lanky body. It's his uniform. His skin.

Dalton walks through the open sliding-glass door of his run-down, pre-fab home and slams the door shut in Ernie's face.

INT. HOME - CONTINUOUS

Large flipper footprints trail behind Dalton as he walks through the kitchen, past his haggard MOTHER (44). The only sound in his ears is the TONE OF THE OCEAN.

Dalton's Mother's face contorts with anger. Her arms flail as she unloads on Dalton, motioning up and down at Dalton's scuba gear.

Dalton stops for a moment, remaining silent.

INT. HOME - DALTON'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dalton SLAMS his door. He's alone.

Stripping off his scuba gear his eyes wander along his walls, blue and soaking with posters and pictures of sea life. Pictures of Dalton and his father hang prominently.

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 (O.C.)  
Dalton. School. Now.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - DAY

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

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Dalton skids to a stop in front of the empty bike rack, leans his bike in place, and enters the main building.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

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

MR. KOOKEN sits with his feet crossed on top of his desk reading. The sleeves of his cardigan are rolled to his elbows.

On the white board behind Mr. Kookan is written and double underlined: "The Road Not Taken".

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

Rising, Mr. Kooken begins to pace at the front of the class.

Dalton doodles undersea scribbles around the words of his English book. His ears tune to the TONE OF THE OCEAN.

His English book now casts a liquid reflection on his face. His feet are now flippered under his desk, tapping in a puddle of water. A few kelp plants unfurl behind Dalton.

A gnarled pencil drips with saliva as it's inserted into Dalton's ear.

DALTON

Gross.. Come on! What the hell--

Dalton's scuba gear is gone.

CHESTER CACKLES next to Dalton, wiping off the pencil on his shirt.

The rest of the CLASS MURMURS. Mr. Kooken's DRONE halts.

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, now don't we.

Chester's face goes red.

DALTON

But I didn't--

MR. KOOKEN

Alright. You may all thank Dalton here for the essay you now have due tomorrow.

The class GROANS.

MR. KOOKEN (CONT'D)

I'd like for you all to examine Robert Frost's poem and explain how the speaker views following the road less travelled.

(beat)

Or is that too much to ask?

CLASS  
No, Mr. Kooken.

DALTON  
(under his breath)  
No, Mr. Kooken.

MR. KOOKEN (CONT'D)  
And Mr. Riley. Floating by is no  
longer an option.

Mr. Kooken's voice trails off as the class eye burns Dalton.

DAPHNE, beautifully nerdy, instead holds a gaze of longing,  
memorizing the back of Dalton's matted hair.

MR. KOOKEN (CONT'D)  
Daphne, would you care to continue  
where we last left off?

DAPHNE  
Oh, yeah. Sure.

Dalton drops his forehead to his desk with a...

INT. HOME - DALTON'S BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

SPLASH. Lifting his head from the sink, Dalton's face drips.  
His reflection is outfitted in his scuba mask and respirator.  
From off-screen Dalton hears his door CREAK open. The mask  
and respirator are gone.

INT. HOME - DALTON'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dalton storms into his room and begins to put on his scuba  
gear.

Dalton's mother is waiting, her eyes red and puffy. She  
folds clothes idly.

MOTHER  
How was school?

DALTON  
Same.

Dalton's mother eyes the scuba gear.

MOTHER  
I could use some help with dinner.

DALTON  
Sorry, have homework.

MOTHER

You know, most people usually stay on land for that.

DALTON

I'm not most people.

Silence.

MOTHER

Just. You know to always test the tank? Safety checks.

Dalton, now fully outfitted, flip-flops out the door.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Wish you wouldn't.

Dalton's mother drops the clothes in her hands back into the laundry basket.

EXT. UNDERWATER - AFTERNOON

Dalton sinks to the bottom of the pool. Sitting cross-legged, bubbles erupt around Dalton's face. He starts to write on an underwater note pad.

EXT. HOME - POOL - CONTINUOUS

Ernie scampers from his house next door to the edge of the pool.

EXT. UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

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

EXT. HOME - POOL - CONTINUOUS

Dalton surfaces. Ernie gives a toothy smile.

ERNIE

Yo yo yo. Super D. Scuba D. Dalton! How's it go-- ing.

Dalton removes his respirator.

ERNIE (CONT'D)

Just doin' some divin'.

(beat)

(MORE)

ERNIE (CONT'D)

Awesome.

(beat)

I mean, nice afternoon for it, for sure. Plenty hot.

Dalton starts to clean his mask.

ERNIE (CONT'D)

Can I please dive today? Please.

DALTON

Ernie. Not now. Not ever.

ERNIE

I'm not afraid! I can do it!

DALTON

Afraid? Has nothing to do with being afraid!

(beat)

You know, why can't you just leave me alone? I don't want to talk anymore, okay. Every damn day.

ERNIE

Come on!

DALTON

No. I've put up with you. That's it. 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. Just. Leave.

Ernie's face flushes red while his chin quivers. He runs away.

EXT. UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

Dalton sinks back to the pool bottom and continues to write 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. The TONE OF THE OCEAN surrounds him.

INT. HOME - DALTON'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dalton lays on his bed. The TONE OF THE OCEAN remains.

EXT. HOME - POOL - CONTINUOUS

Ernie is poised on the edge of the pool. He's dressed in a homemade scuba outfit crafted from taped-together black, plastic garbage bags, a child's mask and snorkel, and ping-pong paddles attached to his feet like flippers.

Two Ziplock bags filled with rocks hang over both of his hips from a rope around his waist.

INT. HOME - DALTON'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A large SPLASH stirs Dalton.

MOTHER (O.C.)  
Oh God! Dalton!

Dalton lurches from his bed.

EXT. UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

Abstract flashes of water and light. Waves ROAR. Struggle.

EXT. HOME - POOL - CONTINUOUS

Dalton, out of breath, collapses next to Ernie beside the pool.

ERNIE  
(turning to Dalton, out of  
breath)  
What's up Scuba D?

Dalton coughs a weak chuckle.

Daphne rounds the fence from the house next door.

DAPHNE  
Ernie! What're you doing?! What'd  
you do?

ERNIE  
Something extremely stupid.

DAPHNE  
 Well, get up. Your mom is gonna be  
 home any minute.  
 (beat)  
 Oh. Hi, Dalton.

Dalton attempts to shake out his clinging, wet pajamas.

DALTON  
 Hi.

DAPHNE  
 Well, I've got to go.

DALTON  
 Well, I've got to go.

DAPHNE  
 Okay.

DALTON  
 Okay.

Silence.

DAPHNE  
 Goodnight.

DALTON  
 Night.

INT. HOME - MOTHER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dalton's mother collapses on the edge of her bed holding Dalton's scuba gear. She's lost in her memory.

A soft glow spreads across Dalton's mother's face as her memories crackle to life on the wall behind her, projected like an ancient film from a hidden projector.

The film spins 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.

Dalton's mother cries as the film plays.

EXT. BOAT AT SEA - DAY - FILM

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.

The image flickers, now Daphne has taken Dalton's mother's place while Dalton has taken his father's.

INT. HOME - DALTON'S ROOM - MORNING

Dalton's eyes open, wide awake.

INT. HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING

Dalton's mother sits blank at the kitchen table. Her eyes are dark, a reflection of the black coffee she's sipping.

Dalton opens the refrigerator, pulls out a bottle of orange juice and takes a swig.

MOTHER

It stops today.

DALTON

(swallowing)

What?

MOTHER

That gear, that pool. Diving. Stops today.

Dalton stands shocked. Then bolts out of the kitchen.

EXT. ROAD - MORNING

Fully outfitted in his scuba gear, Dalton pedals fast down the road on his bike.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Dalton flip-flops through his classmates.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Dalton sits among the other students. Bubbles erupt around him. The CHATTER of his classmates is muffled as if they're underwater.

Mr. Kookan walks through the door, without looking up:

MR. KOOKAN

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

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. The desk begins to leak.

Mr. Kooken looks up with astonishment.

MR. KOOKEN (CONT'D)  
Mr. Riley? Is there something else?

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

MR. KOOKEN (CONT'D)  
Then, what?

MR. KOOKEN'S POV: Dalton stands in front of him without scuba gear.

DALTON  
Nothing.

Mr. Kooken grabs Dalton's now dry essay and flips through it.

Dalton turns to walk back to his desk.

MR. KOOKEN  
Mr. Riley. Nice work.

Dalton slips in to his desk, his scuba gear folded in his backpack at his side.

Looking over his shoulder, Dalton's eyes meet Daphne's.

EXT. ROAD - AFTERNOON

Dalton strolls toward home. A GROUP OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL KIDS run past. Dalton's focus fixes on them, now a school of pageant-like fish.

The fish rush past Daphne as she jogs, rolling Dalton's bike.

DAPHNE  
Hey. You forgot your bike.

DALTON  
Oh, yeah. Thanks. You didn't have--

DAPHNE  
No worries.  
(beat)  
So. You're a diver?

Daphne nods toward Dalton's open backpack.

DALTON

Uh, yeah. Not as exciting as it might seem.

DAPHNE

Some pretty rare excitement last night then?

DALTON

Hmph. Suppose so.

DAPHNE

Well, just to make sure it's as rare as you say, think I better walk you home.

DALTON

Bodygaurd?

DAPHNE

More so an active bystander.

DALTON

That doesn't make any sense.

DAPHNE

Not a whole lot does.

EXT. HOME - BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

Dalton's mother aimlessly prunes her dying garden, stopping as Dalton enters the backyard.

Before Dalton's mother can unleash, Dalton grabs her and hugs her tight.

Daphne looks on, raising her head to the sky.

Dalton's mother relents, melting. She cries. Release.

Taking Dalton by the shoulders, she stares at him.

MOTHER

He'd be so proud of you.

She smiles, turns, and starts to walk. She stops, turns to Daphne.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Welcome.

With a deep sigh, Dalton's mother goes inside.

Dalton fingers a fresh, green bud on the bush next to him.

EXT. HOME - BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

Dalton and Daphne are both laying on the brown earth beside the still, blue above ground pool. Their arms are crossed over their own chests, their eyes fixed above.

Dalton closes his eyes slowly.

EXT. UNDERWATER - AFTERNOON

Bubbles erupt through Dalton's teeth as he smiles wide at Daphne. Together and free.

FADE OUT.