

APNEA

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Written by

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INT. INDOOR POOL - NIGHT

A woman lies face down in the water. Motionless.

This is MAYA, late 30's, a former Australian freediving champion, determined to reclaim her title. She's clad in a tight black wetsuit.

Her eyes are squeezed tight, she holds her breath for static apnea. Her heartbeat echoes in her ears.

EXT. FLASHBACK, DECK - DAY

Hands squeezed tightly, filled with tension.

Maya sits in a blue inflatable birth pool, in labour. Beside her is partner JEREMY, late 30's, a rugged yet gentle looking landscaper. He holds her hand close to his chest.

Nearby a MIDWIFE coaches Maya's breathing.

MIDWIFE

Deep breaths Maya, deep breaths.

Maya's shoulders rise and fall, rise and fall.

INT. INDOOR POOL - NIGHT

Beneath the water, Maya's hand twitches. Her face stirs, concentration lapsing.

Standing in the water beside her, with one hand on her back is IVAN, mid 50's, her coach, and former Eastern European champion. With a shaved head, he bears the presence of a zen monk combined with the intensity of a marine.

Ivan watches the clock as it ticks over -- 4 minutes.

He taps Maya's shoulder, checking in.

Maya raises her finger, she's still alert.

She feels the contractions begin to rise in her chest, violently propelling her body upwards in the water as her body yearns for oxygen.

EXT. FLASHBACK, DECK - DAY

In labour, Maya strains her face, the contractions come faster now.

MIDWIFE

Push, push.

Jeremy squeezes Maya tight, supporting her.

JEREMY

Come on babe.

Maya grits her teeth, exhales for one big push.

INT. INDOOR POOL - NIGHT

The cry of a baby echoes under the water.

Maya's eyes burst open.

Bubbles stream from her mouth in a silent scream.

Maya struggles to pull herself up against the pool's edge, lifts her head from the water.

Quick hook breaths, as she takes in oxygen.

IVAN

Alright?

Maya nods. Gives the ok signal.

MAYA

Time?

Ivan ignores her question.

IVAN

You lost your concentration again.

Maya snatches the stopwatch -- 4:34. She's better than that.

MAYA

Shit.

Maya slams the watch beside the pool.

She hauls herself out of the water, thunders towards the shower block.

INT. POOL SHOWERS - NIGHT

Water droplets pour over Maya's face.

She struggles to pull the wetsuit over her head. It feels tighter than usual.

Stuck like glue around her face, like its almost suffocating her.

She rips it off violently, discarding it on the tiles.

INT. POOLSIDE - NIGHT

Maya dries her hair with a towel. Bag over her shoulder, she saunters towards the exit.

Ivan appears behind her.

IVAN
You're not ready for the
competition.

Maya flares, defiant. She faces him.

MAYA
I've done it before, I can do it
again.

Ivan stares at her, but she's not going to budge.

IVAN
A true champion knows when to call
it quits.

Maya looks at him with resolution.

MAYA
Is this one of your reverse
psychology tricks?

IVAN
Maya, your focus is all over the
place.

Maya flicks the towel over her shoulder, turns.

MAYA
(over her shoulder)
6 o'clock tomorrow.

Ivan watches her leave.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

The front door opens, blue light streaming inside. It's late.

Maya sneaks in, softly closing the door behind her.

She creeps up the hallway, peers into the bedroom, to see Jeremy asleep.

She continues up the hallway.

INT. NURSERY - NIGHT

Maya peeks in. A twinkling ocean light illuminates the ceiling, bathing it in a soft calm blue. Little fish dangle on a mobile above the cot.

Silence.

Maya pulls the door closed softly.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

A covered dinner bowl left out on the bench, a table setting for one. Jeremy must've set it up for her.

Maya pops it in the microwave, watches as it turns.

She opens the fridge, rummages past several baby milk bottles, for a bottle of green juice.

In the shadows, Maya sits at the bench and eats alone.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Moonlit shards of light across Maya's face as she sleeps.

She stirs as she hears the cries of the baby, floating down the hall.

Her eyes flutter open. She turns to look at Jeremy, he's passed out, oblivious.

Maya stirs, her eyes flutter open. She turns to look at Jeremy, he's passed out, oblivious.

With a heavy sigh, Maya rolls out of bed, half asleep.

INT. NURSERY - NIGHT

Maya opens the nursery door, the blue light shimmering.

Maya tiptoes towards the cot. She looks into it, an empty gaze fills her eyes. It's quiet again.

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

The dusky blue of dawn filters through the window.

Jeremy sits on the edge of the bed, pulling on his outdoor work boots.

Maya stirs, scrunched up in a ball, tangled in the bedcovers.

JEREMY
Home for dinner?

MAYA
(half asleep)
I'm training again.

Jeremy looks a little hurt, but he brushes it off.

He leans over and kisses her cheek.

JEREMY
Don't push yourself too hard.

Maya murmurs in her sleepy state, and buries herself into the pillow.

EXT. DECK - DAY

Maya sits cross legged on a Yoga mat, doing lung extension breathing exercises. She sucks her belly in tight, so her ribs stick out. It looks quite unnatural.

She watches the stopwatch as it ticks by.

Liquid drops spill on her knee. Maya looks down to see one of her breasts is leaking milk. She gives up.

INT. INDOOR POOL - NIGHT

Maya stares down the lanes, to the end of the pool.

Ivan treads water beside her.

IVAN
200 metres. If you can't make that,
I'm pulling you from the comp.

Maya nods. She pulls her goggles down, hiding her eyes.

Ivan pops a snorkel in his mouth, he's going to safety spot.

Maya watches as the large competitor clock above the pool ticks. As it nears the 60, she takes one last deep breath...

... and submerges.

INT. UNDERWATER, POOL - NIGHT

Maya glides gracefully across the bottom of the pool, her long fins kicking in rhythm, her arms stretched before her.

Ivan follows along the surface, the ever watchful eye.

Maya finishes her first lap, and turns, moving effortlessly under the water.

Her pace begins to speed up as she hits her flow.

Kick kick, kick kick, she turns, pushes off from the edge. She soars across the bottom.

INT. FLASHBACK, POOL - DAY

Maya hovers in the water, observing Jeremy play with their BABY DAUGHTER. He glides her across the surface, her tiny legs trying to kick.

INT. UNDERWATER, POOL - NIGHT

At the bottom of the pool, Maya tries to squeeze out the thoughts. She kicks harder and harder, forcing herself through the water.

She turns another lap, on the home stretch now.

INT. FLASHBACK, POOL - DAY

Jeremy brings the baby close, offers for Maya to take her. Maya softens, shakes her head. She's having so much fun with her Dad, he should hold onto her.

INT. UNDERWATER, POOL - NIGHT

Maya's form becomes a little sloppy, she's not as streamlined as before.

Ivan watches closely as she begins to flail.

Maya looks up, the end of the pool is still so far away. She pushes and pushes, the strain clear on her face.

Her body begins to shake as she powers through.

From above, Ivan observes her struggle.

Maya bursts the surface at the end of the pool. She made it.

She forgets to inhale, her head dipping back into the water -
- almost a blackout.

Ivan steadies her, holding her up in the water.

IVAN
Breathe, breathe.

Maya snaps to, sucks several quick breaths.

She props herself on the edge of the pool.

IVAN (CONT'D)
You ok?

Maya nods, catching her breath.

MAYA
Yeah, yeah. I can do this.

Ivan's face reveals his doubts.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Maya sneaks into bed beside Jeremy.

She kisses him while he sleeps, he stirs awake.

Maya rolls onto his body, mounting him. She takes control.

JEREMY
What are you doing?

MAYA
What do you mean?

Jeremy tries to push her off, she resists.

JEREMY
Why won't you tell me what's going
on inside you? I don't like seeing
you like this.

MAYA
I will. I will. I just need to get
through this dive first.

Jeremy rolls her off his chest. He stands, reaching for a pillow.

JEREMY

Fuck the competition. Sometimes what's going on in our lives has to come first.

Jeremy leaves the room.

Maya rolls onto her back, staring at the ceiling.

EXT. FLOODED QUARRY - DAY

Maya lies on her back, bobbing in the water. Her gaze seems far far away. She squeezes her eyes shut. A noseclip holds her nostrils tight.

She breathes in, and out through her mouth. In rhythm. Chest rising and falling. She clenches her fingers.

Surrounding her are SEVERAL SAFETY DIVERS, alert, poised.

Ivan sits perched on the wooden platform, legs dangling in the water. He breathes in sync with Maya.

IVAN

Relax, let go, you got this Maya.

Maya's face twitches, she relaxes her fingers.

DIVE JUDGE (O.S.)

Maya Campbell - Australian record attempt. 73m constant weight no fins. Estimated dive time, 3 minutes, 20 seconds.

Maya takes deep breaths, in... and out.

DIVE JUDGE (CONT'D)

10, 9, 8...

The sounds around Maya fade into the background as she shifts her focus inward. Her heartbeat begins to slow.

DIVE JUDGE (CONT'D)

(muffled)

3, 2, 1...

Maya takes a final breath, and rolls backwards beneath the surface. She's gone.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

Kick kick of the legs, as Maya descends. Her skill makes it appear effortless.

As she dives deeper, the light dissipates, to a shade of midnight blue.

Maya glides beside the line, gravity takes control.

She surrenders to the depths, her body being pulled deeper and deeper. All sense of time seems to evaporate.

Her eyes remain closed, focused.

EXT. FLOODED QUARRY - DAY

Ivan stares at the surface, trying to penetrate the depths.

He stares at his watch - 01:15. She must be getting close.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

The darkness swallows Maya as she plummets into the void.

It's so silent down here. She focuses inward, on her heartbeat as it slows.

She approaches the depth platform, and pauses.

Her hands fumble, reaching for the ticket -- got it.

Maya turns, faces upwards. And kicks - one, two, one, two. The strength in her legs, propels her upwards.

She reaches for the line, pull, pull.

EXT. FLOODED QUARRY - DAY

Close on Ivan's watch - as the time ticks over, 02:30.

He looks to the safety divers. Their faces in the water, breathing through snorkels.

One of them looks up.

SAFETY DIVER 1

She's on her way.

Ivan clenches his fist, a sign of nerves.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

Maya pulls herself to the surface.

The light shifts to lighter blue, as she climbs higher, and higher.

Maya's face contorts as emotion invades. Her heartbeat becomes more rapid.

INT. FLASHBACK, NURSERY - NIGHT

Soothing blue as the ocean night lamp twinkles on the ceiling.

Silence as Maya approaches the crib.

She looks over to see her baby daughter, blue in the face, struggling to breathe.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

Maya's closed eyes twitch, her focus slipping. The emotions overtake her. She tries to fight it.

INT. FLASHBACK, PICU - NIGHT

A wall of glass, bathed in blue light. It's eerily quiet, the dead of night, with the rhythmic tones of machines beeping.

Maya is pulled forward. Step by step, she draws closer.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

Hands pull tightly on the line, Maya strains to pull herself closer to the surface.

The light shifts as the sun begins to break through.

INT. FLASHBACK, PICU - NIGHT

Maya stares at the little person before her. Her chest rises and falls as she breathes on a respirator.

Maya reaches, she wants to touch her daughter, but she's removed. Behind the glass.

Jeremy emerges behind her, wrapping his arms around her.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

Maya shakes her head, trying to dismiss the thoughts.

She reaches for the line, falters, and begins to slip. The weights tug at her hips, her kicks slow as the lactic acid drags at her feet.

Maya opens her eyes, looks up to the surface, she reaches.

INT. FLASHBACK, PICU - NIGHT

Jeremy pulls Maya away, the blue light of the machines gets further and further away.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

A hand spasms, legs convulse.

Maya drifts suspended in time, unconscious.

EXT. FLOODED QUARRY - DAY

One of the safety divers looks up.

SAFETY DIVER 1

Blackout.

Safety Diver 2 breathes through their snorkel, duck dives.

Ivan leaps into the water, grabs onto the nearest float.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

Maya's face still, pale.

Safety diver 2 swims towards her, he reaches under her arm, lifting her towards him. He positions her head back, kicks up to the surface.

EXT. FLOODED QUARRY - DAY

The diver breaks the surface. Maya is blue, her eyes rolling back in her head. The safety diver lifts her towards the float.

Ivan pulls her close. He slaps her cheeks gently.

IVAN
 Maya. Maya.

Safety Diver 2 blows on her eyelids.

IVAN (CONT'D)
 Breathe. Breathe.

Ivan puts his head close to her chest, listening for her breath. Nothing.

Ivan slaps her cheeks with more vigour.

IVAN (CONT'D)
 Maya! Breathe!

Ivan pulls her mouth open, and administers a few quick rescue breaths.

SAFETY DIVER 1
 Grab the oxygen!

An OFFICIAL on the platform rummages for the oxygen tank and mask.

Ivan blows forcefully on her eyelids.

IVAN
 Breathe!

Maya's eyelids flicker - she splutters, water frothing from her mouth.

Ivan cradles her head in his hands.

IVAN (CONT'D)
 Breathe in.

Maya's eyes focus on Ivan. She inhales, colour begins to return to her face.

EXT. QUARRY - DAY

Maya stares vacantly at the water as she breathes through an oxygen mask. She sits on the edge of the platform, her toes touching the surface.

Ivan wraps a towel around her shoulders, sits beside her. He thinks for a moment.

IVAN
 I'm disappointed in you.

Maya looks a little shocked -- that was blunt.

MAYA
Disqualified. It was the last 20
metres, I --

IVAN
-- No, I'm disappointed in you...
because you tried.

Ivan's eyes reveal a softness, we haven't yet seen.

He stirs his feet in the water.

IVAN (CONT'D)
You cannot hide from the ocean, she
always sees the truth. You have to
face it Maya, you have to accept
the loss.

Maya looks inward.

MAYA
I couldn't reach her.

IVAN
You did everything you could.

MAYA
I was her mother. Now I'm nothing.
I just needed to be something
again.

IVAN
You'll always be her mother.

Maya's eyes begin to well up.

INT. NURSERY - NIGHT

A tear slides down Maya's cheek.

She stares at the empty crib before her, the pink blankets
still askew.

The twinkling ocean lamp attracts Maya's attention. She moves
towards it, and turns it off shrouding the room in darkness.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Maya steps into the hallway, to see Jeremy standing at the
other end, illuminated by a warm floor lamp.

They look at each other for an extended beat -- a silent apology.

She closes the gap. Maya breaks as she folds into his chest. He wraps his arms around her, holding her close.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

Close on Maya bobbing in the water, face up, eyes closed.

She inhales deeply, rolls backwards beneath the surface.

As she descends, Maya opens her eyes - she's in the open ocean.

She hovers, looking around at the glimmers of life - coloured fish, swaying kelp, schools of silver.

For the first time, her face is surrendered to complete peace.

Maya looks up at the rippling rays of sun, and swims towards the light.

FADE TO WHITE.