

SHAKER HEIGHTS

Written by

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COLD OPEN

EXT. SHAKER HEIGHTS POOL DECK - DAY

It's a swim meet, in full swing. A drone shot, high & wide shows a packed pool deck. Two hundred spectators, **lane markers, starting blocks** -- impressive for a community pool.

The crowd roars as a tightly contested (boys 15-18) freestyle race concludes in a near dead heat.

The top two finishers shake hands as the crowd cheers.

P.A. ANNOUNCER (O.C.)

Next up, event 32, boys 8 & under backstroke.

We drop in pool-side, as RJ CONNER (38) gives his son HUDSON (8) a pre-race pep talk. With swim cap tight and goggles on forehead, Hudson looks ready.

RJ

You nervous, Champ?

HUDSON

No.

RJ

Cuz it's just time trials.

Hudson nods. He just wants RJ to shut up so he can go swim.

RJ

Anybody might get freaked out by all these people and all this noise--

HUDSON

Dad, I'm not nervous.

RJ

Good. That's great. And win or lose, I'm always proud of you.

HUDSON

Thanks.

RJ

Hudson, your best effort is all I ever--

HUDSON

I need to go line up.

Hudson pulls his **goggles** over his eyes and walks away.

RJ

Sure. Lose, win? Doesn't matter.

At the far side of the pool, we see RONDELL RI'CHARD (48). Rondell is a black man, wearing a sweet, baby blue sweatsuit. He's the race "starter", and he holds a microphone that is tethered to a bullhorn that beeps, starting each race.

RONDELL

(into microphone)

Event 32. Swimmers step forward.

Hudson, along with five other boys step up to the edge of the pool. Next to Hudson is TYLER KIM, a wirey Korean kid.

Four of the boys wear baby blue Speedos. Tyler wears a full-torso, hi-tech baby blue suit. Hudson wears regular swim trunks.

RONDELL

Backstrokers into the water.

The boys all drop straight in, feet first.

Back on RJ's side of the pool, he now stands next to STEFAN KIM (30). Stefan is a tall, athletically built Korean-American man.

RJ

He doesn't stand a chance.

STEFAN

The board shorts don't fool me. He's got the eye of the tiger.

Hudson does have an INTENSE LOOK on his face.

RONDELL

(into microphone)

Swimmers place your feet.

The boys grab the backstroke bar and put their feet on the wall.

RJ

'Fraid not. My boy doesn't possess the intensity gene.

RONDELL

(into microphone)

Take your mark.

STEFAN

Maybe so, but at least this isn't his first backstroke event ever.

RJ cocks his head at Stefan. Stefan smirks.

BEEP. The horn sounds and the swimmers plunge into the water.

RJ
Did you just hustle me?

STEFAN
No hustle required.

It's a tight race. The boys swim hard. **The crowd cheers.**

Hudson and Tyler start pulling away from the others.

RJ and Stefan scream out support with the crowd.

RJ
GO! GO!

STEFAN
Dig! Come on. Dig!

It's neck & neck. Hudson and Tyler, back and forth.

Things turn slowmo; the crowd cheering, the swim strokes, RJ and Stefan shouting. The intensity on both boys' faces.

ZIP! Back to real speed, just before the finish. Tyler digs hard and just beats Hudson to the wall. He wins!

The crowd cheers! We hear victorious shouts; **YES, YES!**

It's RJ. Hands raised in victory. He continues shouting.

RJ
YES! YES! That's right! WOO!

Dead silence. Everyone on the pool deck stares at RJ, including his dumbfounded son, who removes his goggles.

Did RJ just celebrate his son's loss? In front of **EVERYBODY?**

So much disappointment in an 8 year old's eyes.

A beat. RJ tries to recover.

RJ
Super proud of you, little man. One heck of an effort.

END OF COLD OPEN