

IT ALL BLEEDS

by

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INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

A bit outdated, but homey. Tiled floor. Wooden cabinets with brass handles and childhood drawings taped to them. Vacation magnets on the fridge. A linoleum island lined with muffins and fruits and other snacks.

A teenager, CAL (17), stands at the end of the island, hands tilting a stool back and forth. He eyes a laptop resting atop the island. A talking head--DR. NICOLE (50s)--stares back at him. She always wears her lab coat, even to virtual appointments.

DR. NICOLE
If you think it will happen, it
will.

Cal straightens and shakes his head, serious.

CAL
Don't say that. It gives them
power.

DR. NICOLE
No, it gives YOU power. You control
your thoughts.

Cal starts pacing in front of the island.

CAL
That's what you tell yourself. But
you have no idea.

DR. NICOLE
Tell me, then.

CAL
I live this. You don't. You
wouldn't understand.

DR. NICOLE
Try me.

CAL
I'm the one who's trying! I'm
trying so damn hard. But the more I
try to push them out, the faster
they come back. They constrict my
reality, squeezing and squeezing
till they're all I can see. Till
they consume me. How can I not
listen to them then?

Dr. Nicole fiddles with her smart watch. She looks up when he's done.

DR. NICOLE
You have to keep trying.

CAL
How can you say that?

She spreads her hands.

DR. NICOLE
I'm trying my best to help. We all are. That's all we can do.

She grabs a mug, takes a sip, puts it back.

DR. NICOLE (CONT'D)
Do you have an example of a thought you can't control?

Cal stops pacing and closes his eyes.

DR. NICOLE (CONT'D)
Or a poem? Your mother said you write poems about what you go through.

CAL
No. I— I don't share those with anyone.

DR. NICOLE
Please. You have to help me help you. If you're serious about getting rid of these thoughts, you need to tell me.

Eyes still closed. He exhales.

CAL
No. It's too horrible. Too real.

DR. NICOLE
Cal, what are you thinking?

CAL
Stop! You're encouraging them.

He's breathing faster, harder. He suffers a silent fight.

DR. NICOLE
You have—

Cal closes the laptop. He's shaking. His face contorts. He bites down so hard that his bottom lip starts to bleed. He rakes his hands through his hair; strands of hair fall out. All of a sudden, he stops. His arms fall onto the island, and his eyes snap open. But he's somewhere else.

INT. DARKNESS OF MIND -- NIGHT

Tiles—same as the kitchen—extend into black. Pure, infinite black. Impossible to pierce. Not that Cal needs to see his demons to know they're there.

His mom (40s) lies on the tiles, unmoving. A gash across her gut. Her stomach is red from the blood, her skin whitish-blue.

Cal falls to his knees and opens his mouth. The darkness swallows his screams.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

Cal's neck is wet with sweat. He's shaking. He unclenches his hands and rests his wrists against the table, steadying himself. It doesn't work. He tries to control his breathing, can't. He looks around, terror on his face. The walls are closing in.

He jumps out of his chair, runs through the living room, pulls open the sliding door.

EXT. BALCONY -- DAY

Ocean waves and wind greet him as he lurches through the door. His mom reclines in a pool chair, reading a half-bent book and sipping fruit juice. Sunglasses hide her satisfaction.

CAL

Mom.

She sits up.

MOM

Honey, what's wrong?

CAL

Thoughts. Bad thoughts. Can we go to the beach? Not safe here.

She sets her book and glass down on the table beside her, then takes off her sunglasses. Cal takes in her face. Pink with life.

MOM

Of course, sweetie. Do you want to talk about it?

CAL

No! No, I... I can't.

MOM

Was Dr. Nicole able to help?

CAL

She made it worse.

She stands and holds his cheek.

MOM

I'm sorry, sweetie. You don't have to see her anymore, if you don't want to. I appreciate you giving her a try.

She kisses his forehead, then lets go.

MOM (CONT'D)

Let me get our things together and then we can head down.

She heads inside. Cal follows her.

EXT. BEACH -- DAY

The sun hides behind the clouds. A smattering of umbrellas dot the beach. A band of shells separates the wet and dry sand. Two dogs race after a tennis ball, scaring away a flock of seagulls. Kids play in the bay and build sandcastles, while their parents read and sleep. A few teenagers play spikeball.

Cal and his mom reach the end of the boardwalk and slip off their shoes. They walk past the shells and sink into the wet sand. Cal unfolds the beach chairs, while his mom unloads towels and waters from the beach bag. Cal takes off his shirt, then ties it around the arm of his chair.

CAL

I'm going in.

MOM

Ok. I'll be right here if you need me.

CAL

I know.

Cal tries to smile, then heads for the ocean.

MOM

Watch out for jellyfish.

Cal wades in to his knees and plops down, content to let the waves come to him. A boat groans in the distance. The tide pulls sand into his pants. He gets up and wades in further to wash it out. The water's past his waist now.

He scans the rest of the ocean. He's the only one in the water. He looks down. Shadows lurk beneath the water. Were those there before? He watches them. They morph into something bigger. They start to circle him. He spins, looking for a way out. Seaweed brushes his leg. He takes off, sprinting through one of the shadows.

He reaches the beach and collapses onto the sand. His foot is bleeding. His mom rushes over, her hat flying away. She puts a hand on his back.

MOM (CONT'D)

Cal! Cal, baby, are you ok?

CAL

Sharks. Swirling around me. I ran.
I think— I think they got me.

She wraps her arms around him.

MOM

No. No sharks. You're safe. I got you. You're ok, sweetie.

CAL

My foot.

She inspects his foot and pulls out a fragment of shell. Cal grunts.

MOM

It was just a shell, sweetheart.
I'll put a band-aid on it when we get back.

CAL

I can't go back.

MOM
We can't stay here.

CAL
Where can I go?

MOM
Somewhere I can take care of you.

She helps him get up, then brushes sand off his back. They walk toward their chairs, Cal wobbling.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Cal is stretched out on a couch, his feet on the armrest. One of them is bandaged. He balances a bowl of mac 'n' cheese on his chest as he scoops a spoonful into his mouth. His mom rests upright in a recliner. They're watching a comedy show where everyone laughs but no one means it.

MOM
Do you need anything, honey?

Cal shakes his head as he licks his lips.

CAL
No. So good. Thank you.

She stands, brushes a crumb off her leg, nods.

MOM
Ok. Alright. Would it be ok if I go for a quick run?

CAL
Go for it.

MOM
Are you sure?

CAL
Mom. I'm ok right now. I promise.
Don't let me ruin your life more than I have to.

She tousles his hair.

MOM
Thanks, kiddo.

CAL
Good luck.

MOM
I'll be back soon.

The front door beeps twice. Cal flicks through channels until he lands on an infomercial for a new hair dryer. Pretty people demonstrate how to use it. Something about it bothers him. He skips to another channel and puts the remote down.

Cal rolls over and sits up, abrupt. Bowl and spoon clatter to the ground. He grabs the remote and returns to the infomercial. His eyes are glued to the screen. His hands grip his knees, then release. He rises, mechanical, and strides toward the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Cal stands in front of a mirror, holding a hair dryer in front of him. It's plugged in and turned on; it blows hair out of his face. Nothing to hide behind. He stares at himself, empty and expressionless. The hum and heat drown out everything else. The door is closed.

Cal raises the hair dryer and holds it against his head, as if it were a gun. He keeps it there. His teeth hook into his bottom lip, stifling a moan. His body quivers. Finally he lets go. He falls to the ground, holding the side of his head. He lies there. The hair dryer hums on.

A while later, the front door beeps again.

MOM
Hey, Cal! I'm home.

Keys jangle. Feet scuffle. Cal sits up.

MOM (CONT'D)
Cal? Where are you?

His mom opens the door and peeks through. When she sees Cal, she rushes in to kneel beside him.

MOM (CONT'D)
Cal! What happened?

CAL
I burned myself.

MOM
Where? Tell me, Cal!

CAL
My head.

She pats his head lightly. She can feel the heat radiating.

MOM
Where? Here?

CAL
Yeah.

She lifts his hair to look at his scalp.

MOM
Oh, thank God. I don't see
anything. Does it hurt?

CAL
It just stings a little now.

She holds her hand against the heat.

MOM
Honey, I'm so sorry. I knew I
shouldn't have left.

CAL
It's not you.

MOM
Don't say that. Come on—we need to
get you a cold shower.

She puts a hand under his arm, but he brushes her off. This time, he gets up himself.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Cal paces in front of his bed. The lights are off. His dresser and bookshelf are dark shapes against the walls.

He stops at his window and looks down at the beach. He sees a scared boy crumpled on the sand.

He turns to face his bathroom. He sees a scared boy holding a hair dryer to his head.

He picks a picture frame off his dresser. His mom and him. He see a scared boy standing before his mother, blue and lifeless.

INT. DARKNESS OF MIND -- NIGHT

The same horrible place. A slip of paper now sits folded on his mom's chest. The screams lodge themselves in Cal's tightening throat. He lets out a whimper.

Cal sinks to the ground, staring at the paper. Anywhere but the blood. He picks it up, delicate. His shaky hands tear the corner a little as he opens it. A poem is scribbled on it:

CAL (V.O.)

Life takes
And takes
And I fight
And fight

But the cold trenches of war
Are no place for a weary soul
With each bullet of resistance
I find my own blood
Staining another piece of me

This war
Cannot be—
Was not meant to be—
Won

The rest of the poem is obscured by blood.

Fury overtakes his fear. He rips apart the paper, bloody shreds sticking to his fingers. He raises his head and hands to the black sky.

CAL

THAT'S IT? That's all you've got
for me? You think I'm ok with all
this shit? You think I like hearing
there's no hope? You think I'm
gonna roll over and fucking take
it? Fuck you! I won't put up with
your dumbass game of life anymore.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Cal puts the picture back on the dresser, wiping a fleck of blood off the glass. He walks to the door, stops, takes a deep breath. His face hardens. He knows what to do. He turns the doorknob and pulls, the door creaking open.

INT. KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Cal strides into the kitchen. His mom watches him from the couch. He opens a drawer, examines the knives, and unsheathes the sharpest one. His mom hurries over, worry etched into her face. She stands between Cal and his bedroom.

MOM

What are you doing?

CAL

Get out of my way.

MOM

Cal. Put the knife down. NOW.

CAL

You have to let me do it.

MOM

Are you fucking kidding me? I'm not going to let you hurt yourself.

CAL

Every day I hurt myself, Mom. I'm doing this to stop the hurt. For both of us.

MOM

Honey, I know you're in pain. But you can't— I'm trying my best to help you. We all are. That's all we can do. You just have to keep trying, too.

CAL

NO. NO. NO. Not you, too!

He closes his eyes. His knife hand shakes.

CAL (CONT'D)

You know how hard I try. I try every damn day. But I fight and fight and looks where it gets me. It's never fucking enough.

MOM

I know—

CAL

I'm doomed to this. Whatever THIS is. Certainly not a life.

MOM
Cal, please—

CAL
I'm not giving up. I'm setting
myself free. And it's about time I
do that.

Cal moves to step around her. She blocks him. He pushes her out of the way, but she manages to grab onto the handle with both hands, the blade facing her. They wrestle for control, grunting. Tears flow silently down her face.

His presence flickers between reality and mind. Between the living and dead. Mind grows stronger. His grip slackens.

A hard tug jolts him back. He's falling forward, his mom backward. Four hands on the knife. She hits the wall. He doesn't. The knife stops him, his momentum driving it deep into her stomach. She moans. She closes her eyes.

He looks down. Only the hilt visible. He lets go, screaming. She falls to the ground. The hilt wobbles. More moans.

CAL (CONT'D)
Mom. Mom! Are you ok? You're ok?
You're ok, right!

MOM
Pull... Out...

CAL
Ok. Ok. Yes. Pull it out. Right. I
can do that.

He grimaces, closes his eyes, and yanks it out. Shrieks, groans, gurgles. Guttural and raw. Cal drops it behind him before opening his eyes. His hands are bloody. He fights the urge to heave.

CAL (CONT'D)
You're gonna be—

Puke spills out of him. He lets it slide down his neck and into his shirt. He doesn't care.

CAL (CONT'D)
You'll be alright, Mom. I'm right
here. I'm here. I got you.

CAL (CONT'D)
You're gonna make it, Mom. We'll
make it. Together. Like you said. I
promise.

Blood pours out of her mouth and stomach. Her eyes are already gone.

CAL (CONT'D)
Mom! Talk to me. You can't leave
me! Please don't leave me.

Cal pounds the floor. Harder and harder. Till his fists are shattered. He can't feel it. Pain disguises pain. He's crying now.

CAL (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry, Mom. I'm so sorry.
I... I don't—

She lifts her head, quieting Cal. She scans him, her eyes unfocused. She sees through him. Yet her words are clear.

MOM
It's ok.

She turns her head away from him and closes her eyes. For good.

Cal shakes her. Her head lolls. Nothing.

CAL
MOM! Wake up. Please, Mom. Wake up!
You can wake up now. Come on.

He shakes her again. She's stiff and cold.

CAL (CONT'D)
Mama...

He cries into her bosom, clinging to her. Trying to find something beyond the pain. But he's stuck in the puke and blood and tears.

DR. NICOLE (V.O.)
If you think it will happen, it
will.

Mind. Reality.

Reality. Mind.

They bleed together.

They bleed, together.

END.