

"THE POOL"

By Sam Hooper

SAM HOOPER
samueljhooper@me.com

EXT. HIGH STREET, MORNING.

PEDESTRIANS file past a seven year old boy standing in the street. This is JOE FISHER; a small scruffy haired boy with dark rings around his closed eyes. Blood begins to trickle out from Joe's nose and drip onto the pavement.

Joe's eyelids twitch rhythmically; warning signals telling us something is amiss in his brain. They flick open to reveal badly bloodshot eyes.

Joe wipes his nose with his sleeve; turns slowly. His eyes widen.

JOE'S POV - a strand of hair protrudes from a mole on a GIRL'S cheek. The hair on the cheek starts to grow and snakes towards Joe like a huge tentacle.

Joe GASPS in horror as the monstrous hair starts to wrap itself around his head.

LUCY (O.S.)

Shhhh! What's wrong with you?
You'll get us in trouble.

The owner of the mole, LUCY, a seven year old misfit with lank hair and glasses held together with tape, frowns confusedly at Joe.

Joe shakes his head violently, snapping him out of his hallucination. Lucy clicks her tongue irritably.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Why do you always get nosebleeds?

Joe shrugs his shoulders apathetically; it's not the first time he's heard that question.

LUCY (CONT'D)

You're weird.

JOE

I hate swimming.

Lucy grabs Joe's hand.

LUCY

(Whispering) Mr Pinder said we
have to hold hands the whole time.
You're not gonna scream are you?

Joe glances down at their hands. Suddenly they melt into each other like something out of a Dali painting.

Joe's eyes start to roll back. He shakes his head and smiles awkwardly at Lucy.

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LUCY (CONT'D)

Just be normal, OK?

MR PINDER (O.S.)

Right, off we go.

Lucy and Joe set off.

EXT. HIGH STREET, MORNING.

Weaving purposefully through PEDESTRIANS on a busy high street is a line of CHILDREN (7). Boys have been paired with girls, everyone is uniformed; everyone has a hundred yard stare. Joe and Lucy are at the end of the line.

Leading the pack is, MR PINDER (40'S), a tall thin man with a thick mustache and a dictatorial air about him. Mr Pinder is the teacher from hell; the obedient children behind him are his pupils.

EXT. GRAND VICTORIAN SWIMMING POOL. MORNING.

Mr Pinder stops in front of the building; the Kids file up behind him like well trained troops. Mr Pinder stares up; a sinister smile spreads across his face. He breathes in deeply.

MR PINDER

When you reach my age, having swam as many times as I have, that smell will be etched into your soul...(breathing in) there's nothing more alluring than the smell of chlorine.

Mr Pinder marches down the line of children, inspecting them one by one. Joe rubs traces of blood from his nose. Mr Pinder catches Joe and shakes his head in disgust.

MR PINDER (CONT'D)

Leave it! You can wait until we're safely inside to clean yourself up.

Mr Pinder strides towards the entrance, muttering to himself:

MR PINDER (CONT'D)

A clear reminder why chlorine is so important.

Joe swallows uncomfortably.

We hear the sound of a CAR HORN off screen.

Mr Pinder spins around.

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A car pulls up outside the building.

Joe watches the car; a glazed look appears on his face. He's disappearing into his own world again.

Suddenly, the car turns into a horse drawn carriage, like something you'd see in a fairy tale.

The driver, SUE (36), pops her head out of a gold rimmed window, smiling.

SUE

Sorry, we're late. I thought I'd drop, Lisa off this morning. She's back at school this week.

The back door of the carriage opens; out steps a pretty blonde girl in a princesses dress. This is, LISA (7).

Mr Pinder frowns irritably.

MR PINDER

Not the usual protocol, but at least you made it. Welcome back, Lisa.

Lisa smiles shyly; a cute girl with something special about her.

MR PINDER (CONT'D)

Join the line, time is precious.

Lisa glides towards the other kids.

Lucy shoves Joe in the arm.

LUCY

You're doing it again. Stop it!

Joe turns to Lucy; dribble runs down his chin. Lucy rolls her eyes. Joe wipes off the dribble; turns back and watches as Sue's 'real' car drives off.

JOE

(Mesmerized, he mutters to himself) She's back.

Mr Pinder marches towards the building; charges through a large wooden swing door. The pupils follow sheepishly behind.

Joe stops in the doorway, turns, and looks back longingly; like an innocent man entering the gates of a prison.

INT. GRAND FOYER, SWIMMING POOL. MORNING.

An ornate glass ceiling. White tiled walls; spit-shine clean.

Mr Pinder claps his hands. The boys and girls separate to form two small groups.

MR PINDER

You know the drill; change quickly, then pool side for lengths. Off you go!

The boys run one way, the girls the other.

INT. BOYS CHANGING ROOM, BASEMENT, MORNING.

It feels like a no-access area down here. It's a sinister place to put your trunks on.

Ancient red heating pipes line the low ceiling. They ACHE and MOAN as water rushes through them to keep the building alive.

Rows of wooden changing cubicles; greasy curtains attached. One cubicle is missing a curtain.

We hear CHEERS and SCREAMS from the Boys; free from Mr Pinder they've finally come alive.

The Boys stampede towards the cubicles, no one wants the one without the curtain. A stocky boy with blonde hair, TOBY (7), points.

TOBY

Last one in is a gaylord!

Joe gets elbowed by a tall BLACK BOY (7) who winds Joe momentarily.

Doubled over, Joe manages to shuffle into the last curtained cubicle which is next to the uncurtained one.

A fat boy with jet black hair, STEVEN (7), waddles towards the uncurtained cubicle. Being last is his style.

In unison, the rest of the boys stick their heads through their curtains, and shout:

ALL THE BOYS

Gaylord!

INT. JOE'S CUBICLE. MORNING.

Joe has his shirt off and is rummaging through his school bag. He pulls out a set of pajamas; sets them onto a changing bench. He shakes his bag out; a notebook and pencil drop onto the floor.

We hear the sound of PADDING FEET.

TOBY (O.S.)

Urgh! Pubes!

Joe leaps up onto his bench; peers over into Steven's cubicle.

INT. STEVEN'S CUBICLE. MORNING

Fat Steven is exposed to the world. He's doubled over naked, his hands covering his private parts.

STEPHEN

Get lost! It's not my fault!

Toby and two other stocky boys, BOY #1 & BOY #2 (7), each carrying pajama sets, crack up with laughter.

Stephen's face flushes pink. He looks up to find Joe's beady eyes staring at him over the top of the cubicle.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

You can get lost as well!

Joe jumps back down into his cubicle.

We hear loud MARCHING FOOTSTEPS.

Toby and Boy #1 and Boy #2 stop laughing. They whip around nervously.

TOBY

Pinder!

Toby and Boy #1 and Boy #2 fly off. Stephen steps into his swimming trunks as fast as his little legs can carry him.

MR PINDER (O.S.)

Hurry up! Don't forget your PJ's.

Mr Pinder strides, Lee Marvin style ("Point Blank"), towards the cubicles carrying an old shoe box. Stephen scurries out; rushes past Mr Pinder.

MR PINDER (CONT'D)

Well done!

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Mr Pinder stops outside Joe's cubicle. The curtain is still drawn.

MR PINDER (CONT'D)

Who isn't ready then? No time wasters. Out you come please.

JOE (O.S.)

I've forgotten my trunks, sir. I won't be able to swim today.

MR PINDER

Rubbish.

Mr Pinder reaches into the shoe box and produces a pair of pink Speedos; quite possibly the other half of a girls bikini. He shoves the bikini bottoms through the curtains.

MR PINDER (CONT'D)

For emergency cases. Put these on.

JOE (O.S.)

But, sir, these are -

MR PINDER

This isn't a fashion contest! Now hurry up or you'll be spending all week with me in the refectory.

JOE (O.S.)

Yes, sir.

Joe's curtain swishes back to reveal scrawny Joe in run-for-your-life pink Speedos. He gives himself the once over, a disbelieving look spreads across his face.

Mr Pinder beams, benevolently.

MR PINDER

Perfect. Right, up to pool side, thank you.

Joe jogs off carrying his pajamas. Mr Pinder follows.

INT. SWIMMING POOL. CONT.

Using the shallow end of the pool, the GIRLS (7) are swimming widths. Lisa, in a cute red swimming hat and goggles, is a confident swimmer.

We hear roars of LAUGHTER off screen from the Boys.

Lisa stops at one end; takes a breather. She pulls her goggles off; looks over to the deep end.

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Joe, with his hands covering his Speedos, embarrassingly creeps towards the other boys who wait eagerly at the head of the pool.

Mr Pinder blows a whistle.

The Boys freeze in silence.

MR PINDER

Right! Enough of that. First lesson of the day: don't forget your trunks.

Joe stumbles; falls on his knee. He lets out a muffled groan. Mr Pinder jogs over to him.

MR PINDER (CONT'D)

Watch out, Fisher.

Joe's knee is grazed. Mr Pinder hoists Joe up.

JOE

Arrh. I can't walk -

MR PINDER

Don't be ridiculous.

The Boys start to talk to each other off screen; their voices raising gradually. Mr Pinder spins around.

MR PINDER (CONT'D)

Quiet!

The Boy's eye each other with guilt across their little faces.

Mr Pinder turns back to Joe.

MR PINDER (CONT'D)

OK, sit down over there and join us in five minutes.

Joe nods meekly; hobbles over to a small bench at the side of the pool. He sits down; inspects his knee.

Mr Pinder jogs back to the Boys.

Joe catches Lisa staring at him from the shallow end. Lisa gives Joe a friendly wave. Joe smiles dreamily back.

Joe glances down at the bench; notices something inscribed into the wood: SINK OR SWIM. Joe frowns confusedly; traces the words with his finger.

Mr Pinder blows his WHISTLE.

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MR PINDER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Right. Everyone into their pajamas. You to, Joe; move it!

Joe sighs; stands up. He starts to put on his pajamas.

Mr Pinder lifts rubber bricks out from a plastic box and sets them neatly in a pile in front of him.

Joe and the other boys, now fully dressed in their pajamas, wait patiently at the head of the pool for instructions.

Joe looks pale. He sways uneasily on his feet. A droplet of blood drops from his nose and splashes onto the tiles by his toes.

Toby, at Joe's side, spots the blood and winces.

TOBY

Gross.

Joe rubs the blood away with his foot; pinches his nose to stop it bleeding.

MR PINDER (O.S.)

Right! Let's get this show on the road.

Mr Pinder tosses the rubber bricks into the air; they PLOP into the water at the deep end of the pool. He points at Joe and Toby.

MR PINDER (CONT'D)

You two are first. Retrieve the brick; give yourself twenty seconds down there, and come up as quick as you can.

Toby turns to Joe; frowns at him.

TOBY

Don't try and beat me.

Joe peers over the edge of pool at the bricks below. They look like tiny pebbles in a deep ocean. He turns to Toby, dishearteningly.

JOE

I won't.

Mr Pinder blows hard on his whistle.

In a split second, Toby dives into the pool. Joe watches as Toby swims towards the bricks. Joe's eyes start to roll back. Mr Pinder blows his whistle again.

MR PINDER

Go on, Joe. Get in!

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Joe closes his eyes, puts one foot in front of the other and half falls half jumps into the pool. SPLASH!

The screen goes BLACK.

We hear the distorted sound of WHISPERING, like many people talking over each other at once, followed by the sound of WHALES and finally the chimes of a CHURCH BELL.

The next scene takes place under the water but is actually deep inside Joe's mind. Dialogue is subtitled on the screen.

INT. UNDER THE WATER, POOL. DAY

Joe is sinking, spiralling down, deeper and deeper until he reaches the bottom of the pool where he lightly bounces to a stop. His eyes are bright and clear; he looks healthier and more alert. He looks up.

High above Joe's head, we can make out Toby's little flapping legs at the surface of the pool. The perspective is all wrong; it's as if Toby is much further away than he really is.

Joe hiccups; an air bubble seeps out from his mouth with a loud POP. It floats up slowly to the surface. We hear the muffled sound of people GROANING. Joe turns.

A line of translucent ghost-like MEN and WOMEN in their eighties shuffle along. They turn to Joe in unison and shake their heads no, morbidly. Joe waves at them with an uncomfortable smile. One by one the Men and Women swim into a vent on a wall.

We hear a loud SPLASH. Joe looks up to find Lisa, dressed in her princesses outfit, floating down towards him, smiling sweetly.

Joe outstretches his hand; Lisa takes it into hers. Joe gently pulls Lisa towards him and they kiss each other lightly on the lips.

JOE

I knew you'd come.

Lisa smiles.

LISA

We have a long way to go.

Joe nods.

JOE

Where are we going?

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LISA

It's not where that matters, Joe.
It's when.

Like two bouncing astronauts on the surface of the moon, Lisa and Joe start on their way across the bottom of the pool.

Joe stares down at his hand, which is held tightly in Lisa's. In a flash their hands have grown in size and age. Joe's eyes widen nervously. He looks up at Lisa and realizes with every step they're beginning to age.

Growing in size, Joe and Lisa change into the adult versions of themselves; Joe a handsome man in his thirties; Lisa an attractive blonde of the same age.

JOE

Why's this happening?

LISA

Because you want it to, Joe.

Joe and Lisa sprout wedding clothes - Joe a black suit, Lisa a white wedding gown. We hear church BELLS chime, as Joe and Lisa embrace. Confetti sprinkles down over their heads.

Joe lets out another air bubble which POPS in Lisa's face. Lisa gives Joe a concerned look; Joe shrugs his shoulders.

JOE

Nobody knows.

We hear another loud SPLASH.

Joe looks up. Mr Pinder is slowly floating down. He has a crazed look on his face and is inhaling deeply from a bottle of chlorine. He laughs wildly as he gets high from the chlorine fumes.

Lisa turns Joe's head towards her.

LISA

Pay attention.

Joe, dumbstruck, touches Lisa's face affectionately.

LISA (CONT'D)

You're not supposed to do that.
Time to move on.

Joe's eyes start to roll back. Lisa pinches Joe's nose.

LISA (CONT'D)

Not yet.

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A briefcase appears in Lisa's hand. She hands it to Joe.

A desk appears with a computer on top.

Joe is swept off his feet and plunked down onto a chair behind the desk.

To Joe's surprise, his fingers start typing away at the keyboard; it's as if some other force is at play. Joe has become the puppet in a show of his life.

Joe's chair zooms back; the desk is whisked away. Lisa steps forward; takes Joe's hand.

LISA (CONT'D)

Being grown ups is fun, huh?

Joe nods, half smiling at Lisa. Lisa looks down; her stomach suddenly grows to pregnant proportions. She takes Joe's hand and places it on her belly.

JOE

I like the name, Milly.

Suddenly a small BABY appears in Lisa's arms.

LISA

That's nice, because that's her name.

Lisa hands Joe the Baby. Joe stares at the Baby; tears well up in his eyes.

Lisa taps Joe on the shoulder. Joe looks up. Lisa has turned into an old woman. Joe steps back, shocked. Lisa takes the baby from Joe and places it into a cot.

Joe looks down to find his hands are old and wrinkled. He feels his face; now old and worn.

We hear the sound of congratulatory CHEERS.

Joe and Lisa turn; a FAMILY are huddled together - a MAN and his WIFE with TWO SMALL SONS and a teenage DAUGHTER. Everyone is wearing paper crown hats from party crackers. The Man holds up a glass of champagne.

MAN

Happy fortieth anniversary guys!

Joe and Lisa look at each other, smile and embrace romantically.

Suddenly, we hear a crack of THUNDER. The Family look up apprehensively. The light fades, as if a giant cloud was passing over the pool.

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Joe looks down at his hands which are cupped together collecting a steady stream of blood from his nose. He turns to Lisa with a frightened look on his face.

Lisa shakes her head.

LISA

Next time.

Joe frowns confessedly.

LISA (CONT'D)

We'll make it, next time.

JOE

I don't want to go.

LISA

Sorry, Joe.

We hear a WHOOSHING sound. Lisa steps to one side as a rubber brick hurtles past her and ricochets off the floor. She turns to Joe, fearfully. Joe crouches down into a ball on the floor as rubber bricks narrowly miss him.

Joe peeks through his fingers and watches as Lisa regresses to a a little girl. She stands staring at Joe strangely as if nothing had happened.

JOE

Why are you showing me this?

LISA

It's not me, Joe. It's you.
Everything that happens, happens
because you want it to.

Joe lets out another air bubble, and changes back into a young boy.

JOE

I want to be a man again!

Joe stands up. Lisa wraps her arms around Joe's neck, and squeezes him tightly.

LISA

Thanks for a lovely time. I'll
never forget you.

Lisa's legs start to lift from the floor and slowly rise up to the surface. Joe grips onto Lisa's hand but it gradually slips away from him.

JOE

Don't go!

Lisa nods.

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JOE (CONT'D)

But what about our life?

LISA

We've lived it already.

Lisa waves goodbye to Joe as she slowly drifts up to the surface.

Joe waves back, tears have formed in his eyes. A steady stream of air bubbles flow from his mouth and the dark rings around his eyes have reappeared.

We hear Mr Pinder's WHISTLE blow. Joe looks down to find a rubber brick at his feet. He picks up the brick and jumps in the air, only to fall flat on his face.

Joe's eyes roll back; he sways uneasily on his feet. He lays down on the floor and yawns. He closes his eyes.

In a sleeping position, Joe starts to float up. As he gets closer to the surface the light starts to fade until eventually we're in the dark.

We hear the muffled sound of girls SCREAMING, gradually getting louder and louder.

INT. POOL SIDE. CONT.

The Girls, screaming with fear, scramble out of the pool and shoot off down towards the changing rooms.

Mr Pinder's whistle drops from his mouth, and his eyes widen with fear. In a flash he charges towards the pool and dives in.

Lisa is the only girl left bobbing in the pool, staring eerily at something.

We start to crane up, away from the pool towards the ceiling. As we do so we see the lifeless body of little Joe, surrounded by blood, floating in the deep end.

Silence.

We're still drifting higher and higher. Mr Pinder can just be made out carving his way through the water towards Joe.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END

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