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FILMS

# I DREAM OF SHARKS

Sometimes what keeps us alive are our dreams



Meet Julien Meurine.

I Dream of Sharks  
is his story.


An intimate and  
mesmerising portrait of a  
tetraplegic man.

A story of his dream to  
get back to the place  
he has always felt  
most alive:

the ocean.

*The ocean took everything from me.  
It left my body a shipwreck  
but I am still drawn to it*





Julien was just fourteen when he had his accident at the beach.

One month after his first (and only) able-bodied dive.

Playing in the surf, he climbed onto his uncle's shoulders and dived into the sea just as the wave drew back.

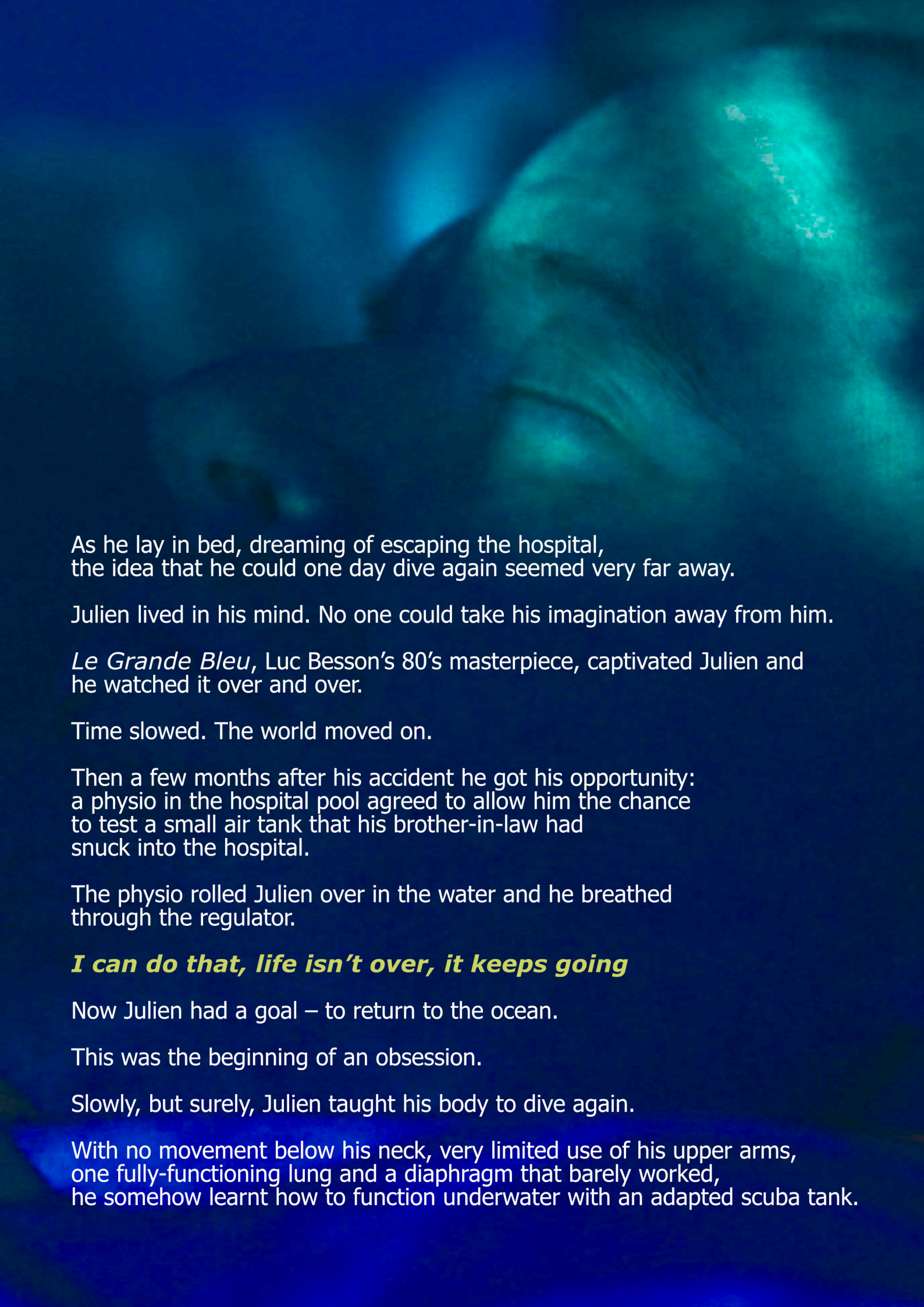
His head hit the wet sand.

The impact broke two cervical vertebrae in his neck and ruptured his spinal column.

Cut off from his old life, his friends, his school, his family, Julien spent hours on his own, lost in his thoughts - but one thing kept him going -

dreaming of the ocean.

***I'm in a washing machine  
my limbs no longer respond,  
I can't get out of the water on my own.  
...I know it is bad***



As he lay in bed, dreaming of escaping the hospital, the idea that he could one day dive again seemed very far away.

Julien lived in his mind. No one could take his imagination away from him.

*Le Grande Bleu*, Luc Besson's 80's masterpiece, captivated Julien and he watched it over and over.

Time slowed. The world moved on.

Then a few months after his accident he got his opportunity: a physio in the hospital pool agreed to allow him the chance to test a small air tank that his brother-in-law had snuck into the hospital.

The physio rolled Julien over in the water and he breathed through the regulator.

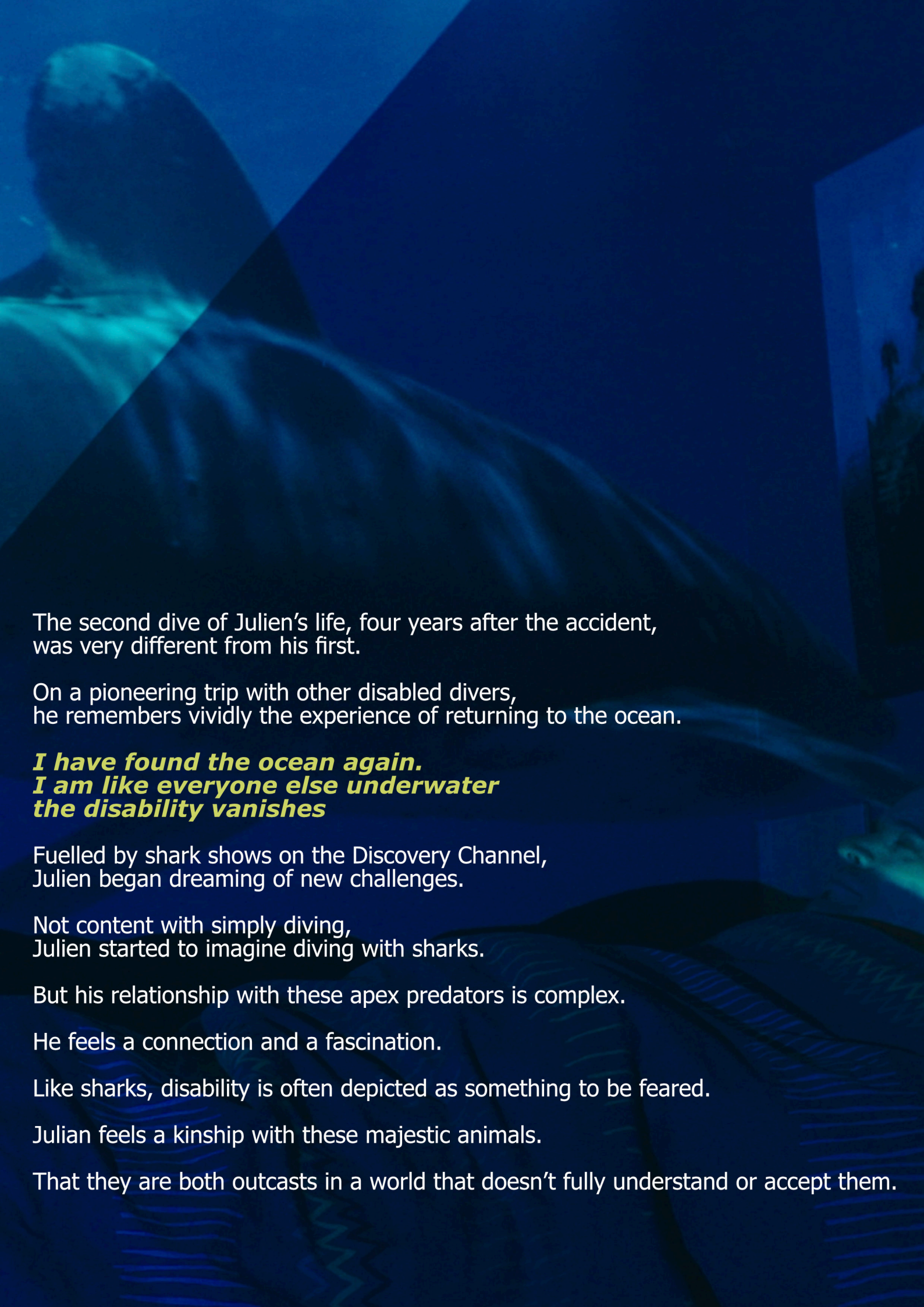
***I can do that, life isn't over, it keeps going***

Now Julien had a goal – to return to the ocean.

This was the beginning of an obsession.

Slowly, but surely, Julien taught his body to dive again.

With no movement below his neck, very limited use of his upper arms, one fully-functioning lung and a diaphragm that barely worked, he somehow learnt how to function underwater with an adapted scuba tank.



The second dive of Julien's life, four years after the accident, was very different from his first.

On a pioneering trip with other disabled divers, he remembers vividly the experience of returning to the ocean.

***I have found the ocean again.  
I am like everyone else underwater  
the disability vanishes***

Fuelled by shark shows on the Discovery Channel, Julien began dreaming of new challenges.

Not content with simply diving, Julien started to imagine diving with sharks.

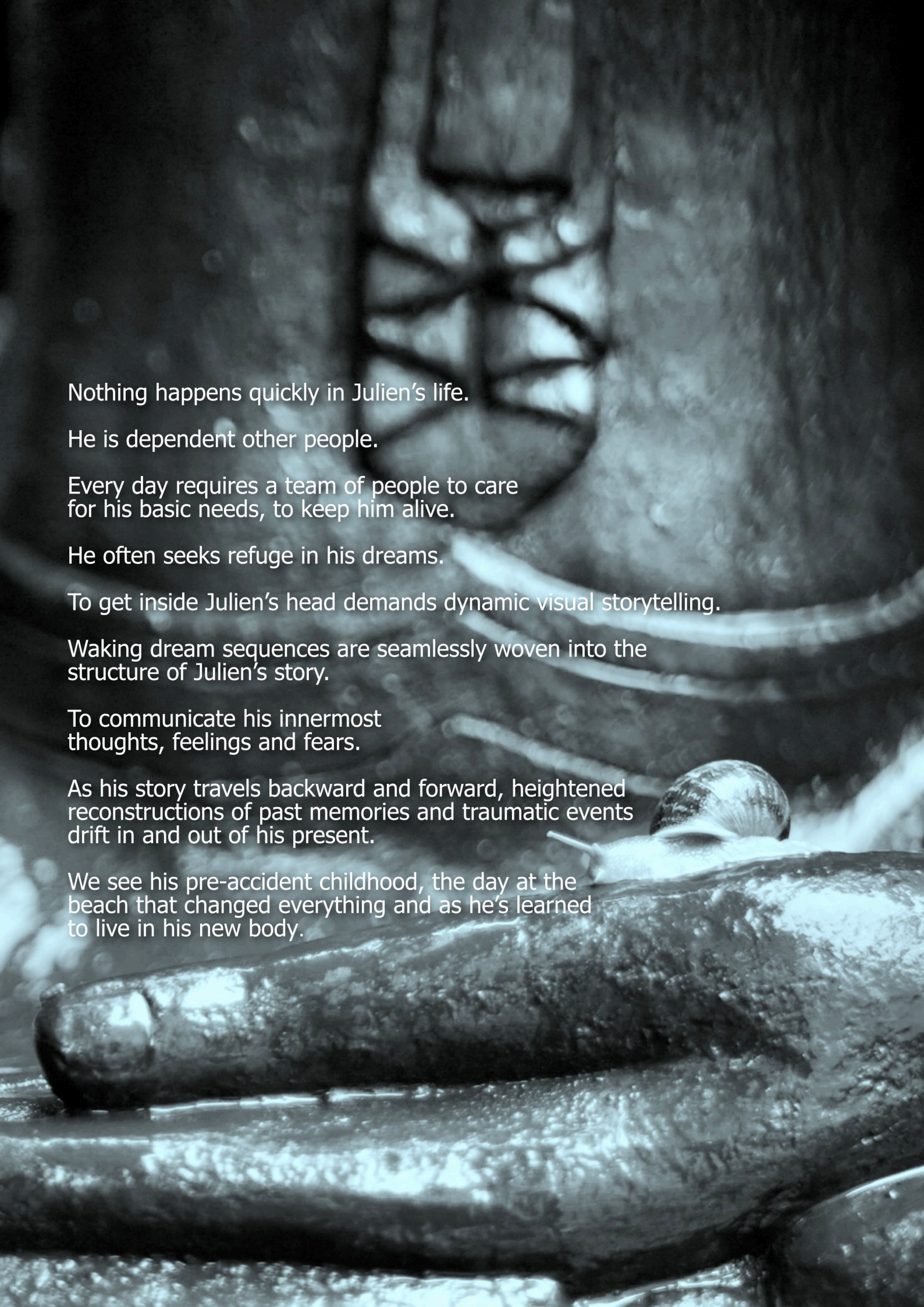
But his relationship with these apex predators is complex.

He feels a connection and a fascination.

Like sharks, disability is often depicted as something to be feared.

Julian feels a kinship with these majestic animals.

That they are both outcasts in a world that doesn't fully understand or accept them.

A black and white close-up photograph of a snail's eye and shell, with a human hand visible in the background. The snail is positioned in the lower right foreground, resting on a dark, textured surface. Its eye is extended, and its shell is partially visible. In the background, a human hand is visible, with fingers slightly curled, suggesting a sense of scale and connection. The overall mood is contemplative and intimate.

Nothing happens quickly in Julien's life.

He is dependent on other people.

Every day requires a team of people to care for his basic needs, to keep him alive.

He often seeks refuge in his dreams.

To get inside Julien's head demands dynamic visual storytelling.

Waking dream sequences are seamlessly woven into the structure of Julien's story.

To communicate his innermost thoughts, feelings and fears.

As his story travels backward and forward, heightened reconstructions of past memories and traumatic events drift in and out of his present.

We see his pre-accident childhood, the day at the beach that changed everything and as he's learned to live in his new body.



Timelines collide.

Memories of his past meet his present.

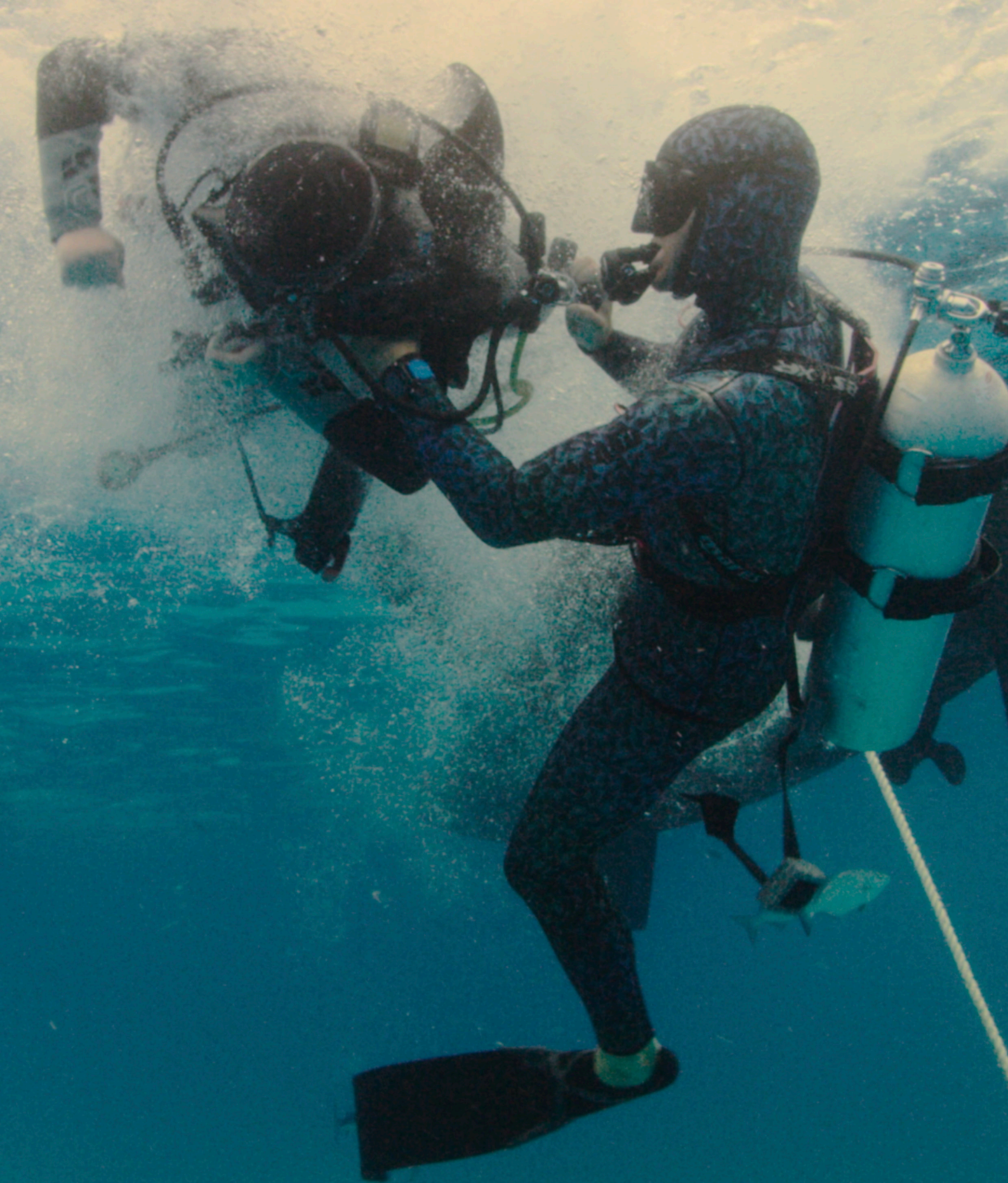
Swimming with sharks becomes reality.

We witness this dreamworld come to life.

Walls fall away. Waves wash around his wheelchair, sitting quietly at home, the ocean laps at his bedroom walls, sharks swim on his ceiling, they pass by his window through rainy, Paris streets.

The floor gives way and he is falling through water. His hospital room fills – and the young, tetraplegic Julien swims up, away from his bed.

These cinematic and lyrical scenes end abruptly as we crash back into the daily routine of his life: being hoisted out of his bed, or being dressed, or washed, the orderlies and the physios that are part of the team that keep Julien alive every single day.



***Either you fight, and do things, or you don't  
and you stay in your bed, but if you do I  
believe you will not last long that way.***

**Stephen Shearman** is a talented Director and Producer based in Bristol, England, where he lives with his wife and daughter. Over the past two decades, Stephen has helmed some of the world's most popular and watched adventure and expedition shows. His work has taken him to six of the seven continents, filming in some of the most remote and challenging environments on Earth.

Stephen's greatest passion lies in listening to people's stories and capturing it on camera, helping us all gain a deeper understanding of the world around us.

In 2024/5 he released *Reef Builders* a 75' feature now streaming on Amazon Prime which premiered in the US at SXSW Film Festival and in the UK in the prestigious Natural History Museum, It is a film about the plight of coastal living with reef loss and how they are trying to restore their own coral reefs.

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/1079318479>

**Matt Fletcher** is an award-winning Producer and Director with global experience of storytelling and delivering high-end films to platforms such as major broadcasters, global streamers, and theatrical. Driven by intellectual curiosity, he's produced and directed across genres and thrives building strong relationships with contributors and shaping character-driven narratives.

In 2024 he produced the feature documentary, *Searching for Satyrus*, a 90' feature directed by acclaimed photographer Rena Effendi who sets out on a journey to find a rare and endangered butterfly that lives in the conflict zone and high mountains between Azerbaijan and Armenia, named after her late father.

*Searching for Satyrus* has its US premiere next month at the Austin Film Festival.

<https://vimeo.com/1099415501>

**Ossian Bacon** is a globally recognised DOP who has worked in high-end commercials and television for 20 years, during which time he's built a strong creative partnership with director Stephen Shearman.

He has huge experience in factual and documentary filmmaking, working for the biggest streamers and networks, capturing human drama and people's lived experience in some of the world's most extreme environments. He is equally at home shooting on-the-shoulder obs-doc or lighting master interviews. As well Drama reconstruction, complex technical setups, drone filming, rigged cameras and gimbal work.

**Atlantic Edge Films** is run by acclaimed underwater camera operator Brocq Maxey and Morne Hardenberg with Mark Van Coller. Brocq first dived with Julien in 2022 and he considers meeting Julien and diving with him to be one of the privileges of his life. They have been firm friends ever since and regularly plot together Julien's next dive.

A highlight of Morne's career was winning the 2008 Award of Excellence by the Guild of Television Cameramen for his breathtaking Great white sequences in the film *Sharkmen*. Specialising in shark diving, underwater filming and marine logistics, their unparalleled footage of the sardine run off the coast of South Africa is sought after by blue-chip natural history producers.



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