

Scene Analysis: MOONLIGHT

Directed by Barry Jenkins (2016)

AHS Film & Video Production

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- Before the swimming scene in "Moonlight," we see Little's difficult home life and his interactions with his mother, Paula, who is struggling with addiction.
 - Little is bullied at school and called names.
 - Little is withdrawn and quiet, seeking refuge from the chaos and neglect he experiences.
 - He is found hiding in an abandoned apartment by Juan, a local drug dealer, who takes him in and provides him with food and shelter.
 - Juan notices Little's fear and vulnerability and offers him a safe space and a sense of belonging.
 - The swimming scene directly follows Juan taking Little to his home, providing a meal and a place to sleep for Little.

Atmosphere

The atmosphere is one of trust, patience, and growing confidence. There's a sense of safety and comfort as Juan gently guides Little through his fear. The scene is both nurturing and empowering, highlighting the importance of mentorship and positive role models.

Action as Meaning

This scene is crucial in "Moonlight" as it establishes Juan as a father figure and provides Little with a safe and nurturing environment where he can begin to heal and grow. It's a moment of tenderness and hope that contrasts with the violence and neglect he experiences elsewhere in his life.

- **The Ocean:** The clear, blue water is a prominent feature, representing both a physical and emotional space for Little. It's a place of cleansing and rebirth.
- **Little:** He's small and vulnerable, initially hesitant and fearful of the water. His body language conveys his discomfort and lack of confidence.
- **Juan:** He's a strong and reassuring presence, acting as a guide and protector for Little. His movements are confident and gentle, conveying a sense of care and patience.
- **The Sunlight:** The bright sunlight emphasizes the warmth and safety of the environment, contrasting with the darkness of Little's home life. It creates a sense of hope and possibility.
- **Minimalist Composition:** The scene is often shot with a simple and uncluttered composition, focusing on the interaction between Little and Juan and the beauty of the natural setting.



“Moonlight playwright Tarell Alvin McCraney and I are this kid. We are Chiron. And you don't think that kid grows up to be nominated for eight Academy Awards. It's not a dream he's allowed to have. I still feel that way. I didn't think this was possible. But now I look at other people looking at me and if I didn't think it was possible, how are they going to? But now it's happened. So what I think of possibility, let's take it off the table. The thing has happened.”

— Barry Jenkins in 2017