

Castles

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Sunny, cloudless sky. Waves roll in, CRASH, roll out. A sea of multi-colored umbrellas. People on the sand. In the water. People everywhere.

Close to the shoreline a boy --

CHANCE (4), sits upright. Wears swim trunks and shirt, legs spread. Concentration on his innocent face. He studiously builds a

SAND CASTLE

He packs the wet sand into plastic molds. Sets them down. Repeats.

A stream of water approaches. It drains into a moat he has built. The castle's safe.

The last mold goes in. He admires his work. Takes a homemade FLAG on a toothpick. Puts it atop the last mold.

Chance turns in the direction of the water. He searches, then finds --

RAY (38), swimsuit, bare-chested and fit. Black hair slicked back. Makes eye contact with his son. He waves to the boy.

RAY

Hey. You coming in, or what?

Chance stands there, hands on hips. He doesn't want to leave the castle all alone. One last look. Can't resist any longer. He RUNS to his father. JUMPS a small wave. GIGGLES happily.

Ray SWOOPS him up. Spins around. Sets him down.

RAY

This is the ocean, buddy.

Chance spies a large approaching wave.

CHANCE

Hold me, daddy.

Ray puts his arms under the boy. Lifts him up just in time. The water furiously RUSHES past, then recedes.

CHANCE

That was a big one, daddy! Bigger than anything I've ever seen.

RAY

Yeah. That was a big one.

Several minutes pass. Many waves are JUMPED.

Chance goes to check on his

CASTLE

All that's left is a series of smooth bumps. The flag lays on top. The moat is filled with water.

CHANCE

(sighs, annoyed)

Awww.

The boy goes back to work.

CASTLE - LATER

This castle is bigger and better. In between the castle and the moat is a hand-shaped wall. Two lines of defense.

Chance takes the flag. Places it on top. Admires his latest work. He SWEATS. Leaving is easier this time. He RUNS back into the water. SPLASHES playfully with his father.

Way out in the water is a small --

FISHING BOAT

Two fisherman stand in the modest boat. An OLD MAN, line in the water, patiently waits for a bite. A YOUNG MAN, baseball cap, casually baits his hook. Drops his line.

They SIGH in unison.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Chance and his father continue to play in the water.

CHANCE

Daddy, wanna see my sand castle?

RAY

Sure, bud.

Chance RUNS ahead only to find his castle in RUINS. But not from the water. It looks to have been trampled by careless feet.

Chance hangs his head. Frustrated.

CHANCE

Aww. Daddy. My castle is gone.

Ray comes up behind him. Puts a hand on the boy's wet hair.

RAY

I'm sorry, pal.

(beat)

Wanna build another one? We'll do it together?

CHANCE

Okay.

Ray picks up a pail. Chance grabs a shovel. They get down to work. From behind them a whistle blows. A --

LIFEGUARD

motions to an unseen swimmer with his arms. The swimmer's out too far.

CHANCE AND RAY

fill the castle molds. Place them down. With Ray's help, the castle is built up once more.

CHANCE

This is gonna be the best castle ever, daddy.

RAY

I know. We're doing a good job. We took the smoldering ruins of a once great civilization and built it right back up again.

CHANCE

(doesn't look up)

Just like life.

Ray stops in mid-shovel. Perplexed and surprised. He smiles in spite of himself.

RAY

What did you mean when you said that?  
"Just like life."

Chance ignores his father. He makes a sand wall with his hands.

RAY

Huh? Chancey? What did you mean by that?

Chance finishes the wall. He takes the homemade flag and places it atop the castle.

CHANCE

Well...Daddy?

RAY

Yes..?

CHANCE

Is Christmas far away?

RAY

A few months. Why?

CHANCE

I need a space station, daddy. I need  
to ask Santa for a space station.

Ray grins so wide it hurts his face.

RAY

Well, I'm sure if you're a really good  
boy Santa will bring you a space  
station.

A big wave CRASHES. RUSHING water flows over the sand, then  
falls back.

A gull cries.

FADE OUT.