

7 Beats Per Minute – FINAL SYNOPSIS

Confirmed Nov. 24, 2023

7 Beats Per Minute Long synopsis (326 words)

In the world of competitive freediving, Jessea Lu (Lu Wenjie) is a legendary figure. The Chinese freediving champion came late to the sport, vaulting into the top tier of talent with remarkable ability and a compulsive drive to challenge her limitations. But in the ocean, you cannot hide from yourself.

In a deep dive, when consciousness shrinks to a singular point, any mistake can prove disastrous. During a world-record attempt in 2018, Jessea blacked out and was lifeless for four minutes.

Award-winning director Yuqi Kang's feature documentary **7 Beats Per Minute** parallels Jessea's physical and mental journey back from the depths, with intimate cinéma vérité camerawork, astonishing underwater imagery and raw personal interviews.

Set against the world of freediving, the film places the audience, and the filmmaker herself, in the immediacy of the experience. The word "otherworldly" doesn't quite do justice to the underwater environments that Jessea encounters, whether swimming beneath the Antarctic ice or in the azure waters of the Bahamas. But in spite of its elemental beauty, the sea is not a forgiving place.

As a scientist, Jessea takes an analytical approach to her chosen sport, investing in rigorous training, including breath control and meditation, but the physical challenges are just the beginning. In the darkness of the deepest subconscious, ancient fears, like the leviathan of old, wait. When barometric pressure compresses the lungs and squeezes the vital organs, the mammalian diving reflex shifts blood to the core of the body; the heart slows and the pulse drops. It is the power of the mind that then proves critical. In the descent of a lifetime, the ocean is a mirror, reflecting back everything inside of you. In order to go deep, you have to let go.

As the boundaries between the filmmaker and her subject grow more fluid, the two return to the site of Jessea's near-death experience to face the traumas of her past and find a way back to light, air and, ultimately, connection.

7 Beats Per Minute short synopsis (210 words)

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Two-Liner (51 Words)

During a world-record attempt, freediving champion Jessea Lu blacked out and was lifeless for four minutes. Director Yuqi Kang's documentary captures the descent of a lifetime, when Jessea returns to the site of her near-death experience to face the traumas of her past and find a way back to connection.

One-liner (38 words)

Director Yuqi Kang's documentary captures the descent of a lifetime, when freediving champion Jessea Lu returns to the site of her near-death experience to face the traumas of her past and find a way back to connection.

Director's Statement

The first time I learned about Chinese diver Jessea Lu, I was in Thailand learning how to freedive. The other freedivers told me about a legendary female diver who was extremely gifted. After only a few short years into her competitive diving career, Jessea was already consistently ranking in the top 10 in international competitions, despite being a successful full-time medical consultant who was training only part-time. As she descended 300 feet into the deep sea, how was she able to override her mind's most primal survival instincts? Who was the person behind the diving mask?

Jessea proved to be unlike all the other world-class freedivers today.

In the depths of the ocean, nothing exists besides the mere consciousness of oneself. At one point, it's about letting go of that self-ego to be able to complete such an extreme dive. Like many trauma survivors, having extreme control over oneself and one's emotions allowed Jessea to survive her early life events. Jessea had to learn to let go of the survival instinct that she knows the best. Ever since her near-death accident, Jessea realized she had missed a large part of life that is shared.

But to share means to become vulnerable. We did not know it at the time, but the years we spent together filming ***7 Beats Per Minute***, unexpectedly witnessing each other grow and experiencing high-pressure diving competitions, brought Jessea and me to the rawest form of ourselves. This process was life-changing, and for the first time, I also realized that for a large part of my life, I'd also missed out on connecting with people deeply. And therefore, missed out on the real experience of life as it happened.

By literally diving deep, Jessea is looking at who she truly is, and by following Jessea, I was also able to discover this about myself.