

The Dive

The chlorine burned fear into my eyes as I watched my arms floating in the water. I looked down at my legs; they wouldn't move, either. My squatting body was immersed in four feet of water, but I couldn't get my head up for air.

My God! My God! Dear Jesus! Help me get up! Don't let me drown! Please! Please, God! Don't let me die! I prayed. I pleaded. I felt the pressure in my lungs; my chest was tightening in a vise of water. The chlorine burned deeper as my eyes searched the water for someone to help me. Cries and pleas, rebellion against death, craving for air violently flamed inside my skull, my lungs, my soul. ***Please, God! I'm only thirteen! Air! I need air!***

A trim young girl in a green tanksuit, her blond hair buoyant in the waves and splashings, swam closer. ***Christy! Dear God, it's Christy!*** I had to get her attention. I had to let her know that I was hurt. I screamed with a force I had never used before, "Help!" The sound echoed under the water and returned to me; bubbles bounced to the surface; water rushed down my throat. Christy nodded, grinning broadly, and blurted out a yell in mimicry. Panic peaked. ***O God, God,*** my heart whispered with more resignation than force. ***I gave You my life. Don't let me die. Let me serve You.***

Christy nudged my floating arm. I saw her do it, but felt nothing; it was as if it were not a part of my body. I tightened my eyes in agony as I saw her spring above the water. A rolling fog was beginning to creep over my consciousness.

Then gulps of air surged into my lungs. Water splattered from my mouth; I coughed and gasped. Christy was grasping my shoulders; my wet hair hung in my face.

"Christy!" I heard my hoarse voice. "Help me or I'll drown. Something's wrong. I can't move." Fear flamed in my eyes. I saw her tanned face turn white and heard a short, nervous laugh.

"You're kidding, aren't you, Jama?" Her blue eyes pleaded for a yes.

"No, Christy, I'm not. I'm hurt. I can't move my legs. Help me." I blinked away streams of chlorine water that dripped from my hair.