My family goes camping every year around Eastern Washington. The joy and happiness I experience during these trips make me look forward to them all throughout the year, especially in the dreary, cold winter months in Seattle. This particular summer, my family and our family friends were camping at Banks Lake, about two hours away from Spokane, Washington. One day out of the camping trip, we venture to these rocks that we can rock jump from. On this sunny day, we had decided to do just that.

After seeking out an isolated beachy section of the shore, we claimed our territory, leaving most of our belongings there while we traveled to the rocks. Looking up at the vast, cloudless, blue sky, I remember the heat radiated off my body, which was comparable to the excitement I exhibited on our boat ride. I was sitting next to my second oldest brother, Kai, on the front bow of the boat, our usual boat-riding spot. I could see the rocks beginning to take shape out of the horizon as we ventured nearer. My skin felt tingly from the anticipation.

Finally, we arrived at the rocks. Almost synchronously, everybody except my dad, who was driving the boat, jumped out and swam towards the rocks. The path up the rocks was narrow, forcing us to dance around the jagged boulders. I remember there was one tree along the path that filled the air with the smell of maple. As I made it to the top of the rocks, I looked up at the sky and saw dark clouds in the distance, but I didn’t let that affect me at all.

We all made it to the top of the rocks, where we would eventually jump from. There was almost a collective sigh of relief from all of us, but, as I looked down towards the water, a pit started to grow in the depths of my stomach. We made a trip to these rocks almost every

summer, but the first jump off is always the scariest, and I could feel the nerves increasing with every breath. My oldest brother jumped off first, then my other brother, then my mom, then our family friends, and finally it was my turn. I looked down at the water and caught a glimpse of Kai giving me a weary smile, providing me all the reassurance I needed. As everybody was cheering me on, I leaped off ledge and plugged my nose. Rising to the top of the water, the excitement and happiness replaced all the nerves, and I remembered why I enjoyed it so much.

We continued to indulge ourselves, jumping off the rocks a few more times. My mom and oldest brother were done after only a few jumps. However, one of our family friends, Kai, and I weren’t even close. Each time I would rise to the surface of the water after each exhilarating jump, those dark clouds that I hadn’t paid much mind to earlier were beginning to move closer and closer. By my fifth or sixth jump, the dark clouds were dominating the sky, the warmth from the sun now evaporated, raindrops creating rings in the water. Us three had decided that we were only going to jump a few more times and then head back to the boat, little did we know that was too long.

What started as light raindrops soon turned into a downpour of hail, wind gusts so strong I could barely hear anything, even my own thoughts. Thunder and lightning crackled across the horizon, lighting up the gloomy clouds. The waves were crashing against the rocks so hard that I realized that there was no way we would be able to swim to the boat. My friend, brother, and I were stranded at the top of the rock, all huddled under the maple-smelling tree, something that once gave me comfort now providing me shelter from the pelting hail. We all saw the boat floating away from us, all worried what was happening. Huddled with my brother, I felt the pitter patter of the rain brush against my face and heard the crackle of the lightning move closer to where we stood. The thumping of my heart started to increase, deepening with every inhale. I

could feel the ricochet of the thunder rattle the inside of my body. We didn’t know if the boat wasn’t starting or if they were going to leave us there huddled on the rock.

I looked up at my brother, someone who I had looked up to greatly and was holding me in his arms, teardrops starting to roll down my fear-stricken face. He reassured me everything was going to be okay, and I knew that because he was there, I was going to be okay. I looked over at our boat again, which was now almost crashing into the cliffs on the other side of the lake. My worry for myself quickly turned into worry for everybody on the boat. Then, it started to move and was heading straight for us. My brother told us that once they were close enough, we were going to have to jump and swim to the boat. I began to lose feelings in my legs, not sure if it were from the cold or from anxiousness. We walked over to the edge of the rocks, readying ourselves to jump into the towering waves. My stomach began to churn, the lump in my stomach deepening with every crash of the wave. My breathing became more and more constricted, as if my lungs were allergic to air.

As soon as the boat was close enough, we all jumped in. The water felt like a cold slice on my body, and I began swimming as fast as I could, trying as hard as I could to not get swept away by the pressure of the waves. I remember telling myself to just swim and swim as quickly as you can. As I reached our boat, everybody onboard grabbed me by my life vest, pulling me out of the water, and wrapped me in a towel. I could feel my heart thumping loudly, my body still riddled with adrenaline.

With everybody on board, we began making our way back to the beach that we had all our stuff on, the waves nearly breaching the top of the boat. Even though the situation was still precarious, I felt safe in the confines of the boat, wrapped in my mother’s arms. I looked around at everybody and realized how lucky I was that everyone was safe.