

“Hurry!” An urgent whisper huffed against my ear, “I’m t-trying, you’re heavier than I thought you know?” A vehement groan filled the overcast night time air, punctuated with the occasional chirp of crickets and stifled laughter.

“You shouldn’t make fun of a girl’s weight”

She pouted, feigning dismay as I continued to chuckle.

“Now hurry and push me up!”

Obliging, I boosted her with all my might until I heard the jangling of metal. I could see her silhouette scramble across the fence, up and over until she had reached the other side.

“Okay, now help me up”

She disappeared for moment before returning with a blue pool noodle which looked like it had seen better days. Chunks of it were missing in places and it was still damp from being used earlier in the day. “Gross” I remarked and it was her turn to laugh at my misfortune. “Just grab on, it’ll only be a second” draping it over the gate of the fence I grabbed on begrudgingly. My sandals hit the cement with a loud smack as I landed on the other side.

“Why wasn’t I the first to go over?”

“Because I’m taller than you”

“Isn’t that why *you* should have boosted *me*?”

“ . . . ”

I waited for a response that never came, instead she turned her back to me and began to survey the pool. This sort of behavior was not unusual coming from her, she was always telling me random facts like: dead bodies float, every person has a unique tongue print and that the Gluteus Maximus is the largest muscle in the body. I never checked if any of them were true. Though, she could annoy me at times with her sporadic and demanding nature, I knew that she meant well, for the most part.

The water was sable under the darkness of night, inky swells lapped against the tile walls. She stripped off her tank top and shorts, leaving them in a pile near the edge revealing the black two piece she had worn beneath. As she lowered herself into the pool I moved to change as well. The waves licked my calves as I sat on the edge of the pool, watching her dive under the surface, emerging in the middle of the pool with a shiver.

“C’mon Katie, the water’s great!”

She said in what I believed was an excitable fashion, it was dark, I couldn’t see the look on her face, only the waving of her arms. When I didn’t move she swam over and pulled my ankle, sending me sprawling into the water. I couldn’t see anything, in a panic I began to flail, swinging my arms before I grasped something. Clinging to it with dear life I pushed myself out of the water meeting a willowy figure.

“I got you, you’re okay silly” she laughed.

To further prove her point she shifted me in her arms slightly before pulling me closer.

“Not funny Morgan, I could have drowned” I said half joking but still slightly upset.

“I’d never let you get hurt”

There was a pause, it was only due to her close proximity now that I could finally see her expression. Her normal ebullient, couldn’t give a care in the world look was replaced with something more solemn, eyebrows knit, lips pressed into a line, her stony eyes bore into mine, a silent plead for me to believe her. I didn’t know what to say, afraid that if I spoke it would ruin whatever this was. Not trusting my words, I nodded and felt myself involuntarily relax as her facial features softened, returning to normal. The silence was heavier now, weighed with words unsaid.

“ . . . ”

“ . . . red, huh?”

Her strange words suddenly shocked me out of whatever stupor I was in.

“What?”

“Your bathing suit”

“..yea? So what?”

“It’s cute”

My face flushed in embarrassment and I pushed her away; I was self conscious about wearing a one piece. All the other girls had moved on to wearing more “mature” styles of swimwear but my mom would never allow it. She chuckled as I tried to fight down the persistent color in my cheeks. Honestly, I didn’t know how she could do it, making me feel dazed one minute and red-faced the next. As she continued to chortle, nearly going under and swallowing water I wondered if perhaps she said that to diffuse the tension, she was definitely more of an enigma than she let on. But for the time being I ignored that, laughing along with her.

“Hah, hah, hah...”

“Hehe.. hmm...”

Our laughter slowly petered out and was replaced with a more comfortable silence. The clouds continued to roll overhead, causing shafts of moonlight to disappear and reappear on the water’s surface. The spots of light just barely penetrated through the water. I heard the soft clap of hands and splash of water. Turning my attention back to Morgan, her hands were clasped together.

“We should play Marco Polo” she said.

I was utterly confused by the sudden change in topic once again. Seeing my puzzled expression she began to backpedal.

“I mean what’s the point of sneaking into a pool if we aren’t going to have any fun?”

That was true, we had thought up the scheme earlier but never did plan out what we were going to do once we got *into* the pool.

“Okay, I guess, let’s play”

“Great! I call being Polo!”

If I wanted to argue there was no opportunity to, by the time my mouth opened, the beginnings of a protest on my lips she had already begun swimming away. She melded into the darkness of the smooth waves and so, giving up, I began to count.

“One.. two.. three.. four.. five...”

I could hear she was somewhat close by as from my right there was a distinct splash indicating movement.

“Six.. seven.. eight.. nine.. ten. Marco-”

There was a sudden sound from the other end of the pool. I heard the dripping sound of water on concrete as something hauled itself out of the pool.

“Hey! You can't get out of the pool, that's cheating!”

“Marco!” I yelled again but there was no reply

*Wow, she must really not want to lose.*

“Marco!” Silence.

I decided if she was going to play dirty I would too, wrenching my eyes open I could see something bobbing slightly in my peripheral vision.

“Not responding is cheating” I said, wading my way over to her, bringing up my hand to shake her body.

Cold.

Her body was cold.

Even with the adrenaline coursing through my veins it was difficult to turn her so that she was floating on her back. I pressed my ear to her chest,

Nothing.

I pulled away instantly, my eyes shot to her face, looking for something, *anything*. Once again I could see her features clearly due to our vicinity. I would never forget what I saw for the rest of my life. Her expression wasn't that of her normal liveliness or shocking pensiveness earlier.

Her eyes were wide and mouth agape, pupils unmoving, frozen in place. It seemed that I too had been frozen, my arms felt like lead, my feet, cinderblocks that rooted me to the ground.

The next thing I knew blaring sirens and blinding lights clouded my senses. I was wrapped in a towel, shivering. The clouds had finally dissipated and the moon shone fully now, the silver light cascading over the sheen of the vehicles and badges jangling in my face. I assumed they were asking me what had happened, and other such inquiries. However, their voices were only whispers, I stared at the stretcher which silently rolled across the pavement before being lifted into the ambulance. As the it pulled away I felt as if it had taken part of me with it. The intensity of their questioning increased tenfold but I still could not hear them. The last thought I had before the crowd surged around me, blocking my last glimpse of the vehicle was,

*I guess dead bodies do float after all.*