

## **SWIMMING LESSONS**

I'm eight in my lady bug bathing suit  
puckered with hand stitching,  
the day I think I may drown.  
Monday, my teacher Lyle,  
thin in tight wool trunks,  
his legs badly scarred,  
places one hand under my back  
and one below my knees.  
I float in a heated pool.

One Wednesday afternoon I learn to glide  
at the bottom in silence.  
Class over, the shallow end  
full of yelling and splashing,  
I swim along the bottom,  
some older boys above me. At first,  
we move back and forth together.  
But when I try to surface, a boy  
blocks my way.

I swim faster, so does he.  
Panic. My arms wave hard, then harder.  
I kick him hard then harder  
find a soft spot and he stops.  
I am exhausted, happy –  
that kind of no account happiness,  
I learn later  
comes from saving  
saving a life.

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