Approaching the First Dive

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By Daisy M. Kimberley, '38

June stepped out of the shower and reached to turn it off. Then she stepped back under it again. It came over her with a sweeping finality. "I can't go into that swimming class. I can't go. . . I won't go. . . I won't be browbeaten into going in. It's my neck. I came to this college to be educated. I didn't come to be drowned."

That made her feel more sick than ever. Her stomach was very light. So light that it began to rise up . . . up . . . nearly to her neck.

The shower changed suddenly to an icy coldness, and she jumped to turn it off. "If everyone else in the class can do it, I can too," she repeated desperately.

"But I don't want to do it! I've lived nineteen years without diving. And I don't want to do it now. I don't feel well. It's that sinus. That's what causes that stuffy, headachy, light-headed feeling when my head is under water. Dr. Morgan would be furious if he knew I was diving."

"You're just stalling," a clear, cold thought came to her. "Your grandmother left a life of luxury in London, crossed the ocean (it's much deeper than the Iowa State swimming pool), and came to Iowa to live in a log cabin without any windows. When grandfather was gone she stayed alone for days at a time, and she was scared to death of the Indians. She knew black nights of cold terror, surrounded by endless space, and wolves, and Indians."

"But she didn't have to jump up and land on her head! She didn't have to dive."
JUNE wiggled into her suit. She had known all the time that some involuntary muscles would make her go through with it.

"Step in the foot bath. Walk around the pool . . . yes, walk, . . . go on . . . you’ve been doing it for eighteen years. Barb and Jean are looking at you. Say, ‘Hi ya.’ Now take a deep breath. Think how graceful the girls look in the movies when they dive. You want to look like that, don’t you?"

"No . . . no . . . no! They can dive if they want to. But I don’t wa—."

"Everybody in with a front dive," the instructor cut in. "I’ll check you one at a time. Miss Johnson, let’s see you go in."

June straightened her hips and her knees so that she was standing. She walked carefully and deliberately toward the end of the pool.

"If I can get some starch in my knees, maybe my stomach won’t be so light. I’ll take a deep breath. It’s just the psychological attitude that makes me so dizzy."

"A girl went blind once from diving. A fellow had to have an appendicitis operation because he dived flat."

She stood on the edge of the pool.

"All right! Around, down, and in," the instructor chanted cheerfully.

A whirling dizziness struck her head. The water stung her legs.

"That laughing? Oh, yes . . . the class." June came back to reality. "I must have dived flat. But I don’t feel as sick as I did before!"