

Paralyzed
By Cassie Morris

I used to love to swim. Waking up in the morning at 5:30 and walking across the street. Ducking in between the loose wood board into my neighbor's backyard (which shaved off a couple extra minutes off my early morning routine), then walking another 30 paces to finally arrive at my destination. I knew the walk to the Columbian Public Pool like the back of my own hand. And if I really think about it hard enough, I can still smell the strong mixture of chlorine and the greasy food the snack bar sold. However, that was then. Now, even thinking of a pool makes my stomach tighten into knots and I get a terrible aching feeling. Like I said, I used to love to swim, but not anymore.

“Anaya, Anaya.” I hear my name being called in the distance, but I try to ignore it. I let my mind relax and the dream that I was having resumes. I’m at the pool. Like always, and I’m swimming laps back and forth. The water is perfect, so pure and bright. It surrounds me and I feel calm. “Anaya, Anaya.” Again I hear my name being called and reluctantly I open my eyes. The piercing white lights blind me, and remind me of where I am, and why I’m here. All of the things I’ve been trying to forget. As my vision comes into focus, I observe the room around me. There is a big window on the right side of my bed and a chair in the corner beneath it. Then on the other side of me, my left side, there is a little sitting area with a couch and a small table. I try to see who is in the room but it is too much work for my tired body, and I feel too weak so I let my heavy lids close again. “Oh, you’re up. I didn’t see you were awake.” It’s my mom. But then again, it’s always my mom. Ever since “It” happened, no one from school has come to see me. Not even my friends. I guess that they’re scared. I’m scared too. I focus my attention back on my mother and try to listen to what she saying. She goes on and on about my brother’s football practice, (he is seven), and the new laundromat that opened up down the street from our house. Just little things in life that I’m missing out on. My mom is here every single day giving me little updates on what is happening outside this room. These talks are supposed to make me feel normal. Like I’m not trapped here, but I am. I’m stuck at the hospital and I probably won’t be getting out for a long time.

I can remember the day “It” happened very vividly, even though I’ve tried to forget countless times. I was at the pool on the tip of the diving board, and I was going to jump and do a perfect swan dive into the water. I could picture myself floating in the air, arms stretched to the sides and then at the last second closing my arms to make a straight pencil-like line from fingertips to toes. At least that was my plan. I slipped and started to fall. To save myself from the embarrassment of belly flopping in front of everyone I attempted to swan dive. I twisted my body around in the air and awkwardly tried to position myself for a dive but it was too late. I hit the water. Hard. After that my memory went blank. I faintly remember hearing sirens and crying. I didn’t feel scared though. Now that I think about it that’s probably because I couldn’t feel anything.

I'm paralyzed from the neck down, and I might never walk again. The doctors tell me to stay positive and, that there is a chance that I will make a full recovery. In the beginning, when I was first placed in the hospital that gave me some hope, but now I hear them talking in whispered tones, like they are discussing something difficult. They are talking about me.

Being alone in the hospital is almost unbearable. The hours tick by and I lay there. Sometimes awake, sometimes asleep. It's boring, really boring. I wish that my friends would come to see me. I miss them. Ever since the accident happened my only visitors have been family. My dad and brother will come but mostly it's my mom because my dad works full time and my younger brother has school. I lay here thinking for a long time and at some point, fall asleep. I want to get better I really do. I feel like giving up.

It's Saturday, My room glows golden in the afternoon sun and the light creates irregular shapes on the floor. I'm sleeping, but not heavily. I'm aware of my surroundings. I can hear the nurses as they scurry down the hall, off to attend sick patients on the other side of the hospital. There is a bird chirping somewhere outside and its call is sweet and innocent. I can also hear distant traffic somewhere outside of this room. I think that I hear something but it's quiet so I drift back into sleep, where my thoughts have movement and my body is free.