

## Blue Water

"Two and a half somersaults with an inward twist!"

Marjorie McAllister, toes curled around the edge of the diving board, looked over her shoulder and smiled. Take a mental picture when you don't have a camera, her mother had often said, and Marjorie tried to do that now, capturing forever in her mind's eye the sunlit scene: her best friend Amy sitting on the dock's single bench, and Dave Garroway – big, dumb, good-natured Dave – perched in the lifeguard's station, requesting dives she could never do.

She gave them a little wave and bounced off the end of the board into a jackknife, the only dive she knew.

She did this one so perfectly that she left only a hiss of bubbles behind her. Immediately she began her ascent, but in that brief interval between water and air she had what she could only later describe as a vision -- a premonition, rather -- of the future.

Whatever it was, wherever it had come from, that wave of knowledge, so frightening and complete, sent her swimming upwards as fast as she could, as though her lungs were bursting.

She broke the surface and saw Dave and Amy sitting just as she had left them, Amy listening skeptically to what Marjorie imagined was another of Dave's tall tales. But all Marjorie could think of was that, in three years, Amy would be dead, killed by a car going out of control.

Fighting tears now, as well as a sick feeling in her stomach, she swam in a panic to the nearest ladder and hauled herself out of the water.

"I'd give that dive a 9.9, maybe a 10," said Dave. But Marjorie did not answer him, nor did she trust herself to look at Amy, but quickly slipped her feet into her flip flops and picked up her wadded towel, throwing it over her shoulders.

"What's the matter, Marj?" asked Amy.

"I'm not feeling very well. I'll call you later." She hurried down the slippery dock, not caring for any puzzled looks she might be getting. She crossed the warm sand and walked quickly across the hotter surface of the parking lot. When she reached her car she got in and gripped the steering wheel with both hands to steady herself, but the knowledge, the certainty, would not go away: She knew what the future held for Amy, and she knew what the future held for herself.

For that involved Tony, Tony Torrance. Anthony John Torrance, Jr. Handsome, brilliant, amusing, possessed of a hair-trigger temper. They had married the week of their college graduation, and had known a few months of happiness. Then had come the drinking, the silences, the first hard shove that sent her flying across the room...

She shivered now, though it was 85 degrees out. She started the car and slowly drove home, her chest heaving. As soon as she got in the door she ran to her mother and told her what had happened.

"You must have hit your head on the board, or maybe you hit it on the bottom," said her mother, holding her. "Do you remember doing that, dear?"

Marjorie was certain she had done neither. "Dave Garroway – he's the lifeguard – said it was a perfect dive. He said he'd give me a 9.9, or something like that, out of 10," Marjorie said,

through broken sobs. "Amy won't even live long enough to graduate from college, and I'm to marry a man named Tony Torrance, who's going to beat me up."

"Well, you're just not going to do it," said Paula McAllister, bending forward and kissing her only daughter on the forehead. "Perhaps you have been forewarned. The Irish are a very spiritual people, you know." She put her arm around Marjorie's shoulders and nudged her toward her bedroom. "Rest and you'll feel better. I'll come and get you in a little while." But when she passed her daughter's room a few minutes later she saw that Marjorie was not sleeping, but was sitting on the edge of her bed, wringing her hands.

Marjorie's father came in an hour later, and, after hearing from his wife what had happened, gave his daughter a hug and some words of encouragement. Marjorie's spirits gradually rose, but she knew she could not face Amy, not yet. When Amy telephoned Mrs. McAllister told her Marjorie was not feeling well, and that she would speak to her tomorrow.

"You'll have to face her sometime," her mother said.

"I can't, not after what happened." She did not return Amy's call, and when she did meet her friend days later she spoke so lifelessly that Amy, hurt and mystified, didn't phone again for weeks. All that time Marjorie moped around the house, until July turned into August.

Finally her mother asked if she would go to see a doctor she knew, a friend of the family. She did not tell Marjorie that the doctor was a psychiatrist, a fact her daughter guessed immediately.

"You think I'm crazy," she said, flatly. "I wish I were. That would explain a lot."

"We don't think you're crazy at all," replied her mother, and her father nodded agreement from the doorway. "I – we -- think you may be a little confused, that's all." Marjorie

looked at her mother in such a way that her mother nearly withdrew her request, but she said, yes, she would go.

Dr. Breitling was a relatively young man, not the gray-bearded individual Marjorie had been expecting. He welcomed her with a smile and beckoned her to sit down on the other side of his polished oak desk. Marjorie noticed a transparent glass snail by the telephone, and Dr. Breitling saw her looking at it.

"A gift from a grateful patient," he said. He picked it up and held it against the light from the window behind him, giving Marjorie a distorted view of the outside world. Then he set it down with a bump. "Slow and steady wins the race," he quipped, but his smile faded when he saw that Marjorie did not smile in turn.

He coughed. "Your parents told me you had some kind of vision at the lake. Care to tell me about it?"

Marjorie told him what had happened, feeling herself getting upset again in the retelling. Finally she stopped, and wiped away a tear with the back of one hand. Dr. Breitling tapped the eraser of his pencil on the desk.

"You say you know what's going to happen -- " Marjorie nodded -- "but how do you know? Have you ever had a déjà vu experience?" Marjorie shook her head. "Do you consider yourself psychic?" Again Marjorie shook her head.

"I just know, that's all. I hope never to know again."

"Perhaps there's something special about that spot," said Breitling. "Go back and dive in again, see if you --"

"I will never swim in that lake again," said Marjorie, firmly. "That's final."

He considered her. "All right. Let's suppose that you have had a glimpse of the future. You may have been given the chance to save your friend Amy. You can let her know that she'll be in danger at a certain time."

Marjorie closed her eyes and bowed her head. "No. It wouldn't do any good. I can't save her. No one can." Dr. Breitling excused himself and went out into the hall, closing the door behind him. Marjorie's mother and father came forward to meet him.

"She seems depressed, to put it mildly," he said, shaking his head. "I don't know what to think. There's nothing physically wrong with her, at least, not that Dr. DeVries could detect. All her tests were normal." He ran his fingers through his hair and frowned. "I could prescribe an antidepressant, or perhaps a change of scene --"

"That's just it, doctor; she wants to leave," said her mother. "It's her senior year, but she says she couldn't face her friends after what happened, and pretend to be happy until next June." Her nervous hands twisted the strap of her purse. "We thought, my husband and I, that Marjorie could stay with my sister and brother-in-law, who live outside Chicago. Their children are grown and out of the house, and they've always been fond of Marjorie. We could tell them that Marjorie needs to get away from the old hometown for a while."

"Yes," said Dr. Breitling. "That might be best."

So the first week of September found Marjorie in the suburbs of Chicago, living in a colonial-style home with her Aunt Pat and Uncle Martin. They were nice people, and, surprisingly, the girls in her class made her feel welcome. She tried to put the episode at the lake out of her mind, and one day in early October she came in the house almost singing, she was so happy.

"You just missed him," said her aunt. "The boy I wanted you to meet."

"What boy, Aunt Pat?"

"The boy from the supermarket who delivers our groceries. He's just the cutest thing.

His name is Tony Torrance."

# # #

By Andrew Armstrong