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Splash

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Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Splash! The water is cold, clear, and barely chlorinated, yet just enough so that your eyes sting when opened while submerged in it. Thousands of tiny bubbles fizzle up beneath you, stimulating your entire body. It's like being inside a shaken soda can, freshly opened."

Cover Page Footnote
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I was six and as I broke through the surface for air the laughter and sound of the annual end of summer block party filled my ears once again.

“Nice,” shouted one of my peers. “Did it hurt?”
“Dude, that splash was like a geyser!” exclaimed another kid.
“It’s cool,” I shot back confidently. “I’m gonna do it again.”

My face beaming, I began to wade through the four feet of water I had just thrown myself into and over to the side of the pool.

“Willis, keep the water in the pool please,” hollered a slightly irritated voice.

It was Chris, the pool owner, at whose house the party was always held. He was on the far right side of the patio, manning the grill and making hamburgers for after swimming. He was a good twenty feet from me and I could see water stains on his back and sleeve that I had no doubt put there with my high flying karate bangin’ hardcore ninja kick that had earned me the praise of my peers. I guess it had been a big splash, though it didn’t feel like one. I hadn’t felt the smack, thwack, or wack of my skin hitting hard against the rough churning of the waters’ surface. There had been no sudden rush to the head as the water immersed me, and no flood of pressure anywhere in the process.

“I’m sorry,” I shouted in the hurried manner of a child whose only interest at hand was the good time he was having. I hobbled up the ladder, shaking and creaking its cheap white plastic for all it was worth.

My feet stomped down on the chipped brown paint of the deck and I roared across the slick soaked surface like some kind of monster. Some of the younger kids thought it was funny and laughed. Soon I reached the pale blue aluminum of the thick metal ring that stretched around the edge, covering up where the deck and pool bonded in a poorly caulked intercourse, separating old splintered wood from chilled blue water. It was lumpy.

Standing on the edge, I felt a slight push from one of the kids behind me, and after briefly shouting, “Cannon Ball!” I leapt into the air, knees up and in against my chin. I felt the thwack and sudden rush of pressure to my head as my bare skin melded with the water’s surface. Pressure filled my head and ears. I was immersed in the cold blue once again.

The rush faded as quickly as it came. I broke through the surface once more gasping for air.

“Willis! Keep the water in the pool! Please!” shouted Chris. “You keep soaking everyone’s dinner! How are we supposed to eat if you just keep dumping water on the food.” He was furious and had more than a few drops on him now. His entire backside was soaked and he was dripping wet from balding head to sandal studded toes. The fury in his eyes turned like a bonfire that had long since gone out of control. “I’m not gonna say it again, please keep the water in the pool. If you can’t do that, then I’m gonna have to ask you to get out.”

My back stung from the force of the impact. That sting quickly turned into an ache, as though I had just been punctured with ten thousand needles. Looking around I could see from all the disapproving glances that that last one had been a real deuzy.

“Will, keep it down,” a stern voice said behind me.

I turned to see my father standing there with several of the other neighborhood men who were only present because their wives had forced them to be. He was holding something, a shiny silver can. I squinted for a better view. It was a beer. I was stunned. My parents didn’t drink, that’s what they had always told me; and for some reason, I had prided myself on that fact. You were never supposed to drink, that was my understanding. Beer was bad for you because it had alcohol in it, which was poison and would kill you. I had had this discussion several times with my parents in the past, both, separately and individually, earlier that day as a matter of fact; and yet, there was my father, drinking, killing himself.

There was an enormous lump forming in the back of my throat and I felt as though someone had just punched me in the gut, hard. I glanced over to where my mother was as my eyes well. She was in a fit of riotous laughter with the neighborhood women under the green tweed umbrella at the round wooden table by the barbeque, wine bottles piled high on its flakey surface. I didn’t realize it then, but looking back now I
can see that she was drunk, beyond drunk, totally smashed, and having the time of her life.

My eyes burned, throat hurt, and my stomach felt as though it was about to reject its contents through the door way they had waltzed in through. I bolted. Grabbing hold of the metal rim, I launched myself over it and onto the split paint of the deck’s wooden surface. I ran. I ran as fast as my legs could carry me, down the driveway and through the open blue picket gate, and across the neighbor’s lawn to mine. Ripping open the screen door, I threw myself hard against the big oak door of my home. I bruised my shoulder, but it opened. Upstairs in my room, I sobbed and wallowed there for what seemed like an eternity. Five minutes later my father came in huffing and out breath, shouting my name. I didn’t answer his calls, but that didn’t matter since he knew right where to find me.

“What’s the matter?” he gasped.
“You’re drinking,” I sobbed, eyes red and face stained with tears.
“So?” he said confused.
“You told me to never ever, ever drink,” I stammered. “You told me you and mom don’t drink, never drink, why are you drinking?” I was shouting at him by this point and my mental state was beyond that of a total train wreck. “You’re killing yourself!” I screamed

“Well, ya see, that’s not totally true,” my fathered stammered, at a loss for words. He raised the silver can to his lips for another drink.

That instant I tore the can from his hands, and smashed the aluminum container and all its contents against the pale blue plaster of my wall. It collided and crumpled against the wall, tearing a small chunk of it free and leaving a minor crater, a scar, that remains to this day. The remaining beer, exorcised from its thin shiny prison, went in all directions, covering my arm and the wall, dripping down to the carpet.

“What the hell is wrong with you!” exclaimed my father in disbelief. “Look it’s an adult thing, you’ll understand when you’re older.”

“No it’s not,” I shot back.
“Look,” my father said, “what do you want?”
“What do I want?” I demanded. “What do I want?” I repeated his words over and over, perplexed. This was a curve ball I hadn’t been anticipating, and now the ball was in my court. I stepped back from him and took a few moments to think over what it was that I wanted.

“I want you stop drinking,” I said.
“You don’t want me to drink?” My father repeated my words, completely confused.

“Yes!” I shouted. “If you’re going to tell me what not to do, then you should not do it also. Otherwise you’re a liar and I won’t listen to you.”
“Ok,” he said calmly. “Ok, I won’t drink anymore.” He shook my shoulder and gave me a slight pat to try and reassure me.

“Promise?” I said
“I promise,” my father said. “I won’t drink anymore. Now, how about we get back to the party? Everyone was pretty confused and worried when you left.”

As we walked back to the party I asked him: “So you really won’t do it anymore?”

“I really won’t do it anymore” my father said. “I won’t drink.”

“Hey!” exclaimed Chris as we walked back through the gate and into the party.

“Willis, what happened? Here Paul have another beer.”

I watched in horror as our host handed my father another can. I could do nothing, but stand there dumbfounded, feeling the welling pain in my eyes as I watched him open it and raise it. I couldn’t believe it. Had he lied to me? Had everything he had just said been for nothing? How could this be? This was my father here.

Turning his head, he smiled at me. Then pulled that silver bullet from the air, and in one quick flick of his wrist, turned it on its head, pouring the canister’s vile contents onto the ground.

Splash!