# Tubes



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Poetry
Nonfiction X

# ~Preface~

The pressure was high. The room was cold. Sweat glistened on all of our bodies, adrenalin pumped through our veins. I took a deep breath as I heard the announcer speak, "On your mark!"

The buzzer sounded, and I pushed off, diving into the water.

# ~Chapter 1~

*BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!*

I groaned, rolling over to swat at my alarm clock. My eyes slowly opened and I sat up, swinging my legs off the side of the bed. In the darkened room, all of my other senses were heightened, meaning I could feel the sharp pain pulsing through my left ear all too well.

*Not again....* I thought, rubbing it. Around the same time last year, in the Spring, I got an ear infection, which took me out of swim season for a week. I had a lot of catching up to do after missing that. If this was yet another ear infection, I prayed it wouldn't be as bad as the last one. I sighed. It wasn't like I could afford to miss school, so I hurried and got ready. All throughout that hour and a half, the pain just got worse. By the time my mom and I got into the car, I was choking back tears. When I just couldn't hold it back anymore, my mom looked at me, startled.

"Is it really that bad?" she asked. I nodded, mute from crying. She sighed and shook her head. I knew she wanted me to go to school, because if I didn't, I'd miss swim practice, but I knew I wouldn't last through the day.

We drove past my school, and up to hers. She was an English teacher at the high school, as well as the coach for the junior high swim teams, and yes, that meant she was my coach as well.

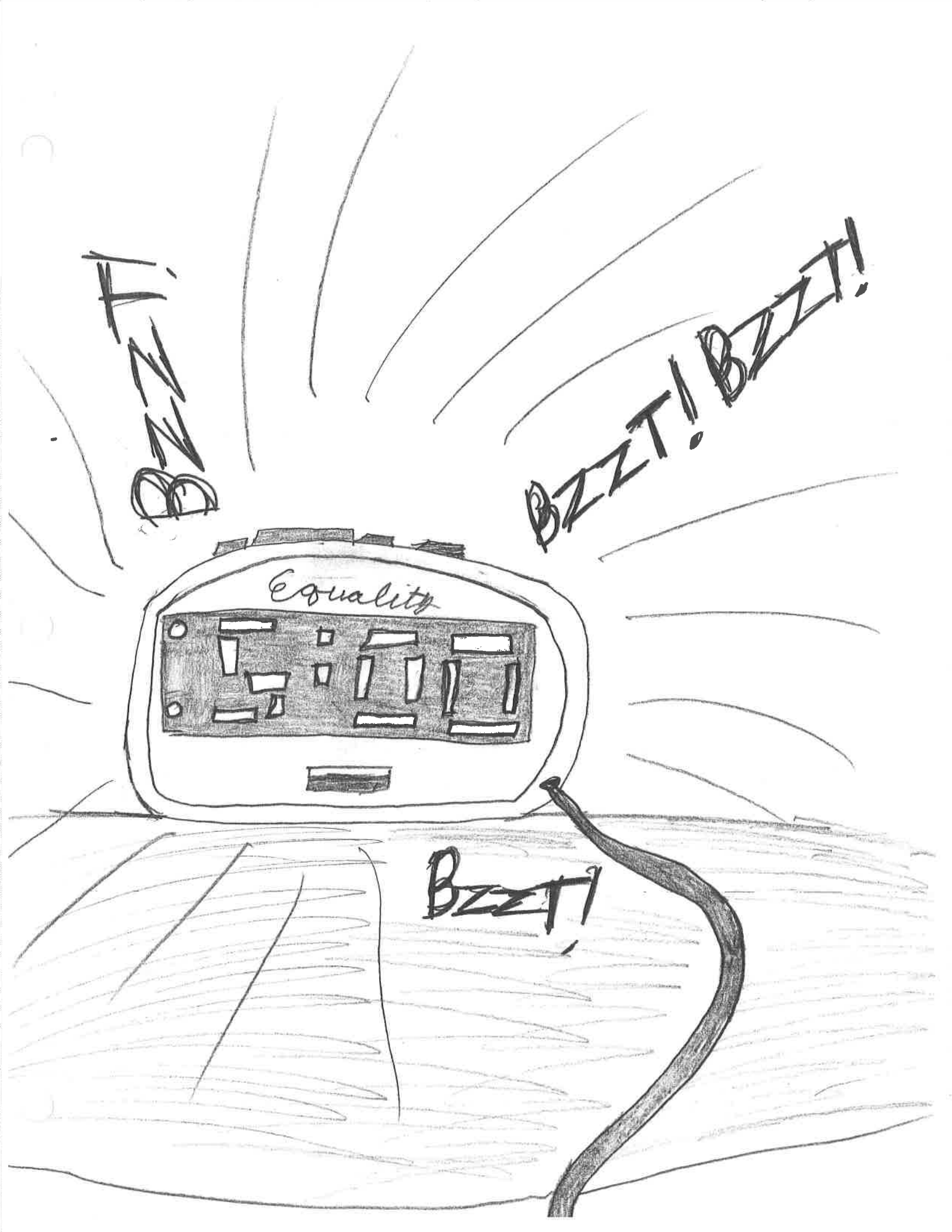
She parked, and walked into the building. We hurried through the labyrinth of halls to her classroom. She hung up her coat and bags, then looked at me.

"There are bean bags in the closet." She said. Heeding what she was suggesting, I dragged out the bags and parked myself behind her desk. Just as the school bell rang, I was drifting off, wondering how much of a doozy this one was going to be.

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Several days later, I wasn't any better. If anything, it had gotten worse; Now it was both of my ears, and I had basically gone deaf with how much gunk had built up inside of them. I couldn't help but feel like it had something to do with my Cystic Fibrosis.

Cystic Fibrosis is a complex genetic disorder that used to kill children at the tender age of twelve years old. Now, much more was understood about the disease, and it was easier to treat. Now, lucky me, I ended up with the second to worst case of it, which came with a shoulder load of side effects, including asthma, hypoglycemia, diabetes, ect. Along with that, came infections, and bad ones, at that. Hence, the nasty ear infection.


BZZT!
BZZT! BZZT!
Equality
BZZT!

I closed my eyes, too tired to do much of anything. Man, I was going to be so behind in school and in swimming. This sucked.

# ~Chapter 2~

I had gone back to school and swimming after two weeks. While I was still in pain and basically deaf. I couldn't afford to miss.

"Today we're doing ladders!" Mom yelled. A collective groan arose from the swim team.

"Cooaaach!" One of the eighth graders whined.

"Nope! I don't want to hear it!" Mom shook a finger at us. "You are doing ladders!"

I looked at Elise, my best friend; "This is gonna suck." I said.

She shrugged. "It isn't really a choice."

Mom blew her whistle, startling all of us, and the first swimmers took off from the wall. I looked at the first ladder. 100 I.M. I grinned; now that I could do. I.M.'s were my strong suit, seeing as I was fluent in every stroke. I'd been swimming since I was practically a baby. My favorite way to swim was Butterfly, and most people thought I was crazy because of it. What they didn't know was that I took after my mom; she was a "flyer" herself. I may not have been the fastest, but my technique was great. At least, that's what I thought.

When my turn came, I pushed off, propelling myself through the water. I was on my last 50 yards to the end when my ears got terribly painful. I got the edge, shaking and gasping for air. I felt a gentle hand on my shoulder.

"Lain? Are you okay?" Elise. I shook my head.

She looked at me worriedly. "Go talk to Coach."

I got out, my head still pounding and ears throbbing. Mom saw me coming and came up to me.

"Mind telling me why you're out of the water?"

"It hurts." I whispered. Her eyes flickered in recognition.

"Alright, I'll call Denver Children's to see what they want us to do." She said. "Try to stick it out today, and we'll go home."

"Okay." I nodded, heading back to the water.

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Later that night, the pain became unbearable. I was sobbing, clutching my head, while dad was warming up a rice bag and mom was frantically calling our family doctor. None of us knew what was wrong. We thought the infection was clearing up because of the antibiotic that she gave us, and that's when it clicked. I had just gotten off the medication the day before; could it really have come back that fast?

Apparently so. After Laurie looked inside my ear, she looked shocked.

"It's worse than the last time I saw it. And you said she got off the antibiotic yesterday?" she asked.

Mom nodded. Laurie said, "This is out of my hands now. You should take this up with your doctors down in Denver."

I held the rice bag to my ears, tears still streaming down my face, in too much pain to think of what that might mean.


Huff
Huff

# ~Chapter 3~

Two months. Two months since the infection first came, and while it was a little better, there still wasn't a huge change. But that wasn't what I was focused on right at this second.

My race was coming up soon; 100 Free Style. This swim season, all of my friends had taken first in at least one of their races... that is, except me. And I was determined to make that change. I slipped on my swim cap and goggles. Taking those few steps to the block.

"100 Freestyle! Swimmers, on the blocks!

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*SPLASH*!

Water rushed past me as I surfaced, pumping my arms and legs like my life depended on it. I quickly made it closer to the edge of the pool, where I could hear my teammates screaming for me to keep going.

*Remember to flip-turn.* I did the quick summersault in the water, pushing myself to keep going. I needed to remember to pace myself, not to waste all my energy in the first few laps. I needed to make the last one count; that was what was important.

Three laps later, and I was on my final stretch, and I was tired. I knew it was going to happen; I wasted all my energy, and I was now a burnt fuse.

*Just... a little... more...* I reached forward, slamming my hand into the wall; my race was over. My head shot up to look at the score board. 4th.

*Crap!* I got out of the water and stared at the ground. I was so disappointed in myself. Looking like an angry wet cat, I trudged over to my team, waiting for my mom and Coach Carrol's verdict.

"Lain." I looked up to see multiple grinning faces. Elise attacked my in a bear hug.

"That was amazing!" she yelped in my aching ear. For the moment, I had forgotten all about the God-awful infection.

Mom walked up, flipping through her clip board. "You held first place for most of the race. It was just that last stretch that killed you."

I grabbed a towel and wrapped it around myself. "I know." I mumbled. Then I was engulfed in a warm embrace.

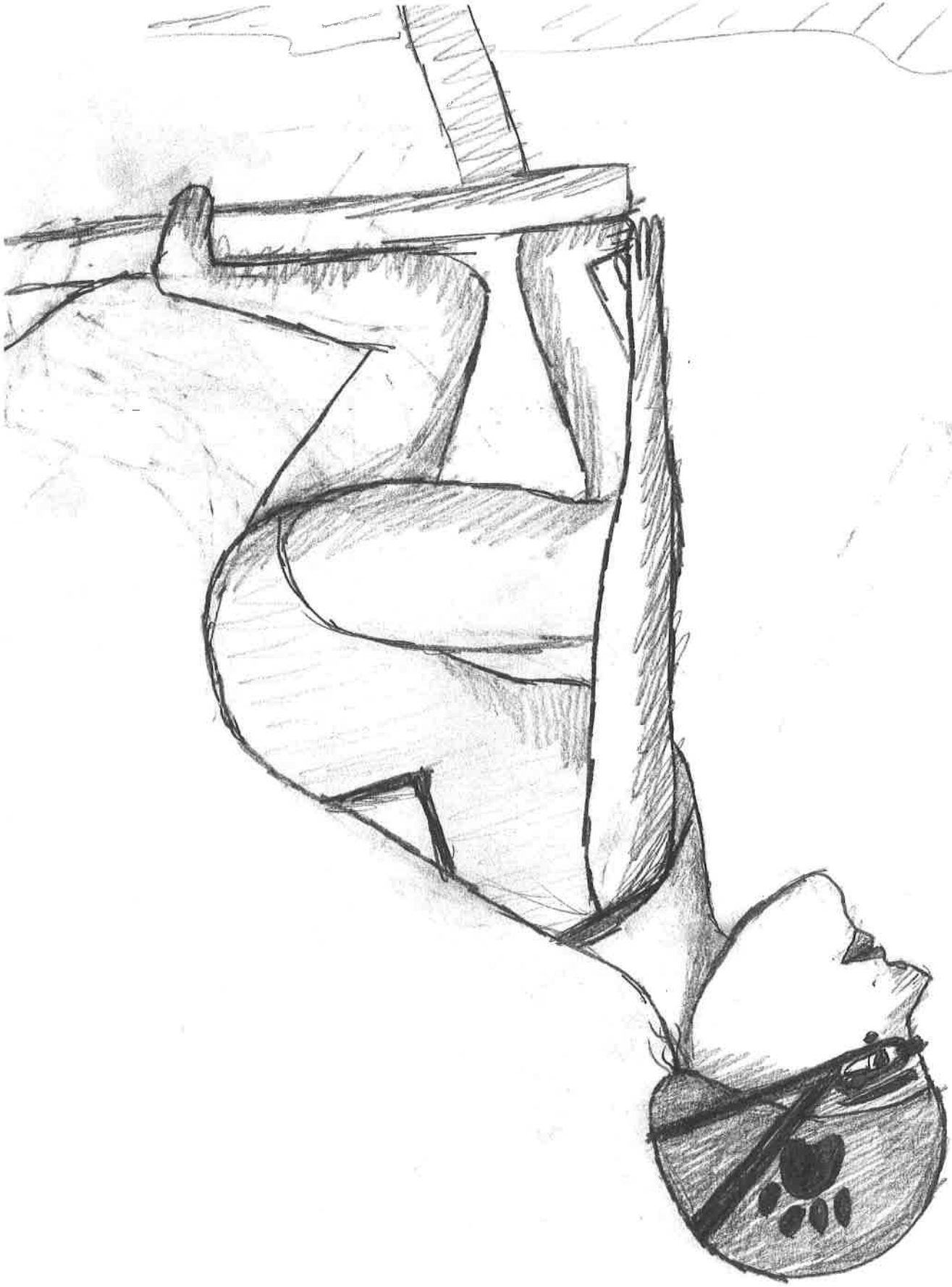
"I'm proud of you." She said.

And if this was what I got at the end of the day... I guess I was okay with it.

# ~Chapter 4~

The drive to Denver was long and tiring. When we finally made it there, I knew what was coming. They were going to put tubes in my ears, and possibly take my swollen adenoids, effectively getting rid of the infection, but at the same time, eliminating me from the swim team for the rest of the season. Now, I was lying on a hospital gurney, the doctors filling us in on what was about to happen.

"Are you ready?" the nurse spoke to me, effectively waking me up out of my daydream.







"As I'll ever be." I smiled nervously. He wheeled me into a sterile white room, where there was a team of doctors and nurses waiting. They hooked my I.V. up to a huge syringe.

"This is going to sting." They said as they started to push the liquid in.

"Is that the anesthesia?" I asked.

"It is." The nurse said with a smile.

They finished pushing it in, and I was confused.

"When is it going to-"

Lights out.

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I tried to swallow, but it was hard; everything hurt. I slowly opened my eyes, and saw my parents sitting to the side. Upon trying to sit up, I got super dizzy. I could barely speak, my throat hurt so much, and my ears were throbbing.

"They took my adenoids, didn't they?" I asked, my voice raspy.

"Yeah, Lain, they did." Mom responded. I laid back again. At least it would help in the long run. Even if I wouldn't be able to swim for a while, I could still be there to support my team.

## ~Chapter 5~

Even with a sore throat and tubes in my ears, I stayed to support my team till the end of the season. While we didn't have a huge victory, we worked hard, and by doing that, we had the time of our lives, and I couldn't have been happier. I had a lot of work to catch up of from all the school that I had missed, and eventually managed... with some help of course.

Ever since then, I haven't been in competitive swimming, although I will be back someday, once my tubes fall out. But until then, I'll keep persevering. Anyone can be a swimmer, even someone with a medical issue.

All you have to do is take that first dive.