

Sophia Japhet

### Who Says it's Too Cold?

Sunny, warm, windless- a perfect day for a swim! It was an ordinary summer Saturday afternoon when my mom announced that she wanted quality family swim time in our pool. "Quality family swim time" not only encompasses swimming but also grilled hamburgers and hotdogs, Lays Potato Chips, Nestlé's Iced Tea, huge blown up animal floats, music, volleyball, chicken fights, and ice-cream-every kids ideal pool party. Excitedly, we all bounded up the stairs to change into our brightly colored swim suits. Within seconds, my sister and I bolted back down into the kitchen with towels in hand. My brother had run off to recruit some neighborhood kids in anticipation of an intense volleyball game against me, my sister, and my mother. My sister and I were about to dart out into the pool area when we heard my mother shout out. "Make sure you wait for Grandma before you enter the pool." Each of us let out a dramatic, loud sigh for we both knew that tectonic plates could move faster than my old grandmother. In her age, arthritis almost cripples her body. Now, couple that with double hip and knee replacements and we knew we would have to be dug out of our graves before she was out and ready.

Anxiously, my sister and I paced up and down the side of the pool discussing strategies and positions for our upcoming volleyball game. We also noted the position of every desirable float in the pool so when it was time to jump in, we knew what direction we would be headed in. After what seemed like days, my mother emerged with Grandma hanging on her arm. Slowly she walked, making sure Grandma would not take a misstep, lose her balance, and fall. They both shuffled to the end of the deck. The steps leading down to the pool were the biggest obstacles. With one hand clenched to my mother's hand, causing the blood vessels in my mother's hand to start to protrude, and the other hand grasped to the wood railing, my grandmother slowly and painfully lowered one swollen leg after another down the steps. Even though her legs trembled and her arms shook, she maintained a smile across her face for there was nothing she loved more than to be outside sitting in her favorite chair next to the pool. The triumph

over one step merited a short break in which to catch her breath and allow the pain in her ankles, knees, and hips to cease. Finally, after minutes of descending down the five steps, she reached the patio. After the exhausting trip from the house to the pool, my grandmother took a seat in her favorite white beach chair under the striped umbrella, even though she was already ultra-violet ray impenetrable with her large hat, dark sunglasses, and white dress. As soon as she was firmly planted in her seat, my mother nodded her head, giving us full permission to go in.

Now, the biggest challenge: dealing with and overcoming the initial temperature shock. “Being cold is just a state of mind,” I explained as I pushed my sister to the steps leading down into the water.

Slowly and carefully, my sister lowered a single toe into the swimming pool afraid that if she dipped any more flesh in the frigid water, her foot would become a thick block of ice. She tightly grasped the railing with both hands as the toe became immersed in the water. After holding that position for about a minute, she dropped her entire foot onto the first step in the water. Goose bumps surfaced on her arms and legs in addition to a growing frown on her face. Again, minutes passed by before she gathered the strength to insert the warm, dry foot onto the first, watery step. Her lips contorted, her eyes shut tight, and her nose wrinkled as she slowly stepped down to the second step. Now, only up to her mid calves, she would have to endure two more steps until she reached the bottom of the shallow end. Painfully, she lowered her shivering, goose-bump overrun legs down the steps. After conquering the steps, she stood in the center of the shallow end with arms folded against her chest, body shaking, teeth chattering, and eyes giving me the death stare.

Chuckling, my grandmother watched these events take place from the solitude of her beach chair under the only umbrella on the patio besides the in ground swimming pool. As the giggling faded, she looked at my sister and me, and then mumbled something inaudible to herself. To my surprise, she pulled off her black sunglasses, removed her flower hat, slowly kicked off her croc sandals, and mustered all the strength in her scrawny arms to pull herself out of the familiar beach chair. Dumbfounded, I intensely

watched the woman I have never seen walk further than the twenty feet from the kitchen table to her room. Her weak legs somehow managed to push her up and enable her to begin to move across the patio. Hunched over, she slowly shuffled her bare, swollen feet over to the edge of the deep end. Still in her white dress she peered into the clear, undisturbed water. I saw her glance into the frigid water at the elderly reflection that stared back at her. With a disgusted frown, she immediately launched herself directly into the reflection. The once stagnant water was now overrun with turbulent waves crashing into the sides of the pool. The reflection was shattered and drowned in the tumultuous disturbance. As quickly as she had jumped into the water, she surfaced with a smile that extended from one end of her face to the other. She leisurely paddled around in the deep end of the swimming pool until she came upon the volleyball. She grabbed the ball, looked at my sister, and served it over the net that extended across the pool. The ball landed into the shallow end, producing ripples that splashed against the motionless girl. My sister still stood frozen with her arms crossed, teeth chattering, and body shaking. Isn't it all just a state of mind?