

The Splash Contest

May 1st

My mom got an email this morning that the neighborhood swimming pool officially opens today! They close it during the cold months, but now the sun is shining, and it finally feels like the start of Summer.

Clare and I were ready to swim, so I raced through my morning chores!

But of course, as I walked out the door with my towel and swimsuit to meet Clare at the pool, my dad asked if I could take the twins too. (Sigh.)

A few minutes later, the three of us were walking down the brick sidewalk toward Volta Park. Ty wore his “super cool” sunglasses. Ruby wore my dad’s shirt over her swimsuit, like a big comfortable dress.

“Woah! There’s like a hundred people here!” Ty exclaimed. He was right. The sunny day brought out almost all of the neighborhood kids. I found Clare in the crowd, and she had managed to save us a seat.

Besides swimming, one of the best parts of going to the pool was the snack bar. It’s a very popular little store where you can buy candy and ice cream.

Ty and Ruby asked me for money to buy ice cream—I told them no, I’d only brought enough for Clare and me. (I would have enough for everyone, if ‘celery’ hadn’t gotten in the way.) They were disappointed, and Ty stuck his tongue out at me before they went off into the crowd of kids.

Clare and I swam, talked, and sat in the sun. After a while, a voice came over the loudspeaker announcing a contest:

“Hey, everyone! Welcome back to the pool! In just a minute, we’re going to do a splash contest. Whoever goes off the diving board and makes the biggest splash will win. The prize is a free ice cream from the snack bar!”

A long line of dripping-wet kids formed behind the diving board. Ruby raced back to our chair to grab our dad’s shirt, then scurried off. That felt suspicious. But before I could ask them anything, they ran off.

The splash contest was a go. One by one, each kid in line announced their name into the microphone the lifeguard was holding. Then, they’d bravely climb the diving board, run to the end, spread out like a pancake, and fling themselves into the water, hoping to make a giant splash and win free ice cream.

Clare and I had stopped paying attention because it went on for a while. (Especially because each jumper would hop right back in line.)

We stopped chatting when we heard “Ty-and-Ruby” over the loudspeaker. We pushed through the crowd and saw something I’ll never forget. There, at the foot of the diving board, were Ty and Ruby, smooshed together in my dad’s shirt.

The other kids called out that this was not fair! Ty took the microphone and said: “We’re twins! We basically count as one person!”

Then their four legs started moving, and they ran off the diving board! They both leaned forward for a giant belly flop and made a huge splash.

The laughing lifeguard announced, “We have our winner!” Ending the contest and disappointing a long line of jumpers.

Ty and Ruby were beaming as they doggy paddled to the side of the pool. Still stuck together, they waddled to the snack bar to claim their prizes.

“I’ll have chocolate!” exclaimed Ty.

“I’ll take strawberry!” proclaimed Ruby.

The teenager running the snack bar handed back one small vanilla ice cream cone. He said, “I thought you were twins, and that basically counted as one person?”

For once, Ty and Ruby were speechless.

Your Friend,
Joanie