***The Five-Dollar Dive***

by Yvonne Nelson Perry

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They brought the guy out at four Saturday afternoon.

They had him on a stretcher, wrapped in a gray blanket. It must have been a job, bringing him down that rough trail from the falls. The men carrying him were dripping in sweat.

As I stood by the ambulance, watching them load up, Jojo appeared at my side.

“A tourist,” he snickered. “Shoulda stayed in Waikiki.”

Pock-faced Jojo, only fourteen, but already bigger than my father, a stevedore1 on the Honolulu docks.

Everyone says Jojo is slow, you know, in the head, but he manages to get money and school lunches away from the rest of us kids.

That’s why I’m here. Jojo bet me I couldn’t jump off the tops of the falls.

Diving at the falls is dangerous. If you don’t know what you are doing, you get hurt. Like that tourist. You see, there’s a big rock that juts up from the pool’s bottom. It’s right where you land if you dive off the different ledges. If you go off the lower ones, no problem. You don’t go under that deep. You dive off the higher ones, you better know where that underwater rock is or you’ll hit it head-on.

Checking out the rock’s position is tricky. The water in the pool is dark unless the sun’s shining on it. Even then, you can barely see the shadow of that monster under there. Sometimes when I dive, I have to shift back and forth, back and forth, squinting, until I see it.

Anyway, today is the day, jump off the top of the falls or give Jojo five bucks. You don’t tell Jojo what the bet is, he tells you. Remember, he’s bigger than the rest of us, and you never knew what he’s going to do. One day, Benny Sato wouldn’t give Jojo his sushi, so Jojo picked him up and threw him over the schoolyard fence. Benny broke his arm when he landed on it wrong; he told the school nurse he was fooling around and fell.

Now Jojo grabbed my shoulder and pushed me toward the trail that led to the falls.

“Come on, Packy, Dive time,” he said.

“Maybe the falls are closed Jojo. You know, because of that guy.” I jerked my thumb toward the ambulance easing out of the dirt parking lot, no siren necessary.

“What’s the matta’, kid? You afraid?”

To show him I wasn’t, I raced to the trail. At that moment I wasn’t afraid of diving, I was afraid of Jojo.

The trail rises gradually as it winds through the narrow valley, thick with ginger and ti2. Breadfruit trees crowd out the sky, making the trail dark. It always smells like rotten guavas and something else. The boys pee in the bamboo clumps along the way.

We pounded up the half-mile trail: I could hear Jojo behind me, grunting as he ran flat footed over the muddy footpath.

As we rounded the last bend, I heard the roar of the waterfall. When I broke into the open area near the pool, some of the kids from school were in the water. Others were sitting around, strumming ukuleles, kicking back.

“Hey Packy! You see that guy?”

“Man you shoulda been here.”

They crowded around, all giving details of the diving accident at once.

Jojo appeared a few moments later. Everyone fell silent; they must have remembered the bet.

As Jojo strutted over to me, I looked up at the falls. Water tumbled down fifty-five feet, making a foamy circle where it hit the pool. The white water calmed down quickly, however, as the circle widened. When it reached the edges of the pool, it lapped softly against smooth mossy rocks.

“Let’s go, Pack Rat.”

Jojo elbowed me and pointed to the top ledge.

Nodding, I took off my shirt, tossed it aside, and dove in. I swam across the pool to the rocks beside the falls, pulled myself out of the water, and started to scale the lava cliff.

Jojo was right behind me.

Looking for a handholds and crevices for my feet took all my attention. The falls cascaded3 a few feet away, spraying me with a fine cool mist. Stopping to rest, I glanced down and saw everyone looking up at us. I couldn’t hear them, I only saw their mouths open and shut, open and shut.

Jojo grabbed one of my ankles.

“Chickenin’ out?” he shouted up at me.

I jerked my foot away in answer and started climbing again.

A few more feet and I scrambled onto the topmost ledge. I had never been this high before. I didn’t stand up until Jojo was beside me; we both stood up together.

Without a word, we squared off and **jung-keena-po’ed** to see who would dive first. I threw paper: hand open, fingers spread wide. On the same down stroke, Jojo held out two fingers: scissors to cut my paper.

I had to dive first.

I turned and faced the pool.

Stepping forward, I gripped my toes over the slippery edge. With knees slightly flexed and arms raised, I got ready to dive.

Peering down, I tried to locate the underwater rock. I couldn’t see it anywhere.

I stepped back from the edge and turned to Jojo.

“I can’t find the rock,” I told him.

“You’re just chicken, man,” he said, sticking his head out like one.

“That guy’s accident made us get here too late.”

“Like I said, Pack, You’re chicken.”

“There’s no sun on the water, Jojo.”

“Chicken!”

“Jojo, I can’t see the rock!”

“You lose buddy! You owe me!” He punched a fist in my chest.

I went down on one knee, lost my balance, and tumbled head-first off the ledge.

As I fell, a gust of wind blew through the kukui trees surrounding the pool. Silver-green leaves fluttered, the last rays of the afternoon sun hit the water.

I saw the shadow of the rock.

As I plunged through the dark surface of the water, I twisted my body to one side.

It was ice-cold, blind-black underwater.

I kept my arms extended, trying to protect myself from the rock.

Then, I brushed against it, my hands sliding down its slimy side.

I pushed away. I was safe, home free.

Heart-pounding, I clawed my way back up to the surface.

Bursting upward into the light, I grinned with relief and waved my arms widely at the cheering crowd around the pool.

“Way to go, Pack! Way to go!” they said.

Treading water, I gulped a mouthful and blew a stream skyward. Now Jojo would owe me five bucks if he didn’t follow me down.

“You did it Packy! You did it!” someone shouted.

Swimming to the side of the pool, I suddenly realized I didn’t want Jojo’s money. I just wanted to do something better than him.

I climbed out of the water and turned to look up at the ledge.

“No!” I shouted.

Jojo was already in motion, doing a perfect swan dive through the still air.

They brought him out at six that evening.

Perry, Yvonne Nelson. *The Other Side of the Island: A Collection of Short Stories*. Santa Barbara: John Daniel, 1994. Print.

Guided Questions for *The Five Dollar Dive*

***Questions for* *The Five Dollar Dive***

1. Make a Connection: Have you ever done anything that you knew you shouldn’t do because you did not want to be a coward in from of your friends? What happened?

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1. What happened to the tourist at the beginning of the story? What evidence from the story proves your claim?

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1. Check your Prediction: Did what you predict would happen when Packy and JoJo went to the top of the falls come true? If not, how did the story turn out differently?

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1. What word would you use to describe Jojo? What parts of the text support that word? How does the author feel about Jojo? Do you think the author would choose the same word you did? How do you know?

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1. What are the most important details to know about the setting? Why?

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1. What mood does the author create in this story? How does she accomplish this? (Use evidence from the text)

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1. What does jung-keen-po’ed mean? What clues from the text helped your figure it out?

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1. How did the author use foreshadowing to impact the plot of the story?

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1. What did you think about the ending? Do you think the story should have had a different ending?

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1. What was the theme of this short story? How did the author develop the theme? Use text evidence to support your answer.

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