

Little Shinji VS the springboard

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Shinji looked at the enormous springboard from below as he stood next to the temperate swimming pool. That thing was monstrous. In his long six years of life he had never seen anything like it. A girl climbed up the stairs and as he got higher and higher she got smaller and smaller, she would be a dot once she stoop on the top, and then she'd jump all the way down in a matter of seconds.

Splash! She crashed through the water surface making it fly in all directions, Shinji jumped back in panic but he didn't make it. A drop fell onto his nose, making him scream and slip back onto his butt. Then he watched the girl emerge out of the water again. She had not got hurt or anything. Shinji thought he would never be able to do something like that, when the girl shook her light red hair around, making him totally wet. He felt angry at that girl, but he was also too ashamed to tell her, what would she think, so he just sat there as he had fallen, staring at her. The girl's blue eyes turned over and saw him, he got out of breath.

"You got a problem?" she asked.

"N-n-no!"

"Why are you staring at me like that?"

"I, well, err..."

"You like my body, huh?" she made a strange pose, like women on TV.

"What body? You're just my age!"

"Hey, hey! I'm six and a half years old, that's way much more than five."

"I'm six too!" Shinji replied annoyed.

"Yeah, see, you're just six, that makes me half a year OLDER than you. That's a lot."

"Oh, well..." Shinji got his legs together and wrapped his arms around them.

"Did you see me jumping from the springboard?" the girl asked, leaning onto the border of the pool. The girl was cute, though, she was... No, Shinji-kun! Dirty, dirty!

"Yeah, well, that was exactly what I thought of..."

"Ain't I the greatest?"

"S-sure, I mean..."

"How about now you jump and I watch?"

Shinji felt a bolt all through his body, he got the goosebumps, he saw himself in inverse color mode, sitting on a small portable chair under an accusing light.

"A-a-I don't think... I don't think my dad will allow me to..."

"Is your dad here with you?"

"Y-yeah, look, he is..."

"Where?"

Shinji's eyes scoured the big crowd of people sitting around.

"There!"

Gendo sat by a table drinking beer, in one of his endless discussions about his art project with Fuyutsuki-sensei. No, no, it was actually an Antarctic project, cause it was the south pole, not the north. What they did there, Shinji didn't have a clue, dad would never tell him. Shinji hated him.

"He seems pretty busy" the girl noticed.

"Yeah, but..."

"Come on, let's go!" she announced, jumping out of the water "Your dad won't notice."

Shinji slowly stood up. Why? And there was nothing he could do against it, no way to justify his stupid, stupid fear...

"But I can hardly swim, actually..." Shinji stuttered.

"But you CAN swim, don't you?" she interrupted.

"Just a little bit..." Shinji admitted.

"That's enough!"

She dragged him to the stairs, where it all started. There were more steps than Shinji could count, and he could count to ten which was already pretty much, maybe these were like a hundred. She said he had to, and his dad didn't say a thing, and his fear was still stupid, so he actually had to, no way out, no way out no way out.

"You're a weezer or what?"

"I'm going!" Shinji firmly decided, and now it was his choice.

He put his right hand onto the stair in front of him and started climbing up. One, two, three... Don't call me a weezer, I'm trying hard! I gotta do it. Four, five, six...

"Hurry up, sucker!" the girl screamed up from below. She was way down already, if Shinji fell from here... Don't think of it, just do it, that's what she wants me to do, isn't it? Seven eight, nine... Isn't it? If my dad doesn't say a thing about it, if nobody tells me it's wrong, but she tells me it's right... Ten... What came after ten? Oh, lord, I don't know, I'm a sucker, she already said I'm a sucker, I don't want to be like this, I want to be like her, jump off the springboard and... What came after ten? I don't know, but I'm way up now, if I fall from here... Mum, where is mum? She stayed at home, but I've got to grow up, be like that girl, she's bigger than I am, after all; half a year, I'll have to wait a long time until I'm that big and know that much about life.

He reached it. The top. He was up there, standing on the monstrous, evil springboard. It was a lot, like a mile down, he could see all the little people, though he couldn't find his dad, but the voice of the red haired girl screaming 'sucker!' still reached him. Who knows what would happen if he fell from there...

Mustn'trunaway-mustn'trunaway-mustn'trunaway-mustn'trunaway!

"You don't have to jump if you don't want to."

He just wanted to hear his mum saying that, but it was his responsibility, after all, he had chosen that, hadn't he?

"No. I didn't chose this."

Mustn'trunaway-mustn'trunaway-mustn'trunaway-mustn'trunaway!

Maybe jumping from the springboard was not something one could chose, it was just something that had to be done in a man's life, something that made a man into a man. Shinji had to be a man, that's what everybody expected from him. There was like another girl standing by him on the springboard, behind him, a pale girl with red eyes.

"What if your were not a man? I'm not a man."

Shinji turned over alarmed as he heard the voice over his shoulder and shouted as he slipped and fell from the springboard, down, down, down and into the water, he

floated below the surface, he was going to get drown.
Idon'twannadie-Idon'twannadie-Idon'twannadie-Idon'twannadie...
I don't want to
DIE!

He took a strong impulse and returned to the surface and splashed all about until he got to the shore where the red haired girl was still waiting for him.

"That was ridiculous!" she laughed "Sucker!"

"Shinji-kun" it was his dad, who was just coming this way. He pulled Shinji out of the water like he was a thing and carried him onto his shoulder.

"Let's go home, Yui must be waiting for us."

Shinji still saw the girl stretching her tongue at him and he showed her his. He hadn't come to know her name, but he never wanted to meet her again.