

However, the favorite pastime back home during the week was driving up to Bucks County ~~and~~ to go swimming in the stone quarry. It was a dangerous thing to do, but teenagers that age never really gave it any thought. During one of their outings, a double dare by one of the guys started a tradition: in order to prove that you weren't a chicken, you had to dive off the top of a boulder. The jump was about forty feet or so. Rachel was the only one of the girls to do it.

Quintana had been swimming in the middle of the quarry about fifty yards away; when he looked up, he saw that Rachel was going to dive in. He yelled at her not to jump in and told her to get down. She dove in anyway. When she surfaced, he swam over to her. He was really angry with her for jumping. He told her never to do it again.

John Quintana loved his summer vacations. Growing up with his neighborhood corner buddies meant the world to him, but so did his dream. He wanted to be cop, so much so that he willfully gave up his summer vacation to devote himself to prepare and study for the police officer exam. It certainly was a sacrifice but, he didn't realize how much of a sacrifice it would become.

On July 8, just a little past 3:00 p.m., John was studying in his bedroom when his mother called up to him and told him that his friends were at the door. She had invited them all inside, but they wanted to wait for him outside. John came downstairs and stopped at the doorway, facing them. Everyone just stood there without saying a word. Just then, a strange feeling came over him, a sinking feeling. He quickly scanned over his group of friends and realized that Rachel was missing.

Tony, who was his best friend, walked up the steps, looked directly into his eyes, and informed him that Rachel had drowned while they were all at the quarry that morning.

**Comment [AW1]:** What age?

**Comment [AW2]:** This has the potential to be a powerful scene. Work on showing rather than telling. You want the reader to be able to imagine this scene as a flashback rather than hear it as a brief part of John's history.

**Comment [AW3]:** Work on transitioning to this thought. Right now it jumps from Rachel jumping to the John losing his summer.

Tony kept talking, describing details of the tragic incident; all John could do was stare; it was as if someone placed him under a trance. He stood there motionless. Tony kept talking; the words poured out, but nothing penetrated. Those two words, “Rachel drowned,” resounded over and over again in his mind. It caused emotions inside of him that he never knew existed. Those shocking words blindsided him. Tears rolled down his cheeks. His mind couldn’t get past the single crushing thought that Rachael was gone forever. He felt an overwhelming sense of injustice, but there was nothing he could do to bring her back.

The penetrating thoughts started to create an overwhelming feeling of guilt. He blamed himself for Rachael’s death. He lost her because he wasn’t around to watch her. He had betrayed her. He had left her to fend for herself. From the moment they first kissed, they were inseparable, but he gave her up for his own selfish reasons. It was too high of a price to pay, but it was too late. He was to blame, no one else.

No one could tell him any different. No one dared until a few years later, when Sister Dorothy, a Roman Catholic nun who ran a neighborhood mission for the poor, helped him erase all of his guilt. Quintana would often visit the mission. He thought the world of Sister Dorothy. She devoted her life to helping the poor in the surrounding North Philadelphia neighborhood. He once found out that she actually came from a very wealthy family and grew up in Bala Cynwyd, an affluent suburb of Philadelphia. Quintana always made sure he slipped her a donation before he left. When she died, he wept at her funeral; it was the second time in his adult life that he felt his tears roll down his cheeks.

**Comment [AW4]:** Expand on this. It seems essential to the story and John’s character. How does she help? How does he meet her? How is able to convince him that he is not to blame? Is this before or after he becomes a cop?