

Chlorine Burn

6

My footsteps pounded as I ran up the stairs. "Why are you running?!" yelled my brother.

"I'm late! I have to be at the pool in seven minutes for practice!" I yelled back. I grabbed a towel and a Gatorade, quickly hopped on my moped and sped off. The air from the speeding cars hit my face as I waited for my turn at the intersection. Finally, there was a break in traffic, and I revved the gas. Nothing happened. I didn't move. I twisted the key to turn off the moped, and again to turn it back on, nothing happened.

*What the hell is going on? This has never happened before.* Then I remembered.

Gas. I hadn't filled up the moped in over a month! Shit, how was I going to get to practice? Cars started to pile up behind me and the honking horns sounded like a flock of geese was flying overhead. Quickly, I wheeled the moped to a side street and parked it.

I unzipped my swim bag and rummaged through it frantically looking for my cell phone. All that I found was what felt like 10 pounds of towels, swimsuits, goggles and clothes that weighed me down as I ran the two miles back to my house. I flung the door open and ran to find a phone.

"Mom? Mom! The moped ran out of gas, can you come get me and take me to practice?" I exclaimed.

"Margaret, I'm in Cedar Rapids, I can't come get you. Just take the gas can to the moped and fill it up." She replied

Chlorine Burn

"But Mom...I'm already 15 minutes late, and we have a meet tomorrow!" I pleaded.

"I know, I know, but I really can't come, I'm working, just take the gas can. I have to go, okay, See you tonight." The line clicked and went dead.

I scrolled through my contacts until I found my coach's number.

"Hey Burkle?" I ventured.

"Hey, where are you?" He asked with concern in his voice.

"Ummm...well...I was driving to practice and I ran out of gas...but I'll try to get there soon." I said, waiting for the concern to turn into anger. To my surprise, I heard laughter over the phone.

"Wow, how'd you manage that?" More chuckles. "Hey everyone, Margaret ran out of gas on her way here!" he told my teammates, I heard a chorus of girls laughing at my embarrassment. Haha. "Okay, well just get here ASAP," Burkle said.

"Will do." I replied.

I quickly got the one gallon gas can, and started to jog the same two miles back to the moped. Almost halfway there, I realized that I had the gas can, but no swim bag. I sprinted back to my house muttering angrily the whole way. Half an hour went by until I finally reached my moped, long enough for me to sweat completely through my polyester swimsuit. I popped the trunk and filled it up. Crossing my fingers, I turned it on and revved the gas again. I heard the engine roar to life, *whew!*

I pushed 30 mph riding back to my house to drop off the gas can. Hoping there weren't any police around, I sped to Mercer, and walked onto the pool deck 57 minutes late.

"Hey stupid, ready to swim?" said Burkle, smiling. I smiled back. Was I ever.