

"You can do it, Carmen!" screamed the crowd, but Carmen's concentration was so great that their cheers barely registered. She looked down at her feet, inhaled deeply, and slowly padded across the rough concrete floor. Every once in a while, she heard her parents' voices cut through the din, and she felt the gravity of the situation, but aside from those instances, she might as well have been all alone in the giant room.

Carmen eventually found herself standing at the base of a massive ladder with plastic steps. The ladder was so tall that she could barely see its apex. It made her nervous not to be able to see its top, but her coaches had taught her long ago to look forward rather than upward and concentrate solely on putting her hands and feet on the steps, one after another. By climbing in this fashion, it wasn't long before she stood on the platform, towering above the heads in the crowd. She had trained for this final diving meet of middle school for years, and she knew she was prepared to do her best.

Carmen slowly made her way to the edge of the platform and placed her toes at the very brink of the precipice. She looked straight ahead, drew in a deep breath and exhaled before throwing herself into the void. She loved the exhilaration of the wind whipping by her ears. While in the air, she flipped once, then twice, before piercing the surface of the water with her outstretched hands. She had jumped from such a great height that she went deep into the pool before rising up again. When she did finally surface she was pleased to see the judges holding signs with the highest scores she had ever been awarded for a dive.