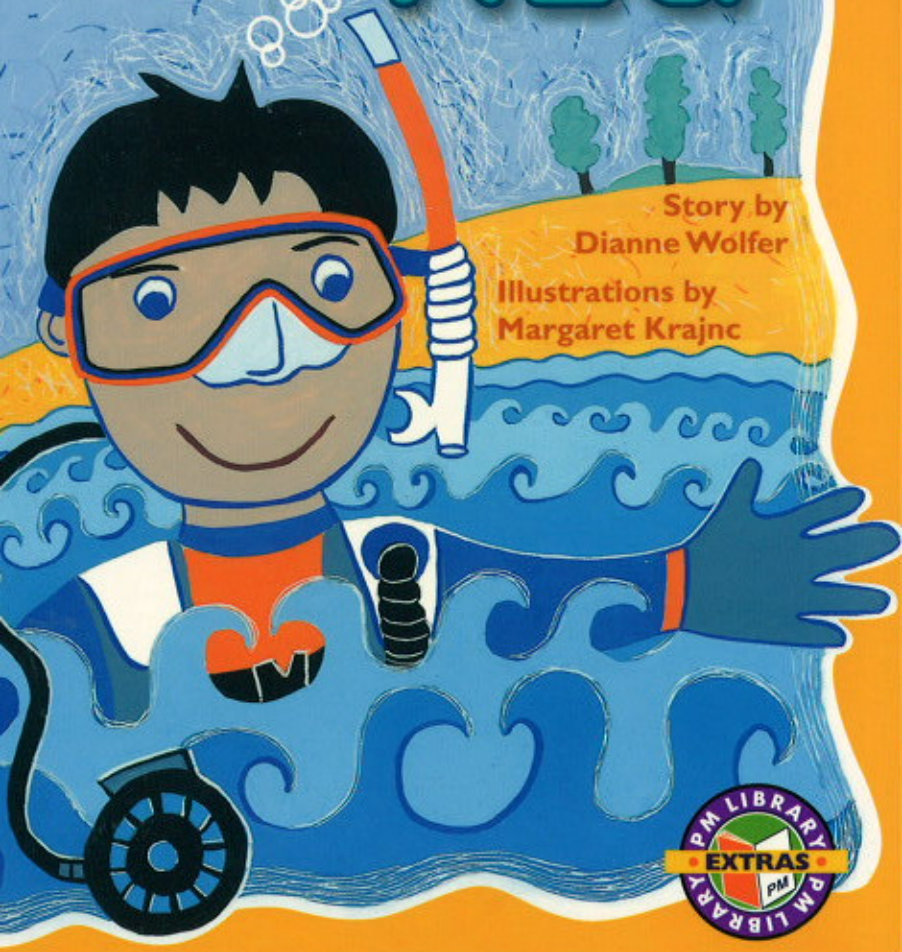
Scuba Kid

Story by
Dianne Wolfer

Illustrations by
Margaret Krajnc



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CHAPTER 1

Waiting



For years I've been waiting to turn twelve, the age when kids can scuba dive. I wanted to learn earlier but Mum and Dad wouldn't let me. Scuba doctors reckon it's too dangerous. Bubbles of nitrogen *could* get trapped in growing bones, and then I *might* not grow properly.

I've been *so* impatient. Mum and Dad both dive. Mum's hobby is taking underwater photographs. Her photos are really good. Some of them have even been used on postcards.

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My older brother, Scott, dives too. He learnt three years ago. He wants to become a dive master when he leaves school.

Whenever our family can afford it, we go to dive resorts for our holidays. Mum, Dad and Scott take turns to dive, because someone always has to stay behind with me. The left-behind-person says you see just as many fish when you snorkel, but I don't believe them. If snorkelling is so great, why are they all crazy about scuba diving?



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Sometimes, when Dad's finished a dive, he lets me play around with his spare breathing hose. It's such fun. I dive about like a seal in the shallows using up the last of his air. I've tried to get him to take me down further, past five metres, but he never does.

'It's not worth the risk,' Dad says. 'Be patient, you're nearly old enough.'

Nearly, but not quite. I love snorkelling, but it's not the same as diving. I hate being left behind in the shallows. Waiting to dive has been so frustrating, but not any more...

Tomorrow I turn twelve. At last!



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CHAPTER 2

Best in the Class



My grandma, aunties, cousins and friends gave Mum money towards my birthday presents: an adult-sized mask and snorkel, proper fins and a wetsuit. I look so cool when I'm wearing my new gear – like a real diver.

Mum booked me into a learn-to-dive course. At first everything was great. The hand signals were easy – I've known them for years. Scott has been helping me study, so learning about buoyancy, flotation and water pressure wasn't too hard.

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Bob, the dive instructor, taught us the basics. Then we went to the pool to practise. Bob showed me how to check the airflow in my regulator and how to buddy-breathe. Sharing my air supply was a little scary at first, but I soon got used to it.

The next thing I had to learn was how to remove my buoyancy vest underwater. It was fun. I was the best in the class. Mum and Dad were watching from the side of the pool. They looked really proud.

