Lucas
By Mariama Bah

I fall beneath the waves, only getting to the surface long enough to grab tiny sips of air. But slowly, each chance to breathe becomes further apart and each breath is shorter than the last. The dark blue water swirls around me, trapping me, keeping me from the air I so desperately need. My entire body is throbbing and my lungs feel like they’re on fire. I frantically kick my arms and legs in an attempt to break through to the surface. It’s no use. The water in my lungs weighs me down. I feel myself sinking…

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It was a hot, humid summer day. Clouds enveloped the bright blue sky. That didn’t stop the mid-July heat from seeping in, trapping every resident of Northeast Virginia in inescapable hotness. The water was calm and its quiet rustling echoed all along the coast. My best friend Lucas and I were at his grandmother’s beach house, splashing in the water, while his mother, grandmother and little brother sat on the beach.

All of them had rich caramel-colored skin, but only Lucas, his mother, and his brother had dark curly hair. His grandma had short, bright white hair. The two women had wise, dark eyes. Lucas and his brother though had honey-colored eyes; warm, playful, and golden.

“Child, no!” we heard his grandma cry out.

His little brother was eating sand, covered head to toe in the granules.

Lucas’ mother’s laugh rang across the water.

“Mom, it’s okay,” she said. She brushed the four-year-old off and kissed the top of his forehead before setting him off again.

After the commotion, a light mist started to drizzle over us. Lucas and I laughed while his family started packing up to head back to the beach house. “Ava, Lucas, are you two gonna be okay?” his mother yelled.

“Yes mom, we’re fine,” he answered, “I love you!”

She blew him a kiss before running back to the house. I looked at Lucas straight in the eyes, and said “Race ya.” He looked back at me, a daunting smile on his lips. He dove underwater and instead of following him, I floated alone for a second. I felt the cool rain plick down on my head and run down my long chocolate-colored hair. It made me shiver and goosebumps
came from my ivory-colored skin but it felt so good. The rain trickled down my face, my eyelashes blocking them from stinging my dark green eyes. I loved this. I loved the rain, and I loved my life.

It began to pour, so I dived underwater and swam to find Lucas. I cleaved through the water with rhythmic strokes, batting my legs, feeling the water rush past me as I moved forward. It was a little difficult since the rain was rattling the otherwise calm water swaying me from side to side. I came up for air, scanning around for my best friend, while waves crashed on top of me.

“Lucas!” I scream, “Lucas!”

Nothing.

I begin to panic. I tried to swim again but the water is too turbulent. Angry waves push me back and the heavy rain didn’t help either. I struggle for a bit and before I know it, I’m underwater, faced with death…

I push myself to the surface through the raging ocean waves and finally, I can breathe. I gulp the air, violently coughing out all the water from my lungs. The briny water burns my eyes blurring my vision, but I still manage to make out a flailing figure in the distance. Then it disappears. Lucas? I breathe deep and go back under. I hurry there and sure enough, I find my best friend fighting in the water, large air bubbles coming from his mouth. I rush to grab his hand but he’s going down, fast. I swim deeper, straining myself for his hand. I push and push and push until I can’t anymore and I go back up to the vicious waves for air before diving back underwater, swimming to reach him as fast as I possibly can.

He stopped flailing. He looks peaceful, his hair graciously dances around his head like black seaweed. I’m able to grasp his hand. It takes every ounce of strength I have in me to pull him up to the surface and swim with him through the tempestuous waves to shore. Up until then, I had fully underestimated the weight of a fourteen-year-old boy. I gently set Lucas down on the wet sand and check his pulse.

I feel nothing.

I don’t believe it. I place my quivering hands on his chest to start CPR. Even after five minutes I feel no pulse. I refuse to believe it. I alternate between CPR and mouth-to-mouth, getting more hysterical with every second that passes.

“Come on, COME ON YOU CAN’T DIE, PLEASE!” I scream.
I pound on his chest until I get too weak to do anything but cry. Hot tears cascade down my eyes and my sobs echo over the roaring waves behind me as I cry over his dead body. I see his family come out of the house while the rain pours down on their heads. I cry even harder. I see his little brother run up to me and give me a big hug. He brushes the wet hair off my face and kisses my cheek.

“Why are you so sad?” he asks. He points to Lucas and says, “Why is he sleeping?”

Lucas’ mother and grandmother are standing over us. His mom is standing in a dripping flowered sundress. Her hair is limp hanging over her shoulders. She looks confused, her eyes are glazed and she isn’t talking.

After a while she asks, “Is he…”

I nod.