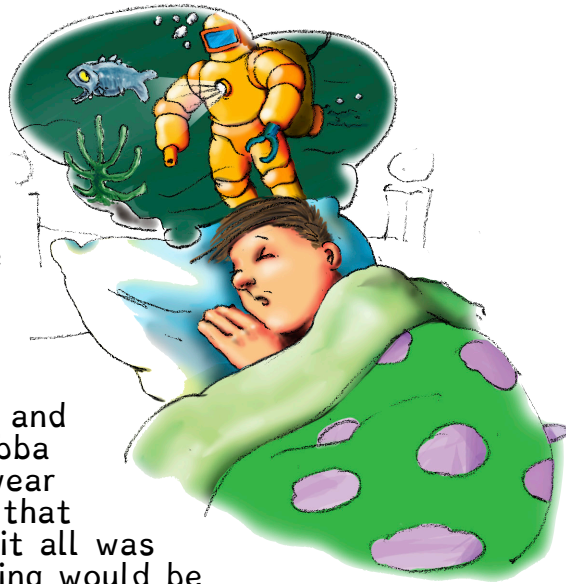


DREAMS

STORY BY PATRICK VAN HOESERLANDE ILLUSTRATION PETER BOSTEELS

In the week up to their pool training, Skubba grew more nervous by the day. He could hardly contain the increasing tension. At last, he would learn to dive with real diving equipment. They no longer had to make their own dive suit, and equipment, but Skubba would now get to wear the real thing. Not that making and testing it all was no fun, but real diving would be something even greater. And he was very excited about it.



He dreamed how he, in a few years, would discover new places underwater for himself. How he, as a diving explorer, would be the first to discover the city of Atlantis. In the movie they had to drill through the earth's crust, but Fred had read in a book that the city had sunk underwater. It had to be somewhere on the seabed. And that was a challenge for real divers, there would be no drilling through dirt.

On another day, he dreamed how he would be the first to discover a new wreck. It would be the most beautiful thing he would ever see. An intact ship resting on the bottom of the sea with a lot of fish circling around it. Fish of all sizes and colours. And dolphins. And whales. And...

During the day, he was a daydreamer and his thoughts wandered off. When the instructor spoke to him, he stared blankly at the board. He was somewhere else out diving.

"Skubba. Skubba!", the instructor's voice brought him back to his desk. But only for a moment, because he would soon be back amongst the bubbles and the fish.

In his bag, he carried a stack of drawings that he had made during his free time. He had drawings of divers, sunken ships lying on

the sea bed, real and fantasy fish and lost cities.

Fred had his mind on diving too and he also started to dream of it. Would he learn to dive with his friend? He liked the idea of diving, but he was afraid of water. He could not swim and thought he would never be allowed to learn to dive. Water was not for him, that was something just for Skubba.

Skubba? What would his friend think if he did not go with him? He would understand, but could he let his friend down? Skubba would need help. Someone had to assist him. And Fred was very eager to know and learn more about diving. Suddenly it was clear to him; he would go, not to dive, but to learn and to help when he could be useful.

Fred's fear of water gave way to thoughts of all the special diving gear that would be needed to dive far and deep, of tanks with extra air, of submersibles with sensors to find wrecks, and of new fish that they would discover together. His stack of drawings in his school bag also grew as he drew what he imagined the underwater world to look like. A few days later Fred came out of the library with a pile of books on diving, fishing and the oceans. He would read and study them all!

And so this carried on until the day of their first pool training.