

DIVING EQUIPMENT

STORY BY PATRICK VAN HOESERLANDE ILLUSTRATION PETER BOSTEELS

On their very first training day, Skubba and Fred were both very tense. Skubba's mother had driven them to the pool and their parents were relieved they were finally starting the course as they had both become very restless with the follow up to learning to dive. What an adventure they were going to have!

Skubba and Fred were an hour early for their appointment with Nella. They could not wait and were afraid that they would be late. Skubba's mother had told them that they would be too early, but they wouldn't listen. They wanted to go and be ready. Skubba had his swimming gear with him, but not Fred. After all, he had decided not to dive. Yet he came along to support his friend and learn all about diving. Nothing could stop them now.

Nella had also arrived early, and when she saw the boys, she decided not to let them wait any longer. She saw how excited they were and didn't want to disappoint them. She called them and asked the two friends to help her unload the diving equipment from her car. Full of enthusiasm, they carried the dive box to the pool and put it down at the entrance hall. Nella opened the box and took out some diving gear. Then she closed the lid.

"Good afternoon Skubba and Fred. Welcome to our youth diving school," she said.

The two boys replied politely, but no more than a "hello" came from their mouths. They were too busy staring at the equipment Nella held in her hands.

"Do you know anything about diving equipment?"

Fred began to tell her all about their adventures with the homemade diving helmet, the dive bag and the belt with weights. Nella was amazed by the duo's creativity. She wanted to know every

detail, but that had to wait for now as they had a lot to get through.

"You two know a lot about diving. Here, in this box is all my stuff. This is what we call ABC equipment." She showed them a mask, a snorkel, a pair of fins and a weight belt, and lay them on the lid.

With open mouths, Skubba and Fred admired all the material. Wow!

When Nella told them they were allowed to pick them up, they treated the items as if they were bits of gold.

As Fred asked her, "Why this and why that,"

Skubba could not resist trying everything on. It was a silly sight watching Skubba stand there. The equipment was far too big for him and did not fit. But Skubba felt like a real diver and did not care how he looked.

Nella opened the chest again and this time, Skubba and Fred had only dreamt about what she was getting

out to show them now...

