

# THE TANK & ACCESSORIES

STORY BY PATRICK VAN HOESERLANDE ILLUSTRATION PETER BOSTEELS

Nella opened the chest again and showed them a vest that could be inflated.

Nella called the inflatable vest, "A BCD or a jacket."

She told them that you could attach a tank to this jacket and that you could dive with it. The two friends looked at each other full of anticipation.

Nella watched their curious eyes. Because they still had time, she decided to put the jacket and tank together. She fastened the jacket with a belt to the tank.

She stuck the belt through a black, plastic thing with 3 openings. It was like the two halves of the strap were sewn together. Everything was fast and smooth. Fred wrote every step down while Skubba closely followed her actions. You could see that she had already done that a lot.

Then she screwed a strange thing she called a regulator, onto the cylinder. She told them that it was the first stage.

On that first stage, there were many tubes attached. Then she turned the tank's valve on and both boys heard a sound like air escaping out of a balloon. The tubes moved a little bit. It was as if they were alive for a moment.

Nella explained and showed how to use the air from the tank. She used it to inflate the jacket. Fred knew almost immediately why. "Archimedes," he said.

Nella was surprised that Fred knew this. For Skubba this was not surprising at all. He knew that his friend was smart.

On one of those hoses there was a thing that allowed you to breathe underwater. She called it a mouthpiece. The mouthpiece was stuck on the second stage. Skubba wondered why you needed

two stages underwater. Was one not enough? He would ask Fred later.

She invited them both to give it a try and breathe through it. Skubba had some difficulties putting the thing in his mouth, but Nella told him he would find it easier soon enough. He had to put his teeth within the mouthpiece and lay his lips over the edge. He succeeded in doing just that. That thing worked much better than their homemade diving helmet. After a few deep inhales, he passed it somewhat hesitantly to

Fred.

"May I dive with that?", Skubba asked.

"Yes, you will use it for diving," Nella said, "but first you have to learn how to use it properly in the pool."

His eyes sparkled. He would go diving with it!

Fred had listened well and could breathe with ease through the mouthpiece.

They followed another tube down to a dial which looked very much like a watch to them. The needle on the dial pointed to the number '200'.

"This is a pressure gauge. This allows us to see how much air there is left in the tank. The needle shows that there is 200 bar of air in the tank. That means that it is completely full."

"Aha", Skubba and Fred said together. Neither one of them had any idea what Nella was talking about.

The friendly lady at the door shouted that they were allowed to go to the locker rooms. The swimming pool training would start soon. Before they could enter, they had to sign a form first. For safety.

