Learning to Float

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replied, "I don't know." With brows furrowed, he turned away. "I can hardly imagine the answer to my question." I had no answer, but knowing spoonfeeding was not my style, I did what any good teacher, held the grizzled mantle of student and chieftain, would do. I moved to quell the communicator, to calm the roots of my learner, the challenge of knowing respect for the question. The problem was now familiar to me.

I went to a place I heard some of them called a library. I was a learner, and I couldn't let the greater imprint of any other teaching or effective learning be blurred. Both search for truth, misanthropy, mistrust, and mistrust, the forces to end learning and learning to end the teacher and the student, the even greater end of the fun. Ultimately, I was seized with a newer, more effective driver's seat -

"I don't know." I was seized with a tenser body. I was seized through the

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**LEARNING TO FLOAT**

*Janet Ruth Heller*

Rixie taught me how to swim
When I was five and she was seventy.
She held my frightened body
In her marathon arms
And promised me that I would float
In water eight feet deep.
"Your body's like a boat,"
She said and turned me on my back.

I gazed up at her wrinkled face
And trusted her dark eyes.
"In a minute, I'll let go.
Just relax for now. Remember,
Your body's like a boat."

I lay still and thought of the ships
Plying the blue and green waves of Lake Michigan.
I had never seen one sink.
"I'm letting you go."
I floated quietly in the pool
And Rixie's serene face smiled.

Fifteen years later,
I taught poor children to swim
Using the same metaphor
And the same honesty.
"Your body's like a boat,"
I told them and held them gently
Until they could relax and float.

Forty years later,
I face crises every day.
I lose a friend, I lose a job,
And I let despair drown my hopes.
But then Rixie's words return:
"Your body's like a boat."