Lily becomes an underwater flying fish, the constant black line on the pool floor guiding her to glory. It all feels good, feels just right. The high-pressure training she’s gone through for years streams her into her race, makes her propel forward with three perfect dolphin kicks. Her muscles pull against the pool water, and she takes a moment to breathe. The quick burst of oxygen takes her into the turn, keeps her going.

Lily can’t see anyone in front of her as her body tires. This is what she’s used to, the daily fight against her exhaustion and the determination to keep going. Even when her arms feel like they’re made out of iron and her legs won’t move, Lily steals more air and kicks harder into her second turn.

The 100 yard race is double that of the race of the 50, so she has to keep fighting and swim it all again. Lily forces her mind onto what she’s doing. Stroke, kick, stroke, stroke. Reach out farther just like Robert always yells at her to do. Steal a breath. Streamline and kill the last turn. Make it count. Reach farther. Kick harder. Do it. Just do it.

And when her fingertips touch the wall, Lily turns and sees her time. After all the drama, she’s placed first in her heat and has made it into finals.