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As a competitive swimmer, I am enveloped in water like a second skin. Slicing through the rippling blue sheen, I stand indifferent to the vast quantity of water contained within the pool, as if the sight were no more than memorized lines. It is my element, always there, always full.

Among flowing faucets and filtered ease, I live comfortably at home. A background noise I grow immune to, water is steady and thoughtless. I never meant to waste it—I simply believed it would not disappear.

Then came one morning.

Drowsiness draping thickly over my puffy eyes, I padded into the kitchen, cup in hand. I turned the faucet handle, expecting that familiar *WHOOSH*—but all I got was a dry, wheezing rattle and a hollow clunk. Rubbing my eyes, I squinted at the forlorn faucet. I tried again. Nothing.

“Dad!” I shouted. “The faucet’s not working.”

With a noncommittal grunt and a creak of the bedsprings, my father emerged from his bedroom and went outside to check. When he returned, his face was quiet and unreadable.

“They’ve shut it off,” he said. “Whole neighborhood. Something wrong with a pipe. We’ll be getting water back by tomorrow.”

Tomorrow. Suddenly, I was uncomfortably aware of the faint dryness in my mouth and my scratchy throat. An irrational tinge of fear sent a jolt through my body, leaving behind an unpleasant, warm sensation. A small chant that grew louder each second echoed in my brain. Find water now. Find water now. Find water now.

My family rushed to the local market, but we were not the only ones. The bottled water aisle was a sight to behold: tangled arms, harried voices, reddened cheeks. Unfortunately, the cheap cases of water were gone—only glossy-packaged, expensive water bottles sold individually remained. They would have to do. My father grabbed the remaining seven (they were disappearing by the minute) and tossed them haphazardly into the cart. For a moment, I stood motionless, disillusioned by the raw, uncomfortable glimpse into a world where water had to be chased.

That night, my family and I rationed what we had, and for the first time in my life, I understood what scarcity felt like. It was not the disconnected knowledge read about in textbooks.

Now, I *truly* understood.

And with it came remorse—for the water I'd let slip down the drain without thought, for the long, steamy showers, for the untouched glasses I'd poured and never finished. All of it came back like echoes in an empty sink.

The next morning, I woke before anyone else. I padded into the kitchen, hesitant, and turned the faucet.

A clear, cold stream spilled into my waiting cup.

Now, I turn off the faucet when I brush my teeth. I shorten my showers. I drink every drop. Not out of guilt, but out of reverence. Because I now know: water is limited. It is something temporary, and it deserves more than silence and waste.