Debatably Dangerous

1st = by Sylvie McGregor

Preparing was the hardest bit. The build-up and suspense was the part that made me feel like I was going to pass out, not the holding-your-breath-under-metres-and-metres-of-water part. Because when I get beneath that sea...

'Ready?'

One nod and I was away. The cold water started to seep through my thin wetsuit, sending a refreshing shock coursing around my stiff body. I slowly sank through the blue, transparent water, past the frayed rope, kicking all the while. Free-diving may be known as dangerous, but to me it was the most peaceful of all the sports. For miles and miles, any which way from me, there was only the sea. Down and down I went, occasionally pulling on the thick rope. I tried to relax as my lungs suddenly realised there was no air to breathe.

After what felt like a day, I reached the tag at the bottom of the rope: **20 m** it said. I scrambled to grab it with my long, pale hands, starting to dread the prospect of having to double my efforts just to get back up. I now began to get those symptoms and feelings that any free-diver worth their salt knew.

Invisible hands squeezed at my lungs.

My vision became steadily foggier.

Panic seized my stiff frame.

An impending sense of doom reached me as I kicked as hard as I could.

Just when I'd begun to dip in and out of consciousness, my head finally broke the seal on top of the sea. Salty air reached my body, and my panic ebbed away as I controlled my rapid breathing. Concerned voices filled my ears. I silenced them all with just one question.

'Can I try 30 metres?'

Everyone laughed.

'What?' I said.