**Jumping**

**by Nora Crawley**

As she stood on the edge of the cliff she looked out to the cloudless sky. It was a spectacular blue, matched only by the turquoise water below her. A soft wind was blowing, whipping pebbles and dust gently against her bare ankles. This calm was why she had picked today. Because today, nothing would stand in her way.

 It was a long way down and she felt a pang of fear as she looked. She wasn’t really afraid of what she was about to do but was terrified of what might go wrong. There were so many things out of her control here but that was part of what made it exhilarating. Taking a deep breath, she walked a few feet from the edge and began running.

 She tried not to look at the edge of the cliff. It was getting closer and closer as she ran, feeling the tiny rocks digging into the soles of her bare feet. And then she was there, at the edge. She jumped.

Suddenly she was falling through the brilliant cloudless sky. The ocean, sparkling in the midday sun, was blinding beneath her. She could feel the air embracing her as she fell, forcing the salty smell of the water all around her. Her hair flew up around her and filled her ears with the strange sound a flag makes as is blows around in a heavy wind.

The water was getting closer now and time seemed to stand still. She was floating in a pocket of wind dozens of feet below a cliff and dozens of feet above the warm water. It was a fall most people would be terrified of, but she felt absolute calm as she fell through the warm summer air.

As the water got closer she shifted her body, moving to land headfirst. With her arms extended, she could almost feel the water around her as she fell farther and farther. Then she was in it. She let her eyes get used to the stinging salt water and held her breath. There were a few startled fish, brightly colored and beautiful, but her dive scared them all away.

Slowly, reluctantly she turned her body back towards the surface and the sun. No longer propelled by gravity, she had to work to get back; but soon she was breathing again. Pushing wet strands of hair out of her eyes, she floated there for a while, looking up at the cliff. She had fallen over eighty feet, landing in water that, although not fathoms deep, had significant depth. Lying on the back in the warm sun, feeling the rays on her arms, legs, and face, she couldn’t help but laugh. She had fallen and yet she was alive. The adrenaline in her system made her itch for another jump, anything exciting, but she was firm about her rules. There would be only one jump, it wouldn’t happen again.