

## 1. Jacqueline Learns to Play Chess

*Jump in the Waves* Chapter Nine: "From Withholding to Competing"

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"It is too early," I was told, "she will be in later." So I waited. Every few minutes I asked, "Is Miss Coque here? When will she arrive?" Then she really did arrive. The night nurse greeted her saying, "Jacqueline has been asking for you." Miss Coque smiled and said nothing. I just looked at her and waited. She hung her coat, spoke to the night nurse, read some papers. I started to doubt that she really had something for me. But I thought it was nice to have her around anyhow. When finally we were alone, she came to me, took a chair, and sat near the bed. Then she pulled out of her large pocketbook a small board. She opened the box containing little wooden pieces, placed them on the board, and explained, "This is the king and this is the queen, the knight, the rook, the pawns. Look, this moves this way, that goes there. If you put this here it can take that one off." And suddenly, I found myself moving the pieces, capturing hers, putting them back so they faced each other equally. I played with Miss Coque all day. I could not part with my new game. She was having fun too, which made the game even more thrilling. We played for hours, and suddenly the days went by quickly. I was surprised when I was told one morning, "Today you will get up." I had been in bed for several weeks, and when I stood up my legs buckled under me. But soon strength came back and Miss Coque said, "You won't need me anymore. You're well now." My stomach turned into an empty pit. "You can keep the chess set," she went on. "It's yours. Good-bye, dear, and good luck to you." She left me with Nanny and soon I was thrown back into the old routine.

Yes, the chess set was mine and I treasured it. But it lay dormant in its box. A new life was bubbling in me; I yearned to play but there was no one to play with. One evening my father said, "I'll play you a game." I jumped up to get the set and set up the pieces. "I haven't played for a long time," he said, "but I'll try." After a couple of games, he started playing slowly. It was his move and he was sitting and thinking. He didn't seem able to move. I couldn't understand. I was just pushing pieces and he was suffering. He tapped his fingers on the table, humming some monotonous little rhythm. "Well," I said, "it's your move." I was getting annoyed. He waited still longer, and finally moved. Although he had studied the position for such a long time, he left a knight where it could be taken. I grabbed the knight. "Oh, no. I didn't see it," he said. "I told you I hadn't played in a long time. I can't do it anymore." He got up and left.

I had won. But my father had walked off. He'd turned away from chess, from me. I sat alone in front of the chess board, frustrated, wanting to call him, "Come back! Play some more." But he'd left.

Now chess had become more than a game, more than a companion. It had created an exchange with my father. We had actually competed, and I'd tasted a win. But more important even than the win was my feeling for chess: I loved the game, the pieces, how they moved, the challenge to find the solution to the infinite combinations. I had actually fallen in love.