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POT HOLE

Copyright

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Parameters Form

Team Details

STATE: VIC
DIVISION: Middle School
SCHOOL/GROUP: Box Hill High School (BOX HILL)
TEAM NAME: MOUNTAIN WATER
TEAM ID: 890

Parameters and random words

Parameters

Primary character 1 Teacher
Primary character 2 Barber
Non-human character Flower pot
Setting Swimming pool
Issue Failed test

Random words

ruby
melts
shiver
tasty
sponge

CHAPTER 1: THE NEWS

'Mum! Dad!' I called out as I ran to my home, "I got my test results!" I was so excited. I had studied so much for these tests. I think I did well.

My mum and dad rushed outside. "Let's see it!" They called out, as excited as I was. We sat down on the stairs and opened the envelope. My eyes darted across the sheet. All the colour drained from my face.

"Failed..." I read out.

I looked down the page and read more of it.

"Failed." I started hyperventilating. How could this happen? I kept on reading. "Failed, failed, failed...". I let out a scream and buried my face in my hands. I was so ashamed. I couldn't tell if my parents were staring at me. I jumped from my chair and ran upstairs, ignoring my parents calling out to me. I slammed the door behind me and I wept. All I could think of was.. Why? What did I do to even deserve this? I studied for all my tests and yet I failed. All of them. Not a single pass, not even my hairdressing VET which I had worked so hard for.

I needed to clear my mind. Suddenly, I heard a sound coming from my pocket. A notification on my phone. I pulled my phone out of my pocket and turned it on.



I doubted it was anything important. It was a text from Amber. She wanted to meet up. Amber and I had been friends for longer than I could remember. Since kindergarten, she was the only close friend I had ever had. She was the only one who supported my decision of becoming a barber when I grew up. She'd always been reliable, and I knew she was a swimming teacher at the local pool Tuesdays and Thursdays. She'd probably have time to chat and swim for a bit after the primary school kids left at 4:00. I wanted to go. It would clear my mind. I took my bathing suit and drove to the pool.

Once I got there, I was filled with colour yet again. So much noise, so much fun. It made me forget about my despair and my test. Suddenly, I spotted Amber. She walked towards me.

"Hey!" She waved cheerfully, her hair still dripping from the pool water.

"Hey," I grumbled back.

Chapter 2: AMBER

"So how are you?" Amber asked

"I've been pretty good but I just failed my hairdressing exam. And all my other exams, but they don't matter as much." I said.

"That sucks." she said empathetically.

I put on my best poker face and said "Yeah, but other than that I'm holding up pretty well. What about you?"

"Not bad. My teaching's been fun. I've been teaching the primary school kids."

"Well I'm gonna go for a swim. You're welcome to join if you want."

"Nah I'll stay here for a bit."

"Ok then."

Amber still looked the same. She had never really changed her style. She had messy brown hair that was usually tied behind her head. She had bright green eyes and had always had a passion for swimming. She was fairly strong and there was one memory when she showed her scary side. A kid had been shoving me over for wanting to be a barber and she ran over and punched the kid. He went home with a black eye and she had been suspended for a day.

I left her and ran off towards the pool, until a lifeguard told me to slow down. I then walked towards the pool and climbed up a diving board. It wasn't impressive or anything, just for fun. As the water rushed past my face, I thought back to

kindergarten. The times where everything was simple. There was nothing that could separate me and Amber. We were the bestest of friends. Just then, my thinking was cut short. It was as if something was tugging on me. As if a black hole was dragging me towards something, but what? Suddenly, before I knew it I was falling... falling... falling.



Chapter 3: WHY?

Weightless
 Meaningless
 Cold
 So cold
 Sad
 So sad
 Anechoic
 Silent
 Weightless

heart

Silent
 Anechoic
 So sad
 Sad
 So cold
 Cold

Air
 Fall
 Slow
 Far
 Old
 Green
 Strong
 Wind
 Ground

Land
 Fast
 Close
 Vines
 Green
 Flower

Against the wind I bravely
 march,
 But its force grows stronger, a
 relentless arch.
 With each step taken, my
 heart does pound,
 As they face the tempest's
 deafening sound.
 With trembling steps, their
 filled with fear,
 They plunge into depths, no
 vision clear.
 A fall unending, an abyss so
 vast,
 Each twist and turn, like a

Meaningless
Weightless

Pot
Floor

never-ending blast.
My mind started to run.

Amber and I kept falling and falling. It was so surreal. No noise, nothing to see, just the sensation of falling. Would it ever end? The only noise was wind rushing past us and our screams fading into the distance.



Chapter 4: FEAR

Suddenly, the wind stopped pushing against my face and my body. A **shiver** ran down my spine. It was freezing, wherever I was. I hadn't dried off from the pool. I opened my eyes and looked around, still lying down on something. I looked down. I was laying on vines. Vines thicker than my arms. A warm light fell on the seemingly infinitely big room through the hole in the tall roof, giving everything a kind of unreal glow. I looked up at the hole I fell down from, I could see people swimming around, seemingly unaffected by the hole. But what was stranger was how the water just stopped, not going down into the hole, it was just there, floating. But suddenly, a dark figure dropped from the hole.

A second thud rings out, a few metres away from me.

"Amber?" I call, my throat dry. It hurts to talk. Too much.

"Will?" Called out a voice. A familiar voice.

I stood up slowly and made my way to Amber, helping her up.

"Thanks." She said, looking around as well.

I muttered 'you're welcome'. She started to walk to the middle of the chamber. I followed her, nervous. I had always been the least brave of our duo. At first, we just walked around, without any goal. But as we got closer to the middle of the room, we realised. There was something there, on top of the vines. Brown, empty, small, about the size of someone's head. I squinted a little. My eyes are still adjusting. A flower pot?

"What's this doing here?" Amber muttered, reaching out to pick it up, but when she touched it, she disappeared.

"Amber?" I called.

Silence.

"Amber?"

I bent down to touch the flowerpot.

"Hello," something said. The voice was odd. But before I could think about it anymore, a mystic energy surrounded me, and I felt my body being pulled somewhere.

CHAPTER 5: RIDDLE RIDDLE ON THE WALL

We landed in a random dark room. We stood up and looked around. It was pitch black except for the tiny bit of light emitted from the pot. From what I could make out, we were in some kind of cave. The rocks colour, I could not see. However, I didn't need to. At that moment the entire room lit up with a giant burst of light. We covered our eyes instinctively. The pot started talking again, except this time it felt more like a clue or a riddle. "What the hell!" Amber shouted in surprise. A raspy voice followed:

"My first is in constructiveness but not in constrictive
My second is in thermos but not in mother
My third is in stalactite but not in classicist

My first is in circumstantial but not in naturalistic
My second is in babysit but not in bassist

My first is in shoehorn but not in snorer
My second is in tenaciously but not in unconstitutionally
My third is in masculine but not in clumsiness
My fourth is in traversal but not in slaver."

"What does that mean?" Amber and I said in unison.

"My first is in constructiveness but not in constrictive," Amber repeated. "My first is in constructiveness but not in constrictive," she repeated yet again.

"Maybe it's got something to do with the letters inside the words?" I suggested. "That could work," she replied.

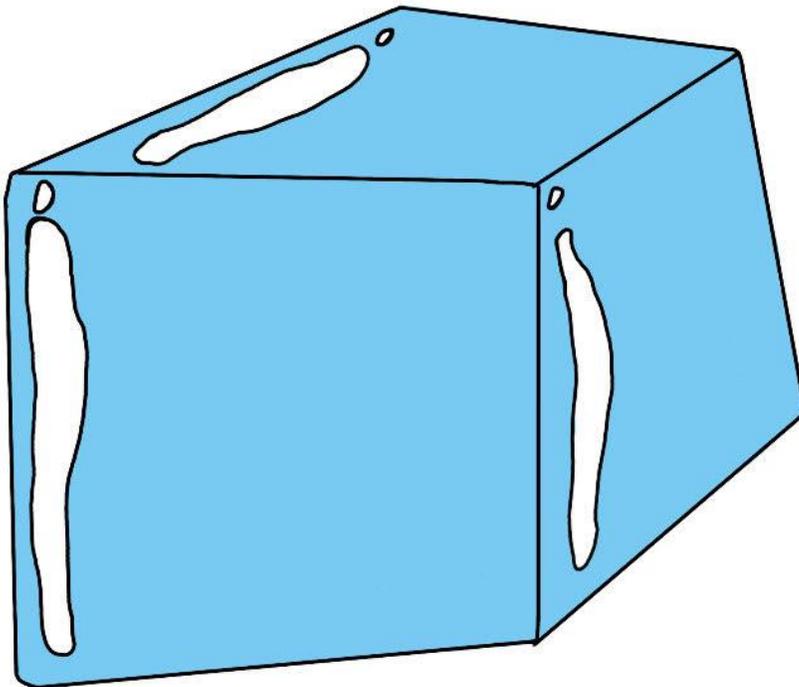
"Let's see..." I continued, "U is a letter that isn't in constrictive but is in constructiveness."

"Yes," Amber agreed.

Using this same technique, we finally managed to solve the riddle.

"Use my heat?" Amber said. "What does that mean?"

Suddenly, an ice cube appeared from thin air.



"How many more surprises..." I groaned, annoyed. I took the ice cube that was floating in the air and stared at it. Amber and I waited for a long time for the ice cube to melt or for something to happen. But it felt like nothing happened.

After a long time, I broke the silence, "Use my heat...". Amber said, "What could that mean?" "I mean," I replied, "The pot said the riddle, right? So maybe we have to melt the ice cube with the pot!"

"That could work," Amber agreed, "So, all we do is put the ice inside the pot and the ice **melts**, right?"

"Exactly," I replied. I put the ice inside the pot and watched it slowly melt until there was nothing else. The cave brightened up with a tremendous light. "Here we go again..." I said as we got pulled to another room.

CHAPTER 6: THE SHARD...

Yet again we were in another room; we had teleported. I woke up sprawled all over the floor. Amber helped me up as we surveyed the room as always. Nothing special; a set of drawers along one wall, traces of dirt on the floor and walls, a wooden table in the corner opposite the one we were standing in.

"What's that?" Amber whispered, "It's glowing so much."

"That's a... sponge?"

"What do you mean?" She exclaimed "How would sponge have anything to d-" She was suddenly cut off by the pot, speaking in its fairytale narrator voice.

"In a room so small, with walls of stone,
A chest awaits, all alone,
Inside you'll find, a shard so bright,
To place on the orb, with all your might.
But beware, for the task is not so easy,
It requires such strength that you'll be left queasy
Once the shard is placed, on the orb so round,
All the water around, will make no sound,
For into the sponge, it will be soaked,
And your quest will be complete, no longer provoked."

"What the hell does that mean?" she exclaimed "We already spent so much time on the last one"

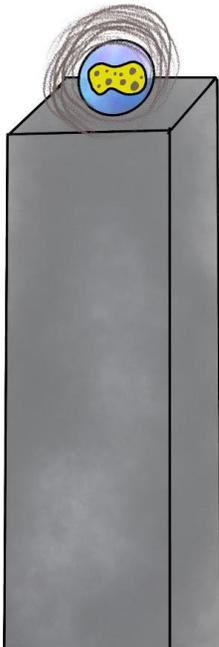
"Well, it said there's a chest with a shard, and we have to use the shard to break some orb." I said, looking around for any hint of a chest.

Then, I saw something. A small rock poking out from under the drawers. It probably meant nothing, but I decided to pull it out. I could only move it a bit before it got stuck. For a second, I thought that it just got caught on something. But then, I realised one of the drawers had opened. Inside, there was a chest.

"The one the pot told us about!" Amber said from behind me, reaching over to open it.

Inside the chest, there was a shard - the one the pot told us about - and a piece of paper with a drawing of a **sponge** dripping water. Then next to the chest, also in the drawer, was a blue orb. The one the pot told us about.

"Let's do it, then." I said. Amber grabbed the orb, and I grabbed the shard. She held the orb up. I hit the orb as hard as I could with the shard, and out popped a sponge, which Amber caught in her right hand.



"So, what now?" I asked.

"Leave it to me."

Amber, with the piece of paper now in her left hand, dipped the sponge into the pot full of water and soaked it all up.

"I don't have anywhere to put it now." She laughed.

"Give it to me. I have pockets."

"Won't your clothes get wet?"

"Well, I'm wearing bathers anyways. They're meant to get wet."

Amber laughed again.

"Well, we both know what to do now."

And so, we reached out and touched the now-empty pot again.

CHAPTER 7: ROT

Once again, the world around me dissipated. Sizzling into a blurry mush, but before my mind could comprehend it, a room reflects into my eyes. A room with a table, a table with 2 pots on it. Each pot had a red apple. The familiar flower pot had a nice and fresh apple in it. While the other pot had an old and rotten apple. Above the original pot was a water droplet. At this point my mind had caught up to the moment. I looked around and found Amber still in a dazed state.

"Amber! Amber!" I screamed.

Amber looked as if she was rebooting, I mean who wouldn't. We are in a giant hole while teleporting. As I was contemplating the situation we were in, Amber came back to reality and as soon as she did, the pot started speaking, "The apple in the pot next to me is very *tasty*, that is all I have to say to you."



"I.... I don't believe *that* bad and ROTTEN apple is tasty" exclaimed Amber. She sighed.

"What we need is to figure out the puzzle for this room," said Amber.

We both go towards the table and pots. Above the original pot was a drawing of a water droplet on the wall, and above the rotten apple was a name tag sticker with the word "Tasty" on it.

"I don't even know where to start," I said

"I guess you could eat the 'Tasty' apple," Amber replied sarcastically.

"I mean, what else could we do," Amber continued.

I then went to eat the 'tasty' apple. Its bitter but somewhat lovely taste filled my mouth, but it all ended and dissolved into my saliva. Suddenly, some text on the wall appeared.

"All the way, when you see vine:

Lever - on"

"Code?" Amber asked, "Why was there some code on the wall?"

"Well," I replied, "no point in figuring it out,"

Amber ignored me and continued, "It must be a clue."

I ignored Amber, "I think this door opens up."

We walked up to the door and pulled it up, then I walked through to a sea of vines and called for Amber. We walked all the way to one of the walls of the chamber, and to our left, under the vines, was a lever. I pulled it, unsure of what would happen next...

Chapter 8: THE WALL

A part of the wall - a hidden door - moved up slowly, creaking and crumbling, leaving a wave of dust in its wake, to reveal a square-shaped room. Big, although not as large as the chamber we were standing in. The walls looked cleaner than the ones in the other rooms, a sharp, cool grey. In the far end of the room, there was another flower pot, a dark red, in contrast with the light brown talking one and the dark brown one with the rotten apple in it. Amber and I walked slowly to the flower pot. Inside was a large **ruby**, about the size of a tennis ball.

"Wait," Amber said, "Remember that picture of the water droplet? The one above the red apple?"

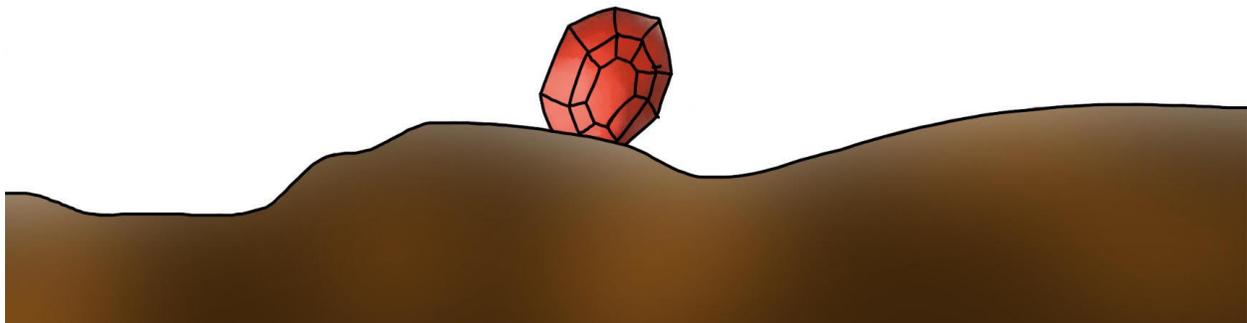
"Yeah."

"The apple was red. Like this ruby. We have water. That means..."

"We have to water the ruby?" I said, finishing her sentence.

I turned around, scanning the room more clearly and noticing a door I hadn't seen previously. I walked towards it, and Amber followed. She put her hand on the doorknob and turned it, pushing it open. There was hardly a room behind it, rather a storage cabinet, with a dirt floor. Near the bottom of the back wall, a small arrow pointing to the floor along with a shovel and an apple had been carved into the stone. Looking up, I realised that there was no roof; we were standing inside a tunnel to the surface. The light from the now setting sun hurt my eyes, although it probably wasn't actually that bright.

"Is this where we're meant to put the ruby?" I asked.



"We're growing a rubystalk. Like Jack and the Beanstalk but it's a ruby." Amber laughed.

"Well, there's nothing else we can do. Might as well try it out."

So, I used my hands to dig a small hole in the dirt, and Amber put the ruby in. I covered the ruby with dirt, grabbed the wet sponge out of my pocket then squeezed all the water out on the spot where the ruby was buried. For a second, nothing happened.

"Did it work?" Amber said.

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But then a glimmering red crystal broke through the dirt. It kept growing, slowly first then speeding up, taking the shape of a beanstalk - a rubystalk. It grew and grew until it reached the surface.

Chapter 9: RUBYSTALK

I looked up the giant rubystalk and looked at Amber. I knew she was thinking about the same thing as me.

"Do we have to climb up that?" I said aloud.

"I think so," Amber replied.

I groaned. I gripped the first ruby but then immediately retreated by hand. It was burning. I looked around me but there was nothing to muffle the heat. I decided that we would just have to climb up without any protection. I put my hand back onto the giant tower of rubies. But we came face to face with another problem.

"The glare!" I shouted to Amber, "It's too bright!"

"Just squint," Amber shouted back.

I took Amber's advice and squinted my eyes. The sun's brightness immediately stopped bothering me. I continued on my way with Amber closely behind my trail. Amber and I continued climbing up. The struggle was hard and monotonous. By the time we were halfway up, the sun had already set. The only light was coming from the dim moon and the shining stars. My hands were aching, and my feet were so close to giving out. However, when I thought that all hope was lost, we reached the ledge and climbed off the rubystalk. I looked around. We were about a hundred metres from the pool where this had all started. It felt so good to finally stand on hard ground. I helped Amber climb off the rubystalk.

"Finally!" we said, collapsing onto the soft grass under our feet and looking up at the stars and the moon in the night sky. It was probably close to 10 by then, but neither of us wanted to leave. We were exhausted, but neither of us wanted to fall asleep.

"Never gonna do something like that again, are we?" I laughed.

Amber laughed along with me, and soon we couldn't stop anymore. I laughed until I could barely breathe, then when we calmed down, I helped her up. We walked through the grass, back to the pool then put our normal clothes on over our bathers.

Then Amber and I said goodbye and went our separate ways, ready for the next day.

Epilogue

Once again, envelope in hand, sitting next to my parents. We all held our breaths as I opened. I slowly read out the words. I passed. I finally got my dream job. My parents were ecstatic, and so was I! I went to my room to call my best friend, Amber, who was always there for me. But as soon as I did, my phone rang. It was Amber! I answered the call and was met with a joyful voice

"I got the job! I'm a full time swimming teacher now!"
"I passed! I'm a qualified barber now!"

Glossary:

Monotonous - Tedious

Queasy - Nauseous/Sick

Sizzling - Very excited or very hot

Mush - A soft wet pulpy mass

Anechoic - No sound or echo

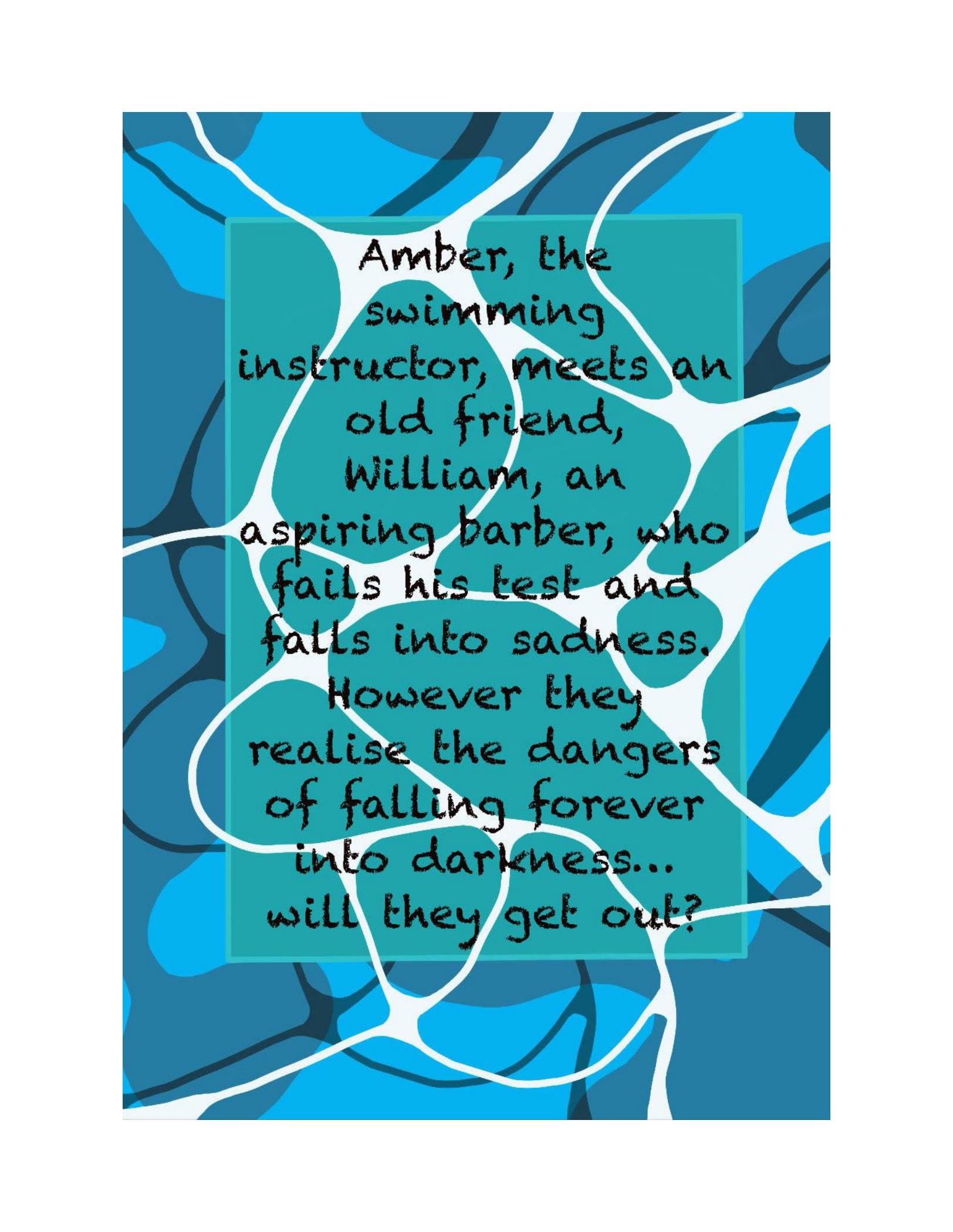
Constrictive - Wring/Squeeze

Teleported - the act or process of moving an object or person by psychokinesis

Lifeguard - someone who at the beach/pool of which dressed in yellow, save someone

Sponge - a piece of a soft, light, porous absorbent substance originally consisting of the fibrous skeleton of an aquatic invertebrate but now usually made of synthetic material, used for washing and cleaning.

Squint: look at someone or something with one or both eyes partly closed in an attempt to see more clearly or as a reaction to strong light.



Amber, the swimming instructor, meets an old friend, William, an aspiring barber, who fails his test and falls into sadness.

However they realise the dangers of falling forever into darkness... will they get out?