Escape From The Lentil

I can't stand this place. The sounds of tears from down the hallway. The sound of bleeps and bloops. The food is terrible, so terrible it makes me miss Grandma's infamous onion soup. St Johns is its real name but everyone from here to Sydney calls it 'The Lentil', thanks to its one and only breakfast, lunch and dinner option. Most of us get sick of the lentils. But some miraculously manage to suck it up. I... am not one of them. Two nights ago, I waited for the nurse to leave so I could order Thai takeaway on my phone. I was the best food I've had in months. I'm thinking of ordering Chinese today.

The name's Sam, 13 years ago I came to this planet, 3 years ago I got stuck in The Lentil. I'm in this stinking place because I've got cancer, leukemia to be exact. I know nothing about it except that it's bad and I've got it. The doctor said I'd have to go to Sydney, but my cheapskate parents knew how much it cost to live there so they convinced the doctor to come to us here in Cooma. My one chance to finally see the big city, ruined by mum. I think I'm the longest kid to ever stay here. Basically, every other child is here because they've got a sore throat or a boil on the bum.

I guess the only thing that doesn't stink here in The Lentil is Grandpa. He's got leukemia, like me. I think I'm sneaky when I order takeaway on my phone, Grandpa has a reputation for sneaking out to the hospital to go skinny dipping at Bondi (that's 395 Kms away from here)! The police had to hunt him down and return him to The Lentil, so now the oldy's think he's a home town hero and the nurses think he's going to jailbreak at any time. I've seen the guard roster. I think it Nurse Karens turn now. I know that the guard change between Ainslie and Karen is the sloppiest of them all because Karen is always refilling her coffee mug right now (I've been here so long I know every nurse and doctors' schedule off by heart). So, I know this the perfect window for Grandpa to sneak out. And he did, as I presumed. Usually, I just see him slip by my window, but today he came into my room. "Grandpa it's 11:32, you know Karen will be onto you by now." I desperately try to teach him something, but who am I kidding, no one can teach Grandpa anything.

"You know every movement in this building off by heart, don't you Sam?"

"If there's one thing I've learnt from you, it's to know everything about the world around me. I've seen you're map of the hospital."

"You call this a hospital. Please, Sam don't be fooled, this doesn't even qualify as a mockery!" Grandpa crossed his arms and sat in the very uncomfortable chair in the corner.

I was tired and Grandpa was not getting to the point. "Spill the beans Grandpa! Why are you here?"

"An old friend of mine rung up last night. Said he'd found something spectacular. I wanna take you there."

"And what is this spectacular thing?" I rolled my eyes, unentertained.

"It's a surprise. Meet me on the ground floor at 6:00 tomorrow with your swimmers." And with that her left leaving the door *half* open. As he always does.

My alarm woke me up the next day. The beeps wrung in my eats and tinnitus took over. But eventually they echoed and ricocheted of my ears, I certainly heard them... but my brain was not processing them. It did this sometimes, when I was tired. Leukemia runs my body. It orders my cells around and jogs through my blood. But I must fight it. Even though I'm meant to stay calm. I whack my alarm and force myself up. I rub my eyes and slip into my cozzies. Then I put my dressing gown on and snuck downstairs into the carpark. It was freezing cold my of course, there had to be a smile on Grandpa's face.

"Got your swimmers?"

"Yes, I'm ready."

We went a lot further then I'd expected. I tried to ask Grandpa where on Earth we were heading, but almost predictively, he didn't answer. We ended up stopping in the middle of the bush near a canyon. All I managed to see from the outside was a bunch of galahs and a couple eucalyptus trees but when Grandpa pulled me inside the mysterious forest everything changed. Not only were there galahs in here: magpies, lorikeets, cockatoos and kookaburras flew and jumped and nestled in branches that make their cozy nest. I saw lizards and lyrebirds, and I swear on Grandpas life I saw a kangaroo hop in the distance. And if not; sorry Grandpa.

After about an hour long walk through this amazing forest we finally reached something more than incredible. And I for sure knew this is what Grandpa was looking for. A waterfall about twenty metres high. The spray cause rainbows and the lake below attracted animals like frogs and fish.

"Alrighty." Grandpa said, taking his eyes off the waterfall to look at me, something that seemed physically impossible at the moment. "Unbutton and let's have some fun."

"WHAT!?"

"Well, you don't think we're here to lick stamps, do ya? Take your robe off and jump in." He said while removing his shirt and cannonballing into the lake.

I reluctantly removed my robes and hopped into the freshwater. It wasn't cold and harsh on my skin like the community pool in was a relaxing temperature that made me want to stay in their forever. I had to hand it to Grandpa; he'd taken me to the nicest place in Australia. Forget Uluru, this place should be the eighth wonder of the world.

"Okay. I'm going up!" Grandpa announced. I had no idea what he meant until I saw him jumping up the rocks and pulling himself up to the top of the waterfall.

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING!" I yelled up to Grandpa.

"JUMPING!" He yelled down.

"What do you-" I was interrupted by a loud splashing sound. When I looked up at the cliff Grandpa had just been standing on, I saw nothing. Of course he jumped off the cliff. That's

perfectly fine for an elderly man to do!
"Sam! It's so fun. You should try it."

"No way am I risking my life to jump off a twenty metre high cliff into a shallow lake!"

"A: It's deep. B: I'd say it's twenty – five metres high. And C: Why not it's fun and it'll be over in ten seconds."

"No." I said plainly.

Everything was quiet for a moment. I think Grandpa was considering his next move in this debate. Should he choose to rebut, I'm ready for anything, it's going to be no.

"I'll throw in 10 packets of BBQ shapes."

"YES!" I immediately replied. I'm obsessed with BBQ shapes. When I buy those boxes of shapes, I only eat the BBQ ones and give the rest to my friend to feed to his dog. Grandpa knows I'm addicted, so whenever he needs me to do something he buys me BBQ shapes.

I'm starting to question myself whether if the shapes are worth jumping off a cliff. Then the half of my brain that doesn't care for anything but BBQ shapes told me it was. So, I'm jumping now. I made Grandpa go with me because I'm scared of heights and usually when I look down from somewhere high, I cling to the closest thing to me. And I'd rather that be Grandpa then an old paperbark tree. I also don't want a tree to be the last thing I touch before I die.

"5, 4," Grandpa counted down. "3, 2, 1!"

I was about to say I couldn't do it but then of course he pushed me. Typical.

"AHHHH!"

I was in the water in a matter of seconds. It felt nice to know I was safe. Because I wasn't standing next to Grandpa.

"Cowabunga!" He yelled as he plummeted down. He landed headfirst in the water, and I almost cracked I smile. Almost.

"You pushed me off a cliff!" I yelled, ready to state the bones I could've broken that would land him in jail and me in The Lentil; which is probably worse.

"Go again?"

I thought about it. It took me about five seconds. Then I thought about the fun that I'll have yapping about bones on the car ride home. I tiny tingle of joy crept up my spine. I did like fall off that cliff. Some weird part of me wanted to go again. Some weird part of me that I'd never noticed before. So...

"Race you to the top!"