

## Candidate 3 evidence

### Tea for Two

In my last moments, all I can think of is the imaginary world that we created together. And that, at the same time, how those make-believe moments made me real.

Amelia took an instant liking to me, with her bouncy blonde curls and inquisitive eyes, I wasn't convinced I was the right one for her. She looked so perfect that perhaps she was supposed to have an archangel instead of just plain old me.

She loved her tea parties. Most afternoons were spent in her room with expressionless toy bears carefully positioned in a wonky circle and Amelia sitting cross-legged on a couple of pillows. She would pour invisible tea from a tangerine teapot into our idiotic plastic cups with uncomfortably tiny handles. At first I thought she was plain crazy, but then I realised that she was imagining every drop.

It astounded me how little this three-year-old had actually experienced and yet she came up with the most fabulous stories, adventures and scenarios. Some afternoons, a pair of brave and noble knights (Amelia and I) would march into the deep dark woods to save the lost princess (also Amelia). On other occasions, we would be in the playground frantically dancing to avoid our toes being nibbled by the tarmac sharks.

When she first went to school, Amelia would take me with her. She and I would whisper in the corner behind the beanbags and I would make her giggle with my hokey-pokey dance. We would imagine all the butterflies from her tummy had erupted and we were swooping to catch them with nets. Quite soon, she was less timid and didn't need me by her side.

Before she said goodbye, Amelia would tell me a joke. "Pip? What do you call a spider with no legs? A raisin!" I chuckled at her delight and we spun around until we were both super dizzy. She wobbled off to class and I sauntered back home, my head still spinning with delight. How lucky I was to have her.

At home, without a brother or sister to play with and two busy parents, Amelia and I would spend hours hiding and seeking and finding and squealing. On Fridays, we stayed up late with a sheet draped over us and a single torch: perfect for making shadow-puppets. We would sit surrounded by treats, talking about anything and laughing until our sides ached.

Every time she referred to me by name in front of her parents, they would correct her, saying that they didn't know anyone called Pip. It confused me for a while as I knew she knew me. She spoke to me, she played with me, she *saw* me. But they couldn't. Once, when the vase smashed and I stepped in front of her to explain that it was my fault (as I was the bloodthirsty gump and she was the innocent rabbit) they took no notice of me. I waved my hand in front of their furious faces, yet they looked right through it. They couldn't see me. Their eyes had been clouded by the cares of adulthood. Powerless, I backed away while Amelia took the scolding.

Sometimes, our games were so exhausting that, when she skipped up to me and asked for another, I would refuse as gently as I could. I'll never forget her soft ocean eyes spilling

over. Hiding her face in her snotty sleeve, she fled to her room. She wasn't used to me saying "no".

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As Amelia has grown, so have her interests. She's left all of her old toys, princess dresses and cowboy hats in the past. Most of the things we used to play with together have been mercilessly donated to the charity shop. And, to be honest, only I miss them. Her Christmas list consists of the latest electronic devices. Now, she loves gaming and texting with her friends. Imaginary friends not so much. We're not made of sparkles and rainbows and certainly can't compete with video games and virtual reality.

Of course, I've felt the bond between us start to weaken, like the echo of a nursery rhyme. First, I started losing memories: forgetting where I was and how I got there. It was too serious not to ask her about. She lowered her screen and the eye-rolling response was almost cold-heartedly quick. "It's nothing serious, you're overreacting". My knees started to buckle, but I managed to steady myself enough. I decided I wasn't going to give up on us just yet.

I staggered towards her like a drunkard, pleading with her to rekindle her imagination. But she took no notice of me as she was engrossed in her phone. The teapot was one of the few things she hadn't got rid of. This little trinket held the last remnants of the good times we used to share. I handed it to her in the hope of stirring her memories but she snatched it from my hands and threw it to the floor. The shards of tangerine were scattered like the pieces of my broken heart. "I don't believe anymore. You're not real!" she shouted at me, and I collapsed.

Soon, all these memories will disappear into nothingness and I will finally be able to rest knowing that our time has run out. My spirit is dwindling as my internal fire dies without the oxygen of her laughter. I hope I did the best I could. I can't think straight anymore. I don't know what's coming and I have no hand to hold. But then I see her eyes twinkling at me.

"Wait!" she whispers... "Thank you".

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