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Professor Skelly

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Therapy In Between Two Buoyed Lane Lines

Every time I revisit the county aquatic center, an overwhelming flood of memories and sensations sweeps over me. As a retired teenage competitive swimmer, this place has been the source of countless victories, defeats, and lessons in perseverance. The pool area itself is modest, surrounded by a chain-link fence and lined with white plastic lounge chairs. But to me, it's so much more than that.

The air carries the distinct scent of chlorine, the aroma that has lingered in my nostrils for years. It's familiar and comforting, almost like a long-lost friend. The faded blue tiles that surround the pool glisten under the summer sun, reflecting the light and casting dancing patterns on the water's surface. The sound of splashing water, the rhythmic beating of my own heart, and the muffled cheers of spectators are all part of the symphony that used to accompany me during every race.

The smooth, cool touch of the starting block beneath my feet is still etched in my memory, as well as the sensation of diving into the water with perfect form, the cold liquid enveloping my body like a second skin. I can recall the taste of victory, sweet and satisfying, when I touched the wall and saw my name at the top of the scoreboard. There were also the bitter moments of defeat, the exhaustion that came with pushing my limits, and the resolve to do better next time.

Every time I walked on the rough concrete around the pool, the feeling of camaraderie with my teammates was palpable. Our shared experiences, laughter, and words of encouragement made the long hours of practice bearable. There was Coach Keith, who stood at the pool's edge, stopwatch in hand, always pushing us to break our personal bests. He had a gruff demeanor, but beneath it all, he genuinely cared about our growth and success.

Now, as I stand at the edge of the pool, no longer a competitive swimmer, I can't help but feel a sense of nostalgia. The pool represents more than just my past; it's a testament to the hard work, dedication, and friendships that have shaped who I am today. Although the races are over and the medals are tucked away, the memories and sensations of this humble pool will forever be a part of my internal landscape.

On meet days, the atmosphere around the swimming pool would transform into a thrilling, electrifying experience. The air was thick with anticipation and excitement, as swimmers from different teams milled about, each sporting their own colors and sharing nervous smiles. The scent of chlorine mixed with the sharp aroma of tension, as everyone prepared for the fierce competition that lay ahead. The sun would cast a warm, golden glow over the entire scene, as if it, too, was excited for the day's events.

The cacophony of sounds on those days was unlike any other. The echoing shouts of coaches offering last-minute advice, the laughter of teammates trying to ease their nerves, and the starter's horn that cut through the noise like a knife, all contributed to the unforgettable soundtrack of the competition. As I stood behind the starting block, adrenaline coursed through my veins, making my heart pound in my chest like a drum. I would take a deep breath, filling my lungs with the charged air, and dive into the water, the world above disappearing as I entered my element. The underwater silence was my sanctuary, my respite from the chaos, as I focused all

my energy on propelling myself toward the finish line. And when I finally emerged from the water, gasping for breath, the rush of emotions - pride, relief, joy, or disappointment - would wash over me, etching yet another memory into the story of my swimming journey.