```
him without his pants on (which I don't recommend), you'd never know there was anything unhuman about him. Baggy jeans and fake feet hide the fact that he's got furry hindquarters and hooves. Grover had been my best friend in sixth grade. He'd gone on this adventure with me
and a girl named Annabeth to save the world, but I hadn't seen him since last July, when he set off alone on a dangerous quest—a quest no satyr had ever returned from. Anyway, in my dream, Grover was hauling goat tail, holding his human shoes in his hands the way he does wh
n he needs to move fast. He clopped past the little tourist shops and surfboard rental places. The wind bent the palm trees almost to the ground. Grover was terrified of something behind him. He must've just come from the beach. Wet sand was caked in his fur. He'd escaped from
omewhere. He was trying to get away from...something. A bone-rattling growl cut through the storm. Behind Grover, at the far end of the block, a shadowy figure loomed. It swatted aside a street lamp, which burst in a shower of sparks. Grover stumbled, whimpering in fear. He mut
ered to himself, Have to get away. Have to warn them! I couldn't see what was chasing him, but I could hear it muttering and cursing. The ground shook as it got closer. Grover dashed around a street corner and faltered. He'd run into a dead-end courtyard full of shops. No time to
ack up. The nearest door had been blown open by the storm. The sign above the darkened display window read: ST. AUGUSTINE BRIDAL BOUTIQUE. Grover dashed inside. He dove behind a rack of wedding dresses. The monster's shadow passed in front of the shop. I could smel
the thing—a sickening combination of wet sheep wool and rotten meat and that weird sour body odor only monsters have, like a skunk that's been living off Mexican food. Grover trembled behind the wedding dresses. The monster's shadow passed on. Silence except for the rain.
rover took a deep breath. Maybe the thing was gone. Then lightning flashed. The entire front of the store exploded, and a monstrous voice bellowed: "MillIINE!" I sat bolt upright, shivering in my bed. There was no storm. No monster. Morning sunlight filtered through my bedroom w
ndow. I thought I saw a shadow flicker across the glass—a humanlike shape. But then there was a knock on my bedroom door—my mom called: "Percy, you're going to be late"—and the shadow at the window disappeared. It must've been my imagination. A fifth-story window with
a rickety old fire escape…there couldn't have been anyone out there. "Come on, dear," my mother called again. "Last day of school. You should be excited! You've almost made it!" "Coming," I managed. I felt under my pillow. My fingers closed reassuringly around the ballpoint pe
l alway's slept with. I brought it out, studied the Ancient Greek writing engraved on the side: Anaklusmos. Äiptide for so long.... Besides, my mom had made me promise not to use deadly weapons in
he apartment after I'd swung a javelin the wrong way and taken out her china cabinet. I put Anaklusmos on my nightstand and dragged myself out of bed. I got dressed as quickly as I could. I tried not to think about my nightmare or monsters or the shadow at my window. Have to c
away. Have to warn them! What had Grover meant? I made a three-fingered claw over my heart and pushed outward—an
                                                                                                                                                                         ancient gesture Grover had once taught me for warding off evil. The dream couldn't have been real. Last day of school.
mom was right, I should have been excited. For the first time in my life, I'd almost made it an entire year without
                                                                                                                                                                                   getting expelled. No weird accidents. No fights in the classroom. No teachers turning into monsters and trying to
                                                                                                                                                                                         ood. Only one more day to go. Surely even I couldn't mess that up. As usual, I didn't have a clue how wron
kill me with poisoned cafeteria food or exploding homework. Tomorrow, I'd be on my way to my favorite pla
g I was. My mom made blue waffles and blue eggs for breakfast. She's funny that way, celebrating spe
                                                                                                                           cial occasions with blue food. I think it's her way
                                                                                                                                                                                               of saying anything is possible. Percy can pass seventh grade. Waffles can be blue. Little miracles like
that. I ate at the kitchen table while my mom washed dishes. She was dressed in her work uniform
                                                                                                                     -a starry blue skirt and a red-and-white striped blouse she wo
                                                                                                                                                                                                    re to sell candy at Sweet on America. Her long brown hair was pulled back in a ponytail. The waft
es tasted great, but I guess I wasn't digging in like I usually did. My mom looked over and frow
                                                                                                               ned. "Percy, are you all right?" "Yeah...fine." But she could always tell w
                                                                                                                                                                                                       hen something was bothering me. She dried her hands and sat down across from me. "Schoo
                                                                                                          I said, and I told her about my dream. She pursed her lips. We didn't talk much ab
                                                                                                                                                                                                           out the other part of my life. We tried to live as normally as possible, but my mom knew a
or..." She didn't need to finish. I knew what she was asking. "I think Grover's in trouble,
about Grover. "I wouldn't be too worried, dear," she said. "Ğrover is a big satyr now. If
                                                                                                                                                                                                               sed as she said the word camp. "What is it?" I asked. "Nothing," she said. "I'll tell you
                                                                                                      there were a problem, I'm sure we would've heard from...from camp...." Her shoulders ten
what. This afternoon we'll celebrate the end of school. I'll take you and Tyson to Roc
                                                                                                  kefeller Center—to that skateboard shop you like." Oh, man, that was tempting. We were always
                                                                                                                                                                                                                  struggling with money. Between my mom's night classes and my private school tuit
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           She twisted her dishrag. "Ah, dear, about that... I got a message from Chiro
                                                                                               thing in her voice bothered me, "Wait a minute," I said. "I thought we were packing me up for camp ton
on, we could never afford to do special stuff like shop for a skateboard. But some
                                                                                           od. He wouldn't contact us unless something serious was going on. "What did he say?" "He thinks…it might
                                                                                                                                                                                                                       not be safe for you to come to camp just yet. We might have to postpone." "P
n last night." My heart sank. Chiron was the activities director at Camp Half-Blo
                                                                                        e place on earth for me!" "Usually, dear, But with the problems they're having—" "What problems?" "Percy...I'm v
stpone? Mom, how could it not be safe? I'm a half-blood! It's like the only saf
                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ery, very sorry. I was hoping to talk to you about it this afternoon. I can't exp
                                                                                    nly." My mind was reeling. How could I not go to camp? I wanted to ask a million questions, but just then the kitchen cl
afternoon. Go on to school." That was the last thing I wanted to do, but my mom had this fragile look in her eyes—a kind of
ain it all now. I'm not even sure Chiron can. Everything happened so sudd
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           ock chimed the half-hour. My mom looked almost relieved. "Seven-thirty, or
ear. You should go. Tyson will be waiting." "But—" "Percy, we'll talk this
                                                                                                                                                                                                                               warning, like if I pushed her too hard she'd start to cry. Besides, she wa
s right about my friend Tyson. I had to meet him at the subway station
                                                                                 on time or he'd get upset. He was scared of traveling underground alone. I gathered up my stuff, but I stopped in the doorway.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                Mom, this problem at camp. Does it...could it have anything to do with
my dream about Grover?" She wouldn't meet my eyes. "We'll talk thi
                                                                               s afternoon, dear. I'll explain has much as I can." Reluctantly, I told her good-bye. I jogged downstairs to catch the Number Two train
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   I didn't know it at the time, but my mom and I would never get to ha
ve our afternoon talk. In fact, I wouldn't be seeing home for a long,
                                                                              long time. As I stepped outside, I glanced at the brownstone building across the street. Just for a second I saw a dark shape in the morn
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    ing sunlight—a human silhouette against the brick wall, a shadow
                                                                           Y DOĎGEBALL WITH CANNIBALS My day started normal. Or as normal as it ever gets at Meriwether College Prep. See, it's this "progressiv
hat belonged to no one. Then it rippled and vanished. TWO I PLA
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        school in downtown Manhattan, which means we sit on beant
                                                                         eachers wear jeans and rock concert T-shirts to work. That's al
ag chairs instead of at desks, and we don't get grades, and the t
                                                                                                                                                              I cool with me. I mean, I'm ADHD and dyslexic, like most half-b
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       loods, so I'd never done that great in regular schools even bef
e they kicked me out. The only bad thing about Meriwether was
                                                                         that the teachers always looked on the brid
                                                                                                                                                                          things, and the kids weren't always...well, bright. Tak
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         e my first class today: English. The whole middle school had
ead this book called Lord of the Flies, where all these kids ge
                                                                      t marooned on an island and go psycho. So for o
                                                                                                                                                                                ur final exam, our teachers sent us into the break
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           yard to spend an hour with no adult supervision to see wha
would happen. What happened was a massive wedgie conte
                                                                    st between the seventh and eighth graders, tw
                                                                                                                                                                                      o pebble fights, and a full-tackle basketball g
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            ame. The school bully, Matt Sloan, led most of those activi-
es. Sloan wasn't big or strong, but he acted like he was. He
                                                                    had eyes like a pit bull, and shaggy black h
                                                                                                                                                                                          air, and he always dressed in expensive b
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            ut sloppy clothes, like he wanted everybody to see how li
e he cared about his family's money. One of his front teet
                                                                 h was chipped from the time he'd taken h
                                                                                                                                                                                               is daddy's Porsche for a joyride and ru
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              n into a PLEASE SLOW DOWN FOR CHILDREN sign. An
way, Sloan was giving everybody wedgies until he made
                                                                 the mistake of trying it on my friend Ty
                                                                                                                                                                                                 son. Tyson was the only homeles s ki
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               d at Meriwether College Prep. As near as my mom and
could figure, he'd been abandoned by his parents when
                                                                 he was very young, probably becaus
                                                                                                                                                                                                    e was so...different. He was si x-foo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 t-three and built like the Abominable Snowman, but he
cried a lot and was scared of just about everything, inc
                                                              luding his own reflection. His face w
                                                                                                                                                                                                       ind of misshapen and brut al-look
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  ing. I couldn't tell you what color his eyes were, becau
se I could never make myself look higher than his cro
                                                              oked teeth. His voice was deep, bu
                                                                                                                                                                                                          funny, like a much young er kid-
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   guess because he'd never gone to school before co
ming to Meriwether. He wore tattered jeans, grimy siz
                                                                   nty sneakers, and a plaid f
                                                                                                                                                                                    lann el sh irt w
                                                                                                                                                                                                           ith holes in it. He smell ed like a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    New York City alleyway, because that's where he li
ed, in a cardboard refrigerator box off 72nd Street. M
                                                                    her Prep had adopted hi
                                                                                                                                                                                               a co mmu
                                                                                                                                                                                                            nity service project s o all the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    students could feel good about themselves. Unfortu
                                                                    overed he was a big s
nately, most of them couldn't stand Tyson. Once the
                                                                                                                                  tie, despite his massive strength and
                                                                                                                                                                                            his scary look s, they made them
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     selves fee
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     I good by picking on him. I was pretty much his on
friend, which meant he was my only friend. My m
                                                                                                                         ool a million times that they weren't doing enough to
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     nothing ever seemed to happen. The social worker
                                                                      complained to the
                                                                                                                                                                                              help him. She'd called social ser
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      vices, but
                                                                                                               y we described and couldn't and nim, though now you miss a g. too hard. Sloan flew fifteen feet and got tangled in the little kids' tire swin g. "You freak!" Sloan yelled. "Who hard. Sloan just sneered at me. "Why do you even bother, Jacks"
                                                                                                                    v we described and couldn't find him, though how you miss a gi
s claimed Tyson didn't exist. They swore up and d
                                                         own tha
                                                                      t they'd visited th
                                                                                                                                                                                            ant kid living in a refrigerator box
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      I don't kr
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      ow. Anyway, Matt Sloan snuck up behind him and
tried to give him a wedgie, and Tyson panicked. H
                                                         e swatte
                                                                      d Slóan away a l
                                                                                                                                                                                                  "You freak!" Sloan velled. "Wh
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      y don't you
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       go back to your cardboard box!" Tyson started s
obbing. He sat down on the jungle gym so hard h
                                                        e bent th
                                                                        bar, and buri
                                                                                                          s head in his hands. "Take it back, Sloan!" I shouted. Sloan just sneered at me.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      on? You mi
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       ght have friends if you weren't always sticking up
for that freak." I balled my fists. I hoped my face
                                                         wasn't a
                                                                       red as it fel
                                                                                             He
                                                                                                       's not a freak. He's just…" I tried to think of the right thing to say, but Sloan wasn't listening. He and his big ugly fri
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      ends were to
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       o busy laughing. I wondered if it were my imagin
                                                                        usual. I wa
ation, or if Sloan had more goons hanging aroun
                                                       d him tha
                                                                                       s u se
                                                                                                   d to seeing him with two or three, but toda y he had like, half a dozen more, and I was pretty sure I'd never seen them
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      befo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         'Just wait till PE, Jackson," Sloan called. "You
                                                                                                                                              nounced that we'd understood Lord of the Flies perfectly. We all passed his c
re so dead." When first period ended, our Englis
                                                       h teacher. Mi
                                                                         de Milo.
                                                                                     came o utside to inspect the carnage. He pro
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     ourse
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        d we should never, never grow up to be violent
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                . an
people. Matt Sloan nodded earnestly, then gave
                                                       me a chip-to
                                                                       othed ari
                                                                                   n. I had
                                                                                              to promise to buy Tyso n an extra
                                                                                                                                            peanut butter sandwich at lunch to get him to stop sobbing. "I...I am a freak?
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       he a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         me. "No," I promised, gritting my teeth. "Matt
                                                      od friend. Mis
                                                                                                                                         ed. I realized he didn't know if he'd be i
loan is the freak." Tyson sniffled. "You are a go
                                                                        s you ne xt year i f...if I can't..." Hi s voic e trembl
                                                                                                                                                                                     nvited back next year for the comm
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      unity
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ice project. I wondered if the headmaster had e
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               serv
ven bothered talking to him about it. "Don't wor
                                                            big guy.
                                                                          man aged. "Everything's go
                                                                                                                                         "Tyson gave me such a grateful look I fel
                                                                                                                                                                                        t like a big liar. How could I pro
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     mise
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          like him that anything would be fine? Our next
                                                                                                                                                                                                      hands were way too b
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     ig for
exam was science. Mrs. Tesla told us that we h
                                                                       hemica is until we succeeded
                                                                                                                                      omething explode. Tyson was my lab partner
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          tiny vials we were supposed to use. He accider
                                                             o mix c
                                                                                                                                                                                                       e hazardous waste r
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          she praised Tyson and me for being natural c
tally knocked a tray of chemicals off the counte
                                                             d made
                                                                         an orange mushroom clo-u
                                                                                                                                     n. After Mrs. Tesla evacuated the lab and calle
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     emoval squad
                                                      r an
hemists. We were the first ones who'd ever ace
                                                                         in under thirty second s
                                                                                                                  was glad the mor ning went fast, because it kept me from thinking
                                                                                                                                                                                                       o much about my p
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      roblems. I cou
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          Idn't stand the idea that something might be w
                                                              r exam
rong at camp. Even worse, I couldn't shake the
                                                                                                                 terrible feeling that Grover was in danger. In social studies, while w
                                                                         f my bad dream. I had
                                                                                                                                                                                                        were drawing latitud
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      e/longitude ma
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ps, I opened my notebook and stared at the pl
                                                             mory o
oto inside—my friend Annabeth on vacation in
                                                                                                                g jeans and a denim jacket over her orange Camp Half-Blood T-shirt.
                                                                                                                                                                                                        H er blond hair was
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          n a bandanna. She was standing in front of the
                                                      Was
                                                            hington
                                                                         D.C. She was weari
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      pulled back i
Lincoln Memorial with her arms crossed, looking
                                                     a extremely pl
                                                                        eased with herself. I
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         o she's always visiting famous monuments ar
                                                                                                                 ke she'd personally designed the place. See, Annabeth wants to be an
                                                                                                                                                                                                           architect when s
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      he grows up. s
d stuff. She's weird that way. She'd e-mailed m
                                                                        fter spring break, a
                                                     e the picture a
                                                                                                               nd every once in a while I'd look at it just to remind myself she was rea
                                                                                                                                                                                                             and Camp Half
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     -Blood hadn't j
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          ust been my imagination. I wished Annabeth w
ere here. She'd know what to make of my drea
                                                                         admit it to her, bu
                                                                                                               she was smarter than me, even if she was annoying sometimes. I was a
                                                                                                                                                                                                             bout to close m
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   notebook when
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         Matt Sloan reached over and ripped the photo of
                                                                ever
ut of the rings, "Hev!" I protested, Sloan check
                                                                       picture and his eve
                                                                                                                                 way, Jackson. Who is that? She is not your—"
                                                                                                                                                                                                                   My ears
                                                                                                                                                                                                                               felt hot. Slo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          anded the photo to his ugly buddies, who snick
                                                     ed out
ered and started ripping it up to make spit wad
                                                                        re new kids who mu
                                                                                                                st've been visiting, because they were all wearing those stupid HI! MY
                                                                                                                                                                                                          NA ME IS: tags from the admiss
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          office. They must've had a weird sense of hum
or, too, because they'd all filled in strange nam
                                                                 MA
                                                                                                                                                                                                                       uys are moving her
                                                                                 SUCKER.
                                                                                                                KULL EATER, and JOE BOB. No human beings had names like that.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          t year," Sloan bragged, like that was supposed
                                                                                                                                                                                                            e se c
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        ace. "You're such
to scare me. "I bet they can pay the tuition, too
                                                                e your retard
                                                                                                                He's not retarded." I had to try really, really hard not to punch Sloan in
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         er, Jackson. Good thing I'm gonna put you out
                                                                                 friend.
of your misery next period." His huge buddies
                                                      chewed
                                                               up my photo.
                                                                                 I wante d t
                                                                                                                o pulverize them, but I was under strict orders from Chiron never to t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        my anger out on re
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         mortals, no matter how obnoxious they were.
had to save my fighting for monsters. Still, part
                                                      of me thought, if Sloa
                                                                                n only kn ew
                                                                                                                  who I really was... The bell rang. As Tyson and I were leaving class,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        irl's voice whispered, "Perc
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          y!" I looked around the locker area, but nobod
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          of kids rushed for the gym, carrying Tyson and
was paying me any attention. Like any girl at M
                                                      eriwether would ever b
                                                                                e caught de a
                                                                                                                 d calling my name. Before I had time to consider whether or not I'd
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        imagining things, a crowd
me along with them. It was time for PE. Our co
                                                     ach had promised us a
                                                                                 free-for-all d
                                                                                                                  odgeball game, and Matt Sloan had promised to kill me. The gym
                                                                                                                                                                                                          uniform
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        at Meriwether is sky blue s
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         horts and tie-dved T-shirts. Fortunately, we did
most of our athletic stuff inside, so we didn't h
                                                      ave to jog through Trib
                                                                                eca looking lik
                                                                                                                               of boot-camp hippie children. I changed as quickly a
                                                                                                                                                                                                        s I could
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        in the lock
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      er room beca
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          use I didn't want to deal with Sloan. I was abou
t to leave when Tyson called, "Percy?" He hadn
                                                      't changed yet. He was
                                                                                 standing by
                                                                                                                              ht room door, clutching his gym clothes. "Will you...
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        Yeah." I tri
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      ed not to sou
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         nd aggravated about it. "Yeah, sure, man." Ty:
on ducked inside the weight room. I stood guar
                                                      d outside the door whil
                                                                                e he changed.
                                                                                                                       felt kind of awkward doing this, but he asked me to most
                                                                                                                                                                                                    days. I think
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        t's becaus
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      e he's compl
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         etely hairy and he's got weird scars on his bac
                                                                                                                                                                                                  he'd get upset
k that I've never had the courage to ask him ab
                                                      out. Anyway, I'd learn
                                                                                 ed the hard way
                                                                                                                        that if people teased Tyson while he was dressing out,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        and start
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       ripping the d
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         oors off lockers. When we got into the gym, Co
                                                      Sports Illustra
ach Nunley was sitting at his little desk reading
                                                                                  Nunley
                                                                                                                          t a million years old, with bifocals and no teeth and
                                                                                                                                                                                                a greas
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        e of gray h
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       air. He remin
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ded me of the Oracle at Camp Half-Blood—whi
                                                                                           was abou
ch was a shriveled-up mummy—except Coach
                                                      Nunley moved
                                                                                             nd he neve
                                                                                                                            r billowed green smoke. Well, at least not that
                                                                                                                                                                                            I'd observ
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        att Sloan sa
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         n I be captain?" "Eh?" Coach Nunley looked u
                                                                         a lot
                                                                                  less a
p from his magazine. "Yeah," he mumbled. "M
                                                      m-hmm." Sloa
                                                                                  nned a
                                                                                             nd took charg
                                                                                                                               e of the picking. He made me the other te
                                                                                                                                                                                         am's captain,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        didn't matter who I picked
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          because all the jocks and the popular kids mo
                                                                        n gri
                                                                        my sid
                                                                                              Tyson, Corev B
ved over to Sloan's side. So did the big group o
                                                      f visitors. On
                                                                                 e I had
                                                                                                                                      r the computer geek, Raj Manda
                                                                                                                                                                                      li the calculus w
                                                                                                                                                                                                            hiz, and a half dozen other kids who al
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ways got harassed by Sloan and his gang. No
mally I would've been okay with just Tyson—he
                                                      was worth hal
                                                                         f a team all by
                                                                                             himself-but the visi
                                                                                                                                       tors on Sloan's team were
                                                                                                                                                                                  almost as ta
                                                                                                                                                                                                II and
                                                                                                                                                                                                            strong-looking as Tyson, and there we
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          re six of them. Matt Sloan spilled a cage full of
balls in the middle of the gym. "Scared," Tyson
                                                      mumbled, "Smell funny," I looke
                                                                                                      m. "What smells
                                                                                                                                                                                                            e was talking about himself. "Them."
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          vson pointed at Sloan's new friends. "Smell fu
                                                                                                                                                                                                                     place where they fed kids raw
nny." The visitors were cracking their knuckles
                                                       eyeing us like it was slaughter t
                                                                                                        couldn't help wonder
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          meat and beat them with sticks. Sloan blew t
                                                                                                                                                                                                 from.
e coach's whistle and the game began. Sloan's
                                                      team ran for the center line. On m
                                                                                                         Rai Mandali yelled something
                                                                                                                                                              in Urdu, probably "I have to
                                                                                                                                                                                                                      nd ran for the exit. Corev Ba
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          ler tried to crawl behind the wall mat and hide
                                                                                                                                                                                                 go po
The rest of my team did their best to cower in f
                                                                                                                      A ball slammed into my gut. I sat down hard in the middle of the gy
                                                                                                                                                                                                 m floor. The oth
                                                                                                                                                                                                                      er team exploded in laughter
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           My eyesight was fuzzy. I felt like I'd just gotte
                                                                                                        yson yelled, "Percy, duck!" I rolled as another dodgeball whistled past my ear a
n the Heimlich maneuver from a gorilla. I could
                                                     n't believe anybody could throw that hard. T
                                                                                                                                                                                                  t the speed of s
                                                                                                                                                                                                                      ound. Whooom! It hit the wal
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          I mat, and Corey Bailer yelped. "Hey!" I yelled
at Sloan's team. "You could kill somebody!
                                                      e visitor named Joe Bob grinned at me evill
                                                                                                              omehow, he looked a lot bigger now...even taller than Tyson. His biceps
                                                                                                                                                                                                                      his T-shirt, "I hope so, Perse
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          us Jackson! I hope so!" The way he said my na
                                                                                                                                                                                                 bulged beneath
me sent a chill down my back. Nobody called m
                                                      e Perseus except those who knew my true id entit
                                                                                                               y. Friends...and enemies. What had Tyson said? They smell furny. Mons
                                                                                                                                                                                                 ters. All around M att Sloan, the visitors were qu
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          owing in size. They were no longer kids. They
were eight-foot-tall giants with wild eyes, point
                                                      y teeth, and hairy arms tattooed with snakes and h
                                                                                                               ula women and
                                                                                                                                                               Valentine hearts. Matt Sloar
                                                                                                                                                                                                  dropped his ball, "Whoa! You're not from Detro
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          it! Who..." The other kids on his team started:
creaming and backing toward the exit, but the
                                                      giant named Marrow Sucker threw a ball with dead
                                                                                                                                                      streaked past Raj Mandali just as he
                                                                                                               v accuracy. It
                                                                                                                                                                                                  was about to leave and hit the door, slamming
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          t shut like magic. Raj and some of the other kid
                                                                                                                                                  wled at me. He had a tattoo on his biceps
s banged on it desperately but it wouldn't budg
                                                      e. "Let them go!" I yelled at the giants. The one cal
                                                                                                                                                                                                 that said: JB luvs Babycakes. "And lose our tast
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          morsels? No. Son of the Sea God. We Laistry
                                                                                                               f dodgeballs appeared o
                                                                                                                                                       n the center line—but these balls weren't made of red rubber. They were bronze, the siz
gonians aren't just playing for your death. We
                                                      want lunch!" He waved his hand and a new batch o
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           of cannon balls, perforated like wiffle balls w
th fire bubbling out the holes. They must've be
                                                                                                                                                                                         sleepily, but if he saw anything abnormal about the dod
                                                      en searing hot, but the giants picked them up with their bare hands. "Coach!" I yelled
                                                                                                                                                                  Nunley looked up
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          geball game, he didn't let on. That's the proble
m with mortals. A magical force called the Mist
                                                      obscures the true appearance of monsters and gods from their vision, so mortals tend
                                                                                                                                                                       to see only w
                                                                                                                                                                                          at they can understand. Maybe the coach saw a few eig
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          nth graders pounding the younger kids like us
                                                                                                                                                                                          was pretty sure nobody else realized we were dealing
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          with genuine man-eating bloodthirsty monsters
ual. Maybe the other kids saw Matt Sloan's thu
                                                      gs getting ready to toss Molotov cocktails around. (It wouldn't have been the first time)
                                                                                                                                                                       ) At any rate
 'Yeah, Mm-hmm." Coach muttered, "Play nice
                                                         And he went back to his magazine. The giant named Skull Eater threw his ball. I
                                                                                                                                                                      dove aside as the fiery bronze comet sailed past my shoulder. "Corey!" I s
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          creamed. Tyson pulled him out from behind the
                                                      it, blasting the mat to smoking shreds. "Run!" I told my teammates. "The oth
                                                                                                                                                                   er exit!" They ran for the locker room, but with another wave of Joe Bob's ha
exercise mat just as the ball exploded against
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          nd, that door also slammed shut. "No one leav
                                                      u're not out until we eat you!" He launched his own fireball. My teamma
                                                                                                                                                                es scattered as it blasted a crater in the gym floor. I reached for Riptide, which
es unless you're out!" Joe Bob roared. "And yo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          always kept in my pocket, but then I realized I
was wearing gym shorts. I had no pockets. Rip
                                                      tide was tucked in my jeans inside my gym locker. And the locker
                                                                                                                                                               room door was sealed. I was completely defenseless. Another fireball came strea
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          king toward me. Tyson pushed me out of the w
ay, but the explosion still blew me head over h
                                                     eels. I found myself sprawled on the gym floor, dazed from sm
                                                                                                                                                               oke, my tie-dyed T-shirt peppered with sizzling holes. Just across the center line
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           two hungry giants were glaring down at me
Flesh!" they bellowed. "Hero flesh for lunch!" T
                                                      hey both took aim. "Percy needs help!" Tyson yelled, and h
                                                                                                                                                                 e jumped in front of me just as they threw their balls. "Tyson!" I screamed, bu
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          t it was too late. Both balls slammed into him.
but no...he'd caught them. Somehow Tyson, w
                                                     ho was so clumsy he knocked over lab equipment and br
                                                                                                                                                                     oke playground structures on a regular basis, had caught two fiery metal b
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         alls speeding toward him at a zillion miles an h
our. He sent them hurtling back toward their su
                                                      rprised owners, who screamed, "BAAAAAD!" as the bron
                                                                                                                                                                                heres exploded against their chests. The giants disintegrated in t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         win columns of flame—a sure sign they were m
                                                      dissipate into smoke and dust, which saves heroes a lot of
                                                                                                                                                                                rouble cleaning up after a fight. "My brothers!" Joe Bob the Cann
onsters, all right. Monsters don't die. They just
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          ibal wailed. He flexed his muscles and his Bab
ycakes tattoo rippled. "You will pay for their de
leachers with a huge KA-BOOM! Kids were run
                                                      struction!" "Tyson!" I said. "Look out!" Another comet hurtle
                                                                                                                                                                                d toward us. Tyson just had time to swat it aside. It flew straight
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          over Coach Nunley's head and landed in the b
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          imself stood petrified in the middle of the court
                                                      ning around screaming, trying to avoid the sizzling craters in th
                                                                                                                                                                                  loor. Others were banging on the door, calling for help. Sloan h
, watching in disbelief as balls of death flew aro
                                                     und him. Coach Nunley still wasn't seeing anything. He tapped h
                                                                                                                                                                                 ng aid like the explosions were giving him interference, but he
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          kept his eyes on his magazine. Surely the whol
                                                                                                                                                heari
                                                                                                                                                                                  Joe Bob the Cannibal. "We will feast on your bones!" I wanted
e school could hear the noise. The headmaster
                                                      , the police, somebody would come help us. "Victory will be our
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          to tell him he was taking the dodgeball game w
                                                                                                                                           s!" roared
ay too seriously, but before I could, he hefted a
                                                      nother ball. The other three giants followed his lead. I knew we
                                                                                                                                              were de
                                                                                                                                                                                ad. Tyson couldn't deflect all those balls at once. His hands had
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          to be seriously burned from blocking the first v
olley. Without my sword... I had a crazy idea. I
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         e balls back toward their owners and blasted th
                                                      ran toward the locker room. "Move!" I told my teammates. "A
                                                                                                                                                                                rom the door." Explosions behind me. Tyson had batted two of th
                                                                                                                                                wa y 1
em to ashes. That left two giants still standing.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          emolished the locker room door. Now, I figured
                                                      A third ball hurtled straight at me. I forced myself to wait—
                                                                                                                                                                                ississippi, two Mississippi—then dove aside as the fiery sphere d
                                                                                                                                                on e M
that the built-up gas in most boys' locker room
                                                      s was enough to cause an explosion, so I wasn't surpris
                                                                                                                                                                                the flaming dodgeball ignited a huge WHOOOOOOM! The wall
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         blew apart. Locker doors, socks, athletic suppo
                                                                                                                                               w hen
                                                     ngs rained all over the gym. I turned just in time to s as turning to face him. "No!" I yelled. The ball cau
rters, and other various nasty personal belongi
                                                                                                                                                                                  kull Eater in the face. The giant crumpled. But the last giant, Jo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          e Bob, had wisely held on to his own ball, waiti
                                                                                                                                       ee Tyson punch S
ng for an opportunity. He threw just as Tyson w
                                                                                                                                      ght Tyson square in th
                                                                                                                                                                                      chest. He slid the length of the court and slammed into the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          e back wall, which cracked and partially crumb
                                                      rch Street. I didn't see how Tyson could still b
ed on top of him, making a hole right onto Chu
                                                                                                                                                                                         oked dazed. The bronze ball was smoking at his feet. Ty
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         son tried to pick it up, but he fell back, stunned
                                                                                                                                     e alive, but he only lo
, into a pile of cinder blocks. "Well!" Joe Bob g
                                                      loated. "I'm the last one standing! I'll have e
                                                                                                                                     nough meat to bring
                                                                                                                                                                                              Babycakes a doggie bag!" He picked up another ba
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          Il and aimed it at Tyson. "Stop!" I yelled. "It's
                                                                                                                                     ng. Riptide had to be
d. "My lunch approach
me you want!" The giant grinned. "You wish to
                                                      die first, young hero?" I had to do somethi
                                                                                                                                                                                                 around here somewhere. Then I spotted my jean
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         s in a smoking heap of clothes right by the gia
nt's feet. If I could only get there....I knew it wa
                                                      s hopeless, but I charged. The giant laughe
                                                                                                                                                                                                    es." He raised his arm to throw. I braced mys
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         elf to die. Suddenly the giant's body went rigid
                                                                                                                                                                                                     d open and he grew something like a horn-
                                                      ise. Right where his belly button should've
His expression changed from gloating to surpr
                                                                                                                                      been, his T-shirt ri ppe
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         no, not a horn-the glowing tip of a blade. The
ball dropped out of his hand. The monster star
                                                                                                                                              rom behin
                                                      ed down at the knife that had just run him thr
                                                                                                                                                                                                     muttered, "Ow," and burst into a cloud of gr
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         een flame, which I figured was going to make B
                                                                                                                                     h f
                                                                                                                              d scratched. She had a rag
                                                     was my friend Annabeth. Her face was grimy an
                                                                                                                                                                                                     pack slung over her shoulder, her baseball c
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ap tucked in her pocket, a bronze knife in her h
abycakes pretty upset. Standing in the smoke
and, and a wild look in her storm-gray eyes, lik
                                                     e she'd just been chased a thousand miles by gh
                                                                                                                             osts. Matt Sloan, who'd bee
                                                                                                                                                                                                     there dumbfounded the whole time, finally ca
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         me to his senses. He blinked at Annabeth, as if
he dimly recognized her from my notebook pic
                                                      ture. "That's the girl...That's the girl--" Annabeth
                                                                                                                            punched him in the nose and
                                                                                                                                                                                                  m flat. "And you," she told him, "lay off my frie
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         nd." The gym was in flames. Kids were still run
                                                                                                                                                               knocked hi
                                                     and a garbled voice over the intercom. Through th
w long have you..." "Pretty much all morning." Sh
were looking in my bedroom window?" "There's
eet me outside," Annabeth told me. "And him.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ock, a crowd of teachers piling up behind him.
ning around screaming. I heard sirens wailing
                                                                                                                            e glass windows of the exit doors, I could se
                                                                                                                                                                                                e the headmaster, Mr. Bonsai, wrestling with the I
"Annabeth..." I stammered. "How did you...ho
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          ver alone." "The shadow I saw this morning—t
                                                                                                                                                                                                to find a good time to talk to you, but you were ne
                                                                                                                           e sheathed her bronze knife. "I've been tryin
hat was—" My face felt hot. "Oh my gods, you
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          t to-" "There!" a woman screamed. The doors
                                                                                                                            no time to explain!" she snapped, though s
                                                                                                                                                                                              he looked a little red-faced herself. "I just didn't wan
burst open and the adults came pouring in. "M
                                                                                                                             She pointed to Tyson, who was still sitting
                                                                                                                                                                                              dazed against the wall. Annabeth gave him a look o
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          f distaste that I didn't quite understand. "You'd
better bring him." "What?" "No time!" she said
                                                       "Hurry!" She put on her Yankees basebal
                                                                                                                                                                                              d instantly vanished. That left me standing alone in
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          the middle of the burning gymnasium when th
                                                                                                                           ap, which was a magic gift from her mom, an
e headmaster came charging in with half the fa
                                                      culty and a couple of police officers. "P
                                                                                                                            Jackson?" Mr. Bonsai said. "What...how.
                                                                                                                                                                                               Over by the broken wall, Tyson groaned and stood
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          up from the pile of cinder blocks. "Head hurts.
Matt Sloan was coming around, too. He focus
                                                     ed on me with a look of terror. "Pe
                                                                                                                    rcy di dit, Mr. Bonsai! He set the whole building o
                                                                                                                                                                                                 n fire. Coach Nunley will tell you! He saw it all!"
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         Coach Nunley had been dutifully reading his m
agazine, but just my luck—he chose that mome
                                                     nt to look up when Sloan said
                                                                                                                      his name. "Eh? Yeah. Mm-hmm." The other adults
                                                                                                                                                                                                      irned toward me. I knew they would never b
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          elieve me, even if I could tell them the truth. I gr
abbed Riptide out of my ruined jeans, told Tyso
                                                     n, "Come on!" and jumped
                                                                                                                         through the gaping hole in the side of the building
                                                                                                                                                                                                       g. THREE WE HAIL THE TAXI OF ETERNA
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          . TORMENT Annabeth was waiting for us in an
alley down Church Street. She pulled Tyson an
                                                      d me off the sidewalk j
                                                                                                                         ust as a fire truck screamed past, heading for Me
                                                                                                                                                                                                            riwether Prep. "Where'd you find him?
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           she demanded, pointing at Tyson. Now, unde
r different circumstances, I would've been reall
                                                      y happy to see her.
                                                                                                                                               our peace last su
                                                                                                                                                                                                               mmer, despite the fact that her mo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         m was Athena and didn't get along with my dad
I'd missed Annabeth probably more than I wa
                                                                                                                                                  n attacked by cannibal g
                                                                                                                                                                                                                   iants, Tyson had saved my life t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         hree or four times, and all Annabeth could do
                                                      nted to admit. B
                                                                                                                         ut I'd just bee
                                                      my friend," I t
                                                                                                                                                   eless?" "What does th
was glare at him like he was the problem. "He's
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         e can hear you, you know. Why don't you ask h
                                                                                                                        old her. "Is he hom
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        have to do with anything? H
im?" She looked surprised. "He can talk?" "I ta
                                                      lk," Tyson a
                                                                                                                        dmitted. "You are pretty." "Ah! Gross!" Annabe
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         couldn't believe she was being so rude. I exami
                                                                                                                                                                                                                      th stepped away from him. I
                                                                                                                                                                                                                     ooked fine—grimy and scarr course not," Annabeth mutt
ned Tyson's hands, which I was sure must've b
                                                     een badly s
                                                                                                                         corched by the flaming dodge balls, but they I
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ed, with dirty fingernails the size of potato chip
                                                                                                                          belief. "Your hands aren't even burned." "Of
s—but they always looked like that. "Tyson," I
                                                     said in dis
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ered. "I'm surprised the Laistrygonians had the
guts to attack you with him around." Tyson se
                                                                                                                           inated by Annabeth's blond hair. He tried
                                                                                                                                                                                                                    to touch it, but she smacked h
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          is hand away. "Annabeth," I said, "what are yo
                                                     emed fasc
u talking about? Laistry-what?" "Laistrygonian
                                                                                                                             sters in the gym. They're a race of gian
                                                                                                                                                                                                                   cannibals who live in the far no
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          rth. Odysseus ran into them once, but I've nev
                                                      s. The mon
er seen them as far south as New York before.
                                                                                                                          can't even say that. What would you call
                                                                                                                                                                                                              them in English?" She thought about
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          t it for a moment. "Canadians," she decided.
                                                       "Laistry—l
                                                     e police'll be a
                                                                                                                                 fter me." "That's the least of our pro
                                                                                                                                                                                                          blems," she said. "Have you been having
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          the dreams?" "The dreams...about Grover?"
Now come on, we have to get out of here." "Th
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         oked stormy, like her mind was racing a millior
Her face turned pale. "Grover? No, what about
                                                     Grover?" I told h
                                                                                                                                      er my dream. "Why? W
                                                                                                                                                                                                      hat were you dreaming about?" Her eyes lo
miles an hour. "Camp," she said at last. "Big tr
                                                     ouble at camp." "M
                                                                                                                                 y mom was saying the sam
                                                                                                                                                                                                    e thing! But what kind of trouble?" "I don't kn
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ow exactly. Something's wrong. We have to get
there right away. Monsters have been chasing oday." "None? But how..." Her eyes drifted to
                                                     me all the way from Virgi
Tyson. "Oh." "What do you m
                                                                                                                                                                                                  nia, trying to stop me. Have you had a lot of att
ean, 'oh'?" Tyson raised his hand like he was s
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         acks?" I shook my head. "None all year...until
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          till in class. "Canadians in the gym called Perc
                                                                                                                                                                                                   w how I could explain, but I figured Tyson des idon, Athena—" "Yes," Tyson said. "Well...
U.S. And sometimes they have kids with
y something...Son of the Sea God?" Annabeth
                                                     and I exchanged looks. I didn't kno
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         erved the truth after almost getting killed. "Big
guy," I said, "you ever hear those old stories a
                                                      bout the Greek gods? Like Zeus, Pose
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         those gods are still alive. They kind of follow W
estern Civilization around, living in the stronge
                                                     st countries, so like now they're in the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         mortals. Kids called half-bloods." "Yes," Tyson
said, like he was still waiting for me to get to th
                                                     e point. "Uh, well, Annabeth and I are h
                                                                                                                                                                                                             alf-bloods," I said. "We're like...heroe
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         s-in-training. And whenever monsters pick up
our scent, they attack us. That's what those gia
                                                      nts were in the gym. Monsters." "Yes."
                                                                                                                                                                                                                 I stared at him. He didn't seem su
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         rprised or confused by what I was telling him,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ah," I admitted. "My dad is Poseidon." Tyson fee time for this," Annabeth said. "We'll talk in th
which surprised and confused me. "So...you b
                                                      elieve me?" Tyson nodded. "But you a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                     re...Son of the Sea God?" "Ye
owned. Now he looked confused. "But then...
                                                      A siren wailed. A police car raced pa
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        st our alley. "We don't hav
e taxi." "A taxi all the way to camp?" I said. "Yo
                                                     u know how much money—" "Trus
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           t me." Í hesitated. "Wha
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          t about Tyson?" I imagined escorting my giant
friend into Camp Half-Blood. If he freaked out o
                                                     n a regular playground with regu
                                                                                                                                                                                                                              lar bullies, how woul
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         d he act at a training camp for demigods? On t
he other hand, the cops would be looking for u
                                                        "We can't just leave him," ∣
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 decided. "He'll be
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          in trouble, too." "Yeah." Annabeth looked grim
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         on were a big disease we needed to get to the
 "We definitely need to take him. Now come on
                                                      " I didn't like the way she
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  said that, as if Tys
hospital, but I followed her down the alley. Tog
                                                      ether the three of us sne
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   aked through the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          side streets of downtown while a huge colum
n of smoke billowed up behind us from my sch
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         topped us on the corner of Thomas and Trimble
                                                      ool gymnasium. "Her
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     e." Annabeth s
e. She fished around in her backpack. "I hope I
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        worse than I'd realized at first. Her chin was cut
                                                       have one left." She
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      looked even
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        in the open. The slashes on the hems of her jea
Twigs and grass were tangled in her ponytail, as
                                                         if she'd slept se
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     veral nights
ns looked suspiciously like claw marks. "What are
                                                              you looking for?" I asked. All around us, sirens wailed. I figured it wouldn't be long before more cops cruised by, looking for juvenile delinquent gym-bombers. No do
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      ubt Matt Sloan had given them a statement by no
w. He'd probably twisted the story around so that Ty
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    son and I were the bloodthirsty cannibals. "Found o
ne. Thank the gods." Annabeth pulled out a gold coin th
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               at I recognized as a drachma, the currency of Mount Oly
mpus. It had Zeus's likeness stamped on one side and the Empire State Building on the other. "Annabeth," I said, "New York taxi drivers won't take that." "Stêthi," she shouted in Ancient Greek. "Ô hárma diabolês!" As usual, the moment she spoke in the language of Olympus, I so
mehow understood it. She'd said: Stop, Chariot of Damnation! That didn't exactly make me feel real excited about whatever her plan was. She threw her coin into the street, but instead of clattering on the asphalt, the drachma sank right through and disappeared. For a moment, noth
ing happened. Then, just where the coin had fallen, the asphalt darkened. It melted into a rectangular pool about the size of a parking space—bubbling red liquid like blood. Then a car erupted from the ooze. It was a taxi, all right, but unlike every other taxi in New York, it wasn't yello
w. It was smoky gray. I mean it looked like it was woven out of smoke, like you could walk right through it. There were words printed on the door—something like GYAR SSIRES—but my dyslexia made it hard for me to decipher what it said. The passenger window rolled down, and a nold woman stuck her head out. She had a mop of grizzled hair covering her eyes, and she spoke in a weird mumbling way, like she'd just had a shot of Novocain. "Passage?" "Three to Camp Half-Blood," Annabeth said. She opened the cab's back door and waved at me to get in, like this was all completely normal. "Ach!" the old woman screeched. "We don't take his kind!" She pointed a bony finger at Tyson. What was it? Pick-on-Big-and-Ugly-Kids Day? "Extra pay," Annabeth promised. "Three more drachma on arrival." "Done!" the woman scree
med. Reluctantly I got in the cab. Tyson squeezed in the middle. Annabeth crawled in last. The interior was also smoky gray, but it felt solid enough. The seat was cracked and lumpy—no different than most taxis. There was no Plexiglas screen separating us from the old lady drivin g... Wait a minute. There wasn't just one old lady. There were three, all crammed in the front seat, each with stringy hair covering her eyes, bony hands, and a charcoal-colored sackcloth dress. The one driving said, "Long Island! Out-of-metro fare bonus! Ha!" She floored the acceler
ator, and my head slammed against the backrest. A prerecorded voice came on over the speaker: Hi, this is Ganymede, cup-bearer to Zeus, and when I'm out buying wine for the Lord of the Skies, I always buckle up! I looked down and found a large black chain instead of a seat beling the condition of the Skies, I always buckle up! I looked down and found a large black chain instead of a seat beling in the condition of the Skies, I always buckle up! I looked down and found a large black chain instead of a seat beling in the condition of the Skies, I always buckle up! I looked down and found a large black chain instead of a seat beling in the middle screeched, "Look out! Go left!" "Well, if you'd give me the eye, Tempest, I could see that!" the driver complained. Wait a minute. Give her the eye? I did
n't have time to ask questions because the driver swerved to avoid an oncoming delivery truck, ran over the curb with a jaw-rattling thump, and flew into the next block. "Wasp!" the third lady said to the driver. "Give me the girl's coin! I want to bite it." "You bit it last time, Anger!" said the driver, whose name must've been Wasp. "It's my turn!" "Is not!" yelled the one called Anger. Instead, Wasp floored the accelerator and rode up on the curb, screeching around another corner, and knoc
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THE SEA OF MONSTERS by Rick Riordan ONE MY BEST FRIEND SHOPS FOR A WEDDING DRESS My nightmare started like this. I was standing on a deserted street in some little beach town. It was the middle of the night. A storm was blowing. Wind and rain ripped at the palm trees along the sidewalk. Pink and yellow stucco buildings lined the street, their windows boarded up. A block away, past a line of hibiscus bushes, the ocean churned. Florida, I thought. Though I wasn't sure how I knew that. I'd never been to Florida. Then I heard hooves clattering against the pavement. I turned and saw my friend Grover running for his life. Yeah, I said hooves. Grover is a satyr. From the waist up, he looks like a typical gangly teenager with a peach-fuzz goatee and a bad case of acne. He walks with a strange limp, but unless you happen to catch