```
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 lack 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 sme
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 always 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 use the could. 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 use the could. 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 use the could. 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 use the could. I tried not to think about my nightmare or monsters or the shadow at my window. Have to use the could. 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 use the could. I got dressed as quickly as I could. I tried not to think about my nights and the could be used to the could. I got dressed as quickly as I could. I got dressed as quickly as I could. I tried not to think about my nights and the could be used to the co
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
 ill me with poisoned cafeteria food or exploding homework. Tomorrow, I'd be on my way to my favorite pla
 l 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 lik
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 waf
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
      ' She didn't need to finish. I knew what she was asking. "I think Grover's in trouble,'
                                                                                                                                                                                                                               out the other part of my life. We tried to live as normally as possible, but my mom knew al
                                                                                                               there were a problem, I'm sure we would've heard from...from camp...." Her shoulders ten
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   sed as she said the word camp. "What is it?" I asked. "Nothing," she said. "I'll tell you
about Grover. "I wouldn't be too worried, dear," she said. "Ĝrover is a big satyr now. If
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 tui
on, we could never afford to do special stuff like shop for a skateboard. But some
                                                                                                        thing in her voice bothered me, "Wait a minute," I said. "I thought we were packing me up for camp ton
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 She twisted her dishrag. "Ah, dear, about that...l got a message from Chiro
n last night." My heart sank. Chiron was the activities director at Camp Half-Blo
                                                                                                    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
stpone? Mom, how could it not be safe? I'm a half-blood! It's like the only saf
                                                                                                 e place on earth for me!" "Usually, dear. But with the problems they're having—" "What problems?" "Percy...I'm v
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              ery, very sorry. I was hoping to talk to you about it this afternoon. I can't exp
ain it all now. I'm not even sure Chiron can. Everything happened so suddear. You should go. Tyson will be waiting." "But—" "Percy, we'll talk this
                                                                                            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
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ock chimed the half-hour. My mom looked almost relieved. "Seven-thirty, of
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     warning, like if I pushed her too hard she'd start to cry. Besides, she wa
                                                                                         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.
s right about my friend Tyson. I had to meet him at the subway station
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      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...as 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
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              school in downtown Manhattan, which means we sit on beank
                                                                                  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
ag chairs instead of at desks, and we don't get grades, and the t
                                                                                 eachers wear jeans and rock concert T-shirts to work. That's al
                                                                                                                                                                              I cool with me. I mean, I'm ADHD and dyslexic, like most half-b
e they kicked me out. The only bad thing about Meriwether was
                                                                                that the teachers always looked on the bri
                                                                                                                                                                                          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
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  vard to spend an hour with no adult supervision to see wha
                                                                             t marooned on an island and go psycho. So for o
                                                                                                                                                                                                  ur final exam, our teachers sent us into the break
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
                                                                           had eyes like a pit bull, and shaggy black h
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    ut sloppy clothes, like he wanted everybody to see how li
es. Sloan wasn't big or strong, but he acted like he was. He
                                                                                                                                                                                                             air, and he always dressed in expensive b
                                                                        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
e he cared about his family's money. One of his front teet
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
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         -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
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          ng. I couldn't tell you what color his eyes were, becar
                                                                    oked teeth. His voice was deep, bu
                                                                                                                                                                                                                             funny, like a much young er kid-
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            guess because he'd never gone to school before co
se I could never make myself look higher than his cro
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 live
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            students could feel good about themselves. Unfortu
ed, in a cardboard refrigerator box off 72nd Street. M
                                                                          her Prep had adopted hi
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                nity service project s o all the
                                                                                                                                                                                                              his scary look s, they made them
nately, most of them couldn't stand Tyson. Once the
                                                                           overed he was a big s
                                                                                                                                              tie, despite his massive strength and
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            selves fee
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            I good by picking on him. I was pretty much his on
                                                                             complained to the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                help him. She'd called social ser
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             nothing ever seemed to happen. The social worker
r friend, which meant he was my only friend. My m
                                                                                                                                     ool a million times that they weren't doing enough to
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            vices, but
                                                                                                                               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
                                                                                                                                                                                                                 g. "You freak!" Sloan yelled. "Wh
. "Why do you even bother, Jacks
tried to give him a wedgie, and Tyson panicked. H
                                                              e swatte
                                                                             d Sloan away a l
                                                                                                                          too hard. Sloan flew fifteen feet and got tangled in the little kids' tire swin
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            y don't you
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               go back to your cardboard box!" Tyson started s
                                                                               bar, and buri
obbing. He sat down on the jungle gym so hard h
                                                             e bent th
                                                                                                                     s head in his hands. "Take it back, Sloan!" I shouted. Sloan just sneered at me.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            on? You m
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               ght have friends if you weren't always sticking up
for that freak." I balled my fists. I hoped my face
                                                              wasn't a
                                                                              s red as it fel
                                                                                                                  '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
ation, or if Sloan had more goons hanging aroun
                                                                               usual. I wa
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 'Just wait till PE, Jackson," Sloan called. "You
                                                             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
re so dead." When first period ended, our Englis
                                                                                de Milo,
                                                            h teacher. Mr
                                                                                             came o utside to inspect the carnage. He pro
                                                                                                                                                            nounced that we'd understood Lord of the Flies perfectly. We all passed his c
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                d we should never, never grow up to be violent
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            ourse
people. Matt Sloan nodded earnestly, then gave
                                                             me a chip-to
                                                                                                      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
                                                                                                                                                                                                       nvited back next year for the comm
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
                                                                                                                                                       ed. I realized he didn't know if he'd be i
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ice project. I wondered if the headmaster had e
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            unity
                                                                                  man aged. "Everything's go
                                                                                                                                                                                                          t like a big liar. How could I pro
ven bothered talking to him about it. "Don't wor
                                                                                                                                                      "Tyson gave me such a grateful look I fel
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            mise
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  like him that anything would be fine? Our next
                                                                  big guy.
                                                                                                                                                   omething explode. Tyson was my lab partner
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            ig for
exam was science. Mrs. Tesla told us that we h
                                                                              hemica is until we succeeded
                                                                                                                                                                                                                         hands were way too b
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  tiny vials we were supposed to use. He accider
                                                                   o mix c
                                                                                                                                                  n. After Mrs. Tesla evacuated the lab and calle
                                                                               an orange mushroom clo u
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  she praised Tyson and me for being natural of
                                                                                                                                                                                                                          e hazardous waste r
                                                                   d made
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            emoval squad
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
                                                                                f my bad dream. I had
                                                                                                                            terrible feeling that Grover was in danger. In social studies, while w
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           were drawing latitud
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            e/longitude ma
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  ps, I opened my notebook and stared at the pl
                                                                   mory o
                                                                                                                           g jeans and a denim jacket over her orange Camp Half-Blood T-shirt.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           H er blond hair was
oto inside—my friend Annabeth on vacation in
                                                           Was
                                                                  hington
                                                                                D.C. She was weari
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             pulled back i
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  n a bandanna. She was standing in front of the
Lincoln Memorial with her arms crossed, looking
                                                                               eased with herself. I
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 o she's always visiting famous monuments ar
                                                           g extremely pl
                                                                                                                            ke she'd personally designed the place. See, Annabeth wants to be an
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            he grows up. 9
                                                                                                                                                                                                                               architect when s
                                                                                                                          nd every once in a while I'd look at it just to remind myself she was rea
                                                           e the picture a
                                                                               fter spring break, a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           -Blood hadn't j
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  ust been my imagination. I wished Annabeth w
d stuff. She's weird that way. She'd e-mailed m
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                and Camp Half
ere here. She'd know what to make of my drea
                                                                               admit it to her, bu t
                                                                                                                          she was smarter than me, even if she was annoying sometimes. I was a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        v notebook when
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  Matt Sloan reached over and ripped the photo
                                                                      ever
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 bout to close m
ut of the rings. "Hey!" I protested. Sloan check
                                                           ed out
                                                                              picture and his eve
                                                                                                                                             way, Jackson. Who is that? She is not your-
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     felt hot. Slo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  anded the photo to his ugly buddies, who snicl
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                ba ck!" Mv ears
                                                                               re new kids who mu
ered and started ripping it up to make spit wad
                                                                                                                           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
                                                                       : MA
or, too, because they'd all filled in strange nam
                                                                                         SUCKER,
                                                                                                                           KULL EATER, and JOE BOB. No human beings had names like that. "T
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  t year," Sloan bragged, like that was supposed
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            uys are moving her
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  er. Jackson. Good thing I'm gonna put you ou
to scare me. "I bet they can pay the tuition, too
                                                                                         friend.
                                                                                                                           He's not retarded." I had to try really, really hard not to punch Sloan in
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             ace. "You're such
                                                                      e your retard
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
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 mortals, no matter how obnoxious they were.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             my anger out on re
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
                                                           eriwether would ever b
was paying me any attention. Like any girl at M
                                                                                        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 di
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
                                                                                                                                the weight room door, clutching his gym clothes. "Will you...
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             ed not to sou
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 nd aggravated about it. "Yeah, sure, man." Tys
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
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,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                     he'd get upset
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             and start
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             ripping the d
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 oors off lockers. When we got into the gym, Co
ach Nunley was sitting at his little desk reading
                                                            Sports Illustra
                                                                                                                                      t a million years old, with bifocals and no teeth and
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             air. He remin
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  ded me of the Oracle at Camp Half-Blood—wh
                                                                                          Nunley
                                                                                                   was abou
                                                                                                                                                                                                                   a greas
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            e of gray h
ch was a shriveled-up mummy—except Coach
                                                           Nunley moved
                                                                                                                                        r billowed green smoke. Well, at least not that
                                                                                                                                                                                                               I'd observ
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             att Sloan sa
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 n I be captain?" "Eh?" Coach Nunley looked u
                                                                                          less a
                                                                                                      nd he neve
p from his magazine. "Yeah," he mumbled. "M
                                                           m-hmm." Sloa
                                                                                                      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
                                                                                          nned a
                                                                               my sid e I had
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                hiz, and a half dozen other kids who al
ved over to Sloan's side. So did the big group o
                                                           f visitors. On
                                                                                                       Tyson, Corey B
                                                                                                                                                   er the computer geek, Raj Manda
                                                                                                                                                                                                       li the calculus w
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ways got harassed by Sloan and his gang. No
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                strong-looking as Tyson, and there we
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
                                                                                                                                                                                                                   II and
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  re six of them. Matt Sloan spilled a cage full o
balls in the middle of the gym. "Scared," Tyson
                                                            mumbled, "Smell funny," I look
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                e was talking about himself. "Them."
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  vson pointed at Sloan's new friends.
nny." The visitors were cracking their knuckles
                                                            eyeing us like it was slaughter t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         place where they fed kids rav
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   meat and beat them with sticks. Sloan blew t
                                                                                                                  couldn't help wonder
e coach's whistle and the game began. Sloan's
                                                                                                                   Raj 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
                                                            team ran for the center line. On m
                                                                                                                                                                                                                    go po
                                                                                                                                 A ball slammed into my gut. I sat down hard in the middle of the gy
                                                                                                                                                                                                                    m floor. The oth
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   My eyesight was fuzzy. I felt like I'd just gotte
The rest of my team did their best to cower in
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           er team exploded in laughte
                                                                                                                  yson yelled, "Percy, duck!" I rolled as another dodgeball whistled past my ear a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                    t the speed of s
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           ound. Whooom! It hit the wal
n the Heimlich maneuver from a gorilla. I could
                                                           n't believe anybody could throw that hard. T
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  I mat, and Corey Bailer yelped. "Hey!" I yelled
at Sloan's team. "You could kill somebody!" Th
                                                                                                                         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 n
                                                           e visitor named Joe Bob grinned at me evill
                                                                                                                                                                                                                    bulged beneath
                                                           e Perseus except those who knew my true id entit
                                                                                                                          y. Friends...and enemies. What had Tyson said? They smell funny. Mons
me sent a chill down my back. Nobody called m
                                                                                                                                                                                                                    ters. All around M att Sloan, the visitors were qu
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  owing in size. They were no longer kids. They
                                                           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
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    ! Who..." The other kids on his team started
were eight-foot-tall giants with wild eyes, point
creaming and backing toward the exit, but the
                                                                                                                          v accuracy. It
                                                           giant named Marrow Sucker threw a ball with deadl
                                                                                                                                                                                                                     was about to leave and hit the door, slamming
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   shut like magic. Raj and some of the other kid
s banged on it desperately but it wouldn't bude
                                                           e. "Let them go!" I yelled at the giants. The one cal
                                                                                                                           led Joe Bob aro
                                                                                                                                                                wled at me. He had a tattoo on his biceps
                                                                                                                                                                                                                    that said: JB luvs Babycakes. "And lose our tast
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   morsels? No. Son of the Sea God. We Laistry
                                                                                                                          f dodgeballs appeared o
gonians aren't just playing for your death. We
                                                           want lunch!" He waved his hand and a new batch o
                                                                                                                                                                     n the center line—but these balls weren't made of red rubber. They were bronze, the siz
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   of cannon balls, perforated like wiffle balls w
th fire bubbling out the holes. They must've be
                                                                                                                                                                                 . Nunley looked up
                                                                                                                                                                                                           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
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  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
                                                                                                                                                                                                            hat they can understand. Maybe the coach saw a few eig
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  nth graders pounding the younger kids like us
                                                                                                                                                                                       to see only w
                                                           gs getting ready to toss Molotov cocktails around. (It wouldn't have been the first time.)
ual. Maybe the other kids saw Matt Sloan's thu
                                                                                                                                                                                                            I was pretty sure nobody else realized we were dealing
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  with genuine man-eating bloodthirsty monsters
 "Yeah. Mm-hmm," Coach muttered. "Play nice
                                                                 nd 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
exercise mat just as the ball exploded against
                                                                                                                                                                                   er exit!" They ran for the locker room, but with another wave of Joe Bob's ha
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  nd, that door also slammed shut. "No one leav
                                                           u're not out until we eat you!" He launched his own fireball. My teammat
es unless you're out!" Joe Bob roared. "And yo
                                                                                                                                                                               es scattered as it blasted a crater in the gym floor. I reached for Riptide, which I
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  always kept in my pocket, but then I realized I
                                                                                                                                                                              room door was sealed. I was completely defenseless. Another fireball came strea
was wearing gym shorts. I had no pockets. Rip
                                                           tide was tucked in my jeans inside my gym locker. And the locker
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  king toward me. Tyson pushed me out of the w
                                                           eels. I found myself sprawled on the gym floor, dazed from sm
ay, but the explosion still blew me head over h
                                                                                                                                                                               oke, my tie-dyed T-shirt peppered with sizzling holes. Just across the center line
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   two hungry giants were glaring down at me
                                                           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.
Flesh!" they bellowed. "Hero flesh for lunch!" T
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
                                                                                                                                                                                                pheres exploded against their chests. The giants disintegrated in t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 win columns of flame—a sure sign they were m
                                                                                                                                                                                                trouble cleaning up after a fight. "My brothers!" Joe Bob the Cann
d toward us. Tyson just had time to swat it aside. It flew straight
                                                           dissipate into smoke and dust, which saves heroes a lot of
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
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  over Coach Nunley's head and landed in the b
                                                           ning around screaming, trying to avoid the sizzling craters in th
                                                                                                                                                                                                   loor. Others were banging on the door, calling for help. Sloan h
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  imself stood petrified in the middle of the court
                                                                                                                                                                 e f
                                                                                                                                                                                                   ng aid like the explosions were giving him interference, but he Joe Bob the Cannibal. "We will feast on your bones!" I wanted
                                                           und him. Coach Nunley still wasn't seeing anything. He tapped h
                                                                                                                                                             heari
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  kept his eyes on his magazine. Surely the whol
, watching in disbelief as balls of death flew aro
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  to tell him he was taking the dodgeball game w
e school could hear the noise. The headmaster
                                                           , the police, somebody would come help us. "Victory will be our
                                                                                                                                                         s!" roared
                                                           nother ball. The other three giants followed his lead. I knew we
ay too seriously, but before I could, he hefted a
                                                                                                                                                           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
                                                           ran toward the locker room. "Move!" I told my teammates. "A
                                                                                                                                                                                                 rom the door." Explosions behind me. Tyson had batted two of th
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  e balls back toward their owners and blasted th
                                                                                                                                                              wa y f
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  emolished the locker room door. Now, I figured
em to ashes. Thát left two giants still standing.
                                                           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
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  e back wall, which cracked and partially crumb
                                                                                                                                                   ght Tyson square in th
                                                                                                                                                                                                       e chest. He slid the length of the court and slammed into the
ed on top of him, making a hole right onto Chu
                                                           rch Street. I didn't see how Tyson could still b
                                                                                                                                                                                                           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
His expression changed from gloating to surpr
                                                           ise. Right where his belly button should've
                                                                                                                                                  been, his T-shirt ri ppe
                                                                                                                                                                                                                         d open and he grew something like a horn-
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 no, not a horn-the glowing tip of a blade. The
ball dropped out of his hand. The monster star
                                                           ed down at the knife that had just run him thr
                                                                                                                                                            rom behin d. H
                                                                                                                                                                                                                         muttered, "Ow," and burst into a cloud of gr
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 een flame, which I figured was going to make B
abycakes pretty upset. Standing in the smoke
                                                           was my friend Annabeth. Her face was grimy an
                                                                                                                                          d scratched. She had a rag ged
                                                                                                                                                                                                                         pack slung over her shoulder, her baseball c
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  ap tucked in her pocket, a bronze knife in her h
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
                                                           ture. "That's the girl...That's the girl--" Annabeth
                                                                                                                                                                                                                     m flat. "And you," she told him, "lay off my frie
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 nd." The gym was in flames. Kids were still run
he dimly recognized her from my notebook pic
                                                                                                                                        punched him in the nose and
                                                                                                                                                                              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
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 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
hat was—" My face felt hot. "Oh my gods, you
                                                                                                                                       e sheathed her bronze knife. "I've been tryin
                                                                                                                                                                                                                  to find a good time to talk to you, but you were ne
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  ver alone." "The shadow I saw this morning—t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  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
                                                           eet me outside," Ánnabeth told me. "And him.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                dazed against the wall. Annabeth gave him a look o
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  f distaste that I didn't quite understand. "You'd
                                                                                                                                         'She pointed to Tyson, who was still sitting
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  the middle of the burning gymnasium when th up from the pile of cinder blocks. "Head hurts.
better bring him." "What?" "No time!" she said
                                                            "Hurry!" She put on her Yankees basebal
                                                                                                                                                                                                                d instantly vanished. That left me standing alone in
                                                                                                                                       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
 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.
                                                                                                                                     We'd made
                                                                                                                                                             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
                                                           nted to admit. B
                                                                                                                                                                 n attacked by cannibal g
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        iants, Tyson had saved my life t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  hree or four times, and all Annabeth could do
                                                                                                                                     ut I'd just bee
                                                          my friend," I t
lk," Tyson a
was glare at him like he was the problem. "He's
im?" She looked surprised. "He can talk?" "I ta
                                                                                                                                                                  eless?" "What does th
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           it have to do with anything? H
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 e can hear you, you know. Why don't you ask h
                                                                                                                                    old her. "Is he hom
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  couldn't believe she was being so rude. I exami
                                                                                                                                    dmitted. "You are pretty." "Ah! Gross!" Annabe
                                                               "Tyson a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           th stepped away from him. I
                                                                                                                                    corched by the flaming dodge balls, but they I belief. "Your hands aren't even burned." "Of
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          ooked fine—grimy and scarr course not," Annabeth mutt
ned Tyson's hands, which I was sure must've b
                                                           een badly s
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ed, with dirty fingernails the size of potato chip
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
                                                                                                                                     can't even say that. What would you call fter me." "That's the least of our pro
er seen them as far south as New York before.
                                                            "Laistry—I
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  them in English?" She thought about
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  t it for a moment. "Canadians," she decided.
                                                           e police'll be a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                             blems," she said. "Have you been having
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   the dreams?" "The dreams...about Grover?"
Now come on, we have to get out of here." "Th
Her face turned pale. "Grover? No, what about
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  oked stormy, like her mind was racing a million
                                                           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
                                                          me all the way from Virgi
Tyson. "Oh." "What do you m
there right away. Monsters have been chasing oday." "None? But how..." Her eyes drifted to
                                                                                                                                                                                                                     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
y something...Son of the Sea God?" Annabeth
                                                           and I exchanged looks. I didn't kno
                                                                                                                                                                                                                       w how I could explain, but I figured Tyson des
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 erved the truth after almost getting killed. "Big
guy," I said, "you ever hear those old stories a estern Civilization around, living in the stronge
                                                                                                                                                                                                                         idon, Athena—" "Yes," Tyson said. "Well...
U.S. And sometimes they have kids with
                                                           bout the Greek gods? Like Zeus, Pose
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  those gods are still alive. They kind of follow W
                                                           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
                                                           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,
our scent, they attack us. That's what those gia
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 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
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 d he act at a training camp for demigods? On t
in trouble, too." "Yeah." Annabeth looked grim
on were a big disease we needed to get to the
                                                          n a regular playground with regu
friend into Camp Half-Blood. If he freaked out o
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    lar bullies, how woul
he other hand, the cops would be looking for u
                                                           s. "We can't just leave him,"
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       decided. "He'll be
 "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
                                                            have one left." She
e. She fished around in her backpack. "I hope I
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                worse than I'd realized at first. Her chin was cut
                                                               if she'd slept se
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                in the open. The slashes on the hems of her jea
Twigs and grass were tangled in her ponytail, as
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            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 into the street. Of the act of the coin had fallen, the asphalt darkened. It melted into a rectangular pool about the size of a parking space—bubbling red liquid like shown the coin had fallen, the appeared to the coin had fallen, the appeared in the dor—something like gyars. 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 gyars and et 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? 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 screamed. 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. There was no Plexiglas screen separating us from the old lady driving and a charcoal-colored sackcloth dress. The one driving said, "Long Island! Out-of-metro fare bonus! Ha!" she to complete the screen and the set of the
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 belt. I decided I wasn't that desperate...yet. The cab sped around the corner of West Broadway, and the gray lady sitting 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 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 who