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 when 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 somewhere. 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 muttered 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 back 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 smell 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. Grover took a deep breath. Maybe the thing was gone. Then lightning flashed. The entire front of the store exploded, and a monstrous voice bellowed: "MIIIIINE!" I sat bolt upright, shivering in my bed. There was no storm. No monster. Morning sunlight filtered through my bedroom window. 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 pen I always slept with. I brought it out, studied the Ancient Greek writing engraved on the side: Anaklusmos. Riptide. I thought about uncapping it, but something held me back. I hadn't used Riptide for so long.… Besides, my mom had made me promise not to use deadly weapons in the 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 get 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. My 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 kill me with poisoned cafeteria food or exploding homework. Tomorrow, I'd be on my way to my favorite place in the world—Camp Half-Blood. Only one more day to go. Surely even I couldn't mess that up. As usual, I didn't have a clue how wrong I was. My mom made blue waffles and blue eggs for breakfast. She's funny that way, celebrating special occasions with blue food. I think it's her way of saying anything is possible. Percy can pass seventh grade. Waffles can be blue. Little miracles like that. I ate at the kitchen table while my mom washed dishes. She was dressed in her work uniform—a starry blue skirt and a red-and-white striped blouse she wore to sell candy at Sweet on America. Her long brown hair was pulled back in a ponytail. The waffles tasted great, but I guess I wasn't digging in like I usually did. My mom looked over and frowned. "Percy, are you all right?" "Yeah…fine." But she could always tell when something was bothering me. She dried her hands and sat down across from me. "School, or…" She didn't need to finish. I knew what she was asking. "I think Grover's in trouble," I said, and I told her about my dream. She pursed her lips. We didn't talk much about the other part of my life. We tried to live as normally as possible, but my mom knew all about Grover. "I wouldn't be too worried, dear," she said. "Grover is a big satyr now. If there were a problem, I'm sure we would've heard from…from camp…" Her shoulders tensed as she said the word camp. "What is it?" I asked. "Nothing," she said. "I'll tell you what. This afternoon we'll celebrate the end of school. I'll take you and Tyson to Rockefeller 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 tuition, we could never afford to do special stuff like shop for a skateboard. But something in her voice bothered me. "Wait a minute," I said. "I thought we were packing me up for camp tonight." She twisted her dishrag. "Ah, dear, about that…I got a message from Chiron last night." My heart sank. Chiron was the activities director at Camp Half-Blood. 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." "Postpone? Mom, how could it not be safe? I'm a half-blood! It's like the only safe place on earth for me!" "Usually, dear. But with the problems they're having—" "What problems?" "Percy…I'm very, very sorry. I was hoping to talk to you about this afternoon. I can't explain it all now. I'm not even sure Chiron can. Everything happened so suddenly." My mind was reeling. How could I not go to camp? I wanted to ask a million questions, but just then the kitchen clock chimed the half-hour. My mom looked almost relieved. "Seven-thirty, dear. You should go. Tyson will be waiting." "But—" "Percy, we'll talk this 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 warning, like if I pushed her too hard she'd start to cry. Besides, she was right about my friend Tyson. I had to meet him at the subway station on time or he'd get upset. He was scared of traveling underground alone. I gathered up my stuff, but I stopped in the doorway. "Mom, this problem at camp. Does it…could it have anything to do with my dream about Grover?" She wouldn't meet my eyes. "We'll talk this 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 have 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 morning sunlight—a human silhouette against the brick wall, a shadow that belonged to no one. Then it rippled and vanished. TWO I PLAY DODGEBALL WITH CANNIBALS My day started normal. Or as normal as it ever gets at Meriwether College Prep. See, it's this "progressive" school in downtown Manhattan, which means we sit on beanbag chairs instead of at desks, and we don't get grades, and the teachers wear jeans and rock concert T-shirts to work. That's all cool with me. I mean, I'm ADHD and dyslexic, like most half-bloods, so I'd never done that great in regular schools even before they kicked me out. The only bad thing about Meriwether was that the teachers always looked on the bright side of things, and the kids weren't always…well, bright. Take my first class today: English. The whole middle school had read this book called Lord of the Flies, where all these kids get marooned on an island and go psycho. So for our final exam, our teachers sent us into the break yard to spend an hour with no adult supervision to see what would happen. What happened was a massive wedgie contest between the seventh and eighth graders, two people fights, and a full-tackle basketball game. The school bully, Matt Sloan, led most of those activities. Sloan wasn't big or strong, but he acted like he was. He had eyes like a pit bull, and shaggy black hair, and he always dressed in expensive but sloppy clothes, like he wanted everybody to see how little he cared about his family's money. One of his front teeth was chipped from the time he'd taken his daddy's Porsche for a joyride and run into a PLEASE SLOW DOWN FOR CHILDREN sign. Anyway, Sloan was giving everybody wedgies until he made the mistake of trying it on my friend Tyson. Tyson was the only homeless kid at Meriwether College Prep. As near as my mom and I could figure, he'd been abandoned by his parents when he was very young, probably because he was so…different. He was six-foot-three and built like the Abominable Snowman, but he cried a lot and was scared of just about everything, including his own reflection. His face was kind of misshapen and brutal-looking. I couldn't tell you what color his eyes were, because I could never make myself look higher than his crooked teeth. His voice was deep, but he talked funny, like a much younger kid—I guess because he'd never gone to school before coming to Meriwether. He wore tattered jeans, grimy size-twenty sneakers, and a plaid flannel shirt with holes in it. He smelled like a New York City alleyway, because that's where he lived, in a cardboard refrigerator box off 72nd Street. Meriwether Prep had adopted him as a community service project so all the students could feel good about themselves. Unfortunately, most of them couldn't stand Tyson. Once they discovered he was a big softie, despite his massive strength and his scary looks, they made themselves feel good by picking on him. I was pretty much his only friend, which meant he was my only friend. My mom had complained to the school a million times that they weren't doing enough to help him. She'd called social services, but nothing ever seemed to happen. The social workers claimed Tyson didn't exist. They swore up and down that they'd visited the alley we described and couldn't find him, though how you miss a giant kid living in a refrigerator box, I don't know. Anyway, Matt Sloan snuck up behind him and tried to give him a wedgie, and Tyson packed. He swatted Sloan away a little too hard. Sloan flew fifteen feet and got tangled in the little kids' tire swing. "You freak!" Sloan yelled. "Why don't you go back to your cardboard box!" Tyson started sobbing. He sat down on the jungle gym so hard he bent the bar, and buried his head in his hands. "Take it back, Sloan!" I shouted. Sloan just sneered at me. "Why do you even bother, Jackson? You might have friends if you weren't always sticking up for that freak." I balled my fists. I hoped my face wasn't as red as it felt. "He's not a freak. He's just…" I tried to think of the right thing to say, but Sloan wasn't listening. He and his big ugly friends were too busy laughing. I wondered if it were my imagination, or if Sloan had more goons hanging around him than usual. I was used to seeing him with two or three, but today he had like, half a dozen more, and I was pretty sure I'd never seen them before. "Just wait till PE, Jackson," Sloan called. "You are so dead." When first period ended, our English teacher, Mr. de Milo, came outside to inspect the carnage. He pronounced that we'd understood Lord of the Flies perfectly. We all passed his course, and we should never, never grow up to be violent people. Matt Sloan nodded earnestly, then gave me a chip-toothed grin. I had to promise to buy Tyson an extra peanut butter sandwich at lunch to get him to stop sobbing. "I…I am a freak?" he asked me. "No," I promised, gritting my teeth. "Matt Sloan is the freak if…if I can't…" His voice trembled. I realized he didn't know if he'd be invited back next year for the community service project. I wondered if the headmaster had even bothered talking to him about it. "Don't worry, big guy," I managed. "Everything's going to be fine." Tyson gave me such a grateful look I felt like a big liar. How could I promise a kid like him that anything would be fine? Our next exam was science. Mrs. Tesla told us that we had to mix chemicals until we succeeded in making something explode. Tyson was my lab partner. His hands were way too big for the tiny vials we were supposed to use. He accidentally knocked a tray of chemicals off the counter and made an orange mushroom cloud in the trash can. After Mrs. Tesla evacuated the lab and called the hazardous waste removal squad, she praised Tyson and me for being natural chemists. We were the first ones who'd ever ace her exam in under thirty seconds. I was glad the morning went fast, because it kept me from thinking too much about my problems. I couldn't stand the idea that something might be wrong at camp. Even worse, I couldn't shake the memory of my bad dream. I had a terrible feeling that Grover was in danger. In social studies, while we were drawing latitude/longitude maps, I opened my notebook and stared at the photo inside—my friend Annabeth on vacation in Washington, D.C. She was wearing jeans and a denim jacket over her orange Camp Half-Blood T-shirt standing in front of the Lincoln Memorial with her arms crossed, looking extremely pleased with herself, like she'd personally designed the place. See, Annabeth wanted to be an architect when she grows up, so she's always visiting famous monuments and stuff. 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The gym uniform at Meriwether is sky blue shorts and tie-dyed T-shirts. Fortunately, we did most of our athletic stuff inside, so we didn't have to jog through Tribeca lookin g like a bunch of boot-camp hippie children. I changed as quickly as I could in the locker room because I didn't want to deal with Sloan. I was about to when Tyson called, "Percy?" He hadn't changed. I ripped off a chunk of my tie-dyed T-shirt clutching his gym clothes. "Will you…uh…" "Oh. Yeah." I tried not to sound aggravated about it. "Yeah, sure, man." Tyson ducked inside the weight room and outside the door while he changed. I feel kind of awkward doing this, but he asked cars on his back that I've never had the courage to ask him about. Anyway, I'd learned the hard way that if people teased Tyson while he was dressing out, he'd get upset and start ripping the doors off lockers. When we got into the gym, Coach Nunley was sitting at his little desk reading Sports Illustrated. Nunley was about a million years old, with bifocals and no teeth and a greasy wave of gray hair. He reminded me of the Oracle at Camp Half-Blood, at least not that I'd observed. Matt Sloan said, "Coach Nunley looked up from his magazine. "Yeah," he jocks and the popular kids moved over to Sloan's side. So did the big group of visitors. On my side, Tyson was worth half a team all by himself. He made me the other team's captain, but it didn't matter, because all the Normally I would've been okay with just Tyson, but Sloan's team were almost as strong-looking as Tyson, and there were six of them. Matt Sloan spilled a cage full of middle of the gym. "Scared," Tyson muttered. "Smell funny." I looked at him. "Why bled." "Smell funny." The visitors were cracking their knuckles, eyeing us like it was slaughter time. I couldn't help wondering where the Sloan had given them a ran for the center line. On my side, Raj Mandali yelled something in Urdu, probably "I have to go pee." "Tyson." Raj Mandali, the currency of Mount Olympus. It had Zeus's likeness stamped on one side and the ta- ke targets. "Tyson, my gut. I sat down hard in the middle of the gym. "Ohoo! Ohoo! Ohoo! Ohoo! Ohoo!" As usual, the moment she spoke in the language of Olympus, n't believe anybody Percy, duck!" I rolled as another dodgeball whistled past my ear at the speed of sound. Whooom! It hit the wall mat, and Corey Bailer yelped. "Hey!" I yelled at Sloan's t- somebody!" The Olympus. Somehow, he looked a lot bigger now…even taller than Tyson. His biceps bulged beneath his T-shirt. "I hope so, Perseus Jackson! I hope so!" The way he said my own my back. No o knew my true identity. Friends…and enemies. What had Tyson said? They sm ell funny. Monsters. All around Matt Sloan, the visitors were growing in size. They were eight-foot-tall giants with wild eyes, pointy teeth, and hairy arms tattooed with snakes and hula women and Valentine hearts. Mat Sloan dropped his ball. "Whoa! You're not from Detroit! Who…" The other kids on toward the exit, but the giant named Marrow Sucker threw a ball with deadly accuracy. It streaked past Raj Mandali just as he was about to leave and hit the door, slamming it shut like magic. Raj and so erately but it wouldn't budge. "Let them go!" I yelled at the giants. The one called Joe Bob growled at me. He had a tattoo on his biceps that said: JB luvs Babycakes. "And lose our tasty morsels? No, Sonny!" He waved his hand and a new batch of dodgeball appeared on the center line—but these balls weren't made of red rubber. They were bronze, the size of cannonballs, perforated like wiffle balls 've been searing hot, but the giants picked them up with their bare hands. "Coach!" I yelled. Nunley looked up sleepily, but if he saw anything abnormal about the dodgeball game, he didn't let on. T force called the Mist obscures the true appearance of monsters and good scrap of the other kids saw Matt Sloan's thugs getting ready to toss Molotov cocktails around their vision, so mortals tend to see only what they can understand. Maybe the coach saw a few eighth graders pound "Yeah. Mm-hmm," Coach muttered. "Play nice." And he went back to his magazine. (It wouldn't have been the first time.) At any rate, I was pretty sure nobody else realized we were dealing with ge hind the exercise mat just as the ball exploded against it, blasting the giant named Skull Eater threw his ball. I dove aside as the fiery bronze cometed past my shoulder. "Corey!" I No one leaves unless you're out!" Joe Bob roared. "And you're not out until we eat you!" He launched his own fireball. My teammates scattered as it blasted a crater in the ground, but with another wave of Joe Bo en I realized I was wearing gym shorts. I had no pockets. Riptide was tucked in my jeans inside my gym locker. And the locker room door was sealed. I was comple- gym floor. I reached for Riptide, out of the way, but the explosion still blew me head over heels. I found myself sprawled on the gym floor, dazed from smoke, my tie-dyed T-shirt peppered with tely deafeningly silent. Other n at me. "Flesh!" they bellowed. "Hero flesh for lunch!" They both took aim. "Percy n e" "Tyson!" I screamed, but it was fenseless. Another fireball came sizzling ho…but no…he'd caught them. Somehow Tyson, who was so clumsy he knocked over la les. Just across the center I them hurtling back toward their surprised owners, who screamed, "BAAAAAD!" as the balls exploded against their chests. The giants disintegrated into twin columns of flame— their balls. "Tyson!" I screamed, but it was die. They just dissipate into smoke and dust, which saves heroes a lot of trouble cleaning up after a fight. "My brothers!" Joe Bob the Cannibal wailed. He fled his caught two fiery metal balls speeding towards us. Tyson jumped aside as another comet hurtled toward us. Tyson squeezed in the middle. Annabeth crawled in last. The interior of the jungle gym so hard he bent the bar, and buried his head in his craters in the floor. Other servers were banging on the door, calling for help. Sloan himself stood petrified in the middle of the court, watching in disbelief as hands. "Take it back, Sloan!" I shouted. Sloan just sneered at me. "Why do you even bother, Jackson? You might have friends if you weren't always sticking up for that freak." I balled my fists. I hoped my face wasn't as red as it felt. "He's not a freak. He's just…" I tried to think of the right thing to say, but Sloan wasn't listening. He and his big ugly friends were too busy laughing. I wondered if it were my imagination, or if Sloan had more goons hanging around him than usual. I was used to seeing him with two or three, but today he had like, half a dozen more, and I was pretty sure I'd never seen them before. 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Who…" The other kids on toward the exit, but the giant named Marrow Sucker threw a ball with deadly accu erately but it wouldn't budge. "Let them g o!" I yelled at the giants. The one called J ch! Ohoo! Ohoo! Ohoo! Ohoo! Ohoo!" As usual, the moment she spoke in the language of Olympus, n't just playing for your death. We want lu ch! " He waved his hand and a new batch of dodgeball appeared on the center line—but these balls weren't made of red rubber. They were bronze, the size of ca ith fire bubbling out the holes. They must've been searing hot, but the giants picked them up with their bare hands. "Coach!" I yelled. Nunley looked up sleepily, but if he saw anything abnormal about the dodgeball game, he didn't let on. T hat's the problem with mortals. A magical force called the Mist obscures the true appearance of monsters and good scrap of the other kids saw Matt Sloan's thugs getting ready to toss Molotov cocktails around their vision, so mortals tend to see only what they can understand. Maybe the coach saw a few eighth graders pound ing the younger kids like usual. Maybe the "Yeah. Mm-hmm," Coach muttered. "Play nice." And he went back to his magazine. (It wouldn't have been the first time.) At any rate, I was pretty sure nobody else realized we were dealing with genuine man-eating bloodthirsty monsters. hind the exercise mat just as the ball exploded against it, blasting the giant named Skull Eater threw his ball. I dove aside as the fiery bronze comet sailed past my shoulder. "Corey!" I screamed. Tyson pulled him out from be No one leaves unless you're out!" Joe Bob roared. "And you're not out until we eat you!" He launched his own fireball. My teammates scattered as it blasted a crater in the ground, but with another wave of Joe Bob's hand, that door also slammed shut. " en I realized I was wearing gym shorts. I had no pockets. Riptide was tucked in my jeans inside my gym locker. And the locker room door was sealed. I was completely deafeningly silent. Other gym floor. I reached for Riptide, which I always kept in my pocket, but the out of the way, but the explosion still blew me head over heels. I found myself sprawled on the gym floor, dazed from smoke, my tie-dyed T-shirt peppered with fenseless. Another fireball came sizzling ho- les. Just across the center I streaking toward me. Tyson pushed me n at me. "Flesh!" they bellowed. "Hero flesh for lunch!" They both took aim. "Percy n e" "Tyson!" I screamed, but it was their balls. "Tyson!" I scr eamed, but it was two hungry giants were glaring down …but no…he'd caught them. Somehow Tyson, who was so clumsy he knocked over la- y metal balls speeding towards us. Tyson jumped aside as another comet hurtled toward us. Tyson squeezed in the middle. Annabeth crawled in last. The interior of the jungle gym so hard he bent the bar, and buried his head in his them hurtling back toward their surprised owners, who screamed, "BAAAAAD!" as the balls exploded against their chests. The giants disintegrated into twin columns of flame— a sure sign the die. They just dissipate into smoke and dust, which saves heroes a lot of trouble cleaning up after a fight. "My brothers!" Joe Bob the Cannibal wailed. He fled his cracked. He swatted Sloan away a little too hard. Sloan flew fifteen feet and got tangled in the little kids' tire swing. "You freak!" Sloan yelled. "Why don't you go back to your cardboard box!" Tyson started sobbing. He sat down on hands. "Take it back, Sloan!" I shouted. Sloan just sneered at me. "Why do you even bother, Jackson? You might have friends if you weren't always sticking up for that freak." I balled my fists. I hoped my face wasn't as red as it felt. "He's not a freak. He's just…" I tried to think of the right thing to say, but Sloan wasn't listening. He and his big ugly friends were too busy laughing. I wondered if it were my imagination, or if Sloan had more goons hanging around him than usual. I was used to seeing him with two or three, but today he had like, half a dozen more, and I was pretty sure I'd never seen them before. "Just wait till PE, Jackson," Sloan called. "You are so dead." When first period ended, our English teacher, Mr. de Milo, came outside to inspect the carnage. He pronounced that we'd understood Lord of the Flies perfectly. We all passed his course, and we should never, never grow up to be violent people. Matt Sloan nodded earnestly, then gave me a chip-toothed grin. I had to promise to buy Tyson an extra peanut butter sandwich at lunch to get him to stop sobbing. "I…I am a freak?" he asked me. "No," I promised, gritting my teeth. "Matt Sloan is the freak." Tyson sniffled. "You are a good friend. Miss you next year if…if I can't…" His voice trembled. I realized he didn't know if he'd be invited back next year for the community service project. I wondered if the headmaster had even bothered talking to him about it. "Don't worry, big guy," I managed. "Everything's going to be fine." Tyson gave me such a grateful look I felt like a big liar. How could I promise a kid like him that anything would be fine? Our next exam was science. Mrs. Tesla told us that we had to mix chemicals until we succeeded in making something explode. Tyson was my lab partner. His hands were way too big for the tiny vials we were supposed to use. He accidentally knocked a tray of chemicals off the counter and made an orange mushroom cloud in the trash can. After Mrs. Tesla evacuated the lab and called the ha

Ty
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tern Civilizat
and I are h
was tellin
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g my
d ecid
down the alley. To
She fished around in he
ms of her jeans looked sus
tt Sloan had given them a
ma, the currency of Mou
. "Ò hárma diabolès!" As
an was. She threw her coi
darkened. It melted into a r
ellow. It was smoky gray. I
me to decipher what it sa
a shot of Novocain. "Passage? Pas sage
his kind!" She pointed a bony finger at Tys
the middle. Annabeth crawled in last. T he interi
e. There wasn't just one old lady. The re were three
ored the accelerator, and my head slammed against
und a large black chain instead of a seat belt. I decid
d see that!" the driver complained. Wait a minute. Gi
e third lady said to the driver. "Give me the girl's coi
!" "Brake!" yelled Anger. Instead, Wasp floored the ac
n yo u see?" "No!" screamed Wasp from behind the whee
e." "O ne eye?" "Yeah." "Each?" "No. One eye total." Next
be with in fifty feet of. "Hang in there, big guy. Anybody got
her a why-did-you-do-this-to-me look. "Hey," she said, "Gray
y serve Greater New York and surrounding communities." "
old bat. That was three thousand years ago!" "Give me the
esterday!" "Bu t I'm driving, you old hag!" "Ex
e shot up th e Williamsburg Bridg
ed to grab at Te mpest's. With their hair flyin
yellow incisor. Instea d of eyes, they just had clo
h of anything it saw. Finally Anger, who had the advantag
Williamsburg Bridge, yelling, "'Ivit back! 'Ivit back!" Tyso
ounding pretty worried. "The Gray Sisters know what t
ing along the edge of a bridge a hundred and thirty f
s!" "Every street in Manhattan!" Wasp bragged, st
ther side, screaming, "Be quiet! Be quiet! He di
ell me." "No!" they all screamed. "The last tim
at—give it back!" "No!" yelled Anger. "Eye!" Wasp yelle
, trying to catch it, but she only
my head hit the ceiling and th
There, by your foot," Annabeth sa
ach other as Anger tried to grab at Wasp' s face and Wasp tri g and their mouths open, screaming a t each other, I realized that none of the s
sters had any teeth except for Wasp, who had one mossy sed, sunken eyelids, except for Ang er, who had one bloodshot green eye tha
t stared at everything hungrily, as if it cou ldn't get enoug e of sight, managed to yank the too th out of her sister Wasp's mouth. This m
ade Wasp so mad she swerved toward th e edge of the n groaned and clutched his stoma ch. "Uh, if anybody's interested," I said, "
we're going to die!" "Don't worry," Annab eth told me, s hey're doing. They're really very w ise." This coming from the daughter of A
thena, but I wasn't exactly reassured. We were skimm eet above the East River. "Yes, wis e!" Anger grinned in the rearview mirror,
showing off her newly acquired tooth. "W e know thing ill hitting her sister. "The capital of N epal!" "The location you seek!" Tempest
added. Immediately her sisters pummele d her from ei dn't even ask yet!" "What?" I said. "Wh at location? I'm not seeking any—" "Noth
ing!" Tempest said. "You're right, boy. It' s nothing!" "T e we told, it was horrible!" Tempest said. " Eye tossed in a lake!" Anger agreed. "Ye
ars to find it again!" Wasp moaned. "And speaking of th d. "Gimme!" She whacked her sister Anger on the back. There was a sickening pop an
d something flew out of Anger's face. An ger fumbled for it managed to bat it with the back of her hand. The s limy green orb sailed over her shoulder, i
nto the backseat, and straight into my lap . I jumped so hard, e eyeball rolled away. "I can't see!" all three sisters y elled. "Give me the eye!" Wasp wailed. "
Give her the eye!" Annabeth screamed. " I don't have it!" I said. " id. "Don't step on it! Get it!" "I'm not picking that up!" The taxi slammed against the guardrail a
nd skidded along with a horrible grinding noise. The whole car shudd ered, billowing gray smoke as if it were about to dissolv e from the strain. "Going to be sick!" Tys
on warned. "Annabeth," I yelled, "let Tys on use your backpack!" "Are you crazy? Get the eye!" Wasp yanked the wheel, and the ta xi swerved away from the rail. We hurtled
down the bridge toward Brooklyn, going faster than any human taxi. The Gray Sisters screeched and pummeled each other and cried out for their eye. At last I steeled my nerv
es. I ripped off a chunk of my tie-dyed T-s hirt, which was already falling apart from a ll the burn marks, and used it to pick the eyeball off th e floor. "Nice boy!" Anger cried, as if she
somehow knew I had her missing peeper . "Give it back!" "Not until you explain," I told her. "What were you talking about, the location i se if she ek?" "No time!" Tempest cried. "Accelera
ting!" I looked out the window. Sure enou gh, trees and cars and whole neighborhoods w ere now zipping by in a gray blur. We were alread y out of Brooklyn, heading through the m
iddle of Long Island. "Percy," Annabeth warned, "they can't find our destination without the eye. We'll just keep accelerating until we break into a million pieces." "First they
have to tell me," I said. "Or I'll open the w indow and throw the eye into oncoming traffic. " No!" the Gray Sisters wailed. "Too dan gerous!" "I'm rolling down the window."
"Wait!" the Gray Sisters screamed. "30, 3 1, 75, 12!" They belted it out like a quarterback calling a play. "What do you mean?" I said. "That makes no sense!" "30, 31, 7
5, 12!" Anger wailed. "That's all we can te ll you. Now give us the eye! Almost to camp! " We were off the highway now, zi pping through the countryside of norther
n Long Island. I could see Half-Blood Hill ahead of us, with its giant pine tree at the c rest—Thalia's tree, which cont ained the life force of a fallen hero. "Perc
y!" Annabeth said more urgently. "Give t hem the eye now!" I decided not to argue . I threw the eye into Wasp' s lap. The old lady snatched it up, pushe
d it into her eye socket like somebody pu tting in a contact lens, and blinked. "W hoa!" She slammed on th e brakes. The taxi spun four or five times
in a cloud of smoke and squealed to a ha lt in the middle of the farm road at t he base of Half-Blood H ill. Tyson let loose a huge belch. "Better
now." "All right," I told the Gray Sisters. " Now tell me what those numbers mean." "No time!" Ann abeth opened her door. "We have to get
out now." I was about to ask why, when I looked up at Half-Blood Hill an d understood. At the crest of the hill was a group of campers.
And they were under attack. FOUR TYSO N PLAYS WITH FIRE Mythol ogically speaking, i f there's anything I hate worse than trios
of old ladies, it's bulls. Last summer, I fou ght the Minotaur on top o f Half-Blood Hill. T his time what I saw up there was even wo
rse: two bulls. And not just regular bulls— bronze ones the size o f elephants. And even that wasn't bad enough. Naturally t
hey had to breathe fire, too. As soon as we exited the taxi, the Gray Sisters p eeled out, heading back to New York, wher
e life was safer. They didn't even wait for th eir extra three-drachma payment. They just left us on the side of the road, Annabeth with nothing but her backpack and knife, Tyson and me still in our burned-up tie-dyed gym clothes. "Oh, man," said Annabeth, looking at the battle raging on the hi
ll. What worried me most weren't the bulls the mselves. Or the ten heroes in full battle armor who were getting their bronze-plated booties wh ooped. What worried me was that the bulls were
ranging all over the hill, even around the back side of the pine tree. That shouldn't have been possible. The
camp's magic boundaries didn't allow monsters to cross past Thalia's tree. But the metal bulls were do