```
THE SEA OF MONSTERS by Rick Riordan ONE MY BEST FRIEND SHOPS FOR A WEDDING DRESS My nightmare started like this. I was the middle of the night. A storm was blowing. Wind and rain ripped at the palm trees along the sidewalk. Pi
k 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 Gro
ver running for his life. Yean, 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 the
e 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 al
one 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 a
most 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 sha
dowy figure loomed. It swatted as ide 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 get away. Have to get away. Have to get away the storm, but I couldn't see what was chasing him, but I could have to get away. Have to get away
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 windo we 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 a rickety old fire escape the Ancient Greek writing engraved on the side: Anaklusmos. 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 work. 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 work.
rong 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
ingered 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 us
ual, 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 kit
hen 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 didn't need to finish. I knew what she was asking. "I think Grover's in trouble," I said, and I told her a
bout 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 m
oney. 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...
                                                                                                                                                                                              ss 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
got a message from Chiron last night." My heart sank. Chiron was the activities director at Camp Half-Blood. He wouldn't contact us unle
e 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!" "Usu
                                                                                                                                                                                                          ally, dear. But with the problems they're having-" "What problems?" "Percy...I'm very, very sorry. I was hoping to talk to you
about it 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 chi
med the half-hour. My mom looked almost relieved. "Seven-thirty, dear. You should go. Tyson will be waiting."
                                                                                                                                                                                                                         n. 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
                                                                                                                                                       ut-" "Percy, we'll talk this afternoo
of warning, like if I pushed her too hard she'd start to cry. Besides, she was right about my friend Tyson. I h
                                                                                                                                                                                                                               upset. He was scared of traveling underground alone. I gathered up my stuff, but I stopped in the doorway
                                                                                                                                            ad to meet him at the subway station on time or he'd get
"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.
didn't know it at the time, but my mom and I would never get to have our afternoon talk. In fact, I wo
                                                                                                                              uldn'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 sunligh
                                                                                                                        and vanished. TWO I PLAY DODGEBALL WITH CANNIBALS My day started normal. Or as no
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             rmal as it ever gets at Meriwether College Prep. See, it's this "progressive" school in downtow
 –a human silhouette against the brick wall, a shadow that belonged to no one. Then it rippled
Manhattan, which means we sit on beanbag chairs instead of at desks, and we don't get gra
                                                                                                                    des, and the teachers wear jeans and rock concert T-shirts to work. That's all cool with me. I mean,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                m ADHD and dyslexic, like most half-bloods, so I'd never done that great in regular schools
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    oday: English. The whole middle school had read this book called Lord of the Flies, when
even before they kicked me out. The only bad thing about Meriwether was that the teache
                                                                                                               rs always looked on the bright side of things, and the kids weren't always...well, bright. Take my first class
e all these kids get marooned on an island and go psycho. So for our final exam, our te
                                                                                                            achers sent us into the break yard to spend an hour with no adult supervision to see what would happen. What hap
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       pened was a massive wedgie contest between the seventh and eighth graders, two pe
bble fights, and a full-tackle basketball game. The school bully, Matt Sloan, led mos
                                                                                                        t 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 hai
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           r, and he always dressed in expensive but sloppy clothes, like he wanted everyboo
                                                                                                    hipped from the time he'd taken his daddy's Porsche for a joyride and run into a PLEASE SLOW DOWN FOR CHILDREN sign. A
y to see how little he cared about his family's money. One of his front teeth was c
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             nyway, Sloan was giving everybody wedgies until he made the mistake of trying
                                                                                                 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
on my friend Tyson. Tyson was the only homeless kid at Meriwether College
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 so...different. He was six-foot-three and built like the Abominable Snowman
                                                                                               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 m
but he cried a lot and was scared of just about everything, including his own
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   yself look higher than his crooked teeth. His voice was deep, but he talked
                                                                                            I 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 Ne
unny, like a much younger kid-I guess because he'd never gone to schoo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     w York City alleyway, because that's where he lived, in a cardboard refrig
rator box off 72nd Street. Meriwether Prep had adopted him as a commu
                                                                                        nity 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, the
                                                                                      s 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. Sh
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         e'd called social services, but nothing ever seemed to happen. The so
ey made themselves feel good by picking on him. I was pretty much hi
                                                                                    at 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
cial workers claimed Tyson didn't exist. They swore up and down th
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            snuck up behind him and tried to give him a wedgie, and Tyson pan
                                                                                  t 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
cked. He swatted Sloan away a little too hard. Sloan flew fifteen fee
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              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 m
                                                                               e. "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 thir
g 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
                                                                                                         When first period ended, our English teacher, Mr.
                                                                                                                                                                                     de Milo, came outside to inspect the carnage. He pronounced that we'd unde
d never seen them before. "Just wait till PE, Jackson," Sloan
                                                                            called, "You are so dead,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    rstood Lord of the Flies perfectly. We all passed his course,
nd we should never, never grow up to be violent people. Mat
                                                                          t 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
                                                                           Tyson sniffled. "You are a good friend. Miss you next year
"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
                                                                       talking to him about it. "Don't worry, big guy," I managed
project. I wondered if the headmaster had even bothered
                                                                                                                                                                                                                  . "Everything's going to be fine." Tyson gave me such a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        grateful look I felt like a big liar. How could I promise a ki
d like him that anything would be fine? Our next exam w
                                                                     as science. Mrs. Tesla told us that we had to mix chem
                                                                                                                                                                                                                       icals until we succeeded in making something explo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         de. Tyson was my lab partner. His hands were way too b
ig for the tiny vials we were supposed to use. He accide
                                                                    ntally knocked a tray of chemicals off the counter a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           nd made an orange mushroom cloud in the trash c
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          an. After Mrs. Tesla evacuated the lab and called the ha
zardous waste removal squad, she praised Tyson and
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            seconds. I was glad the morning went fast, because it
                                                                   me for being natural chemists. We were the first
                                                                                                                                                                                                                               ones who'd ever aced her exam in under thi rty
kept me from thinking too much about my problems.
                                                                  couldn't stand the idea that something might
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             ake the memory of my bad dream. I had a terrible fee
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  be wrong at camp. Even worse, I couldn' t sh
                                                                ile we were drawing latitude/longitude maps,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              o inside-my friend Annabeth on vacation in Washi
ling that Grover was in danger. In social studies, wh
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      pened my notebook and stared at the phot
                                                                                                                                                                                                                      10
                                                              ket over her orange Camp Half-Blood T-shir
ngton, D.C. She was wearing jeans and a denim jac
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           t. H
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         er blond hair was pulled back in a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 banda
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               nna. She was standing in front of the Lincoln Mem
orial with her arms crossed, looking extremely ple
                                                             ased with herself, like she'd personally de
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            the place. See, Annabeth want
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 s to be
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                an architect when she grows up, so she's always
                                                                                                                                                                                                                              gned
visiting famous monuments and stuff. She's weir
                                                             that way. She'd e-mailed me the picture
                                                                                                                                                                                                              afte
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        r sp
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 rina
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              break, and every once in a wh
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ile l'd lo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ok at it just to remind myself she was real and Ca
mp Half-Blood hadn't just been my imagination.
                                                              wishe d Annabeth were here. She'd kn
                                                                                                                                                                                                                            hat t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                ke of my dream. I'd never a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 dmit it to
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  her, but she was smarter than me, even if she w
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   o ma
                                                                                                                                                                                                                  ow w
                                                           y noteb ook when Matt Sloan reached
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 d the photo out of the rin
as annoving sometimes. I was about to close m
                                                                                                                                                                                                                               and rippe
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 gs. "Hey!
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    I protested. Sloan checked out the picture and
                                                                                                                                                                                                                       over
his eyes got wide. "No way, Jackson. Who is th
                                                          at? She
                                                                      is not your—" "Give it bac
                                                                                                                                                       k!" My ears felt hot. Sloan handed t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                          heph oto to his u
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   alv buddies, who snick
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ered and st
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    arted ripping it up to make spit wads. They we
                                                                                                                                              HI! MY NAME IS: tags from the admissions office. Th
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     they'd all filled in strange names like: MARR
e new kids who must've been visiting, becaus
                                                                      ere all wearing those stu
                                                         e they w
                                                                                                                                                                                                                             ey mu st've had a w eird sense of humor, t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 oo, because
OW SUCKER. SKULL EATER. and JOE BOB.
                                                        No huma
                                                                       n beings had names lik
                                                                                                          et
                                                                                                               ha
                                                                                                                                       t. "These guys are moving here next year," Sloan bragged, like that
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           wa s supposed to sca re me. "I bet they ca
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 n pay the tui
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      tion, too, unlike your retard friend." "He's no
                                                                                                                                 such a loser, Jackson. Good thing I'm gonna put you out of your misery next
retarded." I had to try really, really hard not t
                                                        o punch
                                                                        Sloan in the face. "Yo
                                                                                                       u'r e
                                                                                                                                                                                                                             per iod." His huge bu ddies chewed up m
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 y photo. I wa
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      nted to pulverize them, but I was under stric
                                                                                                                           ow obnoxious they were. I had to save my fighting for monsters. Still, part of me thoug ht, if Sloan only knew who I really was...
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   The bell rang
orders from Chiron never to take my anger o
                                                                        lar mortals, no mat
                                                                                                     ter
                                                                                                          h
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       . As Tyson and I were leaving class, a girl's
                                                      ut on regu
                                                                                                                       aying me any attention. Like any girl at Meriwether would ever be caught dead calling my name . Before I had time to consider wheth
voice whispered, "Percy!" I looked around t
                                                      he locker
                                                                        area, but nobody
                                                                                                  was p
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 er or not I'd be
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       en imagining things, a crowd of kids rushed
                                                                                                                   r coach had promised us a free-for-all dodgeball game, and Matt Sloan had promised to kill me. The gym uniform at Meriwether is sky blu
for the gym, carrying Tyson and me along
                                                      with them.
                                                                         It was time for
                                                                                                 PE. Ou
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 e shorts and ti
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       e-dyed T-shirts. Fortunately, we did most of
our athletic stuff inside, so we didn't have
                                                     to jog thro
                                                                          ah Tribeca lo
                                                                                              okin g li
                                                                                                               ke 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 a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 bout to
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             leav
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        e when Tyson called, "Percy?" He hadn't
                                                                                                                                                                       to sound aggravated about it. "Yeah, sure, man." Tyson ducked inside the weight room
hanged yet. He was standing by the weight
                                                      room doo r,
                                                                            utching his
                                                                                                           lothes. "Will you...uh..." "Oh. Yeah." I tried not
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   I stoo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             d gu
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ard outside the door while he changed. I f
                                                                                              gy m c
                                                                                            bec aus e he's completely hairy and he's got weird s
                                                                                                                                                                  cars on his back that I've never had the courage to ask him about. Anyway, I'd learned the ha
It kind of awkward doing this, but he asked
                                                     me to most day
                                                                          s. I think it's
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 rd way
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               tha
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          if people teased Tyson while he was dres
                                                                                       we got into the gym, Coach Nunley
-up mum my—except Coach N unley
sing out, he'd get upset and start ripping t
                                                    he doors off loc
                                                                          kers. When
                                                                                                                                       was sitting
                                                                                                                                                               at his little desk reading Sports Illustrated . Nunley was about a million years old, with bifoca
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 Is and
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               no t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         eeth and a greasy wave of gray hair. He re
minded me of the Oracle at Camp Half-Blo
                                                    od-which was a
                                                                           shriveled
                                                                                                                                      moved a lo
                                                                                                                                                              t less and he never billowed green smoke. We
                                                                                                                                                                                                                     II, at lea st not that I'd observed. Matt Sloan
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  said.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              "Coa
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          ch. can I be captain?" "Eh?" Coach Nunle
                                                                                                                                     e picking.
y looked up from his magazine. "Yeah," h
                                                   e mumbled, "Mm
                                                                           hmm." S loan grinned and took char g e of th
                                                                                                                                                            He made me the other team's captain, but it didn
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        't matt er who I picked, because all the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  jocks
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              and t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          he popular kids moved over to Sloan's si
de. So did the big group of visitors. On m
                                                            de I had
                                                                           Tyson, C orey Bailer the computer g
                                                                                                                                   Rai Mand
                                                                                                                                                          ali the calculus whiz, and a half dozen other kids wh
                                                                                                                                                                                                                         o alwa y s got harassed by Sloan an
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 d his a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          Normally I would've been okay with just 1
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              ang.
yson—he was worth half a team all by him
                                                   self
                                                             -but the
                                                                           visitors on Sloan's team were a Im
                                                                                                                       ost a
                                                                                                                                  s tall and
                                                                                                                                                         strong-looking as Tyson, and there were six of them.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                            Matt
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         Sloan spilled a cage full of
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  balls
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             n the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          middle of the gym. "Scared," Tyson mum
bled. "Smell funny." I looked at him. "Wh
                                                   at s
                                                            mells fun
                                                                          ny?" Because I didn't figure he
                                                                                                                                  talking about h
                                                                                                                                                        imself. "Them." Tyson pointed at Sloan's new friends.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                             Sm
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           ell funny." The visitors w
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ere cracking their
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           knuckles, eyeing us like it was slaughter
                                                                                                                       was
                                                                                                                                 raw meat and beat t hem with sticks. Sloan blew the coach's whistle and the
time. I couldn't help wondering where th
                                                             ere from
                                                                            Someplace where they fed k
                                                                                                                      ids
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            me began. Sloan's team
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  ran for the cente
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           r line. On my side, Raj Mandali yelled so
                                                                                                                                                                                                                              ga
                                                   ey w
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          n," I said. "Let's g-" A ball slammed into
mething in Urdu, probably "I have to go p
                                                   otty
                                                             !" and ra
                                                                          n for the exit. Corey Bailer
                                                                                                                     rie
                                                                                                                               d to crawl behind the wall mat and hide. The rest of my team did their best to co
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            r in fear and not look l
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  ke targets. "Tyso
                                                                                                                                                                                                                               we
                                                                                                                               in laughter. My eyesight was fuzzy. I felt like I'd just gotten the Heimlich maneuv
my gut. I sat down hard in the middle of
                                                            gym floo
                                                                          r. The other team explod
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            r f rom a gorilla. I could
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 n't believe anybo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          dy could throw that hard. Tyson yelled,
                                                                                                                             d. Whooom! It hit the wall mat, and Corey Bailer yelped. "Hey!" I yelled at Sloan's t
Percy, duck!" I rolled as another dodgeba
                                                   Il whistled past m
                                                                          y ear at the speed of sou
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               eam. "You could kill
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  somebody!" The
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           visitor named Joe Bob grinned at me ev
Ily. Somehow, he looked a lot bigger now
                                                   ...even taller than
                                                                            Tyson. His biceps bulg
                                                                                                                             ed beneath his T-shirt. "I hope so, Perseus Jackson! I hope so!" The way he said my
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               n ame sent a chill d
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 own my back. No
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          body called me Perseus except those wh
o knew my true identity. Friends...and en
                                                   emies. W
                                                              hat ha
                                                                             Tyson said? They s m
                                                                                                                            ell funny. Monsters. All around Matt Sloan, the visitors were growing in size. They w
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              er e no longer kids.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               They were eight-fo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          ot-tall giants with wild eyes, pointy teeth
                                                                                                                            t Sloan dropped his ball. "Whoa! You're not from Detroit! Who ... " The other kids on
and hairy arms tattooed with snakes and
                                                   hula wo
                                                                men a
                                                                          nd Valentine hearts. M at
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  is team started sc
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             reaming and backing
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           toward the exit, but the giant named Mar
                                                                                                                            st as he was about to leave and hit the door, slamming it shut like magic. Raj and so
row Sucker threw a ball with deadly accu
                                                                strea
                                                                          ked past Rai Mandali ju
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 me of the other kid
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         s banged on i
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             t desi
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          erately but it wouldn't budge. "Let them g
                                                   racv. It
o!" I yelled at the giants. The one called J
                                                   oe Bob
                                                                grow
                                                                          led at me. He had a tai
                                                                                                                            too on his biceps that said: JB luvs Babycakes. "And lose our tasty morsels? No, So
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               n o f the Sea God. We Laistrygonian
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           't just playing for your death. We want lu
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              s aren
nch!" He waved his hand and a new batc
                                                   h of dod
                                                                gebal
                                                                          Is appeared on the c en
                                                                                                                            ter line—but these balls weren't made of red rubber. They were bronze, the size of ca
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  on balls
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               , perforated like wiffle b
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              alls w
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           ith fire bubbling out the holes. They must
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             nn
                                                                ūp wit
've been searing hot, but the giants picke
                                                   d them
                                                                         h théir
                                                                                    bare hands.
                                                                                                                                     I yelled. Nunley looked up sleepily, but if he saw anything abnormal about th
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  d odge
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               ball game, he didn't le
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              t on.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          hat's the problem with mortals. A magical
force called the Mist obscures the true a
                                                   ppearan
                                                                ce of monsters
                                                                                     and god s fr
                                                                                                                            m their vision, so mortals tend to see only what they can understand. Maybe the coa
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                c h saw
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                a few eighth graders
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              pound
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           ing the younger kids like usual. Maybe the
e other kids saw Matt Sloan's thugs getti
                                                               to toss Molotov
                                                                                                                             und. (It wouldn't have been the first time.) At any rate, I was pretty sure nobody els
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          nuine man-eating bloodthirsty monsters.
                                                                                     cocktails arc
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                alized we were dealing
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             with ae
                                                   ng ready
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     e re
                                                                                                                               The giant named Skull Eater threw his ball. I dove aside as the fiery bronze come
"Yeah. Mm-hmm," Coach muttered. "Play
                                                    nice." And he went back to
                                                                                      his magaz ine
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                ed past my shoulder. "Corey!"
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          screamed. Tyson pulled him out from be
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   t sai
                                                                                                                               ng shreds. "Run!" I told my teammates. "The other exit!" They ran for the locker
hind the exercise mat just as the ball exp
                                                   loded against it, blasting th
                                                                                     e mat to smo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                but with another wave of Joe Bo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          b's hand, that door also slammed shut.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  room.
                                                                                                                               vou!" He launched his own fireball. My teammates scattered as it blasted a crat
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                gym floor. I reached for Riptide.
No one leaves unless you're out!" Joe Bo
                                                   b roared. "And you're not o
                                                                                     ut until we eat
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                er in the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           which I always kept in my pocket, but th
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 fenseless. An other fireball cam
en I realized I was wearing gym shorts. I
                                                   had no pockets. Riptide wa
                                                                                     s tucked in my i
                                                                                                                                 eans inside my gym locker. And the locker room door was sealed. I was com
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              pletely de
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          e streaking toward me. Tyson pushed me
                                                   w me head over heels. I fou
                                                                                                                                  led on the gym floor, dazed from smoke, my tie-dyed T-shirt peppered with
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          ine, two hungry giants were glaring dow
out of the way, but the explosion still ble
                                                                                     nd myself spr aw
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              sizzling ho
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                les. Just acr
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  oss the center I
n at me. "Flesh!" they bellowed. "Hero fle
                                                   sh for lunch!" They both to
                                                                                     ok aim. "Percy n e
                                                                                                                                   eds help!" Tyson yelled, and he jumped in front of me just as they threw
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           their balls.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                Tyson!" I scr
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   eamed, but it w
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          as too late. Both balls slammed into him
..but no...he'd caught them. Somehow T
                                                   yson, who was so clumsy h
                                                                                     e knocked over la
                                                                                                                                    b equipment and broke playground structures on a regular basis, had
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       caught two fier
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                v metal balls
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    speeding towa
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          rd him at a zillion miles an hour. He sent
                                                    owners, who screamed, "B
them hurtling back toward their surprised
                                                                                      AAAAAD!" as the b
                                                                                                                                      ronze spheres exploded against their chests. The giants disintegra
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     ted in twin colum
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                ns of flame-
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   a sure sign the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          y were monsters, all right. Monsters don't
die. They just dissipate into smoke and d
                                                   ust. which saves
                                                                          heroe
                                                                                      s a lot of trouble clea
                                                                                                                                        ning up after a fight. "My brothers!" Joe Bob the Cannibal waile
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  d. He fle
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                xed his
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                muscles an
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   d his Babycake
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           s tattoo rippled. "You will pay for their de
                                                                                                                                          st had time to swat it aside. It flew straight over Coach Nunl
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          huge KA-BOOM! Kids were running arou
struction!" "Tyson!" I said. "Look out!" A
                                                   nother comet hur
                                                                           tled t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                               ey's head
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 and lan
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                ded in the bl
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   eachers with a
                                                                                       oward u
                                                                                                    s. Tyson ju
nd screaming, trying to avoid the sizzling
                                                                                                                                             n the door, calling for help. Sloan himself stood petrifie
                                                    craters in the flo
                                                                                      hers we
                                                                                                                                                                                                                            d in the midd
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 le of th
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               e court, watching in disbelief as
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          balls of death flew around him. Coach Nu
                                                                           or. Ot
                                                                                                     re banging
nley still wasn't seeing anything. He tapp
would come help us. "Victory will be our
                                                   ed his hearing ai
                                                                           d like
                                                                                       the exp
                                                                                                      losions were gi
                                                                                                                                                ving him interference, but he kept his eyes on his
                                                                                                                                                                                                                          magazine. Sure
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ly the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               whole school could hear the nois
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          e. The headmaster, the police, somebody
                                                   s!" roared Joe Bo
                                                                           b the C
                                                                                      annibal
                                                                                                       'We will feast on v
                                                                                                                                                                                                                      ing the dodgeball g
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              o seriously, but before I could, he
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          hefted another ball. The other three gian
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ame way
```

s followed his lead. I knew we were dead. eammates. "Away from the door." Explos Mississippi, two Mississippi-then dove en the flaming dodgeball ignited a huge kull Eater in the face. The giant crumpled ength of the court and slammed into the he fell back, stunned, into a pile of cinde rst, young hero?" I had to do something. his arm to throw. I braced myself to die. S e ball dropped out of his hand. The mons e was grimy and scratched. She had a ra an, who'd been standing there dumbfoun at. ́ "And you," she told ȟim, "lay off my fr ling with the lock, a crowd of teachers pil I saw this morning-that was-" My face he adults came pouring in. "Meet me out ry!" She put on her Yankees baseball cap cy Jackson?" Mr. Bonsai said. "What...h Iding on fire. Coach Nunley will tell you! never believe me, even if I could tell them n alley down Church Street. She pulled T ee her. We'd made our peace last summe r times, and all Annabeth could do was gl "I talk," Tyson admitted. "You are pretty." e—grimy and scarred, with dirty fingerna s to attack you with him around." Tyson gym. They're a race of giant cannibals wh about it for a moment. "Canadians," she ' Her face turned pale. "Grover? No, wha e at camp." "My mom was saying the sam ve you had a lot of attacks?" I shook my Percy something...Son of the Sea God?" ek gods? Like Zeus, Poseidon, Athena als. Kids called half-bloods." "Yes," Tyso hat those giants were in the gym. Monste "Yeah," I admitted. "My dad is Poseidon. amp?" I said. "You know how much mon raining camp for demigods? On the other e the way she said that, as if Tyson were d us from my school gymnasium. "Here.' ass were tangled in her ponytail, as if she be long before more cops cruised by, loo s. "Found one. Thank the gods." Annabe nabeth," I said, "New York taxi drivers wo op, Chariot of Damnation! That didn't exa appeared. For a moment, nothing happen upted from the ooze. It was a taxi, all righ e words printed on the door-something p of grizzled hair covering her eyes, and t me to get in, like this was all completely e drachma on arrival." "Done!" the woma han most taxis. There was no Plexiglas s al-colored sackcloth dress. The one drivi us, and when I'm out buying wine for the sitting in the middle screeched, "Look ou elivery truck, ran over the curb with a jaw my turn!" "Is not!" yelled the one called A ox. She left my stomach somewhere back oked at Annabeth. "They're blind?" "Not en Tyson get carsick on school field trips ntion. I looked over at Annabeth, who wa utside their service area," she said, like t t remind me!" Wasp wailed. "And we didn empest gives me the eye!" "No!" Tempes g me between Tyson and the door. She p ach other as Anger tried to grab at Wasp sters had any teeth except for Wasp, who t stared at everything hungrily, as if it cou ade Wasp so mad she swerved toward th we're going to die!" "Don't worry," Annab thena, but I wasn't exactly reassured. We showing off her newly acquired tooth. "W added. Immediately her sisters pummele ing!" Tempest said. "You're right, boy. It' ars to find it again!" Wasp moaned. "And d something flew out of Anger's face. An nto the backseat, and straight into my lap Give her the eye!" Annabeth screamed. nd skidded along with a horrible grinding on warned. "Annabeth," I yelled, "let Tys down the bridge toward Brooklyn, going es. I ripped off a chunk of my tie-dyed T-s somehow knew I had her missing peeper ting!" I looked out the window. Sure enou iddle of Long Island. "Percy," Annabeth have to tell me," I said. "Or I'll open the w "Wait!" the Gray Sisters screamed. "30, 3 5, 12!" Anger wailed. "That's all we can te n Long Island. I could see Half-Blood Hill y!" Annabeth said more urgently. "Give t d it into her eye socket like somebody pu in a cloud of smoke and squealed to a ha now." "All right," I told the Gray Sisters. out now." I was about to ask why, when I And they were under attack. FOUR TYSO of old ladies, it's bulls. Last summer, I fou rse: two bulls. And not just regular bullshey had to breathe fire, too. As soon as we e life was safer. They didn't even wait for th

aside as the fiery sphere demolished th e locke WHOOOOOOOM! The wall blew apart. L ocker d . But the last giant, Joe Bob, had wisely held on back wall, which cracked and partially crumbled on r blocks. "Well!" Joe Bob gloated. "I'm the last one Riptide had to be around here somewhere. Then I sp otted uddenly the giant's body went rigid. His expression chan ter stared down at the knife that had just run him thro ugh fr gged backpack slung over her shoulder, her baseball cap tuc ded the whole time, finally came to his senses. He blinked at iend." The gym was in flames. Kids were still running aroun ing up behind him. "Annabeth ... " I stammered. "How did you felt hot. "Oh my gods, you were looking in my bedroom window?" "There's no time to explain!" side," Annabeth told me. "And him." She pointed to Tyson, who was still sitting dazed against the wall , which was a magic gift from her mom, and instantly vanished. That left me standing alone in the middle ow..." Over by the broken wall, Tyson groaned and stood up from the pile of cinder blocks. "Head hurts. He saw it all?" Coach Nunley had been dutifully reading his magazine, but just my luck—he chose th the truth. I grabbed Riptide out of my ruined jeans, told Tyson, "Come on!" and jumped throu Annabeth stopped us on the corner of Thomas and Trimble. 'd slept several nights in the open. The slashes on the he king for juvenile delinquent gym-bombers. No doubt Ma th pulled out a gold coin that I recognized as a drach n't take that." "Stêthi," she shouted in Ancient Greek ctly make me feel real excited about whatever her pl ed. Then, just where the coin had fallen, the asphalt t, but unlike every other taxi in New York, it wasn't y like GYAR SSIRES—but my dyslexia made it hard for she spoke in a weird mumbling way, like she'd just had normal. "Ach!" the old woman screeched. "We don't take n screamed. Reluctantly I got in the cab. Tyson squeezed in creen separating us from the old lady driving ... Wait a minut ng said, "Long Island! Out-of-metro fare bonus! Ha!" She flo Lord of the Skies, I always buckle up! I looked down and fo t! Go left!" "Well, if you'd give me the eye, Tempest, I coul -rattling thump, and flew into the next block. "Wasp!" th nger. The middle one, Tempest, screamed, "Red light on Broome Street. "Excuse me," I said. "But...ca completely," Annabeth said. "They have an ey and it was not something you wanted to s hanging on for dear life, and I gave hat should be obvious. "They onl 't have a cab back then, you t screeched. "You had it y unched the gas and w s face and Wasp tri had one mossy Idn't get enoug e edge of the eth told me, s were skimm e know thing d her from ei s nothing!" "T speaking of th aer fumbled for it jumped so hard, I don't have it!" I said. ' noise. The whole car shudd on use your backpack!" "Are you faster than any human taxi. The Gray hirt, which was already falling apart from a "Give it back!" "Not until you explain," I told gh, trees and cars and whole neighborhoods w warned, "they can't find our destination without indow and throw the eye into oncoming traffic. 1, 75, 12!" They belted it out like a quarterback If you. Now give us the eye! Almost to camp! ahead of us, with its giant pine tree at the c hem the eye now!" I decided not to argue tting in a contact lens, and blinked. "W It in the middle of the farm road at t Now tell me what those numbers looked up at Half-Blood Hill an N PLAYS WITH FIRE Mythol ght the Minotaur on top o bronze ones the size o exited the taxi, the

Tyson couldn't d eflect all those ba

ions behind me. Tyson had batted two

Ils at once. His hands

our bones!" I wanted to tell him he was tak had to be seriously burned from blo of the balls back toward the ir owners and blasted th r room door. Now, I fi gured that the built-u oors, socks, athletic suppo rters, and other various na to his own ball, waiting for an oppor tunity. He threw just as Tyson was t top of him, making a hole right onto Church Street. I didn't see how Tyson could still be alive, b standing! I'll have enough meat to bring Babycakes a doggie bag!" He picked up another ball a my jeans in a smoking heap of clothes right by the giant's feet. If I could only get there. ged from gloating to surprise. Right where his belly button should've been, his T-shirt r om behind. He muttered, "Ow," and burst into a cloud of green flame, which I figured w , a bronze knife in her hand, and a ked in her pocket Annabeth, as if he dimly recognized her from my noteboo rd sirens wailing and a garbled voice over the in d screaming. I hea ...how long have you ... " she snapped, though she loo Annabeth gave him of the burning Matt Sloan wa at moment to look T\ red tern Civilizat and I are h was tellin p oli my g 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 "Ô hárma diabolês!" As an was. She threw her coi darkened. It melted int o a r ellow. It was smoky gr ay. I decipher w hat it sa to a shot of Novocai n. "Passage ? Pas sage his kind!" She pointed a bony fi at Tvs ngei the middle. Annabeth crawled in I ast. 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 u see?" "No!" screamed Wasp from behind the whee ne eye?" "Yeah." "Each?" "No. One eye total." Next e 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 Williamsburg Bridg e shot up th

mpest's. With their hair flvin ing along the edge of a bridge a hundred and thirty f ' "Every street in Manhattan!" Wasp bragged, st , trying to catch it, but she only my head hit the ceiling and th There, by your foot," Annabeth sa

cking the first volley. W ithout my sword... I had a crazy idea. I ran to wo giants still standing. A third ball hurtled st em to ashes. Th at left t n most boys' locker rooms was enough to cau p gas i elongings rained all over the gym. I sty per sonal b him. "No!" I yelled. The ball caug urning to face azed. The bronze ball was smokin ut he only looked d n. "Stop!" I yelled. "It's me you wa nd aimed it at Tyso eless, but I charged. The giant lau ...I knew it was hop ipped open and he grew something like a horn-no, as going to make Babycakes pretty upset. Standing in the wild look in her storm-gray eyes, like she'd just been cha k picture. "That's the girl...That's the girl---" Annabeth pun tercom. Through the glass windows of the exit doors, I cou Pretty much all morning." She sheathed her bronze knife. "I've been trying to find a good time to talk to you, she snapped, though she loo ked a little red-faced herself. "I just didn't want to—" "There!" a wom a look of distaste that I didn't quite understand. "You'd better bring gymnasium when the headmaster came charging in with half the fa s coming around, too. He focused on me with a look of terror. "Per up when Sloan said his name. "Eh? Yeah. Mm-hmm." The other ad gh the gaping hole in the side of the building. THREE WE HAIL THE TAXI OF ETERNAL TO nt Olympus. It had Zeus's likeness stamped on one side and th usual, the moment she spoke in the language of Olympus, id. The passenger window rolled down, and an old "Three to Camp Half-Blood," Annabeth said. She ed I wasn't that desperate ... yet. The cab sped around the cor celerator and rode up on the curb, screeching around another Sisters Taxi is the fastest way to camp." We've had famous people in this cab!" Anger exclai e we told, it was horrible!" Tempest said. id. "Don't step on it! Get it!" "I'm not picking that up!" ered, billowing gray smoke as if it were about to dissolv Sisters screeched and pummeled each other and cried calling a play. "What do you mean?" rest-Thalia's tree, which cont . I threw the eye into Wasp ogically speaking, i

RMENT Annabeth was waiting for us in a tances, I would've been really happy to s yson and me off the sidewalk just as a fire truck screamed past, heading for Meriwether P rep. "Where'd you find him?" she demanded, pointing at Tyson. Now, under different circums r, despite the fact that her mom was Athena and didn't get along with my dad. I'd mi are at him like he was the problem. "He's my friend," I told her. "Is he homeless ssed Annabeth probably more than I wanted to admit. But I'd just been attacked by cannibal gia nts, Tyson had saved my life three or fou "What does that have to do with anything? He can hear you, you know. Why don't you ask him ?" She looked surprised. "He can talk?" being so rude. I examined Tyson's hands, which I was sure must've been badly scorched by the said in disbelief. "Your hands aren't even burned." "Of course not," Annabeth muttered. "I'm she smacked his hand away. "Annabeth," I said, "what are you talking about? Laistry-what een them as far south as New York before." "Laistry—I can't even say that. What would e after me." "That's the least of our problems," she said. "Have you been having th "Ah! Gross!" Annabeth stepped away from him. I couldn't believe she was flaming dodge balls, but they looked fin surprised the Laistrygonians had the gui ?" "Laistrygonians. The monsters in the ils the size of potato chips-but they always looked like that. "Tyson," I seemed fascinated by Annabeth's blond hair. He tried to touch it, but o live in the far north. Odysseus ran into them once, but I've never s you call them in English?" She thought decided. "Now come on, we have to get out of here." "The police'll b e dreams?" "The dreams...about Grover" t about Grover?" I told her my dream. "Why? What were you dreaming e thing! But what kind of trouble?" "I don't know exactly. Something's w head. "None all year...until today." "None? But how..." Her eyes drifted to about?" Her eyes looked stormy, like her mind was racing a million miles an h rong. We have to get there right away. Monsters have been chasing me all th son. "Oh." "What do you mean, 'oh'?" Tyson raised his hand like he was sti our. "Camp," she said at last. "Big troubl e way from Virginia, trying to stop me. Ha Il in class. "Canadians in the gym called Annabeth and I exchanged looks. I didn't know how I could explain, but I figu Tyson deserved the truth after almost getting killed. "Big guy," I said, "you ever hear those old stories about the Gre "Yes," Tyson said. "Well...those gods are still alive. They kind of follow Wes ion around, living in the strongest countries, so like now they're in the U.S. And sometimes they have kids with mort n said, like he was still waiting for me to get to the point. "Uh, well, Annabeth alf-bloods," I said. "We're like...heroes-in-training. And whenever monsters p ick up our scent, they attack us. That's w ed. "But you are...Son of the Sea God?" Il talk in the taxi." "A taxi all the way to c " "Yes." I stared at him. He didn't seem surprised or confused by what I g him, which surprised and confused me. "So ... you believe me?" Tyson nodd Tyson frowned. Now he looked confused. "But then..." A siren wailed. A ce car raced past our alley. "We don't have time for this," Annabeth said. "We' "Trust me." I hesitated. "What about Tyson?" I imagined escortin giant friend into Camp Half-Blood. If he freaked out on a regular playground wi th regular bullies, how would he act at a t hand, the cops would be looking for us. "We can't just leave him," I ed. "He'll be in trouble, too." "Yeah." Annabeth looked grim. "We definitely ne ed to take him. Now come on." I didn't lik a big disease we needed to get to the hospital, but I followed her gether the three of us sneaked through the side streets of downtown while a huge column of smoke billowed up behin r backpack. "I hope I have one left." She looked even worse than I'd realiz ed at first. Her chin was cut. Twigs and gr viciously like claw marks. "What are you looking for?" I asked. All arou nd us, sirens wailed. I figured it wouldn't statement by now. He'd probably twisted the story around so that T yson and I were the bloodthirsty cannibal é Empire State Building on the other. "An I somehow understood it. She'd said: St n into the street, but instead of clattering on the asphalt, the drachma sank right through and dis ectangular pool about the size of a parking space-bu bbling red liquid like blood. Then a car er mean it looked like it was woven out of smoke, like y ou could walk right through it. There wer woman stuck her head out. She had a mo opened the cab's back door and waved a on. What was it? Pick-on-Big-and-Ugly-Kids Day? "Ex tra pay," Annabeth promised. "Three mor or was also smoky gray, but it felt solid enough. The se at was cracked and lumpy-no different t all crammed in the front seat, each with stringy hair cov ering her eyes, bony hands, and a charco the backrest. A prerecorded voice came on over the speake r: Hi, this is Ganymede, cup-bearer to Ze ner of West Broadway, and the gray lady ve her the eye? I didn't have time to ask questions because th e driver swerved to avoid an oncoming d n! I want to bite it." "You bit it last time, Anger!" said the driver , whose name must've been Wasp. "It's corner, and knocking over a newspaper b eamed Anger by the shotgun window. I lo good." "Oh, man," I said, because I'd se n yo e." "O I. "No!" screamed Tempest from the middle. "Of course!" scr to me, Tyson groaned and grabbed the seat. "Not feeling so a garbage bag or something?" The three gray ladies were Sisters Taxi is the fastest way to camp." "Then why di too busy squabbling to pay me any atte dn't you take it from Virginia?" "That's o be with med. "Jason! You remember him?" "Don tooth!" Anger tried to grab at Wasp's mouth, but Wasp swatted her hand away. "Only if T cuses! Turn! That was your turn!" Wasp swe rved hard onto Delancey Street, squishin e at seventy miles an hour. The three sist ers were fighting for real now, slapping e g and their mouths open, screaming a t each other, I realized that none of the si ed to grab at Te er, who had one bloodshot green eye tha yellow incisor. Instea d of eyes, they just had clo sed, sunken eyelids, except for Ang 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 th out of her sister Wasp's mouth. This m e of sight, managed to yank the too n groaned and clutched his stoma ch. "Uh, if anybody's interested," I said, hey're doing. They're really very w eet above the East River. "Yes, wis ise." This coming from the daughter of A e!" Anger grinned in the rearview mirror, epal!" "The location you seek!" Tempest ill hitting her sister. "The capital of N 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 dn't even ask yet!" "What?" I said. "Wh at location? I'm not seeking any-" "Noth Eye tossed in a lake!" Anger agreed. "Ye d. "Gimme!" She whacked her sister Anger on the back. There was a sickening pop an limy green orb sailed over her shoulder, managed to bat it with the back of her hand. The s e eyeball rolled away. "I can't see!" all three sisters y elled. "Give me the eye!" Wasp wailed. The taxi slammed against the guardrail a e from the strain. "Going to be sick!" Tys crazy? Get the eye!" Wasp yanked the wheel, and the ta xi swerved away from the rail. We hurtled out for their eye. At last I steeled my nerv e floor. "Nice boy!" Anger cried, as if she ek?" "No time!" Tempest cried. "Accelera Il the burn marks, and used it to pick the eyeball off th her. "What were you talking about, the location I se ere now zipping by in a gray blur. We were alread y out of Brooklyn, heading through the m the eye. We'll just keep accelerating until we ""No!" the Gray Sisters wailed. "Too dan break into a million pieces." "First they gerous!" "I'm rolling down the window. اً said. "That makes no sense!" "30, 31, 7 'We were off the highway now, zi pping through the countryside of norther ained the life force of a fallen hero. "Perc s lap. The old lady snatched it up, pushe hoa!" She slammed on th e brakes. The taxi spun four or five times he base of Half-Blood H ill. Tyson let loose a huge belch. "Better abeth opened her door. "We have to get mean." "No time!" Ann d understood. At the crest of the hill was a group of campers f there's anything I hate worse than trios ř Half-Blood Hill. T his time what I saw up there was even wo even that wasn't bad enough. Naturally t f elephants. And eeled out, heading back to New York, wher Gray Sisters p 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 An nabeth, looking at the battle raging on the hi II. 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 doing it anyway. One of the heroes shouted, "Border patrol, to me!" A girl's voice-gruff and familiar. Border patrol? I thought. The camp didn't have a border patrol. "It's Clarisse," Annabeth said. "Come or , we have to help her." Normally, rushing to Clarisse's aid would not have been high on my "to do" list. She was also a daughter of Ares, and I'd had a very serious disagreement with her father last summer, so now the god of war and all his children basically hated my guts. Still, she was in trouble. Her fellow warriors were scattering, running in panic as the bulls charged. The grass was burning in huge swathes around the pine tree. One hero screamed and waved his arms as he ran in circles, the hors summer, so now the god of war and an ins children basically hated my guts. Still, she was in trouble. Her fellow warnors were scattering, running in panic as the buils charged. The grass was burning in huge swattles around the pine tree. One hero screamed and waved his arms as he ran in circles, the hors ehair plume on his helmet blazing like a fiery Mohawk. Clarisse's own armor was charred. She was fighting with a broken spear shaft, the other end embedded uselessly in the metal joint of one bull's shoulder. I uncapped my ballpoint pen. It shimmered, growing longer and heavier until I held the bronze sw ord Anaklusmos in my hands. "Tyson, stay here. I don't want you taking any more chances." "No!" Annabeth said. "We need him." I stared at her. "He's mortal. He got lucky with the dodge balls but he can't—" "Percy, do you know what those are up there? The Colchis bulls, made by Hephaestus himself. W e can't fight them without Medea's Sunscreen SPF 50,000. We'll get burned to a crisp." "Medea's what?" Annabeth runmaged through her backpack and cursed. "I had a jar of tropical coconut scent sitting on my night-stand at home. Why didn't I bring it?" I'd learned a long time ago not to question Annabet th too much. It just made me more confused. "Look, I don't know what you're talking about, but I'm not going to let Tyson, stay back." I raised my sword. "I'm going in." Tyson tried to protest, but I was already running up the hill toward Clarisse, who was yelling at her patrol, tryi og get them into phalanx formation. It was a good idea. The few who were listening lined up shoulder-to-shoulder, locking their shields to form an ox-hide–and-bronze wall, their spears bristing over the top like porcupine quills. Unfortunately, Clarisse could only muster six campers. The other four were statement of the burne of the bu till running around with their helmets on fire. Annabeth ran toward them, trying to help. She taunted one of the bulls into chasing her, then turned invisible, completely confusing the monster. The other bull charged Clarisse's line. I was halfway up the hill—not close enough to help. Clarisse hadn't even see no were the set. The bull moved deadly fast for something so big. Its metal hide gleamed in the sun. It had fist-sized rubies for eyes, and horns of polished silver. When it opened its hinged mouth, a column of white-hot flame blasted out. "Hold the line!" Clarisse ordered her warriors. Whatever else you could say a bout Clarisse, she was brave. She was a big girl with cruel eyes like her father's. She looked like she was born to wear Greek battle armor, but I didn't see how even she could stand against that bull's charge. Unfortunately, at that moment, the other bull lost interest in finding Annabeth. It turned, wheeling ar ound behind Clarisse on her unprotected side. "Behind you!" I yelled. "Look out!" I shouldn't have said anything, because all I did was startle her. Bull Number One crashed into her shield, and the phalanx broke. Clarisse went flying backward and landed in a smoldering patch of grass. The bull charged past ther, but not before blasting the other heroes with its fiery breath. Their shields melted right off their arms. They dropped their weapons and ran as Bull Number Two closed in on Clarisse for the kill. I lunged forward and grabbed Clarisse by the straps of her armor. I dragged her out of the way just as Bull N umber Two freight-trained past. I gave it a good swipe with Riptide and cut a huge gash in its flank, but the monster just creaked and groaned and kept on going. It hadn't touched me, but I could feel the heat of its metal skin. Its body temperature could've microwaved a frozen burrito. "Let me go!" Clarisse pummeled my hand. "Percy, curse you!" I dropped her in a heap next to the pine tree and turned to face the bulls. We were on the inside slope of the hill now, the valley of Camp Half-Blood directly below us—the cabins, the training facilities, the Big House—all of it at risk if these bulls got past us. Annabeth should orders to the other heroes, telling them to spread out and keep the bulls distracted. Bull Number One ran a wide arc, making its way back toward me. As it passed the middle of the hill, where the invisible boundary line should've kept it out, it slowed down a little, as if it were struggling against a st ong wind; but then it broke through and kept coming. Bull Number Two turned to face me, fire sputtering from the gash I'd cut in its side. I couldn't tell if it felt any pain, but its ruby eyes seemed to glare at me like I'd just made things personal. I couldn't fight both bulls at the same time. I'd have to take dow n Bull Number Two first, cut its head off before Bull Number One charged back into range. My arms already felt tired. I realized how long it had been since I'd worked out with Riptide, how out of practice I was. I lunged but Bull Number Two blew flames at me. I rolled aside as the air turned to pure heat. All the e oxygen was sucked out of my lungs. My foot caught on something—a tree root, maybe—and pain shot up my ankle. Still, I managed to slash with my sword and lop off part of the monster's shout. It galloped away, wild and disoriented. But before I could feel too good about that, I tried to stand, and my left

ward the locker room. "Move!" I told my t

raight at me. I forced myself to wait-one

se an explosion, so I wasn't surprised wh

turned just in time to see Tyson punch S

ht Tyson square in the chest. He slid the l

g at his feet. Tyson tried to pick it up, but

nt!" The giant grinned. "You wish to die fi

ghed. "My lunch approaches." He raised

not a horn-the glowing tip of a blade. Th

smoke was my friend Annabeth. Her fac

sed a thousand miles by ghosts. Matt Slo

ched him in the nose and knocked him fl

Id see the headmaster, Mr. Bonsai, wrest

but you were never alone." "The shadow

an screamed. The doors burst open and t

him." "What?" "No time!" she said. "Hur

culty and a couple of police officers. "Per

cy did it, Mr. Bonsai! He set the whole bui

ults turned toward me. I knew they would