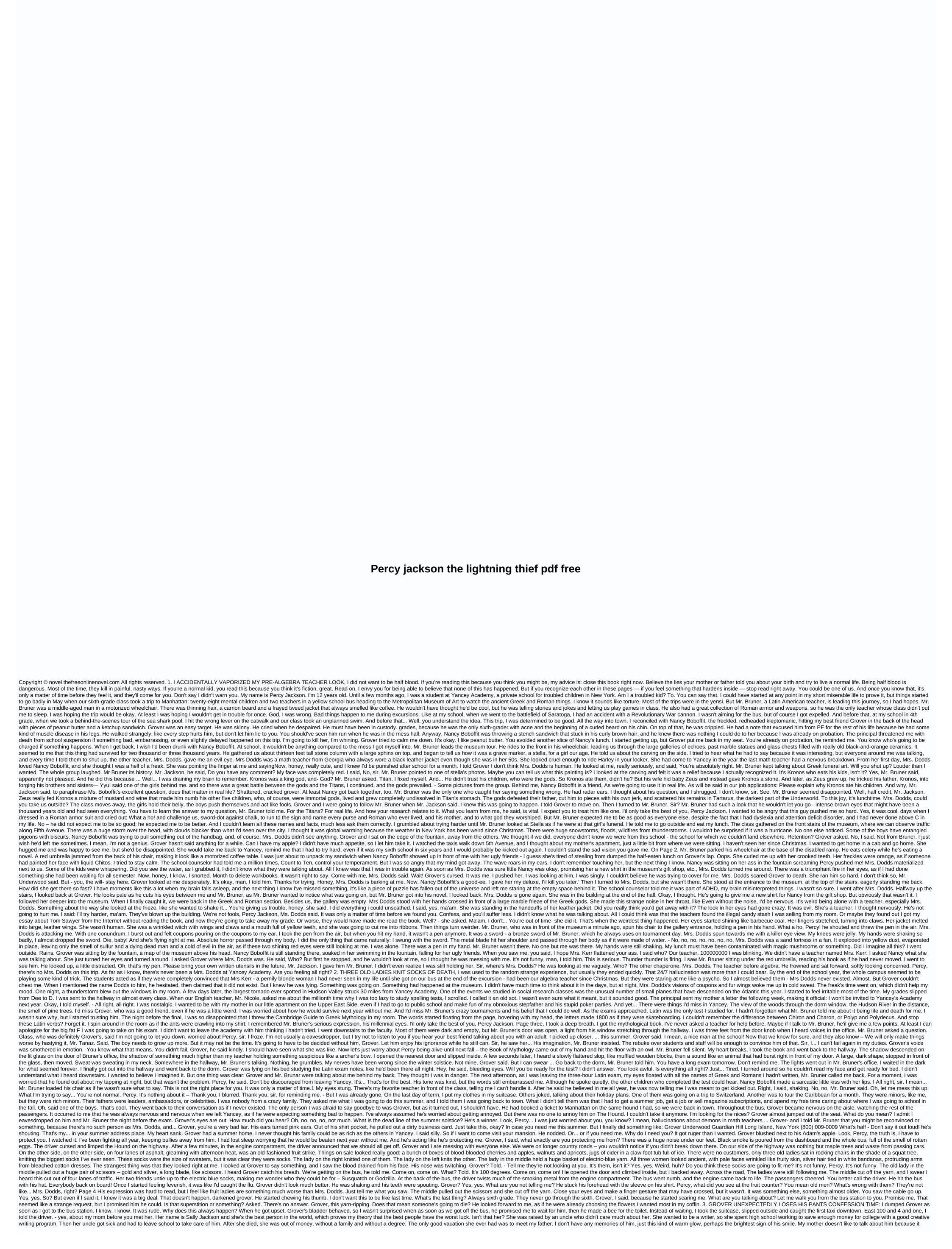
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makes her sad. There are no pictures. See, they weren't married. She told me he was rich and important, and their relationship was a secret. One day he sailed across the Atlantic on some important journey and never returned. My mother said she got lost at sea. He's not dead. Lost at sea. She worked many places, went to classes at night to get her diploma, and raised me on
her own. He never complained or got angry. Not once. But I knew I wasn't an easy kid. She eventually married Gabe Ugliano, who was kind for the first thirty seconds we knew him, and then showed off his true world-class colors. When I was young, I named him smelly gabe. I'm sorry, but it's true. The man smells of mouldy garlic wrapped in shorts. Between you and me, my
mother's life was pretty hard. The way a stinking Gabe treated her the way he and I got along ... well, when I got home, it was a good example. I walked into our little apartment, hoping mom would come home from work. Instead, Smellley Gabe was in the living room playing poker with his friends. The TV's falling apart. Chips and beer cans were scattered across the carpet. So
you're home. Where's my mom? It works, he said. Do you have any money? That's it. No, welcome. It's good to see you. How'd your life have been for the last six months? Gabe had gained weight. It looked like a carrot with no tusks in the store's clothes. He had about three hairs on his head, all the foams on his bald scalp, as if that made him beautiful or something. He ran Mega-
Mart Electronics in Queens, but most of the time he stayed home. I don't know why he wasn't fired long before. He just kept collecting checks, spending the money on cigars that made me throw up, and on beer, of course. Always beer. When I was at home, he expected me to give him the gambling money. He called it our man's secret. Which means if I tell my mother, he'il turn off
my power. I don't have any money, I told him. He raised a greasy eyebrow. Gabe could smell money like a hound, which was surprising, since his smell had to cover everything else. He took a taxi from the bus station, he said. He probably paid 20. I got $6-7 in change. Someone expects to live this roof must carry its own weight. Am I right, Eddie, the super-building, looked
at me with a string of sympathy. Come on, Gabe, he said. The kid just got here. Am I right? Gabe repeated. Eddie frowned in his bagel bowl. The other two passed gas in harmony. Okay, I said. I dug a hundred dollars out of my pocket and threw the money on the table. I hope you lose. Here comes your report card, brain boy! he cried after me. I wouldn't be so embarrassed! The
door to my room wasn't my room. During the school months, that was Gabe's research. He didn't study anything but old car magazines, but he liked to crash my stuff in the closet, leaving his muddy boots on my window and doing everything he could to make the place smell like his nasty cologne and cigars and outdated beer. I dropped my suitcase on the bed. It's a nice home.
Gabe's smell was almost worse than Ms. Dodds's nightmares, or the sound of the raincoats of the old fruit grub. But as soon as I thought about it, my legs felt weak. I remember Grover looking panicked - how he made me promise I wouldn't go home without him. All of a sudden, he cooled off. I felt like someone, something you were looking for right now, maybe you were hitting the
stairs, growing long, horrible lonnies. Then I heard my mother's voice. Percy? She opened the bedroom door and my fears melted away. My mother can make me feel good just by going into the room. Her eyes shine and change color in the light. Her smile is as warm as a quilt. There are a few gray stripes mixed with her long brown hair, but I never thought of her so old. When he
looks at me, it's like he sees all the good things about me, nothing wrong. I've never heard her raise her voice or tell anyone wrong, not even me or Gabe. Oh, Percy. She hugged me tight. I can't believe it. You've grown since Christmas! Her red-and-white and blue Sweet on America uniform smelled of the best things in the world: chocolate, licorice, and all the other things she
sold at the candy store in Grand Central. She had brought me a huge bag of free samples, as always when I got home. We sat together on the edge of the bed. As I was attacking the blueberry sour floss, she put her hand through my hair and demanded to know everything I hadn't put in my letters. You didn't say anything about my exclusion. She didn't care about that. But was I
sound better. my last days at Yancey Academy. I told her I wasn't very sorry about the eviction. Throughout the year, I lasted almost the whole year. I made new friends. I had done very well in Latin. And frankly, the fights weren't as bad as the director said. I liked Yancey Academy. Really. I spun so well of the year, I almost convinced myself. I started choking, thinking of Grover
and Mr. Bruner. Even Nancy Boboffit suddenly didn't look so bad. To this trip to the museum ... What? My mother asked. Her eyes stretched into my mind, trying to pluck out the secrets. Did something scare you? No, Mom. I felt bad lying. I wanted to tell her about Mrs. Dodds and the three old ladies with the yarn, but I thought this was going to sound stupid. She was tying her
lips. You knew I acted like that, but you didn't push me. I have a surprise for you, she said. We're going to the beach. My eyes widened. -Montauk? Three nights, same cabin. When? She smiled. As soon as I change. I couldn't believe it. My mother and I hadn't been to Montauk the last two summers because Gabe said there wasn't enough money. Gabe showed up at the door and
growled: Bean dip, Sally? Didn't you hear me? I wanted to hit him, but I met my mother's eyes, and I realized he was offering me a deal: be nice to Gabe for a while. Only until she was ready to go to Montauk. Then we'il get out of here. I was traveling, honey, she told Gabe. We were just talking about the trip. Gabe's eyes are small. Trip? Are you serious? I knew it, I broke in. He
won't let us go. Of course he will, my mother said evenly. Your stepfather is just worried about money. That's all. Besides, she added, Gabrielle won't settle for a bean top. I'il make it seven-layer enough for the whole weekend. Guacamole. Sour cream. They're 100000000 Gabe softened a little. So this money for your trip ... it comes out of your clothes budget, doesn't it? Yes,
honey, my mother said. And you're not taking my car except there and back. We'il be very careful. Gabe scratched his double chin. Maybe if I kicked you in your tender spot, I thought. And make you sing the soprano for a week. But my mother's eyes warned
me not to him off. Why did she put up with this guy? I wanted to scream. Why does she care what he thinks? I'm sorry, call me. I'm really sorry to interrupt your crucial poker game. Please come back now. Gabe's eyes are bent. His tiny brain was probably trying to detect sarcasm in my testimony. Yes, anyway, he decided. He's back to his game. Thank you, Percy, my mother said.
Once we get to Montauk, we'il talk more about... whatever you forgot to tell me, okay? For a moment, I thought I saw an alarm in the eyes — the same fear I had seen in Grover during the bus journey — it was as if my mother also felt a strange feeling of cold in the air. But then her smile came back, and I thought I was wrong. She ruffled my hair and went to do gabe 7-layer
immersion. Page 5 An hour later, we were ready to leave. Gabe died from his poker game long enough to watch me drag my mother's luggage to the car. He kept complaining and crushing about the loss of his cooking - and, more importantly, his Camaro '78 - for the whole weekend. There's no scratch on this car, brain boy, you warned me as I loaded the last bag. Not a little
scratch. It's like I'm driving. I was 12. But it didn't matter to Gabe. If a seagull was as big as the paint stained, he'd find a way to blame me. When I looked at him in the apartment building, I was angry that I did something I couldn't explain. When Gabe reached the threshold, I made the hand gesture I saw Grover making on the bus, a kind of frightening and villainous gesture, with
his hand scratched above my heart, then a move toward Gabe. The screen door closed so hard that it hit him on the ass and sent him flying down the stairs as if he had been shot by a cannon. Maybe it was just a wind or some weird hinge incident, but I didn't stay long enough to find out. I went up to the Camaro and told my mother to step on it. Our rental hut was on the south
coast, on top of Long Island. It was a small pastel box with bleached curtains, half sunk into the dunes. In the cabinets always the sand and spiders, and most of the time the sea was too cold to swim. I liked the place. We've been there since we were a kid. My mother had been even longer. She didn't exactly say, but I knew why the beach was special to her. That was
where she met my father. As we approached Montak, she looked younger, the years of anxiety and work disappeared from her face. We got to sunset, opened the cabin windows and checked our usual cleaning rules. We went to the beach, fed the blue corn chips to the seagulls, and married blue jelly beans, blue saltwater candy and all the other free samples my mother brought
from work. I guess I should explain the blue food. Gabe once told my mother there was no such thing. They got into a fight, which seemed like something very small at the time. But since then, my mother has been eating out of her way to eat blue candy from the store.
This - along with not being completely dazed by Gabe - proved that she wasn't completely screwed up by Gabe. She had a rebellious streak, like me. When it got dark, we lit a fire. We baked hot dogs and candy. Mom told me before her parents died in the plane crash. She told me about the books she wanted to write one day when she had enough money to leave the store. In the
end, I became brazen to ask about what had always happened to me when we came to Montauk— my father. Mom's eyes were kka. I thought he was going to tell me the same things he always did, but I wasn't tired of hearing them. He was going to tell me the same things he always did, but I wasn't tired of hearing them. He was going to tell me the same things he always did, but I wasn't tired of hearing them. He was kind, Percy, she said. Tall, handsome and strong. But also gentle. You have his black hair, and his green eyes. Mom pulled blue jelly out of
her bag. I wish he could see you, Percy. He'd be so proud. I was wondering how she could say that. What was so great about me? Dyslexic, an overactive man with a D+ scorecard, was expelled from school for the sixth time in six years. How old was I? Asked. I mean... when you left? She was watching the flames. He was only with me for one summer, Percy. Right here on this
beach. 100000000000 But... he knew me as a baby. No, honey. He knew I was expecting a baby, but he didn't see you. He had to leave before you were born. I tried to square that with the fact that I seem to remember ... Something about my father. Warm glow. Smile. I always thought he knew me as a baby. My mother had never said that, but still, I felt it was true. Now, to tell
him he's never seen me... I felt angry with my father. Maybe it was stupid, but I couldn't believe he went on the ocean trip because he didn't marry my mother. He left us, and now we're stuck with Smelly Gabe. Will you send me away again? I asked her. Another school? She pulled candy out of the fire. I don't know, honey. Her voice was heavy. I think... I think we're going to have
to do something. Because you don't want me around? I'm sorry about the words as soon as they were out. My mother's eyes burst into tears. She took my hand, shook her tight. Percy, I have to do this, honey. For your own good. I have to send you away. Her words reminded me of what Mr. Bruner was saying - that it was best for me to leave Yancey. Because I'm not normal, I
said. - You say that like it's a bad thing, Percy. But you don't realize how important you are. I thought Yancey Academy would be far enough away. I thought you'd finally be safe. Safe from what? She met my eyes and jumped on me with memories - all the strange, scary things that had ever happened to me, some of which I was trying to forget. In third grade, a man in a black coat
was stalking me in the playground. When the teachers threatened to call the police, he left with a growl, but no one believed me when I told them that under his hat with his eyes wide rolled, the man had only one eye, right in the middle of his head. Before that—really early memory. I was in preschool, and a teacher accidentally left me on the ground. a nap in a kitten in which the
snake has insent. My mother was screaming when she came to pick me up and found me playing with a limp, scaly rope that I somehow managed to strangle to death with my hands. At every school, something sinister happened, something dangerous, and I was forced to move. I knew I had to tell my mom about the old ladies at the fruit stand, and Mrs. Dodds at the art museum,
about my weird hallucination of cutting my math teacher to dust with a sword. But I couldn't tell her. I had this weird feeling that the news was going to end our trip to Montauk, and I didn't want that. I tried to keep you as close to me as possible, my mother said. They told me it was a mistake. But there's only one other option, Percy, the place your father wanted to send you. And I
just... I just can't stand doing it. My dad wanted me to go to a special school? Not school, she said quietly. Summer camp? And if it's so important, why hasn't she mentioned it before? I'm sorry, Percy, she said, looking into my eyes. But I can't talk
about it. I couldn't send you to this place. That could mean saying goodbye to you for good. For the best? But if it's just summer camp ... She turned to fire, and I knew from her expression that if I asked her more questions, she'd start crying. I had a bright dream the other night. It stormed the beach, and two beautiful animals, a white horse and a golden eagle, were trying to kill
each other at the end of the influx. The eagle descended and cut the horse's muzzle with its huge loon. The horse was bred and kicked on the wings of the eagles. As they fought, the earth was pounding, and the monstrous voice threw itself somewhere underground, leading the animals to fight harder. I ran towards them knowing I had to stop them killing each other, but I ran in
slow motion. I knew I'd be late. I saw the eagle go down, the beak pointed at the horse's wide eyes, and I screamed: No! I woke up with one start. Outside, it really storms, the storm that breaks down trees and blows up houses. There was neither a horse nor an eagle on the beach, only lightning bolts making false daylight, and 20-meter waves hitting the dunes like artillery. With
the next lightning strike, my mother woke up. She sat down, wide, and said Hurricane. I knew this was crazy. Long Island never sees hurricanes so early in the summer. But the ocean seems to have forgotten. After a roar of wind, I heard a distant swollen blue puddle, an angry, tortured sound that caused my hair to stand at the end. Then a much closer noise, like hammers in the
sand. Desperate voice - someone was screaming, banging on the cabin door. My mother got out of bed in the nightgown and threw Tray. Grover stood at the door against a backdrop of pouring rain. But he wasn't... He wasn't exactly a grover. He's been looking all night, and he's melted. What were you thinking? My mother looked at me in horror, not afraid of Grover, but why he
came. Percy, she said, screaming to be heard through the rain. What happened at school? What didn't you tell me? I was too shocked to fit in that he had just cursed in Greek and I understood it perfectly. I was too shocked to wonder how
Grover got here in the middle of the night. Because Grover didn't have pants and where his legs should be ... Wy mother looked at me harshly and spoke in a tone she had never used before: Percy. Tell me now! I stuttered something for the old ladies at the fruit counter, and Mrs. Dodds, and my mother was looking at me, her face fading in the flashes.
She took her bag, threw me the rain jacket and said: Go to the car. Both of them. Go! Grover ran for the Camaro, but he didn't run. He was shaking, shaking his hind hindquarters, and suddenly his story of muscular disorder at his feet seemed reasonable. I figured out how he could run so fast and still limp when he walked. Because where his legs should be, he didn't have legs.
He had hooves. 4. My MOTHER TEACHES ME BULLFIGHTING We destroyed at night on the dark roads of the country. The wind hit the Camaro. The rain bites the windshield. I didn't know how my mother could see anything, but she was stepping on the gas. Every time there was a flash, I watched a grover sitting next to me in the back seat and wondered if I was crazy or if he
was wearing some kind of carpet. But, no, the smell was one of the excursions in the kindergarten to the zoo - lanolin, like wool. The smell of an animal from a barn. So, you and my mom... know each other? Graver's eyes shone on the rear-view mirror, even though there were no cars behind us. Not exactly, he said. We've never met in person. But she knew I was watching you.
Watching me? To keep you in charge. Make sure you're okay. But I wasn't pretending to be your friend, he added. I'm your friend is a donkey – Grover dropped a sharp, throaty Blaa ha-ha! Page 6 I had heard him make that sound, but I always assumed it was a nervous
Then why – The less you knew, the fewer monsters you would attract, Says Grver, as if this should be completely obvious. We put fog over people's eyes. We were hoping you'd think that nice one was a hallucination. But it wasn't good. You're starting to realize who you are. Who, wait a minute, what do you mean? The strange noise rose again behind us, closer than before.
Whatever was after us, he was still following us. Percy, my mother said, there's too much to explain and there's not enough time. We need to get you to safety. Safety from what? Who's after me? Oh, no one, Gruver said, apparently still up for the donkey's comment. Only the Lord of the Dead and some of his most bloodthirsty servants. It's Grover! I'm sorry, Mrs. Jackson. Can you
drive faster, please? I tried to turn my mind, but I couldn't do it. I knew this wasn't a dream. I had no imagination. I never imagined anything so strange. My mother made a strong left. We turned on a narrower road, over darkened country houses and wooded hills and took your own STRAWBERRY signs on white humps. Where are we going? Asked. The summer camp I told you
about. My mother's voice was strict; she was trying not to be afraid for me. The place your father wanted to send you. The place you didn't want me to go. Please, honey, you begged my mother. That's hard enough. Try to understand. You're in danger. Because some old ladies cut off the yarn. These weren't old ladies, Grover says. That was fate. Do you know what this means—
the fact that they appeared before you? They only do this when you're... when someone dies. It's waa. You said so. No, I'm not. I said someone. You mean you. Just like me. I meant you as someone. Not you, you. Guys! my mother said. She pulled the wheel hard to the right and I saw a figure she had ditched to avoid - the dark fluttering shape that has now been lost behind us in
the storm. What was that? Asked. We're almost there, my mother said, ignoring my question. Another mile. You're welcome. Please, please. I didn't know where it was, but I ended up in the car expecting to arrive. Outside, nothing but rain and darkness - the kind of empty surroundings you're on top of Long Island. I was thinking about Mrs. Dodds and the moment
she turned into something with pointed teeth and wings. My limbs were numb with belated shock. She really wasn't human. She wanted to kill me. Then I thought of Mr. Bruner... and the sword he had thrown. I can ask Grover about it, my hair's up on my neck. There was a blinding flash, a jaw-dropping boom, and our car exploded. I remember feeling weightless, as if I had been
crushed, fried and slag at the same time. I peeled my forehead from the back of the seat and said Oh. Percy! my mother was screaming. I am good... I tried to shake off the dazzling. I'm not dead. The car didn't blow up. We got stuck in a ditch. The driver's doors were stuck in the mud. The roof had cracked like an egg shell and it was raining. Lightning. That was the only
explanation. We were thrown off the road. Next to me in the back seat was a big, windless lump. It's Grover! He was disbanded, screwing blood out of his mouth. I shook his hairy leg, thinking: Even if you're a half-bald animal, you're my best friend and I don't want you to die! Then he guarded Food, and I knew there was hope. Percy said my mother, you have to... Her voice has
changed. I looked back. In a flash of lightning, through the back window, I saw a figure holding on to us on the shoulder of the road. It's the kind of skin that creeps up on me. It was a dark silhouette of a huge man, like a footballer. Looks like he's holding a blanket over his head. His upper half was fuzzy and fuzzy. His raised hands made him look like horns. I took a hard drink.
Percy, my mother said, deadly serious. Get out of the car. My mother threw herself against the driver's door. He was sworn in in the mud. I tried mine. And he got stuck. I desperately looked at the hole in the roof. It may be an outlet, but the edges were sizzling and smoking. Climb on the passenger side! Percy, you have to run. See the big tree? What? Another flash flash and
through the smoking hole in the roof I saw, she meant: huge, fir trees from the White House on the crest of the nearest hill. That's the line of ownership, my mother said. Get off the hill and you'il see a big farm down in the valley. Run and don't go back. Call for help. Don't stop until you get to the door. Mom, you're coming too. Her face was pale, her eyes sad, like when she looked
at the ocean. I wasn't the one shouting. You're coming with me. Help me carry Grover. Food! Grover moaned, a little louder. The man with the blanket over his head because his hands - huge meat hands - were swinging on both sides. There was no blanket. It means it's a
very mossy mass that was too big for his head to be... was his head to be... was his head. And the dots that looked like horns ... He doesn't want us, my mother said. He wants you. Besides, I can't cross the property line. But... We are Have time, Percy. Go. Please, please. Then I became angry with my mother, in Gorar the goat, from what with the horns was slowly and deliberately to us like a bull. I
climbed through Grover and opened the door to the rain. We're going together. Come on, Mom. I told you, Mom! I'm not leaving you. Help me with Grover and opened the door to the rescue. Together, we draped Grover's hands over his shoulders and began to
stumble up the wet tall grass. I looked back, the first time I looked at the monster. He was 17m tall, easily, his arms and legs like something out of the cover of Muscle Man magazine - bulging biceps and triceps are triceps and triceps and triceps are triceps and triceps are triceps and triceps are triceps are triceps and triceps are triceps are triceps are trice
which would have seemed ridiculous, except that the top half of his body was so frightening. Rough brown hair started around his belly button and thickened as he reached his shoulders. His neck was a mass of muscles and fur leading to his huge head, which had a muzzle, while my hand, snotty nostrils with a shiny ring, cruel black eyes and horns - huge black and white horns
with dots that you can not get from the electric scraper. I recognized the monster. He was in one of the first stories Mr. Bruner told us. But it can't be real. I blinked the rain from my eyes. That's it- Passifa's son, my mother said. I wish I knew how much they wanted to kill you. But he's Mint: Don't tell him his name, she warned. Names have power. The pine was still too far away – at
least 100 meters up. I looked behind me again. The bull man hugged over our car, looking accurately. It's more like snorting, cracked. I wasn't sure why you were worried when we were only 50 meters away. Food? Grover melted. I told him. Mom, what's he doing? Can't he see us? His vision and hearing are terrible, she said. It goes with a smell. But
he'il know where we are soon enough. It's like a replica, a bull-man holding back with anger. He took Gabe's Camaro to the torn roof, the chassis creaking and creaking. He lifted the car over his head and threw it down the road. She slammed into a wet asphalt and pounced on the shower of sparks about half a mile away before s stops by. The tank exploded. I don't remember
anything, gabe said. Oops. Percy, my mother said. When he sees us, he'il set us up. Wait until the last second, then jump out of the way - directly to the attack. for a long time. I should have expected it. I was selfish, I kept you by my way. Keep me
close to you? But – Another rage and bull-man began to climb up. He smelled us. The pine was only a few meters away, but the hill was getting steeper and sloppy, and Grover wasn't getting any lighter. The bull man hung up. A few more seconds and he'il be on us. My mother must have been exhausted, but it was Grover's shoulder. Go, Percy! Separate! Remember what I said. I
didn't want to split up, but I felt like she was right - it was our only chance. I pressed to the left, turned around and saw the creature coming down on me. His black eyes glow in the heart of the city. He lowered his head and charged, those sharp horns pointing straight at my chest. The fear in my stomach made me want to sober up, but that wouldn't work. I could never escape this
thing. So I held on to the ground, and at the last minute I jumped to the side. The bull broke in like a freight train, then got upset and turned, but not towards me this time, towards my mother used to say, and the lights of a farm glowing yellow in the
rain. But that was half a mile away. We'il never make it. The bull man eviscerates himself to bury the earth. He continued to look at my mother, who was now slowly descending down the road, trying to take the monster accused her of. She tried to stop
by, as she told me, but the monster had learned her lesson. His hand was snive and he grabbed her by the neck as he tried to escape. He picked her up as she struggled, kicked and slapped the air. Page 7, Mom! She caught my eyes, managed to choke on the last word: Go! Then, with an angry roar, the monster closed his fists around my mother's neck, and she decomposed
before my eyes, melting into a light, shiny golden shape, as if it were a holographic projection. She dazzled, and she just... Gone. Anger didn't replace my fear. Burnt forces of newfound power in my limbs - the grass. The monster hugged, squirming, as if he we
going to pick up a grover and make it dissolve. I can't let that happen. I took off my red rain jacket. Hey, hey! I was screaming, removing the jacket, running to one side of the monster than no idea. I spun around on the big pine and removed my red
jacket in front of I thought I was going to jump out of the way at the last minute. But that's not how it happened. The bull man set himself up too fast to catch me, and to try to back away. Time has slowed down. My legs are tins. I couldn't jump sideways, so I jumped straight up, kicked out the creature's head, used it as a board, turned in the air and landed on his neck. How did I do
that? I didn't have time to figure it out. After a millisecond, the monster's head hit the tree, and the impact almost knocked out my teeth. A bull man got involved, trying to shake me. I locked my hands around his horns so they wouldn't throw me. Thunder and lightning were still going strong. The rain was in my eyes. The smell of ish meat burned my nostrils. The monster shook and
hooked up like a rodeo bull. He had to go back into the tree and smash me, but I began to realize that this thing had only one gear: forward. Meanwhile, Grover melted. The bull man approached him, again staked the ground and charged. I thought
about how he ripped out my mother's life, made her disappear in a flash of light, and the rage filled me like high-octane fuel. Both hands are around a horn, and I pulled back with all my might. The monster melted, gave a surprised grunt, then - click! The bull screamed and threw me in the air. I fell on my back in the grass. My head hit a rock. When I sat down, my eyesight was
blurry, but I had a horn in my hands, a ragged bone gun the size of a knife. The monster's loaded. Without a second thought, I turned to one side and got on my knees. As the monster rolled over, I drove the broken horn into his side, just under his leather chest. The bull man roars in agony. He swayed, skinning on his chest, then began to crumble — not like my mother, in a flash
of golden light, but like crumbling sand blown by the wind, in the same way that Ms. Dodds dispersed. The monster was gone. The rain stopped. The storm is still darkening, but only in the distance. I smelled like cattle and my knees were shaking. My head is splitting. I was weak, scared and shaking with grief, I had seen my mother disappear. I wanted to lie down and cry, but
there was Grover needing my help, so I was able to pull him up and descend into the valley, to the farm's headlights. I was crying, calling my mother, but I was holding on to Grover - I wasn't going to let him go. The last thing I remember is collapsing on a wooden porch, looking at the ceiling fan circling over me, a moth flying around a yellow light, and nursing faces of a familiar
looking a man and a beautiful girl, her blonde hair curled like a princess. They both looked at me, and the girl said, He's the one. He should be. Silence, Annabeth, the man said. He's conscious. Bring him in. 5. I play PINOCHLE WITH HORSE, I had strange dreams filled with livestock animals. Most of them wanted to kill me. The rest wanted food. I must have woken up a few
times, but what I heard and saw didn't add up, so I passed out again. I remember lying in a soft bed, being fed a spoonful of something that tasted like popcorn, only it was pudding. The girl with curly blonde hair rises above me, blazing until she pounces on me, scratching from my chin with the spoon. When she saw her eyes open, she asked: What will happen during the summer
solstice? I managed to melt, What? She looked around like she was afraid someone would hear. What's going on? What was stolen? We only have a few weeks! I'm sorry, I was moaning, No... Someone knocked on the door, and the girl quickly filled my mouth with pudding. The next time I woke up, the girl was gone. Blond-haired, like a surfer, stood in the corner of the bedroom
watching me. He had blue eyes, at least a dozen of them on his cheeks, forehead, backs of his hands. * When I finally hinted at good, there was nothing strange about my surroundings, except that they were prettier than I got used to. I sat on a sun lounger on a huge porch, looking at a meadow in green hills in the distance. The breeze smelled like strawberries. There was a
blanket over my legs, a pillow behind my neck. It was all great, but my mouth felt like the scorpion was using it as a nest. My tongue was dry and a paper table glued through a cherry. My hand was so weak, I almost dropped the glass when I shook my
fingers. Careful, said a familiar voice. Grover leaned against the railing on the porch, looking like he hadn't slept all week. Under one hand, he tied himself to a shoebox. He was wearing blue jeans, hi-tops and a bright orange T-shirt, camphalf-BLOOD said. Just old Grover, not the goat boy. Maybe I had a nightmare. Maybe my mom's okay. We were still on vacation and had
stopped at this big house for some reason. And... You saved my life, Grover says. I... I'm back on the hill. I thought you might want this. He put my shoebox on my lap. In it there was a bull horn, the base of a jagged from a broken, the tip was sprayed with dried blood. It wasn't a nightmare. The minotaur, I said. Urn, Percy, is not a good idea – That's what they call it in Greek myths,
is it? I asked. The minotaur. Half human, half bull. inappropriate way. You haven't been out of here in two days. How many do you remember? My mother. Is it really... He looked down. I was looking across the lawn. There were groves of trees, a winding stream, acres of strawberries located under the blue sky. The valley was surrounded by hills, and the highest, right in front of
us, was the one with the huge pine forest at the top. Even this looked beautiful in the sunlight. My mother was gone. The whole world has to be black and cold. Nothing should look beautiful. I'm sorry, Grover smells. I'm a failure. I'm the worst satir in the world. He warmed his leg so hard he melted. I mean, the converse shook. The inside was full of styrofoam, except for a hole in
the shape of hooves. Styx! he mumbles. The thunder is throwing in the sky. When he was struggling to get his hoof back in his fake leg, I thought that settled him. Grover was a satyr. I was willing to bet that if I shaved curly brown hair, I'd find little horns on his head. But I was too unhappy to care that satirs existed, or even minotes. This meant that my mother was indeed pressed
into no where, dissolved in yellow light. I was alone. Orphan. I'm going to have to live with... Smelly gabe? Not. That's never going to happen. I'd live on the street first. If I was 17, I'd pretend I was 17 and join the army. I'd do something. Grover was still sniffing. The poor kid - the poor goat, Satyr, whatever he is - seems to expect to be hit. I said, It wasn't your fault. . . . . . Yes, it
are chocolate chip cookies. Liquid cookies. Liquid cookies. And it's not just cookies, buttery and hot, with more melting chips. Drinking it, my whole body felt warm and good, full of energy. My grief didn't go away, but I felt like my mother had just combed her hand in my cheek, gave me a cookie, as it was when I was little, and told me everything was
going to be okay. Before I knew it, I had drained the glass. I was looking at it, I was probably just having a drink, but the ice cubes hadn't even melted. Was it nice? Grover asked. I nodded. What does it taste like? It sounded so good, I felt guilty. I'm sorry, I said. I should have let you try. His eyes widen. No, no, no, no, no, no, that's not what I meant. I just... they wondered. Chocolate
chip cookies, I said. My mother's. It's all 1,000 meters away. And how do you feel? It's like I can throw Nancy Boboffitt 100 yards. This is he said. That's good. I don't think you can risk drinking more than that. What do you mean? He took the empty glass from me gingerbread, as if it were dynamite, and returned it to the table. Come on, come on. Chiron and Mr. D are waiting. The
porch is wrapped all the time around the farm. My legs felt inadvertently trying to get there. Grover offered to wear the minotaver, but I held him. I paid for a souvenir the hard way. I wasn't going to leave him. As we spun across the street, I felt my breath. We must have been on the north shore of Long Island, because on this side of the house, the valley went all the way to the
water that shines about a kilometer in the distance. Between here and there, I just couldn't process everything I saw. The landscape is dotted with buildings that resembled ancient Greek architecture - an outdoor pavilion, an amphitheater, a circular arena - except that they all look brand new, their white marble columns sparkling in the sun. In the nearby sand pit, a dozen students
and satirs played volleyball. Canoes moved across a small lake. Children in bright orange T-shirts like Grover are chased around a group of booths nestled in the woods. - Some targets within range of archery. Others drove horses on a forest trail and, unless I was hallucinating, some of their horses had wings. Page 8 Down at the end of the porch, two men sat opposite each other
at the card table. The blonde girl who was stuffing me with popcorn was leaning on the porch next to them. The man facing me was small, but pigy. He had a red nose, big watery eyes and curly hair, so black that it was almost purple. What do you call them, corks? No, cherubs. It looked like a cherub that was middle-aged in a caravan. He was wearing a Hawaiian shirt, and he
was going to fit in gabe's poker parties, but I feel like this guy might have played with him even my stepfather. This is Mr. D, he was grumbling about me. He's the director of the camp. Be polite. The girl, this is Annabeth Chase. It's just a camp, but it's here longer than anyone. And now you know Chiron... He pointed to the man whose back was towards me. First of all, I found out
he was sitting in the wheelchair. Then I recognized the tweed jacket, the thinning of the brown hair, the scratched beard. Mr. Bruner! I cried. The Latin teacher turned around and smiled at me. His eyes had this mischievous clay that sometimes appeared in class when he did a test and made all the answers to a few answers B. A, well, Percy, he said. Now we have four for Pinocle.
He offered me a chair to Mr. D's right, who looked at me with bloodied eyes and sighed a big sigh. Oh, I guess I should say it. Welcome to the blood camp. Don't expect me to be happy to see you. Uh, thank you. I went a little further than him, because if there was anything I learned from living with Gabe, it was how to say when an adult hit the happy juice. If Mr. D was a stranger
to alcohol, I was a sate. Annabeth? Mr. Bruner called the blonde girl. She came and Mr. Bruner introduced us. This young lady took care of her health, Percy. Annabeth, honey, why don't you check Percy's bed? For now, we'il put him in cabin eleven. Anabet said, Of course, Chiron. She was my age, maybe a few centimetres taller, and much more athletic looking. With her deep
tan and curly blonde hair, she was just like I thought a stereotypical girl in California would look, only her eyes ruined the image. They had repented gray, like storm clouds; Beautiful, but also disturbing, as if analyzing the best way to bring me down in battle. He looked at the minota in my hands, then he came back to me. You killed a minotaur! or Wow, you're so awesome! or
something. You drool when you sleep. Then she was silent on the lawn, her blonde hair flying behind her. So, I said, looking forward to changing the subject. You, uh, work here, Mr. Bruner? Not Mr. Bruner, said the former Mr. Bruner, said the former Mr. Bruner, said the former Mr. Bruner. I'm afraid that was a pseudonym. You can call me Chiron. - All right, all right, all right, Completely confused, I looked at the director. And Mr. D... does that
mean anything? Mr. Dee stopped shuffling the cards. He looked at me like I was out loud. Young man, names are powerful things. You can't just use them for no reason. Oh, that's right. 1000000000 I have to say, Percy, the chorizo came in, - it's good to see you alive. It's been a while since I've had a home conversation with a potential camper. I wouldn't want to think I was
wasting my time. A home call? My year at Yancey Academy to instruct you. Satyr in most schools, of course, keeps an eye out. But Grover warned me as soon as he met you. You felt like you were something special, so I decided to climb. I convinced the other Latin teacher to... ah, take a leave of absence. I tried to remember the beginning of the school year. It seemed so long
ago, but I had a mossy memory of having another Latin American teacher, my first week in Yancey. You came to Yancey just to teach me? Asked. Chiron nodded. Honestly, I wasn't sure about you at first. We've reached out to your mother so she knows we're following you in case you're ready for camp The Sex. But you still have so much to learn. However, you managed to come
alive and this is always the first test. Grover, Mr. Dee said impatiently, do you play? Yes, sir! Grover until he took the fourth chair, though I didn't know why he had to be so afraid of the fluffy man in a Hawaiian tiger-print shirt. Do you know how to play Pinocles? Mr. D suspected me. I'm not afraid, I said. I'm afraid not, sir, he said. Sir, I said it again. I liked the camp director less and
less. Well, he told me, it is, along with gladiatorial battles and Pac-Man, one of the greatest games ever invented by humans. I expect all civilized young men to know the rules. I'm sure the boy can learn, Chiron said. Please, I said, what is this place? What am I doing here? Mr. Brun- Chiron - why would you go to Yancey Academy just to teach me? Mr. D snorted. I asked the
same question. The camp director handed out the cards. Grover cried every time someone landed on the motto. Chiron smiled at me with sympathy, as he was in the Latin class, as if he had told me that whatever midnight I was, I was his star student. You expected me to have the right answer. Percy, he said. Didn't your mother tell you anything? She said ... I remembered her
sad eyes looking over the sea. She told me she was afraid to send me here, even though that's what my father wanted. You said if I was here, I probably couldn't leave. She wanted to keep me close to her. Typical, Mr. D said. That's how they usually get killed. Young man, are you bidding or not? What? Asked. He explained, eagerly, how you're going to match pinocle, and I did.
I'm afraid there's too much to tell, Chiron said. I'm afraid our usual orientation film won't be enough. A orientation film? Asked. No, chiron decided. Well, Percy. You know grover is a satyr. You know je pointed a horn in the shoebox - that you killed the Minotaur. There's no small feat, boy. What you may not know is that great powers work in your life. The gods—the powers you
call the Greek gods — are very alive.1 I was looking at the others around the table. I was waiting for someone to scream, no! But all I got was Mr. Dee shouting: Oh, royal matchmaking. Trick! 300,000 He collapsed while he was shrinking his points. Mr. D, you asked gruver passionately if you're not going to eat it, can you give me a diet coke? So, what is it? Oh, all right. Grover
tore off a huge piece of the empty aluminum box and chewed it with fabric. Wait, I told Chiron. You're telling me there's such a thing as God. Well, now, chiron said. God the capital G, God. That's a completely different question. We're not going to deal with the metaphysical. Metaphysical? But you have just spoken, Ah, gods, plural, as in great beings who control the powers of
nature and human endeavors: the immortal gods of Olympus. That's a smaller question. Smaller? Yes, quite. The gods we discussed in latin class. Zeus, I said. Hera. Apollo. You mean them. And here we go again – distant thunder Day. Young man said, Mr. D, I'd really be less casual throwing those names around if I were you. But they're fairy tales, I said. They are myths to
explain lightning and seasons and other things. They're what people believed before there was science! Mr. D was making fun of me. And tell me, Perseus Jackson, I fled when he said his real name, which I never told anyone, what would people think of your science in two thousand years? Mr. Dee continued. Hmmm? I'il call it a primitive mambo jumbo. Oh, I love mortals
— they have absolutely no sense of perspective. They think they came from afar. And they are, chiron? Look at this boy and tell me. I didn't like Mr. Dee, but there was something about the way you called me mortal, as if... It was enough to put a lump down my throat, to say why Grover patiently rubbed his cards, chewed his soda and kept his mouth shut. Percy said
Chiron - you may choose to believe it or not, but the fact is that immortals. Can you imagine you're not dying for a moment? Never fades? You exist exactly who you are, all the time? I was just about to answer, from my head, that it sounded like a pretty good deal, but the tone of Himron's voice made me hesitate. You mean whether people believe in you or not, I
said. That's right, Chiron agreed. If you were God, what would you call a myth, an old story, to explain lightning? What if I told you, Perseus Jackson, that someday people would call you a myth designed to explain how little boys can overcome the loss of their mothers? My heart broke. He was trying to me off for some reason, but I wasn't going to let him. I said: I'm not going to
like it. But I don't believe in the gods. You'd better, Mr. Dee was grumbling. Before one of them drains you. Grover said, please, sir. You just lost your mother. He's in shock. And good luck, Mr. D grumbled, playing with a card. Bad enough that I've confined himself to this unhappy job, working with guys who don't even believe it. He waved his hand, and on the table appeared the
chalice, as if the sunlight bent, for a moment, and weaved the air into glass. The chalice is filled with red wine and he got out. My dear me. He looked up at the sky and cried out, Old habits! 20000 More thunder. Mr. D took his hand off again, and the glass turned into a fresh
bottle of Diet Coke. He sighed unhappyly, popped out the top of the soda and went back to his game. Chiron winked at me. Mr D insulted his father some time ago to bathe in a wood nymph, which was declared banned. A tree nymph, I repeated, still stares at the Diet Coke, which can be from space. Yes, Mr. D acknowledged. Dad likes to punish me. 1. Time, Ban. Dead!
Absolutely terrible ten years! The second time - she is really beautiful, and I could not stay away - the second time he sent me here. Half-blooded hill. Summer camp for a guest like you. Be better influences, he told me. Work with the youth instead of knocking them down. They are 10,000 Absolutely unfair. Mr. Dee sounded six years old, like a little pouty. And... Your father is...
Page 9 Di immortal, Chiron, Mr. Di said. I thought you taught this boy the basics. My father is Zeus, of course. I checked D's names from Greek mythology. Wine. The tiger's skin. Satirs who seem to work here. The way Grurrur is turned around, as if Mr. D were his master. You're Dionysus, I said. The God of wine. Mr. D's got his eyes on it. What are they saying these days,
Grover? Do the kids say, Well, shower! Yes, Mr. D. Then, all right! Percy Jackson. Did you think I was Aphrodite? You're a god. Yes, child. God. It's you. He turned to me, and I saw visions of grape vines suffocating to death, drunken warriors
game. I believe I win. Not really, Mr. D, Chiron said. The game goes to me. I thought Mr. Di was going to vaporize Chiron from his wheelchair, but he just sighed through his nose like he'd been beaten by the Latin literature teacher. It worked, and Grover Rose did. I'm tired, Mr. D said. I believe I'm going to take a nap before I cut myself tonight. But first, Grover, we need to talk
again about your non-perfect performance of this task. Grover's face is sweaty. Yes, sir. Mr. D turned to me. Booth eleven, Percy Jackson. And look at manners. He swerthed into the house, grover then terrible. Is Grover going to be okay? I asked Chiron nodded, though he seemed a little worried. Old Dionysus isn't too angry. He just hates his job. He was... ah, punished, I
suppose he would say, and he can not stand waiting another century before he is allowed to return to Olympus. Mount Olympus, but the point of convergence of their powers, which were indeed on It's still called Mount Olympus, out of respect for the old ways, but the
palace is moving, Percy, just like the gods do. The Greek gods are here? As... in America? Well, of course. The gods move with the heart of the West. What? Come on, Percy. As you call Western civilization. Do you think this is an abstract concept? No, it's a living force. A collective consciousness that has been burning brightly for thousands of years. The gods are part of it. It can
even be said that they are the source of this, or at least they are tied so tightly that they could not fade unless all western civilizations had been erased. The fire started in Greece. Then, as you well know—or, as I hope you know, since you have passed my course—the heart of fire has moved to Rome, as have the gods. Oh, different names, maybe Jupiter for Zeus, Venus for
Aphrodite, etc., but the same powers, the same powers, the same gods. And then they died. Died? - Did the West die? The gods were there. They spent several centuries in England. All you have to do is look at the architecture. People don't forget the gods. Any place they have ruled, in the last
three thousand years, you can see them in paintings, in statues, in the most important buildings. And yes, Percy, of course they're in your States now. Look at your symbol, the eagle of Zeus. See the statue of Promethius in Rockefeller Center, the Greek façade of government buildings in Washington. I don't obey you to find an American city where Olympians aren't prominently
exposed. Like it or not - and believe me, many people weren't very attached to Rome: America is now the heart of the flame. This is the great power of the West. So Olympus is here. And we're here. It was too much, especially the fact that I seem to be involved in Chiron, as if I were part of some club. Who are you, Chiron? Who... who am I? Chiron smiled. But I knew it was
impossible. He's paralyzed from the waist down. Who are you? - he softened. Well, that's the answer we all want, isn't it? But for now, we need to find you a bed in Cabin 11. There will be new friends to meet. And then he rose from his wheelchair. But
there was something strange about the way he did it. His blanket fell off his feet, but his legs didn't move. His waist was longer, rising above the belt. At first I thought he was wearing very long, white velvet underwear; was the front of an animal, muscles and sinuses under coarse white
fur. And the wheelchair wasn't a chair. It's some kind of container, a huge box on wheels, and it must have been magic, because there's no way it's going to keep it all. A leg popped out, long and on its knees, with a huge polished hoof. Then another front leg, then hind quarters, and then the box was empty, nothing but a metal shell with several false human legs attached.. I was
looking at the horse that had just popped out of the wheelchair: a huge white stallion. But where the neck should be is the top of my Latin teacher, smoothly grafted to the trunk of the horse. What a relief, the centaur said. I've been nailed there for so long that my tics fell asleep. Come on, Percy Jackson. Let's meet the other campers. 6. I became the Supreme Lord of the Bath,
having become acquainted with the fact that my Latin teacher was a horse, we had a pleasant tour, although I was careful not to follow him. I didn't trust a chiron at the end of the road that I trusted on the front. We went through the volleyball pit. Several of the campers nudge each other. One of those minotaverts I wore. Another said, That's him. Most of the campers are older than
me. Their satiary friends were older than Grover, all walking around in orange CAMPHALF-BLOOD T-shirts, with nothing else to cover their bare-eared hindquarters. I wasn't usually shy, but the way they looked at me made me uncomfortable. I felt like they were expecting me to do something. I looked back at the farm. It was much bigger than I had understood – four floors tall,
sky blue with white decorative elements, like a luxury seaside resort. I was checking the brass eagle when something spotted me, a shadow in the top window of the ceiling. Something had moved the curtain, just for a second, and I had the clear impression that I was being watched. What's up there? I asked Chiron. He looked where I was headed, and his smile faded. Just the
ceiling. Someone lives there? No, he said with final force. Not a single living thing. I feel like he's sincere. But I was sure something had moved to that curtain. Come on, Percy, Chiron said, and his carefree tone is a little violent. It's too much to see. We walked through the strawberry fields where the camper picked out blueberries until a satyr played a cane. . . . . . . Chiron told
me that the camp has grown a nice harvest for export to restaurants in New York and Mount Olympus. That pays us the cost, he explained. And the strawberries hardly try. He said Mr D had this effect on fertile plants: they just went crazy when he was around. It's best with wine grapes, but Mr. D was limited. therefore grow strawberries instead. I watched satir play with the pipe.
His music caused the bug lines to leave the strawberry patch in every direction, like refugees fleeing a fire. I was wondering if Grover could do such magic with music. I was wondering if he was a good defender. Very clean and nice place. Chiron
sighed. He spilled his tweed jacket and scratched it on his horses like a saddle. Grover has big dreams, Percy. Maybe bigger than reasonable. To achieve his goal, he must first show great courage by succeeding as a keeper, finding a new camper van and bringing him safely to Half-Blood Hill. But he did that! I might agree with you, Chiron said. But it's not my house to judge.
Dionysus and the Cloven Elders Council must decide. I'm afraid they might not take this task as a success. After all, Grover was unconscious when I dragged him through the property. The council may wonder if this shows bravery on Grover's part. I wanted to protest. It's not
Grover's fault. I also felt very, very guilty. If I hadn't let Grover get away at the bus station, there wouldn't have been any trouble. He's going to get a second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right? Chiron won. I'm afraid this was Grover's second chance, right?
before trying again. He's still so young for his age... How old is he? 28. What! And he's in sixth grade? Satiri matures half as fast as humans, Percy. Grover has been the equivalent of a secondary school student for the past six years. That's terrible. Quite, Chiron agreed. In any case, Grover has been the equivalent of a secondary school student for the past six years. That's terrible. Quite, Chiron agreed. In any case, Grover has been the equivalent of a secondary school student for the past six years.
Alas, he wanted to pursue his dream. Maybe now he'il find another career... It's not fair, I said. What happened the first time? Was it really that bad? Chiron looked fast. Let's go, okay? But I wasn't ready to drop the subject. Something occurred to me when Chiron was talking about my mother's fate, as if she were deliberately avoiding the word death. The beginning of an idea – a
small, hopeful, began to form in my mind. Chiron, I said. If the gods and Olympus and all who are real ... Yes, child? Does that mean the underworld is real? Chiron's expression is darkened. Page 10 Yes, child. He paused, as if carefully choosing his words. There's a place where ghosts go after death. But for now... until we know more ... will prompt you to take it out of your mind
What do you mean, until we know more? Come on, Percy. Let's see the woods. . . . . . . As we got closer, I realized how huge the forest was. It took at least a quarter of the valley, with trees so tall and thick, that you couldn't imagine that no one was there from the Native Americans. Chiron said, the forest is loaded if you want to try your luck, but you're arming yourself. Stocked up
on what? Asked, Armed with what? You'il see. The shooting of the flag is Friday night, Do you have your own sword and shield? My own—? Chiron said, I guess not, I think it's a size 5. I'il visit the armory later, I wanted to ask what summer camp there was armory, but there were too many other things to think about, so the tour continued. We saw the range of archery, the canoe.
the stables (which Chiron didn't like very much), the range of spear sightings, the frying of the amphitheater and the arena where Chiron said they held a sword and a spear. A sword and a spear sightings, the frying of the cabin and all that, he explained. Not deadly. Usually. Oh, yes, and there's the mess hall. Chiron pointed to an outdoor pavilion shaped in white columns by
Grecian on a hill overlooking the sea. There were a dozen picnic tables. There's no roof. There are no walls. What do you do when it rains? Asked. Chiron looked at me like I was out of my mind. We still have to eat, don't we? I decided to drop the subject. He finally showed me the booths. There were twelve nestled in the forest by the lake. They were arranged in U, with two at the
base and five in a row on both sides. And they were undoubtedly the strangest collection of buildings I've ever seen. Except for the fact that each of them had a large brass number nine had smoke, like a small factory. At number four there are tomato vines on the walls and
a roof made of real grass. Seven appear to be made of solid gold, which shines so much in sunlight that it is almost impossible to look at. They all faced a communal area the size of a football field dotted with Greek statues, fountains, flower beds and several baskets (which were more my speed). In the center of the field there was a huge stone fire pit. Although it was a
warm afternoon, the outbreak smoldered. One girl, about 9 years old, was holding the flames, digging through the coals with a stick. The two cabins at the head of the field, number one and two, resembled its mausoleum, large white marble boxes with heavy columns on the front. Cabin one is the largest and largest of the twelve. Its polished bronze doors were flattened like a
hologram, so from different angles the lightning seemed to rise above them. Cabin two was somehow more graceful, with thinner columns, garlands pomegranates and flowers. The walls are carved with images of peacocks. Zeus and Hera? - I guessed it. That's right, Chiron said. Their quarters look empty. There's a couple of cabins. - That's true. 1.1 km since 1999. Each hut had
a different god, like a mascot. Twelve cabins for the 12 Olympians. But why would some be empty? I stopped outside the first cabin on the left, cabin three. It wasn't as tall and powerful as hut one, but long and low and hard. The outer walls are made of coarse gray stone, wrapped in pieces of shells and corals, as if the slabs were cut straight from the bottom of the ocean floor. I
looked into the open door and Chiron said, Oh, I wouldn't! Before he pulled me, I felt the salty scent of the interior, like the wind on the coast in Montauk. The walls of the interior shone like an enthusiast. There were six empty beds with silk sheets. But there was no sign that anyone had ever slept there. The place felt so sad and lonely that I rejoiced when Chiron put his hand on
my shoulder and said, Come, Percy. Most of the other cabins were crowded with barbed wire. A stuffed head of a wild boar hung over the door, and his eyes seemed followed by me. Inside, I could see a few vicious children, both girls and boys,
struggling and arguing with each other as rock music crucified. The loudest girl was thirteen or fourteen. He was wearing a size XXXL CAMP with a half-shirt under a camouflage jacket. She squats at me and gives me an evil sonnier. She reminded me of Nancy Boboffit, although the camper was much bigger and harder to look, and her hair was long and tough, and brown instead
of red. I kept walking, trying to stay away from Chiron's hooves. We haven't seen any other centaurs, I've been watching. No, Chiron said sadly. My relatives are wild and barbaric people, I'm afraid. You can meet them in the desert or at major sporting events. But you won't see anyone here. - You said your name was Chiron. Are you really... He smiled at me. The chiron of the
stories? Hercules coach and all that? Yes, Percy, it's me. But shouldn't you be dead? Chiron paused, as if the question intrigued him. Honestly, I don't know about it. The truth is, I can't be dead. Before, the gods respected my desire... and I gave up a lot. But
I'm still here, so I can only accept that I'm still needed. I was thinking of becoming a teacher for 3,000 years. He wasn't going to make a list of my top 10 things. Isn't it ever boring? No, no, he said. Annabeth's waiting for us. * * The blonde I met in the Big House was
reading a book in front of the last cabin on the left, number eleven. When we got there, she looked at me critically, as if she was still thinking about how drooling I was. I tried to see what she had read, but I couldn't understand the title. I thought my dyslexia interfered. That's when I realized the title wasn't even English. My letters looked Greek. Literally Greek. There were paintings
of temples and statues and different types of columns, such as those in an architectural book. Anabet told Chiron, - I have a archery class at noon. Would you take Percy from here? Yes, sir. Hut eleven, Chiron said, connect to the door. Make yourself at home. Of all the cabins, eleven looked the most like the ordinary summer camp cabin, with an emphasis on the old one. The
evacuation center. Chiron didn't come in. The door was too low for him. But when the campers saw him, they all stood and bowed with respect. Then, Chiron said. Good luck, Percy. I'il see you at dinner. The galloper is headed for the range of archery. I was standing at the door, looking at the kids. They weren't bowing anymore. They were staring at me, sizing me up. I knew it. I'd
been through it in enough schools. Is he all right? Anabet invites. Go ahead, go ahead, so, of course, I tripped in the door and embarrassed myself completely. There were a few clothes down from the campers, but no one said anything. Percy Jackson, meet booth eleven. Plain or indeterminate? someone asked. I didn't know what to say, but Annabeth said, Indefinite. Everyone
was inglysing. A man who was a little older than the others came out. Now, now, campers. That's why we're here. Welcome, Percy. You might have this place on the floor right there. He was 19 and he looked really cool. He was tall and muscular, with short cropped hair and a friendly smile. She wore an orange tank top, cut-off sandals and a leather necklace with five clay beads
of different colors. The only thing uneasy about his appearance is a thick white scar that has burst from his right eye to his jaw, like an old knife. That's Luke, Annabeth said, and her expression Again. He's your counselor for now. For now? Asked. You are
undetermined, Luke explained patiently. They don't know which villa to put you in, so you're here. Booth Eleven takes all newcomers, all visitors. Of course, we would. Hermes, our patron, is the God of travelers. I looked at the small part of the floor they gave me. I had nothing to wear to mark it as mine, no luggage, no clothes, no sleeping bag. Just the horn of the Minotaver. I
thought we'd melt it down, but then I remembered that Hermes was also a god of thieves. I looked around in the faces of the campers, some santi and suspicious, some stupid brave, some looking at me like they were waiting for a chance to take my pockets. How long am I going to be here? Asked. Good question, Luke said. Until you melt. How long is this going to take?
Everyone camped laughing. Come on, Annabeth told me. I'il show you the volleyball court. I've already seen it. Come on, come on. She grabbed me by the wrist and dragged me outside. I heard the kids in the cabin laughing behind me. When we were a few feet away, Annabeth said, Jackson, you have to do something better than that. What? I can't believe you're the only one.
What's your problem? Now I'm angry. - Don't say that! Annabeth told me. Do you know how many kids in camp want to have your chance? To kill you? Let's fight the Minotaur, the same thing in history... Yes, yes. Then there's only one. Yes, yes. And he died before gigilion, didn't
he? Theseus killed him in the maze. So... Monsters don't die, Percy. They could be killed. But they don't die. Oh, thank you. That clears everything up. They don't have souls like you and me. You can distract them for a while, even for life, if you're lucky. But they are primitive forces. Chiron calls them archetypes. Eventually, they reform. On page 11, I thought of Mrs. Dodds. If I
killed one, by accident, with a sword – the fur ... Your math teacher. - yes, that's right. She's still there. You just her off very, very angry. How do you know about Mrs. Dodds? You're talking in your sleep. You almost called her something. Rage? They're Hades, aren't they? Annabeth looked nervously on the ground, as if expecting her to open up and take a look at her. You don't
have to call them by name, not even here. We call them the Miles, if we have to talk about them at all. Look, is there anything we can say without going off? He sounded whiny, even to himself, but that's when I didn't care. Why do I have to stay in booth eleven? Why is everyone crowded? There are a lot of empty beds right there. I pointed out a few cabins, and Annabeth pales.
You don't just choose a cabin, Percy. Depends on who your parents are. Or... your parents are. Or... your parent. She was looking at me and waiting for me to pick him up. My mother is Sally Jackson, I said. He works at the candy store at Grand Central Station. At least she was used to it. I'm sorry about your mother, Percy. But that's not what I mean. I'm talking about your other parent. Your father.
He's dead. I never knew Him. Annabeth sighed. Apparently, she had this conversation with other kids. Your father's not dead, Percy. How can you say that? You know him? No, of course not. Then how can you say — Because I know you. You wouldn't be here if you weren't one of us. You don't know anything about me. - No, no, no, no, no, no, she raised an eyebrow. I bet you moved
from school to school. I bet you got kicked out of a lot of them. How - Diagnosed with dyslexia. Probably ADHD, also. I tried to eat my shame. What does this have to do with this? Taken together, this is an almost certain sign. Letters take off from the page when you read, right? That's because your mind is hooked on ancient Greek. And ADHD - impulsive, can not stand still in the
classroom. These are your reflexes. In a real fight, they'il keep you alive. As for attention issues, that's because you see too much, Percy, not too little. Your senses are better than ordinary mortals. Of course teachers want you high. Most of the kids
here. If you weren't like us, you couldn't have survived the Minotaur, much less ambrosia and nectar. Ambrosia and nectar. The food and drink we give you to make you better. That would kill a normal child. If you'd gotten up, it would have turned into fire, your bones would be on sand and you'd be dead. Face it. You're half-blooded. Half blood. I had so many questions, I didn't
know where to start. Then a husky voice cried out: Well! A new man! I looked over there. The big girl from the ugly red cabin was holding on to us. She had three more girls behind her, big and ugly and mean like her, all wearing camouflage. Clarice sighed Annabeth. Why don't you polish your spear? Of course, Miss Princess, said the big girl. So I can tell you on Friday night. "Er
es Coracas' Anabet said that what I somehow understood was Greek for Go crows! although I felt like it was a worse curse than it sounded. You don't stand a chance. I'm going to get you dirty, Clarice said, but her gaze shook. Maybe she wasn't sure She could handle the threat. She turned to me. Who's that little guy? Percy Jackson, said Anabet, meet Clarice, Daughter of Ares. I
was blinking. As... god of war? they have shrunk. Do you have a problem with that? - No, I said, regaining my wits. That explains the bad smell. Clarice's in the air. We have a ceremony for the newies, Prissy. Percy. Come on, I'il show you. Clarissa, Annabeth tried to say. Stay out of it, wise man. Annabeth looked bad, but she didn't get in the way, and I didn't want to help her. I
was the new guy. I should have earned a reputation. I handed Annabeth my minotaver and prepared to fight, but before I knew it, Clarisse grabbed me by the neck and dragged me to a cinder block building that I knew immediately was the bathroom. I was kicking and punching. I've fought a lot of fights before, but a big girl, Claricy, had her hands like an iron. She dragged me into
the ladies' room. There was a line of toilets on one side and one line of showers down the other. It smelled just like any public bath, and I thought - no matter how much I thought one side and one side and one line of showers down the other. It smelled just like any public bath, and I thought one side and one line of showers down the other. It smelled just like any public bath, and I thought one side and one line of showers down the other. It smelled just like any public bath, and I thought one side and one line of showers down the other. It smelled just like any public bath, and I thought one side and one line of showers down the other. It smelled just like any public bath, and I thought one side and one line of showers down the other. It smelled just like any public bath, and I thought one side and one line of showers down the other. It smelled just like any public bath, and I thought one side and one line of showers down the other. It smelled just like any public bath, and I thought one side and one line of showers down the other. It smelled just like any public bath and I thought one side and one line of showers down the other. It smelled just like any public bath and I thought one side and one line of showers down the other. It smelled just like any public bath and I thought one side and one
fight the Minotaur, but it just wasn't there. It's like the Big Three, Clarice said as she pushed me into one of the toilets. Yes, that's right. A minotaur probably fell out of laughter, it looked so stupid. Her friends warmed up. Annabeth stood in the corner, looking through her fingers. Clarice bent me on my knees and started pushing me to the toilet bowl. It smelled like rusty pipes and,
well, like what goes into the toilets. I'm tense to keep my head up. I was looking at the water, thinking I wasn't going to do that. Then something happened. I felt a tug in the stomach. I heard the plumbing thunder, the pipes were shaking. Clarice's grip on my hair relaxed. The water shoots out of the toilet, makes a rainbow right over my head, and the
next thing I knew, it was stretched over the bathroom tiles with Clarice screaming behind me. I turned around just as the water drained from the toilet, hitting Clarice in the face so hard that he pushed her on her ass. She struggled, bit, and her friends began to come towards her. But the other toilets exploded, and six more streams of water blew them up. The showers also held,
and together all the bodies sprayed the girls from the toilet, pouring them like garbage that washed away. As soon as they were at the door, I felt the tug in my belly decrease and the wasn't pushed out of the door. She was standing in the same He stared at
me in shock. I looked down and realized I was sitting in the only dry place in the whole room. There was a circle of dry flooring around me. I didn't have a drop of water on my clothes. Nothing. I stood up, my legs trembled. Annabeth said: How are you... I don't know. We got to the door. Outside, Clarice and her friends were scattered in the mud, and several other campers
gathered to stare. Clarice's hair was flattened on her face. She looked at me in full. You're dead, new boy. You're completely dead. I probably should have left it, but I said: You want to gargle with water again, Clarice? Shut your mouth. Her friends kept her. They dragged her to the fifth cabin while the other campers walked away from her feet. I couldn't tell if she was just angry or
angry that she was disgusted. What? I asked. What are you thinking? I think, she said, I want you on my team to catch the flag. 7. MY DINNER GOES UP IN SMOKE The word of the bathroom incident spread immediately. Wherever I go, the campers beat me up and grumbled about toilet water. Or maybe they were watching Annabeth, which was still pretty wet. She showed me
a few more places: a metal shop (where children forged their own swords), the arts and crafts hall (where Satiri were sand, assembling a giant marble statue of a goat man), and the climbing wall, which actually consisted of two lined walls that shook violently, fallen stones, sprayed lava and collided if it did not get to the top fast enough. Finally, we returned to the canoe lake, where
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the path led to the cabins. I have to train, Annabeth said. Dinner's at 7:00. Just follow your quarters to the mess hall. Annabeth, I'm sorry about the toilets. It wasn't my fault. She looked at me skeptically, and I realized it was my fault. They gave me a water gun from the bathroom room. I didn't understand how. But the toilets answered. I had become one with the plumbing. You

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need to talk to the Oracle, Annabeth said. Who? Not who. What. Oracle. I'il ask Chiron. I was looking at the lake, wishing you for once to give me a clear answer. I didn't expect anyone to look at me from the bottom, so my heart skipped over when I noticed two teenage girls sitting on a cross at the base of the pier, about twenty feet below it. They wore blue jeans and shiny green
T-shirts, and their brown hair was worn over their shoulders as they pulled up and out. They smiled and waved as if I was a long-lost friend. I didn't know what else to do. I replied. Don't encourage them, warns Annabeth. The eat is a terrible flirtation. I repeat, I feel completely confused. I want to go home now. Anna frowned. Don't encourage them, warns Annabeth. The eat is a terrible flirtation. I repeat, I feel completely confused.
safe place on earth for kids like us. You mean mentally disturbed kids? I mean, not a man. He's not completely human, anyway. Half human and what? I think you do. I didn't want to admit it, but I was afraid I did. I felt numbness in my limbs, a sensation that was sometimes felt when my mother was talking about my father. God, I said. Demigod. Annabeth nodded. Your father's not
dead, Percy. He's one of the Olympics. It's... Crazy. Is that it? What is the most common thing the gods have done in old stories? They fell in love with people and had children with them. Do you think they've changed their habits over the past few millennia? But these are simple: I almost told myths again. Then I remembered Chiron's warning that in two thousand years, I might be
considered a myth. But if all the children here are half-bodied - demigds, says Annabeth. That's the official term. Or half-blooded. Then who's your father? Page 12 Her hands tightened around the railings of the pier. I feel like I've invaded a sensitive topic. My father is a professor at West Point, she said. I haven't seen him since I was very young. He teaches American history. He's
human. What? You're suggesting she must be a male god who finds a human woman attractive? How sexist is that? Then who's your mother? Sixth place. So? Annabeth said, as I told you before. No one knows. Except for my mother. She knew. Maybe
not, Percy. Gods don't always reveal their identity. My father would have. He loved her. Annabeth looked at me cautiously. He didn't want to burst my balloon. Maybe you're right. Maybe he'il send a sign. It's the only way to know for sure: your father should send you a sign that says you're his son. Sometimes it happens. Sometimes it's not? Annabeth was running along the railing.
The gods are busy. They have a lot of children and not always ... Sometimes they don't care about us, Percy. They're ignoring us. I was thinking of some of the kids I'd seen in Hermes' cabin, teenagers who looked sloppy and depressed, like they were waiting for a call that would never come. I knew such children at Yancey Academy, shuffled into boarding school by wealthy
parents who didn't have time to deal with them. But the gods need to behave better. So I'm stuck here, I said. Is that it? For the rest of your life? It depends, Annabeth said. Some campers stay only summer. If you're a child of Aphrodite or Demetra, you're probably not a real force. Monsters can ignore you so you can cope with a few months of summer training and live in mortal. for
the rest of the year. But for some of us, it's too dangerous to leave. We're all year round. In the mortal world, we attract monsters. They can feel us. They're coming to challenge us. Most of the time, they will ignore us until we are old enough to cause problems—about ten or eleven years old, but then most demigods will either travel here or be killed. Several manage to survive in
the outside world and become famous. Trust me, if I tell you the names, you'il know them. Some don't even realize they're deliberately loaded into the woods or specifically summoned by someone from within. Why would anyone want to summon a monster?
Practice battles. The jokes in practice. Jokes? The point is, the borders are sealed to keep mortals look into the outside, mortals look into the valley and see nothing out a leather necklace with five clay beads of different colors. It was like
Luke's, but annabeth also had a big gold ring, like a ring in college. I've been here seven years, she said. Every August, on the last day of the summer session, you get a survival ball for another year. I've been here longer than most counselors, and they're all in college. Why are you so young? She twisted the ring on her necklace. It's none of your business. I stood there for a
minute in an awkward silence. So... I can leave right now if I want to? It would be suicide, but you could, with the permission of Mr. Di or Chiron. But they would not give permission until the end of the summer session, except ... Unless? You were given a task. But i don't think that's going to happen. Most recent booking for this hotel was yesterday at 17:39 From her tone, I could
tell it didn't go well last time. Back in the hospital room, I said, when you give me this, Ambrosia. Yes, yes. You asked me something? Well... Not. At my old school, I heard Grör and Chiron talking about it. Grover mentioned the summer solstice. He said something? Well... Not. At my old school, I heard Grör and Chiron talking about it. Grover mentioned the summer solstice. He said something? Well...
because of the deadline. What does that mean? She clenched her fists. I wish I knew. Chiron and the satirists know, but they won't tell me. Something's wrong at Olympus? Some of us all year round – Luke, Clarice and I and several others – have taken a field journey
through the winter solstice. Then the gods have their own great annual advice. But... how did you get there? The Long Island Railroad, Get down to Penn Station. EmpireStateBuilding, a special elevator to the six hundredth floor. She looked at me like she was sure I should know that. You're the New Yorker, aren't you? Oh, of course. As far as I knew, there was only a one or two
storeys in EmpireStateBuilding, but I decided not to highlight it. As soon as we visited, Annabeth continued, the weather became strange, as if the gods had begun to fight. I've heard satir talk a few times since. The best I can understand is that something important has been stolen. And if he doesn't come back by the summer solstice, he'il be in trouble. When he came, I was
hoping... I mean, Atena can get along with anyone but Assy. And of course, she has a rivalry with Poseidon. But besides, I thought we could work together. I thought you might know something. I shook my head. I wish I could help her, but I felt too hungry and tired and mentally overwhelmed to ask more questions. I've got to find a job, Mr. Annabeth said of himself. I'm not too
young. If they're just going to tell me the problem ... It smells like barbecue smoke coming from somewhere nearby. Annabeth must have heard my stomach growling and hanging around waiting for dinner. For
the first time, I noticed that many of the campers have similar characteristics: sharp noses, inverted eyebrows, mischievous smiles. They were children who would get drunk as troublemakers. Luckily, no one paid much attention to me as I walked around in my seat on the floor and plundered my minotaur horn. . . . . . The counselor, Luke, is here. He also had a resemblance to
hermes' family. It was obscured by the scar on his right cheek, but his smile was intact. I found you a sleeping bag, he said. And here, I stole some toiletries from the camp store. I can't tell if he was joking about the theft. I said thank you. There's no trial. Luke sat next to me and pushed his back against the wall. Tough first day? I don't belong here, I said. I don't even believe in the
gods. Yes, he said. That's how we all started. Once you start believing in them? It doesn't get any easier. The bitterness in his voice surprised me because Luke seemed like a pretty easy guy. He looked like he could handle anything. So your father is Hermes? Asked. He pulled a knife out of his back pocket, and for a second I thought he was going to gut me, but he just scraped
the mud out of a sandal tear. Yes, yes. Hermes the man with the messenger wings. That's him. Messenger. Medicine. Passengers, merchants, thieves. Anyone who uses the roads. That's why you're here, enjoying the hospitality of eleven. is not looking at who is sponsoring. I thought Luke didn't want to call me anyone. He just had a lot in his head. Have you met your father?
Asked. Once. I waited, thinking if he wanted to tell me, he'd tell me. I wondered if the story had anything to do with how he got his scar. Luke looked up and managed to smile. Don't worry about it, Percy. The campers here are mostly good people. We're a family, aren't we? We take care of each other. I He seemed to understand how lost I felt, and I was grateful for that, because
an older man like him, even if he was a counselor, had to stray from an incoculing middle school like me. But Luke welcomes me to the cabin. He even stole some toiletries from me, which was the nicest thing anyone's ever done to me all day. I decided to ask him my last big question, the one that bothered me all afternoon. Clarissa of Ares joked that I was big three material. Then
Annabeth... You said twice that I might be the one. You said I needed to talk to the Oracle. What was all this about? Luke folded his knife. I hate prophecy. What do you mean? His face was untangled around the scar. Let's just say I messed things up for everyone else. The last two years since I traveled to Hesperides, Chiron hasn't allowed any more quests. Annabeth is dying to
get away. He had a prophecy from the Oracle. He didn't tell her everything, but he said Annabeth wasn't meant to go on a mission. He had to wait until... someone special came to the camp. Someone special? Don't worry, kid, Luke said. Annabeth wants to think that every new camper who comes here is the omen she's been waiting for. Come on, it's time for dinner. The moment
you said it, a horn exploded in the distance. I knew it was a shell, even though I'd never heard one. Luke shouted: Eleven, drop! The whole hut, about 20 of us, has been taken to the court of the municipalities. In order of seniority, of course I was last. The kemps also come from the other cabins, except for the three empty cabins at the end, and cabin eight, which seemed normal
during the day, but now begins to shine silver when the sun falls. We marched down the hill to the gazebo of the cane out of the woods, I mean straight out of the woods. I saw a girl, about nine or 10 years old, melted by maple trees and coming
to jump up the hill. In total, there were about 100 campers, a few dozen satirs and a dozen different tree nymfes and niad. On the pavilion, the burners shine around the marble A central fire burned in a bronze Brazilian bronze the size of a bathtub. Each cabin had its own table, covered with white fabric, trimmed in purple. Four of the tables were empty, but cabin eleven was
overflowing. I had to push myself to the edge of a bench, and half my ass was sticking out. I saw Grover sitting at table two small for a centaur. Page 13 Annabeth sat at table 6 with a group of serious-looking athletics, all with her grey eyes and
blonde hair. Clarice sat behind me at Ares' table. She was obviously overturned because she was laughing and spouting right past her friends. Everyone else raised their glasses. To the gods! Wood nymfi came up with the fabric with food: grapes, apples,
strawberries, cheese, fresh bread and yes, barbecue! My glass was empty, but Luke said: Talk to him. Whatever you want – soft drink, of course. I said cherry car. Soda turned a strong cobalt shade. I took a cautious sip. Perfect..... I had a toast to my mother. I told myself she
didn't go. Not permanently. She's in the Underworld. And if it's a real place, then one day... - Here, Percy, Luke said, handing me a smoked-breasted tether. I loaded my plate and was about to bite off when I noticed everyone was getting on, carrying their plates to the fire in the center of the pavilion. I was wondering if they were going for dessert or something. Come on, luke told
me. When I got closer, I saw that everyone was taking one portion of their food and putting it on fire, the most socio-tasty veal, the warmest, the butter most buttery roll. Luke was grumbling in my ear, Burnt Ansalions to the gods. They like the smell. You're joking. His gaze warned me not to take it lightly, but I couldn't help but wonder why the immortal,
almighty creature would like the smell of burning food. Luke approached the fire, sprained his head and threw himself into a bunch of red grapes. Hermes. I was next. I wish I knew what name God would say. Finally, I made a quiet request. Whoever you are, tell me. You're welcome. I scraped a big piece of breast into the flames. When I caught a smoke, I didn't gag. It didn't smell
like burning food. It smelled like hot chocolate and freshly baked cookies, grilled hamburgers and wildflowers, and a bunch of other nice things that shouldn't have gone well together, but they did. I almost believed the gods could live off that smoke. When everyone had returned to their seats and finished Chiron hit his hoof again for our attention. Mr. Di had a huge sigh. Yes, I
suppose I'd better say hello to all of your family. Well, hi. Our director of operations, Chiron, says the next flag shooting is on Friday. The fifth cabin is currently holding the laurels. A bunch of ugly cheerleaders at the Aros table. Personally, Mr. D continued, I don't care less, but congratulations. Also, I have to tell you, we have a new camper today. Peter Johnson. Chiron's
mumbling something. Er, Percy Jackson, corrects Mr. D. That's right. And all this. Now go to your stupid campfires. Go. Everyone was having fun. We all went down to the amphitheater, where apollo's cabin was led by song. We used to sing songs about the gods and eat more and joke, and the funny thing was, I didn't feel like anyone was staring at me. I felt like I was home. Later
in the evening, as the sparks of the campfire swirled in the starry sky, the horn exploded again, and we all returned to our quarters. I didn't realize how exhausted I was until I collapsed on my sleeping bag. My fingers are swivering around the minotaver's horn. I thought about my mother, but I had good thoughts: her smile, the bedtime stories she would read to me when I was a
child, the way she would tell me not to let bedbugs bite. When I closed my eyes, I fell asleep right away. It was my first day at the Krrq camp. I wish I knew how much I'd enjoy my new home for a while. 8. We catch a FLAG Over the next few days I settled into a routine that feels almost normal, if you do not count the fact that I receive lessons from satirs, nymfi and centaurs. Every
morning I would take ancient Greek from Annabeth and talk about the gods and goddesses in the present day, which was a little strange. I found that Annabeth was right about my dyslexia: ancient Greek was not so hard to read. At least no harder than English. After a few mornings, I could jump a few rows of Homer without too many headaches. For the rest of the day, I spin
outdoors, looking for something I'm good at. Chiron tried to teach me how to get on with it, but we realized I wasn't good with a bow and arrow. He wasn't complaining, even when he had to squeeze an arrow out of his tail. Football competitions? And it doesn't work. The instructors left me in the dust. They told me not to worry about it. They had many years of practice, fleeing the
sick gods. But still, it was a little humiliating to be slower than a tree. And a struggle? Forget it. Every time I got on the tepe, Clarice would look at me. There's more where she comes from, punk, she was whining in my ear. The only thing I really excelled at was the canoe, and it wasn't a heroic skill that people expected to see from the kid who beat the Minotaur. I knew that the
campers and counselors were looking at me, trying to decide who my father was, but it wasn't easy for them. I wasn't easy for them. I wasn't easy for them a better shooter like the Apollo kids. I had no Hephaestus skills with metalworking or - the gods forbid - Dionysus with vines. Luke told me I could be Hermes's child, kind of like a non-thrower, my lord of all. But I feel like he's trying to make
me feel better. He didn't know what to do with me either. Despite all this, I loved the camp. I got used to the morning of fog over the beach, the smell of hot strawberry fields in the afternoon, even the strange sounds of monsters in the forest at night. I'd have dinner with eleven huts, scrape some of my food into the fire and try to feel some connection with my real dad. Nothing
came. It's just a warm feeling I've always had as a memory of his smile. I tried not to think too much about my mother, but I kept wondering: if gods and monsters are real, if all these magical things are possible, there is certainly some way to save her to bring her back ........ I began to understand Luke's bitterness and how he seemed resentful of his father, Hermes. Maybe the
gods had important things to do. But can't they call every now and then, or thunder or something? Dionysus can cause the Diet Coke to emerge from the air. Why can't my father, whoever it was, turn up a phone? On Thursday afternoon, three days after I had arrived at the Camp of Blood, I received my first sword-fighting lesson. Everyone in the cabin gathered in the big round
arena where Luke was going to be an instructor. We started with a basic stabbing and stabbing using a few stuffed straw in the Greek armor. I guess I did a good job. At least I knew what I had to do and my reflexes were good. The problem was, I couldn't find a blade that felt right in my hands. Either they were heavy, or too light, or too long. Luke tried to fix me, but he agreed that
none of the training was working for me. We kept dueling in pairs. Luke told me he was going to be my partner, since this was my first time. Good luck, said one of the camper snorted. Luke showed me that shields are blocking the hard way. With every punch,
when he called for a break, I was soaked in sweat. They're all loose. Luke poured the ice water on his head, which seemed like a good idea, I did the same. I felt better right away. The force is back in my hands. Sword it felt so awkward. All right, everybody in the circle! Luke ordered. If if the I don't mind, I want to give you a little demo. Great, I thought. Let's all watch Percy get
soaked. Hermes' boys are back together. They suppressed the smiles. I thought they were in my place, and I couldn't wait to see Luke use me as a punching bag. He told everyone that he would demonstrate a technique of disarming: how to twist the enemy's blade with your flat sword so that he had no choice but to drop his weapon. That's difficult, he stressed. I used it against
me. Don't laugh at Percy now. Most swordsmen have to work for years to master this technique. He showed me the slow motion. My sword leaked out of my hand. Now in real time, he said after i had pulled out my gun. We will continue to fight until one of us does. I nodded and Luke chased me. Somehow, I kept him from shooting into my sword. My senses have opened. I saw
his attacks coming. I opposed it. I stepped forward and tried my own shot. Luke easily deflected it, but I saw a change in his face. His eyes narrowed, and he began to press me with more force. The sword is drawn in my hand. The balance wasn't right. I knew it was only a matter of seconds before Luke took me down, so I thought: I tried a disarming manoeuvre. My blade hit
that again! I didn't mean to. The short beam of maniacs left me. But Luke insisted. There was no competition this time. The moment our swords connected, Luke wiped the sweat off his forehead. He valued me with a whole new interest. Maybe, he
said. But I wonder what Percy could do with a balanced sword... Friday afternoon, I sat with Grover on the lake, resting from the near-death of the climbing wall. Grover had stained like a mountain goat, but the lava almost caught me. My shirt was smoked. The hairs were baked from the armpits. We were sitting in the dock, watching the Niyads get caught up in it until I cramped to
ask Grover how his conversation with Mr. Dee had taken place. His face turned yellow. All right, he said. So your career is still on the road? He looked at me nervously. Chiron told you I wanted a search warrant? Well... Not. I had no idea what a searcher's license was, but that's it. seems like a good time to ask. He just said you have big plans, you know... and that you need credit
to carry out the holder's task. So, did you get it? Page 14 Grover looked at the ness. Mr D stopped short of condemning. You said I didn't fail, so our fate was still tied. If you got a mission and I went to protect you, and we both came back alive, then maybe he'il accept that the work is done. My spirits have risen. It's not that bad, is it? Blah ha! He could have put me on guard in the
stable. The chances of getting a mission... and even if you did, why do you want me to be with you? Of course I'd like you to be with me! Grover stared into the water. Basket weaving ... It must be nice to have a useful skill. I tried to assure him he had a lot of talent, but that makes him look more miserable. We talked about gau-ka and sword, then discussed the pros and cons of
different gods. Finally, I asked him about the four empty cabins. Number eight, silver, belongs to Artemis, he said. She vowed to be a bachelorette forever. So, of course, no children. The cabin is honorary. If she didn't have one, she'd be mad. Yes, all right. But the other three, the ones at the end. Are these the Big Three? Greer Tennessee. We were close to one touch. Not. One
of them, number two, is Hera's, he said. That's another honorary thing. She's the goddess of marriage, so of course she wouldn't be around when she has relationships with mortals. When we say the Big Three, we mean the three strong brothers, the sons of Kronos. Zeus, Poseidon, Hades. Yes, that's right. You know what I mean? After the great battle with the Titans, they took
over the world from their father, and they drew a lot to decide who got what. Zeus got the sky, I remembered. Poseidon sea, Hades Underworld. Uh, uh. But Hades doesn't have a cabin here... Grover's shaking. Well, it wouldn't be pleasant. Let's just leave it at that.
But Zeus and Poseidon—they had bacilione children as in the myths. Why are their cabins empty? Grover shifted his hooves awkwardly. About sixty years ago, after World War II, the Big Three agreed that no more heroes would be sire. Their children were too strong. They affected human events too much, causing too much distraction. World War II, which was basically a
struggle between the sons of Zeus and Poseidon on one side, and hades' sons on the other. The victor, Zeus and Poseidon, made Hades swear with them: no more deeds with mortal women. They all swore on the Styx River. The thunder bolts... ...and the thunder bolts... ...and the thunder bolts...
face darkened. Seventeen years ago, Zeus fell off the wagon. There was a star with big fluffy hair from the Eighties - he just couldn't cope. When their child was born, the little girl named Talia .. . well, the Styx River is serious about promises. Zeus himself got away easily because he was immortal, but he brought a terrible fate to his daughter. But that's not fair. It wasn't the little
girl's fault. Grover hesitated. Percy, the children of Big Tree have powers bigger than other half-blooded ones. They have a strong aura, a fragrance that attracts monsters wash Talia. A Satyr was appointed her guardian when she was 12, but there was nothing she
could do. He tried to accompany her with several other half-blooded ones she befriended. They're almost cramping. They reach the top of the hill. He directed the valley to the pine forest, where I fought the minotaur. All three of them were after them, along with a horde of hellish hounds. They would have been taken when Talia told her satir to take the other two half-blooded to
safety while she was treating the monsters. She was hurt and tired, and she didn't want to live like a hunting animal. Satire didn't want to leave her, but she couldn't change her mind and had to protect others. So Talia made her last solo position at the top of the hill. While she was dying, Zeus felt sorry for her. He turned it into pine. Her spirit still helps protect the valley's borders.
That is why the hill is called half-blooded hill. In the distance, I watched the pine. History made me feel hollow and guilty. A girl I'm my age is sacrificing herself to save her friends. She was faced with an army of monsters. Besides, my victory over the Minotaver didn't seem like much. I was wondering if I acted differently, could I have saved my mother? Grover said, did the
Underworld. Not always. We're going undercover to a lot of schools. We're trying to smell the half-blooded who make great heroes. If we find someone with a strong aura, as a child of the Big Three, we'il warn Chiron. He tries to keep an eye on them as they can cause really huge problems. And you found me. Chiron said you thought I might be something special. Grover looked
like I was just taking him. Trap. I'm not... Don't think so. If you were, you'd never be allowed to happen, and I would never get my license. You're probably Hermes' child. Or maybe even one of the little gods, like Genesis, the god of vengeance. Don't worry, okay? I understand he was more self-ing than I was. The other night after dinner, there was a lot more excitement than usual.
Finally, it's time to capture the flag. When the plates were cleared, the horn of the horse sounded and we all stood at the tables. Campers screamed and applauded as Annabeth and two of her siblings got stuck in the pavilion, Clarisse and her
friends insed with another banner of the same size, but bare red, painted with a bloody spear and a boar head. I turned to Luke and shouted over the noise, These are the signs? Yes, yes. Araz and Atena always lead the teams? Not always, he said. But often. If another cabin captures one, what are you going to do-repaint the flag? He's uhing. You'il see. We have to get one first.
Whose side are we on? It seemed like he knew something I wasn't. The scar on his face made him look almost evil on the lantern. We've made a temporary alliance with Apollo and Hermes, the two largest cabins. Obviously, the privileges have
been traded – shower time, schedules, the best activity slots – to win support. Ares had contacted everyone else: Dionysus, Demetra's children were on edge with natural skills and things outdoors, but they were not very aggressive. Aphrodite's sons and
daughters weren't too worried. They mostly engaged in every activity, checked their reflection in the lake and did their hair and locks. Hephaestus's children weren't pretty, and there were only four of them, but they were big and messy from working in metalwork all day. They could be a problem. This, of course, left Ares's cabin: a dozen of the biggest, ugliest, most golded children
on Long Island or somewhere else on the planet. Chiron nailed his hoof to marble. Characters! he announced. You know the rules. The downs are the border line. The whole forest is fair game. All magical objects are allowed. The banner must be prominently displayed and have no more than two security guards. Prisoners can be disarmed, but they cannot be tied up or clogged.
No murder or mutilation is allowed. I'il serve as a judge and a combat medic. Arm yourself! He spread his arms, and the tables suddenly covered with helmets, bronze swords, spears, oxide shields covered with metal. Wow, I said. We really should use these? Luke looked at me like I was crazy. Unless you want to get stuck by your friends in the fifth cabin. Here, Chiron thought
they would fit. You'il be on Border Patrol. My shield was the size of an NBA scoreboard, with a big caddies in the middle. It weighed about a million pounds. I could have handled snowboarding, but I was hoping no one would expect me to run fast. My helmet, like all the helmets on atena's side, had a blue horse sheer sheer top. Ares and their allies had red plumes. Annabeth
shouted, Blue Team, forward! We shook our swords and followed her on the way to the southern forests. The red team was screaming at us as they headed north. I was able to catch up with Annabeth without running into my equipment. Hey, Locke, she kept marching. What's the plan? Asked. Do you have any magical items you can lend me? Her hand was looking up at her
pocket, like she was afraid I was going to steal something. Just watch Clarice's copy, she said. You don't want that thing touching you. Otherwise, don't worry. We'il get the banner from Aer. Did Luke give you the job? Border Patrol, whatever that means. Stay by the river, keep the red ones. Leave the rest to me. Athena always has a plan. She got in the way, leaving me in the
dust. Okay, I was whining. I'm glad you wanted me on your team. It was a warm, sticky night. The forest was dark, with fireflies that appeared and came out of sight. Annabeth scattered me to a small creek that scattered me to a small creek that appeared and came out of sight. Annabeth scattered me to a small creek that appeared and came out of sight. Annabeth scattered me to a small creek that scattered on rocks, then she and the rest of the team dispersed into the trees. I was standing there alone, with my big feather helmet and my huge shield, I felt like. The
bronze sword, like all the swords I've tried before, looks balanced. The leather handle pulled on my arm like a bowling ball. There was no way anyone was going to attack me, was there? Olympus had liability issues, didn't he? Far away, the horn is blowing. I heard kids getting into a fight. A blue Apollo ally ran me over like a deer, sneaked across the river and disappeared into
enemy territory. Great, I thought. I'm going to miss all the fun as usual. Then I heard a sound that melted my spine, a low canine growling, somewhere nearby. I raised the shield instinctively; I felt like something was haunting me. Then the growl stopped. I felt the presence receding. Page 15 on the other side of the stream, a flowing sliter explodes. The five Ayers warriors came
screaming and screaming from the dark. Kaipai punk! Clarice shouted. Her ugly pig eyes cascaded through the slits of her helmet. Her siblings only have the standard number. swords – not that it makes me feel better. They've loaded through the slits of her helmet. Her siblings only have the stream. There was no help. I can escape. Or I can protect myself from half the Åre Hut. I managed to jump over the kid's first swing, but
these guys weren't that stupid, the Minotaur. They surrounded me, and Clarice broke into me with their spear. My shield deflected the point, but I felt a painful tingling all over my body. My hair was at the end. My shield's numb, and the air's burning. Electricity. Her stupid copy was electric. I'm back. Another Ared hit me in the chest with the butt of his sword, and I hit the dirt. They
could have kicked me out in jelly, but they were too busy laughing. Cut it, Clarice said. I'm afraid of this man. I was really scared. The flag is that way, I said. I wanted to sound angry, but I was afraid i didn't.
But look, we don't care about the flag. We take care of a guy who made our cabin look stupid. You do it without my help, I told them. It probably wasn't the smartest thing to say. Two of them broke in. I stood up to the stream, tried to lift my shield, but Clarice was too fast. Her spear stuck me in the ribs. If I hadn't put on an armored breastplate, I'd be shish-ke-bald. Anyway, the
electric dot to get my teeth out of my mouth. One of her roommates cut her sword through my hand, leaving a nice size cut. When I see my own blood, I get dizzy — at the same time, it dizzys me and I landed with a splash. Everyone was laughing. I
figured if they had fun, I'd die. But then something happened. It was like I had a packet of my mother's jelly beans. Clarice and her roommates came into the creek, but I stood to meet them. I knew what to do. I put my sword in the head of the first one and ripped off his helmet. I hit him so hard I could see his eyes vibrating as they smashed into the water. Ugly Number Two and
Ugly Number Three broke in. I punched one in the face with my shield and used my sword to split from the rust to the other. They both linger fast. The ugly No.4 didn't seem too eager to attack, but Clarice kept getting closer, the point of her spear imbued with energy. As soon as she pounced, I grabbed the shaft between the edge of my shield and my sword, and broke it like a
twig. Ah! she was screaming. Such! You, you, the worm you breathe, you're alive! She probably would have said worse, but I got into a fight. between my eyes with a sword-ass and send her stumbling back from the stream. Then I heard screams, elated screams, and I saw Luke racing to the boundary line with the red team flag raised high. He was surrounded by several of
Hermes' boys covering his retreat, and several Apollos behind them, wrestling with hephaestus's children. Ares got up, and Clarice cursed a mystery. Trick! she cried. It was a trick. They swayed after Luke, but it was too late. Everyone was converging on the creek while Luke stumbled into friendly territory. Our country is in a state of dissweed. The red banner untangles and turned
to silver. The boars and spear were replaced by a huge cadus, a symbol of cabin eleven. Everyone on the blue team picked up Luke and started wearing it on their shoulders. Chiron dispersed out of the woods and blew the horn. The game's over. We had won. I was about to join the celebration when Annabeth's voice, right next to me in the stream, said No bad, hero. I looked,
but she wasn't there. Where the hell did you learn to fight like that? She asked. The air spilled and she materialized, holding a Yankee baseball cap as if she had just taken it from her head. I felt angry. I hadn't even been shocked by the fact that she was just invisible. You set me up, I said. You put me here because you knew Clarice was going to come after me until you sent Luke
gone. Where the huge cut was, there was a long white scratch, and even that was fading. As I watched, it turned into a small scar and disappeared. I don't understand, I said. Annabeth thought a lot. I almost saw them spin. Get out of the water, Percy. - Just do it. I came out of the stream and immediately felt a tired bone. My hands are numb again. The adrenaline left me. I almost
fell, but Annabeth loaded me. Styx cursed. That's not good. I didn't mean to... I assumed it would be Zeus... Before I asked what he meant, I heard the canine growling again, but much closer than before. And how he cut himself out of the woods. The applause of the campers died on the spot. Chiron shouted something in ancient Greek that I would understand, but later I
understood perfectly: Stand! My bow! Annabeth pulled out her sword. There on the rocks just above us was a black hound the size of a rhino, with lavo-red eyes and teeth like daggers. he was looking right at me. No one was moving except Annabeth, who cried out, Percy, run! She tried to get wild in front of me, but the hound was too fast. She jumped over her - a huge shadow
with her teeth - and just as she hit me as I stumbled backwards and felt his sharp claws ripping through my bumper, there was a helmet of noises, like forty pieces of paper torn one after the other. From the hounds door sprouted a group of arrows. The monster fell dead at my feet. Miraculously, I was still alive. I didn't want to look under the ruins of my torn armor. My breasts felt
warm and wet and I knew I was badly cut off. One more second and the monster would turn me into 100 kilos of delicatessen meat. Chiron hovers next to us, a bow in his hand, his face gloomy. Di Immortals! Anabet said. It's hell from the penalty box. They don't... they do not have to ... Someone called him, Chiron said. Someone in the camp. He came, the flag in his hand
forgotten, and the moment of his glory disappeared. Clarice shouted: It's all Percy's fault! Percy summoned him! Shut up, child, Chiron told her. We watched the greyhound's body melt in the shade, soaked in the ground until it disappeared. You're hurt, Annabeth said. Quick, Percy, get in the water. I am good. No, you didn't, she said. Chiron, watch this. I was too tired to argue. I
stepped into the river, the whole camp that was gathering around me. I felt better right away. I could feel the cuts on my chest closing. Some of the campers have spilled out. Look, I don't know why, I said, trying to apologize. I am sorry... But they didn't watch my wounds heal. They were looking at something above my head. Percy said, pointing out. Um... When I looked up, the
sign was already fading, but I could still erase the hologram of the green light, the rotation and the glow. Trident. Your father mur tweeted anabet. That's really not good. It definitely is, Chiron said. Everyone around me, the campers started kneeling, even Ars's cabin, though they didn't seem happy about it. My father? I asked, completely damaged. Poseidon, Chiron said. Earth
landowner, Stormbig, Father of horses. City, Perseus Jackson, Son of the Sea God. 9. I PROPOSED QUEST the next morning, Chiron moved me to a third hut. I shouldn't have to sit at my dinner table, choose all my activities, call out every time I feel like I
want it, and I don't listen to anyone else. And I was absolutely unhappy. Just when I started to feel accepted, feeling like I had a home in a shack eleven and maybe I was a normal child - or as normal as you are when you're half-blooded - I was separated. it's like I have rare diseases. No one mentioned the hound, but I feel like everyone's talking about it behind my back. The
attack scared everyone. He sent two messages: one that I was the son of the Sea God; and secondly, the monsters would stop at nothing to kill me. They can even invade a camp that was always considered safe. The other campers strayed from me as much as possible. 11 was too nervous to pick me up after what I did to the people of Are in the woods, so my lessons with Luke
turned into one-on-one. He pushed me harder than ever and wasn't afraid to hurt me. You're going to need all the training you can get, he promised, as we worked with swords and flaming torches. Now let's try to repeat this viper. 50 more repetitions. Annabeth still taught me Greek in the morning, but she seemed distracted. Every time I say something, she frowns at me like I'm
just trampling her between my eyes. After the lessons, she would leave to grumble: Aspiration... Poseidon? ... Dirty dirty ... I have to make a plan ... Even Clarissa didn't go far, although her poisonous gaze makes it clear that she wants to kill me for breaking her magic spear. I wish he could hit me or hit me. I'd rather fight every day than be ignored. I knew someone in the camp
resented me because one night I walked into my cabin and found a death newspaper that fell into the door, a copy of the New York Daily News, open to Metro's page. The article took me almost an hour because the more angry that they swirled around the page. A BOY AND A MOTHER ARE STILL MISSING AFTER EILEEN SMYTHE CRASH SALLY JACKSON and his son Percy
are still missing a week after their mysterious disappearance. The family was badly burned in '78 last Saturday on a road north of Long Island with a roof ripped off and the front bridge broken. The car flipped over and s curled up a few hundred yards before it exploded. Page 16 Mother and son went on a weekend vacation in Montauk, but bent over under mysterious
circumstances. Small traces of blood were found in the car and near the crash site, but there were no other signs of missing Jackson, Percy Jackson, had betrayed a child who had been kicked out of multiple boarding schools and had
expressed abuse in the past. Police would not say whether son Percy was a suspect in his mother's disappearance, but they did not rule out foul play. Below are the latest photos of Sally Jackson and Percy. Police are urging anyone with information to call the following free crime lines. The phone number is enclosed in black I waved the paper and threw it away, then splashed in
my bed in the middle of my empty cabin. Turn off the lights, I told myself terribly. Tonight, I had my worst dream. I ran along the beach in a storm. There was a town behind me this time. Not in New York. It is stretched differently: buildings spread farther, palm trees and low hills in the distance. About 100 meters down the surf, two men fought. They looked like TV wrestlers,
muscular, with beards and long hair. Both wore flowing Greek tunics, one in blue and the other in green. They grabbed each other, wrestled, kicked and kicked the head, and every time they connected, lightning flashes, the sky gets darker and the wind rises. I had to stop them. I didn't know why. But the harder I ran, the more the wind blew me away as I ran on the spot, my shoes
digging uselessly in the sand. After the roar of the storm, I heard the blue robe screaming at the green slave, give it back! Give it back to me! Like a milgarth fighting for a toy. The waves grew, hit the beach, sprayed me with salt. I was screaming, stop! Stop fighting! The earth shook. Laughter came from somewhere underground, and a voice so deep and evil that it turned my blood
into ice. Get down there, little hero, the voice was in vain. Scroll! The sand burst beneath me, opening a crack right next to the center of the earth. My legs slipped and the darkness swallowed me up. I was definitely falling. I was violent. I never
dreamed of it. I heard a noise on the door, a hoof on the doorstep. Go in? The rodent's in there, he looks worried. Mr. D wants to see you. Why? He wants to kill... I'd better let him tell you. Nervously, I dressed up and followed him, I'm sure I'm in big trouble. For days, I've been expecting to call the Big House. Now that I had been declared the son of Poseidon, one of the big three
gods who should not have children, I decided it was a crime for me just to be alive. The other gods probably discussed the best way to punish me for the existing one, and now Mr. D was ready to deliver his verdict. Over Long Island Sound, the sky looked like an ink soup that boiled. In our direction came a blurred curtain of rain. I asked Grover if we needed an umbrella. No, he
said. It never rains here unless we want it. I'm headed for the storm. What the hell is this? He looked untenable into the sky. It's going to go around us. Bad weather always does. I understand he's right. During the week I was here, it was never cloudy. The few rain clouds I'd seen had scratched around the edges of the valley. But this storm ... This one was huge. In the volleyball
pit, From the Apollo quarters, they played a morning game against satirs. Dionysus's twins walk along strawberry fields, making plants grow. Everyone was doing their job, but they seemed tense. They kept their eyes on the storm. Grover and I went to the porch of the Big House. Dionysus sat at the pinot singa mass in his Hawaiian diet coke shirt, just like it was on my first day.
Chiron sat at the table in his fake wheelchair. They played against invisible opponents - two groups of cards that rotate in the air. Well, well, Mr. Dee said, without looking up. Our little celebrity. Waited....... Come closer, Mr. D said. And don't expect me to bow to you, mortal, just because old Barnacle-Beard is your father. There was lightning through the clouds. Bolt slammed the
windows of the house. Blah, bl
camp: to keep your little bastards safe from evil. Self-ignition is a kind of harm, Mr. D. The boy would not feel anything. However, I agreed to refrain from thinking of turning you into a dolphin instead of looking back at your father. Mr. D, Chiron said. All right, he was throwing up Dionysus. There's another option. But this is deadly nonsense. Dionysus rose, and the invisible players
fell to the table. I'm going to Olympus for the emergency meeting. If the boy's still here when I get back, I'il turn it into an Atlantic bottle. Do you understand? And Perseus Jackson, if you're smart, you'il see that this is a much more sensible choice than what Chiron thinks you should do. Dionysus took a play card, twisted it and it turned into a plastic rectangle. Credit card? Not.
Security lapses. He broke his fingers. The air seemed to fold and bend around it. It became a hologram, then wind, then disappeared, leaving only the smell of freshly pressed grapes behind which it lingers. Chiron smiled at me, but he seemed tired and tense. Sit down, Percy, please. And Grover. Chiron put his cards on the table, a winning hand he hadn't used. Tell me, Percy, he
said. What have you done for the hound of hell? Just hearing the name made me shudder. Chiron probably meant, Heck, it's nothing. I eat hounds for breakfast. But I didn't want to lie. That scared me, I said. If you hadn't fired, I'd be dead. You'il meet even worse, Percy. Much worse before you're done. Fait... with what? Your search, of course. Can you This? I looked at a grover
crossing his fingers. Sir, I said, you haven't told me what it is yet. Well, that's the hard part, the details. Thunder crossed the valley. The storms had now reached the edge of the beach. As far as I can see, the sky and the sea sing together. Poseidon and Zeus, I said. They're fighting for something of value ... something that was stolen, wasn't it?. Chiron and Grover are exchanging
looks. Chiron sat in his wheelchair. How do you know that? My face got hot. I wish I hadn't opened my big mouth. The weather after Christmas is strange, as the sea and the sky struggle. Then I talked to Annabeth, and she heard something about theft. And... I had those dreams, too. I knew it, Grover said. Quiet, Satyr, command Chiron. But that's his search! Grover's eyes were
bright with excitement. It has to be! Only Oracle can determine. Chiron stroked his beard. However, Percy, you're right. Your father and Zeus have been fighting for centuries. They're fighting for something of value that's been stolen. To be precise: lightning. I laughed nervously. What? Don't take it lightly, Chiron warned. I'm not talking about some zigzag-covered zigzag you'il see
in a second-grade play. I'm talking about a two-metre cylinder of high-quality celestial bronze, with a ceiling at both ends with explosives at the god level. Oh, that's it, Zeus's main bolt, Chiron said, now hardened. The symbol of its power, from which all other lightning bolts are patterned. The first weapon made by the Cyclops for the war against the Titans, the bolt that cut off the
top of Mount Etna and pushed Kronos from his throne; the main bolt, which has enough power to make mortal hydrogen bombs look like fireboks. And it's missing? Stolen, Chiron raised his hand—that's what Zeus thinks. During the winter solstice, on the
last council of the gods, Zeus and Poseidon argued. The usual nonsense: Mother Rhea always liked you best, air disasters are more spectacular than sea disasters, etc. He blamed poseidon. Now, God cannot directly legitimize another symbol of the power of another god—which is forbidden by the most ancient divine laws. But Zeus believes your father convinced a human hero
to take him. But I didn't - Patience and listen, child, says Chiron. Zeus has good reason to be suspicious. The haloes of the Cyclops are under the ocean, which influences Poseidon on his brother's creators. Zeus from his throne. Zeus wasn't
sure which character he stole the lightning for. Now Poseidon has declared you his son. You were in New York during the winter holidays. It's easy to sneak into Olympus. Zeus believes he has found his thief. But I've never been to Olympus! Zeus is crazy! Chiron and Grover looked nervously into the sky. The clouds don't seem to split around us, as Grover promised. They rolled
straight through the valley, sealing us like a coffin cover. Ersy... Grover said. We don't use the word c to describe the Lord in Heaven. Maybe paranoid, Chiron suggested. Then Poseidon tried to cut Zeus off before. I think that was the question at 38 on your final exam. He looked at me as if he was actually waiting to remember the question 38. How can anyone accuse me of
stealing God's weapon? I couldn't even steal a slice of pizza from Gabe's poker party without being arrested. Chiron was waiting for an answer. Anything on a gold net? - I guessed it. Poseidon and Hera and several other gods ... they, like, caught Zeus and did not let him go until he promised to be a better ruler, right? That's right, Chiron said. And Zeus has never trusted Poseidon
since. Of course, Poseidon denies stealing the main bolt. He was offended by the accusation. The two are arguing about war. And now, you have come—the saying last straw. Page 17 But I'm just a child! Percy, he's broken, if you're Zeus, and you already thought your brother was planning to take you down, then your brother suddenly confessed that he had broken the sacred
oath he took after World War II, that he was the father of a new mortal hero who could be used as a weapon against you... Wouldn't that solidify your toga? But I didn't do anything. Poseidon— my father — he didn't steal this master bolt, did he? Chiron sighed. Most thinking observers would agree that the thefts are not Poseidon's style. But the Sea God is too proud to try to
convince Zeus of this. Zeus asked Poseidon to return the lightning to the summer solstice. This is June 2 first, in 10 days. Poseidon wants an apology for being called a thief on the same date. I hoped that diplomacy would prevail, that Hera or Demetra or Demetra or Hestia would make the two brothers see meaning. But your arrival has stirred up Zeus' character. Now God won't back down. If
someone doesn't intervene, if the main bolt is not found and returns to Zeus before the solstice, there will be war. And do you know what a full-fledged war would look like, Percy? Is it bad? - I guessed it. Imagine the world in chaos. Nature is at war with itself. Olympians forced to choose sides Zeus and Poseidon. Destruction. Carnage. Millions dead. Western civilization has
become a battlefield so big that it will make the Trojan War look like a water balloon battle. Bad, I kept saying. And you, Percy Jackson, will be the first to feel Zeus' wrath. It's starting to rain. Volleyball players stopped their game and stared in stunned silence in the sky. I had brought this storm to Hal-bl. Zeus punished the whole camp for me. I was furious. So I have to find the
stupid bolt, I said. And return it to Zeus. What better offer of peace, Chiron said, than for the son of Poseidon to return the estate to Zeus? If Poseidon doesn't, where's the job? I believe I do. Chiron's expression was bleak. Part of a prophecy I had years ago ... some of the lines make sense to me. But before I can say more, you have to officially take on the task. You should seek
the oracle's advice. Why don't you tell me where the bolt is in advance? Because if I did, you'd be afraid to accept the challenge. I took a drink. That's a good reason. Do you agree? I looked at Grover, who nodded encouragingly. I was the one Zeus wanted to kill. Okay, I said. It's better than turning into a dolphin. Then it's time to consult the Oracle, Chiron said. Go upstairs, Percy
Jackson, in the attic. When you go back down, assuming you're still normal, we'il talk more. Four stories up, the stairs ended up under the green door. I pulled the cord. The door shrunk and a wooden ladder rose in place. The warm air on top smelled like mold and bad wood and something else ... smell I remembered from biology class. The smell of snakes. I climbed my breath
and climbed. The ceiling is filled with Greek hero junk: armored racks covered with cobwebs; once bright shields wrapped in rust; old leather steamer stumps plastered with pickled things - severed hairy nails, huge yellow eyes, various other parts of monsters. The
dusty trophy on the wall looked like a giant snake, but with horns and a full set of shark teeth. The sign read, HYDRA HEAD #1, WOODSTOCK, N.Y., 1969. By the window, sitting on a wooden triptad seat, was the most terrifying of them all: a mummy. Not from the wrapped in clothes, but the human body shrinks to a shell. She wore a dyed summer dress, lots of necklaces and a
headband over long black hair. The skin on her face was thin and tough on the skull, and her eyes had white slits, as if real eyes had been replaced by marble; She's been dead a long, long time. Watching her run me down. And that was before I sat in the chair and opened my mouth. Green mist poured out of the mummy's mouth, over the floor in dense terriers, clapping like
twenty thousand snakes. I ran into myself trying to get to the bonnet, but she slammed herself. In my head, I heard a voice clapping in one ear and curling around my brain: I am the spirit of Delphi, a spokesman for the prophecies of Feibus Apollo, the assassin of the mighty Python. Come closer, look and ask. I mean, no thanks, wrong door, I was just looking for the bathroom. But
I forced myself to take a deep breath. The mummy wasn't alive. She was some terrifying vessel for something else, the power that now revolves around me in the green mist. But his presence didn't feel like evil, like my math teacher Mrs. Dodds or the Minotaver. I felt more like the three Fates I had seen knitting the yarn outside the fruit stand on the highway: ancient, powerful and
definitely not human. But I'm not really interested in killing me. What's my destiny? The fog spun more tightly, collecting right in front of me and around the table with the jars of jars for monstrous. Suddenly, four men playing cards sat at the table. Their faces are clear. It was Smelly Gabe and his friends. My fists spilled, even though I knew this poker party couldn't be real. It was an
illusion made of fog. Gabe turned to me and spoke in the racial voice of the Oracle: You will go west and face a god who has turned. His friend on the left threw two poker chips, then said, You're going to be betrayed by someone who called you a friend
Finally, Eddie, our super-builder, brought us the worst line: And in the end, you're going to fail to save the most important thing. The numbers began to dissolve. At first I was too stunned to say anything, but when the fog retreated, winded into a huge green snake and retreated into the mummy's mouth, I cried out: Wait! What do you mean? - What friend? What can't I save? The
snake's tail disappeared into the mummy's mouth. She leaned against the wall. Her mouth is closed like it hasn't been opened in 100 years. The ceiling was silent again, abandoned, just a room full of mollusks. I feel like I can stay here until I have cobwebs, and I wouldn't learn anything else. My audience with the Oracle is over. Is he all right? Chiron asked me. At the pinochley
table. She said I'd take what was stolen. Grover sat forward, chewing on the remains of a diet coke with an excited look. That's great! What exactly did the Oracle say? Chiron's under pressure. That's important. My ears still shuddered from the reptile. It... she said I would go west and face a God who had turned. I'il get what was stolen and see it safely returned. said Grover. . . . . .
Chiron didn't seem pleased. Anything else? I didn't want to tell him. What friend would betray me? I didn't have that much. And the last line — I will not save the most important thing. What Oracle will send me on a mission and tell me, Oh, by the way, will fail How can I admit this? No, I said. That's all. He studied my face. Very good, Percy. But know this: the words of the Oracle
often have a double meaning. Don't think about it too much. The truth is not always clear until events come true.1 I feel like he knew I was hiding something bad and trying to make me feel better. All right, I said, eager to change the themes. So, where do I go? Who is this God in the west? Oh, think, Percy, Chiron said. If Zeus and Poseidon weaken each other in war, who will win?
Anyone else who wants to take over? - I guessed it. Yes, quite. Someone who had been unhappy since the world was divided centuries ago, whose kingdom will become more powerful with the death of millions. Someone who hates his brothers because he forces him to swear not to have any more children, an oath they have both already broken.1 I was
thinking about my dreams, about the evil voice that had come out of the earth. Hades. Chiron nodded. The Lord of the Dead is the only option. A piece of aluminum came out of Grover's mouth. Wait, wa
furies obey only one Lord: Hades. Yes, but Hades hates all the characters, Grover protests. Especially if he found out percy was poseidon's son... The hound of hell has entered the forest, Chiron continued. They can only be called from the fields of judgment, and it must be summoned by someone within the camp. Hades must have a spy here. He must suspect poseidon will use
Percy to clear his name. Hades would very much like to kill this young half-blooded before he embarks on the search. Great, I broke in. These are two great gods who want to kill me. But aspiration striving for ... Grover's swallowed. Can't the bolt be somewhere like Maine? Maine is very good at this time of year. Hades sent a pet to steal the main bolt, Chiron insisted. He hid it in
the Underworld, knowing full well that Zeus would blame Poseidon. I'm not pretending to properly understand the motives of the Lord of the Dead, or why he chose this time to start a war, but one thing's for sure. Percy has to go to the Underworld, find the main bolt and uncover the truth. The burned fire in my stomach. The strangest thing was: it wasn't fear. It was an expectation
The desire for revenge. Hades has tried to kill me three times so far with Fury, the Minotaur and the hound. It was his fault, my mother didn't commit. I was ready to take it. Besides, if my mother was in the Underworld... Little said the little part of my brain that's still normal. You're
a child. Hades is a god. Grover's shaking. He started eating cards like chips. The poor man had to finish a mission with me so he could get his seeker license, whatever, but how can I ask him to do this search, especially when the Oracle says he's meant to fail? That was suicide. Look, if we know it's Hades, I told Chiron, why can't we just tell the other gods? Zeus or Poseidon can
go down into the Underworld and touch a few heads. The suspects and those known are not the same, Chiron said. Moreover, even if the other gods suspect Hades— and I imagine Poseidon does— they themselves cannot regain the bolt. The gods cannot cross their territories except by invitation. It's another ancient rule. On the other hand, heroes have certain privileges. They
can go anywhere, challenge anyone, as long as they are brave enough and strong enough to do so. No god can be held responsible for the hero's actions. Why do you think the gods always act through men? Page 18 You say they're using me. I'm saying it's no coincidence that Poseidon took you away. It's risky, but it's in a desperate position. He needs you. My father needs me.
Emotions rolled at me like a piece of glass in a kaleidoscope. I didn't know whether to feel dissatisfied, grateful or happy or angry. Poseidon ignored me for 12 years. Now all of a sudden he needed me. I looked at Chiron. You knew I was poseidon's son, didn't you? I had my suspicions. Like I said... I also talked to the Oracle. I feel like he didn't tell me about his prophecy, but I
decided I couldn't worry about it now. After all, I kept information, too. Let me get this straight, I said. I must go to the Underworld and face the Lord of the Dead. Shah, Chiron said. Find the most powerful weapon in the universe. Yes, yes, and take it to Olympus before the summer solstice, in 10 days. That's right. I was watching Grover swallow an ace of hearts. Did I mention that
serious about wanting me, I won't disappoint you. I felt so relieved that I wanted to cry, even though I didn't think it would be very heroic. Grover was the only friend I ever had. more than a few months. I wasn't sure what a satyr would do against the forces of the dead, but I felt better knowing he'd be with me. To the end, G-man. I turned to Chiron. So, where are we going? The
Oracle just said to go west. The entrance to the Underworld is always to the west. It moves from age to age, just like Olympus. He's in America right now, of course. Where? Chiron seemed surprised. I thought that would be obvious enough. The entrance to the Underworld is in Los Angeles. Oh, I said. Naturally. - No! Grimmer's a slobber. Percy, what are you thinking? Have you
ever been on a plane in your life? I shake my head, I feel ashamed. My mother never cheated on me on a plane. He always said we didn't have any money. Besides, her parents died in a plane crash. Percy, think about it, Chiron said. You are the son of the Sea God. Your father's fiercest rival is Zeus, the Lord of Heaven. Your mother knew she didn't trust you on a plane. You will
be the domain of Zeus. You'il never come down alive again. Overhead, lightning broke. Thunder blossomed. All right, I said, determined not to watch the storm. So, I'm going to travel by land. That's right, Chiron said. Two companions may accompany you. Grover's one thing. I said I'd be surprised. Who else would be stupid enough to show up for such a journey? The air has
darkened behind Chiron. Annabeth vawned as she stuffed the Yankees hat into her back pocket, I've been waiting a long time for a search, a sea brain, she said. I assume you have a plan, wise girl? Do you want my help or not? The truth
was, I did. I needed help. Trio, I said. This is going to work. Excellent, Chiron said. This afternoon, we can take you to the bus station in Manhattan. After that, you're alone. The flash is flashed. Rain poured down on the meadows, which were not supposed to have stormy weather. There's no time to waste, Chiron said. I think you should get back together. 10. I spoil a perfectly
good bus Did not take me long to pack. I decided to leave the minotaur in my cabin, which left me with only one extra change of clothes and a toothbrush to stuff myself in Grover's backpack. My camp borrowed $100 in death money and 20 gold drachmas. These coins are as large as girl scout cookies and there were images of different Greek gods stamped on one side and
EmpireStateBuilding on the other. The ancient mortal drachmas were silver, Ni said, but the Olympians never used less than pure gold. Chiron said the coins could be useful for transactions – no matter what that means. He gave Annabeth and me every maner nectar and Ziploc bag full of ambrosia, so that it could only be used in emergencies if we were seriously injured. It was
god's food, Chiron reminded us. It will heal us from almost any trauma, but deadly to mortals. Too much of it would make a half-blooded one very, very feverish. An overdose will burn us, literally. Annabeth wore her magic Yankee hat, which she told me was a gift for her mother's twelfth birthday. I was sure the knife would crack us the first time we went through a metal detector.
Grover wore his fake legs and his pants are like humans. He was wearing a green rasta-style hat because when it rained curly hair flattened you could see the tips of his horns. His pocket was a set of reeds that his goat father carved for him, even though he knew only two songs: Mozart's Piano
Concerto No. 12 and Hilary Duff's Yesterday, both of which sounded pretty bad with the pipes. We waved goodbye to the tall pine, which was Talia, daughter of Zeus. Chiron was waiting for us in his wheelchair. Next to him stood the surfer I saw as I
was recovering in the hospital. According to Grover, the man was the camp's head of security. He had eyes all over his body, so he wouldn't be surprised. Today, however, he was wearing a driver's uniform, so I could only see extra peeks on his hands, face and neck. It's Argus, Mr. Chiron said. He'il take you to town, and all right, he'il keep an eye on things. I heard footsteps
behind us. Luke went up the hill wearing a pair of basketball shoes. Hey! he's running. I'm glad I caught you. Annabeth blushed, as always when Luke was around. I just wanted to wish you luck,' Luke said: 'The wings of the white bird swore from the heels,
it scared me so much that I dropped them. The shoes spilled to the ground until the wings folded and disappeared. It's a great place! Grover said. Luke smiled. They served me well when I was on my quest. A gift from Dad. Of course, I don't use them very much these days... His face got sad. I didn't know what to say. It was cool enough that Luke came to say goodbye. I was
afraid he might obsess me, that I've attracted so much attention over the last few days. But here he gave me a magical gift... It made me feel good. almost as much as Annabeth. Hey, man, I said. Thanks for thanking you. Listen, Percy... Luke seemed uncomfortable. There's a lot of hope on you. So just ... kill some monsters for me, right? We shook hands. Luke sank his head
between his horns, then hugged for annabeth's farewell, which seemed like he might pass out. After Luke left, I told her, You're hyperventilation. I didn't. You let him capture the flag for you, didn't you? Oh, no, no, no, why do I want to go somewhere with you, Percy? She stepped across the hill, where a white SUV was waiting on the shoulder of the road. Argus followed him by
throwing away his car keys. I took the flying shoes, and suddenly I felt bad. I looked at Chiron. I'm not going to be able to use them, am I? He shook his head. Luke had a good mind, Percy. But to broadcast ... who shall not be wise to you.13 I nodded, disappointed, but then I got an idea. Hello, Grover. You want a magic dot? His eyes lit up. Me? Very soon we had the sneakers on
his artificial legs, and the first flying goat boy in the world was ready to launch. Yeast! he cried. He ground, but fell to the side to drag himself into the grass. The wings were wooded up and down like little Broncos. Train, call Chiron after him. You just need practice! Ah, aaaa! Grover flies sideways down the hill as a lawnmower owner headed for the van. Before I could
follow you, Chiron grabbed my hand. I should have coached you better, Percy, he said. If only I had more time. Hercules, Jason, they all received more training. That's good. I just wish I could stop because I'd sound like a kid. I was hoping my father would have given me something to help me find something as good as Luke's flying shoes or Annabeth's invisible hat. What am I
thinking? Chiron cried. I can't let you get away without this. He pulled a pen out of his coat pocket and handed it to me. It was a simple disposable pen, black ink, removable cap. It's probably 30 cents. God! - I said so. Thanks for thanking you. Percy, this is a gift from your father. I've been protecting him for years, not knowing you're the one I've been waiting for. But my prophecy is
clear now. You're the only one. I remembered the trip to the Art Museum when I vaporized Mrs. Dodds. Chiron gave me a pen that turned into a sword. Could it be...? I took off the cap and the pen became longer and heavier in my hand. For half a second, I held a bronze sword with a double-edged knife, a leather handle and a flat duvet with gold studs. It was the first weapon that
actually felt balanced in my hand. The sword has a long and tragic history that we shouldn't go into, Chiron said: Anacosmos. Riptide, I translated, surprised ancient Greek came so easily. Use it only for Chiron said: and only against monsters. No hero should hurt mortals unless absolutely necessary, of course, but this sword will not harm them in any case. I looked at
the sharp knife. What do you mean, it won't hurt mortals? How can it not be? The sword is a heavenly bronze. Forged by the Cyclops, tempered in the heart of Mount Etna, cooled in the River Lette. It's deadly for monsters, for every creature in the Underworld, provided they don't kill you first. But the blade will pass through mortals as an illusion. They're just not important enough
for the knife to kill. And I must warn you: as a demi-god, you may be killed by celestial or normal weapons. You're twice as vulnerable. Page 19 All right, I know. Now ask the pen. I touched the pen cap to the top of the sword, and immediately Riptide curled up to a pen again. I put it in my pocket, a little nervous, because I was famous for losing pens at school. You can't, Chiron
said. What can't you do? Remove the pen, he said. He's fascinated. It will always reappear in your pocket. Try it. I was cautious, but I threw the pen as much as I could down the hill and watched it disappear into the grass. It may take a while, Chiron said. Now check your pocket. Of course, the pen was there. Okay, that's extremely cool, I confessed. What if a mortal sees me pull
out a sword? Chiron smiled. Fog is a powerful thing, Percy. Mist? Yes, yes. Read the Iliad. It's full of references to things exactly as they are, being half-blooded, but people will interpret things quite differently. Truly remarkable are the lengths to
which people will go to tailor things to their version of reality. I put Riptide back in my pocket. For the first time, the search felt real. Actually, I was leaving Half-Blood Hill. I was heading west without guards, no backup plan, not even a cell phone. (Chiron said mobile phones can be tracked by monsters; if we used one, it would be worse than sending a flare.) I didn't have a weapon
stronger than a sword to fight monsters and get to the Land of the Dead. Chiron... Told. When you say the gods are immortal... I mean, there was time before them, right? Actually, four years before them. This, the time of Western civilization and of Zeus, is the fifth age.
So, what was it... before the gods? Chiron twisted his lips. Even I'm not old enough to remember this, child, but I know it was a time of darkness and savages for mortals. Kronos, the lord of the Titans, called his reign in the Golden Age because people lived innocently and without knowledge. But it was propaganda. 1. The king was not interested in his appearance, except as
appetizers or a source of cheap entertainment. It was only at the beginning of Lord Zeus' reign, when the Good Titan, Titan, ignited that your species had begun to progress, and even then Promethius was a graffitied radical thinker. Zeus punishes him severely, as you may remember. Of course, in the end the gods warmed to the people and western civilization was born. But the
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gods can't die now, can they? As long as Western civilization is alive, they are alive. So... even if I failed, nothing could have happened so badly that it would mess everything up, right? Chiron gave me a melancholy smile. No one knows how long the age of the West will last, Percy. The gods are immortal, yes. But then so did the Titans. They still exist, locked in their various

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prisons, forced to endure endless pain and punishment, reduced strength, but still very alive. May fate not allow the gods to ever be so obvious, or that we must ever return to the darkness and chaos of the past. All we can do, child, is follow our destiny. Our destiny ... if we know what that is. Relax, Chiron told me. Keep your head clear. And remember, maybe you can prevent the
biggest war in human history. Relax, I said. I'm very calm. When I got to the top of the hill, I looked back. Under the pine, which used to be Talia, daughter of Zeus, Chiron now stands in full shape on the horse, holding his bow high in honor. It's just the typical summer camp sending the typical centaur. * Argus kicked us out of the country and into western Long Island. It was weird
being back on the freeway, Annabeth and Grover sitting next to me like we were normal colverts. After two weeks at Half-Blood Hill, the real world seemed like a fantasy. I found myself looking at every McDonald's, every kid in his parents' car, every billboard and shopping mall. So good, I told Annabeth and Grover sitting next to me like we were normal colverts. After two weeks at Half-Blood Hill, the real world seemed like a fantasy. I found myself looking at every McDonald's, every kid in his parents' car, every billboard and shopping mall. So good, I told Annabeth and Grover sitting next to me like we were normal colverts.
say that, sea brain. Remind me again, why do you hate me so much? I don't hate you. He could fool me. She folded her hat into invisibility. See... We just don't have to get along. Our parents are rivals. Why? She sighed. How many reasons do you want? My mother once caught Poseidon with her friend in the temple of Atena, which is extremely disrespectful. Other times, Athens
and Poseidon competed to be patron saint of the city of Athens. Your father created stupid saltwater for his gift. My mother created the olive seat, Argus smiled. He said nothing but one The eye on his
neck winked at me. Traffic slowed us down in Queens. When we got into Manhattan, it was starting to rain. Argus let us in at Greyhound Station on the Upper East Side, not far from my mother's apartment and gabe's. Glued to a mailbox was soaked with a picture of me on it: Have you seen this boy? I tore it up before Annabeth and Grover noticed. Argus
unloaded our bags, made sure we got our bus tickets, then left, the eye of the opening of his hand, to watch us get out of the parking lot. I was thinking how close I was to my old apartment. On a normal day, my mother would be home from the candy store. Smelly Gabe was probably up there playing poker, she didn't even miss it. Grover spun around on his backpack. He looked
down the street in the direction I was looking for. You want to know why she married him, Percy? I watched it. Did you read my mind? Just your emotions. He collapsed. I guess I forgot to tell you that satirists can do this. You were thinking about your mother married
Gabe because of you, Grover told me. You call him Smelly, but you have no idea. The man has an aura... Yuck. I can smell it from here. I can smell his tracks on you, and you haven't been near him in a week. Thank you, I said. Where's the presence of a demi god. As
soon as I smelled his Camaro, I realized: Gabe's been covering your scent for years. If you hadn't lived with him every summer, you'd probably have been found by the monsters a long time ago. Your mother stayed with him to protect you. She was a smart woman. She must have loved you so much to come by this person - if that makes you feel better. No, but I forced myself not
to show it. I'il see her again, I thought. She's not missing. I was wondering if Grover could still read my feelings the way they were. I was pleased that he and Annabeth were with me, but I felt guilty that I wasn't being honest with them. I didn't tell them the real reason I said yes to this crazy thing. The truth was, I didn't care about taking zeus' flash, saving the world, or even helping
my father out of trouble. I wasn't helping me, I wasn't helping me, I wasn't even sending the child support check. He was bothering me because he needed a job. All I cared about was my mother. Hades had taken it unfairly and Hades would have returned it. The oracle whispered in my mind. In the end, you will be able to save the most important thing. Shut up, I said it. The rain kept falling. We were
waiting for the bus. I decided to play Haky Sak with one of Grover's apples. Annabeth was amazing. I wasn't bad either. The game was over when I threw the apple at Grover and got too close to his mouth. In a mega goat bite, the hack-bag disappeared -core, stem, and everything. Grover blushed. He tried to apologize, but Annabeth and I were too busy getting high. The bus has
finally arrived. As we stood in line for a board, Grover began to look around, smelling the air as if it smelled of his favorite delicacy in the café – enchilada. What is this? Asked. I don't know, he said tensely. Maybe it's nothing. But I can say it's nothing. And I started looking over my shoulder. I was relieved when we finally got on board and found seats together on the bus. We
arrived in the backpacks. Anabet kept hitting his Yankees nervously in the thigh. As the last passengers boarded, Annabeth clased her hand on my knee. Percy. An old lady had just got on the bus. She wore a crinkled velvet dress, lace gloves and a shapeless orange hat that shaded her face and carried a large paisley handbag. When she tilted her head up, her black eyes
shone, and my heart skipped one punch. It was Mrs. Dodds. An older, more with a green hat, one with a purple hat. Otherwise, they looked just like Mrs Dodds - the same hands, bags with stilts, wrinkled velvet dresses. Three times the demon grandmothers. They were sitting in
the front row, right behind the driver. The two of them on the aisle crossed their legs along the aisle, making H. It was careless enough, but it sent a clear message: no one leaves. The bus got out of the station and we ran through the streets of Manhattan. She didn't stay dead for long, I said, trying not to flinch my voice. I thought you said they could be distracted for life. I said if
you're lucky, Annabeth said. Apparently, you're not. All three of them were grotesque. Di Immortals! It's ok, Annabeth said, apparently thinking hard. The fury. The three worst monsters of the Underworld. It's okay. It's okay. It's okay. It's okay. We'il just slip out of the windows. They don't open, they do. Back exit? she suggested. There wasn't one. Even if there was, it wouldn't have helped. At that
time, we were on Ninth Avenue, heading for the Lincoln Tunnel. They're not going to attack us with witnesses around here, I said. Will he? Mortals don't have good eyes, Annabeth reminded me. Their brains can only process what they see through the fog. They're going to see three old ladies kill us, right? She thought about it. It's hard to say. But we can't rely on mortals for help
Maybe the emergency exit on the roof ... ? We hit Lincoln. and the bus went dark, except for the lights down the aisle. It was very quiet without the sound of rain. Page 20, Mrs. Dodds got up. In a flat voice, as if rehearsing it, she announced to the entire bus: I have to use the rest room. Me too, the second sister said. Me too, the third sister said. Everyone started coming down the
aisle. I have it, Annabeth said. Percy, take my hat. What? You're the one they want. Turn invisible and go up the aisle. Let them pass you by. Maybe you can get to the Big Three. Your smell can be overpowered. I can't just leave you. Don't worry about us,
Grover said. Go! My hands were shaking. I felt like, but I took the Yankee hat and put it on. When I looked down, my body wasn't there. I started sneaking down the aisle. I managed to raise ten rows, then sat in an empty space just as Furies walked past. Mrs. Dodds stopped, sniffed and looked at me. My heart broke. Apparently, she didn't see anything. She and her sisters
moved on. I was free. I came to the bus. We're almost through the Lincoln Tunnel. I was going to press the emergency stop button when I heard a disgusting spin from the back row. The old ladies weren't o
Their bags had turned into fire whips. The ovens surrounded Grover and Annabeth, wrapping their whips, in a room: Where is it? Where? The other people on the bus were screaming, stealing in their seats. They saw something. He's not here! Annabeth screamed. He's gone! The ovens picked up their whips. Annabeth drew her bronze knife. Grover grabbed a tin packet from his
bag and prepared to throw it away. What I did was so impulsive and dangerous had to be called ADHD Poster Child of the Year. The bus driver became distracted, trying to see what was going on in the rearview mirror. Still invisible, I grabbed him and pulled him to the left. Everyone was spinning when they were thrown to the right and I heard that I was hoping to hear the sound
of three furies crashing into the windows. The driver shouted. Hello, loch! We fought for the bike. The bus struck from the side of the tunnel, grinding metal, throwing sparks a kilometre behind us. They were looking out of the Lincoln Tunnel and we were going back to the storm, people and monsters were throwing around the bus, cars were plooking like bowling. The driver
somehow found a way out. We shot ourselves off the highway, through half a dozen traffic lights, and ended up on one of new Jersey's rural roads. You can't believe there's nothing on the other side of the river from New York. There were woods on the left, the Hudson River on the right, and the driver seemed to be moving toward the river. Another great idea: I pressed the
emergency brake. The bus broke down in tears, spun the entire circle on wet asphalt and crashed into the trees. They turned on the emergency lights. The bus driver was the first outside and passengers were screaming as they chased him. I got into the driver's seat and let them pass. The Fury have regained their balance. They stuck their whips at Annabeth as
she waved her knife and shouted in Ancient Greek, telling them to back off. Grover threw a tin pap smear. I looked at the open door. I was free to leave, but I couldn't leave my friends. I took off the invisible hat. Hey, hey! The Furies turned around, stuck their yellow teeth on me, and the exit suddenly seemed like a great idea. Mrs. Dodds stalked the aisle, just like she did in a class
where she was going to bring me the math test. Every time he lit his whip, the red flames danced on shaved skin. Her two ugly sisters jumped into the seats on either side of her and crawled towards me like huge nasty lizards. Perseus Jackson, Ms. Dodds said, with an accent that's definitely from somewhere farther south of Georgia. You insulted the gods. You're going to die. I
liked you better as a math teacher, I told her. Anabet and Grover move carefully behind fury, looking for an opening. I took the pen out of my pocket and freaked it out. Riptide has become a shining double-edged sword. The ovens hesitated. Mrs. Dodds has felt Riptide's blade before. She obviously didn't like seeing him again. Give it up now, she said. And you will not suffer eternal
torment. Nice try, I said. Percy, watch out! Annabeth cried. Mrs. Dodds stabbed her with my knife, while fury on both sides stabbed me. My hand felt like it was wrapped in molten lead, but I couldn't miss Riptide. I stuck the Fury on the left with his handle, sending her writhing in the seat. I turned around and cut Fury on the right. As soon as the blade connected to her neck, she
screamed and burst into dust. Annabeth grabbed Ms Dodds on a wrestler and pulled her back until Grover pulled the whip out of her hands. Du! he cried. Oh, uh, Hot! 20000 The fury I had captured hit me again, the coupons were ready, but I swung and it opened like a piñata. Mrs. Dodds was trying to get Annabeth back. She kicked, scribbled, spouted and held, but Annabeth
held on until Grove grabbed Ms Dodds' legs. Eventually, they both pushed her down the aisle. Ms Dodds tried to get up, but there was no room to wave her bat wings, so she kept falling. I wasn't sure where Latin came from. I think it means eat my pants! Thunder bus. My hair went up on my
neck. Go away! Annabeth yelled at me. Now! I didn't need any support. We rushed outside and found the other passengers wandering around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, or running around in dazzle, arguing with the driver, arguing with th
The bus windows exploded as passengers closed. Lightning cut a huge crater on the roof, but an angry wall inside told me That Mrs Dodds was not yet dead. Run! Anabet said. She's calling for reinforcements! We have to get out of here! We plunged into the forest until the rain poured, the bus caught fire behind us, and nothing but darkness before us. 11. WE VISIT THE
GARDEN GNOME EMPORIUM In one way, it is better to know that there are Greek gods out there because you have someone to blame when things go wrong. For example, when you leave a bus that has just been attacked by monsters and blown up by lightning, and it rains on top of everything else, most people may think it's just bad luck; When you're half-blooded, you realize
that some divine power is really trying to mess up your day. So Annabeth, Grover and I walked through the woods along the banks of the New Jersey River, the glow of New York, making the night sky yellow behind us, and the smell of the Hudson shaking in our noses. Grover was shaking and shaking, his big goat eyes turned into a pupil and full of horror. Three kind. All three at
once. I was in shock myself. The explosion of the bus windows still rings in my ears. But Annabeth kept pulling us, saying, Come on! The further away we are, the better. All our money was there, I reminded her. Our food and clothes. Everything was in a lot of place. What do you want me to do? Let you die? You shouldn't have protected me, Percy. I'd be fine. Sliced like bread, -
put grover, but fine. Shut up, goat boy, Annabeth said. Grover frowns with sadness. Tin tins ... Perfectly good canned bag. We squeezed through dirt, through dirt, through dirty twisted trees that smelled like sour laundry. A few minutes later, Annabeth lined up next to me. Look, I... Her voice has changed. Thanks for coming back for us, right? That was really brave. We're a team, aren't we?
She kept quiet for a few more steps. It's just that if you die... Besides the fact that it's really going to suck for you, that would mean the mission is over. This may be my only chance to see the real world. The storm had finally eased. 1. shines behind us, leaving us in near total darkness. I couldn't see anything from Annabeth but twinkling blonde hair. You haven't left camp since you
were seven years old? I asked her. Not... only short excursions in the field. My father, History Professor. Yes, yes. It didn't work out that I was living at home. CampHalf is my home. She was trying to stop her. At camp, you train and train. And that's all, but in the real world, it's the monsters. There you will learn whether you are good or not. If I didn't know better, I'd swear I heard a
doubt in her voice. Is that what you think? Anyone who can get on the fur is good for me. I couldn't see, but I thought she might have smiled. You know, she said, maybe I should tell you ... Something funny back on the bus ... Whatever she meant was interrupted by exile, like the sound of an owl's torture. Hey, my pipes are still working! Grover cried. If I could remember a song
about finding our way, we'd be able to get out of these woods! . . . . . . . . . He blew a few notes, but the song still sounds suspiciously like Hilary Duff. Instead of finding my way, I immediately bumped into a tree and had a nice knot on my head. Add to the list of superpowers I didn't have: infrared vision. After tripping and cursing, and generally feeling unhappy for another mile, I
began to see light ahead: the colors of the neo-sign. I could smell food. Fried, fatty, excellent food. I realized I hadn't eaten anything unhealthy since I arrived at Half-Blood Hill, where we lived on grapes, bread, cheese and barbecue made from nymphs. That boy needed a double cheeseburger. We kept walking until I saw a deserted road through the trees. On the other side was a
closed gas station, fragile billboards for a 1990s movie and an open business, a source of neon lights and a good smell. It wasn't a fast food restaurant like I hoped. It was one of those weird roadside shops that sold lawn flamingos and wooden Indians and cement grizzly bears and stuff like that. The main building is a long, low warehouse surrounded by acres of statues. The neon
sign above the gate was impossible for me to read, because if there is anything worse for my dyslexia than ordinary English, it is red italics neon English to read so much, I forgot she was dyslexic, too. Grover translates: Aunt Em
Emmrium's garden. Flank at the entrance, as advertised, were two cement garden thnoms, ugly bearded little little ones, smiling and waving as if they were to take pictures. I crossed the street, followed the smell of hamburgers. Hey, hey, no, no, no, not Grover warned. The lights are inside, Annabeth said. Maybe it's open. The snack bar, I said excruciatingly. The snack bar,
she agreed. Are you two crazy? Grover said. This place is weird. We ignored him. The front is a forest of statues: cement animals, cement children, even cement Satyr plays on the pipes, which gave Grover thrills. Blah ha-ha! he's bleeding. He looks like my Uncle Ferdinand! We stopped at the storage door. Don't knock, molly grover. It smells like monsters. Your nose is clogged by
the Furers, Mr. Anabet said. All I smell is hamburgers. Aren't you hungry? Meat! said contempt. I'm a vegetarian. You eat cheese and aluminum cans, I reminded him. It's vegetables. Come. Let's go. These statues are... he's looking at me. Then the door opened and stood in front of us was a tall woman from the Middle East — at least I assumed she was from the Middle East,
because she was wearing a long black dress that covered everything but her hands, and her head was completely veiled. Her eyes were writhing behind a curtain of black gauze, but that was all I could understand. Her coffee-colored hands looked old, but well stylish and elegant, so I imagined that she was a grandmother who was once a beautiful lady. Her accent sounded vague
and Middle Eastern. She said: 'Kids, it's too late to be alone. Where are your parents? They are ... 2000 ,... Annabeth started saying. We're orphans, I said. Our circus caravan. Maybe he forgot or meant another gas station. Anyway, we're lost. Is that the food I smell? Oh, my dears, the
expressions on their faces. I thought you'd have to have a pretty big garden to fit even one of these statues, because I was thinking about food. Call me because you broke into a weird ladies' store just because I was hungry, but sometimes I do impulsive things. Besides, you never smelled Aunt Em's burgers. The scent was like laughing gas in the
dentist's chair - he made everything else disappear. I barely noticed Grover's nervous whining crybabies, or the way the statues' eyes follow. or the fact that Aunt Em locked the door behind us. All I cared about was the eateries. And of course, there was the back of the warehouse, at a fast food stand with grill, soda tap, precedent heater and nacho cheese dispenser. Anything
you'd like, plus a few steel picnic tables in front. Please sit down, said Aunt Em. Great, I said. Um, you said with inewee, we don't have any money, ma'am. Before I hit him in the ribs, Aunt Em hardened up like Annabeth had done
something wrong, but the old woman relaxed so quickly, so I thought that was my imagination. All right, Annabeth, she said. You have such beautiful gray eyes, child. It was only later that I wondered how she knew Annabeth she said. You have such beautiful gray eyes, child. It was only later that I wondered how she knew it, he
was carrying us plastic trays with double cheeseburgers, vanilla smoothies and portions of french fries. I was halfway through my burger before I remembered to breathe. Annabeth shook her. Grover picked out fries and looked at the wax paper as if he might try to do it, but still seemed too nervous to eat. What's that noise? He asked. I listened, but I didn't hear anything. Annabeth
shook her head. Is it falling apart? Aunt Em asked. Maybe you'il hear the friteur oil. You have lit ears, Grover. I take vitamins. To my ears. It's delightful, she said. But please relax. Aunt Em doesn't eat anything. She hadn't taken her head off, even cooking, and now she sat down, intertwined fingers, and watched us eat. It was a little anxious to be staring at someone when I couldn't
much, no. Ever since the highway was built... most cars, they do not go like this now. I have to take care of every client I get. Like someone else was looking at me. I turned around, but it was just a statue of a young girl holding a basket for Easter. The detail was amazing, much better than you see in most garden statues. She looked like she was scared or even terrified. Ah, Aunt
Em said sadly. You notice that some of my creations are not proving to be good. They're darkened. They're darkened to get right. Always the face. You do these kill yourself? Asked. Yes, yes. I used to have two sisters to help me in the business, but they've passed away, and Aunt Em is alone. I only have my statues. That's why I make them, you know.
They're my company. The sadness in her voice sounded so deep and so real that I couldn't help but feel sorry for her. Annabeth, a bad woman was jealous of me when I was young. Had... And this bad woman is determined to separate us. She caused a terrible accident. My sisters
stayed by my house. They shared my bad condition as much as they could, but eventually they gave up. They've faded. I survived, but at a price. I wasn't sure what he meant, but I felt bad for her. My eyelids were getting heavier, my stomach was making me restrain myself. Poor old lady. Who would want to hurt someone so nicely? Percy? Annabeth shook me to
get my attention. Maybe we should go. I mean, the lord of the ring will wait. She reached out, as if to hit Annabeth's cheek, but Annabeth and the said again. Yes, it's been a while since I've seen gray eyes like this. She reached out, as if to hit Annabeth's cheek, but Annabeth
stood up sharply. We really should go. Yes Grover took a wax paper and stood up. The lord of the ring is waiting! 100,000 I didn't want to leave. I felt full and satisfied. Aunt Em was so nice. I wanted to stay with her for a while. Please, honey, you begged Aunt Em. I rarely date kids. Before you go, won't you at least sit down for a pose? Posture? Annabeth asked for war. One
picture. I'il use it to model a new statue. Children are as popular as you can see. Everybody loves kids. Annabeth for being so rude, so rude to an old lady who fed us for free. It's just a picture, Annabeth. What's wrong? Yes, Annabeth, fry the woman. There's
nothing wrong with that. I can tell Annabeth he doesn't like it, but he let Aunt Em take us out the front door, into the garden of statues. Aunt Em directed us to a park bench next to satire. Now, she said, I'll just position you right. I think the young girl in the middle and the two young gentlemen on both sides. There's not much light for a photo, I noted. Oh, that's enough, aunt Em said.
Enough to see you, yes? Where's your camera? Grover looked at the satira cement next to him and muttered: This certainly looks like Uncle Ferdinand. Grover, aunts Em, look over here, honey. She still didn't have a camera in her hands. Percy, Annabeth said.
Some instincts warned me to listen to Annabeth, but I struggled with drowsiness, the convenient lusm that came from the old woman's food and voice. I'il just be there for a moment, aunt Em said. I don't see you very well in that damn veil... Percy, something's wrong, Annabeth insisted. Wrong? No, honey. I have such noble company tonight. What could be wrong? It's Uncle
Ferdinand! Grover shuffled. Don't shut her up! Annabeth shouted. She smashed her Yankees on the ground looking at Aunt Em's sandals. I heard Grover's going one way, Annabeth in another. But I was too quiet to move. Then I heard a strange sound above me. My eyes rose to the
hands of Aunt Em, who had become a thug and warts, with sharp bronze nail nails. I almost looked higher, but somewhere on my left, Annabeth screams: No! No, no, no, no! More rasping — the sound of small snakes, just above me, from ... from where Aunt Em's head would be. Run! Grover's bleeding. I heard him jumping over the gravel screaming Maya! start flying sneakers.
Page 22, I couldn't move. It's a pity to destroy the beautiful young face, she told me. Stay with me, Percy. All you have to do is look up. I struggled with an urge to obey. Instead, I looked on one side and saw one of those glass; her hairstyle had disappeared, revealing her
face as a shimmering pale circle. Her hair was moving, she was writhing like a snake. Aunt Em. Aunt M. How could I be so stupid? - I told myself. How did Medusa die in the myth? But I couldn't think. Something told me that mita Medusa was asleep when she was attacked by my namesake, Perseus. She wasn't nearly asleep. If he wanted to, he could take those nails and open
my face. My grey-eyed did this, Percy said Medusa, and she didn't sound like a monster. Her voice invited me to look up, to sympathize with an old grandmother. Annabeth's mother, the cursed Atena, turned me from a beautiful woman into this. Don't listen to her! Annabeth's voice shouted somewhere in statues. Run, Percy! Be quiet! Jellyfish kicked. Then her voice returned to
the comforting murmur. - You see why I have to destroy the girl, Percy. is the daughter of my enemy. I'm going to crush her statue to dust. But you, dear Percy, must not suffer. No, I broke in. I tried to get the legs moving... Do you understand what awaits you on this stupid mission, Percy? What happens if you get to
the Underworld? Don't be an Olympian's pawn, honey. You'il be better off like a statue. Less pain. Percy Behind Me, I heard a buzz, like a £200 hummingbird in love. Grover holding a tree branch the size of a baseball bat. His eyes were closed, his head
Uncle Ferdinand! Grover shouted. I scrambled and hid in the state outsider until Grover got stuck for another pass. Auto Medusa shouted, her snake hair curled and spit. Right next to me, Annabeth took off her hat and became visible. You have to cut off her head.
What? Are you crazy? Let's get out of here. Jellyfish is a threat. She's evil. I'd kill her myself, but... Annabeth devoured as if she were going to make a difficult reception. But you have a better weapon. Besides, I would never get close to her. He's going to cut me to pieces for my mother. You have a chance. What? I can't see her, do you want her to turn more innocent people into
statues? She pointed to a pair of statue lovers, a man and a woman with their hands around each other, facing a stone from the monster. Anabet grabbed a green watch ball from a nearby pedestal. A polished shield would be better. She studied the field critically. The protrusion will cause some distortion. The size of the reflection must be one of the factors in The English
Language? She threw me the glass ball. Just look at it in the glass. Never look directly at her. Hey, guys! Grover was shouting somewhere above us. I think he's unconscious! Maybe not, fix Grover. He went to stray from the tree. Hurry up, Annabeth told me. Grover's got a great nose, but he's going to crash in the end. I pulled out my pen and freaked it out. Riptide's bronze knife is
oblong in my hand. I followed the stack and spit on Medusa, not the real thing. Then, in the green colored glass, I saw her. Grover was coming in at bat, but this time he flew too low. Medusa, not the real thing. Then, in the green colored glass, I saw her. Grover was coming in at bat, but this time he flew too low. Medusa, not the real thing. Then, in the green colored glass, I saw her. Grover was coming in at bat, but this time he flew too low. Medusa, not the real thing. Then, in the green colored glass, I saw her. Grover was coming in at bat, but this time he flew too low.
bear with a painful Umf! Medusa would have jumped on him when I screamed: I developed it, which was not easy, to hold a sword and a glass ball. If she's on it, I'm going to have a hard time defending myself. But she let me get close – 2 meters, 3 meters. It certainly wasn't that ugly. The greens on the ball should distort it, which makes it worse. You wouldn't hurt an old woman,
Percy, bent down. I know you wouldn't want to. I hesitated, fascinated by the face I saw reflected in the glass - eyes that seemed to burn through the green hue, causing my hands to weaken. From the grizzly cement, Grover moaned: Percy, don't listen to her! Jellyfish have shrunk. Too late. She was attacking me with her fingernails. I cut my sword, I heard a sick stiletto!
Something fell to the ground next to my leg. It took all the will not to look. I could feel a warm sour in my sock, little dying snake heads pulling me to the laces of my shoes. Oh,, Grover said. His eyes were still tightly closed, but I guess he could hear the thing writhing and steaming. Mega-nasty. Annabeth came to me, her eyes turned to heaven. She was holding medusa's black
veil. She said, Don't move. Very, very carefully, without looking down, she knelt and draped the monster's head in a black towel, then lifted her up. He was still dripping green juice. Are you okay? - she asked me, her voice trembling. Yes, I did, although I'd like to throw up on my double cheeseburger. Why don't you... why didn't the head evaporate? Once you tear it off, it becomes
a war wreck, she said. Same as the minotaur. But don't blow your head off. It can still petrified you. Grover moaned as he walked down from the grizzly statue. He had a big velodra on his forehead. His green rasta hat hung from one of his little goat horns, and his fake legs were ripped off his hooves. Magic sneakers flew aimlessly around his head. The red baron, I said. Nice work,
man. He handled the so-called no-fly zone. That really wasn't fun, though. Well, that was fun. But crash into concrete? It's not funny. You took your shoes out of the air. I gave you the sword. Together, the table where we dined and sat around her. to speak.
Finally, I said, So we should thank Atena for this monster? Annabeth flashed an irritated look. Your father, actually. Don't you remember? Medusa was poseidon's friend. They decided to meet at my mother's temple, became the three gorgons. That's why Medusa wanted to
chop me up, but he wanted to keep you like a nice statue. She's still nice to your father. You probably remind her of Him. My face was on fire. Oh, now it's my fault we met Medusa. Annabeth stood up. In a bad imitation of my voice, she said: 'It's just a picture, Annabeth. What's wrong? Forget it, I said. You're impossible. You're unbearable. - Hey! Grover's been cut off. You two
give me migraines, and satirists don't even get migraines. What are we going to do with the head? I was looking at this thing. A little snake was hanging from a hole in the plastic. The words printed on the side of the bag said: We appreciate your business! I was angry not only with Annabeth or her mother, but with all the gods for this search, for blowing us out of the way and in
two big battles on the first day of camp. At this rate, we'il never get to L.A. alive, much less before the summer solstice. What did Medusa say? Don't be an Olympian's pawn, honey. You'il be better off like a statue. Became. I'il be back. Percy, i got Annabeth on the phone. I searched the warehouse until I found Medusa's office. Her account book showed her six recent sales, all
shipments to the Underworld, to decorate hades and Persephone's garden. According to one forwarding, the address of The Unsumane World is DOA Recording Studio, West Hollywood, California. I folded the bill and stuffed it in my pocket. At the checkout, I found $20, a couple of gold drachmas, and a couple of packing plugs for Hermes Integral Express, each with a small
leather bag attached to coins. I was scrubbing around the rest of the office until I found a box. I went back to the picnic table, packed Medusa's head and filled out a delivery ticket: The Gods of Olympus 600th Floor, Empire State Building New York, NY with best wishes, PERCY JACKSON They won't like that, Grohr warned. They'il think you're cheeky. I poured some gold
drachmas into the bag. As soon as I closed it, it sounded like a cash register. The package flew off the table and disappeared with popcorn! I'm on my way in, I said. I watched Annabeth, challenging her to criticize. She seemed betrayed to the fact that I have a great talent for ticking the gods. Come on, she talked. We need a new plan. 12. WE GET ADVICE FROM POODLE WE
were quite unhappy that night. We camped in 100 meters from the main road, in the swamp that local children apparently used for parties. The ground was flattened flattened soda and fast food packaging. We had taken food and blankets from Aunt Em, but I dare not light a fire to dry the damp clothes. Fury and Medusa were thrilled enough for a day. We didn't want to attract
anything else. We decided to sleep in shifts. I volunteered to take the first shift. Annabeth curled up on the blankets and snored as soon as her head hit the ground. Grover flaunted his flying shoes to the lowest tree, stuck in the trunk and staring into the night sky. Page 23 Sleep ahead, I said. I'il wake you up if there's a problem. He nodded, but he didn't close his eyes. It makes me
world so quickly ... Ah, it doesn't matter. It's useless to talk to a person. I'il never find Pan. Pan? Like cooking spray? Pan! he cried resentfully. P-A-N.H. The Great God Pan! What do you think I want a searcher's license for? A strange breeze rusted through the purge, temporarily overpowering the smell of garbage and slobbering. That was in the woods. All of a sudden, I became
nostalgic for something I'd never seen before. Tell me about the search, I said. Grover looked at me cautiously, as if he were afraid I was just having fun. The God of wild places disappeared two thousand years ago, he told me. A sailor off the coast of Ephesus heard the news,
they believed it. Since then, they have pilloried the kingdom of Pan. But for the Satirists, Pan was our master and maste
sleep.1 And you want to be a searcher. It's my life's dream, he said. My father was a seeker. And my Uncle Ferdinand ... the statue you saw there – Oh, yes, I'm sorry. Grover shook his head. Uncle Ferdinand knew the risks. So is my father. But I'il make it. I'il be the first seeker to come back alive. Hold on, the first one? Grover pulled his pipes out of his pocket. No searcher has
ever returned. Once they have Disappear. They've never seen them alive again. Not once in two thousand years? No, no, no. What about your father? You have to believe it, Percy. Every searcher does. It's the only thing that protects us from despair
when we look at what the people of the world have done. I have to believe that Pan can be awakened. I watched the orange mist in the sky and tried to figure out how Grover could pursue a dream that seemed so hopeless. But again, was I better? How are we going to get you into the Underworld? I asked him. What chance do we have against God? I don't know, he admitted. But of the world have done. I watched the orange mist in the sky and tried to figure out how Grover could pursue a dream that seemed so hopeless. But again, was I better? How are we going to get you into the Underworld? I asked him. What chance do we have against God? I don't know, he admitted.
in Medusa, when you searched her office? Annabeth used to say to me, Oh, I forgot. Annabeth will have a plan he came up with. Don't be so her, Percy. She's had a hard life, but she's a good person. After all, she forgave me... His voice is loud. What do you mean? Asked. What did he give you for? Suddenly Grover seemed very interested in putting notes on his pipes. Wait a
minute, I said. Your first job with a goalie was five years ago. Annabeth's been camped out for five years ago. Annabet his lower lip suggested he start crying if I pressed him. But as I was saying, in Medusa, Anabet and I agreed that something strange was happening with this search. Something's not
what it looks like. Well, Father. It's my fault for stealing thunder that Hades took. That's not what I mean, Grover says. The fur – the kind were kind of like stepping away. Like Mrs. Dodds at Yancey Academy... Why did he wait so long to try to kill you? Then on the bus, they just weren't as aggressive as they could be. They seemed pretty aggressive to me. Grover shook his head.
They peed on us: Where is it? Where? I asked about me, I said. Maybe... But Annabeth and I both feel like they weren't asking about a man. They said where is he? You seem to have been asked about me, I said. Maybe... But Annabeth and I both feel like they weren't asking about this search, and we only have nine days to find the master's bolt... He looked at me like he was
hoping for answers, but I didn't have any. I was thinking about what Medusa said: I was used by the gods. What was waiting for me was worse than territoriality. I wasn't being honest with you, you said 1-1. I don't care about the bolt. I agreed to go to the Underworld so I could bring my mother back. Grover played a soft date on his pipes. I know that, Percy. But are you sure that's
the only reason? I'm not doing this to help my father. I don't care. I don't care. I don't care. Grover stared at Branch. Look, Percy, I'm not as smart as Annabeth. I'm not as brave as you. But I'm pretty good at reading emotions. You're glad your father's alive. You feel good that he has stagnant you, and part of you wants to make him proud. That's why you sent Medusa's head to Olympus. You
wanted him to notice what you did. Yes, yes, yes, maybe satyr emotions work differently from human emotions. Because you're wrong. I don't care what he thinks. Grover pulled his feet to the branch. All right, Percy. Besides, I haven't done anything worth bragging about. We barely got out of New York, and we're stuck here with no money and no way west. Grover looked at the
night sky like he was thinking about this problem. How about I take the first shift, huh? Get some sleep. I wanted to protest, but he started playing Mozart, soft and sweet, and I turned around, my eyes stinging. After a few bars at Piano Concerto No 12, I was asleep. In my dreams, I was standing in a dark cave, in front of a gaping pit. The gray creatures were simmering around me,
whispering rags of smoke that I somehow knew were the spirits of the dead. They were pulling towards my clothes, trying to pull me back, but I felt compelled to walk forward towards the very end of the precipice. The look down makes me dizzy. The pit yawned so wide and it was so black, I knew it had to be bottomless. But I felt like something was trying to rise from the abyss,
something huge and evil. The little hero, the funny voice, is echoed in the dark. Too weak, too young, but maybe you will. The voice felt old — cold and heavy. It wraps me up like lead. They let you down, boy, he said. Barter with me. I'il give you what you want. A brilliant image that divorced over the void: my mother frozen the moment she fell apart in the shower of gold. Her face
was distorted with pain, as if the Minotaur was still pushing her. Her eyes looked at me, begging: Go! I tried to scream, but my voice doesn't work. The cold laughter echoed from a precipice. Invisible force pulled me forward. He'd drag me into the pit if I wasn't strict. Help me get up, boy. The voice got hungrier. Bring me the lightning. Strike against treacherous gods! The spirits of
the dead whispered around me, no! Wake! My mother's image began to fade. The thing in the pit tightened its unlooking grip around me. I realized I wasn't interested in being tossed. He used me to pull out. Okay, he was grumbling. Well. Wake! the dead whispered. Wake! Someone shook me. My eyes opened and it was in daylight. Well, Annabeth said, the zombie is life. I was
trembling from the dream. I could still feel the monster's grip on precipices around my chest. How long had I been asleep? Long enough to make breakfast. Annabeth tossed me a bag of corn chips with an initial delicious taste from Aunt Em's snack bar. And grover Study. Look, he found a friend. My eyes weren't focused. Grover sat on a blanket with something fuzzy on his lap, a
dirty, unnatural pink stuffed animal. Not. It wasn't a stuffed animal. Not. It wasn't a stuffed animal. It was a pink poodle is growling. This thing, Gruver warned, is our ticket west. Be nice to Him. You can talk to animals? Grover ignored the question. Percy, i'd like you to meet Gladiola. Gladiola. Gladiola, Percy. I was
watching Annabeth when I thought he was going to jump on that joke he was playing with me, but he seemed deadly serious. I don't congratulate a pink poodle. Grover explained that he ran into Gladiola in the woods and that they talked. The poodle escaped from a
money and buy tickets to Los Angeles. It was all just I was thinking about my dream — the whispering voices of the dead, the thing in a precipice and my mother's face twinkling as it dissolved into gold. Anything that can wait for me in the West. Not another bus I said combatively. No, Annabeth agreed. She pointed down to the railroad tracks I hadn't seen in the Wast last night.
There's Amtrak Station half a mile away. According to Gladiola, the train to the west leaves at noon. 13. I AM IMMERSED UNTIL MY DEATH We spent two days on the Amtrak train, driving west through hills, over rivers, past amber waves of grain. We didn't get attacked once, but I didn't relax. I felt like we were traveling around in case of a display, watching us from above and
maybe underneath, that something was waiting for the right opportunity. I tried not to get too close, because my name and painting were scattered on the front pages of several East Coast newspapers. The Trenton Register-News showed a photo taken by a tourist as he got off the Greyhound bus. I had a good time in my eyes. My sword was a metal blur in my hands. It could be a
baseball bat or a lacrosse. The caption of the photo reads: Twelve-year-old Percy Jackson, wanted for questioning in his mother's disappearance two weeks ago, is shown here fleeing the bus where he refers to several elderly female passengers. The bus exploded in eastern New Jersey shortly after Jackson fled. On the basis of a witness base, the police the boy can travel with
two teenage accomplices. His stepfather, Gabe Ugliano, offered a cash reward for information leading to his capture. Page 24 Don't worry, Mr. Anabet said. Death police can never find us. But she didn't sound so sure. The rest of the day spent consistently looking at the length of the train (because I had a really hard time sitting) or looking at the windows. I once spotted a family of
centaurs racing into the wheat field, bowing in readiness as they hunted for lunch. The little centaur boy, who was the size of a second-grader on a tank top, caught my eye and waved at me. I looked around in the car, but no one else noticed. The elderly riders were buried in laptops or magazines. Another time, towards nightfall, I saw something huge moving through the woods. I
could have sworn it was a lion, but lions don't live wildly in America, and this thing was the size of a Hummer. Her skin clay gold in the light of the evening. Then he slipped through the trees and disappeared. Our money for gladiola poodle's return was enough just to buy tickets all the way to Denver. We couldn't get anchor seats in the sleeping car, so we got stuck in our seats. My
neck's cramping. I tried not to sleep because Annabeth was sitting next to me. Grover was snoring, bleeding and waking me up. He softened once and his fake leg fell off. Annabeth and I had to glue it before the other passengers noticed. So, Annabeth asked after we had set Grover's sneakers. Who wants your help? What do you mean? When she fell asleep right now, you were
moaning, 'I'm not going to help you. Who are you dreaming about? I didn't mean anything. This is the second time I've dreamed of the evil voice from the pit. But it bothered me so much that I finally told her. Annabeth was quiet for a long time. That doesn't sound like Hades. He always appears on a black throne and never laughs. He proposed to my mother in return. Who else
could do that? Guess... Help me rise from the Underworld. If he wants to go to war with the Olympians. But why would I ask you to bring him the main bolt if he already has it? I shook my head, I wish I knew the answer. I was thinking about what Grover felt my emotions.
He snorted in his sleep, tinged something for the vegetables and turned his head. Anabet recalibranged his hat to cover his horns. Percy, you can't roll over with Hades. You know that, don't you? He's lying, heartless and greedy. I don't care if his kind people weren't that aggressive this time around - This time?. Asked. So you've seen them before? She painted a white bead
painted with the image of pine, one of them tokens at the end of summer. Let's just say I have no love for the Lord of the Dead. You can't be tempted to make a deal with your mother. What would you do if it was your father? That's easy, she said. I'd let it rot. You're not serious? Annabeth's grey eyes are fixed to me. He wore the same expression he wore in the woods in the
camp, the moment he pulled his sword against the hound. My father has outraged me since the day I was born, Percy, she said. He never wanted a baby. When he caught me, he asked Atena to pick me up and raise me at Olympus because he was too busy with his job. She wasn't happy about it. She tells him that heroes should be brought up by their mortal parent. But how ... I
guess you weren't born in a hospital... I showed up at my father's door, in a golden cradle carried by Olympus from Zephyr West Wind. You think my dad's going to remember this as a miracle, don't you? Maybe he'il take some pictures. But he always talked about my arrival, as if it were the most embarrassing thing that ever happened to him. When I was five years old, he got
married and completely forgot about Atena. He has a regular mortal wife and had two regular mortal children and tried to pretend I didn't know how. Grover said she did it to protect me, to hide me in the scent of a human family. Maybe that's what your
father thought. Annabeth was worried about her necklace. He pinched the gold ring, which hung with beads. I wondered why she wore it if she hated it so much. He doesn't care about me, she said. His wife - my stepmother - treated me like a freak. My father left with her. When something dangerous happened - you know, something with monsters - they both looked at me
indignantly, like How dare you put our family at risk. I finally got the hint. I wasn't wanted. I ran away. How old were you? Same age I started camp. Seven. But... you couldn't have walked all the way to Half-Blood Hill alone. Not alone, no. Atena was watching over me, pointing me to help. I made some unexpected friends who took care of me for a short time. I wanted to ask what
happened, but Annabeth seemed lost in sad memories. So I listened to the sound of Grover snoring and looked at the windows of the trains as the dark fields of Ohio raced. Towards the end of our second day on the train, June 13, eight days before the summer solstice, we passed through some golden hills and along the Mississippi River in St. Louis. Annabeth grabbed her neck
to see the Arch at the entrance, which looked like a huge one to me bag stuck in the city. I want to do that,' she sighed. What? Asked. Do something like that will last a thousand years. I laughed. You? Architect? I don't know
why, but I find it funny. Just Annabeth's idea of trying to sit still and paint all day. Her cheeks are blushing. Yes, an architect. Atena expects her children to create things, not just tear them down, like some earthquake god I could mention. I watched mississippi's brown water down there. I'm sorry, Annabeth said. That sucked. Can't we work together? - I pleaded with him. Didn't
Atena and Poseidon cooperate? Annabeth should have thought about it. Guess... chariot, she said chariot. My mother invented it, but Poseidon created horses from the crests of the waves. That's why they had to work together to finish it. Then we can collaborate, too. Right? We were riding in the city, Annabeth watching the Arch disappear behind a hotel. I guess so, she said at
last. We got into Amtrak station. The intercom told us we'd have a three-hour stay before we left for Denver. Grover stretched. Before waking up, he said: Food. Come on, goat boy, Anabet said. Sights? An arch at the door, she said. Flore waking up, he said: Food. Come on, goat boy, Anabet said. Sights. Sights? An arch at the door, she said. This may be my only chance to get on top. Are you coming or not? Grover and I exchanged looks. I mean, no, but I figured if Annabeth went,
we couldn't leave her alone. Grover's collapsed. As long as there's a monster-free snack bar. The arch was about a mile from the station. Late in the day they took over, the lines weren't that long. We walked through the underground museum, looking at the covered wagons and other rubbish from the 1800s. It wasn't that exciting, but Annabeth was telling us interesting facts about
how the Arch was built, and Grover was passing me jelly beans, so I was fine. But I was still looking around other people. Do you smell anything? I grumble at Grover. He pulled his nose out of the candy bag long enough to smell. Underground, he said disgustingly. Underground air always smells like monsters. It probably doesn't mean anything. But something seemed wrong. I felt
like we shouldn't be here. Guys, I said. Do you know the gods symbols of power? Annabeth was in the process of reading the construction equipment used to build the Arch, but she looked at it. Yes, yes. Well, Hadd, Grver cleared his throat. We're in a public place... You mean our friend downstairs? Uh, yes, I said. Our friend's downstairs. Isn't there a hat like Annabeth's? You
mean the Helmet of Darkness, Annabeth said. yes, that's it. power symbol. I saw him near his seat during the council meeting on the winter solstice. He was there? Asked. She nodded. This is the only time he is allowed to visit Olympus – the darkest day of the year. But his handlebars are much stronger than my invisible hat, if what I've heard is true... - It allows it to become
darkness, Grover confirms. It can melt in the shade or pass through walls. It cannot be touched, seen or heard. And it can radiate fear so strong that it can drive you crazy or stop your heart. Why do you think all intelligent creatures are afraid of the dark? But then ... How do we know he's not here right now looking at us? Asked. Annabeth and Grover are exchanging looks. We don't
want to, Grover said. Thank you, it makes me feel so much better, I said. Is there any blue jelly beans left? I had almost perfected my nerves when I saw the little elevator car we were going to ride to the arch, and I knew I was in trouble. I hate closed places. They're driving me crazy. With a big fat lady and her dog, a chihuahua with a shiny collar. I thought the dog was seeing
Chihuahua because none of the guards said a word about it. We started climbing the Arch. I've never been in an elevator that's poured into a bend, and my stomach wasn't very happy. No parents? - the fat lady asked us. She had eyes on beads; sharp, coffee-stained teeth; denim hat and denim dress that stood out so much that it looked like a blue-jean. They're downstairs,
Annabeth said. Fear of heights. Poor darling. Chihuahua has grown. The woman said: Now, now, son. Behave yourself. The dog had beads eyes like its owner, intelligent and vicious. I said: Sonny. Is that his name? No, the lady said. He smiled, as if that cleared it all up. At the top of the Arch, the observation deck reminded me of a tin edging with carpets. Rows of small windows
looked over the city on one side and the river on the other. The view was fine, but if there is something I like less than a confined space, it is a limited space, and how she would make windows bigger and designed a window. He could probably have been there for hours, but luckily
for me, the ranger announced that the observation deck would close in a few minutes. Page 25 I directed Grover and Annabet to the exit, loaded them into the elevator and was about to get out of here, Annabeth said. We'il wait with you. But it
would confuse everyone and take even longer, so I said: No, it's ok. I'il see you at the bottom. Grover and Annabeth looked But they let the elevator door slide. Their car disappeared down the ramp. Now the only people left on the observation deck were me, a little boy with his parents, the park ranger and the fat lady with her Chihuahua. I smiled unbalanced at the fat one. She
smiled, a dismembered tongue flickering between her teeth. One minute. You gave away your tongue? Before I decided if I had really seen this, her chihuahua jumped up and started jumping on me. Now, son, said the little boy. Look, puppy! His parents brought him back. A chihuahua sticks its
teeth out of its black lips. Well, son, you sighed the fat lady. If you insist. There's ice forming in my stomach. Ern, did you call that Chihuahua your son? Chimera, honey, adjust the fat one. When she smiled, I saw her teeth were teeth. The pupils on he
eyes were like reptiles. Chihuahua barked louder, and with each bark, it grew. First to the size of a Doberman, then to a lion. The bark turned into a roar. The little boy was screaming. His parents pulled him to the exit, straight into the park ranger, who stood paralyzed, gaping into the monster. The chimera was so high that the back rubbed on the roof. The lion's head with a
bloodied mane, the body and hooves of a giant goat and a tail snake holding a 1-foot diamond head from its shaqgy head. The pebble dog strap was still hanging around its neck, and the dog-sized plate was already easy to read: CHIMERA – RABID, FIRE-BREATHING, POISONOUS – IF FOUND, PLEASE CALL TARTARUS – EXT. 954. I realized I didn't even drop my sword. My
hands were numb. I was 10 meters from Chimera's bloody obsession, and I knew that as soon as I moved, the creature would rise. The snake lady has shed a tear, which can be a laugh. It's an honor, Percy Jackson. Lord Zeus rarely allows me to experience a hero with one of my pylons. Because I am the Mother of Monsters, the terrible Echidna! I was looking at her. All I can say
is: Isn't that a kind of ney? She screamed, her face brown and green with anger. I hate it when people say that! I hate Australia! You called this ridiculous animal to me. That's why, Percy Jackson, my son will destroy you! The chimera charged, the lion's teeth creak. I managed to break away and avoid the bite. Finally, I found myself next to the family and the ranger, who were
screaming now, trying to open the doors to the emergency exit. I couldn't let them get hurt. I misplaced my sword, ran to the opened his mouth, radiating a stench like the world's largest barbecue pit, and fired a column of flame straight at me. I was
sick of the explosion. The carpet burst into flames; The heat was so intense, it almost got rid of my eyebrows. Where I had stood shortly before was a ragged hole in the side of the Arch, with molten metal steaming around the edges. Great, I thought. We just blew out a national monument. Riptide was a shiny bronze knife in my hands, and when Chimera turned around, I cut
myself around his neck. That was my fatal mistake. The blade ignited harmlessly from the dog's leash. I tried to regain my balance, but I was so worried about defending myself from the fiery lion's mouth, I completely forgot about the snake's tail until it waved and sank into my calf. My whole leg was set on fire. I tried to eat Riptide in Chimera's mouth, but the snake's tail until it waved and sank into my calf. My whole leg was set on fire. I tried to eat Riptide in Chimera's mouth, but the snake's tail wrapped
around my ankles and pulled me out of balance, and my blade popped out of my hand, swirling from the hole in the Arch and down to the Mississippi River. I was able to get back on my feet, but I knew I'd lost. I was unarmed. I could feel a deadly poison throw to my chest. I remembered chiron who told me that Anacloos would always come back to me, but there was no pen in
my pocket. Maybe he fell too far. Maybe she only came back when she was in the form of a pen. I didn't know, and I wouldn't have lived long enough to understand it. I went back to the hole in the wall. Chimera advanced, growling, smoke curling from his lips. The snake woman, Echidna, is a stick. They don't make heroes like they used to, do they, son? The monster was growling.
I wasn't in a hurry to finish me off after I was beaten. I looked at the ranger and the family. The little boy was hiding behind his father's feet. I had to protect these people. I couldn't just ... Die. I tried to think, but my whole body was set on fire. My head's singly. I didn't have a sword. I was confronted by a huge fire-breathing monster and his mother. I was scared, too. I had nowhere
else to go, so I stepped to the edge of the hole. Far, far below, the river shines. If I die, will the monsters disappear? Would they leave people alone? If you are the son of Poseidon, hiss Echidna, you will not be afraid of water. Jump, Percy Jackson. Show me the water won't hurt you. Jump up and get your sword. Get your bloodline. Yes, I thought so. I read somewhere that
jumping into water from a few stories was like jumping on hard asphalt. This is where I'm going to disperse for the hit. Chimera's mouth was glowing red, warming up for another blast. You have no faith, Echidna said. Don't trust the gods, I can't blame you. You'd better die now, The gods are faithless. The poison is in your heart. She was right: I was dving. I could feel my breath.
Down. No one can save me, not even the gods. I went back and looked down at the water. I remember the water glow of my father's smile when I was a baby. He must have visited me when I was in the swing. I remembered the rotating green trident that had appeared above my head on the night of the flag takeover, when Poseidon had declared me his
son. But that wasn't the sea. It was a Mississippi, dead center of the United States. There was no Sea God here. Die, you infidel, curse Ihidna, and Chimera sends a flame to my veins, I flocked to the river. 14. I BECAME FAMOUS FUGITIVES I would like to tell you
that I had some deep revelation on my way down, that I put up with my own mortality, laughed in the face of death, etc. My only thought was: Aaaggh! The river contacted me at the speed of a truck. The wind ripped the air out of my lungs. Blazing, skyscrapers and bridges collapsed from my vision. And then: Flaa-boom! White from bubbles. I sank through the purr, I'm sure I'il end
up in 100 meters of mud, and I lost forever. But my impact with the water was not hurt. I was falling slowly, the bubbles were trampling on my fingers. I got stuck at the bottom of the river without sound. A catfish the size of my stepfather is thrown into the dark. The clouds of slee and disgusting garbage – beer bottles, old shoes, plastic bags – swirled around me. At that moment, I
realized a few things: first, I was not flattened in a pancake. I wasn't at a barbecue. I didn't feel the Chimera boil in my veins. I was good. Second realization: I was not flattened in a pancake. I wasn't wet. I could feel the coolness of the water. I saw where the fire was extinguished on my clothes. But when I touched my own shirt, it felt completely dry. I looked at the garbage that was floating and
stole an old lighter. - No, no, I thought. I'm crying at you. She's on fire. There was a small flame right there at the bottom of the Mississippi. I took a hamburger-soaked package from the current, and immediately the paper turned. I lit it without a problem. As soon as I let him go, the flames dislocated. The shell turned into a mucus rag. Strange. But the strangest thought occurred to
me only one last time: I was breathing. I was breathing. I was underwater breathing normally. I stood up, deep in the thigh. My legs are shaking. I should have been dead. The fact that I wasn't... well, a miracle. I imagined a woman's voice, a voice that looked a little like my mother: Percy, what do you say? Um... 100000000 Underwater, it sounded like records, like an older
child. Thank you... Our Father. There's no answer. Only the dark drift of Along the river, the huge catfish glides from the sur face of the water, turning everything into the color of the bush. Why did Poseidon save me? I was ashamed, too. So, I've been lucky a few times. Against something like Chimera, I never had a chance. The poor people in the Arch were probably on
toast. I couldn't protect them. I wasn't a hero. Maybe I should stay here with the fish and join the bottom feeders. - yes, it's a fum-fum. The oar of a creek is thrown over me, turning the slime. There, don't move me, was my sword, the shining bronze swirling in the mud. I heard the woman's voice again: Percy, take the sword. Your father believes in you. This time I knew the voice
wasn't in my head. I didn't imagine it. Her words seem to come from everywhere, piercing the water like sonar. Where are you? I called aloud. Then, through the darkness, I saw her—a woman of the color of water, a ghost in the current, floating just above the sword. She had long hair, and her eyes, barely visible, were as green as mine. A lump formed in my throat. I said, Mom?
No, child, just a messenger, though your mother's fate is not as hopeless as you believe. Go to the beach in Santa Monica. What? This is your father's will. Before you go down to the Underworld, you have to go to Santa Monica. What? This is your father's will. Before you go down to the Underworld, you have to go to Santa Monica. What? This is your father's will. Before you go down to the Underworld, you have to go to Santa Monica. What? This is your father's will. Before you go down to the Underworld, you have to go to Santa Monica. What? This is your father's will. Before you go down to the Underworld, you have to go to Santa Monica. What? This is your father you go down to the Underworld, you have to go to Santa Monica. What? This is your father you go down to the Underworld, you have to go to Santa Monica. What? This is your father you go down to the Underworld, you have to go to Santa Monica. What? This is your father you go down to the Underworld, you have to go to Santa Monica. What? This is your father you go down to the Underworld, you have to go to Santa Monica. What? This is your father you go down to the Underworld, you have to go to Santa Monica. What? This is your father you go down to the Underworld, you have to go to Santa Monica. What? This is your father you go down to the Underworld you 
how it happened to you – had so much to ask, the words stuck in my throat. I can't stay, brave, the woman said. She reached out, and I felt my present face as attached. What gifts? Wait! She made another attempt to talk, but the sound disappeared. Her image melted away. If
it was my mother, I'd lose her again. I felt like drowning. The only problem: I was immune to drowning. Page 26 Your father believes in you, she said. She also called me brave ... unless she talked to the fish. I dragged myself to Riptide and grabbed him by the handle. The chimera could still be upstairs with her fat mother waiting to finish me off. At the very least, the death penalty
police will arrive trying to figure out who blew a hole in the Arch. If they find me, they'il have questions. I stuck my sword, stuck the pen in my pocket. Thank you, Father, I said again to the dark water. Then I jumped out through the air and swam to the surface. I came ashore to a floating McDonald's. All emergency vehicles in St. Louis are surrounded by arch. The crowd of
spectators reminded me of The square is on New Year's Eve. One little girl said: Mom! That boy came out of the river. That's nice, honey, her mother said, weakening her neck to watch ambulances. But he's dry! That's good, honey. One news lady was talking about the camera: Probably not a terrorist attack, we're told, but it's still very early in the investigation. The damage, as
you can see, is very serious. We're trying to get to some of the survivors, question them about eyewitness reports of someone who fell from the Arch. Survivors. I felt a strain. Maybe the park garden and the family got away safely. I was hoping Annabeth and Grover would be okay. I tried to push the crowd to see what was going on at the police station. ... young boy, said another
reporter. Channel 5 has learned that ccTV footage shows the youngster going wild on the observation deck, somehow exploding in a freak explosion. It's hard to go a long way around the police perimeter. Uniformed police officers and reporters were
everywhere. I almost lost hope of finding Annabeth and Grover when a familiar voice shines, Perr-qi! I turned around and hugged me with a Grover bear or a goat hug. We thought you went to Hades the hard way! Annabeth stood behind him, trying to look angry, but even seemed relieved to see me. We can't leave you alone for five minutes! What happened? Fell. Percy! 650
meters? Behind us, a cop called Pass! The crowd broke up and several paramedics moved in, rolling a woman on a stretcher. I immediately recognized her as the mother of the little boy who was on the observation deck. She said: 'And then this huge dog, a huge fire-breathing Chihuahua - Ok, ma'am, said the paramedic. Just calm down. Your family's fine. The drug begins to
rush. I'm not crazy! That boy jumped out of the hole and the monster disappeared. That's when you saw me. There he is! That's when you saw me. There he is! That's the boy! I quickly turned around and pressed Annabeth insisted. Were you talking about chihuahuas in the elevator? I told them the whole story of Chimera. Echidna, my of Chimera. Echidna echidna, my of Chimera. Echidna, my of Chimera. Echidna, my of C
high diving and the message of the underwater lady. Wow, Grover said. We have to get you to Santa Monica! You can't ignore subpoenas from your father. Before Annabeth responded, we went through another reporter making news interruptions, and I almost froze in my tracks when he said, Percy Jackson. That's right, Dan. Channel 12 has learned that the boy who caused the
explosion matches the description of a young man wanted by authorities for a serious incident in New Jersey three days ago. And the boy is believed to travel west. For our viewers back home, here's a photo of Percy Jackson. We broke into the van and sneaked into an alley. First of all, I told Grover. We have to get out of town! Somehow we were able to get back to Amtrak
station without being noticed. We got on the train just before he got off for Denver. The train was heading west when darkness fell, police still running across the St. Louis skyline behind us. 15. A GOD BUYS USCHEESEBURGERS Next afternoon, June 14, seven days before the solstice, our train rolls in Denver. We haven't eaten in the food car before, somewhere in Kansas. We
haven't taken a shower since Hila, and I was sure it was obvious. Let's try to contact Chiron, Annabeth said. I want to tell him about your conversation with the river spirit. We can't use phones, can we? I'm not talking about phones. We walked for about holf an hour, although I wasn't sure what Annabeth was looking for. The air was dry and hot, which felt strange after the humidity
of St. Louis. Everywhere we turned, the Rocky Mountains seemed to stare at me like a tidal wave crashing into the city. We finally found an empty car wash. We headed to the farthest side of the street, opening our eyes to patrol cars. There were three teenagers hanging out at a car wash without a car; any cop who's worth the doughnuts will think we're not good. What exactly are
we doing? I asked when Grover pulled out the gun. That's seventy-five cents, he snorted. I only have two quarters left. Annabeth? Don't look at me, she said. The food car wiped me out. I took out my last change coin and went to Grover with a quarter that left me two coins and a jellyfish drachma. That's great, Grover said. We can do it with spray, of course, but the connection is
not so good, and my hand is tired of pumping. What are you talking about? He eats in the cabin and adjusts the fine mist knob. It's me. Instant messages, anabet has been corrected. The rainbow goddess Iris messages, anabet has been corrected. The rainbow goddess Iris messages for the gods. If you know how to ask and she is not very busy, she will do the same for halves of blood. You call the goddess with a gun?
Grover pointed to the nozzle in the air and water, hooked up in thick white fog. Unless you know an easier way to make a rainbow. Of course, late afternoon light filtered through the vapor and broke in colors. Annabeth held my hand. Drachma, please. I've been doing it. She lifted the coin over her head. Oh, goddess, accept our message. She threw the drachma into the rainbow.
It's gone in gold glitter. Half-blooded hill, Annabeth asked. Nothing happened for a moment. Then I watched the fog of strawberry fields and Long Island. Looks like we're on the porch of the Big House. Standing with his back to us on the railing was sandy-haired shorts and an orange tank top. He was holding a bronze sword and seemed to be staring at something that was
descending on the lawn. Luke! I called. He turned around, his eyes wide. I could have sworn that he was standing a metre in front of me through a fog screen, only to see that part of him that appeared in the rainbow. Percy Scarface jumped on a smile. Is that Annabeth? Thank you to the gods! Are you guys all right? We're... Uh... All right, take Annabeth. She was trying to fix her
dirty T-shirts, trying to cut the hair out of her face. We thought: Chiron - I mean - he's in the quarters. Luke's smile faded. We have some problems with the campers. Listen, is everything okay with you? Is Grover all right? I'm here, Grover called. He held the nozzle to one side and intervened in Luke's line. What kind of problems? That's when a great Lincoln Continental slipped
into the car wash with its stereo, which became maximum hip-hop. As the car descended into the next stall, the bass from the sabouffers vibrated so much that it shook the pavement. Chiron had to do it, what's that noise? Luke shouted. I'il take care of it. Annabeth turned away, and seemed relieved that she had an excuse to get away. Grover, come on! What is this? Grover said.
But- Give Percy the nozzle and come on! she ordered. Grover said the girls were harder to understand than the Oracle in Delphi, then he gave me the gun and followed Annabeth. I reconfighed the hose so I could support the rainbow and keep seeing Luke. Hiron had to fight, Luke called me over the music. Things are pretty tense here, Percy. A word for Zeus, Poseidon, has
expired. We're still not sure how- probably the same piece of that called the hound. Now the campers are starting to take sides. Everything is shaping up as the Trojan War. Aphrodite, Aros, and Apollo return to Poseidon. Atena supports Zeus. I was thrilled that Clarice's house would ever be on my father's side. In the next stand, I heard Annabeth and some guy arguing with each
other, and then the music decreased dramatically. What's the status? Luke invited me. Chiron will regret missing you. I told him almost everything, including my dreams. I wish I was there in Olympus in the winter solstice. I was field trip and we saw it. But Chiron said
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the gods can't take their magic objects directly. That's true, Luke said, looking for trouble. Still... Hades is at the forefront of darkness. How can anyone else sneak into the throne room and steal the bolt? You must be invisible. We were both silent until Luke realized what he was saying. Oh, hey, he's protesting. I didn't mean Annabeth. She and I have known each other forever.

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