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Stanley stood in the shower and let the cold water pour over his hot and sore body. It was four minutes of heaven. For the second day in a row he didn't use soap. He was too tired.

There was no roof over the shower building, and the walls were raised up six inches off the ground except in the corners. There was no drain in the floor. The water ran out under the walls and evaporated quickly in the sun.

He put on his clean set of orange clothes. He returned to his tent, put his dirty clothes in his crate, got out his pen and box of stationery, and headed to the rec room.

A sign on the door said wreck room.

Nearly everything in the room was broken; the TV, the pinball machine, the furniture. Even the people looked broken, with their worn-out bodies sprawled over the various chairs and sofas.

X-Ray and Armpit were playing pool. The surface of the table reminded Stanley of the surface of the lake. It was full of bumps and holes because so many people had carved their initials into the felt.

There was a hole in the far wall, and an electric fan had been placed in front of it. Cheap air-conditioning. At least the fan worked.

As Stanley made his way across the room, he tripped over an outstretched leg.

“Hey, watch it!” said an orange lump on a chair.

“You watch it,” muttered Stanley, too tired to care.

“What’d you say?” the Lump demanded.

“Nothin’,” said Stanley.

The Lump rose. He was almost as big as Stanley and a lot tougher. “You said something.” He poked his fat finger in Stanley’s neck. “What’d you say?”

A crowd quickly formed around them.

“Be cool,” said X-Ray. He put his hand on Stanley’s shoulder. “You don’t want to mess with the Caveman,” he warned.

“The Caveman’s cool,” said Armpit.

“I’m not looking for trouble,” Stanley said. “I’m just tired, that’s all.”

The Lump grunted.

X-Ray and Armpit led Stanley over to a couch. Squid slid over to make room as Stanley sat down.

“Did you see the Caveman back there?” X-Ray asked.

“The Caveman’s one tough dude,” said Squid, and he lightly punched Stanley’s arm.

Stanley leaned back against the torn vinyl upholstery. Despite his shower, his body still radiated heat. “I wasn’t trying to start anything,” he said.

The last thing he wanted to do after killing himself all day on the lake was to get in a fight with a boy called the Cave-man. He was glad X-Ray and Armpit had come to his rescue.

“Well, how’d you like your first hole?” asked Squid.

Stanley groaned, and the other boys laughed.

“Well, the first hole’s the hardest,” said Stanley.

“No way,” said X-Ray. “The second hole’s a lot harder. You’re hurting before you even get started. If you think you’re sore now, just wait and see how you feel tomorrow morning, right?”

“That’s right,” said Squid.

“Plus, the fun’s gone,” said X-Ray.

“The fun?” asked Stanley.

“Don’t lie to me,” said X-Ray. “I bet you always wanted to dig a big hole, right? Am I right?”

Stanley had never really thought about it before, but he knew better than to tell X-Ray he wasn’t right.

“Every kid in the world wants to dig a great big hole,” said X-Ray. “To China, right?”

“Right,” said Stanley.

“See what I mean,” said X-Ray. “That’s what I’m saying. But now the fun’s gone. And you still got to do it again, and again, and again.”

“Camp Fun and Games,” said Stanley.

“What’s in the box?” asked Squid.

Stanley had forgotten he had brought it. “Uh, paper. I was going to write a letter to my mother.”

“Your mother?” laughed Squid.

“She’ll worry if I don’t.”

Squid scowled.

Stanley looked around the room. This was the one place in camp where the boys could enjoy themselves, and what'd they do? They wrecked it. The glass on the TV was smashed, as if someone had put his foot through it. Every table and chair seemed to be missing at least one leg. Everything leaned.

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He waited to write the letter until after Squid had gotten up and joined the game of pool.

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Dear Mom,

Today was my first day at camp, and I've already made some friends. We've been out on the lake all day, so I'm pretty tired. Once I pass the swimming test, I'll get to learn how to water-ski. I

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He stopped writing as he became aware that somebody was reading over

his shoulder. He turned to see Zero, standing behind the couch.

“I don’t want her to worry about me,” he explained.

Zero said nothing. He just stared at the letter with a serious, almost angry look on his face.

Stanley slipped it back into the stationery box.

“Did the shoes have red X’s on the back?” Zero asked him.

It took Stanley a moment, but then he realized Zero was asking about Clyde Livingston’s shoes.

“Yes, they did,” he said. He wondered how Zero knew that. Brand X was a popular brand of sneakers. Maybe Clyde Livingston made a commercial for them.

Zero stared at him for a moment, with the same intensity with which he had been staring at the letter.

Stanley poked his finger through a hole in the vinyl couch and pulled out some of the stuffing. He wasn't aware of what he was doing.

"C'mon, Caveman, dinner," said Armpit.

"You coming, Caveman?" said Squid.

Stanley looked around to see that Armpit and Squid were talking to him. "Uh, sure," he said. He put the piece of stationery back in the box, then got up and followed the boys out to the tables.

The Lump wasn't the Caveman. He was.

He shrugged his left shoulder. It was better than Barf Bag.