

There were six large gray tents, and each one had a black letter on it: A, B, C, D, E, or F. The first five tents were for the campers. The counselors slept in F.

Stanley was assigned to D tent. Mr. Pendanski was his counselor.

"My name is easy to remember," said Mr. Pendanski as he shook hands with Stanley just outside the tent. "Three easy words: pen, dance, key."

Mr. Sir returned to the office.

Mr. Pendanski was younger than Mr. Sir, and not nearly as scary looking. The top of his head was shaved so close it was almost bald, but his face was covered in a thick curly black beard. His nose was badly sunburned.

"Mr. Sir isn't really so bad," said Mr. Pendanski. "He's just been in a bad mood ever since he quit smoking. The person you've got to worry about is the Warden. There's really only one rule at Camp Green Lake: Don't upset the Warden."

Stanley nodded, as if he understood.

"I want you to know, Stanley, that I respect you," Mr. Pendanski said. "I understand you've made some bad mistakes in your life. Otherwise you wouldn't be here. But everyone makes mistakes. You may have done some bad things, but that doesn't mean you're a bad kid."

Stanley nodded. It seemed pointless to try and tell his counselor that he was innocent. He figured that everyone probably said that. He didn't want Mr. Pen-dance-key to think he had a bad attitude.

"I'm going to help you turn your life around," said his counselor. "But you're going to have to help, too. Can I count on your help?"

"Yes, sir," Stanley said.

Mr. Pendanski said, "Good," and patted Stanley on the back.

Two boys, each carrying a shovel, were coming across the compound. Mr. Pendanski called to them. "Rex! Alan! I want you to come say hello to Stanley. He's the newest member of our team."

The boys glanced wearily at Stanley.

They were dripping with sweat, and their faces were so dirty that it took Stanley a moment to notice that one kid was white and the other black.

"What happened to Barf Bag?" asked the black kid.

"Lewis is still in the hospital," said Mr. Pendanski. "He won't be returning." He told the boys to come shake Stanley's hand and introduce themselves, "like gentlemen."

"Hi," the white kid grunted.

"That's Alan," said Mr. Pendanski.

"My name's not Alan," the boy said. "It's Squid. And that's X-Ray."

"Hey," said X-Ray. He smiled and shook Stanley's hand. He wore glasses, but they were so dirty that Stanley wondered how he could see out of them.

Mr. Pendanski told Alan to go to the Rec Hall and bring the other boys to meet Stanley. Then he led him inside the tent.

There were seven cots, each one less than two feet from the one next to it.

"Which was Lewis's cot?" Mr. Pendanski asked.

"Barf Bag slept here," said X-Ray, kicking at one of the beds.

"All right, Stanley, that'll be yours," said Mr. Pendanski.

Stanley looked at the cot and nodded. He wasn't particularly thrilled about sleeping in the same cot that had been used by somebody named Barf Bag.

▷ 4 assign sb. to sth. [ə'sam]: send sb. to work or live in sth. 9 scary: frightening
10 bald [bɔ:ld]: having little or no hair on your head 16 upset sb. [-]: annoy sb.
31 compound (n): area in which several buildings stand together (usu. surrounded by a fence, etc.) 33 weary ['wiəri]: very tired, esp. after you have been working hard
34 drip: (hier) tröpfeln 37 barf bag: bag into which you vomit (= sich übergeben)
41 grunt (v): make a sound like a pig 43 squid: Tintenfisch · x-ray (n): Röntgen
47 Rec Hall: room where the youngsters spend their free time; rec (abbr) = recreation 49 cot: camp bed 55 thrilled (adj): very excited and pleased

Seven crates were stacked in two piles at one side of the tent. The open end of the crates faced outward. Stanley put his backpack, change of clothes, and towel in what used to be Barf Bag's crate. It was at the bottom of the stack that had three in it.

Squid returned with four other boys. The first three were introduced by Mr. Pendanski as José, Theodore, and Ricky. They called themselves Magnet, Armpit, and Zigzag.

"They all have nicknames," explained Mr. Pendanski. "However, I prefer to use the names their parents gave them – the names that *society will recognize them by* when they return to become useful and hardworking members of society."

"It ain't just a nickname," X-Ray told Mr. Pendanski. He tapped the rim of his glasses. "I can see inside you, Mom. You've got a big fat heart."

The last boy either didn't have a real name or else he didn't have a nickname. Both Mr. Pendanski and X-Ray called him Zero.

"You know why his name's Zero?" asked Mr. Pendanski.

"Because there's nothing inside his head." He smiled and playfully shook Zero's shoulder.

Zero said nothing.

"And that's Mom!" a boy said.

Mr. Pendanski smiled at him. "If it makes you feel better to call me Mom, Theodore, go ahead and call me Mom." He turned to Stanley. "If you have questions, Theodore will help you. You got that, Theodore? I'm depending on you."

Theodore spit a thin line of saliva between his teeth, causing some of the other boys to complain about the need to keep their "home" sanitary.

"You were all new here once," said Mr. Pendanski, "and you all know what it feels like. I'm counting on every one of you to help Stanley."

Stanley looked at the ground.

Mr. Pendanski left the tent, and soon the other boys began to file out as well, taking their towels and change of clothes with them. Stanley was relieved to be left alone, but he was so thirsty he felt as if he would die if he didn't get something to drink soon.

"Hey, uh, Theodore," he said, going after him. "Do you know where I can fill my canteen?"

Theodore whirled and grabbed Stanley by his collar. "My name's not Thee-o-dore," he said. "It's Armpit." He threw Stanley to the ground.

Stanley stared up at him, terrified.

"There's a water spigot on the wall of the shower stall."

"Thanks ... Armpit," said Stanley.

As he watched the boy turn and walk away, he couldn't for the life of him figure out why anyone would want to be called Armpit.

In a way, it made him feel a little better about having to sleep in a cot that had been used by somebody named Barf Bag. Maybe it was a term of respect.

▷ 1 *crate*: open wooden container for storing or transporting goods · *stack sth.*: arrange sth. neatly in a pile 7 *armpit*: part of the body under the arm where it joins the shoulder 13 *rim*: edge of sth. that is circular 25 *depend on sb./sth.*: rely on sb./sth. and be able to trust them 26 *saliva* [sə'laɪvə]: liquid that is produced in your mouth 28 *sanitary*: clean 33–34 *file out*: walk in a line in a particular direction 39 *whirl* [wɜ:rl]: move around quickly in a circle 43 *spigot*: Trinkhahn

Stanley took a shower – if you could call it that, ate dinner – if you could call it that, and went to bed – if you could call his smelly and scratchy cot a bed.

Because of the scarcity of water, each camper was only allowed a four-minute shower. It took Stanley nearly that long to get used to the cold water. There was no knob for hot water. He kept stepping into, then jumping back from, the spray, until the water shut off automatically. He never managed to use his bar of soap, which was just as well, because he wouldn't have had time to rinse off the suds.

Dinner was some kind of stewed meat and vegetables. The meat was brown and the vegetables had once been green. Everything tasted pretty much the same. He ate it all, and used his slice of white bread to mop up the juice. Stanley had never been one to leave food on his plate, no matter how it tasted.

"What'd you do?" one of the campers asked him.

At first Stanley didn't know what he meant.

"They sent you here for a reason."

"Oh," he realized. "I stole a pair of sneakers."

The other boys thought that was funny. Stanley wasn't sure why. Maybe because their crimes were a lot worse than stealing shoes.

"From a store, or were they on someone's feet?" asked Squid.

"Uh, neither," Stanley answered. "They belonged to Clyde Livingston."

Nobody believed him.

"Sweet Feet?" said X-Ray. "Yeah, right!"

"No way," said Squid.

Now, as Stanley lay on his cot, he thought it was kind of funny in a way. Nobody had believed him when he said he was innocent. Now, when he said he stole them, nobody believed him either.

Clyde "Sweet Feet" Livingston was a famous baseball player. He'd led the American League in stolen bases over the last three years. He was also the only player in history to ever hit four triples in one game.

Stanley had a poster of him hanging on the wall of his bedroom. He used to have the poster anyway. He didn't know where it was now. It had been taken by the police and was used as evidence of his guilt in the courtroom.

Clyde Livingston also came to court. In spite of everything, when Stanley found out that Sweet Feet was going to be there, he was actually excited about the prospect of meeting his hero.

Clyde Livingston testified that they were his sneakers and that he had donated them to help raise money for the homeless shelter. He said he couldn't imagine what kind of horrible person would steal from homeless children.

That was the worst part for Stanley. His hero thought he was a no-good-dirty-rotten thief.

As Stanley tried to turn over on his cot, he was afraid it was going to collapse under all his weight. He barely fit in it. When he finally managed to roll over on his stomach, the smell was so bad that he had to turn over again and try sleeping on his back. The cot smelled like sour milk.

Though it was night, the air was still very warm. Armpit was snoring two cots away.

▷ 3 *scratchy*: (of clothes or fabric) rough and unpleasant to touch 4 *scarcity* ['skersəti]: lack of sth. 9 *suds* (pl): very small soap bubbles 13 *mop sth. up*: remove sth. (esp. a liquid) by using a thing that absorbs it 31 *American League*: amerikanische Baseball-Liga 31 *stolen base*: action in which a player moves from one base to another while no one is paying attention 32 *hit a triple*: hit the ball so you have time to run to the third base 35 *evidence*: the facts, signs etc. that make sb. believe that sth. is true 39 *prospect of sth.*: possibility that sth. will happen 40 *testify*: make a statement that sth. happened or that sth. is true, esp. as a witness (= Zeuge/in) in a court of law 41 *donate sth.*: give sth. to (help) poor people · *homeless shelter*: Obdachlosenheim 47 *barely* (adv): hardly · *fit in sth.* (v): be the right size for sth. 52 *snore*: breathe noisily through your mouth and nose while you are asleep

Back at school, a bully named Derrick Dunne used to torment Stanley. The teachers never took Stanley's complaints seriously, because Derrick was so much smaller than Stanley. Some teachers even seemed to find it amusing that a little kid like Derrick could pick on someone as big as Stanley.

On the day Stanley was arrested, Derrick had taken Stanley's notebook and, after a long game of come-and-get-it, finally dropped it in the toilet in the boys' restroom. By the time Stanley retrieved it, he had missed his bus and had to walk home.

It was while he was walking home, carrying his wet notebook, with the prospect of having to copy the ruined pages, that the sneakers fell from the sky.

"I was walking home and the sneakers fell from the sky."

He had told the judge. "One hit me on the head."

It had hurt, too.

They hadn't exactly fallen from the sky. He had just walked out from under a freeway overpass when the shoe hit him on the head.

Stanley took it as some kind of sign. His father had been trying to figure out a way to recycle old sneakers, and suddenly a pair of sneakers fell on top of him, seemingly out of nowhere, like a gift from God.

Naturally, he had no way of knowing they belonged to Clyde Livingston. In fact, the shoes were anything but sweet. Whoever had worn them had had a bad case of foot odor.

Stanley couldn't help but think that there was something special about the shoes, that they would somehow provide the key to his father's invention. It was too much of a coincidence to be a mere accident. Stanley had felt like he was holding destiny's shoes.

He ran. Thinking back now, he wasn't sure why he ran. Maybe he was in a hurry to bring the shoes to his father, or maybe he was trying to run away from his miserable and humiliating day at school.

A patrol car pulled alongside him. A policeman asked him why he was running. Then he took the shoes and made a call on his radio. Shortly thereafter, Stanley was arrested.

It turned out the sneakers had been stolen from a display at the homeless shelter. That evening rich people were going to come to the shelter and pay a hundred dollars to eat the food that the poor people ate every day for free. Clyde Livingston, who had once lived at the shelter when he was younger, was going to speak and sign auto-

graphs. His shoes would be auctioned, and it was expected that they would sell for over five thousand dollars. All the money would go to help the homeless.

Because of the baseball schedule, Stanley's trial was delayed several months. His parents couldn't afford a lawyer. "You don't need a lawyer," his mother had said. "Just tell the truth."

Stanley told the truth, but perhaps it would have been better if he had lied a little. He could have said he found the shoes in the street. No one believed they fell from the sky.

It wasn't destiny, he realized. It was his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather!

The judge called Stanley's crime despicable. "The shoes were valued at over five thousand dollars. It was money that would provide food and shelter for the homeless. And you stole that from them, just so you could have a souvenir."

The judge said that there was an opening at Camp Green Lake, and he suggested that the discipline of the camp might improve Stanley's character. It was either that or jail. Stanley's parents asked if they could have some time to find out more about Camp Green Lake, but the judge advised them to make a quick decision. "Vacancies don't last long at Camp Green Lake."

▷ 1 *bully* (n): person who uses their strength or power to frighten or hurt weaker people · *torment sb.*: make sb. suffer a lot 2 *complaint*: statement that sb. makes saying that they are not satisfied or that sth. unpleasant is happening to them 4-5 *pick on sb.*: treat sb. in an unpleasant way 8 *restroom*: room with toilets · *retrieve sth.*: get sth. back 17 *freeway overpass*: Autobahnbrücke 26 *provide sth.*: (hier) etwas liefern 27 *coincidence* [kou'insidəns]: the fact that two things happen at the same time by chance · *mere* [mɪr]: simple 28 *accident*: (hier) Zufall · *destiny*: Schicksal 31 *miserable* ['mɪzrəbl]: very unpleasant · *humiliating* [-'----] (adj): making sb. feel ashamed or stupid 35 *display* (n): Auslage 43 *delay sth.*: do sth. at a later time 44 *afford sth.* [ə'fɔ:rd]: have enough money to be able to pay for sth. · *lawyer* ['lɔ:jər]: Rechtsanwalt/-wältin 51 *despicable* [-'----]: very unpleasant or evil 55 *opening* (n): (here) vacancy, free place

The shovel felt heavy in Stanley's soft, fleshy hands. He tried to jam it into the earth, but the blade banged against the ground and bounced off without making a dent. The vibrations ran up the shaft of the shovel and into Stanley's wrists, making his bones rattle.

It was still dark. The only light came from the moon and the stars, more stars than Stanley had ever seen before. It seemed he had only just gotten to sleep when Mr. Pendanski came in and woke everyone up.

Using all his might, he brought the shovel back down onto the dry lake bed. The force stung his hands but made no impression on the earth. He wondered if he had a defective shovel. He glanced at Zero, about fifteen feet away, who scooped out a shovelful of dirt and dumped it on a pile that was already almost a foot tall.

For breakfast they'd been served some kind of lukewarm cereal. The best part was the orange juice. They each got a pint carton. The cereal actually didn't taste too bad, but it had smelled just like his cot.

Then they filled their canteens, got their shovels, and were marched out across the lake. Each group was assigned a different area.

The shovels were kept in a shed near the showers. They all looked the same to Stanley, although X-Ray had his own special shovel, which no one else was allowed to use. X-Ray claimed it was shorter than the others, but if it was, it was only by a fraction of an inch.

The shovels were five feet long, from the tip of the steel blade to the end of the wooden shaft. Stanley's hole would have to be as deep as his shovel, and he'd have to be able to lay the shovel flat across the

bottom in any direction. That was why X-Ray wanted the shortest shovel.

The lake was so full of holes and mounds that it reminded Stanley of pictures he'd seen of the moon. "If you find anything interesting or unusual," Mr. Pendanski had told him, "you should report it either to me or Mr. Sir, when we come around with the water truck. If the Warden likes what you found, you'll get the rest of the day off."

"What are we supposed to be looking for?" Stanley asked him.

"You're not looking for anything. You're digging to build character. It's just if you find anything, the Warden would like to know about it."

He glanced helplessly at his shovel. It wasn't defective. He was defective.

He noticed a thin crack in the ground. He placed the point of his shovel on top of it, then jumped on the back of the blade with both feet.

The shovel sank a few inches into the packed earth.

He smiled. For once in his life it paid to be overweight.

He leaned on the shaft and pried up his first shovelful of dirt, then dumped it off to the side.

Only ten million more to go, he thought, then placed the shovel back in the crack and jumped on it again.

He unearthed several shovelfuls of dirt in this manner, before it occurred to him that he was dumping his dirt within the perimeter of his hole. He laid his shovel flat on the ground and marked where the edges of his hole would be. Five feet was awfully wide.

He moved the dirt he'd already dug up out past his mark. He took a drink from his canteen. Five feet would be awfully deep, too.

The digging got easier after a while. The ground was hardest at the surface, where the sun had baked a crust about eight inches deep.

▷ 1 *fleshy*: fleischig 2 *blade*: the sharp part of a knife, etc. 3 *dent* (n): hollow place in a hard surface usually caused by sth. hitting it · *shaft*: the wooden part of a spade 4 *rattle* (v): make a series of short loud sounds when hitting against sth. hard 10 *sting* – *stung* – *stung*: feel a sharp pain 11 *defective*: that has a fault 12 *scoop sth. out*: lift sth. out with a quick continuous movement 14 *lukewarm*: not really warm 23 *a fraction*: Bruchteil · *inch*: small unit of measurement (= 2,54 cm) 29 *mound*: large pile of earth 40 *crack* (n): line on a surface which has broken but not split into separate parts 44 *it paid*: (hier) es machte sich bezahlt 45 *pry sth. up*: use force to separate sth. from sth. else 50 *perimeter*: Umfang 53 *past* (prep): on the other side of 54 *awfully* (adv): very, extremely

Beneath that, the earth was looser. But by the time Stanley broke past the crust, a blister had formed in the middle of his right thumb, and it hurt to hold the shovel.

Stanley's great-great-grandfather was named Elya Yelnats. He was born in Latvia. When he was fifteen years old he fell in love with Myra Menke. 5

(He didn't know he was Stanley's great-great-grandfather.)

Myra Menke was fourteen. She would turn fifteen in two months, at which time her father had decided she should be married.

Elya went to her father to ask for her hand, but so did Igor Barkov, the pig farmer. Igor was fifty-seven years old. He had a red nose and fat puffy cheeks. 10

"I will trade you my fattest pig for your daughter," Igor offered.

"And what have you got?" Myra's father asked Elya.

"A heart full of love," said Elya. 15

"I'd rather have a fat pig," said Myra's father.

Desperate, Elya went to see Madame Zeroni, an old Egyptian woman who lived on the edge of town. He had become friends with her, though she was quite a bit older than him. She was even older than Igor Barkov. 20

The other boys of his village liked to mud wrestle. Elya preferred visiting Madame Zeroni and listening to her many stories.

Madame Zeroni had dark skin and a very wide mouth. When she looked at you, her eyes seemed to expand, and you felt like she was looking right through you. 25

"Elya, what's wrong!" she asked, before he even told her he was upset. She was sitting in a homemade wheelchair. She had no left foot. Her leg stopped at her ankle.

"I'm in love with Myra Menke," Elya confessed. "But Igor Barkov has offered to trade his fattest pig for her. I can't compete with that." 30

"Good," said Madame Zeroni. "You're too young to get married. You've got your whole life ahead of you."

"But I love Myra."

"Myra's head is as empty as a flowerpot."

"But she's beautiful." 35

"So is a flowerpot. Can she push a plow? Can she milk a goat? No, she is too delicate. Can she have an intelligent conversation? No, she is silly and foolish. Will she take care of you when you are sick? No,