

Monday 30th March

Read chapter 11, 12 and 13.

Make notes on any words you are unsure of and either look them up today or tomorrow once you have read the other chapters we are working on this week

11

Stanley returned to his hole. It wasn't fair. Mr. Pendanski had even said his fossil was interesting. He slammed his shovel into the ground and pried up another piece of earth. After a while, he noticed X-Ray had come by and was watching him dig. "Hey, Caveman, let me talk to you a second," X-Ray said. Stanley put down his shovel and stepped up out of his hole. "Say, listen," said X-Ray. "If you find something else, give it to me, okay?" Stanley wasn't sure what to say. X-Ray was clearly the leader of the group, and Stanley didn't want to get on his bad side. "You're new here, right?" said X-Ray. "I've been here for almost a year. I've never found anything. You know, my eyesight's not so good. No one knows this, but you know why my name's X-Ray?" Stanley shrugged one shoulder. "It's pig latin for Rex. That's all. I'm too blind to find anything." Stanley tried to remember how pig latin worked. "I mean," X-Ray went on, "why should you get a day off when you've only been here a couple of days? If anybody gets a day off, it should be me. That's only fair, right?" "I guess," Stanley agreed. X-Ray smiled. "You're a good guy, Caveman."

Stanley picked up his shovel. The more he thought about it, the more he was glad that he agreed to let X-Ray have anything he might find. If he was going to survive at Camp Green Lake, it was far more important that X-Ray think he was a good guy than it was for him to get one day off. Besides, he didn't expect to find anything anyway. There probably wasn't anything "of interest" out there, and even if there was, he'd never been what you could call lucky. He slammed his blade into the ground, then dumped out another shovelful of dirt. It was a little surprising, he thought, that X-Ray was the leader of the group, since he obviously wasn't the biggest or the toughest. In fact, except for Zero, X-Ray was the smallest. Armpit was the biggest. Zigzag may have been taller than Armpit, but that was only because of his neck. Yet Armpit, and all the others, seemed to be willing to do whatever X-Ray asked of them. As Stanley dug up another shovelful of dirt, it occurred to him that Armpit wasn't the

biggest. He, the Caveman, was bigger. He was glad they called him Caveman. It meant they accepted him as a member of the group. He would have been glad even if they'd called him Barf Bag.

It was really quite remarkable to him. At school, bullies like Derrick Dunne used to pick on him. Yet Derrick Dunne would be scared senseless by any of the boys here. As he dug his hole, Stanley thought about what it would be like if Derrick Dunne had to fight Armpit or Squid. Derrick wouldn't stand a chance. He imagined what it would be like if he became good friends with all of them, and then for some reason they all went with him to his school, and then Derrick Dunne tried to steal his notebook . . . "Just what do you think you're doing?" asks Squid, as he slams his hands into Derrick Dunne's smug face. "Caveman's our friend," says Armpit, grabbing him by the shin collar. Stanley played the scene over and over again in his mind, each time watching another boy from Group D beat up Derrick Dunne. It helped him dig his hole and ease his own suffering. Whatever pain he felt was being felt ten times worse by Derrick.

12

Again, Stanley was the last one to finish digging. It was late afternoon when he dragged himself back to the compound. This time he would have accepted a ride on the truck if it was offered. When he got to the tent, he found Mr. Pendanski and the other boys sitting in a circle on the ground. "Welcome, Stanley," said Mr. Pendanski. "Hey, Caveman. You get your hole dug?" asked Magnet. He managed to nod. "You spit in it?" asked Squid. He nodded again. "You're right," he said to X-Ray. "The second hole's the hardest." X-Ray shook his head. "The third hole's the hardest," he said. "Come join our circle," said Mr. Pendanski. Stanley plopped down between Squid and Magnet. He needed to rest up before taking a shower. "We've been discussing what we want to do with our lives," said Mr. Pendanski. "We're not going to be at Camp Green Lake forever. We need to prepare for the day we leave here and join the rest of society." "Hey, that's great, Mom!" said Magnet. "They're going to finally let you out of here?" The other boys laughed. "Okay, José," said Mr. Pendanski. "What do you want to do with your life?" "I don't know," said Magnet. "You need to think about that," said Mr. Pendanski. "It's important to have goals. Otherwise

you're going to end up right back in jail. What do you like to do?" "I don't know," said Magnet. "You must like something," said Mr. Pendanski. "I like animals," said Magnet. "Good," said Mr. Pendanski. "Does anyone know of any jobs that involve animals?" "Veterinarian," said Armpit. "That's right," said Mr. Pendanski. "He could work in a zoo," said Zigzag. "He belongs in the zoo," said Squid, then he and X-Ray laughed. "How about you, Stanley? Any ideas for José?" Stanley sighed. "Animal trainer," he said. "Like for the circus, or movies, or something like that." "Any of those jobs sound good to you, José?" asked Mr. Pendanski. "Yeah, I like what Caveman said. About training animals for movies. I think it would be fun to train monkeys." X-Ray laughed. "Don't laugh, Rex," said Mr. Pendanski. "We don't laugh at people's dreams. Someone is going to have to train monkeys for the movies." "Who are you kidding, Mom?" asked X-Ray. "Magnet's never going to be a monkey trainer." "You don't know that," said Mr. Pendanski. "I'm not saying it's going to be easy. Nothing in life is easy. But that's no reason to give up. You'll be surprised what you can accomplish if you set your mind to it. After all, you only have one life, so you should try to make the most of it." Stanley tried to figure out what he'd say if Mr. Pendanski asked him what he wanted to do with his life. He used to think he wanted to work for the F.B.I., but this didn't seem the appropriate place to mention that. "So far you've all done a pretty good job at messing up your lives," said Mr. Pendanski. "I know you think you're cool." He looked at Stanley. "So you're Caveman, now, huh? You like digging holes, Caveman?" Stanley didn't know what to say. "Well, let me tell you something, Caveman. You are here on account of one person. If it wasn't for that person, you wouldn't be here digging holes in the hot sun. You know who that person is?" "My no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grand-father." The other boys howled with laughter. Even Zero smiled. It was the first time Stanley had ever seen Zero smile. He usually had such an angry expression on his face. Now he had such a huge smile it almost seemed too big for his face, like the smile on a jack-o'-lantern. "No," said Mr. Pendanski. "That person is you, Stanley. You're the reason you are here. You're responsible for yourself. You messed up your life, and it's up to you to fix it. No one else is going to do it for you—for any of you." Mr. Pendanski looked from one boy to another. "You're all special in your own way," he said. "You've all got something to offer. You have to think about what you want to do, then do it. Even you, Zero. You're not completely worthless." The smile was now gone from Zero's face.

"What do you want to do with your life?" Mr. Pendanski asked him. Zero's mouth was shut tight. As he glared at Mr. Pendanski, his dark eyes seemed to expand. "What about it, Zero?" asked Mr. Pendanski. "What do you like to do?" "I like to dig holes."

13

All too soon Stanley was back out on the lake, sticking his shovel into the dirt. X-Ray was right: the third hole was the hardest. So was the fourth hole. And the fifth hole. And the sixth, and the . . . He dug his shovel into the dirt. After a while he'd lost track of the day of the week, and how many holes he'd dug. It all seemed like one big hole, and it would take a year and a half to dig it. He guessed he'd lost at least five pounds. He figured that in a year and a half he'd be either in great physical condition, or else dead. He dug his shovel into the dirt. It couldn't always be this hot, he thought. Surely it got cooler in December. Maybe then they froze. He dug his shovel into the dirt. His skin had gotten tougher. It didn't hurt so much to hold the shovel. As he drank from his canteen he looked up at the sky. A cloud had appeared earlier in the day. It was the first cloud he could remember seeing since coming to Camp Green Lake. He and the other boys had been watching it all day, hoping it would move in front of the sun. Occasionally it got close, but it was just teasing them. His hole was waist deep. He dug his shovel into the dirt. As he dumped it out, he thought he saw something glisten as it fell onto the dirt pile. Whatever it was, it was quickly buried. Stanley stared at the pile a moment, unsure if he'd even seen it. Even if it was something, what good would it do him? He'd promised to give anything he found to X-Ray. It didn't seem worth the effort to climb out of his hole to check it out. He glanced up at the cloud, which was close enough to the sun that he had to squint to look at it. He dug his shovel back into the earth, scooped out some dirt, and lifted it over his dirt pile. But instead of dumping it there, he tossed it off to the side. His curiosity had gotten the better of him. He climbed up out of his hole and sifted his fingers through the pile. He felt something hard and metallic. He pulled it out. It was a gold tube, about as long and as wide as the second finger on his right hand. The tube was open at one end and closed at the other. He used a few drops of his precious water to clean it.

There seemed to be some kind of design on the flat, closed end. He poured a few more drops of water on it and rubbed it on the inside of his pants pocket. He looked again at the

design engraved into the flat bottom of the tube. He could see an outline of a heart, with the letters K B etched inside it. He tried to figure out some way that he wouldn't have to give it to X-Ray. He could just keep it, but that wouldn't do him any good. He wanted a day off. He looked at the large piles of dirt near where X-Ray was digging. X-Ray was probably almost finished for the day. Getting the rest of the day off would hardly do him much good. X-Ray would first have to show the tube to Mr. Sir or Mr. Pendanski, who would then have to show it to the Warden. By then X-Ray might be done anyway. Stanley wondered about trying to secretly take the tube directly to the Warden. He could explain the situation to the Warden, and the Warden might make up an excuse for giving him the day off, so X-Ray wouldn't suspect. He looked across the lake toward the cabin under the two oak trees. The place scared him. He'd been at Camp Green Lake almost two weeks, and he still hadn't seen the Warden. That was just as well. If he could go his entire year and a half without seeing the Warden, that would be fine with him. Besides, he didn't know if the Warden would find the tube "interesting." He looked at it again. It looked familiar. He thought he'd seen something like it, somewhere before, but couldn't quite place it. "What you got there, Caveman?" asked Zigzag. Stanley's large hand closed around the tube. "Nothin', just, uh . . ." It was useless. "I think I might have found something." "Another fossil?" "No, I'm not sure what it is." "Let me see," said Zigzag. Instead of showing it to Zigzag, Stanley brought it to X-Ray. Zigzag followed. X-Ray looked at the tube, then rubbed his dirty glasses on his dirty shirt and looked at the tube again. One by one, the other boys dropped their shovels and came to look. "It looks like an old shotgun shell," said Squid. "Yeah, that's probably what it is," said Stanley. He decided not to mention the engraved design. Maybe nobody would notice it. He doubted X-Ray could see it. "No, it's too long and thin to be a shotgun shell," said Magnet. "It's prob'ly just a piece of junk," said Stanley. "Well, I'll show it to Mom," said X-Ray. "See what he thinks. Who knows? Maybe I'll get the day off." "Your hole's almost finished," said Stanley. "Yeah, so?" Stanley raised and lowered his shoulder. "So, why don't you wait until tomorrow to show it to Mom?" he suggested. "You can pretend you found it first thing in the morning. Then you can get the whole day off, instead of just an hour or so this afternoon." X-Ray smiled. "Good thinking, Caveman." He dropped the tube into his large pocket on the right leg of his dirty orange pants.

Stanley returned to his hole. When the water truck came, Stanley started to take his place at the end of the line, but X-Ray told him to get behind Magnet, in front of Zero. Stanley moved up one place in line.