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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-grandfather."

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."