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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.