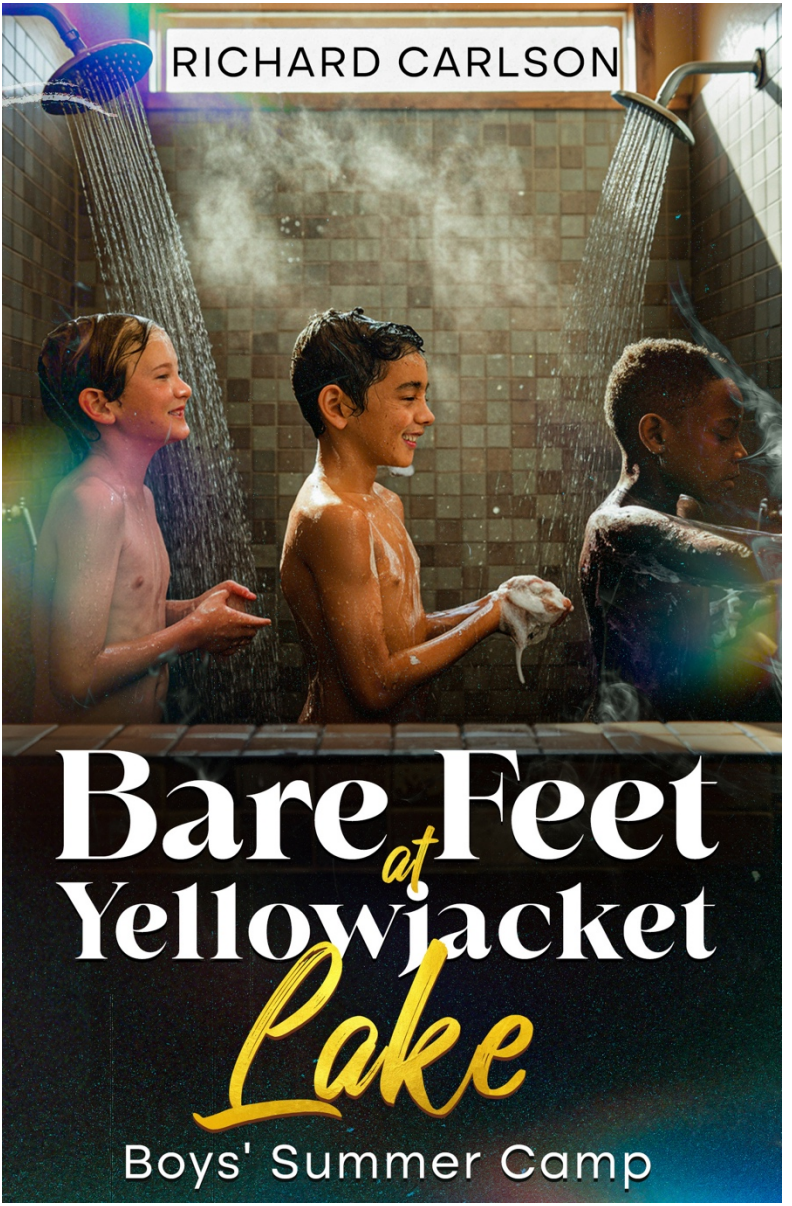

RICHARD CARLSON
Bare at Feet
Yellowjacket
Lake
Boys' Summer Camp

Bare Feet at Yellowjacket Lake: Boys' Summer Camp

Richard Carlson

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Part I

At the airport, twelve-year-old Jeremy got on the bus for summer camp. Jeremy looked at all the boys already on the bus as he walked to a bench in the middle, where two boys, one Hispanic and one Black, were sitting. Most of the other seats already sat three boys. He smiled his thanks as the two scooted over toward the window. Sitting down, he

pulled out a pack of Hubba Bubba bubble gum from his shirt pocket.

"Would you guys like some?" he asked them, and each said, "Yes, please."

Opening the pack, Jeremy handed one piece to each of them and unwrapped one for himself.

"Yummy. Grape. My favorite," the Hispanic boy said, smiling as he put it in his mouth.

Jeremy grinned. “I’m Jeremy. I’m twelve.”

“I’m Ben,” the Black kid said. “I’m twelve, too.”

“I’m Anthony,” the Hispanic kid said. “And I’m twelve, too!”

Chuckling, they each shook hands. They were friends already!

Jeremy wondered about the surprise he had in his luggage. What would everyone think about it? He hoped they’d like it.

The bus pulled out of the depot and onto the street; the camp was still a long ride away.

“I have an idea. Let’s talk about our families,” Jeremy said.

“Okay,” Anthony said. “I live with my parents, siblings, and grandparents, in a large house in Amarillo, Texas.”

“That’s nice,” Jeremy said. “I hope you don’t feel homesick without them.”

“I am already missing them, especially my grandma,” Anthony said, with a tear in his eye. “I miss them already.”

“It’s okay, man,” Jeremy said, patting his arm. “You’ll get through it. Just wait until we get to camp. Then, we’ll be busy having fun, and you won’t feel so homesick.”

“Yeah, that’s true,” Anthony said, but he still looked like he was going to cry. Jeremy realized

that Anthony was sensitive, like he was.

“I’m from Washington, D.C., in the city,” Ben shared. “I’ve been to the White House many times, since I live so close to it. I’ve even met President Carter and President Reagan,” he said, making Anthony and Jeremy go a little bug-eyed. They were happy to have such an interesting friend who’d met two presidents.

“I’m from, Tucson, Arizona, where it’s all desert,” Jeremy said. He blew a big bubble and popped it loudly, which cheered Anthony up a little.

“Amarillo, Texas, is also in the desert,” Anthony said, feeling better to have a connection with someone.

“Do you live in the city or countryside?” Jeremy asked him.

“Countryside,” he replied.

After a lengthy gap in the conversation, Jeremy said, “There are not going to be any girls at camp, and I am going to miss seeing females our age for two whole weeks. I’ll need a hug, even if it’s from a boy,” he joked. “I’ll need a boy to comfort me, because I am sensitive and need love.”

Laughing, Ben said, “I will hug you and make you feel loved!”

Anthony and Jeremy giggled.

“You’re a true jokester, Jeremy,” Anthony said.

Jeremy was happy that he had cheered Anthony up by joking with the guys. “Bwwwooommp!” He made a farting sound with his hand and armpit. “That’s the kind of fart that leaks a little juice when it happens,” he explained. He had to maintain his reputation of being a typical cool twelve-year-old.

Anthony and Ben grinned.

“Where will we shower at camp? Do they have individual showers? Or one big one, for everyone at once?” Jeremy asked.

Ben giggled. “Each cabin has one shower that is for a few boys at a time,” he explained.

Now, Jeremy was no longer feeling so happy. He was worried about his new friends seeing him naked every day.

“I’ll wear a swimsuit,” Anthony declared.

Jeremy was glad to realize that his new friend was nervous about it, too. Even so, Jeremy almost wished he wasn't going to summer camp.

"You'll be just fine. We're all men; we all look the same," Ben assured them, but nervous himself.

Jeremy could only hope that was true, that the shower situation would be just fine; that's what had been worrying him for

weeks. At least he knew that being naked in front of the others bugged Anthony, too.

“What about your family?” Jeremy asked Ben in an attempt to change the subject.

“I live with my parents and two younger sisters. I look after them, like a brother should,” Ben explained. “One has autism, and I am always looking out for her.”

“I have an autistic younger brother. He’s nine, and I look after

him, too. I'm the oldest of my siblings: two brothers and a baby sister, who was born two months ago. She's so sweet. She's an angel," Jeremy proudly said.

"I have seven siblings: three younger sisters and four younger brothers," Anthony piped up. "So, with all my siblings, we're a family of ten, plus my grandparents, making it twelve. My grandparents immigrated from Mexico, many years ago, before I was born. They

had to wait many years to be approved to come here."

"I'm happy they came here," Jeremy said. "Maybe we never would have met if they hadn't!"

Ben and Anthony were awesome new buddies. Pushing the worry out of his mind, Jeremy knew they were going to have a great time at camp!

He wondered what they would think about his secret: he had some very unusual travelers

in his luggage. They were alive and were in a clear plastic peanut butter jar—which was empty and washed out, of course.

Part II

The boys continued to banter during the long bus ride.

“What is something interesting about yourself?” Ben asked Jeremy.

“Well, my grandmother, my mom’s mother, was Jewish, which makes me one quarter Jewish, which, of course, was frowned upon in Nazi Germany. I don’t remember the German word for it,

but I'd be considered a *mutt* by the Nazis. Did you know that Adolf Hitler might have also been a quarter Jewish?" At the boys' shocked expressions, he added, "It's true. His paternal grandfather, his father's father, might have been Jewish. It's currently unknown, but if he was, then Hitler would be no better than a mutt, like me, to the Nazis. I like my heritage: my Jewish, Swedish, Polish, and Irish

ancestry. Adolf Hitler was a moron. Nazis are sick people. They believe in a society where no one has any feelings whatsoever. And their soldiers were expected to have absolutely no feelings, so they couldn't know the difference between right and wrong. Nazis believe that Jews are an evil race—but the Nazis are an evil group that should be exterminated."

“I agree,” Ben declared. “I think that Blacks, Jews, and Hispanics should stick together. Some Blacks have prejudice against the Jews, but my parents have brought me up to like the Jews, and I do like them. It’s important to support their civil rights. Neo-Nazis are complete idiots.”

“A Neo-Nazi on TV said that if you are more than thirteen percent Hispanic, you are not

good enough to live in this country," Anthony said. "My dad is white; my mom is Hispanic. I'm half Hispanic, and I like my heritage. And I support Blacks' and Jews' civil rights, too. Especially the Jews, because it seems like they are the most despised group of people in the entire world by some people." Ben and Jeremy agreed.

"I can't stand Neo-Nazis at all." Despite his fierce expression,

Jeremy was happy on the inside. He was glad to be living in a place where everyone had civil rights.

"What Hitler should have done is, after coming to power and helping revive the German economy, *not* start a war and *not* persecute anyone innocent–then he'd be remembered as a hero to everyone, especially the Germans who could have prospered under his leadership," Jeremy said.

“I saw one Holocaust survivor on TV saying that he would have liked to have strangled Hitler because he and the Nazis murdered his entire family,” Anthony shared. “He was only eight years old when they were murdered. How terrible! He was pissed that he lost his family and had to be adopted. He has numbers tattooed on his arm.” He grimaced and added, “Hitler was

a really big booger goober that should be flicked off your finger!”

The boys all solemnly nodded their agreement, and then Jeremy changed the subject. “Do you guys have any pets at home?”

“We have a huge fishtank with saltwater and exotic tropical fish, and a wire-haired dachshund named Gretchen,” Ben said.

“A wiener dog—cool!” Jeremy said.

“We have several horses and two dogs, one beagle and one dalmatian,” Anthony said.

“Wow!” Jeremy said. “We have a blue and gold macaw that mimics what people have said to it, and a long-haired Siamese and Balinese mixed kitten named Basia. Basia likes Stanley, our parrot.”

“Parrots and kittens are really awesome,” Ben said, and Anthony agreed.

Jeremy thought about the surprise he had in his luggage in the jar. What would the cabin staff think about it? he wondered. Would they confiscate it?

Finally, they arrived at camp. The boys couldn't wait to stand and stretch from having sat so long.

The trees and other green plants were beautiful! Jeremy had missed seeing nature like this. His family used to live in Upstate New

York until just a few years ago: his family had moved to Arizona when his dad got a job offer that he couldn't refuse. He gazed in awe at the beautiful scenery.

The cabin counselors were waiting for them at the bus stop. The three boys quickly found out that they were in the same cabin—such an awesome coincidence! What could possibly go wrong?

The camp counselors all wore neon-green t-shirts that read *Camp Counselor*. Their counselor, Marc, was a tall, muscular, eighteen-year-old.

"Welcome to Camp Yellowjacket Lake," he said to the boys.

Jeremy, Anthony, and Ben got their luggage and followed the cabin counselor and their other cabinmates to their cabin. It was a long walk; Jeremy was just

barely able to carry his suitcase, and he struggled all the way. Their cabin was near the other cabins.

At long last, they reached their cabin. “Let’s take a look,” Anthony said as Ben and Jeremy followed him inside after the counselor and other boys.

Inside, there were seven bunks for thirteen boys and the cabin counselor. There were cubbies along a wall and an open area in the center of the room.

Next to the cubbies was a large chalkboard, with ‘Welcome to Camp Yellowjacket’ written on it. Jeremy noticed a walkway to another room. He, Anthony, and Ben put their suitcases down and then went down the walkway, which, they discovered, led to the shower area. It was large, with two huge shower heads and a narrow but long window at the very top of the high ceiling. It looked like three or four boys

could fit in the shower at one time. There was no door. The toilet, near the shower, was a stall with a door. There was also a double-sink next to where the stall was.

After meeting the other boys in their cabin, they chose their beds. Jeremy chose a bed on the bottom because he slept on a top bunk at home and knew how much fun that was; he wanted Ben to be able to experience it.

Anthony's bed was adjacent to Jeremy's.

Jeremy left the jar in his luggage; he wasn't going to take it out until the time was right.

Jeremy could tell that Anthony was upset; he was missing his family already.

"We'll be just fine," Jeremy said, trying to help Anthony feel better.

Marc must have sensed the vibe because he came over and

said, “It’s normal for everyone to feel at least some homesickness. Do you want to talk about it?”

“Thanks, but that is all right,” Anthony said. “I’ll adjust.” He offered a small smile.

It was time for dinner.

Marc announced, “After dinner, and story time at the bonfire, we’ll come back here, and then everyone will shower, so we don’t have to do it in the morning.”

Jeremy, Anthony, and Ben shrugged. No one else had seen them naked, except for their parents and siblings when the boys were younger. Jeremy's nerves were on edge as they walked to the cafeteria.

Alex, said to the three buddies while they were walking. "After P.E., all the boys shower at my school. It's not bad. We have a lot of fun being naked with the

other boys, seeing each other's ding-dong."

"Ding-dong? Yeah. All right," Jeremy said, still incredibly nervous.

The three friends got their meals and sat at one of the picnic tables outside. Today was pizza day. Alex joined them.

"Bwwwoooommmmp!" Jeremy made a farting sound with his hand and armpit. "That's a fart

that squirts out a little diarrhea when it's born," he joked.

The boys all smirked as they downed their pizza.

"My girlfriend back home says she can do anything a boy can do. If that's true, then girls should grow a ding-dong and apples and pee standing up. And if I can do anything a girl can do, then I should try having a baby," Alex exclaimed, making the three buddies crack up.

Everyone bantered as they enjoyed their meal. Afterward, they joined the other campers at the campfire and sat on one of the benches. It was getting dark quickly. The camp owner, Mr. Gonzalez, thanked the campers for coming and told them about all the fun they'd have at camp.

Marc started the entertainment by telling a story about Bigfoot; it was actually a story geared for children, but the

tweens and young teens enjoyed it. It was about a young girl who meets Bigfoot in her backyard and shows Bigfoot to her parents. Then, her father scares Bigfoot away because he's afraid Bigfoot might hurt his daughter. The girl doesn't see Bigfoot again, until she is grown and her kids encounter Bigfoot and his family in the desert. They bring Bigfoot home to visit her, and the two have a joyful reunion.

Between stories, the campers chatted, meeting new friends and meeting up with old friends, as they toasted marshmallows.

Meanwhile, Jeremy worried and worried. Anthony worried and worried. And Ben worried and worried. They were all worried about showering tonight.

Eventually, the hour grew late, and it was time to return to their cabins. The buddies walked back

slowly, panicked about showering with other boys.

Part III

“Okay. Which three of you are going to go first?” Marc asked the cabin full of boys.

Jeremy, Anthony, and Ben cringed.

“I’m first!” Alex exclaimed. He hurriedly removed his clothing and stood there proudly, naked, in front of the boys.

“Okay. And how about you two,” Marc said to two older boys,

who both looked about fourteen. “The older boys can go first.”

The two boys stripped to their underwear and, after grabbing a towel, walked with Alex back to the shower.

Within minutes, Jeremy, Anthony, and Ben could hear the water spraying and the boys in the shower joking and laughing loudly while they showered.

“Everyone, strip to your underwear, and wait for your

turn," Marc said as he stripped to his underwear, too. Jeremy, Anthony, and Ben stripped to their tighty-whities. Now everyone was standing around in their underwear.

Jeremy had packed a back brush for showering, but was too shy to take it out of his luggage and use it tonight.

Not too long later, Alex and the two boys came back, wearing

towels. Then, the two other boys changed into their sleep clothes.

“I sleep naked at home,” Alex explained, lying nude on his lower bunk—next to Jeremy—with his hands behind his head.

Jeremy smiled and giggled.

Other boys went into the shower, and the process continued.

Then, Jeremy, Anthony, Ben, went with a fresh white towel. Jeremy could feel his heart in his

throat; his stomach sank as far down in the ocean of his body as the World War II German battleship, Bismarck. The boys reluctantly took off their underwear and went in the shower. They were still nervous, but ready to get it over with. They quickly showered. Jeremy could see that Anthony and Ben were well into puberty because they had pubic hair, like him. The boys were quiet; they didn't talk or joke

around. When they finished, they dried off, wrapped towels around their bodies, and went back to their bunks. They put on their underwear as quickly as possible, minimizing the time they'd be seen naked by the other boys, and then put on their night clothes. Jeremy wore sleep shorts and a white t-shirt. Anthony wore sweatpants and a white t-shirt. Ben wore pajama bottoms and a light grey t-shirt.

The buddies were relieved to no longer be naked in front of each other and the others.

Then, Marc showered by himself.

Suddenly, Alex exclaimed, “Phew! Someone farted,” pinching his nose.

“All right. Who’s the culprit?” Jeremy asked. “Bwwwooommp!” He made a farting sound with his hand and armpit. “Did it sound like that?”

“No. It was silent—and very, very deadly. Gas attack! Gas attack! Gas attack!” Alex shouted, now waving both hands in the air. “I need a gas mask!”

Eventually, everyone settled down, each boy occupied with his own activities.

Jeremy took out the jar from his luggage.

He tapped both of his friends and whispered, “Look at what I’ve got.”

“A jar with roaches?” Ben exclaimed quietly, leaning over from above.

The jar had five cockroaches, a piece of a tree branch, and some moldy bread for the roaches to eat.

“Yes!” Jeremy said. He held the jar up for his friends to see more clearly in the dim light.

The other boys looked in awe.

“Are these your pets?” Anthony quizzed.

“Yes,” Jeremy answered, happy to be getting so much attention.

“What is that?” Marc asked. “Oh, my God. Roaches!” he gasped. “Is that a glass jar?”

“No,” Jeremy said, “it’s a plastic peanut butter jar.”

“Do not open the jar,” Marc instructed. “We can’t have roaches running around. And don’t bring that out of the cabin until you leave. If Mr. Gonzalez

sees it, he might not like you having it."

"Okay," he said feeling nervous about it.

"How long have you had these?" Ben asked. "I'm curious about such an unusual exotic pet."

"I got them from inside a dead barrel cactus in my front yard. It stank. I just happened to push the barrel cactus with the bottom of my shoe when I saw

roaches underneath. I fed them some moldy bread my mom threw away just before leaving for camp."

"Do you have names for them?" Anthony asked.

"No. I hope they make babies soon," Jeremy replied.

"They're so cute," Alex chimed, making his voice sound like a girl. Everyone chuckled.

Jeremy put the jar back in his luggage.

It was almost time for bed. Marc turned the lights out, and wearing a head light, read part of a young teen chapter book, *Barefoot at Summer Camp,* to the boys. The boys enjoyed the story. Then, they eventually fell asleep.

Anthony had the most trouble falling asleep. He was a little teary-eyed. He still missed his family, especially his mom and grandma.

Part IV

The cabin alarm clock beeped innocuously at eight in the morning. Jeremy yawned as he woke up.

“There’s nothing like a morning woody to wake up to,” Alex said, standing up beside his bed.

Some of the older boys giggled as they watched Alex get dressed for the day.

The three friends happily changed into their day clothes quickly. Marc put on a fresh neon-green t-shirt. Everyone made their beds and organized their things. Jeremy checked on his roaches, and they were fine. Then the boys all brushed their teeth.

Before long, they all headed outside and squinted in the bright Upstate New York summer sunlight. Yawning, they followed

Marc to breakfast. The sky had slowly become dark.

"Bwwwwooooooommmmp!" Jeremy made a farting sound with his hand and armpit. "Pay attention, class. That's juicy diarrhea disguised as an innocuous fart. 'Innocuous' is the word of the day, and it means harmless. At least that's one definition," Jeremy explained in his best teacher voice.

The boys were very happy to eat French toast, sausages, and an egg omelet with pieces of bacon and cheese inside.

“I haven’t had French toast in years,” Jeremy exclaimed to his buddies. “It’s really good. And these eggs are superb. *Praise to the chef.*”

Anthony and Ben agreed. The boys finished eating and flushed everything down with cold, refreshing milk.

First on the agenda for the day was a swimming test to determine which campers still needed some lessons. But before they even reached the water, it started raining—and then thundering.

“Thunder warning!” Marc shouted. “Everyone back to the cabin!”

The boys scrambled to the cabin.

Part V

Inside the cabin, the boys talked.

“How about we play hangman? We can use the chalkboard,” Marc suggested. “Any volunteers?”

“I will!” Jeremy’s hand shot up like a rocket entering outer space.

“Okay. You can choose the word or phrase and use the

chalkboard to make the hangman," Marc said, pointing to Jeremy.

Jeremy hurried to the chalkboard, thinking of a good word and a question. Jeremy thought and thought. Then, thinking about Alex and his *morning woody* comment this morning, Jeremy came up with an idea.

He drew gallows and wrote his clue on the board: *What is the*

most favorite thing in the entire world to a tween and teenage boy?

Then, Jeremy read his question out loud.

“Oh, I know,” Alex said.

He would, Jeremy thought. “Hold on. Wait until I put the underscores on the board first, please.” Once he did, he said, “The word is six letters long. Who wants to guess a letter?”

Alex waved, flapping his hand in the air again and again.

"Okay, Alex first," Jeremy said.

"A tween and teenage boy's favorite thing in the entire world is his *penis?"*

"No," Jeremy said and drew a man's top hat above the noose.

"Penis is five letters—not six," Ben exclaimed, raising his hand.

"Ben," Jeremy said.

"Is there a *D?"*

"Sorry. No *D."*

Jeremy wrote *D* at the bottom of the board and drew a man's head beneath the top hat.

Anthony and several other boys anxiously waved their hands.

"Okay, Anthony," Jeremy said.

"How about an *A?*"

"No. No *A*." Jeremy wrote *A* on the board at the bottom. He drew the man's chest and torso.

Kazzo, a tall fourteen-year-old boy, waved his hand rapidly.

“Okay, you. What’s your name?”

“Kazzo. How about an *E?”*

“Yes. There is one *E.”*

Jeremy put an *E* over the last line.

“Now we’re getting someplace,” Alex exclaimed. “I guess it’s not ding-dong, dick, wiener, thingy, thing, sausage, pisser, wee-wee, cucumber, pee-pee, pecker, or joystick.”

Everyone thought and thought.

Alex raised his hand.

“Okay, Alex.”

“Is it *weenie?”*

“Sorry. No. Not *weenie.”*

“What could it be, then?” Alex wondered, shrugging.

“It only has one *E,* at the end, so it’s not *weenie,”* Ben explained.

Jeremy drew an arm.

Wilmar, a thirteen-year-old, raised his hand.

“Okay. go for it,” Jeremy said, hoping he’d get another letter.

“How about an *L?”*

“No. Sorry. No *L.”*

Jeremy drew another arm.

Tim, another twelve-year-old, raised his hand.

“Okay,” Jeremy said pointing at the boy.

“How about . . . about a . . . *G?”*

“Sorry. No *G.”*

Jeremy drew a leg.

Anthony's hand shot up like a rocket.

"Yes, Anthony?"

"How about a *W?"*

"Yes. There is one *W."*

Jeremy wrote a *W* over the first underscore.

"Oh! Oh! Oh! I know what the word is!" Alex shouted excitedly.

"Okay. Go ahead, Alex."

"A tween and teenage boy's most favorite thing in the entire world is his *willie,"* Alex proudly

said, “and I am very much proof that is true. My willie is my favorite thing in the entire world.”

“Correct,” Jeremy exclaimed, happy that someone finally got it. He wrote in the missing letters, spelling *willie*.

“So, what you are saying is that I’m correct that I’m proof that it’s true?” Alex asked.

Everyone laughed.

“Sure. That’s what I meant. You are the proof that it is true,”

Jeremy joked, having a lot of fun. “Your favorite thing in the *entire* world is your *willie.*”

“Speaking about willies, when will the roaches mate?” Alex asked.

“Hopefully, very soon. I don’t know how they mate, or if I even have some boys and girls so they can mate,” Jeremy replied.

“Maybe, if they’re boys, they’re gay,” Alex said with a big grin. “Good luck having little

babies, if the boy roaches are gay."

The rest of his words were drowned out as thunder shook the cabin walls and rain pounded against the windows.

The boys broke up into teams of three and played blackjack. The buddies were in one group. Jeremy was the dealer, and Anthony and Ben tried to beat the house. They used fake money that

was on top of the cubbies, along with decks of cards.

By the time Ben bankrupted his two friends, the sky had cleared.

“All right, everyone. Change into your swimsuits and put on sunscreen,” Marc said with a happy smile. “We’re going to have a swimming test at the lake!”

Everyone cheered, eager to dive in and escape the sudden humidity brought on by the storm.

However, the buddies, were still nervous about being naked in front of the other boys. They stripped quickly, keeping their backs to the others, and yanked on their swimsuits as fast as possible as the other boys quickly changed into their suits.

The boys walked barefoot to the lake, following Marc, who had also changed into his trunks. Jeremy and Anthony swam a lot at home, but Ben did not. How

would the boys fare at the swim test?

"Bwwwwooooommmmmp!" Jeremy made his famous farting sound with his hand and armpit. "That's the type of fart that really burns your ass," he said.

Before the test, the boys watched in awe as a seaplane, piloted by Mr. Gonzalez, landed on the lake. Marc rowed a boat to the plane to bring him to shore. Mr. Gonzales waved to the boys.

The swim test involved swimming ten laps of twenty yards each, which was quite a long swim. If a boy got fewer than ten laps, but at least six, he passed the second level and could go swimming, but couldn't swim too far out in the lake—definitely not to the swim dock diving platform in the middle. If a boy managed fewer than six laps, he had to take swimming lessons.

Jeremy and Anthony swam just like goldfish and finished the ten laps easily. Ben, however, had trouble and was completely worn out after just four laps. He left his friends in order to go to the shallow area to take swimming lessons.

“Let’s race to the dock,” Jeremy said to Anthony. “Whoever wins gets the other person’s dessert tonight.” He knew he was

showing off a bit; he was a really fast swimmer.

"Okay, buddy. You're on."

Jeremy and Anthony raced to the dock. Jeremy was ahead at first, but then Anthony caught up. Then Anthony surged ahead, and Jeremy caught up. But both made it . . . at the same time!

"It's a tie!" Jeremy said, surprise in his voice. "I've never had anyone catch up to me before! So, neither of us gets the

other's dessert." He had to stop talking in order to catch his breath. A tie—that was a first for him! But he was just happy that he hadn't lost.

"To keep up with me, you've got to be a shark," Anthony declared smugly.

Alone on the dock, the boys sat, dangling their feet into the cool lake water, looking at the small fish.

Suddenly, Anthony started to tear up and then cry. “I can’t help it. I miss my family. Especially my grandma and mom,” he moaned. He leaned his head against Jeremy’s chest and sobbed.

“You’ll be all right. You’ll be just fine. It’s okay,” Jeremy comforted him.

Anthony was glad that he cried; hopefully, that was the way to get his homesickness out of his system. It helped to say what was

on his mind to someone who cared. Talking about it helped him feel better. Jeremy was a good friend.

Once Anthony felt up to it, the boys swam back to shore. They met up with Ben, who had finished his swimming lessons and done very well, he informed them.

The trio returned to their cabin to change into their clothes,

but left their shirts off because of the humidity.

Next, the boys participated in archery. Ben did the best, followed by Jeremy, and then Anthony, who was starting to feel a little better.

By the time everyone finished archery practice, it was time for lunch. The boys followed Marc to the meal benches.

Meatloaf, peas, and French fries were on the menu. The boys loved it.

“I haven’t had meatloaf in ages,” Jeremy said.

“Neither have I,” Anthony said.

“Mom and Dad make it for us all the time. This is pretty good. It tastes different than my parents’, but it’s just as good,” Ben said happily.

Jeremy doused his meatloaf with a deluge of ketchup. Anthony and Ben liked theirs the way it was, without a condiment. The gang washed their meals down with refreshing, cold milk.

The next activity was volleyball. Unlike some other boys, Jeremy wasn't good at most sports, but he played volleyball at home and was pretty good at it. He was relieved that they were

playing a sport he actually felt comfortable with.

The boys followed Marc to the volleyball sand courts and removed their shoes and socks to play on the sand.

Jeremy squished his toes in the moist sand, enjoying himself. Ben and Anthony were on his team, thankfully.

He spiked the ball three times in one game, scoring each time. His team won, and they even

cheered for him. They then proceeded to win three more games. Jeremy couldn't contain his broad smile. He was happy to be good at two sports, at least. He must have gotten distracted by his ego, because, suddenly, the ball slammed right into Jeremy's face.

"Sorry, Jeremy!" the opponent called out. "It was an accident. I spiked the ball and thought you would get it."

“No problem; it was my own fault for not paying attention,” he called back. Jeremy rubbed his nose. It hurt a little, but didn’t bleed—and it wasn’t broken, thank goodness.

After that final game, the group moved on to riflery.

Part VI

At the riflery range, the instructor explained how to use the rife, and he emphasized the importance of safety and following the rules when using guns.

Anthony wasn't homesick at all now. "I love guns," he exclaimed. "I'm going to join the Marines as a grunt, when I turn eighteen."

“What if you get homesick?” Jeremy asked. “On second thought, camp will prepare you for joining the Marines, getting you used to being away from your family.”

“I’m going to join the Navy as a helicopter pilot. I’ll fly and land on an aircraft carrier or other Navy ship,” Ben said. “I may not be the greatest swimmer, but I’m smart. I could become a Navy pilot.”

“If I joined the military, I’d go to language school and learn Arabic, Korean, or maybe Chinese. My neighbor is nineteen, and he’s in language school in the Army right now, learning Arabic,” Jeremy told them. He didn’t want to say he was smart, too; he’d learned his lesson that morning about being modest and not showing off too much.

The boys lie prone at the firing line at the riflery range, shooting

at their target. Anthony did the best, getting the most points. Ben closely followed, and Jeremy came in last place. The boys kept their targets and some of their shells.

It was now time for dinner chow. The buddies led their cabinmates and Marc to the meal benches.

“Pancakes, eggs, and sausage for dinner? That’s awesome! We’re having breakfast

for dinner tonight!” Ben said. His friends smiled, wholeheartedly agreeing.

They chowed down, enjoying every bite. Then, it was time for dessert: vanilla ice cream, on a cone, with colored sprinkles. The boys enjoyed every lick and every crunch.

At long last, it was time for the campfire to be lit. The boys sat on benches facing the fire and toasted marshmallows on sticks.

“I really like mine burned to a crisp,” Jeremy stated, holding up his blazing marshmallow.

“To a crisp,” Anthony agreed, as he lit his on fire, too.

Then, grinning, Ben did the same.

After they had eaten their blackened, crispy marshmallows, Marc called his group to return to the cabin.

In the cabin, the boys got ready to shower. Jeremy and his

buddies bantered awkwardly in their underwear as they waited for their turn; they still felt uneasy about showering with each other.

Alex removed his underwear and bantered naked.

Then, some of the other boys also removed their underwear while waiting for the shower. And more boys did. Now, the three buddies and Marc were the only ones still wearing underwear. So, bowing to the silent peer

pressure, the buddies removed their tighty-whities. They now stood naked, like the rest of the boys. They felt a little nervous, but what was done was done. They gradually felt a little better, now that the choice was made.

Jeremy and Anthony lay on their bunks supine with their hands behind their heads, chatting with Ben, who was standing next to them. They fell abruptly silent when Alex pulled a

younger boy, Rizzer, by the hands to the middle of the cabin and started dancing with him. Everyone broke out laughing.

After the dance was over, Alex joined the trio. “Any update on the roaches?”

Jeremy stood up to check on them. The roaches were fine. “They haven’t laid any eggs yet. I don’t know if they are ever going to.”

The buddies showered last again that night. They felt a lot less nervous this time, and joked as they showered and washed their sweaty bodies. This time, Jeremy even felt comfortable enough to bring his back brush.

"Bwwwwooooommmmp!" He made his classic farting sound with his hand and armpit. "It's a shame we're not in a bathtub together—that fart would leak

juice into the tub, with us in it!" he stated.

"Gross! Your diarrhea juice in the tub water with us? Gross," Ben said, washing his chest and underarms.

Because Anthony's back was facing him, Jeremy said, "Anthony, don't really fart in here. Your fart juice might come out on me!"

Anthony couldn't resist. He bent over and tried to make a

farting sound with his hand and armpit, but was unsuccessful.

"You'll have to teach me how to do that," Anthony said, laughing.

"Okay. I'll show you later," Jeremy promised.

After they finished showering, they dried off and went back into the cabin. Everyone was still naked.

Alex exclaimed, "No one got dressed yet! Is everyone going to

sleep naked, like I do? It's fun, and it gives your junk a chance to get some fresh air."

"Okay," Jeremy said, and the others agreed.

The boys broke into groups of three and played blackjack in the middle area of the cabin. Jeremy, Anthony, and Ben were in one group. They were having a lot of fun. Jeremy, the house, won fifteen times, Anthony, three times, and Ben, six.

Then, Jeremy showed Anthony and Ben how to make farting sounds with their hand and armpit. The boys practiced until they were able to do it flawlessly.

Then, it was time for bed. The boys lay on top of their bed covers and listened in the dark as Marc continued to read *Barefoot at Summer Camp*. They fell asleep soon afterward, happy to be at camp; they were having the time

of their lives, making memories that would last a lifetime.

Part VII

"Darn it. Another morning woody," Alex exclaimed after the alarm went off and everyone got out of bed. Jeremy thought it was fun to sleep naked and be with the boys, also naked. He even started to like showering with his buddies. He kind of missed his family, but he didn't want to return home, at least not right away. He looked at a picture of his

siblings and wondered what they were doing.

“Come on, slacker. You didn’t even make your bed yet,” one of the campers teased him.

Shaken from his reverie, Jeremy quickly made his bed and caught up with the other campers, who were heading out for breakfast. He looked for his friends and realized that Anthony was all the way up front, crying on Marc’s chest.

“It’s okay,” Marc reassured him. “It’s normal to feel homesick.”

Ben tapped Jeremy on the arm, and they exchanged looks of sympathy for their friend. When they arrived at the cafeteria, they started to approach, but Marc waved them inside and sat with Anthony on a bench outside.

While they were still waiting in line for their food, Anthony caught up with them. He looked a

lot better. Time at camp went by fast.

Later, delicious meat lasagna was for dinner. The boys filled up their plates and then had cheesecake for dessert.

“This cheesecake is the best I’ve ever had,” Jeremy said, with a big smile. “It’s rich and creamy.”

“I like it, too. But my mom’s cheesecake is the best,” Ben exclaimed, happy to have such good buddies.

Anthony finished eating and licked his plate clean.

Shocked and yet intrigued, Jeremy said, “That’s rude. At least, it’s rude to do in a restaurant.”

“Yeah. I know. One time, my family and I were in an expensive restaurant, and I ordered soup. I lifted the bowl and put the edge up to my mouth to drink, and my dad scolded me for being impolite.”

“My mom is a heart surgeon, and my dad is a nurse; they work together at a hospital,” Ben told his friends. “One surgery, my mom put her hand in a patient’s open chest and pumped his heart with her hand to get it beating again, and it did!”

“That’s really cool,” Jeremy said.

Anthony added, “That’s awesome!” Then he shared, “My dad works at a Ford car

dealership as a salesman. But he's cool, and not a total jackass, like people assume car dealership salespeople are. He's the dealership's top salesperson and has been for ten years."

"Wow! My mom works at an elementary school as a fifth-grade teacher, and my dad is a principal at a high school," Jeremy told them. "It helps having smart parents to go over my schoolwork with me."

The boys toasted marshmallows at the bonfire that night as they listened to stories told by the camp staff and Mr. Gonzalez. Some were about love or taught lessons.

Back at their cabin, the trio showered first that night.

Before they left the shower, Jeremy gently slapped Anthony's tush with the back of his brush, making a loud slapping sound.

Anthony giggled and grabbed Jeremy's brush out of his hand and spanked Jeremy on the tush several times and then spanked Ben's tush several times. The boys laughed, having a lot of fun.

"Now, we're done," Jeremy said, as the boys turned the two showerheads off. They all grabbed their towels and dried off.

The entire cabin decided to sleep naked again, except for Marc, who wore underwear.

“I’m so horny, I’m going to start humping the boys in this cabin because I haven’t seen a female in ages,” Alex said. He stood behind Jeremy, held his hands on Jeremy’s hips, and pumped his hips forward and back, again and again. The boys cracked up. “I don’t even

remember what girls look like," Alex moaned.

"All right, Alex, knock it off," Marc said.

Alex walked away, and the boys played cards again. This time, they played five-card stud in the same groups of three. Jeremy won three games, Ben two, and Anthony six. Marc then read more of *Barefoot at Summer Camp* in the dark, wearing his head light, and the campers finally fell

asleep after another busy and tiring day at camp.

Part VIII

In the morning, nude, Jeremy awoke to see Alex grabbing his hips and acting like he was having sex again.

“I’m so horny. I’m so horny. I miss the girls at home. I’m so horny,” he cried.

Everyone giggled and laughed. Then, one of them said, “Okay, Alex. We get the point.”

“What do guys do in prison?” Ben asked as Alex walked away from Jeremy and started making his bed. “Who do they have sex with?”

“Each other, after being cooped up for a long time, and being so horny,” Kazoo explained as he got dressed. “They probably either turn gay or go insane.”

“I don’t think that’s entirely true,” Marc said. “Not everyone in prison turns gay.”

“It must be hard in prison,” Jeremy said. “I don’t know how I’d do it.”

“Well, don’t do anything to get yourself in prison . . . don’t steal or break the law,” Marc advised, sweeping his gaze to all of the young boys who were still immature and prone to doing things they shouldn’t because of their age.

“After being here for another week, I’d be having sex with

anything and anyone that moves," Alex exclaimed. "And, yes, that means you guys." He turned to Marc. "How do you deal with no sex, while you're at camp for the whole two weeks?" He put on deodorant and pulled on a muscle shirt, adding, "Don't you feel really horny after a while?"

"I'm a virgin. I plan to lose my virginity after I'm married," Marc explained. Again, he looked meaningfully at the younger boys.

“Alex is making it out to be more than it is. You boys should wait until you are older, at least eighteen, to have sex. All right?” He hoped the boys would do fun things that boys should be doing at their very young age, and not engage in sexual behavior.

“I plan to have sex after I’m married,” Jeremy announced.

“That’s a good idea,” Marc said.

Jeremy already felt very happy for him and his future wife, that they would lose their virginity after marriage.

“Well, I’m horny. And if you boys don’t watch it, I’ll hump every one of you. I need a female’s love,” Alex stated, giggling. Everyone laughed—except for Marc, who scowled.

Marc led the boys to breakfast after they all made their

beds and organized their clothes and other belongings.

After a tasty breakfast, the boys went shopping at the camp store. Jeremy, Anthony, and Ben each bought a pocketknife with *Camp Yellowjacket Lake* etched in the wooden handle.

“I’m going to carve my name in a tree trunk,” Jeremy said.

Overhearing, Marc said, “Boys. Let’s not deface the trees. We should keep them as natural

as possible to preserve the landscape here."

"Agreed. That's a good point," Jeremy responded.

"Be really careful with your knives," Marc warned, wanting the boys to stay very safe.

"Okay. We will," Ben promised, and Jeremy and Anthony agreed.

Jeremy also bought a Snickers candy bar. Ben bought a pair of glasses with lights on them

for seeing in the dark, like Marc used when reading to the boys in the evening.

Part IX

The days at camp progressed, and the boys had fun playing sports, swimming, canoeing, making friendship bracelets, and other activities. The boys wrote home and received letters from home. Jeremy's family included another photograph of his family and him; they hoped that it would help him to not feel too homesick. They were right to consider that:

four days into camp, and Jeremy was feeling homesick, but he kept his mind off it by having fun with the great new friends he was making. In fact, he was ecstatic because his mom wrote that she and his dad had gotten raises at work, so they would be able to afford to send him back to camp next year!

"Hooray!" Jeremy exclaimed after telling his friends. "This is great. Will you be here, too?"

“I really hope so,” Anthony said. He was happy to spend time with his buddies and had started to not miss home as much.

“I’ll be here next year, I’m sure,” Ben said. “We’ll have a cabin together again!” He hoped that they would have as much fun next summer as they were right now.

Ben had felt a little homesick earlier in the day and had told Marc.

“It’s all right,” Marc had told him. “It’s normal. Camp isn’t forever. You’ll be back home before you know it—then you’ll miss being at camp! And you aren’t alone. I feel a little homesick, too. I miss my girlfriend,” Marc confided. Ben realized that Marc really could sympathize and identify with the boys’ homesickness. Ben and the other boys always felt a lot better after talking to Marc.

That night, the boys were in the cabin, all naked again, after having taken their showers.

Jeremy had an idea. “Guys, how about we play Dress Poker, instead of Strip Poker? This way, when you lose, you put on an article of clothing. How about that? Fun? Huh?”

The boys all agreed. They played until one boy in their group was completely dressed. In the end, Jeremy had no clothes on;

Ben was wearing socks, shoes, and a t-shirt; and Anthony was the one fully dressed. Jeremy won.

After the game, Jeremy, Anthony, and Ben each made a deluge of farting sounds.

“Bwwwwooooooomp,” Ben made.

“Bwwooooooomp,” Anthony made.

“Bwwwwwwooooooooomm mmmp,” Jeremy made, feeling

happy to have the world's loudest and longest fart.

"I'm the fart winner! The only living thing that farts louder and longer than me is a brontosaurus—and they're extinct," Jeremy proclaimed proudly. "Mine was the juicy-juiciest."

"Gross," Anthony exclaimed.

Then, Anthony checked Jeremy's roaches.

“Look! They’re mating!” he exclaimed. “They’re going to make babies!”

Jeremy grabbed the jar. “Holy cow. They’re mating,” Jeremy said, glancing at Anthony.

“Let me see,” Alex said.

Jeremy held up the jar so he could see.

“They’re doing it! They’re doing it!” Alex exclaimed as Jeremy handed him the jar. “Now we know how roaches mate.”

Everyone took turns looking.

“Should we give the lovers some privacy?” Alex asked. “I know that I don’t want people watching me when someday I mate. I don’t want people checking me out as I hump and hump and hump.”

“They’re roaches—not people,” Ben said in an exasperated tone.

Alex smirked at him and replied, “I am going to watch and

wait until they are finished. I want to be an expert on roach-mating," he joked.

"My parents got me a puppy when I was Jeremy's age; Jeremy's parents got him a roach," Marc teased. Once the chuckles subsided, he said, "Give him back his roaches, Alex, and get in bed. It's reading time, everyone."

Marc read another young adult book about kids at a summer camp. Before long, the

prepubescent and pubescent boys were softly sleeping, dreaming about the girls back home.

Part X

One morning, days later, Alex said, “I dreamt of my girlfriend, hugging and kissing her again and again and again. I miss her. I really care about her. I had no idea how special she was until I spent a long time not being with her. I appreciate her and my family much more now that I’ve been at camp. They’re invaluable to me.”

“Aww,” Jeremy said, “that’s pretty cool. I appreciate my family now that I have not been with them for so long. I’d rather have them in my life than a million dollars.”

The other campers agreed as they dressed, made their beds, brushed their teeth, organized the cabin, checked on the roaches, and headed to breakfast. By then, the two roaches had finished mating.

The campers spent time fishing, water skiing, climbing the climbing tower, fencing, playing flag football and kickball, making jewelry, riding horses, kayaking, rafting, night canoeing, ziplining, playing bingo, rock climbing, hiking, cooking outdoors, and acting in theatre.

For theatre, their cabin wrote a play about boys missing girls at a two-week summer camp. Jeremy, Anthony, and Ben played

female characters, replete with lipstick, blush, eyeliner, eyeshadow, a huge and long curly wig, and a skimpy skirt from the theater building. The audience could see the boys' white briefs under their skimpy skirts. They received a standing ovation! To them, looking in the mirror, they looked so very silly and comical, but they were so very happy to have performed so very well.

For jewelry making, the buddies used a shell from their rifle shooting to make a pendant. “These are so cool,” Jeremy said. “I’m going to keep mine until I’m an old man!”

All of the boys at camp were also given a sterling silver boy’s necklace.

A surprise was waiting for them when they returned to their cabin.

“A roach laid an egg!” Jeremy exclaimed, looking into his jar of roaches. The egg was in a crevice formed by two branches.

“When will they hatch?” Alex asked. “I hope it’s very soon. I’d like to see the babies.”

“Marc, do you know?” Jeremy asked.

“Not exactly,” he replied, “but I assume it won’t take too long, as roaches can reproduce very quickly, producing many babies;

and then their babies grow and make more babies. That's what I remember from being a kid living in Brooklyn when we had roaches in our basement. In Brooklyn, people called them *water bugs*."

The next day, for their first activity, the boys were scheduled to play tug-of-war with another cabin. They all wore their swimsuits and tugged over a huge, thick mud puddle that the losers would be pulled into.

“We’re going to win,” Jeremy declared to Alex, as the latter grabbed the rope in front of him. The boys were barefoot, which made it harder to pull the rope and easier to slip; plus, this way, they wouldn’t get their sneakers muddy. Ben and Anthony held on behind Jeremy.

Mr. Gonzalez blew a whistle, and each team pulled and pulled with all their might. Jeremy struggled to pull and keep his feet

from sliding. As each team pulled and pulled, the rope moved back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, while the boys struggled and struggled. Then, it happened: the opposing cabin pulled Jeremy and his cabinmates right into the mud puddle! The boys were drenched in cold, wet mud. The opposing team clapped and cheered and then laughed along with the boys in the mud,

who were also laughing and giggling.

It was all good fun, and it wasn't taken seriously by any of the boys. Jeremy playfully grabbed a handful of mud and threw it toward the other team. As soon as he did, a mud-throwing war erupted. Soon, the winners were covered in just as much mud as the losers. The cabin owner absconded from the vicinity, but got a clump of mud

on his forehead before he left. Marc, also covered in mud, threw mud at the opposing boys, too. Those who weren't soaked enough smeared the mud on their own bodies. They were having a blast!

After it was over, Marc led his group back to their cabin. He used a hose to hose himself and the boys off outside the cabin. Then the boys went inside and stripped before standing in a line,

waiting to shower the leftover dirt off their bodies.

Jeremy, Anthony, and Ben chose to shower together like always.

Afterward, there was a thunder and lightning storm, so the boys remained in the cabin, naked, while they bantered.

“I can’t wait to see my girlfriend, Alissa,” Alex stated. “I plan to bear hug her, tell her I love her, and French kiss her until our

tongues are much, much too tired and completely worn out. I miss her so much. And I can't wait to get home so I can, you know, *slap the monkey,* since I haven't since I headed to camp—a whole, long, eternity, two weeks without doing it. I'm so, so, so horny, I feel like my eyeballs are bloodshot and bulging all the way out of my head! If you boys don't watch your back, I'll hump you, like a boy dog humps your leg."

Everyone laughed and laughed. Alex was funny; he clearly was not embarrassed to admit that he masturbates, something that the other boys were uneasy to admit to.

Alex then said, “Boys, we haven’t seen or been around girls our age for almost two weeks now. Don’t take girls for granted when you get back home; they’re sweethearts, at least most of them.”

Marc nodded his agreement, glad that Alex was, for once, setting a good example by talking about appreciating females.

“I’m dying to find a girlfriend,” Jeremy shared with his cabinmates. “I miss the girls in my neighborhood and school. I miss my family, too.”

“I’m going to hump the first girl I see,” Alex joked. Everyone smiled, and several boys rolled their eyes. “Okay, not really,” he

added. “I’m loyal to my girlfriend and don’t cheat; that wouldn’t be right,” he said.

“No, it wouldn’t,” Marc said.

Jeremy, Anthony, and Ben sat together on Jeremy’s bunk.

“Are there any girls you like at school?” Ben asked with a smile. “How about it? Jeremy? Who’s going to be your one and only love when you get back home?”

“There’s a girl, Jennifer, who lives around the block. She’s very

pretty and really cool. She listens to the same music as me: Journey, Men at Work, Michael Jackson, The Police and some others. I know because I've talked with her on the bus. I like her," Jeremy said, making the boys smile.

"I like two girls in my neighborhood: Susan and Julie. I can't choose one; I'll date both!" Anthony joked. When the other

boys laughed, he added, “I just can’t choose.”

“There’s a girl at school who’s beautiful,” Ben said. “I want to marry her when I’m older—we’ve played basketball with my guy friends at the court at school several times. Her name is Emily. She’s actually a better player than me. That’s hard to believe, but true.” He smiled.

“Why don’t we have pubic hair yet?” a twelve-year-old boy, Georgie, suddenly asked Marc.

“You’ll grow it soon. It probably won’t take too much longer. By the time you’re fourteen or fifteen at the latest, you’ll notice a difference, but possibly much sooner,” Marc assured him.

“Look. I’ve started growing pubic hair,” Tristan, a twelve-year-old said, as he pointed to his pubic area.

His pubic area had several thin dark hairs and some short, very thin hairs, too.

"Yes. You've started puberty," Alex said, looking at Tristan's pubic area. "Congratulations." He reached over and shook Tristan's hand. "You're a man."

"Why is Kazoo's penis different from everyone else's?" Rizzer asked Marc.

"Kazoo wasn't circumcised. His penis still has foreskin—skin

over the tip of his penis. You probably were circumcised as a baby," Marc said to him. "Your parents made that decision."

Everyone looked at Kazoo's penis, now knowing why he was different from them—something they had all wondered but had been too shy to ask.

"Your foreskin was probably cut off at the hospital you were born in," Marc added.

Rizzer looked down at Kazoo's penis. "Why do some people circumcise and some don't?"

Marc explained, "Some people say that getting circumcised is better; others say uncircumcised is better. There are advantages and disadvantages to each.

"Circumcision decreases the risk of a urinary tract infection. It lowers the risk of sexually transmitted infections. It protects

against penile cancer, which is low in the USA. It also makes genital hygiene easier.

"But circumcision can cause infection and bleeding from the surgery. It can cause pain during surgery and after. It can negatively affect sexual pleasure in the man's future. And a boy or man might regret being circumcised."

"I can give Kazoo a circumcision right now, if he'd like, with my new pocketknife,"

Jeremy exclaimed. “He can lie on his bunk, and—"

“Oh, no. That’s all right,” Kazoo said, grinning at Jeremy. Then, he turned serious. “I wish I was just like you dudes, though,” he said. “I just want to fit in.”

“Don’t worry about it. You’re one of us, and that’s what counts. You’re accepted by everyone just the way you are,” Marc assured him. “Right, guys?”

The boys emphatically agreed.

The buddies felt happy to be with each other at camp, supporting other kids. It was so much fun!

They'd already made plans to write to each other to keep up-to-date with the girlfriend situation and the roach situation.

By morning, the rain and thunderstorm passed. The boys put on their swimsuits and swam

and played Marco Polo with other campers in the lake.

Later, they returned to their cabin.

“The egg hasn’t hatched yet,” Jeremy moaned to his friends as he looked at the roach egg. “How long will it be?”

“I have no idea,” Anthony said.

Days passed; the boys had fun and loved being at camp. They

and their cabinmates were just like brothers.

The roach eggs still hadn't hatched, though.

The time flew by so fast for the boys because they were having so much fun. Before they knew it, it was the last day. The campers were finally going home.

Part XI

On the last day of camp, the boys ate pepperoni pizza—for breakfast!

“Dinner for breakfast,” Jeremy said happily to his buddies. “Cool!”

After breakfast, the boys packed, filled with sadness to be leaving their friends.

“I’m looking forward to seeing my family,” Jeremy said, “but I’ll

really miss my buddies." With a tear in his eye, he shook Ben's and Anthony's hands and hugged each of them.

"I can't wait to see my grandma and mom, but I'm going to miss you guys and camp," Anthony said. "Let us know about the roaches when you write."

"Okay," Jeremy said, wiping another tear from his eye, "all right."

“We still have the bus ride to the airport, you guys,” Ben reminded them.

“Yeah, that’s good,” Jeremy said, glad for the reminder.

Next, Jeremy hugged Alex.

“Watch it, buddy, or I’ll hump you,” Alex exclaimed. Jeremy smiled.

Then, Jeremy hugged Marc.

“Boys. Don’t do anything that would send you to prison or get you in trouble with the law,” Marc

demanded, caring very much about the boys. “I don’t want any of you boys to wind up in prison. Promise me.”

“We promise,” the boys replied.

“I can’t wait to see my family,” Jeremy said. “Camp has shown me how important they are in my life—and how much I miss girls. We have not seen any girls in two long weeks! I appreciate females so much more now.”

“That’s good to hear,” Marc said.

Just then, Alex’s mom and dad arrived at the cabin. They were picking him up at camp.

“Hi, Alex,” they said at the door.

“Hi Mom, Dad.” Alex rushed over and hugged them tight. “I really missed you!”

He turned to face his cabinmates. “Goodbye, guys. I’m going to really miss all of you,” he

said. “See you next year.” He picked up his luggage and followed his parents outside.

Jeremy and his buddies were teary-eyed.

Then, the boys’ bus arrived. The bus driver helped the buddies put their luggage in the bus’s cargo hold.

They got on the bus and sat together in the middle, just like they had when they first met. They

waved goodbye to Marc and the other boys.

“What I’m going to miss the most about camp is showering naked with you guys and being naked with the other boys,” Jeremy admitted. “It was so much fun.”

“Hopefully, we can do it next year,” Anthony said with a smile.

“The only thing more fun than showering with you guys would be

showering with a bunch of naked girls," Jeremy exclaimed.

"Yeah," Anthony said, "Showering with a bunch of naked girls would be awesome!"

"Remember how nervous we were?" Ben reminded them. "All that worry for nothing!"

The boys cracked smiles, hoping to do it again next year . . .

And the next summer, they did!

About the story: Twelve-year-olds Jeremy, Anthony, and Ben have the time of their lives at a summer camp for young teen boys in Upstate New York, USA, in 1983.

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