



Chapter 1 Out of Lucky

● It was just after lunch at Camp Miggles when the swim coach burst into our cabin with a big grin on his face. I looked up from my comic book. Neither I nor my best friends, Aaron and Marcus, were good swimmers, so I kind of doubted Coach **Coburn** was there for us.

“I have great news!” he said. “Alex and John have been chosen for the boy’s swim team this year. You’re the only cabin with two boys to make the Pirates team!” He looked over at John and Alex. “The annual relay race against the girl’s team is in three days, so I want both of you down at the lake first thing in the morning for some serious training.”

Now, this was something to get excited about! For some reason, the girls here at camp were being very competitive. Every time you turned around they were talking about something they had just won or done better than the boys. In fact, just that morning, I had seen two boys suffer an **embarrassing** loss in a game of Ping-Pong. The girls who had won acted like this was final proof that girls were the dominant life form on the planet. It was getting pretty annoying.



● “That’s the best news I’ve heard all summer!” I said. “You guys are incredible swimmers. I’m sure you can win this for the Pirates!”

“Thanks, Sam,” said Alex. “I hope you’re right.”

“I hope you’re right too, Sam,” said Coach **Coburn**. “The last four years have been pretty **embarrassing**. I’d hate to see the Pirates lose to the Dolphins again this year.”

At dinner that night, Alex and John told us the whole terrible story.

“My brother was at camp here five years ago,” Alex said. “That’s when the Pirates last won the swim relay. The race was really close that year. Just as the swimmers were on their last lap from Pirate’s Point to the pier, a bird did a big one right on the judge’s head.”

● “I always wondered how Mr. Collins got the name Poopy Head,” said Aaron.

Alex continued, “Well, some of the girls thought that they had won the race, but old Poopy Head gave the win to the Pirates.”

John nodded. “The Pirates had a team mascot named Lucky. It was a wooden parrot that the first Pirates team made a long time ago.”

“Well, no one thought it was just a **coincidence** when, two days after the race, Lucky suddenly disappeared,” said Alex.

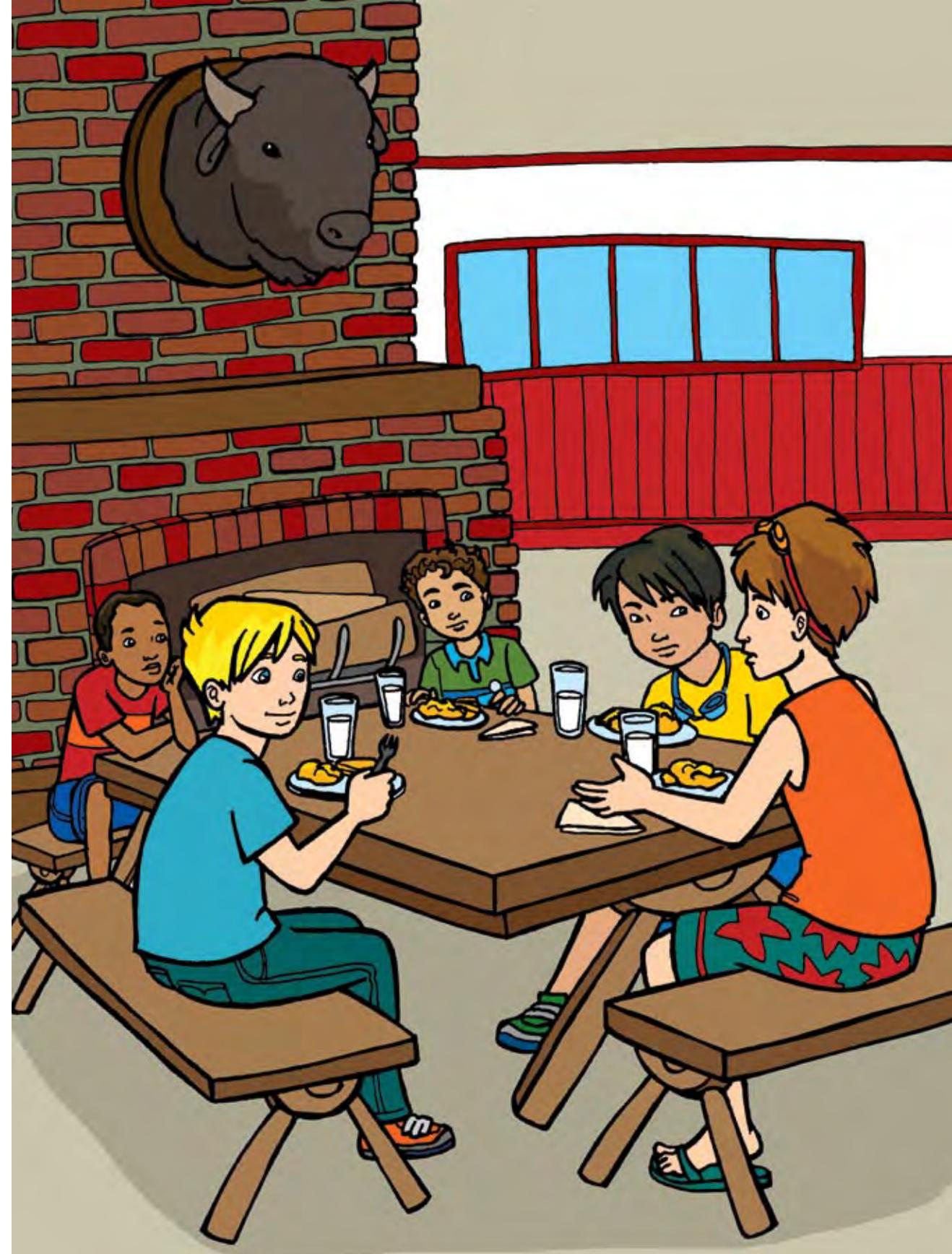
He glanced over at the tables full of girls and whispered, “Everyone thought that a certain group of sore losers stole him, but no one could ever prove anything.”



● “Lucky’s never been seen since, and the Pirates have never won the swim relay since then either,” John said, shaking his head. “Maybe losing Lucky and losing all those races was a **coincidence**, but I wish we had our old mascot back.”

“If we had Lucky back, I’m sure we could win,” Alex said.

“There’s one other thing,” said John. “Whoever took Lucky left a note behind. It said, ‘You will treasure the picture to Pirate’s Point.’ Some guys thought it was a clue, but if it *was* a clue, no one ever figured it out.”



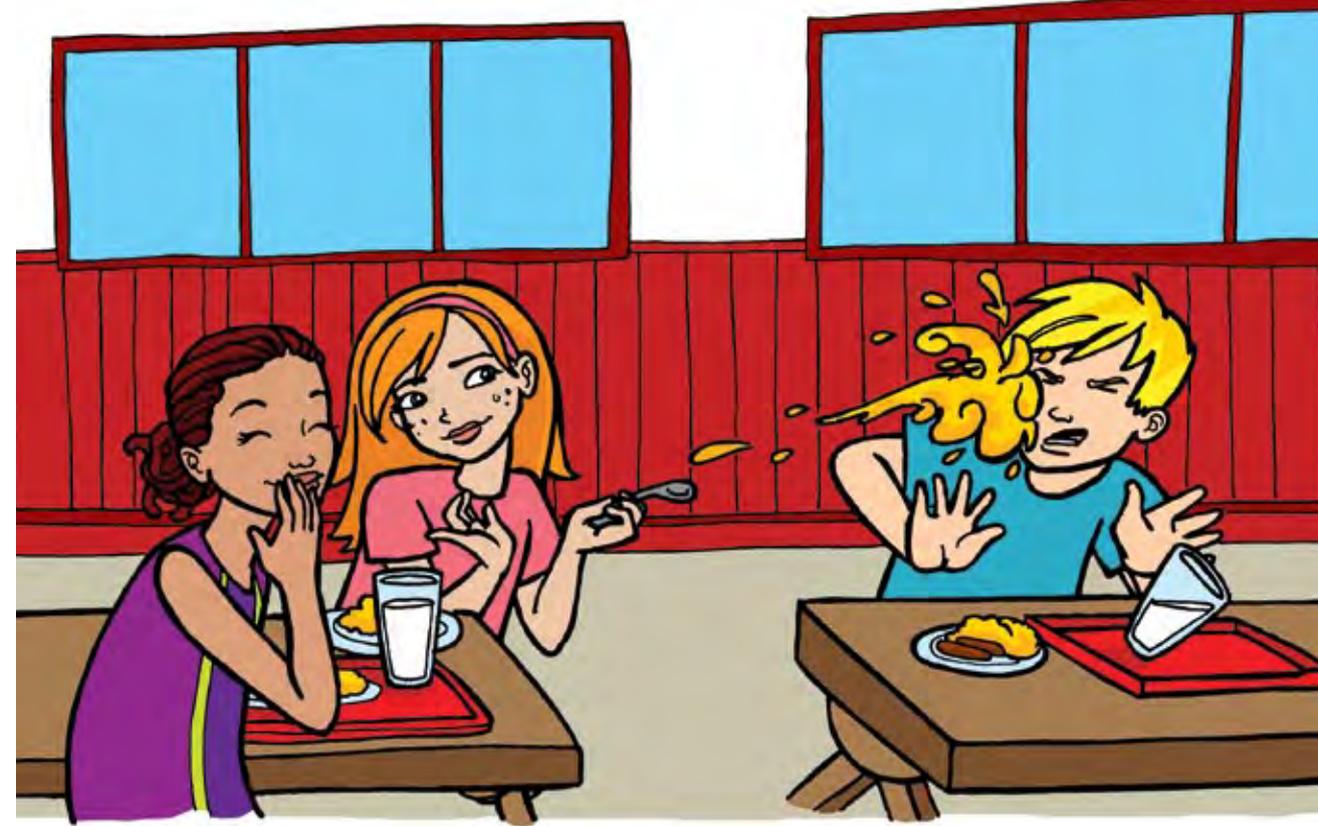


● The next morning, I found myself pushing gooey **scrambled** eggs around my plate, while Aaron kept talking nonstop about the missing parrot. “Come on, Sam!” he said. “Maybe we *can* find Lucky. You heard Alex. If they had their mascot back, they’d win the race for sure! We can’t let those *girls* win!”

“And what’s the problem with *girls* winning?” said a voice behind us. We turned. There stood a redheaded girl staring at Aaron like he had just said something terrible about her best friend.

Aaron stammered, “Uh, nothing. I mean, that is, if they win. But . . .”

“Oh, the Dolphins are going to win. *That* you can be sure of.” Then she whipped around and headed toward the next table.



● “Boy, *some* people are touchy,” said Aaron as he made a funny face at the table full of girls.

“Listen, Aaron,” I said, “I’d love to find Lucky, but it’s been five years! If they couldn’t find him back then, what makes you think we can find him now?”

Just then, I felt the cold wet slap of **scrambled** eggs hitting the side of my head. I whipped around to see all the girls at the next table giggling into their plates. Except one. The redheaded girl looked at me and smiled. “Oops,” she said. “Sorry. I’m just a girl, so my aim isn’t very good.” And then the girls started laughing and falling all over each other.

That’s when I saw Marcus flick a spoonful of his eggs. Maybe he was just lucky, but the redhead got it right between the eyes.