

Snake

—James Zhao

Leaving the twisted portaloo behind, you continue your trek through the forest. However, you get the feeling that you aren't getting anywhere. The forest seems to be repeating itself as you walk along, and those footprints on the ground are starting to look awfully familiar. You decide to set up camp under a tree for the night, using your lab coat as a makeshift tent.

Hearing a loud howling sound behind you, you whirl around, expecting to be confronted by a pack of ravenous wolves. Instead, you see a ravenous raven, perched just above eye level on a nearby tree branch, suspiciously eyeing its surroundings. A brightly coloured snake dangles from the branch above it, slowly descending, obviously intent on having raven for dinner. Bored beyond belief, you spend a good hour watching it edge ever closer to the motionless raven, noticing, perhaps due to your boredom, that the patterns on its back almost resemble letters.

As the sky darkens with dusk, some rustling in the undergrowth grabs your attention, and you see a dark silhouetted figure rise from it, somewhat resembling the shorter of the suspicious pair you saw on the train, but much hairier. Half-expecting him to throw another notebook at you, you are startled when he leaps up at the raven, which manages to escape in a flurry of feathers. Meanwhile, the dark figure dangles perilously from something, and as he slowly descends to the ground, you realise to your horror that his hands are clasped around the colourful snake, now dark in the glare of the sunset.

Muttering unintelligible sounds of annoyance and snarling viciously, he rolls the snake into a ball and hurls it in your direction, confirming your suspicions as to his identity. Suddenly he notices you, resting under the shade of your lab coat, and disappears back into the underbrush. As the snake stalks off, as best as a snake can, you feel assured that you haven't walked a whole day through a forest for nothing, and wonder what dark secrets the suspicious figure is hiding.

