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Opening extract from
**Borgon the Axeboy and the
Whispering Temple**

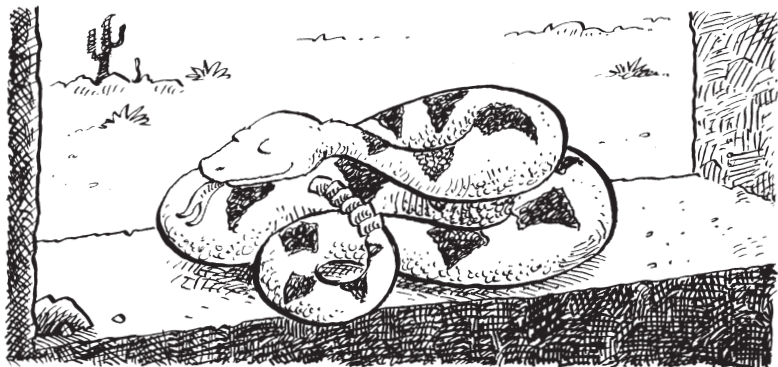
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The Blue Snake

It was morning in the Lost Desert. The sunlight was shining on the ruins of an old temple hidden among the giant rocks, and a bright blue rattlesnake was quietly dozing high up on a window ledge. Suddenly . . .

PLOP!

A fat raindrop splatted down on to the



snake's head. The snake opened a beady eye and saw a huge black cloud shutting out the sun. The snake knew the raindrop hadn't been an accident. Softly, it uncoiled itself, then listened out very carefully. Sure enough, there was the sound of something climbing up from below. The snake opened its mouth wide so its fangs were ready to strike, then it peered over the edge to see who or what was coming.

'GOTCHA!'

A dirty hand grabbed the snake by the neck and dragged it off the ledge. The snake thrashed around helplessly in the air, then realised it was being stared in the face by



a chubby little savage. The snake tried to stretch forward and sink its fangs into his nose, but the savage just laughed.

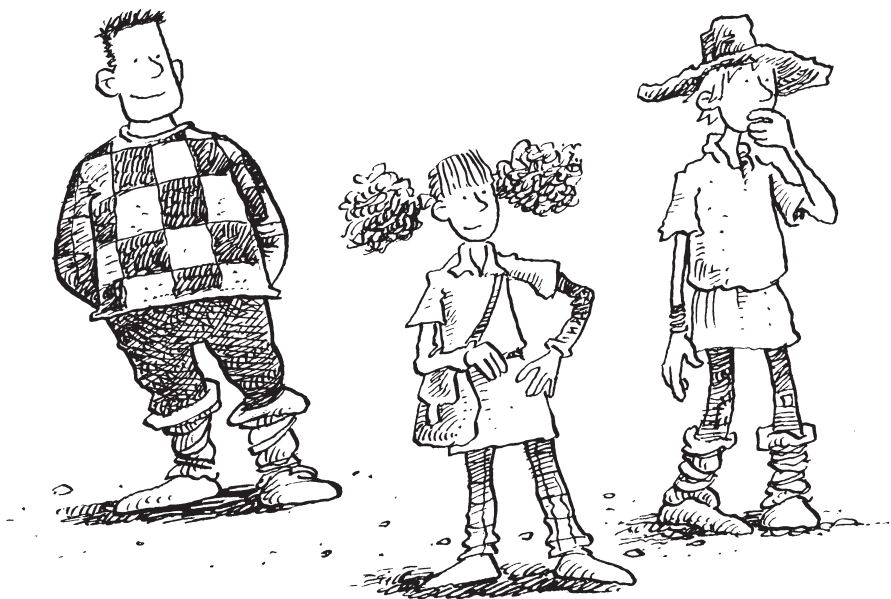
‘You ARE a beauty!’ said Borgon the Axeboy.

HISS! SPIT! Rattle rattle! went the snake angrily.

‘Behave yourself,’ laughed Borgon.

He scrambled back down the wall, holding the snake out at arm’s length.

Three more savages were waiting at the bottom. Grizzy was the girl with the shoulder bag, Mungoid was the chunky one and Hunjah was the skinny one with the big straw hat. All four of them lived in a circle of caves known as Golgarth Basin, and that morning they had been exploring when Borgon had spotted the snake.



Of course, any sensible savage would have kept well away from the snake, but Borgon was not a sensible savage. He was a barbarian, which meant he was one of the fiercest, scariest and maddest savages in the desert. For Borgon there was no such thing as fear, there was only fun, and that's why catching rattlesnakes was one of his favourite tricks.

‘Look at this!’ said Borgon, as he jumped to the ground. ‘I’m going to keep it for a pet.’

‘Put it back!’ said Hunjah nervously.

‘Not likely,’ said Borgon. ‘I’ve never seen a blue rattlesnake before.’

‘Me neither,’ said Mungoid. ‘Rattlers are

supposed to be yellow or brown so they can hide in the rocks.'

'That's not a normal rattlesnake,' said Hunjah nervously. 'It's a guard snake.'

'Rubbish,' said Grizzy. 'Whoever heard of a guard snake? What's it supposed to be guarding?'

'The temple!' said Hunjah. 'I've just recognised it. My mum used to be a priestess here. She took me inside once when I was small and she warned me about the blue snakes.'

'So what happened to this place?' asked Mungoid, looking up at the ruins. 'Doesn't anybody come here any more?'

'Not since the earthquake,' said Hunjah.

‘EARTHQUAKE?’ gasped the others.

‘Did the land split open and mountains collapse?’ asked Mungoid.

‘Not really,’ said Hunjah sadly. ‘But the temple wobbled a bit and some big stones fell off, so everybody decided it was unsafe and stopped coming.’

‘Not everybody!’ said Borgon, holding up the snake. ‘This guy’s still here.’

‘You’d better let the snake go,’ said Hunjah. ‘Or you’ll upset the temple god.’

‘Who cares?’ said Borgon. ‘I’m a BARBARIAN! If there is a god still in there, he should be more worried about upsetting me. **YARGHHHH!**’

KABLOOSH!

A blast of rain came down and splashed Borgon from head to toe. The hot sand around his feet fizzed and gave off a cloud of steam.

‘HA HA HA!’ laughed Grizzly.

‘It’s not funny,’ said Hunjah. ‘That was the god sending Borgon a warning.’

‘Don’t be so pathetic, Hunjah,’ said Grizzly. ‘This temple is a wreck. No sensible god would still be hanging around when there’s no one coming to worship him.’

‘Are you sure?’ asked Mungoid, looking uncertain. ‘It’s funny how that bit of rain just hit Borgon and nothing else.’

Borgon looked at the ground. There was



only one wet patch
and he was standing
in the middle of it. The
snake gave its tail a little
waggle. It seemed to be
laughing at him.

‘If there is a god
here wanting to scare
me, he’ll have to try
harder than that!’ said
Borgon.

Above them the dark
cloud rumbled. Mungoid looked up nervously.

‘Maybe you shouldn’t have said that,’ said
the chunky savage.