

Arachnids

Chapter 1: Dusting off the Cobwebs

Under normal circumstances, Edgeville is usually a peaceful area to dwell, sometimes there's the odd rush of civilians and adventurer folk doing their day to day chores, but mostly it's calm and relaxing. This may come as a surprise to most, as a little over a couple hundred of yards from where the bank is situated, resides one of the most dangerous places in the land, tarnished and defiled by a forgotten war. Rarely, a lost adventurer trespasses too far and veers into the most veiled, ancient areas, discovering the demonic beings that linger in the darkness. However, I've noticed that most of the trouble that makes the news in this area comes from what lurks beneath Edgeville. Word has it that the beasts inhabiting the dungeons below this small town safeguard vast treasures and selfishly keep desired riches. Naturally, the appeal is too great for some to resist, they will blindly venture deep into its depths, unaware and unprepared for what awaits. Most come back alive, empty handed or with a bag full of stolen red spider eggs and a number of venomous spider bites to tend to. In more 'grave' circumstances some individuals eventually turn up around Falador or Varrock, perplexed and amnesic, but alive. However, the rumour that local people were permanently disappearing was becoming common knowledge, this was a new cause of concern for the area, its folk and for me.

My first concerns were raised when upon leaving the local bank; out of the corner of my eye I noticed commotion that was attracting the attention of everyone in the vicinity. It was literally at the edge of the wilderness, only a few metres away from the wall separating the town from the decaying land. It involved an older bearded man and a distressed woman. Initially, I intended to ignore it, assuming it was domestic; however my conscience and curiosity overcame my physical will. As I started to approach them the male stranger muttered quietly. "I'm sorry" he said apologising, before he walked away, with his head hung low as if out of embarrassment. Upon this her attention turned directly to me. I could tell she had been crying, she brushed away her tears with the back of her hand, yet continued to sob as she started to talk to me. "Have you seen my son?" she hoarsely exclaimed, "He is about this tall, with long mousey brown hair and green eyes" she pleaded whilst she described her son, directing her hands to roughly four feet above the ground. "He was here ... He *was* right here with me..." I was slightly stunned, my first judgements were that he had run away which, given the location was especially dangerous. My reply lacked the empathy I intended to convey, "No." I blandly uttered. I could tell her heart sank and I had shattered what little hope she was desperately clutching on to. I couldn't help but think of when I aided Irena when she lost her daughter, to south of Al Kharid. Specifically, how upset she was and how much this woman's current trauma resembled hers. "I haven't been in this area for all that long... when did he *disappear*?" I was extremely careful to use 'disappear' rather than a more pessimistic 'kidnapped' or 'stolen' to maintain a sense of calmness with her. "A few hours ago" she quickly replied "Joel was playing here with his brother, Nolan, just outside of the bank, I only went in there for a few moments to sort out some paperwork and ... and when I came back he was g-" she briefly paused to compose herself, gesturing me to wait. "Poor Nolan is so distraught I've asked a friend to take care of him whilst I try my best to ... to find my son" at this point she uncontrollably burst into tears. "There, There" I gently said. "I've helped find missing persons before and they turned out to be fine in the end. It's just a case of tracking back, to find out what exactly happened" I explained. I desperately tried to comfort her. "Everything is going to be okay" I lied. I wanted to be positive and I felt incensed at myself, but

the odds against finding him alive were stacking up. Facing the facts, at least someone kidnapped Ana, vanishing children in an area with a notorious reputation for peril made me feel even more cynical. "I'm sorry" I stressed, "I didn't catch your name", "Angela" she replied. "Look... Angela, did anyone in the area ... see or hear anything?" Angela's facial expression drastically transformed "No!" she angrily exclaimed to my face. I was startled by her aggressive outburst. She quickly realised that she might have insulted my compassion and was quick to apologise. "I'm very sorry... It's been tough... I've been asking everyone who comes by, non-stop, for hours now. It's frustrating me. No one has seen or heard anything.... only Nolan was here. It's all been a bit overwhelming on his fragile mind; he was screaming nonsense when I left him" I raised my eyebrow and my mood lifted slightly with the revelation of this seemingly unimportant detail.

"Non-sense?" I asked inquisitively. "Yes. Utter nonsense" Angela paused expecting me to change the subject, yet continued when I gestured her to continue. "I'm ... I'm not really sure what he was saying, I wasn't really listening ... I just want my baby boy back!" Angela broke out into tears again. I had to be honest with myself; I'd previously investigated a variety of situations for a lot less than 'a word of nonsense'. I felt inclined to help too. "Angela? Would you mind if I talked to your son?" she looked at me curiously. "... Just to get a greater understanding of what happened and possibly get some useful information from him?" Angela paused to think about it "Do you think it will help?" she asked expectantly. "I really think so..." I paused trying to find the right words to lift her mood. "Look ... there's not a lot of ... tangible, useful evidence here I can use. He is my only eye-witness; he might have seen something important." I was afraid she might completely reject the idea and take offense to questioning her already traumatized son. Angela silently pondered the idea, so I tried to further rouse a positive response. "If, he offers useful information, I promise to investigate it, no matter what he suggests..." Angela slipped a smile as signifying that I had sold the idea to her. "Would you do that for me?" "Yes. Of Course" I replied sternly. "Where is Nolan staying at the moment?" I asked. Angela thought about the question for a moment whilst she dried her eyes. "I'm fairly certain he'll be at home, we live in south Varrock, just next to the southern entrance. It's the big house. Very hard to miss." Finally, Angela seemed to be becoming more composed and hopeful. I didn't want to waste any time. "I'll head over there now to ask your son some questions." I eagerly said. "Thank you" she said with the briefest of smiles, "I really feel lost amongst all of this at the moment, it's not that often you meet genuine, good people" she sniffled. "Whilst you are gone, I think I will stay here and continue to ask about Joel, hopefully someone else might have seen something." She paused, obviously thinking about Joel. "I think it's the only thing I can bring myself to do at the moment" she said looking at the ground. Her shoulders dropped and she fiddled around with her fingers. "Perhaps we should find something to wipe your eyes with, relax a little before you continue?" I empathically offered. She briefly smiled again, "Yeah, I think I'll do that ... please find him ... soon?" she looked at me again, "I promise I'll bring him back safe and sound" I replied with a smile. I knelt down to find some clean cloth in my rucksack. "Oh..." she exclaimed aloud, suddenly remembering something. "Yes?" I enquiringly replied. "Susan, the woman looking after Nolan can be a bit... *difficult* at times ... I guess it just comes from living in that part of Varrock" she said sympathetically. "I ... understand" I thoughtfully, yet confusingly replied. I momentarily wondered what she could mean by that, and then I decided to overlook it for now. "I'm sure something will come to mind" I unconfidently admitted. Angela thanked me again as I began to head south out of Edgeville, looking back I saw her wander towards the bank, gazing emptily into the wilderness. She was probably too worried about

her son to even think about calming herself down. I silently prayed she would unearth something to aid in her desperate search to find her son.

The walk to Varrock normally takes around ten minutes; arguably I could have used my various skills in Magicks to arrive there instantaneously, however the walk gave me time to reflect and think about how I was going to address Nolan. Varrock is a grand town, with so much visible historical importance, constantly under threat however, from the horrors of the north. Surely enough my arrival into Varrock was greeted with the usual military presence at the western entrance, followed by the manic rush of merchants and tradesman, scurrying to the Grand Exchange to make their daily earnings. I headed towards the southern entrance, walking through the streets, passing the crumbled walls of formerly standing houses and the local apothecary. As Angela has explained, there stood her house, sitting just next to the southern exit of Varrock. It had a chocolate brown, wooden front door and rounded glass windows. As I walked towards the door and entered the front garden area I could hear someone speaking from inside the house. I intently knocked, bold and loudly to ensure they knew I was here. "Who is it?" asked a woman's voice from inside the house. "I've been sent here by Angela and I was wondering if I could have a talk with Nolan?" I was hoping this vague reply would give the impression I was actually a Varrockian Guard or an official investigator, at least then she would open the door to me. It was silent for a moment, then I could hear the clicking and un-latching of what seemed to be three or four locks on the other side of the door. My plan had seemingly worked, the door slowly opened to reveal an older, brown haired woman, roughly about the same height as Angela. "What do you want to talk to Nolan for?" she aggressively asked. She locked eye contact with me, it felt as though her eyes were trying to identify and unravel me. "I think he may hold some valuable information which could lead to finding his brother Joel" I replied seriously. There was another uncomfortable pause whilst she scrutinized me. At first I thought she was going to chase me away, however it seemed that I managed to make her believe I was genuinely there to help. "Angela sent you?", "Yes ma'am" I politely replied, nodding as I said it. "Fair enough, come inside, Nolan's upstairs; if he doesn't want to talk to you or if you upset him, I'll throw you out with my bare hands. Do you understand?", "Perfectly" I replied gulping. At this point Susan stood aside from the door and signalled towards the stairs of the house.

I was aware that Susan was still glaring at me, silently studying me, even when I had passed her. I made my way through Angela's living room; it was a very warm and welcoming home with a tall, large coal fireplace surrounded by well crafted teak chairs and fluffy pillows. There was a loud wooden creak coming from beneath my feet every time I stepped on the stairs, despite knowing I wouldn't disrupt anyone, I tried walking softer as I gingerly moved up the last steps. The stairs led into a small attic-like room at the top of the house. At first, my back was turned to Nolan, as I turned around at the head of the stairs I could see him sat upon his bed with his head in his hands. The whole room was untidy, three beds were lined up along the length of the room, their quilts were left hanging off and items off a mahogany bedside table lay scattered around the floor. "I made sure he was home quickly, he's been through a lot today" Susan said sympathetically from behind me. I cautiously approached Nolan and sat myself down quietly next to his bed. I could hear him crying so I introduced myself. "Nolan?" he looked quickly at me through his fingers. "Nolan, I'm a friend of your mother's, she's sent me to talk and h..." he quickly interrupted me "They took him; they came out of the shadows and dragged him away. Now I'm scared they'll come for me too!" he blubbered. I didn't want Susan to think I'd upset him, but she was swift to voice her opinion. "Whoever it was who took him, is not going to get you whilst I'm here!" shouted Susan. I tried to look Nolan in the

face; however he was still hiding it. "I'm here to help Nolan... I want to try and find your brother as soon as possible. However I need to understand what exactly happened." Nolan was quick to reply, "You won't believe me; even my mum doesn't believe me!" he sobbed. "Nolan..." I gently placed my hand upon his shoulder. "I too have had various strange and evil encounters myself ... and ..." I stopped. "And?" Nolan said sarcastically. "And, well, I'm still here, alive and well. I'm certain that I can find your brother and bring him home safely." At this point Nolan's head slowly arose from his encased hands. "Can you promise me you'll bring Joel back?" requested Nolan. "I promise." I replied. "Now dry your eyes ... firstly I need you to do me a favour. I need you to tell me what happened, every detail, no matter how bizarre or out of the ordinary. I will believe you. I swear." "My throat hurts ... could you fetch me a drink please?" he said this openly, however I turned around and looked at Susan, implying she should get it for him. "I'll get a glass of water for you, sweetie!" she replied with a smile. As Susan made her way downstairs Nolan began his explanation of what had happened. "We were just playing near Edgeville bank, my mum told us to stay there but Joel kicked my ball away. He always does that. It's my ball too! So, I ran after it and managed to stop it before it bounced over the wall" "The wilderness..." I whispered anxiously. "Yes, mum told us never to cross! So, I picked my ball up and Joel snatched it back off me, he said 'oh, you would be so cool if you went to get this ball from over there'" Nolan said this in a sarcastic, nonchalant tone imitating his brothers voice. "So, I said no and I told him mum didn't want us near there." I was curious. "Was... this... when it happened?" I asked. "No." Nolan replied. "He said 'I double dare you to do it or you are a big chicken'. Then he snatched the ball off me again and kicked it over the wall" I could hear Susan coming up the staircase. "Ahh, here's a drink for you." I said. Susan arrived and gave Nolan the glass, then sat down on the bed beside him. "Do you want me to tell him to leave?" Susan asked Nolan whilst he drank. "Perfect", I thought to myself. I felt a little angry that I was making progress, yet Susan was trying to get rid of me already. He replied after finishing his drink. "No." Nolan turned to face me "I tried to stop Joel but he completely ignored me." "Stop him from doing what?" I replied. "Well, after I told him I didn't want to go for the ball he called me a chicken. Then, he climbed over the wall himself". Nolan stopped talking and looked directly at me, he was upset, and he even frowned and cowered as though he was in trouble. "You should have told your mother!" barked Susan, interrupting Nolan. "I ... I couldn't! It ... it all happened really fast, I heard something scuttling really fast from his left, I ran to the wall." Nolan halted, looking down towards the floor, I saw a tear roll down his nose, and then drop to the floor. "I saw it ... but Joel didn't." He said visibly distressed. "You saw ... it?" I questioned. "Yes, it was black, black like the shadows it came from, but it was bigger, much larger than I have ever seen them before." Susan appeared to be shocked, yet I was more surprised. "You've see them before?" I curiously questioned again. "Yes, it was a huge, gigantic spider, like the little ones ... only bigger ... it had ..." Nolan started shaking with terror. Susan immediately noticed Nolan's distress. "Right! You need to leave ... now!" exclaimed Susan. "Wait!" I pleaded. "It's important I hear Nolan finish explaining what happened!" I said as I stood up. Susan quickly grabbed me from the other side of the bed and started to physically push me towards the stairs. "What else happened Nolan?" I desperately pleaded. "Out! I explained what would happen if you upset him!" Susan screamed, raising her voice over mine. She stopped pushing me when Nolan replied. "It bit him. Then he fell down and it carried him away!" Nolan started to cry, "I thought it killed him" he snivelled. "Out!" Susan shouted in my face again. There was not much I could do, Susan bundled me down the stairs and out of their front door slamming it behind me, I didn't even properly say goodbye to Nolan. I was hopeful at this point that I could make things better for them all.

Now I knew I would have to return to Edgeville and closely investigate the area where Joel was abducted. I was disturbed, yet confused at the reasons why the spider would attack Joel and take him away. I've had brief encounters with spiders before that were significantly less traumatic. I always thought they'd naturally reside in darker areas, underneath the earth and never grow much higher than two or three foot. It troubled me to hear of one physically hunting and stealing a child in plain sight. I was no spider expert but this seemed to me very peculiar and irregular behaviour. Whilst I let my thoughts drift into other theories' I quickly sprinted to the nearest bank which was north up the road from Angela's house. I was aware that I had little to no time to lose at all if I was going to recover Joel alive. I politely, yet urgently asked the bank assistant to access my possessions. The bank's magical technology was truly unrivalled, their caskets, which are unlocked by various passwords and secure numbers at their owner's request, are substantially bigger on the inside than they are on the outside. Apparently some form of 'magical dimension folding', not to be tampered with and developed by some unknown, yet probably rich geniuses. As I rattled around through my possessions I finally found what I was looking for and delicately withdrew it from the casket. "Why that's a glorious amulet you have there, sir" the worker exclaimed in awe as the violet light from the amulet's dragonstone heart caught his attention. I smiled at him and replied "Yes and very expensive". He laughed whilst I started to rub the amulet's gem, my thoughts cleared and focused on Edgeville. As I closed my eyes and took a deep breath, I could feel my body starting to lift; I could see shimmers of dark green and gold light whistling past my closed eyes like a kaleidoscope. In an instant, the light vanished and I slowly released my breath. I could feel the ground beneath my feet again. I opened my eyes to see Edgeville once more. Surely enough Angela was still here frantically asking everyone who came past her about Joel. She had not noticed that I had returned yet, so I quickly requested that my possessions be returned to my bank, and then went to update Angela on my plan of action.

"Your back!" Angela cried with joy as I strolled over to her. "What did Nolan say? Did he help?" she continued with her list of questions. I knew my first obstacle would be subtly breaking the news that he was abducted by a spider. "From what Nolan told me, it seems that your son was stolen by some sort of ..." I halted, I couldn't simply say it. "Yes?" she asked tilting her head. "... spider" I unhappily replied. "*Spider?*" she asked, frowning with confusion. "Yes ... it's both good ... and bad..." I paused for a moment, to think how I would say this "Personally, I've never heard of this kind of behaviour from an arachnid before, however they can be tracked, I think, I might be able to find where it took him." This seemed to please Angela slightly. "Where are you starting your search? I will help you!" she desperately pleaded. "I'm afraid, I'm going to have to insist that I do this alone, this search is going to require a venture into the wilderness, and I don't know what will be found or encountered, you're in a bad enough state as it is." I slowly explained. Angela seemed both frustrated, yet relieved that she wouldn't have to accompany me. "Do you really think you can find him?" she charmingly asked. I didn't fully believe I could, so I tried to spin the question. "I do have all the necessary provisions required for the journey, I'll just need a little time to prepare my equipment." I replied, dodging a blunt answer. She seemed eager, yet anxious to let me go. "Well ... I'll let you get to it then" she calmly stated as she intently nodded. Before I left her she informed me that should I require anything I would know where to find her. "Try not to worry too much" I suggested in vain, I knew she would continue asking strangers while I was gone. This was easily going to be the most dangerous quest I had been upon for a while, so I ensured that I put all of my compulsory gear for any kind of life threatening task in my rucksack. I headed to the bank and listed

the items I would need. "Rope ... knife ... pick-axe" I whispered to myself to ensure I didn't forget anything. Once the items for my voyage were packed I made sure I was ready for combat. Delving into my most prized possessions, I knew exactly what I was looking for. "Guthix bless you, Oziach" I said to myself as I jerked the various pieces of my armour out of the bank and held them up the air so I could inspect them closer. This particular set of armour had saved my life on more than one occasion. The platebody had a distinct supernatural, blue metallic look, with scratches and scuffs baring testament to previous battles. The runite metal that it is made from is only forged by the most skilled of smiths and can easily withstand any considerable force or mortal wound. Whether or not Oziach himself moulded it himself is still a mystery, but after that 'dragon incident' on Karamja I think he felt I was deemed worthy of wearing it. Finally, I pulled on my matching metallic boots, adjusted the amulet around my neck and picked up my long sword and shield, prepped for the trek. Just before I hopped over the wall segregating Edgeville from the barren wilderness, I heard Angela cry out, "Be careful!" she shouted through her cupped hands from behind me. I turned and lifted my helmet's visor, "I'll find your son!" I shouted back, I then lowered my visor and crossed the crumbling stone wall.

The origins of the wilderness are still an enigma, many professors and academics have continued to study it throughout the years. The only facts known for sure are that it is one of the last remaining scars of the legendary war of the gods. Many men and strange beings fought and died across this vast horizon of scorched earth. The air itself is thick ash, the ground crumbles and cracks upon any weight and the sky is immersed in choking black clouds. Dead trees litter the landscape; there are very few men who dare to tread here. I had heard myths of revenants haunting the endless night stalking anything they discover and concealed, vast, archaic beasts, waiting within the deepest of caverns. Only the bravest and most daring freely wander the wilderness, fearing what they might awaken or arouse with their presence. I was always nervous, yet sensitively aware of my surroundings. It's too easy to lose your bearings and become lost in the shadows and the fog. I knew what I wanted to accomplish, bear northwest whilst avoiding the tall standing obelisk of air which seems to act like a magnet to evil, attracting every form of malevolent force in its vicinity. I was really searching in the hope of stumbling across even the tiniest glimpse of a trail, or a scrap of evidence to point me in the right direction. Roughly fifteen minutes due north-west of the obelisk there was a dense collection of pale trees awash with dust, surrounded by deceased undergrowth and protruding roots from the dirt. Firmly caught within the bony arms of a lifeless bush lay Joel's ball. Sorrow took hold of my body, "Oh, no" I said sadly to myself, distracted by grief and losing faith in what little hope I had left. I grasped the ball and pulled it out of the bush, exerting my strength in frustration. As I tore the ball away from the grasp of the fragile branches I noticed something peculiar through the nettles and dead branches. I cautiously removed my machete and irately slashed my way through the perishing plantation. As the out stretched limbs of the trees snapped and broke around me I hastily walked too far without realising the soil ceased to be in front of my feet. I desperately searched for something to grab hold of to prevent dropping into dense darkness. My own fate was sealed; I lost my footing and fell.

As I awoke I kept my eyes closed, my vision was black. Cautiously I opened my eyes, but still couldn't see a thing. Realising where I was, I frantically scrambled to find my tinderbox and bulls eye lantern. A high pitch squeal echoed throughout the tunnel followed by the light pattering of movement. I anxiously sparked the tinderbox repeatedly, "Come on ... Come on!" I shouted. I quickly glanced up; the light from the spark briefly illuminated the corridor of darkness. I could see four spiders

scampering along the sides and roof of the tunnel bearing directly towards me. The tinderbox sparked and fizzed; I promptly lit the lantern and positioned it to face down the tunnel. The foremost spider pounced off the roof towards me, screeching as it sailed through the air. I unsheathed my long sword and rammed the tip of the blade into the mouth of the pouncing spider, catching it mid-flight. It twitched and jerked on my blade, which had pierced all the way through its body. I swung my sword around casually tossing the spider away and hid behind my shield, prepared for the next attack. The remaining spiders scuttled along the floor in a seemingly intelligent, triangular formation. I thrust my weapon through the body of the most prominent spider, which dispersed the other two, making them easy to quickly dispatch. Transparent spider hemolymph trickled down my blade; I casually wiped it off then curiously studied my surroundings. The tunnel itself had a circular structure, it appeared as if it had been burrowed by something significantly larger than the spiders I had slain, or any spider I had ever seen before. Also, judging from the dust that had settled around where I had awoken, it appeared like I had been unconscious for some time. "Where am I?" I asked myself, puzzled and still dazed from the fall. An epiphany instantly struck my memory and I glared up at the entrance to which I fell down. "Wow ... what a hole... that must have been about thirty feet!" I exclaimed. I felt my back crack and snap when I looked up. It felt like every muscle in my body was aching. I considered how beneficial my armour was at breaking the fall, even though it had left me feeling like I had fallen off the zip line in Morytania several times. Satisfied that it was worth bringing it, I returned to my possessions and rummaged around in my rucksack for my grapple hook. "Aha!" I declared happily as I noticed it hiding in the bottom of the bag. Impetuously, I swung the grapple around and attempted to throw it out of the tunnel entrance. My determination was defeated by pessimism, although I managed to get the grapple out of the tunnel entrance, it helplessly bore through the weak soil and plunged back down into the abyss that I was standing in. "Looks like I'm stuck down here." I disappointingly explained to myself. I aimed my lantern down the tunnel, it seemed to be endless darkness, and I had to resist shouting down the tunnel to hear the echo, being aware that it would alert everything to my presence. I felt defeated already, but I knew I had to press on and explore the hidden depths of the tunnel; I re-invigorated myself, hurled my rucksack onto my back, gripped my lantern tightly in one hand and held my shield in the other. Then, I began walking down the tunnel.

It seemed to stretch forever; I didn't know much of the landscape above, so I couldn't judge where I actually was in comparison to the surface. Scrutinising the walls of the tunnel didn't help either; there were no clues or hints to what actually made the tunnel. The fact that it was completely vacant made me feel uneasy and the infrequent occurrence of strange, blackened liquid oozing down the walls made me feel even more uncomfortable. Normally I would be more inquisitive; however I was disgusted by the sight of it and felt compelled to leave it. The tunnel continued to delve deeper into the Earth, the air became warmer and I could hear faint sounds of the volcano relentlessly erupting. I was relieved to have an idea of where I was; however I grew more worried for my own safety knowing that the walls could easily collapse, allowing lava to gush in and flood the tunnel. Suddenly, I was startled by a shouting voice, resonating along the tunnel, I couldn't understand it, but it was the stimulation I needed to cast caution into the wind. I began to thoughtlessly sprint down the tunnel, the light from my lantern danced and flashed across the roof of the tunnel, casting strange and peculiar shadows off the hanging stalagmites and fallen rocks. I froze; whilst examining the tunnel I noticed several suspicious looking holes around the walls of the tunnel. A hole directly in my vision jerked and shuddered with movement; I tentatively walked closer

to the hole noticing it had cobwebs dangling inside of it. I vigilantly moved back, aiming my lantern at the hole's opening. I saw the light reflect off the numerous eyes gazing back at me, and with a deafening screech the spider launched out of the hole. I reacted by dropping my lantern on the ground, then evading the spider's attacks. I snatched my lantern again and retreated back. Slowly placing the lantern on the ground, I could see more spiders climbing out of their fissures. I instantly recognised these spiders from my travels, their unique shade of fluorescent orange exposed what they were. "Fever Spiders!" I gasped, "Duradel, never mentioned encountering them here to me!" I exclaimed. This specific type of spider had a notoriously diseased bite, which if inflicted, caused its helpless victim to rapidly develop fever-like symptoms. These bites would eventually cause the body to stop functioning altogether. Remembering my training and realising my hands were bare, I impulsively attempted to glove them; I set the blade of my sword into the ground and tightly wrenched a single glove on. The spiders sharply organised themselves into a cluster, counting eight in number, I primed myself, watching them scampering across the floor. I didn't have enough time; I clutched my shield with my bare hand and set myself for a rare bout of weapon-less, melee combat. Engaging the cluster, I parried the leading spider, knocking it through the remainder of them like skittles. A single spider sneakily, crawled under my shield and nibbled on my sturdy runite boots. "It's gonna take a lot more than your bite to pierce these boots!" I barked at the spider as I kicked it aside, executing it under the sole of the same boot. I rolled backwards and slammed my shield through the body of another spider, decapitating it. They screeched and screamed as they attempted to flank; however I could tell they were intimidated by me. Slowly, I slaughtered them one at a time until only two remained. Defeated, they attempted to withdraw, however their attempts were futile, I reclaimed my sword and pursued them, ensuring none survived. I swiftly gathered my things together and continued to dash down through the tunnel.

My progress was abruptly halted; the tunnel ended and opened out into a large cavern, with a chasm separating me from the entrance I could see on the other side. The roof was illuminated with a warm orange glow. I anxiously peered over the edge, staring at the boiling river of magma; I could feel my heart thumping from the adrenaline of combat, which made my head throb like a drum. I frantically searched for a solution to my problem, hunting for a miracle lever which would teleport me across. Conquered, I lurched back and collapsed to the floor, staring at the hypnotising light show on the ceiling. I took off my helmet and pressed my thumbs into the temples of my head, attempting to massage the pain. Closing my eyes, I relaxed my head, allowing it to slowly limp to the side. Upon re-opening my eyes I noticed a small rocky path hidden to my left, stretching out over the cavern, suspending a rocky outgrowth across the gulf. "If I could swing across ... hmm" I deliberated. My mind fanatically sparked into life. "Yes!" I cried out in euphoria. I had an idea which even I thought was borderline insane, but I was prepared to try anything now. I madly rummaged through my rucksack to salvage as much rope as I could find. "It's not enough!" I screamed in frustration at the roof, crushing whatever I had in my hands. "I need ... more! ... rope! ..." I paused, noticing the abundance of spider webbing all around the cave. "I could use spider webbing!" I elatedly yelled. I walked back to the edge of the chasm and started to judge how much webbing I would roughly need. Closing one eye and examining the distance through my little finger and thumb, I came to a guessed decision on the length of webbing I would need. Brandishing my sword, I went to work slicing it all down. Thick, sticky threads of web fell and thudded on the floor around me, I was surprised at how easy it was to pick up and carry, although the same couldn't be said for detaching it from my grip. Once I was satisfied, I retrieved my pickaxe, which was loosely tied to my backpack

and attempted to break a piece of rock somewhat suitable to attach to the web for standing on. Fortunately, I had spent many hours training with the dwarves in their mining guild and I was able to etch an appropriate sized rock much quicker than I had anticipated. The lengths of webbing continued to be difficult to handle, its adhesiveness made it constantly stick to my backpack and collect dust off the dirty floor. I found binding the various fibres together physically draining, yet I was intent on ensuring that all the binds were tight and strong. I couldn't help but become more irritated with this tedious task, I growled aloud in annoyance every time I missed the thread. Eventually, I felt confident that I had fashioned three correctly sized, delicately crafted 'web-ropes' which I could use and have faith they would hold my weight. I tentatively wrapped the rope around the rock and then tied a sturdy, expertly executed knot. I pulled it as hard as I could, resting my feet against the rock and suspending myself off the floor. I hoped this would work. Anxiously, I dragged the rock up to the overhanging arch of rock then, cautiously walked along the support. I timidly jumped up and down, half expecting the rocky outstretched arm to snap, leaving me to descend into the magma pit simmering below. I sighed with relief, "Solid as a rock" I said happily. I laid face down and wrapped my arms around the rocky limb; it felt like there was a good two or three inches between my hands underneath. I struggled to thread the other end of the spider rope around the bulk of the rock, but I eventually persevered. "Here we go..." I murmured under my breath. Slowly, I lowered the rock off the edge of the overhanging rock until it hung at full length, suspended below. I calmly backed away from the edge of the stony branch, walking back around to where I entered the cavern, clutching at the other rope I had tied to the dangling rock. I was surprised at how precise my estimates were, at the furthest point from the dangling platform I was balancing on the very edge of the ground. Finally, my odd plan had all of its components in place; all I needed to do now was attempt to cross. "This! ... Is going to be the death of me!" I smugly chuckled to myself. I boldly tightened my backpack and pulled the rock towards me. Taking a deep breath, I ran towards the edge of ground, leaping in faith, onto the awaiting rock.

I barely had time to react, upon landing on the rock my momentum propelled it through the air, gliding across the chasm. I could hear the web rope stretch and tighten under my weight. Seizing the loose web rope tightly with my hand, I dived off the rock, landing on my back on the dusty ledge of the opposing cave mouth. The rocky pendulum began to swing back towards the other side, still clenching onto the rope, I was pulled back with it. My boots grazed through the ash covered floor scattering dust into the air behind me as I tried to stop myself from being pulled over the edge. "Arrgh!" I yelled, realising I might not be able to stop the rock from dragging me back. As I was drawn towards the edge, the heels of my boots wedged into a gap in the rocky ground, halting me instantly. I breathed a sigh of relief, staring down the cavern. Hesitantly, I pulled the rope over my shoulder and tugged it back to where I wanted to tie it down. I placed the rope under my foot and searched my bag for my hammer and nails. I could hear the nails jingle as I moved the bag around, but the lack of light made it difficult to actually retrieve them. I kneeled down, still holding the rope under my foot and hammered a nail into the rocky floor. Tiny pieces of rock flicked and ricocheted off my helmet with every swing of the hammer. I finally felt content that the nail was firmly pierced into the ground; I tied the rope down, and then deservedly recuperated for a brief moment, temporarily sitting down with my hands placed on my knees. Whilst I studied the cavern I slowly began to unlatch my light source from my backpack, preparing to enter the cave mouth I risked so much to reach. The ambiguous black liquid flowed down the wall, either side of the caves entrance. It made the wall appear to be flowing with veins of black blood. Recovered, I dragged myself back

onto my feet and warily passed through the cave mouth. The cave on the other side of the opening was significantly larger inside than I had first thought. Huge stalagmites acted like pillars supporting the vast cavern and large webs dangled from the roof, big enough to catch anything that dare fly into them. My awe was promptly disturbed when I realised there were also large cocoons swinging from the ceiling. They varied in height and width, gently swaying back and forth in the wind that whistled through this cavern. I shone the light from my lantern around the whole cavern, the cocoons were everywhere. Inquisitively, I walked towards the nearest one with my lantern fixed on its position. It oozed and dripped a familiar disgusting, oily, black liquid. Directly settled underneath it rested a large pile of bones, with the liquid pooling around it. I initially presumed that the cocoons were being used as form of shelter for spider young. I was quickly proved wrong, upon closer inspection I realised to my own horror that they were in fact cocoons of prey, kidnapped or hunted, then brought here. The cocoon I was tentatively watching was smaller than the others in size, but I could make out the outline of an adult dwarf, already passed away, slowly being digested. My stomach turned and I felt sick. Nauseously, I drew my longbow, which sparkled with the essence of the magic tree it was fletched from and unleashed a volley of arrows at a different cocoon. The thread of web which was suspending the target was stubborn and strong; it took three direct hits to cut loose. The case of webbing hit the ground with a crunching thud, snapping and cracking the bones it landed on. The ominous black liquid splattered everywhere, some spilling onto my armour. It was like thick, viscous oil, which hardened on impact with my cold, metal plate body. I unsheathed my sword and delicately sliced the cocoon open. The liquid flooded out, the stench was vile. It was the unmistakable odour of death. Only un-digested bones remained within the webbing, I frantically poked and scooped the bones out with my sword. The bones didn't appear to be human, but they were almost unrecognisable as bones, appearing eaten and eroded from the hungry fluids. "No, he has to be here somewhere..." I exclaimed to myself, desperately fixing my light on every cocoon. I had no other option; there were too many cocoons to sift through... "Joel?!" I screamed as loud as I could. At first I could hear the echoes of my voice filter down through the holes and tunnels surrounding the cavern, and then a disturbingly eerie silence fell. It was only interrupted by the light tapping of falling stones and rocks in the distance. It felt like something was watching me, like something knew I was here and I had foolishly drawn its attention. A soft mumble caught my attention from behind me; I sprung around searching for the source of the sound. It was much closer than the falling rocks; I anxiously focused the attention of my lantern on the surrounding cocoons, sprinting to each one, checking each one for movement. "Am I hearing things?" I asked myself. Finally, the sight of my lantern caught a glimpse of a cocoon energetically rocking backwards and forwards as if something inside had woken up and was trying to escape. I ran up it and worriedly searched for an opening. "Joel? Joel? Are you in there?" I asked, and then I paused for a moment, hoping to hear the faint sound of his voice. There was a long silence, my hopes were devastated, and I closed my eyes and prayed that I could hear the voice call out again. I gazed above staring at the ceiling of the cavern "Plee-easse! Call a-" I was disrupted in my prayer. I could hear more mumbling struggling to break out of the web-like prison cell. I pressed my ear against the surface of the cocoon; I could just make out what Joel was saying, "H-help ... me ..." he weakly coughed. It sounded like something was lodged in his throat. I gleefully thanked towards the heavens then controlled my excitement to explain to him what I was going to do. "Joel, I'm going to cut you free, just hang on a moment... please... brace yourself! This might hurt a little when it hits the ground!" Cautiously, I backed away from the cocoon, drew my knife and then threw it at the thread of web to which the cocoon was hanging from. It instantly dropped to the ground with a thump, the liquid inside made it

wobble like jelly. I drew my sword; I knew I had to get him out now. Expertly, I lined the blade of my sword with the centre of the cocoon, and then accurately made an incision on the surface. Black liquid slowly secreted out at first, but as I cut deeper it gushed out everywhere. I didn't care anymore at this point, I pushed my hand into the pool of mysterious liquid grabbing the first solid object I could grasp and tugged. Slowly, Joel appeared from the liquid, finally escaping from his confinement. I noticed I had seized him by his arm, as his head surfaced out of the fluid a tentacle like tube also appeared, wound around his neck and wedged in his throat. It looked like it was slowly suffocating him; "Joel?" I cried, opening his eyelids to see if he was alive. His eyes looked at me in fear, he seemed sedated yet conscious of what was happening. I cut the unnatural bind around his neck and pulled it out of his throat. He sputtered and regurgitated black liquid, then took a huge gasp for air. His tears rolled down his face, clearing a tiny path through the black liquid. I propped him up by his back, and then I offered him a cloth to wipe his face. He aggressively wiped his eyes. "Thank you for saving me" he softly said "It hurts really badly" he pleaded, whilst sobbing. He then sincerely hugged me. "I'm so scared" he declared, trembling in my arms. "I'm going to get you out of here!" I boldly stated. My first thoughts were to give him some food, so I reached into my backpack, snatching a bar of chocolate and my water skin. "Please, eat..., drink..." I allowed him a moment to get himself together, and then informed him of the bad news. "I'm pretty certain they'll know I've cut you free so we'll have to be quick!" Joel poured most of the water over his face and head leaving a small amount to drink; he rubbed his eyes in frustration, and then continued to gobble the chocolate bar up. "This ... chocolate... tastes ... so good!" he exclaimed as he frantically devoured the chocolate bar, only pausing to take a short breath. The gifted, brief moment of recovery was swiftly halted. The sound of rocks falling behind us caused Joel to freeze in terror; I quickly stole the lantern from beside him and pointed it in the direction of the noise. "We have to move!" I whispered, realising what was storming towards us. "Sssssshe! Musssst! Be fed!" shrieked a bone chilling voice. "Kill the adult! *She* wants the child ... aliveeeee". The voice bellowed through the whole cavern, it felt like it shook the ground beneath me. Joel was already helping me gather my stuff. "Start running!" I shouted at Joel. Joel immediately turned around and darted towards the cavern exit, back towards the way I had entered. As I began to run, the first of the spider horde caught up to me. I spun around, deflecting three spiders backwards with my shield, then I began to fully sprint. I could feel another two spiders biting at my heels, so I spun around again, cleanly slicing the heads off them both. "Hurry!" Joel urgently shouted from just ahead of me. I heard projectiles whistle past my ears; gazing upwards I noticed one of the missiles had disconnected a stalagmite from the roof, which sent it plunging towards where I was running to. I made a daring, agile jump underneath it, narrowly squeezing through the closing gap; I heard the rock grind against the back of my armour. After clambering to my feet I continued to run forwards, passing through the exit. "What are we going to do?" Joel desperately questioned gazing at the cavern separating us from safety. "Jump onto the rock!" I declared. Joel gazed at me in fear, but I could hear the hissing of the spider horde approaching, "Jump on the rock ... we have no time!" Joel nervously obeyed my order. "Listen to me very carefully, the second this rock reaches the other side you jump! Don't look down, don't think! Just jump as far as you can, then hide in the cave mouth!" Joel didn't blink, he just obediently listened. "You don't have to worry about any spiders, I cleared it out when I passed ..." out of the darkness, a soaring spider interrupted me, landing on my back. It attempted to wound me, scratching and gnawing the surface of my armour. I struggled to get a tight grip on the spider as it squirmed and wriggled around. I finally grabbed it and pulled it over my shoulder into my vision. It impulsively struggled, trying to escape, hissing and roaring at me as it failed to do so. I grabbed it by

the neck, and ended its life. Spiders were flooding onto the platform; I discarded the spider's body, and then dived to cut the strand of web holding the rocky pendulum that Joel was stood upon. "Here we go!" I screamed, warning Joel as I cut the web that held what he was stood upon.

I didn't dare look, knowing I might have just killed Joel myself. I slowly turned ready for battle. Several spiders came scurrying towards me, others scampered up the walls. I kicked the first spider back towards the entrance, and then swung my sword into another. I heard another land behind me; I immediately hid behind my shield and felt it clatter against it. Engrossed in the flow of combat, I kicked the spider off the edge of the cavern into the waiting magma below, and then stabbed another. I briefly peaked over my shoulder ... Joel had made it! He was sat down on the floor staring across; I had great respect for him and he was acting very calm amidst the chaos he was witnessing. My thoughts distracted me; a larger spider charged me to the ground, almost knocking me over the edge. I dropped my sword and shield onto the ground and grabbed hold of the spiders head. It snapped and chomped at my helmet, I began to unleash melee hits on it in an attempt to defend myself. I knocked all of its legs out from underneath it; it stumbled and fell on top of me. Despite being heavy and knocking the wind out of my lungs, I continued my flurry of punches, finishing the melee combination with an uppercut. The spider seemed dazed; I grabbed my sword and lodged the blade into its skull, instantly stopping its movements. I was triumphant; killing the spider had made the others swiftly retreat. "That's right! Run and hide!" I yelled egotistically. I briefly retrieved my breath, and then waved across to Joel. He waved back, and then the whole cavern shook. It felt like the volcano had exploded, I quickly gazed up, raising my arms above my face to stop the falling debris hitting my face. There were rocks and stalagmites falling everywhere, "Joel, get covered!" I shrieked. Gazing through the plummeting rocks I could see Joel cower in the archway of the entrance to this cavern, I was surprised he heard me. A deafening serpent-like screech jolted me; I looked up to see a giant tarantula descend from the roof on a thick thread of web. The spider was significantly bigger than any other spider I had ever encountered. It's gangly, long legs made it appear an even more daunting foe. I immediately drew my bow and began firing arrows at the spider. It roared at me, and then zipped back up to the roof. "Adventurer, I need your raw flesh" it calmly stated. "You can talk?" I replied astonished. "She needs to be fed, she needs fresh meat". It crawled down the cavern wall towards Joel, he didn't move, locked in terror, he was gently rocking with his head in his hands. "You leave him alone!" I warned emptily. I focused and fired an accurate shot straight at the spider. It shrieked in agony as the arrow pierced through its body, and then leapt across the cavern, landing just above my head. It continued to weave glistening webbing across the cavern. It screeched then twitched, launching projectile spikes from its body; I dodged out of the way then continued to fire arrows back up towards the tarantula. It crawled down the wall then attempted to bite me. "Give me your meat" it said as it locked me in its snout. Releasing my bow, I wriggled free and rolled underneath the body of the hairy tarantula; it spun around frantically trying to find me, and then raised the rear of its body. A large fine, needle like spine extended from its body, dripping black liquid. Glaring at it, I closed my eyes and muttered a quick prayer to Guthix. The spine pierced my armour; however I felt it tremble as it failed to pierce my body. I stretched to grab my sword, and then cut the spine from the spider's body. The spiders shriek was so loud and high pitched; I grabbed my helmet in a feeble attempt to cover my ears. The spider leapt again, over to the other side of the cavern dripping blood from its wound. "It seems you are favoured by whatever false 'God' you pray to. Your faith won't save you forever." It aggressively stated. The spider turned to face Joel "I'll claim you in little pieces if I have to." it explained. I quickly sprung to my feet; I

couldn't get across to the other side. I impulsively jumped and grasped the string of web laced across the cavern. My hands stuck to it, I knew I wouldn't be able to climb across. My weight tore the adhesive grip from my hand, I felt completely helpless watching the spider approach Joel in anticipation. I was conscious my time was running out, I thoughtlessly ran to the cavern wall and dipped my hands into the stream of black liquid that surged down the walls surface. Fully coating my hands in the vile solution, I dashed towards the cord of web and leapt out across the fiery gulf. I gripped the web; my lubricated hands let me slide across the rift, I could feel sweat rolling down my forehead, it felt like I was being barbecued as I dangled above the molten lava. As I reached the other side I released my grip of the web and landed inelegantly, crashing into the floor. I accidentally caught the tarantula's attention; it stormed towards me, attempting to knock me off the edge. "I'd enjoy watching your skin bubble in the lava" the spider satisfyingly declared. I attempted to get to my feet, but it grabbed onto my legs with its branching jaws and threw me against the wall. The spider crawled around where I sat, savouring the moment. I pulled myself up using the wall, and then bolted toward the tarantula, leaping onto its head. It panicked and crawled around in circles trying to shake me free. I drew my sword and viciously stabbed at the tarantula. It shrieked and squealed, then flung me again. I landed next to Joel who had been watching everything that was happening. As I stood up the spider pinned me against the wall. "I'll devour you, then claim the child" it snarled staring straight into my eyes. I head butted the spider, drew my sword then forced the tip of the blade through the spiders chin. "No you won't" I replied arrogantly in its shrieking face. I pulled my sword back out of the spider, watched it collapse and then aimed to separate the head from the body. I needed to swing twice to cut the spiders head off; I wanted to be certain I had banished this evil creature.

Exhausted, yet jubilant I slumped down next to Joel to catch my breath. "How are you feeling?" I asked gasping for air. "A bit better now" he smiled. I looked at Joel, I felt sympathetic, I knew he wouldn't be the same innocent child that he was just a day ago; he had seen the depths of his nightmares in the flesh. "Come on let's..." I was interrupted by a low pitch groan which shook the cavern. "Thiss ... iss not ... over. I will stalk you. You will suffer for your greed. *She* is still hungry." I leapt to my feet whilst staring intently at the cavern entrance across from me. As the invisible beast stopped talking more spiders flooded out of the cavern entrance on the other side of the cavern. "We've got to move!" I said turning to face Joel. "Grab this!" I gave Joel the lantern then instructed him to pass through the cavern entrance into the darkness. The cavern wall opposite was crawling with spiders, there must have been close to a hundred spiders now scuttling up the walls. I detached my pickaxe from my backpack, and then swung at the base of the cavern entrance. I continued to swing until the rocks sounded like they were cracking and grinding against each other as gravity started to pull the entrance down. "Start running Joel! I'm going to bring this cave down!" I walked over to the other side of the cavern and quickly glanced across the cave to see the approaching spider host. As I looked at the entrance thirteen red eyes illuminated one at a time, looking at me. Its voice echoed in my head. Defiantly, I swung my pickaxe at the other base of the entrance and began to run. "Keep running!" I cried as the rocks and stones rained down around me. I couldn't see Joel; I could only see the glare from the lantern through the dust ahead of me and hear the roar of the collapsing tunnel behind me. I could feel the wind being pushed up the tunnel as it all crumbled apart. The rumblings were creeping closer and closer to my back. I concentrated on running, as fast as I could. "Quickly!" cried Joel, his voice inspired me, as the earth seemed to fold and crumple before me, I dodged and eluded everything that tried to crush me. Lengthy sharp spikes hurtled

down before me and bulky boulders rolled past me into the stone abyss trying to swallow me up. With one final leap, I escaped its jaws and collided into the ground next to where Joel had stopped. I landed flat on the ground, face upwards, peering at the obliterated cave. The debris was still resting; stones fell and rolled past where we lay. "I'm never leaving my mum again" Joel spoke softly. "I don't blame you" I replied with a smile. I picked myself up, dusting myself off then offered my hand to Joel. "Come on, let's get you back to your mum, she'll still be worried sick." Joel smiled and nodded. I gripped my lantern and led the way back to the entrance of the cave.

I was curious, "What happened to you Joel?" I asked. As the words left my mouth I felt slight feelings of regret, but I needed to know. "What do you mean? ... The spiders?" he replied. "Yes, what exactly happened to you?" he seemed unsettled at the thought of his ordeal. "If you don't want to talk I can wait." I compassionately said. "No, it's ok" he replied, "The ball bounced over the wall" he lied, "so I chased after it, I got hold of it, then felt a sharp pain in my neck" he said pointing to a sore wound on his neck. "I didn't realise you had that" I said inspecting it closer. "We'll have to get it checked when we get back." I said worryingly. "I don't remember much after that" he continued "I remember spinning around when they sealed me up in that web thing, but I don't remember much else." As he finished we arrived back at the entrance of the cave. "Guthix! I never thought I'd be so glad to see the wilderness again" I declared, relishing the horrible, deathly scent of freedom. "Stay put a moment; this isn't going to be easy." Joel rested as I attempted to climb to the summit of the hole. It took close to fifteen minutes before I'd successfully escaped. I still feared what could find us, so I was eager to get Joel out as fast as possible. "Stand on this and hold tight! Oh! And be wary of sharp rocks!" I warned as I threw my grappling hook down to Joel. I was completely exhausted when I eventually lifted Joel out, but it was worth the physical pain to see him desperately clutching to the rope and finally crawling over the edge of the hole. "Can we sit down for a bit?" he pleaded. I swiftly replied, "I'm sorry, but we have to move, it's just as dangerous out here as it was in there!" I said trying to reason with him. Joel shrugged his shoulders and accepted my suggestion, "Come on, we're nearly home" I said sincerely. He smiled, and then took my hand. The walk back was relatively safe, I had my wits as sharp as I could possibly muster; however there was little, if any cause for concern. Joel noticed that I was periodically checking behind us every so often. "You can never be too careful out here." I warned. "Yeah, I understand, I'm never coming back ... well, not until I become a strong adventurer like you!" he exclaimed. I laughed; it was nice to see he still had zest and ambition. As we approached the ancient, deteriorating wall, Joel could barely contain his excitement, if he had not been worn out from the events of the day he would have ran the remaining distance. "Your mother was worried sick, so was your brother..." Joel stopped. "Oh" he replied, remembering his family. "I had forgotten how they must have felt ... I thought I was going to die". I thought Joel was going to burst into tears, so I quickly comforted him. "Hey, what matters is that you're here now, come on, they've been waiting for you". I helped Joel climb across, and then approached where I had first encountered Angela. Joel couldn't wait any longer, he ran away from me, straight into his mother's waiting arms. "Joel! ... Oh my baby boy, how I have missed you" she softly said as she embraced her son. "Don't you ever do anything like that again you hear me!? I was worried sick! Scared to death!" she shouted, pointing her finger directly at his nose. I tried to catch a tiny moment of rest; however Angela had spotted me and came running over, dragging Joel behind her. "Thank you so much! You've made me so happy!" she said as she squeezed me. I could feel my face beginning to burn from the embarrassment of the attention. Some people had even come out of the bank to see what the noise was. "It's okay... I was just being a good Samaritan!" I stated. "You

don't even realise how amazing this is, how thankful I really am!" she said, tears falling from her chin. "I will keep up my end of the promise" she continued, offering me a small leathery brown bag of gold coins. "It's what I said I would give to anyone who found my son." I didn't want her money, so I protested. "This isn't necessary, I'm glad Joel is back with you". I replied. "No!" she stubbornly argued. "I want you to take this and come for dinner as well, I owe you a lot more than this, plus I'll feel insulted." I felt emotionally blackmailed into accepting the reward; however I also felt that, had I continued to neglect her generous offerings, she might transform into something worse than the frightening tarantula. "Okay" I replied half heartedly, giving into Angela's demands. She wouldn't let go of Joel, something told me she was going to be over protective of him for the rest of his life. I offered teleports back to Varrock, but Angela insisted we walked back and informed her of what happened. She, like Joel, experienced a whirlwind of emotions for the duration of the trip. On arrival at her house, Nolan and Susan were eagerly anticipating Joel's safe return, everyone started to cry upon the sight of Joel alive. I was very appreciative of their gratitude and their warm hospitality, but at the back of my mind echoed the warnings of that supernatural voice. I felt uneasy, yet anticipant, it was pleasant to finally relax, to take my boots off and eat well. I felt temporarily part of their family, safe and secure, but deep down it felt like I just uncovered a small part of a larger, unravelling mystery.