



THE FOREST'S
TWILIGHT ZONE

AIYVEN MBAWA

Published by Saronti Ltd

Facilitated by Clare Ford at the Switched On Academy

August 2021

The Forest's Twilight Zone

Written by

Aiyven Mbawa

Chapter 1

It's no secret that the earth spins at one thousand miles per hour, or that it's the fifth largest planet in our solar system. We all know those things. However, no one appreciates the small things that occur: the ongoing cases no one has solved, the mysteries yet to be discovered. Or the abnormally large furry mammal living in your local forest.

This all might sound tedious to you, and you may even be double checking whether or not you've picked up a science textbook, but let me tell you - *it's the complete opposite.*

‘So you’re *not* joining the netball team?’ Lucette questioned, gripping onto her backpack straps.

We were on our way to civic education, dodging a number of younger students rushing to get to their lesson, or older students taking their sweet time. My arm brushed against multiple lockers as Lucette and I were pushed farther and farther against the wall. The comforting sound of pupils chatting amongst each other filled my ears, making me feel somewhat warm inside.

I shook my head. ‘I made a Pros and Cons list and decided against it.’

Lucette put her arm out in front of me, acting as a barrier. ‘Pardon? Excusez-moi? What do you mean “you decided against it”? Are you mad?’

Pushing her hand away and continuing to walk, I replied with, ‘No, Lucette, I’m not mad, I’m just overly tactical.’

‘Yeah, but why didn’t you *join*?’ Lucette cried as we turned into a classroom.

We claimed our seats at the back of the classroom as we so often did. Once we’d zipped open our bags and brought out our books, I went back to chatting with a quite bewildered Lucette.

‘But you’ve always wanted to get on the netball team. I don’t understand!’

I shrugged, unzipping my pencil case. ‘I think I liked the thought of joining the team more than the actual process, you know?’

Lucette shook her head. ‘No, not at all.’

When I arrived home, I gently placed my backpack against the wall near the front door and made my way to the kitchen, where I knew Mum would be typing away at her laptop.

It took her a second to acknowledge my presence. ‘Florine, you’re home.’ She stood up from her chair and gave me a quick hug.

‘How was the walk today?’

‘The usual,’ I responded, strolling over to the biscuit tin and opening it in the least sceptical manner.

I took out a Canistrelli whilst Mum returned to her laptop, and alas, the distinguishable sound of her punching away at the computer resumed.

Chapter 2

Ring, ring. I pulled my phone from my pocket and rolled my eyes when I read the name “Donat”. My younger cousin who had recently received a phone. He was constantly calling me when he had the time, and although it was great to have an admirer, constant company from your eleven-year-old cousin wasn’t necessarily the key to life.

Nevertheless, I picked up the phone and put on my best smile.

‘Bonjour!’ he greeted, his face uncomfortably close to the camera.

‘Bonjour, Donat. What brings you to call?’

Donat smiled and raised his eyebrows. ‘I have a new exploration mission for you!’

‘Ah.’

Way back, in the days where Donat and I spent a lot of time together, we came up with Mission Réalisable, which translated to “achievable mission”. As often as possible, we would come up with new adventures to pursue. These weren’t just simple “who took a bite from my apple” missions. We tried our best to imitate detective movies to ensure we were “doing this correctly”.

I can’t remember the last time Donat and I had a Mission Réalisable adventure, and I wasn’t too keen to begin a new one. So whilst Donat was nattering on about his hamster, Scrawny, I was actively thinking of how to refuse.

‘So, you’re gonna come over this weekend?’ Donat peevied.

It took all my willpower not to roll my eyes. I opened my mouth to decline, and as if on cue Mum entered my bedroom holding a plate of sliced fruit.

‘I’ve made you some- oh, is that Donat?’ Mum came toward my phone and kneeled beside me to get in frame, her cheek almost touching mine. ‘Bonjour, Donny, wow you look so old!’

My cousin sucked up all the attention like a mosquito. ‘Bonjour, auntie! Comment ça va?’

‘Ça va bien, merci! What are you two discussing?’

I hesitated, but *luckily* my silence was filled with Donat’s answer.

‘We’re going to go exploring this weekend! Saturday afternoon, I’m thinking.’

‘Ooh, that’s a wonderful idea, you’re such a creative boy!’ Mum cooed. ‘Florine will have a lot of fun, won’t you, Flore?’ Mum turned her head to me

I reluctantly nodded. ‘Oui, we will.’

Mum pushed herself off the table, grunting. ‘Well, we’ll see you this Saturday, Donny. Make sure to eat before you come.’

Donat said goodbye and once Mum had left the room, he continued to blabber on about Scrawny, at one point picking him up haphazardly and holding him close to the camera.

‘I still cannot believe I’ve agreed to this,’ I crumbled, circling my spoon around the cereal bowl.

Mum sighed and leaned against a counter, her arms crossed. ‘It’ll be good for you, Flore. Ever since his brother enrolled in university, he’s been so lonely.’

Scoffing, I responded, ‘What about me? I’m an only child, *I’m* lonely.’

Mum shook her head. ‘It’s no competition, Flore. Plus, you’ve never had a sibling, so you wouldn’t know what it feels like.’

I secretively rolled my eyes.

‘Donat’s mum sent me a list of things you need to pack,’ Mum continued, wiping the surface she was stood against. ‘Here, take a look for yourself.’ She handed me her phone and I skimmed

through the list of items. ‘*Really?* I’m leaving in thirty minutes; I don’t have the time to make a *plotted map*.’

‘Don’t know if you’ll have a choice,’ Mum mumbled.

Groaning, after draining the milk from it, I placed my cereal bowl into the sink.

It took me a quarter of an hour to gather all the items and place them neatly in a backpack. Once I’d worn the “appropriate clothes”, a t-shirt and leggings, Mum and I set off to meet Donat in the local forest.

I placed my elbow against the side of the car, gazing hopelessly into the window.

Mum looked at me through the rear-view mirror. ‘Give us a smile, Flore! You must be a *little* bit excited to do this, oui?’

I forced a smile upon my face, my teeth gritted.

‘That’s it, now just make it real and we’ll be fine.’

Chapter 3

We arrived at the forest and found Donat crouched down at the entrance.

Mum went over, her hand above her eyes, shielding her from the sun. ‘Bonjour, Donat. Where’s your Mum?’

Donat jumped up. ‘Bonjour, aunt. I walked to the forest – *alone!*’

Mum raised her eyebrows. ‘You grow up so fast, eh? Well, you too better get to whatever you kids do these days. Au revior!’

‘Au revior, auntie.’

I gave Mum a desperate wave and tilted her head. Unfortunately, she didn’t acknowledge my subtle cries for help as she swung the

car keys, almost as if she were mimicking me, and went back to the car.

Donat was wasting no time. As soon as Mum turned her back, he grabbed my hand, saying, ‘Come on, come on, *hurry up.*’ We raced through the forest, twigs scratching the few unprotected centimetres of skin between the cuff of my leggings and the beginning of my socks.

We leaped over small patches of nettles and dodged branches. After a minute or so, I was panting, my backpack falling off my shoulders.

‘Nearly there!’ Donat exclaimed. ‘They say it’s in the twilight zone of the forest, if that’s a thing. Which it probably isn’t, because that’s for oceans. Do you ever think about how ocean levels work ...’

I ground my teeth together. Only Donat could make a minute seem like an eternity. Excluding my sixth grade Spanish teacher, but that's another tale.

Finally, after two minutes of running (and, admittedly, slow jogging) we reached the area of the forest Donat deemed to be the habitat of this mammal.

'They're apparently like deer,' Donat whispered, avoiding piles of leaves. 'Get out your flashlight – as quietly as possible – and turn it on. If we find it, shine it straight into it's eyes and it'll freeze, like a –'

'Like a deer in headlights, yes,' I murmured.

We continued, edging deeper and deeper into the forest, flashlights at the ready.

Rustle.

Donat and I instantaneously whipped our heads around to where the noise came and spotted a small animal.

'A red squirrel,' Donat muttered. 'Never mind, keep going.'

Snap.

Shortly after the rustling, there was the infamous noise of a twig being snapped. I froze in fear.

'A badger,' Donat whispered. 'Damn it.'

I was starting to give up hope. Why did I think there was any chance of there being something in the first place.

Rustle, snap, grunt.

Donat held his hand in front of me, stopping me in my track. ‘What was that?’

Slowly, I turned my head around, my heart on fire.

‘Donat,’ I whispered, rearranging my posture so I could stare the creature in the face. ‘Donat.’

My cousin turned around too, and we both stared upon the animal in horror.

It stood three metres tall at least, and had thick, matted grey fur.

It’s ears were floppy, like a rabbit’s, but don’t let this trait fool you, for I have never been as terrified as I was then in my fourteen years of life.

‘F– flashlight?’ Donat was trembling.

The creature’s large, oval eyes stared down on the both of us. I barely reached it’s stomach.

‘No,’ I whispered, my lungs being replaced with horror. ‘No. When I say now, *run.*’

The mammal let out a low grunt.

‘NOW!’

We raced through the bush’s, this time not avoiding the twigs and brambles and nettles.

The creature followed in close pursuit.

‘Donat!’ I yelled. His flailing legs had knocked me over. I tumbled to the uneven floor, dirt in the corners of my mouth.

The creature was towering over me, and I shut my eyes as it raised a paw the size of my face. A paw that could remove my face.

We hope that you and your family and friends enjoy the book that you have created.

This project was co-ordinated and facilitated by Clare Ford, Founder of Switched ON! the global online academy which is re-defining education beyond academic success to unlock the brilliance in your child.

Find out more at: www.switchedonglobal.com and register for your next exciting course.

Publish your book at www.saronti.com/switchedon

Create & Download, Print at home or Buy Print



Custom & Personalised books, card games, colouring activities and more...



We make reading and writing fun. We embrace creativity.
It's fun. It's unique. It's Saronti!

Need another copy of this book?
Go to <https://www.saronti.com/switchedon>
Your Book reference is Sar2632

www.saronti.com



Florine has heard rumours. There's an endless list of nonsense gossip that's spread around school. But nothing compares to this ...

Despite not participating in one for yonks, Florine is asked to explore the "twilight zone" of the forest with her overly needy cousin with the aim to find a large creature she's certain is no more than a myth.

However, she learns that not all news is untrue in the worst way possible ...