

Snakes & Ladders

By Shaun Smith

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For as long as 13-year-old Paige Morrow can remember, the tree fort in the giant oak near her cottage in Ontario’s Muskoka has been her sanctuary. Now everything is changing. It’s the summer of 1971, and she and her little brother, Toby, have been at their cottage with their mother since school let out. But this year, Paige feels more alone than ever. Her father has stopped coming up from the city on weekends, while her mother buries herself in whiskey and writing.

Paige retreats to her tree fort, but becomes concerned when the farmer who owns the property hires a creepy arborist -- a "tree doctor," Paige's mother calls him. Is something wrong with the farm’s apple orchard or with her tree? When Paige befriends the arborist's troubled teenage daughter, Janine, and her group of rowdy locals, she is pulled into a maze of dark secrets and shocking truths that leads to a life-and-death confrontation.

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Editorial Review

Review
"...Shaun Smith uses language beautifully, paints vivid scenes, and builds the tension wonderfully in this coming-of-age story." --*CM Magazine*

"...this book is touching, intriguing and devasting ... *Snakes and Ladders* is a story you won't soon forget (FOUR STARS)." --*Kidzworld.com*

"A phenomenal read for young adults! Shaun Smith has written a novel rich in motifs and symbols that would appeal to both the male and female junior high aged reader. Rarely does an author or novel captivate the reader the way in which Shaun Smith has with *Snakes and Ladders*. A powerful summer read for any adolescent." --*Resource Links*

The idyllic sanctuary of Paige's Muskoka cottage is shattered when discord between her parents, a group of rowdy locals, trouble with her brother and a threat to her beloved grandfather's tree spiral into a life-and-death struggle. --*Stephanie Simpson McLellan, Today's Parent*

From the Inside Flap
Thirteen-year-old Paige Morrow becomes concerned when the farmer who owns the property her family cottage is on hires a creepy arborist -- a "tree doctor," Paige's mother calls him.When Paige befriends the arborist's troubled teenage daughter, Janine, and her group of rowdy locals, she is pulled into a maze of dark secrets and shocking truths.

About the Author

Shaun Smith is a writer and journalist whose work has appeared in Toronto Life, Chatelaine, the Globe and Mail, and on CBC Arts Online. He is a regular book reviewer for the Toronto Star and a contributing editor at Quill & Quire. He lives in Toronto. His website is www.shaunsmith.ca.

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