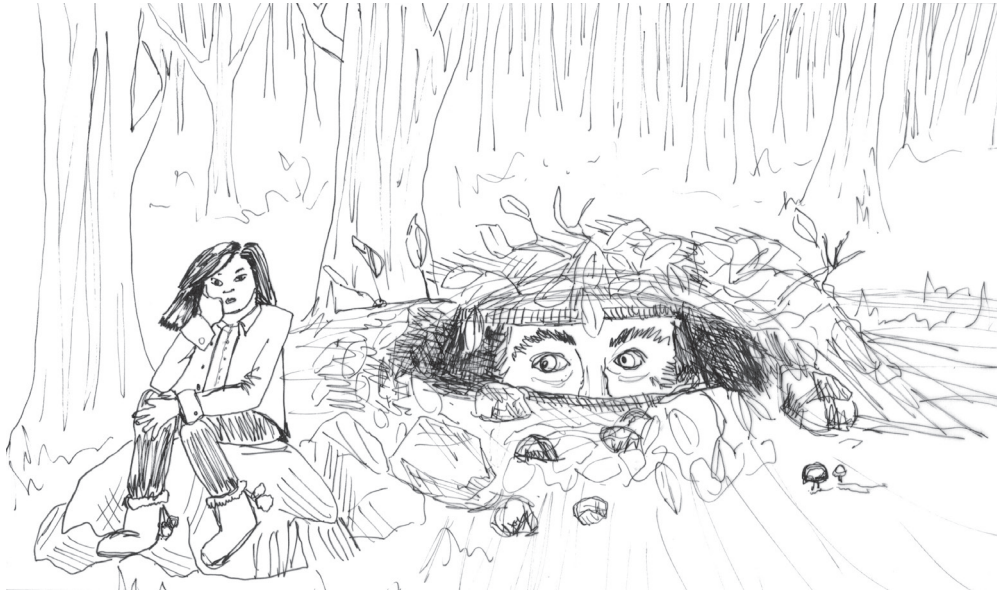


Peach and the Giant James



Peach Guǒyuán was born in Georgia, but grew up in Washington, DC. Peach's parents were in love with Georgia's state fruit—peaches. When their daughter was born, they felt Peach was the perfect name for their sweet new baby.

Peach's parents moved to Washington, DC when Peach was 4 years old. This move is when Peach is certain that her life took its current and rather uncomfortable course. Uncomfortable because, among other things, no one is named after fruit in DC—especially not orchard fruit. And no one at the fancy prep school that Peach attends has an interesting name of any sort; they all have old-fashioned names like Michael and Sophia.

It was during one of her fancy prep school's fancy field trips that Peach had a life-changing experience. Peach dreamily trailed behind her group as they hiked through part of the historic Appalachian Trail. Peach soon discovered that she was quite lost. She had gone off-trail to look at what she thought was a fox's den. It wasn't.

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Peach sighed and sat down on a rock just opposite the fake den to chew her thumbnail and decide what to do next.

“That finger taste good?” came a deep and rumbly voice. Peach jumped up and shrieked, startled out of her wits, and looked around frantically to find the source of the voice.



“I’m over here,” the voice rumbled. It came from the fake fox den, which now appeared to have a trap door peeking out from under the leaves. Peering out from under the trap door was the largest forehead and pair of eyes that Peach had ever seen.

Peach was in shock. She was looking at a real-live giant. Was she dreaming? What was going on? Peach had so many questions and didn’t hesitate to ask them. The giant was patient and tried to answer all of them. It turns out that James (that was his name) was a plain old Appalachian Giant. The Appalachian Giants once roamed the east coast of America, but had to go into hiding when the first humans arrived. They decided to live underground, and that was when they made the Appalachian Mountains—really the mountains are hollow and filled with rather elaborate homes, stores, and so on.

“Are there other giants, other than the Appalachian Giants, I mean?” asked Peach.

James climbed out and up onto the ground. He stood as tall as the tallest tree on the forest floor and wasn’t much thicker.

“Of course,” he answered plucking up a young sapling and picking his teeth with it. “Where there’s a mountain range, you’ve got giants living underneath. How else are mountains formed, after all?”

From that moment on, Peach decided to spend the rest of her life getting to know the mountain giants of the world and writing about them—as fiction of course—starting with this very page.

