

When a cult of demon-worshippers is making active preparations to toss you into a volcano, you tend to take stock of your life. I do, anyway. Nothing focuses the mind like impending death, and all the choices that directly or indirectly brought you to this moment stand out in stark relief. You consider the many times that, as Robert Frost put it, *two roads diverged*... I suspect he was being metaphorical, but I can be metaphorical too, contemplating my current predicament, which is that I'm lashed to a stake at the highest point on the island of Anak Kartaka. I find myself wondering if, metaphorically speaking, I had taken the road *more* traveled by once or twice, would I now find myself in more advantageous circumstances? Maybe lounging in a hot tub with a nice-looking movie star, sipping a margarita? Who can say?

From this vantage point, tied to a stake on top of a volcano, I enjoy (if that's the right word, which it isn't) a magnificent view of the South Pacific, as well as a something-other-than-magnificent view of my captors, a clean-cut crew of crazy-eyed zealots clustered around the rim of the volcano like fruit flies on a mug of lemonade. They are dressed identically: pink polo shirts neatly tucked into khaki cargo shorts, and green Crocs, snug over white tube socks pulled up to the knees. (There, now you hate them too, am I right?)

But getting back to the stake: This isn't just a simple metal pole stuck in the dirt. This is a more complicated apparatus. Welded metal loops hold in place the ropes binding my chest, hands, and feet, and tie-down lines secure the stake to the ground at four points. Someone crafted this stake, lovingly, and with a single purpose in mind. My captors clearly brought it with them, which shows good planning on their part, but it also makes me wonder where such a contraption might have come from. Where does one obtain a stake that's to be used for volcano sacrifices? Or maybe just one volcano sacrifice (me), before everything comes to an end.

Etsy maybe.