

couldn't understand. I seemed just to close my eyes for a minute. But then everything was dark and the Morlocks had their hands on me.

'Throwing off their fingers, I quickly felt in my pocket for the matchbox and – it had gone! Then they took hold of me again. In a moment I realised what had happened. I had slept and my fire had gone out. I felt the fear of death. The forest seemed full of the smell of burning wood. I was caught by the neck, by the hair, by the arms, and pulled down. It was unbelievably horrible in the darkness to feel all these soft creatures lying on top of me. There were too many of them, and I fell to the ground.

'I felt little teeth biting at my neck. I turned over and as I did so, my hand touched my metal bar. It gave me strength. I fought hard to get back on my feet, shaking off the human rats. Holding the bar against my body, I pushed where I thought their faces might be. I could feel the softness of bodies and my hits, and for a moment I was free.

'I felt the strange happiness that so often seems to come with hard fighting. I knew that both I and Weena were finished, but I decided to make the Morlocks pay for their meat. I stood with my back to a tree, moving the metal bar from side to side in front of me.

'The whole wood was full of the movement and cries of the Morlocks. A minute passed. Their voices seemed to rise to a greater level of excitement and their movements grew faster. But no more came within reach. I stood staring into the blackness.

'Then suddenly hope came. Were the Morlocks afraid? And soon after that, I noticed a strange thing. The darkness seemed to grow lighter. I began to see the Morlocks around me – three half-dead at my feet. Then I recognised, with great surprise, that the others were running from behind me and away through the wood in front. And their backs seemed no longer white, but reddish.

'As I stood there, my mouth open in surprise, I saw a little cloud of smoke move across a small area of starlight between the branches and disappear. And then I understood the smell of burning wood and the quiet voices growing now into a great noise. I understood the smoke and the reason for the Morlocks' speed.

'Stepping out from behind my tree and looking back, I saw, through the nearer trees, the flames of the burning forest. It was my first fire coming after me. I looked for Weena, but she was gone. The sounds of the fire behind me, the crashing noise as each new tree caught fire, left little time to think. With my metal bar still in my hand, I followed in the Morlocks' path.

'It was a hard race. Once the flames moved forwards so quickly on my right as I ran that they got ahead of me and I had to move away to my left. But at last I came out of the trees into a small open space, and as I did so, a Morlock rushed towards me. He ran blindly past me and straight into the fire!

'And then I saw the most strange and horrible thing, I think, of all that I saw in that future age. This whole space was as bright as day with the light of the fire. In the centre was a small hill, surrounded by burned bushes. Beyond that was another arm of the burning forest, with yellow tongues of flame already coming from it, completely surrounding the space with a ring of fire. On the hillside were thirty or forty Morlocks, blinded by the light and the heat, running here and there against each other in their fear.

'At first I didn't understand their blindness and struck angrily at them with my bar, in terror, as they came close to me. I killed one and hurt another. But when I had watched the movements of one of them under the bushes against the red sky, and heard their cries, I understood their total helplessness and pain in the strong light and I hit no more of them.

'But now and then one ran straight towards me, frightening