

'We should be safe here,' he panted. 'They'll probably go straight to the camp; they won't find us here.'

'Who?' I asked, breathlessly. 'Where are the professors? Who's chasing us?'

'The apemen!' cried Lord John. 'Keep your voice down; they have long ears and sharp eyes. Where were you when they attacked?'

In a few short sentences, I told Lord John about my trip to the lake. He listened with interest.

'So what happened?' I asked.

'It was early in the morning,' said Lord John. 'The professors hadn't even woken up yet when the apes began falling out of the trees like apples! They looked like apes, but they behaved like humans; they were carrying sticks and stones and talking to each other. They were big fellows; as big as men, and much stronger, with curious, glassy eyes. I managed to shoot one of them, but the others attacked. We tried to get away, but they captured us and tied our hands with creepers.'

'What happened next?' I asked.

'One of them, the old ape king, stood beside Challenger. You won't believe it, but they looked like twins! They both have thick bodies, big shoulders, round chests, and long beards. The ape king looked at Challenger for some time before putting his paw on his shoulder. Then, the apemen dragged me and Summerlee through the forest, while Challenger was carried like a Roman emperor by four apemen!'

Just then, we heard a strange clicking noise in the distance.

'It's them,' whispered Lord John. 'Load your rifle, they might come this way.'

I did as I was told and Lord John continued with his story. 'They took us to their town, which is made up of about a thousand huts – it's further north than our camp and close to the edge of the cliff. You say you saw signs of men, but we saw the natives themselves. It seems that the humans occupy one side of the plateau and the apemen occupy the other side. They are at war with each other, as far as I can tell. The apemen captured about a dozen human prisoners yesterday, and put two of them to death right there in front of us.'

I gasped in horror.

