

'Do you remember the bamboo patch where we found the skeleton?' continued Lord John.

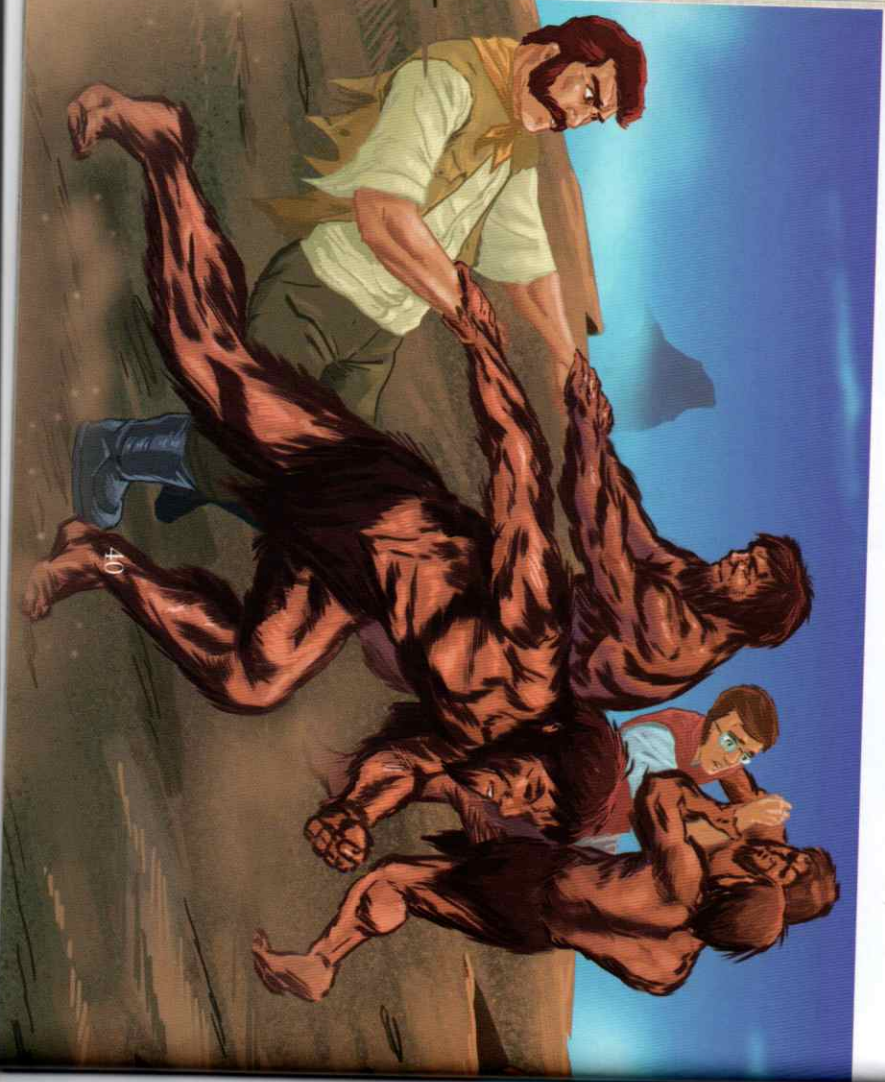
I nodded.

'That's just under ape-town and it's where they throw their prisoners to their deaths. Some are killed by the fall while others land on the bamboo. It's a horrible thing to watch. Once they'd killed seven native Indians, they sent the remaining natives and the three of us back to their camp. I knew our turn was next, so I decided to make a run for it. The apemen can't run as fast as we can, and they don't know what guns are. So, when I got an opportunity, I kicked my guard in the stomach and ran to the camp as fast as I could to get the rifles.'

'But what about the professors?' I asked.

'We have to go back and get them,' said Lord John, 'before it's too late.'

I was just about to stand up when I felt Lord John's grip on my arm. 'By George,' he whispered, 'here they come.'



CHAPTER 8

A GROUP OF APEMEN WALKED PAST US IN SINGLE FILE; THEY were about five feet tall, with long arms and enormous chests. Some of them were carrying sticks. We watched anxiously as they sniffed the air and searched the bushes. Finally, the apes disappeared into the forest.

'We should stay here until they've given up their search,' whispered Lord John.

I nodded. After a quick breakfast, we filled our pockets with ammunition and, at around midday, we set off for ape-town to carry out our rescue mission.

'Go slowly, keep your eyes open and your rifle ready,' said Lord John as we crept through the forest.

It took us two hours to reach the ape-town. When we arrived, we immediately took cover behind a thick clump of bushes, a short distance from the apes' huts. From our hiding place we could see that a crowd of apemen and a small group of Indians had gathered at the edge of the cliff.

'The bamboo patch is just beneath them,' said Lord John. 'I'm afraid those Indians are going to be put to death.'

Just then, the ape king arrived with the two professors following close behind.

'There are the Professors!' I whispered.

Suddenly, two of the apemen seized one of the Indians and dragged him to the edge of the cliff. The apes turned to look at the king; he raised his hand and the apemen swung the Indian back and forth violently, before throwing him over the edge of the cliff. The apes were silent for a moment, then they began to howl with delight. Once their howling was over the apemen prepared themselves for their next victim: Professor Summerlee. Two of the apemen grabbed the professor by the wrists and pulled him to the front. Challenger turned to the ape king and waved his hands, begging him to spare his friend's life. The ape king pushed him aside roughly and shook his head. Wasting no time, Lord John fired his rifle, and the king sank to the ground.

'Shoot, Malone, shoot!' cried Lord John.