

CHAPTER 4

WE SPENT SEVERAL DAYS ROWING DOWN THE RIVER; ON TWO occasions we had to carry our canoes through the woods to avoid the dangerous rapids. One afternoon, we heard the sound of drums beating in the distance.

'What is that?' I asked.

'War drums,' replied Lord John. 'I've heard them before.'

'Yes,' said Gomez. 'They're war drums... The Indians are watching us; they'll kill us if they can.'

I turned to look at the dark green trees that surrounded us, imagining the eyes of the Indians upon us. The river was as still as glass and emerald in colour, and as we moved slowly along it, our paddles sent a thousand ripples across its shiny surface. Eventually, the sound of the drums faded away.

'No Indians here,' said Gomez. 'They're afraid of *Curupuri*.'

'That's the evil spirit of the cliffs,' explained Lord John.

I nodded, remembering my first conversation with Professor Challenger.

In time, the river became too shallow to navigate, so we hid our canoes in the bushes and continued the rest of our journey on foot. We filled our backpacks with guns, ammunition, blankets, food and other provisions, and made our way north. Two days later, we arrived at an open plain – the red cliffs were clearly visible in the distance.

'There are the cliffs!' I said.

Professor Challenger smiled and said nothing. As we approached the cliffs, we saw trees and bushes on the summit, but no other signs of life. Exhausted from our journey, we set up camp at the foot of the cliffs, and went to sleep.

The next morning, we discussed how we were going to climb to the plateau at the top of the cliffs. 'This side is too steep to climb,' said Challenger, peering up at the cliffs. 'We need to walk around the cliffs and look for a way up.'

The ground at the foot of the cliffs was rocky and broken, and the going was slow and difficult. At around midday, we made a surprising discovery: an old, abandoned campsite. We found empty meat tins and bottles and a newspaper, the *Chicago Democrat*.



Professor Challenger's eyes lit up when he saw the newspaper. 'This must be Maple White's campsite! This proves we're on the right track!'

Lord John glanced at a nearby tree and noticed that a piece of wood had been nailed to it. 'That looks like a signpost,' he said. Challenger examined the signpost. 'Maple White knew someone would come looking for this place, so he left a clue.'

Further down from the campsite, we came across a thick patch of bamboo. The stems were twenty feet high and extremely sharp, and looked very much like spears. As we passed along the edge of the bamboo, I noticed a white object inside it. I poked my head between the stems and, to my horror, saw a human skull. The skeleton was also there, lying a short distance away. I gasped and my companions crowded around me curiously.

'Let's clear away the bamboo and get a closer look,' said Summerlee. The skeleton's clothes were torn, but its boots were still on its bony feet. A pen and a gold watch lay near the bones. The initials 'JC' were engraved on the watch.

'Who can he be?' asked Lord John. 'Poor man, every bone in his body seems to be broken.'

'I think I know who he is,' said Challenger. 'Maple White was travelling with an American named James Colver - 'JC'.'

'He either fell into this bamboo patch or someone threw him off the edge of the cliff,' said Lord John. 'How else could all his bones have been broken?'

'There was no doubt the man had fallen from above. But was it an accident or not?'

We continued our journey in silence. An hour later, we found a chalk-drawn arrow on a rock, pointing westward.

'Another clue from Maple White,' said Challenger.

Five miles later, there was another chalk-drawn arrow which led to a cave. We entered the cave and found a very long and steep tunnel. 'Maple White must have used this tunnel to climb to the top of the cliffs!' said Professor Challenger.

We made our way through the tunnel, but, to our dismay, discovered that part of it had been blocked by a rock fall. We returned



to our camp at the base of the cliff, and decided to continue searching for a way up in the morning.



CHAPTER 5

IT TOOK US SIX DAYS TO WALK AROUND THE CLIFFS. FINALLY, WE had to admit that there was no way to climb to the top. That night, we gathered around the campfire gloomily and ate our dinner in silence. Challenger spent most of the evening with his head in his hands; he seemed to be in deep thought. The following morning, the professor was in much better spirits. 'Gentlemen!' he cried, once we'd all woken up, 'I have found a way up!' 'You have?' said Lord John. 'I think so,' said the professor. He pointed to a large column of rock to the right of where we stood – the rock was separated from the cliffs by a huge chasm. 'All we have to do is climb to the top of this rock, then we'll cross the chasm and get to the plateau.'

'How will we cross the chasm?' I asked.

'I'll tell you how when we've reached the top,' said Challenger.

With our ropes, clamps and other devices, we began the difficult climb to the top of the rock. An hour later, we'd reached the summit. The view from the top was spectacular; we could see the entire plain as well as a line of green forest stretching into the distance. I was still admiring the view when Professor Challenger's heavy hand fell upon my shoulder.

'This way,' he said.

I followed him to an enormous beech tree.

'By George!' cried Lord John. 'We're going to make a bridge!'

'Exactly,' said Challenger. 'The tree is at least sixty feet high; if it falls the right way, we can easily cross the chasm.'

Challenger handed me an axe. 'Now my young friend, please cut down the tree,' he said.

After an hour of chopping, we heard a loud crack – the tree swayed to one side, then crashed to the ground. The trunk rolled to the edge of the platform, and there was our bridge to the unknown.

'Now I will cross the bridge first,' said Challenger.

Lord John looked alarmed. 'Wait,' he said, 'I can't allow that; there could be cannibals waiting for us on the other side. Malone and I will go down, collect the rifles and some provisions and bring

CHAPTER 4

Reading Comprehension

1 Answer the following questions.

1. Why did the men have to carry their canoes along the river twice?

2. What did Edward think when he was looking at the dark green trees?

3. Why had Maple White nailed a piece of wood to a tree?

4. What did Edward see in between the stems of the bamboo?

5. Who was James Colver?

6. Why couldn't the men go through the tunnel?

2

Match the two halves of the sentences.

1. One afternoon, the men heard
2. The men filled their backpacks
3. Lord John looked at a tree and saw
4. Professor Challenger realised that
5. James Colver was recognised
- a. with guns, ammunition, blankets and food.
- b. that a piece of wood was nailed to it.
- c. by his pen and watch.
- d. the sound of drums beating in the distance.
- e. Maple White had left clues.

3

Choose a, b or c to complete the sentences below.

1. I can't find my house keys anywhere, please help me _____ for them.
- a. peer
- b. search
- c. glance
2. I'm telling you I didn't eat that last piece of chocolate cake, and you can't _____ that I did.
- a. avoid
- b. seem
- c. prove

4

Find words in Chapter 4 which mean the same as:

3. As I was swimming, I noticed some brightly coloured fish swimming just below the _____ of the water.
- a. surface
- b. ground
- c. edge
4. The water at our local swimming pool is far too _____ to dive into.
- a. steep
- b. shallow
- c. rocky
5. He _____ the classroom, apologised to his teacher for being late, and sat down quietly to begin his test.
- a. entered
- b. navigated
- c. poked
6. That man over there _____ my old maths teacher – do you think that I should go and speak to him?
- a. comes across
- b. looks like
- c. clears away

Follow-up activities

5 Discuss.

1. How do you think the men felt when they heard the drum beating? How would you feel in their place?
2. Why do you think that Maple White nailed the piece of wood to the tree?
3. How do you think Edward felt when he discovered the skeleton? What would be your thoughts at such a sight?
4. What do you think happened to James Colver?
5. Have you ever walked through a tunnel or a cave? Do you consider the idea exciting or frightening?

6 Imagine that you are Edward. Write a letter to your editor, Mr McArdle about your adventures and your thoughts so far.

(100-120 words)