

CHAPTER 3

TRAPPED!

We decided to walk along the bottom of the cliffs, looking for a place where we might be able to climb up. We had only gone a little way when we came across the remains of Maple White's campsite. Lord John spotted a piece of wood nailed to a nearby tree. It was a signpost! White must have marked out his route so others could follow him. Suddenly I spotted something white in a patch of tall bamboo canes at the base of the cliffs. It was a human skeleton.

'Poor devil!' said Lord John. 'Every bone in his body seems to be broken.'

'The bamboo is sticking through his smashed ribs,' said Summerlee. 'He must have fallen from above and been impaled here.'

Did the man fall or was he pushed? With this worrying thought, we went on until we came to another of White's signs. It was an arrow pointing to a narrow gap in the cliff wall. We squeezed through and found ourselves in a cave. We had only gone a few hundred metres before our path was blocked: the roof of the cave had collapsed.

Disappointed, we had started walking back to the entrance when suddenly a huge rock came crashing past us. We only just managed to jump out of the way in time. It seemed that someone had deliberately tried to hit us. But who?

That night, while we were sitting by our camp fire roasting a wild pig, something swooped out of the darkness. We were covered in a canopy of leathery wings and I caught a glimpse of the long neck, fierce red eye and great snapping beak of a pterodactyl before it was gone – taking our supper with it.

'Professor Challenger,' said a solemn Summerlee. 'I owe you an apology, sir. I beg you to forget I ever doubted you.'

The two men shook hands and, for the moment, were friends.

It took us nearly a week to walk around the bottom of the cliffs. We passed through stony deserts and desolate marshes and, worst of all, a swamp filled with poisonous snakes. The morning after we completed our circuit, Challenger had another idea. He suggested we climb the pillar of rock. Its top was level with the top of the cliffs, but was separated from them by a 15-metre gap.

'When we're up there I'm sure I'll think of a way to cross that chasm,' he said, confidently.

It was a hard climb and for the last 30 metres we were clinging with our fingers and toes to tiny ledges and cracks in the rock. We made it at last and with a sigh of relief I wrapped my arms around the tree that grew there.

'This tree will be our saviour!' said the professor, patting it with his big, hairy hand.

'By George!' cried Lord John. 'A bridge!'

The tree was about 20 metres tall so when we cut it down it fell across the gap between the rock and the plateau. The four of us hurried across, leaving Zambo and the others behind. We had only just got to the other side when there was a terrible crash. Far below us, we saw our bridge, smashed upon the ground below. On the other side was Gomez. His angry eyes were flashing.

'Lord John, you English dog!' he shouted, shaking his fist. 'I tried to kill you in the cave with the stone but now I have destroyed your bridge, you are trapped there forever. Pedro Lopez, the man you killed five years ago, was my brother and now his death has been avenged.'

As Gomez started to climb down the rock, Lord John pulled out his gun and shot him. He fell to earth with a terrible scream. Any satisfaction we had in seeing our enemy dead was short-lived. Gomez had been right. We were trapped. We had a rope, but it wasn't strong enough or long enough for us to climb down it. There were trees on the plateau, but they were too far away for us to carry them to make another bridge.

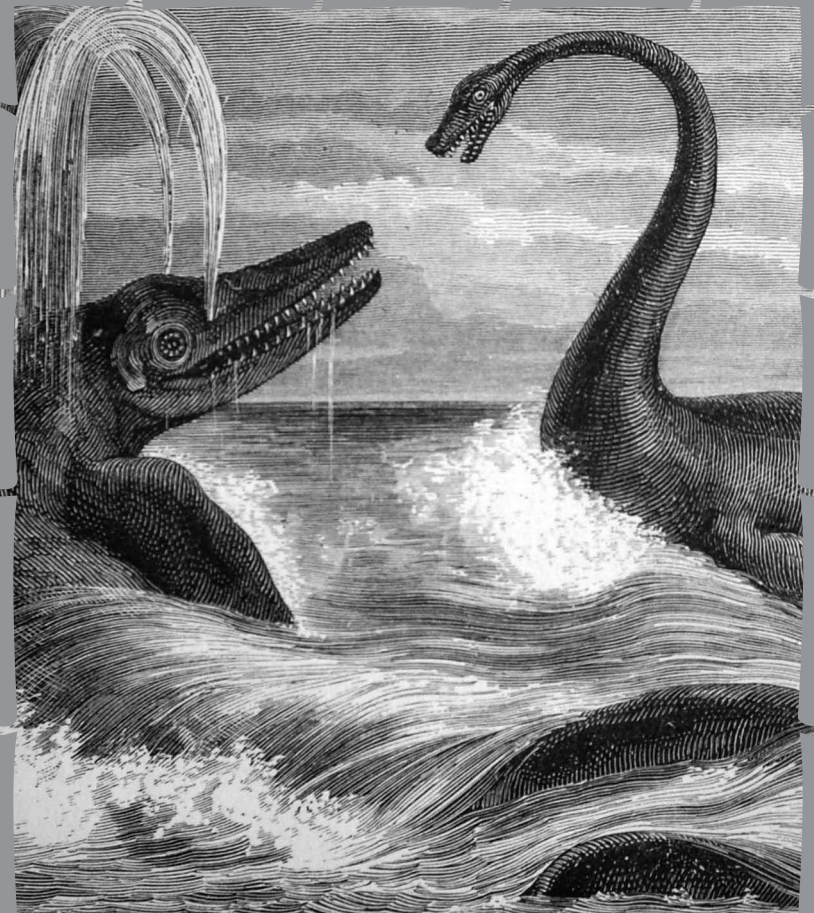
The Indians had all fled when Gomez was shot but loyal Zambo said he would wait for us and he threw over some of our supplies and equipment. We made ourselves a camp, using thorny bushes for its walls and building it around a broad tree so the branches would form a roof.

The next morning, as we explored, we came across strange tracks in the soft mud. There were a number of three-toed marks – some of them enormous – and the occasional five-toed one.

'I know what this is,' cried Challenger, happily. 'I've seen fossilised tracks like these in Sussex. It's the marks of the iguanodon. It moves on its three-toed back feet and sometimes puts its five-fingered front paws on the ground to rest.'

In a clearing ahead we saw a family of the creatures, two adults and three younger ones. They were big, lumbering beasts and did not seem dangerous, but our next encounter was very different. We had walked further on when we came upon hundreds of pterodactyls. They were gathered in a large volcanic crater. When they saw us they rose up in the air in a terrible cloud, then flew down to attack us. We all got nasty bites and scratches and if Lord John hadn't fired his gun to scare them away while we ran for cover, I think we'd have been killed.

When we got back to our camp, bleeding and battered, we had another nasty shock. Some of our supplies had been scattered and broken. Who could be out there, watching us?



DID YOU KNOW...

... that fossils help us to know what animals that lived millions of years ago used to look like? Fossils are usually formed from the hard parts of dead bodies – like bones and teeth – but can also be formed by marks the creature made when it was alive, like footprints and bites. This picture is of an ichthyosaur and a plesiosaur. Some of the first fossils of these sea-monsters were found by a young girl called Mary Anning in the early nineteenth century.

NEW WORDS

avenged	got even for something
canopy	roof
chasm	gap
circuit	route around something
desolate	miserable
encounter	meeting
fossilised	preserved in stone
glimpse	short look
impaled	stuck on something sharp
lumbering	moving clumsily
marshes	boggy places
saviour	helper
swooped	dived down
volcanic crater	hole with raised sides made when a volcano erupts

PUZZLE

Fill the gaps in the sentences.
The words are all hidden in
the word box.

T	U	R	N	W
R	O	O	F	O
O	H	I	T	O
C	A	V	E	D
K	B	A	C	K

Maple White left a signpost
made from

It led them to a

The had collapsed so they had to
..... They were nearly
..... by a

GET CREATIVE

Maple White drew a man next to the stegosaurus to
show how big it was. The figure of the man was used for
comparison. The iguanodon was about ten metres long.
Draw an iguanodon with something beside. It needs to be
something that people will recognise and know the size of,
for example, a bus, a famous building or an elephant.

