

CHAPTER 5 BATTLE WITH THE APE-MEN

I had been knocked out by my fall. When I came to, I was aware of a terrible smell. I was in a deep pit with sloping sides. The bottom was covered with rotting flesh. In the middle of the pit-floor was a tall post which had been sharpened to a spike. It was black with the blood of the creatures that had been impaled upon it. Nervously I crawled out of the trap, worried that the dinosaur that had been chasing me was still near. It was now early morning. Suddenly I heard a rifle shot. It must be my companions. Perhaps they were firing the gun to guide me home.

I hurried on and at last could see the thorn walls ahead of me. I gave a cheery shout and rushed into camp. What a terrible sight! My companions were gone, the grass was stained with blood and all our belongings had been wrecked. I had never felt so afraid and so alone. My only consolation was that faithful Zambo was still nearby, even if I couldn't reach him.

I spent a restless day and night at the camp, not knowing what had happened. I was shaken awake the following morning by Lord John. But how different he looked! He was pale and wild-eyed, his face was scratched and bloody, his clothes were in rags and his hat gone.

'Quick, young fellah! Quick!' he cried. 'Get the other rifles! Fill up your pockets with cartridges! Now some food! Don't wait to talk or think! Get a move on, or we are done for!'

Still half-awake, I followed him as we ran madly into the woods and hid ourselves in a thick clump of bushes. He then told me what had happened.

'It was the ape-men! My God, what brutes! It was early mornin'. Suddenly it rained apes. They came down out of the trees. I got one shot off, but they knocked us to the ground and tied up our hands with creepers, jabberin' all the while. Then they dragged us off to this town of their's – thousands of huts made from branches and leaves. The big chief took a shine to Challenger. And you could see why. He had red hair and Challenger has black, but other than that they looked exactly the same. If it wasn't so horrible, you'd have laughed.

'Challenger was taken off to the big chief's hut, but me and Summerlee were tied to a tree along with some other men. Poor little devils they were. Must be some kind of Indian. My God! What a nightmare! You remember those bamboo canes we saw with the skeleton? Well, that's just below the ape-men's town. They took a bunch of those Indians and threw them over. Some were dashed to pieces, some were skewered. They saved some over for today – including me and Summerlee, and probably Challenger too.

'This morning I loosened my ropes, gave my guard a kick and ran back to the camp to fetch the guns. We'll have to take care as those devils will be out searchin' for me – and you too – but we've got to go and rescue the professors.'

We hid some of our provisions in the bushes, as we couldn't risk going back to our camp, then made our way to the town. When we got there, we could see Summerlee had been hauled to the top of the cliff. Challenger was begging the big chief to spare Summerlee's life. The ape-man pushed him aside roughly and shook his head. There was a crack from a rifle and the chief fell to the ground, dead.

'Shoot into the thick of them! Shoot! sonny, shoot!' Lord John cried.

We fired our guns and the ape-men ran around in confusion. Challenger quickly realised what was happening and grabbed the bewildered Summerlee, dragging him towards us. Four of the Indians joined him. The chattering brutes gave chase and for mile after mile they were at our heels, until they grew tired of dodging bullets.

We went to where we had hidden our supplies and Summerlee slumped to the ground. 'My word! You've pulled us all out of the jaws of death,' he said weakly.

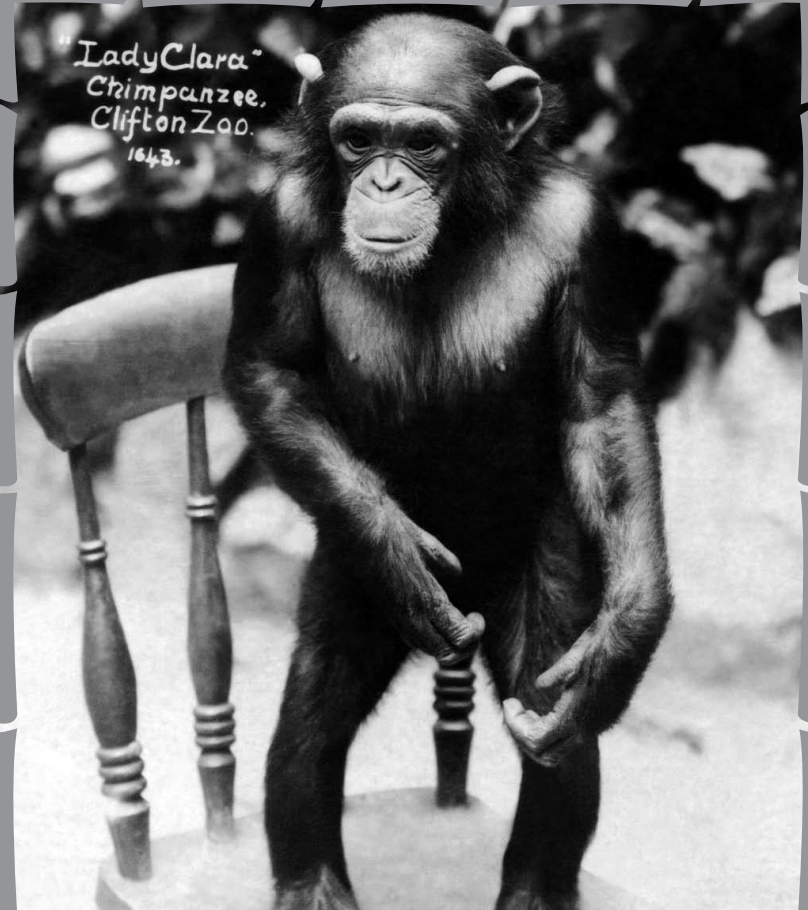
I told the others that the Indians must live in the caves I'd seen and we should take them home when things had quietened down. The next morning, always on the look out for the ape-men, we set off for Lake Gladys. When we drew near, the Indians gave a shout of joy. Hundreds of canoes were being paddled across the water towards us. It was the Indian tribe. They were coming to the rescue.

When they reached the bank, the Indians gathered together for a council of war. Although we couldn't understand the words they spoke, from their gestures and the tone of their voices we worked out that they wanted to finish off the ape-men once and for all, and they wanted our help.

'For my part, I'm goin' with our little pals,' said Lord John. 'What do you fellahs say?'

Challenger and I agreed at once, but Summerlee hesitated. 'It seems very far from the objective of this expedition,' he said, crossly. 'However, if you're all going I can't very well stay behind.'

The battle took place the next day. We had our rifles, the Indians had arrows and knives, the ape-men clubs and stones. It was brutal and bloody and lasted several hours, but at last the ape-men were driven back to their town. Those who weren't killed fighting were forced to jump from the cliff onto the bamboo spikes below. The long rivalry of many centuries had come to an end.



DID YOU KNOW...

... humans and apes have **evolved** from the same ancestor? Evolution refers to the changes that take place in living things over many generations. This picture is of Lady Clara, a chimpanzee who lived at Bristol Zoo over a 100 years ago. The scientist Charles Darwin could see that humans and chimps must be related. Some people got upset about this. They thought it was an insult to say they had anything in common with apes.

NEW WORDS

cartridges	the cases carrying the explosive charge used in a gun
consolation	comfort
council of war	meeting to plan a battle
creepers	long vines
gestures	body language
jabbering	talking quickly
objectives	aims, purpose
rivalry	competition
skewered	pierced by something sharp
slumped	collapsed
took a shine to	liked

PUZZLE

Complete the puzzle using the clues below. Make up your own clue for the word revealed in the shaded column.

	1				
2					
3					
	4				
	5				
	6				

1. Lord John came to fetch the
2. His face was scratched and
3. The Indians crossed the lake in
4. They rescued the professors from the jaws of
5. Lord John called Malone a '..... fellak'.
6. Each ape-man had a club or

GET CREATIVE

Imagine Lady Clara the chimp could talk and she gave a five-minute interview to a newspaper reporter. With a partner, take it in turns being the chimp and the reporter. What questions would you like to ask her? What do you think she would answer? One thing you might like to find out is what she thinks about being related to humans.