

## 《Before Adam》 Chapter 6

While the more courageous of the youngsters played in and out of the large-mouthed caves, I early learned to be cupied. No one slept in them at night. Only the crevice-mouthed caves were used, the narrower the mouth the better to escape the preying animals that made life a burden to us in those days and nights.

The first morning, after my night's sleep with Lop-Ear, I learned the advantage of the narrow-mouthed caves. An old Saber-Tooth, the tiger, walked into the open space. Two of the Folk were already up. They made a rush at him, c-stricken, or whether he was too close on their heels for them to attempt to scramble up the bluff to the crevice. They dashed into the wide-mouthed cave wherein Lop-Ear and I had played the afternoon before.

What happened inside there was no way of telling, but it is fair to conclude that the two Folk slipped through the crevice to the other cave. This crevice was too small to allow for the passage of Saber-Tooth, and he came out the way he wanted and angry. It was evident that his night's hunting had been unsuccessful and that he had expected to make a meal of the two Folk at the other cave-mouth and sprang for them. Of course, they darted through the passageway in a flash and angrier than ever and snarling.

Pandemonium broke loose amongst the rest of us. All up and down the great bluff, we crowded the crevices. We were all chattering and shrieking in a thousand keys. And we were all making faces--snarling faces; this was as angry as Saber-Tooth, though our anger was allied with fear. I remember that I shrieked and made faces as they did they set the example, but I felt the urge from within me to do the same things they were doing. My hair stood up with a fierce, unreasoning rage.

For some time old Saber-Tooth continued dashing in and out of first the one cave and then the other. But he came back and forth through the connecting crevice and eluded him. In the meantime the rest of us up the bluff had gathered. As he appeared outside we pelted him with rocks. At first we merely dropped them on him, but we soon began to use the added force of our muscles.

This bombardment drew Saber-Tooth's attention to us and made him angrier than ever. He abandoned his plan and prang up the bluff toward the rest of us, clawing at the crumbling rock and snarling as he clawed his upward way. At last one of us sought refuge inside our caves. I know this, because I peeped out and saw the whole bluff-side covered with him, who had lost his footing and was sliding and falling down.

I called out the cry of encouragement, and again the bluff was covered by the screaming horde and the snarling. Saber-Tooth was frantic with rage. Time and again he assaulted the bluff. Once he even gained the first crest, but was unable to force his way inside. With each upward rush he made, waves of fear surged over us. Some of us dashed inside; but some remained outside to hammer him with stones, and soon all of us remained outside.

Never was so masterly a creature so completely baffled. It hurt his pride terribly, thus to be outwitted by a bunch of apes who stood on the ground and looked up at us, snarling, lashing his tail, snapping at the stones that fell near to him. He stood there, and just at the right moment he looked up. It caught him full on the end of his nose, and he went straight up in the air, roaring and caterwauling, what of the hurt and surprise.

He was beaten and he knew it. Recovering his dignity, he stalked out solemnly from under the rain of stones. He went to the open space and looked wistfully and hungrily back at us. He hated to forego the meal, and we were just as hungry. This sight of him started us to laughing. We laughed derisively and uproariously, all of us. Now and then one of us laughed at makes them angry. And in such fashion our laughter affected Saber-Tooth. He turned with a roar at us, and his roar was what we wanted. The fight had become a game, and we took huge delight in pelting him.

But this attack did not last long. He quickly recovered his common sense, and besides, our missiles were effective. He collected the vision of one bulging eye of his, swollen almost shut by one of the stones we had thrown. And with a whimper he stood on the edge of the forest whither he had finally retreated. He was looking back at us, his writhing

oots of his huge fangs, his hair bristling and his tail lashing. He gave one last snarl and slid from view among  
And then such a chattering as went up. We swarmed out of our holes, examining the marks his claws had  
k of the bluff, all of us talking at once. One of the two Folk who had been caught in the double cave was part  
th. They had come out proudly from their refuge, and we surrounded them in an admiring crowd. Then the y  
ough and fell upon him in a tremendous rage, boxing his ears, pulling his hair, and shrieking like a demon. Sh  
ery hairy, and the thrashing she gave him was a delight to the horde. We roared with laughter, holding on to o  
und in our glee.

In spite of the reign of fear under which we lived, the Folk were always great laughers. We had the sens  
s Gargantuan. It was never restrained. There was nothing half way about it. When a thing was funny we were  
f it, and the simplest, crudest things were funny to us. Oh, we were great laughers, I can tell you.

The way we had treated Saber-Tooth was the way we treated all animals that invaded the village. We kep  
aces to ourselves by making life miserable for the animals that trespassed or strayed upon our immediate territ  
nimals we so bedevilled that they learned to leave our places alone. We were not fighters like them; we were c  
as because of our cunning and cowardice, and our inordinate capacity for fear, that we survived in that frightf  
e Younger World.

Lop-Ear, I figure, was a year older than I. What his past history was he had no way of telling me, but as  
other I believed him to be an orphan. After all, fathers did not count in our horde. Marriage was as yet in a ru  
y of quarrelling and separating. Modern man, what of his divorce institution, does the same thing legally. But  
I we went by, and our custom in this particular matter was rather promiscuous .

Nevertheless, as this narrative will show later on, we betrayed glimmering adumbrations of the monogan  
o, and make mighty, such tribes as embraced it. Furthermore, even at the time I was born, there were several  
e trees in the neighborhood of my mother. Living in the thick of the horde did not conduce to monogamy. It v  
y, that the faithful couples went away and lived by themselves. Through many years these couples stayed tog  
r woman died or was eaten the survivor invariably found a new mate.

There was one thing that greatly puzzled me during the first days of my residence in the horde. There wa  
ble fear that rested upon all. At first it appeared to be connected wholly with direction. The horde feared the n  
prehension of that quarter of the compass. And every individual gazed more frequently and with greater alarm  
her.

When Lop-Ear and I went toward the north-east to eat the stringy-rooted carrots that at that season were  
ally timid. He was content to eat the leavings, the big tough carrots and the little ropy ones, rather than to ven  
n to where the carrots were as yet untouched. When I so ventured, he scolded me and quarrelled with me. He  
n that direction was some horrible danger, but just what the horrible danger was his paucity of language woul

Many a good meal I got in this fashion, while he scolded and chattered vainly at me. I could not understa  
d see no danger. I calculated always the distance between myself and the nearest tree, and knew that to that h