



## 《Before Adam》 Chapter 8

Well do I remember that first winter after I left home. I have long dreams of sitting shivering in the cold, with our arms and legs about each other, blue-faced and with chattering teeth. It got particularly crisp all through the early hours we slept little, huddling together in numb misery and waiting for the sunrise in order to get warm.

When we went outside there was a crackle of frost under foot. One morning we discovered ice on the stream where the drinking-place, and there was a great How-do-you-do about it. Old Marrow-Bone was the first to see it, and he had never seen anything like it before. I remember the worried, plaintive look that came into his eyes. That plaintive look always came into our eyes when we did not understand a thing, or when we felt the prod of suspicion. Red-Eye, too, when he investigated the ice, looked bleak and plaintive, and stared across the river into the distance as if he were trying to connect the Fire People with this latest happening.

But we found ice only on that one morning, and that was the coldest winter we experienced. I have never known a winter so cold. I have often thought that that cold winter was a fore-runner of the countless cold winters to come when the north crept down over the face of the land. But we never saw that ice-sheet. Many generations must have passed since the horde migrated south, or remained and adapted themselves to the changed conditions.

Life was hit or miss and happy-go-lucky with us. Little was ever planned, and less was executed. We ate when we were thirsty, avoided our carnivorous enemies, took shelter in the caves at night, and for the rest just lived our simple life.

We were very curious, easily amused, and full of tricks and pranks. There was no seriousness about us, and we were never angry, in which cases the one was quickly forgotten and the other as quickly got over.

We were inconsecutive, illogical, and inconsequential. We had no steadfastness of purpose, and it was hard to get anything done. We were capable of long-cherished purpose. The faithfulness of the monogamic couples I have referred to may be explained; but my long desire for the Swift One cannot be so explained, any more than can be explained the undying desire for the Swift One.

But it was our inconsequentiality and stupidity that especially distresses me when I look back upon that time. I found a broken gourd which happened to lie right side up and which had been filled with the rain. The water was fresh. I took the gourd down to the stream and filled it with more water, some of which I drank and some of which I poured on my head. I never entered my head to fill the gourd with water and carry it into my cave. Especially after eating wild onions and watercress, and no one ever dared leave the caves at night for a drink.

Another time I found a dry gourd, inside of which the seeds rattled. I had fun with it for a while. But it was not long after this that the using of gourds for storing water became the general practice of the horde. The honor was due to old Marrow-Bone, and it is fair to assume that it was the necessity of his great invention.

At any rate, the first member of the horde to use gourds was Marrow-Bone. He kept a supply of drinking water in a gourd which belonged to his son, the Hairless One, who permitted him to occupy a corner of it. We used to see Marrow-Bone carrying his gourd and carrying it carefully up to his cave. Imitation was strong in the Folk, and first one, and then another, and then a third, and so on, until it was a general practice with all of us so to store water.

Sometimes old Marrow-Bone had sick spells and was unable to leave the cave. Then it was that the Hairless One deputed the task to Long-Lip, his son. And after that, even when Marrow-Bone continued carrying water for him. By and by, except on unusual occasions, the men never carried any water at all. The women and larger children. Lop-Ear and I were independent. We carried water only for ourselves, and we often laughed when they were called away from play to fill the gourds.

Progress was slow with us. We played through life, even the adults, much in the same way that children of the other animals played. What little we learned, was usually in the course of play, and was due to our curiosity. For that matter, the one big invention of the horde, during the time I lived with it, was the use of gourds. A he gourds--in imitation of old Marrow-Bone.

But one day some one of the women--I do not know which one--filled a gourd with black-berries and called all the women were carrying berries and nuts and roots in the gourds. The idea, once started, had to go on. A gourd-receptacle was due to the women. Without doubt, some woman's gourd was too small, or else she had for so it may, she bent two great leaves together, pinning the seams with twigs, and carried home a bigger quantity than contained in the largest gourd.

So far we got, and no farther, in the transportation of supplies during the years I lived with the Folk. It took us to weave a basket out of willow-withes. Sometimes the men and women tied tough vines about the bundles of supplies carried to the caves to sleep upon. Possibly in ten or twenty generations we might have worked up to the weaving. The one thing is sure: if once we wove withes into baskets, the next and inevitable step would have been the weaving of clothes. It followed, and with covering our nakedness would have come modesty.

Thus was momentum gained in the Younger World. But we were without this momentum. We were just beginning to go far in a single generation. We were without weapons, without fire, and in the raw beginnings of speech. I can see in the future that I am appalled when I think of it.

Even I was once on the verge of a great discovery. To show you how fortuitous was development in the future, it has not been for the gluttony of Lop-Ear I might have brought about the domestication of the dog. And this was the one thing the people who lived to the northeast had not yet achieved. They were without dogs; this I knew from observation. But Lop-Ear's gluttony possibly set back our social development many generations.

Well to the west of our caves was a great swamp, but to the south lay a stretch of low, rocky hills. There were two reasons. First of all, there was no food there of the kind we ate; and next, those rocky hills were filled with

But Lop-Ear and I strayed over to the hills one day. We would not have strayed had we not been teasing the children of old Saber-Tooth himself. We were perfectly safe. We chanced upon him in the forest, early in the morning. He was in the branches overhead we chattered down at him our dislike and hatred. And from branch to branch, and from head to head, making an infernal row and warning all the forest-dwellers that old Saber-Tooth was coming.

We spoiled his hunting for him, anyway. And we made him good and angry. He snarled at us and lashed out with his tail and stared up at us quietly for a long time, as if debating in his mind some way by which he could get hold of us. He pelted him with twigs and the ends of branches.

This tiger-baiting was common sport among the folk. Sometimes half the horde would follow from over the hills and hunt out in the daytime. It was our revenge; for more than one member of the horde, caught unexpectedly, by a lion or the lion's. Also, by such ordeals of helplessness and shame, we taught the hunting animals to some extent. And then it was funny. It was a great game.

And so Lop-Ear and I had chased Saber-Tooth across three miles of forest. Toward the last he put his tail up and ran like a beaten cur. We did our best to keep up with him; but when we reached the edge of the forest he was out of sight in the distance.

I don't know what prompted us, unless it was curiosity; but after playing around awhile, Lop-Ear and I went to the edge of the rocky hills. We did not go far. Possibly at no time were we more than a hundred yards from the edge of a sharp corner of rock (we went very carefully, because we did not know what we might encounter), we caught the sun in the sun.

They did not see us, and we watched them for some time. They were wild dogs. In the rock-wall was a cave where their mother had left them, and where they should have remained had they been obedient. But the curiosity of Lop-Ear had impelled us to venture away from the forest, had driven the puppies out of the cave to frolic. I knew the mother would have punished them had she caught them.

But it was Lop-Ear and I who caught them. He looked at me, and then we made a dash for it. The puppies ran into the lair, and we headed them off. One rushed between my legs. I squatted and grabbed him. He sank his head down, and I dropped him in the suddenness of the hurt and surprise. The next moment he had scurried inside.

Lop-Ear, struggling with the second puppy, scowled at me and intimated by a variety of sounds the difference that I was. This made me ashamed and spurred me to valor. I grabbed the remaining puppy by the tail. He ran. I then I got him by the nape of the neck. Lop-Ear and I sat down, and held the puppies up, and looked at them.

They were snarling and yelping and crying. Lop-Ear started suddenly. He thought he had heard something

ear, realizing the danger of our position. The one thing that made animals raging demons was tampering with things that made such a racket belonged to the wild dogs. Well we knew them, running in packs, the terror of the land. They attacked them following the herds of cattle and bison and dragging down the calves, the aged, and the sick. We had seen them ourselves, more than once. I had seen one of the Folk, a woman, run down by them and caught just as she reached a tree. She had not been tired out by the run, she might have made it into a tree. She tried, and slipped, and fell back. They tried to pull her down, but she was too quick for them.

We did not stare at each other longer than a moment. Keeping tight hold of our prizes, we ran for the wall. We hid in the hollow of an all tree, we held up the puppies and laughed again. You see, we had to have our laugh out, no matter what happened.

And then began one of the hardest tasks I ever attempted. We started to carry the puppies to our cave. It was a long and tiring job, most of the time they were occupied with holding our squirming captives. Once we tried to walk on a path, we were stopped by a miserable hyena, who followed along underneath. He was a wise hyena.

Lop-Ear got an idea. He remembered how we tied up bundles of leaves to carry home for beds. Breaking the puppy's legs together, and then, with another piece of vine passed around his neck, slung the puppy on his back. He was jubilant, and did not wait for me to finish tying my puppy's legs, but started to walk. However, the puppy wouldn't stay slung on Lop-Ear's back. It swung around to the side and then on in front. The next thing it did was to sink its teeth into Lop-Ear's soft and unprotected stomach. He let out a scream, nearly fainting. He struggled valiantly with both hands to save himself. The vine around his neck broke, and the puppy, its four legs still tied together, proceeded to dine.