

World War Zero

Forward

Interactions between species of human ancestors were important in shaping the evolution of man. This story is about one of those encounters. Recent genetic studies suggest that the ancestors of all living humans, besides sub-Saharan Africans, can trace their genetic lineage to a particular living gene pool of *Homo sapiens* known as the San Bushmen (or related tribes). Evidently, around 70,000 years ago, some of these people migrated and, through evolution, gave rise to all of the populations of modern humans outside of sub-Saharan Africa.

An important factor in understanding the evolution of human species is interspecies hybridization. Though it is commonly thought that separate species cannot interbreed, closely related species actually can in many cases. For the human line, it is estimated that human species separated by as much as two million years may produce viable offspring. Another important factor to take into consideration is the branching nature of speciation, the process by which new species evolve. Typically, an entire species will not evolve into another, but rather, a subset population of a species will give rise to another. This means that there will be the possibility of hybridization of the two species after the new one evolves. When this happens, the introduction of distantly related DNA of one species into a gene pool of another species is referred to as admixing.

Interestingly, genetic studies suggest that admixing took place between *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals in the region of central Asia. In addition, other genetic studies (Hammer et al., 2011) suggest that admixing took place about 35,000 years ago between sub-Saharan *Homo sapiens*, including the San Bushmen, and an archaic population that split from the ancestors of modern humans 700,000 years ago. Though it is believed that *Homo sapiens* evolved directly from *Homo heidelbergensis*, the earliest evidence for this species date back only to 600,000 years ago, about which time it is believed to have evolved from *Homo erectus*. The earliest evidence for *Homo erectus* is dated to 1.8 million years ago, and the most recent evidence, from Indonesia, is dated to 53,000 years ago. However, the Central African fossil record is poorly represented, and other lines of evidence suggest that archaic humans persisted in Africa until as recently as 35,000 years ago. Although it has not yet been determined what this archaic admixed species was, for this story, I assume that it was *Homo erectus*, the quintessential apeman.

Regarding the evolution of *Homo sapiens*, what are referred to as archaic or premodern *Homo sapiens* (*Homo sapiens archaic*) appeared about 200,000 years ago. About 115,000 years ago, modern *Homo sapiens* (*Homo sapiens modern*) appeared in Africa. Where the transitions took place, they occurred at different times in different places, and not all populations survived. As early as 90,000 years ago in Africa, there was a proliferation of new tool use as evidenced by the fossil record. This period marks the earliest stages of what is known as the Upper Paleolithic Tool Culture. Of particular interest for this story, potential evidence for the first bow and arrow have been dated at 64,000 and 71,000 years ago at locations in South Africa.

Introduction

The Apemen

Homo erectus was the longest lived species of the human line. They were like us from the neck down. Their leg bones show traits common among today's Olympic athletes, indications that they were adapted to running. They could run long distances, cooperate in packs, and make tools, and thus were like wolves with weapons. Their species had spread across the Old World, and, for a time, that were at the apex of human evolution.

Into this "planet of the apemen" came *Homo heidelbergensis*, which had branched off from the *Homo erectus* line. It was evolution's latest bid to improve upon the *Homo erectus* design. From *Homo Heidelbergensis* came Neanderthals, Denisovans, and *Homo sapiens*. Gradually, *Homo erectus* was replaced by its more modern descendants throughout its range. But, a few populations stubbornly clung to the evolutionary stage.

Compared to *Homo sapiens*, *Homo erectus* had some disadvantages. Their shoulders could not rotate to the degree that *Homo sapiens* could and their hands were set in a palm-forward configuration while standing and so they were not as good at throwing spears. As such, they could not kill at a distance, which exposed them to more risk of injury or death during hunts. But, most importantly, the brain of *Homo sapiens* is about 1/3 larger than *Homo erectus*, putting *Homo erectus* at a great mental disadvantage. Their minds simply did not have the hardware to compete with the more intuitive and imaginative *Homo sapiens*.

The intelligence of apemen was about halfway between chimpanzees and man. Aside from those things that improved the apemen chances of survival, the added intelligence was often employed to invent clever forms of cruelty. Indeed, like is the case with man, cruelty was a way for apemen to express their inventive nature. The miraculous invention of evolution that is intelligence spawned both the spear and the pleasure of using it.

Tribes of apemen walked the savannas like troops of baboons. There they would walk the open plains that they sometimes defended as their territories, on the endless quest for food. Their mode of life or ecological niche was similar to that of baboons except apemen were not nearly as good at tree climbing and therefore were regularly engaged in direct combat with predators. On the savannas, the only real threat to tribes of apemen were prides of lions and packs of hyena, either of which could decimate a poorly defended tribe. To cope with these two greatest predatory threats, apemen were equipped with a strong herding instinct, and tribes tended to be large, usually comprised of 100 individuals or more. In addition, apemen were both physically and mentally adapted for the task. The combination of large numbers and fierce predatory capabilities meant the apemen diet consisted of a far higher percentage of meat than that of baboons.

A well equipped apeman tribe could own the day, but night was the kingdom of the lion and hyena. Night vision, sense of smell, and hearing of apemen and men were hopelessly inadequate to effectively fend off predators at night. Fire was the only real

defense against a night attack. Tribes that did not build fire for night defense were at a relative disadvantage compared to those tribes that did and thus their chances of survival were comparatively less. For this reason, and for the other advantages fire brings, evolution selected for fire building apemen.

All apemen, including females and younger individuals, would forage for anything ranging from eggs to insects and flowers to roots. They would also hunt for smaller game that they could corral and capture. Only the males of the tribe would hunt big game. The planning of the hunts and other movements of the tribes were rather instinctual in nature – one thing usually just led to another as events unfolded and threats and opportunities arose.

The biggest evolutionary advantages apeman had to survive the evolutionary contest it was apart of were his relatively large brain compared to anything but man, the upright configuration of his body plan, and the hairless, sweat gland rich skin. Besides the obvious advantages offered by intelligence, such as tool making, their two legged, or bipedal, style of walking provided huge savings in calories consumed, compared to their four legged, or quadrupedal, ancestors and competitors. The advantages of his hairless body was the way it could shed heat. Overheating causes incapacitation and can be deadly to all animals. Animals use evaporative cooling to shed excess heat. A dog or lion will pant, for instance, and a kangaroo will lick its fur to cool themselves. Apemen skin had evolved to shed heat more effectively by coating his skin with sweat. Water could then evaporate from the total surface area of his body for maximum cooling.

His efficient walking design combined with his highly effective heat-shedding skin allowed apemen to walk and run over great distances in the heat of the day when most predators must rest in the shade to keep from suffering heat exhaustion. Apeman hunting technique was simple: walk and run prey to exhaustion. Many grazers are simply not able to shed heat effectively enough when pursued by apemen or men in the hottest part of the day and eventually brain temperature rises to debilitating levels, enabling easy kills. Modern sub-Saharan tribesmen use the very technique to this day.

The San

The San were inquisitive, gentle of heart, and imaginative. In their eyes you could see the twinkle that is human. It mostly resided in the frontal lobes of evolutions new prototype brain. The San had evolved from a particular branch of *Homo heidelbergensis*. Over tens of thousands of years, the ancestors of the San had used their gradually evolving brains to out smart their apeman competitors. They traded brawn for brains.

The San's more advanced culture, the product of enhanced language and other cognitive skills, provided them with advantages in planning, weapons, and other technologies such as stone making and weaving. The San loved to learn new things, but what really made them special was their love of teaching. They had inherited the crafts of making things from their parents and grandparents. Through the process of handing down knowledge, man would someday set foot on the Moon. In comparison, there were no dreamers among apemen.

The San mostly stayed away from apemen, but the larger and more organized tribes of the San could hold their own against apemen in most encounters. The smaller tribes of San feared and hid from apemen like they did lions, for they were as deadly and cleverer. Sometimes they did not kill, but stole the San. This made the San fear the apemen with the limits of their imagination. For some, they were the demons of the world.

Because of the apeman threat, smaller tribes of San kept to brushy areas, the bush, to avoid them. But, apemen were smart enough to use the advantage of numbers and surprise tactics against the San. And, unlike with animals, fire brought apemen to you. It was a simple thing for apemen to raid your camp and cook you over your fire. So, the San only lit fires only in the deepest of forests where they hunted small game, such as hares and dik-dik. They could not make permanent dwellings or use the same areas for long because apemen were great trackers, and the San were greatly prized.

Chapter 1 Eureka!

The San had a weapons advantage over the apemen. They used bone spear points and thinner shafts that gave them several advantages such as a greater therefore safer throwing distance. Also, the San could carry more “ammunition” and make more shots because their spears were lighter than the heavy stone tipped spears the apemen made. However, apemen were up to 7 feet tall and were quick footed and could disable or kill a San man in a moment with his bare hands. With their heavy spears and heavier physiques, apemen specialized in close encounters when it came to hunting both animals and the San. Both species were fairly evenly matched in wooded habitats where the San could evade the apemen because of their small stature, but on the open plains, apemen would surround the San and eventually over run them.

But, one day, a San Bushman called Wyan made an intuitive leap that would shift the balance strongly in favor of the San. At nearly five feet tall, he was taller than the average San, but what really made him special was that he was extraordinarily gifted with imagination. Wyan believed that there was some power in wood beyond fire. That fire seemed to come from wood made it a spiritual substance to the San. That it grew out of the earth was another wonder of its mysterious nature. It was the most important resource in their world. Wyan explored its properties when he had the time and notion. Wood fascinated him in the way a scientist some 70,000 years in the future could become fascinated by research.

Wyan had been experimenting with the springy properties of branches and twigs. He had the idea that he might be able to make a new sort of weapon based on the springy nature of wood unlike the shafts of spears. He tried flinging rocks by bending back a long branch he stuck in an animal hole while holding a rock against the top of the branch. Rocks could be flung a fair distance in that way. However, he found that this worked less well than throwing rocks, so he tried to think of something else.

Then one day he decided to make a present for Dawn. Inspired by his love of wood, Wyan got the idea to make for her a favorite decoration of the San. The latest craze that had been spreading among the tribes of the San was a piece of artwork that was reminiscent of Native American dream catchers. A framework of wood was used to

display loved trinkets such as carved bone, feathers, and flowers. They liked to hang them from trees around their camps. They called these devices wind spirits. Although Wysan had never attempted to make one, he was sure that he could.

His first vision was that of a perfect circle made of wood. He wanted to mimic the shape of the sun for Dawn. Afterwards, he could not recall how the thought emerged from his mind, but the way he chose to make the circle led to the greatest innovation in human history until the age of gunpowder. Instead of tying together a framework of wood into rough circle, in his mind's eye, he imagined a perfect circle made of a single piece of wood.

His wood of choice was from the most spiritual tree of the San, the Acacia. The shape of Acacia trees inspired visions of purposeful design. To the San it seemed to have that quality of "art" that they admired. Along with other mysteries in their world, the Acacia hinted that unknown powers were at work behind the scenes. Although the San had yet to devise religion, they experienced a sense of wonder and awe at the awesome beauty and power of nature that was purer of heart than many religions that would come after.

When Wysan attempted to tie a single branch of Acacia together into a circle it would always break. He knew that there were more flexible woods he could work with, but he did not want to give up on Acacia. He was disappointed that a single piece would not do it, but he figured that two half circles should work. He bent a single branch into a half circle and tied both ends together with a length of string made from strips of Acacia bark that he twisted together. He found he could change the shape of the curve of the wood by shortening or lengthening the string. He had to get each half of the circle just right for them to match up.

While pulling on the strings he once again felt that power in wood that he had recently been experimenting with. In a flash, Wysan conceived his great vision. He picked up a small, straight branch and held one end against the middle of the string of the half circle. He pulled back on the string while holding the half circle. He steadied the branch between his thumb and forefinger, and let go. To his delight, the branch was flung through the air. It was the first arrow that was ever shot in the history of the earth.

Chapter 2 Cheetah!

Wysan smiled broadly. Then he could not contain his pleasure at this discovery. He burst out laughing and jumped up and down. He looked around. He hoped nothing had heard him. Wysan had made the perilous journey across open ground to the Acacia tree that was about a quarter mile from the bush where he made his home. He now felt he had been too daring to linger so long, but it was his favorite place in the world.

A sense of dread came over Wysan. He spied the area around him for possible threats. 'I think something heard me!' He thought. There, not more than 200 yards away in the opposite direction of the Bush were two adolescent cheetahs. Wysan scanned for the mother. He could climb the tree and better defend himself as cheetahs were not the most capable of cats when it came to climbing. 'But if I climb, I'll be trapped. And, if I'm stuck up there for too long, other predators might be attracted to the commotion.' Wysan reasoned.

He loved cheetahs the most of all cats. The few instances when he had seen them run were etched in his brain. The speed of cheetahs defied Wyan's imagination. They were not as dangerous as lions and leopards that regularly took San, so Wyan did not get that feeling of dread in the pit of his stomach when he saw them. Cheetahs preferred open country where they could use their speed to advantage. They took smaller game and avoided injury more than any other predator. Their speed was just too critical for their survival, and their bodies were too fragile for combat. Nature had made them lightly built for speed. They usually tripped up antelope and then quickly gave their prey a suffocating bite to the neck.

Wyan could tell that they had heard him. They were looking in his direction with that cat "radar" that told him that he was their object of focus. He expected they would seek for the source of the sound. 'Wyan! You fool.' He reproached himself. 'You have to go now! But don't run. That will only excite them. You have to keep them in a state of cautious curiosity after they see you.' Wyan knew he had no chance of not being seen once he broke cover. His only chance was to fight them off if they got too close.

Gathering up his belongings, he quietly placed them in his "backpack". It was a dik-dik skin made into an elongated pouch about two feet long and six inches round that was framed with wood and adorned with a skin flap for a lid. He slid the leather strap over his head and one arm so that the pack rested diagonally across his back. He picked up his spear and touched the point. His adrenaline was running so high that he did not feel the pain as it punctured his finger. He automatically licked the blood. His spear was as long as he was tall at 4 feet and 6 inches. Taking a deep breath, Wyan forced himself to move.

Walking as calmly as possible, he headed toward the bush as if nothing was wrong. He did not want the cats to draw the conclusion that he was prey. Every few steps Wyan glanced around him, especially in the direction of the cats. There they were! Both were walking toward him in a state of confused curiosity. He knew they would not let him reach the bush without finding out what he was. 'Maybe they are too young to have run across San before.' He hoped. 'I'm sure I could fight off one.' His mind raced as he looked for solutions to his predicament. 'But, two?'

He thought his best chance lie in bluff and discouragement. 'If they're not too hungry they won't try too hard to eat me. I'll just have to fight to the bitter end if they force it.' Wyan realized that he needed more ammunition. Scanning the ground as he walked, he picked up several rocks about the size of his fist and cradled them in his free arm, while holding the spear in the other. 'I'll just stop and stand my ground when they get too close.' Wyan was within one hundred yards of the bush when the cats got around to catching up. This two legged thing had really got their attention.

He was so close to the clearing that he had to fight the urge to run for it. They would only jump on him and, even if he managed to get closer to the bush before turning to face them, he would only exhaust himself pointlessly. He needed all of his strength, skill, and courage to win this. Turning to face them, he gritted his teeth and stuck the shaft of his spear into the soft earth at his feet. This was it. The cats snarled and hissed as they both sized Wyan up. He waited for them to get within twenty feet before he threw the first rock.

It hit the ground right at the nearer cat's front paws. It jumped wildly into the air and took several paces back, unsure what this meant. Meanwhile, the other cat, which

had been circling around Wysan, now came in for the kill. He barely had time to grab his spear and lunge with all his might at the advancing cat. Wysan's spear tip would have entered the nose of the cheetah, but it moved with lightning speed and nearly knocked Wysan down when it struck the spear with its paw.

The cat resisted charging long enough for Wysan to step back and grab another rock. 'Let's see if you're fast enough slap this away.' Wysan yelled with rage. With all his might he threw the rock at the nose of the cat, which was now a mere six feet away. This one hit the cat squarely in its snarling mouth. The cat tore away with lightning speed at the pain, shaking its head and licking its lips when it reached what it thought was a safe distance from Wysan. He had obviously hurt the cat with that throw. Turning to face the other cat, Wysan could see that it was now distracted by its sibling. Confused, it turned and trotted over to the other cat.

Wysan used this opportunity to exit the scene. Turning back to the bush, he took a few steps and stopped. Scanning the ground near where he had struck the cat, he searched for the object he had noticed flying from its mouth. There it lay! It was the cheetah's canine tooth. He quickly picked up the prize and walked slowly and confidently to the bush because Wysan wanted the cats to believe that the battle was over and that he had won.

Chapter 3 Invention

Back in the bush, Wysan marveled at his luck and good fortune at escaping with his life and recovering the cheetah's tooth. His mouth was parched and he was chilled by the sweat that had beaded all over his body. His tribe had a number of hidden camps that they used while hunting the broad expanses of bush. At some of the camps they had cleverly hidden caches of water, food, and other essentials. He decided he would make for the nearest one that was in the direction his tribe last encamped. More than anything he wanted the time to safely come to grips with all that had transpired in the intense moments since his discovery.

Wysan's home was like an isle of bush in a sea of savannas. There were many such fragments of bush scattered across that region of Africa. The patch of bush his tribe called home of was about 10 miles in diameter and was by no means the largest. He had travelled with others of his tribe to visit other tribes that lived in nearby islands of bush. The nearest was a rather larger island some 5 miles of savanna to the southeast. Roughly halfway in between these there was a system of waterholes that filled into a wide network of pools and lakes during the rainier half of the year. Wysan's tribe and the tribe that claimed the bush to the southeast regularly hunted and fished, taking waterfowl, eggs, small crocs, turtles, and the like. In the dry season, when the waterline dropped, it became far too dangerous a place for the San because lions would lay in wait for thirsty prey.

Fortunately for the San, they had learned to dig into the beds of dry watercourses to reach groundwater that was often only a few feet below the surface. Some of these watercourses crossed the bush where the concept of the permanent well had been invented through the pursuit of water. It was another example of the advantages

intelligence brings. Apemen had not mastered this innovation, so they fought with lions and other predators at the waterholes.

Only a year before, he had wed his lovely bride, Dawn, during an annual celebration held at the main camp of her tribe in the bush to the southeast. Now he wanted more than anything to see her again and tell her about all that had happened. When he reached the nearby camp it was mid-afternoon. He was less than a half day's leisurely march to the camp where Dawn and the rest of the tribe were staying, and from which he had set off for the acacia tree that morning.

'First, I will make a necklace of the cheetah's tooth. The cheetah will be my totem and the tooth will my amulet.' Wysan proclaimed.

He found a leather strip to and hang the tooth around his neck. He passed the tooth through the leather and carefully tied a knot over the tooth to make sure that it would not come free. He then tied the ends of the leather strip together. Satisfied, he passed the necklace over his head and grasped the tooth. He then offered a prayer to the great unknown and asked the spirit of the cheetah to protect him.

He had planned to do some hunting after the visit to the tree and to make it back to the camp where his tribe was staying by nightfall, but he could not take his mind off of his discovery. After test firing a few more sticks and reliving his amazement and glee, Wysan set his mind to work. He asked himself what type of wood might be the best to make a more powerful bow. Then he thought of his spear shaft. They were slender enough to bend, but they were never used in the manner of a bow. His tribe had a stash of spear shafts at the camp. He tested each and chose the shaft he thought would work best and then broke it into a shaft about four feet long. Looking through the stash of string and rope, he chose a length of string that was strong yet thin. He cut a notch close to each end of the shaft where he could securely tie the string. He bent the shaft about a quarter of the way to the point where he thought it would break, while he tied off the string at both ends. He pulled on the string and let go several times, each time pulling a little harder.

'Great, I now have a working...hmm, it makes a sound like bow when I release it. I call thee bow. Now for the sticks...hmm, a better word might do...I think I like...arrow because they remind me of the reeds of a raft that are rowed through water. Okay. Bow and arrow it is.' Wysan said to no one.

Wysan collected several straight branches of varying size to try out with the bow. He cut a notch at the end of each one to set the string of the bow in. Through trial and error, he found the right range of branch thicknesses and lengths that flew the furthest distances. He practiced with these until he got the hang of it enough so that he could strike the same patch of ground over and over again.

'Now I need a target. A piece of animal skin tied across two poles should do. I'll sharpen the arrows to see if I can pierce the skin.' Wysan thought out loud.

At twenty paces, Wysan could strike and pierce the skin nearly every time, but at fifty paces he noticed that the arrows would drift and turn through the air, causing their trajectory to become unpredictable. He thought about this problems for some time before he struck upon an idea.

'If arrows are like canoes of the air, then maybe what they need is a rudder to steer them straight. But, what would make a small rudder?' Wysan pondered.

As he was thinking on this problem, a bird flew by and he got an idea.

'Birds are masters of the air, and a feather is shaped a bit like a paddle. It's worth a try.' He concluded, with a fuzzy sort of logic.

In the cache there were feathers that were used for swaddling and decorations. He selected a few of the larger ones to try with his arrows.

'But, how to fasten them? I could use string or tree sap. Pitch might work too.' He figured.

Wysan decided on string for the time being because he was in a hurry and sap required seeking out the right sort of tree that yielded suitable sap, and pitch required heating in a fire to make it sticky. His first proper arrow had a single complete feather tied near to the notch at the end of its shaft. He fired it several times from fifty paces and found that its flight was far truer.

'That's it! I think I could really kill an animal with it. I could heat the pointed end to harden it, but, to make it even more deadly, I'll want a small knife at the point. I could use a flake of stone or shape a bone to cause the arrows make bigger wounds.' Wysan reasoned.

After an hour's labor, Wysan managed to shape and attach bone arrowheads to three arrows. He accomplished this by splitting the arrow tip and inserting the arrowhead in the gap. He then tied the arrowhead in place tightly with string. He practiced some more until he thought he was ready to try hunting with his invention.

'I think I should try to hunt something that is difficult to kill with a spear. A hare or a guineafowl would do nicely.' Wysan thought.

He began to quietly walk down a nearby animal path in the hope of coming across some suitable prey. The path was worn down by the frequent passing of Bush Pigs, which were highly prized by the San. They could be very dangerous and aggressive, especially when piglets were in tow. They also had a very tough hide that often deflected spearpoints. If they didn't attack, they could very quickly disappear through the bush when disturbed.

After a half an hour, he spotted a small group of Black Guineafowl. They hadn't yet noticed him. They walked slowly along, picking at insects with jerky motions, oblivious to his intentions. The largest were about two feet tall and weighed roughly three pounds. When threatened, they could run through the bush or take to the air. Wysan realized that if they flew far away, he would not get a second shot. But, often they would perch in the branches of nearby trees after being disturbed.

So, Wysan slowly and very quietly crept, crouching as much as he could, as he readied his bow. When he managed to get within forty paces of the nearest bird, he pulled back on the string and took careful aim. He let the arrow fly and saw it strike the ground just in front of the bird. Startled, the bird flapped its wings and ran away, not understanding what had caused the commotion. The other bird took notice, but they did not perceive the danger. Wysan stayed where he was and remained motionless, waiting for the birds to settle down.

'Perhaps they think it was a snake. With luck, another will come within shooting range.' Wysan hoped.

After a short while, they seemed completely oblivious once again, so he set another arrow to his bowstring. Soon, another bird crossed the ground in front of him at only thirty paces. Aiming slightly higher, Wysan sent the arrow flying. This time the arrow hit the mark. As the bird flapped wildly, Wysan could see that it was fully pierced by his

arrow. He quickly ran to the bird to claim his prize. Grabbing it by its head, he spun the bird rapidly to break its neck. The other birds took to the wing and flew far away.

Wysan was ecstatic as he triumphantly danced about holding the bird at arms length.

'It works! It works! It works!' He exclaimed gleefully.

By the time Wysan made it back to the camp where he had invented and practiced with the bow and arrow, the sun was almost setting. He had planned to return to the camp where he had left his tribe in the morning by the end of the day, but he had been so engrossed by his discovery that he had lost track of time. So, he set to work on making camp for the night. The first thing he did was to pluck and dress the guineafowl. Then he started a small campfire to roast it. His water bag was empty now, so he dug up an ostrich egg that his people used to store water, and settled down for an enjoyable meal under the stars.

After he took his fill, he wrapped and buried the remainder so as to not attract the animals of the night, especially leopards. Then he spread out an animal fur and laid back to watch the night sky. He kept the fire fed just enough to cast some light around him so that the reflective eyes of animals would give him some warning of their approach. He laid several spears and rocks beside him for protection, and his bow and arrows too. Being alone, he knew that falling asleep was not a safe option. So he kept his mind alert by keeping his eyes open and by thinking intently.

First he thought about his invention, of course. He considered all of its uses, how he might improve upon its design, and how his people would react to it when he revealed it to them in the morning. He imagined how the other hunters would pat him on his back for creating such a useful new weapon. And, he thought about how Dawn would be so proud of him, and how she would smile and look at him with loving admiration in her eyes. She would now that she had made the right choice in marrying him. Perhaps, she would even cry with tears of joy.

After smiling at these thoughts for a while, he turned his attention to the heavens. Unlike the Sun and the Moon, which cast light and so seemed to have some worldly connection and purpose, the stars and milky patches of the night sky were beyond understanding. For ancient peoples, the backdrop of the night sky was a visage that inspired mysticism and mythology.

Wysan held up his bow and arrow above him and could see it silhouetted against the great mystery of the heavens as it flickered in the light of his campfire. As he did so, he noticed a pattern of stars that reminded him of himself holding his bow and arrow out in front of him. It was Orion the hunter. This led him to wonder if there were patterns in the night sky. Just as he had figured out how invent his bow and arrow, perhaps with careful study, the meaning of the great mystery could be unraveled. So, he spent much of the night looking for meaningful patterns amongst the stars, as the Moon crossed from the eastern to the western horizon over the course of the night.

Chapter 4 Og's M.O.

The leader of the apeman tribe that made a home of the savannah adjacent to Wysan's bush was Og. At 7 1/2 feet and 300 pounds, he was the tallest and the most

muscular of his tribe, and was possessed by a quick temper. He was the leader not only because he was the biggest and most viscous of the 30 adult male apeman of his tribe. Og had better than average intelligence for an apeman, and possessed leadership genes, as well. As such, Og was not simply motivated to dominate for pleasure and satisfaction, the emotions that were basis of the behavior of the pecking order that was natural to the social hierarchy of apeman. Motivated by his leadership genes, Og forced his will on *his* tribe with a vengeance. He knew when to threaten, beat, or kill the other adults of his tribe to maintain leadership. Most of the other adults had learned to fear Og enough to know not to anger him.

Since Og had fought for and won leadership of his tribe two years before, killing the twenty-five-year-old leader in a fit of rage over his growing lethargy brought on by old age during a particularly bad drought that had forced the tribe to travel greater distances to the few remaining waterholes. During the crisis, he had been the ideal apeman captain and had proven to be an excellent leader in his early prime, at the age of fifteen. By using brute force to establish total control, and by developing an ordered and logical routine to movement, he had saved and led his tribe to the status of a major force in the region. There was no room for error on the unforgiving stage of nature, and Og was a natural born drill sergeant.

Born of brutality, a force of some 30 adult apemen armed with spears was the most terrifying sight the San knew. Even prides of lions and packs of hyenas respected threats or attacks by apemen, such encounters usually resulting from claims over kills or water rights, or the defense of their kind. Apeman tribes were on par with lions and hyenas as deadly forces on the savanna's of Africa, with clashes regularly occurring. As is the case between lions and hyenas, most confrontations were limited to a show of force rather than actual combat. When encounters turned deadly, the apemen would run towards the predators in groups and thrust their spears into the animals.

Because of the respect the apemen had earned through battles with the two lion prides and hyena packs that held territories that overlapped the tribe's territory, they had learned to give way to the apemen. So, when Og's apemen approached either of the two waterholes that the tribe regularly frequented, the hyenas there gave way and the lions simply tried to ignore them through their midday naps. But, to reduce the chances of conflicts, the apemen usually arrived at high noon when it was simply too hot for the other predators to make much effort. Being fur-covered, the predators preferred mornings, evenings, and the night for the hunt.

During the arid and blistering dry season, which lasted for half of the year, vegetation tended to become dried out. This meant that grazers like antelope and impala, and omnivores like baboons and apemen, were forced to visit the waterholes no less than every other day because they could not acquire enough water from eating the vegetation. This was fine for the lions and hyenas that stayed near the waterholes because they could enjoy near constant proximity to food without having to trek about the savanna, and an easy trot to a leisurely drink.

For meat, apemen would chase anything from herds to single grazers at a time, and gradually wear them down to exhaustion in the midday sun. Wild dogs and hyenas used the same strategy, but could not match the apeman's ability to shed heat, especially near noontime. Numerous sweat glands and mostly hairless bodies effectively powered the apeman cooling system, but required large amounts of water to

run well. In addition, an insulating woolly skull cap shielded the top of the head and brain from direct heating by the sun. Besides making fire and stone tools like crude spear points and knives, the apemen had learned to use the stomachs of the animals they killed as water bags. But, these would be drained after a day or two in the African sun.

The routine Og had established for his tribe was to walk in an oblong circle that crossed a waterhole at either end, arriving at a waterhole every other day around noon. After drinking their fill and filling their water bags, the entire tribe of one hundred individuals would attempt to corral as many grazers as possible from the area around the waterhole. With increasing distance from the waterhole, more and more of the animals would evade the apemen. Eventually, if this went according to plan, just a few animals would be left in the net. At this point, about twenty males, in groups of three or four, would target individual animals and quicken the pace. After a marathon, usually about half of each sub group of males would be successful in bringing down an exhausted animal with a spear thrust or two. They would then carry the animals back to the main body of the tribe to share the spoils.

In between such hunts, the tribe would scour the territory it held for anything else to eat, whether plant or small game. Though both waterholes would always be visited on a given circuit, the paths of the circles would vary as much as possible so as to cover new ground each time, thus ensuring all ground was covered as evenly as possible and no opportunity or resource was wasted. So it was that, one day, Og observed smoke rising from Wyan's bush during sunset as the tribe settled down for the night.

'Nak.' Og called to his second in command. 'See, fire smoke.' Og pointed to the narrow wisp above the setting sun.

'Little bush men, fire smoke.' Nak grunted.

Og thought for a while. 'Og hungry, tribe hungry. Want kill, want eat little bush men. Now, we hunt little bush men. Now, now, now.' Og repeated to the other warriors gathering around Og.

'Eat little bush men.' A few spoke, or the like. The others mostly grunted.

In a few moments, fifteen apemen, with Og at the lead, set off to the bush with spears in hand. Fifteen males remained behind to defend the tribe. The moon was rising in the east behind them, lighting their way. The bush rose before them and then Og saw a clearing that seemed to offer a way into the bush. At the end of the clearing there was a trail that continued in the direction of the fire. Og paused. He did not like the bush. It was easy to get lost in the bush, and there was nothing worth taking the risk to hunt, unless they could surprise a tribe of bushmen. Only once before had his tribe attacked bushmen in this way. Though he was too young to join the hunting party, he remembered the flesh was very good, like apeman.

His stomach growled. 'Og try.' He thought to himself. The others whimpered discontent at the foreboding bush. 'Shut up!' Og hissed under his breath.

Leading the hunting party, he slowly let the bush swallow him as he carefully followed the moonlit trail. More than once, Og thought of turning back. But, every now and then he would pick up the scent of fire on a westerly breeze. Now and then, when he paused, the hunting party would begin to whimper. This made Og very angry so that he would forget his fear.

'Shut up!' he hissed again and then as they continued down the trail.

Twice he had to decide at forks in the trail, and by luck and the moon, he chose the correct westward way. So it was that by the time the moon was in their eyes in the west, near the end of night, they came to a point where they could see a twinkle of fire. They crept closely to the clearing and waited. When Og was ready, in the morning light, they all sprang forward with murder in their eyes.

Wysan's tribe did not stand a chance as they slept here and there around the dying fires. Some had stayed up to tend the fires in the night, but by early morning no one was awake. Most of them heard a great commotion of screams as a waking call, as both apemen and San gave out blood curdling screams. And, before they could find their weapons and gather their senses, they were mortally jabbed with a cruel spear thrust. Only five escaped this fate. This relatively merciful fate.

Of the thirty San, twenty were carried dead, their limp bodies slung over each shoulder of ten of the apemen. Five females of breeding age were kept alive for the moment and, roughly gripped, were lead out of the forest by Og, Nak, Gan, Bung, and Nug, who were otherwise unencumbered to react quickly to threats. The procession was comprised of fifteen excited apemen, nineteen dead San, and five living San women.

The five women were in a state of shocked numbness or terrified to a panic, having just witnessed the massacre of their children and loved ones. Being surrounded and gripped by what for them seemed like the demons of the world who carried their dead, was too much for their minds to bear. Gradually, as they were lead down the trail by the apemen returning to the rest of the tribe waiting on the savanna, they came back to their senses. They looked at the other women among them for what to do.

'Why don't they kill us? I don't want to live anymore.' Sky cried.

'What will they do with us?' Dawn's sister, Dusk, asked, not wanting to believe it could be sex.

'They will make sport of us. Burn us alive to torment us, I know.' Dawn replied in a distant voice.

'We should try to escape to make them kill us, I will not be raped by these demons!' Rain screamed, as she struggled to break away.

Rain managed to find a loose stone exposed on the trail and, hitting the hand of Nug, she broke away. Running a few paces in the direction back to her camp, she threw the rock at the face of Bung, who held her sister, Mist. He too released his grip on the woman, but before the two sisters could escape into the bush, Bung flew into a rage and skewered them both with his spear.

'Ha ha ha ha ha...ah ha ha ha ha.' The apemen who had been near enough in the procession to have seen what transpired broke out into laughter in the manner of their kind, which was a deep, slow, guttural, hacking.

'Bung bloody nose, kill his bush woman and Nug bush woman. Now Nug mad at Bung. Now slip hand Nug and Bung carry two dead mates.' Og said between fits of laughters, looking back from the lead point in front of Nak.

This was followed by even more laughter as apemen further back caught up to the scene. Now Dawn, Dusk, and Sky kept silent the rest of the way to the apeman camp as Og, Nak, and Gan tightened their grip. Although each thought it better to be dead than captives of the demons, they did not have the courage to attempt escape or

otherwise take their own lives. They could only look at each other, tears streaming, in the hope that they would be put out of their misery, or escape by some miracle.

The pace of the apemen on the way back was several times faster than the slow creep that had taken them all night long. By mid-morning, the apemen had returned to the tribe that had awaited them about halfway between the northeast clearing and the waterhole to the east. It was safer to spend the night at least two miles from the waterhole to limit the chances of attacks by lions or hyenas because they tended to keep closer the shady clumps of trees nearer the water. Where the apemen camped, the ground was somewhat flat and was covered by tall grasses and shrubs.

The fifteen males who had stayed behind ran to help with carrying the bodies to the host. There was much hooting and hollering and stamping of feet as the excited tribe salivated uncontrollably. Fires were re-stoked and others were lit for what was to be a great feast. Soon the air was filled with the aromas of roasted San as the one hundred hungry apemen could wait no longer, though many did not anyway. Here and there could be seen an arm or a leg being gnawed upon by the ravenous apemen. The three San women cowered and shut their eyes tight at this sight and all the incoherent jabbering, laughing, poking, and prodding that were directed at them.

Today, in a world without apemen, the nearest parallel to apeman eating man are those occasional incidences of chimpanzee attacks on humans. Although chimpanzee diet is mainly comprised of leaves, fruits, roots, and insects, they will occasionally make raids on troops of monkeys. Baby snatching is their most effective strategy. They will surround a mother in the trees and, closing the noose in a great confusion, one will snatch the baby. The dominant males will then take turns tearing and biting flesh from the baby.

Following a similar strategy, chimpanzees in Tanzania have been documented attacking humans and stealing babies. In one particular case, a mother and her friend were walking from their village to a nearby small town along a wooded trail. A male chimpanzee came crashing out of the bushes and snatched the baby from the mother. The authorities were quickly notified, but when the chimp was located he had already partially consumed the baby. It may seem strange that related families of man, apes, and monkeys can predate each other, but there is no natural law that prohibits cannibalism, nor the predation that eerily resembles cannibalism.

The meat that was not consumed at this first gorging was left to smoke over low fires for the feasting that would continue into the next day. Normally Og would have lead them to the waterhole that day at noon to keep on their routine after a nights stay in that area, but the feast warranted and second nights stay. The banquet of twenty-two San easily yielded around one thousand pounds of meat. By the next morning, more than half the meat had been consumed. The rest of the meat, partly dried by the fires, would be stuffed into leather sacks to be carried with them to be leisurely gnawed while the normal routine of their days resumed once more. They then headed to the waterhole by late morning so as to arrive at noon.

Normally when apeman took San alive, their life expectancy was measured in hours. This was because the brutality and uncooperative nature of apeman lead to them being abused to death soon after capture. But, because Og had claimed Dawn, no other apeman dared to touch her. Besides his natural curiosity, and the sense of possession

and dominance that satisfied him, sex was Og's primary motive for keeping Dawn alive. As such, Og raped Dawn daily during her captivity.

Chapter 5 From Triumph to Tragedy

Early in the morning, the day after inventing the bow and arrow, Wyan headed back to his tribe. He moved at a relatively fast pace because he was anxious about sharing the news. He carried his bow and arrows in one hand and his spear in the other. His gear and the remainder of the guineafowl was in his pack. He was prepared to hunt or defend himself, but he came across no danger nor anything of interest to hunt on the journey back. In about three hours, he neared the clearing where he had left his tribe the morning before.

Just as he entered the clearing from the south, he could see that there had been a great trampling of the surrounding vegetation. Immediately, he was struck by a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach. His instincts kicked in and he quickly crouched low as his adrenaline surged. Listening intently for anything that might explain what had happened, he slowly crept forward into the camp. From behind a tree, he scanned the clearing and could see several small bodies. He surmised that something terrible had transpired while he was away. His people would not leave their dead children like this if they were not forced to flee for their lives. He thought of what predators might be to blame, but could only imagine that a raid by apemen would explain what he was seeing. Another possibility was a raid by another tribe of people.

After waiting and hearing nothing for a time, he concluded that the battle was over and strode to the bodies in the clearing with his bow ready to fire. One by one, he recognized the small children and babies. He counted five. They had all been speared. Scanning the ground for clues, he observed numerous blood pools and countless large footprints. He realized that a troop of apemen must have murdered most or all of his tribe. Dropping to his knees, he buried his head in his arms, as the reality of the tragedy overcame his mind.

The initial shock lasted for several minutes as what had happened sunk in. Then he thought about what the massacre had been like for his people, and what it would mean for himself. Intense emotions of anguish and sorrow grew out of his thoughts of empathy and loss. These were followed by intense emotions of hate, which led to the desire for vengeance. Over and over again, these waves of emotions rocked his mind.

Through the emotional tempest, the thought that they might not all be dead began to grow stronger in his mind. So, he forced himself to get up and search the surrounding bush for signs. It became clear to him that the apemen had entered and departed from the east. He could find no other signs around the rest of the perimeter of the camp. It appeared that no one had escaped in those directions. The only possibility of escape was to the east. So, he walked down the heavily trodden eastward path to search for footprints and other signs. In several places he could make out sets of small footprints amongst the large apeman footprints. It appeared likely to him that some of his tribe had been made captives and had been led down the trail by the apemen at a fast walking pace.

'Those devils captured some of my people.' Wyan spoke aloud.

Needing to know how far away the apemen were, he ran back to the camp to examine the pools of blood and the bodies. He surmised that the raid had taken place that very morning, only a few hours ago. Deciding that he would track them, he took only the bare essentials with him. He emptied his pack of all contents, except for a water bag that he found in the camp and the remainder of the guineafowl. He made up his mind to leave the bow and arrows behind and take only his spear with him for defense.

Not sure what he would do if he caught up to them, he ran down the eastern trail as fast as he could. Before long, he arrived at the place where Rain and Mist had been killed. Wyan could see that two of his people had tried to escape and that one apeman had probably killed both of them, judging by the amount of blood on the ground. Continuing eastward, he found more small footprints.

'Some still live, perhaps.' Wyan said, retaining some hope.

So, he began to run once again. After another hour of running, he reached the edge of the bush. He could see the eastward path the troop of apemen had taken across the savanna. He shielded his eyes from the sun and strained to see some sign on the horizon. He guessed that they were still some two hours ahead of him. If they had continued at their pace, he would not be near enough to see them. But, just at the edge of sight, Wyan could make out something on the horizon through the shimmering mirage of the heated airs.

'This will be dangerous, but I have to know.' Wyan told himself.

Keeping low and taking advantage of cover where he could find it, Wyan began a stealthy trek across the savanna. After a half an hour, he was close enough to make out individual apemen. Seeing the smoke from several fires, he concluded that they had made camp and were not likely to move for some time.

'Fires at midday? That can only mean one thing.' He realized, hanging his head.

He so close now that they would certainly see him if he stood up.

'If they see me, I'll be dead. That wouldn't do anyone any good. I'll have to crawl on my stomach from here. I'll need the stealth of a cat.' Wyan said to himself as he clutched the cheetah canine hanging from his neck.

Slowly working his way forward, he carefully kept to lower ground and avoided disturbing tall patches of grasses that might give him away. After about an hour, he decided that he was as near as he dared to approach them. At a distance of about three hundred yards, he observed all that he could from his vantage point. Most of the apemen were sitting, but occasionally one would get up and walk to a fire, carrying bunches of grass to feed it. One of them, after doing this, picked up something else and brought it to its mouth. Wyan could just make out the fingers of a hand as the apeman, holding the arm by the wrist, tore away at the forearm with its teeth as if it were a drumstick.

At that moment, a girl that Wyan recognized, got up and began to run. It was Dawn! Wyan was seized by an intense desire to come to her rescue, but only barely managed to contain himself. They would only kill him right in front of Dawn, after all. Then, a really big apeman got up and ran her down. He could see him beating Dawn with his fists. It then picked her up and carried her back to the place where she had been. It then threw her down hard. This was followed by a bout of apeman laughter.

'I want to kill them all. I want to kill them all. I want to kill them all.' Wysan cried in a hoarse whisper, over and over again, as he buried his face in the sand.

Wysan racked his mind as he tried to think of something that he might do to rescue Dawn. He thought of sneaking into their camp under the cover of darkness. So, after backing off a few hundred yards, he waited for the sun to set. The waiting was the most tormenting time that Wysan ever knew, but he could not bring himself to leave.

When the sun had finally set and the stars began to come out, Wysan crept to the apeman camp once again. The camp was lit by the twinkling light of the fires. Several sentries were guarding the perimeter of the camp against possible attacks by lions and hyenas. He knew that a near full moon would rise in the east before long.

'They will see me in the moonlight, I'm sure. And, I'll have to escape with Dawn, if I can even get to her. Its now or never.' Wysan told himself.

Through a gap in the sentries, Wysan crawled to where he thought he had last seen Dawn. He could hear apemen snoring here and there as he crawled to the center of their camp. With great luck, he reached a point where he could just make out a small dark shape amongst other larger ones on the ground, not too far from a fire.

'That could be Dawn.' He thought to himself.

Risking everything, he crawled to the small shape and shook her gently as he covered her mouth. But, he realized too late that the mouth did not feel right. It protruded more than a human mouth. His doubts were confirmed when the adolescent female apeman screamed. Then, shapes begin to rise all around him.

'Run! Run! Run!' Wysan yelled, hoping that Dawn and the others might escape in the confusion.

Wysan, realizing that there was nothing more that he could do, ran out from the center of the camp with all of his speed. He thought to stop once he got clear and try to make out if any of his tribe had managed to escape. But, he soon realized that he was being followed. Apparently, one of the sentries had spotted him in the dark and was closing on him fast. When the heavy steps grew alarmingly close, he turned and threw his spear with all his might at the silhouette of the apeman. It must have hit the apeman in a vital spot, because it fell at Wysan's feet and moved no more.

Wysan yanked his spear from the apeman and continued to run away. After about a hundred yards, Wysan stopped and turned. He knelt to the ground and tried to catch his breath. The apemen were in a raucous. Through the din of shouts and barks, he listened for a voice that he might recognize.

'Wysan! Help us!' Dawn screamed.

Wysan felt that a knife had pierced his heart at the sound of her desperate cry. Her voice seemed to have come from the center of the camp. Dawn, at least had not escaped.

Soon, many apemen were scouting the camp's surroundings for signs of an enemy. Wysan faced the fact that there was nothing more that he could do for now. Tearing himself away, he jogged from the scene with the heaviest of hearts.

Chapter 6 Inner Space

By morning, walking almost aimlessly, he arrived back at the camp of the massacre. He then set himself to the task of burying the dead. After saying prayers in the manner of his kind, he gathered all of his tribes scattered belongings into a pile and began to sort through them. He put useful things to one side and used the rest to create a kind of shrine or memorial.

'I cannot give up on rescuing Dawn and the others. But, even with the bow I would have no chance alone, unless by another game of stealth. But, they'll be on the lookout for me now. I can't try that again.' Wyan voiced his thoughts as he arranged the personal items of his people.

'I must try to arm volunteers of my kin to the southeast and elsewhere with my weapon and persuade them to make war on the apeman tribe. But to persuade as many men as possible to go on this campaign, they will need to be assured of their loved one's safety while they are away. With so many young men gone, their families would be more vulnerable to attack by animals.' Wyan continued, as he set his mind to solving this problem.

'My mind is so clouded with the thoughts of what my people, my family, and especially Dawn, whom I cannot get out of I mind. What they all must have suffered at the hands of the demons, and what suffering continues for Dawn and the others.' He said, as he began to sob.

To escape the pain, Wyan tries various remedies of his people and discovers there is one that quells the madness that has taken over his mind.

'Now I can think without distraction. I believe the answer lies in wood. There is magic in wood that I have learned of. I think there is more that I can yet discover.' Wyan said, as he refocused his thinking.

'In my minds eye I can vaguely see things made of sticks. The bow seemed so amazing at first, but now I can "see" other possibilities...many sticks...many strings. I will practice with smaller sticks first. Like how I discovered the bow when I was trying to figure out how to make Dawn's wind spirit. This will be like exploring the unknown, like the unknown of the heavens.' Wyan said, smiling.

In his minds eye, Wyan resolves a vision. It is a never before imagined concept. A gigantic invention made of wood and string that many people can fit inside of.

'So many parts. A world inside. Safety from leopards. If covered with skins it would even provide safety from the apeman demons, for a time.' Wyan said, with a far away look in his eyes.

Wyan begins with a collection of sticks of different sizes ranging in length from 4 to 12 inches, and a spool of string the ladies make and use to sew cloths. First he tries tying several into hoops and then, through experimentation, discovers that by tying together hoops of the same size he can arrange them in such a way to make a hollow ball.

'The space inside is what I'm after. I'm on to something! What could I use this thing for? A toy? Art? I want to put an animal inside. But...I mean to keep animals out? This can do both, I guess.' Wyan said, as he grinned about his discovery of the cage.

In the bush the leopard was the cat to be most feared. Lions and cheetah preferred more open ground, but leopards stayed near and hunted wooded territories

that included the San's natural habitat. More San were taken by leopards than by apeman, and so the San had a healthy respect for them. On rare occasions, the San would stumble on the cubs of leopards and they would sometimes play with them before killing and eating them, their skins welcomed additions to their attire.

Wysan considered the possibility of keeping a leopard confined to a cage, but realized that they were simply too dangerous, even as adolescents, to be practical pets. Then he remembered the caracal. It was a much smaller cat, about the size of a bobcat. Caracals have the coloration and physique of pint-sized mountain lions with huge tufted ears. Their life style is similar to the serval, taking mice, hares, and being able to leap up to catch birds in flight. They can even ambush smaller gazelle.

'Yes, that would be some trick. To raise a caracal from kitten to adult.' Wysan mused.

Caracal kittens were usually killed when stumbled upon, that is when children did not beg to play with them. But, the kittens could not be watched forever, and predators would normally get to them if left tied to trees if no one was about to defend a camp. That's why the San seldom tried to keep animals that way. It just wasn't logical to risk losing a perfectly fine skin.

'With a cage, we could put them inside while we foraged and they would be safe when left unguarded. The children will love it. I will build one.' Wysan giggled.

Then he thought about Dawn and how he wished he could have a normal life raising children with her.

'But perhaps, that is not now my fate.' He resigned.

Turning his attention back to the task at hand, Wysan started on a larger cage. This time he collected branches about two to three feet in length. The ball shape did not work on these stiffer branches. Tying the ends of the branches together, the first shape he stumbled upon was that of a cube. Wysan was fascinated by the regular shape of the cube and felt that it was somehow akin to a perfect circle, though he could not explain it. Wysan then tied other branches to the cube until the openings were too small for a kitten to escape. Pleased with himself, Wysan marveled at his invention and its peculiar form.

'The space inside is like nothing I've ever seen before.' He thought out loud. But, how shall I put the kitten in and take it out again? I could untie a branch or two...yes that would work. But what if I removed one side? Yes, I've got to try that.' He decided.

Carefully untying some of the cords at one side of his cube, Wysan found that he could swing that whole side out of the way as if it were on hinges.

'So the whole contraption I'll call a cage, and this swinging part I'll call a door.' Wysan said as he played with his invention for some time while imagining the possibilities.

After constructing a cage large enough to hold a caracal kitten, Wysan connected another dot. Snares had been used by some of his friends before the apemen raided his tribe. The advantage of a snare is that you don't have to actively hunt or even be around to catch prey. But, like keeping an animal tied to a tree, it was just as likely as not that your catch would end up in another animal's mouth before you returned to check your snares.

'But, how can I make the cage into a kind of snare?' he asked himself as he furrowed his brow.

He thought that he might be able to modify the cage to make a trap.

'I need to trap the animal in the cage somehow, A door that could close behind the animal after it enters would do the trick. A trap door! But, how to devise? Hmm, I'll need to play around with that to figure it out.' He suggested to himself.

Wysan figured that he could make a trap door that swung down from the outside and locked itself somehow after an animal entered the cage, but he decided to try a trap door that swung down from the inside instead. This type of trap door could be prevented from swinging outwards by the frame of the cage. By trial and error, he found a way to run a string from the door of his cage so that when an animal grabbed a bit of food tied to the other end of the string, the force of pulling the string would release a stick that held the trap door open. But, to make room for the animal, the cube would not work right for this type of trap door because it swung inward. He then made a longer cage with a rectangular shape to make more room for the trap door to swing down. Once it swung down, the animal would not be able to push open the door and it would be trapped.

'That should work. I shall call this type of cage a cage trap.' Wysan spoke out loud.

'Now, for something large enough for people to sleep inside. I'll just have to make it bigger.' Wysan pondered, clutched the tooth hanging around his neck without knowing why.

Unable to control his enthusiasm, Wysan began collecting large branches of wood some 6 feet in length in order to make a cage large enough for people. By the time he had a working model, the sun was setting, casting red light on his glorious creation. Wysan strode around the cage and then finally walked inside and closed the door behind him.

'Now I'm in a cage.' He said, laughing.

Chapter 7 King Bamasan

When Wysan was ready to show his new inventions to King Bamasan, the leader of the San that lived in the bush to the southeast, he traveled to what was their capital village. The Bamasan's bush was about fifteen by twenty miles wide. Upon entering the village, Wysan set about building the King a new abode, the likes of which had never been seen before. Wysan wanted to impress the King so as to win his favor. He also wanted to convince Bamasan that the bow and arrow would give them a great enough weapons advantage to win a war against the apemen.

Wysan debated with King Bamasan as to the strategies they might implement to destroy Og's tribe and rescue Dawn, that is, if she still lived. War was not a new concept to the San. There had been conflict among the San before, however, no attack had ever been launched on an entire apeman tribe before. So, despite the gifts of the bow and arrow, the hut, and the trap that Wysan had bestowed upon the King's people, there was still considerable (and understandable) trepidation to on the part King Bamasan yet to overcome.

While smoking the sacred bud with the King, Wysan recalled a story about a mother cheetah that he had witnessed some months before while under his favorite acacia tree. He had seen the mother and her three cubs from a distance and had been

quite entertained by their interaction and playfulness. It surprised Wysan how much they seemed like San children playing under the watchful eye of an elder. But, then something alarming happened.

An adult male lion had stridden into view. What's more, the lion seemed to have spotted the mother and her cubs. He had heard of accounts of lions killing other cats, including even their own kind. For this reason, it was believed among many San that male lions killed merely for the pleasure of it. So, it surprised Wysan when the mother only watched the lion approaching until he was no more than 50 yards away. The lion was walking slowly, so Wysan had hoped that he was not bent on killing the cubs as he had grown rather fond of them.

Then something very interesting occurred. The mother stood up and began walking toward the lion, apparently to challenge him. Wysan thought her very brave indeed, but he feared it would be over in an instant when the lion got hold of her. But, as the lion responded, the mother cheetah began to limp sideways at a right angle to the direction the lion had been striding and away from her cubs. Now Wysan guessed at her strategy as he silently stared, holding his breath. 'Yes. Take the bait. Please!' he whispered.

To his relief, the lion stopped in his tracks, apparently trying to make sense of the strange circumstances. He gazed from the mother and back to the cubs which were now scrambling to get out of harms way in a sort of confused and aimless way. The mother feigned a challenge once again in between warning chirps to her cubs. This went on for what seemed an eternity to Wysan, while the cubs were still no more than a few seconds from certain death. At last, the lion took the bait. After a few starts and stops, the lion chased the mother in a less than determined way, and then finally gave up. After the lion wandered off, the mother cheetah rejoined her cubs.

'A very interesting tale, Wysan. But, what lesson does your story have for our war on the apemen that stole Dawn and massacred your tribe?' Bamasan asked.

'I believe that, like lions, apemen are dangerous, but not so smart. I think we might be able to trick the apemen into doing something that would be to our advantage.' Wysan explained.

'Hmm, that is interesting. Yes, I think you are right about apemen being less intelligent than we are. What do you propose?' asked Bamasan, now intrigued.

'I think we might be able to lure the apemen into a kind of trap. We know that they will attack us if we are in small numbers. And, we also know that they will not usually attack us in the bush if we are well defended and aware of them. I suggest that we, or rather a few of us, cross their path near some dense bush, and that these few lure them into a trap. In the bush, we can make a small clearing where many of us can hide. Then, when the apemen are all inside the clearing, we can assail the apemen from all directions.' Wysan laid out his plan.

'That is a very good idea, Wysan. But, how will we time our meeting with the apemen?' Bamasan asked, seeming impressed.

'Well, I was thinking that like prides of lions, apemen tend to cover the same territory over and over again. Just like we San tend to inhabit and defend and occupy the same territories, apemen become a little predictable in their roaming. They must go to a waterhole almost daily, for instance, and in the dry season, as we are now in, this means they must cross over the same stretch of land between your kingdom the bush

of my people.' Wysan explained, grimacing a little at the thought of the extermination of his tribe.

'So you think we might set a kind of trap in a part of the bush near to the apemen use to reach the watering hole?' Bamasan asked.

'Yes, Bamasan. And, as the rightful inheritor of my land, I would grant you and your people all rights to it if you would commit some of your warriors to this battle.' Wysan answered.

Bamasan smiled. Even though he knew that gaining rights to the bush of Wysan's tribe would be a more complicated process involving negotiations with neighboring tribes in the region, he was grateful that Wysan appreciated the enormity of the request he was making of him. And, he thought that a land grant by Wysan, whose status was rising with the impression his gifts were making on his people, might bring to bear considerable weight in future negotiations. In fact, if they should pull off this extermination of the apemen, then Bamasan's claim on Wysan's bush might become nearly incontestable.

Bamasan weighed in his mind the pro and cons of Wysan's plans. At worst he could lose many warriors, and perhaps even his own life in the battle. But, what would be gained would be a far safer world for his people, the chance to more safely expand into new territory, the expansion of his kingdom, and the fame and glory winning would bring to his rule. All the San would know of the legendary feats of Wysan the inventor, and Great Warrior King Bamasan.

'Alright, Wysan. Where do you propose we make this trap?' Bamasan asked, returning from the fantasy forming in his mind.

Wysan launched right into it. 'I have observed the savanna for many years and I have noticed patterns. In past years I've noticed that the apemen have been forced to visit the waterhole to the north of your kingdom that connects the same watercourse my tribe and your tribes have hunted and fished in past wet seasons. While making observations from the fringes of my bush, I have observed this. They come from the west and cross near to the northern expanse of my bush. It is why we had feared camping so close to the northern expanse. While tracking the raiding party, I discovered that it was at a gap in the northeast side of the bush, where there is a long narrow clearing that ends in a trail, that the raid that they had launched against my people began. They had also used this gap when they left the bush with Dawn and the others.

I think that it would not be too difficult to entice them to attempt the very same sort of raid again if it appears to them that a few survivors have foolishly wandered outside the bush. I hate to think it, but they completely destroyed my tribe, and as far as I could tell without a single loss of their own. They will feel emboldened, I think, and would see these few as easy pickings after the slaughter of our tribe. Once inside of the trap, they could be attacked from all sides.' Wysan finished.

Impressed a little at Wysan's understanding of the situation, his observational history, and his tracking abilities, Bamasan asked, 'What is the smallest number of men you think we would need as bait to entice the apemen?'

Encouraged and delighted at Bamasan's use of "we", and his apparent willingness to consider the undertaking, Wysan answered, 'I would ask that you risk no more than three or four, because if the runners misjudge their timing and the apemen overtake them, they won't stand a chance on the savanna. If that happened, we could

attack them on the savanna, but we would lose the advantage of surprise and the encirclement the trap would give us.'

'Yes. I agree. And how large a force would we need to man the trap itself, do you suppose?' Bamasa asked, now with a more concerned expression on his face than before. 'Do you know how many apemen were on the raid that killed your people?'

'I counted a force of about fifteen that entered, although the number of apeman warriors in the tribe as a whole was about fifteen stronger. If we entice the entire tribe at such a close distance, we might expect that a majority of the warriors would attack. So, I would say that you should commit twice as many men as they have warriors, Bamasan. We must completely overwhelm them. They must have no chance of winning.' Wyan boldly answered.

At this, Bamasan furrowed his brow. After a few moments he replied, 'I have about one hundred men in total that I can call together, but I would not leave the women and children undefended. And, if things go bad and we are annihilated, who will carry on?' Not expecting Wyan to reply at this, Bamasan declared, 'I will commit no more than half of my men, but I will go to command the war party myself. Is that good enough, Wyan?'

'You are wise and brave, King Bamasan. My heart soars at your words!' Wyan passed the pipe back to the King.

Bamasan inhaled deeply, 'That leaves us the question of who will be the bait, or the runners as you put it. I think I know who might be the most trustworthy among my people, certainly the bravest. Three men, actually. Have you heard of "The Three", Wyan?' Bamasan asked with a quirky smile on his face.

'As a matter of fact, I have. Are they not the three inseparable triplets that people have spoken of in tale?' Wyan asked.

'One and the same. Or, should I say three and the same?' Bamasan laughed. 'As a matter of fact, you remind me of them. They are the adventurous sort. Always going off to visit distant relatives, or to see what's on the other side.' Bamasan continued, gesturing with a sweep of his hand. 'Why don't we ask them. Anyway, I think you should meet them.'

Chapter 8 The Three

Bamasan got up and stepped outside the hut that Wyan had constructed for the him. 'Where are the three?' He called out.

In response, Wyan could hear several calls go out. 'The Three, The Three, where are The Three? The King want's The Three.' After several minutes, Wyan could hear footsteps approaching.

'We are here.' Three voices rang out, in near unison, followed by laughter. It was The Three. 'Of course we are here.' One voice answered. 'Yes, where else would we be?' Said another. 'We came to learn of the new inventions everyone is speaking of. What on earth is that mess of branches, Bamasan? Is it a stockpile for the miraculous bow and arrow everyone is talking about?'

The King was very fond of his royal hut, but he laughed at the joke anyway.

'It is better than that Omzi.' Replied Bamasan. 'Step this way and be prepared for a second amazement of Wysan the inventor.'

The wooden framework of the hut, which was a 10-foot square by 5 feet tall, had a roof that tapered up to a circular opening five feet above the top of the walls. The walls and roof had been covered with a mix of skins and grasses such that it was not possible to see inside, except through the two doors set at opposite ends of the structure from east to west. As Wysan stood up, The Three entered the hut, followed by the King. For a long moment, while their six eyes adjusted to the dimness of the hut, Wysan studied the astonished faces of The Three in the light of the small fire at the center of the hut.

'We have traveled far and wide and have seen many strange things.' Alzi managed, 'But we have never seen things as we have seen today. What do you call this contraption?'

'I call it a hut.' Wysan answered. 'It is a much larger version of something I call a cage, which is for holding live animals, or a trap for catching them.' Wysan lifted up his first model of a trap, which lay near the wall of the hut.

'The bow and arrow, the hut, the cage and the trap are the great inventions of Wysan'. The King introduced The Three, 'This is the eldest, Alzi, the second, Bezi, and the youngest, Omzi.'

The Three were born only minutes apart, but the ages of each were respected as would be with any brothers. Each of The Three bumped Wysan's forearm with theirs and bowed in turn, to which Wysan bowed in return. Wysan may have earned considerable respect for his inventiveness, but for Wysan, The Three were a living legend.

'Before we begin discussions, I would like to pass the sacred bud around. Are any of you hungry or thirsty?' The King asked as he offered three adorned ostrich eggs, which had been carefully repurposed as a vessel, and were now filled with a flavored and mildly alcoholic beverage. There was also a large shallow bowl made of woven grasses that contained nuts, fruits, and dried meats. The king was very proud of his luxurious possessions.

The Three ate, drank and smoked until they were content, while Bamasan and Wysan told them of all that they had discussed up to that point. However, neither of them wanted to ask The Three if they would like to be the bait or runners. As it turned out, The Three came to the conclusion that they would be most suited to the task as most San men would be too inexperienced and indeed too terrified to play a game of cat and mouse with a tribe of apemen.

'Wysan, we saw an amazing thing at the waterhole you speak of last dry season. As usual, the herding animals were forced to stay within a couple of miles of the hole as it is the only source of water for many miles around. A pair of wild dogs had made a kill on an impala and had gotten part way through it when two hyenas muscled them out of it. We thought that would be the end of it as it often goes that way. But, just then a jackal showed up and, unable to get near enough for a bite, it began to call out. Jackals are lone hunters and scavengers so we wondered at why it had started calling.' Alzi finished and looked at Bezi.

'Soon after, two lionesses came trotting in, apparently alerted to the kill by the jackal's calls. The lions chased off the pair of hyenas and began to dine, with the jackal

still waiting for a chance. But it did not end there. The hyenas began to whimper away and soon reinforcements arrived. The lionesses decided to retreat when the first two, and three more hyenas, entered the scene. It was during this confused scrambling of dogs, hyenas, and lions that the jackal made its move. It darted in and grabbed and ran off with a bone holding some meat.' Bezi finished, looking at Omzi.

'So you see, it is possible for a smaller and weaker animal to use cunning to gain an advantage. So, it seems that, like the cheetah in your story, the jackal must use its wits to survive. We know we are smarter than apemen, so we must do the same, I think, if we wish to survive.' Omzi finished, making the point.

'I am glad that you all see this. I fear and hate the apemen more than anything in this world, and not just since my people were massacred by them. It seems to me that they are part animal and part man. They are more dangerous to us than leopards and not just because of their pack behavior, but because they can think just well enough to make fools of us when we drop our guard. We must use our wits to defeat them.' Wyan responded.

'We know them well and we know you are right, Wyan.' Alzi agreed. 'What is worse is that they, unlike animals, seem to take what we would call a sick pleasure in causing pain and suffering, like bad children. Only, they are monsters by comparison. For these reasons we have both feared and studied apeman the most of all creatures on our journeys. I hate to tell you this Wyan, but we have seen San and apemen together more than once.'

'What! When? How?' Wyan asked.

Chapter 9 The Scouts

After saying their goodbyes and receiving many parting gifts and wishes for good luck, Wyan and The Three set out the following morning for Wyan's bush. They each carried with them packs enough to sustain them for a week, a bow and quiver containing twenty bone tipped arrows and a long and sturdy spear. They had hopes of reaching the northeast clearing the apemen had used on the raid by early afternoon, a trek of some twenty miles as the crow flies from Bamasan's main encampment, where they had spent the last week making plans with the King and practicing the bow and arrows with the warriors. From the clearing they would use trails that only Wyan knew of to bring them to the northern most part of Wyan's bush.

As the four of them exited the realm of Bamasan, they turned in a final farewell and waved goodbye to the King and his entourage which had accompanied them to the border of the bush. They would be expected back in one week if things went according to plan. If they were not back within two weeks, King Bamasan would abandon all plans for war with the apemen and Wyan's bush would be considered unsafe for occupation by the San.

The sun was shining on their backs as they crossed the savanna heading in a northwest direction. Wyan's intention was to reach the acacia tree where he had the insight for the bow and arrow and where he narrowly escaped losing his life by cheetahs. He always kept the cheetah's tooth around his neck, tied with a leather thong. It was a reminder of both the best and worst that life had to offer, as well as a great

conversation piece. He loved the remarkable, speedy cats and so loved the opportunity to share his enthusiasm for them with anyone who shared the same sense of awe of cheetahs.

When they reached the acacia tree, which was about half the distance to the northeast clearing from where they had left Bamasan's realm, or five miles. It was near to noon. They decided to have lunch and so they flung their packs to the ground. As they munched on a variety of dried foods, Wysan recounted his tale once again. This time he was able to actually point to where the cheetahs came from, where the standoff took place, and where he entered the bush.

'This must truly be a special place, Wysan for you two have two great strokes of luck. Discovering the bow and arrow, and surviving an attack by a cheetah, while alone!' Bezi remarked.

'Yes, I think you should carve a token into this tree as an acknowledgment to the powers that be.' Suggested Omzi.

'I agree that you should carve something.' Offered the practical elder Alzi. 'People may visit this tree in the future to pay homage to your discovery, and we can also use this tree as a marker to help our people to find their way.'

Wysan thought for a few moments as he strode around the tree. He walked to the side of the tree he had been facing when he had his epiphany. Without speaking he drew out his knife and began to carve. Some moments later he stepped back and all four of the scouts surveyed the art of Wysan. He had carved a bow and arrow with the arrow ready to be fired. Below this was an etching of a long and slender cat, running in the direction the arrow was pointing, which, not incidentally, was in the direction that the standoff took place. "I think the speed of the cheetah reflects the speed of the arrow. Now that I think of it, perhaps the two are related in some way." Wysan trailed off.

They all looked at each other. 'You were being tested, Wysan. I'm sure of it.' Bezi exclaimed. 'If you had not survived the test, the discovery would have been lost with you!' The other two brothers nodded in agreement. With that, The Three knelt before the carving and, bowing and clutching the token hanging around their necks, gave a silent prayer to the powers that be, as was the custom of the King's people. Not sure if he should, Wysan followed suit.

After a few moments, all four of them grinned at each other. 'Let's make a pact.' Wysan suggested. 'You realize that the bow and arrow could be the tool we need to defeat the apemen. And, you realize that what we do with it and with our lives, will determine just how much it matters to our people. I believe we, not just I alone, the four of us, and Bamasan, have been selected by fate, or the powers that be, to be the players in what could be a turning point for the San. I will give my life to this cause. Will you, Alzi, Bezi, and Omzi make this pact with me? To give everything to it. To go to any place and do whatever we are called to do in the cause of exterminating apemen?'

The four took each other forearms, and in a circle, they then made this proclamation: 'To the end of our days, we will be forever committed to the destruction of apemen, wherever we must go and whatever we must do.' Then they hooted deeply four times to express their manhood, to throw their emotion into it, and to affirm their determination and commitment to the cause. At this, Wysan could not resist looking for cheetahs on the horizon.

'Now we must decide which way to go from here.' Said Wysan. 'It's another five miles to the northeast clearing. Entering the bush from here and using the trails I know would be the safest route, but it would take longer than if we followed the perimeter of the bush northward from here. However, besides the risk of running into savanna predators, we might attract the attention of the apeman tribe before we are ready.'

'Then let us not take unnecessary risks with all that is at stake. We shall take the longer road.' Alzi decided.

Wysan lead the way, pointing out the location of the stand off with the two cheetahs and where he picked up the canine, as they began following the same path he had taken some two weeks earlier, on the way to the most traumatic discovery of his life. A few paces more and they entered the bush.

Because the paths and animal tracks of the bush wound about rather randomly, it was a matter of taking the right fork when they came to them. Sometimes they would be headed mostly westward, at other times to the north, but gradually they made their way to the northwest, to the campsite where the raid had taken place. The northeast gap and clearing, where the apemen had entered the bush on the raid was about two miles east of the raid site itself. Wysan was leading them to the raid site so that The Three could learn what they might find of the tracks and other signs the apemen may have left behind.

They reached the raid site, some eight miles of trail after entering Wysan's bush, as the sun was sinking in the west. They still had couple of hours or so before she would set below the horizon, a sight invisible from denser bush. The raid site was located roughly equally in distance, about three miles, to the borders of the bush in the western and northern direction. To the clearing in the east the distance to the border was only two miles. To the south, the border was ten miles away, the bush having a roughly rectangular shape of thirteen by six miles, with the long side oriented north-south.

'This is where I found them'. Said Wysan, solemnly. 'That is, what was left of the six they had not carried away.' They were all quiet for some time.

'We feel your pain, Wysan.' Omzi managed. 'We will avenge the dead...and the living.'

They scanned the ground while the light lasted. After surveying all the signs that could be made out, they came together at the graves of the seven that had been mercilessly and savagely murdered. After offering prayers for the dead, they began to discuss what the signs meant.

'It seems to me that the apemen must have entered the bush in the dead of night. Two weeks ago it would have been full moon. Using the light of the Great Owl (a common reference to the moon among Bamasan's people) they crept up to the campsite your tribe had chosen to use on that night. They may have been guided by the light of the fires that had been lit. Given that none of your tribe escaped, I would guess that the apemen waited until first light to launch their attack.' Alzi surmised.

'Otherwise, if it had been darker, you would expect many of your people to have escaped immediate capture. And, once in the bush, they would have easily evaded the apemen.' Bezi added.

Following that line of reasoning, Omzi continued. 'It is likely that nearly all were soon killed, otherwise the apemen could not control the thirty that were here.'

‘Yes, I had hoped that was the case.’ Wysan added, feeling relieved to know that the suffering was sort lived for most of his tribe. ‘After following the tracks toward the clearing for some distance, I could see that at least five were forced to walk from the site and back in the direction the apemen came. But by the time they reached the savanna, only three still remained alive. It seems that two attempted to escape the apemen, or were simply killed. I believe this because I found a place about halfway to the clearing where there was more blood spilled.’

‘And you said you saw only two alive, Dawn and her sister, as they were heading east, back toward the waterhole?’

Wysan had to clench his jaw at this. ‘It was ten days ago now since I crept up in the early morning moonlight to the apeman camp, about two miles from the bush, east of where we stand. It’s been almost two weeks since the raid, as I figure it. It was the hardest thing I’ve ever had to do. To leave them there, with them, in that torment. But, what else could I...’ Wysan began to sob.

Omzi hugged Wysan, and they all shed tears on the gravesite. ‘There is still hope, Wysan.’ Alzi attempted to console.

After a time, as the sun was on the horizon and the sky was turning red, the four walked south from the raid site, led by Wysan, to find a safer location to make camp. Wysan and the others were relieved to put the sadness behind them a little as their minds turned to the ‘morrow and the real first stage of their quest.

Chapter 10 A Pattern Emerges

The goal of Wysan and The Three had been to locate and observe the apeman tribe undetected and from a safe distance in order to ascertain their movements. For the trap to be set and baited, Bamasan would need to know when the apeman tribe would be near to the northeast gap that Wysan had spoken of a few days in advance so as to allow time to muster the warriors and travel the day’s march. Also, although he trusted Wysan to a point, the King was not about to put himself and forty of his warriors at risk without the confirmation of The Three of the intelligence gathered.

So, the day after the four of them arrived at the raid site, they worked their way, again led by Wysan, to the northern most fringes of the bush. From there they could scan the horizons for the telltale signs of a large tribe of apemen by the dust they would kick up, especially during the dry season. So, by luck it was that on the fourteenth day since the raid, Og led his tribe toward the camp zone between the northeast gap and the water hole. It was a little in the afternoon when the tribe skirted the north end of the bush on their way to camp. The next day they would reach the water hole by noon.

‘This is great luck.’ Wysan started upon seeing the tribe come into view in the northwest direction. ‘I feared we might have to wait days for them to come back the way, if at all.’

Or, worse, be forced to travel over the savanna to locate them.’ Alzi added.

I only wish they would come near enough so that we could see if Dawn and Dusk are still alive as I did the time I saw them before. I think I might try to get close enough again.’ Wysan said.

‘Should we go with him if he goes?’ Bezi asked Alzi.

After thinking a moment, Alzi answered, 'If we go we must head north now as to get a little closer without catching their eye. Still we should not get too close. We can't risk that.'

'We will stay low, and crawl where there is little cover. We can get within a quarter a mile of their path that way. Then we can count how many there are and if the girls are still with them.' Omzi suggested.

'OK, but no closer or we'll be tonight's main course.' With that, Alzi led the way, keeping low.

After about an hour of carefully working their way north they stopped and, finding good cover that allowed them to see yet not be seen, they watched the passing tribe of apemen.

The apemen were spread out over a swath some 500 yards in the direction of travel, by 200 or 300 yards wide, foraging as they walked along. Occasionally, one or two would hoot out when a good patch of berries or seeds was stumbled over. Others would converge on them until the resource was exhausted. Then turning, they would get back on track with the rest of the procession.

At one point, one particularly hideous apeman alerted the tribe to a patch of seeds that was no more than one hundred yards from where the men were hiding. Finally, when all the apemen had their backs to the four hiding in the grass and were moving away, the men let out a sigh of relief, as they released the tension in their bows.

'That's what I was afraid of.' Alzi exclaimed, 'Lets not let that happen again, please!'

The men compared notes and came to more or less to the same count, about one hundred apemen, thirty or so adult males, forty adult females, and the rest adolescents and children either being carried or running about in small sub packs. As for Dawn and Dusk, they could be seen near the front of the procession with the two largest apemen nearby. Wyasan could only guess that they had claimed his wife and her sister as mates.

'The two biggest led the pack. I guess that's the way with them. I guess that's why the women are still alive.' Bezi trailed off, not knowing how to broach the subject of species interbreeding.

'I'd rather not talk about it.' Is all Wyasan said.

They made their way back to the bush after it was completely safe to do so. They made a small camp without fire in the northern fringes in case the apemen attempted another raid via the northeast gap and clearing that led to the trail. The Three spent the evening talking solemnly, as little could be gotten out of Wyasan.

In the early morning they headed east to find out where the apemen had camped. The information gathered would be compared to the Wyasan's recollections of the previous treks and campsites of the apemen to help pin down their habits and routines with regard to movements. This intelligence was critical if they were to successfully time baiting them on some future day.

Three days later, the pattern repeated. This time the apemen came little closer to the northern fringes so that the four men dared not leave the bush. Again, the women were seen alive at the front of the pack.

'OK, I believe we can assume that the apemen repeat the same migration around their territory on a three-day cycle. But we need to know the best location and time of

day to bait them not far from the northeast gap.' Alzi said. The other simply nodded. 'I think we should risk heading to the gap now to watch them.'

It was mid-to-late afternoon when the apeman tribe passed nearest to the gap and to the northeast as they rounded the bend of the outskirts of the bush. In another hour or two they would reach their camping zone about two miles to the east. They could make a best guess then that it would be three days, and again in six days hence, that the apemen would be in position. The Three would then leave the forest as the apemen approached from the west northwest. When the apeman tribe was due north of The Three, they would make sure the apemen saw them. If the apemen gave chase, they would run as fast as they could to the gap with the apemen close on their heels. Then Bamasan's warriors would attack them from both sides where the gap pinched into a narrow clearing.

Chapter 11 The Mustering of the San

Upon returning to the realm of Bamasan the following afternoon, the spirits of the four men had become lighter. They returned via the same paths that they had trod, except that they turned south immediately upon reaching the first fork in the trail west of the clearing. The Three dwelt not on the perilous task that awaited them, but instead thought of the many adventures they had enjoyed and how the bow and arrow would afford them the opportunity to take part in what was promising to be their greatest adventure of all. They imagined traveling abroad to distant relatives and telling the tales of the first known war on the apemen. A war they were confident they could now win.

They stopped once again to pray, and give thanks to the powers that be for their protection and good fortune up to that point. 'I can't wait to share the bow and arrow with our other peoples to the east and west of Bamasan's realm, Wysan.' Conveyed Omzi. 'To see the amazement in their eyes when they see the swift arrow fly!'

'And to teach to them making and use of the animal trap.' Added Bezi.

'If that weren't enough, the hut will certainly delight them to no end. I do not think they will believe we had won such a war without the amazement that all the inventions will stir in them, even if we brought with us all the head skins of the apemen.' Alzi interjected. 'You will have to come with us, Wysan, or we might claim to be the inventors ourselves. The ladies would give themselves freely to us.'

'I think they will if I come or not.' Wysan laughed. 'But I will come, if I can. I would like to see more of this world even if you would do the job I believe has been assigned to me by the powers that be.'

'Then it's settled! You're coming with us on a great holiday of adventure.' Omzi said determinedly.

Bamasan and the people who stayed near his hut greeted Wysan and The Three warmly as they reached the end of their scouting mission. Bamasan surmised that things had gone well judging by the smiles on the faces of the four men. 'Take your time men. When you are ready you may join me in my hut to discuss the intel that you've gathered. I will have the ladies put together a nice meal for you. And the sacred bud is especially good.' Bamasan offered with a broad grin and a chuckle. He had apparently

been spending a great deal of time smoking the pipe with the Chiefs of his tribesmen as he prepared them for possible war.

After bathing, the four men entered the King's hut. At the side opposite the main door of the hut, Bamasan sat slightly elevated on a wooden contraption that might have been the first chair, though it had no legs. There to one side were the Chiefs of the four quadrants of Bamasan's realm. Bamasan motioned the four men to sit down to face the chiefs and then handed Wysan the pipe. When the sacred bud calmed their nerves, they began discussions.

The chief nearest Bamasan spoke first in a formal fashion, followed by the other three. 'I am Chief Akersan, I am Chief Websan, I am Chief Glasan, I am Chief Molsan.' Akersan continued. 'I speak for all four of us hear today. I understand that you have persuaded our King to go to war with the apeman tribe that annihilated your tribe. Before we can enthusiastically recruit our warriors and lead them into battle, you must convince us that this is not a foolhardy retaliatory action.

'I've, well, the four of us have come to the conclusion that this is a winnable war. There is the means for retreat because we will not attack them unless we have them where we want them. As powerful a new weapon as the bow and arrow is I would not ask that we attack them on the savanna, given the apeman advantage of speed.' Wysan answered, trying to ease their concerns by assuring them that the lives of the warriors mattered to him.'

Chief Akersan continued. 'Bamasan told me of your idea to trap the apemen. So you still believe you can entice them into that very part of the bush where our warriors will lay waiting? How?'

At this, Alzi answered. 'I am Alzi of The Three and I speak for The Three. We have scouted the area and we have observed the apeman tribe in question with Wysan. We are not driven by revenge as Wysan may be. I tell you that his plan will likely work because the apemen have already entered the forest where the trap will be sprung on the night that they raided Wysan's tribe. They cross by the same paths every three days as they circumnavigate their territory. It is simply a matter of preparing and baiting the trap. If the apemen do not take the bait, then only the time of the warriors will be wasted, not their lives.'

'And who shall be that bait?' Akersan asked, though Bamasan had mentioned it might be The Three.

'We will!' Alzi, Bezi, and Omzi answered at once. Alzi looked a little annoyed at the others joining in, but could not resist a smile. 'Well, at least you know that we are all equally committed.'

'I will go as bait as well, if you ask.' Offered Wysan to The Three.

'No need, Wysan.' said Alzi, appreciating the offer. 'Three should be enough and The Three know each other as well as if we were one, and you are too precious to put at risk. After all, the powers that be favor you and who knows what else you may invent.'

After discussing the details of the intel and journey of the four men at length, and the war plans that might be implemented, the four Chiefs excused themselves to sleep on what had been shared. They would meet with the King the following morning to give their final decision. Although the King ruled and could technically command the Chiefs to wage war, he trusted in their experience in such matters and he knew it would be

better for him to have the Chiefs on his side for the harmony of his people, and his career as a King.

The following morning the Chiefs unanimously agreed to go to war with the apeman tribe. They soon departed with the promise of bringing ten warriors each from the four quadrants of the realm of Bamasan, two days hence, along with an entourage to prepare for a possible feast. This would give them the time to recruit willing men and train them on the bow and arrow when they arrived at Bamasan's camp. The forty warriors would set out for Wysan bush on the fourth day and arrive at the clearing where the trap would be set on the evening prior to the day the apemen were expected cross that area once again.

Wysan could only hope that it would not be too late for Dawn and her sister and considered heading back up that way because the apemen would travel through the area once again before the trap would be set. He expressed his impatience to The Three. 'What if we're too late!'

'There is nothing you can do now. We need you here now to help train our people in the use and construction of more bows and arrows. And, you have become a legend, Wysan. Our people need to have you with us to give them more hope and confidence. Think of it: Wysan the miraculous and The Three, and King Bamasan and the Chiefs of the four quadrants all going to war on the demons. Its legend, I tell you.' Urged Omzi.

The people who lived near Bamasan's camp, the capital of his kingdom so to speak, set it to be their task to make as many arrows as possible for the warriors when they arrived. Wysan and The Three worked on the construction of more bows and on perfecting the design. They tried many different woods and shapes, gradually improving the design through trial and error and leaps of insight, but none would go to waste.

The four Chiefs took with them two bows and ten arrows each to show to their warriors that the rumors were not lies and that a weapon of great significance had indeed been invented by he called Wysan the One and, it was hoped, to encourage them to join the war party willingly. It was better to have confident and willing combatants in a war on apemen. They were instructed to practice as much as possible, but that bows and arrows enough would be waiting for them at the capital as gifts for joining the war party. This had the intended affect.

On the second day, the bands of ten recruits and their associated entourage entered the capital one within a few hours of each other, led by the Chiefs. Many a greeting and thanks were made to each of the warriors as they received their new weapons. They wasted no time practicing. By the end of the fourth day the troops were able to hit an apeman-sized target and thirty yards nearly every time. This was deemed adequate, for the clearing was no wider than fifty yards where the ambush would occur and they would be shooting from both sides of the clearing.

So, early on the fourth day as planned, the war party set out to Wysan's tree, as it became known. When they arrived, Wysan was asked to recount the discovery of the bow and arrow and the test of the powers that be. All prayed before the tree for success in that battle that all now truly hoped for.

They passed into the woods and came to the raid site to spend the night. Scouts were sent to the northern border of the forest and the clearing to warn them if the apemen arrived earlier than expected. On the following morning, Wysan led the war

party to the clearing where the ambush was to happen later that day. Again scouts were positioned to warn of the return of the apeman tribe.

They busied themselves getting acquainted with the terrain, including possible lines of retreat and locations where they might reform if things went badly and the apemen got the better of them. Barriers made of tied branches arranged in a fence-like pattern through which arrows could be fired were constructed on both sides of the clearing at several locations, but deep enough within the bush so as to not be too visible.

Special attention was given to the construction of a barrier where the clearing narrowed, which The Three would catapult around, presumably with the apemen in close pursuit. It would need to provide ample protection for The Three and stop the apemen from entering the bush via the trail. It was made like a wall of a hut that blended in with the thick brush on either side of the trail. An opening too narrow for apemen in the wall would allow The Three or any other of the San to squeeze through.

Just when things were at last made fully ready a scout came running with the message that the apeman tribe was rounding the bush to the north of the gap. Now was the time to bait them into the gap and then the clearing. The Three bolted eastward through the clearing and out the gap, not wasting any time on goodbyes.

The Three bent low as they got into position, just beyond the gap, covering the ground in about fifteen minutes. They could see the apeman tribe directly to the north now. As had happened that last time The Three had watched them, the apemen began to turn towards the east southeast as they rounded the fringes of the bush on the way to their campsite zone to the east of the gap. 'Let us catch our breath while we wait for them to come a little to the south.' Alzi whispered between breaths.

'Are you sure we are close enough?' asked Bezi. They were separated by about five hundred yards, with about five hundred yards to the clearing. 'I think they might not see us from here.'

'They are twice as fast as we are! Remember? We are halfway between them and the trap now. They'll cover twice the distance we will in the same time.' Retorted Alzi.

'So, let's get their attention. Stand up!' Omzi said loudly, standing up. The other stood up. They waited but the apemen did not notice them. 'Ok, let's try this.' Omzi began yelling in a loud voice and began shoving Bezi in a mock fight. Alzi kept his eyes on the apemen that he was sure now would take the bait and begin the chase. He did not have to wait long. 'Run, Run, Run!' was all he yelled.

Chapter 12 War of Worlds

At first things went according to plan, just as Wyan had hoped. The apemen had taken the bait and the bait had not been overtaken, only just. The Three had only managed to stay 25 yards ahead of the sprinting apemen as they entered the narrow clearing and the entrance to bush. By this time the apemen were committed to the chase and entered the clearing at breakneck speed, barely slowing for fear of losing their intended victims.

As instructed, the three did not stop until they reached the innermost “wall” of the trap that had been constructed. Flinging themselves through the barrier, the three armed themselves with the bows and arrows that were awaiting them. As the leading apemen saw this they became bewildered at the construct, a thing they had never encounter before and indeed could never fathom.

In this moment, Wysan and Bamasan cried out at the top of their lungs 'Attack! Attack! Attack!' The air was filled with the shrill of flying arrows and the screams of the San. The apemen, some struck, others simply dumbfounded, screamed their warning cries for help. This brought in even more of the trailing apemen and soon the clearing in the bush was filled with some twenty savage apemen, all trying to assess the situation and attack whatever moved. Soon apeman blood was joined by San blood as the apemen took sight of their attackers.

By the time the most of the apemen had discovered the San hiding along either of their flanks, some ten of them had been mortally wounded by arrows. Some were enraged, while others were frightened. A few tried to run back the way they had come, but the majority went on the offensive. Charging into the bush they sought their mortal enemies with madness in their eyes, driven as they were by the instinctual fight response evolution had programed them with. Thrusting spears to and fro they managed to kill several San.

But the San would not give up their dead nor their plan, not while in the comparatively advantageous setting of their trap. All forty San men continued to fire their arrows until all were spent - about 10 each. Next came their spears. The arrows had disabled the apemen enough that they were becoming easy targets and all of the apemen that had entered the bush were soon in their death throes. Satisfied that all the apemen were grievously wounded, Bamasan gave the call for the soldiers to back away to a safe distance to let the apemen bleed out.

But Wysan could not be sated, for he could not forget Dawn and his tribe. Searching for the leader of the apeman tribe he came perilously close to being speared by maddened, dying apemen. Soon he realized that Og was not among the vanquished. Then, running to the clearing he scanned the nearby savanna to see where the leader and Dawn might be. Off some 100 yards he could see Og running with all his speed back toward his tribe, which was almost a 1/4 mile in the distance. Og, not leading but trailing at the last this time, perhaps because he had sensed that something was not right, had managed to kill two San warriors before giving up the fight

Wysan turned back to the soldiers, his heart about to burst, wanting to give chase and finish the extermination, but he knew there was not hope it that gamble. Although the attack had been a glorious success with twenty out of thirty adult males of the tribe killed, the tribe was still some eighty strong, even though forty were adult females along with some thirty more adolescents and babies. He scanned for Dawn but could not see her at this distance. At last, overwhelmed by excitement and exertion, Wysan fell to his hands and knees. Through the haze of his mind that followed the battle, Wysan could not help but smile at the outcome, and at the chance for more carnage yet.

Chapter 13 The Feast

Waste Not, Want More: A scene on the battlefield of life:

A leopard makes a kill, an impala. While enjoying its first licks and swallows a hyena enters the scene. A standoff between the growling leopard, tucked close to the ground while managing a bite or two, and the whimpering hyena, tugging at the prize, lasts for a few minutes. Enter hyena number two and the leopard retreats. But before the rest of the hyena pack arrives, a male lion, with its instinct to hate hyena, and two lionesses rush in for battle. The prize is alone for only a moment before the leopard returns to claim its rightful kill, which it wisely carries thirty feet up a nearby tree.

The lionesses return to find the prize missing up the tree. One has had enough and decides to climb the tree after the leopard kill. The lioness is twice the weight of the leopard but the leopard is master of trees and the lioness a comparatively clumsy and heavy climber. While face to face with the snarling leopard, the lioness gorges on the impala until the remains fall to the ground. The lioness companions below are grateful for the scrapes, starving as they are. When the overburdened lioness struggles down, it falls, and becomes trapped, dangling above the ground, its back broken. In the morning its companion releases the dead lioness from the branch and has a second breakfast of cat and tenderized impala.

Food is rarely wasted in nature, and the San were born of nature. Twenty dead male apeman, each weighing over two hundred pounds, and eleven dead San, each about one hundred pounds adds up to a feast of over two tons of meat! The San, always on the brink of starvation, were not about to waste the bounty. So, after gorging themselves, two runners were sent back to tell the others of the outcome of battle and to give the command of King Bamasan for his people to enter Wysan's bush with the promise of a feast like had never been seen in the living memory of the San.

The apemen, now gutted and beheaded to lighten the load, would bring gluttony to the feast for some two hundred of King Bamasan's people, and the remainder, after being sliced thin and dried and smoked, would provide sustenance for weeks to come. In the meantime, the survivors of the battle carried the bodies of the apemen, tied to wooden poles, southward and deeper into the bush, to a clearing large enough to prepare for the coming of their people. The eleven fallen were also carried in this way, except that their bodies were kept intact and they were carried near to the front of the procession in a place of honor. As always, the dead would be honored by consumption in a cannibalistic orgy.

A few heads were kept intact for show and ceremony. One of these was the head of Nak, which was an especially large one that would be dried and preserved and would be a conversation piece of Bamasan's hut. All of the other head skins were kept by the warriors as trophies of the battle. Some would be donned by the warriors during future reenactments of the battle meant to entertain Bamasan's people, but to also inspire recognition of the heroism of the warriors, and the sacrifice of the fallen.

Most of the heads, their brains eaten by the warriors soon after the battle in the belief that they would gain strength in the act, were piled at the entrance to the bush where the battle took place as a memorial to the battle and a warning to the apemen. It

was not known if the apemen would understand this warning, but along with Wysan's tree and the raid site, the skulls would mark the third sacred site of World War Zero, the war of man on apeman.

By late afternoon of that day, the two runners had reached the realm of Bamasan, and soon after, a large party of Bamasan's people that had been preparing in the expectation of a successful outcome of the battle, had gathered for the march to Wysan's bush and the great feast. The runners guided the host to the Wysan's tree as they approached bush. All took a moment for prayers and thanks to the powers that be for the gifts of Wysan, the successful outcome of the battle, and for the feast that would soon be engaged.

Another runner had been sent to Wysan's tree to guide the host to the feast site. With such a heavy load, the warriors could not carry the dead more than a mile or two southward from the battle to the clearing that was chosen. So, it was that the host arrived quite late, their way lit by torches in a long procession through the bush and under the stars. However, the excitement of the day was so great, brought to a frenzy by the vivid reenactments of the warriors and the alcoholic beverages that were prepared for such occasion and brought by the host, and the feasting so excellent, that no one felt even a little sleepy until the stars began to fade.

Chapter 14 The Blood Hole

After the great feast, Wysan returned his attention to Dawn. What's more, he had to know the fate of Og and his tribe of apemen. The last he remembered was that Og, having narrowly escaped death by his prowess and luck, had been running the half a mile to his tribe. They had been on the way to the waterhole about four miles east from the clearing and the trap. His tribe had been waiting with the ten remaining guards while the foray was unleashed. He wondered what they would think at the sole return of Og.

Wysan could not dispel the feeling that the unrest that would undoubtedly result from the massacre of twenty of the thirty adult apemen of his tribe would somehow result in the killing of Dawn and her sister. Would Og or the other apemen blame the girls for their disaster? He could not rest until he found out the truth, even if it meant only finding their scattered remains in the dust. At least that would be the end of it, and so he could mourn. Still, even without the girls as a factor, he had to know the fate of Og and his tribe. So Wysan set out late the next morning from the feast site after consulting with Bamasan. Like before, The Three would accompany Wysan on the scouting mission.

The apeman tribe would be vulnerable to attack by lions and hyena now that only ten adult males remained. If Og and the remaining males were killed or scattered the females and young of the tribe would have no chance of survival on the deadly savanna unless they joined another apeman tribe. With lions, it's the females that give the majority of the power to a pride. With hyena, it's much the same. But female apemen were not programmed by nature for battle. Without sufficient male apemen to defend the tribe, it would soon fall prey to their carnivorous adversaries. With only ten males left, even if one of them might be the mighty Og, the tribe had a less than ten percent chance of surviving until enough male adolescents matured.

As a general strategy to exterminate apeman from the world of the San it seemed then that the tactic they had implemented was just the right solution. The San could weaken an apemen tribe by killing a majority of the adult males and then lions and hyenas would mop up the rest. However, Wysan was determined to rescue Dawn before the tribe fell victim to Darwinian carnage, that long standing natural battle fought between lions, hyenas, and apemen. But, would he need to conjure yet another insight for this special case, for Dawn? As it turned out, thirst for water would be the doing in by what was left of the tribe of apemen.

Wysan and The Three picked up the trail of Og from the point that it left the clearing where the trap had been sprung. As Wysan remembered, the tracks showed that Og had sprinted away from the scene in a straight line to where the tribe had been waiting, a half a mile from the clearing. The tracks continued in an eastward direction. They followed these for another two miles until they reached the great trampling of the ground where the apeman tribe had apparently spent the night. By this time, it was noon, the day was already fiercely hot and the sun scorching their shoulders.

The apemen were no where to be seen. Og had led his tribe this far from the trap before he felt comfortable in stopping, a little east of his usual camping zone. However, being a smart apeman leader, he had not led them directly to the contestable waterhole, especially to spend the night, for cats and hyena were nocturnal and apemen were not. And the cats more often owned the waterhole than not. Fire was the apeman's greatest protection from night marauders.

As expected, the coals of many fires were to be seen, still warm, but nothing else was noticeable at first sight. Wysan felt a lump in his throat as he surveyed the ground for any signs of Dawn, live or dead, but nothing was to be found. The trail simply left the trampling in a straight line toward the waterhole, which was not quite two miles further from the clearing and the trap.

Wysan, showing concern, asked Alzi, Bezi, and Omzi if they had seen any useful signs as they all converged in the middle of the apeman camp. 'I'm sorry Wysan, there is no sign of the girls.' each reported in his own way. "But there is no sign that they were killed either, maybe they still live.' offered Omzi. 'We know they were alive early yesterday.'

'Yes, I know.' replied Wysan meekly, 'I still have hope. But how shall we approach the waterhole from this point?' Wysan quickly changed the subject.

'We know the waterhole well,' answered Alzi. 'I would suggest that we approach from the downstream side of the dry river bed. Its is closer to our bush and if we get into trouble we might retreat that way. There are many tall trees in that direction as well and we might climb them as we approach the water to see what might be seen.'

Wysan gratefully nodded acceptance at Alzi suggestion as he was having a hard time thinking clearly, worrying about Dawn as he was. 'I do not know the waterhole as well as you do as my tribe only rarely came there during the wet season, so I will trust in your experience.'

At this Alzi led the way to the east, but at a slight angle to the apeman tracks in a southerly direction so as to arrive south of the waterhole along the dry water course. At this distance, the trees Alzi mentioned could only just be perceived on the horizon.

The apemen tribe had set out for the waterhole and hour or more before the four scouts came upon their camp, and was arriving there as the four men moved on. The

four scouts did not know it, but Og was battling his fear of approaching the waterhole with only ten apeman warriors. Against the fear was the worsening thirst that the tribe was feeling, their stomach canteen squeezed dry. Og hesitated on a rocky, bush covered knoll only five hundred yard from the water for over an hour, surveying the open ground, a killing field of lions, before him.

When the four scout reached the dry watercourse and the tall trees that lined it, they were grateful for the cover and the shade. The waterhole was about a half a mile to the north from here. They could only assume that the apeman tribe had come to it and departed by now, but they had little else to do but have a look. So, slowly they crept northward from tree to tree, scanning always for hidden predators, especially lions, that might attack without warning. Besides the defense their bows and arrows and the long spear they always carried offered, they could climb a tree if need arose.

In addition to spying out predators, they scanned constantly for low branches that would be useful for a quick exit from the ground, especially ones that were within reach of other, higher branches. Lions could climb of course, but their large mass meant that they could not reach branches a man could safely use. And hyenas could not climb at all. Leopards and baboons were the most dangerous of tree climbers.

As they neared the waterhole, they decided it was time to have a look from high up a tree. Nothing useful could be seen on the first attempt. As they continued northward, they took turns climbing up to see if they were close enough to see anything yet. Finally, when it was Omzi turn, he spied both the water and the apeman tribe. 'The apemen are going to the water right now!' He hissed in a loud whisper. The others quickly climbed the tree to watch the scene unfold, each hoping the apemen would be set upon by lions.

Sure enough they could see Og and his ten remaining warriors leading the tribe that now numbered eighty down to the water. Normally the thirty adult male apemen would surround the tribe as dozens of member would drink at a time to their content and fill their stomach canteens. But, now there were far too few to effectively ward off attack, so the majority of the adult males were concentrated near the front as they approached the water. Wyan could see Dawn and her sister near the front of the pack. At this, Wyan caught his breath. 'I see the girls!' he croaked.

From their shady hangouts under the tree, the lion surveyed the tribe. They sensed something different. First it was the apprehensive behavior of the apemen that got their attention. And then, as they would searched for the young and the weak among a herd of dangerous water buffalo, the horns of which they had earned considerable respect for, as they did apeman spears, they would calculate with their cat logic if an attack was worthwhile. In this case, given the relative few "horns" among the apeman tribe, especially to the rear of the pack, several of the big cats began to salivate.

The entire pride of thirty-four lions was on its feet within moments of each other, stalking toward the poorly defended apeman rear. Then the attack began. Og had seen this coming. Yelling, he was followed by the ten remaining warriors as he ran to the defense of his tribe. He managed to face off a charge led by a great male lion on the north side of the apeman tribe where the cats had been sleeping, but now thirty other cats fanned out to nearly surround the tribe. Then the carnage began.

Without the means to defend themselves effectively, the females and adolescents were easy pickings for the lions. At not more than one hundred and fifty

pounds each, they were snagged like rag dolls by the heavy animals. And so, thirty odd apemen were soon being dragged off, screaming and flailing wildly until they were strangled by throat bites. Panicked now at the sight of this, the other apemen ran this way and that in groups of various sizes, but mostly to the south in the direction of the four scouts in the tree.

The commotion was an uproar of growling lions and screaming apemen that could be heard for miles. The pack of sixty or more henna that frequented the waterhole came running in from the east to see if there were kills to muscle away or scrapes to scavenge. Og had moved to the south with the bulk of the chaotically disintegrating tribe, with the other warriors rallied around him, but moving more slowly in a more or less controlled retreat. If they continued to the south, soon they would cross under the tree the four scouts were observing from.

'Get your bows ready and find a position you can fire from.' Commanded Alzi. 'We might be able to pick off a few and keep any of them from climbing this tree.' The scouts scrambled into position against the trunk of the tree they were in and on different branches. Straddling their branch with their legs to hold on and steady themselves, each prepared to fire on the retreating apemen.

A female and an adolescent male, running with fear in their eyes, were the first of the apemen to move within range of the archers. As they paused to glance back, not 20 yard away, Wysan and The Three let loose a volley. Three arrows struck the male, which fell dead in its tracks, the fourth struck the female in the leg, and screaming, she ran off further south. Bezi, bent another, but Alzi shouted, 'Bezi wait, she as good as dead. We need to conserve our arrows. Wysan and Omzi, you take the west side and Bezi and I will shoot to the east as the pass.'

A group of six more came within shooting distance and within ten-seconds all were mortally wounded. Then Wysan saw a sight he would never forget. Dawn and Dusk, hand in hand were running right to the tree they were hiding in, with Dusk leading Dawn who looked completely bewildered. Without waiting, Wysan climbed down and ran to them. The terrified girls could not understand the sudden appearance of Wysan, but Dusk seemed to have enough wits about her to understand what Wysan was yelling to her. 'Up into the tree! Up into the tree!' was all he said. But there was no time.

Og and seven of his warriors who had managed not to be separated caught sight of Wysan. Barking out, 'Kill! Kill! Kill!' Og ordered his troops to kill Wysan and the girls. Og had been brooding all night and day about the misfortune at the clearing where his world had been turned upside down and his fears had turned to hatred for the little bush people. If this was the end of his reign, he would kill every bushman he could before he was dead too. However, he had learned something of their new weapon and so he held himself back, out of range, as he guessed.

As Wysan helped Dusk into the tree, the seven troops of Og bolted toward the base of the tree, but they did not see The Three. Many arrows were loosed in rapid succession, half of them finding their mark. One after the other the apemen warriors fell before they reached the trunk of the tree. After helping Dusk onto a low branch, Wysan too began to fire. Og starred in disbelief. Then, glaring at Wysan, let out a scream of rage. Wysan yelled back, 'I want him! Shoot! Kill him!' Arrows flew, but Og was out of range.

Wysan gave up for the moment and, helped by Dusk, hauled Dawn up into the tree. He pleaded for The Three to come down and give chase to the leader of the apeman tribe, still glaring at him from fifty yards away, before he got away. But, Alzi yelled back, 'Hyena, Wysan! Get up quick!'

Running in from the north east, spread across two hundred yards, was the largest number of hyena Wysan had ever seen. Og looked around when Wysan broke his stare. Like a bolt of lightning, Og careened southward along the dry water course and out of sight. Not wanting to accept that Og would escape once again, Wysan regained his perch.

The six of them, safe in the tree, were treated to the handiwork of the hyena as they fought over the feast of apemen on the ground below them. Before long, they were joined by wild dogs and even a jackal, snatching an arm or a rib or an organ. The lions bothered not to stray far from the waterhole, especially in the heat of afternoon. The hyena and wild dogs had endurance enough to hunt down the rest. Some of the apemen had even been taken by enormous crocodiles when they skirted the waterhole in the mayhem. By morning, the only apeman still alive was Og.

Chapter 15 Fates Intertwined

Wysan and The Three narrowly escaped becoming part of the great feast. Of all the apemen of his former tribe, Og was the only one that had the wits to survive for any length of time alone. And now he was on his way to becoming a man killer like no apeman had ever been. He had a genuine hatred for the San now that he had lost his rule to them. So it was the Og hunted the San as a lone hunter by stalking them in or near whatever bush he happened across in the manner of a leopard. And, though many of Og's kills were attributed to leopards, the tracks of a large apeman were sometimes associated with disappearances. This led to growing rumors that spread across the kingdoms of the San of an apeman demon haunting the San.

Although it is true that Og saved Dawn from the other apemen, he abused her cruelly to the point of death on many occasions. Og controlled Dawn through striking and strangling. If the anguish and never ending fear resulting from her existence among the apemen who had killed and eaten nearly everyone she had known had not been enough to destroy her mind, the physical abuse certainly had permanently damaged her brain through both strikes to her head and by lack of oxygen caused by near suffocation. Within days of her capture, Dawn had been reduced to a mere shell of the once cheerful and loving companion of Wysan.

Wysan did not know it, but Og and his fate were inextricably intertwined, partly because Og had stolen Dawn and had permanently abused her mind, forever destroying her life, and, consequently, his. Og would also prove to be Wysan's greatest challenge and obsession in his mission to exterminate apeman. Og now knew the tricks of man and their ways to the degree that he could innately sense, if not fully comprehend, the particular risks man could pose. But, he also knew their weaknesses and vulnerabilities.

Nine months after her rescue from her demon captors, Dawn gave birth to a half-breed. Wysan loses his mind at the birthing of Og's child and is driven to commit every

living moment to the killing of apemen. He must also wrestle with the matter of the half-breed.

'I could simply kill it as I should, but I want to know the demons mind!' he argues with King Bamasan. 'The more we know of them the better we can kill them! I might even try to capture a young one...' Wysan thought about this for a long time, '...I could tame them. I could bring them to other San tribes to help them get their heads around what the apemen are. After you kill a few they aren't so terrifying. They will see that they are really just animals.'

'We cannot live with this thing, Wysan. What you ask of us will only bring down evil on us. Already the men are fighting about it.' Pleaded King Bamasan. 'We thank the heavens for your gifts, Wysan. And though we paid dearly for the victory, I say it was a price worth paying to rid our world of them.'

'But, they are not all dead!' Wysan insisted. 'I am now fated to destroy them. I must know my enemy.'

'And who will go with you to fight? We have lost so many.' Asked Bamasan

Wysan answered, 'There is plenty of time, Bamasan. I will raise the half-breed with Dawn's help. She is cracked now and loves the child. I will move it and her away from here to a hut. The hut will be strong enough to keep the animals out. I will bring her food, water, and other things.'

'Alright, Wysan. I give you leave. But, what else will you do? I mean until it grows older? Your hate is unquenchable, I know.'

'There are two things on my mind. First, I'd like to find out how much of this new open lands territory between the bush that we've captured from the apemen that we might be able to defend from lions and hyenas. With arrows we'd have a better chance of fighting them off, and with huts we would be safer at night. Also, I would also like to travel to other tribes to teach them of the bow and arrow, the hut, and how to kill the apemen.'

'Then you will need someone to tend to Dawn and the half-breed while you are gone. King Bamasan considers, 'Don't worry Wysan, I will do it myself to learn of our enemy as well. I will assist you as much as I can. I believe in your cause too. We should rid the world of the apemen!'

Wysan decided to name the half-breed Halfsan. Because he was a mixture of Og and Dawn, the concentration of pigment in Halfsan's skin was somewhere in between. The San were brown in color, a shade or two darker than modern south central Asians, who were to eventually evolve directly from genetic stock very closely related to the San. Yet the San were not as dark as sub-Saharan apemen. This is because the pigment, melatonin, which darkens the skin of ape and man is concentrated in the skin in direct proportion to the amount of UV light that a species or sub-species lives with. The pigment absorbs UV light, thus helping to prevent skin damage. Although the San lived in the same high intensity UV zone of Africa as did apemen, their mode of life or habitat was under the partial shading of the bush, whereas apemen, living mostly on the plains, bore the full brunt of the equatorial sun, and, so, were very near black.

Halfsan's features were also roughly halfway between a San and an apeman. His jaw was larger and protruded outward more than a San man's, but his forehead was taller than an apeman's. Unfortunately, the San mind, that miraculous feat of evolution, was not proportionately expressed in Halfsan. In terms of intelligence, his was closer to

that of the average apeman than the average San. It seemed that the intricate arrangement of neural wiring that made the San so special in all the world had been scrambled into relative mush. Halfsan could not form a sentence, though he would sometime make utterances imitating actual language. But, he could be taught to mimic and repeat simple tasks, and as a porter, at least, he never complained.

The rate at which Halfsan grew was astonishing. Apemen, possessing only a fraction of the brain that is common in man, did not require the lengthily span of years of childhood and adolescence for the skull and brain to grow, and as he very quickly grew he showed a dogged determination to follow Dawn wherever she would wander or be lead, to the point of dog-like persistence. At the age of six he matched the height of the average San. At ten, he was almost fully matured and stood 6 feet tall.

In keeping with Halfsan's natural instinct, Wysan designed a special rope made up of knots that prevented it from being undone by the crafty Halfsan, yet allowed for a restraining or punishing choke action to be applied, much like is used with a modern choke collar, to keep him under control. Halfsan could usually be seen within a few yards of Dawn, around who's leather waist belt the end of the rope was normally affixed.

The End

John Arfstrom
jarfstrom@gmail.com