

## Trapped at Baboon Rock

*by Gregory Wessels*

**H**ey, Owen, did you hear that? Sounded like baboons barking,” Dave observed as he tightened the last rope securing their tent. He and his friend were camping out in the woods in South Africa.

“Yes, I heard it,” Owen responded. “It sounded rather close. Do you suppose they already know we’re here?”

“Maybe.”

“Dave, would you mind gathering more firewood before it gets too dark for us to see? I’ll start a fire using what we already have on hand.”

“OK. I’ll go into that gully,” Dave said, pointing. “I should find plenty of dry wood down there.”

The gully was narrow and deep, and large boulders lay strewn about. There was also plenty of dry pine wood, perfect for keeping the two teens’ campfire alive.

As Owen stirred the camp stew he was making, he noticed that the sun had set behind Baboon Rock. He knew that the gully had become too dark for Dave to see firewood. *What's taking him so long?* he wondered.

"Dave," Owen shouted, "the stew is simmering in the pot, and the fritters are frying in the pan! Hurry up—I'm starving!"

He heard no answer. He sat on a stone, staring at the fire and listening to the night sounds. Normally, darkness didn't bother him. But with Dave gone, he grew uneasy.

Suddenly Owen froze. He could hear the ominous bark of baboons. Owen knew this meant that a leopard was on the prowl. An owl hooted in a nearby tree as he stoked the fire with the last piece of wood.

*Something must have happened to Dave,* Owen thought. *He would never stay in the gully after dark. I need to look for him, but there's no way I'm going into that dark gully. Dave will just have to be OK.* His thoughts were in a dreadful turmoil as he picked up the spoon and briskly stirred the stew again.

"Dave, hurry up!" Owen shouted desperately. Staring into the glowing embers, he felt hot tears roll down his cheeks.

Just then a bloodcurdling roar from the gully drove icy spikes of fear through Owen's heart. Grabbing a long, thick stick, he jabbed one end into

the fire and waited impatiently as it caught fire. Pulling it out, he reached for his flashlight with his other hand and ran toward the gully.

“Dave, Dave, are you in here?” Owen called as he shone the flashlight beam carefully from boulder to boulder.

Owen cautiously worked his way up the gully, the burning brand in one hand and the flashlight in the other. Then, looking up, he saw a leopard lying on an overhanging branch not six feet above his head! The teenager froze. Backing away ever so slowly, he softly called his friend’s name.

“Dave, Dave, where are you?”

“Over here, Owen. Move to your left” came Dave’s faint response.

“Keep talking, Dave. Your voice will guide me to you,” Owen said. He moved slowly in the direction of Dave’s voice while keeping his eyes riveted on the leopard twitching its tail back and forth.

Suddenly Owen stumbled and dropped his flashlight. Searching for it by the eerie light of his flaming torch, he stumbled over his camping mate.

Dave had stepped into a crevasse, and his boot was stuck. Owen noticed that Dave’s leg was bleeding badly. *Maybe it’s broken*, he thought to himself as he looked into the pale, frightened face of his friend.

“Sorry, Owen,” Dave said. “I really messed up this time.”

"Don't worry, Dave. I'll think of something in a minute," Owen responded.

Suddenly an earsplitting roar shattered the night. Owen looked up just as the leopard plunged from its perch onto the rocks below.

With a primeval scream that rose from somewhere deep inside him, Owen propelled himself up the path toward the leopard, slashing the darkness with his fiery brand. The startled animal stood its ground for just a moment and then bounded into the darkness of the night.

Crouching beside his friend, Owen peered into Dave's terrified face. "It's OK," he said softly. "He'll be gone for a while."

Owen felt the bones in Dave's leg, thankful that he had learned first-aid techniques. Dave's leg wasn't broken, but it was cut badly. He yanked hard at the rocks that held Dave prisoner. But no matter how hard he pulled and twisted, he couldn't free Dave's boot.

Sweat streamed down Owen's face. His shirt was drenched, his hands bleeding. He was tired and had to rest.

"We're in a horrible mess, aren't we, Owen?"

"I guess so," Owen replied, aware that the leopard would probably return very soon.

"Owen, do you think God would help us if we asked Him?"

"I don't know whether God is interested in this

sort of stuff, Dave, but I think we'd better ask Him anyway." Owen bowed his head. "God," he prayed, "Dave's foot is stuck, and he's hurt bad. I've tried real hard to free him, but it's no use. The leopard is sure to be back soon. We could really use some help. Thank You for listening."

Owen lifted his head and spoke to Dave. "OK, let's try it again."

Owen pulled and pulled with all his might. Suddenly he felt the rock move, and Dave pulled his foot free.

"Thanks, Owen," Dave said to his rescuer.

Helping Dave to his feet, Owen smiled. "Say, I'm ready for some stew. How about you?"