

GROK IN QUICKSAND, 499,988 BC—
(*another story about cavemen*)
By Paul Lambrecht

Well, there he was, thought Grok, caught in quicksand. Never thought this would happen again. He had been chasing the duck-billed ratypus and was unwilling to give up the chase, despite the fact he knew this hazard existed, though where exactly he couldn't recall. Yet it had drew him to itself again.

Probably didn't matter where it really was. It never failed to suck you in. He was up to his thighs in the muck, and sinking slowly. How had he gotten out last time?

It had been a long hazy day shouting himself hoarse. There were vines hanging overhead but they were far out of reach.

The mud tugged at Grok's ankles. A Bird of Paradise stood as a neutral witness in his perch. Don't struggle, thought Grok, that will only make it worse. Grok was not panicking. In fact, this grove with the shifting and illusory floor was actually quite calm and inviting, serene even, all things considered. Grok's mind reeled and tried to settle on a solution to this quandary. The last time this had happened, Grok recalled he'd been able to thrash his way over to the edge and grab a big enough stick to use as a cantilever and stretched it over a narrower gap in the pit, where he could pull himself out.

That had been after a monsoon though and the mud had been looser. Now it was rock-hard. And there didn't look to be any long sticks about.

You know, though Grok, if it weren't for being inextricably stuck, this mud really was soothing, a very relaxing respite from the stresses and hassles of tribal life. He remembered pondering these exact same thoughts before, the last time he'd been stuck in quicksand: would he be missed?

How would they take his disappearance?

Why must man face his own mortality thus? Who was the face or wolf staring back from across the void?

The ceiling of creepers rustled in a stiff wind. He had been very patient before when the stick appeared. Now a strand of vine knocked loose and fell within his grasp.

Grok smiled, as if his mouth were being pulled upwards at the turns by divine marionette strings. He reached for the vine, returning the full-expressed embrace of Dame Fortuna. He hoisted himself out.

The Bird of Paradise was gone and another ratypus had got away.

End.