

CRADLE OF HUMANKIND

by Chris Sham



- **Genre:** Paleolithic
- **Setting:** Southern Africa, one million years ago. The winter dry season has come to the rolling, temperate grasslands, with cold winds sweeping in from the South, pushing most sources of food away with them. The only way your family will survive is to leave the comfort of your cave and risk travelling north towards warmer climes.
- **Major Characters:** The *Elder*, the *Mother*, the *Father*, the *Youngster*. You are one family unit, plus assorted vulnerable infants and toddlers. You have no dedicated leader, as it isn't usually hard to find consensus among such a small group. The major danger lies in the fearsome *Hyena* that stalks the Hills, blocking your path of migration.
- **Important Locations:** *Maropeng*, the plain covered in dry grass and scrub, where your home cave is. The treacherous *Hills* to the North, where many dangers lurk. The *Green Lands* beyond the Hills, where the last kudu herd was seen heading.

THE ELDER

- **Role:** Three things must ye know about the old wise woman. Retired gatherer.
- **Backstory:** The Elder remembers the time when others like you lived around here. She remembers many other dry seasons, but none as bad as the current one, since she was a child. At that time, her family took her across the Hills too, and there they found food. But many were killed on the way there.
- **Persona's Traits:** Aged and Arthritic, Venerated
- **Persona's Focuses:** Tracking, Fire-making, Pelt-working, Oral History
- **Demeanor:** Caring and protective towards all her family.
- **Goal:** To bring her family to the Green Lands she distantly remembers.
- **Costume:** Ochre-rich mud body-paint, Skin cape, Substantial merkin.

THE MOTHER

- **Role:** To herd the children along, to feed them, and not lose any. Gatherer.
- **Backstory:** Last of the Elder's surviving offspring, you have been responsible for feeding this family since your brothers and sisters all died, and the Elder became too frail to do this work.
- **Persona's Traits:** Responsible for Family, Respected, Always Busy
- **Persona's Focuses:** Fire-making, Stone-working, Oral History
- **Demeanor:** Strict and diligent.
- **Goal:** To keep her family together while trusting the Elder's plan to migrate.
- **Costume:** Ochre-rich mud body-paint, Substantial merkin.

THE FATHER

- **Role:** To kill prey and so to eat first. Hunter.
- **Backstory:** You wandered far from your own family long ago, pushed out by rivals. After a terrifying, almost deadly hike through unknown territory, the young Mother finally took you in and you soon paired with her. You add little to the family, but you are too big and strong to be removed... except perhaps by that new Youngster.
- **Persona's Traits:** Strong, Big, Respected, Secretly Afraid of Beasts
- **Persona's Focuses:** Fire-making, Stone-working, Pelt-working
- **Demeanor:** Selfish and domineering.
- **Goal:** To keep eating.
- **Costume:** Ochre-rich mud body-paint, Skin hood, Largest hand axe, Substantial merkin.

THE YOUNGSTER

- **Role:** To stay with these new people, and so to eat. Hunter.
- **Backstory:** Your own family were caught in the worst of the approaching dry season, far away, and you are the only one still alive. Starving, you randomly marched here in search of anything to eat, and luckily the Elder and the Mother decided you should stay with them. You haven't yet had a successful hunt, but as you recover your strength, you're feeling more and more up to it.
- **Persona's Traits:** Strong, Unknown, Malnourished
- **Persona's Focuses:** Tracking, Stone-working
- **Demeanor:** Skittish, ever-alert, untrusting
- **Goal:** To keep eating.
- **Costume:** Substantial merkin.

THE HYENA

- **Role:** The antagonist. To hunt the family.
- **Backstory:** The largest predator for kilometers around. The Hills and the Green Lands beyond are her natural territory, though she's been known to descend towards Maropeng when vulnerable prey tries to escape that way. She can keep running at high speed for hours without tiring, and her bite crushes bone.
- **Persona's Traits:** Uncommonly large, Problem-solver
- **Persona's Focuses:** Tracking, Hunting
- **Demeanor:** Frightening!
- **Goal:** To eat, to live.