

Language & World View

The bushes twitched again. Lok steadied by the tree and gazed. A head and a chest faced him, half-hidden. There were white bone-things behind the leaves and hair. The man had white bone things above his eyes and under the mouth so that his face was longer than a face should be. The man turned sideways in the bushes and looked along his shoulder. A stick rose upright and there was a lump of bone in the middle. Lok peered at the stick and the lump of bone and the small eyes in the bone things over the face. Suddenly Lok understood that the man was holding the stick out to him, but neither he nor Lok could reach over the river. He would have laughed if it were not for the echo of the screaming in his head. The stick began to grow shorter at both ends. Then it shot out to full length again.

The dead tree by his ear acquired a voice.

‘Clop!’

His ears twitched and he turned to the tree. By his face there had grown a twig. The twig smelt of other and of goose and of the bitter berries he must not eat.

(William Golding’s *The Inheritors* 1961:106)