

The PELLUCIDAR Series

**At the Earth's Core
Pellucidar
Tanar of Pellucidar
Tarzan at the Earth's Core
Back to the Stone Age
Land of Terror
Savage Pellucidar**

by Edgar Rice Burroughs



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At the Earth's Core • Pellucidar • Tanar of Pellucidar
Tarzan at the Earth's Core • Back to the Stone Age
Land of Terror • Savage Pellucidar
by Edgar Rice Burroughs

First published 1914–1942

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Edgar Rice Burroughs was born 1875 in Chicago as the youngest of four brothers. His father was a civil war veteran and a renown and successful businessman, his mother (who later wrote an autobiography, *Memoirs of a War Bride*) a school teacher. Both on his father's and his mother's side, the family proudly traced their ancestry back to English Puritan settlers who moved to Massachusetts in the early 17th century.

As a biography published by Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc. puts it, "from the day he was born, in Chicago, on September 1, 1875, until he submitted one-half a novel to All-Story Magazine in 1911, Edgar Rice Burroughs failed in nearly every enterprise he tried." In 1897 he had to give up his intended military career after he was diagnosed with a heart condition. In 1900 he married his childhood sweetheart, Emma Hulbert, but otherwise things remained disappointing, and by 1911 the financial situation of the family — two children, the third on its way — had become so dire that, after one more business (selling pencil sharpeners) had failed, he considered suicide. Instead, he tried one more thing — writing fiction. He had been reading pulp magazines, and, as he later said, "if people were paid for writing rot such as I read in some of those magazines, that I could write stories just as rotten. As a matter of fact, although I had never written a story, I knew absolutely that I could write stories just as entertaining and probably a whole lot more so than any I chanced to read in those magazines." And indeed he could. Success came quickly. *Tarzan of the Apes*, his third story, published 1912, laid the foundation of his fame, and by the end

of 1916, five years after he had taken up writing, twenty-seven of his novels had been published.

His private life was not without setbacks — in 1934 he and his wife divorced, and his second marriage again ended in divorce in 1942 — but as a writer of fantasy, science fiction, Westerns and historical romances and, from 1923 on, owner of Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc., he became one of the most successful authors of the first half of the 20th century, and Tarzan may be the best known character that modern fantasy fiction has created. Edgar Rice Burroughs died from a heart attack in 1950.

The seven volumes of the *Pellucidar* saga are not Edgar Rice Burroughs's most popular works, but, while defying all logic, they offer a breathtaking and highly enjoyable nonstop deathly peril last minute escape only to fall into the next deathly trap roller coaster ride, full of noble and ignoble stone age savages, brave and opinionated beautiful stone age girls, hungry cannibals, man-eating prehistoric beasts, keen explorers, valiant heroes, and utterly improbable coincidences. Fasten your seat belts!

ABOUT THIS EDITION

I do not have access to the original publications, but I have tried to fix what seem to be obvious printing or OCR errors in the version that has been available to me.

There are a number of errors in the text that has been available to me, though, that do not seem to be OCR related, and which I, too, tried to fix — they may either already have been in the original magazine editions, or have slipped in later. Where a scholarly edition would compare all published versions of the text and would document the editor's interventions, I can only make educated guesses, and I do not want to distract the reader with editorial notes that would add nothing to the understanding or enjoyment of the text.

Just a few examples:

“But how,” persisted Perry, “could you travel to strange country without heavenly bodies or a compass to guide you?”

Edited: travel to *your* country

That you may not appreciate my plan I shall briefly outline the history of the race.

Edited: That you *may* appreciate

... the cause for which I so devoutly hoped, for which I had consecrated my life, and for which I was not willing to give my life.

Edited: and for which I was *now* willing

They say that a part of this world is very cold and that their ancestors, who were seafaring men, because caught with their ships

in the frozen waters; that their compasses turned in all directions and became useless to them and that when finally they broke through the ice and sailed away into Pellucidar, which they found inhabited only by naked savages and wild beasts.

Edited: *became* caught with their ships in the frozen waters

Edited: when finally they broke through the ice *they* sailed away

He had saved Daj; but perhaps he had underestimated the safety of his own position, for he had not reckoned with the surprising agility and speed of the enormous ryth.

Edited: perhaps he had *overestimated* the safety

Frug scratched his head

Edited: *shook* his head [his wrists are bound behind his back]

Et cetera ...

In the first chapter, when they desperately watch the thermometer hoping not to die from the heat inside their vehicle, "At four hundred miles the temperature had reached 153 degrees," and it keeps slowly rising, "until at four hundred and ten miles it stood at 153 degrees." I have changed the first figure to 150.

At the beginning of Book VII David Innes is called Dave Innes, which can only be an error. I have changed his name back to David.

A few minor changes in spelling: *growsome* and *boulder* have been modernized to *gruesome* and *boulder*, the adjective *stanch* changed to *staunch*, the hyphen removed from *shore-line*, and *harquebus* is used consistently instead of sometimes *arquebus*.

In Book VI, Chapter 3 I have deleted a few sentences from the text and relegated them to a footnote. You will see, why.

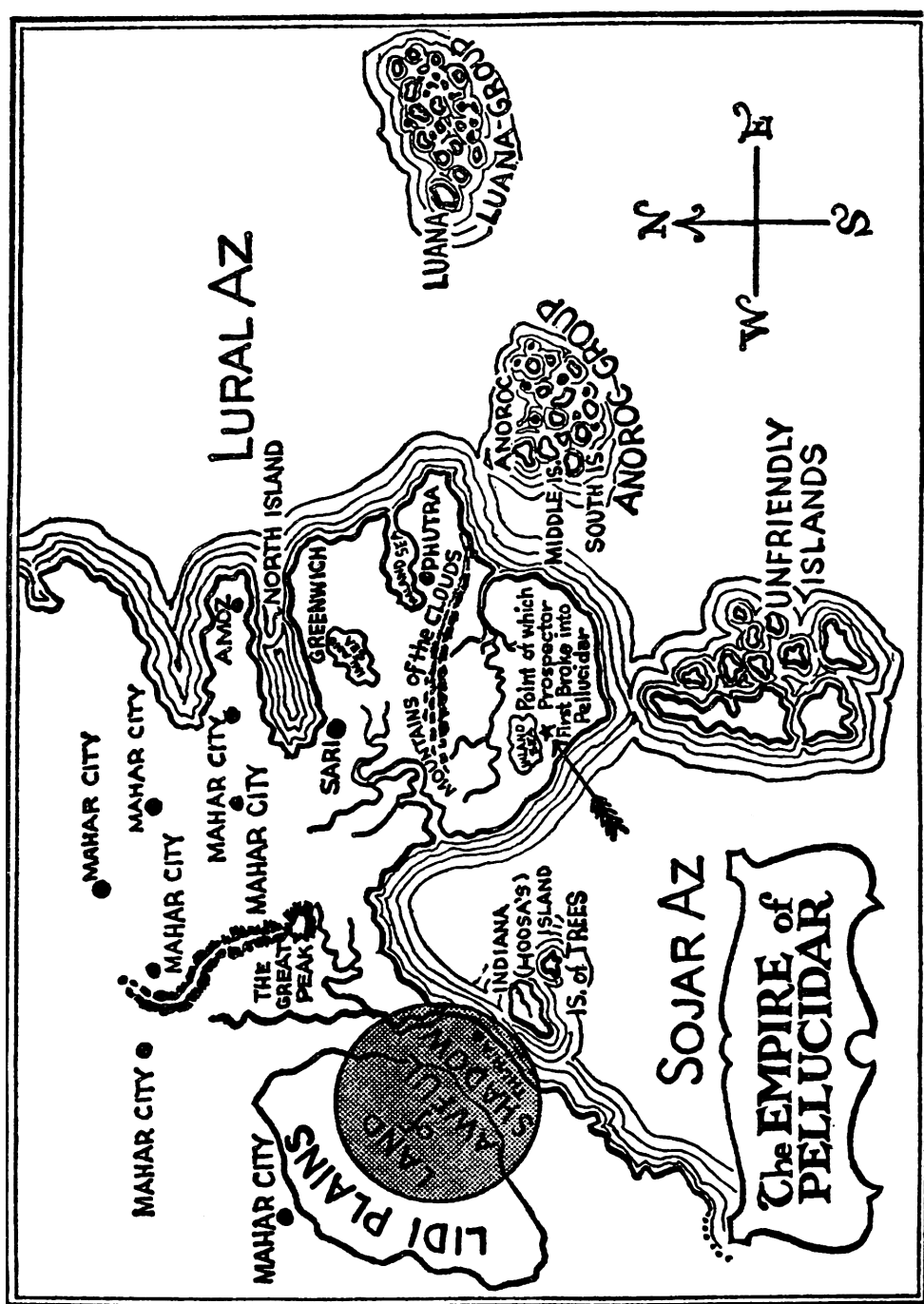
This is the first publication of the Pellucidar books in one volume.

MAPS

Maps of Pellucidar, drawn by Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Map 1 (next page):
From the first edition of *Pellucidar* (1915)

Other maps of Pellucidar can be found here:
<https://www.erbzine.com/mag30/3042.html>





Map 2:

From the *Blue Book Magazine* edition of *Tanar of Pellucidar* (1929)

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BOOK I
AT THE EARTH'S CORE

PROLOGUE

In the first place please bear in mind that I do not expect you to believe this story. Nor could you wonder had you witnessed a recent experience of mine when, in the armor of blissful and stupendous ignorance, I gaily narrated the gist of it to a Fellow of the Royal Geological Society on the occasion of my last trip to London.

You would surely have thought that I had been detected in no less a heinous crime than the purloining of the Crown Jewels from the Tower, or putting poison in the coffee of His Majesty the King.

The erudite gentleman in whom I confided congealed before I was half through! — it is all that saved him from exploding — and my dreams of an Honorary Fellowship, gold medals, and a niche in the Hall of Fame faded into the thin, cold air of his arctic atmosphere.

But I believe the story, and so would you, and so would the learned Fellow of the Royal Geological Society, had you and he heard it from the lips of the man who told it to me. Had you seen, as I did, the fire of truth in those gray eyes; had you felt the ring of sincerity in that quiet voice; had you realized the pathos of it all — you, too, would believe. You would not have needed the final ocular proof that I had — the weird rhamphorhynchus-like creature which he had brought back with him from the inner world.

I came upon him quite suddenly, and no less unexpectedly, upon the rim of the great Sahara Desert. He was standing before a goat-skin tent amidst a clump of date palms within a tiny oasis. Close by was an Arab douar of some eight or ten tents.

I had come down from the north to hunt lion. My party consisted

of a dozen children of the desert — I was the only “white” man. As we approached the little clump of verdure I saw the man come from his tent and with hand-shaded eyes peer intently at us. At sight of me he advanced rapidly to meet us.

“A white man!” he cried. “May the good Lord be praised! I have been watching you for hours, hoping against hope that *this* time there would be a white man. Tell me the date. What year is it?”

And when I had told him he staggered as though he had been struck full in the face, so that he was compelled to grasp my stirrup leather for support.

“It cannot be!” he cried after a moment. “It cannot be! Tell me that you are mistaken, or that you are but joking.”

“I am telling you the truth, my friend,” I replied. “Why should I deceive a stranger, or attempt to, in so simple a matter as the date?”

For some time he stood in silence, with bowed head.

“Ten years!” he murmured, at last. “Ten years, and I thought that at the most it could be scarce more than one!” That night he told me his story — the story that I give you here as nearly in his own words as I can recall them.

1.

TOWARD THE ETERNAL FIRES

I was born in Connecticut about thirty years ago. My name is David Innes. My father was a wealthy mine owner. When I was nineteen he died. All his property was to be mine when I had attained my majority — provided that I had devoted the two years intervening in close application to the great business I was to inherit.

I did my best to fulfil the last wishes of my parent — not because of the inheritance, but because I loved and honored my father. For six months I toiled in the mines and in the counting-rooms, for I wished to know every minute detail of the business.

Then Perry interested me in his invention. He was an old fellow who had devoted the better part of a long life to the perfection of a mechanical subterranean prospector. As relaxation he studied paleontology. I looked over his plans, listened to his arguments, inspected his working model — and then, convinced, I advanced the funds necessary to construct a full-sized, practical prospector.

I shall not go into the details of its construction — it lies out there in the desert now — about two miles from here. Tomorrow you may care to ride out and see it. Roughly, it is a steel cylinder a hundred feet long, and jointed so that it may turn and twist through solid rock if need be. At one end is a mighty revolving drill operated by an engine which Perry said generated more power to the cubic inch than any other engine did to the cubic foot. I remember that he used to claim that that invention alone would make us fabulously wealthy — we were going to make the whole thing public after the successful issue of our

first secret trial — but Perry never returned from that trial trip, and I only after ten years.

I recall as it were but yesterday the night of that momentous occasion upon which we were to test the practicality of that wondrous invention. It was near midnight when we repaired to the lofty tower in which Perry had constructed his “iron mole” as he was wont to call the thing. The great nose rested upon the bare earth of the floor. We passed through the doors into the outer jacket, secured them, and then passing on into the cabin, which contained the controlling mechanism within the inner tube, switched on the electric lights.

Perry looked to his generator; to the great tanks that held the life-giving chemicals with which he was to manufacture fresh air to replace that which we consumed in breathing; to his instruments for recording temperatures, speed, distance, and for examining the materials through which we were to pass.

He tested the steering device, and overlooked the mighty cogs which transmitted its marvelous velocity to the giant drill at the nose of his strange craft.

Our seats, into which we strapped ourselves, were so arranged upon transverse bars that we would be upright whether the craft were ploughing her way downward into the bowels of the earth, or running horizontally along some great seam of coal, or rising vertically toward the surface again.

At length all was ready. Perry bowed his head in prayer. For a moment we were silent, and then the old man’s hand grasped the starting lever. There was a frightful roaring beneath us — the giant frame trembled and vibrated — there was a rush of sound as the loose earth passed up through the hollow space between the inner and outer jackets to be deposited in our wake. We were off!

The noise was deafening. The sensation was frightful. For a full minute neither of us could do aught but cling with the proverbial desperation of the drowning man to the handrails of our swinging seats. Then Perry glanced at the thermometer.

“Gad!” he cried, “it cannot be possible — quick! What does the distance meter read?”

That and the speedometer were both on my side of the cabin, and as I turned to take a reading from the former I could see Perry muttering.

“Ten degrees rise — it cannot be possible!” and then I saw him tug frantically upon the steering wheel.

As I finally found the tiny needle in the dim light I translated Perry’s evident excitement, and my heart sank within me. But when I spoke I hid the fear which haunted me. “It will be seven hundred feet, Perry,” I said, “by the time you can turn her into the horizontal.”

“You’d better lend me a hand then, my boy,” he replied, “for I cannot budge her out of the vertical alone. God give that our combined strength may be equal to the task, for else we are lost.”

I wormed my way to the old man’s side with never a doubt but that the great wheel would yield on the instant to the power of my young and vigorous muscles. Nor was my belief mere vanity, for always had my physique been the envy and despair of my fellows. And for that very reason it had waxed even greater than nature had intended, since my natural pride in my great strength had led me to care for and develop my body and my muscles by every means within my power. What with boxing, football, and baseball, I had been in training since childhood.

And so it was with the utmost confidence that I laid hold of the huge iron rim; but though I threw every ounce of my strength into it,

my best effort was as unavailing as Perry's had been — the thing would not budge — the grim, insensate, horrible thing that was holding us upon the straight road to death!

At length I gave up the useless struggle, and without a word returned to my seat. There was no need for words — at least none that I could imagine, unless Perry desired to pray. And I was quite sure that he would, for he never left an opportunity neglected where he might sandwich in a prayer. He prayed when he arose in the morning, he prayed before he ate, he prayed when he had finished eating, and before he went to bed at night he prayed again. In between he often found excuses to pray even when the provocation seemed far-fetched to my worldly eyes — now that he was about to die I felt positive that I should witness a perfect orgy of prayer — if one may allude with such a simile to so solemn an act.

But to my astonishment I discovered that with death staring him in the face Abner Perry was transformed into a new being. From his lips there flowed — not prayer — but a clear and limpid stream of undiluted profanity, and it was all directed at that quietly stubborn piece of unyielding mechanism.

"I should think, Perry," I chided, "that a man of your professed religiousness would rather be at his prayers than cursing in the presence of imminent death."

"Death!" he cried. "Death is it that appalls you? That is nothing by comparison with the loss the world must suffer. Why, David within this iron cylinder we have demonstrated possibilities that science has scarce dreamed. We have harnessed a new principle, and with it animated a piece of steel with the power of ten thousand men. That two lives will be snuffed out is nothing to the world calamity that entombs in the bowels of the earth the discoveries that I have made and proved in

the successful construction of the thing that is now carrying us farther and farther toward the eternal central fires.”

I am frank to admit that for myself I was much more concerned with our own immediate future than with any problematic loss which the world might be about to suffer. The world was at least ignorant of its bereavement, while to me it was a real and terrible actuality.

“What can we do?” I asked, hiding my perturbation beneath the mask of a low and level voice.

“We may stop here, and die of asphyxiation when our atmosphere tanks are empty,” replied Perry, “or we may continue on with the slight hope that we may later sufficiently deflect the prospector from the vertical to carry us along the arc of a great circle which must eventually return us to the surface. If we succeed in so doing before we reach the higher internal temperature we may even yet survive. There would seem to me to be about one chance in several million that we shall succeed — otherwise we shall die more quickly but no more surely than as though we sat supinely waiting for the torture of a slow and horrible death.”

I glanced at the thermometer. It registered 110 degrees. While we were talking the mighty iron mole had bored its way over a mile into the rock of the earth’s crust.

“Let us continue on, then,” I replied. “It should soon be over at this rate. You never intimated that the speed of this thing would be so high, Perry. Didn’t you know it?”

“No,” he answered. “I could not figure the speed exactly, for I had no instrument for measuring the mighty power of my generator. I reasoned, however, that we should make about five hundred yards an hour.”

“And we are making seven miles an hour,” I concluded for him, as

I sat with my eyes upon the distance meter. "How thick is the Earth's crust, Perry?" I asked.

"There are almost as many conjectures as to that as there are geologists," was his answer. "One estimates it thirty miles, because the internal heat, increasing at the rate of about one degree to each sixty to seventy feet depth, would be sufficient to fuse the most refractory substances at that distance beneath the surface. Another finds that the phenomena of precession and nutation require that the earth, if not entirely solid, must at least have a shell not less than eight hundred to a thousand miles in thickness. So there you are. You may take your choice."

"And if it should prove solid?" I asked.

"It will be all the same to us in the end, David," replied Perry. "At the best our fuel will suffice to carry us but three or four days, while our atmosphere cannot last to exceed three. Neither, then, is sufficient to bear us in the safety through eight thousand miles of rock to the antipodes."

"If the crust is of sufficient thickness we shall come to a final stop between six and seven hundred miles beneath the earth's surface; but during the last hundred and fifty miles of our journey we shall be corpses. Am I correct?" I asked.

"Quite correct, David. Are you frightened?"

"I do not know. It all has come so suddenly that I scarce believe that either of us realizes the real terrors of our position. I feel that I should be reduced to panic; but yet I am not. I imagine that the shock has been so great as to partially stun our sensibilities."

Again I turned to the thermometer. The mercury was rising with less rapidity. It was now but 140 degrees, although we had penetrated to a depth of nearly four miles. I told Perry, and he smiled.

“We have shattered one theory at least,” was his only comment, and then he returned to his self-assumed occupation of fluently cursing the steering wheel. I once heard a pirate swear, but his best efforts would have seemed like those of a tyro alongside of Perry’s masterful and scientific imprecations.

Once more I tried my hand at the wheel, but I might as well have essayed to swing the earth itself. At my suggestion Perry stopped the generator, and as we came to rest I again threw all my strength into a supreme effort to move the thing even a hair’s breadth — but the results were as barren as when we had been traveling at top speed.

I shook my head sadly, and motioned to the starting lever. Perry pulled it toward him, and once again we were plunging downward toward eternity at the rate of seven miles an hour. I sat with my eyes glued to the thermometer and the distance meter. The mercury was rising very slowly now, though even at 145 degrees it was almost unbearable within the narrow confines of our metal prison.

About noon, or twelve hours after our start upon this unfortunate journey, we had bored to a depth of eighty-four miles, at which point the mercury registered 153 degrees F.

Perry was becoming more hopeful, although upon what meager food he sustained his optimism I could not conjecture. From cursing he had turned to singing — I felt that the strain had at last affected his mind. For several hours we had not spoken except as he asked me for the readings of the instruments from time to time, and I announced them. My thoughts were filled with vain regrets. I recalled numerous acts of my past life which I should have been glad to have had a few more years to live down. There was the affair in the Latin Commons at Andover when Calhoun and I had put gunpowder in the stove — and nearly killed one of the masters. And then — but what was the use,

I was about to die and atone for all these things and several more. Already the heat was sufficient to give me a foretaste of the hereafter. A few more degrees and I felt that I should lose consciousness.

“What are the readings now, David?” Perry’s voice broke in upon my somber reflections.

“Ninety miles and 153 degrees,” I replied.

“Gad, but we’ve knocked that thirty-mile-crust theory into a cocked hat!” he cried gleefully.

“Precious lot of good it will do us,” I growled back.

“But my boy,” he continued, “doesn’t that temperature reading mean anything to you? Why it hasn’t gone up in six miles. Think of it, son!”

“Yes, I’m thinking of it,” I answered; “but what difference will it make when our air supply is exhausted whether the temperature is 153 degrees or 153,000? We’ll be just as dead, and no one will know the difference, anyhow.” But I must admit that for some unaccountable reason the stationary temperature did renew my waning hope. What I hoped for I could not have explained, nor did I try. The very fact, as Perry took pains to explain, of the blasting of several very exact and learned scientific hypotheses made it apparent that we could not know what lay before us within the bowels of the earth, and so we might continue to hope for the best, at least until we were dead — when hope would no longer be essential to our happiness. It was very good, and logical reasoning, and so I embraced it.

At one hundred miles the temperature had *dropped to 152½ degrees!* When I announced it Perry reached over and hugged me.

From then on until noon of the second day, it continued to drop until it became as uncomfortably cold as it had been unbearably hot before. At the depth of two hundred and forty miles our nostrils were

assailed by almost overpowering ammonia fumes, and the temperature had dropped to *ten below zero!* We suffered nearly two hours of this intense and bitter cold, until at about two hundred and forty-five miles from the surface of the earth we entered a stratum of solid ice, when the mercury quickly rose to 32 degrees. During the next three hours we passed through ten miles of ice, eventually emerging into another series of ammonia-impregnated strata, where the mercury again fell to ten degrees below zero.

Slowly it rose once more until we were convinced that at last we were nearing the molten interior of the earth. At four hundred miles the temperature had reached 150 degrees. Feverishly I watched the thermometer. Slowly it rose. Perry had ceased singing and was at last praying.

Our hopes had received such a deathblow that the gradually increasing heat seemed to our distorted imaginations much greater than it really was. For another hour I saw that pitiless column of mercury rise and rise until at four hundred and ten miles it stood at 153 degrees. Now it was that we began to hang upon those readings in almost breathless anxiety.

One hundred and fifty-three degrees had been the maximum temperature above the ice stratum. Would it stop at this point again, or would it continue its merciless climb? We knew that there was no hope, and yet with the persistence of life itself we continued to hope against practical certainty.

Already the air tanks were at low ebb — there was barely enough of the precious gases to sustain us for another twelve hours. But would we be alive to know or care? It seemed incredible.

At four hundred and twenty miles I took another reading.

“Perry!” I shouted. “Perry, man! She’s going down! She’s going down! She’s 152 degrees again.”

“Gad!” he cried. “What can it mean? Can the earth be cold at the center?”

“I do not know, Perry,” I answered; “but thank God, if I am to die it shall not be by fire — that is all that I have feared. I can face the thought of any death but that.”

Down, down went the mercury until it stood as low as it had seven miles from the surface of the earth, and then of a sudden the realization broke upon us that death was very near. Perry was the first to discover it. I saw him fussing with the valves that regulate the air supply. And at the same time I experienced difficulty in breathing. My head felt dizzy — my limbs heavy.

I saw Perry crumple in his seat. He gave himself a shake and sat erect again. Then he turned toward me.

“Good-bye, David,” he said. “I guess this is the end,” and then he smiled and closed his eyes.

“Good-bye, Perry, and good luck to you,” I answered, smiling back at him. But I fought off that awful lethargy. I was very young — I did not want to die.

For an hour I battled against the cruelly enveloping death that surrounded me upon all sides. At first I found that by climbing high into the framework above me I could find more of the precious life-giving elements, and for a while these sustained me. It must have been an hour after Perry had succumbed that I at last came to the realization that I could no longer carry on this unequal struggle against the inevitable.

With my last flickering ray of consciousness I turned mechanically toward the distance meter. It stood at exactly five hundred miles from

the earth's surface — and then of a sudden the huge thing that bore us came to a stop. The rattle of hurtling rock through the hollow jacket ceased. The wild racing of the giant drill betokened that it was running loose in *air* — and then another truth flashed upon me. The point of the prospector was *above* us. Slowly it dawned on me that since passing through the ice strata it had been above. We had turned in the ice and sped upward toward the earth's crust. Thank God! We were safe!

I put my nose to the intake pipe through which samples were to have been taken during the passage of the prospector through the earth, and my fondest hopes were realized — a flood of fresh air was pouring into the iron cabin. The reaction left me in a state of collapse, and I lost consciousness.

2.

A STRANGE WORLD

I was unconscious little more than an instant, for as I lunged forward from the crossbeam to which I had been clinging, and fell with a crash to the floor of the cabin, the shock brought me to myself.

My first concern was with Perry. I was horrified at the thought that upon the very threshold of salvation he might be dead. Tearing open his shirt I placed my ear to his breast. I could have cried with relief — his heart was beating quite regularly.

At the water tank I wetted my handkerchief, slapping it smartly across his forehead and face several times. In a moment I was rewarded by the raising of his lids. For a time he lay wide-eyed and quite uncomprehending. Then his scattered wits slowly foregathered, and he sat up sniffing the air with an expression of wonderment upon his face.

“Why, David,” he cried at last, “it’s air, as sure as I live. Why — why what does it mean? Where in the world are we? What has happened?”

“It means that we’re back at the surface all right, Perry,” I cried; “but where, I don’t know. I haven’t opened her up yet. Been too busy reviving you. Lord, man, but you had a close squeak!”

“You say we’re back at the surface, David? How can that be? How long have I been unconscious?”

“Not long. We turned in the ice stratum. Don’t you recall the sudden whirling of our seats? After that the drill was above you instead of below. We didn’t notice it at the time; but I recall it now.”

“You mean to say that we turned back in the ice stratum, David? That is not possible. The prospector cannot turn unless its nose is

deflected from the outside — by some external force or resistance — the steering wheel within would have moved in response. The steering wheel has not budged, David, since we started. You know that.”

I did know it; but here we were with our drill racing in pure air, and copious volumes of it pouring into the cabin.

“We couldn’t have turned in the ice stratum, Perry, I know as well as you,” I replied; “but the fact remains that we did, for here we are this minute at the surface of the earth again, and I am going out to see just where.”

“Better wait till morning, David — it must be midnight now.”

I glanced at the chronometer.

“Half after twelve. We have been out seventy-two hours, so it must be midnight. Nevertheless I am going to have a look at the blessed sky that I had given up all hope of ever seeing again,” and so saying I lifted the bars from the inner door, and swung it open. There was quite a quantity of loose material in the jacket, and this I had to remove with a shovel to get at the opposite door in the outer shell.

In a short time I had removed enough of the earth and rock to the floor of the cabin to expose the door beyond. Perry was directly behind me as I threw it open. The upper half was above the surface of the ground. With an expression of surprise I turned and looked at Perry — it was broad daylight without!

“Something seems to have gone wrong either with our calculations or the chronometer,” I said. Perry shook his head — there was a strange expression in his eyes.

“Let’s have a look beyond that door, David,” he cried.

Together we stepped out to stand in silent contemplation of a landscape at once weird and beautiful. Before us a low and level shore stretched down to a silent sea. As far as the eye could reach the surface

of the water was dotted with countless tiny isles — some of towering, barren, granitic rock — others resplendent in gorgeous trappings of tropical vegetation, myriad starred with the magnificent splendor of vivid blooms.

Behind us rose a dark and forbidding wood of giant arborescent ferns intermingled with the commoner types of a primeval tropical forest. Huge creepers depended in great loops from tree to tree, dense under-brush overgrew a tangled mass of fallen trunks and branches. Upon the outer verge we could see the same splendid coloring of countless blossoms that glorified the islands, but within the dense shadows all seemed dark and gloomy as the grave.

And upon all the noonday sun poured its torrid rays out of a cloudless sky.

“Where on earth can we be?” I asked, turning to Perry.

For some moments the old man did not reply. He stood with bowed head, buried in deep thought. But at last he spoke.

“David,” he said, “I am not so sure that we are *on* earth.”

“What do you mean Perry?” I cried. “Do you think that we are dead, and this is heaven?” He smiled, and turning, pointing to the nose of the prospector protruding from the ground at our backs.

“But for that, David, I might believe that we were indeed come to the country beyond the Styx. The prospector renders that theory untenable — it, certainly, could never have gone to heaven. However I am willing to concede that we actually may be in another world from that which we have always known. If we are not *on* earth, there is every reason to believe that we may be *in* it.”

“We may have quartered through the earth’s crust and come out upon some tropical island of the West Indies,” I suggested. Again Perry shook his head.

“Let us wait and see, David,” he replied, “and in the meantime suppose we do a bit of exploring up and down the coast — we may find a native who can enlighten us.”

As we walked along the beach Perry gazed long and earnestly across the water. Evidently he was wrestling with a mighty problem.

“David,” he said abruptly, “do you perceive anything unusual about the horizon?”

As I looked I began to appreciate the reason for the strangeness of the landscape that had haunted me from the first with an illusive suggestion of the bizarre and unnatural — *there was no horizon!* As far as the eye could reach out the sea continued and upon its bosom floated tiny islands, those in the distance reduced to mere specks; but ever beyond them was the sea, until the impression became quite real that one was *looking up* at the most distant point that the eyes could fathom — the distance was lost in the distance. That was all — there was no clear-cut horizontal line marking the dip of the globe below the line of vision.

“A great light is commencing to break on me,” continued Perry, taking out his watch. “I believe that I have partially solved the riddle. It is now two o’clock. When we emerged from the prospector the sun was directly above us. Where is it now?”

I glanced up to find the great orb still motionless in the center of the heaven. And such a sun! I had scarcely noticed it before. Fully thrice the size of the sun I had known throughout my life, and apparently so near that the sight of it carried the conviction that one might almost reach up and touch it.

“My God, Perry, where are we?” I exclaimed. “This thing is beginning to get on my nerves.”

“I think that I may state quite positively, David,” he commenced,

“that we are —” but he got no further. From behind us in the vicinity of the prospector there came the most thunderous, awe-inspiring roar that ever had fallen upon my ears. With one accord we turned to discover the author of that fearsome noise.

Had I still retained the suspicion that we were on earth the sight that met my eyes would quite entirely have banished it. Emerging from the forest was a colossal beast which closely resembled a bear. It was fully as large as the largest elephant and with great forepaws armed with huge claws. Its nose, or snout, depended nearly a foot below its lower jaw, much after the manner of a rudimentary trunk. The giant body was covered by a coat of thick, shaggy hair.

Roaring horribly it came toward us at a ponderous, shuffling trot. I turned to Perry to suggest that it might be wise to seek other surroundings — the idea had evidently occurred to Perry previously, for he was already a hundred paces away, and with each second his prodigious bounds increased the distance. I had never guessed what latent speed possibilities the old gentleman possessed.

I saw that he was headed toward a little point of the forest which ran out toward the sea not far from where we had been standing, and as the mighty creature, the sight of which had galvanized him into such remarkable action, was forging steadily toward me, I set off after Perry, though at a somewhat more decorous pace. It was evident that the massive beast pursuing us was not built for speed, so all that I considered necessary was to gain the trees sufficiently ahead of it to enable me to climb to the safety of some great branch before it came up.

Notwithstanding our danger I could not help but laugh at Perry’s frantic capers as he essayed to gain the safety of the lower branches of the trees he now had reached. The stems were bare for a distance of some fifteen feet — at least on those trees which Perry attempted to

ascend, for the suggestion of safety carried by the larger of the forest giants had evidently attracted him to them. A dozen times he scrambled up the trunks like a huge cat only to fall back to the ground once more, and with each failure he cast a horrified glance over his shoulder at the oncoming brute, simultaneously emitting terror-stricken shrieks that awoke the echoes of the grim forest.

At length he spied a dangling creeper about the bigness of one's wrist, and when I reached the trees he was racing madly up it, hand over hand. He had almost reached the lowest branch of the tree from which the creeper depended when the thing parted beneath his weight and he fell sprawling at my feet.

The misfortune now was no longer amusing, for the beast was already too close to us for comfort. Seizing Perry by the shoulder I dragged him to his feet, and rushing to a smaller tree — one that he could easily encircle with his arms and legs — I boosted him as far up as I could, and then left him to his fate, for a glance over my shoulder revealed the awful beast almost upon me.

It was the great size of the thing alone that saved me. Its enormous bulk rendered it too slow upon its feet to cope with the agility of my young muscles, and so I was enabled to dodge out of its way and run completely behind it before its slow wits could direct it in pursuit.

The few seconds of grace that this gave me found me safely lodged in the branches of a tree a few paces from that in which Perry had at last found a haven.

Did I say safely lodged? At the time I thought we were quite safe, and so did Perry. He was praying — raising his voice in thanksgiving at our deliverance — and had just completed a sort of paeon of gratitude that the thing couldn't climb a tree when without warning it reared up

beneath him on its enormous tail and hind feet, and reached those fearfully armed paws quite to the branch upon which he crouched.

The accompanying roar was all but drowned in Perry's scream of fright, and he came near tumbling headlong into the gaping jaws beneath him, so precipitate was his impetuous haste to vacate the dangerous limb. It was with a deep sigh of relief that I saw him gain a higher branch in safety.

And then the brute did that which froze us both anew with horror. Grasping the tree's stem with his powerful paws he dragged down with all the great weight of his huge bulk and all the irresistible force of those mighty muscles. Slowly, but surely, the stem began to bend toward him. Inch by inch he worked his paws upward as the tree leaned more and more from the perpendicular. Perry clung chattering in a panic of terror. Higher and higher into the bending and swaying tree he clambered. More and more rapidly was the tree top inclining toward the ground.

I saw now why the great brute was armed with such enormous paws. The use that he was putting them to was precisely that for which nature had intended them. The sloth-like creature was herbivorous, and to feed that mighty carcass entire trees must be stripped of their foliage. The reason for its attacking us might easily be accounted for on the supposition of an ugly disposition such as that which the fierce and stupid rhinoceros of Africa possesses. But these were later reflections. At the moment I was too frantic with apprehension on Perry's behalf to consider aught other than a means to save him from the death that loomed so close.

Realizing that I could outdistance the clumsy brute in the open, I dropped from my leafy sanctuary intent only on distracting the thing's attention from Perry long enough to enable the old man to gain

the safety of a larger tree. There were many close by which not even the terrific strength of that titanic monster could bend.

As I touched the ground I snatched a broken limb from the tangled mass that matted the jungle-like floor of the forest and, leaping unnoticed behind the shaggy back, dealt the brute a terrific blow. My plan worked like magic. From the previous slowness of the beast I had been led to look for no such marvelous agility as he now displayed. Releasing his hold upon the tree he dropped on all fours and at the same time swung his great, wicked tail with a force that would have broken every bone in my body had it struck me; but, fortunately, I had turned to flee at the very instant that I felt my blow land upon the towering back.

As it started in pursuit of me I made the mistake of running along the edge of the forest rather than making for the open beach. In a moment I was knee-deep in rotting vegetation, and the awful thing behind me was gaining rapidly as I floundered and fell in my efforts to extricate myself.

A fallen log gave me an instant's advantage, for climbing upon it I leaped to another a few paces farther on, and in this way was able to keep clear of the mush that carpeted the surrounding ground. But the zigzag course that this necessitated was placing such a heavy handicap upon me that my pursuer was steadily gaining upon me.

Suddenly from behind I heard a tumult of howls, and sharp, piercing barks — much the sound that a pack of wolves raises when in full cry. Involuntarily I glanced backward to discover the origin of this new and menacing note with the result that I missed my footing and went sprawling once more upon my face in the deep muck.

My mammoth enemy was so close by this time that I knew I must feel the weight of one of his terrible paws before I could rise, but to

my surprise the blow did not fall upon me. The howling and snapping and barking of the new element which had been infused into the melee now seemed centered quite close behind me, and as I raised myself upon my hands and glanced around I saw what it was that had distracted the *dyryth*, as I afterward learned the thing is called, from my trail.

It was surrounded by a pack of some hundred wolf-like creatures — wild dogs they seemed — that rushed growling and snapping in upon it from all sides, so that they sank their white fangs into the slow brute and were away again before it could reach them with its huge paws or sweeping tail.

But these were not all that my startled eyes perceived. Chattering and gibbering through the lower branches of the trees came a company of manlike creatures evidently urging on the dog pack. They were to all appearances strikingly similar in aspect to the Negro of Africa. Their skins were very black, and their features much like those of the more pronounced Negroid type except that the head receded more rapidly above the eyes, leaving little or no forehead. Their arms were rather longer and their legs shorter in proportion to the torso than in man, and later I noticed that their great toes protruded at right angles from their feet — because of their arboreal habits, I presume. Behind them trailed long, slender tails which they used in climbing quite as much as they did either their hands or feet.

I had stumbled to my feet the moment that I discovered that the wolf-dogs were holding the *dyryth* at bay. At sight of me several of the savage creatures left off worrying the great brute to come slinking with bared fangs toward me, and as I turned to run toward the trees again to seek safety among the lower branches, I saw a number of the man-apes leaping and chattering in the foliage of the nearest tree.

Between them and the beasts behind me there was little choice, but at least there was a doubt as to the reception these grotesque parodies on humanity would accord me, while there was none as to the fate which awaited me beneath the grinning fangs of my fierce pursuers.

And so I raced on toward the trees intending to pass beneath that which held the man-things and take refuge in another farther on; but the wolf-dogs were very close behind me — so close that I had despaired of escaping them, when one of the creatures in the tree above swung down headforemost, his tail looped about a great limb, and grasping me beneath my armpits swung me in safety up among his fellows.

There they fell to examining me with the utmost excitement and curiosity. They picked at my clothing, my hair, and my flesh. They turned me about to see if I had a tail, and when they discovered that I was not so equipped they fell into roars of laughter. Their teeth were very large and white and even, except for the upper canines which were a trifle longer than the others — protruding just a bit when the mouth was closed.

When they had examined me for a few moments one of them discovered that my clothing was not a part of me, with the result that garment by garment they tore it from me amidst peals of the wildest laughter. Apelike, they essayed to don the apparel themselves, but their ingenuity was not sufficient to the task and so they gave it up.

In the meantime I had been straining my eyes to catch a glimpse of Perry, but nowhere about could I see him, although the clump of trees in which he had first taken refuge was in full view. I was much exercised by fear that something had befallen him, and though I called his name aloud several times there was no response.

Tired at last of playing with my clothing the creatures threw it to

the ground, and catching me, one on either side, by an arm, started off at a most terrifying pace through the tree tops. Never have I experienced such a journey before or since — even now I oftentimes awake from a deep sleep haunted by the horrid remembrance of that awful experience.

From tree to tree the agile creatures sprang like flying squirrels, while the cold sweat stood upon my brow as I glimpsed the depths beneath, into which a single misstep on the part of either of my bearers would hurl me. As they bore me along, my mind was occupied with a thousand bewildering thoughts. What had become of Perry? Would I ever see him again? What were the intentions of these half-human things into whose hands I had fallen? Were they inhabitants of the same world into which I had been born? No! It could not be. But yet where else? I had not left that earth — of that I was sure. Still neither could I reconcile the things which I had seen to a belief that I was still in the world of my birth. With a sigh I gave it up.

3.

A CHANGE OF MASTERS

We must have traveled several miles through the dark and dismal wood when we came suddenly upon a dense village built high among the branches of the trees. As we approached it my escort broke into wild shouting which was immediately answered from within, and a moment later a swarm of creatures of the same strange race as those who had captured me poured out to meet us. Again I was the center of a wildly chattering horde. I was pulled this way and that. Pinched, pounded, and thumped until I was black and blue, yet I do not think that their treatment was dictated by either cruelty or malice — I was a curiosity, a freak, a new plaything, and their childish minds required the added evidence of all their senses to back up the testimony of their eyes.

Presently they dragged me within the village, which consisted of several hundred rude shelters of boughs and leaves supported upon the branches of the trees.

Between the huts, which sometimes formed crooked streets, were dead branches and the trunks of small trees which connected the huts upon one tree to those within adjoining trees; the whole network of huts and pathways forming an almost solid flooring a good fifty feet above the ground.

I wondered why these agile creatures required connecting bridges between the trees, but later when I saw the motley aggregation of half-savage beasts which they kept within their village I realized the necessity for the pathways. There were a number of the same vicious wolf-dogs which we had left worrying the dyryth, and many goatlike

animals whose distended udders explained the reasons for their presence.

My guard halted before one of the huts into which I was pushed; then two of the creatures squatted down before the entrance — to prevent my escape, doubtless. Though where I should have escaped to I certainly had not the remotest conception. I had no more than entered the dark shadows of the interior than there fell upon my ears the tones of a familiar voice, in prayer.

“Perry!” I cried. “Dear old Perry! Thank the Lord you are safe.”

“David! Can it be possible that you escaped?” And the old man stumbled toward me and threw his arms about me.

He had seen me fall before the dyryth, and then he had been seized by a number of the ape-creatures and borne through the tree tops to their village. His captors had been as inquisitive as to his strange clothing as had mine, with the same result. As we looked at each other we could not help but laugh.

“With a tail, David,” remarked Perry, “you would make a very handsome ape.”

“Maybe we can borrow a couple,” I rejoined. “They seem to be quite the thing this season. I wonder what the creatures intend doing with us, Perry. They don’t seem really savage. What do you suppose they can be? You were about to tell me where we are when that great hairy frigate bore down upon us — have you really any idea at all?”

“Yes, David,” he replied, “I know precisely where we are. We have made a magnificent discovery, my boy! We have proved that the earth is hollow. We have passed entirely through its crust to the inner world.”

“Perry, you are mad!”

“Not at all, David. For two hundred and fifty miles our prospector bore us through the crust beneath our outer world. At that point it

reached the center of gravity of the five-hundred-mile-thick crust. Up to that point we had been descending — direction is, of course, merely relative. Then at the moment that our seats revolved — the thing that made you believe that we had turned about and were speeding upward — we passed the center of gravity and, though we did not alter the direction of our progress, yet we were in reality moving upward — toward the surface of the inner world. Does not the strange fauna and flora which we have seen convince you that you are not in the world of your birth? And the horizon — could it present the strange aspects which we both noted unless we were indeed standing upon the inside surface of a sphere?”

“But the sun, Perry!” I urged. “How in the world can the sun shine through five hundred miles of solid crust?”

“It is not the sun of the outer world that we see here. It is another sun — an entirely different sun — that casts its eternal noonday effulgence upon the face of the inner world. Look at it now, David — if you can see it from the doorway of this hut — and you will see that it is still in the exact center of the heavens. We have been here for many hours — yet it is still noon.

“And withal it is very simple, David. The earth was once a nebulous mass. It cooled, and as it cooled it shrank. At length a thin crust of solid matter formed upon its outer surface — a sort of shell; but within it was partially molten matter and highly expanded gases. As it continued to cool, what happened? Centrifugal force hurled the particles of the nebulous center toward the crust as rapidly as they approached a solid state. You have seen the same principle practically applied in the modern cream separator. Presently there was only a small super-heated core of gaseous matter remaining within a huge vacant interior left by the contraction of the cooling gases. The equal

attraction of the solid crust from all directions maintained this luminous core in the exact center of the hollow globe. What remains of it is the sun you saw today — a relatively tiny thing at the exact center of the earth. Equally to every part of this inner world it diffuses its perpetual noonday light and torrid heat.

“This inner world must have cooled sufficiently to support animal life long ages after life appeared upon the outer crust, but that the same agencies were at work here is evident from the similar forms of both animal and vegetable creation which we have already seen. Take the great beast which attacked us, for example. Unquestionably a counterpart of the Megatherium of the post-Pliocene period of the outer crust, whose fossilized skeleton has been found in South America.”

“But the grotesque inhabitants of this forest?” I urged. “Surely they have no counterpart in the earth’s history.”

“Who can tell?” he rejoined. “They may constitute the link between ape and man, all traces of which have been swallowed by the countless convulsions which have racked the outer crust, or they may be merely the result of evolution along slightly different lines — either is quite possible.”

Further speculation was interrupted by the appearance of several of our captors before the entrance of the hut. Two of them entered and dragged us forth. The perilous pathways and the surrounding trees were filled with the black ape-men, their females, and their young. There was not an ornament, a weapon, or a garment among the lot.

“Quite low in the scale of creation,” commented Perry.

“Quite high enough to play the deuce with us, though,” I replied. “Now what do you suppose they intend doing with us?”

We were not long in learning. As on the occasion of our trip to the village we were seized by a couple of the powerful creatures and

whirled away through the tree tops, while about us and in our wake raced a chattering, jabbering, grinning horde of sleek, black ape-things.

Twice my bearers missed their footing, and my heart ceased beating as we plunged toward instant death among the tangled deadwood beneath. But on both occasions those lithe, powerful tails reached out and found sustaining branches, nor did either of the creatures loosen their grasp upon me. In fact, it seemed that the incidents were of no greater moment to them than would be the stubbing of one's toe at a street crossing in the outer world — they but laughed uproariously and sped on with me.

For some time they continued through the forest — how long I could not guess for I was learning, what was later borne very forcefully to my mind, that time ceases to be a factor the moment means for measuring it cease to exist. Our watches were gone, and we were living beneath a stationary sun. Already I was puzzled to compute the period of time which had elapsed since we broke through the crust of the inner world. It might be hours, or it might be days — who in the world could tell where it was always noon! By the sun, no time had elapsed — but my judgment told me that we must have been several hours in this strange world.

Presently the forest terminated, and we came out upon a level plain. A short distance before us rose a few low, rocky hills. Toward these our captors urged us, and after a short time led us through a narrow pass into a tiny, circular valley. Here they got down to work, and we were soon convinced that if we were not to die to make a Roman holiday, we were to die for some other purpose. The attitude of our captors altered immediately as they entered the natural arena within the rocky hills. Their laughter ceased. Grim ferocity marked their bestial faces — bared fangs menaced us.

We were placed in the center of the amphitheater — the thousand creatures forming a great ring about us. Then a wolf-dog was brought — hyaenadon Perry called it — and turned loose with us inside the circle. The thing's body was as large as that of a full-grown mastiff, its legs were short and powerful, and its jaws broad and strong. Dark, shaggy hair covered its back and sides, while its breast and belly were quite white. As it slunk toward us it presented a most formidable aspect with its upcurled lips baring its mighty fangs.

Perry was on his knees, praying. I stooped and picked up a small stone. At my movement the beast veered off a bit and commenced circling us. Evidently it had been a target for stones before. The ape-things were dancing up and down urging the brute on with savage cries, until at last, seeing that I did not throw, he charged us.

At Andover, and later at Yale, I had pitched on winning ball teams. My speed and control must both have been above the ordinary, for I made such a record during my senior year at college that overtures were made to me in behalf of one of the great major-league teams; but in the tightest pitch that ever had confronted me in the past I had never been in such need for control as now.

As I wound up for the delivery, I held my nerves and muscles under absolute command, though the grinning jaws were hurtling toward me at terrific speed. And then I let go, with every ounce of my weight and muscle and science in back of that throw. The stone caught the hyaenodon full upon the end of the nose, and sent him bowling over upon his back.

At the same instant a chorus of shrieks and howls arose from the circle of spectators, so that for a moment I thought that the upsetting of their champion was the cause; but in this I soon saw that I was mistaken. As I looked, the ape-things broke in all directions toward

the surrounding hills, and then I distinguished the real cause of their perturbation. Behind them, streaming through the pass which leads into the valley, came a swarm of hairy men — gorilla-like creatures armed with spears and hatchets, and bearing long, oval shields. Like demons they set upon the ape-things, and before them the hyaenodon, which had now regained its senses and its feet, fled howling with fright. Past us swept the pursued and the pursuers, nor did the hairy ones accord us more than a passing glance until the arena had been emptied of its former occupants. Then they returned to us, and one who seemed to have authority among them directed that we be brought with them.

When we had passed out of the amphitheater onto the great plain we saw a caravan of men and women — human beings like ourselves — and for the first time hope and relief filled my heart, until I could have cried out in the exuberance of my happiness. It is true that they were a half-naked, wild-appearing aggregation; but they at least were fashioned along the same lines as ourselves — there was nothing grotesque or horrible about them as about the other creatures in this strange, weird world.

But as we came closer, our hearts sank once more, for we discovered that the poor wretches were chained neck to neck in a long line, and that the gorilla-men were their guards. With little ceremony Perry and I were chained at the end of the line, and without further ado the interrupted march was resumed.

Up to this time the excitement had kept us both up; but now the tiresome monotony of the long march across the sun-baked plain brought on all the agonies consequent to a long-denied sleep. On and on we stumbled beneath that hateful noonday sun. If we fell we were prodded with a sharp point. Our companions in chains did not

stumble. They strode along proudly erect. Occasionally they would exchange words with one another in a monosyllabic language. They were a noble-appearing race with well-formed heads and perfect physiques. The men were heavily bearded, tall and muscular; the women, smaller and more gracefully molded, with great masses of raven hair caught into loose knots upon their heads. The features of both sexes were well proportioned — there was not a face among them that would have been called even plain if judged by earthly standards. They wore no ornaments; but this I later learned was due to the fact that their captors had stripped them of everything of value. As garmenture the women possessed a single robe of some light-colored, spotted hide, rather similar in appearance to a leopard's skin. This they wore either supported entirely about the waist by a leathern thong, so that it hung partially below the knee on one side, or possibly looped gracefully across one shoulder. Their feet were shod with skin sandals. The men wore loin cloths of the hide of some shaggy beast, long ends of which depended before and behind nearly to the ground. In some instances these ends were finished with the strong talons of the beast from which the hides had been taken.

Our guards, whom I already have described as gorilla-like men, were rather lighter in build than a gorilla, but even so they were indeed mighty creatures. Their arms and legs were proportioned more in conformity with human standards, but their entire bodies were covered with shaggy, brown hair, and their faces were quite as brutal as those of the few stuffed specimens of the gorilla which I had seen in the museums at home.

Their only redeeming feature lay in the development of the head above and back of the ears. In this respect they were not one whit less human than we. They were clothed in a sort of tunic of light cloth

which reached to the knees. Beneath this they wore only a loin cloth of the same material, while their feet were shod with thick hide of some mammoth creature of this inner world.

Their arms and necks were encircled by many ornaments of metal — silver predominating — and on their tunics were sewn the heads of tiny reptiles in odd and rather artistic designs. They talked among themselves as they marched along on either side of us, but in a language which I perceived differed from that employed by our fellow prisoners. When they addressed the latter they used what appeared to be a third language, and which I later learned is a mongrel tongue rather analogous to the Pidgin-English of the Chinese coolie.

How far we marched I have no conception, nor has Perry. Both of us were asleep much of the time for hours before a halt was called — then we dropped in our tracks. I say “for hours,” but how may one measure time where time does not exist! When our march commenced the sun stood at zenith. When we halted our shadows still pointed toward nadir. Whether an instant or an eternity of earthly time elapsed who may say. That march may have occupied nine years and eleven months of the ten years that I spent in the inner world, or it may have been accomplished in the fraction of a second — I cannot tell. But this I do know that since you have told me that ten years have elapsed since I departed from this earth I have lost all respect for time — I am commencing to doubt that such a thing exists other than in the weak, finite mind of man.

4.

DIAN THE BEAUTIFUL

When our guards aroused us from sleep we were much refreshed. They gave us food. Strips of dried meat it was, but it put new life and strength into us, so that now we too marched with high-held heads, and took noble strides. At least I did, for I was young and proud; but poor Perry hated walking. On earth I had often seen him call a cab to travel a square — he was paying for it now, and his old legs wobbled so that I put my arm about him and half carried him through the balance of those frightful marches.

The country began to change at last, and we wound up out of the level plain through mighty mountains of virgin granite. The tropical verdure of the lowlands was replaced by hardier vegetation, but even here the effects of constant heat and light were apparent in the immensity of the trees and the profusion of foliage and blooms. Crystal streams roared through their rocky channels, fed by the perpetual snows which we could see far above us. Above the snowcapped heights hung masses of heavy clouds. It was these, Perry explained, which evidently served the double purpose of replenishing the melting snows and protecting them from the direct rays of the sun.

By this time we had picked up a smattering of the bastard language in which our guards addressed us, as well as making good headway in the rather charming tongue of our co-captives. Directly ahead of me in the chain gang was a young woman. Three feet of chain linked us together in a forced companionship which I, at least, soon rejoiced in. For I found her a willing teacher, and from her I learned the language

of her tribe, and much of the life and customs of the inner world — at least that part of it with which she was familiar.

She told me that she was called Dian the Beautiful, and that she belonged to the tribe of Amoz, which dwells in the cliffs above the Darel Az, or shallow sea.

“How came you here?” I asked her.

“I was running away from Jubal the Ugly One,” she answered, as though that was explanation quite sufficient.

“Who is Jubal the Ugly One?” I asked. “And why did you run away from him?”

She looked at me in surprise.

“Why *does* a woman run away from a man?” she answered my question with another.

“They do not, where I come from,” I replied. “Sometimes they run after them.”

But she could not understand. Nor could I get her to grasp the fact that I was of another world. She was quite as positive that creation was originated solely to produce her own kind and the world she lived in as are many of the outer world.

“But Jubal,” I insisted. “Tell me about him, and why you ran away to be chained by the neck and scourged across the face of a world.”

“Jubal the Ugly One placed his trophy before my father’s house. It was the head of a mighty tander. It remained there and no greater trophy was placed beside it. So I knew that Jubal the Ugly One would come and take me as his mate. None other so powerful wished me, or they would have slain a mightier beast and thus have won me from Jubal. My father is not a mighty hunter. Once he was, but a sadok tossed him, and never again had he the full use of his right arm. My brother, Dacor the Strong One, had gone to the land of Sari to steal

a mate for himself. Thus there was none, father, brother, or lover, to save me from Jubal the Ugly One, and I ran away and hid among the hills that skirt the land of Amoz. And there these Sagoths found me and made me captive.”

“What will they do with you?” I asked. “Where are they taking us?”

Again she looked her incredulity.

“I can almost believe that you are of another world,” she said, “for otherwise such ignorance were inexplicable. Do you really mean that you do not know that the Sagoths are the creatures of the Mahars — the mighty Mahars who think they own Pellucidar and all that walks or grows upon its surface, or creeps or burrows beneath, or swims within its lakes and oceans, or flies through its air? Next you will be telling me that you never before heard of the Mahars!”

I was loath to do it, and further incur her scorn; but there was no alternative if I were to absorb knowledge, so I made a clean breast of my pitiful ignorance as to the mighty Mahars. She was shocked. But she did her very best to enlighten me, though much that she said was as Greek would have been to her. She described the Mahars largely by comparisons. In this way they were like unto thipdars, in that to the hairless lidi.

About all I gleaned of them was that they were quite hideous, had wings, and webbed feet; lived in cities built beneath the ground; could swim under water for great distances, and were very, very wise. The Sagoths were their weapons of offense and defense, and the races like herself were their hands and feet — they were the slaves and servants who did all the manual labor. The Mahars were the heads — the brains — of the inner world. I longed to see this wondrous race of supermen.

Perry learned the language with me. When we halted, as we occasionally did, though sometimes the halts seemed ages apart, he

would join in the conversation, as would Ghak the Hairy One, he who was chained just ahead of Dian the Beautiful. Ahead of Ghak was Hooja the Sly One. He too entered the conversation occasionally. Most of his remarks were directed toward Dian the Beautiful. It didn't take half an eye to see that he had developed a bad case; but the girl appeared totally oblivious to his thinly veiled advances. Did I say thinly veiled? There is a race of men in New Zealand, or Australia, I have forgotten which, who indicate their preference for the lady of their affections by banging her over the head with a bludgeon. By comparison with this method Hooja's lovemaking might be called thinly veiled. At first it caused me to blush violently although I have seen several Old Years out at Rectors, and in other less fashionable places off Broadway, and in Vienna, and Hamburg.

But the girl! She was magnificent. It was easy to see that she considered herself as entirely above and apart from her present surroundings and company. She talked with me, and with Perry, and with the taciturn Ghak because we were respectful; but she couldn't even see Hooja the Sly One, much less hear him, and that made him furious. He tried to get one of the Sagoths to move the girl up ahead of him in the slave gang, but the fellow only poked him with his spear and told him that he had selected the girl for his own property — that he would buy her from the Mahars as soon as they reached Phutra. Phutra, it seemed, was the city of our destination.

After passing over the first chain of mountains we skirted a salt sea, upon whose bosom swam countless horrid things. Seal-like creatures there were with long necks stretching ten and more feet above their enormous bodies and whose snake heads were split with gaping mouths bristling with countless fangs. There were huge tortoises too, paddling about among these other reptiles, which Perry said were

plesiosaurs of the Lias. I didn't question his veracity — they might have been most anything.

Dian told me they were tandorazes, or tandors of the sea, and that the other, and more fearsome reptiles, which occasionally rose from the deep to do battle with them, were azdyryths, or sea-dyryths — Perry called them ichthyosaurs. They resembled a whale with the head of an alligator.

I had forgotten what little geology I had studied at school — about all that remained was an impression of horror that the illustrations of restored prehistoric monsters had made upon me, and a well-defined belief that any man with a pig's shank and a vivid imagination could "restore" most any sort of paleolithic monster he saw fit, and take rank as a first class paleontologist. But when I saw these sleek, shiny carcasses shimmering in the sunlight as they emerged from the ocean, shaking their giant heads; when I saw the waters roll from their sinuous bodies in miniature waterfalls as they glided hither and thither, now upon the surface, now half submerged; as I saw them meet, open-mouthed, hissing and snorting, in their titanic and interminable warring I realized how futile is man's poor, weak imagination by comparison with Nature's incredible genius.

And Perry! He was absolutely flabbergasted. He said so himself.

"David," he remarked, after we had marched for a long time beside that awful sea. "David, I used to teach geology, and I thought that I believed what I taught; but now I see that I did not believe it — that it is impossible for man to believe such things as these unless he sees them with his own eyes. We take things for granted, perhaps, because we are told them over and over again, and have no way of disproving them — like religions, for example; but we don't believe them, we only think we do. If you ever get back to the outer world you will find that

the geologists and paleontologists will be the first to set you down a liar, for they know that no such creatures as they restore ever existed. It is all right to *imagine* them as existing in an equally imaginary epoch — but now? poof!”

At the next halt Hooja the Sly One managed to find enough slack chain to permit him to worm himself back quite close to Dian. We were all standing, and as he edged near the girl she turned her back upon him in such a truly earthly feminine manner that I could scarce repress a smile; but it was a short-lived smile for on the instant the Sly One’s hand fell upon the girl’s bare arm, jerking her roughly toward him.

I was not then familiar with the customs or social ethics which prevailed within Pellucidar; but even so I did not need the appealing look which the girl shot to me from her magnificent eyes to influence my subsequent act. What the Sly One’s intention was I paused not to inquire; but instead, before he could lay hold of her with his other hand, I placed a right to the point of his jaw that felled him in his tracks.

A roar of approval went up from those of the other prisoners and the Sagoths who had witnessed the brief drama; not, as I later learned, because I had championed the girl, but for the neat and, to them, astounding method by which I had bested Hooja.

And the girl? At first she looked at me with wide, wondering eyes, and then she dropped her head, her face half averted, and a delicate flush suffused her cheek. For a moment she stood thus in silence, and then her head went high, and she turned her back upon me as she had upon Hooja. Some of the prisoners laughed, and I saw the face of Ghak the Hairy One go very black as he looked at me searchingly. And what I could see of Dian’s cheek went suddenly from red to white.

Immediately after we resumed the march, and though I realized that in some way I had offended Dian the Beautiful I could not prevail upon her to talk with me that I might learn wherein I had erred — in fact I might quite as well have been addressing a sphinx for all the attention I got. At last my own foolish pride stepped in and prevented my making any further attempts, and thus a companionship that without my realizing it had come to mean a great deal to me was cut off. Thereafter I confined my conversation to Perry. Hooja did not renew his advances toward the girl, nor did he again venture near me.

Again the weary and apparently interminable marching became a perfect nightmare of horrors to me. The more firmly fixed became the realization that the girl's friendship had meant so much to me, the more I came to miss it; and the more impregnable the barrier of silly pride. But I was very young and would not ask Ghak for the explanation which I was sure he could give, and that might have made everything all right again.

On the march, or during halts, Dian refused consistently to notice me — when her eyes wandered in my direction she looked either over my head or directly through me. At last I became desperate, and determined to swallow my self-esteem, and again beg her to tell me how I had offended, and how I might make reparation. I made up my mind that I should do this at the next halt. We were approaching another range of mountains at the time, and when we reached them, instead of winding across them through some high-flung pass we entered a mighty natural tunnel — a series of labyrinthine grottoes, dark as Erebus.

The guards had no torches or light of any description. In fact we had seen no artificial light or sign of fire since we had entered Pellucidar. In a land of perpetual noon there is no need of light above

ground, yet I marveled that they had no means of lighting their way through these dark, subterranean passages. So we crept along at a snail's pace, with much stumbling and falling — the guards keeping up a singsong chant ahead of us, interspersed with certain high notes which I found always indicated rough places and turns.

Halts were now more frequent, but I did not wish to speak to Dian until I could see from the expression of her face how she was receiving my apologies. At last a faint glow ahead forewarned us of the end of the tunnel, for which I for one was devoutly thankful. Then at a sudden turn we emerged into the full light of the noonday sun.

But with it came a sudden realization of what meant to me a real catastrophe — Dian was gone, and with her a half-dozen other prisoners. The guards saw it too, and the ferocity of their rage was terrible to behold. Their awesome, bestial faces were contorted in the most diabolical expressions, as they accused each other of responsibility for the loss. Finally they fell upon us, beating us with their spear shafts, and hatchets. They had already killed two near the head of the line, and were like to have finished the balance of us when their leader finally put a stop to the brutal slaughter. Never in all my life had I witnessed a more horrible exhibition of bestial rage — I thanked God that Dian had not been one of those left to endure it.

Of the twelve prisoners who had been chained ahead of me each alternate one had been freed commencing with Dian. Hooja was gone. Ghak remained. What could it mean? How had it been accomplished? The commander of the guards was investigating. Soon he discovered that the rude locks which had held the neckbands in place had been deftly picked.

“Hooja the Sly One,” murmured Ghak, who was now next to me

in line. "He has taken the girl that you would not have," he continued, glancing at me.

"That I would not have!" I cried. "What do you mean?"

He looked at me closely for a moment.

"I have doubted your story that you are from another world," he said at last, "but yet upon no other grounds could your ignorance of the ways of Pellucidar be explained. Do you really mean that you do not know that you offended the Beautiful One, and how?"

"I do not know, Ghak," I replied.

"Then shall I tell you. When a man of Pellucidar intervenes between another man and the woman the other man would have, the woman belongs to the victor. Dian the Beautiful belongs to you. You should have claimed her or released her. Had you taken her hand, it would have indicated your desire to make her your mate, and had you raised her hand above her head and then dropped it, it would have meant that you did not wish her for a mate and that you released her from all obligation to you. By doing neither you have put upon her the greatest affront that a man may put upon a woman. Now she is your slave. No man will take her as mate, or may take her honorably, until he shall have overcome you in combat, and men do not choose slave women as their mates — at least not the men of Pellucidar."

"I did not know, Ghak," I cried. "I did not know. Not for all Pellucidar would I have harmed Dian the Beautiful by word, or look, or act of mine. I do not want her as my slave. I do not want her as my —" but here I stopped. The vision of that sweet and innocent face floated before me amidst the soft mists of imagination, and where I had on the second believed that I clung only to the memory of a gentle friendship I had lost, yet now it seemed that it would have been disloyalty to her to have said that I did not want Dian the Beautiful as my mate. I had

not thought of her except as a welcome friend in a strange, cruel world. Even now I did not think that I loved her.

I believe Ghak must have read the truth more in my expression than in my words, for presently he laid his hand upon my shoulder.

“Man of another world,” he said, “I believe you. Lips may lie, but when the heart speaks through the eyes it tells only the truth. Your heart has spoken to me. I know now that you meant no affront to Dian the Beautiful. She is not of my tribe; but her mother is my sister. She does not know it — her mother was stolen by Dian’s father who came with many others of the tribe of Amoz to battle with us for our women — the most beautiful women of Pellucidar. Then was her father king of Amoz, and her mother was daughter of the king of Sari — to whose power I, his son, have succeeded. Dian is the daughter of kings, though her father is no longer king since the sadok tossed him and Jubal the Ugly One wrested his kingship from him. Because of her lineage the wrong you did her was greatly magnified in the eyes of all who saw it. She will never forgive you.”

I asked Ghak if there was not some way in which I could release the girl from the bondage and ignominy I had unwittingly placed upon her.

“If ever you find her, yes,” he answered. “Merely to raise her hand above her head and drop it in the presence of others is sufficient to release her; but how may you ever find her, you who are doomed to a life of slavery yourself in the buried city of Phutra?”

“Is there no escape?” I asked.

“Hooja the Sly One escaped and took the others with him,” replied Ghak. “But there are no more dark places on the way to Phutra, and once there it is not so easy — the Mahars are very wise. Even if one escaped from Phutra there are the thipdars — they would find you,

and then —” the Hairy One shuddered. “No, you will never escape the Mahars.”

It was a cheerful prospect. I asked Perry what he thought about it; but he only shrugged his shoulders and continued a longwinded prayer he had been at for some time. He was wont to say that the only redeeming feature of our captivity was the ample time it gave him for the improvisation of prayers — it was becoming an obsession with him. The Sagoths had begun to take notice of his habit of declaiming throughout entire marches. One of them asked him what he was saying — to whom he was talking. The question gave me an idea, so I answered quickly before Perry could say anything.

“Do not interrupt him,” I said. “He is a very holy man in the world from which we come. He is speaking to spirits which you cannot see — do not interrupt him or they will spring out of the air upon you and rend you limb from limb — like that,” and I jumped toward the great brute with a loud “Boo!” that sent him stumbling backward.

I took a long chance, I realized, but if we could make any capital out of Perry’s harmless mania I wanted to make it while the making was prime. It worked splendidly. The Sagoths treated us both with marked respect during the balance of the journey, and then passed the word along to their masters, the Mahars.

Two marches after this episode we came to the city of Phutra. The entrance to it was marked by two lofty towers of granite, which guarded a flight of steps leading to the buried city. Sagoths were on guard here as well as at a hundred or more other towers scattered about over a large plain.

5.

SLAVES

As we descended the broad staircase which led to the main avenue of Phutra I caught my first sight of the dominant race of the inner world. Involuntarily I shrank back as one of the creatures approached to inspect us. A more hideous thing it would be impossible to imagine. The all-powerful Mahars of Pellucidar are great reptiles, some six or eight feet in length, with long narrow heads and great round eyes. Their beak-like mouths are lined with sharp, white fangs, and the backs of their huge, lizard bodies are serrated into bony ridges from their necks to the end of their long tails. Their feet are equipped with three webbed toes, while from the fore feet membranous wings, which are attached to their bodies just in front of the hind legs, protrude at an angle of 45 degrees toward the rear, ending in sharp points several feet above their bodies.

I glanced at Perry as the thing passed me to inspect him. The old man was gazing at the horrid creature with wide astonished eyes. When it passed on, he turned to me.

“A rhamphorhynchus of the Middle Oligocene, David,” he said, “but, gad, how enormous! The largest remains we ever have discovered have never indicated a size greater than that attained by an ordinary crow.”

As we continued on through the main avenue of Phutra we saw many thousand of the creatures coming and going upon their daily duties. They paid but little attention to us. Phutra is laid out underground with a regularity that indicates remarkable engineering skill. It is hewn from solid limestone strata. The streets are broad and of a

uniform height of twenty feet. At intervals tubes pierce the roof of this underground city, and by means of lenses and reflectors transmit the sunlight, softened and diffused, to dispel what would otherwise be Cimmerian darkness. In like manner air is introduced.

Perry and I were taken, with Ghak, to a large public building, where one of the Sagoths who had formed our guard explained to a Maharan official the circumstances surrounding our capture. The method of communication between these two was remarkable in that no spoken words were exchanged. They employed a species of sign language. As I was to learn later, the Mahars have no ears, not any spoken language. Among themselves they communicate by means of what Perry says must be a sixth sense which is cognizant of a fourth dimension.

I never did quite grasp him, though he endeavored to explain it to me upon numerous occasions. I suggested telepathy, but he said no, that it was not telepathy since they could only communicate when in each others' presence, nor could they talk with the Sagoths or the other inhabitants of Pellucidar by the same method they used to converse with one another.

"What they do," said Perry, "is to project their thoughts into the fourth dimension, when they become appreciable to the sixth sense of their listener. Do I make myself quite clear?"

"You do not, Perry," I replied. He shook his head in despair, and returned to his work. They had set us to carrying a great accumulation of Maharan literature from one apartment to another, and there arranging it upon shelves. I suggested to Perry that we were in the public library of Phutra, but later, as he commenced to discover the key to their written language, he assured me that we were handling the ancient archives of the race.

During this period my thoughts were continually upon Dian the

Beautiful. I was, of course, glad that she had escaped the Mahars, and the fate that had been suggested by the Sagoth who had threatened to purchase her upon our arrival at Phutra. I often wondered if the little party of fugitives had been overtaken by the guards who had returned to search for them. Sometimes I was not so sure but that I should have been more contented to know that Dian was here in Phutra, than to think of her at the mercy of Hooja the Sly One. Ghak, Perry, and I often talked together of possible escape, but the Sarian was so steeped in his lifelong belief that no one could escape from the Mahars except by a miracle, that he was not much aid to us — his attitude was of one who waits for the miracle to come to him.

At my suggestion Perry and I fashioned some swords of scraps of iron which we discovered among some rubbish in the cells where we slept, for we were permitted almost unrestrained freedom of action within the limits of the building to which we had been assigned. So great were the number of slaves who waited upon the inhabitants of Phutra that none of us was apt to be overburdened with work, nor were our masters unkind to us.

We hid our new weapons beneath the skins which formed our beds, and then Perry conceived the idea of making bows and arrows — weapons apparently unknown within Pellucidar. Next came shields; but these I found it easier to steal from the walls of the outer guard-room of the building.

We had completed these arrangements for our protection after leaving Phutra when the Sagoths who had been sent to recapture the escaped prisoners returned with four of them, of whom Hooja was one. Dian and two others had eluded them. It so happened that Hooja was confined in the same building with us. He told Ghak that he had not seen Dian or the others after releasing them within the dark grotto.

What had become of them he had not the faintest conception — they might be wandering yet, lost within the labyrinthine tunnel, if not dead from starvation.

I was now still further apprehensive as to the fate of Dian, and at this time, I imagine, came the first realization that my affection for the girl might be prompted by more than friendship. During my waking hours she was constantly the subject of my thoughts, and when I slept her dear face haunted my dreams. More than ever was I determined to escape the Mahars.

“Perry,” I confided to the old man, “if I have to search every inch of this diminutive world I am going to find Dian the Beautiful and right the wrong I unintentionally did her.” That was the excuse I made for Perry’s benefit.

“Diminutive world!” he scoffed. “You don’t know what you are talking about, my boy,” and then he showed me a map of Pellucidar which he had recently discovered among the manuscript he was arranging.

“Look,” he cried, pointing to it, “this is evidently water, and all this land. Do you notice the general configuration of the two areas? Where the oceans are upon the outer crust, is land here. These relatively small areas of ocean follow the general lines of the continents of the outer world.

“We know that the crust of the globe is 500 miles in thickness; then the inside diameter of Pellucidar must be 7,000 miles, and the superficial area 165,480,000 square miles. Three-fourths of this is land. Think of it! A land area of 124,110,000 square miles! Our own world contains but 53,000,000 square miles of land, the balance of its surface being covered by water. Just as we often compare nations by their

relative land areas, so if we compare these two worlds in the same way we have the strange anomaly of a larger world within a smaller one!

“Where within vast Pellucidar would you search for your Dian? Without stars, or moon, or changing sun how could you find her even though you knew where she might be found?”

The proposition was a corker. It quite took my breath away; but I found that it left me all the more determined to attempt it.

“If Ghak will accompany us we may be able to do it,” I suggested.

Perry and I sought him out and put the question straight to him.

“Ghak,” I said, “we are determined to escape from this bondage. Will you accompany us?”

“They will set the thipdars upon us,” he said, “and then we shall be killed; but —” he hesitated — “I would take the chance if I thought that I might possibly escape and return to my own people.”

“Could you find your way back to your own land?” asked Perry. “And could you aid David in his search for Dian?”

“Yes.”

“But how,” persisted Perry, “could you travel to your country without heavenly bodies or a compass to guide you?”

Ghak didn’t know what Perry meant by heavenly bodies or a compass, but he assured us that you might blindfold any man of Pellucidar and carry him to the farthestmost corner of the world, yet he would be able to come directly to his own home again by the shortest route. He seemed surprised to think that we found anything wonderful in it. Perry said it must be some sort of homing instinct such as is possessed by certain breeds of earthly pigeons. I didn’t know, of course, but it gave me an idea.

“Then Dian could have found her way directly to her own people?” I asked.

“Surely,” replied Ghak, “unless some mighty beast of prey killed her.”

I was for making the attempted escape at once, but both Perry and Ghak counseled waiting for some propitious accident which would insure us some small degree of success. I didn’t see what accident could befall a whole community in a land of perpetual daylight where the inhabitants had no fixed habits of sleep. Why, I am sure that some of the Mahars never sleep, while others may, at long intervals, crawl into the dark recesses beneath their dwellings and curl up in protracted slumber. Perry says that if a Mahar stays awake for three years he will make up all his lost sleep in a long year’s snooze. That may be all true, but I never saw but three of them asleep, and it was the sight of these three that gave me a suggestion for our means of escape.

I had been searching about far below the levels that we slaves were supposed to frequent — possibly fifty feet beneath the main floor of the building — among a network of corridors and apartments, when I came suddenly upon three Mahars curled up upon a bed of skins. At first I thought they were dead, but later their regular breathing convinced me of my error. Like a flash the thought came to me of the marvelous opportunity these sleeping reptiles offered as a means of eluding the watchfulness of our captors and the Sagoth guards.

Hastening back to Perry where he pored over a musty pile of, to me, meaningless hieroglyphics, I explained my plan to him. To my surprise he was horrified.

“It would be murder, David,” he cried.

“Murder to kill a reptilian monster?” I asked in astonishment.

“Here they are not monsters, David,” he replied. “Here they are the dominant race — we are the ‘monsters’ — the lower orders. In Pelucidar evolution has progressed along different lines than upon the

outer earth. These terrible convulsions of nature time and time again wiped out the existing species — but for this fact some monster of the Saurozoic epoch might rule today upon our own world. We see here what might well have occurred in our own history had conditions been what they have been here.

“Life within Pellucidar is far younger than upon the outer crust. Here man has but reached a stage analogous to the Stone Age of our own world’s history, but for countless millions of years these reptiles have been progressing. Possibly it is the sixth sense which I am sure they possess that has given them an advantage over the other and more frightfully armed of their fellows; but this we may never know. They look upon us as we look upon the beasts of our fields, and I learn from their written records that other races of Mahars feed upon men — they keep them in great droves, as we keep cattle. They breed them most carefully, and when they are quite fat, they kill and eat them.”

I shuddered.

“What is there horrible about it, David?” the old man asked. “They understand us no better than we understand the lower animals of our own world. Why, I have come across here very learned discussions of the question as to whether gilaks, that is men, have any means of communication. One writer claims that we do not even reason — that our every act is mechanical, or instinctive. The dominant race of Pellucidar, David, have not yet learned that men converse among themselves, or reason. Because we do not converse as they do it is beyond them to imagine that we converse at all. It is thus that we reason in relation to the brutes of our own world. They know that the Sagoths have a spoken language, but they cannot comprehend it, or how it manifests itself, since they have no auditory apparatus. They believe that the motions of the lips alone convey the meaning.

That the Sagoths can communicate with us is incomprehensible to them.

“Yes, David,” he concluded, “it would entail murder to carry out your plan.”

“Very well then, Perry.” I replied. “I shall become a murderer.”

He got me to go over the plan again most carefully, and for some reason which was not at the time clear to me insisted upon a very careful description of the apartments and corridors I had just explored.

“I wonder, David,” he said at length, “as you are determined to carry out your wild scheme, if we could not accomplish something of very real and lasting benefit for the human race of Pellucidar at the same time. Listen, I have learned much of a most surprising nature from these archives of the Mahars. That you may appreciate my plan I shall briefly outline the history of the race.

“Once the males were all-powerful, but ages ago the females, little by little, assumed the mastery. For other ages no noticeable change took place in the race of Mahars. It continued to progress under the intelligent and beneficent rule of the ladies. Science took vast strides. This was especially true of the sciences which we know as biology and eugenics. Finally a certain female scientist announced the fact that she had discovered a method whereby eggs might be fertilized by chemical means after they were laid — all true reptiles, you know, are hatched from eggs.

“What happened? Immediately the necessity for males ceased to exist — the race was no longer dependent upon them. More ages elapsed until at the present time we find a race consisting exclusively of females. But here is the point. The secret of this chemical formula is kept by a single race of Mahars. It is in the city of Phutra, and unless

I am greatly in error I judge from your description of the vaults through which you passed today that it lies hidden in the cellar of this building.

“For two reasons they hide it away and guard it jealously. First, because upon it depends the very life of the race of Mahars, and second, owing to the fact that when it was public property as at first so many were experimenting with it that the danger of over-population became very grave.

“David, if we can escape, and at the same time take with us this great secret what will we not have accomplished for the human race within Pellucidar!”

The very thought of it fairly overpowered me. Why, we two would be the means of placing the men of the inner world in their rightful place among created things. Only the Sagoths would then stand between them and absolute supremacy, and I was not quite sure but that the Sagoths owed all their power to the greater intelligence of the Mahars — I could not believe that these gorilla-like beasts were the mental superiors of the human race of Pellucidar.

“Why, Perry,” I exclaimed, “you and I may reclaim a whole world! Together we can lead the races of men out of the darkness of ignorance into the light of advancement and civilization. At one step we may carry them from the Age of Stone to the twentieth century. It’s marvelous — absolutely marvelous just to think about it.”

“David,” said the old man, “I believe that God sent us here for just that purpose — it shall be my life work to teach them His word — to lead them into the light of His mercy while we are training their hearts and hands in the ways of culture and civilization.”

“You are right, Perry,” I said, “and while you are teaching them to

pray I'll be teaching them to fight, and between us we'll make a race of men that will be an honor to us both."

Ghak had entered the apartment some time before we concluded our conversation, and now he wanted to know what we were so excited about. Perry thought we had best not tell him too much, and so I only explained that I had a plan for escape. When I had outlined it to him, he seemed about as horror-struck as Perry had been; but for a different reason. The Hairy One only considered the horrible fate that would be ours were we discovered; but at last I prevailed upon him to accept my plan as the only feasible one, and when I had assured him that I would take all the responsibility for it were we captured, he accorded a reluctant assent.

6.

THE BEGINNING OF HORROR

Within Pellucidar one time is as good as another. There were no nights to mask our attempted escape. All must be done in broad daylight — all but the work I had to do in the apartment beneath the building. So we determined to put our plan to an immediate test lest the Mahars who made it possible should awake before I reached them; but we were doomed to disappointment, for no sooner had we reached the main floor of the building on our way to the pits beneath, than we encountered hurrying bands of slaves being hastened under strong Sagoth guard out of the edifice to the avenue beyond.

Other Sagoths were darting hither and thither in search of other slaves, and the moment that we appeared we were pounced upon and hustled into the line of marching humans.

What the purpose or nature of the general exodus was we did not know, but presently through the line of captives ran the rumor that two escaped slaves had been recaptured — a man and a woman — and that we were marching to witness their punishment, for the man had killed a Sagoth of the detachment that had pursued and overtaken them.

At the intelligence my heart sprang to my throat, for I was sure that the two were of those who escaped in the dark grotto with Hooja the Sly One, and that Dian must be the woman. Ghak thought so too, as did Perry.

“Is there naught that we may do to save her?” I asked Ghak.

“Naught,” he replied.

Along the crowded avenue we marched, the guards showing

unusual cruelty toward us, as though we, too, had been implicated in the murder of their fellow. The occasion was to serve as an object-lesson to all other slaves of the danger and futility of attempted escape, and the fatal consequences of taking the life of a superior being, and so I imagine that Sagoths felt amply justified in making the entire proceeding as uncomfortable and painful to us as possible.

They jabbed us with their spears and struck at us with the hatchets at the least provocation, and at no provocation at all. It was a most uncomfortable half-hour that we spent before we were finally herded through a low entrance into a huge building the center of which was given up to a good-sized arena. Benches surrounded this open space upon three sides, and along the fourth were heaped huge boulders which rose in receding tiers toward the roof.

At first I couldn't make out the purpose of this mighty pile of rock, unless it were intended as a rough and picturesque background for the scenes which were enacted in the arena before it, but presently, after the wooden benches had been pretty well filled by slaves and Sagoths, I discovered the purpose of the boulders, for then the Mahars began to file into the enclosure.

They marched directly across the arena toward the rocks upon the opposite side, where, spreading their bat-like wings, they rose above the high wall of the pit, settling down upon the boulders above. These were the reserved seats, the boxes of the elect.

Reptiles that they are, the rough surface of a great stone is to them as plush as upholstery to us. Here they lolled, blinking their hideous eyes, and doubtless conversing with one another in their sixth-sense-fourth-dimension language.

For the first time I beheld their queen. She differed from the others in no feature that was appreciable to my earthly eyes, in fact all Mahars

look alike to me: but when she crossed the arena after the balance of her female subjects had found their boulders, she was preceded by a score of huge Sagoths, the largest I ever had seen, and on either side of her waddled a huge thipdar, while behind came another score of Sagoth guardsmen.

At the barrier the Sagoths clambered up the steep side with truly apelike agility, while behind them the haughty queen rose upon her wings with her two frightful dragons close beside her, and settled down upon the largest boulder of them all in the exact center of that side of the amphitheater which is reserved for the dominant race. Here she squatted, a most repulsive and uninteresting queen; though doubtless quite as well assured of her beauty and divine right to rule as the proudest monarch of the outer world.

And then the music started — music without sound! The Mahars cannot hear, so the drums and fifes and horns of earthly bands are unknown among them. The “band” consists of a score or more Mahars. It filed out in the center of the arena where the creatures upon the rocks might see it, and there it performed for fifteen or twenty minutes.

Their technic consisted in waving their tails and moving their heads in a regular succession of measured movements resulting in a cadence which evidently pleased the eye of the Mahar as the cadence of our own instrumental music pleases our ears. Sometimes the band took measured steps in unison to one side or the other, or backward and again forward — it all seemed very silly and meaningless to me, but at the end of the first piece the Mahars upon the rocks showed the first indications of enthusiasm that I had seen displayed by the dominant race of Pellucidar. They beat their great wings up and down, and smote their rocky perches with their mighty tails until the ground

shook. Then the band started another piece, and all was again as silent as the grave. That was one great beauty about Mahar music — if you didn't happen to like a piece that was being played all you had to do was shut your eyes.

When the band had exhausted its repertory it took wing and settled upon the rocks above and behind the queen. Then the business of the day was on. A man and woman were pushed into the arena by a couple of Sagoth guardsmen. I leaned forward in my seat to scrutinize the female — hoping against hope that she might prove to be another than Dian the Beautiful. Her back was toward me for a while, and the sight of the great mass of raven hair piled high upon her head filled me with alarm.

Presently a door in one side of the arena wall was opened to admit a huge, shaggy, bull-like creature.

“A bos,” whispered Perry, excitedly. “His kind roamed the outer crust with the cave bear and the mammoth ages and ages ago. We have been carried back a million years, David, to the childhood of a planet — is it not wondrous?”

But I saw only the raven hair of a half-naked girl, and my heart stood still in dumb misery at the sight of her, nor had I any eyes for the wonders of natural history. But for Perry and Ghak I should have leaped to the floor of the arena and shared whatever fate lay in store for this priceless treasure of the Stone Age.

With the advent of the bos — they call the thing a thag within Pellucidar — two spears were tossed into the arena at the feet of the prisoners. It seemed to me that a bean shooter would have been as effective against the mighty monster as these pitiful weapons.

As the animal approached the two, bellowing and pawing the ground with the strength of many earthly bulls, another door directly

beneath us was opened, and from it issued the most terrific roar that ever had fallen upon my outraged ears. I could not at first see the beast from which emanated this fearsome challenge, but the sound had the effect of bringing the two victims around with a sudden start, and then I saw the girl's face — she was not Dian! I could have wept for relief.

And now, as the two stood frozen in terror, I saw the author of that fearsome sound creeping stealthily into view. It was a huge tiger — such as hunted the great bos through the jungles primeval when the world was young. In contour and markings it was not unlike the noblest of the Bengals of our own world, but as its dimensions were exaggerated to colossal proportions so too were its colorings exaggerated. Its vivid yellows fairly screamed aloud; its whites were as eider down; its blacks glossy as the finest anthracite coal, and its coat long and shaggy as a mountain goat. That it is a beautiful animal there is no gainsaying, but if its size and colors are magnified here within Pellucidar, so is the ferocity of its disposition. It is not the occasional member of its species that is a man hunter — all are man hunters; but they do not confine their foraging to man alone, for there is no flesh or fish within Pellucidar that they will not eat with relish in the constant efforts which they make to furnish their huge carcasses with sufficient sustenance to maintain their mighty thews.

Upon one side of the doomed pair the thag bellowed and advanced, and upon the other tarag, the frightful, crept toward them with gaping mouth and dripping fangs.

The man seized the spears, handing one of them to the woman. At the sound of the roaring of the tiger the bull's bellowing became a veritable frenzy of rageful noise. Never in my life had I heard such an infernal din as the two brutes made, and to think it was all lost upon the hideous reptiles for whom the show was staged!

The thag was charging now from one side, and the tarag from the other. The two puny things standing between them seemed already lost, but at the very moment that the beasts were upon them the man grasped his companion by the arm and together they leaped to one side, while the frenzied creatures came together like locomotives in collision.

There ensued a battle royal which for sustained and frightful ferocity transcends the power of imagination or description. Time and again the colossal bull tossed the enormous tiger high into the air, but each time that the huge cat touched the ground he returned to the encounter with apparently undiminished strength, and seemingly increased ire.

For a while the man and woman busied themselves only with keeping out of the way of the two creatures, but finally I saw them separate and each creep stealthily toward one of the combatants. The tiger was now upon the bull's broad back, clinging to the huge neck with powerful fangs while its long, strong talons ripped the heavy hide into shreds and ribbons.

For a moment the bull stood bellowing and quivering with pain and rage, its cloven hoofs widespread, its tail lashing viciously from side to side, and then, in a mad orgy of bucking it went careening about the arena in frenzied attempt to unseat its rending rider. It was with difficulty that the girl avoided the first mad rush of the wounded animal.

All its efforts to rid itself of the tiger seemed futile, until in desperation it threw itself upon the ground, rolling over and over. A little of this so disconcerted the tiger, knocking its breath from it I imagine, that it lost its hold and then, quick as a cat, the great thag

was up again and had buried those mighty horns deep in the tarag's abdomen, pinning him to the floor of the arena.

The great cat clawed at the shaggy head until eyes and ears were gone, and naught but a few strips of ragged, bloody flesh remained upon the skull. Yet through all the agony of that fearful punishment the thag still stood motionless pinning down his adversary, and then the man leaped in, seeing that the blind bull would be the least formidable enemy, and ran his spear through the tarag's heart.

As the animal's fierce clawing ceased, the bull raised his gory, sightless head, and with a horrid roar ran headlong across the arena. With great leaps and bounds he came, straight toward the arena wall directly beneath where we sat, and then accident carried him, in one of his mighty springs, completely over the barrier into the midst of the slaves and Sagoths just in front of us. Swinging his bloody horns from side to side the beast cut a wide swath before him straight upward toward our seats. Before him slaves and gorilla-men fought in mad stampede to escape the menace of the creature's death agonies, for such only could that frightful charge have been.

Forgetful of us, our guards joined in the general rush for the exits, many of which pierced the wall of the amphitheater behind us. Perry, Ghak, and I became separated in the chaos which reigned for a few moments after the beast cleared the wall of the arena, each intent upon saving his own hide.

I ran to the right, passing several exits choked with the fear-mad mob that were battling to escape. One would have thought that an entire herd of thags was loose behind them, rather than a single blinded, dying beast; but such is the effect of panic upon a crowd.

7.

FREEDOM

Once out of the direct path of the animal, fear of it left me, but another emotion as quickly gripped me — hope of escape that the demoralized condition of the guards made possible for the instant.

I thought of Perry, but for the hope that I might better encompass his release if myself free I should have put the thought of freedom from me at once. As it was I hastened on toward the right searching for an exit toward which no Sagoths were fleeing, and at last I found it — a low, narrow aperture leading into a dark corridor.

Without thought of the possible consequence, I darted into the shadows of the tunnel, feeling my way along through the gloom for some distance. The noises of the amphitheater had grown fainter and fainter until now all was as silent as the tomb about me. Faint light filtered from above through occasional ventilating and lighting tubes, but it was scarce sufficient to enable my human eyes to cope with the darkness, and so I was forced to move with extreme care, feeling my way along step by step with a hand upon the wall beside me.

Presently the light increased and a moment later, to my delight, I came upon a flight of steps leading upward, at the top of which the brilliant light of the noonday sun shone through an opening in the ground.

Cautiously I crept up the stairway to the tunnel's end, and peering out saw the broad plain of Phutra before me. The numerous lofty, granite towers which mark the several entrances to the subterranean city were all in front of me — behind, the plain stretched level and

unbroken to the nearby foothills. I had come to the surface, then, beyond the city, and my chances for escape seemed much enhanced.

My first impulse was to await darkness before attempting to cross the plain, so deeply implanted are habits of thought; but of a sudden I recollected the perpetual noonday brilliance which envelopes Pellucidar, and with a smile I stepped forth into the daylight.

Rank grass, waist high, grows upon the plain of Phutra — the gorgeous flowering grass of the inner world, each particular blade of which is tipped with a tiny, five-pointed blossom — brilliant little stars of varying colors that twinkle in the green foliage to add still another charm to the weird, yet lovely, landscape.

But then the only aspect which attracted me was the distant hills in which I hoped to find sanctuary, and so I hastened on, trampling the myriad beauties beneath my hurrying feet. Perry says that the force of gravity is less upon the surface of the inner world than upon that of the outer. He explained it all to me once, but I was never particularly brilliant in such matters and so most of it has escaped me. As I recall it the difference is due in some part to the counter-attraction of that portion of the earth's crust directly opposite the spot upon the face of Pellucidar at which one's calculations are being made. Be that as it may, it always seemed to me that I moved with greater speed and agility within Pellucidar than upon the outer surface — there was a certain airy lightness of step that was most pleasing, and a feeling of bodily detachment which I can only compare with that occasionally experienced in dreams.

And as I crossed Phutra's flower-bespangled plain that time I seemed almost to fly, though how much of the sensation was due to Perry's suggestion and how much to actuality I am sure I do not know. The more I thought of Perry the less pleasure I took in my new-found

freedom. There could be no liberty for me within Pellucidar unless the old man shared it with me, and only the hope that I might find some way to encompass his release kept me from turning back to Phutra.

Just how I was to help Perry I could scarce imagine, but I hoped that some fortuitous circumstance might solve the problem for me. It was quite evident however that little less than a miracle could aid me, for what could I accomplish in this strange world, naked and unarmed? It was even doubtful that I could retrace my steps to Phutra should I once pass beyond view of the plain, and even were that possible, what aid could I bring to Perry no matter how far I wandered?

The case looked more and more hopeless the longer I viewed it, yet with a stubborn persistency I forged ahead toward the foothills. Behind me no sign of pursuit developed, before me I saw no living thing. It was as though I moved through a dead and forgotten world.

I have no idea, of course, how long it took me to reach the limit of the plain, but at last I entered the foothills, following a pretty little canyon upward toward the mountains. Beside me frolicked a laughing brooklet, hurrying upon its noisy way down to the silent sea. In its quieter pools I discovered many small fish, of four- or five-pound weight I should imagine. In appearance, except as to size and color, they were not unlike the whale of our own seas. As I watched them playing about I discovered, not only that they suckled their young, but that at intervals they rose to the surface to breathe as well as to feed upon certain grasses and a strange, scarlet lichen which grew upon the rocks just above the water line.

It was this last habit that gave me the opportunity I craved to capture one of these herbivorous cetaceans — that is what Perry calls them — and make as good a meal as one can on raw, warm-blooded fish; but I had become rather used, by this time, to the eating of food

in its natural state, though I still balked on the eyes and entrails, much to the amusement of Ghak, to whom I always passed these delicacies.

Crouching beside the brook, I waited until one of the diminutive purple whales rose to nibble at the long grasses which overhung the water, and then, like the beast of prey that man really is, I sprang upon my victim, appeasing my hunger while he yet wriggled to escape.

Then I drank from the clear pool, and after washing my hands and face continued my flight. Above the source of the brook I encountered a rugged climb to the summit of a long ridge. Beyond was a steep declivity to the shore of a placid, inland sea, upon the quiet surface of which lay several beautiful islands.

The view was charming in the extreme, and as no man or beast was to be seen that might threaten my new-found liberty, I slid over the edge of the bluff, and half sliding, half falling, dropped into the delightful valley, the very aspect of which seemed to offer a haven of peace and security.

The gently sloping beach along which I walked was thickly strewn with strangely shaped, colored shells; some empty, others still housing as varied a multitude of mollusks as ever might have drawn out their sluggish lives along the silent shores of the antediluvian seas of the outer crust. As I walked I could not but compare myself with the first man of that other world, so complete the solitude which surrounded me, so primal and untouched the virgin wonders and beauties of adolescent nature. I felt myself a second Adam wending my lonely way through the childhood of a world, searching for my Eve, and at the thought there rose before my mind's eye the exquisite outlines of a perfect face surmounted by a loose pile of wondrous, raven hair.

As I walked, my eyes were bent upon the beach so that it was not until I had come quite upon it that I discovered that which shattered

all my beautiful dream of solitude and safety and peace and primal overlordship. The thing was a hollowed log drawn upon the sands, and in the bottom of it lay a crude paddle.

The rude shock of awakening to what doubtless might prove some new form of danger was still upon me when I heard a rattling of loose stones from the direction of the bluff, and turning my eyes in that direction I beheld the author of the disturbance, a great copper-colored man, running rapidly toward me.

There was that in the haste with which he came which seemed quite sufficiently menacing, so that I did not need the added evidence of brandishing spear and scowling face to warn me that I was in no safe position, but whither to flee was indeed a momentous question.

The speed of the fellow seemed to preclude the possibility of escaping him upon the open beach. There was but a single alternative — the rude skiff — and with a celerity which equaled his, I pushed the thing into the sea and as it floated gave a final shove and clambered in over the end.

A cry of rage rose from the owner of the primitive craft, and an instant later his heavy, stone-tipped spear grazed my shoulder and buried itself in the bow of the boat beyond. Then I grasped the paddle, and with feverish haste urged the awkward, wobbly thing out upon the surface of the sea.

A glance over my shoulder showed me that the copper-colored one had plunged in after me and was swimming rapidly in pursuit. His mighty strokes bade fair to close up the distance between us in short order, for at best I could make but slow progress with my unfamiliar craft, which nosed stubbornly in every direction but that which I desired to follow, so that fully half my energy was expended in turning its blunt prow back into the course.

I had covered some hundred yards from shore when it became evident that my pursuer must grasp the stern of the skiff within the next half-dozen strokes. In a frenzy of despair, I bent to the grandfather of all paddles in a hopeless effort to escape, and still the copper giant behind me gained and gained.

His hand was reaching upward for the stern when I saw a sleek, sinuous body shoot from the depths below. The man saw it too, and the look of terror that overspread his face assured me that I need have no further concern as to him, for the fear of certain death was in his look.

And then about him coiled the great, slimy folds of a hideous monster of that prehistoric deep — a mighty serpent of the sea, with fanged jaws, and darting forked tongue, with bulging eyes, and bony protuberances upon head and snout that formed short, stout horns.

As I looked at that hopeless struggle my eyes met those of the doomed man, and I could have sworn that in his I saw an expression of hopeless appeal. But whether I did or not there swept through me a sudden compassion for the fellow. He was indeed a brother-man, and that he might have killed me with pleasure had he caught me was forgotten in the extremity of his danger.

Unconsciously I had ceased paddling as the serpent rose to engage my pursuer, so now the skiff still drifted close beside the two. The monster seemed to be but playing with his victim before he closed his awful jaws upon him and dragged him down to his dark den beneath the surface to devour him. The huge, snakelike body coiled and uncoiled about its prey. The hideous, gaping jaws snapped in the victim's face. The forked tongue, lightning-like, ran in and out upon the copper skin.

Nobly the giant battled for his life, beating with his stone hatchet

against the bony armor that covered that frightful carcass; but for all the damage he inflicted he might as well have struck with his open palm.

At last I could endure no longer to sit supinely by while a fellow-man was dragged down to a horrible death by that repulsive reptile. Embedded in the prow of the skiff lay the spear that had been cast after me by him whom I suddenly desired to save. With a wrench I tore it loose, and standing upright in the wobbly log drove it with all the strength of my two arms straight into the gaping jaws of the hydrophidian.

With a loud hiss the creature abandoned its prey to turn upon me, but the spear, imbedded in its throat, prevented it from seizing me though it came near to overturning the skiff in its mad efforts to reach me.

8.

THE MAHAR TEMPLE

The aborigine, apparently uninjured, climbed quickly into the skiff, and seizing the spear with me helped to hold off the infuriated creature. Blood from the wounded reptile was now crimsoning the waters about us and soon from the weakening struggles it became evident that I had inflicted a death wound upon it. Presently its efforts to reach us ceased entirely, and with a few convulsive movements it turned upon its back quite dead.

And then there came to me a sudden realization of the predicament in which I had placed myself. I was entirely within the power of the savage man whose skiff I had stolen. Still clinging to the spear I looked into his face to find him scrutinizing me intently, and there we stood for some several minutes, each clinging tenaciously to the weapon the while we gazed in stupid wonderment at each other.

What was in his mind I do not know, but in my own was merely the question as to how soon the fellow would recommence hostilities.

Presently he spoke to me, but in a tongue which I was unable to translate. I shook my head in an effort to indicate my ignorance of his language, at the same time addressing him in the bastard tongue that the Sagoths use to converse with the human slaves of the Mahars.

To my delight he understood and answered me in the same jargon.

“What do you want of my spear?” he asked.

“Only to keep you from running it through me,” I replied.

“I would not do that,” he said, “for you have just saved my life,”

and with that he released his hold upon it and squatted down in the bottom of the skiff.

“Who are you,” he continued, “and from what country do you come?”

I too sat down, laying the spear between us, and tried to explain how I came to Pellucidar, and wherefrom, but it was as impossible for him to grasp or believe the strange tale I told him as I fear it is for you upon the outer crust to believe in the existence of the inner world. To him it seemed quite ridiculous to imagine that there was another world far beneath his feet peopled by beings similar to himself, and he laughed uproariously the more he thought upon it. But it was ever thus. That which has never come within the scope of our really pitifully meager world-experience cannot be — our finite minds cannot grasp that which may not exist in accordance with the conditions which obtain about us upon the outside of the insignificant grain of dust which wends its tiny way among the boulders of the universe — the speck of moist dirt we so proudly call the World.

So I gave it up and asked him about himself. He said he was a Mezop, and that his name was Ja.

“Who are the Mezops?” I asked. “Where do they live?”

He looked at me in surprise.

“I might indeed believe that you were from another world,” he said, “for who of Pellucidar could be so ignorant! The Mezops live upon the islands of the seas. In so far as I ever have heard no Mezop lives elsewhere, and no others than Mezops dwell upon islands, but of course it may be different in other far-distant lands. I do not know. At any rate in this sea and those near by it is true that only people of my race inhabit the islands.

“We are fishermen, though we be great hunters as well, often going

to the mainland in search of the game that is scarce upon all but the larger islands. And we are warriors also," he added proudly. "Even the Sagoths of the Mahars fear us. Once, when Pellucidar was young, the Sagoths were wont to capture us for slaves as they do the other men of Pellucidar, it is handed down from father to son among us that this is so; but we fought so desperately and slew so many Sagoths, and those of us that were captured killed so many Mahars in their own cities that at last they learned that it were better to leave us alone, and later came the time that the Mahars became too indolent even to catch their own fish, except for amusement, and then they needed us to supply their wants, and so a truce was made between the races. Now they give us certain things which we are unable to produce in return for the fish that we catch, and the Mezops and the Mahars live in peace.

"The great ones even come to our islands. It is there, far from the prying eyes of their own Sagoths, that they practice their religious rites in the temples they have builded there with our assistance. If you live among us you will doubtless see the manner of their worship, which is strange indeed, and most unpleasant for the poor slaves they bring to take part in it."

As Ja talked I had an excellent opportunity to inspect him more closely. He was a huge fellow, standing I should say six feet six or seven inches, well developed and of a coppery red not unlike that of our own North American Indian, nor were his features dissimilar to theirs. He had the aquiline nose found among many of the higher tribes, the prominent cheek bones, and black hair and eyes, but his mouth and lips were better molded. All in all, Ja was an impressive and handsome creature, and he talked well too, even in the miserable makeshift language we were compelled to use.

During our conversation Ja had taken the paddle and was pro-

pulling the skiff with vigorous strokes toward a large island that lay some half-mile from the mainland. The skill with which he handled his crude and awkward craft elicited my deepest admiration, since it had been so short a time before that I had made such pitiful work of it.

As we touched the pretty, level beach Ja leaped out and I followed him. Together we dragged the skiff far up into the bushes that grew beyond the sand.

“We must hide our canoes,” explained Ja, “for the Mezops of Luana are always at war with us and would steal them if they found them,” he nodded toward an island farther out at sea, and at so great a distance that it seemed but a blur hanging in the distant sky. The upward curve of the surface of Pellucidar was constantly revealing the impossible to the surprised eyes of the outer-earthly. To see land and water curving upward in the distance until it seemed to stand on edge where it melted into the distant sky, and to feel that seas and mountains hung suspended directly above one’s head required such a complete reversal of the perceptive and reasoning faculties as almost to stupefy one.

No sooner had we hidden the canoe than Ja plunged into the jungle, presently emerging into a narrow but well-defined trail which wound hither and thither much after the manner of the highways of all primitive folk, but there was one peculiarity about this Mezop trail which I was later to find distinguished them from all other trails that I ever have seen within or without the earth.

It would run on, plain and clear and well defined to end suddenly in the midst of a tangle of matted jungle, then Ja would turn directly back in his tracks for a little distance, spring into a tree, climb through it to the other side, drop onto a fallen log, leap over a low bush and alight once more upon a distinct trail which he would follow back for

a short distance only to turn directly about and retrace his steps until after a mile or less this new pathway ended as suddenly and mysteriously as the former section. Then he would pass again across some media which would reveal no spoor, to take up the broken thread of the trail beyond.

As the purpose of this remarkable avenue dawned upon me I could not but admire the native shrewdness of the ancient progenitor of the Mezops who hit upon this novel plan to throw his enemies from his track and delay or thwart them in their attempts to follow him to his deep-buried cities.

To you of the outer earth it might seem a slow and tortuous method of traveling through the jungle, but were you of Pellucidar you would realize that time is no factor where time does not exist. So labyrinthine are the windings of these trails, so varied the connecting links and the distances which one must retrace one's steps from the paths' ends to find them that a Mezop often reaches man's estate before he is familiar even with those which lead from his own city to the sea.

In fact three-fourths of the education of the young male Mezop consists in familiarizing himself with these jungle avenues, and the status of an adult is largely determined by the number of trails which he can follow upon his own island. The females never learn them, since from birth to death they never leave the clearing in which the village of their nativity is situated except they be taken to mate by a male from another village, or captured in war by the enemies of their tribe.

After proceeding through the jungle for what must have been upward of five miles we emerged suddenly into a large clearing in the exact center of which stood as strange an appearing village as one might well imagine.

Large trees had been chopped down fifteen or twenty feet above

the ground, and upon the tops of them spherical habitations of woven twigs, mud covered, had been built. Each ball-like house was surmounted by some manner of carven image, which Ja told me indicated the identity of the owner.

Horizontal slits, six inches high and two or three feet wide, served to admit light and ventilation. The entrances to the house were through small apertures in the bases of the trees and thence upward by rude ladders through the hollow trunks to the rooms above. The houses varied in size from two to several rooms. The largest that I entered was divided into two floors and eight apartments.

All about the village, between it and the jungle, lay beautifully cultivated fields in which the Mezops raised such cereals, fruits, and vegetables as they required. Women and children were working in these gardens as we crossed toward the village. At sight of Ja they saluted deferentially, but to me they paid not the slightest attention. Among them and about the outer verge of the cultivated area were many warriors. These too saluted Ja, by touching the points of their spears to the ground directly before them.

Ja conducted me to a large house in the center of the village — the house with eight rooms — and taking me up into it gave me food and drink. There I met his mate, a comely girl with a nursing baby in her arms. Ja told her of how I had saved his life, and she was thereafter most kind and hospitable toward me, even permitting me to hold and amuse the tiny bundle of humanity whom Ja told me would one day rule the tribe, for Ja, it seemed, was the chief of the community.

We had eaten and rested, and I had slept, much to Ja's amusement, for it seemed that he seldom if ever did so, and then the red man proposed that I accompany him to the temple of the Mahars which lay not far from his village. "We are not supposed to visit it," he said;

“but the great ones cannot hear and if we keep well out of sight they need never know that we have been there. For my part I hate them and always have, but the other chieftains of the island think it best that we continue to maintain the amicable relations which exist between the two races; otherwise I should like nothing better than to lead my warriors amongst the hideous creatures and exterminate them — Pellucidar would be a better place to live were there none of them.”

I wholly concurred in Ja’s belief, but it seemed that it might be a difficult matter to exterminate the dominant race of Pellucidar. Thus conversing we followed the intricate trail toward the temple, which we came upon in a small clearing surrounded by enormous trees similar to those which must have flourished upon the outer crust during the Carboniferous age.

Here was a mighty temple of hewn rock built in the shape of a rough oval with rounded roof in which were several large openings. No doors or windows were visible in the sides of the structure, nor was there need of any, except one entrance for the slaves, since, as Ja explained, the Mahars flew to and from their place of ceremonial, entering and leaving the building by means of the apertures in the roof.

“But,” added Ja, “there is an entrance near the base of which even the Mahars know nothing. Come,” and he led me across the clearing and about the end to a pile of loose rock which lay against the foot of the wall. Here he removed a couple of large boulders, revealing a small opening which led straight within the building, or so it seemed, though as I entered after Ja I discovered myself in a narrow place of extreme darkness.

“We are within the outer wall,” said Ja. “It is hollow. Follow me closely.”

The red man groped ahead a few paces and then began to ascend

a primitive ladder similar to that which leads from the ground to the upper stories of his house. We ascended for some forty feet when the interior of the space between the walls commenced to grow lighter and presently we came opposite an opening in the inner wall which gave us an unobstructed view of the entire interior of the temple.

The lower floor was an enormous tank of clear water in which numerous hideous Mahars swam lazily up and down. Artificial islands of granite rock dotted this artificial sea, and upon several of them I saw men and women like myself.

“What are the human beings doing here?” I asked.

“Wait and you shall see,” replied Ja. “They are to take a leading part in the ceremonies which will follow the advent of the queen. You may be thankful that you are not upon the same side of the wall as they.”

Scarcely had he spoken than we heard a great fluttering of wings above and a moment later a long procession of the frightful reptiles of Pellucidar winged slowly and majestically through the large central opening in the roof and circled in stately manner about the temple.

There were several Mahars first, and then at least twenty awe-inspiring pterodactyls — thipdars, they are called within Pellucidar. Behind these came the queen, flanked by other thipdars as she had been when she entered the amphitheater at Phutra.

Three times they wheeled about the interior of the oval chamber, to settle finally upon the damp, cold boulders that fringe the outer edge of the pool. In the center of one side the largest rock was reserved for the queen, and here she took her place surrounded by her terrible guard.

All lay quiet for several minutes after settling to their places. One might have imagined them in silent prayer. The poor slaves upon the diminutive islands watched the horrid creatures with wide eyes. The

men, for the most part, stood erect and stately with folded arms, awaiting their doom; but the women and children clung to one another, hiding behind the males. They are a noble-looking race, these cave men of Pellucidar, and if our progenitors were as they, the human race of the outer crust has deteriorated rather than improved with the march of the ages. All they lack is opportunity. We have opportunity, and little else.

Now the queen moved. She raised her ugly head, looking about; then very slowly she crawled to the edge of her throne and slid noiselessly into the water. Up and down the long tank she swam, turning at the ends as you have seen captive seals turn in their tiny tanks, turning upon their backs and diving below the surface.

Nearer and nearer to the island she came until at last she remained at rest before the largest, which was directly opposite her throne. Raising her hideous head from the water she fixed her great, round eyes upon the slaves. They were fat and sleek, for they had been brought from a distant Mahar city where human beings are kept in droves, and bred and fattened, as we breed and fatten beef cattle.

The queen fixed her gaze upon a plump young maiden. Her victim tried to turn away, hiding her face in her hands and kneeling behind a woman; but the reptile, with unblinking eyes, stared on with such fixity that I could have sworn her vision penetrated the woman, and the girl's arms to reach at last the very center of her brain.

Slowly the reptile's head commenced to move to and fro, but the eyes never ceased to bore toward the frightened girl, and then the victim responded. She turned wide, fear-haunted eyes toward the Mahar queen, slowly she rose to her feet, and then as though dragged by some unseen power she moved as one in a trance straight toward the reptile, her glassy eyes fixed upon those of her captor. To the

water's edge she came, nor did she even pause, but stepped into the shallows beside the little island. On she moved toward the Mahar, who now slowly retreated as though leading her victim on. The water rose to the girl's knees, and still she advanced, chained by that clammy eye. Now the water was at her waist; now her armpits. Her fellows upon the island looked on in horror, helpless to avert her doom in which they saw a forecast of their own.

The Mahar sank now till only the long upper bill and eyes were exposed above the surface of the water, and the girl had advanced until the end of that repulsive beak was but an inch or two from her face, her horror-filled eyes riveted upon those of the reptile.

Now the water passed above the girl's mouth and nose — her eyes and forehead all that showed — yet still she walked on after the retreating Mahar. The queen's head slowly disappeared beneath the surface and after it went the eyes of her victim — only a slow ripple widened toward the shores to mark where the two vanished.

For a time all was silence within the temple. The slaves were motionless in terror. The Mahars watched the surface of the water for the reappearance of their queen, and presently at one end of the tank her head rose slowly into view. She was backing toward the surface, her eyes fixed before her as they had been when she dragged the helpless girl to her doom.

And then to my utter amazement I saw the forehead and eyes of the maiden come slowly out of the depths, following the gaze of the reptile just as when she had disappeared beneath the surface. On and on came the girl until she stood in water that reached barely to her knees, and though she had been beneath the surface sufficient time to have drowned her thrice over there was no indication, other than her dripping hair and glistening body, that she had been submerged at all.

Again and again the queen led the girl into the depths and out again, until the uncanny weirdness of the thing got on my nerves so that I could have leaped into the tank to the child's rescue had I not taken a firm hold of myself.

Once they were below much longer than usual, and when they came to the surface I was horrified to see that one of the girl's arms was gone — gnawed completely off at the shoulder — but the poor thing gave no indication of realizing pain, only the horror in her set eyes seemed intensified.

The next time they appeared the other arm was gone, and then the breasts, and then a part of the face — it was awful. The poor creatures on the islands awaiting their fate tried to cover their eyes with their hands to hide the fearful sight, but now I saw that they too were under the hypnotic spell of the reptiles, so that they could only crouch in terror with their eyes fixed upon the terrible thing that was transpiring before them.

Finally the queen was under much longer than ever before, and when she rose she came alone and swam sleepily toward her boulder. The moment she mounted it seemed to be the signal for the other Mahars to enter the tank, and then commenced, upon a larger scale, a repetition of the uncanny performance through which the queen had led her victim.

Only the women and children fell prey to the Mahars — they being the weakest and most tender — and when they had satisfied their appetite for human flesh, some of them devouring two and three of the slaves, there were only a score of full-grown men left, and I thought that for some reason these were to be spared, but such was far from the case, for as the last Mahar crawled to her rock the queen's thipdars

darted into the air, circled the temple once and then, hissing like steam engines, swooped down upon the remaining slaves.

There was no hypnotism here — just the plain, brutal ferocity of the beast of prey, tearing, rending, and gulping its meat, but at that it was less horrible than the uncanny method of the Mahars. By the time the thipdars had disposed of the last of the slaves the Mahars were all asleep upon their rocks, and a moment later the great pterodactyls swung back to their posts beside the queen, and themselves dropped into slumber.

“I thought the Mahars seldom, if ever, slept,” I said to Ja.

“They do many things in this temple which they do not do elsewhere,” he replied. “The Mahars of Phutra are not supposed to eat human flesh, yet slaves are brought here by thousands and almost always you will find Mahars on hand to consume them. I imagine that they do not bring their Sagoths here, because they are ashamed of the practice, which is supposed to obtain only among the least advanced of their race; but I would wager my canoe against a broken paddle that there is no Mahar but eats human flesh whenever she can get it.”

“Why should they object to eating human flesh,” I asked, “if it is true that they look upon us as lower animals?”

“It is not because they consider us their equals that they are supposed to look with abhorrence upon those who eat our flesh,” replied Ja; “it is merely that we are warm-blooded animals. They would not think of eating the meat of a thag, which we consider such a delicacy, any more than I would think of eating a snake. As a matter of fact it is difficult to explain just why this sentiment should exist among them.”

“I wonder if they left a single victim,” I remarked, leaning far out of the opening in the rocky wall to inspect the temple better. Directly below me the water lapped the very side of the wall, there being a

break in the boulders at this point as there was at several other places about the side of the temple.

My hands were resting upon a small piece of granite which formed a part of the wall, and all my weight upon it proved too much for it. It slipped and I lunged forward. There was nothing to save myself and I plunged headforemost into the water below.

Fortunately the tank was deep at this point, and I suffered no injury from the fall, but as I was rising to the surface my mind filled with the horrors of my position as I thought of the terrible doom which awaited me the moment the eyes of the reptiles fell upon the creature that had disturbed their slumber.

As long as I could I remained beneath the surface, swimming rapidly in the direction of the islands that I might prolong my life to the utmost. At last I was forced to rise for air, and as I cast a terrified glance in the direction of the Mahars and the thipdars I was almost stunned to see that not a single one remained upon the rocks where I had last seen them, nor as I searched the temple with my eyes could I discern any within it.

For a moment I was puzzled to account for the thing, until I realized that the reptiles, being deaf, could not have been disturbed by the noise my body made when it hit the water, and that as there is no such thing as time within Pellucidar there was no telling how long I had been beneath the surface. It was a difficult thing to attempt to figure out by earthly standards — this matter of elapsed time — but when I set myself to it I began to realize that I might have been submerged a second or a month or not at all. You have no conception of the strange contradictions and impossibilities which arise when all methods of measuring time, as we know them upon earth, are non-existent.

I was about to congratulate myself upon the miracle which had

saved me for the moment, when the memory of the hypnotic powers of the Mahars filled me with apprehension lest they be practicing their uncanny art upon me to the end that I merely imagined that I was alone in the temple. At the thought cold sweat broke out upon me from every pore, and as I crawled from the water onto one of the tiny islands I was trembling like a leaf — you cannot imagine the awful horror which even the simple thought of the repulsive Mahars of Pellucidar induces in the human mind, and to feel that you are in their power — that they are crawling, slimy, and abhorrent, to drag you down beneath the waters and devour you! It is frightful.

But they did not come, and at last I came to the conclusion that I was indeed alone within the temple. How long I should be alone was the next question to assail me as I swam frantically about once more in search of a means to escape.

Several times I called to Ja, but he must have left after I tumbled into the tank, for I received no response to my cries. Doubtless he had felt as certain of my doom when he saw me topple from our hiding place as I had, and lest he too should be discovered, had hastened from the temple and back to his village.

I knew that there must be some entrance to the building beside the doorways in the roof, for it did not seem reasonable to believe that the thousands of slaves which were brought here to feed the Mahars the human flesh they craved would all be carried through the air, and so I continued my search until at last it was rewarded by the discovery of several loose granite blocks in the masonry at one end of the temple.

A little effort proved sufficient to dislodge enough of these stones to permit me to crawl through into the clearing, and a moment later I had scurried across the intervening space to the dense jungle beyond.

Here I sank panting and trembling upon the matted grasses beneath the giant trees, for I felt that I had escaped from the grinning fangs of death out of the depths of my own grave. Whatever dangers lay hidden in this island jungle, there could be none so fearsome as those which I had just escaped. I knew that I could meet death bravely enough if it but came in the form of some familiar beast or man — anything other than the hideous and uncanny Mahars.

9.

THE FACE OF DEATH

I must have fallen asleep from exhaustion. When I awoke I was very hungry, and after busying myself searching for fruit for a while, I set off through the jungle to find the beach. I knew that the island was not so large but that I could easily find the sea if I did but move in a straight line, but there came the difficulty as there was no way in which I could direct my course and hold it, the sun, of course, being always directly above my head, and the trees so thickly set that I could see no distant object which might serve to guide me in a straight line.

As it was I must have walked for a great distance since I ate four times and slept twice before I reached the sea, but at last I did so, and my pleasure at the sight of it was greatly enhanced by the chance discovery of a hidden canoe among the bushes through which I had stumbled just prior to coming upon the beach.

I can tell you that it did not take me long to pull that awkward craft down to the water and shove it far out from shore. My experience with Ja had taught me that if I were to steal another canoe I must be quick about it and get far beyond the owner's reach as soon as possible.

I must have come out upon the opposite side of the island from that at which Ja and I had entered it, for the mainland was nowhere in sight. For a long time I paddled around the shore, though well out, before I saw the mainland in the distance. At the sight of it I lost no time in directing my course toward it, for I had long since made up my mind to return to Phutra and give myself up that I might be once more with Perry and Ghak the Hairy One.

I felt that I was a fool ever to have attempted to escape alone, especially in view of the fact that our plans were already well formulated to make a break for freedom together. Of course I realized that the chances of the success of our proposed venture were slim indeed, but I knew that I never could enjoy freedom without Perry so long as the old man lived, and I had learned that the probability that I might find him was less than slight.

Had Perry been dead, I should gladly have pitted my strength and wit against the savage and primordial world in which I found myself. I could have lived in seclusion within some rocky cave until I had found the means to outfit myself with the crude weapons of the Stone Age, and then set out in search of her whose image had now become the constant companion of my waking hours, and the central and beloved figure of my dreams.

But, to the best of my knowledge, Perry still lived and it was my duty and wish to be again with him, that we might share the dangers and vicissitudes of the strange world we had discovered. And Ghak, too; the great, shaggy man had found a place in the hearts of us both, for he was indeed every inch a man and king. Uncouth, perhaps, and brutal, too, if judged too harshly by the standards of effete twentieth-century civilization, but withal noble, dignified, chivalrous, and loveable.

Chance carried me to the very beach upon which I had discovered Ja's canoe, and a short time later I was scrambling up the steep bank to retrace my steps from the plain of Phutra. But my troubles came when I entered the canyon beyond the summit, for here I found that several of them centered at the point where I crossed the divide, and which one I had traversed to reach the pass I could not for the life of me remember.

It was all a matter of chance and so I set off down that which seemed the easiest going, and in this I made the same mistake that many of us do in selecting the path along which we shall follow out the course of our lives, and again learned that it is not always best to follow the line of least resistance.

By the time I had eaten eight meals and slept twice I was convinced that I was upon the wrong trail, for between Phutra and the inland sea I had not slept at all, and had eaten but once. To retrace my steps to the summit of the divide and explore another canyon seemed the only solution of my problem, but a sudden widening and levelness of the canyon just before me seemed to suggest that it was about to open into a level country, and with the lure of discovery strong upon me I decided to proceed but a short distance farther before I turned back.

The next turn of the canyon brought me to its mouth, and before me I saw a narrow plain leading down to an ocean. At my right the side of the canyon continued to the water's edge, the valley lying to my left, and the foot of it running gradually into the sea, where it formed a broad level beach.

Clumps of strange trees dotted the landscape here and there almost to the water, and rank grass and ferns grew between. From the nature of the vegetation I was convinced that the land between the ocean and the foothills was swampy, though directly before me it seemed dry enough all the way to the sandy strip along which the restless waters advanced and retreated.

Curiosity prompted me to walk down to the beach, for the scene was very beautiful. As I passed along beside the deep and tangled vegetation of the swamp I thought that I saw a movement of the ferns at my left, but though I stopped a moment to look it was not repeated,

and if anything lay hid there my eyes could not penetrate the dense foliage to discern it.

Presently I stood upon the beach looking out over the wide and lonely sea across whose forbidding bosom no human being had yet ventured, to discover what strange and mysterious lands lay beyond, or what its invisible islands held of riches, wonders, or adventure. What savage faces, what fierce and formidable beasts were this very instant watching the lapping of the waves upon its farther shore! How far did it extend? Perry had told me that the seas of Pellucidar were small in comparison with those of the outer crust, but even so this great ocean might stretch its broad expanse for thousands of miles. For countless ages it had rolled up and down its countless miles of shore, and yet today it remained all unknown beyond the tiny strip that was visible from its beaches.

The fascination of speculation was strong upon me. It was as though I had been carried back to the birth time of our own outer world to look upon its lands and seas ages before man had traversed either. Here was a new world, all untouched. It called to me to explore it. I was dreaming of the excitement and adventure which lay before us could Perry and I but escape the Mahars, when something, a slight noise I imagine, drew my attention behind me.

As I turned, romance, adventure, and discovery in the abstract took wing before the terrible embodiment of all three in concrete form that I beheld advancing upon me.

A huge, slimy amphibian it was, with toad-like body and the mighty jaws of an alligator. Its immense carcass must have weighed tons, and yet it moved swiftly and silently toward me. Upon one hand was the bluff that ran from the canyon to the sea, on the other the fearsome swamp from which the creature had sneaked upon me, behind lay the

mighty untracked sea, and before me in the center of the narrow way that led to safety stood this huge mountain of terrible and menacing flesh.

A single glance at the thing was sufficient to assure me that I was facing one of those long-extinct, prehistoric creatures whose fossilized remains are found within the outer crust as far back as the Triassic formation, a gigantic labyrinthodon. And there I was, unarmed, and, with the exception of a loin cloth, as naked as I had come into the world. I could imagine how my first ancestor felt that distant, prehistoric morn that he encountered for the first time the terrifying progenitor of the thing that had me cornered now beside the restless, mysterious sea.

Unquestionably he had escaped, or I should not have been within Pellucidar or elsewhere, and I wished at that moment that he had handed down to me with the various attributes that I presumed I have inherited from him, the specific application of the instinct of self-preservation which saved him from the fate which loomed so close before me today.

To seek escape in the swamp or in the ocean would have been similar to jumping into a den of lions to escape one upon the outside. The sea and swamp both were doubtless alive with these mighty, carnivorous amphibians, and if not, the individual that menaced me would pursue me into either the sea or the swamp with equal facility.

There seemed nothing to do but stand supinely and await my end. I thought of Perry — how he would wonder what had become of me. I thought of my friends of the outer world, and of how they all would go on living their lives in total ignorance of the strange and terrible fate that had overtaken me, or unguessing the weird surroundings which had witnessed the last frightful agony of my extinction. And

with these thoughts came a realization of how unimportant to the life and happiness of the world is the existence of any one of us. We may be snuffed out without an instant's warning, and for a brief day our friends speak of us with subdued voices. The following morning, while the first worm is busily engaged in testing the construction of our coffin, they are teeing up for the first hole to suffer more acute sorrow over a sliced ball than they did over our, to us, untimely demise. The labyrinthodon was coming more slowly now. He seemed to realize that escape for me was impossible, and I could have sworn that his huge, fanged jaws grinned in pleasurable appreciation of my predicament, or was it in anticipation of the juicy morsel which would so soon be pulp between those formidable teeth?

He was about fifty feet from me when I heard a voice calling to me from the direction of the bluff at my left. I looked and could have shouted in delight at the sight that met my eyes, for there stood Ja, waving frantically to me, and urging me to run for it to the cliff's base.

I had no idea that I should escape the monster that had marked me for his breakfast, but at least I should not die alone. Human eyes would watch me end. It was cold comfort I presume, but yet I derived some slight peace of mind from the contemplation of it.

To run seemed ridiculous, especially toward that steep and unscalable cliff, and yet I did so, and as I ran I saw Ja, agile as a monkey, crawl down the precipitous face of the rocks, clinging to small projections, and the tough creepers that had found root-hold here and there.

The labyrinthodon evidently thought that Ja was coming to double his portion of human flesh, so he was in no haste to pursue me to the cliff and frighten away this other tidbit. Instead he merely trotted along behind me.

As I approached the foot of the cliff I saw what Ja intended doing, but I doubted if the thing would prove successful. He had come down to within twenty feet of the bottom, and there, clinging with one hand to a small ledge, and with his feet resting precariously upon tiny bushes that grew from the solid face of the rock, he lowered the point of his long spear until it hung some six feet above the ground.

To clamber up that slim shaft without dragging Ja down and precipitating both to the same doom from which the copper-colored one was attempting to save me seemed utterly impossible, and as I came near the spear I told Ja so, and that I could not risk him to try to save myself.

But he insisted that he knew what he was doing and was in no danger himself.

“The danger is still yours,” he called, “for unless you move much more rapidly than you are now, the sithic will be upon you and drag you back before ever you are halfway up the spear — he can rear up and reach you with ease anywhere below where I stand.”

Well, Ja should know his own business, I thought, and so I grasped the spear and clambered up toward the red man as rapidly as I could — being so far removed from my simian ancestors as I am. I imagine the slow-witted sithic, as Ja called him, suddenly realized our intentions and that he was quite likely to lose all his meal instead of having it doubled as he had hoped.

When he saw me clambering up that spear he let out a hiss that fairly shook the ground, and came charging after me at a terrific rate. I had reached the top of the spear by this time, or almost; another six inches would give me a hold on Ja’s hand, when I felt a sudden wrench from below and glancing fearfully downward saw the mighty jaws of the monster close on the sharp point of the weapon.

I made a frantic effort to reach Ja's hand, the sithic gave a tremendous tug that came near to jerking Ja from his frail hold on the surface of the rock, the spear slipped from his fingers, and still clinging to it I plunged feet foremost toward my executioner.

At the instant that he felt the spear come away from Ja's hand the creature must have opened his huge jaws to catch me, for when I came down, still clinging to the butt end of the weapon, the point yet rested in his mouth and the result was that the sharpened end transfixed his lower jaw.

With the pain he snapped his mouth closed. I fell upon his snout, lost my hold upon the spear, rolled the length of his face and head, across his short neck onto his broad back and from there to the ground.

Scarce had I touched the earth than I was upon my feet, dashing madly for the path by which I had entered this horrible valley. A glance over my shoulder showed me the sithic engaged in pawing at the spear stuck through his lower jaw, and so busily engaged did he remain in this occupation that I had gained the safety of the cliff top before he was ready to take up the pursuit. When he did not discover me in sight within the valley he dashed, hissing into the rank vegetation of the swamp and that was the last I saw of him.

10.

PHUTRA AGAIN

I hastened to the cliff edge above Ja and helped him to a secure footing. He would not listen to any thanks for his attempt to save me, which had come so near miscarrying.

"I had given you up for lost when you tumbled into the Mahar temple," he said, "for not even I could save you from their clutches, and you may imagine my surprise when on seeing a canoe dragged up upon the beach of the mainland I discovered your own footprints in the sand beside it.

"I immediately set out in search of you, knowing as I did that you must be entirely unarmed and defenseless against the many dangers which lurk upon the mainland both in the form of savage beasts and reptiles, and men as well. I had no difficulty in tracking you to this point. It is well that I arrived when I did."

"But why did you do it?" I asked, puzzled at this show of friendship on the part of a man of another world and a different race and color.

"You saved my life," he replied; "from that moment it became my duty to protect and befriend you. I would have been no true Mezop had I evaded my plain duty; but it was a pleasure in this instance for I like you. I wish that you would come and live with me. You shall become a member of my tribe. Among us there is the best of hunting and fishing, and you shall have, to choose a mate from, the most beautiful girls of Pellucidar. Will you come?"

I told him about Perry then, and Dian the Beautiful, and how my

duty was to them first. Afterward I should return and visit him — if I could ever find his island.

“Oh, that is easy, my friend,” he said. “You need merely to come to the foot of the highest peak of the Mountains of the Clouds. There you will find a river which flows into the Lural Az. Directly opposite the mouth of the river you will see three large islands far out, so far that they are barely discernible, the one to the extreme left as you face them from the mouth of the river is Anoroc, where I rule the tribe of Anoroc.”

“But how am I to find the Mountains of the Clouds?” I asked.

“Men say that they are visible from half Pellucidar,” he replied.

“How large is Pellucidar?” I asked, wondering what sort of theory these primitive men had concerning the form and substance of their world.

“The Mahars say it is round, like the inside of a tola shell,” he answered, “but that is ridiculous, since, were it true, we should fall back were we to travel far in any direction, and all the waters of Pellucidar would run to one spot and drown us. No, Pellucidar is quite flat and extends no man knows how far in all directions. At the edges, so my ancestors have reported and handed down to me, is a great wall that prevents the earth and waters from escaping over into the burning sea whereon Pellucidar floats; but I never have been so far from Anoroc as to have seen this wall with my own eyes. However, it is quite reasonable to believe that this is true, whereas there is no reason at all in the foolish belief of the Mahars. According to them Pellucidarians who live upon the opposite side walk always with their heads pointed downward!” and Ja laughed uproariously at the very thought.

It was plain to see that the human folk of this inner world had not advanced far in learning, and the thought that the ugly Mahars had

so outstripped them was a very pathetic one indeed. I wondered how many ages it would take to lift these people out of their ignorance even were it given to Perry and me to attempt it. Possibly we would be killed for our pains as were those men of the outer world who dared challenge the dense ignorance and superstitions of the earth's younger days. But it was worth the effort if the opportunity ever presented itself.

And then it occurred to me that here was an opportunity — that I might make a small beginning upon Ja, who was my friend, and thus note the effect of my teaching upon a Pellucidarian.

“Ja,” I said, “what would you say were I to tell you that in so far as the Mahars’ theory of the shape of Pellucidar is concerned it is correct?”

“I would say,” he replied, “that either you are a fool, or took me for one.”

“But, Ja,” I insisted, “if their theory is incorrect how do you account for the fact that I was able to pass through the earth from the outer crust to Pellucidar. If your theory is correct all is a sea of flame beneath us, wherein no peoples could exist, and yet I come from a great world that is covered with human beings, and beasts, and birds, and fishes in mighty oceans.”

“You live upon the under side of Pellucidar, and walk always with your head pointed downward?” he scoffed. “And were I to believe that, my friend, I should indeed be mad.”

I attempted to explain the force of gravity to him, and by the means of the dropped fruit to illustrate how impossible it would be for a body to fall off the earth under any circumstances. He listened so intently that I thought I had made an impression, and started the train of

thought that would lead him to a partial understanding of the truth. But I was mistaken.

“Your own illustration,” he said finally, “proves the falsity of your theory.” He dropped a fruit from his hand to the ground. “See,” he said, “without support even this tiny fruit falls until it strikes something that stops it. If Pellucidar were not supported upon the flaming sea it too would fall as the fruit falls — you have proven it yourself!” He had me, that time — you could see it in his eye.

It seemed a hopeless job and I gave it up, temporarily at least, for when I contemplated the necessity explanation of our solar system and the universe I realized how futile it would be to attempt to picture to Ja or any other Pellucidarian the sun, the moon, the planets, and the countless stars. Those born within the inner world could no more conceive of such things than can we of the outer crust reduce to factors appreciable to our finite minds such terms as space and eternity.

“Well, Ja,” I laughed, “whether we be walking with our feet up or down, here we are, and the question of greatest importance is not so much where we came from as where we are going now. For my part I wish that you could guide me to Phutra where I may give myself up to the Mahars once more, that my friends and I may work out the plan of escape which the Sagoths interrupted when they gathered us together and drove us to the arena to witness the punishment of the slaves who killed the guardsman. I wish now that I had not left the arena for by this time my friends and I might have made good our escape, whereas this delay may mean the wrecking of all our plans, which depended for their consummation upon the continued sleep of the three Mahars who lay in the pit beneath the building in which we were confined.”

“You would return to captivity?” cried Ja.

“My friends are there,” I replied, “the only friends I have in Pellucidar, except yourself. What else may I do under the circumstances?”

He thought for a moment in silence. Then he shook his head sorrowfully.

“It is what a brave man and a good friend should do,” he said; “yet it seems most foolish, for the Mahars will most certainly condemn you to death for running away, and so you will be accomplishing nothing for your friends by returning. Never in all my life have I heard of a prisoner returning to the Mahars of his own free will. There are but few who escape them, though some do, and these would rather die than be recaptured.”

“I see no other way, Ja,” I said, “though I can assure you that I would rather go to Sheol after Perry than to Phutra. However, Perry is much too pious to make the probability at all great that I should ever be called upon to rescue him from the former locality.”

Ja asked me what Sheol was, and when I explained, as best I could, he said, “You are speaking of Molop Az, the flaming sea upon which Pellucidar floats. All the dead who are buried in the ground go there. Piece by piece they are carried down to Molop Az by the little demons who dwell there. We know this because when graves are opened we find that the bodies have been partially or entirely borne off. That is why we of Anoroc place our dead in high trees where the birds may find them and bear them bit by bit to the Dead World above the Land of Awful Shadow. If we kill an enemy we place his body in the ground that it may go to Molop Az.”

As we talked we had been walking up the canyon down which I had come to the great ocean and the sithic. Ja did his best to dissuade me from returning to Phutra, but when he saw that I was determined to do so, he consented to guide me to a point from which I could see the

plain where lay the city. To my surprise the distance was but short from the beach where I had again met Ja. It was evident that I had spent much time following the windings of a tortuous canon, while just beyond the ridge lay the city of Phutra near to which I must have come several times.

As we topped the ridge and saw the granite gate towers dotting the flowered plain at our feet Ja made a final effort to persuade me to abandon my mad purpose and return with him to Anoroc, but I was firm in my resolve, and at last he bid me good-bye, assured in his own mind that he was looking upon me for the last time.

I was sorry to part with Ja, for I had come to like him very much indeed. With his hidden city upon the island of Anoroc as a base, and his savage warriors as escort Perry and I could have accomplished much in the line of exploration, and I hoped that were we successful in our effort to escape we might return to Anoroc later.

There was, however, one great thing to be accomplished first — at least it was the great thing to me — the finding of Dian the Beautiful. I wanted to make amends for the affront I had put upon her in my ignorance, and I wanted to — well, I wanted to see her again, and to be with her.

Down the hillside I made my way into the gorgeous field of flowers, and then across the rolling land toward the shadowless columns that guard the ways to buried Phutra. At a quarter-mile from the nearest entrance I was discovered by the Sagoth guard, and in an instant four of the gorilla-men were dashing toward me.

Though they brandished their long spears and yelled like wild Comanches I paid not the slightest attention to them, walking quietly toward them as though unaware of their existence. My manner had the effect upon them that I had hoped, and as we came quite near

together they ceased their savage shouting. It was evident that they had expected me to turn and flee at sight of them, thus presenting that which they most enjoyed, a moving human target at which to cast their spears.

“What do you here?” shouted one, and then as he recognized me, “Ho! It is the slave who claims to be from another world — he who escaped when the thag ran amuck within the amphitheater. But why do you return, having once made good your escape?”

“I did not ‘escape’,” I replied. “I but ran away to avoid the thag, as did others, and coming into a long passage I became confused and lost my way in the foothills beyond Phutra. Only now have I found my way back.”

“And you come of your free will back to Phutra!” exclaimed one of the guardsmen.

“Where else might I go?” I asked. “I am a stranger within Pellucidar and know no other where than Phutra. Why should I not desire to be in Phutra? Am I not well fed and well treated? Am I not happy? What better lot could man desire?”

The Sagoths scratched their heads. This was a new one on them, and so being stupid brutes they took me to their masters whom they felt would be better fitted to solve the riddle of my return, for riddle they still considered it.

I had spoken to the Sagoths as I had for the purpose of throwing them off the scent of my purposed attempt at escape. If they thought that I was so satisfied with my lot within Phutra that I would voluntarily return when I had once had so excellent an opportunity to escape, they would never for an instant imagine that I could be occupied in arranging another escape immediately upon my return to the city.

So they led me before a slimy Mahar who clung to a slimy rock within the large room that was the thing's office. With cold, reptilian eyes the creature seemed to bore through the thin veneer of my deceit and read my inmost thoughts. It heeded the story which the Sagoths told of my return to Phutra, watching the gorilla-men's lips and fingers during the recital. Then it questioned me through one of the Sagoths.

"You say that you returned to Phutra of your own free will, because you think yourself better off here than elsewhere — do you not know that you may be the next chosen to give up your life in the interests of the wonderful scientific investigations that our learned ones are continually occupied with?"

I hadn't heard of anything of that nature, but I thought best not to admit it.

"I could be in no more danger here," I said, "than naked and unarmed in the savage jungles or upon the lonely plains of Pellucidar. I was fortunate, I think, to return to Phutra at all. As it was I barely escaped death within the jaws of a huge sithic. No, I am sure that I am safer in the hands of intelligent creatures such as rule Phutra. At least such would be the case in my own world, where human beings like myself rule supreme. There the higher races of man extend protection and hospitality to the stranger within their gates, and being a stranger here I naturally assumed that a like courtesy would be accorded me."

The Mahar looked at me in silence for some time after I ceased speaking and the Sagoth had translated my words to his master. The creature seemed deep in thought. Presently he communicated some message to the Sagoth. The latter turned, and motioning me to follow him, left the presence of the reptile. Behind and on either side of me marched the balance of the guard.

“What are they going to do with me?” I asked the fellow at my right.

“You are to appear before the learned ones who will question you regarding this strange world from which you say you come.”

After a moment’s silence he turned to me again.

“Do you happen to know,” he asked, “what the Mahars do to slaves who lie to them?”

“No,” I replied, “nor does it interest me, as I have no intention of lying to the Mahars.”

“Then be careful that you don’t repeat the impossible tale you told Sol-to-to just now — another world, indeed, where human beings rule!” he concluded in fine scorn.

“But it is the truth,” I insisted. “From where else then did I come? I am not of Pellucidar. Anyone with half an eye could see that.”

“It is your misfortune then,” he remarked dryly, “that you may not be judged by one with but half an eye.”

“What will they do with me,” I asked, “if they do not have a mind to believe me?”

“You may be sentenced to the arena, or go to the pits to be used in research work by the learned ones,” he replied.

“And what will they do with me there?” I persisted.

“No one knows except the Mahars and those who go to the pits with them, but as the latter never return, their knowledge does them but little good. It is said that the learned ones cut up their subjects while they are yet alive, thus learning many useful things. However I should not imagine that it would prove very useful to him who was being cut up; but of course this is all but conjecture. The chances are that ere long you will know much more about it than I,” and he grinned as he spoke. The Sagoths have a well-developed sense of humor.

“And suppose it is the arena,” I continued; “what then?”

“You saw the two who met the tarag and the thag the time that you escaped?” he said.

“Yes.”

“Your end in the arena would be similar to what was intended for them,” he explained, “though of course the same kinds of animals might not be employed.”

“It is sure death in either event?” I asked.

“What becomes of those who go below with the learned ones I do not know, nor does any other,” he replied; “but those who go to the arena may come out alive and thus regain their liberty, as did the two whom you saw.”

“They gained their liberty? And how?”

“It is the custom of the Mahars to liberate those who remain alive within the arena after the beasts depart or are killed. Thus it has happened that several mighty warriors from far distant lands, whom we have captured on our slave raids, have battled the brutes turned in upon them and slain them, thereby winning their freedom. In the instance which you witnessed the beasts killed each other, but the result was the same — the man and woman were liberated, furnished with weapons, and started on their homeward journey. Upon the left shoulder of each a mark was burned — the mark of the Mahars — which will forever protect these two from slaving parties.”

“There is a slender chance for me then if I be sent to the arena, and none at all if the learned ones drag me to the pits?”

“You are quite right,” he replied; “but do not felicitate yourself too quickly should you be sent to the arena, for there is scarce one in a thousand who comes out alive.”

To my surprise they returned me to the same building in which

I had been confined with Perry and Ghak before my escape. At the doorway I was turned over to the guards there.

“He will doubtless be called before the investigators shortly,” said he who had brought me back, “so have him in readiness.”

The guards in whose hands I now found myself, upon hearing that I had returned of my own volition to Phutra evidently felt that it would be safe to give me liberty within the building as had been the custom before I had escaped, and so I was told to return to whatever duty had been mine formerly.

My first act was to hunt up Perry; whom I found poring as usual over the great tomes that he was supposed to be merely dusting and rearranging upon new shelves.

As I entered the room he glanced up and nodded pleasantly to me, only to resume his work as though I had never been away at all. I was both astonished and hurt at his indifference. And to think that I was risking death to return to him purely from a sense of duty and affection!

“Why, Perry!” I exclaimed, “haven’t you a word for me after my long absence?”

“Long absence!” he repeated in evident astonishment. “What do you mean?”

“Are you crazy, Perry? Do you mean to say that you have not missed me since that time we were separated by the charging thag within the arena?”

“‘That time’,” he repeated. “Why man, I have but just returned from the arena! You reached here almost as soon as I. Had you been much later I should indeed have been worried, and as it is I had intended asking you about how you escaped the beast as soon as I had completed the translation of this most interesting passage.”

“Perry, you *are* mad,” I exclaimed. “Why, the Lord only knows how long I have been away. I have been to other lands, discovered a new race of humans within Pellucidar, seen the Mahars at their worship in their hidden temple, and barely escaped with my life from them and from a great labyrinthodon that I met afterward, following my long and tedious wanderings across an unknown world. I must have been away for months, Perry, and now you barely look up from your work when I return and insist that we have been separated but a moment. Is that any way to treat a friend? I’m surprised at you, Perry, and if I’d thought for a moment that you cared no more for me than this I should not have returned to chance death at the hands of the Mahars for your sake.”

The old man looked at me for a long time before he spoke. There was a puzzled expression upon his wrinkled face, and a look of hurt sorrow in his eyes.

“David, my boy,” he said, “how could you for a moment doubt my love for you? There is something strange here that I cannot understand. I know that I am not mad, and I am equally sure that you are not; but how in the world are we to account for the strange hallucinations that each of us seems to harbor relative to the passage of time since last we saw each other. You are positive that months have gone by, while to me it seems equally certain that not more than an hour ago I sat beside you in the amphitheater. Can it be that both of us are right and at the same time both are wrong? First tell me what time is, and then maybe I can solve our problem. Do you catch my meaning?”

I didn’t and said so.

“Yes,” continued the old man, “we are both right. To me, bent over my book here, there has been no lapse of time. I have done little or nothing to waste my energies and so have required neither food nor

sleep, but you, on the contrary, have walked and fought and wasted strength and tissue which must needs be rebuilt by nutriment and food, and so, having eaten and slept many times since last you saw me you naturally measure the lapse of time largely by these acts. As a matter of fact, David, I am rapidly coming to the conviction that there is no such thing as time — surely there can be no time here within Pellucidar, where there are no means for measuring or recording time. Why, the Mahars themselves take no account of such a thing as time. I find here in all their literary works but a single tense, the present. There seems to be neither past nor future with them. Of course it is impossible for our outer-earthly minds to grasp such a condition, but our recent experiences seem to demonstrate its existence.”

It was too big a subject for me, and I said so, but Perry seemed to enjoy nothing better than speculating upon it, and after listening with interest to my account of the adventures through which I had passed he returned once more to the subject, which he was enlarging upon with considerable fluency when he was interrupted by the entrance of a Sagoth.

“Come!” commanded the intruder, beckoning to me. “The investigators would speak with you.”

“Good-bye, Perry!” I said, clasping the old man’s hand. “There may be nothing but the present and no such thing as time, but I feel that I am about to take a trip into the hereafter from which I shall never return. If you and Ghak should manage to escape I want you to promise me that you will find Dian the Beautiful and tell her that with my last words I asked her forgiveness for the unintentional affront I put upon her, and that my one wish was to be spared long enough to right the wrong that I had done her.”

Tears came to Perry’s eyes.

“I cannot believe but that you will return, David,” he said. “It would be awful to think of living out the balance of my life without you among these hateful and repulsive creatures. If you are taken away I shall never escape, for I feel that I am as well off here as I should be anywhere within this buried world. Good-bye, my boy, good-bye!” and then his old voice faltered and broke, and as he hid his face in his hands the Sagoth guardsman grasped me roughly by the shoulder and hustled me from the chamber.

11.

FOUR DEAD MAHARS

A moment later I was standing before a dozen Mahars — the social investigators of Phutra. They asked me many questions, through a Sagoth interpreter. I answered them all truthfully. They seemed particularly interested in my account of the outer earth and the strange vehicle which had brought Perry and me to Pellucidar. I thought that I had convinced them, and after they had sat in silence for a long time following my examination, I expected to be ordered returned to my quarters.

During this apparent silence they were debating through the medium of strange, unspoken language the merits of my tale. At last the head of the tribunal communicated the result of their conference to the officer in charge of the Sagoth guard.

“Come,” he said to me, “you are sentenced to the experimental pits for having dared to insult the intelligence of the mighty ones with the ridiculous tale you have had the temerity to unfold to them.”

“Do you mean that they do not believe me?” I asked, totally astonished.

“Believe you!” he laughed. “Do you mean to say that you expected any one to believe so impossible a lie?”

It was hopeless, and so I walked in silence beside my guard down through the dark corridors and runways toward my awful doom. At a low level we came upon a number of lighted chambers in which we saw many Mahars engaged in various occupations. To one of these chambers my guard escorted me, and before leaving they chained me

to a side wall. There were other humans similarly chained. Upon a long table lay a victim even as I was ushered into the room. Several Mahars stood about the poor creature holding him down so that he could not move. Another, grasping a sharp knife with her three-toed fore foot, was laying open the victim's chest and abdomen. No anesthetic had been administered and the shrieks and groans of the tortured man were terrible to hear. This, indeed, was vivisection with a vengeance. Cold sweat broke out upon me as I realized that soon my turn would come. And to think that where there was no such thing as time I might easily imagine that my suffering was enduring for months before death finally released me!

The Mahars had paid not the slightest attention to me as I had been brought into the room. So deeply immersed were they in their work that I am sure they did not even know that the Sagoths had entered with me. The door was close by. Would that I could reach it! But those heavy chains precluded any such possibility. I looked about for some means of escape from my bonds. Upon the floor between me and the Mahars lay a tiny surgical instrument which one of them must have dropped. It looked not unlike a buttonhook, but was much smaller, and its point was sharpened. A hundred times in my boyhood days had I picked locks with a buttonhook. Could I but reach that little bit of polished steel I might yet effect at least a temporary escape.

Crawling to the limit of my chain, I found that by reaching one hand as far out as I could my fingers still fell an inch short of the coveted instrument. It was tantalizing! Stretch every fiber of my being as I would, I could not quite make it.

At last I turned about and extended one foot toward the object. My heart came to my throat! I could just touch the thing! But suppose that in my effort to drag it toward me I should accidentally shove it still

farther away and thus entirely out of reach! Cold sweat broke out upon me from every pore. Slowly and cautiously I made the effort. My toes dropped upon the cold metal. Gradually I worked it toward me until I felt that it was within reach of my hand and a moment later I had turned about and the precious thing was in my grasp.

Assiduously I fell to work upon the Mahar lock that held my chain. It was pitifully simple. A child might have picked it, and a moment later I was free. The Mahars were now evidently completing their work at the table. One already turned away and was examining other victims, evidently with the intention of selecting the next subject.

Those at the table had their backs toward me. But for the creature walking toward us I might have escaped that moment. Slowly the thing approached me, when its attention was attracted by a huge slave chained a few yards to my right. Here the reptile stopped and commenced to go over the poor devil carefully, and as it did so its back turned toward me for an instant, and in that instant I gave two mighty leaps that carried me out of the chamber into the corridor beyond, down which I raced with all the speed I could command.

Where I was, or whither I was going, I knew not. My only thought was to place as much distance as possible between me and that frightful chamber of torture.

Presently I reduced my speed to a brisk walk, and later realizing the danger of running into some new predicament, were I not careful, I moved still more slowly and cautiously. After a time I came to a passage that seemed in some mysterious way familiar to me, and presently, chancing to glance within a chamber which led from the corridor I saw three Mahars curled up in slumber upon a bed of skins. I could have shouted aloud in joy and relief. It was the same corridor and the same Mahars that I had intended to have lead so important a role in our

escape from Phutra. Providence had indeed been kind to me, for the reptiles still slept.

My one great danger now lay in returning to the upper levels in search of Perry and Ghak, but there was nothing else to be done, and so I hastened upward. When I came to the frequented portions of the building, I found a large burden of skins in a corner and these I lifted to my head, carrying them in such a way that ends and corners fell down about my shoulders completely hiding my face. Thus disguised I found Perry and Ghak together in the chamber where we had been wont to eat and sleep.

Both were glad to see me, it was needless to say, though of course they had known nothing of the fate that had been meted out to me by my judges. It was decided that no time should now be lost before attempting to put our plan of escape to the test, as I could not hope to remain hidden from the Sagoths long, nor could I forever carry that bale of skins about upon my head without arousing suspicion. However it seemed likely that it would carry me once more safely through the crowded passages and chambers of the upper levels, and so I set out with Perry and Ghak — the stench of the illy cured pelts fairly choking me.

Together we repaired to the first tier of corridors beneath the main floor of the buildings, and here Perry and Ghak halted to await me. The buildings are cut out of the solid limestone formation. There is nothing at all remarkable about their architecture. The rooms are sometimes rectangular, sometimes circular, and again oval in shape. The corridors which connect them are narrow and not always straight. The chambers are lighted by diffused sunlight reflected through tubes similar to those by which the avenues are lighted. The lower the tiers

of chambers, the darker. Most of the corridors are entirely unlighted. The Mahars can see quite well in semidarkness.

Down to the main floor we encountered many Mahars, Sagoths, and slaves; but no attention was paid to us as we had become a part of the domestic life of the building. There was but a single entrance leading from the place into the avenue and this was well guarded by Sagoths — this doorway alone were we forbidden to pass. It is true that we were not supposed to enter the deeper corridors and apartments except on special occasions when we were instructed to do so; but as we were considered a lower order without intelligence there was little reason to fear that we could accomplish any harm by so doing, and so we were not hindered as we entered the corridor which led below.

Wrapped in a skin I carried three swords, and the two bows, and the arrows which Perry and I had fashioned. As many slaves bore skin-wrapped burdens to and fro my load attracted no comment. Where I left Ghak and Perry there were no other creatures in sight, and so I withdrew one sword from the package, and leaving the balance of the weapons with Perry, started on alone toward the lower levels.

Having come to the apartment in which the three Mahars slept I entered silently on tiptoe, forgetting that the creatures were without the sense of hearing. With a quick thrust through the heart I disposed of the first but my second thrust was not so fortunate, so that before I could kill the next of my victims it had hurled itself against the third, who sprang quickly up, facing me with wide-distended jaws. But fighting is not the occupation which the race of Mahars loves, and when the thing saw that I already had dispatched two of its companions, and that my sword was red with their blood, it made a dash to escape me. But I was too quick for it, and so, half hopping, half flying, it scurried down another corridor with me close upon its heels.

Its escape meant the utter ruin of our plan, and in all probability my instant death. This thought lent wings to my feet; but even at my best I could do no more than hold my own with the leaping thing before me.

Of a sudden it turned into an apartment on the right of the corridor, and an instant later as I rushed in I found myself facing two of the Mahars. The one who had been there when we entered had been occupied with a number of metal vessels, into which had been put powders and liquids as I judged from the array of flasks standing about upon the bench where it had been working. In an instant I realized what I had stumbled upon. It was the very room for the finding of which Perry had given me minute directions. It was the buried chamber in which was hidden the Great Secret of the race of Mahars. And on the bench beside the flasks lay the skin-bound book which held the only copy of the thing I was to have sought, after dispatching the three Mahars in their sleep.

There was no exit from the room other than the doorway in which I now stood facing the two frightful reptiles. Cornered, I knew that they would fight like demons, and they were well equipped to fight if fight they must. Together they launched themselves upon me, and though I ran one of them through the heart on the instant, the other fastened its gleaming fangs about my sword arm above the elbow, and then with her sharp talons commenced to rake me about the body, evidently intent upon disemboweling me. I saw that it was useless to hope that I might release my arm from that powerful, viselike grip which seemed to be severing my arm from my body. The pain I suffered was intense, but it only served to spur me to greater efforts to overcome my antagonist.

Back and forth across the floor we struggled — the Mahar dealing

me terrific, cutting blows with her fore feet, while I attempted to protect my body with my left hand, at the same time watching for an opportunity to transfer my blade from my now useless sword hand to its rapidly weakening mate. At last I was successful, and with what seemed to me my last ounce of strength I ran the blade through the ugly body of my foe.

Soundless, as it had fought, it died, and though weak from pain and loss of blood, it was with an emotion of triumphant pride that I stepped across its convulsively stiffening corpse to snatch up the most potent secret of a world. A single glance assured me it was the very thing that Perry had described to me.

And as I grasped it did I think of what it meant to the human race of Pellucidar — did there flash through my mind the thought that countless generations of my own kind yet unborn would have reason to worship me for the thing that I had accomplished for them? I did not. I thought of a beautiful oval face, gazing out of limpid eyes, through a waving mass of jet-black hair. I thought of red, red lips, God-made for kissing. And of a sudden, apropos of nothing, standing there alone in the secret chamber of the Mahars of Pellucidar, I realized that I loved Dian the Beautiful.

12.

PURSUIT

For an instant I stood there thinking of her, and then, with a sigh, I tucked the book in the thong that supported my loin cloth, and turned to leave the apartment. At the bottom of the corridor which leads aloft from the lower chambers I whistled in accordance with the pre-arranged signal which was to announce to Perry and Ghak that I had been successful. A moment later they stood beside me, and to my surprise I saw that Hooja the Sly One accompanied them.

“He joined us,” explained Perry, “and would not be denied. The fellow is a fox. He scents escape, and rather than be thwarted of our chance now I told him that I would bring him to you, and let you decide whether he might accompany us.”

I had no love for Hooja, and no confidence in him. I was sure that if he thought it would profit him he would betray us; but I saw no way out of it now, and the fact that I had killed four Mahars instead of only the three I had expected to, made it possible to include the fellow in our scheme of escape.

“Very well,” I said, “you may come with us, Hooja; but at the first intimation of treachery I shall run my sword through you. Do you understand?”

He said that he did.

Some time later we had removed the skins from the four Mahars, and so succeeded in crawling inside of them ourselves that there seemed an excellent chance for us to pass unnoticed from Phutra. It was not an easy thing to fasten the hides together where we had split

them along the belly to remove them from their carcasses, but by remaining out until the others had all been sewed in with my help, and then leaving an aperture in the breast of Perry's skin through which he could pass his hands to sew me up, we were enabled to accomplish our design to really much better purpose than I had hoped. We managed to keep the heads erect by passing our swords up through the necks, and by the same means were enabled to move them about in a life-like manner. We had our greatest difficulty with the webbed feet, but even that problem was finally solved, so that when we moved about we did so quite naturally. Tiny holes punctured in the baggy throats into which our heads were thrust permitted us to see well enough to guide our progress.

Thus we started up toward the main floor of the building. Ghak headed the strange procession, then came Perry, followed by Hooja, while I brought up the rear, after admonishing Hooja that I had so arranged my sword that I could thrust it through the head of my disguise into his vitals were he to show any indication of faltering.

As the noise of hurrying feet warned me that we were entering the busy corridors of the main level, my heart came up into my mouth. It is with no sense of shame that I admit that I was frightened — never before in my life, nor since, did I experience any such agony of soulsearing fear and suspense as enveloped me. If it be possible to sweat blood, I sweat it then.

Slowly, after the manner of locomotion habitual to the Mahars, when they are not using their wings, we crept through throngs of busy slaves, Sagoths, and Mahars. After what seemed an eternity we reached the outer door which leads into the main avenue of Phutra. Many Sagoths loitered near the opening. They glanced at Ghak as he padded between them. Then Perry passed, and then Hooja. Now it was my

turn, and then in a sudden fit of freezing terror I realized that the warm blood from my wounded arm was trickling down through the dead foot of the Mahar skin I wore and leaving its tell-tale mark upon the pavement, for I saw a Sagoth call a companion's attention to it.

The guard stepped before me and pointing to my bleeding foot spoke to me in the sign language which these two races employ as a means of communication. Even had I known what he was saying I could not have replied with the dead thing that covered me. I once had seen a great Mahar freeze a presumptuous Sagoth with a look. It seemed my only hope, and so I tried it. Stopping in my tracks I moved my sword so that it made the dead head appear to turn inquiring eyes upon the gorilla-man. For a long moment I stood perfectly still, eyeing the fellow with those dead eyes. Then I lowered the head and started slowly on. For a moment all hung in the balance, but before I touched him the guard stepped to one side, and I passed on out into the avenue.

On we went up the broad street, but now we were safe for the very numbers of our enemies that surrounded us on all sides. Fortunately, there was a great concourse of Mahars repairing to the shallow lake which lies a mile or more from the city. They go there to indulge their amphibian proclivities in diving for small fish, and enjoying the cool depths of the water. It is a fresh-water lake, shallow, and free from the larger reptiles which make the use of the great seas of Pellucidar impossible for any but their own kind.

In the thick of the crowd we passed up the steps and out onto the plain. For some distance Ghak remained with the stream that was traveling toward the lake, but finally, at the bottom of a little gully he halted, and there we remained until all had passed and we were alone. Then, still in our disguises, we set off directly away from Phutra.

The heat of the vertical rays of the sun was fast making our horrible prisons unbearable, so that after passing a low divide, and entering a sheltering forest, we finally discarded the Mahar skins that had brought us thus far in safety.

I shall not weary you with the details of that bitter and galling flight. How we traveled at a dogged run until we dropped in our tracks. How we were beset by strange and terrible beasts. How we barely escaped the cruel fangs of lions and tigers the size of which would dwarf into pitiful insignificance the greatest felines of the outer world.

On and on we raced, our one thought to put as much distance between ourselves and Phutra as possible. Ghak was leading us to his own land — the land of Sari. No sign of pursuit had developed, and yet we were sure that somewhere behind us relentless Sagoths were dogging our tracks. Ghak said they never failed to hunt down their quarry until they had captured it or themselves been turned back by a superior force. Our only hope, he said, lay in reaching his tribe which was quite strong enough in their mountain fastness to beat off any number of Sagoths.

At last, after what seemed months, and may, I now realize, have been years, we came in sight of the dun escarpment which buttressed the foothills of Sari. At almost the same instant, Hooja, who looked ever quite as much behind as before, announced that he could see a body of men far behind us topping a low ridge in our wake. It was the long-expected pursuit.

I asked Ghak if we could make Sari in time to escape them.

“We may,” he replied; “but you will find that the Sagoths can move with incredible swiftness, and as they are almost tireless they are doubtless much fresher than we. Then —” he paused, glancing at Perry.

I knew what he meant. The old man was exhausted. For much of the period of our flight either Ghak or I had half supported him on the march. With such a handicap, less fleet pursuers than the Sagoths might easily overtake us before we could scale the rugged heights which confronted us.

“You and Hooja go on ahead,” I said. “Perry and I will make it if we are able. We cannot travel as rapidly as you two, and there is no reason why all should be lost because of that. It can’t be helped — we have simply to face it.”

“I will not desert a companion,” was Ghak’s simple reply. I hadn’t known that this great, hairy, primeval man had any such nobility of character stowed away inside him. I had always liked him, but now to my liking was added honor and respect. Yes, and love.

But still I urged him to go on ahead, insisting that if he could reach his people he might be able to bring out a sufficient force to drive off the Sagoths and rescue Perry and myself.

No, he wouldn’t leave us, and that was all there was to it, but he suggested that Hooja might hurry on and warn the Sarians of the king’s danger. It didn’t require much urging to start Hooja — the naked idea was enough to send him leaping on ahead of us into the foothills which we now had reached.

Perry realized that he was jeopardizing Ghak’s life and mine and the old fellow fairly begged us to go on without him, although I knew that he was suffering a perfect anguish of terror at the thought of falling into the hands of the Sagoths. Ghak finally solved the problem, in part, by lifting Perry in his powerful arms and carrying him. While the act cut down Ghak’s speed he still could travel faster thus than when half supporting the stumbling old man.

13.

THE SLY ONE

The Sagoths were gaining on us rapidly, for once they had sighted us they had greatly increased their speed. On and on we stumbled up the narrow canyon that Ghak had chosen to approach the heights of Sari. On either side rose precipitous cliffs of gorgeous, parti-colored rock, while beneath our feet a thick mountain grass formed a soft and noiseless carpet. Since we had entered the canyon we had had no glimpse of our pursuers, and I was commencing to hope that they had lost our trail and that we would reach the now rapidly nearing cliffs in time to scale them before we should be overtaken.

Ahead we neither saw nor heard any sign which might betoken the success of Hooja's mission. By now he should have reached the outposts of the Sarians, and we should at least hear the savage cries of the tribesmen as they swarmed to arms in answer to their king's appeal for succor. In another moment the frowning cliffs ahead should be black with primeval warriors. But nothing of the kind happened — as a matter of fact the Sly One had betrayed us. At the moment that we expected to see Sarian spearmen charging to our relief at Hooja's back, the craven traitor was sneaking around the outskirts of the nearest Sarian village, that he might come up from the other side when it was too late to save us, claiming that he had become lost among the mountains.

Hooja still harbored ill will against me because of the blow I had struck in Dian's protection, and his malevolent spirit was equal to sacrificing us all that he might be revenged upon me.

As we drew nearer the barrier cliffs and no sign of rescuing Sarians appeared Ghak became both angry and alarmed, and presently as the sound of rapidly approaching pursuit fell upon our ears, he called to me over his shoulder that we were lost.

A backward glance gave me a glimpse of the first of the Sagoths at the far end of a considerable stretch of canyon through which we had just passed, and then a sudden turning shut the ugly creature from my view; but the loud howl of triumphant rage which rose behind us was evidence that the gorilla-man had sighted us.

Again the canyon veered sharply to the left, but to the right another branch ran on at a lesser deviation from the general direction, so that it appeared more like the main canyon than the lefthand branch. The Sagoths were now not over two hundred and fifty yards behind us, and I saw that it was hopeless for us to expect to escape other than by a ruse. There was a bare chance of saving Ghak and Perry, and as I reached the branching of the canyon I took the chance.

Pausing there I waited until the foremost Sagoth hove into sight. Ghak and Perry had disappeared around a bend in the left-hand canyon, and as the Sagoth's savage yell announced that he had seen me I turned and fled up the right-hand branch. My ruse was successful, and the entire party of man-hunters raced headlong after me up one canyon while Ghak bore Perry to safety up the other.

Running has never been my particular athletic forte, and now when my very life depended upon fleetness of foot I cannot say that I ran any better than on the occasions when my pitiful base running had called down upon my head the rooter's raucous and reproachful cries of "Ice Wagon," and "Call a cab."

The Sagoths were gaining on me rapidly. There was one in particular, fleetest than his fellows, who was perilously close. The canyon

had become a rocky slit, rising roughly at a steep angle toward what seemed a pass between two abutting peaks. What lay beyond I could not even guess — possibly a sheer drop of hundreds of feet into the corresponding valley upon the other side. Could it be that I had plunged into a cul-de-sac?

Realizing that I could not hope to outdistance the Sagoths to the top of the canyon I had determined to risk all in an attempt to check them temporarily, and to this end had unslung my rudely made bow and plucked an arrow from the skin quiver which hung behind my shoulder. As I fitted the shaft with my right hand I stopped and wheeled toward the gorilla-man.

In the world of my birth I never had drawn a shaft, but since our escape from Phutra I had kept the party supplied with small game by means of my arrows, and so, through necessity, had developed a fair degree of accuracy. During our flight from Phutra I had restrung my bow with a piece of heavy gut taken from a huge tiger which Ghak and I had worried and finally dispatched with arrows, spear, and sword. The hard wood of the bow was extremely tough and this, with the strength and elasticity of my new string, gave me unwonted confidence in my weapon.

Never had I greater need of steady nerves than then — never were my nerves and muscles under better control. I sighted as carefully and deliberately as though at a straw target. The Sagoth had never before seen a bow and arrow, but of a sudden it must have swept over his dull intellect that the thing I held toward him was some sort of engine of destruction, for he too came to a halt, simultaneously swinging his hatchet for a throw. It is one of the many methods in which they employ this weapon, and the accuracy of aim which they achieve, even under the most unfavorable circumstances, is little short of miraculous.

My shaft was drawn back its full length — my eye had centered its sharp point upon the left breast of my adversary; and then he launched his hatchet and I released my arrow. At the instant that our missiles flew I leaped to one side, but the Sagoth sprang forward to follow up his attack with a spear thrust. I felt the swish of the hatchet at it grazed my head, and at the same instant my shaft pierced the Sagoth's savage heart, and with a single groan he lunged almost at my feet — stone dead. Close behind him were two more — fifty yards perhaps — but the distance gave me time to snatch up the dead guardsman's shield, for the close call his hatchet had just given me had borne in upon me the urgent need I had for one. Those which I had purloined at Phutra we had not been able to bring along because their size precluded our concealing them within the skins of the Mahars which had brought us safely from the city.

With the shield slipped well up on my left arm I let fly with another arrow, which brought down a second Sagoth, and then as his fellow's hatchet sped toward me I caught it upon the shield, and fitted another shaft for him; but he did not wait to receive it. Instead, he turned and retreated toward the main body of gorilla-men. Evidently he had seen enough of me for the moment.

Once more I took up my flight, nor were the Sagoths apparently overanxious to press their pursuit so closely as before. Unmolested I reached the top of the canyon where I found a sheer drop of two or three hundred feet to the bottom of a rocky chasm; but on the left a narrow ledge rounded the shoulder of the overhanging cliff. Along this I advanced, and at a sudden turning, a few yards beyond the canyon's end, the path widened, and at my left I saw the opening to a large cave. Before, the ledge continued until it passed from sight about another projecting buttress of the mountain.

Here, I felt, I could defy an army, for but a single foeman could advance upon me at a time, nor could he know that I was awaiting him until he came full upon me around the corner of the turn. About me lay scattered stones crumbled from the cliff above. They were of various sizes and shapes, but enough were of handy dimensions for use as ammunition in lieu of my precious arrows. Gathering a number of stones into a little pile beside the mouth of the cave I waited the advance of the Sagoths.

As I stood there, tense and silent, listening for the first faint sound that should announce the approach of my enemies, a slight noise from within the cave's black depths attracted my attention. It might have been produced by the moving of the great body of some huge beast rising from the rock floor of its lair. At almost the same instant I thought that I caught the scraping of hide sandals upon the ledge beyond the turn. For the next few seconds my attention was considerably divided.

And then from the inky blackness at my right I saw two flaming eyes glaring into mine. They were on a level that was over two feet above my head. It is true that the beast who owned them might be standing upon a ledge within the cave, or that it might be rearing up upon its hind legs; but I had seen enough of the monsters of Pellucidar to know that I might be facing some new and frightful Titan whose dimensions and ferocity eclipsed those of any I had seen before.

Whatever it was, it was coming slowly toward the entrance of the cave, and now, deep and forbidding, it uttered a low and ominous growl. I waited no longer to dispute possession of the ledge with the thing which owned that voice. The noise had not been loud — I doubt if the Sagoths heard it at all — but the suggestion of latent possibilities

behind it was such that I knew it would only emanate from a gigantic and ferocious beast.

As I backed along the ledge I soon was past the mouth of the cave, where I no longer could see those fearful flaming eyes, but an instant later I caught sight of the fiendish face of a Sagoth as it warily advanced beyond the cliff's turn on the far side of the cave's mouth. As the fellow saw me he leaped along the ledge in pursuit, and after him came as many of his companions as could crowd upon each other's heels. At the same time the beast emerged from the cave, so that he and the Sagoths came face to face upon that narrow ledge.

The thing was an enormous cave bear, rearing its colossal bulk fully eight feet at the shoulder, while from the tip of its nose to the end of its stubby tail it was fully twelve feet in length. As it sighted the Sagoths it emitted a most frightful roar, and with open mouth charged full upon them. With a cry of terror the foremost gorilla-man turned to escape, but behind him he ran full upon his on-rushing companions.

The horror of the following seconds is indescribable. The Sagoth nearest the cave bear, finding his escape blocked, turned and leaped deliberately to an awful death upon the jagged rocks three hundred feet below. Then those giant jaws reached out and gathered in the next — there was a sickening sound of crushing bones, and the mangled corpse was dropped over the cliff's edge. Nor did the mighty beast even pause in his steady advance along the ledge.

Shrieking Sagoths were now leaping madly over the precipice to escape him, and the last I saw he rounded the turn still pursuing the demoralized remnant of the man hunters. For a long time I could hear the horrid roaring of the brute intermingled with the screams and shrieks of his victims, until finally the awful sounds dwindled and disappeared in the distance.

Later I learned from Ghak, who had finally come to his tribesmen and returned with a party to rescue me, that the ryth, as it is called, pursued the Sagoths until it had exterminated the entire band. Ghak was, of course, positive that I had fallen prey to the terrible creature, which, within Pellucidar, is truly the king of beasts.

Not caring to venture back into the canyon, where I might fall prey either to the cave bear or the Sagoths I continued on along the ledge, believing that by following around the mountain I could reach the land of Sari from another direction. But I evidently became confused by the twisting and turning of the canyons and gullies, for I did not come to the land of Sari then, nor for a long time thereafter.

14.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

With no heavenly guide, it is little wonder that I became confused and lost in the labyrinthine maze of those mighty hills. What, in reality, I did was to pass entirely through them and come out above the valley upon the farther side. I know that I wandered for a long time, until tired and hungry I came upon a small cave in the face of the limestone formation which had taken the place of the granite farther back.

The cave which took my fancy lay halfway up the precipitous side of a lofty cliff. The way to it was such that I knew no extremely formidable beast could frequent it, nor was it large enough to make a comfortable habitat for any but the smaller mammals or reptiles. Yet it was with the utmost caution that I crawled within its dark interior.

Here I found a rather large chamber, lighted by a narrow cleft in the rock above which let the sunlight filter in in sufficient quantities partially to dispel the utter darkness which I had expected. The cave was entirely empty, nor were there any signs of its having been recently occupied. The opening was comparatively small, so that after considerable effort I was able to lug up a boulder from the valley below which entirely blocked it.

Then I returned again to the valley for an armful of grasses and on this trip was fortunate enough to knock over an orthopi, the diminutive horse of Pellucidar, a little animal about the size of a fox terrier, which abounds in all parts of the inner world. Thus, with food and bedding I returned to my lair, where after a meal of raw meat, to which I had now become quite accustomed, I dragged the boulder before the entrance

and curled myself upon a bed of grasses — a naked, primeval, cave man, as savagely primitive as my prehistoric progenitors.

I awoke rested but hungry, and pushing the boulder aside crawled out upon the little rocky shelf which was my front porch. Before me spread a small but beautiful valley, through the center of which a clear and sparkling river wound its way down to an inland sea, the blue waters of which were just visible between the two mountain ranges which embraced this little paradise. The sides of the opposite hills were green with verdure, for a great forest clothed them to the foot of the red and yellow and copper green of the towering crags which formed their summit. The valley itself was carpeted with a luxuriant grass, while here and there patches of wild flowers made great splashes of vivid color against the prevailing green.

Dotted over the face of the valley were little clusters of palmlike trees — three or four together as a rule. Beneath these stood antelope, while others grazed in the open, or wandered gracefully to a nearby ford to drink. There were several species of this beautiful animal, the most magnificent somewhat resembling the giant eland of Africa, except that their spiral horns form a complete curve backward over their ears and then forward again beneath them, ending in sharp and formidable points some two feet before the face and above the eyes. In size they remind one of a pure bred Hereford bull, yet they are very agile and fast. The broad yellow bands that stripe the dark roan of their coats made me take them for zebra when I first saw them. All in all they are handsome animals, and added the finishing touch to the strange and lovely landscape that spread before my new home.

I had determined to make the cave my headquarters, and with it as a base make a systematic exploration of the surrounding country in search of the land of Sari. First I devoured the remainder of the

carcass of the orthopi I had killed before my last sleep. Then I hid the Great Secret in a deep niche at the back of my cave, rolled the boulder before my front door, and with bow, arrows, sword, and shield scrambled down into the peaceful valley.

The grazing herds moved to one side as I passed through them, the little orthopi evincing the greatest wariness and galloping to safest distances. All the animals stopped feeding as I approached, and after moving to what they considered a safe distance stood contemplating me with serious eyes and up-cocked ears. Once one of the old bull antelopes of the striped species lowered his head and bellowed angrily — even taking a few steps in my direction, so that I thought he meant to charge; but after I had passed, he resumed feeding as though nothing had disturbed him.

Near the lower end of the valley I passed a number of tapirs, and across the river saw a great sadok, the enormous double-horned progenitor of the modern rhinoceros. At the valley's end the cliffs upon the left ran out into the sea, so that to pass around them as I desired to do it was necessary to scale them in search of a ledge along which I might continue my journey. Some fifty feet from the base I came upon a projection which formed a natural path along the face of the cliff, and this I followed out over the sea toward the cliff's end.

Here the ledge inclined rapidly upward toward the top of the cliffs — the stratum which formed it evidently having been forced up at this steep angle when the mountains behind it were born. As I climbed carefully up the ascent my attention suddenly was attracted aloft by the sound of strange hissing, and what resembled the flapping of wings.

And at the first glance there broke upon my horrified vision the most frightful thing I had seen even within Pellucidar. It was a giant dragon such as is pictured in the legends and fairy tales of earth folk.

Its huge body must have measured forty feet in length, while the batlike wings that supported it in midair had a spread of fully thirty. Its gaping jaws were armed with long, sharp teeth, and its claw equipped with horrible talons.

The hissing noise which had first attracted my attention was issuing from its throat, and seemed to be directed at something beyond and below me which I could not see. The ledge upon which I stood terminated abruptly a few paces farther on, and as I reached the end I saw the cause of the reptile's agitation.

Some time in past ages an earthquake had produced a fault at this point, so that beyond the spot where I stood the strata had slipped down a matter of twenty feet. The result was that the continuation of my ledge lay twenty feet below me, where it ended as abruptly as did the end upon which I stood.

And here, evidently halted in flight by this insurmountable break in the ledge, stood the object of the creature's attack — a girl cowering upon the narrow platform, her face buried in her arms, as though to shut out the sight of the frightful death which hovered just above her.

The dragon was circling lower, and seemed about to dart in upon its prey. There was no time to be lost, scarce an instant in which to weigh the possible chances that I had against the awfully armed creature; but the sight of that frightened girl below me called out to all that was best in me, and the instinct for protection of the other sex, which nearly must have equaled the instinct of self-preservation in primeval man, drew me to the girl's side like an irresistible magnet.

Almost thoughtless of the consequences, I leaped from the end of the ledge upon which I stood, for the tiny shelf twenty feet below. At the same instant the dragon darted in toward the girl, but my

sudden advent upon the scene must have startled him for he veered to one side, and then rose above us once more.

The noise I made as I landed beside her convinced the girl that the end had come, for she thought I was the dragon; but finally when no cruel fangs closed upon her she raised her eyes in astonishment. As they fell upon me the expression that came into them would be difficult to describe; but her feelings could scarcely have been one whit more complicated than my own — for the wide eyes that looked into mine were those of Dian the Beautiful.

“Dian!” I cried. “Dian! Thank God that I came in time.”

“You?” she whispered, and then she hid her face again; nor could I tell whether she were glad or angry that I had come.

Once more the dragon was sweeping toward us, and so rapidly that I had no time to unsling my bow. All that I could do was to snatch up a rock, and hurl it at the thing’s hideous face. Again my aim was true, and with a hiss of pain and rage the reptile wheeled once more and soared away.

Quickly I fitted an arrow now that I might be ready at the next attack, and as I did so I looked down at the girl, so that I surprised her in a surreptitious glance which she was stealing at me; but immediately, she again covered her face with her hands.

“Look at me, Dian,” I pleaded. “Are you not glad to see me?”

She looked straight into my eyes.

“I hate you,” she said, and then, as I was about to beg for a fair hearing she pointed over my shoulder. “The thipdar comes,” she said, and I turned again to meet the reptile.

So this was a thipdar. I might have known it. The cruel bloodhound of the Mahars. The long-extinct pterodactyl of the outer world. But this time I met it with a weapon it never had faced before. I had

selected my longest arrow, and with all my strength had bent the bow until the very tip of the shaft rested upon the thumb of my left hand, and then as the great creature darted toward us I let drive straight for that tough breast.

Hissing like the escape valve of a steam engine, the mighty creature fell turning and twisting into the sea below, my arrow buried completely in its carcass. I turned toward the girl. She was looking past me. It was evident that she had seen the thipdar die.

“Dian,” I said, “won’t you tell me that you are not sorry that I have found you?”

“I hate you,” was her only reply; but I imagined that there was less vehemence in it than before — yet it might have been but my imagination.

“Why do you hate me, Dian?” I asked, but she did not answer me.

“What are you doing here?” I asked, “and what has happened to you since Hooja freed you from the Sagoths?”

At first I thought that she was going to ignore me entirely, but finally she thought better of it.

“I was again running away from Jubal the Ugly One,” she said. “After I escaped from the Sagoths I made my way alone back to my own land; but on account of Jubal I did not dare enter the villages or let any of my friends know that I had returned for fear that Jubal might find out. By watching for a long time I found that my brother had not yet returned, and so I continued to live in a cave beside a valley which my race seldom frequents, awaiting the time that he should come back and free me from Jubal.

“But at last one of Jubal’s hunters saw me as I was creeping toward my father’s cave to see if my brother had yet returned and he gave the alarm and Jubal set out after me. He has been pursuing me across

many lands. He cannot be far behind me now. When he comes he will kill you and carry me back to his cave. He is a terrible man. I have gone as far as I can go, and there is no escape,” and she looked hopelessly up at the continuation of the ledge twenty feet above us.

“But he shall not have me,” she suddenly cried, with great vehemence. “The sea is there” — she pointed over the edge of the cliff — “and the sea shall have me rather than Jubal.”

“But I have you now Dian,” I cried; “nor shall Jubal, nor any other have you, for you are mine,” and I seized her hand, nor did I lift it above her head and let it fall in token of release.

She had risen to her feet, and was looking straight into my eyes with level gaze.

“I do not believe you,” she said, “for if you meant it you would have done this when the others were present to witness it — then I should truly have been your mate; now there is no one to see you do it, for you know that without witnesses your act does not bind you to me,” and she withdrew her hand from mine and turned away.

I tried to convince her that I was sincere, but she simply couldn’t forget the humiliation that I had put upon her on that other occasion.

“If you mean all that you say you will have ample chance to prove it,” she said, “if Jubal does not catch and kill you. I am in your power, and the treatment you accord me will be the best proof of your intentions toward me. I am not your mate, and again I tell you that I hate you, and that I should be glad if I never saw you again.”

Dian certainly was candid. There was no gainsaying that. In fact I found candor and directness to be quite a marked characteristic of the cave men of Pellucidar. Finally I suggested that we make some attempt to gain my cave, where we might escape the searching Jubal, for I am free to admit that I had no considerable desire to meet the formidable

and ferocious creature, of whose mighty prowess Dian had told me when I first met her. He it was who, armed with a puny knife, had met and killed a cave bear in a hand-to-hand struggle. It was Jubal who could cast his spear entirely through the armored carcass of the sadok at fifty paces. It was he who had crushed the skull of a charging dyryth with a single blow of his war club. No, I was not pining to meet the Ugly One — and it was quite certain that I should not go out and hunt for him; but the matter was taken out of my hands very quickly, as is often the way, and I did meet Jubal the Ugly One face to face.

This is how it happened. I had led Dian back along the ledge the way she had come, searching for a path that would lead us to the top of the cliff, for I knew that we could then cross over to the edge of my own little valley, where I felt certain we should find a means of ingress from the cliff top. As we proceeded along the ledge I gave Dian minute directions for finding my cave against the chance of something happening to me. I knew that she would be quite safely hidden away from pursuit once she gained the shelter of my lair, and the valley would afford her ample means of sustenance.

Also, I was very much piqued by her treatment of me. My heart was sad and heavy, and I wanted to make her feel badly by suggesting that something terrible might happen to me — that I might, in fact, be killed. But it didn't work worth a cent, at least as far as I could perceive. Dian simply shrugged those magnificent shoulders of hers, and murmured something to the effect that one was not rid of trouble so easily as that.

For a while I kept still. I was utterly squelched. And to think that I had twice protected her from attack — the last time risking my life to save hers. It was incredible that even a daughter of the Stone Age

could be so ungrateful — so heartless; but maybe her heart partook of the qualities of her epoch.

Presently we found a rift in the cliff which had been widened and extended by the action of the water draining through it from the plateau above. It gave us a rather rough climb to the summit, but finally we stood upon the level mesa which stretched back for several miles to the mountain range. Behind us lay the broad inland sea, curving upward in the horizonless distance to merge into the blue of the sky, so that for all the world it looked as though the sea lapped back to arch completely over us and disappear beyond the distant mountains at our backs — the weird and uncanny aspect of the seascapes of Pellucidar baffle description.

At our right lay a dense forest, but to the left the country was open and clear to the plateau's farther verge. It was in this direction that our way led, and we had turned to resume our journey when Dian touched my arm. I turned to her, thinking that she was about to make peace overtures; but I was mistaken.

“Jubal,” she said, and nodded toward the forest.

I looked, and there, emerging from the dense wood, came a perfect whale of a man. He must have been seven feet tall, and proportioned accordingly. He still was too far off to distinguish his features.

“Run,” I said to Dian. “I can engage him until you get a good start. Maybe I can hold him until you have gotten entirely away,” and then, without a backward glance, I advanced to meet the Ugly One. I had hoped that Dian would have a kind word to say to me before she went, for she must have known that I was going to my death for her sake; but she never even so much as bid me good-bye, and it was with a heavy heart that I strode through the flower-bespangled grass to my doom.

When I had come close enough to Jubal to distinguish his features I understood how it was that he had earned the sobriquet of Ugly One. Apparently some fearful beast had ripped away one entire side of his face. The eye was gone, the nose, and all the flesh, so that his jaws and all his teeth were exposed and grinning through the horrible scar.

Formerly he may have been as good to look upon as the others of his handsome race, and it may be that the terrible result of this encounter had tended to sour an already strong and brutal character. However this may be it is quite certain that he was not a pretty sight, and now that his features, or what remained of them, were distorted in rage at the sight of Dian with another male, he was indeed most terrible to see — and much more terrible to meet.

He had broken into a run now, and as he advanced he raised his mighty spear, while I halted and fitting an arrow to my bow took as steady aim as I could. I was somewhat longer than usual, for I must confess that the sight of this awful man had wrought upon my nerves to such an extent that my knees were anything but steady. What chance had I against this mighty warrior for whom even the fiercest cave bear had no terrors! Could I hope to best one who slaughtered the sadok and dyryth singlehanded! I shuddered; but, in fairness to myself, my fear was more for Dian than for my own fate.

And then the great brute launched his massive stone-tipped spear, and I raised my shield to break the force of its terrific velocity. The impact hurled me to my knees, but the shield had deflected the missile and I was unscathed. Jubal was rushing upon me now with the only remaining weapon that he carried — a murderous-looking knife. He was too close for a careful bowshot, but I let drive at him as he came, without taking aim. My arrow pierced the fleshy part of his thigh,

inflicting a painful but not disabling wound. And then he was upon me.

My agility saved me for the instant. I ducked beneath his raised arm, and when he wheeled to come at me again he found a sword's point in his face. And a moment later he felt an inch or two of it in the muscles of his knife arm, so that thereafter he went more warily.

It was a duel of strategy now — the great, hairy man maneuvering to get inside my guard where he could bring those giant thews to play, while my wits were directed to the task of keeping him at arm's length. Thrice he rushed me, and thrice I caught his knife blow upon my shield. Each time my sword found his body — once penetrating to his lung. He was covered with blood by this time, and the internal hemorrhage induced paroxysms of coughing that brought the red stream through the hideous mouth and nose, covering his face and breast with bloody froth. He was a most unlovely spectacle, but he was far from dead.

As the duel continued I began to gain confidence, for, to be perfectly candid, I had not expected to survive the first rush of that monstrous engine of ungoverned rage and hatred. And I think that Jubal, from utter contempt of me, began to change to a feeling of respect, and then in his primitive mind there evidently loomed the thought that perhaps at last he had met his master, and was facing his end.

At any rate it is only upon this hypothesis that I can account for his next act, which was in the nature of a last resort — a sort of forlorn hope, which could only have been born of the belief that if he did not kill me quickly I should kill him. It happened on the occasion of his fourth charge, when, instead of striking at me with his knife, he

dropped that weapon, and seizing my sword blade in both his hands wrenched the weapon from my grasp as easily as from a babe.

Flinging it far to one side he stood motionless for just an instant glaring into my face with such a horrid leer of malignant triumph as to almost unnerve me — then he sprang for me with his bare hands. But it was Jubal's day to learn new methods of warfare. For the first time he had seen a bow and arrows, never before that duel had he beheld a sword, and now he learned what a man who knows may do with his bare fists.

As he came for me, like a great bear, I ducked again beneath his outstretched arm, and as I came up planted as clean a blow upon his jaw as ever you have seen. Down went that great mountain of flesh sprawling upon the ground. He was so surprised and dazed that he lay there for several seconds before he made any attempt to rise, and I stood over him with another dose ready when he should gain his knees.

Up he came at last, almost roaring in his rage and mortification; but he didn't stay up — I let him have a left fair on the point of the jaw that sent him tumbling over on his back. By this time I think Jubal had gone mad with hate, for no sane man would have come back for more as many times as he did. Time after time I bowled him over as fast as he could stagger up, until toward the last he lay longer on the ground between blows, and each time came up weaker than before.

He was bleeding very profusely now from the wound in his lungs, and presently a terrific blow over the heart sent him reeling heavily to the ground, where he lay very still, and somehow I knew at once that Jubal the Ugly One would never get up again. But even as I looked upon that massive body lying there so grim and terrible in death, I

could not believe that I, single-handed, had bested this slayer of fearful beasts — this gigantic ogre of the Stone Age.

Picking up my sword I leaned upon it, looking down on the dead body of my foeman, and as I thought of the battle I had just fought and won a great idea was born in my brain — the outcome of this and the suggestion that Perry had made within the city of Phutra. If skill and science could render a comparative pygmy the master of this mighty brute, what could not the brute's fellows accomplish with the same skill and science. Why all Pellucidar would be at their feet — and I would be their king and Dian their queen.

Dian! A little wave of doubt swept over me. It was quite within the possibilities of Dian to look down upon me even were I king. She was quite the most superior person I ever had met — with the most convincing way of letting you know that she was superior. Well, I could go to the cave, and tell her that I had killed Jubal, and then she might feel more kindly toward me, since I had freed her of her tormentor. I hoped that she had found the cave easily — it would be terrible had I lost her again, and I turned to gather up my shield and bow to hurry after her, when to my astonishment I found her standing not ten paces behind me.

“Girl!” I cried, “what are you doing here? I thought that you had gone to the cave, as I told you to do.”

Up went her head, and the look that she gave me took all the majesty out of me, and left me feeling more like the palace janitor — if palaces have janitors.

“As you told me to do!” she cried, stamping her little foot. “I do as I please. I am the daughter of a king, and furthermore, I hate you.”

I was dumbfounded — this was my thanks for saving her from Jubal! I turned and looked at the corpse. “May be that I saved you from

a worse fate, old man,” I said, but I guess it was lost on Dian, for she never seemed to notice it at all.

“Let us go to my cave,” I said, “I am tired and hungry.”

She followed along a pace behind me, neither of us speaking. I was too angry, and she evidently didn’t care to converse with the lower orders. I was mad all the way through, as I had certainly felt that at least a word of thanks should have rewarded me, for I knew that even by her own standards, I must have done a very wonderful thing to have killed the redoubtable Jubal in a hand-to-hand encounter.

We had no difficulty in finding my lair, and then I went down into the valley and bowled over a small antelope, which I dragged up the steep ascent to the ledge before the door. Here we ate in silence. Occasionally I glanced at her, thinking that the sight of her tearing at raw flesh with her hands and teeth like some wild animal would cause a revulsion of my sentiments toward her; but to my surprise I found that she ate quite as daintily as the most civilized woman of my acquaintance, and finally I found myself gazing in foolish rapture at the beauties of her strong, white teeth. Such is love.

After our repast we went down to the river together and bathed our hands and faces, and then after drinking our fill went back to the cave. Without a word I crawled into the farthest corner and, curling up, was soon asleep.

When I awoke I found Dian sitting in the doorway looking out across the valley. As I came out she moved to one side to let me pass, but she had no word for me. I wanted to hate her, but I couldn’t. Every time I looked at her something came up in my throat, so that I nearly choked. I had never been in love before, but I did not need any aid in diagnosing my case — I certainly had it and had it bad. God, how I loved that beautiful, disdainful, tantalizing, prehistoric girl!

After we had eaten again I asked Dian if she intended returning to her tribe now that Jubal was dead, but she shook her head sadly, and said that she did not dare, for there was still Jubal's brother to be considered — his oldest brother.

"What has he to do with it?" I asked. "Does he too want you, or has the option on you become a family heirloom, to be passed on down from generation to generation?"

She was not quite sure as to what I meant.

"It is probable," she said, "that they all will want revenge for the death of Jubal — there are seven of them — seven terrible men. Someone may have to kill them all, if I am to return to my people."

It began to look as though I had assumed a contract much too large for me — about seven sizes, in fact.

"Had Jubal any cousins?" I asked. It was just as well to know the worst at once.

"Yes," replied Dian, "but they don't count — they all have mates. Jubal's brothers have no mates because Jubal could get none for himself. He was so ugly that women ran away from him — some have even thrown themselves from the cliffs of Amoz into the Darel Az rather than mate with the Ugly One."

"But what had that to do with his brothers?" I asked.

"I forget that you are not of Pellucidar," said Dian, with a look of pity mixed with contempt, and the contempt seemed to be laid on a little thicker than the circumstance warranted — as though to make quite certain that I shouldn't overlook it. "You see," she continued, "a younger brother may not take a mate until all his older brothers have done so, unless the older brother waives his prerogative, which Jubal would not do, knowing that as long as he kept them single they would be all the keener in aiding him to secure a mate."

Noticing that Dian was becoming more communicative I began to entertain hopes that she might be warming up toward me a bit, although upon what slender thread I hung my hopes I soon discovered.

“As you dare not return to Amoz,” I ventured, “what is to become of you since you cannot be happy here with me, hating me as you do?”

“I shall have to put up with you,” she replied coldly, “until you see fit to go elsewhere and leave me in peace, then I shall get along very well alone.”

I looked at her in utter amazement. It seemed incredible that even a prehistoric woman could be so cold and heartless and ungrateful. Then I arose.

“I shall leave you *now*,” I said haughtily, “I have had quite enough of your ingratitude and your insults,” and then I turned and strode majestically down toward the valley. I had taken a hundred steps in absolute silence, and then Dian spoke.

“I hate you!” she shouted, and her voice broke — in rage, I thought.

I was absolutely miserable, but I hadn’t gone too far when I began to realize that I couldn’t leave her alone there without protection, to hunt her own food amid the dangers of that savage world. She might hate me, and revile me, and heap indignity after indignity upon me, as she already had, until I should have hated her; but the pitiful fact remained that I loved her, and I couldn’t leave her there alone.

The more I thought about it the madder I got, so that by the time I reached the valley I was furious, and the result of it was that I turned right around and went up that cliff again as fast as I had come down. I saw that Dian had left the ledge and gone within the cave, but I bolted right in after her. She was lying upon her face on the pile of grasses I had gathered for her bed. When she heard me enter she sprang to her feet like a tigress.

“I hate you!” she cried.

Coming from the brilliant light of the noonday sun into the semi-darkness of the cave I could not see her features, and I was rather glad, for I disliked to think of the hate that I should have read there.

I never said a word to her at first. I just strode across the cave and grasped her by the wrists, and when she struggled, I put my arm around her so as to pinion her hands to her sides. She fought like a tigress, but I took my free hand and pushed her head back — I imagine that I had suddenly turned brute, that I had gone back a thousand million years, and was again a veritable cave man taking my mate by force — and then I kissed that beautiful mouth again and again.

“Dian,” I cried, shaking her roughly, “I love you. Can’t you understand that I love you? That I love you better than all else in this world or my own? That I am going to have you? That love like mine cannot be denied?”

I noticed that she lay very still in my arms now, and as my eyes became accustomed to the light I saw that she was smiling — a very contented, happy smile. I was thunderstruck. Then I realized that, very gently, she was trying to disengage her arms, and I loosened my grip upon them so that she could do so. Slowly they came up and stole about my neck, and then she drew my lips down to hers once more and held them there for a long time. At last she spoke.

“Why didn’t you do this at first, David? I have been waiting so long.”

“What!” I cried. “You said that you hated me!”

“Did you expect me to run into your arms, and say that I loved you before I knew that you loved me?” she asked.

“But I have told you right along that I love you,” I said. “Love speaks in acts,” she replied. “You could have made your mouth say

what you wished it to say, but just now when you came and took me in your arms your heart spoke to mine in the language that a woman's heart understands. What a silly man you are, David?"

"Then you haven't hated me at all, Dian?" I asked.

"I have loved you always," she whispered, "from the first moment that I saw you, although I did not know it until that time you struck down Hooja the Sly One, and then spurned me."

"But I didn't spurn you, dear," I cried. "I didn't know your ways — I doubt if I do now. It seems incredible that you could have reviled me so, and yet have cared for me all the time."

"You might have known," she said, "when I did not run away from you that it was not hate which chained me to you. While you were battling with Jubal, I could have run to the edge of the forest, and when I learned the outcome of the combat it would have been a simple thing to have eluded you and returned to my own people."

"But Jubal's brothers — and cousins —" I reminded her, "how about them?"

She smiled, and hid her face on my shoulder.

"I had to tell you *something*, David," she whispered. "I must needs have *some* excuse for remaining near you."

"You little sinner!" I exclaimed. "And you have caused me all this anguish for nothing!"

"I have suffered even more," she answered simply, "for I thought that you did not love me, and I was helpless. I couldn't come to you and demand that my love be returned, as you have just come to me. Just now when you went away hope went with you. I was wretched, terrified, miserable, and my heart was breaking. I wept, and I have not done that before since my mother died," and now I saw that there was the moisture of tears about her eyes. It was near to making me cry

myself when I thought of all that poor child had been through. Motherless and unprotected; hunted across a savage, primeval world by that hideous brute of a man; exposed to the attacks of the countless fearsome denizens of its mountains, its plains, and its jungles — it was a miracle that she had survived it all.

To me it was a revelation of the things my early forebears must have endured that the human race of the outer crust might survive. It made me very proud to think that I had won the love of such a woman. Of course she couldn't read or write; there was nothing cultured or refined about her as you judge culture and refinement; but she was the essence of all that is best in woman, for she was good, and brave, and noble, and virtuous. And she was all these things in spite of the fact that their observance entailed suffering and danger and possible death.

How much easier it would have been to have gone to Jubal in the first place! She would have been his lawful mate. She would have been queen in her own land — and it meant just as much to the cave woman to be a queen in the Stone Age as it does to the woman of today to be a queen now; it's all comparative glory any way you look at it, and if there were only half-naked savages on the outer crust today, you'd find that it would be considerable glory to be the wife a Dahomey chief.

I couldn't help but compare Dian's action with that of a splendid young woman I had known in New York — I mean splendid to look at and to talk to. She had been head over heels in love with a chum of mine — a clean, manly chap — but she had married a broken-down, disreputable old debauchee because he was a count in some dinky little European principality that was not even accorded a distinctive color by Rand McNally.

Yes, I was mighty proud of Dian.

After a time we decided to set out for Sari, as I was anxious to see

Perry, and to know that all was right with him. I had told Dian about our plan of emancipating the human race of Pellucidar, and she was fairly wild over it. She said that if Dacor, her brother, would only return he could easily be king of Amoz, and that then he and Ghak could form an alliance. That would give us a flying start, for the Sarians and the Amozites were both very powerful tribes. Once they had been armed with swords, and bows and arrows, and trained in their use we were confident that they could overcome any tribe that seemed disinclined to join the great army of federated states with which we were planning to march upon the Mahars.

I explained the various destructive engines of war which Perry and I could construct after a little experimentation — gunpowder, rifles, cannon, and the like, and Dian would clap her hands, and throw her arms about my neck, and tell me what a wonderful thing I was. She was beginning to think that I was omnipotent although I really hadn't done anything but talk — but that is the way with women when they love. Perry used to say that if a fellow was one-tenth as remarkable as his wife or mother thought him, he would have the world by the tail with a down-hill drag.

The first time we started for Sari I stepped into a nest of poisonous vipers before we reached the valley. A little fellow stung me on the ankle, and Dian made me come back to the cave. She said that I mustn't exercise, or it might prove fatal — if it had been a full-grown snake that struck me she said, I wouldn't have moved a single pace from the nest — I'd have died in my tracks, so virulent is the poison. As it was I must have been laid up for quite a while, though Dian's poultices of herbs and leaves finally reduced the swelling and drew out the poison.

The episode proved most fortunate, however, as it gave me an idea

which added a thousand-fold to the value of my arrows as missiles of offense and defense. As soon as I was able to be about again, I sought out some adult vipers of the species which had stung me, and having killed them, I extracted their virus, smearing it upon the tips of several arrows. Later I shot a hyaenodon with one of these, and though my arrow inflicted but a superficial flesh wound the beast crumpled in death almost immediately after he was hit.

We now set out once more for the land of the Sarians, and it was with feelings of sincere regret that we bade good-bye to our beautiful Garden of Eden, in the comparative peace and harmony of which we had lived the happiest moments of our lives. How long we had been there I did not know, for as I have told you, time had ceased to exist for me beneath that eternal noonday sun — it may have been an hour, or a month of earthly time; I do not know.

15.

BACK TO EARTH

We crossed the river and passed through the mountains beyond, and finally we came out upon a great level plain which stretched away as far as the eye could reach. I cannot tell you in what direction it stretched even if you would care to know, for all the while that I was within Pellucidar I never discovered any but local methods of indicating direction — there is no north, no south, no east, no west. *Up* is about the only direction which is well defined, and that, of course, is *down* to you of the outer crust. Since the sun neither rises nor sets there is no method of indicating direction beyond visible objects such as high mountains, forests, lakes, and seas.

The plain which lies beyond the white cliffs which flank the Darel Az upon the shore nearest the Mountains of the Clouds is about as near to any direction as any Pellucidarian can come. If you happen not to have heard of the Darel Az, or the white cliffs, or the Mountains of the Clouds you feel that there is something lacking, and long for the good old understandable northeast and southwest of the outer world.

We had barely entered the great plain when we discovered two enormous animals approaching us from a great distance. So far were they that we could not distinguish what manner of beasts they might be, but as they came closer, I saw that they were enormous quadrupeds, eighty or a hundred feet long, with tiny heads perched at the top of very long necks. Their heads must have been quite forty feet from the ground. The beasts moved very slowly — that is their action was

slow — but their strides covered such a great distance that in reality they traveled considerably faster than a man walks.

As they drew still nearer we discovered that upon the back of each sat a human being. Then Dian knew what they were, though she never before had seen one.

“They are lidis from the land of the Thorians,” she cried. “Thoria lies at the outer verge of the Land of Awful Shadow. The Thorians alone of all the races of Pellucidar ride the lidi, for nowhere else than beside the dark country are they found.”

“What is the Land of Awful Shadow?” I asked.

“It is the land which lies beneath the Dead World,” replied Dian; “the Dead World which hangs forever between the sun and Pellucidar above the Land of Awful Shadow. It is the Dead World which makes the great shadow upon this portion of Pellucidar.”

I did not fully understand what she meant, nor am I sure that I do yet, for I have never been to that part of Pellucidar from which the Dead World is visible; but Perry says that it is the moon of Pellucidar — a tiny planet within a planet — and that it revolves around the earth’s axis coincidentally with the earth, and thus is always above the same spot within Pellucidar.

I remember that Perry was very much excited when I told him about this Dead World, for he seemed to think that it explained the hitherto inexplicable phenomena of nutation and the precession of the equinoxes.

When the two upon the lidis had come quite close to us we saw that one was a man and the other a woman. The former had held up his two hands, palms toward us, in sign of peace, and I had answered him in kind, when he suddenly gave a cry of astonishment and

pleasure, and slipping from his enormous mount ran forward toward Dian, throwing his arms about her.

In an instant I was white with jealousy, but only for an instant; since Dian quickly drew the man toward me, telling him that I was David, her mate.

“And this is my brother, Dacor the Strong One, David,” she said to me.

It appeared that the woman was Dacor’s mate. He had found none to his liking among the Sari, nor farther on until he had come to the land of the Thoria, and there he had found and fought for this very lovely Thorian maiden whom he was bringing back to his own people.

When they had heard our story and our plans they decided to accompany us to Sari, that Dacor and Ghak might come to an agreement relative to an alliance, as Dacor was quite as enthusiastic about the proposed annihilation of the Mahars and Sagoths as either Dian or I.

After a journey which was, for Pellucidar, quite uneventful, we came to the first of the Sarian villages which consists of between one and two hundred artificial caves cut into the face of a great cliff. Here to our immense delight, we found both Perry and Ghak. The old man was quite overcome at sight of me for he had long since given me up as dead.

When I introduced Dian as my wife, he didn’t quite know what to say, but he afterward remarked that with the pick of two worlds I could not have done better.

Ghak and Dacor reached a very amicable arrangement, and it was at a council of the head men of the various tribes of the Sari that the eventual form of government was tentatively agreed upon. Roughly, the various kingdoms were to remain virtually independent, but there

was to be one great overlord, or emperor. It was decided that I should be the first of the dynasty of the emperors of Pellucidar.

We set about teaching the women how to make bows and arrows, and poison pouches. The young men hunted the vipers which provided the virus, and it was they who mined the iron ore, and fashioned the swords under Perry's direction. Rapidly the fever spread from one tribe to another until representatives from nations so far distant that the Sarians had never even heard of them came in to take the oath of allegiance which we required, and to learn the art of making the new weapons and using them.

We sent our young men out as instructors to every nation of the federation, and the movement had reached colossal proportions before the Mahars discovered it. The first intimation they had was when three of their great slave caravans were annihilated in rapid succession. They could not comprehend that the lower orders had suddenly developed a power which rendered them really formidable.

In one of the skirmishes with slave caravans some of our Sarians took a number of Sagoth prisoners, and among them were two who had been members of the guards within the building where we had been confined at Phutra. They told us that the Mahars were frantic with rage when they discovered what had taken place in the cellars of the buildings. The Sagoths knew that something very terrible had befallen their masters, but the Mahars had been most careful to see that no inkling of the true nature of their vital affliction reached beyond their own race. How long it would take for the race to become extinct it was impossible even to guess; but that this must eventually happen seemed inevitable.

The Mahars had offered fabulous rewards for the capture of any one of us alive, and at the same time had threatened to inflict the direst

punishment upon whomever should harm us. The Sagoths could not understand these seemingly paradoxical instructions, though their purpose was quite evident to me. The Mahars wanted the Great Secret, and they knew that we alone could deliver it to them.

Perry's experiments in the manufacture of gunpowder and the fashioning of rifles had not progressed as rapidly as we had hoped — there was a whole lot about these two arts which Perry didn't know. We were both assured that the solution of these problems would advance the cause of civilization within Pellucidar thousands of years at a single stroke. Then there were various other arts and sciences which we wished to introduce, but our combined knowledge of them did not embrace the mechanical details which alone could render them of commercial, or practical value.

"David," said Perry, immediately after his latest failure to produce gunpowder that would even burn, "one of us must return to the outer world and bring back the information we lack. Here we have all the labor and materials for reproducing anything that ever has been produced above — what we lack is knowledge. Let us go back and get that knowledge in the shape of books — then this world will indeed be at our feet."

And so it was decided that I should return in the prospector, which still lay upon the edge of the forest at the point where we had first penetrated to the surface of the inner world. Dian would not listen to any arrangement for my going which did not include her, and I was not sorry that she wished to accompany me, for I wanted her to see my world, and I wanted my world to see her.

With a large force of men we marched to the great iron mole, which Perry soon had hoisted into position with its nose pointed back toward the outer crust. He went over all the machinery carefully.

He replenished the air tanks, and manufactured oil for the engine. At last everything was ready, and we were about to set out when our pickets, a long, thin line of which had surrounded our camp at all times, reported that a great body of what appeared to be Sagoths and Mahars were approaching from the direction of Phutra.

Dian and I were ready to embark, but I was anxious to witness the first clash between two fair-sized armies of the opposing races of Pellucidar. I realized that this was to mark the historic beginning of a mighty struggle for possession of a world, and as the first emperor of Pellucidar I felt that it was not alone my duty, but my right, to be in the thick of that momentous struggle.

As the opposing army approached we saw that there were many Mahars with the Sagoth troops — an indication of the vast importance which the dominant race placed upon the outcome of this campaign, for it was not customary with them to take active part in the sorties which their creatures made for slaves — the only form of warfare which they waged upon the lower orders.

Ghak and Dacor were both with us, having come primarily to view the prospector. I placed Ghak with some of his Sarians on the right of our battle line. Dacor took the left, while I commanded the center. Behind us I stationed a sufficient reserve under one of Ghak's head men. The Sagoths advanced steadily with menacing spears, and I let them come until they were within easy bowshot before I gave the word to fire.

At the first volley of poison-tipped arrows the front ranks of the gorilla-men crumpled to the ground; but those behind charged over the prostrate forms of their comrades in a wild, mad rush to be upon us with their spears. A second volley stopped them for an instant, and then my reserve sprang through the openings in the firing line to

engage them with sword and shield. The clumsy spears of the Sagoths were no match for the swords of the Sarian and Amozite, who turned the spear thrusts aside with their shields and leaped to close quarters with their lighter, handier weapons.

Ghak took his archers along the enemy's flank, and while the swordsmen engaged them in front, he poured volley after volley into their unprotected left. The Mahars did little real fighting, and were more in the way than otherwise, though occasionally one of them would fasten its powerful jaw upon the arm or leg of a Sarian.

The battle did not last a great while, for when Dacor and I led our men in upon the Sagoth's right with naked swords they were already so demoralized that they turned and fled before us. We pursued them for some time, taking many prisoners and recovering nearly a hundred slaves, among whom was Hooja the Sly One.

He told me that he had been captured while on his way to his own land; but that his life had been spared in hope that through him the Mahars would learn the whereabouts of their Great Secret. Ghak and I were inclined to think that the Sly One had been guiding this expedition to the land of Sari, where he thought that the book might be found in Perry's possession; but we had no proof of this and so we took him in and treated him as one of us, although none liked him. And how he rewarded my generosity you will presently learn.

There were a number of Mahars among our prisoners, and so fearful were our own people of them that they would not approach them unless completely covered from the sight of the reptiles by a piece of skin. Even Dian shared the popular superstition regarding the evil effects of exposure to the eyes of angry Mahars, and though I laughed at her fears I was willing enough to humor them if it would relieve her apprehension in any degree, and so she sat apart from the

prospector, near which the Mahars had been chained, while Perry and I again inspected every portion of the mechanism.

At last I took my place in the driving seat, and called to one of the men without to fetch Dian. It happened that Hooja stood quite close to the doorway of the prospector, so that it was he who, without my knowledge, went to bring her; but how he succeeded in accomplishing the fiendish thing he did, I cannot guess, unless there were others in the plot to aid him. Nor can I believe that, since all my people were loyal to me and would have made short work of Hooja had he suggested the heartless scheme, even had he had time to acquaint another with it. It was all done so quickly that I may only believe that it was the result of sudden impulse, aided by a number of, to Hooja, fortuitous circumstances occurring at precisely the right moment.

All I know is that it was Hooja who brought Dian to the prospector, still wrapped from head to toe in the skin of an enormous cave lion which covered her since the Mahar prisoners had been brought into camp. He deposited his burden in the seat beside me. I was all ready to get under way. The good-byes had been said. Perry had grasped my hand in the last, long farewell. I closed and barred the outer and inner doors, took my seat again at the driving mechanism, and pulled the starting lever.

As before on that far-gone night that had witnessed our first trial of the iron monster, there was a frightful roaring beneath us — the giant frame trembled and vibrated — there was a rush of sound as the loose earth passed up through the hollow space between the inner and outer jackets to be deposited in our wake. Once more the thing was off.

But on the instant of departure I was nearly thrown from my seat by the sudden lurching of the prospector. At first I did not realize what had happened, but presently it dawned upon me that just before

entering the crust the towering body had fallen through its supporting scaffolding, and that instead of entering the ground vertically we were plunging into it at a different angle. Where it would bring us out upon the upper crust I could not even conjecture. And then I turned to note the effect of this strange experience upon Dian. She still sat shrouded in the great skin.

“Come, come,” I cried, laughing, “come out of your shell. No Mahar eyes can reach you here,” and I leaned over and snatched the lion skin from her. And then I shrank back upon my seat in utter horror.

The thing beneath the skin was not Dian — it was a hideous Mahar. Instantly I realized the trick that Hooja had played upon me, and the purpose of it. Rid of me, forever as he doubtless thought, Dian would be at his mercy. Frantically I tore at the steering wheel in an effort to turn the prospector back toward Pellucidar; but, as on that other occasion, I could not budge the thing a hair.

It is needless to recount the horrors or the monotony of that journey. It varied but little from the former one which had brought us from the outer to the inner world. Because of the angle at which we had entered the ground the trip required nearly a day longer, and brought me out here upon the sand of the Sahara instead of in the United States as I had hoped.

For months I have been waiting here for a white man to come. I dared not leave the prospector for fear I should never be able to find it again — the shifting sands of the desert would soon cover it, and then my only hope of returning to my Dian and her Pellucidar would be gone forever.

That I ever shall see her again seems but remotely possible, for how may I know upon what part of Pellucidar my return journey may

terminate — and how, without a north or south or an east or a west may I hope ever to find my way across that vast world to the tiny spot where my lost love lies grieving for me?

~

That is the story as David Innes told it to me in the goat-skin tent upon the rim of the great Sahara Desert. The next day he took me out to see the prospector — it was precisely as he had described it. So huge was it that it could have been brought to this inaccessible part of the world by no means of transportation that existed there — it could only have come in the way that David Innes said it came — up through the crust of the earth from the inner world of Pellucidar.

I spent a week with him, and then, abandoned my lion hunt, returned directly to the coast and hurried to London where I purchased a great quantity of stuff which he wished to take back to Pellucidar with him. There were books, rifles, revolvers, ammunition, cameras, chemicals, telephones, telegraph instruments, wire, tool and more books — books upon every subject under the sun. He said he wanted a library with which they could reproduce the wonders of the twentieth century in the Stone Age and if quantity counts for anything I got it for him.

I took the things back to Algeria myself, and accompanied them to the end of the railroad; but from here I was recalled to America upon important business. However, I was able to employ a very trustworthy man to take charge of the caravan — the same guide, in fact, who had accompanied me on the previous trip into the Sahara — and after writing a long letter to Innes in which I gave him my American address, I saw the expedition head south.

Among the other things which I sent to Innes was over five

hundred miles of double, insulated wire of a very fine gauge. I had it packed on a special reel at his suggestion, as it was his idea that he could fasten one end here before he left and by paying it out through the end of the prospector lay a telegraph line between the outer and inner worlds. In my letter I told him to be sure to mark the terminus of the line very plainly with a high cairn, in case I was not able to reach him before he set out, so that I might easily find and communicate with him should he be so fortunate as to reach Pellucidar.

I received several letters from him after I returned to America — in fact he took advantage of every northward-passing caravan to drop me word of some sort. His last letter was written the day before he intended to depart. Here it is.

My Dear Friend:

Tomorrow I shall set out in quest of Pellucidar and Dian. That is if the Arabs don't get me. They have been very nasty of late. I don't know the cause, but on two occasions they have threatened my life. One, more friendly than the rest, told me today that they intended attacking me tonight. It would be unfortunate should anything of that sort happen now that I am so nearly ready to depart.

However, maybe I will be as well off, for the nearer the hour approaches, the slenderer my chances for success appear.

Here is the friendly Arab who is to take this letter north for me, so good-bye, and God bless you for your kindness to me.

The Arab tells me to hurry, for he sees a cloud of sand to the south — he thinks it is the party coming to murder me, and he doesn't want to be found with me. So good-bye again.

Yours,

David Innes.

A year later found me at the end of the railroad once more, headed for the spot where I had left Innes. My first disappointment was when I discovered that my old guide had died within a few weeks of my return, nor could I find any member of my former party who could lead me to the same spot.

For months I searched that scorching land, interviewing countless desert sheiks in the hope that at last I might find one who had heard of Innes and his wonderful iron mole. Constantly my eyes scanned the blinding waste of sand for the ricky cairn beneath which I was to find the wires leading to Pellucidar — but always was I unsuccessful.

And always do these awful questions harass me when I think of David Innes and his strange adventures.

Did the Arabs murder him, after all, just on the eve of his departure? Or, did he again turn the nose of his iron monster toward the inner world? Did he reach it, or lies he somewhere buried in the heart of the great crust? And if he did come again to Pellucidar was it to break through into the bottom of one of her great island seas, or among some savage race far, far from the land of his heart's desire?

Does the answer lie somewhere upon the bosom of the broad Sahara, at the end of two tiny wires, hidden beneath a lost cairn? I wonder.

Book II
PELLUCIDAR

PROLOGUE

Several years had elapsed since I had found the opportunity to do any big-game hunting; for at last I had my plans almost perfected for a return to my old stamping-grounds in northern Africa, where in other days I had had excellent sport in pursuit of the king of beasts.

The date of my departure had been set; I was to leave in two weeks. No schoolboy counting the lagging hours that must pass before the beginning of "long vacation" released him to the delirious joys of the summer camp could have been filled with greater impatience or keener anticipation.

And then came a letter that started me for Africa twelve days ahead of my schedule.

Often am I in receipt of letters from strangers who have found something in a story of mine to commend or to condemn. My interest in this department of my correspondence is ever fresh. I opened this particular letter with all the zest of pleasurable anticipation with which I had opened so many others. The post-mark (Algiers) had aroused my interest and curiosity, especially at this time, since it was Algiers that was presently to witness the termination of my coming sea voyage in search of sport and adventure.

Before the reading of that letter was completed lions and lion-hunting had fled my thoughts, and I was in a state of excitement bordering upon frenzy.

It — well, read it yourself, and see if you, too, do not find food for frantic conjecture, for tantalizing doubts, and for a great hope.

Here it is:

Dear Sir: I think that I have run across one of the most remarkable coincidences in modern literature. But let me start at the beginning:

I am, by profession, a wanderer upon the face of the earth. I have no trade — nor any other occupation.

My father bequeathed me a competency; some remoter ancestors lust to roam. I have combined the two and invested them carefully and without extravagance.

I became interested in your story, *At the Earth's Core*, not so much because of the probability of the tale as of a great and abiding wonder that people should be paid real money for writing such impossible trash. You will pardon my candor, but it is necessary that you understand my mental attitude toward this particular story — that you may credit that which follows.

Shortly thereafter I started for the Sahara in search of a rather rare species of antelope that is to be found only occasionally within a limited area at a certain season of the year. My chase led me far from the haunts of man.

It was a fruitless search, however, in so far as antelope is concerned; but one night as I lay courting sleep at the edge of a little cluster of date-palms that surround an ancient well in the midst of the arid, shifting sands, I suddenly became conscious of a strange sound coming apparently from the earth beneath my head.

It was an intermittent ticking!

No reptile or insect with which I am familiar reproduces any such notes. I lay for an hour — listening intently.

At last my curiosity got the better of me. I arose, lighted my lamp and commenced to investigate.

My bedding lay upon a rug stretched directly upon the warm sand. The noise appeared to be coming from beneath the rug. I raised it, but found nothing — yet, at intervals, the sound continued.

I dug into the sand with the point of my hunting-knife. A few inches below the surface of the sand I encountered a solid substance that had the feel of wood beneath the sharp steel.

Excavating about it, I unearthed a small wooden box. From this receptacle issued the strange sound that I had heard.

How had it come here?

What did it contain?

In attempting to lift it from its burying place I discovered that it seemed to be held fast by means of a very small insulated cable running farther into the sand beneath it.

My first impulse was to drag the thing loose by main strength; but fortunately I thought better of this and fell to examining the box. I soon saw that it was covered by a hinged lid, which was held closed by a simple screwhook and eye.

It took but a moment to loosen this and raise the cover, when, to my utter astonishment, I discovered an ordinary telegraph instrument clicking away within.

“What in the world,” thought I, “is this thing doing here?”

That it was a French military instrument was my first guess; but really there didn’t seem much likelihood that this was the correct explanation, when one took into account the loneliness and remoteness of the spot.

As I sat gazing at my remarkable find, which was ticking and clicking away there in the silence of the desert night, trying to convey some message which I was unable to interpret, my eyes fell upon a bit

of paper lying in the bottom of the box beside the instrument. I picked it up and examined it. Upon it were written but two letters:

D. I.

They meant nothing to me then. I was baffled.

Once, in an interval of silence upon the part of the receiving instrument, I moved the sending-key up and down a few times. Instantly the receiving mechanism commenced to work frantically.

I tried to recall something of the Morse Code, with which I had played as a little boy — but time had obliterated it from my memory. I became almost frantic as I let my imagination run riot among the possibilities for which this clicking instrument might stand.

Some poor devil at the unknown other end might be in dire need of succor. The very franticness of the instrument's wild clashing betokened something of the kind.

And there sat I, powerless to interpret, and so powerless to help!

It was then that the inspiration came to me. In a flash there leaped to my mind the closing paragraphs of the story I had read in the club at Algiers:

Does the answer lie somewhere upon the bosom of the broad Sahara, at the ends of two tiny wires, hidden beneath a lost cairn?

The idea seemed preposterous. Experience and intelligence combined to assure me that there could be no slightest grain of truth or possibility in your wild tale — it was fiction pure and simple.

And yet where *were* the other ends of those wires?

What was this instrument — ticking away here in the great Sahara — but a travesty upon the possible!

Would I have believed in it had I not seen it with my own eyes?

And the initials — D. I. — upon the slip of paper!

David's initials were these — David Innes.

I smiled at my imaginings. I ridiculed the assumption that there was an inner world and that these wires led downward through the earth's crust to the surface of Pellucidar. And yet —

Well, I sat there all night, listening to that tantalizing clicking, now and then moving the sending-key just to let the other end know that the instrument had been discovered. In the morning, after carefully returning the box to its hole and covering it over with sand, I called my servants about me, snatched a hurried breakfast, mounted my horse, and started upon a forced march for Algiers.

I arrived here today. In writing you this letter I feel that I am making a fool of myself.

There is no David Innes.

There is no Dian the Beautiful.

There is no world within a world.

Pellucidar is but a realm of your imagination — nothing more.

But —

The incident of the finding of that buried telegraph instrument upon the lonely Sahara is little short of uncanny, in view of your story of the adventures of David Innes.

I have called it one of the most remarkable coincidences in modern fiction. I called it literature before, but — again pardon my candor — your story is not.

And now — why am I writing you?

Heaven knows, unless it is that the persistent clicking of that unfathomable enigma out there in the vast silences of the Sahara has so wrought upon my nerves that reason refuses longer to function sanely.

I cannot hear it now, yet I know that far away to the south, all alone beneath the sands, it is still pounding out its vain, frantic appeal.

It is maddening.

It is your fault — I want you to release me from it.

Cable me at once, at my expense, that there was no basis of fact for your story, At the Earth's Core.

Very respectfully yours,

Cogdon Nestor,

—— and —— Club, Algiers.

June 1st, —.

Ten minutes after reading this letter I had cabled Mr. Nestor as follows:

Story true. Await me Algiers.

As fast as train and boat would carry me, I sped toward my destination. For all those dragging days my mind was a whirl of mad conjecture, of frantic hope, of numbing fear.

The finding of the telegraph-instrument practically assured me that David Innes had driven Perry's iron mole back through the earth's crust to the buried world of Pellucidar; but what adventures had befallen him since his return?

Had he found Dian the Beautiful, his half-savage mate, safe among his friends, or had Hooja the Sly One succeeded in his nefarious schemes to abduct her?

Did Abner Perry, the lovable old inventor and paleontologist, still live?

Had the federated tribes of Pellucidar succeeded in overthrowing the mighty Mahars, the dominant race of reptilian monsters, and their fierce, gorilla-like soldiery, the savage Sagoths?

I must admit that I was in a state bordering upon nervous prostration when I entered the —— and —— Club, in Algiers, and inquired for Mr. Nestor. A moment later I was ushered into his presence, to find

myself clasping hands with the sort of chap that the world holds only too few of.

He was a tall, smooth-faced man of about thirty, clean-cut, straight, and strong, and weather-tanned to the hue of a desert Arab. I liked him immensely from the first, and I hope that after our three months together in the desert country — three months not entirely lacking in adventure — he found that a man may be a writer of “impossible trash” and yet have some redeeming qualities.

The day following my arrival at Algiers we left for the south, Nestor having made all arrangements in advance, guessing, as he naturally did, that I could be coming to Africa for but a single purpose — to hasten at once to the buried telegraph-instrument and wrest its secret from it.

In addition to our native servants, we took along an English telegraph-operator named Frank Downes. Nothing of interest enlivened our journey by rail and caravan till we came to the cluster of date-palms about the ancient well upon the rim of the Sahara.

It was the very spot at which I first had seen David Innes. If he had ever raised a cairn above the telegraph instrument no sign of it remained now. Had it not been for the chance that caused Cogdon Nestor to throw down his sleeping rug directly over the hidden instrument, it might still be clicking there unheard — and this story still unwritten.

When we reached the spot and unearthed the little box the instrument was quiet, nor did repeated attempts upon the part of our telegrapher succeed in winning a response from the other end of the line. After several days of futile endeavor to raise Pellucidar, we had begun to despair. I was as positive that the other end of that little cable protruded through the surface of the inner world as I am that I sit here

today in my study — when about midnight of the fourth day I was awakened by the sound of the instrument.

Leaping to my feet I grasped Downes roughly by the neck and dragged him out of his blankets. He didn't need to be told what caused my excitement, for the instant he was awake he, too, heard the long-hoped for click, and with a whoop of delight pounced upon the instrument.

Nestor was on his feet almost as soon as I. The three of us huddled about that little box as if our lives depended upon the message it had for us.

Downes interrupted the clicking with his sending-key. The noise of the receiver stopped instantly.

“Ask who it is, Downes,” I directed.

He did so, and while we awaited the Englishman's translation of the reply, I doubt if either Nestor or I breathed.

“He says he's David Innes,” said Downes. “He wants to know who we are.”

“Tell him,” said I; “and that we want to know how he is — and all that has befallen him since I last saw him.”

For two months I talked with David Innes almost every day, and as Downes translated, either Nestor or I took notes. From these, arranged in chronological order, I have set down the following account of the further adventures of David Innes at the earth's core, practically in his own words.

1.

LOST ON PELLUCIDAR

The Arabs, of whom I wrote you at the end of my last letter (Innes began), and whom I thought to be enemies intent only upon murdering me, proved to be exceedingly friendly — they were searching for the very band of marauders that had threatened my existence. The huge rhamphorhynchus-like reptile that I had brought back with me from the inner world — the ugly Mahar that Hooja the Sly One had substituted for my dear Dian at the moment of my departure — filled them with wonder and with awe.

Nor less so did the mighty subterranean prospector which had carried me to Pellucidar and back again, and which lay out in the desert about two miles from my camp.

With their help I managed to get the unwieldy tons of its great bulk into a vertical position — the nose deep in a hole we had dug in the sand and the rest of it supported by the trunks of date-palms cut for the purpose.

It was a mighty engineering job with only wild Arabs and their wilder mounts to do the work of an electric crane — but finally it was completed, and I was ready for departure.

For some time I hesitated to take the Mahar back with me. She had been docile and quiet ever since she had discovered herself virtually a prisoner aboard the “iron mole.” It had been, of course, impossible for me to communicate with her since she had no auditory organs and I no knowledge of her fourth-dimension, sixth-sense method of communication.

Naturally I am kind-hearted, and so I found it beyond me to leave even this hateful and repulsive thing alone in a strange and hostile world. The result was that when I entered the iron mole I took her with me.

That she knew that we were about to return to Pellucidar was evident, for immediately her manner changed from that of habitual gloom that had pervaded her, to an almost human expression of contentment and delight.

Our trip through the earth's crust was but a repetition of my two former journeys between the inner and the outer worlds. This time, however, I imagine that we must have maintained a more nearly perpendicular course, for we accomplished the journey in a few minutes' less time than upon the occasion of my first journey through the five-hundred-mile crust. Just a trifle less than seventy-two hours after our departure into the sands of the Sahara, we broke through the surface of Pellucidar.

Fortune once again favored me by the slightest of margins, for when I opened the door in the prospector's outer jacket I saw that we had missed coming up through the bottom of an ocean by but a few hundred yards.

The aspect of the surrounding country was entirely unfamiliar to me — I had no conception of precisely where I was upon the one hundred and twenty-four million square miles of Pellucidar's vast land surface.

The perpetual midday sun poured down its torrid rays from zenith, as it had done since the beginning of Pellucidarian time — as it would continue to do to the end of it. Before me, across the wide sea, the weird, horizonless seascape folded gently upward to meet the sky until

it lost itself to view in the azure depths of distance far above the level of my eyes.

How strange it looked! How vastly different from the flat and puny area of the circumscribed vision of the dweller upon the outer crust!

I was lost. Though I wandered ceaselessly throughout a lifetime, I might never discover the whereabouts of my former friends of this strange and savage world. Never again might I see dear old Perry, nor Ghak the Hairy One, nor Dacor the Strong One, nor that other infinitely precious one — my sweet and noble mate, Dian the Beautiful!

But even so I was glad to tread once more the surface of Pellucidar. Mysterious and terrible, grotesque and savage though she is in many of her aspects, I can not but love her. Her very savagery appealed to me, for it is the savagery of unspoiled Nature.

The magnificence of her tropic beauties enthralled me. Her mighty land areas breathed unfettered freedom.

Her untracked oceans, whispering of virgin wonders unsullied by the eye of man, beckoned me out upon their restless bosoms.

Not for an instant did I regret the world of my nativity. I was in Pellucidar. I was home. And I was content.

As I stood dreaming beside the giant thing that had brought me safely through the earth's crust, my traveling companion, the hideous Mahar, emerged from the interior of the prospector and stood beside me. For a long time she remained motionless.

What thoughts were passing through the convolutions of her reptilian brain?

I do not know.

She was a member of the dominant race of Pellucidar. By a strange freak of evolution her kind had first developed the power of reason in that world of anomalies.

To her, creatures such as I were of a lower order. As Perry had discovered among the writings of her kind in the buried city of Phutra, it was still an open question among the Mahars as to whether man possessed means of intelligent communication or the power of reason.

Her kind believed that in the center of all-pervading solidity there was a single, vast, spherical cavity, which was Pellucidar. This cavity had been left there for the sole purpose of providing a place for the creation and propagation of the Mahar race. Everything within it had been put there for the uses of the Mahar.

I wondered what this particular Mahar might think now. I found pleasure in speculating upon just what the effect had been upon her of passing through the earth's crust, and coming out into a world that one of even less intelligence than the great Mahars could easily see was a different world from her own Pellucidar.

What had she thought of the outer world's tiny sun?

What had been the effect upon her of the moon and myriad stars of the clear African nights?

How had she explained them?

With what sensations of awe must she first have watched the sun moving slowly across the heavens to disappear at last beneath the western horizon, leaving in his wake that which the Mahar had never before witnessed — the darkness of night? For upon Pellucidar there is no night. The stationary sun hangs forever in the center of the Pellucidarian sky — directly overhead.

Then, too, she must have been impressed by the wondrous mechanism of the prospector which had bored its way from world to world and back again. And that it had been driven by a rational being must also have occurred to her.

Too, she had seen me conversing with other men upon the earth's

surface. She had seen the arrival of the caravan of books and arms, and ammunition, and the balance of the heterogeneous collection which I had crammed into the cabin of the iron mole for transportation to Pellucidar.

She had seen all these evidences of a civilization and brain-power transcending in scientific achievement anything that her race had produced; nor once had she seen a creature of her own kind.

There could have been but a single deduction in the mind of the Mahar — there were other worlds than Pellucidar, and the gilak was a rational being.

Now the creature at my side was creeping slowly toward the near-by sea. At my hip hung a long-barreled six-shooter — somehow I had been unable to find the same sensation of security in the newfangled automatics that had been perfected since my first departure from the outer world — and in my hand was a heavy express rifle.

I could have shot the Mahar with ease, for I knew intuitively that she was escaping — but I did not.

I felt that if she could return to her own kind with the story of her adventures, the position of the human race within Pellucidar would be advanced immensely at a single stride, for at once man would take his proper place in the considerations of the reptilia.

At the edge of the sea the creature paused and looked back at me. Then she slid sinuously into the surf.

For several minutes I saw no more of her as she luxuriated in the cool depths.

Then a hundred yards from shore she rose and there for another short while she floated upon the surface.

Finally she spread her giant wings, flapped them vigorously a score

of times and rose above the blue sea. A single time she circled far aloft — and then straight as an arrow she sped away.

I watched her until the distant haze enveloped her and she had disappeared. I was alone.

My first concern was to discover where within Pellucidar I might be — and in what direction lay the land of the Sarians where Ghak the Hairy One ruled.

But how was I to guess in which direction lay Sari?

And if I set out to search — what then?

Could I find my way back to the prospector with its priceless freight of books, firearms, ammunition, scientific instruments, and still more books — its great library of reference works upon every conceivable branch of applied sciences?

And if I could not, of what value was all this vast storehouse of potential civilization and progress to be to the world of my adoption?

Upon the other hand, if I remained here alone with it, what could I accomplish single-handed?

Nothing.

But where there was no east, no west, no north, no south, no stars, no moon, and only a stationary mid-day sun, how was I to find my way back to this spot should ever I get out of sight of it?

I didn't know.

For a long time I stood buried in deep thought, when it occurred to me to try out one of the compasses I had brought and ascertain if it remained steadily fixed upon an unvarying pole. I reentered the prospector and fetched a compass without.

Moving a considerable distance from the prospector that the needle might not be influenced by its great bulk of iron and steel I turned the delicate instrument about in every direction.

Always and steadily the needle remained rigidly fixed upon a point straight out to sea, apparently pointing toward a large island some ten or twenty miles distant. This then should be north.

I drew my note-book from my pocket and made a careful topographical sketch of the locality within the range of my vision. Due north lay the island, far out upon the shimmering sea.

The spot I had chosen for my observations was the top of a large, flat boulder which rose six or eight feet above the turf. This spot I called Greenwich. The boulder was the "Royal Observatory."

I had made a start! I cannot tell you what a sense of relief was imparted to me by the simple fact that there was at least one spot within Pellucidar with a familiar name and a place upon a map.

It was with almost childish joy that I made a little circle in my note-book and traced the word Greenwich beside it.

Now I felt I might start out upon my search with some assurance of finding my way back again to the prospector.

I decided that at first I would travel directly south in the hope that I might in that direction find some familiar landmark. It was as good a direction as any. This much at least might be said of it.

Among the many other things I had brought from the outer world were a number of pedometers. I slipped three of these into my pockets with the idea that I might arrive at a more or less accurate mean from the registrations of them all.

On my map I would register so many paces south, so many east, so many west, and so on. When I was ready to return I would then do so by any route that I might choose.

I also strapped a considerable quantity of ammunition across my shoulders, pocketed some matches, and hooked an aluminum fry-pan and a small stew-kettle of the same metal to my belt.

I was ready — ready to go forth and explore a world!

Ready to search a land area of 124,110,000 square miles for my friends, my incomparable mate, and good old Perry!

And so, after locking the door in the outer shell of the prospector, I set out upon my quest. Due south I traveled, across lovely valleys thick-dotted with grazing herds.

Through dense primeval forests I forced my way and up the slopes of mighty mountains searching for a pass to their farther sides.

Ibex and musk-sheep fell before my good old revolver, so that I lacked not for food in the higher altitudes. The forests and the plains gave plentifully of fruits and wild birds, antelope, aurochs, and elk.

Occasionally, for the larger game animals and the gigantic beasts of prey, I used my express rifle, but for the most part the revolver filled all my needs.

There were times, too, when faced by a mighty cave bear, a saber-toothed tiger, or huge felis spelaea, black-maned and terrible, even my powerful rifle seemed pitifully inadequate — but fortune favored me so that I passed unscathed through adventures that even the recollection of causes the short hairs to bristle at the nape of my neck.

How long I wandered toward the south I do not know, for shortly after I left the prospector something went wrong with my watch, and I was again at the mercy of the baffling timelessness of Pellucidar, forging steadily ahead beneath the great, motionless sun which hangs eternally at noon.

I ate many times, however, so that days must have elapsed, possibly months with no familiar landscape rewarding my eager eyes.

I saw no men nor signs of men. Nor is this strange, for Pellucidar, in its land area, is immense, while the human race there is very young and consequently far from numerous.

Doubtless upon that long search mine was the first human foot to touch the soil in many places — mine the first human eye to rest upon the gorgeous wonders of the landscape.

It was a staggering thought. I could not but dwell upon it often as I made my lonely way through this virgin world. Then, quite suddenly, one day I stepped out of the peace of manless primality into the presence of man — and peace was gone.

It happened thus:

I had been following a ravine downward out of a chain of lofty hills and had paused at its mouth to view the lovely little valley that lay before me. At one side was tangled wood, while straight ahead a river wound peacefully along parallel to the cliffs in which the hills terminated at the valley's edge.

Presently, as I stood enjoying the lovely scene, as insatiate for Nature's wonders as if I had not looked upon similar landscapes countless times, a sound of shouting broke from the direction of the woods. That the harsh, discordant notes rose from the throats of men I could not doubt.

I slipped behind a large boulder near the mouth of the ravine and waited. I could hear the crashing of underbrush in the forest, and I guessed that whoever came came quickly — pursued and pursuers, doubtless.

In a short time some hunted animal would break into view, and a moment later a score of half-naked savages would come leaping after with spears or club or great stone-knives.

I had seen the thing so many times during my life within Pellucidar that I felt that I could anticipate to a nicety precisely what I was about to witness. I hoped that the hunters would prove friendly and be able to direct me toward Sari.

Even as I was thinking these thoughts the quarry emerged from the forest. But it was no terrified four-footed beast. Instead, what I saw was an old man — a terrified old man!

Staggering feebly and hopelessly from what must have been some very terrible fate, if one could judge from the horrified expressions he continually cast behind him toward the wood, he came stumbling on in my direction.

He had covered but a short distance from the forest when I beheld the first of his pursuers — a Sagoth, one of those grim and terrible gorilla-men who guard the mighty Mahars in their buried cities, faring forth from time to time upon slave-raiding or punitive expeditions against the human race of Pellucidar, of whom the dominant race of the inner world think as we think of the bison or the wild sheep of our own world.

Close behind the foremost Sagoth came others until a full dozen raced, shouting after the terror-stricken old man. They would be upon him shortly, that was plain.

One of them was rapidly overhauling him, his back-thrown spear-arm testifying to his purpose.

And then, quite with the suddenness of an unexpected blow, I realized a past familiarity with the gait and carriage of the fugitive.

Simultaneously there swept over me the staggering fact that the old man was — *Perry*! That he was about to die before my very eyes with no hope that I could reach him in time to avert the awful catastrophe — for to me it meant a real catastrophe!

Perry was my best friend.

Dian, of course, I looked upon as more than friend. She was my mate — a part of me.

I had entirely forgotten the rifle in my hand and the revolvers at

my belt; one does not readily synchronize his thoughts with the stone age and the twentieth century simultaneously.

Now from past habit I still thought in the stone age, and in my thoughts of the stone age there were no thoughts of firearms.

The fellow was almost upon Perry when the feel of the gun in my hand awoke me from the lethargy of terror that had gripped me. From behind my boulder I threw up the heavy express rifle — a mighty engine of destruction that might bring down a cave bear or a mammoth at a single shot — and let drive at the Sagoth's broad, hairy breast.

At the sound of the shot he stopped stock-still. His spear dropped from his hand.

Then he lunged forward upon his face.

The effect upon the others was little less remarkable. Perry alone could have possibly guessed the meaning of the loud report or explained its connection with the sudden collapse of the Sagoth. The other gorilla-men halted for but an instant. Then with renewed shrieks of rage they sprang forward to finish Perry.

At the same time I stepped from behind my boulder, drawing one of my revolvers that I might conserve the more precious ammunition of the express rifle. Quickly I fired again with the lesser weapon.

Then it was that all eyes were directed toward me. Another Sagoth fell to the bullet from the revolver; but it did not stop his companions. They were out for revenge as well as blood now, and they meant to have both.

As I ran forward toward Perry I fired four more shots, dropping three of our antagonists. Then at last the remaining seven wavered. It was too much for them, this roaring death that leaped, invisible, upon them from a great distance.

As they hesitated I reached Perry's side. I have never seen such an expression upon any man's face as that upon Perry's when he recognized me. I have no words wherewith to describe it. There was not time to talk then — scarce for a greeting. I thrust the full, loaded revolver into his hand, fired the last shot in my own, and reloaded. There were but six Sagoths left then.

They started toward us once more, though I could see that they were terrified probably as much by the noise of the guns as by their effects. They never reached us. Half-way the three that remained turned and fled, and we let them go.

The last we saw of them they were disappearing into the tangled undergrowth of the forest. And then Perry turned and threw his arms about my neck and, burying his old face upon my shoulder, wept like a child.

2.

TRAVELING WITH TERROR

We made camp there beside the peaceful river. There Perry told me all that had befallen him since I had departed for the outer crust.

It seemed that Hooja had made it appear that I had intentionally left Dian behind, and that I did not purpose ever returning to Pellucidar. He told them that I was of another world and that I had tired of this and of its inhabitants.

To Dian he had explained that I had a mate in the world to which I was returning; that I had never intended taking Dian the Beautiful back with me; and that she had seen the last of me.

Shortly afterward Dian had disappeared from the camp, nor had Perry seen or heard aught of her since.

He had no conception of the time that had elapsed since I had departed, but guessed that many years had dragged their slow way into the past.

Hooja, too, had disappeared very soon after Dian had left. The Sarians, under Ghak the Hairry One, and the Amozites under Dacor the Strong One, Dian's brother, had fallen out over my supposed defection, for Ghak would not believe that I had thus treacherously deceived and deserted them.

The result had been that these two powerful tribes had fallen upon one another with the new weapons that Perry and I had taught them to make and to use. Other tribes of the new federation took sides with the original disputants or set up petty revolutions of their own.

The result was the total demolition of the work we had so well started.

Taking advantage of the tribal war, the Mahars had gathered their Sagoths in force and fallen upon one tribe after another in rapid succession, wreaking awful havoc among them and reducing them for the most part to as pitiable a state of terror as that from which we had raised them.

Alone of all the once-mighty federation the Sarians and the Amozites with a few other tribes continued to maintain their defiance of the Mahars; but these tribes were still divided among themselves, nor had it seemed at all probable to Perry when he had last been among them that any attempt at re-amalgamation would be made.

“And thus, your majesty,” he concluded, “has faded back into the oblivion of the Stone Age our wondrous dream and with it has gone the First Empire of Pellucidar.”

We both had to smile at the use of my royal title, yet I was indeed still “Emperor of Pellucidar,” and some day I meant to rebuild what the vile act of the treacherous Hooja had torn down.

But first I would find my empress. To me she was worth forty empires.

“Have you no clue as to the whereabouts of Dian?” I asked.

“None whatever,” replied Perry. “It was in search of her that I came to the pretty pass in which you discovered me, and from which, David, you saved me.

“I knew perfectly well that you had not intentionally deserted either Dian or Pellucidar. I guessed that in some way Hooja the Sly One was at the bottom of the matter, and I determined to go to Amoz, where I guessed that Dian might come to the protection of her brother, and do my utmost to convince her, and through her Dacor the Strong One,

that we had all been victims of a treacherous plot to which you were no party.

“I came to Amoz after a most trying and terrible journey, only to find that Dian was not among her brother’s people and that they knew naught of her whereabouts.

“Dacor, I am sure, wanted to be fair and just, but so great were his grief and anger over the disappearance of his sister that he could not listen to reason, but kept repeating time and again that only your return to Pellucidar could prove the honesty of your intentions.

“Then came a stranger from another tribe, sent I am sure at the instigation of Hooja. He so turned the Amozites against me that I was forced to flee their country to escape assassination.

“In attempting to return to Sari I became lost, and then the Sagoths discovered me. For a long time I eluded them, hiding in caves and wading in rivers to throw them off my trail.

“I lived on nuts and fruits and the edible roots that chance threw in my way.

“I traveled on and on, in what directions I could not even guess; and at last I could elude them no longer and the end came as I had long foreseen that it would come, except that I had not foreseen that you would be there to save me.”

We rested in our camp until Perry had regained sufficient strength to travel again. We planned much, rebuilding all our shattered air-castles; but above all we planned most to find Dian.

I could not believe that she was dead, yet where she might be in this savage world, and under what frightful conditions she might be living, I could not guess.

When Perry was rested we returned to the prospector, where he

fitted himself out fully like a civilized human being — under-clothing, socks, shoes, khaki jacket and breeches and good, substantial puttees.

When I had come upon him he was clothed in rough sadak sandals, a gee-string and a tunic fashioned from the shaggy hide of a thag. Now he wore real clothing again for the first time since the ape-folk had stripped us of our apparel that long-gone day that had witnessed our advent within Pellucidar.

With a bandoleer of cartridges across his shoulder, two six-shooters at his hips, and a rifle in his hand he was a much rejuvenated Perry.

Indeed he was quite a different person altogether from the rather shaky old man who had entered the prospector with me ten or eleven years before, for the trial trip that had plunged us into such wondrous adventures and into such a strange and hitherto un-dreamed-of world.

Now he was straight and active. His muscles, almost atrophied from disuse in his former life, had filled out.

He was still an old man of course, but instead of appearing ten years older than he really was, as he had when we left the outer world, he now appeared about ten years younger. The wild, free life of Pellucidar had worked wonders for him.

Well, it must need have done so or killed him, for a man of Perry's former physical condition could not long have survived the dangers and rigors of the primitive life of the inner world.

Perry had been greatly interested in my map and in the "royal observatory" at Greenwich. By use of the pedometers we had retraced our way to the prospector with ease and accuracy.

Now that we were ready to set out again we decided to follow a different route on the chance that it might lead us into more familiar territory.

I shall not weary you with a repetition of the countless adventures

of our long search. Encounters with wild beasts of gigantic size were of almost daily occurrence; but with our deadly express rifles we ran comparatively little risk when one recalls that previously we had both traversed this world of frightful dangers inadequately armed with crude, primitive weapons and all but naked.

We ate and slept many times — so many that we lost count — and so I do not know how long we roamed, though our map shows the distances and directions quite accurately. We must have covered a great many thousand square miles of territory, and yet we had seen nothing in the way of a familiar landmark, when from the heights of a mountain-range we were crossing I descried far in the distance great masses of billowing clouds.

Now clouds are practically unknown in the skies of Pellucidar. The moment that my eyes rested upon them my heart leaped. I seized Perry's arm and, pointing toward the horizonless distance, shouted:

"The Mountains of the Clouds!"

"They lie close to Phutra, and the country of our worst enemies, the Mahars," Perry remonstrated.

"I know it," I replied, "but they give us a starting-point from which to prosecute our search intelligently. They are at least a familiar landmark.

"They tell us that we are upon the right trail and not wandering far in the wrong direction.

"Furthermore, close to the Mountains of the Clouds dwells a good friend, Ja the Mezop. You did not know him, but you know all that he did for me and all that he will gladly do to aid me.

"At least he can direct us upon the right direction toward Sari."

"The Mountains of the Clouds constitute a mighty range," replied Perry. "They must cover an enormous territory. How are you to find

your friend in all the great country that is visible from their rugged flanks?”

“Easily,” I answered him, “for Ja gave me minute directions. I recall almost his exact words:

“‘You need merely come to the foot of the highest peak of the Mountains of the Clouds. There you will find a river that flows into the Lural Az.

“‘Directly opposite the mouth of the river you will see three large islands far out — so far that they are barely discernible. The one to the extreme left as you face them from the mouth of the river is Anoroc, where I rule the tribe of Anoroc.’”

And so we hastened onward toward the great cloud-mass that was to be our guide for several weary marches. At last we came close to the towering crags, Alp-like in their grandeur.

Rising nobly among its noble fellows, one stupendous peak reared its giant head thousands of feet above the others. It was he whom we sought; but at its foot no river wound down toward any sea.

“It must rise from the opposite side,” suggested Perry, casting a rueful glance at the forbidding heights that barred our further progress. “We cannot endure the arctic cold of those high flung passes, and to traverse the endless miles about this interminable range might require a year or more. The land we seek must lie upon the opposite side of the mountains.”

“Then we must cross them,” I insisted.

Perry shrugged.

“We can’t do it, David,” he repeated, “We are dressed for the tropics. We should freeze to death among the snows and glaciers long before we had discovered a pass to the opposite side.”

“We must cross them,” I reiterated. “We will cross them.”

I had a plan, and that plan we carried out. It took some time.

First we made a permanent camp part way up the slopes where there was good water. Then we set out in search of the great, shaggy cave bear of the higher altitudes.

He is a mighty animal — a terrible animal. He is but little larger than his cousin of the lesser, lower hills; but he makes up for it in the awfulness of his ferocity and in the length and thickness of his shaggy coat. It was his coat that we were after.

We came upon him quite unexpectedly. I was trudging in advance along a rocky trail worn smooth by the padded feet of countless ages of wild beasts. At a shoulder of the mountain around which the path ran I came face to face with the Titan.

I was going up for a fur coat. He was coming down for breakfast. Each realized that here was the very thing he sought.

With a horrid roar the beast charged me.

At my right the cliff rose straight upward for thousands of feet.

At my left it dropped into a dim, abysmal canon.

In front of me was the bear.

Behind me was Perry.

I shouted to him in warning, and then I raised my rifle and fired into the broad breast of the creature. There was no time to take aim; the thing was too close upon me.

But that my bullet took effect was evident from the howl of rage and pain that broke from the frothing jowls. It didn't stop him, though.

I fired again, and then he was upon me. Down I went beneath his ton of maddened, clawing flesh and bone and sinew.

I thought my time had come. I remember feeling sorry for poor old Perry, left all alone in this inhospitable, savage world.

And then of a sudden I realized that the bear was gone and that

I was quite unharmed. I leaped to my feet, my rifle still clutched in my hand, and looked about for my antagonist.

I thought that I should find him farther down the trail, probably finishing Perry, and so I leaped in the direction I supposed him to be, to find Perry perched upon a projecting rock several feet above the trail. My cry of warning had given him time to reach this point of safety.

There he squatted, his eyes wide and his mouth ajar, the picture of abject terror and consternation.

“Where is he?” he cried when he saw me. “Where is he?”

“Didn’t he come this way?” I asked,

“Nothing came this way,” replied the old man. “But I heard his roars — he must have been as large as an elephant.”

“He was,” I admitted; “but where in the world do you suppose he disappeared to?”

Then came a possible explanation to my mind. I returned to the point at which the bear had hurled me down and peered over the edge of the cliff into the abyss below.

Far, far down I saw a small brown blotch near the bottom of the canon. It was the bear.

My second shot must have killed him, and so his dead body, after hurling me to the path, had toppled over into the abyss. I shivered at the thought of how close I, too, must have been to going over with him.

It took us a long time to reach the carcass, and arduous labor to remove the great pelt. But at last the thing was accomplished, and we returned to camp dragging the heavy trophy behind us.

Here we devoted another considerable period to scraping and

curing it. When this was done to our satisfaction we made heavy boots, trousers, and coats of the shaggy skin, turning the fur in.

From the scraps we fashioned caps that came down around our ears, with flaps that fell about our shoulders and breasts. We were now fairly well equipped for our search for a pass to the opposite side of the Mountains of the Clouds.

Our first step now was to move our camp upward to the very edge of the perpetual snows which cap this lofty range. Here we built a snug, secure little hut, which we provisioned and stored with fuel for its diminutive fireplace.

With our hut as a base we sallied forth in search of a pass across the range.

Our every move was carefully noted upon our maps which we now kept in duplicate. By this means we were saved tedious and unnecessary retracing of ways already explored.

Systematically we worked upward in both directions from our base, and when we had at last discovered what seemed might prove a feasible pass we moved our belongings to a new hut farther up.

It was hard work — cold, bitter, cruel work. Not a step did we take in advance but the grim reaper strode silently in our tracks.

There were the great cave bears in the timber, and gaunt, lean wolves — huge creatures twice the size of our Canadian timber-wolves. Farther up we were assailed by enormous white bears — hungry, devilish fellows, who came roaring across the rough glacier tops at the first glimpse of us, or stalked us stealthily by scent when they had not yet seen us.

It is one of the peculiarities of life within Pellucidar that man is more often the hunted than the hunter. Myriad are the huge-bellied carnivora of this primitive world. Never, from birth to death, are those

great bellies sufficiently filled, so always are their mighty owners prowling about in search of meat.

Terribly armed for battle as they are, man presents to them in his primal state an easy prey, slow of foot, puny of strength, ill-equipped by nature with natural weapons of defense.

The bears looked upon us as easy meat. Only our heavy rifles saved us from prompt extinction. Poor Perry never was a raging lion at heart, and I am convinced that the terrors of that awful period must have caused him poignant mental anguish.

When we were abroad pushing our trail farther and farther toward the distant break which, we assumed, marked a feasible way across the range, we never knew at what second some great engine of clawed and fanged destruction might rush upon us from behind, or lie in wait for us beyond an ice-hummock or a jutting shoulder of the craggy steeps.

The roar of our rifles was constantly shattering the world-old silence of stupendous canons upon which the eye of man had never before gazed. And when in the comparative safety of our hut we lay down to sleep the great beasts roared and fought without the walls, clawed and battered at the door, or rushed their colossal frames headlong against the hut's sides until it rocked and trembled to the impact.

Yes, it was a gay life.

Perry had got to taking stock of our ammunition each time we returned to the hut. It became something of an obsession with him.

He'd count our cartridges one by one and then try to figure how long it would be before the last was expended and we must either remain in the hut until we starved to death or venture forth, empty, to fill the belly of some hungry bear.

I must admit that I, too, felt worried, for our progress was indeed

snail-like, and our ammunition could not last forever. In discussing the problem, finally we came to the decision to burn our bridges behind us and make one last supreme effort to cross the divide.

It would mean that we must go without sleep for a long period, and with the further chance that when the time came that sleep could no longer be denied we might still be high in the frozen regions of perpetual snow and ice, where sleep would mean certain death, exposed as we would be to the attacks of wild beasts and without shelter from the hideous cold.

But we decided that we must take these chances and so at last we set forth from our hut for the last time, carrying such necessities as we felt we could least afford to do without. The bears seemed unusually troublesome and determined that time, and as we clambered slowly upward beyond the highest point to which we had previously attained, the cold became infinitely more intense.

Presently, with two great bears dogging our footsteps we entered a dense fog.

We had reached the heights that are so often cloud-wrapped for long periods. We could see nothing a few paces beyond our noses.

We dared not turn back into the teeth of the bears which we could hear grunting behind us. To meet them in this bewildering fog would have been to court instant death.

Perry was almost overcome by the hopelessness of our situation. He flopped down on his knees and began to pray.

It was the first time I had heard him at his old habit since my return to Pellucidar, and I had thought that he had given up his little idiosyncrasy; but he hadn't. Far from it.

I let him pray for a short time undisturbed, and then as I was about

to suggest that we had better be pushing along one of the bears in our rear let out a roar that made the earth fairly tremble beneath our feet.

It brought Perry to his feet as if he had been stung by a wasp, and sent him racing ahead through the blinding fog at a gait that I knew must soon end in disaster were it not checked.

Crevasses in the glacier-ice were far too frequent to permit of reckless speed even in a clear atmosphere, and then there were hideous precipices along the edges of which our way often led us. I shivered as I thought of the poor old fellow's peril.

At the top of my lungs I called to him to stop, but he did not answer me. And then I hurried on in the direction he had gone, faster by far than safety dictated.

For a while I thought I heard him ahead of me, but at last, though I paused often to listen and to call to him, I heard nothing more, not even the grunting of the bears that had been behind us. All was deathly silence — the silence of the tomb. About me lay the thick, impenetrable fog.

I was alone. Perry was gone — gone forever, I had not the slightest doubt.

Somewhere near by lay the mouth of a treacherous fissure, and far down at its icy bottom lay all that was mortal of my old friend, Abner Perry. There would his body be preserved in its icy sepulcher for countless ages, until on some far distant day the slow-moving river of ice had wound its snail-like way down to the warmer level, there to disgorge its grisly evidence of grim tragedy, and what in that far future age, might mean baffling mystery.

3.

SHOOTING THE CHUTES — AND AFTER

Through the fog I felt my way along by means of my compass. I no longer heard the bears, nor did I encounter one within the fog.

Experience has since taught me that these great beasts are as terror-stricken by this phenomenon as a landsman by a fog at sea, and that no sooner does a fog envelop them than they make the best of their way to lower levels and a clear atmosphere. It was well for me that this was true.

I felt very sad and lonely as I crawled along the difficult footing. My own predicament weighed less heavily upon me than the loss of Perry, for I loved the old fellow.

That I should ever win the opposite slopes of the range I began to doubt, for though I am naturally sanguine, I imagine that the bereavement which had befallen me had cast such a gloom over my spirits that I could see no slightest ray of hope for the future.

Then, too, the blighting, gray oblivion of the cold, damp clouds through which I wandered was distressing. Hope thrives best in sunlight, and I am sure that it does not thrive at all in a fog.

But the instinct of self-preservation is stronger than hope. It thrives, fortunately, upon nothing. It takes root upon the brink of the grave, and blossoms in the jaws of death. Now it flourished bravely upon the breast of dead hope, and urged me onward and upward in a stern endeavor to justify its existence.

As I advanced the fog became denser. I could see nothing beyond my nose. Even the snow and ice I trod were invisible.

I could not see below the breast of my bearskin coat. I seemed to be floating in a sea of vapor.

To go forward over a dangerous glacier under such conditions was little short of madness; but I could not have stopped going had I known positively that death lay two paces before my nose. In the first place, it was too cold to stop, and in the second, I should have gone mad but for the excitement of the perils that beset each forward step.

For some time the ground had been rougher and steeper, until I had been forced to scale a considerable height that had carried me from the glacier entirely. I was sure from my compass that I was following the right general direction, and so I kept on.

Once more the ground was level. From the wind that blew about me I guessed that I must be upon some exposed peak of ridge.

And then quite suddenly I stepped out into space. Wildly I turned and clutched at the ground that had slipped from beneath my feet.

Only a smooth, icy surface was there. I found nothing to clutch or stay my fall, and a moment later so great was my speed that nothing could have stayed me.

As suddenly as I had pitched into space, with equal suddenness did I emerge from the fog, out of which I shot like a projectile from a cannon into clear daylight. My speed was so great that I could see nothing about me but a blurred and indistinct sheet of smooth and frozen snow, that rushed past me with express-train velocity.

I must have slid downward thousands of feet before the steep incline curved gently on to a broad, smooth, snow-covered plateau. Across this I hurtled with slowly diminishing velocity, until at last objects about me began to take definite shape.

Far ahead, miles and miles away, I saw a great valley and mighty woods, and beyond these a broad expanse of water. In the nearer

foreground I discerned a small, dark blob of color upon the shimmering whiteness of the snow.

“A bear,” thought I, and thanked the instinct that had impelled me to cling tenaciously to my rifle during the moments of my awful tumble.

At the rate I was going it would be but a moment before I should be quite abreast the thing; nor was it long before I came to a sudden stop in soft snow, upon which the sun was shining, not twenty paces from the object of my most immediate apprehension.

It was standing upon its hind legs waiting for me. As I scrambled to my feet to meet it, I dropped my gun in the snow and doubled up with laughter.

It was Perry.

The expression upon his face, combined with the relief I felt at seeing him again safe and sound, was too much for my overwrought nerves.

“David!” he cried. “David, my boy! God has been good to an old man. He has answered my prayer.”

It seems that Perry in his mad flight had plunged over the brink at about the same point as that at which I had stepped over it a short time later. Chance had done for us what long periods of rational labor had failed to accomplish.

We had crossed the divide. We were upon the side of the Mountains of the Clouds that we had for so long been attempting to reach.

We looked about. Below us were green trees and warm jungles. In the distance was a great sea.

“The Lural Az,” I said, pointing toward its blue-green surface.

Somehow — the gods alone can explain it — Perry, too, had clung

to his rifle during his mad descent of the icy slope. For that there was cause for great rejoicing.

Neither of us was worse for his experience, so after shaking the snow from our clothing, we set off at a great rate down toward the warmth and comfort of the forest and the jungle.

The going was easy by comparison with the awful obstacles we had had to encounter upon the opposite side of the divide. There were beasts, of course, but we came through safely.

Before we halted to eat or rest, we stood beside a little mountain brook beneath the wondrous trees of the primeval forest in an atmosphere of warmth and comfort. It reminded me of an early June day in the Maine Woods.

We fell to work with our short axes and cut enough small trees to build a rude protection from the fiercer beasts. Then we lay down to sleep.

How long we slept I do not know. Perry says that inasmuch as there is no means of measuring time within Pellucidar, there can be no such thing as time here, and that we may have slept an outer earthly year, or we may have slept but a second.

But this I know. We had stuck the ends of some of the saplings into the ground in the building of our shelter, first stripping the leaves and branches from them, and when we awoke we found that many of them had thrust forth sprouts.

Personally, I think that we slept at least a month; but who may say? The sun marked midday when we closed our eyes; it was still in the same position when we opened them; nor had it varied a hair's breadth in the interim.

It is most baffling, this question of elapsed time within Pellucidar.

Anyhow, I was famished when we awoke. I think that it was the

pangs of hunger that awoke me. Ptarmigan and wild boar fell before my revolver within a dozen moments of my awakening. Perry soon had a roaring fire blazing by the brink of the little stream.

It was a good and delicious meal we made. Though we did not eat the entire boar, we made a very large hole in him, while the ptarmigan was but a mouthful.

Having satisfied our hunger, we determined to set forth at once in search of Anoroc and my old friend, Ja the Mezop. We each thought that by following the little stream downward, we should come upon the large river which Ja had told me emptied into the Lural Az opposite his island.

We did so; nor were we disappointed, for at last after a pleasant journey — and what journey would not be pleasant after the hardships we had endured among the peaks of the Mountains of the Clouds — we came upon a broad flood that rushed majestically onward in the direction of the great sea we had seen from the snowy slopes of the mountains.

For three long marches we followed the left bank of the growing river, until at last we saw it roll its mighty volume into the vast waters of the sea. Far out across the rippling ocean we described three islands. The one to the left must be Anoroc.

At last we had come close to a solution of our problem — the road to Sari.

But how to reach the islands was now the foremost question in our minds. We must build a canoe.

Perry is a most resourceful man. He has an axiom which carries the thought-kernel that what man has done, man can do, and it doesn't cut any figure with Perry whether a fellow knows how to do it or not.

He set out to make gunpowder once, shortly after our escape from

Phutra and at the beginning of the confederation of the wild tribes of Pellucidar. He said that some one, without any knowledge of the fact that such a thing might be concocted, had once stumbled upon it by accident, and so he couldn't see why a fellow who knew all about powder except how to make it couldn't do as well.

He worked mighty hard mixing all sorts of things together, until finally he evolved a substance that looked like powder. He had been very proud of the stuff, and had gone about the village of the Sarians exhibiting it to every one who would listen to him, and explaining what its purpose was and what terrific havoc it would work, until finally the natives became so terrified at the stuff that they wouldn't come within a rod of Perry and his invention.

Finally, I suggested that we experiment with it and see what it would do, so Perry built a fire, after placing the powder at a safe distance, and then touched a glowing ember to a minute particle of the deadly explosive. It extinguished the ember.

Repeated experiments with it determined me that in searching for a high explosive, Perry had stumbled upon a fire-extinguisher that would have made his fortune for him back in our own world.

So now he set himself to work to build a scientific canoe. I had suggested that we construct a dugout, but Perry convinced me that we must build something more in keeping with our positions of supermen in this world of the Stone Age.

"We must impress these natives with our superiority," he explained. "You must not forget, David, that you are emperor of Pellucidar. As such you may not with dignity approach the shores of a foreign power in so crude a vessel as a dugout."

I pointed out to Perry that it wasn't much more incongruous for the

emperor to cruise in a canoe, than it was for the prime minister to attempt to build one with his own hands.

He had to smile at that; but in extenuation of his act he assured me that it was quite customary for prime ministers to give their personal attention to the building of imperial navies; “and this,” he said, “is the imperial navy of his Serene Highness, David I, Emperor of the Federated Kingdoms of Pellucidar.”

I grinned; but Perry was quite serious about it. It had always seemed rather more or less of a joke to me that I should be addressed as majesty and all the rest of it. Yet my imperial power and dignity had been a very real thing during my brief reign.

Twenty tribes had joined the federation, and their chiefs had sworn eternal fealty to one another and to me. Among them were many powerful though savage nations. Their chiefs we had made kings; their tribal lands kingdoms.

We had armed them with bows and arrows and swords, in addition to their own more primitive weapons. I had trained them in military discipline and in so much of the art of war as I had gleaned from extensive reading of the campaigns of Napoleon, Von Moltke, Grant, and the ancients.

We had marked out as best we could natural boundaries dividing the various kingdoms. We had warned tribes beyond these boundaries that they must not trespass, and we had marched against and severely punished those who had.

We had met and defeated the Mahars and the Sagoths. In short, we had demonstrated our rights to empire, and very rapidly were we being recognized and heralded abroad when my departure for the outer world and Hooja’s treachery had set us back.

But now I had returned. The work that fate had undone must

be done again, and though I must need smile at my imperial honors, I none the less felt the weight of duty and obligation that rested upon my shoulders.

Slowly the imperial navy progressed toward completion. She was a wondrous craft, but I had my doubts about her. When I voiced them to Perry, he reminded me gently that my people for many generations had been mine-owners, not ship-builders, and consequently I couldn't be expected to know much about the matter.

I was minded to inquire into his hereditary fitness to design battleships; but inasmuch as I already knew that his father had been a minister in a back-woods village far from the coast, I hesitated lest I offend the dear old fellow.

He was immensely serious about his work, and I must admit that in so far as appearances went he did extremely well with the meager tools and assistance at his command. We had only two short axes and our hunting-knives; yet with these we hewed trees, split them into planks, surfaced and fitted them.

The "navy" was some forty feet in length by ten feet beam. Her sides were quite straight and fully ten feet high — "for the purpose," explained Perry, "of adding dignity to her appearance and rendering it less easy for an enemy to board her."

As a matter of fact, I knew that he had had in mind the safety of her crew under javelin-fire — the lofty sides made an admirable shelter. Inside she reminded me of nothing so much as a floating trench. There was also some slight analogy to a huge coffin.

Her prow sloped sharply backward from the water-line — quite like a line of battleship. Perry had designed her more for moral effect upon an enemy, I think, than for any real harm she might inflict, and so those parts which were to show were the most imposing.

Below the water-line she was practically non-existent. She should have had considerable draft; but, as the enemy couldn't have seen it, Perry decided to do away with it, and so made her flat-bottomed. It was this that caused my doubts about her.

There was another little idiosyncrasy of design that escaped us both until she was about ready to launch — there was no method of propulsion. Her sides were far too high to permit the use of sweeps, and when Perry suggested that we pole her, I remonstrated on the grounds that it would be a most undignified and awkward manner of sweeping down upon the foe, even if we could find or wield poles that would reach to the bottom of the ocean.

Finally I suggested that we convert her into a sailing vessel. When once the idea took hold Perry was most enthusiastic about it, and nothing would do but a four-masted, full-rigged ship.

Again I tried to dissuade him, but he was simply crazy over the psychological effect which the appearance of this strange and mighty craft would have upon the natives of Pellucidar. So we rigged her with thin hides for sails and dried gut for rope.

Neither of us knew much about sailing a full-rigged ship; but that didn't worry me a great deal, for I was confident that we should never be called upon to do so, and as the day of launching approached I was positive of it.

We had built her upon a low bank of the river close to where it emptied into the sea, and just above high tide. Her keel we had laid upon several rollers cut from small trees, the ends of the rollers in turn resting upon parallel tracks of long saplings. Her stern was toward the water.

A few hours before we were ready to launch her she made quite an imposing picture, for Perry had insisted upon setting every shred of

“canvas.” I told him that I didn’t know much about it, but I was sure that at launching the hull only should have been completed, everything else being completed after she had floated safely.

At the last minute there was some delay while we sought a name for her. I wanted her christened the Perry in honor both of her designer and that other great naval genius of another world, Captain Oliver Hazard Perry, of the United States Navy. But Perry was too modest; he wouldn’t hear of it.

We finally decided to establish a system in the naming of the fleet. Battle-ships of the first-class should bear the names of kingdoms of the federation; armored cruisers the names of kings; cruisers the names of cities, and so on down the line. Therefore, we decided to name the first battle-ship Sari, after the first of the federated kingdoms.

The launching of the Sari proved easier than I contemplated. Perry wanted me to get in and break something over the bow as she floated out upon the bosom of the river, but I told him that I should feel safer on dry land until I saw which side up the Sari would float.

I could see by the expression of the old man’s face that my words had hurt him; but I noticed that he didn’t offer to get in himself, and so I felt less contrition than I might otherwise.

When we cut the ropes and removed the blocks that held the Sari in place she started for the water with a lunge. Before she hit it she was going at a reckless speed, for we had laid our tracks quite down to the water, greased them, and at intervals placed rollers all ready to receive the ship as she moved forward with stately dignity. But there was no dignity in the Sari.

When she touched the surface of the river she must have been going twenty or thirty miles an hour. Her momentum carried her well out into the stream, until she came to a sudden halt at the end of the

long line which we had had the foresight to attach to her bow and fasten to a large tree upon the bank.

The moment her progress was checked she promptly capsized. Perry was overwhelmed. I didn't upbraid him, nor remind him that I had "told him so."

His grief was so genuine and so apparent that I didn't have the heart to reproach him, even were I inclined to that particular sort of meanness.

"Come, come, old man!" I cried. "It's not as bad as it looks. Give me a hand with this rope, and we'll drag her up as far as we can; and then when the tide goes out we'll try another scheme. I think we can make a go of her yet."

Well, we managed to get her up into shallow water. When the tide receded she lay there on her side in the mud, quite a pitiable object for the premier battle-ship of a world — "the terror of the seas" was the way Perry had occasionally described her.

We had to work fast; but before the tide came in again we had stripped her of her sails and masts, righted her, and filled her about a quarter full of rock ballast. If she didn't stick too fast in the mud I was sure that she would float this time right side up.

I can tell you that it was with palpitating hearts that we sat upon the river-bank and watched that tide come slowly in. The tides of Pellucidar don't amount to much by comparison with our higher tides of the outer world, but I knew that it ought to prove ample to float the Sari.

Nor was I mistaken. Finally we had the satisfaction of seeing the vessel rise out of the mud and float slowly upstream with the tide. As the water rose we pulled her in quite close to the bank and clambered aboard.

She rested safely now upon an even keel; nor did she leak, for she was well calked with fiber and tarry pitch. We rigged up a single short mast and light sail, fastened planking down over the ballast to form a deck, worked her out into midstream with a couple of sweeps, and dropped our primitive stone anchor to await the turn of the tide that would bear us out to sea.

While we waited we devoted the time to the construction of an upper deck, since the one immediately above the ballast was some seven feet from the gunwale. The second deck was four feet above this. In it was a large, commodious hatch, leading to the lower deck. The sides of the ship rose three feet above the upper deck, forming an excellent breastwork, which we loopholed at intervals that we might lie prone and fire upon an enemy.

Though we were sailing out upon a peaceful mission in search of my friend Ja, we knew that we might meet with people of some other island who would prove unfriendly.

At last the tide turned. We weighed anchor. Slowly we drifted down the great river toward the sea.

About us swarmed the mighty denizens of the primeval deep — plesiosaurs and ichthyosauria with all their horrid, slimy cousins whose names were as the names of aunts and uncles to Perry, but which I have never been able to recall an hour after having heard them.

At last we were safely launched upon the journey to which we had looked forward for so long, and the results of which meant so much to me.

4.

FRIENDSHIP AND TREACHERY

The Sari proved a most erratic craft. She might have done well enough upon a park lagoon if safely anchored, but upon the bosom of a mighty ocean she left much to be desired.

Sailing with the wind she did her best; but in quartering or when close-hauled she drifted terribly, as a nautical man might have guessed she would. We couldn't keep within miles of our course, and our progress was pitifully slow.

Instead of making for the island of Anoroc, we bore far to the right, until it became evident that we should have to pass between the two right-hand islands and attempt to return toward Anoroc from the opposite side.

As we neared the islands Perry was quite overcome by their beauty. When we were directly between two of them he fairly went into raptures; nor could I blame him.

The tropical luxuriance of the foliage that dripped almost to the water's edge and the vivid colors of the blooms that shot the green made a most gorgeous spectacle.

Perry was right in the midst of a flowery panegyric on the wonders of the peaceful beauty of the scene when a canoe shot out from the nearest island. There were a dozen warriors in it; it was quickly followed by a second and third.

Of course we couldn't know the intentions of the strangers, but we could pretty well guess them.

Perry wanted to man the sweeps and try to get away from them,

but I soon convinced him that any speed of which the Sari was capable would be far too slow to outdistance the swift, though awkward, dug-outs of the Mezops.

I waited until they were quite close enough to hear me, and then I hailed them. I told them that we were friends of the Mezops, and that we were upon a visit to Ja of Anoroc, to which they replied that they were at war with Ja, and that if we would wait a minute they'd board us and throw our corpses to the azdyryths.

I warned them that they would get the worst of it if they didn't leave us alone, but they only shouted in derision and paddled swiftly toward us. It was evident that they were considerably impressed by the appearance and dimensions of our craft, but as these fellows know no fear they were not at all awed.

Seeing that they were determined to give battle, I leaned over the rail of the Sari and brought the imperial battle-squadron of the Emperor of Pellucidar into action for the first time in the history of a world. In other and simpler words, I fired my revolver at the nearest canoe.

The effect was magical. A warrior rose from his knees, threw his paddle aloft, stiffened into rigidity for an instant, and then toppled overboard.

The others ceased paddling, and, with wide eyes, looked first at me and then at the battling sea-things which fought for the corpse of their comrade. To them it must have seemed a miracle that I should be able to stand at thrice the range of the most powerful javelin-thrower and with a loud noise and a smudge of smoke slay one of their number with an invisible missile.

But only for an instant were they paralyzed with wonder. Then, with savage shouts, they fell once more to their paddles and forged rapidly toward us.

Again and again I fired. At each shot a warrior sank to the bottom of the canoe or tumbled overboard.

When the prow of the first craft touched the side of the Sari it contained only dead and dying men. The other two dugouts were approaching rapidly, so I turned my attention toward them.

I think that they must have been commencing to have some doubts — those wild, naked, red warriors — for when the first man fell in the second boat, the others stopped paddling and commenced to jabber among themselves.

The third boat pulled up alongside the second and its crews joined in the conference. Taking advantage of the lull in the battle, I called out to the survivors to return to their shore.

“I have no fight with you,” I cried, and then I told them who I was and added that if they would live in peace they must sooner or later join forces with me.

“Go back now to your people,” I counseled them, “and tell them that you have seen David I, Emperor of the Federated Kingdoms of Pellucidar, and that single-handed he has overcome you, just as he intends over-coming the Mahars and the Sagoths and any other peoples of Pellucidar who threaten the peace and welfare of his empire.”

Slowly they turned the noses of their canoes toward land. It was evident that they were impressed; yet that they were loath to give up without further contesting my claim to naval supremacy was also apparent, for some of their number seemed to be exhorting the others to a renewal of the conflict.

However, at last they drew slowly away, and the Sari, which had not decreased her snail-like speed during this, her first engagement, continued upon her slow, uneven way.

Presently Perry stuck his head up through the hatch and hailed me.

“Have the scoundrels departed?” he asked. “Have you killed them all?”

“Those whom I failed to kill have departed, Perry,” I replied.

He came out on deck and, peering over the side, descried the lone canoe floating a short distance astern with its grim and grisly freight. Farther his eyes wandered to the retreating boats.

“David,” said he at last, “this is a notable occasion. It is a great day in the annals of Pellucidar. We have won a glorious victory.

“Your majesty’s navy has routed a fleet of the enemy thrice its own size, manned by ten times as many men. Let us give thanks.”

I could scarce restrain a smile at Perry’s use of the pronoun “we,” yet I was glad to share the rejoicing with him as I shall always be glad to share everything with the dear old fellow.

Perry is the only male coward I have ever known whom I could respect and love. He was not created for fighting; but I think that if the occasion should ever arise where it became necessary he would give his life cheerfully for me — yes, I *know* it.

It took us a long time to work around the islands and draw in close to Anoroc. In the leisure afforded we took turns working on our map, and by means of the compass and a little guesswork we set down the shoreline we had left and the three islands with fair accuracy.

Crossed sabers marked the spot where the first great naval engagement of a world had taken place. In a note-book we jotted down, as had been our custom, details that would be of historical value later.

Opposite Anoroc we came to anchor quite close to shore. I knew from my previous experience with the tortuous trails of the island that I could never find my way inland to the hidden tree-village of the

Mezop chieftain, Ja; so we remained aboard the Sari, firing our express rifles at intervals to attract the attention of the natives.

After some ten shots had been fired at considerable intervals a body of copper-colored warriors appeared upon the shore. They watched us for a moment and then I hailed them, asking the whereabouts of my old friend Ja.

They did not reply at once, but stood with their heads together in serious and animated discussion. Continually they turned their eyes toward our strange craft. It was evident that they were greatly puzzled by our appearance as well as unable to explain the source of the loud noises that had attracted their attention to us. At last one of the warriors addressed us.

“Who are you who seek Ja?” he asked. “What would you of our chief?”

“We are friends,” I replied. “I am David. Tell Ja that David, whose life he once saved from a sithic, has come again to visit him.

“If you will send out a canoe we will come ashore. We cannot bring our great warship closer in.”

Again they talked for a considerable time. Then two of them entered a canoe that several dragged from its hiding-place in the jungle and paddled swiftly toward us.

They were magnificent specimens of manhood. Perry had never seen a member of this red race close to before. In fact, the dead men in the canoe we had left astern after the battle and the survivors who were paddling rapidly toward their shore were the first he ever had seen. He had been greatly impressed by their physical beauty and the promise of superior intelligence which their well-shaped skulls gave.

The two who now paddled out received us into their canoe with dignified courtesy. To my inquiries relative to Ja they explained that

he had not been in the village when our signals were heard, but that runners had been sent out after him and that doubtless he was already upon his way to the coast.

One of the men remembered me from the occasion of my former visit to the island; he was extremely agreeable the moment that he came close enough to recognize me. He said that Ja would be delighted to welcome me, and that all the tribe of Anoroc knew of me by repute, and had received explicit instructions from their chieftain that if any of them should ever come upon me to show me every kindness and attention.

Upon shore we were received with equal honor. While we stood conversing with our bronze friends a tall warrior leaped suddenly from the jungle.

It was Ja. As his eyes fell upon me his face lighted with pleasure. He came quickly forward to greet me after the manner of his tribe.

Toward Perry he was equally hospitable. The old man fell in love with the savage giant as completely as had I. Ja conducted us along the maze-like trail to his strange village, where he gave over one of the tree-houses for our exclusive use.

Perry was much interested in the unique habitation, which resembled nothing so much as a huge wasp's nest built around the bole of a tree well above the ground.

After we had eaten and rested Ja came to see us with a number of his head men. They listened attentively to my story, which included a narrative of the events leading to the formation of the federated kingdoms, the battle with the Mahars, my journey to the outer world, and my return to Pellucidar and search for Sari and my mate.

Ja told me that the Mezops had heard something of the federation and had been much interested in it. He had even gone so far as to

send a party of warriors toward Sari to investigate the reports, and to arrange for the entrance of Anoroc into the empire in case it appeared that there was any truth in the rumors that one of the aims of the federation was the overthrow of the Mahars.

The delegation had met with a party of Sagoths. As there had been a truce between the Mahars and the Mezops for many generations, they camped with these warriors of the reptiles, from whom they learned that the federation had gone to pieces. So the party returned to Anoroc.

When I showed Ja our map and explained its purpose to him, he was much interested. The location of Anoroc, the Mountains of the Clouds, the river, and the strip of seacoast were all familiar to him.

He quickly indicated the position of the inland sea and close beside it, the city of Phutra, where one of the powerful Mahar nations had its seat. He likewise showed us where Sari should be and carried his own coast-line as far north and south as it was known to him.

His additions to the map convinced us that Greenwich lay upon the verge of this same sea, and that it might be reached by water more easily than by the arduous crossing of the mountains or the dangerous approach through Phutra, which lay almost directly in line between Anoroc and Greenwich to the northwest.

If Sari lay upon the same water then the shoreline must bend far back toward the southwest of Greenwich — an assumption which, by the way, we found later to be true. Also, Sari was upon a lofty plateau at the southern end of a mighty gulf of the Great Ocean.

The location which Ja gave to distant Amoz puzzled us, for it placed it due north of Greenwich, apparently in mid-ocean. As Ja had never been so far and knew only of Amoz through hearsay, we thought that he must be mistaken; but he was not. Amoz lies directly north

of Greenwich across the mouth of the same gulf as that upon which Sari is.

The sense of direction and location of these primitive Pellucidarians is little short of uncanny, as I have had occasion to remark in the past. You may take one of them to the uttermost ends of his world, to places of which he has never even heard, yet without sun or moon or stars to guide him, without map or compass, he will travel straight for home in the shortest direction.

Mountains, rivers, and seas may have to be gone around, but never once does his sense of direction fail him — the homing instinct is supreme.

In the same remarkable way they never forget the location of any place to which they have ever been, and know that of many of which they have only heard from others who have visited them.

In short, each Pellucidarian is a walking geography of his own district and of much of the country contiguous thereto. It always proved of the greatest aid to Perry and me; nevertheless we were anxious to enlarge our map, for we at least were not endowed with the homing instinct.

After several long councils it was decided that, in order to expedite matters, Perry should return to the prospector with a strong party of Mezops and fetch the freight I had brought from the outer world. Ja and his warriors were much impressed by our firearms, and were also anxious to build boats with sails.

As we had arms at the prospector and also books on boat-building we thought that it might prove an excellent idea to start these naturally maritime people upon the construction of a well built navy of staunch sailing-vessels. I was sure that with definite plans to go by Perry could oversee the construction of an adequate flotilla.

I warned him, however, not to be too ambitious, and to forget about dreadnoughts and armored cruisers for a while and build instead a few small sailing-boats that could be manned by four or five men.

I was to proceed to Sari, and while prosecuting my search for Dian attempt at the same time the rehabilitation of the federation. Perry was going as far as possible by water, with the chances that the entire trip might be made in that manner, which proved to be the fact.

With a couple of Mezops as companions I started for Sari. In order to avoid crossing the principal range of the Mountains of the Clouds we took a route that passed a little way south of Phutra. We had eaten four times and slept once, and were, as my companions told me, not far from the great Mahar city, when we were suddenly confronted by a considerable band of Sagoths.

They did not attack us, owing to the peace which exists between the Mahars and the Mezops, but I could see that they looked upon me with considerable suspicion. My friends told them that I was a stranger from a remote country, and as we had previously planned against such a contingency I pretended ignorance of the language which the human beings of Pellucidar employ in conversing with the gorilla-like soldiery of the Mahars.

I noticed, and not without misgivings, that the leader of the Sagoths eyed me with an expression that betokened partial recognition. I was sure that he had seen me before during the period of my incarceration in Phutra and that he was trying to recall my identity.

It worried me not a little. I was extremely thankful when we bade them adieu and continued upon our journey.

Several times during the next few marches I became acutely conscious of the sensation of being watched by unseen eyes, but I did not

speak of my suspicions to my companions. Later I had reason to regret my reticence, for —

Well, this is how it happened:

We had killed an antelope and after eating our fill I had lain down to sleep. The Pellucidarians, who seem seldom if ever to require sleep, joined me in this instance, for we had had a very trying march along the northern foothills of the Mountains of the Clouds, and now with their bellies filled with meat they seemed ready for slumber.

When I awoke it was with a start to find a couple of huge Sagoths astride me. They pinioned my arms and legs, and later chained my wrists behind my back. Then they let me up.

I saw my companions; the brave fellows lay dead where they had slept, javelined to death without a chance at self-defense.

I was furious. I threatened the Sagoth leader with all sorts of dire reprisals; but when he heard me speak the hybrid language that is the medium of communication between his kind and the human race of the inner world he only grinned, as much as to say, "I thought so!"

They had not taken my revolvers or ammunition away from me because they did not know what they were; but my heavy rifle I had lost. They simply left it where it had lain beside me.

So low in the scale of intelligence are they, that they had not sufficient interest in this strange object even to fetch it along with them.

I knew from the direction of our march that they were taking me to Phutra. Once there I did not need much of an imagination to picture what my fate would be. It was the arena and a wild thag or fierce tarag for me — unless the Mahars elected to take me to the pits.

In that case my end would be no more certain, though infinitely more horrible and painful, for in the pits I should be subjected to cruel vivisection. From what I had once seen of their methods in the pits

of Phutra I knew them to be the opposite of merciful, whereas in the arena I should be quickly despatched by some savage beast.

Arrived at the underground city, I was taken immediately before a slimy Mahar. When the creature had received the report of the Sagoth its cold eyes glistened with malice and hatred as they were turned balefully upon me.

I knew then that my identity had been guessed. With a show of excitement that I had never before seen evinced by a member of the dominant race of Pellucidar, the Mahar hustled me away, heavily guarded, through the main avenue of the city to one of the principal buildings.

Here we were ushered into a great hall where presently many Mahars gathered.

In utter silence they conversed, for they have no oral speech since they are without auditory nerves. Their method of communication Perry has likened to the projection of a sixth sense into a fourth dimension, where it becomes cognizable to the sixth sense of their audience.

Be that as it may, however, it was evident that I was the subject of discussion, and from the hateful looks bestowed upon me not a particularly pleasant subject.

How long I waited for their decision I do not know, but it must have been a very long time. Finally one of the Sagoths addressed me. He was acting as interpreter for his masters.

“The Mahars will spare your life,” he said, “and release you on one condition.”

“And what is that condition?” I asked, though I could guess its terms.

“That you return to them that which you stole from the pits of Phutra when you killed the four Mahars and escaped,” he replied.

I had thought that that would be it. The great secret upon which depended the continuance of the Mahar race was safely hid where only Dian and I knew.

I ventured to imagine that they would have given me much more than my liberty to have it safely in their keeping again; but after that — what?

Would they keep their promises?

I doubted it. With the secret of artificial propagation once more in their hands their numbers would soon be made so to overrun the world of Pellucidar that there could be no hope for the eventual supremacy of the human race, the cause for which I so devoutly hoped, for which I had consecrated my life, and for which I was now willing to give my life.

Yes! In that moment as I stood before the heartless tribunal I felt that my life would be a very little thing to give could it save to the human race of Pellucidar the chance to come into its own by insuring the eventual extinction of the hated, powerful Mahars.

“Come!” exclaimed the Sagoths. “The mighty Mahars await your reply.”

“You may say to them,” I answered, “that I shall not tell them where the great secret is hid.”

When this had been translated to them there was a great beating of reptilian wings, gaping of sharp-fanged jaws, and hideous hissing. I thought that they were about to fall upon me on the spot, and so I laid my hands upon my revolvers; but at length they became more quiet and presently transmitted some command to my Sagoth guard, the chief of which laid a heavy hand upon my arm and pushed me roughly before him from the audience-chamber.

They took me to the pits, where I lay carefully guarded. I was sure

that I was to be taken to the vivisection laboratory, and it required all my courage to fortify myself against the terrors of so fearful a death. In Pellucidar, where there is no time, death-agonies may endure for eternities.

Accordingly, I had to steel myself against an endless doom, which now stared me in the face!

5.

SURPRISES

But at last the allotted moment arrived — the moment for which I had been trying to prepare myself, for how long I could not even guess. A great Sagoth came and spoke some words of command to those who watched over me. I was jerked roughly to my feet and with little consideration hustled upward toward the higher levels.

Out into the broad avenue they conducted me, where, amid huge throngs of Mahars, Sagoths, and heavily guarded slaves, I was led, or, rather, pushed and shoved roughly, along in the same direction that the mob moved. I had seen such a concourse of people once before in the buried city of Phutra; I guessed, and rightly, that we were bound for the great arena where slaves who are condemned to death meet their end.

Into the vast amphitheater they took me, stationing me at the extreme end of the arena. The queen came, with her slimy, sickening retinue. The seats were filled. The show was about to commence.

Then, from a little doorway in the opposite end of the structure, a girl was led into the arena. She was at a considerable distance from me. I could not see her features.

I wondered what fate awaited this other poor victim and myself, and why they had chosen to have us die together. My own fate, or rather, my thought of it, was submerged in the natural pity I felt for this lone girl, doomed to die horribly beneath the cold, cruel eyes of her awful captors. Of what crime could she be guilty that she must expiate it in the dreaded arena?

As I stood thus thinking, another door, this time at one of the long sides of the arena, was thrown open, and into the theater of death slunk a mighty tarag, the huge cave tiger of the Stone Age. At my sides were my revolvers. My captors had not taken them from me, because they did not yet realize their nature. Doubtless they thought them some strange manner of war-club, and as those who are condemned to the arena are permitted weapons of defense, they let me keep them.

The girl they had armed with a javelin. A brass pin would have been almost as effective against the ferocious monster they had loosed upon her.

The tarag stood for a moment looking about him — first up at the vast audience and then about the arena. He did not seem to see me at all, but his eyes fell presently upon the girl. A hideous roar broke from his titanic lungs — a roar which ended in a long-drawn scream that is more human than the death-cry of a tortured woman — more human but more awesome. I could scarce restrain a shudder.

Slowly the beast turned and moved toward the girl. Then it was that I came to myself and to a realization of my duty. Quickly and as noiselessly as possible I ran down the arena in pursuit of the grim creature. As I ran I drew one of my pitifully futile weapons. Ah! Could I but have had my lost express-gun in my hands at that moment! A single well-placed shot would have crumbled even this great monster. The best I could hope to accomplish was to divert the thing from the girl to myself and then to place as many bullets as possible in it before it reached and mauled me into insensibility and death.

There is a certain unwritten law of the arena that vouchsafes freedom and immunity to the victor, be he beast or human being — both of whom, by the way, are all the same to the Mahar. That is, they were accustomed to look upon man as a lower animal before Perry and

I broke through the Pellucidarian crust, but I imagine that they were beginning to alter their views a trifle and to realize that in the gilak — their word for human being — they had a highly organized, reasoning being to contend with.

Be that as it may, the chances were that the tarag alone would profit by the law of the arena. A few more of his long strides, a prodigious leap, and he would be upon the girl. I raised a revolver and fired. The bullet struck him in the left hind leg. It couldn't have damaged him much; but the report of the shot brought him around, facing me.

I think the snarling visage of a huge, enraged, saber-toothed tiger is one of the most terrible sights in the world. Especially if he be snarling at you and there be nothing between the two of you but bare sand.

Even as he faced me a little cry from the girl carried my eyes beyond the brute to her face. Hers was fastened upon me with an expression of incredulity that baffles description. There was both hope and horror in them, too.

“Dian!” I cried. “My Heavens, Dian!”

I saw her lips form the name David, as with raised javelin she rushed forward upon the tarag. She was a tigress then — a primitive savage female defending her loved one. Before she could reach the beast with her puny weapon, I fired again at the point where the tarag's neck met his left shoulder. If I could get a bullet through there it might reach his heart. The bullet didn't reach his heart, but it stopped him for an instant.

It was then that a strange thing happened. I heard a great hissing from the stands occupied by the Mahars, and as I glanced toward them I saw three mighty thipdars — the winged dragons that guard the queen, or, as Perry calls them, pterodactyls — rise swiftly from their rocks and dart lightning-like, toward the center of the arena. They are

huge, powerful reptiles. One of them, with the advantage which his wings might give him, would easily be a match for a cave bear or a tarag.

These three, to my consternation, swooped down upon the tarag as he was gathering himself for a final charge upon me. They buried their talons in his back and lifted him bodily from the arena as if he had been a chicken in the clutches of a hawk.

What could it mean?

I was baffled for an explanation; but with the tarag gone I lost no time in hastening to Dian's side. With a little cry of delight she threw herself into my arms. So lost were we in the ecstasy of reunion that neither of us — to this day — can tell what became of the tarag.

The first thing we were aware of was the presence of a body of Sagoths about us. Gruffly they commanded us to follow them. They led us from the arena and back through the streets of Phutra to the audience chamber in which I had been tried and sentenced. Here we found ourselves facing the same cold, cruel tribunal.

Again a Sagoth acted as interpreter. He explained that our lives had been spared because at the last moment Tu-al-sa had returned to Phutra, and seeing me in the arena had prevailed upon the queen to spare my life.

"Who is Tu-al-sa?" I asked.

"A Mahar whose last male ancestor was — ages ago — the last of the male rulers among the Mahars," he replied.

"Why should she wish to have my life spared?"

He shrugged his shoulders and then repeated my question to the Mahar spokesman. When the latter had explained in the strange sign-language that passes for speech between the Mahars and their fighting men the Sagoth turned again to me:

“For a long time you had Tu-al-sa in your power,” he explained. “You might easily have killed her or abandoned her in a strange world — but you did neither. You did not harm her, and you brought her back with you to Pellucidar and set her free to return to Phutra. This is your reward.”

Now I understood. The Mahar who had been my involuntary companion upon my return to the outer world was Tu-al-sa. This was the first time that I had learned the lady’s name. I thanked fate that I had not left her upon the sands of the Sahara — or put a bullet in her, as I had been tempted to do. I was surprised to discover that gratitude was a characteristic of the dominant race of Pellucidar. I could never think of them as aught but cold-blooded, brainless reptiles, though Perry had devoted much time in explaining to me that owing to a strange freak of evolution among all the genera of the inner world, this species of the reptilia had advanced to a position quite analogous to that which man holds upon the outer crust.

He had often told me that there was every reason to believe from their writings, which he had learned to read while we were incarcerated in Phutra, that they were a just race, and that in certain branches of science and arts they were quite well advanced, especially in genetics and metaphysics, engineering and architecture.

While it had always been difficult for me to look upon these things as other than slimy, winged crocodiles — which, by the way, they do not at all resemble — I was now forced to a realization of the fact that I was in the hands of enlightened creatures — for justice and gratitude are certain hallmarks of rationality and culture.

But what they purposed for us further was of most imminent interest to me. They might save us from the tarag and yet not free us. They looked upon us yet, to some extent, I knew, as creatures of a

lower order, and so as we are unable to place ourselves in the position of the brutes we enslave — thinking that they are happier in bondage than in the free fulfillment of the purposes for which nature intended them — the Mahars, too, might consider our welfare better conserved in captivity than among the dangers of the savage freedom we craved. Naturally, I was next impelled to inquire their further intent.

To my question, put through the Sagoth interpreter, I received the reply that having spared my life they considered that Tu-al-sa's debt of gratitude was canceled. They still had against me, however, the crime of which I had been guilty — the unforgivable crime of stealing the great secret. They, therefore, intended holding Dian and me prisoners until the manuscript was returned to them.

They would, they said, send an escort of Sagoths with me to fetch the precious document from its hiding-place, keeping Dian at Phutra as a hostage and releasing us both the moment that the document was safely restored to their queen.

There was no doubt but that they had the upper hand. However, there was so much more at stake than the liberty or even the lives of Dian and myself, that I did not deem it expedient to accept their offer without giving the matter careful thought.

Without the great secret this maleless race must eventually become extinct. For ages they had fertilized their eggs by an artificial process, the secret of which lay hidden in the little cave of a far-off valley where Dian and I had spent our honeymoon. I was none too sure that I could find the valley again, nor that I cared to. So long as the powerful reptilian race of Pellucidar continued to propagate, just so long would the position of man within the inner world be jeopardized. There could not be two dominant races.

I said as much to Dian.

“You used to tell me,” she replied, “of the wonderful things you could accomplish with the inventions of your own world. Now you have returned with all that is necessary to place this great power in the hands of the men of Pellucidar.

“You told me of great engines of destruction which would cast a bursting ball of metal among our enemies, killing hundreds of them at one time.

“You told me of mighty fortresses of stone which a thousand men armed with big and little engines such as these could hold forever against a million Sagoths.

“You told me of great canoes which moved across the water without paddles, and which spat death from holes in their sides.

“All these may now belong to the men of Pellucidar. Why should we fear the Mahars?

“Let them breed! Let their numbers increase by thousands. They will be helpless before the power of the Emperor of Pellucidar.

“But if you remain a prisoner in Phutra, what may we accomplish?

“What could the men of Pellucidar do without you to lead them?

“They would fight among themselves, and while they fought the Mahars would fall upon them, and even though the Mahar race should die out, of what value would the emancipation of the human race be to them without the knowledge, which you alone may wield, to guide them toward the wonderful civilization of which you have told me so much that I long for its comforts and luxuries as I never before longed for anything.

“No, David; the Mahars cannot harm us if you are at liberty. Let them have their secret that you and I may return to our people, and lead them to the conquest of all Pellucidar.”

It was plain that Dian was ambitious, and that her ambition had

not dulled her reasoning faculties. She was right. Nothing could be gained by remaining bottled up in Phutra for the rest of our lives.

It was true that Perry might do much with the contents of the prospector, or iron mole, in which I had brought down the implements of outer-world civilization; but Perry was a man of peace. He could never weld the warring factions of the disrupted federation. He could never win new tribes to the empire. He would fiddle around manufacturing gun-powder and trying to improve upon it until some one blew him up with his own invention. He wasn't practical. He never would get anywhere without a balance-wheel — without some one to direct his energies.

Perry needed me and I needed him. If we were going to do anything for Pellucidar we must be free to do it together.

The outcome of it all was that I agreed to the Mahars' proposition. They promised that Dian would be well treated and protected from every indignity during my absence. So I set out with a hundred Sagoths in search of the little valley which I had stumbled upon by accident, and which I might and might not find again.

We traveled directly toward Sari. Stopping at the camp where I had been captured I recovered my express rifle, for which I was very thankful. I found it lying where I had left it when I had been overpowered in my sleep by the Sagoths who had captured me and slain my Mezop companions.

On the way I added materially to my map, an occupation which did not elicit from the Sagoths even a shadow of interest. I felt that the human race of Pellucidar had little to fear from these gorilla-men. They were fighters — that was all. We might even use them later ourselves in this same capacity. They had not sufficient brain power to constitute a menace to the advancement of the human race.

As we neared the spot where I hoped to find the little valley I became more and more confident of success. Every landmark was familiar to me, and I was sure now that I knew the exact location of the cave.

It was at about this time that I sighted a number of the half-naked warriors of the human race of Pellucidar. They were marching across our front. At sight of us they halted; that there would be a fight I could not doubt. These Sagoths would never permit an opportunity for the capture of slaves for their Mahar masters to escape them.

I saw that the men were armed with bows and arrows, long lances and swords, so I guessed that they must have been members of the federation, for only my people had been thus equipped. Before Perry and I came the men of Pellucidar had only the crudest weapons wherewith to slay one another.

The Sagoths, too, were evidently expecting battle. With savage shouts they rushed forward toward the human warriors.

Then a strange thing happened. The leader of the human beings stepped forward with upraised hands. The Sagoths ceased their warcries and advanced slowly to meet him. There was a long parley during which I could see that I was often the subject of their discourse. The Sagoths' leader pointed in the direction in which I had told him the valley lay. Evidently he was explaining the nature of our expedition to the leader of the warriors. It was all a puzzle to me.

What human being could be upon such excellent terms with the gorilla-men?

I couldn't imagine. I tried to get a good look at the fellow, but the Sagoths had left me in the rear with a guard when they had advanced to battle, and the distance was too great for me to recognize the features of any of the human beings.

Finally the parley was concluded and the men continued on their way while the Sagoths returned to where I stood with my guard. It was time for eating, so we stopped where we were and made our meal. The Sagoths didn't tell me who it was they had met, and I did not ask, though I must confess that I was quite curious.

They permitted me to sleep at this halt. Afterward we took up the last leg of our journey. I found the valley without difficulty and led my guard directly to the cave. At its mouth the Sagoths halted and I entered alone.

I noticed as I felt about the floor in the dim light that there was a pile of fresh-turned rubble there. Presently my hands came to the spot where the great secret had been buried. There was a cavity where I had carefully smoothed the earth over the hiding-place of the document — the manuscript was gone!

Frantically I searched the whole interior of the cave several times over, but without other result than a complete confirmation of my worst fears. Someone had been here ahead of me and stolen the great secret.

The one thing within Pellucidar which might free Dian and me was gone, nor was it likely that I should ever learn its whereabouts. If a Mahar had found it, which was quite improbable, the chances were that the dominant race would never divulge the fact that they had recovered the precious document. If a cave man had happened upon it he would have no conception of its meaning or value, and as a consequence it would be lost or destroyed in short order.

With bowed head and broken hopes I came out of the cave and told the Sagoth chieftain what I had discovered. It didn't mean much to the fellow, who doubtless had but little better idea of the contents

of the document I had been sent to fetch to his masters than would the cave man who in all probability had discovered it.

The Sagoth knew only that I had failed in my mission, so he took advantage of the fact to make the return journey to Phutra as disagreeable as possible. I did not rebel, though I had with me the means to destroy them all. I did not dare rebel because of the consequences to Dian. I intended demanding her release on the grounds that she was in no way guilty of the theft, and that my failure to recover the document had not lessened the value of the good faith I had had in offering to do so. The Mahars might keep me in slavery if they chose, but Dian should be returned safely to her people.

I was full of my scheme when we entered Phutra and I was conducted directly to the great audience-chamber. The Mahars listened to the report of the Sagoth chieftain, and so difficult is it to judge their emotions from their almost expressionless countenance, that I was at a loss to know how terrible might be their wrath as they learned that their great secret, upon which rested the fate of their race, might now be irretrievably lost.

Presently I could see that she who presided was communicating something to the Sagoth interpreter — doubtless something to be transmitted to me which might give me a forewarning of the fate which lay in store for me. One thing I had decided definitely: If they would not free Dian I should turn loose upon Phutra with my little arsenal. Alone I might even win to freedom, and if I could learn where Dian was imprisoned it would be worth the attempt to free her. My thoughts were interrupted by the interpreter.

“The mighty Mahars,” he said, “are unable to reconcile your statement that the document is lost with your action in sending it to them

by a special messenger. They wish to know if you have so soon forgotten the truth or if you are merely ignoring it.”

“I sent them no document,” I cried. “Ask them what they mean.”

“They say,” he went on after conversing with the Mahar for a moment, “that just before your return to Phutra, Hooja the Sly One came, bringing the great secret with him. He said that you had sent him ahead with it, asking him to deliver it and return to Sari where you would await him, bringing the girl with him.”

“Dian?” I gasped. “The Mahars have given over Dian into the keeping of Hooja.”

“Surely,” he replied. “What of it? She is only a gilak,” as you or I would say, “She is only a cow.”

6.

A PENDENT WORLD

The Mahars set me free as they had promised, but with strict injunctions never to approach Phutra or any other Mahar city. They also made it perfectly plain that they considered me a dangerous creature, and that having wiped the slate clean in so far as they were under obligations to me, they now considered me fair prey. Should I again fall into their hands, they intimated it would go ill with me.

They would not tell me in which direction Hooja had set forth with Dian, so I departed from Phutra, filled with bitterness against the Mahars, and rage toward the Sly One who had once again robbed me of my greatest treasure.

At first I was minded to go directly back to Anoroc; but upon second thought turned my face toward Sari, as I felt that somewhere in that direction Hooja would travel, his own country lying in that general direction.

Of my journey to Sari it is only necessary to say that it was fraught with the usual excitement and adventure, incident to all travel across the face of savage Pellucidar. The dangers, however, were greatly reduced through the medium of my armament. I often wondered how it had happened that I had ever survived the first ten years of my life within the inner world, when, naked and primitively armed, I had traversed great areas of her beast-ridden surface.

With the aid of my map, which I had kept with great care during my march with the Sagoths in search of the great secret, I arrived at Sari at last. As I topped the lofty plateau in whose rocky cliffs the

principal tribe of Sarians find their cave-homes, a great hue and cry arose from those who first discovered me.

Like wasps from their nests the hairy warriors poured from their caves. The bows with their poison-tipped arrows, which I had taught them to fashion and to use, were raised against me. Swords of hammered iron — another of my innovations — menaced me, as with lusty shouts the horde charged down.

It was a critical moment. Before I should be recognized I might be dead. It was evident that all semblance of intertribal relationship had ceased with my going, and that my people had reverted to their former savage, suspicious hatred of all strangers. My garb must have puzzled them, too, for never before of course had they seen a man clothed in khaki and puttees.

Leaning my express rifle against my body I raised both hands aloft. It was the peace-sign that is recognized everywhere upon the surface of Pellucidar. The charging warriors paused and surveyed me. I looked for my friend Ghak, the Hairy One, king of Sari, and presently I saw him coming from a distance. Ah, but it was good to see his mighty, hairy form once more! A friend was Ghak — a friend well worth the having; and it had been some time since I had seen a friend.

Shouldering his way through the throng of warriors, the mighty chieftain advanced toward me. There was an expression of puzzlement upon his fine features. He crossed the space between the warriors and myself, halting before me.

I did not speak. I did not even smile. I wanted to see if Ghak, my principal lieutenant, would recognize me. For some time he stood there looking me over carefully. His eyes took in my large pith helmet, my khaki jacket, and bandoleers of cartridges, the two revolvers swinging at my hips, the large rifle resting against my body. Still I stood with

my hands above my head. He examined my puttees and my strong tan shoes — a little the worse for wear now. Then he glanced up once more to my face. As his gaze rested there quite steadily for some moments I saw recognition tinged with awe creep across his countenance.

Presently without a word he took one of my hands in his and dropping to one knee raised my fingers to his lips. Perry had taught them this trick, nor ever did the most polished courtier of all the grand courts of Europe perform the little act of homage with greater grace and dignity.

Quickly I raised Ghak to his feet, clasping both his hands in mine. I think there must have been tears in my eyes then — I know I felt too full for words. The king of Sari turned toward his warriors.

“Our emperor has come back,” he announced. “Come hither and —”

But he got no further, for the shouts that broke from those savage throats would have drowned the voice of heaven itself. I had never guessed how much they thought of me. As they clustered around, almost fighting for the chance to kiss my hand, I saw again the vision of empire which I had thought faded forever.

With such as these I could conquer a world. With such as these I *would* conquer one! If the Sarians had remained loyal, so too would the Amozites be loyal still, and the Kalians, and the Suvians, and all the great tribes who had formed the federation that was to emancipate the human race of Pellucidar.

Perry was safe with the Mezops; I was safe with the Sarians; now if Dian were but safe with me the future would look bright indeed.

It did not take long to outline to Ghak all that had befallen me since I had departed from Pellucidar, and to get down to the business of

finding Dian, which to me at that moment was of even greater importance than the very empire itself.

When I told him that Hooja had stolen her, he stamped his foot in rage.

“It is always the Sly One!” he cried. “It was Hooja who caused the first trouble between you and the Beautiful One.

“It was Hooja who betrayed our trust, and all but caused our recapture by the Sagoths that time we escaped from Phutra.

“It was Hooja who tricked you and substituted a Mahar for Dian when you started upon your return journey to your own world.

“It was Hooja who schemed and lied until he had turned the kingdoms one against another and destroyed the federation.

“When we had him in our power we were foolish to let him live. Next time —”

Ghak did not need to finish his sentence.

“He has become a very powerful enemy now,” I replied. “That he is allied in some way with the Mahars is evidenced by the familiarity of his relations with the Sagoths who were accompanying me in search of the great secret, for it must have been Hooja whom I saw conversing with them just before we reached the valley. Doubtless they told him of our quest and he hastened on ahead of us, discovered the cave and stole the document. Well does he deserve his appellation of the Sly One.”

With Ghak and his head men I held a number of consultations. The upshot of them was a decision to combine our search for Dian with an attempt to rebuild the crumbled federation. To this end twenty warriors were despatched in pairs to ten of the leading kingdoms, with instructions to make every effort to discover the whereabouts of Hooja

and Dian, while prosecuting their missions to the chieftains to whom they were sent.

Ghak was to remain at home to receive the various delegations which we invited to come to Sari on the business of the federation. Four hundred warriors were started for Anoroc to fetch Perry and the contents of the prospector to the capitol of the empire, which was also the principal settlements of the Sarians.

At first it was intended that I remain at Sari, that I might be in readiness to hasten forth at the first report of the discovery of Dian; but I found the inaction in the face of my deep solicitude for the welfare of my mate so galling that scarce had the several units departed upon their missions before I, too, chafed to be actively engaged upon the search.

It was after my second sleep, subsequent to the departure of the warriors, as I recall that I at last went to Ghak with the admission that I could no longer support the intolerable longing to be personally upon the trail of my lost love.

Ghak tried to dissuade me, though I could tell that his heart was with me in my wish to be away and really doing something. It was while we were arguing upon the subject that a stranger, with hands above his head, entered the village. He was immediately surrounded by warriors and conducted to Ghak's presence.

The fellow was a typical cave man — squat, muscular, and hairy, and of a type I had not seen before. His features, like those of all the primeval men of Pellucidar, were regular and fine. His weapons consisted of a stone ax and knife and a heavy knobbed bludgeon of wood. His skin was very white.

“Who are you?” asked Ghak. “And whence come you?”

“I am Kolk, son of Goork, who is chief of the Thurians,” replied

the stranger. "From Thuria I have come in search of the land of Amoz, where dwells Dacor, the Strong One, who stole my sister, Canda, the Graceful One, to be his mate.

"We of Thuria had heard of a great chieftain who has bound together many tribes, and my father has sent me to Dacor to learn if there be truth in these stories, and if so to offer the services of Thuria to him whom we have heard called emperor."

"The stories are true," replied Ghak, "and here is the emperor of whom you have heard. You need travel no farther."

Kolk was delighted. He told us much of the wonderful resources of Thuria, the Land of Awful Shadow, and of his long journey in search of Amoz.

"And why," I asked, "does Goork, your father, desire to join his kingdom to the empire?"

"There are two reasons," replied the young man. "Forever have the Mahars, who dwell beyond the Lidi Plains which lie at the farther rim of the Land of Awful Shadow, taken heavy toll of our people, whom they either force into lifelong slavery or fatten for their feasts. We have heard that the great emperor makes successful war upon the Mahars, against whom we should be glad to fight.

"Recently has another reason come. Upon a great island which lies in the Sojar Az, but a short distance from our shores, a wicked man has collected a great band of outcast warriors of all tribes. Even are there many Sagoths among them, sent by the Mahars to aid the Wicked One.

"This band makes raids upon our villages, and it is constantly growing in size and strength, for the Mahars give liberty to any of their male prisoners who will promise to fight with this band against the enemies of the Mahars. It is the purpose of the Mahars thus to raise

a force of our own kind to combat the growth and menace of the new empire of which I have come to seek information. All this we learned from one of our own warriors who had pretended to sympathize with this band and had then escaped at the first opportunity.”

“Who could this man be,” I asked Ghak, “who leads so vile a movement against his own kind?”

“His name is Hooja,” spoke up Kolk, answering my question.

Ghak and I looked at each other. Relief was written upon his countenance and I know that it was beating strongly in my heart. At last we had discovered a tangible clue to the whereabouts of Hooja — and with the clue a guide!

But when I broached the subject to Kolk he demurred. He had come a long way, he explained, to see his sister and to confer with Dacor. Moreover, he had instructions from his father which he could not ignore lightly. But even so he would return with me and show me the way to the island of the Thurian shore if by doing so we might accomplish anything.

“But we cannot,” he urged. “Hooja is powerful. He has thousands of warriors. He has only to call upon his Mahar allies to receive a countless horde of Sagoths to do his bidding against his human enemies.

“Let us wait until you may gather an equal horde from the kingdoms of your empire. Then we may march against Hooja with some show of success.

“But first must you lure him to the mainland, for who among you knows how to construct the strange things that carry Hooja and his band back and forth across the water?”

“We are not island people. We do not go upon the water. We know nothing of such things.”

I couldn't persuade him to do more than direct me upon the way. I showed him my map, which now included a great area of country extending from Anoroc upon the east to Sari upon the west, and from the river south of the Mountains of the Clouds north to Amoz. As soon as I had explained it to him he drew a line with his finger, showing a sea-coast far to the west and south of Sari, and a great circle which he said marked the extent of the Land of Awful Shadow in which lay Thuria.

The shadow extended southeast of the coast out into the sea half-way to a large island, which he said was the seat of Hooja's traitorous government. The island itself lay in the light of the noonday sun. Northwest of the coast and embracing a part of Thuria lay the Lidi Plains, upon the northwestern verge of which was situated the Mahar city which took such heavy toll of the Thurians.

Thus were the unhappy people now between two fires, with Hooja upon one side and the Mahars upon the other. I did not wonder that they sent out an appeal for succor.

Though Ghak and Kolk both attempted to dissuade me, I was determined to set out at once, nor did I delay longer than to make a copy of my map to be given to Perry that he might add to his that which I had set down since we parted. I left a letter for him as well, in which among other things I advanced the theory that the Sojar Az, or Great Sea, which Kolk mentioned as stretching eastward from Thuria, might indeed be the same mighty ocean as that which, swinging around the southern end of a continent, ran northward along the shore opposite Phutra, mingling its waters with the huge gulf upon which lay Sari, Amoz, and Greenwich.

Against this possibility I urged him to hasten the building of a fleet

of small sailing-vessels, which we might utilize should I find it impossible to entice Hooja's horde to the mainland.

I told Ghak what I had written, and suggested that as soon as he could he should make new treaties with the various kingdoms of the empire, collect an army and march toward Thuria — this of course against the possibility of my detention through some cause or other.

Kolk gave me a sign to his father — a lidi, or beast of burden, crudely scratched upon a bit of bone, and beneath the lidi a man and a flower; all very rudely done perhaps, but none the less effective as I well knew from my long years among the primitive men of Pellucidar.

The lidi is the tribal beast of the Thurians; the man and the flower in the combination in which they appeared bore a double significance, as they constituted not only a message to the effect that the bearer came in peace, but were also Kolk's signature.

And so, armed with my credentials and my small arsenal, I set out alone upon my quest for the dearest girl in this world or yours.

Kolk gave me explicit directions, though with my map I do not believe that I could have gone wrong. As a matter of fact I did not need the map at all, since the principal landmark of the first half of my journey, a gigantic mountain peak, was plainly visible from Sari, though a good hundred miles away.

At the southern base of this mountain a river rose and ran in a westerly direction, finally turning south and emptying into the Sojar Az some forty miles northeast of Thuria. All that I had to do was follow this river to the sea and then follow the coast to Thuria.

Two hundred and forty miles of wild mountain and primeval jungle, of untracked plain, of nameless rivers, of deadly swamps and savage forests lay ahead of me, yet never had I been more eager for an

adventure than now, for never had more depended upon haste and success.

I do not know how long a time that journey required, and only half did I appreciate the varied wonders that each new march unfolded before me, for my mind and heart were filled with but a single image — that of a perfect girl whose great, dark eyes looked bravely forth from a frame of raven hair.

It was not until I had passed the high peak and found the river that my eyes first discovered the pendent world, the tiny satellite which hangs low over the surface of Pellucidar casting its perpetual shadow always upon the same spot — the area that is known here as the Land of Awful Shadow, in which dwells the tribe of Thuria.

From the distance and the elevation of the highlands where I stood the Pellucidarian noonday moon showed half in sunshine and half in shadow, while directly beneath it was plainly visible the round dark spot upon the surface of Pellucidar where the sun has never shone. From where I stood the moon appeared to hang so low above the ground as almost to touch it; but later I was to learn that it floats a mile above the surface — which seems indeed quite close for a moon.

Following the river downward I soon lost sight of the tiny planet as I entered the mazes of a lofty forest. Nor did I catch another glimpse of it for some time — several marches at least. However, when the river led me to the sea, or rather just before it reached the sea, of a sudden the sky became overcast and the size and luxuriance of the vegetation diminished as by magic — as if an omnipotent hand had drawn a line upon the earth, and said:

“Upon this side shall the trees and the shrubs, the grasses and the flowers, riot in profusion of rich colors, gigantic size and bewildering

abundance; and upon that side shall they be dwarfed and pale and scant.”

Instantly I looked above, for clouds are so uncommon in the skies of Pellucidar — they are practically unknown except above the mightiest mountain ranges — that it had given me something of a start to discover the sun obliterated. But I was not long in coming to a realization of the cause of the shadow.

Above me hung another world. I could see its mountains and valleys, oceans, lakes, and rivers, its broad, grassy plains and dense forests. But too great was the distance and too deep the shadow of its underside for me to distinguish any movement as of animal life.

Instantly a great curiosity was awakened within me. The questions which the sight of this planet, so tantalizingly close, raised in my mind were numerous and unanswerable.

Was it inhabited?

If so, by what manner and form of creature?

Were its people as relatively diminutive as their little world, or were they as disproportionately huge as the lesser attraction of gravity upon the surface of their globe would permit of their being?

As I watched it, I saw that it was revolving upon an axis that lay parallel to the surface of Pellucidar, so that during each revolution its entire surface was once exposed to the world below and once bathed in the heat of the great sun above. The little world had that which Pellucidar could not have — a day and night, and — greatest of boons to one outer-earthly born — time.

Here I saw a chance to give time to Pellucidar, using this mighty clock, revolving perpetually in the heavens, to record the passage of the hours for the earth below. Here should be located an observatory, from which might be flashed by wireless to every corner of the empire the

correct time once each day. That this time would be easily measured I had no doubt, since so plain were the landmarks upon the under surface of the satellite that it would be but necessary to erect a simple instrument and mark the instant of passage of a given landmark across the instrument.

But then was not the time for dreaming; I must devote my mind to the purpose of my journey. So I hastened onward beneath the great shadow. As I advanced I could not but note the changing nature of the vegetation and the paling of its hues.

The river led me a short distance within the shadow before it emptied into the Sojar Az. Then I continued in a southerly direction along the coast toward the village of Thuria, where I hoped to find Goork and deliver to him my credentials.

I had progressed no great distance from the mouth of the river when I discerned, lying some distance at sea, a great island. This I assumed to be the stronghold of Hooja, nor did I doubt that upon it even now was Dian.

The way was most difficult, since shortly after leaving the river I encountered lofty cliffs split by numerous long, narrow fiords, each of which necessitated a considerable detour. As the crow flies it is about twenty miles from the mouth of the river to Thuria, but before I had covered half of it I was fagged. There was no familiar fruit or vegetable growing upon the rocky soil of the cliff-tops, and I would have fared ill for food had not a hare broken cover almost beneath my nose.

I carried bow and arrows to conserve my ammunition-supply, but so quick was the little animal that I had no time to draw and fit a shaft. In fact my dinner was a hundred yards away and going like the proverbial bat when I dropped my six-shooter on it. It was a pretty shot

and when coupled with a good dinner made me quite contented with myself.

After eating I lay down and slept. When I awoke I was scarcely so self-satisfied, for I had not more than opened my eyes before I became aware of the presence, barely a hundred yards from me, of a pack of some twenty huge wolf-dogs — the things which Perry insisted upon calling hyaenodons — and almost simultaneously I discovered that while I slept my revolvers, rifle, bow, arrows, and knife had been stolen from me.

And the wolf-dog pack was preparing to rush me.

7.

FROM PLIGHT TO PLIGHT

I have never been much of a runner; I hate running. But if ever a sprinter broke into smithereens all world's records it was I that day when I fled before those hideous beasts along the narrow spit of rocky cliff between two narrow fiords toward the Sojar Az. Just as I reached the verge of the cliff the foremost of the brutes was upon me. He leaped and closed his massive jaws upon my shoulder.

The momentum of his flying body, added to that of my own, carried the two of us over the cliff. It was a hideous fall. The cliff was almost perpendicular. At its foot broke the sea against a solid wall of rock.

We struck the cliff-face once in our descent and then plunged into the salt sea. With the impact with the water the hyaenodon released his hold upon my shoulder.

As I came sputtering to the surface I looked about for some tiny foot- or hand-hold where I might cling for a moment of rest and recuperation. The cliff itself offered me nothing, so I swam toward the mouth of the fiord.

At the far end I could see that erosion from above had washed down sufficient rubble to form a narrow ribbon of beach. Toward this I swam with all my strength. Not once did I look behind me, since every unnecessary movement in swimming detracts so much from one's endurance speed. Not until I had drawn myself safely out upon the beach did I turn my eyes back toward the sea for the hyaenodon.

He was swimming slowly and apparently painfully toward the beach upon where I stood.

I watched him for a long time, wondering, why it was that such a doglike animal was not a better swimmer. As he neared me I realized that he was weakening rapidly. I had gathered a handful of stones to be ready for his assault when he landed, but in a moment I let them fall from my hands. It was evident that the brute either was no swimmer or else was severely injured, for by now he was making practically no headway. Indeed, it was with quite apparent difficulty that he kept his nose above the surface of the sea.

He was not more than fifty yards from shore when he went under. I watched the spot where he had disappeared, and in a moment I saw his head reappear. The look of dumb misery in his eyes struck a chord in my breast, for I love dogs. I forgot that he was a vicious, primordial wolf-thing — a man-eater, a scourge, and a terror. I saw only the sad eyes that looked like the eyes of Raja, my dead collie of the outer world.

I did not stop to weigh and consider. In other words, I did not stop to think, which I believe must be the way of men who do things — in contradistinction to those who think much and do nothing. Instead, I leaped back into the water and swam out toward the drowning beast. At first he showed his teeth at my approach, but just before I reached him he went under for the second time, so that I had to dive to get him.

I grabbed him by the scruff of the neck, and though he weighed as much as a Shetland pony, I managed to drag him to shore and well up upon the beach. Here I found that one of his forelegs was broken — the crash against the cliff-face must have done it.

By this time all the fight was out of him, so that when I had gathered a few tiny branches from some of the stunted trees that grew

in the crevices of the cliff, and returned to him he permitted me to set his broken leg and bind it in splints. I had to tear part of my shirt into bits to obtain a bandage, but at last the job was done. Then I sat stroking the savage head and talking to the beast in the man-dog talk with which you are familiar, if you ever owned and loved a dog.

When he is well, I thought, he probably will turn upon me and attempt to devour me, and against that eventuality I gathered together a pile of rocks and set to work to fashion a stone-knife. We were bottled up at the head of the fiord as completely as if we had been behind prison bars. Before us spread the Sojar Az, and elsewhere about us rose unscalable cliffs.

Fortunately a little rivulet trickled down the side of the rocky wall, giving us ample supply of fresh water — some of which I kept constantly beside the hyaenodon in a huge, bowl-shaped shell, of which there were countless numbers among the rubble of the beach.

For food we subsisted upon shellfish and an occasional bird that I succeeded in knocking over with a rock, for long practice as a pitcher on prep-school and varsity nines had made me an excellent shot with a hand-thrown missile.

It was not long before the hyaenodon's leg was sufficiently mended to permit him to rise and hobble about on three legs. I shall never forget with what intent interest I watched his first attempt. Close at my hand lay my pile of rocks. Slowly the beast came to his three good feet. He stretched himself, lowered his head, and lapped water from the drinking-shell at his side, turned and looked at me, and then hobbled off toward the cliffs.

Thrice he traversed the entire extent of our prison, seeking, I imagine, a loop-hole for escape, but finding none he returned in my

direction. Slowly he came quite close to me, sniffed at my shoes, my puttees, my hands, and then limped off a few feet and lay down again.

Now that he was able to get around, I was a little uncertain as to the wisdom of my impulsive mercy.

How could I sleep with that ferocious thing prowling about the narrow confines of our prison?

Should I close my eyes it might be to open them again to the feel of those mighty jaws at my throat. To say the least, I was uncomfortable.

I have had too much experience with dumb animals to bank very strongly on any sense of gratitude which may be attributed to them by inexperienced sentimentalists. I believe that some animals love their masters, but I doubt very much if their affection is the outcome of gratitude — a characteristic that is so rare as to be only occasionally traceable in the seemingly unselfish acts of man himself.

But finally I was forced to sleep. Tired nature would be put off no longer. I simply fell asleep, willy nilly, as I sat looking out to sea. I had been very uncomfortable since my ducking in the ocean, for though I could see the sunlight on the water half-way toward the island and upon the island itself, no ray of it fell upon us. We were well within the Land of Awful Shadow. A perpetual half-warmth pervaded the atmosphere, but clothing was slow in drying, and so from loss of sleep and great physical discomfort, I at last gave way to nature's demands and sank into profound slumber.

When I awoke it was with a start, for a heavy body was upon me. My first thought was that the hyaenodon had at last attacked me, but as my eyes opened and I struggled to rise, I saw that a man was astride me and three others bending close above him.

I am no weakling — and never have been. My experience in the hard life of the inner world has turned my thews to steel. Even such

giants as Ghak the Hairy One have praised my strength; but to it is added another quality which they lack — science.

The man upon me held me down awkwardly, leaving me many openings — one of which I was not slow in taking advantage of, so that almost before the fellow knew that I was awake I was upon my feet with my arms over his shoulders and about his waist and had hurled him heavily over my head to the hard rubble of the beach, where he lay quite still.

In the instant that I arose I had seen the hyaenodon lying asleep beside a boulder a few yards away. So nearly was he the color of the rock that he was scarcely discernible. Evidently the newcomers had not seen him.

I had not more than freed myself from one of my antagonists before the other three were upon me. They did not work silently now, but charged me with savage cries — a mistake upon their part. The fact that they did not draw their weapons against me convinced me that they desired to take me alive; but I fought as desperately as if death loomed immediate and sure.

The battle was short, for scarce had their first wild whoop reverberated through the rocky fiord, and they had closed upon me, than a hairy mass of demoniacal rage hurtled among us.

It was the hyaenodon!

In an instant he had pulled down one of the men, and with a single shake, terrier-like, had broken his neck. Then he was upon another. In their efforts to vanquish the wolf-dog the savages forgot all about me, thus giving me an instant in which to snatch a knife from the loin-string of him who had first fallen and account for another of them. Almost simultaneously the hyaenodon pulled down the remaining enemy, crushing his skull with a single bite of those fearsome jaws.

The battle was over — unless the beast considered me fair prey, too. I waited, ready for him with knife and bludgeon — also filched from a dead foeman; but he paid no attention to me, falling to work instead to devour one of the corpses.

The beast had been handicapped but little by his splinted leg; but having eaten he lay down and commenced to gnaw at the bandage. I was sitting some little distance away devouring shellfish, of which, by the way, I was becoming exceedingly tired.

Presently, the hyaenodon arose and came toward me. I did not move. He stopped in front of me and deliberately raised his bandaged leg and pawed my knee. His act was as intelligible as words — he wished the bandage removed.

I took the great paw in one hand and with the other hand untied and unwound the bandage, removed the splints and felt of the injured member. As far as I could judge the bone was completely knit. The joint was stiff; when I bent it a little the brute winced — but he neither growled nor tried to pull away. Very slowly and gently I rubbed the joint and applied pressure to it for a few moments.

Then I set it down upon the ground. The hyaenodon walked around me a few times, and then lay down at my side, his body touching mine. I laid my hand upon his head. He did not move. Slowly, I scratched about his ears and neck and down beneath the fierce jaws. The only sign he gave was to raise his chin a trifle that I might better caress him.

That was enough! From that moment I have never again felt suspicion of Raja, as I immediately named him. Somehow all sense of loneliness vanished, too — I had a dog! I had never guessed precisely what it was that was lacking to life in Pellucidar, but now I knew it was the total absence of domestic animals.

Man here had not yet reached the point where he might take the time from slaughter and escaping slaughter to make friends with any of the brute creation. I must qualify this statement a trifle and say that this was true of those tribes with which I was most familiar. The Thurians do domesticate the colossal lidi, traversing the great Lidi Plains upon the backs of these grotesque and stupendous monsters, and possibly there may also be other, far-distant peoples within the great world, who have tamed others of the wild things of jungle, plain or mountain.

The Thurians practice agriculture in a crude sort of way. It is my opinion that this is one of the earliest steps from savagery to civilization. The taming of wild beasts and their domestication follows.

Perry argues that wild dogs were first domesticated for hunting purposes; but I do not agree with him. I believe that if their domestication were not purely the result of an accident, as, for example, my taming of the hyaenodon, it came about through the desire of tribes who had previously domesticated flocks and herds to have some strong, ferocious beast to guard their roaming property. However, I lean rather more strongly to the theory of accident.

As I sat there upon the beach of the little fiord eating my unpalatable shell-fish, I commenced to wonder how it had been that the four savages had been able to reach me, though I had been unable to escape from my natural prison. I glanced about in all directions, searching for an explanation. At last my eyes fell upon the bow of a small dugout protruding scarce a foot from behind a large boulder lying half in the water at the edge of the beach.

At my discovery I leaped to my feet so suddenly that it brought Raja, growling and bristling, upon all fours in an instant. For the moment I had forgotten him. But his savage rumbling did not cause me any uneasiness. He glanced quickly about in all directions as if

searching for the cause of my excitement. Then, as I walked rapidly down toward the dugout, he slunk silently after me.

The dugout was similar in many respects to those which I had seen in use by the Mezops. In it were four paddles. I was much delighted, as it promptly offered me the escape I had been craving.

I pushed it out into water that would float it, stepped in and called to Raja to enter. At first he did not seem to understand what I wished of him, but after I had paddled out a few yards he plunged through the surf and swam after me. When he had come alongside I grasped the scruff of his neck, and after a considerable struggle, in which I several times came near to overturning the canoe, I managed to drag him aboard, where he shook himself vigorously and squatted down before me.

After emerging from the fiord, I paddled southward along the coast, where presently the lofty cliffs gave way to lower and more level country. It was here somewhere that I should come upon the principal village of the Thurians. When, after a time, I saw in the distance what I took to be huts in a clearing near the shore, I drew quickly into land, for though I had been furnished credentials by Kolk, I was not sufficiently familiar with the tribal characteristics of these people to know whether I should receive a friendly welcome or not; and in case I should not, I wanted to be sure of having a canoe hidden safely away so that I might undertake the trip to the island, in any event — provided, of course, that I escaped the Thurians should they prove belligerent.

At the point where I landed the shore was quite low. A forest of pale, scrubby ferns ran down almost to the beach. Here I dragged up the dugout, hiding it well within the vegetation, and with some loose

rocks built a cairn upon the beach to mark my cache. Then I turned my steps toward the Thurian village.

As I proceeded I began to speculate upon the possible actions of Raja when we should enter the presence of other men than myself. The brute was padding softly at my side, his sensitive nose constantly atwitch and his fierce eyes moving restlessly from side to side — nothing would ever take Raja unawares!

The more I thought upon the matter the greater became my perturbation. I did not want Raja to attack any of the people upon whose friendship I so greatly depended, nor did I want him injured or slain by them.

I wondered if Raja would stand for a leash. His head as he paced beside me was level with my hip. I laid my hand upon it caressingly. As I did so he turned and looked up into my face, his jaws parting and his red tongue lolling as you have seen your own dog's beneath a love pat.

“Just been waiting all your life to be tamed and loved, haven't you, old man?” I asked. “You're nothing but a good pup, and the man who put the hyaeno in your name ought to be sued for libel.”

Raja bared his mighty fangs with upcurled, snarling lips and licked my hand.

“You're grinning, you old fraud, you!” I cried. “If you're not, I'll eat you. I'll bet a doughnut you're nothing but some kid's poor old Fido, masquerading around as a real, live man-eater.”

Raja whined. And so we walked on together toward Thuria — I talking to the beast at my side, and he seeming to enjoy my company no less than I enjoyed his. If you don't think it's lonesome wandering all by yourself through savage, unknown Pellucidar, why, just try it, and you will not wonder that I was glad of the company of this first

dog — this living replica of the fierce and now extinct hyaenodon of the outer crust that hunted in savage packs the great elk across the snows of southern France, in the days when the mastodon roamed at will over the broad continent of which the British Isles were then a part, and perchance left his footprints and his bones in the sands of Atlantis as well.

Thus I dreamed as we moved on toward Thuria. My dreaming was rudely shattered by a savage growl from Raja. I looked down at him. He had stopped in his tracks as one turned to stone. A thin ridge of stiff hair bristled along the entire length of his spine. His yellow green eyes were fastened upon the scrubby jungle at our right.

I fastened my fingers in the bristles at his neck and turned my eyes in the direction that his pointed. At first I saw nothing. Then a slight movement of the bushes riveted my attention. I thought it must be some wild beast, and was glad of the primitive weapons I had taken from the bodies of the warriors who had attacked me.

Presently I distinguished two eyes peering at us from the vegetation. I took a step in their direction, and as I did so a youth arose and fled precipitately in the direction we had been going. Raja struggled to be after him, but I held tightly to his neck, an act which he did not seem to relish, for he turned on me with bared fangs.

I determined that now was as good a time as any to discover just how deep was Raja's affection for me. One of us could be master, and logically I was the one. He growled at me. I cuffed him sharply across the nose. He looked at me for a moment in surprised bewilderment, and then he growled again. I made another feint at him, expecting that it would bring him at my throat; but instead he winced and crouched down.

Raja was subdued!

I stooped and patted him. Then I took a piece of the rope that constituted a part of my equipment and made a leash for him.

Thus we resumed our journey toward Thuria. The youth who had seen us was evidently of the Thurians. That he had lost no time in racing homeward and spreading the word of my coming was evidenced when we had come within sight of the clearing, and the village — the first real village, by the way, that I had ever seen constructed by human Pellucidarians. There was a rude rectangle walled with logs and boulders, in which were a hundred or more thatched huts of similar construction. There was no gate. Ladders that could be removed by night led over the palisade.

Before the village were assembled a great concourse of warriors. Inside I could see the heads of women and children peering over the top of the wall; and also, farther back, the long necks of lidi, topped by their tiny heads. Lidi, by the way, is both the singular and plural form of the noun that describes the huge beasts of burden of the Thurians. They are enormous quadrupeds, eighty or a hundred feet long, with very small heads perched at the top of very long, slender necks. Their heads are quite forty feet from the ground. Their gait is slow and deliberate, but so enormous are their strides that, as a matter of fact, they cover the ground quite rapidly.

Perry has told me that they are almost identical with the fossilized remains of the diplodocus of the outer crust's Jurassic age. I have to take his word for it — and I guess you will, unless you know more of such matters than I.

As we came in sight of the warriors the men set up a great jabbering. Their eyes were wide in astonishment — only, I presume, because of my strange garmenture, but as well from the fact that I came

in company with a jalok, which is the Pellucidarian name of the hyaenodon.

Raja tugged at his leash, growling and showing his long white fangs. He would have liked nothing better than to be at the throats of the whole aggregation; but I held him in with the leash, though it took all my strength to do it. My free hand I held above my head, palm out, in token of the peacefulness of my mission.

In the foreground I saw the youth who had discovered us, and I could tell from the way he carried himself that he was quite overcome by his own importance. The warriors about him were all fine looking fellows, though shorter and squatter than the Sarians or the Amozites. Their color, too, was a bit lighter, owing, no doubt, to the fact that much of their lives is spent within the shadow of the world that hangs forever above their country.

A little in advance of the others was a bearded fellow tricked out in many ornaments. I didn't need to ask to know that he was the chieftain — doubtless Goork, father of Kolk. Now to him I addressed myself.

"I am David," I said, "Emperor of the Federated Kingdoms of Pellucidar. Doubtless you have heard of me?"

He nodded his head affirmatively.

"I come from Sari," I continued, "where I just met Kolk, the son of Goork. I bear a token from Kolk to his father, which will prove that I am a friend."

Again the warrior nodded. "I am Goork," he said. "Where is the token?"

"Here," I replied, and fished into the game-bag where I had placed it.

Goork and his people waited in silence. My hand searched the inside of the bag.

It was empty!

The token had been stolen with my arms!

8.

CAPTIVE

When Goork and his people saw that I had no token they commenced to taunt me.

“You do not come from Kolk, but from the Sly One!” they cried. “He has sent you from the island to spy upon us. Go away, or we will set upon you and kill you.”

I explained that all my belongings had been stolen from me, and that the robber must have taken the token too; but they didn’t believe me. As proof that I was one of Hooja’s people, they pointed to my weapons, which they said were ornamented like those of the island clan. Further, they said that no good man went in company with a jalok — and that by this line of reasoning I certainly was a bad man.

I saw that they were not naturally a war-like tribe, for they preferred that I leave in peace rather than force them to attack me, whereas the Sarians would have killed a suspicious stranger first and inquired into his purposes later.

I think Raja sensed their antagonism, for he kept tugging at his leash and growling ominously. They were a bit in awe of him, and kept at a safe distance. It was evident that they could not comprehend why it was that this savage brute did not turn upon me and rend me.

I wasted a long time there trying to persuade Goork to accept me at my own valuation, but he was too canny. The best he would do was to give us food, which he did, and direct me as to the safest portion of the island upon which to attempt a landing, though even as he told

me I am sure that he thought my request for information but a blind to deceive him as to my true knowledge of the insular stronghold.

At last I turned away from them — rather disheartened, for I had hoped to be able to enlist a considerable force of them in an attempt to rush Hooja's horde and rescue Dian. Back along the beach toward the hidden canoe we made our way.

By the time we came to the cairn I was dog-tired. Throwing myself upon the sand I soon slept, and with Raja stretched out beside me I felt a far greater security than I had enjoyed for a long time.

I awoke much refreshed to find Raja's eyes glued upon me. The moment I opened mine he rose, stretched himself, and without a backward glance plunged into the jungle. For several minutes I could hear him crashing through the brush. Then all was silent.

I wondered if he had left me to return to his fierce pack. A feeling of loneliness overwhelmed me. With a sigh I turned to the work of dragging the canoe down to the sea. As I entered the jungle where the dugout lay a hare darted from beneath the boat's side, and a well-aimed cast of my javelin brought it down. I was hungry — I had not realized it before — so I sat upon the edge of the canoe and devoured my repast. The last remnants gone, I again busied myself with preparations for my expedition to the island.

I did not know for certain that Dian was there; but I surmised as much. Nor could I guess what obstacles might confront me in an effort to rescue her. For a time I loitered about after I had the canoe at the water's edge, hoping against hope that Raja would return; but he did not, so I shoved the awkward craft through the surf and leaped into it.

I was still a little downcast by the desertion of my new-found friend, though I tried to assure myself that it was nothing but what I might have expected.

The savage brute had served me well in the short time that we had been together, and had repaid his debt of gratitude to me, since he had saved my life, or at least my liberty, no less certainly than I had saved his life when he was injured and drowning.

The trip across the water to the island was uneventful. I was mighty glad to be in the sunshine again when I passed out of the shadow of the dead world about half-way between the mainland and the island. The hot rays of the noonday sun did a great deal toward raising my spirits, and dispelling the mental gloom in which I had been shrouded almost continually since entering the Land of Awful Shadow. There is nothing more dispiriting to me than absence of sunshine.

I had paddled to the southwestern point, which Goork said he believed to be the least frequented portion of the island, as he had never seen boats put off from there. I found a shallow reef running far out into the sea and rather precipitous cliffs running almost to the surf. It was a nasty place to land, and I realized now why it was not used by the natives; but at last I managed, after a good wetting, to beach my canoe and scale the cliffs.

The country beyond them appeared more open and park-like than I had anticipated, since from the mainland the entire coast that is visible seems densely clothed with tropical jungle. This jungle, as I could see from the vantage-point of the cliff-top, formed but a relatively narrow strip between the sea and the more open forest and meadow of the interior. Farther back there was a range of low but apparently very rocky hills, and here and there all about were visible flat-topped masses of rock — small mountains, in fact — which reminded me of pictures I had seen of landscapes in New Mexico. Altogether, the country was very much broken and very beautiful. From where I stood I counted no less than a dozen streams winding down from among the

table-buttres and emptying into a pretty river which flowed away in a northeasterly direction toward the opposite end of the island.

As I let my eyes roam over the scene I suddenly became aware of figures moving upon the flat top of a far-distant butte. Whether they were beast or human, though, I could not make out; but at least they were alive, so I determined to prosecute my search for Hooja's stronghold in the general direction of this butte.

To descend to the valley required no great effort. As I swung along through the lush grass and the fragrant flowers, my cudgel swinging in my hand and my javelin looped across my shoulders with its aurochs-hide strap, I felt equal to any emergency, ready for any danger.

I had covered quite a little distance, and I was passing through a strip of wood which lay at the foot of one of the flat-topped hills, when I became conscious of the sensation of being watched. My life within Pellucidar has rather quickened my senses of sight, hearing, and smell, and, too, certain primitive intuitive or instinctive qualities that seem blunted in civilized man. But, though I was positive that eyes were upon me, I could see no sign of any living thing within the wood other than the many, gay-plumaged birds and little monkeys which filled the trees with life, color, and action.

To you it may seem that my conviction was the result of an overwrought imagination, or to the actual reality of the prying eyes of the little monkeys or the curious ones of the birds; but there is a difference which I cannot explain between the sensation of casual observation and studied espionage. A sheep might gaze at you without transmitting a warning through your subjective mind, because you are in no danger from a sheep. But let a tiger gaze fixedly at you from ambush, and unless your primitive instincts are completely calloused you will

presently commence to glance furtively about and be filled with vague, unreasoning terror.

Thus was it with me then. I grasped my cudgel more firmly and unslung my javelin, carrying it in my left hand. I peered to left and right, but I saw nothing. Then, all quite suddenly, there fell about my neck and shoulders, around my arms and body, a number of pliant fiber ropes.

In a jiffy I was trussed up as neatly as you might wish. One of the nooses dropped to my ankles and was jerked up with a suddenness that brought me to my face upon the ground. Then something heavy and hairy sprang upon my back. I fought to draw my knife, but hairy hands grasped my wrists and, dragging them behind my back, bound them securely.

Next my feet were bound. Then I was turned over upon my back to look up into the faces of my captors.

And what faces! Imagine if you can a cross between a sheep and a gorilla, and you will have some conception of the physiognomy of the creature that bent close above me, and of those of the half-dozen others that clustered about. There was the facial length and great eyes of the sheep, and the bull-neck and hideous fangs of the gorilla. The bodies and limbs were both man and gorilla-like.

As they bent over me they conversed in a mono-syllabic tongue that was perfectly intelligible to me. It was something of a simplified language that had no need for aught but nouns and verbs, but such words as it included were the same as those of the human beings of Pellucidar. It was amplified by many gestures which filled in the speech-gaps.

I asked them what they intended doing with me; but, like our own North American Indians when questioned by a white man, they pre-

tended not to understand me. One of them swung me to his shoulder as lightly as if I had been a shoat. He was a huge creature, as were his fellows, standing fully seven feet upon his short legs and weighing considerably more than a quarter of a ton.

Two went ahead of my bearer and three behind. In this order we cut to the right through the forest to the foot of the hill where precipitous cliffs appeared to bar our farther progress in this direction. But my escort never paused. Like ants upon a wall, they scaled that seemingly unscalable barrier, clinging, Heaven knows how, to its ragged perpendicular face. During most of the short journey to the summit I must admit that my hair stood on end. Presently, however, we topped the thing and stood upon the level mesa which crowned it.

Immediately from all about, out of burrows and rough, rocky lairs, poured a perfect torrent of beasts similar to my captors. They clustered about, jabbering at my guards and attempting to get their hands upon me, whether from curiosity or a desire to do me bodily harm I did not know, since my escort with bared fangs and heavy blows kept them off.

Across the mesa we went, to stop at last before a large pile of rocks in which an opening appeared. Here my guards set me upon my feet and called out a word which sounded like “Gr-gr-gr!” and which I later learned was the name of their king.

Presently there emerged from the cavernous depths of the lair a monstrous creature, scarred from a hundred battles, almost hairless and with an empty socket where one eye had been. The other eye, sheeplike in its mildness, gave the most startling appearance to the beast, which but for that single timid orb was the most fearsome thing that one could imagine.

I had encountered the black, hairless, long-tailed ape — things of

the mainland — the creatures which Perry thought might constitute the link between the higher orders of apes and man — but these brute-men of Gr-gr-gr seemed to set that theory back to zero, for there was less similarity between the black ape-men and these creatures than there was between the latter and man, while both had many human attributes, some of which were better developed in one species and some in the other.

The black apes were hairless and built thatched huts in their arboreal retreats; they kept domesticated dogs and ruminants, in which respect they were farther advanced than the human beings of Pellucidar; but they appeared to have only a meager language, and sported long, apelike tails.

On the other hand, Gr-gr-gr's people were, for the most part, quite hairy, but they were tailless and had a language similar to that of the human race of Pellucidar; nor were they arboreal. Their skins, where skin showed, were white.

From the foregoing facts and others that I have noted during my long life within Pellucidar, which is now passing through an age analogous to some pre-glacial age of the outer crust, I am constrained to the belief that evolution is not so much a gradual transition from one form to another as it is an accident of breeding, either by crossing or the hazards of birth. In other words, it is my belief that the first man was a freak of nature — nor would one have to draw over-strongly upon his credulity to be convinced that Gr-gr-gr and his tribe were also freaks.

The great man-brute seated himself upon a flat rock — his throne, I imagine — just before the entrance to his lair. With elbows on knees and chin in palms he regarded me intently through his lone sheep-eye while one of my captors told of my taking.

When all had been related Gr-gr-gr questioned me. I shall not attempt to quote these people in their own abbreviated tongue — you would have even greater difficulty in interpreting them than did I. Instead, I shall put the words into their mouths which will carry to you the ideas which they intended to convey.

“You are an enemy,” was Gr-gr-gr’s initial declaration. “You belong to the tribe of Hooja.”

Ah! So they knew Hooja and he was their enemy! Good!

“I am an enemy of Hooja,” I replied. “He has stolen my mate and I have come here to take her away from him and punish Hooja.”

“How could you do that alone?”

“I do not know,” I answered, “but I should have tried had you not captured me. What do you intend to do with me?”

“You shall work for us.”

“You will not kill me?” I asked.

“We do not kill except in self-defense,” he replied; “self-defense and punishment. Those who would kill us and those who do wrong we kill. If we knew you were one of Hooja’s people we might kill you, for all Hooja’s people are bad people; but you say you are an enemy of Hooja. You may not speak the truth, but until we learn that you have lied we shall not kill you. You shall work.”

“If you hate Hooja,” I suggested, “why not let me, who hate him, too, go and punish him?”

For some time Gr-gr-gr sat in thought. Then he raised his head and addressed my guard.

“Take him to his work,” he ordered.

His tone was final. As if to emphasize it he turned and entered his burrow. My guard conducted me farther into the mesa, where we came

presently to a tiny depression or valley, at one end of which gushed a warm spring.

The view that opened before me was the most surprising that I have ever seen. In the hollow, which must have covered several hundred acres, were numerous fields of growing things, and working all about with crude implements or with no implements at all other than their bare hands were many of the brute-men engaged in the first agriculture that I had seen within Pellucidar.

They put me to work cultivating in a patch of melons.

I never was a farmer nor particularly keen for this sort of work, and I am free to confess that time never had dragged so heavily as it did during the hour or the year I spent there at that work. How long it really was I do not know, of course; but it was all too long.

The creatures that worked about me were quite simple and friendly. One of them proved to be a son of Gr-gr-gr. He had broken some minor tribal law, and was working out his sentence in the fields. He told me that his tribe had lived upon this hilltop always, and that there were other tribes like them dwelling upon other hilltops. They had no wars and had always lived in peace and harmony, menaced only by the larger carnivora of the island, until my kind had come under a creature called Hooja, and attacked and killed them when they chanced to descend from their natural fortresses to visit their fellows upon other lofty mesas.

Now they were afraid; but some day they would go in a body and fall upon Hooja and his people and slay them all. I explained to him that I was Hooja's enemy, and asked, when they were ready to go, that I be allowed to go with them, or, better still, that they let me go ahead and learn all that I could about the village where Hooja dwelt so that they might attack it with the best chance of success.

Gr-gr-gr's son seemed much impressed by my suggestion. He said that when he was through in the fields he would speak to his father about the matter.

Some time after this Gr-gr-gr came through the fields where we were, and his son spoke to him upon the subject, but the old gentleman was evidently in anything but a good humor, for he cuffed the youngster and, turning upon me, informed me that he was convinced that I had lied to him, and that I was one of Hooja's people.

"Wherefore," he concluded, "we shall slay you as soon as the melons are cultivated. Hasten, therefore."

And hasten I did. I hastened to cultivate the weeds which grew among the melon-vines. Where there had been one sickly weed before, I nourished two healthy ones. When I found a particularly promising variety of weed growing elsewhere than among my melons, I forthwith dug it up and transplanted it among my charges.

My masters did not seem to realize my perfidy. They saw me always laboring diligently in the melon-patch, and as time enters not into the reckoning of Pellucidarians — even of human beings and much less of brutes and half brutes — I might have lived on indefinitely through this subterfuge had not that occurred which took me out of the melon-patch for good and all.

9.

HOOJA'S CUTTHROATS APPEAR

I had built a little shelter of rocks and brush where I might crawl in and sleep out of the perpetual light and heat of the noonday sun. When I was tired or hungry I retired to my humble cot.

My masters never interposed the slightest objection. As a matter of fact, they were very good to me, nor did I see aught while I was among them to indicate that they are ever else than a simple, kindly folk when left to themselves. Their awe-inspiring size, terrific strength, mighty fighting-fangs, and hideous appearance are but the attributes necessary to the successful waging of their constant battle for survival, and well do they employ them when the need arises. The only flesh they eat is that of herbivorous animals and birds. When they hunt the mighty thag, the prehistoric bos of the outer crust, a single male, with his fiber rope, will catch and kill the greatest of the bulls.

Well, as I was about to say, I had this little shelter at the edge of my melon-patch. Here I was resting from my labors on a certain occasion when I heard a great hubbub in the village, which lay about a quarter of a mile away.

Presently a male came racing toward the field, shouting excitedly. As he approached I came from my shelter to learn what all the commotion might be about, for the monotony of my existence in the melon-patch must have fostered that trait of my curiosity from which it had always been my secret boast I am peculiarly free.

The other workers also ran forward to meet the messenger, who quickly unburdened himself of his information, and as quickly turned

and scampered back toward the village. When running these beast-men often go upon all fours. Thus they leap over obstacles that would slow up a human being, and upon the level attain a speed that would make a thoroughbred look to his laurels. The result in this instance was that before I had more than assimilated the gist of the word which had been brought to the fields, I was alone, watching my co-workers speeding villageward.

I was alone! It was the first time since my capture that no beast-man had been within sight of me. I was alone! And all my captors were in the village at the opposite edge of the mesa repelling an attack of Hooja's horde!

It seemed from the messenger's tale that two of Gr-gr-gr's great males had been set upon by a half-dozen of Hooja's cutthroats while the former were peaceably returning from the thag hunt. The two had returned to the village unscratched, while but a single one of Hooja's half-dozen had escaped to report the outcome of the battle to their leader. Now Hooja was coming to punish Gr-gr-gr's people. With his large force, armed with the bows and arrows that Hooja had learned from me to make, with long lances and sharp knives, I feared that even the mighty strength of the beastmen could avail them but little.

At last had come the opportunity for which I waited! I was free to make for the far end of the mesa, find my way to the valley below, and while the two forces were engaged in their struggle, continue my search for Hooja's village, which I had learned from the beast-men lay farther on down the river that I had been following when taken prisoner.

As I turned to make for the mesa's rim the sounds of battle came plainly to my ears — the hoarse shouts of men mingled with the half-beastly roars and growls of the brute-folk.

Did I take advantage of my opportunity?

I did not. Instead, lured by the din of strife and by the desire to deliver a stroke, however feeble, against hated Hooja, I wheeled and ran directly toward the village.

When I reached the edge of the plateau such a scene met my astonished gaze as never before had startled it, for the unique battle-methods of the half-brutes were rather the most remarkable I had ever witnessed. Along the very edge of the cliff-top stood a thin line of mighty males — the best rope-throwers of the tribe. A few feet behind these the rest of the males, with the exception of about twenty, formed a second line. Still farther in the rear all the women and young children were clustered into a single group under the protection of the remaining twenty fighting males and all the old males.

But it was the work of the first two lines that interested me. The forces of Hooja — a great horde of savage Sagoths and primeval cave men — were working their way up the steep cliff-face, their agility but slightly less than that of my captors who had clambered so nimbly aloft — even he who was burdened by my weight.

As the attackers came on they paused occasionally wherever a projection gave them sufficient foothold and launched arrows and spears at the defenders above them. During the entire battle both sides hurled taunts and insults at one another — the human beings naturally excelling the brutes in the coarseness and vileness of their vilification and invective.

The “firing-line” of the brute-men wielded no weapon other than their long fiber nooses. When a foeman came within range of them a noose would settle unerringly about him and he would be dragged, fighting and yelling, to the cliff-top, unless, as occasionally occurred, he was quick enough to draw his knife and cut the rope above him,

in which event he usually plunged downward to a no less certain death than that which awaited him above.

Those who were hauled up within reach of the powerful clutches of the defenders had the nooses snatched from them and were catapulted back through the first line to the second, where they were seized and killed by the simple expedient of a single powerful closing of mighty fangs upon the backs of their necks.

But the arrows of the invaders were taking a much heavier toll than the nooses of the defenders and I foresaw that it was but a matter of time before Hooja's forces must conquer unless the brute-men changed their tactics, or the cave men tired of the battle.

Gr-gr-gr was standing in the center of the first line. All about him were boulders and large fragments of broken rock. I approached him and without a word toppled a large mass of rock over the edge of the cliff. It fell directly upon the head of an archer, crushing him to instant death and carrying his mangled corpse with it to the bottom of the declivity, and on its way brushing three more of the attackers into the hereafter.

Gr-gr-gr turned toward me in surprise. For an instant he appeared to doubt the sincerity of my motives. I felt that perhaps my time had come when he reached for me with one of his giant paws; but I dodged him, and running a few paces to the right hurled down another missile. It, too, did its allotted work of destruction. Then I picked up smaller fragments and with all the control and accuracy for which I had earned justly deserved fame in my collegiate days I rained down a hail of death upon those beneath me.

Gr-gr-gr was coming toward me again. I pointed to the litter of rubble upon the cliff-top.

“Hurl these down upon the enemy!” I cried to him. “Tell your warriors to throw rocks down upon them!”

At my words the others of the first line, who had been interested spectators of my tactics, seized upon great boulders or bits of rock, whichever came first to their hands, and, without, waiting for a command from Gr-gr-gr, deluged the terrified cave men with a perfect avalanche of stone. In less than no time the cliff-face was stripped of enemies and the village of Gr-gr-gr was saved.

Gr-gr-gr was standing beside me when the last of the cave men disappeared in rapid flight down the valley. He was looking at me intently.

“Those were your people,” he said. “Why did you kill them?”

“They were not my people,” I returned. “I have told you that before, but you would not believe me. Will you believe me now when I tell you that I hate Hooja and his tribe as much as you do? Will you believe me when I tell you that I wish to be the friend of Gr-gr-gr?”

For some time he stood there beside me, scratching his head. Evidently it was no less difficult for him to readjust his preconceived conclusions than it is for most human beings; but finally the idea percolated — which it might never have done had he been a man, or I might qualify that statement by saying had he been some men. Finally he spoke.

“Gilak,” he said, “you have made Gr-gr-gr ashamed. He would have killed you. How can he reward you?”

“Set me free,” I replied quickly.

“You are free,” he said. “You may go down when you wish, or you may stay with us. If you go you may always return. We are your friends.”

Naturally, I elected to go. I explained all over again to Gr-gr-gr

the nature of my mission. He listened attentively; after I had done he offered to send some of his people with me to guide me to Hooja's village. I was not slow in accepting his offer.

First, however, we must eat. The hunters upon whom Hooja's men had fallen had brought back the meat of a great thag. There would be a feast to commemorate the victory — a feast and dancing.

I had never witnessed a tribal function of the brute-folk, though I had often heard strange sounds coming from the village, where I had not been allowed since my capture. Now I took part in one of their orgies.

It will live forever in my memory. The combination of bestiality and humanity was oftentimes pathetic, and again grotesque or horrible. Beneath the glaring noonday sun, in the sweltering heat of the mesa-top, the huge, hairy creatures leaped in a great circle. They coiled and threw their fiber-ropes; they hurled taunts and insults at an imaginary foe; they fell upon the carcass of the thag and literally tore it to pieces; and they ceased only when, gorged, they could no longer move.

I had to wait until the processes of digestion had released my escort from its torpor. Some had eaten until their abdomens were so distended that I thought they must burst, for beside the thag there had been fully a hundred antelopes of various sizes and varied degrees of decomposition, which they had unearthed from burial beneath the floors of their lairs to grace the banquet-board.

But at last we were started — six great males and myself. Gr-gr-gr had returned my weapons to me, and at last I was once more upon my oft-interrupted way toward my goal. Whether I should find Dian at the end of my journey or no I could not even surmise; but I was none the less impatient to be off, for if only the worst lay in store for me I wished to know even the worst at once.

I could scarce believe that my proud mate would still be alive in the power of Hooja; but time upon Pellucidar is so strange a thing that I realized that to her or to him only a few minutes might have elapsed since his subtle trickery had enabled him to steal her away from Phutra. Or she might have found the means either to repel his advances or escape him.

As we descended the cliff we disturbed a great pack of large hyena-like beasts — *hyaena spelaeus*, Perry calls them — who were busy among the corpses of the cave men fallen in battle. The ugly creatures were far from the cowardly things that our own hyenas are reputed to be; they stood their ground with bared fangs as we approached them. But, as I was later to learn, so formidable are the brute-folk that there are few even of the larger carnivora that will not make way for them when they go abroad. So the hyenas moved a little from our line of march, closing in again upon their feasts when we had passed.

We made our way steadily down the rim of the beautiful river which flows the length of the island, coming at last to a wood rather denser than any that I had before encountered in this country. Well within this forest my escort halted.

“There!” they said, and pointed ahead. “We are to go no farther.”

Thus having guided me to my destination they left me. Ahead of me, through the trees, I could see what appeared to be the foot of a steep hill. Toward this I made my way. The forest ran to the very base of a cliff, in the face of which were the mouths of many caves. They appeared untenanted; but I decided to watch for a while before venturing farther. A large tree, densely foliaged, offered a splendid vantage-point from which to spy upon the cliff, so I clambered among its branches where, securely hidden, I could watch what transpired about the caves.

It seemed that I had scarcely settled myself in a comfortable position before a party of cave men emerged from one of the smaller apertures in the cliff-face, about fifty feet from the base. They descended into the forest and disappeared. Soon after came several others from the same cave, and after them, at a short interval, a score of women and children, who came into the wood to gather fruit. There were several warriors with them — a guard, I presume.

After this came other parties, and two or three groups who passed out of the forest and up the cliff-face to enter the same cave. I could not understand it. All who came out had emerged from the same cave. All who returned reentered it. No other cave gave evidence of habitation, and no cave but one of extraordinary size could have accommodated all the people whom I had seen pass in and out of its mouth.

For a long time I sat and watched the coming and going of great numbers of the cave-folk. Not once did one leave the cliff by any other opening save that from which I had seen the first party come, nor did any reenter the cliff through another aperture.

What a cave it must be, I thought, that houses an entire tribe! But dissatisfied of the truth of my surmise, I climbed higher among the branches of the tree that I might get a better view of other portions of the cliff. High above the ground I reached a point whence I could see the summit of the hill. Evidently it was a flat-topped butte similar to that on which dwelt the tribe of Gr-gr-gr.

As I sat gazing at it a figure appeared at the very edge. It was that of a young girl in whose hair was a gorgeous bloom plucked from some flowering tree of the forest. I had seen her pass beneath me but a short while before and enter the small cave that had swallowed all of the returning tribesmen.

The mystery was solved. The cave was but the mouth of a passage

that led upward through the cliff to the summit of the hill. It served merely as an avenue from their lofty citadel to the valley below.

No sooner had the truth flashed upon me than the realization came that I must seek some other means of reaching the village, for to pass unobserved through this well-traveled thoroughfare would be impossible. At the moment there was no one in sight below me, so I slid quickly from my arboreal watch-tower to the ground and moved rapidly away to the right with the intention of circling the hill if necessary until I had found an un-watched spot where I might have some slight chance of scaling the heights and reaching the top unseen.

I kept close to the edge of the forest, in the very midst of which the hill seemed to rise. Though I carefully scanned the cliff as I traversed its base, I saw no sign of any other entrance than that to which my guides had led me.

After some little time the roar of the sea broke upon my ears. Shortly after I came upon the broad ocean which breaks at this point at the very foot of the great hill where Hooja had found safe refuge for himself and his villains.

I was just about to clamber along the jagged rocks which lie at the base of the cliff next to the sea, in search of some foothold to the top, when I chanced to see a canoe rounding the end of the island. I threw myself down behind a large boulder where I could watch the dugout and its occupants without myself being seen.

They paddled toward me for a while and then, about a hundred yards from me, they turned straight in toward the foot of the frowning cliffs. From where I was it seemed that they were bent upon self-destruction, since the roar of the breakers beating upon the perpendicular rock-face appeared to offer only death to any one who might venture within their relentless clutch.

A mass of rock would soon hide them from my view; but so keen was the excitement of the instant that I could not refrain from crawling forward to a point whence I could watch the dashing of the small craft to pieces on the jagged rocks that loomed before her, although I risked discovery from above to accomplish my design.

When I had reached a point where I could again see the dugout, I was just in time to see it glide unharmed between two needle-pointed sentinels of granite and float quietly upon the unruffled bosom of a tiny cove.

Again I crouched behind a boulder to observe what would next transpire; nor did I have long to wait. The dugout, which contained but two men, was drawn close to the rocky wall. A fiber rope, one end of which was tied to the boat, was made fast about a projection of the cliff face.

Then the two men commenced the ascent of the almost perpendicular wall toward the summit several hundred feet above. I looked on in amazement, for, splendid climbers though the cave men of Pellucidar are, I never before had seen so remarkable a feat performed. Upwardly they moved without a pause, to disappear at last over the summit.

When I felt reasonably sure that they had gone for a while at least I crawled from my hiding-place and at the risk of a broken neck leaped and scrambled to the spot where their canoe was moored.

If they had scaled that cliff I could, and if I couldn't I should die in the attempt.

But when I turned to the accomplishment of the task I found it easier than I had imagined it would be, since I immediately discovered that shallow hand and foot-holds had been scooped in the cliff's rocky face, forming a crude ladder from the base to the summit.

At last I reached the top, and very glad I was, too. Cautiously I raised my head until my eyes were above the cliff-crest. Before me spread a rough mesa, liberally sprinkled with large boulders. There was no village in sight nor any living creature.

I drew myself to level ground and stood erect. A few trees grew among the boulders. Very carefully I advanced from tree to tree and boulder to boulder toward the inland end of the mesa. I stopped often to listen and look cautiously about me in every direction.

How I wished that I had my revolvers and rifle! I would not have to worm my way like a scared cat toward Hooja's village, nor did I relish doing so now; but Dian's life might hinge upon the success of my venture, and so I could not afford to take chances. To have met suddenly with discovery and had a score or more of armed warriors upon me might have been very grand and heroic; but it would have immediately put an end to all my earthly activities, nor have accomplished aught in the service of Dian.

Well, I must have traveled nearly a mile across that mesa without seeing a sign of anyone, when all of a sudden, as I crept around the edge of a boulder, I ran plump into a man, down on all fours like myself, crawling toward me.

10.

THE RAID ON THE CAVE-PRISON

His head was turned over his shoulder as I first saw him — he was looking back toward the village. As I leaped for him his eyes fell upon me. Never in my life have I seen a more surprised mortal than this poor cave man. Before he could utter a single scream of warning or alarm I had my fingers on his throat and had dragged him behind the boulder, where I proceeded to sit upon him, while I figured out what I had best do with him.

He struggled a little at first, but finally lay still, and so I released the pressure of my fingers at his windpipe, for which I imagine he was quite thankful — I know that I should have been.

I hated to kill him in cold blood; but what else I was to do with him I could not see, for to turn him loose would have been merely to have the entire village aroused and down upon me in a moment. The fellow lay looking up at me with the surprise still deeply written on his countenance. At last, all of a sudden, a look of recognition entered his eyes.

“I have seen you before,” he said. “I saw you in the arena at the Mahars’ city of Phutra when the thipdars dragged the tarag from you and your mate. I never understood that. Afterward they put me in the arena with two warriors from Gombul.”

He smiled in recollection.

“It would have been the same had there been ten warriors from Gombul. I slew them, winning my freedom. Look!”

He half turned his left shoulder toward me, exhibiting the newly healed scar of the Mahars’ branded mark.

“Then,” he continued, “as I was returning to my people I met some of them fleeing. They told me that one called Hooja the Sly One had come and seized our village, putting our people into slavery. So I hurried hither to learn the truth, and, sure enough, here I found Hooja and his wicked men living in my village, and my father’s people but slaves among them.

“I was discovered and captured, but Hooja did not kill me. I am the chief’s son, and through me he hoped to win my father’s warriors back to the village to help him in a great war he says that he will soon commence.

“Among his prisoners is Dian the Beautiful One, whose brother, Dacor the Strong One, chief of Amoz, once saved my life when he came to Thuria to steal a mate. I helped him capture her, and we are good friends. So when I learned that Dian the Beautiful One was Hooja’s prisoner, I told him that I would not aid him if he harmed her.

“Recently one of Hooja’s warriors overheard me talking with another prisoner. We were planning to combine all the prisoners, seize weapons, and when most of Hooja’s warriors were away, slay the rest and retake our hilltop. Had we done so we could have held it, for there are only two entrances — the narrow tunnel at one end and the steep path up the cliffs at the other.

“But when Hooja heard what we had planned he was very angry, and ordered that I die. They bound me hand and foot and placed me in a cave until all the warriors should return to witness my death; but while they were away I heard someone calling me in a muffled voice which seemed to come from the wall of the cave. When I replied the voice, which was a woman’s, told me that she had overheard all that had passed between me and those who had brought me thither, and that she was Dacor’s sister and would find a way to help me.

“Presently a little hole appeared in the wall at the point from which the voice had come. After a time I saw a woman’s hand digging with a bit of stone. Dacor’s sister made a hole in the wall between the cave where I lay bound and that in which she had been confined, and soon she was by my side and had cut my bonds.

“We talked then, and I offered to make the attempt to take her away and back to the land of Sari, where she told me she would be able to learn the whereabouts of her mate. Just now I was going to the other end of the island to see if a boat lay there, and if the way was clear for our escape. Most of the boats are always away now, for a great many of Hooja’s men and nearly all the slaves are upon the Island of Trees, where Hooja is having many boats built to carry his warriors across the water to the mouth of a great river which he discovered while he was returning from Phutra — a vast river that empties into the sea there.”

The speaker pointed toward the northeast. “It is wide and smooth and slow-running almost to the land of Sari,” he added.

“And where is Dian the Beautiful One now?” I asked.

I had released my prisoner as soon as I found that he was Hooja’s enemy, and now the pair of us were squatting beside the boulder while he told his story.

“She returned to the cave where she had been imprisoned,” he replied, “and is awaiting me there.”

“There is no danger that Hooja will come while you are away?”

“Hooja is upon the Island of Trees,” he replied.

“Can you direct me to the cave so that I can find it alone?” I asked.

He said he could, and in the strange yet explicit fashion of the Pellucidarians he explained minutely how I might reach the cave where he had been imprisoned, and through the hole in its wall reach Dian.

I thought it best for but one of us to return, since two could accomplish but little more than one and would double the risk of discovery. In the meantime he could make his way to the sea and guard the boat, which I told him lay there at the foot of the cliff.

I told him to await us at the cliff-top, and if Dian came alone to do his best to get away with her and take her to Sari, as I thought it quite possible that, in case of detection and pursuit, it might be necessary for me to hold off Hooja's people while Dian made her way alone to where my new friend was to await her. I impressed upon him the fact that he might have to resort to trickery or even to force to get Dian to leave me; but I made him promise that he would sacrifice everything, even his life, in an attempt to rescue Dacor's sister.

Then we parted — he to take up his position where he could watch the boat and await Dian, I to crawl cautiously on toward the caves. I had no difficulty in following the directions given me by Juag, the name by which Dacor's friend said he was called. There was the leaning tree, my first point he told me to look for after rounding the boulder where we had met. After that I crawled to the balanced rock, a huge boulder resting upon a tiny base no larger than the palm of your hand.

From here I had my first view of the village of caves. A low bluff ran diagonally across one end of the mesa, and in the face of this bluff were the mouths of many caves. Zig-zag trails led up to them, and narrow ledges scooped from the face of the soft rock connected those upon the same level.

The cave in which Juag had been confined was at the extreme end of the cliff nearest me. By taking advantage of the bluff itself, I could approach within a few feet of the aperture without being visible from any other cave. There were few people about at the time; most of these

were congregated at the foot of the far end of the bluff, where they were so engrossed in excited conversation that I felt but little fear of detection. However I exercised the greatest care in approaching the cliff. After watching for a while until I caught an instant when every head was turned away from me, I darted, rabbitlike, into the cave.

Like many of the man-made caves of Pellucidar, this one consisted of three chambers, one behind another, and all unlit except for what sunlight filtered in through the external opening. The result was gradually increasing darkness as one passed into each succeeding chamber.

In the last of the three I could just distinguish objects, and that was all. As I was groping around the walls for the hole that should lead into the cave where Dian was imprisoned, I heard a man's voice quite close to me.

The speaker had evidently but just entered, for he spoke in a loud tone, demanding the whereabouts of one whom he had come in search of.

"Where are you, woman?" he cried. "Hooja has sent for you."

And then a woman's voice answered him:

"And what does Hooja want of me?"

The voice was Dian's. I groped in the direction of the sounds, feeling for the hole.

"He wishes you brought to the Island of Trees," replied the man; "for he is ready to take you as his mate."

"I will not go," said Dian. "I will die first."

"I am sent to bring you, and bring you I shall."

I could hear him crossing the cave toward her.

Frantically I clawed the wall of the cave in which I was in an effort to find the elusive aperture that would lead me to Dian's side.

I heard the sound of a scuffle in the next cave. Then my fingers sank into loose rock and earth in the side of the cave. In an instant I realized why I had been unable to find the opening while I had been lightly feeling the surface of the walls — Dian had blocked up the hole she had made lest it arouse suspicion and lead to an early discovery of Juag's escape.

Plunging my weight against the crumbling mass, I sent it crashing into the adjoining cavern. With it came I, David, Emperor of Pellucidar. I doubt if any other potentate in a world's history ever made a more un-dignified entrance. I landed head first on all fours, but I came quickly and was on my feet before the man in the dark guessed what had happened.

He saw me, though, when I arose and, sensing that no friend came thus precipitately, turned to meet me even as I charged him. I had my stone knife in my hand, and he had his. In the darkness of the cave there was little opportunity for a display of science, though even at that I venture to say that we fought a very pretty duel.

Before I came to Pellucidar I do not recall that I ever had seen a stone knife, and I am sure that I never fought with a knife of any description; but now I do not have to take my hat off to any of them when it comes to wielding that primitive yet wicked weapon.

I could just see Dian in the darkness, but I knew that she could not see my features or recognize me; and I enjoyed in anticipation, even while I was fighting for her life and mine, her dear joy when she should discover that it was I who was her deliverer.

My opponent was large, but he also was active and no mean knife-man. He caught me once fairly in the shoulder — I carry the scar yet, and shall carry it to the grave. And then he did a foolish thing, for as I leaped back to gain a second in which to calm the shock of the

wound he rushed after me and tried to clinch. He rather neglected his knife for the moment in his greater desire to get his hands on me. Seeing the opening, I swung my left fist fairly to the point of his jaw.

Down he went. Before ever he could scramble up again I was on him and had buried my knife in his heart. Then I stood up — and there was Dian facing me and peering at me through the dense gloom.

“You are not Juag!” she exclaimed. “Who are you?”

I took a step toward her, my arms outstretched.

“It is I, Dian,” I said. “It is David.”

At the sound of my voice she gave a little cry in which tears were mingled — a pathetic little cry that told me all without words how far hope had gone from her — and then she ran forward and threw herself in my arms. I covered her perfect lips and her beautiful face with kisses, and stroked her thick black hair, and told her again and again what she already knew — what she had known for years — that I loved her better than all else which two worlds had to offer. We couldn’t devote much time, though, to the happiness of love-making, for we were in the midst of enemies who might discover us at any moment.

I drew her into the adjoining cave. Thence we made our way to the mouth of the cave that had given me entrance to the cliff. Here I reconnoitered for a moment, and seeing the coast clear, ran swiftly forth with Dian at my side. We dodged around the cliff-end, then paused for an instant, listening. No sound reached our ears to indicate that any had seen us, and we moved cautiously onward along the way by which I had come.

As we went Dian told me that her captors had informed her how close I had come in search of her — even to the Land of Awful Shadow — and how one of Hooja’s men who knew me had discovered me asleep and robbed me of all my possessions. And then how Hooja

had sent four others to find me and take me prisoner. But these men, she said, had not yet returned, or at least she had not heard of their return.

“Nor will you ever,” I responded, “for they have gone to that place whence none ever returns.” I then related my adventure with these four.

We had come almost to the cliff-edge where Juag should be awaiting us when we saw two men walking rapidly toward the same spot from another direction. They did not see us, nor did they see Juag, whom I now discovered hiding behind a low bush close to the verge of the precipice which drops into the sea at this point. As quickly as possible, without exposing ourselves too much to the enemy, we hastened forward that we might reach Juag as quickly as they.

But they noticed him first and immediately charged him, for one of them had been his guard, and they had both been sent to search for him, his escape having been discovered between the time he left the cave and the time when I reached it. Evidently they had wasted precious moments looking for him in other portions of the mesa.

When I saw that the two of them were rushing him, I called out to attract their attention to the fact that they had more than a single man to cope with. They paused at the sound of my voice and looked about.

When they discovered Dian and me they exchanged a few words, and one of them continued toward Juag while the other turned upon us. As he came nearer I saw that he carried in his hand one of my six-shooters, but he was holding it by the barrel, evidently mistaking it for some sort of warclub or tomahawk.

I could scarce refrain a grin when I thought of the wasted possibilities of that deadly revolver in the hands of an untutored warrior of the stone age. Had he but reversed it and pulled the trigger he might

still be alive; maybe he is for all I know, since I did not kill him then. When he was about twenty feet from me I flung my javelin with a quick movement that I had learned from Ghak. He ducked to avoid it, and instead of receiving it in his heart, for which it was intended, he got it on the side of the head.

Down he went all in a heap. Then I glanced toward Juag. He was having a most exciting time. The fellow pitted against Juag was a veritable giant; he was hacking and hewing away at the poor slave with a villainous-looking knife that might have been designed for butchering mastodons. Step by step, he was forcing Juag back toward the edge of the cliff with a fiendish cunning that permitted his adversary no chance to side-step the terrible consequences of retreat in this direction. I saw quickly that in another moment Juag must deliberately hurl himself to death over the precipice or be pushed over by his foeman.

And as I saw Juag's predicament I saw, too, in the same instant, a way to relieve him. Leaping quickly to the side of the fellow I had just felled, I snatched up my fallen revolver. It was a desperate chance to take, and I realized it in the instant that I threw the gun up from my hip and pulled the trigger. There was no time to aim. Juag was upon the very brink of the chasm. His relentless foe was pushing him hard, beating at him furiously with the heavy knife.

And then the revolver spoke — loud and sharp. The giant threw his hands above his head, whirled about like a huge top, and lunged forward over the precipice.

And Juag?

He cast a single affrighted glance in my direction — never before, of course, had he heard the report of a firearm — and with a howl of dismay he, too, turned and plunged headforemost from sight. Horror-

struck, I hastened to the brink of the abyss just in time to see two splashes upon the surface of the little cove below.

For an instant I stood there watching with Dian at my side. Then, to my utter amazement, I saw Juag rise to the surface and swim strongly toward the boat.

The fellow had dived that incredible distance and come up unharmed!

I called to him to await us below, assuring him that he need have no fear of my weapon, since it would harm only my enemies. He shook his head and muttered something which I could not hear at so great a distance; but when I pushed him he promised to wait for us. At the same instant Dian caught my arm and pointed toward the village. My shot had brought a crowd of natives on the run toward us.

The fellow whom I had stunned with my javelin had regained consciousness and scrambled to his feet. He was now racing as fast as he could go back toward his people. It looked mighty dark for Dian and me with that ghastly descent between us and even the beginnings of liberty, and a horde of savage enemies advancing at a rapid run.

There was but one hope. That was to get Dian started for the bottom without delay. I took her in my arms just for an instant — I felt, somehow, that it might be for the last time. For the life of me I couldn't see how both of us could escape.

I asked her if she could make the descent alone — if she were not afraid. She smiled up at me bravely and shrugged her shoulders. She afraid! So beautiful is she that I am always having difficulty in remembering that she is a primitive, half-savage cave girl of the stone age, and often find myself mentally limiting her capacities to those of the effete and overcivilized beauties of the outer crust.

“And you?” she asked as she swung over the edge of the cliff.

“I shall follow you after I take a shot or two at our friends,” I replied. “I just want to give them a taste of this new medicine which is going to cure Pellucidar of all its ills. That will stop them long enough for me to join you. Now hurry, and tell Juag to be ready to shove off the moment I reach the boat, or the instant that it becomes apparent that I cannot reach it.

“You, Dian, must return to Sari if anything happens to me, that you may devote your life to carrying out with Perry the hopes and plans for Pellucidar that are so dear to my heart. Promise me, dear.”

She hated to promise to desert me, nor would she; only shaking her head and making no move to descend. The tribesmen were nearing us. Juag was shouting up to us from below. It was evident that he realized from my actions that I was attempting to persuade Dian to descend, and that grave danger threatened us from above.

“Dive!” he cried. “Dive!”

I looked at Dian and then down at the abyss below us. The cove appeared no larger than a saucer. How Juag ever had hit it I could not guess.

“Dive!” cried Juag. “It is the only way — there is no time to climb down.”

11.

ESCAPE

Dian glanced downward and shuddered. Her tribe were hill people — they were not accustomed to swimming other than in quiet rivers and placid lakelets. It was not the steep that appalled her. It was the ocean — vast, mysterious, terrible.

To dive into it from this great height was beyond her. I couldn't wonder, either. To have attempted it myself seemed too preposterous even for thought. Only one consideration could have prompted me to leap headforemost from that giddy height — suicide; or at least so I thought at the moment.

"Quick!" I urged Dian. "You cannot dive; but I can hold them until you reach safety."

"And you?" she asked once more. "Can you dive when they come too close? Otherwise you could not escape if you waited here until I reached the bottom."

I saw that she would not leave me unless she thought that I could make that frightful dive as we had seen Juag make it. I glanced once downward; then with a mental shrug I assured her that I would dive the moment that she reached the boat. Satisfied, she began the descent carefully, yet swiftly. I watched her for a moment, my heart in my mouth lest some slight mis-step or the slipping of a finger-hold should pitch her to a frightful death upon the rocks below.

Then I turned toward the advancing Hoojans — "Hoosiers," Perry dubbed them — even going so far as to christen this island where Hooja held sway Indiana; it is so marked now upon our maps. They

were coming on at a great rate. I raised my revolver, took deliberate aim at the foremost warrior, and pulled the trigger. With the bark of the gun the fellow lunged forward. His head doubled beneath him. He rolled over and over two or three times before he came to a stop, to lie very quietly in the thick grass among the brilliant wild flowers.

Those behind him halted. One of them hurled a javelin toward me, but it fell short — they were just beyond javelin-range. There were two armed with bows and arrows; these I kept my eyes on. All of them appeared awe-struck and frightened by the sound and effect of the firearm. They kept looking from the corpse to me and jabbering among themselves.

I took advantage of the lull in hostilities to throw a quick glance over the edge toward Dian. She was half-way down the cliff and progressing finely. Then I turned back toward the enemy. One of the bowmen was fitting an arrow to his bow. I raised my hand.

"Stop!" I cried. "Whoever shoots at me or advances toward me I shall kill as I killed him!"

I pointed at the dead man. The fellow lowered his bow. Again there was animated discussion. I could see that those who were not armed with bows were urging something upon the two who were.

At last the majority appeared to prevail, for simultaneously the two archers raised their weapons. At the same instant I fired at one of them, dropping him in his tracks. The other, however, launched his missile, but the report of my gun had given him such a start that the arrow flew wild above my head. A second after and he, too, was sprawled upon the sward with a round hole between his eyes. It had been a rather good shot.

I glanced over the edge again. Dian was almost at the bottom.

I could see Juag standing just beneath her with his hands upstretched to assist her.

A sullen roar from the warriors recalled my attention toward them. They stood shaking their fists at me and yelling insults. From the direction of the village I saw a single warrior coming to join them. He was a huge fellow, and when he strode among them I could tell by his bearing and their deference toward him that he was a chieftain. He listened to all they had to tell of the happenings of the last few minutes; then with a command and a roar he started for me with the whole pack at his heels. All they had needed had arrived — namely, a brave leader.

I had two unfired cartridges in the chambers of my gun. I let the big warrior have one of them, thinking that his death would stop them all. But I guess they were worked up to such a frenzy of rage by this time that nothing would have stopped them. At any rate, they only yelled the louder as he fell and increased their speed toward me. I dropped another with my remaining cartridge.

Then they were upon me — or almost. I thought of my promise to Dian — the awful abyss was behind me — a big devil with a huge bludgeon in front of me. I grasped my six-shooter by the barrel and hurled it squarely in his face with all my strength.

Then, without waiting to learn the effect of my throw, I wheeled, ran the few steps to the edge, and leaped as far out over that frightful chasm as I could. I know something of diving, and all that I know I put into that dive, which I was positive would be my last.

For a couple of hundred feet I fell in horizontal position. The momentum I gained was terrific. I could feel the air almost as a solid body, so swiftly I hurtled through it. Then my position gradually changed to the vertical, and with hands outstretched I slipped through

the air, cleaving it like a flying arrow. Just before I struck the water a perfect shower of javelins fell all about. My enemies had rushed to the brink and hurled their weapons after me. By a miracle I was untouched.

In the final instant I saw that I had cleared the rocks and was going to strike the water fairly. Then I was in and plumbing the depths. I suppose I didn't really go very far down, but it seemed to me that I should never stop. When at last I dared curve my hands upward and divert my progress toward the surface, I thought that I should explode for air before I ever saw the sun again except through a swirl of water. But at last my head popped above the waves, and I filled my lungs with air.

Before me was the boat, from which Juag and Dian were clambering. I couldn't understand why they were deserting it now, when we were about to set out for the mainland in it; but when I reached its side I understood. Two heavy javelins, missing Dian and Juag by but a hair's breadth, had sunk deep into the bottom of the dugout in a straight line with the grain of the wood, and split her almost in two from stem to stern. She was useless.

Juag was leaning over a near-by rock, his hand outstretched to aid me in clambering to his side; nor did I lose any time in availing myself of his proffered assistance. An occasional javelin was still dropping perilously close to us, so we hastened to draw as close as possible to the cliffside, where we were comparatively safe from the missiles.

Here we held a brief conference, in which it was decided that our only hope now lay in making for the opposite end of the island as quickly as we could, and utilizing the boat that I had hidden there, to continue our journey to the mainland.

Gathering up three of the least damaged javelins that had fallen

about us, we set out upon our journey, keeping well toward the south side of the island, which Juag said was less frequented by the Hoojans than the central portion where the river ran. I think that this ruse must have thrown our pursuers off our track, since we saw nothing of them nor heard any sound of pursuit during the greater portion of our march the length of the island.

But the way Juag had chosen was rough and roundabout, so that we consumed one or two more marches in covering the distance than if we had followed the river. This it was which proved our undoing.

Those who sought us must have sent a party up the river immediately after we escaped; for when we came at last onto the river-trail not far from our destination, there can be no doubt but that we were seen by Hoojans who were just ahead of us on the stream. The result was that as we were passing through a clump of bush a score of warriors leaped out upon us, and before we could scarce strike a blow in defense, had disarmed and bound us.

For a time thereafter I seemed to be entirely bereft of hope. I could see no ray of promise in the future — only immediate death for Juag and me, which didn't concern me much in the face of what lay in store for Dian.

Poor child! What an awful life she had led! From the moment that I had first seen her chained in the slave caravan of the Mahars until now, a prisoner of a no less cruel creature, I could recall but a few brief intervals of peace and quiet in her tempestuous existence. Before I had known her, Jubal the Ugly One had pursued her across a savage world to make her his mate. She had eluded him, and finally I had slain him; but terror and privations, and exposure to fierce beasts had haunted her footsteps during all her lonely flight from him. And when I had returned to the outer world the old trials had recommenced with

Hooja in Jubal's role. I could almost have wished for death to vouchsafe her that peace which fate seemed to deny her in this life.

I spoke to her on the subject, suggesting that we expire together.

"Do not fear, David," she replied. "I shall end my life before ever Hooja can harm me; but first I shall see that Hooja dies."

She drew from her breast a little leathern thong, to the end of which was fastened a tiny pouch.

"What have you there?" I asked.

"Do you recall that time you stepped upon the thing you call viper in your world?" she asked.

I nodded.

"The accident gave you the idea for the poisoned arrows with which we fitted the warriors of the empire," she continued. "And, too, it gave me an idea. For a long time I have carried a viper's fang in my bosom. It has given me strength to endure many dangers, for it has always assured me immunity from the ultimate insult. I am not ready to die yet. First let Hooja embrace the viper's fang."

So we did not die together, and I am glad now that we did not. It is always a foolish thing to contemplate suicide; for no matter how dark the future may appear today, tomorrow may hold for us that which will alter our whole life in an instant, revealing to us nothing but sunshine and happiness. So, for my part, I shall always wait for tomorrow.

In Pellucidar, where it is always today, the wait may not be so long, and so it proved for us. As we were passing a lofty, flat-topped hill through a park-like wood a perfect network of fiber ropes fell suddenly about our guard, enmeshing them. A moment later a horde of our friends, the hairy gorilla-men, with the mild eyes and long faces of sheep leaped among them.

It was a very interesting fight. I was sorry that my bonds prevented

me from taking part in it, but I urged on the brute-men with my voice, and cheered old Gr-gr-gr, their chief, each time that his mighty jaws crunched out the life of a Hoojan. When the battle was over we found that a few of our captors had escaped, but the majority of them lay dead about us. The gorilla-men paid no further attention to them. Gr-gr-gr turned to me.

“Gr-gr-gr and all his people are your friends,” he said. “One saw the warriors of the Sly One and followed them. He saw them capture you, and then he flew to the village as fast as he could go and told me all that he had seen. The rest you know. You did much for Gr-gr-gr and Gr-gr-gr’s people. We shall always do much for you.”

I thanked him; and when I had told him of our escape and our destination, he insisted on accompanying us to the sea with a great number of his fierce males. Nor were we at all loath to accept his escort. We found the canoe where I had hidden it, and bidding Gr-gr-gr and his warriors farewell, the three of us embarked for the mainland.

I questioned Juag upon the feasibility of attempting to cross to the mouth of the great river of which he had told me, and up which he said we might paddle almost to Sari; but he urged me not to attempt it, since we had but a single paddle and no water or food. I had to admit the wisdom of his advice, but the desire to explore this great waterway was strong upon me, arousing in me at last a determination to make the attempt after first gaining the mainland and rectifying our deficiencies.

We landed several miles north of Thuria in a little cove that seemed to offer protection from the heavier seas which sometimes run, even upon these usually pacific oceans of Pellucidar. Here I outlined to Dian and Juag the plans I had in mind. They were to fit the canoe with a small sail, the purposes of which I had to explain to them both — since neither had ever seen or heard of such a contrivance before.

Then they were to hunt for food which we could transport with us, and prepare a receptacle for water.

These two latter items were more in Juag's line, but he kept muttering about the sail and the wind for a long time. I could see that he was not even half convinced that any such ridiculous contraption could make a canoe move through the water.

We hunted near the coast for a while, but were not rewarded with any particular luck. Finally we decided to hide the canoe and strike inland in search of game. At Juag's suggestion we dug a hole in the sand at the upper edge of the beach and buried the craft, smoothing the surface over nicely and throwing aside the excess material we had excavated. Then we set out away from the sea. Traveling in Thuria is less arduous than under the midday sun which perpetually glares down on the rest of Pellucidar's surface; but it has its drawbacks, one of which is the depressing influence exerted by the everlasting shade of the Land of Awful Shadow.

The farther inland we went the darker it became, until we were moving at last through an endless twilight. The vegetation here was sparse and of a weird, colorless nature, though what did grow was wondrous in shape and form. Often we saw huge lidi, or beasts of burden, striding across the dim landscape, browsing upon the grotesque vegetation or drinking from the slow and sullen rivers that run down from the Lidi Plains to empty into the sea in Thuria.

What we sought was either a thag — a sort of gigantic elk — or one of the larger species of antelope, the flesh of either of which dries nicely in the sun. The bladder of the thag would make a fine water-bottle, and its skin, I figured, would be a good sail. We traveled a considerable distance inland, entirely crossing the Land of Awful Shadow and emerging at last upon that portion of the Lidi Plains which lies

in the pleasant sunlight. Above us the pendent world revolved upon its axis, filling me especially — and Dian to an almost equal state — with wonder and insatiable curiosity as to what strange forms of life existed among the hills and valleys and along the seas and rivers, which we could plainly see.

Before us stretched the horizonless expanses of vast Pellucidar, the Lidi Plains rolling up about us, while hanging high in the heavens to the northwest of us I thought I discerned the many towers which marked the entrances to the distant Mahar city, whose inhabitants preyed upon the Thurians.

Juag suggested that we travel to the northeast, where, he said, upon the verge of the plain we would find a wooded country in which game should be plentiful. Acting upon his advice, we came at last to a forest-jungle, through which wound innumerable game-paths. In the depths of this forbidding wood we came upon the fresh spoor of thag.

Shortly after, by careful stalking, we came within javelin-range of a small herd. Selecting a great bull, Juag and I hurled our weapons simultaneously, Dian reserving hers for an emergency. The beast staggered to his feet, bellowing. The rest of the herd was up and away in an instant, only the wounded bull remaining, with lowered head and roving eyes searching for the foe.

Then Juag exposed himself to the view of the bull — it is a part of the tactics of the hunt — while I stepped to one side behind a bush. The moment that the savage beast saw Juag he charged him. Juag ran straight away, that the bull might be lured past my hiding-place. On he came — tons of mighty bestial strength and rage.

Dian had slipped behind me. She, too, could fight a thag should emergency require. Ah, such a girl! A rightful empress of a stone age by every standard which two worlds might bring to measure her!

Crashing down toward us came the bull thag, bellowing and snorting, with the power of a hundred outer-earthly bulls. When he was opposite me I sprang for the heavy mane that covered his huge neck. To tangle my fingers in it was the work of but an instant. Then I was running along at the beast's shoulder.

Now, the theory upon which this hunting custom is based is one long ago discovered by experience, and that is that a thag cannot be turned from his charge once he has started toward the object of his wrath, so long as he can still see the thing he charges. He evidently believes that the man clinging to his mane is attempting to restrain him from overtaking his prey, and so he pays no attention to this enemy, who, of course, does not retard the mighty charge in the least.

Once in the gait of the plunging bull, it was but a slight matter to vault to his back, as cavalymen mount their chargers upon the run. Juag was still running in plain sight ahead of the bull. His speed was but a trifle less than that of the monster that pursued him. These Pellucidarians are almost as fleet as deer; because I am not is one reason that I am always chosen for the close-in work of the thag-hunt. I could not keep in front of a charging thag long enough to give the killer time to do his work. I learned that the first — and last — time I tried it.

Once astride the bull's neck, I drew my long stone knife and, setting the point carefully over the brute's spine, drove it home with both hands. At the same instant I leaped clear of the stumbling animal. Now, no vertebrate can progress far with a knife through his spine, and the thag is no exception to the rule.

The fellow was down instantly. As he wallowed Juag returned, and the two of us leaped in when an opening afforded the opportunity and snatched our javelins from his side. Then we danced about him, more

like two savages than anything else, until we got the opening we were looking for, when simultaneously, our javelins pierced his wild heart, stilling it forever.

The thag had covered considerable ground from the point at which I had leaped upon him. When, after despatching him, I looked back for Dian, I could see nothing of her. I called aloud, but receiving no reply, set out at a brisk trot to where I had left her. I had no difficulty in finding the self-same bush behind which we had hidden, but Dian was not there. Again and again I called, to be rewarded only by silence. Where could she be? What could have become of her in the brief interval since I had seen her standing just behind me?

12.

KIDNAPED!

I searched about the spot carefully. At last I was rewarded by the discovery of her javelin, a few yards from the bush that had concealed us from the charging thag — her javelin and the indications of a struggle revealed by the trampled vegetation and the overlapping foot-prints of a woman and a man. Filled with consternation and dismay, I followed these latter to where they suddenly disappeared a hundred yards from where the struggle had occurred. There I saw the huge imprints of a lidi's feet.

The story of the tragedy was all too plain. A Thurian had either been following us, or had accidentally espied Dian and taken a fancy to her. While Juag and I had been engaged with the thag, he had abducted her. I ran swiftly back to where Juag was working over the kill. As I approached him I saw that something was wrong in this quarter as well, for the islander was standing upon the carcass of the thag, his javelin poised for a throw.

When I had come nearer I saw the cause of his belligerent attitude. Just beyond him stood two large jaloks, or wolf-dogs, regarding him intently — a male and a female. Their behavior was rather peculiar, for they did not seem preparing to charge him. Rather, they were contemplating him in an attitude of questioning.

Juag heard me coming and turned toward me with a grin. These fellows love excitement. I could see by his expression that he was enjoying in anticipation the battle that seemed imminent. But he never

hurled his javelin. A shout of warning from me stopped him, for I had seen the remnants of a rope dangling from the neck of the male jalok.

Juag again turned toward me, but this time in surprise. I was abreast him in a moment and, passing him, walked straight toward the two beasts. As I did so the female crouched with bared fangs. The male, however, leaped forward to meet me, not in deadly charge, but with every expression of delight and joy which the poor animal could exhibit.

It was Raja — the jalok whose life I had saved, and whom I then had tamed! There was no doubt that he was glad to see me. I now think that his seeming desertion of me had been but due to a desire to search out his ferocious mate and bring her, too, to live with me.

When Juag saw me fondling the great beast he was filled with consternation, but I did not have much time to spare to Raja while my mind was filled with the grief of my new loss. I was glad to see the brute, and I lost no time in taking him to Juag and making him understand that Juag, too, was to be Raja's friend. With the female the matter was more difficult, but Raja helped us out by growling savagely at her whenever she bared her fangs against us.

I told Juag of the disappearance of Dian, and of my suspicions as to the explanation of the catastrophe. He wanted to start right out after her, but I suggested that with Raja to help me it might be as well were he to remain and skin the thag, remove its bladder, and then return to where we had hidden the canoe on the beach. And so it was arranged that he was to do this and await me there for a reasonable time. I pointed to a great lake upon the surface of the pendent world above us, telling him that if after this lake had appeared four times I had not returned to go either by water or land to Sari and fetch Ghak with an army. Then, calling Raja after me, I set out after Dian and

her abductor. First I took the wolf dog to the spot where the man had fought with Dian. A few paces behind us followed Raja's fierce mate. I pointed to the ground where the evidences of the struggle were plainest and where the scent must have been strong to Raja's nostrils.

Then I grasped the remnant of leash that hung about his neck and urged him forward upon the trail. He seemed to understand. With nose to ground he set out upon his task. Dragging me after him, he trotted straight out upon the Lidi Plains, turning his steps in the direction of the Thurian village. I could have guessed as much!

Behind us trailed the female. After a while she closed upon us, until she ran quite close to me and at Raja's side. It was not long before she seemed as easy in my company as did her lord and master.

We must have covered considerable distance at a very rapid pace, for we had reentered the great shadow, when we saw a huge lidi ahead of us, moving leisurely across the level plain. Upon its back were two human figures. If I could have known that the jaloks would not harm Dian I might have turned them loose upon the lidi and its master; but I could not know, and so dared take no chances.

However, the matter was taken out of my hands presently when Raja raised his head and caught sight of his quarry. With a lunge that hurled me flat and jerked the leash from my hand, he was gone with the speed of the wind after the giant lidi and its riders. At his side raced his shaggy mate, only a trifle smaller than he and no whit less savage.

They did not give tongue until the lidi itself discovered them and broke into a lumbering, awkward, but none the less rapid gallop. Then the two hound-beasts commenced to bay, starting with a low, plaintive note that rose, weird and hideous, to terminate in a series of short, sharp yelps. I feared that it might be the hunting-call of the pack; and if this were true, there would be slight chance for either Dian

or her abductor — or myself, either, as far as that was concerned. So I redoubled my efforts to keep pace with the hunt; but I might as well have attempted to distance the bird upon the wing; as I have often reminded you, I am no runner. In that instance it was just as well that I am not, for my very slowness of foot played into my hands; while had I been fleeter, I might have lost Dian that time forever.

The lidi, with the hounds running close on either side, had almost disappeared in the darkness that enveloped the surrounding landscape, when I noted that it was bearing toward the right. This was accounted for by the fact that Raja ran upon his left side, and unlike his mate, kept leaping for the great beast's shoulder. The man on the lidi's back was prodding at the hyaenodon with his long spear, but still Raja kept springing up and snapping.

The effect of this was to turn the lidi toward the right, and the longer I watched the procedure the more convinced I became that Raja and his mate were working together with some end in view, for the she-dog merely galloped steadily at the lidi's right about opposite his rump.

I had seen jaloks hunting in packs, and I recalled now what for the time I had not thought of — the several that ran ahead and turned the quarry back toward the main body. This was precisely what Raja and his mate were doing — they were turning the lidi back toward me, or at least Raja was. Just why the female was keeping out of it I did not understand, unless it was that she was not entirely clear in her own mind as to precisely what her mate was attempting.

At any rate, I was sufficiently convinced to stop where I was and await developments, for I could readily realize two things. One was that I could never overhaul them before the damage was done if they should pull the lidi down now. The other thing was that if they did

not pull it down for a few minutes it would have completed its circle and returned close to where I stood.

And this is just what happened. The lot of them were almost swallowed up in the twilight for a moment. Then they reappeared again, but this time far to the right and circling back in my general direction. I waited until I could get some clear idea of the right spot to gain that I might intercept the lidi; but even as I waited I saw the beast attempt to turn still more to the right — a move that would have carried him far to my left in a much more circumscribed circle than the hyaenodons had mapped out for him. Then I saw the female leap forward and head him; and when he would have gone too far to the left, Raja sprang, snapping at his shoulder and held him straight.

Straight for me the two savage beasts were driving their quarry! It was wonderful.

It was something else, too, as I realized while the monstrous beast neared me. It was like standing in the middle of the tracks in front of an approaching express-train. But I didn't dare waver; too much depended upon my meeting that hurtling mass of terrified flesh with a well-placed javelin. So I stood there, waiting to be run down and crushed by those gigantic feet, but determined to drive home my weapon in the broad breast before I fell.

The lidi was only about a hundred yards from me when Raja gave a few barks in a tone that differed materially from his hunting-cry. Instantly both he and his mate leaped for the long neck of the ruminant.

Neither missed. Swinging in mid-air, they hung tenaciously, their weight dragging down the creature's head and so retarding its speed that before it had reached me it was almost stopped and devoting all its energies to attempting to scrape off its attackers with its forefeet.

Dian had seen and recognized me, and was trying to extricate herself from the grasp of her captor, who, handicapped by his strong and agile prisoner, was unable to wield his lance effectively upon the two jaloks. At the same time I was running swiftly toward them.

When the man discovered me he released his hold upon Dian and sprang to the ground, ready with his lance to meet me. My javelin was no match for his longer weapon, which was used more for stabbing than as a missile. Should I miss him at my first cast, as was quite probable, since he was prepared for me, I would have to face his formidable lance with nothing more than a stone knife. The outlook was scarcely entrancing. Evidently I was soon to be absolutely at his mercy.

Seeing my predicament, he ran toward me to get rid of one antagonist before he had to deal with the other two. He could not guess, of course, that the two jaloks were hunting with me; but he doubtless thought that after they had finished the lidi they would make after the human prey — the beasts are notorious killers, often slaying wantonly.

But as the Thurian came Raja loosened his hold upon the lidi and dashed for him, with the female close after. When the man saw them he yelled to me to help him, protesting that we should both be killed if we did not fight together. But I only laughed at him and ran toward Dian.

Both the fierce beasts were upon the Thurian simultaneously — he must have died almost before his body tumbled to the ground. Then the female wheeled toward Dian. I was standing by her side as the thing charged her, my javelin ready to receive her.

But again Raja was too quick for me. I imagined he thought she was making for me, for he couldn't have known anything of my relations toward Dian. At any rate he leaped full upon her back and dragged

her down. There ensued forthwith as terrible a battle as one would wish to see if battles were gaged by volume of noise and riotousness of action. I thought that both the beasts would be torn to shreds.

When finally the female ceased to struggle and rolled over on her back, her forepaws limply folded, I was sure that she was dead. Raja stood over her, growling, his jaws close to her throat. Then I saw that neither of them bore a scratch. The male had simply administered a severe drubbing to his mate. It was his way of teaching her that I was sacred.

After a moment he moved away and let her rise, when she set about smoothing down her rumpled coat, while he came stalking toward Dian and me. I had an arm about Dian now. As Raja came close I caught him by the neck and pulled him up to me. There I stroked him and talked to him, bidding Dian do the same, until I think he pretty well understood that if I was his friend, so was Dian.

For a long time he was inclined to be shy of her, often baring his teeth at her approach, and it was a much longer time before the female made friends with us. But by careful kindness, by never eating without sharing our meat with them, and by feeding them from our hands, we finally won the confidence of both animals. However, that was a long time after.

With the two beasts trotting after us, we returned to where we had left Juag. Here I had the dickens' own time keeping the female from Juag's throat. Of all the venomous, wicked, cruel-hearted beasts on two worlds, I think a female hyaenodon takes the palm.

But eventually she tolerated Juag as she had Dian and me, and the five of us set out toward the coast, for Juag had just completed his labors on the thag when we arrived. We ate some of the meat before

starting, and gave the hounds some. All that we could we carried upon our backs.

On the way to the canoe we met with no mishaps. Dian told me that the fellow who had stolen her had come upon her from behind while the roaring of the thag had drowned all other noises, and that the first she had known he had disarmed her and thrown her to the back of his lidi, which had been lying down close by waiting for him. By the time the thag had ceased bellowing the fellow had got well away upon his swift mount. By holding one palm over her mouth he had prevented her calling for help.

“I thought,” she concluded, “that I should have to use the viper’s tooth, after all.”

We reached the beach at last and unearthed the canoe. Then we busied ourselves stepping a mast and rigging a small sail — Juag and I, that is — while Dian cut the thag meat into long strips for drying when we should be out in the sunlight once more.

At last all was done. We were ready to embark. I had no difficulty in getting Raja aboard the dugout; but Ranee — as we christened her after I had explained to Dian the meaning of Raja and its feminine equivalent — positively refused for a time to follow her mate aboard. In fact, we had to shove off without her. After a moment, however, she plunged into the water and swam after us.

I let her come alongside, and then Juag and I pulled her in, she snapping and snarling at us as we did so; but, strange to relate, she didn’t offer to attack us after we had ensconced her safely in the bottom alongside Raja.

The canoe behaved much better under sail than I had hoped — infinitely better than the battle-ship Sari had — and we made good progress almost due west across the gulf, upon the opposite side of

which I hoped to find the mouth of the river of which Juag had told me.

The islander was much interested and impressed by the sail and its results. He had not been able to understand exactly what I hoped to accomplish with it while we were fitting up the boat; but when he saw the clumsy dugout move steadily through the water without paddles, he was as delighted as a child. We made splendid headway on the trip, coming into sight of land at last.

Juag had been terror-stricken when he had learned that I intended crossing the ocean, and when we passed out of sight of land he was in a blue funk. He said that he had never heard of such a thing before in his life, and that always he had understood that those who ventured far from land never returned; for how could they find their way when they could see no land to steer for?

I tried to explain the compass to him; and though he never really grasped the scientific explanation of it, yet he did learn to steer by it quite as well as I. We passed several islands on the journey — islands which Juag told me were entirely unknown to his own island folk. Indeed, our eyes may have been the first ever to rest upon them. I should have liked to stop off and explore them, but the business of empire would brook no unnecessary delays.

I asked Juag how Hooja expected to reach the mouth of the river which we were in search of if he didn't cross the gulf, and the islander explained that Hooja would undoubtedly follow the coast around. For some time we sailed up the coast searching for the river, and at last we found it. So great was it that I thought it must be a mighty gulf until the mass of driftwood that came out upon the first ebb tide convinced me that it was the mouth of a river. There were the trunks of trees uprooted by the undermining of the river banks, giant creepers,

flowers, grasses, and now and then the body of some land animal or bird.

I was all excitement to commence our upward journey when there occurred that which I had never before seen within Pellucidar — a really terrific wind-storm. It blew down the river upon us with a ferocity and suddenness that took our breaths away, and before we could get a chance to make the shore it became too late. The best that we could do was to hold the scudding craft before the wind and race along in a smother of white spume. Juag was terrified. If Dian was, she hid it; for was she not the daughter of a once great chief, the sister of a king, and the mate of an emperor?

Raja and Ranee were frightened. The former crawled close to my side and buried his nose against me. Finally even fierce Ranee was moved to seek sympathy from a human being. She slunk to Dian, pressing close against her and whimpering, while Dian stroked her shaggy neck and talked to her as I talked to Raja.

There was nothing for us to do but try to keep the canoe right side up and straight before the wind. For what seemed an eternity the tempest neither increased nor abated. I judged that we must have blown a hundred miles before the wind and straight out into an unknown sea!

As suddenly as the wind rose it died again, and when it died it veered to blow at right angles to its former course in a gentle breeze. I asked Juag then what our course was, for he had had the compass last. It had been on a leather thong about his neck. When he felt for it, the expression that came into his eyes told me as plainly as words what had happened — the compass was lost! The compass was lost!

And we were out of sight of land without a single celestial body to guide us! Even the pendent world was not visible from our position!

Our plight seemed hopeless to me, but I dared not let Dian and Juag guess how utterly dismayed I was; though, as I soon discovered, there was nothing to be gained by trying to keep the worst from Juag — he knew it quite as well as I. He had always known, from the legends of his people, the dangers of the open sea beyond the sight of land. The compass, since he had learned its uses from me, had been all that he had to buoy his hope of eventual salvation from the watery deep. He had seen how it had guided me across the water to the very coast that I desired to reach, and so he had implicit confidence in it. Now that it was gone, his confidence had departed, also.

There seemed but one thing to do; that was to keep on sailing straight before the wind — since we could travel most rapidly along that course — until we sighted land of some description. If it chanced to be the mainland, well and good; if an island — well, we might live upon an island. We certainly could not live long in this little boat, with only a few strips of dried thag and a few quarts of water left.

Quite suddenly a thought occurred to me. I was surprised that it had not come before as a solution to our problem. I turned toward Juag.

“You Pellucidarians are endowed with a wonderful instinct,” I reminded him, “an instinct that points the way straight to your homes, no matter in what strange land you may find yourself. Now all we have to do is let Dian guide us toward Amoz, and we shall come in a short time to the same coast whence we just were blown.”

As I spoke I looked at them with a smile of renewed hope; but there was no answering smile in their eyes. It was Dian who enlightened me.

“We could do all this upon land,” she said. “But upon the water that power is denied us. I do not know why; but I have always heard

that this is true — that only upon the water may a Pellucidarian be lost. This is, I think, why we all fear the great ocean so — even those who go upon its surface in canoes. Juag has told us that they never go beyond the sight of land.”

We had lowered the sail after the blow while we were discussing the best course to pursue. Our little craft had been drifting idly, rising and falling with the great waves that were now diminishing. Sometimes we were upon the crest — again in the hollow. As Dian ceased speaking she let her eyes range across the limitless expanse of billowing waters. We rose to a great height upon the crest of a mighty wave. As we topped it Dian gave an exclamation and pointed astern.

“Boats!” she cried. “Boats! Many, many boats!”

Juag and I leaped to our feet; but our little craft had now dropped to the trough, and we could see nothing but walls of water close upon either hand. We waited for the next wave to lift us, and when it did we strained our eyes in the direction that Dian had indicated. Sure enough, scarce half a mile away were several boats, and scattered far and wide behind us as far as we could see were many others! We could not make them out in the distance or in the brief glimpse that we caught of them before we were plunged again into the next wave canyon; but they were boats.

And in them must be human beings like ourselves.

13.

RACING FOR LIFE

At last the sea subsided, and we were able to get a better view of the armada of small boats in our wake. There must have been two hundred of them. Juag said that he had never seen so many boats before in all his life. Where had they come from? Juag was first to hazard a guess.

“Hooja,” he said, “was building many boats to carry his warriors to the great river and up it toward Sari. He was building them with almost all his warriors and many slaves upon the Island of Trees. No one else in all the history of Pellucidar has ever built so many boats as they told me Hooja was building. These must be Hooja’s boats.”

“And they were blown out to sea by the great storm just as we were,” suggested Dian.

“There can be no better explanation of them,” I agreed.

“What shall we do?” asked Juag.

“Suppose we make sure that they are really Hooja’s people,” suggested Dian. “It may be that they are not, and that if we run away from them before we learn definitely who they are, we shall be running away from a chance to live and find the mainland. They may be a people of whom we have never even heard, and if so we can ask them to help us — if they know the way to the mainland.”

“Which they will not,” interposed Juag.

“Well,” I said, “it can’t make our predicament any more trying to wait until we find out who they are. They are heading for us now. Evidently they have spied our sail, and guess that we do not belong to their fleet.”

“They probably want to ask the way to the mainland themselves,” said Juag, who was nothing if not a pessimist.

“If they want to catch us, they can do it if they can paddle faster than we can sail,” I said. “If we let them come close enough to discover their identity, and can then sail faster than they can paddle, we can get away from them anyway, so we might as well wait.”

And wait we did.

The sea calmed rapidly, so that by the time the foremost canoe had come within five hundred yards of us we could see them all plainly. Every one was headed for us. The dugouts, which were of unusual length, were manned by twenty paddlers, ten to a side. Besides the paddlers there were twenty-five or more warriors in each boat.

When the leader was a hundred yards from us Dian called our attention to the fact that several of her crew were Sagoths. That convinced us that the flotilla was indeed Hooja’s. I told Juag to hail them and get what information he could, while I remained in the bottom of our canoe as much out of sight as possible. Dian lay down at full length in the bottom; I did not want them to see and recognize her if they were in truth Hooja’s people.

“Who are you?” shouted Juag, standing up in the boat and making a megaphone of his palms.

A figure arose in the bow of the leading canoe — a figure that I was sure I recognized even before he spoke.

“I am Hooja!” cried the man, in answer to Juag.

For some reason he did not recognize his former prisoner and slave — possibly because he had so many of them.

“I come from the Island of Trees,” he continued. “A hundred of my boats were lost in the great storm and all their crews drowned.

Where is the land? What are you, and what strange thing is that which flutters from the little tree in the front of your canoe?"

He referred to our sail, flapping idly in the wind.

"We, too, are lost," replied Juag. "We know not where the land is. We are going back to look for it now."

So saying he commenced to scull the canoe's nose before the wind, while I made fast the primitive sheets that held our crude sail. We thought it time to be going.

There wasn't much wind at the time, and the heavy, lumbering dugout was slow in getting under way. I thought it never would gain any momentum. And all the while Hooja's canoe was drawing rapidly nearer, propelled by the strong arms of his twenty paddlers. Of course, their dugout was much larger than ours, and, consequently, infinitely heavier and more cumbersome; nevertheless, it was coming along at quite a clip, and ours was yet but barely moving. Dian and I remained out of sight as much as possible, for the two craft were now well within bow-shot of one another, and I knew that Hooja had archers.

Hooja called to Juag to stop when he saw that our craft was moving. He was much interested in the sail, and not a little awed, as I could tell by his shouted remarks and questions. Raising my head, I saw him plainly. He would have made an excellent target for one of my guns, and I had never been sorrier that I had lost them.

We were now picking up speed a trifle, and he was not gaining upon us so fast as at first. In consequence, his requests that we stop suddenly changed to commands as he became aware that we were trying to escape him.

"Come back!" he shouted. "Come back, or I'll fire!"

I use the word fire because it more nearly translates into English

the Pellucidarian word trag, which covers the launching of any deadly missile.

But Juag only seized his paddle more tightly — the paddle that answered the purpose of rudder, and commenced to assist the wind by vigorous strokes. Then Hooja gave the command to some of his archers to fire upon us. I couldn't lie hidden in the bottom of the boat, leaving Juag alone exposed to the deadly shafts, so I arose and, seizing another paddle, set to work to help him. Dian joined me, though I did my best to persuade her to remain sheltered; but being a woman, she must have her own way.

The instant that Hooja saw us he recognized us. The whoop of triumph he raised indicated how certain he was that we were about to fall into his hands. A shower of arrows fell about us. Then Hooja caused his men to cease firing — he wanted us alive. None of the missiles struck us, for Hooja's archers were not nearly the marksmen that are my Sarians and Amozites.

We had now gained sufficient headway to hold our own on about even terms with Hooja's paddlers. We did not seem to be gaining, though; and neither did they. How long this nerve-racking experience lasted I cannot guess, though we had pretty nearly finished our meager supply of provisions when the wind picked up a bit and we commenced to draw away.

Not once yet had we sighted land, nor could I understand it, since so many of the seas I had seen before were thickly dotted with islands. Our plight was anything but pleasant, yet I think that Hooja and his forces were even worse off than we, for they had no food nor water at all.

Far out behind us in a long line that curved upward in the distance, to be lost in the haze, strung Hooja's two hundred boats. But one

would have been enough to have taken us could it have come alongside. We had drawn some fifty yards ahead of Hooja — there had been times when we were scarce ten yards in advance — and were feeling considerably safer from capture. Hooja's men, working in relays, were commencing to show the effects of the strain under which they had been forced to work without food or water, and I think their weakening aided us almost as much as the slight freshening of the wind.

Hooja must have commenced to realize that he was going to lose us, for he again gave orders that we be fired upon. Volley after volley of arrows struck about us. The distance was so great by this time that most of the arrows fell short, while those that reached us were sufficiently spent to allow us to ward them off with our paddles. However, it was a most exciting ordeal.

Hooja stood in the bow of his boat, alternately urging his men to greater speed and shouting epithets at me. But we continued to draw away from him. At last the wind rose to a fair gale, and we simply raced away from our pursuers as if they were standing still. Juag was so tickled that he forgot all about his hunger and thirst. I think that he had never been entirely reconciled to the heathenish invention which I called a sail, and that down in the bottom of his heart he believed that the paddlers would eventually overhaul us; but now he couldn't praise it enough.

We had a strong gale for a considerable time, and eventually dropped Hooja's fleet so far astern that we could no longer discern them. And then — ah, I shall never forget that moment — Dian sprang to her feet with a cry of "Land!"

Sure enough, dead ahead, a long, low coast stretched across our bow. It was still a long way off, and we couldn't make out whether it was island or mainland; but at least it was land. If ever shipwrecked

mariners were grateful, we were then. Raja and Ranee were commencing to suffer for lack of food, and I could swear that the latter often cast hungry glances upon us, though I am equally sure that no such hideous thoughts ever entered the head of her mate. We watched them both most closely, however. Once while stroking Ranee I managed to get a rope around her neck and make her fast to the side of the boat. Then I felt a bit safer for Dian. It was pretty close quarters in that little dugout for three human beings and two practically wild, man-eating dogs; but we had to make the best of it, since I would not listen to Juag's suggestion that we kill and eat Raja and Ranee.

We made good time to within a few miles of the shore. Then the wind died suddenly out. We were all of us keyed up to such a pitch of anticipation that the blow was doubly hard to bear. And it was a blow, too, since we could not tell in what quarter the wind might rise again; but Juag and I set to work to paddle the remaining distance.

Almost immediately the wind rose again from precisely the opposite direction from which it had formerly blown, so that it was mighty hard work making progress against it. Next it veered again so that we had to turn and run with it parallel to the coast to keep from being swamped in the trough of the seas.

And while we were suffering all these disappointments Hooja's fleet appeared in the distance!

They evidently had gone far to the left of our course, for they were now almost behind us as we ran parallel to the coast; but we were not much afraid of being overtaken in the wind that was blowing. The gale kept on increasing, but it was fitful, swooping down upon us in great gusts and then going almost calm for an instant. It was after one of these momentary calms that the catastrophe occurred. Our sail hung limp and our momentum decreased when of a sudden a particularly

vicious squall caught us. Before I could cut the sheets the mast had snapped at the thwart in which it was stepped.

The worst had happened; Juag and I seized paddles and kept the canoe with the wind; but that squall was the parting shot of the gale, which died out immediately after, leaving us free to make for the shore, which we lost no time in attempting. But Hooja had drawn closer in toward shore than we, so it looked as if he might head us off before we could land. However, we did our best to distance him, Dian taking a paddle with us.

We were in a fair way to succeed when there appeared, pouring from among the trees beyond the beach, a horde of yelling, painted savages, brandishing all sorts of devilish-looking primitive weapons. So menacing was their attitude that we realized at once the folly of attempting to land among them.

Hooja was drawing closer to us. There was no wind. We could not hope to outpaddle him. And with our sail gone, no wind would help us, though, as if in derision at our plight, a steady breeze was now blowing. But we had no intention of sitting idle while our fate overtook us, so we bent to our paddles and, keeping parallel with the coast, did our best to pull away from our pursuers.

It was a grueling experience. We were weakened by lack of food. We were suffering the pangs of thirst. Capture and death were close at hand. Yet I think that we gave a good account of ourselves in our final effort to escape. Our boat was so much smaller and lighter than any of Hooja's that the three of us forced it ahead almost as rapidly as his larger craft could go under their twenty paddles.

As we raced along the coast for one of those seemingly interminable periods that may draw hours into eternities where the labor is soul-searing and there is no way to measure time, I saw what I took for the

opening to a bay or the mouth of a great river a short distance ahead of us. I wished that we might make for it; but with the menace of Hooja close behind and the screaming natives who raced along the shore parallel to us, I dared not attempt it.

We were not far from shore in that mad flight from death. Even as I paddled I found opportunity to glance occasionally toward the natives. They were white, but hideously painted. From their gestures and weapons I took them to be a most ferocious race. I was rather glad that we had not succeeded in landing among them.

Hooja's fleet had been in much more compact formation when we sighted them this time than on the occasion following the tempest. Now they were moving rapidly in pursuit of us, all well within the radius of a mile. Five of them were leading, all abreast, and were scarce two hundred yards from us. When I glanced over my shoulder I could see that the archers had already fitted arrows to their bows in readiness to fire upon us the moment that they should draw within range.

Hope was low in my breast. I could not see the slightest chance of escaping them, for they were overhauling us rapidly now, since they were able to work their paddles in relays, while we three were rapidly wearying beneath the constant strain that had been put upon us.

It was then that Juag called my attention to the rift in the shoreline which I had thought either a bay or the mouth of a great river. There I saw moving slowly out into the sea that which filled my soul with wonder.

14.

GORE AND DREAMS

It was a two-masted felucca with lateen sails! The craft was long and low. In it were more than fifty men, twenty or thirty of whom were at oars with which the craft was being propelled from the lee of the land. I was dumbfounded.

Could it be that the savage, painted natives I had seen on shore had so perfected the art of navigation that they were masters of such advanced building and rigging as this craft proclaimed? It seemed impossible! And as I looked I saw another of the same type swing into view and follow its sister through the narrow strait out into the ocean.

Nor were these all. One after another, following closely upon one another's heels, came fifty of the trim, graceful vessels. They were cutting in between Hooja's fleet and our little dugout.

When they came a bit closer my eyes fairly popped from my head at what I saw, for in the eye of the leading felucca stood a man with a sea-glass leveled upon us. Who could they be? Was there a civilization within Pellucidar of such wondrous advancement as this? Were there far-distant lands of which none of my people had ever heard, where a race had so greatly outstripped all other races of this inner world?

The man with the glass had lowered it and was shouting to us. I could not make out his words, but presently I saw that he was pointing aloft. When I looked I saw a pennant fluttering from the peak of the forward lateen yard — a red, white, and blue pennant, with a single great white star in a field of blue.

Then I knew. My eyes went even wider than they had before. It was

the navy! It was the navy of the empire of Pellucidar which I had instructed Perry to build in my absence. It was *my* navy!

I dropped my paddle and stood up and shouted and waved my hand. Juag and Dian looked at me as if I had gone suddenly mad. When I could stop shouting I told them, and they shared my joy and shouted with me.

But still Hooja was coming nearer, nor could the leading felucca overhaul him before he would be alongside or at least within bow-shot.

Hooja must have been as much mystified as we were as to the identity of the strange fleet; but when he saw me waving to them he evidently guessed that they were friendly to us, so he urged his men to redouble their efforts to reach us before the felucca cut him off.

He shouted word back to others of his fleet — word that was passed back until it had reached them all — directing them to run alongside the strangers and board them, for with his two hundred craft and his eight or ten thousand warriors he evidently felt equal to overcoming the fifty vessels of the enemy, which did not seem to carry over three thousand men all told.

His own personal energies he bent to reaching Dian and me first, leaving the rest of the work to his other boats. I thought that there could be little doubt that he would be successful in so far as we were concerned, and I feared for the revenge that he might take upon us should the battle go against his force, as I was sure it would; for I knew that Perry and his Mezops must have brought with them all the arms and ammunition that had been contained in the prospector. But I was not prepared for what happened next.

As Hooja's canoe reached a point some twenty yards from us a great puff of smoke broke from the bow of the leading felucca, followed almost simultaneously by a terrific explosion, and a solid shot

screamed close over the heads of the men in Hooja's craft, raising a great splash where it clove the water just beyond them.

Perry had perfected gunpowder and built cannon! It was marvelous! Dian and Juag, as much surprised as Hooja, turned wondering eyes toward me. Again the cannon spoke. I suppose that by comparison with the great guns of modern naval vessels of the outer world it was a pitifully small and inadequate thing; but here in Pellucidar, where it was the first of its kind, it was about as awe-inspiring as anything you might imagine.

With the report an iron cannonball about five inches in diameter struck Hooja's dugout just above the water-line, tore a great splintering hole in its side, turned it over, and dumped its occupants into the sea.

The four dugouts that had been abreast of Hooja had turned to intercept the leading felucca. Even now, in the face of what must have been a withering catastrophe to them, they kept bravely on toward the strange and terrible craft.

In them were fully two hundred men, while but fifty lined the gunwale of the felucca to repel them. The commander of the felucca, who proved to be Ja, let them come quite close and then turned loose upon them a volley of shots from small-arms.

The cave men and Sagoths in the dugouts seemed to wither before that blast of death like dry grass before a prairie fire. Those who were not hit dropped their bows and javelins and, seizing upon paddles, attempted to escape. But the felucca pursued them relentlessly, her crew firing at will.

At last I heard Ja shouting to the survivors in the dugouts — they were all quite close to us now — offering them their lives if they would surrender. Perry was standing close behind Ja, and I knew that this merciful action was prompted, perhaps commanded, by the old man;

for no Pellucidarian would have thought of showing leniency to a defeated foe.

As there was no alternative save death, the survivors surrendered and a moment later were taken aboard the Amoz, the name that I could now see printed in large letters upon the felucca's bow, and which no one in that whole world could read except Perry and I.

When the prisoners were aboard, Ja brought the felucca alongside our dugout. Many were the willing hands that reached down to lift us to her decks. The bronze faces of the Mezops were broad with smiles, and Perry was fairly beside himself with joy.

Dian went aboard first and then Juag, as I wished to help Raja and Ranee aboard myself, well knowing that it would fare ill with any Mezop who touched them. We got them aboard at last, and a great commotion they caused among the crew, who had never seen a wild beast thus handled by man before.

Perry and Dian and I were so full of questions that we fairly burst, but we had to contain ourselves for a while, since the battle with the rest of Hooja's fleet had scarce commenced. From the small forward decks of the feluccas Perry's crude cannon were belching smoke, flame, thunder, and death. The air trembled to the roar of them. Hooja's horde, intrepid, savage fighters that they were, were closing in to grapple in a last death-struggle with the Mezops who manned our vessels.

The handling of our fleet by the red island warriors of Ja's clan was far from perfect. I could see that Perry had lost no time after the completion of the boats in setting out upon this cruise. What little the captains and crews had learned of handling feluccas they must have learned principally since they embarked upon this voyage, and while experience is an excellent teacher and had done much for them, they

still had a great deal to learn. In maneuvering for position they were continually fouling one another, and on two occasions shots from our batteries came near to striking our own ships.

No sooner, however, was I aboard the flag-ship than I attempted to rectify this trouble to some extent. By passing commands by word of mouth from one ship to another I managed to get the fifty feluccas into some sort of line, with the flag-ship in the lead. In this formation we commenced slowly to circle the position of the enemy. The dugouts came for us right along in an attempt to board us, but by keeping on the move in one direction and circling, we managed to avoid getting in each other's way, and were enabled to fire our cannon and our small arms with less danger to our own comrades.

When I had a moment to look about me, I took in the felucca on which I was. I am free to confess that I marveled at the excellent construction and staunch yet speedy lines of the little craft. That Perry had chosen this type of vessel seemed rather remarkable, for though I had warned him against turreted battle-ships, armor, and like useless show, I had fully expected that when I beheld his navy I should find considerable attempt at grim and terrible magnificence, for it was always Perry's idea to overawe these ignorant cave men when we had to contend with them in battle. But I had soon learned that while one might easily astonish them with some new engine of war, it was an utter impossibility to frighten them into surrender.

I learned later that Ja had gone carefully over the plans of various craft with Perry. The old man had explained in detail all that the text told him of them. The two had measured out dimensions upon the ground, that Ja might see the sizes of different boats. Perry had built models, and Ja had had him read carefully and explain all that they could find relative to the handling of sailing vessels. The result of this

was that Ja was the one who had chosen the felucca. It was well that Perry had had so excellent a balance wheel, for he had been wild to build a huge frigate of the Nelsonian era — he told me so himself.

One thing that had inclined Ja particularly to the felucca was the fact that it included oars in its equipment. He realized the limitations of his people in the matter of sails, and while they had never used oars, the implement was so similar to a paddle that he was sure they quickly could master the art — and they did. As soon as one hull was completed Ja kept it on the water constantly, first with one crew and then with another, until two thousand red warriors had learned to row. Then they stepped their masts and a crew was told off for the first ship.

While the others were building they learned to handle theirs. As each succeeding boat was launched its crew took it out and practiced with it under the tutorage of those who had graduated from the first ship, and so on until a full complement of men had been trained for every boat.

Well, to get back to the battle: The Hoojans kept on coming at us, and as fast as they came we mowed them down. It was little else than slaughter. Time and time again I cried to them to surrender, promising them their lives if they would do so. At last there were but ten boatloads left. These turned in flight. They thought they could paddle away from us — it was pitiful! I passed the word from boat to boat to cease firing — not to kill another Hoojan unless they fired on us. Then we set out after them. There was a nice little breeze blowing and we bowled along after our quarry as gracefully and as lightly as swans upon a park lagoon. As we approached them I could see not only wonder but admiration in their eyes. I hailed the nearest dugout.

“Throw down your arms and come aboard us,” I cried, “and you

shall not be harmed. We will feed you and return you to the mainland. Then you shall go free upon your promise never to bear arms against the Emperor of Pellucidar again!”

I think it was the promise of food that interested them most. They could scarce believe that we would not kill them. But when I exhibited the prisoners we already had taken, and showed them that they were alive and unharmed, a great Sagoth in one of the boats asked me what guarantee I could give that I would keep my word.

“None other than my word,” I replied. “That I do not break.”

The Pellucidarians themselves are rather punctilious about this same matter, so the Sagoth could understand that I might possibly be speaking the truth. But he could not understand why we should not kill them unless we meant to enslave them, which I had as much as denied already when I had promised to set them free. Ja couldn’t exactly see the wisdom of my plan, either. He thought that we ought to follow up the ten remaining dugouts and sink them all; but I insisted that we must free as many as possible of our enemies upon the mainland.

“You see,” I explained, “these men will return at once to Hooja’s Island, to the Mahar cities from which they come, or to the countries from which they were stolen by the Mahars. They are men of two races and of many countries. They will spread the story of our victory far and wide, and while they are with us, we will let them see and hear many other wonderful things which they may carry back to their friends and their chiefs. It’s the finest chance for free publicity, Perry,” I added to the old man, “that you or I have seen in many a day.”

Perry agreed with me. As a matter of fact, he would have agreed to anything that would have restrained us from killing the poor devils who fell into our hands. He was a great fellow to invent gunpowder

and fire-arms and cannon; but when it came to using these things to kill people, he was as tender-hearted as a chicken.

The Sagoth who had spoken was talking to other Sagoths in his boat. Evidently they were holding a council over the question of the wisdom of surrendering.

“What will become of you if you don’t surrender to us?” I asked. “If we do not open up our batteries on you again and kill you all, you will simply drift about the sea helplessly until you die of thirst and starvation. You cannot return to the islands, for you have seen as well as we that the natives there are very numerous and warlike. They would kill you the moment you landed.”

The upshot of it was that the boat of which the Sagoth speaker was in charge surrendered. The Sagoths threw down their weapons, and we took them aboard the ship next in line behind the Amoz. First Ja had to impress upon the captain and crew of the ship that the prisoners were not to be abused or killed. After that the remaining dugouts paddled up and surrendered. We distributed them among the entire fleet lest there be too many upon any one vessel. Thus ended the first real naval engagement that the Pellucidarian seas had ever witnessed — though Perry still insists that the action in which the Sari took part was a battle of the first magnitude.

The battle over and the prisoners disposed of and fed — and do not imagine that Dian, Juag, and I, as well as the two hounds were not fed also — I turned my attention to the fleet. We had the feluccas close in about the flag-ship, and with all the ceremony of a medieval potentate on parade I received the commanders of the forty-nine feluccas that accompanied the flag-ship — Dian and I together — the empress and the emperor of Pellucidar.

It was a great occasion. The savage, bronze warriors entered into

the spirit of it, for as I learned later dear old Perry had left no opportunity neglected for impressing upon them that David was emperor of Pellucidar, and that all that they were accomplishing and all that he was accomplishing was due to the power, and redounded to the glory, of David. The old man must have rubbed it in pretty strong, for those fierce warriors nearly came to blows in their efforts to be among the first of those to kneel before me and kiss my hand. When it came to kissing Dian's I think they enjoyed it more; I know I should have.

A happy thought occurred to me as I stood upon the little deck of the Amoz with the first of Perry's primitive cannon behind me. When Ja kneeled at my feet, and first to do me homage, I drew from its scabbard at his side the sword of hammered iron that Perry had taught him to fashion. Striking him lightly on the shoulder I created him king of Anoroc. Each captain of the forty-nine other feluccas I made a duke. I left it to Perry to enlighten them as to the value of the honors I had bestowed upon them.

During these ceremonies Raja and Ranee had stood beside Dian and me. Their bellies had been well filled, but still they had difficulty in permitting so much edible humanity to pass unchallenged. It was a good education for them though, and never after did they find it difficult to associate with the human race without arousing their appetites.

After the ceremonies were over we had a chance to talk with Perry and Ja. The former told me that Ghak, king of Sari, had sent my letter and map to him by a runner, and that he and Ja had at once decided to set out on the completion of the fleet to ascertain the correctness of my theory that the Lural Az, in which the Anoroc Islands lay, was in reality the same ocean as that which lapped the shores of Thuria under the name of Sojar Az, or Great Sea.

Their destination had been the island retreat of Hooja, and they had sent word to Ghak of their plans that we might work in harmony with them. The tempest that had blown us off the coast of the continent had blown them far to the south also. Shortly before discovering us they had come into a great group of islands, from between the largest two of which they were sailing when they saw Hooja's fleet pursuing our dugout.

I asked Perry if he had any idea as to where we were, or in what direction lay Hooja's island or the continent. He replied by producing his map, on which he had carefully marked the newly discovered islands — there described as the Unfriendly Isles — which showed Hooja's island northwest of us about two points west.

He then explained that with compass, chronometer, log and reel, they had kept a fairly accurate record of their course from the time they had set out. Four of the feluccas were equipped with these instruments, and all of the captains had been instructed in their use.

I was very greatly surprised at the ease with which these savages had mastered the rather intricate detail of this unusual work, but Perry assured me that they were a wonderfully intelligent race, and had been quick to grasp all that he had tried to teach them.

Another thing that surprised me was the fact that so much had been accomplished in so short a time, for I could not believe that I had been gone from Anoroc for a sufficient period to permit of building a fleet of fifty feluccas and mining iron ore for the cannon and balls, to say nothing of manufacturing these guns and the crude muzzle-loading rifles with which every Mezop was armed, as well as the gunpowder and ammunition they had in such ample quantities.

"Time!" exclaimed Perry. "Well, how long were you gone from Anoroc before we picked you up in the Sojar Az?"

That was a puzzler, and I had to admit it. I didn't know how much time had elapsed and neither did Perry, for time is nonexistent in Pellucidar.

"Then, you see, David," he continued, "I had almost unbelievable resources at my disposal. The Mezops inhabiting the Anoroc Islands, which stretch far out to sea beyond the three principal isles with which you are familiar, number well into the millions, and by far the greater part of them are friendly to Ja. Men, women, and children turned to and worked the moment Ja explained the nature of our enterprise.

"And not only were they anxious to do all in their power to hasten the day when the Mahars should be overthrown, but — and this counted for most of all — they are simply ravenous for greater knowledge and for better ways of doing things.

"The contents of the prospector set their imaginations to working overtime, so that they craved to own, themselves, the knowledge which had made it possible for other men to create and build the things which you brought back from the outer world.

"And then," continued the old man, "the element of time, or, rather, lack of time, operated to my advantage. There being no nights, there was no laying off from work — they labored incessantly stopping only to eat and, on rare occasions, to sleep. Once we had discovered iron ore we had enough mined in an incredibly short time to build a thousand cannon. I had only to show them once how a thing should be done, and they would fall to work by thousands to do it.

"Why, no sooner had we fashioned the first muzzle-loader and they had seen it work successfully, than fully three thousand Mezops fell to work to make rifles. Of course there was much confusion and lost motion at first, but eventually Ja got them in hand, detailing squads of them under competent chiefs to certain work.

“We now have a hundred expert gun-makers. On a little isolated isle we have a great powder-factory. Near the iron-mine, which is on the mainland, is a smelter, and on the eastern shore of Anoroc, a well equipped shipyard. All these industries are guarded by forts in which several cannon are mounted and where warriors are always on guard.

“You would be surprised now, David, at the aspect of Anoroc. I am surprised myself; it seems always to me as I compare it with the day that I first set foot upon it from the deck of the Sari that only a miracle could have worked the change that has taken place.”

“It is a miracle,” I said; it is nothing short of a miracle to transplant all the wondrous possibilities of the twentieth century back to the Stone Age. It is a miracle to think that only five hundred miles of earth separate two epochs that are really ages and ages apart.

“It is stupendous, Perry! But still more stupendous is the power that you and I wield in this great world. These people look upon us as little less than supermen. We must show them that we are all of that.

“We must give them the best that we have, Perry.”

“Yes,” he agreed; “we must. I have been thinking a great deal lately that some kind of shrapnel shell or explosive bomb would be a most splendid innovation in their warfare. Then there are breech-loading rifles and those with magazines that I must hasten to study out and learn to reproduce as soon as we get settled down again; and —”

“Hold on, Perry!” I cried. “I didn’t mean these sorts of things at all. I said that we must give them the best we have. What we have given them so far has been the worst. We have given them war and the munitions of war. In a single day we have made their wars infinitely more terrible and bloody than in all their past ages they have been able to make them with their crude, primitive weapons.

“In a period that could scarcely have exceeded two outer earthly hours, our fleet practically annihilated the largest armada of native canoes that the Pellucidarians ever before had gathered together. We butchered some eight thousand warriors with the twentieth-century gifts we brought. Why, they wouldn’t have killed that many warriors in the entire duration of a dozen of their wars with their own weapons! No, Perry; we’ve got to give them something better than scientific methods of killing one another.”

The old man looked at me in amazement. There was reproach in his eyes, too.

“Why, David!” he said sorrowfully. “I thought that you would be pleased with what I had done. We planned these things together, and I am sure that it was you who suggested practically all of it. I have done only what I thought you wished done and I have done it the best that I know how.”

I laid my hand on the old man’s shoulder.

“Bless your heart, Perry!” I cried. “You’ve accomplished miracles. You have done precisely what I should have done, only you’ve done it better. I’m not finding fault; but I don’t wish to lose sight myself, or let you lose sight, of the greater work which must grow out of this preliminary and necessary carnage. First we must place the empire upon a secure footing, and we can do so only by putting the fear of us in the hearts of our enemies; but after that —

“Ah, Perry! That is the day I look forward to! When you and I can build sewing-machines instead of battle-ships, harvesters of crops instead of harvesters of men, plow-shares and telephones, schools and colleges, printing-presses and paper! When our merchant marine shall ply the great Pellucidarian seas, and cargoes of silks and typewriters

and books shall forge their ways where only hideous saurians have held sway since time began!"

"Amen!" said Perry.

And Dian, who was standing at my side, pressed my hand.

15.

CONQUEST AND PEACE

The fleet sailed directly for Hooja's island, coming to anchor at its north-eastern extremity before the flat-topped hill that had been Hooja's stronghold. I sent one of the prisoners ashore to demand an immediate surrender; but as he told me afterward they wouldn't believe all that he told them, so they congregated on the cliff-top and shot futile arrows at us.

In reply I had five of the feluccas cannonade them. When they scampered away at the sound of the terrific explosions and at sight of the smoke and the iron balls, I landed a couple of hundred red warriors and led them to the opposite end of the hill into the tunnel that ran to its summit. Here we met a little resistance; but a volley from the muzzle-loaders turned back those who disputed our right of way, and presently we gained the mesa. Here again we met resistance, but at last the remnant of Hooja's horde surrendered.

Juag was with me, and I lost no time in returning to him and his tribe the hilltop that had been their ancestral home for ages until they were robbed of it by Hooja. I created a kingdom of the island, making Juag king there. Before we sailed I went to Gr-gr-gr, chief of the beast-men, taking Juag with me. There the three of us arranged a code of laws that would permit the brute-folk and the human beings of the island to live in peace and harmony. Gr-gr-gr sent his son with me back to Sari, capital of my empire, that he might learn the ways of the human beings. I have hopes of turning this race into the greatest agriculturists of Pellucidar.

When I returned to the fleet I found that one of the islanders of Juag's tribe, who had been absent when we arrived, had just returned from the mainland with the news that a great army was encamped in the Land of Awful Shadow, and that they were threatening Thuria. I lost no time in weighing anchors and setting out for the continent, which we reached after a short and easy voyage.

From the deck of the Amoz I scanned the shore through the glasses that Perry had brought with him. When we were close enough for the glasses to be of value I saw that there was indeed a vast concourse of warriors entirely encircling the walled village of Goork, chief of the Thurians. As we approached smaller objects became distinguishable. It was then that I discovered numerous flags and pennants floating above the army of the besiegers.

I called Perry and passed the glasses to him.

"Ghak of Sari," I said.

Perry looked through the lenses of a moment, and then turned to me with a smile.

"The red, white, and blue of the empire," he said. "It is indeed your majesty's army."

It soon became apparent that we had been sighted by those on shore, for a great multitude of warriors had congregated along the beach watching us. We came to anchor as close in as we dared, which with our light feluccas was within easy speaking-distance of the shore. Ghak was there and his eyes were mighty wide, too; for, as he told us later, though he knew this must be Perry's fleet it was so wonderful to him that he could not believe the testimony of his own eyes even while he was watching it approach.

To give the proper effect to our meeting I commanded that each felucca fire twenty-one guns as a salute to His Majesty Ghak, King

of Sari. Some of the gunners, in the exuberance of their enthusiasm, fired solid shot; but fortunately they had sufficient good judgment to train their pieces on the open sea, so no harm was done. After this we landed — an arduous task since each felucca carried but a single light dugout.

I learned from Ghak that the Thurian chieftain, Goork, had been inclined to haughtiness, and had told Ghak, the Hairy One, that he knew nothing of me and cared less; but I imagine that the sight of the fleet and the sound of the guns brought him to his senses, for it was not long before he sent a deputation to me, inviting me to visit him in his village. Here he apologized for the treatment he had accorded me, very gladly swore allegiance to the empire, and received in return the title of king.

We remained in Thuria only long enough to arrange the treaty with Goork, among the other details of which was his promise to furnish the imperial army with a thousand lidi, or Thurian beasts of burden, and drivers for them. These were to accompany Ghak's army back to Sari by land, while the fleet sailed to the mouth of the great river from which Dian, Juag, and I had been blown.

The voyage was uneventful. We found the river easily, and sailed up it for many miles through as rich and wonderful a plain as I have ever seen. At the head of navigation we disembarked, leaving a sufficient guard for the feluccas, and marched the remaining distance to Sari.

Ghak's army, which was composed of warriors of all the original tribes of the federation, showing how successful had been his efforts to rehabilitate the empire, marched into Sari some time after we arrived. With them were the thousand lidi from Thuria.

At a council of the kings it was decided that we should at once commence the great war against the Mahars, for these haughty reptiles

presented the greatest obstacle to human progress within Pellucidar. I laid out a plan of campaign which met with the enthusiastic indorsement of the kings. Pursuant to it, I at once despatched fifty lidi to the fleet with orders to fetch fifty cannon to Sari. I also ordered the fleet to proceed at once to Anoroc, where they were to take aboard all the rifles and ammunition that had been completed since their departure, and with a full complement of men to sail along the coast in an attempt to find a passage to the inland sea near which lay the Mahars' buried city of Phutra.

Ja was sure that a large and navigable river connected the sea of Phutra with the Lural Az, and that, barring accident, the fleet would be before Phutra as soon as the land forces were.

At last the great army started upon its march. There were warriors from every one of the federated kingdoms. All were armed either with bow and arrows or muzzle-loaders, for nearly the entire Mezop contingent had been enlisted for this march, only sufficient having been left aboard the feluccas to man them properly. I divided the forces into divisions, regiments, battalions, companies, and even to platoons and sections, appointing the full complement of officers and noncommissioned officers. On the long march I schooled them in their duties, and as fast as one learned I sent him among the others as a teacher.

Each regiment was made up of about a thousand bowmen, and to each was temporarily attached a company of Mezop musketeers and a battery of artillery — the latter, our naval guns, mounted upon the broad backs of the mighty lidi. There was also one full regiment of Mezop musketeers and a regiment of primitive spearmen. The rest of the lidi that we brought with us were used for baggage animals and to transport our women and children, for we had brought them with us, as it was our intention to march from one Mahar city to another until

we had subdued every Mahar nation that menaced the safety of any kingdom of the empire.

Before we reached the plain of Phutra we were discovered by a company of Sagoths, who at first stood to give battle; but upon seeing the vast numbers of our army they turned and fled toward Phutra. The result of this was that when we came in sight of the hundred towers which mark the entrances to the buried city we found a great army of Sagoths and Mahars lined up to give us battle.

At a thousand yards we halted, and, placing our artillery upon a slight eminence at either flank, we commenced to drop solid shot among them. Ja, who was chief artillery officer, was in command of this branch of the service, and he did some excellent work, for his Mezop gunners had become rather proficient by this time. The Sagoths couldn't stand much of this sort of warfare, so they charged us, yelling like fiends. We let them come quite close, and then the musketeers who formed the first line opened up on them.

The slaughter was something frightful, but still the remnants of them kept on coming until it was a matter of hand-to-hand fighting. Here our spearmen were of value, as were also the crude iron swords with which most of the imperial warriors were armed.

We lost heavily in the encounter after the Sagoths reached us; but they were absolutely exterminated — not one remained even as a prisoner. The Mahars, seeing how the battle was going, had hastened to the safety of their buried city. When we had overcome their gorillamen we followed after them.

But here we were doomed to defeat, at least temporarily; for no sooner had the first of our troops descended into the subterranean avenues than many of them came stumbling and fighting their way back to the surface, half-choked by the fumes of some deadly gas that

the reptiles had liberated upon them. We lost a number of men here. Then I sent for Perry, who had remained discreetly in the rear, and had him construct a little affair that I had had in my mind against the possibility of our meeting with a check at the entrances to the underground city.

Under my direction he stuffed one of his cannon full of powder, small bullets, and pieces of stone, almost to the muzzle. Then he plugged the muzzle tight with a cone-shaped block of wood, hammered and jammed in as tight as it could be. Next he inserted a long fuse. A dozen men rolled the cannon to the top of the stairs leading down into the city, first removing it from its carriage. One of them then lit the fuse and the whole thing was given a shove down the stairway, while the detachment turned and scampered to a safe distance.

For what seemed a very long time nothing happened. We had commenced to think that the fuse had been put out while the piece was rolling down the stairway, or that the Mahars had guessed its purpose and extinguished it themselves, when the ground about the entrance rose suddenly into the air, to be followed by a terrific explosion and a burst of smoke and flame that shot high in company with dirt, stone, and fragments of cannon.

Perry had been working on two more of these giant bombs as soon as the first was completed. Presently we launched these into two of the other entrances. They were all that were required, for almost immediately after the third explosion a stream of Mahars broke from the exits furthest from us, rose upon their wings, and soared northward. A hundred men on lidi were despatched in pursuit, each lidi carrying two riflemen in addition to its driver. Guessing that the

inland sea, which lay not far north of Phutra, was their destination, I took a couple of regiments and followed.

A low ridge intervenes between the Phutra plain where the city lies, and the inland sea where the Mahars were wont to disport themselves in the cool waters. Not until we had topped this ridge did we get a view of the sea.

Then we beheld a scene that I shall never forget so long as I may live.

Along the beach were lined up the troop of lidi, while a hundred yards from shore the surface of the water was black with the long snouts and cold, reptilian eyes of the Mahars. Our savage Mezop riflemen, and the shorter, squatter, white-skinned Thurian drivers, shading their eyes with their hands, were gazing seaward beyond the Mahars, whose eyes were fastened upon the same spot. My heart leaped when I discovered that which was chaining the attention of them all. Twenty graceful feluccas were moving smoothly across the waters of the sea toward the reptilian horde!

The sight must have filled the Mahars with awe and consternation, for never had they seen the like of these craft before. For a time they seemed unable to do aught but gaze at the approaching fleet; but when the Mezops opened on them with their muskets the reptiles swam rapidly in the direction of the feluccas, evidently thinking that these would prove the easier to overcome. The commander of the fleet permitted them to approach within a hundred yards. Then he opened on them with all the cannon that could be brought to bear, as well as with the small arms of the sailors.

A great many of the reptiles were killed at the first volley. They wavered for a moment, then dived; nor did we see them again for a long time.

But finally they rose far out beyond the fleet, and when the feluccas came about and pursued them they left the water and flew away toward the north.

Following the fall of Phutra I visited Anoroc, where I found the people busy in the shipyards and the factories that Perry had established. I discovered something, too, that he had not told me of — something that seemed infinitely more promising than the powder-factory or the arsenal. It was a young man poring over one of the books I had brought back from the outer world! He was sitting in the log cabin that Perry had had built to serve as his sleeping quarters and office. So absorbed was he that he did not notice our entrance. Perry saw the look of astonishment in my eyes and smiled.

“I started teaching him the alphabet when we first reached the prospector, and were taking out its contents,” he explained. “He was much mystified by the books and anxious to know of what use they were. When I explained he asked me to teach him to read, and so I worked with him whenever I could. He is very intelligent and learns quickly. Before I left he had made great progress, and as soon as he is qualified he is going to teach others to read. It was mighty hard work getting started, though, for everything had to be translated into Pellucidarian.

“It will take a long time to solve this problem, but I think that by teaching a number of them to read and write English we shall then be able more quickly to give them a written language of their own.”

And this was the nucleus about which we were to build our great system of schools and colleges — this almost naked red warrior, sitting in Perry’s little cabin upon the island of Anoroc, picking out words letter by letter from a work on intensive farming. Now we have —

But I’ll get to all that before I finish.

While we were at Anoroc I accompanied Ja in an expedition to South Island, the southernmost of the three largest which form the Anoroc group — Perry had given it its name — where we made peace with the tribe there that had for long been hostile toward Ja. They were now glad enough to make friends with him and come into the federation. From there we sailed with sixty-five feluccas for distant Luana, the main island of the group where dwell the hereditary enemies of Anoroc.

Twenty-five of the feluccas were of a new and larger type than those with which Ja and Perry had sailed on the occasion when they chanced to find and rescue Dian and me. They were longer, carried much larger sails, and were considerably swifter. Each carried four guns instead of two, and these were so arranged that one or more of them could be brought into action no matter where the enemy lay.

The Luana group lies just beyond the range of vision from the mainland. The largest island of it alone is visible from Anoroc; but when we neared it we found that it comprised many beautiful islands, and that they were thickly populated. The Luanians had not, of course, been ignorant of all that had been going on in the domains of their nearest and dearest enemies. They knew of our feluccas and our guns, for several of their riding-parties had had a taste of both. But their principal chief, an old man, had never seen either. So, when he sighted us, he put out to overwhelm us, bringing with him a fleet of about a hundred large war-canoes, loaded to capacity with javelin-armed warriors. It was pitiful, and I told Ja as much. It seemed a shame to massacre these poor fellows if there was any way out of it.

To my surprise Ja felt much as I did. He said he had always hated to war with other Mezops when there were so many alien races to fight against. I suggested that we hail the chief and request a parley; but

when Ja did so the old fool thought that we were afraid, and with loud cries of exultation urged his warriors upon us.

So we opened up on them, but at my suggestion centered our fire upon the chief's canoe. The result was that in about thirty seconds there was nothing left of that war dugout but a handful of splinters, while its crew — those who were not killed — were struggling in the water, battling with the myriad terrible creatures that had risen to devour them.

We saved some of them, but the majority died just as had Hooja and the crew of his canoe that time our second shot capsized them.

Again we called to the remaining warriors to enter into a parley with us; but the chief's son was there and he would not, now that he had seen his father killed. He was all for revenge. So we had to open up on the brave fellows with all our guns; but it didn't last long at that, for there chanced to be wiser heads among the Luanians than their chief or his son had possessed. Presently, an old warrior who commanded one of the dugouts surrendered. After that they came in one by one until all had laid their weapons upon our decks.

Then we called together upon the flag-ship all our captains, to give the affair greater weight and dignity, and all the principal men of Luana. We had conquered them, and they expected either death or slavery; but they deserved neither, and I told them so. It is always my habit here in Pellucidar to impress upon these savage people that mercy is as noble a quality as physical bravery, and that next to the men who fight shoulder to shoulder with one, we should honor the brave men who fight against us, and if we are victorious, award them both the mercy and honor that are their due.

By adhering to this policy I have won to the federation many great and noble peoples, who under the ancient traditions of the inner world

would have been massacred or enslaved after we had conquered them; and thus I won the Luanians. I gave them their freedom, and returned their weapons to them after they had sworn loyalty to me and friendship and peace with Ja, and I made the old fellow, who had had the good sense to surrender, king of Luana, for both the old chief and his only son had died in the battle.

When I sailed away from Luana she was included among the kingdoms of the empire, whose boundaries were thus pushed eastward several hundred miles.

We now returned to Anoroc and thence to the mainland, where I again took up the campaign against the Mahars, marching from one great buried city to another until we had passed far north of Amoz into a country where I had never been. At each city we were victorious, killing or capturing the Sagoths and driving the Mahars further away.

I noticed that they always fled toward the north. The Sagoth prisoners we usually found quite ready to transfer their allegiance to us, for they are little more than brutes, and when they found that we could fill their stomachs and give them plenty of fighting, they were nothing loath to march with us against the next Mahar city and battle with men of their own race.

Thus we proceeded, swinging in a great half-circle north and west and south again until we had come back to the edge of the Lidi Plains north of Thuria. Here we overcame the Mahar city that had ravaged the Land of Awful Shadow for so many ages. When we marched on to Thuria, Goork and his people went mad with joy at the tidings we brought them.

During this long march of conquest we had passed through seven countries, peopled by primitive human tribes who had not yet heard of the federation, and succeeded in joining them all to the empire. It was

noticeable that each of these peoples had a Mahar city situated near by, which had drawn upon them for slaves and human food for so many ages that not even in legend had the population any folk-tale which did not in some degree reflect an inherent terror of the reptilians.

In each of these countries I left an officer and warriors to train them in military discipline, and prepare them to receive the arms that I intended furnishing them as rapidly as Perry's arsenal could turn them out, for we felt that it would be a long, long time before we should see the last of the Mahars. That they had flown north but temporarily until we should be gone with our great army and terrifying guns I was positive, and equally sure was I that they would presently return.

The task of ridding Pellucidar of these hideous creatures is one which in all probability will never be entirely completed, for their great cities must abound by the hundreds and thousands of the far-distant lands that no subject of the empire has ever laid eyes upon.

But within the present boundaries of my domain there are now none left that I know of, for I am sure we should have heard indirectly of any great Mahar city that had escaped us, although of course the imperial army has by no means covered the vast area which I now rule.

After leaving Thuria we returned to Sari, where the seat of government is located. Here, upon a vast, fertile plateau, overlooking the great gulf that runs into the continent from the Lural Az, we are building the great city of Sari. Here we are erecting mills and factories. Here we are teaching men and women the rudiments of agriculture. Here Perry has built the first printing-press, and a dozen young Sarians are teaching their fellows to read and write the language of Pellucidar.

We have just laws and only a few of them. Our people are happy because they are always working at something which they enjoy. There is no money, nor is any money value placed upon any commodity.

Perry and I were as one in resolving that the root of all evil should not be introduced into Pellucidar while we lived.

A man may exchange that which he produces for something which he desires that another has produced; but he cannot dispose of the thing he thus acquires. In other words, a commodity ceases to have pecuniary value the instant that it passes out of the hands of its producer. All excess reverts to government; and, as this represents the production of the people as a government, government may dispose of it to other peoples in exchange for that which they produce. Thus we are establishing a trade between kingdoms, the profits from which go to the betterment of the people — to building factories for the manufacture of agricultural implements, and machinery for the various trades we are gradually teaching the people.

Already Anoroc and Luana are vying with one another in the excellence of the ships they build. Each has several large shipyards. Anoroc makes gunpowder and mines iron ore, and by means of their ships they carry on a very lucrative trade with Thuria, Sari, and Amoz. The Thurians breed lidi, which, having the strength and intelligence of an elephant, make excellent draft animals.

Around Sari and Amoz the men are domesticating the great striped antelope, the meat of which is most delicious. I am sure that it will not be long before they will have them broken to harness and saddle. The horses of Pellucidar are far too diminutive for such uses, some species of them being little larger than fox-terriers.

Dian and I live in a great palace overlooking the gulf. There is no glass in our windows, for we have no windows, the walls rising but a few feet above the floor-line, the rest of the space being open to the ceilings; but we have a roof to shade us from the perpetual noon-day sun. Perry and I decided to set a style in architecture that would not

curse future generations with the white plague, so we have plenty of ventilation. Those of the people who prefer, still inhabit their caves, but many are building houses similar to ours.

At Greenwich we have located a town and an observatory — though there is nothing to observe but the stationary sun directly overhead. Upon the edge of the Land of Awful Shadow is another observatory, from which the time is flashed by wireless to every corner of the empire twenty-four times a day. In addition to the wireless, we have a small telephone system in Sari. Everything is yet in the early stages of development; but with the science of the outer-world twentieth century to draw upon we are making rapid progress, and with all the faults and errors of the outer world to guide us clear of dangers, I think that it will not be long before Pellucidar will become as nearly a Utopia as one may expect to find this side of heaven.

Perry is away just now, laying out a railway-line from Sari to Amoz. There are immense anthracite coal-fields at the head of the gulf not far from Sari, and the railway will tap these. Some of his students are working on a locomotive now. It will be a strange sight to see an iron horse puffing through the primeval jungles of the stone age, while cave bears, saber-toothed tigers, mastodons and the countless other terrible creatures of the past look on from their tangled lairs in wide-eyed astonishment.

We are very happy, Dian and I, and I would not return to the outer world for all the riches of all its princes. I am content here. Even without my imperial powers and honors I should be content, for have I not that greatest of all treasures, the love of a good woman — my wondrous empress, Dian the Beautiful?

BOOK III
TANAR OF PELLUCIDAR

PROLOGUE

Jason Gridley is a radio bug. Had he not been, this story never would have been written. Jason is twenty-three and scandalously good looking — too good looking to be a bug of any sort. As a matter of fact, he does not seem buggish at all — just a normal, sane, young American, who knows a great deal about many things in addition to radio; aeronautics, for example, and golf, and tennis, and polo.

But this is not Jason's story — he is only an incident — an important incident in my life that made this story possible, and so, with a few more words of explanation, we shall leave Jason to his tubes and waves and amplifiers, concerning which he knows everything and I nothing.

Jason is an orphan with an income, and after he graduated from Stanford, he came down and bought a couple of acres at Tarzana, and that is how and when I met him.

While he was building he made my office his headquarters and was often in my study and afterward I returned the compliment by visiting him in his new "lab," as he calls it — a quite large room at the rear of his home, a quiet, restful room in a quiet, restful house of the Spanish-American farm type — or we rode together in the Santa Monica Mountains in the cool air of early morning.

Jason is experimenting with some new principle of radio concerning which the less I say the better it will be for my reputation, since I know nothing whatsoever about it and am likely never to.

Perhaps I am too old, perhaps I am too dumb, perhaps I am just not interested — I prefer to ascribe my abysmal and persistent

ignorance of all things pertaining to radio to the last state; that of disinterestedness; it salves my pride.

I do know this, however, because Jason has told me, that the idea he is playing with suggests an entirely new and unsuspected — well, let us call it wave.

He says the idea was suggested to him by the vagaries of static, and in groping around in search of some device to eliminate this he discovered in the ether an undercurrent that operated according to no previously known scientific laws.

At his Tarzana home he has erected a station and a few miles away, at the back of my ranch, another. Between these stations we talk to one another through some strange, ethereal medium that seems to pass through all other waves and all other stations, unsuspected and entirely harmless — so harmless is it that it has not the slightest effect upon Jason's regular set, standing in the same room and receiving over the same aerial.

But this, which is not very interesting to anyone except Jason, is all by the way of getting to the beginning of the amazing narrative of the adventures of Tanar of Pellucidar.

Jason and I were sitting in his "lab" one evening discussing, as we often did, innumerable subjects, from "cabbages to kings," and coming back, as Jason usually did, to the Gridley wave, which is what we have named it.

Much of the time Jason kept on his ear phones, than which there is no greater discourager of conversation. But this does not irk me as much as most of the conversations one has to listen to through life. I like long silences and my own thoughts.

Presently, Jason removed the headpiece. "It is enough to drive a fellow to drink!" he exclaimed.

“What?” I asked.

“I am getting that same stuff again,” he said. “I can hear voices, very faintly, but, unmistakably, human voices. They are speaking a language unknown to man. It is maddening.”

“Mars, perhaps,” I suggested, “or Venus.”

He knitted his brows and then suddenly smiled one of his quick smiles. “Or Pellucidar.” I shrugged.

“Do you know, Admiral,” he said (he calls me Admiral because of a yachting cap I wear at the beach), “that when I was a kid I used to believe every word of those crazy stories of yours about Mars and Pellucidar. The inner world at the earth’s core was as real to me as the High Sierras, the San Joaquin Valley, or the Golden Gate, and I felt that I knew the twin cities of Helium better than I did Los Angeles.

“I saw nothing improbable at all in that trip of David Innes and old man Perry through the earth’s crust to Pellucidar. Yes, sir, that was all gospel to me when I was a kid.”

“And now you are twenty-three and know that it can’t be true,” I said, with a smile.

“You are trying to tell me it is true, are you?” he demanded, laughing.

“I never have told anyone that it is true,” I replied; “I let people think what they think, but I reserve the right to do likewise.”

“Why, you know perfectly well that it would be impossible for that iron mole of Perry’s to have penetrated five hundred miles of the earth’s crust, you know there is no inner world peopled by strange reptiles and men of the stone age, you know there is no Emperor of Pellucidar.” Jason was becoming excited, but his sense of humor came to our rescue and he laughed.

“I like to believe that there is a Dian the Beautiful,” I said.

“Yes,” he agreed, “but I am sorry you killed off Hooja the Sly One. He was a corking villain.”

“There are always plenty of villains,” I reminded him.

“They help the girls to keep their ‘figgers’ and their school girl complexions,” he said.

“How?” I asked.

“The exercise they get from being pursued.”

“You are making fun of me,” I reproached him, “but remember, please, that I am but a simple historian. If damsels flee and villains pursue I must truthfully record the fact.”

“Baloney!” he exclaimed in the pure university English of America.

Jason replaced his headpiece and I returned to the perusal of the narrative of an ancient liar, who should have made a fortune out of the credulity of book readers, but seems not to have. Thus we sat for some time.

Presently Jason removed his ear phones and turned toward me. “I was getting music,” he said; “strange, weird music, and then suddenly there came loud shouts and it seemed that I could hear blows struck and there were screams and the sound of shots.”

“Perry, you know, was experimenting with gunpowder down there below, in Pellucidar,” I reminded Jason, with a grin; but he was inclined to be serious and did not respond in kind.

“You know, of course,” he said, “that there really has been a theory of an inner world for many years.”

“Yes,” I replied, “I have read works expounding and defending such a theory.”

“It supposes polar openings leading into the interior of the earth,” said Jason.

“And it is substantiated by many seemingly irrefutable scientific

facts,” I reminded him — “open polar sea, warmer water farthest north, tropical vegetation floating southward from the polar regions, the northern lights, the magnetic pole, the persistent stories of the Eskimos that they are descended from a race that came from a warm country far to the north.”

“I’d like to make a try for one of the polar openings,” mused Jason as he replaced the ear phones.

Again there was a long silence, broken at last by a sharp exclamation from Jason. He pushed an extra headpiece toward me.

“Listen!” he exclaimed.

As I adjusted the ear phones I heard that which we had never before received on the Gridley wave — code! No wonder that Jason Gridley was excited, since there was no station on earth, other than his own, attuned to the Gridley wave.

Code! What could it mean? I was torn by conflicting emotions — to tear off the ear phones and discuss this amazing thing with Jason, and to keep them on and listen.

I am not what one might call an expert in the intricacies of code, but I had no difficulty in understanding the simple signal of two letters, repeated in groups of three, with a pause after each group: “D.I., D.I., D.I.,” pause; “D.I., D.I., D.I.,” pause.

I glanced up at Jason. His eyes, filled with puzzled questioning, met mine, as though to ask, what does it mean?

The signals ceased and Jason touched his own key, sending his initials, “J.G., J.G., J.G.” in the same grouping that we had received the D.I. signal. Almost instantly he was interrupted — you could feel the excitement of the sender.

“D.I., D.I., D.I., Pellucidar,” rattled against our eardrums like

machine gun fire. Jason and I sat in dumb amazement, staring at one another.

“It is a hoax!” I exclaimed, and Jason, reading my lips, shook his head.

“How can it be a hoax?” he asked. “There is no other station on earth equipped to send or to receive over the Gridley wave, so there can be no means of perpetrating such a hoax.”

Our mysterious station was on the air again: “If you get this, repeat my signal,” and he signed off with “D.I., D.I., D.I.”

“That would be David Innes,” mused Jason.

“Emperor of Pellucidar,” I added.

Jason sent the message, “D.I., D.I., D.I.,” followed by, “what station is this,” and “who is sending?”

“This is the Imperial Observatory at Greenwich, Pellucidar; Abner Perry sending. Who are you?”

“This is the private experimental laboratory of Jason Gridley, Tarzana, California; Gridley sending,” replied Jason.

“I want to get into communication with Edgar Rice Burroughs; do you know him?”

“He is sitting here, listening in with me,” replied Jason.

“Thank God, if that is true, but how am I to know that it is true?” demanded Perry.

I hastily scribbled a note to Jason: “Ask him if he recalls the fire in his first gunpowder factory and that the building would have been destroyed had they not extinguished the fire by shoveling his gunpowder onto it?”

Jason grinned as he read the note, and sent it.

“It was unkind of David to tell of that,” came back the reply, “but

now I know that Burroughs is indeed there, as only he could have known of that incident. I have a long message for him. Are you ready?"

"Yes," replied Jason.

"Then stand by."

And this is the message that Abner Perry sent from the bowels of the earth; from The Empire of Pellucidar.

INTRODUCTION

It must be some fifteen years since David Innes and I broke through the inner surface of the earth's crust and emerged into savage Pellucidar, but when a stationary sun hangs eternally at high noon and there is no restless moon and there are no stars, time is measureless and so it may have been a hundred years ago or one. Who knows?

Of course, since David returned to earth and brought back many of the blessings of civilization we have had the means to measure time, but the people did not like it. They found that it put restrictions and limitations upon them that they never had felt before and they came to hate it and ignore it until David, in the goodness of his heart, issued an edict abolishing time in Pellucidar.

It seemed a backward step to me, but I am resigned now, and, perhaps, happier, for when all is said and done, time is a hard master, as you of the outer world, who are slaves of the sun, would be forced to admit were you to give the matter thought.

Here, in Pellucidar, we eat when we are hungry, we sleep when we are tired, we set out upon journeys when we leave and we arrive at our destinations when we get there; nor are we old because the earth has circled the sun seventy times since our birth, for we do not know that this has occurred.

Perhaps I have been here fifteen years, but what matter. When I came I knew nothing of radio — my researches and studies were along other lines — but when David came back from the outer world he brought many scientific works and from these I learned all that I know of radio, which has been enough to permit me to erect two successful

stations; one here at Greenwich and one at the capital of The Empire of Pellucidar.

But, try as I would, I never could get anything from the outer world, and after a while I gave up trying, convinced that the earth's crust was impervious to radio.

In fact we used our stations but seldom, for, after all, Pellucidar is only commencing to emerge from the stone age, and in the economy of the stone age there seems to be no crying need for radio.

But sometimes I played with it and upon several occasions I thought that I heard voices and other sounds that were not of Pellucidar. They were too faint to be more than vague suggestions of intriguing possibilities, but yet they did suggest something most alluring, and so I set myself to making changes and adjustments until this wonderful thing that has happened but now was made possible.

And my delight in being able to talk with you is second only to my relief in being able to appeal to you for help. David is in trouble. He is a captive in the north, or what he and I call north, for there are no points of compass known to Pellucidarians.

I have heard from him, however. He has sent me a message and in it he suggests a startling theory that would make aid from the outer crust possible if — but first let me tell you the whole story; the story of the disaster that befell David Innes and what led up to it and then you will be in a better position to judge as to the practicability of sending succor to David from the outer crust.

The whole thing dates from our victories over the Mahars, the once dominant race of Pellucidar. When, with our well organized armies, equipped with firearms and other weapons unknown to the Mahars or their gorilla-like mercenaries, the Sagoths, we defeated the reptilian monsters and drove their slimy hordes from the confines of The

Empire, the human race of the inner world for the first time in its history took its rightful place among the orders of creation.

But our victories laid the foundation for the disaster that has overwhelmed us.

For a while there was no Mahar within the boundaries of any of the kingdoms that constitute The Empire of Pellucidar; but presently we had word of them here and there — small parties living upon the shores of sea or lake far from the haunts of man.

They gave us no trouble — their old power had crumbled beyond recall; their Sagoths were now numbered among the regiments of The Empire; the Mahars had no longer the means to harm us; yet we did not want them among us. They are eaters of human flesh and we had no assurance that lone hunters would be safe from their voracious appetites.

We wanted them to be gone and so David sent a force against them, but with orders to treat with them first and attempt to persuade them to leave The Empire peacefully rather than embroil themselves in another war that might mean total extermination.

Sagoths accompanied the expedition, for they alone of all the creatures of Pellucidar can converse in the sixth sense, fourth dimension language of the Mahars.

The story that the expedition brought back was rather pitiful and aroused David's sympathies, as stories of persecution and unhappiness always do.

After the Mahars had been driven from The Empire they had sought a haven where they might live in peace. They assured us that they had accepted the inevitable in a spirit of philosophy and entertained no thoughts of renewing their warfare against the human race or in any way attempting to win back their lost ascendancy.

Far away upon the shores of a mighty ocean, where there were no signs of man, they settled in peace, but their peace was not for long. A great ship came, reminding the Mahars of the first ships they had seen — the ships that David and I had built — the first ships, as far as we knew, that ever had sailed the silent seas of Pellucidar.

Naturally it was a surprise to us to learn that there was a race within the inner world sufficiently far advanced to be able to build ships, but there was another surprise in store for us. The Mahars assured us that these people possessed firearms and that because of their ships and their firearms they were fully as formidable as we and they were much more ferocious; killing for the pure sport of slaughter.

After the first ship had sailed away the Mahars thought they might be allowed to live in peace, but this dream was short lived, as presently the first ship returned and with it were many others manned by thousands of bloodthirsty enemies against whose weapons the great reptiles had little or no defense.

Seeking only escape from man, the Mahars left their new home and moved back a short distance toward The Empire, but now their enemies seemed bent only upon persecution; they hunted them, and when they found them the Mahars were again forced to fall back before the ferocity of their continued attacks.

Eventually they took refuge within the boundaries of The Empire, and scarcely had David's expedition to them returned with its report when we had definite proof of the veracity of their tale through messages from our northernmost frontier bearing stories of invasion by a strange, savage race of white men.

Frantic was the message from Goork, King of Thuria, whose far-flung frontier stretches beyond the Land of Awful Shadow.

Some of his hunters had been surprised and all but a few killed or captured by the invaders.

He had sent warriors, then, against them, but these, too, had met a like fate, being greatly outnumbered, and so he sent a runner to David begging the Emperor to rush troops to his aid.

Scarcely had the first runner arrived when another came, bearing tidings of the capture and sack of the principal town of the Kingdom of Thuria; and then a third arrived from the commander of the invaders demanding that David come with tribute or they would destroy his country and slay the prisoners they held as hostages.

In reply David dispatched Tanar, son of Ghak, to demand the release of all prisoners and the departure of the invaders.

Immediately runners were sent to the nearest kingdoms of The Empire and ere Tanar had reached the Land of Awful Shadow, ten thousand warriors were marching along the same trail to enforce the demands of the Emperor and drive the savage foe from Pellucidar.

As David approached the Land of Awful Shadow that lies beneath Pellucidar's mysterious satellite, a great column of smoke was observable in the horizonless distance ahead.

It was not necessary to urge the tireless warriors to greater speed, for all who saw guessed that the invaders had taken another village and put it to the torch.

And then came the refugees — women and children only — and behind them a thin line of warriors striving to hold back swarthy, bearded strangers, armed with strange weapons that resembled ancientarquebuses with bell-shaped muzzles — huge, unwieldy things that belched smoke and flame and stones and bits of metal.

That the Pellucidarians, outnumbered ten to one, were able to hold

back their savage foes at all was due to the more modern firearms that David and I had taught them to make and use.

Perhaps half the warriors of Thuria were armed with these and they were all that saved them from absolute rout, and, perhaps, total annihilation.

Loud were the shouts of joy when the first of the refugees discovered and recognized the force that had come to their delivery.

Goork and his people had been wavering in allegiance to The Empire, as were several other distant kingdoms, but I believe that this practical demonstration of the value of the Federation ended their doubts forever and left the people of the Land of Awful Shadow and their king the most loyal subjects that David possessed.

The effect upon the enemy of the appearance of ten thousand well-armed warriors was quickly apparent. They halted, and, as we advanced, they withdrew, but though they retreated they gave us a good fight.

David learned from Goork that Tanar had been retained as a hostage, but though he made several attempts to open negotiations with the enemy for the purpose of exchanging some prisoners that had fallen into our hands, for Tanar and other Pellucidarians, he never was able to do so.

Our forces drove the invaders far beyond the limits of The Empire to the shores of a distant sea, where, with difficulty and the loss of many men, they at last succeeded in embarking their depleted forces on ships that were as archaic in design as were their ancient harquebuses.

These ships rose to exaggerated heights at stem and bow, the sterns being built up in several stories, or housed decks, one atop another. There was much carving in seemingly intricate designs everywhere

above the water line and each ship carried at her prow a figurehead painted, like the balance of the ship, in gaudy colors — usually a life size or a heroic figure of a naked woman or a mermaid.

The men themselves were equally bizarre and colorful, wearing gay cloths about their heads, wide sashes of bright colors and huge boots with flapping tops — those that were not half naked and barefoot.

Besides their harquebuses they carried huge pistols and knives stuck in their belts and at their hips were cutlasses. Altogether, with their bushy whiskers and fierce faces, they were at once a bad looking and a picturesque lot.

From some of the last prisoners he took during the fighting at the seashore, David learned that Tanar was still alive and that the chief of the invaders had determined to take him home with him in the hope that he could learn from Tanar the secrets of our superior weapons and gunpowder, for, notwithstanding my first failures, I had, and not without some pride, finally achieved a gunpowder that would not only burn, but that would ignite with such force as to be quite satisfactory. I am now perfecting a noiseless, smokeless powder, though honesty compels me to confess that my first experiments have not been entirely what I had hoped they might be, the first batch detonated having nearly broken my ear-drums and so filled my eyes with smoke that I thought I had been blinded.

When David saw the enemy ships sailing away with Tanar he was sick with grief, for Tanar always has been an especial favorite of the Emperor and his gracious Empress, Dian the Beautiful. He was like a son to them.

We had no ships upon this sea and David could not follow with his army; neither, being David, could he abandon the son of his best

friend to a savage enemy before he had exhausted every resource at his command in an effort toward rescue.

In addition to the prisoners that had fallen into his hands David had captured one of the small boats that the enemy had used in embarking his forces, and this it was that suggested to David the mad scheme upon which he embarked.

The boat was about sixteen feet long and was equipped with both oars and a sail. It was broad of beam and had every appearance of being staunch and seaworthy, though pitifully small in which to face the dangers of an unknown sea, peopled, as are all the waters of Pellucidar, with huge monsters possessing short tempers and long appetites.

Standing upon the shore, gazing after the diminishing outlines of the departing ships, David reached his decision. Surrounding him were the captains and the kings of the Federated Kingdoms of Pellucidar and behind these ten thousand warriors, leaning upon their arms. To one side the sullen prisoners, heavily guarded, gazed after their departing comrades, with what sensations of hopelessness and envy one may guess.

David turned toward his people. "Those departing ships have borne away Tanar, the son of Ghak, and perhaps a score more of the young men of Pellucidar. It is beyond reason to expect that the enemy ever will bring our comrades back to us, but it is easy to imagine the treatment they will receive at the hands of this savage, bloodthirsty race.

"We may not abandon them while a single avenue of pursuit remains open to us. Here is that avenue." He waved his hand across the broad ocean. "And here the means of traversing it." He pointed to the small boat.

“It would carry scarce twenty men,” cried one, who stood near the Emperor.

“It need carry but three,” replied David, “for it will sail to rescue, not by force, but by strategy; or perhaps only to locate the stronghold of the enemy, that we may return and lead a sufficient force upon it to overwhelm it.”

“I shall go,” concluded the Emperor. “Who will accompany me?”

Instantly every man within hearing of his voice, saving the prisoners only, flashed a weapon above his head and pressed forward to offer his services. David smiled.

“I knew as much,” he said, “but I cannot take you all. I shall need only one and that shall be Ja of Anoroc, the greatest sailor of Pellucidar.”

A great shout arose, for Ja, the King of Anoroc, who is also the chief officer of the navy of Pellucidar, is vastly popular throughout The Empire, and, though all were disappointed in not being chosen, yet they appreciated the wisdom of David’s selection.

“But two is too small a number to hope for success,” argued Ghak, “and I, the father of Tanar, should be permitted to accompany you.”

“Numbers, such as we might crowd in that little boat, would avail us nothing,” replied David, “so why risk a single additional life? If twenty could pass through the unknown dangers that lie ahead of us, two may do the same, while with fewer men we can carry a far greater supply of food and water against the unguessed extent of the great sea that we face and the periods of calm and the long search.”

“But two are too few to man the boat,” expostulated another, “and Ghak is right — the father of Tanar should be among his rescuers.”

“Ghak is needed by The Empire,” replied David. “He must remain

to command the armies for the Empress until I return, but there shall be a third who will embark with us.”

“Who?” demanded Ghak.

“One of the prisoners,” replied David. “For his freedom we should readily find one willing to guide us to the country of the enemy.”

Nor was this difficult since every prisoner volunteered when the proposal was submitted to them.

David chose a young fellow who said his name was Fitt and who seemed to possess a more open and honest countenance than any of his companions.

And then came the provisioning of the boat. Bladders were filled with fresh water, and quantities of corn and dried fish and jerked meat, as well as vegetables and fruits, were packed into other bladders, and all were stored in the boat until it seemed that she might carry no more. For three men the supplies might have been adequate for a year’s voyage upon the outer crust, where time enters into all calculations.

The prisoner, Fitt, who was to accompany David and Ja assured David that one fourth the quantity of supplies would be ample and that there were points along the route they might take where their water supply could be replenished and where game abounded, as well as native fruits, nuts and vegetables, but David would not cut down by a single ounce the supplies that he had decided upon.

As the three were about to embark David had a last word with Ghak.

“You have seen the size and the armament of the enemy ships, Ghak,” he said. “My last injunction to you is to build at once a fleet that can cope successfully with these great ships of the enemy and while the fleet is building — and it must be built upon the shores of this sea — send expeditions forth to search for a waterway from this

ocean to our own. Can you find it, all of our ships can be utilized and the building of the greater navy accelerated by utilizing the shipyards of Anoroc.

“When you have completed and manned fifty ships set forth to our rescue if we have not returned by then. Do not destroy these prisoners, but preserve them well for they alone can guide you to their country.”

And then David I, Emperor of Pellucidar, and Ja, King of Anoroc, with the prisoner, Fitt, boarded the tiny boat; friendly hands pushed them out upon the long, oily swells of a Pellucidarian sea; ten thousand throats cheered them upon their way and ten thousand pairs of eyes watched them until they had melted into the mist of the upcurving, horizonless distance of a Pellucidarian seascape.

David had departed upon a vain but glorious adventure, and, in the distant capital of The Empire, Dian the Beautiful would be weeping.

1.

STELLARA

The great ship trembled to the recoil of the cannon; the rattle of musketry. The roar of the guns aboard her sister ships and the roar of her own were deafening. Below decks the air was acrid with the fumes of burnt powder.

Tanar of Pellucidar, chained below with other prisoners, heard these sounds and smelled the smoke. He heard the rattle of the anchor chain; he felt the straining of the mast to which his shackles were bent and the altered motion of the hull told him that the ship was under way.

Presently the firing ceased and the regular rising and falling of the ship betokened that it was on its course. In the darkness of the hold Tanar could see nothing. Sometimes the prisoners spoke to one another, but their thoughts were not happy ones, and so, for the most part, they remained silent — waiting. For what?

They grew very hungry and very thirsty. By this they knew that the ship was far at sea. They knew nothing of time. They only knew that they were hungry and thirsty and that the ship should be far at sea — far out upon an unknown sea, setting its course for an unknown port.

Presently a hatch was raised and men came with food and water — poor, rough food and water that smelled badly and tasted worse; but it was water and they were thirsty.

One of the men said: "Where is he who is called Tanar?"

"I am Tanar," replied the son of Ghak.

"You are wanted on deck," said the man, and with a huge key he

unlocked the massive, hand-wrought lock that held Tanar chained to the mast. "Follow me!"

The bright light of Pellucidar's perpetual day blinded the Sarian as he clambered to the deck from the dark hole in which he had been confined and it was a full minute before his eyes could endure the light, but his guard hustled him roughly along and Tanar was already stumbling up the long stairs leading to the high deck at the ship's stem before he regained the use of his eyes.

As he mounted the highest deck he saw the chiefs of the Korsar horde assembled and with them were two women. One appeared elderly and ill favored, but the other was young and beautiful, but for neither did Tanar have any eyes — he was interested only in the enemy men, for these he could fight, these he might kill, which was the sole interest that an enemy could hold for Tanar, the Sarian, and being what he was Tanar could not fight women, not even enemy women; but he could ignore them, and did.

He was led before a huge fellow whose bushy whiskers almost hid his face — a great, blustering fellow with a scarlet scarf bound about his head. But for an embroidered, sleeveless jacket, open at the front, the man was naked above the waist, about which was wound another gaudy sash into which were stuck two pistols and as many long knives, while at his side dangled a cutlass, the hilt of which was richly ornamented with inlays of pearl and semiprecious stones.

A mighty man was The Cid, chief of the Korsars — a burly, blustering, bully of a man, whose position among the rough and quarrelsome Korsars might be maintained only by such as he.

Surrounding him upon the high poop of his ship was a company of beefy ruffians of similar mold, while far below, in the waist of the vessel, a throng of lesser cutthroats, the common sailors, escaped from

the dangers and demands of an arduous campaign, relaxed according to their various whims.

Stark brutes were most of these, naked but for shorts and the inevitable gaudy sashes and head cloths — an unlovely company, yet picturesque.

At The Cid's side stood a younger man who well could boast as hideous a countenance as any sun ever shone upon, for across a face that might have taxed even a mother's love, ran a repulsive scar from above the left eye to below the right hand corner of the mouth, cleaving the nose with a deep, red gash. The left eye was lidless and gazed perpetually upward and outward, as a dead eye might, while the upper lip was permanently drawn upward at the right side in a sardonic sneer that exposed a single fang-like tooth. No, Bohar the Bloody was not beautiful.

Before these two, The Cid and The Bloody One, Tanar was roughly dragged.

"They call you Tanar?" bellowed The Cid.

Tanar nodded.

"And you are the son of a king!" and he laughed loudly. "With a ship's company I could destroy your father's entire kingdom and make a slave of him, as I have of his son."

"You had many ship's companies," replied Tanar; "but I did not see any of them destroying the kingdom of Sari. The army that chased them into the ocean was commanded by my father, under the Emperor."

The Cid scowled. "I have made men walk the plank for less than that," he growled.

"I do not know what you mean," said Tanar.

"You shall," barked The Cid; "and then, by the beard of the sea

god, you'll keep a civil tongue in your head. Hey!" he shouted to one of his officers, "have a prisoner fetched and the plank run out. We'll show this son of a king who The Cid is and that he is among real men now."

"Why fetch another?" demanded Bohar the Bloody. "This fellow can walk and learn his lesson at the same time."

"But he could not profit by it," replied The Cid.

"Since when did The Cid become a dry nurse to an enemy?" demanded Bohar, with a sneer.

Without a word The Cid wheeled and swung an ugly blow to Bohar's chin, and as the man went down the chief whipped a great pistol from his sash and stood over him, the muzzle pointed at Bohar's head.

"Perhaps that will knock your crooked face straight or bump some brains into your thick head," roared The Cid.

Bohar lay on his back glaring up at his chief.

"Who is your master?" demanded The Cid.

"You are," growled Bohar.

"Then get up and keep a civil tongue in your head," ordered The Cid.

As Bohar arose he turned a scowling face upon Tanar. It was as though his one good eye had gathered all the hate and rage and venom in the wicked heart of the man and was concentrating them upon the Sarian, the indirect cause of his humiliation, and from that instant Tanar knew that Bohar the Bloody hated him with a personal hatred distinct from any natural antipathy that he might have felt for an alien and an enemy.

On the lower deck men were eagerly running a long plank out over

the starboard rail and making the inboard end fast to cleats with stout lines.

From an opened hatch others were dragging a strapping prisoner from the kingdom of Thuria, who had been captured in the early fighting in the Land of Awful Shadow.

The primitive warrior held his head high and showed no terror in the presence of his rough captors. Tanar, looking down upon him from the upper deck, was proud of this fellow man of the Empire. The Cid was watching, too.

“That tribe needs taming,” he said.

The younger of the two women, both of whom had stepped to the edge of the deck and were looking down upon the scene in the waist, turned to The Cid.

“They seem brave men; all of them,” she said. “It is a pity to kill one needlessly.”

“Poof! girl,” exclaimed The Cid. “What do you know of such things? It is the blood of your mother that speaks. By the beards of the gods, I would that you had more of your father’s blood in your veins.”

“It is brave blood, the blood of my mother,” replied the girl, “for it does not fear to be itself before all men. The blood of my father dares not reveal its good to the eyes of men because it fears ridicule. It boasts of its courage to hide its cowardice.”

The Cid swore a mighty oath. “You take advantage of our relationship, Stellara,” he said, “but do not forget that there is a limit beyond which even you may not go with The Cid, who brooks no insults.”

The girl laughed. “Reserve that talk for those who fear you,” she said.

During this conversation, Tanar, who was standing near, had an opportunity to observe the girl more closely and was prompted to

do so by the nature of her remarks and the quiet courage of her demeanor. For the first time he noticed her hair, which was like gold in warm sunlight, and because the women of his own country were nearly all dark haired the color of her hair impressed him. He thought it very lovely and when he looked more closely at her features he realized that they, too, were lovely, with a sunny, golden loveliness that seemed to reflect like qualities of heart and character. There was a certain feminine softness about her that was sometimes lacking in the sturdy, self-reliant, primitive women of his own race. It was not in any sense a weakness, however, as was evidenced by her fearless attitude toward The Cid and by the light of courage that shone from her brave eyes. Intelligent eyes they were, too — brave, intelligent and beautiful.

But there Tanar's interest ceased and he was repulsed by the thought that this woman belonged to the uncouth bully, who ruled with an iron hand the whiskered brutes of the great fleet, for The Cid's reference to their relationship left no doubt in the mind of the Sarian that the woman was his mate.

And now the attention of all was focused on the actors in the tragedy below. Men had bound the wrists of the prisoner together behind his back and placed a blindfold across his eyes.

"Watch below, son of a king," said The Cid to Tanar, "and you will know what it means to walk the plank."

"I am watching," said Tanar, "and I see that it takes many of your people to make one of mine do this thing, whatever it may be."

The girl laughed, but The Cid scowled more deeply, while Bohar cast a venomous glance at Tanar.

Now men with drawn knives and sharp pikes lined the plank on either side of the ship's rail and others lifted the prisoner to the inboard end so that he faced the opposite end of the plank that

protruded far out over the sea, where great monsters of the deep cut the waves with giant backs as they paralleled the ship's course — giant saurians, long extinct upon the outer crust.

Prodding the defenseless man with knife and pike they goaded him forward along the narrow plank to the accompaniment of loud oaths and vulgar jests and hoarse laughter.

Erect and proud, the Thurian marched fearlessly to his doom. He made no complaint and when he reached the outer end of the plank and his foot found no new place beyond he made no outcry. Just for an instant he drew back his foot and hesitated and then, silently, he leaped far out, and, turning, dove head foremost into the sea.

Tanar turned his eyes away and it chanced that he turned them in the direction of the girl. To his surprise he saw that she, too, had refused to look at the last moment and in her face, turned toward his, he saw an expression of suffering.

Could it be that this woman of The Cid's brutal race felt sympathy and sorrow for a suffering enemy? Tanar doubted it. More likely that something she had eaten that day had disagreed with her.

"Now," cried The Cid, "you have seen a man walk the plank and know what I may do with you, if I choose."

Tanar shrugged. "I hope I may be as indifferent to my fate as was my comrade," he said, "for you certainly got little enough sport out of him."

"If I turn you over to Bohar we shall have sport," replied The Cid. "He has other means of enlivening a dull day that far surpass the tame exercise on the plank."

The girl turned angrily upon The Cid. "You shall not do that!" she cried. "You promised me that you would not torture any prisoners while I was with the fleet."

“If he behaves I shall not,” said The Cid, “but if he does not I shall turn him over to Bohar the Bloody. Do not forget that I am Chief of Korsar and that even you may be punished if you interfere!”

Again the girl laughed. “You can frighten the others, Chief of Korsar,” she said, “but not me.”

“If she were mine,” muttered Bohar threateningly, but the girl interrupted him.

“I am not, nor ever shall be,” she said.

“Do not be too sure of that,” growled The Cid. “I can give you to whom I please; let the matter drop.” He turned to the Sarian prisoner. “What is your name, son of a king?” he asked.

“Tanar.”

“Listen well, Tanar,” said The Cid impressively. “Our prisoners do not live beyond the time that they be of service to us. Some of you will be kept to exhibit to the people of Korsar, after which they will be of little use to me, but you can purchase life and, perhaps, freedom.”

“How?” demanded Tanar.

“Your people were armed with weapons far better than ours,” explained The Cid; “your powder was more powerful and more dependable. Half the time ours fails to ignite at the first attempt.”

“That must be embarrassing,” remarked Tanar.

“It is fatal,” said The Cid.

“But what has it to do with me?” asked the prisoner.

“If you will teach us how to make better weapons and such powder as your people have you shall be spared and shall have your freedom.”

Tanar made no reply — he was thinking — thinking of the supremacy that their superior weapons gave his people — thinking of the fate that lay in store for him and for those poor devils in the dark, foul hole below deck.

“Well?” demanded The Cid.

“Will you spare the others, too?” he asked.

“Why should I?”

“I shall need their help,” said Tanar. “I do not know all that is necessary to make the weapons and the powder.”

As a matter of fact he knew nothing about the manufacture of either, but he saw here a chance to save his fellow prisoners, or at least to delay their destruction and gain time in which they might find means to escape, nor did he hesitate to deceive The Cid, for is not all fair in war?

“Very well,” said the Korsar chief; “if you and they give me no trouble you shall all live — provided you teach us how to make weapons and powder like your own.”

“We cannot live in the filthy hole in which we are penned,” retorted the Sarian; “neither can we live without food. Soon we shall all sicken and die. We are people of the open air — we cannot be smothered in dark holes filled with vermin and be starved, and live.”

“You shall not be returned to the hole,” said The Cid. “There is no danger that you will escape.”

“And the others?” demanded Tanar.

“They remain where they are!”

“They will all die; and without them I cannot make powder,” Tanar reminded him.

The Cid scowled. “You would have my ship overrun with enemies,” he growled.

“They are unarmed.”

“Then they certainly would be killed,” said The Cid. “No one would survive long among that pack an’ he were not armed;” he waved a hand contemptuously toward the half naked throng below.

“Then leave the hatches off and give them decent air and more and better food.”

“I’ll do it,” said The Cid. “Bohar, have the forward hatches removed, place a guard there with orders to kill any prisoner who attempts to come on deck and any of our men who attempts to go below; see, too, that the prisoners get the same rations as our own men.”

It was with a feeling of relief that amounted almost to happiness that Tanar saw Bohar depart to carry out the orders of The Cid, for he knew well that his people could not long survive the hideous and unaccustomed confinement and the vile food that had been his lot and theirs since they had been brought aboard the Korsar ship.

Presently The Cid went to his cabin and Tanar, left to his own devices, walked to the stem and leaning on the rail gazed into the hazy upcurving distance where lay the land of the Sarians, his land, beyond the haze. Far astern a small boat rose and fell with the great, long billows. Fierce denizens of the deep constantly threatened it, storms menaced it, but on it forged in the wake of the great fleet — a frail and tiny thing made strong and powerful by the wills of three men.

But this Tanar did not see, for the mist hid it. He would have been heartened to know that his Emperor was risking his life to save him.

As he gazed and dreamed he became conscious of a presence near him, but he did not turn, for who was there upon that ship who might have access to this upper deck, whom he might care to see or speak with?

Presently he heard a voice at his elbow, a low, golden voice that brought him around facing its owner. It was the girl.

“You are looking back toward your own country?” she said.

“Yes.”

“You will never see it again,” she said, a note of sadness in her voice, as though she understood his feelings and sympathized.

“Perhaps not, but why should you care? I am an enemy.”

“I do not know why I should care,” replied the girl. “What is your name?”

“Tanar.”

“Is that all?”

“I am called Tanar the Fleet One.”

“Why?”

“Because in all Sari none can outdistance me.”

“Sari — is that the name of your country?”

“Yes.”

“What is it like?”

“It is a high plateau among the mountains. It is a very lovely country, with leaping rivers and great trees. It is filled with game. We hunt the great ryth there and the tarag for meat and for sport and there are countless lesser animals that give us food and clothing.”

“Have you no enemies? You are not a warlike people as are the Korsars.”

“We defeated the warlike Korsars,” he reminded her.

“I would not speak of that too often,” she said. “The tempers of the Korsars are short and they love to kill.”

“Why do you not kill me then?” he demanded. “You have a knife and a pistol in your sash, like the others.”

The girl only smiled.

“Perhaps you are not a Korsar,” he exclaimed. “You were captured as I was and are a prisoner.”

“I am no prisoner,” she replied

“But you are not a Korsar,” he insisted.

“Ask The Cid — he will doubtless cutlass you for your impertinence; but why do you think I am not a Korsar?”

“You are too beautiful and too fine,” he replied. “You have shown sympathy and that is a finer sentiment far beyond their mental capability. They are —”

“Be careful, enemy; perhaps I am a Korsar!”

“I do not believe it,” said Tanar.

“Then keep your beliefs to yourself, prisoner,” retorted the girl in a haughty tone.

“What is this?” demanded a rough voice behind Tanar. “What has this thing said to you, Stellara?”

Tanar wheeled to face Bohar the Bloody.

“I questioned that she was of the same race as you,” snapped Tanar before the girl could reply. “It is inconceivable that one so beautiful could be tainted by the blood of Korsar.”

His face flaming with rage, Bohar laid a hand upon one of his knives and stepped truculently toward the Sarian. “It is death to insult the daughter of The Cid,” he cried, whipping the knife from his sash and striking a wicked blow at Tanar.

The Sarian, light of foot, trained from childhood in the defensive as well as offensive use of edged weapons, stepped quickly to one side and then as quickly in again and once more Bohar the Bloody sprawled upon the deck to a well delivered blow.

Bohar was fairly foaming at the mouth with rage as he jerked his heavy pistol from his gaudy sash and aiming it at Tanar’s chest from where he lay upon the deck, pulled the trigger. At the same instant the girl sprang forward as though to prevent the slaying of the prisoner.

It all happened so quickly that Tanar scarcely knew the sequence of

events, but what he did know was that the powder failed to ignite, and then he laughed.

“You had better wait until I have taught you how to make powder that will burn before you try to murder me, Bohar,” he said.

The Bloody One scrambled to his feet and Tanar stood ready to receive the expected charge, but the girl stepped between them with an imperious gesture.

“Enough of this!” she cried. “It is The Cid’s wish that this man live. Would you like to have The Cid know that you tried to pistol him, Bohar?”

The Bloody One stood glaring at Tanar for several seconds, then he wheeled and strode away without a word.

“It would seem that Bohar does not like me,” said Tanar, smiling.

“He dislikes nearly every one,” said Stellara, “but he hates you — now.”

“Because I knocked him down, I suppose. I cannot blame him.”

“That is not the real reason,” said the girl.

“What is, then?”

She hesitated and then she laughed. “He is jealous. Bohar wants me for his mate.”

“But why should he be jealous of me?”

Stellara looked Tanar up and down and then she laughed again. “I do not know,” she said. “You are not much of a man beside our huge Korsars — with your beardless face and your small waist. It would take two of you to make one of them.” To Tanar her tone implied thinly veiled contempt and it piqued him, but why it should he did not know and that annoyed him, too. What was she but the savage daughter of a savage, boorish Korsar? When he had first learned from Bohar’s lips that she was the daughter and not the mate of The Cid

he had felt an unaccountable relief, half unconsciously and without at all attempting to analyze his reaction.

Perhaps it was the girl's beauty that had made such a relationship with The Cid seem repulsive, perhaps it was her lesser ruthlessness, which seemed superlative gentleness by contrast with the brutality of Bohar and The Cid, but now she seemed capable of a refined cruelty, which was, after all, what he might have expected to find in one form or another in the daughter of the Chief of the Korsars.

As one will, when piqued, and just at random, Tanar loosed a bolt in the hope that it might annoy her. "Bohar knows you better than I," he said; "perhaps he knew that he had cause for jealousy."

"Perhaps," she replied, enigmatically, "but no one will ever know, for Bohar will kill you — I know him well enough to know that."

2.

DISASTER

Upon the timeless seas of Pellucidar a voyage may last for an hour or a year — that depends not upon its duration, but upon the important occurrences which mark its course.

Curving upward along the inside of the arc of a great circle the Korsar fleet ploughed the restless sea. Favorable winds carried the ships onward. The noonday sun hung perpetually at zenith. Men ate when they were hungry, slept when they were tired, or slept against the time when sleep might be denied them, for the people of Pellucidar seem endowed with a faculty that permits them to store sleep, as it were, in times of ease, against the time when sleep might be denied them, against the more strenuous periods of hunting and warfare when there is no opportunity for sleep. Similarly, they eat with unbelievable irregularity.

Tanar had slept and eaten several times since his encounter with Bohar, whom he had seen upon various occasions since without an actual meeting. The Bloody One seemed to be biding his time.

Stellara had kept to her cabin with the old woman, who Tanar surmised was her mother. He wondered if Stellara would look like the mother or The Cid when she was older, and he shuddered when he considered either eventuality.

As he stood thus musing, Tanar's attention was attracted by the actions of the men on the lower deck. He saw them looking across the port bow and upward and, following the direction of their eyes with his, he saw the rare phenomenon of a cloud in the brilliant sky.

Some one must have notified The Cid at about the same time, for he came from his cabin and looked long and searchingly at the heavens.

In his loud voice The Cid bellowed commands and his wild crew scrambled to their stations like monkeys, swarming aloft or standing by on deck ready to do his bidding.

Down came the great sails and reefed were the lesser ones, and throughout the fleet, scattered over the surface of the shining sea, the example of the Commander was followed.

The cloud was increasing in size and coming rapidly nearer. No longer was it the small white cloud that had first attracted their attention, but a great, bulging, ominous, black mass that frowned down upon the ocean, turning it a sullen gray where the shadow lay.

The wind that had been blowing gently ceased suddenly. The ship fell off and rolled in the trough of the sea. The silence that followed cast a spell of terror over the ship's company.

Tanar, watching, saw the change. If these rough seafaring men blenched before the threat of the great cloud the danger must be great indeed.

The Sarians were mountain people. Tanar knew little of the sea, but if Tanar feared anything on Pellucidar it was the sea. The sight, therefore, of these savage Korsar sailors cringing in terror was far from reassuring.

Someone had come to the rail and was standing at his side.

"When that has passed," said a voice, "there will be fewer ships in the fleet of Korsar and fewer men to go home to their women."

He turned and saw Stellara looking upward at the cloud.

"You do not seem afraid," he said.

“Nor you,” replied the girl. “We seem the only people aboard who are not afraid.”

“Look down at the prisoners,” he told her. “They show no fear.”

“Why?” she asked.

“They are Pellucidarians,” he replied, proudly.

“We are all of Pellucidar,” she reminded him.

“I refer to The Empire,” he said.

“Why are you not afraid?” she asked. “Are you so much braver than the Korsars?” There was no sarcasm in her tone.

“I am very much afraid,” replied Tanar. “Mine are mountain people — we know little of the sea or its ways.”

“But you show no fear,” insisted Stellara.

“That is the result of heredity and training,” he replied.

“The Korsars show their fear,” she mused. She spoke as one who was of different blood. “They boast much of their bravery,” she continued as though speaking to herself, “but when the sky frowns they show fear.” There seemed a little note of contempt in her voice. “See!” she cried. “It is coming!”

The cloud was tearing toward them now and beneath it the sea was lashed to fury. Shreds of cloud whirled and twisted at the edges of the great cloud mass. Shreds of spume whirled and twisted above the angry waves. And then the storm struck the ship, laying it over on its side.

What ensued was appalling to a mountaineer, unaccustomed to the sea — the chaos of watery mountains, tumbling, rolling, lashing at the wallowing ship; the shrieking wind; the driving, blinding spume; the terror-stricken crew, cowed, no longer swaggering bullies.

Reeling, staggering, clutching at the rail Bohar the Bloody passed Tanar where he clung with one arm about a stanchion and the other

holding Stellara, who would have been hurled to the deck but for the quick action of the Sarian.

The face of Bohar was an ashen mask against which the red gash of his ugly scar stood out in startling contrast. He looked at Tanar and Stellara, but he passed them by, mumbling to himself.

Beyond them was The Cid, screaming orders that no one could hear. Toward him Bohar made his way. Above the storm Tanar heard The Bloody One screaming at his chief.

“Save me! Save me!” he cried. “The boats — lower the boats! The ship is lost.”

It was apparent, even to a landsman, that no small boat could live in such a sea even if one could have been lowered. The Cid paid no attention to his lieutenant, but clung where he was, bawling commands.

A mighty sea rose suddenly above the bow; it hung there for an instant and then rolled in upon the lower deck — tons of crushing, pitiless, insensate sea — rolled in upon the huddled, screaming seamen. Naught but the high prow and the lofty poop showed above the angry waves — just for an instant the great ship strained and shuddered, battling for life.

“It is the end!” cried Stellara.

Bohar screamed like a dumb brute in the agony of death. The Cid knelt on the deck, his face buried in his arms. Tanar stood watching, fascinated by the terrifying might of the elements. He saw man shrink to puny insignificance before a gust of wind, and a slow smile crossed his face.

The wave receded and the ship, floundering, staggered upward, groaning. The smile left Tanar’s lips as his eyes gazed down upon the lower deck. It was almost empty now. A few broken forms lay huddled

in the scuppers; a dozen men, clinging here and there, showed signs of life. The others, all but those who had reached safety below deck, were gone.

The girl clung tightly to the man. "I did not think she could live through that," she said.

"Nor I," said Tanar.

"But you were not afraid," she said. "You seemed the only one who was not afraid."

"Of what use was Bohar's screaming?" he asked. "Did it save him?"

"Then you were afraid, but you hid it?"

He shrugged. "Perhaps," he said. "I do not know what you mean by fear. I did not want to die, if that is what you mean."

"Here comes another!" cried Stellara, shuddering, and pressing closer to him.

Tanar's arm tightened about the slim figure of the girl. It was an unconscious gesture of the protective instinct of the male.

"Do not be afraid," he said.

"I am not — now," she replied.

At the instant that the mighty comber engulfed the ship the angry hurricane struck suddenly with renewed fury — struck at a new angle — and the masts, already straining even to the minimum of canvas that had been necessary to give the ship headway and keep its nose into the storm, snapped like dry bones and crashed by the board in a tangle of cordage. The ship's head fell away and she rolled in the trough of the great seas, a hopeless derelict.

Above the screaming of the wind rose Bohar's screams.

"The boats! The boats!" he repeated like a trained parrot gone mad from terror.

As though sated for the moment and worn out by its own exertions the storm abated, the wind died, but the great seas rose and fell and the great ship rolled, helpless. At the bottom of each watery gorge it seemed that it must be engulfed by the gray green cliff toppling above it and at the crest of each liquid mountain certain destruction loomed inescapable.

Bohar, still screaming, scrambled to the lower deck. He found men, by some miracle still alive in the open, and others cringing in terror below deck. By dint of curses and blows and the threat of his pistol he gathered them together and though they whimpered in fright he forced them to make a boat ready.

There were twenty of them and their gods or their devils must have been with them, for they lowered a boat and got clear of the floundering hulk in safety and without the loss of a man.

The Cid, seeing what Bohar contemplated, had tried to prevent the seemingly suicidal act by bellowing orders at him from above, but they had no effect and at the last moment The Cid had descended to the lower deck to enforce his commands, but he had arrived too late.

Now he stood staring unbelievably at the small boat riding the great seas in seeming security while the dismasted ship, pounded by the stumps of its masts, seemed doomed to destruction.

From corners where they had been hiding came the balance of the ship's company and when they saw Bohar's boat and the seemingly relative safety of the crew they clamored for escape by the other boats. With the idea once implanted in their minds there followed a mad panic as the half-brutes fought for places in the remaining boats.

"Come!" cried Stellara. "We must hurry or they will go without us." She started to move toward the companionway, but Tanar restrained her.

“Look at them,” he said. “We are safer at the mercy of the sea and the storm.”

Stellara shrank back close to him. She saw men knifing one another — those behind knifing those ahead. Men dragging others from the boats and killing them on deck or being killed. She saw The Cid pistol a seaman in the back and leap to his place in the first boat to be lowered. She saw men leaping from the rail in a mad effort to reach this boat and falling into the sea, or being thrown in if they succeeded in boarding the tossing shell.

She saw the other boats being lowered and men crushed between them and the ship’s side — she saw the depths to which fear can plunge the braggart and the bully as the last of the ship’s company, failing to win places in the last boat, deliberately leaped into the sea and were drowned.

Standing there upon the high poop of the rolling derelict, Tanar and Stellara watched the frantic efforts of the oarsmen in the overcrowded small boats. They saw one boat foul another and both founder. They watched the drowning men battling for survival. They heard their hoarse oaths and their screams above the roaring of the sea and the shriek of the wind as the storm returned as though fearing that some might escape its fury.

“We are alone,” said Stellara. “They have all gone.”

“Let them go,” replied Tanar. “I would not exchange places with them.”

“But there can be no hope for us,” said the girl.

“There is no more for them,” replied the Sarian, “and at least we are not crowded into a small boat filled with cutthroats.”

“You are more afraid of the men than you are of the sea,” she said.

“For you, yes,” he replied.

“Why should you fear for me?” she demanded. “Am I not also your enemy?”

He turned his eyes quickly upon her and they were filled with surprise. “That is so,” he said; “but, somehow, I had forgotten it — you do not seem like an enemy, as the others do. You do not seem like one of them, even.”

Clinging to the rail and supporting the girl upon the lurching deck, Tanar’s lips were close to Stellara’s ear as he sought to make himself heard above the storm. He sensed the faint aroma of a delicate sachet that was ever after to be a part of his memory of Stellara.

A sea struck the staggering ship throwing Tanar forward so that his cheek touched the cheek of the girl and as she turned her head his lips brushed hers. Each realized that it was an accident, but the effect was none the less surprising. Tanar, for the first time, felt the girl’s body against his and consciousness of contact must have been reflected in his eyes for Stellara shrank back and there was an expression of fear in hers.

Tanar saw the fear in the eyes of an enemy, but it gave him no pleasure. He tried to think only of the treatment that would have been accorded a woman of his tribe had one been at the mercy of the Korsars, but that, too, failed to satisfy him as it only could if he were to admit that he was of the same ignoble clay as the men of Korsar.

But whatever thoughts were troubling the minds of Stellara and Tanar were temporarily submerged by the grim tragedy of the succeeding few moments as another tremendous sea, the most gigantic that had yet assailed the broken ship, hurled its countless tons upon her shivering deck.

To Tanar it seemed, indeed, that this must mark the end since it was inconceivable that the unmanageable hulk could rise again from

the smother of water that surged completely over her almost to the very highest deck of the towering poop, where the two clung against the tearing wind and the frightful pitching of the derelict.

But, as the sea rolled on, the ship slowly, sluggishly struggled to the surface like an exhausted swimmer who, drowning, struggles weakly against the inevitability of fate and battles upward for one last gasp of air that will, at best, but prolong the agony of death.

As the main deck slowly emerged from the receding waters, Tanar was horrified by the discovery that the forward hatch had been stove in. That the ship must have taken in considerable water, and that each succeeding wave that broke over it would add to the quantity, affected the Sarian less than knowledge of the fact that it was beneath this hatch that his fellow prisoners were confined.

Through the black menace of his almost hopeless situation had shone a single bright ray of hope that, should the ship weather the storm, there would be aboard her a score of his fellow Pellucidarians and that together they might find the means to rig a makeshift sail and work their way back to the mainland from which they had embarked; but with the gaping hatch and the almost certain conclusion to be drawn from it he realized that it would, indeed, be a miracle if there remained alive aboard the derelict any other than Stellara and himself.

The girl was looking down at the havoc wrought below and now she turned her face toward his.

“They must all be drowned,” she said, “and they were your people. I am sorry.”

“Perhaps they would have chosen it in preference to what might have awaited them in Korsar,” he said.

“And they have been released only a little sooner than we shall be,” she continued. “Do you notice how low the ship rides now and how

sluggish she is? The hold must be half filled with water — another such sea as the last one will founder her.”

For some time they stood in silence, each occupied with his own thoughts. The hulk rolled in the trough and momentarily it seemed that she might not roll back in time to avert the disaster of the next menacing comber, yet each time she staggered drunkenly to oppose a high side to the hungry waters.

“I believe the storm has spent itself,” said Tanar.

“The wind has died and there has been no sea like the great one that stove in the forward hatch,” said Stellara, hopefully.

The noonday sun broke from behind the black cloud that had shrouded it and the sea burst into a blaze of blue and silver beauty. The storm had passed. The seas diminished. The derelict rolled heavily upon the great swells, low in the water, but temporarily relieved of the menace of immediate disaster.

Tanar descended the companionway to the lower deck and approached the forward hatch. A single glance below revealed only what he could have anticipated — floating corpses rolling with the roll of the derelict. All below were dead. With a sigh he turned away and returned to the upper deck.

The girl did not even question him for she could read in his demeanor the story of what his eyes had beheld.

“You and I are the only living creatures that remain aboard,” he said.

She waved a hand in a broad gesture that took in the sea about them. “Doubtless we alone of the entire ship’s company have survived,” she said. “I see no other ship nor any of the small boats.”

Tanar strained his eyes in all directions. “Nor I,” said he; “but perhaps some of them have escaped.”

She shook her head. "I doubt it."

"Yours has been a heavy loss," sympathized the Sarian. "Besides so many of your people, you have lost your father and your mother."

Stellara looked up quickly into his eyes. "They were not my people," she said.

"What?" exclaimed Tanar. "They were not your people? But your father, The Cid, was Chief of the Korsars!"

"He was not my father," replied the girl.

"And the woman was not your mother?"

"May the gods forbid!" she exclaimed.

"But The Cid! He treated you like a daughter."

"He thought I was his daughter, but I am not."

"I do not understand," said Tanar; "yet I am glad that you are not. I could not understand how you, who are so different from them, could be a Korsar."

"My mother was a native of the island of Amiocap and there The Cid, raiding for women, seized her. She told me about it many times before she died.

"Her mate was absent upon a great tander hunt and she never saw him again. When I was born The Cid thought that I was his daughter, but my mother knew better for I bore upon my left shoulder a small, red birthmark identical with one upon the left shoulder of the mate from whom she had been stolen — my father.

"My mother never told The Cid the truth, for fear that he would kill me in accordance with the custom the Korsars follow of destroying the children of their captives if a Korsar is not the father."

"And the woman who was with you on board was not your mother?"

"No, she was The Cid's mate, but not my mother, who is dead."

Tanar felt a distinct sense of relief that Stellara was not a Korsar, but why this should be so he did not know, nor, perhaps, did he attempt to analyze his feelings.

“I am glad,” he said again.

“But why?” she asked.

“Now we do not have to be enemies,” he replied.

“Were we before?”

He hesitated and then he laughed. “I was not your enemy,” he said, “but you reminded me that you were mine.”

“It has been the habit of a lifetime to think of myself as a Korsar,” exclaimed Stellara, “although I knew that I was not. I felt no enmity toward you.”

“Whatever we may have been we must of necessity be friends now,” he told her.

“That will depend upon you,” she replied.

3.

AMIOCAP

The blue waters of the great sea known as Korsar Az wash the shores of a green island far from the mainland — a long, narrow island with verdure-clad hills and plateaus, its coastline indented by coves and tiny bays — Amiocap, an island of mystery and romance.

At a distance, and when there is a haze upon the waters, it looks like two islands, rather than one, so low and narrow it is at one point, where coves run in on either side and the sea almost meets.

Thus it appeared to the two survivors from the deck of the Korsar derelict drifting helplessly with the sluggish run of an ocean current and at the whim of vagrant winds.

Time is not even a word to the people of Pellucidar, so Tanar had given no thought to that. They had eaten many times, but as there was still an ample supply of provisions, even for a large ship's company, he felt no concern upon that score, but he had been worried by the depletion of their supply of good water, for the contents of many casks that he had broached had been undrinkable.

They had slept much, which is the way of Pellucidarians when there is naught else to do, storing energy for possible future periods of long drawn exertion.

They had been sleeping thus, for how long who may say in the measureless present of Pellucidar. Stellara was the first to come on deck from the cabin she had occupied next to that of The Cid. She looked about for Tanar, but not seeing him she let her eyes wander out over the upcurving expanse of water that merged in every direction

with the blue domed vault of the brilliant sky, in the exact center of which hung the great noonday sun.

But suddenly her gaze was caught and held by something beside the illimitable waters and the ceaseless sun. She voiced a surprised and joyous cry and, turning, ran across the deck toward the cabin in which Tanar slept.

“Tanar! Tanar!” she cried, pounding upon the paneled door. “Land, Tanar, land!”

The door swung open and the Sarian stepped out upon the deck where Stellara stood pointing across the starboard rail of the drifting derelict.

Close by rose the green hills of a long shore line that stretched away in both directions for many miles, but whether it was the mainland or an island they could not tell.

“Land!” breathed Tanar. “How good it looks!”

“The pleasant green of the soft foliage often hides terrible beasts and savage men,” Stellara reminded him.

“But they are the dangers that I know — it is the unknown dangers of the sea that I do not like. I am not of the sea.”

“You hate the sea?”

“No,” he replied, “I do not hate it; I do not understand it — that is all. But there is something that I do understand,” and he pointed toward the land.

There was that in Tanar’s tone that caused Stellara to look quickly in the direction that he indicated.

“Men!” she exclaimed.

“Warriors,” said Tanar.

“There must be twenty of them in that canoe,” she said.

“And here comes another canoe behind them.”

From the mouth of a narrow cove the canoes were paddling out into the open sea.

“Look!” cried Stellara. “There are many more coming.”

One after another twenty canoes moved in a long column out upon the quiet waters and as they drew steadily toward the ship the survivors saw that each was filled with almost naked warriors. Short, heavy spears, bone-tipped, bristled menacingly; stone knives protruded from every G-string and stone hatchets swung at every hip.

As the flotilla approached, Tanar went to a cabin and returned with two of the heavy pistols left behind by a fleeing Korsar when the ship had been abandoned.

“Do you expect to repulse four hundred warriors with those?” asked the girl.

Tanar shrugged. “If they have never heard the report of a firearm a few shots may suffice to frighten them away, for a time at least,” he explained, “and if we do not go on the shore the current will carry us away from them in time.”

“But suppose they do not frighten so easily?” she demanded.

“Then I can do no more than my best with the crude weapons and the inferior powder of the Korsars,” he said with the conscious superiority of one who had, with his people, so recently emerged from the stone age that he often instinctively grasped a pistol by the muzzle and used it as a war club in sudden emergencies when at close quarters.

“Perhaps they will not be unfriendly,” suggested Stellara.

Tanar laughed. “Then they are not of Pellucidar,” he said, “but of some wondrous country inhabited by what Perry calls angels.”

“Who is Perry?” she demanded. “I never heard of him.”

“He is a madman who says that Pellucidar is the inside of a hollow stone that is as round as the strange world that hangs forever above

the Land of Awful Shadow, and that upon the outside are seas and mountains and plains and countless people and a great country from which he comes.”

“He must be quite mad,” said the girl.

“Yet he and David, our Emperor, have brought us many advantages that were before unknown in Pellucidar, so that now we can kill more warriors in a single battle than was possible before during the course of a whole war. Perry calls this civilization and it is indeed a very wonderful thing.”

“Perhaps he came from the frozen world from which the ancestors of the Korsars came,” suggested the girl. “They say that the country lies outside of Pellucidar.”

“Here is the enemy,” said Tanar. “Shall I fire at that big fellow standing in the bow of the first canoe?” Tanar raised one of the heavy pistols and took aim, but the girl laid a hand upon his arm.

“Wait,” she begged. “They may be friendly. Do not fire unless you must — I hate killing.”

“I can well believe that you are no Korsar,” he said, lowering the muzzle of his weapon.

There came a hail from the leading canoe. “We are prepared for you, Korsars,” shouted the tall warrior standing in the bow. “You are few in numbers. We are many. Your great canoe is a useless wreck; ours are manned by twenty warriors each. You are helpless. We are strong. It is not always thus and this time it is not we who shall be taken prisoners, but you, if you attempt to land.

“But we are not like you, Korsars. We do not want to kill or capture. Go away and we shall not harm you.”

“We cannot go away,” replied Tanar. “Our ship is helpless. We are

only two and our food and water are nearly exhausted. Let us land and remain until we can prepare to return to our own countries.”

The warrior turned and conversed with the others in his canoe. Presently he faced Tanar again.

“No,” he said; “my people will not permit Korsars to come among us. They do not trust you. Neither do I. If you do not go away we shall take you as prisoners and your fate will be in the hands of the Council of the Chiefs.”

“But we are not Korsars,” explained Tanar.

The warrior laughed. “You speak a lie,” he said. “Do you think that we do not know the ships of Korsar?”

“This is a Korsar ship,” replied Tanar; “but we are not Korsars. We were prisoners and when they abandoned their ship in a great storm they left us aboard.”

Again the warriors conferred and those in other canoes that had drawn alongside the first joined in the discussion.

“Who are you then?” demanded the spokesman.

“I am Tanar of Pellucidar. My father is King of Sari.”

“We are all of Pellucidar,” replied the warrior; “but we never heard of a country called Sari. And the woman — she is your mate?”

“No!” cried Stellara, haughtily. “I am not his mate.”

“Who are you? Are you a Sarian, also?”

“I am no Sarian. My father and mother were of Amiocap.” Again the warriors talked among themselves, some seeming to favor one idea, some another.

“Do you know the name of this country?” finally demanded the leading warrior, addressing Stellara.

“No,” she replied.

“We were about to ask you that very question,” said Tanar.

“And the woman is from Amiocap?” demanded the warrior.

“No other blood flows in my veins,” said Stellara, proudly.

“Then it is strange that you do not recognize your own land and your own people,” cried the warrior. “This is the island of Amiocap!”

Stellara voiced a low cry of pleased astonishment.

“Amiocap!” she breathed softly, as to herself. The tone was a caress, but the warriors in the canoes were too far away to hear her. They thought she was silent and embarrassed because they had discovered her deception.

“Go away!” they cried again.

“You will not send me away from the land of my parents!” cried Stellara, in astonishment.

“You have lied to us,” replied the tall warrior. “You are not of Amiocap. You do not know us, nor do we know you.”

“Listen!” cried Tanar. “I was a prisoner aboard this ship and, being no Korsar, the girl told me her story long before we sighted this land. She could not have known that we were near your island. I do not know that she even knew its location, but nevertheless I believe that her story is true.

“She has never said that she was from Amiocap, but that her parents were. She has never seen the island before now. Her mother was stolen by the Korsars before she was born.”

Again the warriors spoke together in low tones for a moment and then, once more, the spokesman addressed Stellara. “What was your mother’s name?” he demanded. “Who was your father?”

“My mother was called Allara,” replied the girl. “I never saw my father, but my mother said that he was a chief and a great tander hunter, called Fedol.”

At a word from the tall warrior in the bow of the leading canoe

the warriors paddled slowly nearer the drifting hulk, and as they approached the ship's waist Tanar and Stellara descended to the main deck, which was now almost awash, so deep the ship rode because of the water in her hold, and as the canoe drifted alongside, the warriors, with the exception of a couple, laid down their paddles and stood ready with their bone-tipped spears.

Now the two upon the ship's deck and the tall warrior in the canoe stood almost upon the same level and face to face. The latter was a smooth-faced man with finely molded features and clear, gray eyes that bespoke intelligence and courage. He was gazing intently at Stellara, as though he would search her very soul for proof of the veracity or falsity of her statements. Presently he spoke.

"You might well be her daughter," he said; "the resemblance is apparent."

"You knew my mother?" exclaimed Stellara.

"I am Vulhan. You have heard her speak of me?"

"My mother's brother!" exclaimed Stellara, with deep emotion, but there was no answering emotion in the manner of the Amiocap warrior. "My father, where is he? Is he alive?"

"That is the question," said Vulhan, seriously. "Who is your father! Your mother was stolen by a Korsar. If the Korsar is your father, you are a Korsar."

"But he is not my father. Take me to my own father — although he has never seen me he will know me and I shall know him."

"It will do no harm," said a warrior who stood close to Vulhan. "If the girl is a Korsar we shall know what to do with her."

"If she is the spawn of the Korsar who stole Allara, Vulhan and Fedol will know how to treat her," said Vulhan savagely.

"I am not afraid," said Stellara.

“And this other,” said Vulhan, nodding toward Tanar.

“What of him?”

“He was a prisoner of war that the Korsars were taking back to Korsar. Let him come with you. His people are not sea people. He could not survive by the sea alone.”

“You are sure that he is no Korsar?” demanded Vulhan.

“Look at him!” exclaimed the girl. “The men of Amiocap must know the people of Korsar well by sight. Does this one look like a Korsar?”

Vulhan was forced to admit that he did not. “Very well,” he said, “he may come with us, but whatever your fate, he must share it.”

“Gladly,” agreed Tanar.

The two quit the deck of the derelict as places were made for them in the canoe and as the little craft was paddled rapidly toward shore neither felt any sorrow at parting from the drifting hulk that had been their home for so long. The last they saw of her, just as they were entering the cove, from which they had first seen the canoes emerge, she was drifting slowly with the ocean current parallel with the green shore of Amiocap.

At the upper end of the cove the canoes were beached and dragged beneath the concealing foliage of the luxuriant vegetation. Here they were turned bottom side up and left until occasion should again demand their use.

The warriors of Amiocap conducted their two prisoners into the jungle that grew almost to the water’s edge. At first there was no sign of trail and the leading warriors forced their way through the lush vegetation, which fortunately was free from thorns and briers, but presently they came upon a little path which opened into a broad, well beaten trail along which the party moved in silence.

During the march Tanar had an opportunity to study the men of Amiocap more closely and he saw that almost without exception they were symmetrically built, with rounded, flowing muscles that suggested a combination of agility and strength. Their features were regular, and there was not among them one who might be termed ugly. On the whole their expressions were open rather than cunning and kindly rather than ferocious; yet the scars upon the bodies of many of them and their well worn and efficient looking, though crude, weapons suggested that they might be bold hunters and fierce warriors. There was a marked dignity in their carriage and demeanor which appealed to Tanar as did their taciturnity, for the Sarians themselves are not given to useless talk.

Stellara walking at his side appeared unusually happy and there was an expression of contentment upon her face that the Sarian had never seen there before. She had been watching him as well as the Amiocapians, and now she addressed him in a whisper.

“What do you think of my people?” she asked, proudly. “Are they not wonderful?”

“They are a fine race,” he replied, “and I hope for your sake that they will believe that you are one of them.”

“It is all just as I have dreamed it so many times,” said the girl, with a happy sigh. “I have always known that some day I should come to Amiocap and that it would be just as my mother told me that it was — the great trees, the giant ferns, the gorgeous, flowering vines and bushes. There are fewer savage beasts here than in other parts of Pellucidar and the people seldom war among themselves, so that for the most part they live in peace and contentment, broken only by the raids of the Korsars or an occasional raid upon their fields and villages

by the great tandors. Do you know what tandors are, Tanar? Do you have them in your country?"

Tanar nodded. "I have heard of them in Amoz," he said, "though they are rare in Sari."

"There are thousands of them upon the island of Amiocap," said the girl, "and my people are the greatest tador hunters in Pellucidar."

Again they walked on in silence, Tanar wondering what the attitude of the Amiocapians would be towards them, and if friendly whether they would be able to assist him in making his way back to the distant mainland, where Sari lay. To this primitive mountaineer it seemed little short of hopeless even to dream of returning to his native land, for the sea appalled him, nor did he have any conception as to how he might set a course across its savage bosom, or navigate any craft that he might later find at his disposal; yet so powerful is the homing instinct in the Pellucidarians that there was no doubt in his mind that so long as he lived he would always be searching for a way back to Sari.

He was glad that he did not have to worry about Stellara, for if it was true that she was among her own people she could remain upon Amiocap and there would rest upon him no sense of responsibility for her return to Korsar; but if they did not accept her — that was another matter; then Tanar would have to seek for means of escape from an island peopled by enemies and he would have to take Stellara with him.

But this train of thought was interrupted by a sudden exclamation from Stellara. "Look!" she cried. "Here is a village; perhaps it is the very village of my mother."

"What did you say?" inquired a warrior, walking near them.

"I said that perhaps this is the village where my mother lived before she was stolen by the Korsars."

“And you say that your mother was Allara?” inquired the warrior.

“Yes.”

“This was indeed the village in which Allara lived,” and the warrior; “but do not hope, girl, that you will be received as one of them, for unless your father also was of Amiocap, you are not an Amiocapian. It will be hard to convince anyone that you are not the daughter of a Korsar father, and as such you are a Korsar and no Amiocapian.”

“But how can you know that my father was a Korsar?” demanded Stellara.

“We do not have to know,” replied the warrior; “it is merely a matter of what we believe, but that is a question that will have to be settled by Zural, the chief of the village of Lar.”

“Lar,” repeated Stellara. “That is the village of my mother! I have heard her speak of it many times. This, then, must be Lar.”

“It is,” replied the warrior, “and presently you shall see Zural.”

The village of Lar consisted of perhaps a hundred thatched huts, each of which was divided into two or more rooms, one of which was invariably an open sitting room without walls, in the center of which was a stone fireplace. The other rooms were ordinarily tightly walled and windowless, affording the necessary darkness for the Amiocapians when they wished to sleep.

The entire clearing was encircled by the most remarkable fence that Tanar had ever seen. The posts, instead of being set in the ground, were suspended from a heavy fiber rope that ran from tree to tree, the lower ends of the posts hanging at least four feet above the ground. Holes had been bored through the posts at intervals of twelve or eighteen inches and into these were inserted hardwood stakes, four or five feet in length and sharpened at either end. These stakes protruded from the posts in all directions, parallel with the ground, and the posts

were hung at such a distance from one another that the points of the stakes, protruding from contiguous posts, left intervals of from two to four feet between. As a safeguard against an attacking enemy they seemed futile to Tanar, for in entering the village the party had passed through the open spaces between the posts without being hindered by the barrier.

But conjecture as to the purpose of this strange barrier was crowded from his thoughts by other more interesting occurrences, for no sooner had they entered the village than they were surrounded by a horde of men, women and children.

“Who are these?” demanded some.

“They say that they are friends,” replied Vulhan, “but we believe that they are from Korsar.”

“Korsars!” cried the villagers.

“I am no Korsar,” cried Stellara, angrily. “I am the daughter of Allara, the sister of Vulhan.”

“Let her tell that to Zural. It is his business to listen, not ours,” cried one. “Zural will know what to do with Korsars. Did they not steal his daughter and kill his son?”

“Yes, take them to Zural,” cried another.

“It is to Zural that I am taking them,” replied Vulhan.

The villagers made way for the warriors and their prisoners and as the latter passed through the aisles thus formed, many were the ugly looks cast upon them and many the expressions of hatred that they overheard, but no violence was offered them and presently they were conducted to a large hut near the center of the village.

Like the other dwellings of the village of Lar, the floors of the chief’s house were raised a foot or eighteen inches above the ground. The thatched roof of the great, open living room, into which they were

conducted, was supported by enormous ivory tusks of the giant tandors. The floor, which appeared to be constructed of unglazed tile, was almost entirely covered by the hides of wild animals. There were a number of low, wooden stools standing about the room, and one higher one that might almost have been said to have attained the dignity of a chair.

Upon this larger stool was seated a stern faced man, who scrutinized them closely and silently as they were halted before him. For several seconds no one spoke, and then the man upon the chair turned to Vulhan.

“Who are these,” he demanded, “and what do they in the village of Lar?”

“We took them from a Korsar ship that was drifting helplessly with the ocean current,” said Vulhan, “and we have brought them to Zural, chief of the village of Lar, that he may hear their story and judge whether they be the friends they claim to be, or the Korsar enemies that we believe them to be. This one,” and Vulhan pointed to Stellara, “says that she is the daughter of Allara.”

“I am the daughter of Allara,” said Stellara.

“And who was your father?” demanded Zural.

“My father’s name is Fedol,” replied Stellara.

“How do you know?” asked Zural.

“My mother told me.”

“Where were you born?” demanded Zural.

“In the Korsar city of Allaban,” replied Stellara.

“Then you are a Korsar,” stated Zural with finality.

“And this one, what has he to say for himself?” asked Zural, indicating Tanar with a nod.

“He claims that he was a prisoner of the Korsars and that he comes from a distant kingdom called Sari.”

“I have never heard of such a kingdom,” said Zural. “Is there any warrior here who has ever heard of it?” he demanded.

“If there is, let him in justice to the prisoner speak.” But the Amiocapians only shook their heads for there was none who had ever heard of the kingdom of Sari. “It is quite plain,” continued Zural, “that they are enemies and that they are seeking by falsehood to gain our confidence. If there is a drop of Amiocapian blood in one of them, we are sorry for that drop. Take them away, Vulhan. Keep them under guard until we decide how they shall be destroyed.”

“My mother told me that the Amiocapians were a just and kindly people,” said Stellara; “but it is neither just nor kindly to destroy this man who is not an enemy simply because you have never heard of the country from which he comes. I tell you that he is no Korsar. I was on one of the ships of the fleet when the prisoners were brought aboard. I heard The Cid and Bohar the Bloody when they were questioning this man, and I know that he is no Korsar and that he comes from a kingdom known as Sari. They did not doubt his word, so why should you? If you are a just and kindly people how can you destroy me without giving me an opportunity to talk with Fedol, my father. He will believe me; he will know that I am his daughter.”

“The gods frown upon us if we harbor enemies in our village,” replied Zural. “We should have bad luck, as all Amiocapians know. Wild beasts would kill our hunters and the tandors would trample our fields and destroy our villages. But worst of all the Korsars would come and rescue you from us. As for Fedol, no man knows where he is. He is not of this village and the people of his own village have slept and eaten many times since they saw Fedol. They have slept and eaten

many times since Fedol set forth upon his last tandor hunt. Perhaps the tandors have avenged the killing of many of their fellows, or perhaps Fedol fell into the clutches of the Buried People. These things we do not know, but we do know that Fedol went away to hunt tandors and that he never came back and that we do not know where to find him. Take them away, Vulhan, and we shall hold a council of the chiefs and then we shall decide what shall be done with them.”

“You are a cruel and wicked man, Zural,” cried Stellara, “and no better than the Korsars themselves.”

“It is useless, Stellara,” said Tanar, laying a hand upon the girl’s arm. “Let us go quietly with Vulhan;” and then in a low whisper, “Do not anger them, for there is yet hope for us in the council of the chiefs if we do not antagonize them.” And so without further word Stellara and Tanar were led from the house of Zural the chief, surrounded by a dozen stalwart warriors.

4.

LETARI

Stellara and Tanar were conducted to a small hut in the outskirts of the village. The building consisted of but two rooms; the open living room with the fireplace and a small, dark, sleeping apartment. Into the latter the prisoners were thrust and a single warrior was left on guard in the living room to prevent their escape.

In a world where the sun hangs perpetually at zenith there is no darkness and without darkness there is little opportunity to escape from the clutches of a watchful enemy. Yet never for a moment was the thought of escape absent from the mind of Tanar the Sarian. He studied the sentries and as each one was relieved he tried to enter into conversation with his successor, but all to no avail — the warriors would not talk to him. Sometimes the guards dozed, but the village and the clearing about it were always alive with people so that it appeared unlikely that any opportunity for escape might present itself.

The sentries were changed, food was brought to the prisoners and when they felt so inclined they slept. Thus only might they measure the lapse of time, if such a thing occurred to them, which doubtless it did not. They talked together and sometimes Stellara sang — sang the songs of Amiocap that her mother had taught her, and they were happy and contented, although each knew that the specter of death hovered constantly above them. Presently he would strike, but in the meantime they were happy.

“When I was a youth,” said Tanar, “I was taken prisoner by the black people with tails. They build their villages among the high

branches of lofty trees and at first they put me in a small hut as dark as this and much dirtier and I was very miserable and very unhappy for I have always been free and I love my freedom, but now I am again a prisoner in a dark hut and in addition I know that I am going to die and I do not want to die, yet I am not unhappy. Why is it, Stellara, do you know?"

"I have wondered about the same thing myself," replied the girl. "It seems to me that I have never been so happy before in my life, but I do not know the reason."

They were sitting close together upon a fiber mat that they had placed near the doorway that they might obtain as much light and air as possible. Stellara's soft eyes looked thoughtfully out upon the little world framed by the doorway of their prison cell. One hand rested listlessly on the mat between them. Tanar's eyes rested upon her profile, and slowly his hand went out and covered hers.

"Perhaps," he said, "I should not be happy if you were not here."

The girl turned half frightened eyes upon him and withdrew her hand. "Don't," she said.

"Why?" he asked.

"I do not know, only that it makes me afraid." The man was about to speak again when a figure darkened the opening in the doorway. A girl had come bringing food. Heretofore it had been a man — a taciturn man who had replied to none of Tanar's questions. But there was no suggestion of taciturnity upon the beautiful, smiling countenance of the girl.

"Here is food," she said. "Are you hungry?"

"Where there is nothing else to do but eat I am always hungry," said Tanar. "But where is the man who brought our food before?"

"That was my father," replied the girl. "He has gone to hunt and

I have brought the food in his stead.”

“I hope that he never returns from the hunt,” said Tanar.

“Why?” demanded the girl. “He is a good father. Why do you wish him harm?”

“I wish him no harm,” replied Tanar, laughing. “I only wish that his daughter would continue to bring our food. She is far more agreeable and much better looking.”

The girl flushed, but it was evident that she was pleased.

“I wanted to come before,” she said, “but my father would not let me. I saw you when they brought you into the village and I have wanted to see you again. I never before saw a man who looked like you. You are different from the Amiocapians. Are all the men of Sari as good looking as you?”

Tanar laughed. “I am afraid I have never given much thought to that subject,” he replied. “In Sari we judge our men by what they do and not by what they look like.”

“But you must be a great hunter,” said the girl. “You look like a great hunter.”

“How do great hunters look?” demanded Stellara with some asperity.

“They look like this man,” replied the girl. “Do you know,” she continued, “I have dreamed about you many times.”

“What is your name?” asked Tanar.

“Letari,” replied the girl.

“Letari,” repeated Tanar. “That is a pretty name. I hope, Letari, that you will bring our food to us often.”

“I shall never bring it again,” she said, sadly.

“And why?” demanded Tanar.

“Because no one will bring it again,” she said.

“And why is that? Are they going to starve us to death?”

“No, the council of the chiefs has decided that you are both Korsars and that you must be destroyed.”

“And when will that be?” asked Stellara.

“As soon as the hunters return with food. We are going to have a great feast and dance, but I shall not enjoy it. I shall be very unhappy for I do not wish to see Tanar die.”

“How are they going to destroy us?” asked the man.

“Look,” said the girl, pointing through the open doorway. There, in the distance, the two prisoners saw men setting two stakes into the ground. “There were many who wanted to give you to the Buried People,” said Letari, “but Zural said that it has been so long since we have had a feast and a dance that he thought that we should celebrate the killing of two Korsars rather than let the Buried People have all the pleasure, and so they are going to tie you to those two stakes and pile dry wood and brush around you and burn you to death.”

Stellara shuddered. “And my mother taught me that you were a kindly people,” she said.

“Oh, we do not mean to be unkind,” said Letari, “but the Korsars have been very cruel to us and Zural believes that the gods will take word to the Korsars that you were burned to death and that perhaps it will frighten them and keep them away from Amiocap.”

Tanar arose to his feet and stood very straight and stiff. The horror of the situation almost overwhelmed him. He looked down at Stellara’s golden head and shuddered. “You cannot mean,” he said, “that the men of Amiocap intend to burn this girl alive?”

“Why, yes,” said Letari. “It would do no good to kill her first for then her spirit could not tell the gods that she was burned and they could not tell the Korsars.”

“It is hideous,” cried Tanar; “and you, a girl yourself, have you no sympathy; have you no heart?”

“I am very sorry that they are going to burn you,” said Letari, “but as for her, she is a Korsar and I feel nothing but hatred and loathing for her, but you are different. I know that you are not a Korsar and I wish that I could save you.”

“Will you — would you, if you could?” demanded Tanar.

“Yes, but I cannot.”

The conversation relative to escape had been carried on in low whispers, so that the guard would not overhear, but evidently it had aroused his suspicion for now he arose and came to the doorway of the hut. “What are you talking about?” he demanded. “Why do you stay in here so long, Letari, talking with these Korsars? I heard what you said and I believe that you are in love with this man.”

“What if I am?” demanded the girl. “Do not our gods demand that we love? What else do we live for upon Amiocap but love?”

“The gods do not say that we should love our enemies.”

“They do not say that we should not,” retorted Letari. “If I choose to love Tanar it is my own affair.”

“Clear out!” snapped the warrior. “There are plenty of men in Lar for you to love.”

“Ah!” sighed the girl as she passed through the doorway, “but there is none like Tanar.”

“The hateful little wanton,” cried Stellara after the girl had left.

“She does not hesitate to reveal what is in her heart,” said Tanar. “The girls of Sari are not like that. They would die rather than reveal their love before the man had declared his. But perhaps she is only a child and did not realize what she said.”

“A child nothing,” snapped Stellara. “She knew perfectly well what

she was saying and it is quite apparent that you liked it. Very well, when she comes to save you, go with her.”

“You do not think that I intended to go with her alone even though an opportunity for escape presented itself through her, do you?” demanded Tanar.

“She told you that she would not help me to escape,” Stellara reminded him.

“I know that, but it would be only in the hope of helping you to escape that I would take advantage of her help.”

“I would rather be burned alive a dozen times than to escape with her help.”

There was a venom in the girl’s voice that had never been there before and Tanar looked at her in surprise. “I do not understand you, Stellara,” he said.

“I do not understand myself,” said the girl, and burying her face in her hands she burst into tears.

Tanar knelt quickly beside her and put an arm about her. “Don’t,” he begged, “please don’t.”

She pushed him from her. “Go away,” she cried. “Don’t touch me. I hate you.”

Tanar was about to speak again when he was interrupted by a great commotion at the far end of the village. There were shouts and yells from men, mingled with a thunderous noise that fairly shook the ground, and then the deep booming of drums.

Instantly the men setting the stakes in the ground, where Tanar and Stellara were to be burned, stopped their work, seized their weapons and rushed in the direction from which the noise was coming.

The prisoners saw men, women and children running from their huts and all directed their steps toward the same point. The guard

before their door leaped to his feet and stood for a moment looking at the running villagers. Then, without a word or backward glance, he dashed off after them.

Tanar, realizing that for the moment at least they were unguarded, stepped from the dark cell out into the open living apartment and looked in the direction toward which the villagers were running. There he saw the cause of the disturbance and also an explanation of the purpose for which the strange hanging barrier had been erected.

Just beyond the barrier loomed two gigantic mammoths — huge tandors, towering sixteen feet or more in height — their wicked eyes red with hate and rage; their great tusks gleaming in the sunlight; their long, powerful trunks seeking to drag down the barrier from the sharpened stakes of which their flesh recoiled. Facing the mammoths was a shouting horde of warriors, screaming women and children, and above all rose the thundering din of the drums.

Each time the tandors sought to force their way through the barrier, or brush aside its posts, these swung about so that the sharpened stakes threatened their eyes or pricked the tender flesh of their trunks, while bravely facing them the shouting warriors hurled their stone-tipped spears.

But however interesting or inspiring the sight might be, Tanar had no time to spare to follow the course of this strange encounter. Turning to Stellara, he seized her hand. “Come,” he cried. “Now is our chance!” And while the villagers were engrossed with the tandors at the far end of the village, Tanar and Stellara ran swiftly across the clearing and entered the lush vegetation of the forest beyond.

There was no trail and it was with difficulty that they forced their way through the underbrush for a short distance before Tanar finally halted.

“We shall never escape them in this way,” he said. “Our spoor is as plain as the spoor of a dyryth after a rain.”

“How else then may we escape?” asked Stellara.

Tanar was looking upward into the trees examining them closely. “When I was a prisoner among the black people with long tails,” he said, “I had to learn to travel through the trees and this knowledge and the ability have stood me in good stead many times since and I believe that they may prove our salvation now.”

“You go then,” said Stellara, “and save yourself, for certainly I cannot travel through the trees, and there is no reason why we should both be recaptured when one of us can escape.”

Tanar smiled. “You know that I would not do that,” he said.

“But what else may you do?” demanded Stellara. “They will follow the trail we are making and recapture us before we are out of hearing of the village.”

“We shall leave no trail,” said Tanar. “Come,” and leaping lightly to a lower branch he swung himself into the tree that spread above them. “Give me your hand,” he said, reaching down to Stellara, and a moment later he had drawn the girl to his side. Then he stood erect and steadied the girl while she arose to her feet. Before them a maze of branches stretched away to be lost in the foliage.

“We shall leave no spoor here,” said Tanar.

“I am afraid,” said Stellara. “Hold me tightly.”

“You will soon become accustomed to it,” said Tanar, “and then you will not be afraid. At first I was afraid, but later I could swing through the trees almost as rapidly as the black men themselves.”

“I cannot even take a single step,” said Stellara. “I know that I shall fall.”

“You do not have to take a step,” said Tanar. “Put your arms around

my neck and hold on tightly,” and then he stooped and lifted her with his left arm while she clung tightly to him, her soft white arms encircling his neck.

“How easily you lifted me!” she said; “how strong you are; but no man living could carry my weight through these trees and not fall.”

Tanar did not reply, but instead he moved off among the branches seeking sure footing and secure handholds as he went. The girl’s soft body was pressed close to his and in his nostrils was the delicate sachet that he had sensed in his first contact with Stellara aboard the Korsar ship and which now seemed a part of her.

As Tanar swung through the forest, the girl marveled at the strength of the man. She had always considered him a weakling by comparison with the beefy Korsars, but now she realized that in those smoothly rolling muscles was concealed the power of a superman.

She found a fascination in watching him. He moved so easily and he did not seem to tire. Once she let her lips fall until they touched his thick, black hair and then, just a little, almost imperceptibly, she tightened her arms about his neck.

Stellara was very happy and then, of a sudden, she recalled Letari and she straightened up and relaxed her hold. “The vile wanton,” she said.

“Who?” demanded Tanar. “What are you talking about?”

“That creature, Letari,” said Stellara.

“Why she is not vile,” said Tanar. “I thought she was very nice and she is certainly beautiful.”

“I believe you are in love with her,” snapped Stellara.

“That would not be difficult,” said Tanar. “She seemed very lovable.”

“Do you love her?” demanded Stellara.

“Why shouldn’t I?” asked Tanar.

“Do you?” insisted the girl.

“Would you care if I did?” asked Tanar, softly.

“Most certainly not,” said Stellara.

“Then why do you ask?”

“I didn’t ask,” said Stellara. “I do not care.”

“Oh,” said Tanar. “I misunderstood,” and he moved on in silence, for the men of Sari are not talkative, and Stellara did not know what was in his mind for his face did not reflect the fact that he was laughing inwardly, and, anyway, Stellara could not see his face.

Tanar moved always in one direction and his homing instinct assured him that the direction lay toward Sari. As far as the land went he could move unerringly toward the spot in Pellucidar where he was born. Every Pellucidarian can do that, but put them on the water, out of sight of land, and that instinct leaves them and they have no more conception of direction than would you or I if we were transported suddenly to a land where there are no points of compass since the sun hangs perpetually at zenith and there is no moon and no stars.

Tanar’s only wish at present was to put them as far as possible from the village of Lar. He would travel until they reached the coast for, knowing that Amiocap was an island, he knew that eventually they must come to the ocean. What they should do then was rather vague in his mind. He had visions of building a boat and embarking upon the sea, although he knew perfectly well that this would be madness on the part of a hill dweller such as he.

Presently he felt hungry and he knew that they must have traveled a considerable distance.

Sometimes Tanar kept track of distance by computing the number of steps that he took, for by much practice he had learned to count

them almost mechanically, leaving his mind free for other perceptions and thoughts, but here among the branches of the trees, where his steps were not of uniform length, he had thought it not worth the effort to count them and so he could only tell by the recurrence of hunger that they must have covered considerable distance since they left the village of Lar.

During their flight through the forest they had seen birds and monkeys and other animals and, on several occasions, they had paralleled or crossed game trails, but as the Amiocapians had stripped him of his weapons he had no means of obtaining meat until he could stop long enough to fashion a bow and some arrows and a spear.

How he missed his spear! From childhood it had been his constant companion and for a long time he had felt almost helpless without it. He had never become entirely accustomed or reconciled to carrying firearms, feeling in the bottom of his primitive and savage heart that there was nothing more dependable than a sturdy, stone shod spear.

He had rather liked the bow and arrows that Innes and Perry had taught him to make and use, as the arrows had seemed like little spears. At least one could see them, whereas with the strange and noisy weapons, which belched forth smoke and flame, one could not see the projectile at all. It was most unnatural and uncanny.

But Tanar's mind was not occupied with such thoughts at this time. Food was dominant.

Presently they came to a small, natural clearing beside a crystal brook and Tanar swung lightly to the ground.

"We shall stop here," he said, "until I can make weapons and get meat for us."

With the feel of the ground beneath her feet again Stellara felt more independent. "I am not hungry," she said.

“I am,” said Tanar.

“There are berries and fruits and nuts in plenty,” she insisted. “We should not wait here to be overtaken by the warriors from Lar.”

“We shall wait here until I have made weapons,” said Tanar, with finality, “and then I shall not only be in a position to make a kill for meat, but I shall be able better to defend you against Zural’s warriors.”

“I wish to go on,” said Stellara. “I do not wish to stay here,” and she stamped her little foot.

Tanar looked at her in surprise. “What is the matter with you, Stellara? You were never like this before.”

“I do not know what is the matter with me,” said the girl. “I only know that I wish I were back in Korsar, in the house of The Cid. There, at least, I should be among friends. Here I am surrounded only by enemies.”

“Then you would have Bohar the Bloody One as a mate, if he survived the storm, or if not he another like him,” Tanar reminded her.

“At least he loved me,” said Stellara.

“And you loved him?” asked Tanar.

“Perhaps,” said Stellara.

There was a peculiar look on Tanar’s face as his eyes rested upon the girl. He did not understand her, but he seemed to be trying to. She was looking past him, a strange expression upon her face when suddenly she voiced an exclamation of dismay and pointed past him.

“Look!” she cried. “Oh, God, look!”

5.

THE TANDOR HUNTER

So filled with fear was Stellara's tone that Tanar felt the hair rise upon his scalp as he wheeled about to face the thing that had so filled the girl with horror, but even had he had time to conjure in his imagination a picture worthy of her fright, he could not have imagined a more fearsome or repulsive thing than that which was advancing upon them.

In conformation it was primarily human, but there the similarity ended. It had arms and legs and it walked erect upon two feet; but such feet! They were huge, flat things with nailless toes — short, stubby toes with webs between them. Its arms were short and in lieu of fingers its hands were armed with three heavy claws. It stood somewhere in the neighborhood of five feet in height and there was not a vestige of hair upon its entire naked body, the skin of which was of the sickly pallor of a corpse.

But these attributes lent to it but a fraction of its repulsiveness — it was its head and face that were appalling. It had no external ears, there being only two small orifices on either side of its head where these organs are ordinarily located. Its mouth was large with loose, flabby lips that were drawn back now into a snarl that exposed two rows of heavy fangs. Two small openings above the center of the mouth marked the spot where a nose should have been and, to add further to the hideousness of its appearance, it was eyeless, unless bulging protuberances forcing out the skin where the eyes should have been might be called eyes. Here the skin upon the face moved as though great, round eyes were rolling beneath. The hideousness of

that blank face without eyelids, lashes or eyebrows shocked even the calm and steady nerves of Tanar.

The creature carried no weapons, but what need had it for weapons, armed as it was with those formidable claws and fangs? Beneath its pallid skin surged great muscles that attested its giant strength and upon its otherwise blank face the mouth alone was sufficient to suggest its diabolical ferocity.

“Run, Tanar!” cried Stellara. “Take to the trees! It is one of the Buried People.” But the thing was too close to him to admit of escape even if Tanar had been minded to desert Stellara, and so he stood there quietly awaiting the encounter and then suddenly, as though to add to the uncanny horror of the situation, the thing spoke. From its flabby, drooling lips issued sounds — mumbled, ghastly sounds that yet took on the semblance of speech until it became intelligible in a distorted way to Tanar and Stellara.

“It is the woman I want,” mumbled the creature. “Give me the woman, and the man may go.” To Tanar’s shocked sensibilities it was as though a mutilated corpse had risen from the grave and spoken, and he fell back a step with a sensation as nearly akin to horror as he had ever experienced.

“You cannot have the woman,” said Tanar. “Leave us alone, or I will kill you.”

An uncanny scream that was a mixture of laugh and shriek broke from the lips of the thing. “Then die!” it cried, as it launched itself upon the Sarian.

As it closed it struck upward with its heavy claws in an attempt to disembowel its antagonist, but Tanar eluded its first rush by leaping lightly to one side and then, turning quickly, he hurled himself upon the loathsome body and circling its neck with one powerful arm Tanar

turned suddenly and, bending his body forward and downward, hurled the creature over his head and heavily to the ground.

But instantly it was up again and at him. Screaming with rage and frothing at the mouth it struck wildly with its heavy claws, but Tanar had learned certain things from David Innes that men of the stone age ordinarily do not know, for David had taught him, as he had taught many another young Pellucidarians, the art of self-defense, including boxing, wrestling and jiu-jitsu, and now again they came into good stead as they had upon other occasions since he had mastered them and once more he gave thanks for the fortunate circumstance that had brought David Innes from the outer crust to Pellucidar to direct the destinies of its human race as first emperor.

Combined with his knowledge, training and agility was Tanar's great strength, without which these other accomplishments would have been of far lesser value, and so as the creature struck, Tanar parried the blows, fending the wicked talons from his flesh, and with a strength that surprised his antagonist since it was fully as great as his own.

But what was still more surprising to the monster was the frequency with which Tanar was able to step in and deliver telling blows to the body and head that, in its awkwardness and lack of skill, it was unable to properly protect.

To one side, watching the battle for which she was the stake, stood Stellara. She might have run away and hidden; she might have made good her escape, but no such thoughts entered her courageous little head. It would have been as impossible for her to desert her champion in the hour of his need as it would have been for him to leave her to her fate and so she stood there, helpless, awaiting the outcome.

To and fro across the clearing the battlers moved, trampling down the lush vegetation that sometimes grew so thickly as to hamper their

movements, and now it became apparent to both Stellara and Tanar from the labored breathing of the creature that it was being steadily worn down and that it lacked the endurance of the Sarian. However, probably sensing something of this itself, it now redoubled its efforts and the ferocity of its attack, and, at the same time, Tanar discovered a vulnerable spot at which to aim his blows.

Striking for the face he had accidentally touched one of the bulging protuberances that lay beneath the skin where the eyes should have been. At the impact of the blow, light as it was, the creature screamed and leaped backward, instinctively raising one of its claws to the injured organ and thereafter Tanar directed all his efforts toward placing further and heavier blows upon those two bulging spots.

He struck again and landed cleanly a heavy blow upon one of them. With a shriek of pain the creature stepped back and clamped both paws to its hurt.

They were fighting very close to where Stellara stood. The creature's back was toward her and she could have reached out and touched him, so near was he to her. She saw Tanar spring forward to strike again. The creature dropped back quite abreast of her and then suddenly lowering its head it gave vent to a horrid shriek and charged the Sarian with all the hideous ferocity that it could gather.

It seemed as though it had mustered all its remaining vitality and thrown it into this last, mad charge. Tanar, his mind and muscles coordinating perfectly, quick to see openings and take advantage of them and equally quick to realize the advantages of retreat, leaped backward to avoid the mad charge and the flailing claws, but as he did so one of his heels struck a low bush and he fell heavily to the ground upon his back.

For the moment he was helpless and in that brief moment the creature could be upon him with those horrid fangs and ripping claws.

Tanar knew it. The thing charging him knew it and Stellara, standing so close to them, knew it, and so quickly did she act that Tanar had scarcely struck the ground as she launched herself bodily upon the charging monster from behind.

As a football player hurls himself forward to tackle an opponent so Stellara hurled herself at the creature. Her arms encircled its knees and then slipped down, as he kicked and struggled to free himself, until finally she secured a hold upon one of his skinny ankles just above its huge foot. There she clung and the creature lunged forward just short of Tanar, but instantly, with a howl of rage, it turned to rend the girl. But that brief instant of delay had been sufficient to permit Tanar to regain his feet and ere ever the talons or fangs could sink into the soft flesh of Stellara, Tanar was upon the creature's back. Fingers of steel encircled its throat and though it struggled and struck out with its heavy claws it was at last helpless in the clutches of the Sarian.

Slowly, relentlessly, Tanar choked the life from the monster and then, with an expression of disgust, he cast the corpse aside and stepped quickly to where Stellara was staggering weakly to her feet.

He put his arm about her and for a moment she buried her face in his shoulder and sobbed. "Do not be afraid," he said; "the thing is dead."

She raised her face toward his. "Let us go away from here," she said. "I am afraid. There may be more of the Buried People about. There must be an entrance to their underworld near here, for they do not wander far from such openings."

"Yes," he said, "until I have weapons I wish to see no more of them."

“They are horrible creatures,” said Stellara, “and if there had been two of them we should both have been lost.”

“What are they?” asked Tanar. “You seem to know about them. Where had you ever seen one before?”

“I have never seen one until just now,” said she, “but my mother told me about them. They are feared and hated by all Amiociapians. They are Coropies and they inhabit dark caverns and tunnels beneath the surface of the ground. That is why we call them the Buried People. They live on flesh and wandering about the jungle they gather up the remains of our kills and devour the bodies of wild beasts that have died in the forest, but being afraid of our spears they do not venture far from the openings that lead down into their dark world. Occasionally they waylay a lone hunter and less often they come to one of our villages and seize a woman or child. No one has ever entered their world and escaped to tell about it, so that what my mother has told me about them is only what our people have imagined as to the underworld where the Buried People dwell, for there has never been any Amiociapian warrior brave enough to venture into the dark recesses of one of their tunnels, or if there has been such he has not returned to tell of it.”

“And if the kindly Amiociapians had not decided to burn us to death, they might have given us to the Buried People?” asked Tanar.

“Yes, they would have taken us and bound us to trees close to one of the entrances to the underworld, but do not blame my mother’s people for that as they would have been doing only that which they considered right and proper. ”

“Perhaps they are a kindly people,” said Tanar, with a grin, “for it was certainly far more kindly to accord us death by burning at the stake than to have left us to the horrid attentions of the Coropies. But come,

we will take to the trees again, for this spot does not look as beautiful to me now as it did when we first looked upon it.”

Once more they took up their flight among the branches and just as they were commencing to feel the urge to sleep Tanar discovered a small deer in a game trail beneath them, and making his kill the two satisfied their hunger, and then with small branches and great leaves Tanar constructed a platform in a tree — a narrow couch, where Stellara lay dawn to sleep while he stood guard, and after she had slept he slept, and then once more they resumed their flight.

Strengthened and refreshed by food and sleep they renewed their journey in higher spirits and greater hopefulness. The village of Lar lay far behind and since they had left it they had seen no other village nor any sign of man.

While Stellara had slept Tanar had busied himself in fashioning crude weapons against the time when he might find proper materials for the making of better ones. A slender branch of hard wood, gnawed to a point by his strong white teeth, must answer him for a spear. His bow was constructed of another branch and strung with tendons taken from the deer he had killed, while his arrows were slender shoots cut from a tough shrub that grew plentifully throughout the forest. He fashioned a second, lighter spear for Stellara, and thus armed each felt a sense of security that had been entirely wanting before.

On and on they went, three times they ate and once again they slept, and still they had not reached the seacoast.

The great sun hung overhead; a gentle, cooling breeze moved through the forest; birds of gorgeous plumage and little monkeys unknown to the outer world flew or scampered, sang or chattered as the man and the woman disturbed them in their passage. It was a peaceful world and to Tanar, accustomed to the savage, carnivorous

beasts that overran the great mainland of his birth, it seemed a very safe and colorless world; yet he was content that nothing was interfering with their progress toward escape.

Stellara had said no more about desiring to return to Korsar and the plan that always hovered among his thoughts included taking Stellara back to Sari with him,

The peaceful trend of Tanar's thoughts was suddenly shattered by the sound of shrill trumpeting. So close it sounded that it might almost have been directly beneath him, and an instant later as he parted the foliage ahead of him he saw the cause of the disturbance.

The jungle ended here upon the edge of open meadowland that was dotted with small clumps of trees. In the foreground there were two figures — a warrior fleeing for his life and behind him a huge tandor, which, though going upon three legs, was sure soon to overtake the man.

Tanar took the entire scene in at a glance and was aware that here was a lone tandor hunter who had failed to hamstring his prey in both hind legs.

It is seldom that man hunts the great tandor single-handed and only the bravest or the most rash would essay to do so. Ordinarily there are several hunters, two of whom are armed with heavy stone axes. While the others make a noise to attract the attention of the tandor and hide the sound of the approach of the axe men, the latter creep cautiously through the underbrush from the rear of the great animal until each is within striking distance of a hind leg. Then simultaneously they hamstring the monster, which, lying helpless, they dispatch with heavy spears and arrows.

He who would alone hamstring a tandor must be endowed not only with great strength and courage, but must be able to strike two un-

erring blows with his axe in such rapid succession that the beast is crippled almost before it realizes that it has been attacked.

It was evident to Tanar that this hunter had failed to get in his second blow quickly enough and now he was at the mercy of the great beast.

Since they had started upon their flight through the trees Stellara had overcome her fear and was now able to travel alone with only occasional assistance from Tanar. She had been following the Sarian and now she stood at his side, watching the tragedy being enacted below them.

“He will be killed,” she cried. “Can we not save him?”

This thought had not occurred to Tanar, for was the man not an Amiocapian and an enemy; but there was something in the girl’s tone that spurred the Sarian to action. Perhaps it was the instinct in the male to exhibit his prowess before the female. Perhaps it was because at heart Tanar was brave and magnanimous, or perhaps it was because that among all the other women in the world it was Stellara who had spoken. Who may know? Perhaps Tanar did not know himself what prompted his next act.

Shouting a word that is familiar to all tandor hunters and which is most nearly translatable into English as “Reverse!” he leaped to the ground almost at the side of the charging tandor and simultaneously he carried his spear hand back and drove the heavy shaft deep into the beast’s side, just behind its left shoulder. Then he leaped back into the forest expecting that the tandor would do precisely what it did do.

With a squeal of pain it turned upon its new tormentor.

The Amiocapian, who still clung to his heavy axe, had heard, as though it was a miracle from the gods, the familiar signal that had burst so suddenly from Tanar’s lips. It had told him what the other would

attempt and he was ready, with the result that he turned back toward the beast at the instant that it wheeled to charge after Tanar, and as it crashed into the undergrowth of the jungle in pursuit of the Sarian the Amiociapian overtook it. The great axe moved swiftly as lightning and the huge beast, trumpeting with rage, sank helplessly to the ground and rolled over on its side.

“Down!” shouted the Amiociapian, to advise Tanar that the attack had been successful

The Sarian returned and together the two warriors dispatched the great beast, while above them Stellara remained among the concealing verdure of the trees, for the women of Pellucidar do not rashly expose themselves to view of enemy warriors. In this instance she knew that it would be safer to wait and discover the attitude of the Amiociapian toward Tanar. Perhaps he would be grateful and friendly, but there was the possibility that he might not.

The beast dispatched, the two men faced one another.

“Who are you,” demanded the Amiociapian, “who came so bravely to the rescue of a stranger? I do not recognize you. You are not of Amiociap.”

“My name is Tanar and I am from the kingdom of Sari, that lies far away on the distant mainland. I was captured by the Korsars, who invaded the empire of which Sari is a part. They were taking me and other prisoners back to Korsar when the fleet was overtaken by a terrific storm and the ship upon which I was confined was so disabled that it was deserted by its crew. Drifting helplessly with the wind and current it finally bore us to the shores of Amiociap, where we were captured by warriors from the village of Lar. They did not believe our story, but thought that we were Korsars and they were about to destroy us when we succeeded in making our escape.

“If you do not believe me,” continued the Sarian, “then one of us must die for under no circumstances will we return to Lar to be burned at the stake.”

“Whether I believe you or not,” replied the Amiocapian, “I should be beneath the contempt of all men were I to permit any harm to befall one who has just saved my life at the risk of his own.”

“Very well,” said Tanar. “We shall go our way in the knowledge that you will not reveal our whereabouts to the men of the village of Lar.”

“You say ‘we,’” said the Amiocapian. “You are not alone then?”

“No, there is another with me,” replied Tanar.

“Perhaps I can help you,” said the Amiocapian. “It is my duty to do so. In what direction are you going and how do you plan to escape from Amiocap?”

“We are seeking the coast where we hope to be able to build a craft and to cross the ocean to the mainland.”

The Amiocapian shook his head. “That will be difficult,” he said. “Nay, impossible.”

“We may only make the attempt,” said Tanar, “for it is evident that we cannot remain here among the people of Amiocap, who will not believe that we are not Korsars.”

“You do not look at all like the Korsars,” said the warrior. “Where is your companion? Does he look like one?”

“My companion is a woman,” replied Tanar.

“If she looks no more like a Korsar than you, then it were easy to believe your story and, I, for one, am willing to believe it and willing to help you. There are other villages upon Amiocap than Lar and other chiefs than Zural.

“We are all bitter against the Korsars, but we are not all blinded by our hate as is Zural. Fetch your companion and if she does not

appear to be a Korsar, I will take you to my own village and see that you are well treated. If I am in doubt I will permit you to go your way; nor shall I mention the fact to others that I have seen you.”

“That is fair enough,” said Tanar, and then, turning, he called to the girl. “Come, Stellara! Here is a warrior who would see if you are a Korsar.”

The girl dropped lightly to the ground from the branches of the tree above the two men.

As the eyes of the Amiocapian fell upon her he stepped back with an exclamation of shock and surprise.

“Gods of Amiocap!” he cried. “Allara!”

The two looked at him in amazement. “No, not Allara,” said Tanar, “but Stellara, her daughter. Who are you that you should so quickly recognize the likeness?”

“I am Fedol,” said the man, “and Allara was my mate.”

“Then this is your daughter, Fedol,” said Tanar.

The warrior shook his head, sadly. “No,” he said, “I can believe that she is the daughter of Allara, but her father must have been a Korsar for Allara was stolen from me by the men of Korsar. She is a Korsar and though my heart urges me to accept her as my daughter, the customs of Amiocap forbid. Go your way in peace. If I can protect you I shall, but I cannot accept you, or take you to my village.”

Stellara came close to Fedol, her eyes searching the tan skin upon his left shoulder. “You are Fedol,” she said, pointing to the red birthmark upon his skin, “and here is the proof that my mother gave me, transmitted to me through your blood, that I am the daughter of Fedol,” and she turned her left shoulder to him, and there lay upon the white skin a small, round, red mark identical with that upon the left shoulder of the Amiocapian.

For a moment Fedol stood spellbound his eyes fixed upon Stellara's shoulder and then he took her into his arms and held her closely.

“My daughter!” he murmured. “Allara come back to me in the blood of our blood and the flesh of our flesh!”

6.

THE ISLAND OF LOVE

The noonday sun of Pellucidar shone down upon a happy trio as Fedol guided Stellara and Tanar towards the village of Paraht, where he ruled as chief.

“Will they receive us there as friends,” asked Stellara, “or will they wish to destroy us as did the men of Lar?”

“I am chief,” said Fedol. “Even if they questioned you, they will do as I command, but there will be no question for the proof is beyond dispute and they will accept you as the daughter of Fedol and Allara, as I have accepted you.”

“And Tanar?” asked Stellara, “will you protect him, too?”

“Your word is sufficient that he is not a Korsar,” replied Fedol. “He may remain with us as long as he wishes.”

“What will Zural think of this?” asked Tanar. “He has condemned us to die. Will he not insist that the sentence be carried out?”

“Seldom do the villagers of Amiocap war one against the other,” replied Fedol; “but if Zural wishes war he shall have it ere ever I shall give up you or my daughter to the burning stake of Lar.”

Great was the rejoicing when the people of Paraht saw their chief, whom they had thought lost to them forever, returning. They clustered about him with glad cries of welcome, which were suddenly stilled by loud shouts of

“The Korsars! The Korsars!” as the eyes of some of the people alighted upon Tanar and Stellara.

“Who cried ‘Korsars?’” demanded Fedol. “What know you of these people?”

“I know them,” replied a tall warrior. “I am from Lar. There are six others with me and we have been searching for these Korsars, who escaped just before they were to have been burned at the stake. We will take them back with us and Zural will rejoice that you have captured them.”

“You will take them nowhere,” said Fedol. “They are not Korsars. This one,” and he placed a hand upon Stellara’s shoulder, “is my daughter, and the man is a warrior from distant Sari. He is the son of the king of that country, which lies far away upon a mainland unknown to us.”

“They told that same story to Zural,” said the warrior from Lar; “but we did not believe them. None of us believed them. I was with Vulhan and his party when we took them from the Korsar ship that brought them to Amiocap.”

“At first I did not believe them,” said Fedol, “but Stellara convinced me that she is my daughter, just as I can convince you of the truth of her statement.”

“How?” demanded the warrior.

“By the birthmark on my left shoulder,” replied Fedol. “Look at it, and then compare it with the one upon her left shoulder. No one who knew Allara can doubt that Stellara is her daughter, so closely does the girl resemble her mother, and being Allara’s daughter how could she inherit the birthmark upon her left shoulder from any other sire than me?”

The warriors from Lar scratched their heads. “It would seem the best of proof,” replied the warriors’ spokesman.

“It is the best of proof,” said Fedol. “It is all that I need. It is all

the people of Paraht need. Take the word to Zural and the people of Lar and I believe that they will accept my daughter and Tanar as we are accepting them, and I believe that they will be willing to protect them as we intend to protect them from all enemies, whether from Amiocap or elsewhere.”

“I shall take your message to Zural,” replied the warrior, and shortly afterward they departed on the trail toward Lar.

Fedol prepared a room in his house for Stellara and assigned Tanar to a large building that was occupied solely by bachelors.

Plans were made for a great feast to celebrate the coming of Stellara and a hundred men were dispatched to fetch the ivory and the meat of the tandor that Fedol and Tanar had slain.

Fedol decked Stellara with ornaments of bone and ivory and gold. She wore the softest furs and the gorgeous plumage of rare birds. The people of Paraht loved her and Stellara was happy.

Tanar was accepted at first by the men of the tribe with some reservations, not untinged with suspicion. He was their guest by the order of their chief and they treated him as such, but presently, when they came to know him and particularly after he had hunted with them, they liked him for himself and made him one of them.

The Amiocapians were, at first, an enigma to Tanar. Their tribal life and all their customs were based primarily upon love and kindness. Harsh words, bickering and scolding were practically unknown among them. These attributes of the softer side of man appeared at first weak and effeminate to the Sarian, but when he found them combined with great strength and rare courage his admiration for the Amiocapians knew no bounds, and he soon recognized in their attitude toward one another and toward life a philosophy that he hoped he might make clear to his own Sarians.

The Amiocapians considered love the most sacred of the gifts of the gods, and the greatest power for good and they practiced liberty of love without license. So that while they were not held in slavery by senseless man-made laws that denied the laws of God and nature, yet they were pure and virtuous to a degree beyond that which he had known in any other people.

With hunting and dancing and feasting, with tests of skill and strength in which the men of Amiocap contended in friendly rivalry, life for Stellara and Tanar was ideally happy.

Less and less often did the Sarian think of Sari. Sometime he would build a boat and return to his native country, but there was no hurry; he would wait, and gradually even that thought faded almost entirely from his mind. He and Stellara were often together. They found a measure of happiness and contentment in one another's society that was lacking at other times or with other people. Tanar had never spoken of love. Perhaps he had not thought of love for it seemed that he was always engaged upon some enterprise of the hunt, or contending in some of the sports and games of the men. His body and his mind were occupied — a condition which sometimes excludes thoughts of love, but wherever he went or whatever he did the face and figure of Stellara hovered ever in the background of his thoughts.

Without realizing it, perhaps, his every thought, his every act was influenced by the sweet loveliness of the chief's daughter. Her friendship he took for granted and it gave him great happiness, but yet he did not speak of love. But Stellara was a woman, and women live on love.

In the village of Paraht she saw the girls openly avowing their love to men, but she was still bound by the customs of Korsar and it would have been impossible for her to bring herself to tell a man that she loved him until he had avowed his love. And so hearing no word of

love from Tanar, she was content with his friendship. Perhaps she, too, had given no more thought to the matter of love than he.

But there was another who did harbor thoughts of love. It was Doval, the Adonis of Paraht. In all Amiocap there was no handsomer youth than Doval. Many were the girls who had avowed their love to him, but his heart had been unmoved until he looked upon Stellara.

Doval came often to the house of Fedol the chief. He brought presents of skin and ivory and bone to Stellara and they were much together. Tanar saw and he was troubled, but why he was troubled he did not know.

The people of Paraht had eaten and slept many times since the coming of Tanar and Stellara and as yet no word had come from Zural, or the village of Lat, in answer to the message that Fedol had sent, but now, at last, there entered the village a party of warriors from Lar, and Fedol, sitting upon the chief's chair, received them in the tiled living room of his home.

"Welcome, men of Lar," said the chief. "Fedol welcomes you to the village of Paraht and awaits with impatience the message that you bring him from his friend, Zural the chief."

"We come from Zural and the people of Lar," said the spokesman, "with a message of friendship for Fedol and Paraht. Zural, our chief, has commanded us to express to you his deep sorrow for the unintentional wrong that he did your daughter and the warrior from Sari. He is convinced that Stellara is your daughter and that the man is no Korsar if you are convinced of these facts, and he has sent presents to them and to you and with these presents an invitation for you to visit the village of Lar and bring Stellara and Tanar with you that Zural and his people may make amends for the wrong that they unwittingly did them."

Fedol and Tanar and Stellara accepted the proffered friendship of Zural and his people, and a feast was prepared in honor of the visitors.

While these preparations were in progress a girl entered the village from the jungle. She was a dark-haired girl of extraordinary beauty. Her soft skin was scratched and soiled as from a long journey. Her hair was disheveled, but her eyes were bright with happiness and her teeth gleamed from between lips that were parted in a smile of triumph and expectation.

She made her way directly through the village to the house of Fedol and when the warriors of Lar descried her they exclaimed with astonishment.

“Letari!” cried one of them. “Where did you come from? What are you doing in the village of Paraht?”

But Letari did not answer. Instead she walked directly to where Tanar stood and halted before him.

“I have come to you,” she said. “I have died many a death from loneliness and sorrow since you ran away from the village of Lar, and when the warriors returned and said that you were safe in the village of Paraht I determined to come here. And so when Zural sent these warriors to bear his message to Fedol I followed them, The way has been hard and though I kept close behind them there were many times when wild beasts menaced me and I feared that I should never reach you, but at last I am here.”

“But why have you come?” demanded Tanar.

“Because I love you,” replied Letari. “Before the men of Lar and all the people of Paraht I proclaim my love.”

Tanar flushed. In all his life he had never been in so embarrassing a position. All eyes were turned upon him and among them were the eyes of Stellara.

“Well?” demanded Fedol, looking at Tanar.

“The girl is mad,” said the Sarian. “She cannot love me for she scarcely knows me. She never spoke to me but once before and that was when she brought food to Stellara and me when we were prisoners in the village of Lar.”

“I am not mad,” said Letari. “I love you.”

“Will you have her?” asked Fedol.

“I do not love her,” said Tanar.

“We will take her back to the village of Lar with us when we go,” said one of the warriors.

“I shall not go,” cried Letari. “I love him and I shall stay here forever.”

The girl’s declaration of love for Tanar seemed not to surprise anyone but the Sarian. It aroused little comment and no ridicule. The Amiocapians, with the possible exception of Stellara, took it as a matter of course. It was the most natural thing in the world for the people of this island of love to declare themselves publicly in matters pertaining to their hearts or to their passions,

That the general effect of such a policy was not nor never had been detrimental to the people as a race was evident by their high intelligence, the perfection of their physique, their great beauty and their unquestioned courage. Perhaps the opposite custom, which has prevailed among most of the people of the outer crust for so many ages, is responsible for the unnumbered millions of unhappy human beings who are warped or twisted mentally, morally or physically.

But with such matters the mind of Letari was not concerned. It was not troubled by any consideration of posterity. All she thought of was that she loved the handsome stranger from Sari and that she wanted to be near him. She came close to him and looked up into his face.

“Why do you not love me?” she asked. “Am I not beautiful?”

“Yes, you are very beautiful,” he said; “but no one can explain love, least of all I. Perhaps there are qualities of mind and character — things that we can neither see nor feel nor hear — that draw one heart forever to another.”

“But I am drawn to you,” said the girl. “Why are not you attracted to me?”

Tanar shook his head for he did not know. He wished that the girl would go away and leave him alone for she made him feel uneasy and restless and entirely uncomfortable, but Letari had no idea of leaving him alone. She was near him and there she intended to stay until they dragged her away and took her back to Lar, if they were successful in so doing, but she had determined in her little head that she should run away from them at the first opportunity and hide in the jungle until she could return to Paraht and Tanar.

“Will you talk to me?” she asked. “Perhaps if you talk to me you will love me.”

“I will talk to you,” said Tanar, “but I shall not love you.”

“Let us walk a little way from these people where we may talk,” she said.

“Very well,” said Tanar. He was only too anxious himself to get away where he might hide his embarrassment.

Letari led the way down the village street, her soft arm brushing his. “I should be a good mate,” she said, “for I should love only you, and if, after a while, you did not like me you could send me away for that is one of the customs of Amiocap — that when one of two people ceases to love they shall no longer be mates.”

“But they do not become mates unless they both love,” insisted Tanar.

“That is true,” admitted Letari, “but presently you shall love me. I know that, for all men love me. I could have for my mate any man in Lar that I choose.”

“You do not feel unkindly towards yourself,” said Tanar, with a grin.

“Why should I?” asked Letari. “Am I not beautiful and young?”

Stellara watched Tanar and Letari walking down the village street. She saw how close together they walked and it seemed that Tanar was very much interested in what Letari had to say to him. Doval was standing at her side. She turned to him.

“It is noisy here,” she said. “There are too many people. Walk with me to the end of the village.”

It was the first time that Stellara had ever indicated a desire to be alone with him and Doval felt a strange thrill of elation. “I will walk with you to the end of the village, Stellara, or to the end of Pellucidar, forever, because I love you,” he said.

The girl sighed and shook her head. “Do not talk about love,” she begged. “I merely wish to walk and there is no one else here to walk with me.”

“Why will you not love me?” asked Doval, as they left the house of the chief and entered the main street of the village. “Is it because you love another?”

“No!” cried Stellara, vehemently. “I love no one. I hate all men.”

Doval shook his head in perplexity. “I cannot understand you,” he said. “Many girls have told me that they loved me. I think that I could have almost any girl in Amiocap as my mate if I asked her; but you, the only one that I love, will not have me.”

For a few moments Stellara was silent in thought. Then she turned to the handsome youth at her side. “You are very sure of yourself,

Doval,” she said, “but I do not believe that you are right. I would be willing to bet that I could name a girl who would not have you; who, no matter how hard you tried to make her, would not love you.”

“If you mean yourself, then there is one,” he said, “but there is no other.”

“Oh, yes, there is,” insisted Stellara.

“Who is she?” demanded Doval.

“Letari, the girl from Lar,” said Stellara.

Doval laughed. “She throws her love at the first stranger that comes to Amiocap,” he said. “She would be too easy.”

“I do not intend to try,” said Doval. “I do not love her. I love only you, and if I made her love me of what good would that be toward making you love me? No, I shall spend my time trying to win you.”

“You are afraid,” said Stellara. “You know that you would fail.”

“It would do me no good if I succeeded,” insisted Doval.

“It would make me like you very much better than I do now,” said Stellara.

“You mean that?” asked Doval.

“I most certainly do,” said Stellara.

“Then I shall make the girl love me,” said Doval. “And if I do you promise to be mine?”

“I said nothing of the kind,” said Stellara. “I only said that I should like you very much better than I do now.”

“Well, that is something,” said Doval. “If you will like me very much better than you do now that is at least a step in the right direction.”

“However, there is no danger of that,” said Stellara, “for you cannot make her love you.”

“Wait, and see,” said Doval.

As Tanar and Letari turned to come back along the village street they passed Doval and Stellara, and Tanar saw that they were walking very close together and whispering in low tones. The Sarian scowled; and suddenly he discovered that he did not like Doval and he wondered why because always he had thought Doval a very fine fellow. Presently it occurred to him that the reason was that Doval was not good enough for Stellara, but then if Stellara loved him that was all there was to it and with the thought that perhaps Stellara loved him Tanar became angry with Stellara. What could she see in this Doval, he wondered, and what business had Doval to walk alone with her in the village streets? Had not he, Tanar, always had Stellara to himself? Never before had anyone interfered, although all the men liked Stellara. Well, if Stellara liked Doval better than she did him, he would show her that he did not care. He, Tanar the Sarian, son of Ghak, king of Sari, would not let any woman make a fool of him and so he ostentatiously put his arm around the slim shoulders of Letari and walked thus slowly the length of the village street; nor did Stellara fail to see.

At the feast that was given in honor of the messengers sent by Zural, Stellara sat by Doval and Tanar had Letari at his side, and Doval and Letari were happy.

After the feast was over most of the villagers returned to their houses and slept, but Tanar was restless and unhappy and could not sleep so he took his weapons, his heavy spear shod with bone, his bow and his arrows, and his stone knife with the ivory handle, that Fedol the chief had given him, and went alone into the forest to hunt.

If the villagers slept an hour or a day is a matter of no moment, since there was no way of measuring the time. When they awoke — some sooner, some later — they went about the various duties of their

life. Letari sought for Tanar, but she could not find him; instead she came upon Doval.

“You are very beautiful,” said the man.

“I know it,” replied Letari.

“You are the most beautiful girl that I have ever seen,” insisted Doval.

Letari looked at him steadily for a few moments. “I never noticed you before,” she said. “You are very handsome. You are quite the handsomest man that I ever saw.”

“That is what every one says,” replied Doval. “Many girls have told me that they loved me, but still I have no mate.”

“A woman wants something beside a handsome face in her mate,” said Letari.

“I am very brave,” said Doval, “and I am a great hunter. I like you. Come, let us walk together,” and Doval put his arm about the girl’s shoulders and together they walked along the village street, while, from the doorway of her sleeping apartment in the home of her father, the chief, Stellara watched, and as she watched, a smile touched her lips.

Over the village of Paraht rested the peace of Amiocap and the calm of eternal noon. The children played at games beneath the shade of the trees that had been left dotting the village here and there when the clearing had been made. The women worked upon skins, strung beads or prepared food. The men looked to their weapons against the next hunt, or lolled idly on furs in their open living rooms — those who were not still sleeping off the effects of the heavy feast. Fedol, the chief, was bidding farewell to Zural’s messengers and entrusting to them a gift for the ruler of Lar, when suddenly the peace and quiet was shattered by hoarse cries and a shattering burst of musketry.

Instantly all was pandemonium. Then women and warriors rushed from their homes; shouts, curses and screams filled the air.

“Korsars! Korsars!” rang through the village, as the bearded ruffians, taking advantage of the surprise and confusion of the villagers, rushed rapidly forward to profit by the advantage they had gained.

7.

“KORSARS!”

Tanar the Sarian hunted through the primeval forest of Amiocap. Already his repute as a hunter stood high among the men of Paraht, but it was not to add further luster to his fame that he hunted now. It was to quiet a restlessness that would not permit him to sleep — restlessness and a strange depression that was almost unhappiness, but his thoughts were not always upon the hunt. Visions of Stellara often walked in front of him, the golden sunlight on her golden hair, and then beside her he saw the handsome Doval with an arm about her shoulder. He closed his eyes and shook his head to dispel the vision, but it persisted and he tried thinking of Letari, the beautiful maiden from Lar. Yes, Letari was beautiful. What eyes she had; and she loved him. Perhaps, after all, it would be as well to mate with her and remain forever upon Amiocap, but presently he found himself comparing Letari with Stellara and he found himself wishing that Letari possessed more of the characteristics of Stellara. She had not the character nor the intelligence of the daughter of Fedol. She offered him none of the restful companionship that had made his association with Stellara so infinitely happy.

He wondered if Stellara loved Doval, and if Doval loved Stellara, and with the thoughts he halted in his tracks and his eyes went wide as a sudden realization burst for the first time upon his consciousness.

“God!” he exclaimed aloud. “What a fool I have been. I have loved her always and did not know it,” and wheeling about he set off at a

brisk trot in the direction of Paraht, all thoughts of his hunt erased from his mind.

Tanar had hunted far, much farther than he had thought, but at last he came to the village of Fedol the chief. As he passed through the hanging barrier of Paraht, the first people that he saw were Letari and Doval. They were walking side by side and very close and the man's arm was about the slim shoulders of the girl.

Letari looked at Tanar in astonishment as she recognized him. "We all thought the Korsars had taken you with them," she cried.

"Korsars!" exclaimed Tanar. "What Korsars?"

"They were here," said Doval. "They raided the village, but we drove them off with just a small loss. There were not many of them. Where were you?"

"After the feast I went into the forest to hunt," said Tanar. "I did not know that there was a Korsar upon the island of Amiocap."

"It is just as well that you were not here," said Letari, "for while you were away I have learned that I love Doval."

"Where is Stellara?" demanded Tanar.

"She was taken by the Korsars," said Doval. "Thank God that it was not you, Letari," and, stooping, he kissed the girl upon the lips.

With a cry of grief and rage Tanar ran swiftly to the house of Fedol the chief. "Where is Stellara?" he demanded, springing unceremoniously into the center of the living room.

An old woman looked up from where she sat with her face buried in her hands. She was the sole occupant of the room. "The Korsars took her," she said.

"Where is Fedol then?" demanded Tanar.

"He has gone with warriors to try to rescue her," said the old

woman, “but it is useless. They, who are taken by the Korsars, never come back.”

“Which way did they go?” asked Tanar.

Sobbing with grief, the old woman pointed in the direction taken by the Korsars, and again she buried her face in her hands, grieving for the misfortune that had overtaken the house of Fedol the chief.

Almost immediately Tanar picked up the trail of the Korsars, which he could identify by the imprints of their heeled boots, and he saw that Fedol and his warriors had not followed the same trail, evidencing the fact that they must have gone in the wrong direction to succor Stellara successfully.

Sick with anguish, maddened by hate, the Sarian plunged on through the forest. Plain to his eyes lay the spoor of his quarry. In his heart was a rage that gave him the strength of many men.

In a little glade, partially surrounded by limestone cliffs, a small company of ragged, bewhiskered men had halted to rest. Where they had halted a tiny spring broke from the base of the cliff and trickled along its winding channel for a short distance to empty into a natural, circular opening in the surface of the ground. From deep in the bottom of this natural well the water falling from the rim could be heard splashing upon the surface of the water far below. It was dark down there — dark and mysterious, but the bearded ruffians gave no heed either to the beauty or the mystery of the spot.

One huge, fierce-visaged fellow, his countenance disfigured by an ugly scar, confronted a slim girl, who sat upon the turf, her back against a tree, her face buried in her arms.

“You thought me dead, eh?” he exclaimed. “You thought Bohar the Bloody dead? Well he is not dead. Our boat weathered the storm and passing close to Amiocap we saw the wreck of The Cid’s ship

lying upon the sand. Knowing that you and the prisoners had been left aboard when we quit the ship, I guessed that perhaps you might be somewhere upon Amiocap; nor was I wrong, Stellara. Bohar the Bloody is seldom wrong.

“We hid close to a village which they call Lar and at the first opportunity we captured one of the villagers — a woman — and from her we learned that you had indeed come ashore, but that you were then in the village of your father and we made the woman guide us there. The rest you know and now be cheerful for at last you are to mate with Bohar the Bloody and return to Korsar.”

“Rather than that I shall die,” cried the girl.

“But how?” laughed Bohar. “You have no weapons. Perhaps, however, you will choke yourself to death,” and he laughed uproariously at his own joke.

“There is a way,” cried the girl, and before he could guess what she intended, or stay her, she dodged quickly around him and ran toward the natural well that lay a few hundred feet away.

“Quick!” shouted Bohar. “Stop her!” and instantly the entire twenty sprang in pursuit. But Stellara was swift and there was likelihood that they would not overtake her in the short distance that lay before her and the edge of the abyss.

Fortune, however, was with Bohar the Bloody that day and almost at her goal Stellara’s foot caught in a tangle of grasses and she stumbled forward upon her face. Before she could recover her feet the nearest Korsar had seized her, and then Bohar the Bloody ran to her side and, taking her from the grasp of the other Korsar, shook her violently.

“You she-tarag!” he cried. “For this I shall fix you so that never again will you run away. When we reach the sea I shall cut off one of

your feet and then I shall know that you will not run away from me again,” and he continued to shake her violently.

Breaking suddenly and unexpectedly from the dense jungle into the opening of the glade a warrior came upon the scene being enacted at the edge of the well. At the moment he thought that Stellara was being killed and he went mad with rage; nor was his rage any the less when he recognized Bohar the Bloody as the author of the assault.

With an angry shout he leaped forward, his heavy spear ready in his hand. What mattered it that twenty men with firearms opposed him? He saw only Stellara in the cruel grip of the bestial Bohar.

At the sound of his voice the Korsar looked up and instantly Bohar recognized the Sarian.

“Look, Stellara,” he said, with a sneer. “Your lover has come. It is well for with no lover and only one foot you will have no reason at all for running away.”

A dozen harquebuses had already been raised in readiness and the men stood looking toward Bohar.

Tanar had reached the opposite edge of the well, only a few yards distant, when Bohar nodded and there was a roar of musketry and a flash of flame accompanied by so dense a pall of black smoke that for an instant the figure of the Sarian was entirely obliterated from view.

Stellara, wide-eyed and trembling with pain and horror, tried to penetrate the smoke cloud with her frightened eyes. Quickly it lifted, revealing no sign of Tanar.

“Well done,” cried Bohar to his men. “Either you blew him all to pieces, or his body fell into the hole,” and going to the edge of the opening he looked down, but it was very dark there and he saw nothing. “Wherever he is, at least he is dead,” said Bohar. “I should like to have crushed his life out with my own hands, but at least he

is dead by my command and the blow that he struck me is wiped out, as Bohar wipes out the blows of all his enemies.”

As the Korsars resumed the march toward the ocean, Stellara walked among them with bent head and moist, unseeing eyes. Often she stumbled and each time she was jerked roughly to her feet and shaken, at the same time being admonished in hoarse tones to watch her footing.

By the time they reached the seashore Stellara was sick with a high fever and she lay in the camp of the Korsars for what may have been a day or a month, too sick to move, while Bohar and his men felled timbers, hewed planks and constructed a boat to carry them to the distant shores of Korsar.

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Rushing forward to rescue Stellara from the clutches of Bohar, Tanar’s mind and eyes had been fixed on nothing but the figure of the girl. He had not seen the opening in the ground and at the instant that the Korsars fired their harquebuses he had stepped unwittingly into the opening and plunged to the water far below.

The fall had not hurt him. It had not even stunned him and when he came to the surface he saw before him a quiet stream moving gently through an opening in the limestone wall about him. Beyond the opening was a luminous cavern and into this Tanar swam, clambering to its rocky floor the moment that he had found a low place in the bank of the stream. Looking about him he found himself in a large cavern, the walls of which shone luminously, so considerable was their content of phosphorus.

There was a great deal of rubbish on the floor of the cave — the

bones of animals and men, broken weapons, bits of hide. It might have been the dumping ground of some gruesome charnel house.

The Sarian walked back to the opening through which the little stream had borne him into the grotto, but a careful investigation revealed no avenue of escape in this direction, although he reentered the stream and swam into the bottom of the well where he found the walls worn so smooth by the long continued action of falling water that they gave no slightest indication of handhold or foothold.

Then slowly he made a circuit of the outer walls of the grotto, but only where the stream passed out at its far end was there any opening — a rough archway that rose some six feet above the surface of the underground stream.

Along one side was a narrow ledge and looking through the opening he saw a dim corridor leading away into the distance and obscurity.

There being no other way in which to search for freedom, Tanar passed along the narrow ledge beneath the archway to find himself in a tunnel that followed the windings of the stream.

Only here and there small patches of the rock that formed the walls and ceiling of the corridor threw out a luminosity that barely relieved the inky darkness of the place, yet relieve it it did so that at least one might be sure of his footing, though at points where the corridor widened its walls were often lost in darkness.

For what distance he followed the tunnel Tanar did not know, but presently he came to a low and narrow opening through which he could pass only upon his hands and knees. Beyond there seemed to be a much lighter chamber and as Tanar came into this, still upon all fours, a heavy body dropped upon his back from above and then another at each side of him and he felt cold, clammy claws seizing his

arms and legs, and arms encircled his neck — arms that felt against his flesh like the arms of a corpse.

He struggled but there were too many for him and in a moment he was disarmed and his ankles and wrists securely bound with tough thongs of rawhide. Then he was rolled over on his side and lay looking up into the horrid faces of Coripies, the Buried People of Amiocap.

The blank faces, the corpse-like skin, the bulging protuberances where the eyes would have been, the hairless bodies, the claw-like hands combined to produce such a hideous aspect in the monsters as to make the stoutest of hearts quail.

And when they spoke! The mumbled mouthing revealing yellow fangs withered the heart in the breast of the Sarian. Here, indeed, was a hideous end, for he knew that it was the end, since never in all the many tales the Amiocapians had told him of the Buried People was there any record of a human being escaping from their clutches.

Now they were addressing him and presently, in their hollow mewling, he discerned words. “How did you get into the land of the Coripies?” demanded one.

“I fell into a hole in the ground,” replied Tanar. “I did not seek to come here. Take me out and I will reward you.”

“What have you to give the Coripies more than your flesh?” demanded another.

“Do not think to get out for you never shall,” said a third.

Now two of them lifted him lightly and placed him upon the back of one of their companions. So easily the creature carried him that Tanar wondered that he had ever overcome the Coripi that he had met upon the surface of the ground.

Through long corridors, some very dark and others partially lighted by outcroppings of phosphorescent rock, the creature bore him.

At times they passed through large grottoes, beautifully wrought in intricate designs by nature, or climbed long stairways carved in the limestone, probably by the Coripies themselves, only presently to descend other stairways and follow winding tunnels that seemed interminable.

But at last the journey ended in a huge cavern, the ceiling of which rose at least two hundred feet above them. This stupendous grotto was more brilliantly lighted than any other section of the subterranean world that Tanar had passed through. Into its limestone walls were cut pathways that zigzagged back and forth upward toward the ceiling, and the entire surface of the surrounding walls was pierced by holes several feet in diameter that appeared to be the mouths of caves.

Squatting about on the floor of the cavern were hundreds of Coripies of all ages and both sexes.

At one end of the grotto, in a large opening, a few feet above the floor, squatted a single, large Coripi. His skin was mottled with a purplish hue that suggested a corpse in which mortification had progressed to a considerable degree. The protuberances that suggested huge eyeballs beneath the skin protruded much further and were much larger than those in any other of the Coripies that Tanar had examined. The creature was, by far, the most repulsive of all the repulsive horde.

On the floor of the grotto, directly before this creature, were gathered a number of male Coripies and toward this congregation Tanar's captors bore him.

Scarcely had they entered the grotto when it became apparent to Tanar that these creatures could see, a thing that he had commenced to suspect shortly after his capture, for now, at sight of him, they commenced to scream and make strange, whistling sounds, and from the openings of many of the high flung caves within the walls heads

protruded and the hideous, eyeless faces seemed to be bending eyes upon him.

One cry seemed to rise above all others as he was borne across the grotto towards the creature sitting in the niche. It was “Flesh! Flesh!” and it sounded gruesome and horrible in its suggestiveness.

Flesh! Yes, he knew that they ate human flesh and it seemed now that they were but awaiting a signal to leap upon him and devour him alive, tearing pieces from him with their heavy claws. But when one did rush upon him there came a scream from the creature in the niche and the fellow desisted, even as one of his captors had turned to defend him.

The cavern crossed at last, Tanar was deposited upon his feet in front of the creature squatting in the niche. Tanar could see the great eyeballs revolving beneath the pulsing skin of the protuberances and though he could see no eyes, he knew that he was being examined coldly and calculatingly.

“Where did you get it?” finally demanded the creature, addressing Tanar’s captors.

“He tumbled into the Well of Sounding Water,” replied one.

“How do you know?”

“He told us so.”

“Do you believe him?”

“There was no other way in which he could enter the land of the Coropies,” replied one of the captors.

“Perhaps he was leading a party in to slay us,” said the creature in the niche. “Go, many of you, and search the corridors and the tunnels about the Well of Sounding Water.” Then the creature turned to Tanar’s captors. “Take this and put it with the others; we have not yet enough.”

Tanar was now again placed upon the back of a Coripi, who carried him across the grotto and up one of the pathways cut into the face of the limestone wall. Ascending this pathway a short distance the creature turned into one of the cave openings, and Tanar found himself again in a narrow, dark, winding tunnel.

The tunnels and corridors through which he had already been conducted had impressed upon Tanar the great antiquity of this underground labyrinthian world, since there was every evidence that the majority of these tunnels had been hewn from the limestone rock or natural passageways enlarged to accommodate the Coripies, and as these creatures appeared to have no implements other than their heavy, three-toed claws the construction of the tunnels must have represented the labor of countless thousands of individuals over a period of many ages.

Tanar, of course, had only a hazy conception of what we describe as the measurable aspect of duration. His consideration of the subject concerned itself with the countless millions of times that these creatures must have slept and eaten during the course of their stupendous labors.

But the mind of the captive was also occupied with other matters as the Coripi bore him through the long tunnel. He thought of the statement of the creature in the niche, as he had ordered Tanar taken into confinement, to the effect that there were not yet enough. What did he mean? Enough of what? Enough prisoners? And when there were enough to what purpose would they be devoted?

But perhaps, to a far greater extent, his mind was occupied with thoughts of Stellara; with fears for her safety and with vain regret that he had been unable to accomplish her rescue.

From the moment that he had been so unexpectedly propitiated

into the underground world of the Buried People, his dominant thought, of course, had been that of escape; but the further into the bowels of the earth he was carried the more hopeless appeared the outcome of any venture in this direction, yet he never for once abandoned it though he realized that he must wait until they had reached the place of his final confinement before he could intelligently consider any plan at all.

How far the tireless Coripi bore Tanar the Sarian could not guess, but presently they emerged into a dimly lighted grotto, before the narrow entrance to which squatted a dozen Coripies. Within the chamber were a score more and one human being — a man with sandy hair, close-set eyes and a certain mean, crafty expression of countenance that repelled the Sarian immediately.

“Here is another,” said the Coripi who had carried Tanar to the cavern, and with that he dumped the Sarian unceremoniously upon the stone floor at the feet of the dozen Coripies who stood guard at the entrance. With teeth and claws they severed the bonds that secured his wrists and ankles.

“They come slowly,” grumbled one of the guards. “How much longer must we wait?”

“Old Xax wishes to have the greatest number that has ever been collected,” remarked another of the Coripies.

“But we grow impatient,” said the first speaker. “If he makes us wait much longer he may be one of the number here himself.”

“Be careful,” cautioned one of his fellows. “If Xax heard that you had said such a thing as that the number of our prisoners would be increased by one.”

As Tanar arose to his feet, after his bonds were severed, he was pushed roughly toward the other inmates of the room, who he soon

was to discover were prisoners, like himself, and quite naturally the first to approach him was the other human captive.

“Another,” said the stranger. “Our numbers increase but slowly, yet each one brings us closer to our inevitable doom and so I do not know whether I am sorry to see you here or glad because of the human company that I shall now have. I have eaten and slept many times since I was thrown into this accursed place and always nothing but these hideous, mumbling things for company. God, how I hate and loathe them, yet they are in the same predicament as we for they, too, are doomed to the same fate.”

“And what may that be?” asked Tanar.

“You do not know?”

“I may only guess,” replied the Sarian.

“These creatures seldom get flesh with warm blood in it. They subsist mostly upon the fish in their underground rivers and upon the toads and lizards that inhabit their caves. Their expeditions to the surface ordinarily yield nothing more than the carcasses of dead beasts, yet they crave flesh and warm blood. Heretofore they had killed their condemned prisoners one by one as they were available, but this plan gave only a mouthful of flesh to a very few Coropies. Recently Xax hit upon the plan of preserving his own condemned and the prisoners from the outer world until he had accumulated a sufficient number to feast the entire population of the cavern of which he is chief. I do not know how many that will be, but steadily the numbers grow and perhaps it will not be long now before there are enough of us to fill the bellies of Xax’s tribe.”

“Xax!” repeated Tanar. “Was he the creature sitting in the niche in the great cavern to which I was first taken?”

“That was Xax. He is ruler of that cavern. In the underground

world of the Buried People there are many tribes, each of which occupies a large cavern similar to that in which you saw Xax. These tribes are not always friendly and the most of the prisoners that you see in this cavern are members of other tribes, though there are a few from the tribe of Xax who have been condemned to death for one reason or another.”

“And there is no escape?” asked Tanar.

“None,” replied the other. “Absolutely none; but tell me who are you and from what country? I cannot believe that you are a native of Amiocap, for what Amiocapian is there who would need ask questions about the Buried People?”

“I am not of Amiocap,” replied Tanar. “I am from Sari, upon the far distant mainland.”

“Sari! I never heard of such a country,” said the other. “What is your name?”

“Tanar, and yours?”

“I am Jude of Hime,” replied the man. “Hime is an island not far from Amiocap. Perhaps you have heard of it.”

“No,” said Tanar.

“I was fishing in my canoe, off the coast of Hime,” continued Jude, “when a great storm arose which blew me across the waters and hurled me upon the coast of Amiocap. I had gone into the forest to hunt for food when three of these creatures fell upon me and dragged me into their underworld.”

“And you think that there is no escape?” demanded Tanar.

“None — absolutely none,” replied Jude.

8.

Mow

Imprisonment in the dark, illy lighted, poorly ventilated cavern weighed heavily upon Tanar of Pellucidar, and he knew that it was long for he had eaten and slept many times and though other Coripi prisoners were brought from time to time there seemed not to be enough to satisfy Xax's bloody craving for flesh.

Tanar had been glad of the companionship of Jude, though he never thoroughly understood the man, whose sour and unhappy disposition was so unlike his own. Jude apparently hated and mistrusted everyone, for even in speaking of the people of his own island he mentioned no one except in terms of bitterness and hatred, but this attitude Tanar generously attributed to the effect upon the mind of the Himean of his long and terrible incarceration among the creatures of the underworld, an experience which he was fully convinced might easily affect and unbalance a weak mind.

Even in the breasts of some of the Coripi prisoners Tanar managed to arouse sentiments somewhat analogous to friendship.

Among the latter was a young Coripi named Mow from the grotto of Ictl, who hated all the Coripies from the grotto of Xax and seemed suspicious of those from other grottoes.

Though the creatures seemed endowed with few human attributes or characteristics, yet it was apparent to Tanar that they set a certain value upon companionship, and being denied this among the creatures of his own kind Mow gradually turned to Tanar, whose courageous and happy spirit had not been entirely dampened by his lot.

Jude would have nothing to do with Mow or any other of the Coripies and he reproached Tanar for treating them in a friendly manner.

“We are all prisoners together,” Tanar reminded him, “and they will suffer the same fate as we. It will neither lessen our danger nor add to our peace of mind to quarrel with our fellow prisoners, and I, for my part, find it interesting to talk with them about this strange world which they inhabit.”

And, indeed, Tanar had learned many interesting things about the Coripies. Through his association with Mow he had discovered that the creatures were color blind, seeing everything in blacks and whites and grays through the skin that covered their great eyeballs. He learned also that owing to the restricted amount of food at their command it had been necessary to restrict their number, and to this end it had become customary to destroy women who gave birth to too many children, the third child being equivalent to a death sentence for the mother.

He learned also that among these unhappy Coripies there were no diversions and no aim in life other than eating. So eager and unvaried was their diet of fish and toads and lizards that the promise of warm flesh was the only great event in the tiresome monotony of their deadly existence.

Although Mow had no words for love and no conception of its significance, Tanar was able to gather from his remarks that this sentiment did not exist among the Buried People. A mother looked upon each child as a threat to her existence and a prophecy of death, with the result that she loathed children from birth; nor is this strange when the fact is considered that the men chose as the mothers of their children the women whom they particularly loathed and hated, since the custom of destroying a woman who had borne three children deterred them

from mating with any female for whom they might have entertained any degree of liking.

When not hunting or fishing the creatures squatted around upon their haunches staring stupidly and sullenly at the floor of their cavern.

“I should think,” said Tanar to Mow, “that, confronted by such a life, you would welcome death in any form.”

The Coripi shook his head. “I do not want to die,” he said.

“Why?” demanded Tanar.

“I do not know,” replied Mow. “I simply wish to live.”

“Then I take it that you would like to escape from this cavern, if you could,” suggested Tanar.

“Of course I should like to escape,” said Mow, “but if I try to escape and they catch me they will kill me.”

“They are going to kill you anyway,” Tanar reminded him.

“Yes, I never thought of that,” said Mow. “That is quite true; they are going to kill me anyhow.”

“Could you escape?” asked Tanar.

“I could if I had someone to help me,” said Mow.

“This cavern is filled with men who will help you,” said Tanar.

“The Coripies from the grotto of Xax will not help me,” said Mow, “because if they escape there is no place where they may go in safety. If Xax recaptures them they will be killed, and the same is true if the ruler of any other grotto captures them.”

“But there are men from other grottoes here,” insisted Tanar, “and there are Jude and I.”

Mow shook his head. “I would not save any of the Coripies. I hate them. They are all enemies from other grottoes.”

“But you do not hate me,” said Tanar, “and I will help you, and so will Jude.”

“I need but one,” said Mow, “but he must be very strong, stronger than you, stronger than Jude.”

“How strong?” asked Tanar.

“He must be able to lift my weight,” replied the Coripi.

“Look then,” said Tanar, and seizing Mow he held him high above his head.

When he had set him down upon the floor again the Coripi gazed at Tanar for some time. “You are, indeed, strong,” he said.

“Then let us make our plans for escape,” said Tanar.

“Just you and I,” said the Coripi.

“We must take Jude with us,” insisted Tanar.

Mow shrugged his shoulders. “It is all the same to me,” he said. “He is not a Coripi, and if we become hungry and cannot find other food we can eat him.”

Tanar made no reply as he felt that it would be unwise to voice his disgust at this proposal and he was sure that he and Jude together could prevent the Coripi from succumbing to his lust for flesh.

“You have noticed at the far end of the cavern, where the shadows are so dense, that one may scarcely see a figure moving there?” asked Mow.

“Yes,” said Tanar.

“There the dim shadows hide the rough, rocky walls and the ceiling there is lost in total darkness, but in the ceiling is an opening that leads through a narrow shaft into a dark tunnel.”

“How do you know this?” asked Tanar.

“I discovered it once when I was hunting. I came upon a strange tunnel leading from that along which I was making my way to the upper world. I followed it to see where it led and I came at last to the opening in the ceiling of this cavern, from whence one may see all

that takes place below without being himself seen. When I was brought here as a prisoner I recognized the spot immediately. That is how I know that one may escape if he has proper help."

"Explain," said Tanar.

"The wall beneath the opening is, as I have discovered, inclined backward from the floor to a considerable height and so rough that it can easily be scaled to a little ledge beneath the opening in the ceiling, but just so far beneath that one may not reach it unaided. If, however, I could lift you into the opening you could, in turn, reach down and help me up."

"But how may we hope to climb the wall without being seen by the guards?" demanded Tanar.

"That is the only chance of capture that we shall have to take," replied Mow. "It is very dark there and if we wait until another prisoner is brought and their attention is diverted we may be able to succeed in reaching the opening in the ceiling before we are discovered, and once there they cannot capture us."

Tanar discussed the plan with Jude, who was so elated at the prospect of escape that he almost revealed a suggestion of happiness.

And now commenced an interminable wait for the moment when a new prisoner might be brought into the cavern. The three conspirators made it a practice to spend most of their time in the shadows at the far end of the cavern so that the guards might become accustomed to seeing them there, and as no one other than themselves was aware of the opening in the ceiling at this point no suspicions were aroused, as the spot where they elected to be was at the opposite end of the cavern from the entrance, which was, in so far as the guards knew, the only opening into the cavern.

Tanar, Jude and Mow ate and slept several times until it began to

appear that no more prisoners ever would be brought to the cavern; but if no prisoners came, news trickled in and one item filled them with such alarm that they determined to risk all upon the hazard of a bold dash for freedom.

Some Coropies coming to relieve a part of the guard reported that it had been with difficulty that Xax had been able to suppress an uprising among his infuriated tribesmen, many of whom had conceived the conviction that Xax was saving all of the prisoners for himself.

The result had been that a demand had been made upon Xax for an immediate feast of flesh. Perhaps already other Coropies were on their way to conduct the unfortunate prisoners to the great cavern of Xax, where they would be torn limb from limb by the fierce, hunger-mad throng.

And, true enough, there had been time for but one hunger before the party arrived to conduct them back to the main grotto of the tribe.

"Now is the time," whispered Tanar to Mow and Jude, seeing that the guard was engaged in conversation with the newcomers, and in accordance with their previously made plan the three started without an instant's hesitation to scale the far wall of the cavern.

Upon a little ledge, twenty-five feet from the floor, Tanar halted, and an instant later Mow and Jude stood upon either side of him. Without a word the Coripi lifted Tanar to his shoulders and in the darkness above Tanar groped for a handhold.

He soon found the opening into the shaft leading into the tunnel above, and, too, he found splendid handholds there so that an instant later he had drawn himself up into the opening and was sitting upon a small ledge that entirely encircled it.

Bracing himself, he reached down and seized the hand of Jude,

who was standing upon Mow's shoulders, and drew the Himean to the ledge beside him.

At that instant a great shouting arose below them, and glancing down Tanar saw that one of the guards had discovered them and that now a general rush of both guard and prisoners was being made in their direction.

Even as Tanar reached down to aid Mow to the safety of the shaft's mouth, some of the Coripies were already scaling the wall below them. Mow hesitated and turned to look at the enemies clambering rapidly toward him. The ledge upon which Mow stood was narrow and the footing precarious. The surprise and shock of their discovery may have unnerved him, or, in turning to look downward he may have lost his balance, but whatever it was Tanar saw him reel, topple and then lunge downward upon the ascending Coripies, scraping three of them from the wall in his descent as he crashed to the stone floor below, where he lay motionless.

Tanar turned to Jude. "We cannot help him," he said. "Come, we had better get out of this as quickly as possible."

Feeling for each new handhold and foothold the two climbed slowly up the short shaft and presently found themselves in the tunnel, which Mow had described. Darkness was absolute.

"Do you know the way to the surface?" asked Jude.

"No," said Tanar. "I was depending upon Mow to lead us."

"Then we might as well be back in the cavern," said Jude.

"Not I," said Tanar, "for at least I am satisfied now that the Coripies will not eat me alive, if they eat me at all."

Groping his way through the darkness and followed closely by Jude, Tanar crept slowly through the Stygian darkness. The tunnel seemed interminable. They became very hungry and there was no

food, though they would have relished even the filthy fragments of decayed fish that the Coripies had hurled them while they were prisoners.

“Almost,” said Tanar, “could I eat a toad.” They became exhausted and slept, and then again they crawled and stumbled onward. There seemed no end to the interminable, inky corridor.

For long distances the floor of the tunnel was quite level, but then again it would pitch downward, sometimes so steeply that they had difficulty in clinging to the sloping floor. It turned and twisted as though its original excavators had been seldom of the same mind as to the direction in which they wished to proceed.

On and on the two went; again they slept, but whether that meant that they had covered a great distance, or that they were becoming weak from hunger, neither knew.

When they awoke they went on again for a long time in silence, but the sleep did not seem to have refreshed them much, and Jude especially was soon exhausted again.

“I cannot go much further,” he said. “Why did you lure me into this crazy escapade?”

“You need not have come,” Tanar reminded him, “and if you had not you would by now be out of your misery since doubtless all the prisoners have long since been torn to pieces and devoured by the Coripies of the grotto of Xax.”

Jude shuddered. “I should not mind being dead,” he said, “but I should hate to be torn to pieces by those horrible creatures.”

“This is a much nicer death,” said Tanar, “for when we are sufficiently exhausted we shall simply sleep and awake no more.”

“I do not wish to die,” wailed Jude.

“You have never seemed very happy,” said Tanar. “I should think one as unhappy as you would be glad to die.”

“I enjoy being unhappy,” said Jude. “I know that I should be most miserable were I happy and anyway I should much rather be alive and unhappy than dead and unable to know that I was unhappy.”

“Take heart,” said Tanar. “It cannot be much further to the end of this long corridor. Mow came through it and he did not say that it was so great a length that he became either exhausted or hungry and he not only traversed it from end to end in one direction, but he had to turn around and retrace his steps after he reached the opening into the cavern which we left.”

“The Coropies do not eat much; they are accustomed to starving,” said Jude, “and they sleep less than we.”

“Perhaps you are right,” said Tanar, “but I am sure that we are nearing the end.”

“I am,” said Jude, “but not the end that I had wished.”

Even as they discussed the matter they were moving slowly along, when far ahead Tanar discerned a slight luminosity.

“Look,” he said, “there is light. We are nearing the end.”

The discovery instilled new strength into both the men and with quickened steps they hastened along the tunnel in the direction of the promised escape. As they advanced, the light became more apparent until finally they came to the point where the tunnel they had been traversing opened into a large corridor, which was filled with a subdued light from occasional patches of phosphorescent rock in walls and ceiling, but neither to the right nor the left could they see any sign of daylight.

“Which way now?” demanded Jude.

Tanar shook his head. “I do not know,” he said.

“At least I shall not die in that awful blackness,” wailed Jude, and perhaps that factor of their seemingly inevitable doom had weighed most heavily upon the two Pellucidarians, for, living as these people do beneath the brilliant rays of a perpetual noonday sun, darkness is a hideous and abhorrent thing to them, so unaccustomed are they to it.

“In this light, however slight it may be,” said Tanar, “I can no longer be depressed. I am sure that we shall escape.”

“But in which direction?” again demanded Jude.

“I shall turn to the right,” said Tanar.

Jude shook his head. “That probably is the wrong direction,” he said.

“If you know that the right direction lies to the left,” said Tanar, “let us go to the left.”

“I do not know,” said Jude; “doubtless either direction is wrong.”

“All right,” said Tanar, with a laugh. “We shall go to the right,” and, turning, he set off at a brisk walk along the larger corridor.

“Do you notice anything, Jude?” asked Tanar.

“No. Why do you ask?” demanded the Himean.

“I smell fresh air from the upper world,” said Tanar, “and if I am right we must be near the mouth of the tunnel. ”

Tanar was almost running now; exhaustion was forgotten in the unexpected hope of immediate deliverance. To be out in the fresh air and the light of day! To be free from the hideous darkness and the constant menace of recapture by the hideous monsters of the underworld! And across that bright hope, like a sinister shadow, came the numbing fear of disappointment.

What, if, after all, the breath of air which was now clear and fresh in their nostrils should prove to be entering the corridor through some unscalable shaft, such as the Well of Sounding Water into which he

had fallen upon his entrance into the country of the Buried People, or what, if, at the moment of escape, they should meet a party of the Coripies?

So heavily did these thoughts weigh upon Tanar's mind that he slackened his speed until once again he moved in a slow walk.

"What is the matter?" demanded Jude. "A moment ago you were running and now you are barely crawling along. Do not tell me that you were mistaken and that, after all, we are not approaching the mouth of the corridor."

"I do not know," said Tanar. "We may be about to meet a terrible disappointment and if that is true I wish to delay it as long as possible. It would be a terrible thing to have hope crushed within our breasts now."

"I suppose it would," said Jude, "but that is precisely what I have been expecting."

"You, I presume, would derive some satisfaction from disappointment," said Tanar.

"Yes," said Jude, "I suppose I would. It is my nature."

"Then prepare to be unhappy," cried Tanar, suddenly, "for here indeed is the mouth of the tunnel."

He had spoken just as he had rounded a turn in the corridor, and when Jude came to his side the latter saw daylight creeping into the corridor through an opening just in front of them — an opening beyond which he saw the foliage of growing things and the blue sky of Pellucidar.

Emerging again to the light of the sun after their long incarceration in the bowels of the earth, the two men were compelled to cover their eyes with their hands, while they slowly accustomed themselves again to the brilliant light of the noonday sun of Pellucidar.

When he was able to uncover his eyes and look about him, Tanar saw that the mouth of the tunnel was high upon the precipitous side of a lofty mountain. Below them wooded ravines ran down to a mighty forest, just beyond which lay the sparkling waters of a great ocean that, curving upward, merged in the haze of the distance.

Faintly discernible in the mid-distance an island raised its bulk out of the waters of the ocean.

“That,” said Jude, pointing, “is the island of Hime.”

“Ah, if I, too, could but see my home from here,” sighed Tanar, “my happiness would be almost complete. I envy you, Jude.”

“It gives me no happiness to see Hime,” said Jude. “I hate the place.”

“Then you are not going to try to go back to it?” demanded Tanar.

“Certainly, I shall,” said Jude.

“But, why?” asked Tanar.

“There is no other place where I may go,” grumbled Jude. “At least in Hime they will not kill me for no reason at all as strangers would do if I went elsewhere.”

Jude’s attention was suddenly attracted by something below them in a little glade that lay at the upper end of the ravine, which started a little distance below the mouth of the tunnel.

“Look,” he cried, “there are people.” Tanar looked in the direction in which Jude was pointing, and when his eyes found the figures far below they first went wide with incredulity and then narrowed with rage.

“God!” he exclaimed, and as he voiced that single exclamation he leaped swiftly downward in the direction of the figures in the glade.

9.

LOVE AND TREACHERY

Stellara, lying upon a pallet of grasses beneath the shade of a large tree, above the beach where the Korsars were completing the boat in which they hoped to embark for Korsar, knew that the fever had left her and that her strength was rapidly returning, but having discovered that illness, whether real or feigned, protected her from the attentions of Bohar, she continued to permit the Korsars to believe that she was quite ill. In her mind there constantly revolved various plans for escape, but she wished to delay the attempt as long as possible, not only that she might have time to store up a great amount of reserve strength, but also because she realized that if she waited until the Korsar boat was completed it would be unlikely that the majority of the men would brook delay in departure for the purpose of gratifying any desire that Bohar might express to pursue and recapture her.

Again, it was necessary to choose a time when none of the Korsars was in camp and as one of the two, who were detailed to prepare food and stand guard, was invariably on duty it appeared possible that she might never have the opportunity she hoped for, though she had determined that this fact would not prevent her from making an attempt at escape.

All of her hopes in this direction were centered upon one contingency, which her knowledge of nautical matters made to appear almost a certainty of the near future, and this was the fact that the launching of the boat would require the united efforts and strength of the entire party.

She knew from the discussions and conversations that she had overheard that it was Bohar's intention to launch the boat the moment that the hull was completed and to finish the balance of the work upon it while it floated in the little cove upon the beach of which it was being constructed.

This work would require no great amount of time or effort, since the mast, spars, rigging and sail were ready and at hand; bladders and gourds already prepared to receive fresh water, and food provisions for the trip, accumulated by the hunters detailed for this purpose, were neatly sewn up in hide and stored away in a cool, earth-covered dugout.

And so from her couch of grasses beneath the great tree Stellara watched the work progressing upon the hull of the boat that was to carry Bohar and his men to Korsar, and, as she watched, she planned her method of escape.

Above the camp rose the forested slopes of the hills which she must cross in her return to Paraht. For some distance the trees were scattered and then commenced the dense forest. If she could reach this unobserved she felt that she might entertain high hope of successful escape, for once in the denser growth she could take advantage of the skill and experience she had acquired under Tanar's tutorage and prosecute her flight along the leafy pathways of the branches, leaving no spoor that Bohar might follow and at the same time safeguarding herself from the attacks of the larger and more dangerous beasts of the forest, for, though few, there were still dangerous beasts upon Amiocap. Perhaps the most fearsome was the tarag, the giant, saber-toothed tiger that once roamed the hills of the outer crust. For the tandor she felt less concern since they seldom attack an individual unless molested; but in the hills which she must cross the greatest danger lay in the

presence of the tarag and the ryth, the gigantic cave bear or *Ursus spelaeus*, long since extinct upon the outer crust. Of the men of Amiocap whom she might possibly encounter she entertained little fear, even though they might be members of tribes other than hers, though she shuddered at the thought that she might fall into the hands of the Coropies, as these grotesque monsters engendered within her far greater fear than any of the other dangers that might possibly beset her way.

The exhilaration of contemplated flight and the high hopes produced within her at prospects of successfully returning to her father and her friends were dampened by the realization that Tanar would not be there to greet her.

The supposed death of the Sarian had cast a blight upon her happiness that naught ever could remove and her sorrow was the deeper, perhaps, because no words of love had passed between them, and, therefore, she had not the consolation of happy memories to relieve the gnawing anguish of her grief.

The work upon the hull of the boat was at last completed and the men, coming to camp to eat, spoke hopefully of early departure for Korsar. Bohar approached Stellara's couch and stood glaring down upon her, his repulsive face darkened by a malignant scowl.

"How much longer do you intend to lie here entirely useless to me?" he demanded. "You eat and sleep and the flush of fever has left your skin. I believe that you are feigning illness in order to escape fulfilling your duties as my mate and if that is true, you shall suffer for it. Get up!"

"I am too weak," said Stellara. "I cannot rise."

"That can be remedied," growled Bohar, and seizing her roughly by the hair, he dragged her from her couch and lifted her to her feet.

As Bohar released his hold upon her, Stellara staggered, her legs trembled, her knees gave beneath her and she fell back upon her couch, and so realistic was the manner in which she carried out the deception that even Bohar was fooled.

“She is sick and dying,” growled one of the Korsars. “Why should we take her along in an overcrowded boat to eat the food and drink the water that some of us may be dying for before we reach Korsar?”

“Right,” cried another. “Leave her behind.”

“Stick a knife into her,” said a third. “She is good for nothing.”

“Shut up!” cried Bohar. “She is going to be my mate and she is going with us.” He drew his two huge pistols. “Whoever objects will stay here with a bullet in his guts. Eat now, you filthy hounds, and be quick about it for I shall need all hands and all your strength to launch the hull when you have eaten.”

So they were going to launch the hull! Stellara trembled with excitement as the moment for her break for liberty drew near. With impatience she watched the Korsars as they bolted their food like a pack of hungry wolf-dogs. She saw some of them throw themselves down to sleep after they had eaten, but Bohar the Bloody kicked them into wakefulness, and, at the point of his pistol, herded them to the beach, taking every available man and leaving Stellara alone and unguarded for the first time since he had seized her in the village of Fedol the chief.

She watched them as they descended to the hull and she waited until they seemed to be wholly engrossed in their efforts to shove the heavy boat into the sea; then she rose from her pallet and scurried like a frightened rabbit toward the forest on the slopes above the camp.

The hazards of fate, while beyond our control, are the factors in life which oftentimes make for the success or failure of our most important

ventures. Upon them hang the fruition of our most cherished hope. They are, in truth, in the lap of the gods, where lies our future, and it was only by the merest hazard that Bohar the Bloody chanced to glance back toward the camp at the very moment that Stellara rose from her couch to make her bid for freedom.

With an oath he abandoned the work of launching the hull, and, calling his men to follow him, ran hurriedly up the steep slope in pursuit.

His fellows took in the situation at a glance and hesitated.

“Let him chase his own woman,” growled one.

“What have we to do with it? Our business is to launch the boat and get her ready to sail to Korsar.”

“Right,” said another, “and if he is not back by the time that we are ready we shall sail without him.”

“Good,” cried a third. “Let us make haste then in the hope that we may be prepared to sail before he returns.”

And so Bohar the Bloody, unaccompanied by his men, pursued Stellara alone. Perhaps it was as well for the girl that this was true for there were many fleeter among the Korsars than the beefy Bohar.

The girl was instantly aware that her attempt to escape had been discovered, for Bohar was shouting in stentorian tones demanding that she halt, but his words only made her run the faster until presently she had darted into the forest and was lost to his view.

Here she took to the trees, hoping thereby to elude him even though she knew that her speed would be reduced. She heard the sound of his advance as he crashed through the underbrush and she knew that he was gaining rapidly upon her, but this did not unnerve her since she was confident that he could have no suspicion that she was in the branches of the trees and just so long as she kept among

thick foliage he might pass directly beneath her without being aware of her close presence, and that is precisely what he did, cursing and puffing as he made his bull-like way up the steep slope of the hillside.

Stellara heard him pass and go crashing on in pursuit, and then she resumed her flight, turning to the right away from the direction of Bohar's advance until presently the noise of his passing was lost in the distance; then she turned upward again toward the height she must cross on her journey to Paraht.

Bohar sweated upward until finally almost utter exhaustion forced him to rest. He found himself in a little glade and here he lay down beneath a shrub that not only protected him from the rays of the sun, but hid him from sight as well, for in savage Pellucidar it is always well to seek rest in concealment.

Bohar's mind was filled with angry thoughts. He cursed himself for leaving the girl alone in camp and he cursed the girl for escaping, and he cursed the fate that had forced him to clamber up this steep hillside upon his futile mission, and most of all he cursed his absent followers whom he now realized had failed to accompany him. He knew that he had lost the girl and that it would be like looking for a particular minnow in the ocean to continue his search for her, and so, having rested, he was determined to hasten back to his camp when his attention was suddenly attracted by a noise at the lower end of the glade. Instinctively he reached for one of his pistols and to his dismay he found that both were gone, evidently having slipped from his sash or been scraped from it as he wallowed upward through the underbrush.

Bohar, despite his bluster and braggadocio, was far from courageous. Without his weapons he was an arrant coward and so now he cringed in his concealment as he strained his eyes to discover the

author of the noise he had heard, and as he watched a cunning leer of triumph curled his hideous mouth, for before him, at the far end of the glade, he saw Stellara drop from the lower branches of a tree and come upward across the glade toward him.

As the girl came abreast of his hiding place, Bohar the Bloody leaped to his feet and confronted her. With a stifled exclamation of dismay Stellara turned and sought to escape, but the Korsar was too close and too quick and reaching forth he seized her roughly by the hair.

“Will you never learn that you cannot escape Bohar the Bloody?” he demanded. “You are mine and for this I shall cut off both your feet at the ankles when I get you into the boat, so that there will be no chance whatever that you may again run away from me. But come, mate willingly with me and it will go less hard with you,” and he drew her slim figure into his embrace.

“Never,” cried Stellara, and she struck him in the face with her two clenched fists.

With an oath Bohar seized the girl by the throat and shook her. “You she-ryth,” he cried, “if I did not want you so badly I should kill you, and by the god of Korsar if ever you strike me again I shall kill you.”

“Then kill me,” cried Stellara, “for I should rather die than mate with you,” and again she struck him with all her strength full in the face.

Bohar frothed with rage as he closed his fingers more tightly upon the girl’s soft neck. “Die, then, you —”

The words died upon his lips and he wheeled about as there fell upon his ears a man’s loud voice raised in anger.

As he stood there hesitating and looking in the direction of the

sound, the underbrush at the upper end of the glade parted and a warrior, leaping into the clearing, ran swiftly toward him.

Bohar blanched as though he had seen a ghost, and then, hurling the girl roughly to the ground he faced the lone warrior.

Bohar would have fled had he not realized the futility of flight, for what chance had he in a race with this lithe man, who leaped toward him with the grace and speed of a deer.

“Go away,” shouted Bohar. “Go away and leave us alone. This is my mate.”

“You lie,” growled Tanar of Pellucidar as he leaped upon the Korsar.

Down went the two men, the Sarian on top, and as they fell each sought a hold upon the other’s throat, and, failing to secure it, they struck blindly at one another’s face.

Tanar was mad with rage. He fought like a wild beast, forgetting all that David Innes had taught him. His one thought was to kill; it mattered not how just so long as he killed, and Bohar, on the defensive fighting for his life, battled like a cornered rat. To his advantage were his great weight and his longer reach, but in strength and agility as well as courage Tanar was his superior.

Stellara slowly opened her eyes as she recovered from the swoon into which she had passed beneath the choking fingers of Bohar the Bloody. At first she did not recognize Tanar, seeing only two warriors battling to the death on the sward of the glade and guessing that she would be the prey of him who was victorious. But presently, in the course of the duel, the face of the Sarian was turned toward her.

“Tanar!” she cried. “God is merciful. I thought you were dead and He has given you back to me.”

At her words the Sarian redoubled his efforts to overcome his

antagonist, but Bohar succeeded in getting his fingers upon Tanar's throat.

Horried, Stellara looked about her for a rock or a stick with which to come to the succor of her champion, but before she had found one she realized that he needed no outside assistance. With a single Herculean movement he tore himself loose from Bohar and leaped to his feet.

Instantly the Korsar sprang to an upright position and lowering his head he charged the Sarian — charged like a mad bull.

Now Tanar was fighting with cool calculation. The blood-madness of the first moment following the sight of Stellara in the choking murderous fingers of the Korsar had passed. He awaited Bohar's rush, and as they came together he clamped an arm around the Korsar's head, and turning swiftly, hurled the man over his shoulder and heavily to the ground. Then he waited.

Once more Bohar, shaking his head, staggered to his feet. Once more he rushed the Sarian, and once more that deadly arm was locked about his head, and once more he was hurled heavily to the ground.

This time he did not arise so quickly nor so easily. He came up staggering and feeling of his head and neck.

"Prepare to die," growled Tanar. "For the suffering you have inflicted upon Stellara you are about to die."

With a shriek of mingled rage and fright Bohar, gone mad, charged the Sarian again, and for the third time his great body flew through the air, to alight heavily upon the hard ground, but this time it did not arise; it did not stir, for Bohar the Bloody lay dead with a broken neck.

For a moment Tanar of Pellucidar stood ready over the body of his fallen foe, but when he realized that Bohar was dead he turned away with a sneer of disgust.

Before him stood Stellara, her beautiful eyes filled with incredulity and with happiness.

“Tanar!” It was only a whisper, but it carried to him a world of meaning that sent thrill after thrill through his body.

“Stellara!” he cried, as he took the girl in his arms. “Stellara, I love you.”

Her soft arms stole around his neck and drew his face to hers. His mouth covered her mouth in a long kiss, and, as he raised his face to look down into hers, from her parted lips burst a single exclamation, “Oh, God!” and from the depth of her half-closed eyes burned a love beyond all understanding.

“My mate,” he cried, as he pressed her form to him.

“My mate,” breathed Stellara, “while life remains in my body and after life, throughout death, forever!”

Suddenly she looked up and drew away.

“Who is that, Tanar?” she asked.

As Tanar turned to look in the direction indicated by the girl he saw Jude emerging from the forest at the upper end of the glade. “It is Jude,” he said to Stellara, “who escaped with me from the country of the Buried People.”

Jude approached them, his sullen countenance clouded by its habitual scowl.

“He frightens me,” said Stellara, pressing closer to Tanar.

“You need not fear him,” said the Sarian. “He is always scowling and unhappy; but he is my friend and even if he were not he is harmless.”

“I do not like him,” whispered Stellara. Jude approached and stopped before them. His eyes wandered for a moment to the body of Bohar and then came back and fastened themselves in a steady gaze

upon Stellara, apprising her from head to foot. There was a crafty boldness in his gaze that disturbed Stellara even more than his sullen scowl.

“Who is the woman?” he demanded, without taking his eyes from her face.

“My mate,” replied Tanar.

“Then she is going with us?” asked Jude.

“Of course,” replied the Sarian.

“And where are we going?” demanded Jude.

“Stellara and I will return to Paraht, where her father, Fedol, is chief,” replied Tanar. “You may come with us if you wish. We will see that you are received as a friend and treated well until you can find the means to return to Hime.”

“Is he from Hime?” asked Stellara, and Tanar felt her shudder.

“I am from Hime,” said Jude, “but I do not care if I never return there if your people let me live with them.”

“That,” said Tanar, “is something that must be decided by Fedol and his people, but I can promise you that they will let you remain with them, if not permanently, at least until you can find the means of returning to Hime.

“And now, before we set out for Paraht, let us renew our strength with food and sleep.”

Without weapons it was not easy to obtain game and they had traveled up the mountain slopes for some distance before the two men were able to bring down a brace of large birds, which they knocked over with well aimed stones. The birds closely resembled wild turkeys, whose prototypes were doubtless the progenitors of the wild turkeys of the outer crust. The hunt had brought them to a wide plateau, just below the summit of the hills. It was a rolling table-land, waist deep

in lush grasses, with here and there a giant tree or a group of trees offering shade from the vertical rays of the noonday sun.

Beside a small stream, which rippled gayly downward toward the sea, they halted to eat and sleep.

Jude gathered firewood while Tanar made fire by the primitive method of rapidly revolving a sharpened stick in a tinder-filled hole in a larger piece of dry wood. As these preparations were going forward Stellara prepared the birds and it was not long before the turkeys were roasting over a hot fire.

Their hunger appeased, the urge to sleep took possession of them, and now Jude insisted that he stand the first watch, arguing that he had not been subjected to the fatigue of battle as had Tanar, and so Stellara and the Sarian lay down beneath the shade of the tree while the scowling Himean stood watch.

Even in the comparative safety of Amiocap danger might always be expected to lurk in the form of carnivorous beast or hunting man, but the watcher cast no solicitous glances beyond the camp. Instead, he squatted upon his haunches, devouring Stellara with his eyes. Not once did he remove them from the beautiful figure of the girl except occasionally to glance quickly at Tanar, where the regular rising and falling of his breast denoted undisturbed slumber.

Whatever thoughts the beauty of the sleeping girl engendered in the breast of the Himean, they were reflected only in the unremitting scowl that never lifted itself from the man's dark brows.

Presently he arose noiselessly and gathered a handful of soft grasses, which he rolled into a small ball. Then he crept stealthily to where Stellara lay and kneeled beside her.

Suddenly he leaned over her and grasped her by the throat, at the

same time clamping his other hand, in the palm of which lay the ball of grass, over her mouth.

Thus rudely awakened from deep slumber, her first glance revealing the scowling features of the Himean, Stellara opened her mouth to scream for help, and, as she did so, Jude forced the ball of grass between her teeth and far into her mouth, dragged her to her feet, and, throwing her across his shoulder, bore her swiftly downward across the table-land.

Stellara struggled and fought to free herself, but Jude was a powerful man and her efforts were of no avail against his strength. He held her in such a way that both her arms were confined. The ball of grass expanded in her mouth and she could not force it out with her tongue alone. A single scream she knew would awaken Tanar and bring him to her rescue, but she could not scream.

Down across the rolling table-land the Himean carried Stellara to the edge of a steep cliff that overhung the sea at the upper end of a deep cove which cut far into the island at this point. Here Jude lowered Stellara to her feet, but he still clung tightly to one of her wrists.

“Listen, woman,” he growled, “you are coming to Hime to be the mate of Jude. If you come peaceably, no harm will befall you and if you will promise to make no outcry I shall remove the gag from your mouth. Do you promise?”

Stellara shook her head determinedly in an unquestionable negative and at the same time struggled to free herself from Jude’s grasp.

With an ugly growl the man struck her and as she fell unconscious he gathered long grasses and twisted them into a rope and bound her wrists and ankles; then he lifted her again to his shoulder and started down over the edge of the cliff, where a narrow trail now became discernible.

It was evident that Jude had had knowledge of this path since he had come to it so unerringly, and the ease and assurance with which he descended it strengthened this conviction.

The descent was not over a hundred feet to a little ledge almost at the water's edge.

It was here that Stellara gained consciousness, and, as she opened her eyes, she saw before her a water-worn cave that ran far back beneath the cliff.

Into this, along the narrow ledge, Jude carried her to the far end of the cavern, where, upon a narrow, pebbly beach, were drawn up a half dozen dugouts — the light, well-made canoes of the Himeans.

In one of these Jude placed the girl, and, pushing it off into the deep water of the cove, leaped into it himself, seized the paddle and directed its course out toward the open sea.

10.

PURSUIT

Awakening from a deep and refreshing slumber, Tanar opened his eyes and lay gazing up into the foliage of the tree above him. Happy thoughts filled his mind, a smile touched his lips and then, following the trend of his thoughts, his eyes turned to feast upon the dear figure of his mate.

She was not there, where he had last seen her huddled snugly in her bed of grasses, but still he felt no concern, thinking merely that she had awakened before him and arisen.

Idly his gaze made a circuit of the little camp, and then with a startled exclamation he leaped to his feet for he realized that both Stellara and Jude had disappeared. Again he looked about him, this time extending the field of his enquiring gaze, but nowhere was there any sign of either the man or the woman that he sought.

He called their names aloud, but there was no response, and then he fell to examining the ground about the camp. He saw where Stellara had been sleeping and to his keen eyes were revealed the tracks of the Himean as he had approached her couch. He saw other tracks leading away, the tracks of Jude alone, but in the crushed grasses where the man had gone he read the true story, for they told him that more than the weight of a single man had bent and bruised them thus; they told him that Jude had carried Stellara off, and Tanar knew that it had been done by force.

Swiftly he followed the well marked spoor through the long grass, oblivious of all else save the prosecution of his search for Stellara and

the punishment of Jude. And so he was unaware of the sinister figure that crept along the trail behind him.

Down across the table-land they went — the man and the great beast following silently in his tracks. Down to a cliff overhanging the sea the trail led, and here as Tanar paused an instant to look out across the ocean he saw hazily in the distance a canoe and in the canoe were two figures, but who they were he could only guess since they were too far away for him to recognize.

As he stood there thus, stunned for a moment, a slight noise behind him claimed his attention, recalled him momentarily from the obsession of his sorrow and his rage so that he turned a quick, scowling glance in the direction from which the interruption had come, and there, not ten paces from him, loomed the snarling face of a great tarag.

The fangs of the saber-tooth gleamed in the sunlight; the furry snout was wrinkled in a snarl of anger; the lashing tail came suddenly to rest, except for a slight convulsive twitching of its tip; the beast crouched and Tanar knew that it was about to charge.

Unarmed and single-handed as he was, the man seemed easy prey for the carnivore; nor to right nor to left was there any avenue of escape.

All these things passed swiftly through the mind of the Sarian, yet never did they totally obliterate the memory of the two figures in the canoe far out at sea behind him; nor of the cliff overhanging the waters of the cove beneath. And then the tarag charged.

A hideous scream broke from the savage throat as the great beast hurled itself forward with lightning-like rapidity. Two great bounds it took, and in mid-spring of the second Tanar turned and dove head foremost over the edge of the cliff, for the only alternative that

remained to him was death beneath the rending fangs and talons of the sabertooth.

For all he knew jagged rocks might lie just beneath the surface of the water, but there was one chance that the water was deep, while no chance for life remained to him upon the cliff top.

The momentum of the great cat's spring, unchecked by the body of his expected prey, carried him over the edge of the cliff also so that man and beast hurtled downward almost side by side to the water far below.

Tanar cut the water cleanly with extended hands and turning quickly upwards came to the surface scarcely a yard from where the great cat had alighted.

The two faced one another and at sight of the man the tarag burst again into hideous screams and struck out swiftly toward him.

Tanar knew that he might outdistance the tarag in the water, but at the moment that they reached the beach he would be at the mercy of the great carnivore. The snarling face was close to his; the great talons were reaching for him as Tanar of Pellucidar dove beneath the beast.

A few, swift strokes brought him up directly behind the cat and an instant later he had reached out and seized the furry hide. The tarag turned swiftly to strike at him, but already the man was upon his shoulders and his weight was carrying the snarling face below the surface.

Choking, struggling, the maddened animal sought to reach the soft flesh of the man with his raking talons, but in the liquid element that filled the sea its usual methods of offense and defense were worthless. Quickly realizing that death stared it in the face, unless it could immediately overcome this handicap, the tarag now strained its every muscle to reach the solid footing of the land, while Tanar on his part

sought to prevent it. Now his fingers had crept from their hold upon the furry shoulders down to the white furred throat and like claws of steel they sank into the straining muscles.

No longer did the beast attempt to scream and the man, for his part, fought in silence.

It was a grim duel; a terrible duel; a savage encounter that might be enacted only in a world that was very young and between primitive creatures who never give up the stern battle for life until the scythe of the Grim Reaper has cut them down.

Deep into the gloomy cavern, beneath the cliff the tarag battled for the tiny strip of beach at the far end and grimly the man fought to hold it back and force its head beneath the water. He felt the efforts of the beast weakening and yet they were very close to the beach. At any instant the great claws might strike bottom and Tanar knew that there was still left within that giant carcass enough vitality to rend him to shreds if ever the tarag got four feet on solid ground and his head above the water.

With a last supreme effort he tightened his fingers upon the throat of the tarag and sliding from its back sought to drag it from its course, and the animal upon its part made one, last supreme effort for life. It reared up in the water and wheeling about struck at the man. The raking talons grazed his flesh, and then he was back upon the giant shoulders forcing the head once more beneath the surface of the sea. He felt a spasm pass through the great frame of the beast beneath him; the muscles relaxed and the tarag floated limp.

A moment later Tanar dragged himself to the pebbly beach, where he lay panting from exhaustion. Recovered, nor did it take him long to recover, so urgent were the demands of the pursuit upon which he was engaged, Tanar rose and looked about him. Before him were

canoes, such as he had never seen before, drawn up upon the narrow beach. Paddles lay in each of the canoes as though they but awaited the early return of their owners. Whence they had come and what they were doing here in this lovely cavern, Tanar could not guess. They were unlike the canoes of the Amiocapians, which fact convinced him that they belonged to a people from some other island, or possibly from the mainland itself. But these were questions which did not concern him greatly at the time. Here were canoes. Here was the means of pursuing the two that he had seen far out at sea and whom he was convinced were none other than Jude and Stellara.

Seizing one of the small craft he dragged it to the water's edge and launched it. Then, leaping into it, he paddled swiftly down the cove out towards the sea, and as he paddled he had an opportunity to examine the craft more closely.

It was evidently fashioned from a single log of very light wood and was all of one piece, except a bulkhead at each end of the cockpit, which was large enough to accommodate three men.

Rapping with his paddle upon the surface of the deck and upon the bulkheads convinced him that the log had been entirely hollowed out beneath the deck and as the bulkheads themselves gave every appearance of having been so neatly fitted as to be watertight, Tanar guessed that the canoe was unsinkable.

His attention was next attracted by a well-tanned and well-worn hide lying in the bottom of the cockpit. A rawhide lacing ran around the entire periphery of the hide and as he tried to determine the purpose to which the whole had been put his eyes fell upon a series of cleats extending entirely around the edge of the cockpit, and he guessed that the hide was intended as a covering for it. Examining it more closely he discovered an opening in it about the size of a man's

body and immediately its purpose became apparent to him. With the covering in place and laced tightly around the cockpit and also laced around the man's body the canoe could ship no water and might prove a seaworthy craft, even in severe storms.

As the Sarian fully realized his limitations as a seafaring man, he lost no time in availing himself of this added protection against the elements, and when he had adjusted it and laced it tightly about the outside of the cockpit and secured the lacing which ran around the opening in the center of the hide about his own body, he experienced a feeling of security that he had never before felt when he had been forced to surrender himself to the unknown dangers of the sea.

Now he paddled rapidly in the direction in which he had last seen the canoe with its two occupants, and when he had passed out of the cove into the open sea he espied them again, but this time so far out that the craft and its passengers appeared only as a single dot upon the broad waters. But beyond them hazily loomed the bulk of the island that Jude had pointed out as Hime and this tended to crystallize Tanar's assurance that the canoe ahead of him was being guided by Jude toward the island of his own people.

The open seas of Pellucidar present obstacles to the navigation of a small canoe that would seem insurmountable to men of the outer crust, for their waters are oftentimes alive with saurian monsters of a long past geologic epoch and it was encounters with these that the Sarian mountaineer apprehended with more acute concern than consideration of adverse wind or tempest aroused within him.

He had noticed that one end of the long paddle he wielded was tipped with a piece of sharpened ivory from the end of a tandor's tusk, but the thing seemed an utterly futile weapon with which to combat a tandoraz or an azdyryth, two of the mightiest and most fearsome

inhabitants of the deep, but as far as he could see ahead the long, oily swells of a calm ocean were unruffled by marine life of any description.

Well aware of his small experience and great deficiency as a paddler, Tanar held no expectation of being able to overhaul the canoe manned by the experienced Jude. The best that he could hope was that he might keep it in view until he could mark the spot upon Hime where it landed. And once upon solid ground again, even though it was an island peopled by enemies, the Sarian felt that he would be able to cope with any emergency that might arise.

Gradually the outlines of Hime took definite shape before him, while those of Amiocap became correspondingly vague behind.

And between him and the island of Hime the little dot upon the surface of the sea told him that his quarry had not as yet made land. The pursuit seemed interminable. Hime seemed to be receding almost as rapidly as he approached it. He became hungry and thirsty, but there was neither food nor water. There was naught but to bend his paddle ceaselessly through the monotonous grind of pursuit, but at length the details of the shoreline grew more distinct. He saw coves and inlets and wooded hills and then he saw the canoe that he was following disappear far ahead of him beyond the entrance of a cove. Tanar marked the spot well in his mind and redoubled his efforts to reach the shore. And then fate arose in her inexorable perversity and confounded all his hopes and plans.

A sudden flurry on the surface of the water far to his right gave him his first warning. And then, like the hand of a giant, the wind caught his frail craft and turned it at right angles to the course he wished to pursue. The waves rolled; the wind shrieked; the storm was upon him in great fury and there was naught to do but turn and flee before it.

Down the coast of Hime he raced, parallel to the shore, further

and further from the spot where Jude had landed with Stellara, but all the time Tanar was striving to drive his craft closer and closer to the wooded slopes of Hime.

Ahead of him, and upon his right, he could see what appeared to be the end of the island. Should he be carried past this he realized that all would be lost, for doubtless the storm would carry him on out of sight of land and if it did he knew that he could never reach Hime nor return to Amiocap, since he had no means whatsoever of ascertaining direction once land slipped from view in the haze of the upcurving horizon.

Straining every muscle, continuously risking being capsized, Tanar strove to drive inward toward the shore, and though he saw that he was gaining he knew that it was too late, for already he was almost abreast of the island's extremity, and still he was a hundred yards off shore. But even so he did not despair, or if he did despair he did not cease to struggle for salvation.

He saw the island slip past him, but there was yet a chance for in its lee he saw calm water and if he could reach that he would be saved.

Straining every muscle the Sarian bent to his crude paddle. Suddenly the breeze stopped and he shot out into the smooth water in the lee of the island, but he did not cease his strenuous efforts until the bow of the canoe had touched the sand of Hime.

Tanar leaped out and dragged the craft ashore. That he should ever need it again he doubted, yet he hid it beneath the foliage of nearby bushes, and alone and unarmed set forth to face the dangers of an unknown country in what appeared even to Tanar as an almost hopeless quest for Stellara.

To the Sarian it seemed wisest to follow the coast-line back until he

found the spot at which Jude had landed and then trace his trail inland, and this was the plan that he proceeded to follow.

Being in a strange land and, therefore, in a land of enemies, and being unarmed, Tanar was forced to move with great caution; yet constantly he sacrificed caution to speed. Natural obstacles impeded his progress. A great cliff running far out into the sea barred his way and it was with extreme difficulty and then only after traveling inland for a considerable distance. [that he was able to scale it]*

Beyond the summit rolled a broad table-land dotted with trees. A herd of thags grazed quietly in the sunlight or dozed beneath the shadowy foliage of the trees.

At sight of the man passing among them these great horned cattle became restless. An old bull bellowed and pawed the ground, and Tanar measured the distance to the nearest tree. But on he went, avoiding the beasts as best he could and hoping against hope that he could pass them successfully without further arousing their short tempers. But the challenge of the old bull was being taken up by others of his sex until a score of heavy-shouldered mountains of beef were converging slowly upon the lone man, stopping occasionally to paw or gore the ground, while they bellowed forth their displeasure.

There was still a chance that he might pass them in safety. There was an opening among them just ahead of him, and Tanar accelerated his speed, but just at that instant one of the bulls took it into his head to charge and then the whole twenty bore down upon the Sarian like a band of iron locomotives suddenly endowed with the venom of hornets.

There was naught to do but seek the safety of the nearest tree and towards this Tanar ran at full speed, while from all sides the angry bulls raced to head him off.

With scarcely more than inches to spare Tanar swung himself into the branches of the tree just as the leading bull passed beneath him. A moment later the bellowing herd congregated beneath his sanctuary and while some contented themselves with pawing and bellowing, others placed their heavy heads against the bole of the tree and sought to push it down, but fortunately for Tanar it was a young oak and it withstood their sturdiest efforts.

But now, having treed him, the thags showed no disposition to leave him. For a while they milled around beneath him and then several deliberately lay down beneath the tree as though to prevent his escape.

To one accustomed to the daily recurrence of the darkness of night, following the setting of the sun, escape from such a dilemma as that in which Tanar found himself would have seemed merely a matter of waiting for the coming of night, but where the sun does not set and there is no night, and time is immeasurable and unmeasured, and where one may not know whether a lifetime or a second has been encompassed by the duration of such an event, the enforced idleness and delay are maddening.

But in spite of these conditions, or perhaps because of them, the Sarian possessed a certain philosophic outlook upon life that permitted him to accept his fate with marked stoicism and to take advantage of the enforced delay by fashioning a bow, arrows and a spear from the material afforded by the tree in which he was confined.

The tree gave him everything that he needed except the cord for his bow, and this he cut from the rawhide belt that supported his loin cloth — a long, slender strip of rawhide which he inserted in his mouth and chewed thoroughly until it was entirely impregnated with saliva.

Then he bent his bow and stretched the wet rawhide from tip to tip. While it dried, he pointed his arrows with his teeth.

In drying the rawhide shrunk, bending the bow still further and tightening the string until it hummed to the slightest touch.

The weapons were finished and yet the great bulls still stood on guard, and while Tanar remained helpless in the tree Jude was taking Stellara toward the interior of the island.

But all things must end. Impatient of delay, Tanar sought some plan whereby he might rid himself of the short-tempered beasts beneath him. He hit upon the plan of yelling and throwing dead branches at them and this did have the effect of bringing them all to their feet. A few wandered away to graze with the balance of the herd, but enough remained to keep Tanar securely imprisoned.

A great bull stood directly beneath him. Tanar jumped up and down upon a small branch, making its leafy end whip through the air, and at the same time he hurled bits of wood at the great thags. And then, suddenly, to the surprise and consternation of both man and beast, the branch broke and precipitated Tanar full upon the broad shoulders of the bull. Instantly his fingers clutched its long hair as, with a bellow of surprise and terror, the beast leaped forward.

Instinct took the frightened animal toward the balance of the herd and when they saw him with a man sitting upon his back they, too, became terrified, with the result that a general stampede ensued, the herd attempting to escape their fellow, while the bull raced to be among them.

Stragglers, that had been grazing at a considerable distance from the balance of the herd, were stringing out to the rear and it was the presence of these that made it impossible for Tanar to slip to the ground and make his escape. Knowing that he would be trampled by

those behind if he left the back of the bull, there was no alternative but to remain where he was as long as he could.

The thag, now thoroughly frightened because of his inability to dislodge the man-thing from his shoulders, was racing blindly forward, and presently Tanar found himself carried into the very midst of the lunging herd as it thundered across the table-land toward a distant forest.

The Sarian knew that once they reached the forest he would doubtless be scraped from the back of the thag almost immediately by some low hanging limb, and if he were not killed or injured by the blow he would be trampled to death by the thags behind. But as escape seemed hopeless he could only await the final outcome of this strange adventure.

When the leaders of the herd approached the forest hope was rekindled in Tanar's breast, for he saw that the growth was so thick and the trees so close together that it was impossible for the beasts to enter the woods at a rapid gait.

Immediately the leaders reached the edge of the forest their pace was slowed down and those behind them, pushing forward, were stopped by those in front. Some of them attempted to climb up, or were forced up, upon the backs of those ahead. But, for the most part, the herd slowed down and contended itself with pushing steadily onward toward the woods with the result that when the beast that Tanar was astride arrived at the edge of the dark shadows his gait had been reduced to a walk, and as he passed beneath the first tree Tanar swung lightly into its branches.

He had lost his spear, but his bow and arrows that he had strapped to his back remained with him, and as the herd passed beneath him and he saw the last of them disappear in the dark aisles of the forest,

he breathed a deep sigh of relief and turned once more toward the far end of the island.

The thags had carried him inland a considerable distance, so now he cut back diagonally toward the coast to gain as much ground as possible.

Tanar had not emerged from the forest when he heard the excited growling of some wild beast directly ahead of him.

He thought that he recognized the voice of a codon, and fitting an arrow to his bow he crept warily forward. What wind was blowing came from the beast toward him and presently brought to his nostrils proof of the correctness of his guess, together with another familiar scent — that of man.

Knowing that the beast could not catch his scent from upwind, Tanar had only to be careful to advance silently, but there are few animals on earth that can move more silently than primitive man when he elects to do so, and so Tanar came in sight of the beast without being discovered by it.

It was, as he had thought, a huge wolf, a pre-historic but gigantic counterpart of our own timber wolf.

No need had the codon to run in packs, for in size, strength, ferocity and courage it was a match for any creature that it sought to bring down, with the possible exception of the mammoth, and this great beast alone it hunted in packs.

The codon stood snarling beneath a great tree, occasionally leaping high against the bole as though he sought to reach something hidden by the foliage above.

Tanar crept closer and presently he saw the figure of a youth crouching among the lower branches above the codon. It was evident that the boy was terror stricken, but the thing that puzzled Tanar was

that he cast affrighted glances upward into the tree more often than he did downward toward the codon, and presently this fact convinced the Sarian that the youth was menaced by something above him.

Tanar viewed the predicament of the boy and then considered the pitiful inadequacy of his own makeshift bow and arrow, which might only infuriate the beast and turn it upon himself. He doubted that the arrows were heavy enough, or strong enough, to pierce through the savage heart and thus only might he hope to bring down the codon.

Once more he crept to a new position, without attracting the attention either of the codon or the youth, and from this new vantage point he could look further up into the tree in which the boy crouched and then it was that he realized the hopelessness of the boy's position, for only a few feet above him and moving steadily closer appeared the head of a great snake, whose wide, distended jaws revealed formidable fangs.

Tanar's consideration of the boy's plight was influenced by a desire to save him from either of the two creatures that menaced him and also by the hope that if successful he might win sufficient gratitude to enlist the services of the youth as a guide, and especially as a go-between in the event that he should come in contact with natives of the island.

Tanar had now crept to within seven paces of the codon, from the sight of which he was concealed by a low shrub behind which he lay. Had the youth not been so occupied between the wolf and the snake he might have seen the Sarian, but so far he had not seen him.

Fitting an arrow to his crude bow and inserting four others between the fingers of his left hand, Tanar arose quietly and drove a shaft into the back of the codon, between its shoulders.

With a howl of pain and rage the beast wheeled about, only to

receive another arrow full in the chest. Then his glaring eyes alighted upon the Sarian and, with a hideous growl, he charged.

With such rapidity do events of this nature transpire that they are over in much less time than it takes to record them, for a wounded wolf, charging its antagonist, can cover seven paces in an incredibly short space of time; yet even in that brief interval three more arrows sank deeply into the white breast of the codon, and the momentum of its last stride sent it rolling against the Sarian's feet — dead.

The youth, freed from the menace of the codon, leaped to the ground and would have fled without a word of thanks had not Tanar covered him with another arrow and commanded him to halt.

The snake, seeing another man and realizing, perhaps, that the odds were now against him, hesitated a moment and then withdrew into the foliage of the tree, as Tanar advanced toward the trembling youth.

“Who are you?” demanded the Sarian.

“My name is Balal,” replied the youth. “I am the son of Scurv, the chief.”

“Where is your village?” asked Tanar.

“It is not far,” replied Balal.

“Will you take me there?” asked Tanar.

“Yes,” replied Balal.

“Will your father receive me well?” continued the Sarian.

“You saved my life,” said Balal. “For that he will treat you well, though for the most part we kill strangers who come to Garb.”

“Lead on,” said the Sarian.

11.

GURA

Balal led Tanar through the forest until they came at last to the edge of a steep cliff, which the Sarian judged was the opposite side of the promontory that had barred his way along the beach.

Not far from the cliff's edge stood the stump of a great tree that seemed to have been blasted and burned by lightning. It reared its head some ten feet above the ground and from its charred surface protruded the stub ends of several broken limbs.

"Follow me," said Balal, and leaping to the protruding stub, he climbed to the top of the stump and lowered himself into the interior.

Tanar followed and found an opening some three feet in diameter leading down into the bole of the dead tree. Set into the sides of this natural shaft were a series of heavy pegs, which answered the purpose of ladder rungs to the descending Balal.

The noonday sun lighted the interior of the tree for a short distance, but their own shadows, intervening, blotted out everything that lay at a depth greater than six or eight feet.

None too sure that he was not being led into a trap and, therefore, unwilling to permit his guide to get beyond his reach, Tanar hastily entered the hollow stump and followed Balal downward.

The Sarian was aware that the interior of the tree led into a shaft dug in the solid ground and a moment later he felt his feet touch the floor of a dark tunnel.

Along this tunnel Balal led him and presently they emerged into a

cave that was dimly lighted through a small opening opposite them and near the floor.

Through this aperture, which was about two feet in diameter and beyond which Tanar could see daylight, Balal crawled, followed closely by the Sarian, who found himself upon a narrow ledge, high up on the face of an almost vertical cliff.

“This,” said Balal, “is the village of Garb.”

“I see no village nor any people,” said Tanar.

“They are here though,” said Balal. “Follow me,” and he led the way a short distance along the ledge, which inclined downward and was in places so narrow and so shelving that the two men were compelled to flatten themselves against the side of the cliff and edge their way slowly, inch by inch, sideways.

Presently the ledge ended and here it was much wider so that Balal could lie down upon it, and, lowering his body over the edge, he clung a moment by his hands and then dropped.

Tanar looked over the edge and saw that Balal had alighted upon another narrow ledge about ten feet below. Even to a mountaineer, such as the Sarian was, the feat seemed difficult and fraught with danger, but there was no alternative and so, lying down, he lowered himself slowly over the edge of the ledge, clung an instant with his fingers, and then dropped.

As he alighted beside the youth he was about to remark upon the perilous approach to the village of Garb, but it was so apparent that Balal took it as a matter of course and thought nothing of it that Tanar desisted, realizing, in the instant, that among cliff dwellers, such as these, the little feat that they had just accomplished was as ordinary and everyday an occurrence as walking on level ground was to him.

As Tanar had an opportunity to look about him on this new level,

he saw, and not without relief, that the ledge was much wider and that the mouths of several caves opened upon it. In places, and more especially in front of the cave entrances, the ledge widened to as much as six or eight feet, and here Tanar obtained his first view of any considerable number of Himeans.

“Is it not a wonderful village?” asked Balal, and without waiting for an answer, “Look!” and he pointed downward over the edge of the ledge.

Following the direction indicated by the youth, Tanar saw ledge after ledge scoring the face of a lofty cliff from summit to base, and upon every ledge there were men, women and children.

“Come,” said Balal, “I will take you to my father,” and forthwhile he led the way along the ledge.

As the first people they encountered saw Tanar they leaped to their feet, the men seizing their weapons. “I am taking him to my father, the chief,” said Balal. “Do not harm him,” and with sullen looks the warriors let them pass.

A log into which wooden pegs were driven served as an easy means of descent from one ledge to the next, and after descending for a considerable distance to about midway between the summit and the ground Balal halted at the entrance to a cave, before which sat a man, a woman and two children, a girl about Balal’s age and a boy much younger.

As had all the other villagers they had passed, these, too, leaped to their feet and seized weapons when they saw Tanar.

“Do not harm him,” repeated Balal. “I have brought him to you, Scurv, my father, because he saved my life when it was threatened simultaneously by a snake and a wolf and I promised him that you would receive him and treat him well.”

Scurv eyed Tanar suspiciously and there was no softening of the lines upon his sullen countenance even when he heard that the stranger had saved the life of his son. “Who are you and what are you doing in our country?” he demanded.

“I am looking for one named Jude,” replied Tanar.

“What do you know of Jude?” asked Scurv. “Is he your friend?”

There was something in the man’s tone that made it questionable as to the advisability of claiming Jude as a friend. “I know him,” he said. “We were prisoners together among the Coripies on the island of Amiocap.”

“You are an Amiocapian?” demanded Scurv.

“No,” replied Tanar, “I am a Sarian from a country on a far distant mainland.”

“Then what were you doing on Amiocap?” asked Scurv.

“I was captured by the Korsars and the ship in which they were taking me to their country was wrecked on Amiocap. All that I ask of you is that you give me food and show me where I can find Jude.”

“I do not know where you can find Jude,” said Scurv. “His people and my people are always at war.”

“Do you not know where their country or village is?” demanded Tanar.

“Yes, of course I know where it is, but I do not know that Jude is there.”

“Are you going to give him food,” asked Balal, “and treat him well as I promised you would?”

“Yes,” said Scurv, but his tone was sullen and his shifty eyes looked neither at Balal nor Tanar as he replied.

In the center of the ledge, opposite the mouth of the cave, a small

fire was burning beneath an earthen bowl, which was supported by three or four small pieces of stone.

Squatting close to this was a female, who, in youth, might have been a fine looking girl, but now her face was lined by bitterness and hate as she glared sullenly into the caldron, the contents of which she was stirring with the rib of some large animal.

“Tanar is hungry, Sloo,” said Balal, addressing the woman. “When will the food be cooked?”

“Have I not enough to do preparing hides and cooking food for all of you without having to cook for every enemy that you see fit to bring to the cave of your father?”

“This is the first time I ever brought anyone, mother,” said Balal.

“Let it be the last, then,” snapped the woman.

“Shut up, woman,” snapped Scurv, “and hasten with the food.”

The woman leaped to her feet, brandishing the rib above her head. “Don’t tell me what to do, Scurv,” she shrilled. “I have had about enough of you anyway.”

“Hit him, mother!” screamed a lad of about eleven, jumping to his feet and dancing about in evident joy and excitement.

Balal leaped across the cook fire and struck the lad heavily with his open palm across the face, sending him spinning up against the cliff wall. “Shut up, Dhung,” he cried, “or I’ll pitch you over the edge.”

The remaining member of the family party, a girl, just ripening into womanhood, remained silent where she was seated, leaning against the face of the cliff, her large, dark eyes taking in the scene being enacted before her. Suddenly the woman turned upon her. “Why don’t you do something, Gura?” she demanded. “You sit there and let them attack me and never raise a hand in my defense.”

“But no one has attacked you, mother,” said the girl, with a sigh.

“But I will,” yelled Scruv, seizing a short club that lay beside him. “I’ll knock her head off if she doesn’t keep a still tongue in it and hurry with that food.”

At this instant a loud scream attracted the attention of all toward another family group before a cave, a little further along the ledge. Here, a man, grasping a woman by her hair, was beating her with a stick, while several children were throwing pieces of rock, first at their parents and then at one another.

“Hit her again!” yelled Scruv.

“Scratch out his eyes!” screamed Sloo, and for the moment the family of the chief forgot their own differences in the enjoyable spectacle of another family row.

Tanar looked on in consternation and surprise. Never had he witnessed such tumult and turmoil in the villages of the Sarians, and coming, as he just had, from Amiocap, the island of love, the contrast was even more appalling.

“Don’t mind them,” said Balal, who was watching the Sarian and had noticed the expression of surprise and disgust upon his face. “If you stay with us long you will get used to it, for it is always like this. Come on, let’s eat, the food is ready,” and drawing his stone knife he fished into the pot and speared a piece of meat.

Tanar, having no knife, had recourse to one of his arrows, which answered the purpose quite as well, and then, one by one, the family gathered around as though nothing unusual had happened, and fell, too, upon the steaming stew with avidity.

During the meal they did not speak other than to call one another vile names, if two chanced to reach into the caldron simultaneously and one interfered with another.

The caldron emptied, Scruv and Sloo crawled into the dark interior of their cave to sleep, where they were presently followed by Balal.

Gura, the daughter, took the caldron and started down the cliff toward the brook to wash out the receptacle and return with it filled with water.

As she made her precarious way down rickety ladders and narrow ledges, little Dhung, her brother, amused himself by hurling stones at her.

“Stop that,” commanded Tanar. “You might hit her.”

“That is what I am trying to do,” said the little imp. “Why else should I be throwing stones at her? To miss her?” He hurled another missile and with that Tanar grabbed him by the scruff of the neck.

Instantly Dhung let out a scream that might have been heard in Amiocap — a scream that brought Sloo rushing from the cave.

“He is killing me,” shrieked Dhung, and at that the cave woman turned upon Tanar with flashing eyes and a face distorted with rage.

“Wait,” said Tanar, in a calm voice. “I was not hurting the child. He was hurling rocks at his sister and I stopped him.”

“What business have you to stop him?” demanded Sloo. “She is his sister, he has a right to hurl rocks at her if he chooses.”

“But he might have struck her, and if he had she would have fallen to her death below.”

“What if she did? That is none of your business,” snapped Sloo, and grabbing Dhung by his long hair she cuffed his ears and dragged him into the interior of the cave, where for a long time Tanar could hear blows and screams, mingled with the sharp tongue of Sloo and the curses of Scruv.

But finally these died down to silence, permitting the sounds of

other domestic brawls from various parts of the cliff village to reach the ears of the disgusted Sarian.

Far below him Tanar saw the girl, Gura, washing the earthenware vessel in a little stream, after which she filled it with fresh water and lifted the heavy burden to her head. He wondered at the ease with which she carried the great weight and was at a loss to know how she intended to scale the precipitous cliff and the rickety, makeshift ladders with her heavy load. Watching her progress with considerable interest he saw her ascend the lowest ladder, apparently with as great ease and agility as though she was unburdened. Up she came, balancing the receptacle with no evident effort.

As he watched her he saw a man ascending also, but several ledges higher than the girl. The fellow came swiftly and noiselessly to the very ledge where Tanar stood. Paying no attention to the Sarian, he slunk cautiously along the ledge to the mouth of the cave next to that of Scurv. Drawing his stone knife from his loin cloth he crept within, and a moment later Tanar heard the sounds of screams and curses and then two men rolled from the mouth of the cave, locked in a deadly embrace. One of them was the fellow whom Tanar had just seen enter the cave. The other was a younger man and smaller and less powerful than his antagonist. They were slashing desperately at one another with their stone knives, but the duel seemed to be resulting in more noise than damage.

At this juncture, a woman came running from the cave. She was armed with the leg bone of a thag and with this she sought to belabor the older man, striking vicious blows at his head and body.

This attack seemed to infuriate the fellow to the point of madness, and, rather than incapacitating him, urged him onto redoubled efforts.

Presently he succeeded in grasping the knife hand of his opponent

and an instant later he had driven his own blade into the heart of his opponent.

With a scream of anguish the woman struck again at the older man's head, but she missed her target and her weapon was splintered on the stone of the ledge. The victor leaped to his feet and seizing the body of his opponent hurled it over the cliff, and then grabbing the woman by the hair he dragged her about, shrieking and cursing, as he sought for some missile wherewith to belabor her.

As Tanar stood watching the disgusting spectacle he became aware that someone was standing beside him and, turning, he saw that Gura had returned. She stood there straight as an arrow, balancing the water vessel upon her head.

"It is terrible," said Tanar, nodding toward the battling couple.

Gura shrugged indifferently. "It is nothing," she said. "Her mate returned unexpectedly. That is all."

"You mean," asked Tanar, "that this fellow is her mate and that the other was not?"

"Certainly," said Gura, "but they all do it. What can you expect where there is nothing but hate," and walking to the entrance to her father's cave she set the water vessel down within the shadows just inside the entrance. Then she sat down and leaned her back against the cliff, paying no more attention to the matrimonial difficulties of her neighbor.

Tanar, for the first time, noticed the girl particularly. He saw that she had neither the cunning expression that characterized Jude and all of the other Himeans he had seen; nor were there the lines of habitual irritation and malice upon her face; instead it reflected an innate sadness and he guessed that she looked much like her mother might have when she was Gura's age.

Tanar crossed the ledge and sat down beside her. "Do your people always quarrel thus?" he asked.

"Always," replied Gura.

"Why?" he asked.

"I do not know," she replied. "They take their mates for life and are permitted but one and though both men and women have a choice in the selection of their mates they never seem to be satisfied with one another and are always quarreling, usually because neither one nor the other is faithful. Do the men and women quarrel thus in the land from which you come?"

"No," replied Tanar. "They do not. If they did they would be thrown out of the tribe."

"But suppose that they find that they do not like one another?" insisted the girl.

"Then they do not live together," replied Tanar. "They separate and if they care to they find other mates."

"That is wicked," said Gura. "We would kill any of our people who did such a thing."

Tanar shrugged and laughed.

"At least we are all a very happy people," he said, "which is more than you can say for yourselves, and, after all, happiness, it seems to me, is everything."

The girl thought for some time, seemingly studying an idea that was new to her.

"Perhaps you are right," she said, presently. "Nothing could be worse than the life that we live. My mother tells me that it was not thus in her country, but now she is as bad as the rest."

"Your mother is not a Himean?" asked Tanar.

“No, she is from Amiocap. My father captured her there when she was young.”

“That accounts for the difference,” mused Tanar.

“What difference?” she asked. “What do you mean?”

“I mean that you are not like the others, Gura,” he replied. “You neither look like them nor act like them — neither you nor your brother, Balal.”

“Our mother is an Amiocapian,” she replied. “Perhaps we inherited something from her and then again, and most important, we are young and, as yet, have no mates. When that time comes we shall grow to be like the others, just as our mother has grown to be like them.”

“Do many of your men take their mates from Amiocap?” asked Tanar.

“Many try to, but few succeed for as a rule they are driven away or killed by the Amiocapian warriors. They have a landing place upon the coast of Amiocap in a dark cave beneath a high cliff and of ten Himean warriors who land there scarce one returns, and he not always with an Amiocapian mate. There is a tribe living along our coast that has grown rich by crossing to Amiocap and bringing back the canoes of the warriors, who have crossed for mates and have died at the hands of the Amiocapian warriors.”

For a few moments she was silent, absorbed in thought. “I should like to go to Amiocap,” she mused, presently.

“Why?” asked Tanar.

“Perhaps I should find there a mate with whom I might be happy,” she said.

Tanar shook his head sadly. “That is impossible, Gura,” he said.

“Why?” she demanded. “Am I not beautiful enough for the Amiocapian warriors?”

“Yes,” he replied, “you are very beautiful, but if you went to Amiocap they would kill you.”

“Why?” she demanded again.

“Because, although your mother is an Amiocapian, your father is not,” explained Tanar.

“That is their law?” asked Gura, sadly.

“Yes,” replied Tanar.

“Well,” she said with a sigh, “then I suppose I must remain here and seek a mate whom I shall learn to hate and bring children into the world who will hate us both.”

“It is not a pleasant outlook,” said Tanar.

“No,” she said, and then after a pause, “unless —”

“Unless, what?” asked the Sarian.

“Nothing,” said Gura.

For a time they sat in silence, each occupied with his own thoughts, Tanar’s being filled to the exclusion of all else by the face and figure of Stellara.

Presently the girl looked up at him. “What are you going to do after you find Jude?” she asked.

“I am going to kill him,” replied Tanar.

“And then?” she queried.

“I do not know,” said the Sarian. “If I find the one whom I believe to be with Jude we shall try to return to Amiocap.”

“Why do you not remain here?” asked Gura. “I wish that you would.”

Tanar shuddered. “I would rather die,” he said.

“I do not blame you much,” said the girl, “but I believe there is a way in which you might be happy even in Hime.”

“How?” asked Tanar.

Gura did not answer and he saw tears come to her eyes. Then she arose hurriedly and entered the cave.

Tanar thought that Scurv would never be done with his sleep. He wanted to talk to him and arrange for a guide to the village of Jude, but it was Sloo who first emerged from the cave.

She eyed him sullenly. "You still here?" she demanded.

"I am waiting for Scurv to send a guide to direct me to the village of Jude," replied the Sarian. "I shall not remain here an instant longer than is necessary."

"That will be too long," growled Sloo, and turning on her heels she reentered the cave.

Presently Balal emerged, rubbing his eyes. "When will Scurv send me on my way?" demanded Tanar.

"I do not know," replied the youth. "He has just awakened. When he comes out you should speak to him about it. He has just sent me to fetch the skin of the codon you killed. He was very angry to think that I left it lying in the forest."

After Balal departed, Tanar sat with his own thoughts for a long while.

Presently Gura came from the cave. She appeared frightened and excited. She came close to Tanar and, kneeling, placed her lips close to his ear. "You must escape at once," she said, in a low whisper. "Scurv is going to kill you. That is why he sent Balal away."

"But why does he want to kill me?" demanded Tanar. "I saved the life of his son and I have only asked that he direct me to the village of Jude."

"He thinks Sloo is in love with you," explained Gura, "for when he awakened she was not in the cave. She was out here upon the ledge with you."

Tanar laughed. "Sloo made it very plain to me that she did not like me," he said, "and wanted me to be gone."

"I believe you," said Gura, "but Scurv, filled with suspicion and hatred and a guilty conscience, is anxious to believe anything bad that he can of Sloo, and as he does not wish to be convinced that he is wrong it stands to reason that nothing can convince him, so that your only hope is in flight."

"Thank you, Gura," said Tanar. "I shall go at once."

"No, that will not do," said the girl. "Scurv is coming out here immediately. He would miss you, possibly before you could get out of sight, and in a moment he could muster a hundred warriors to pursue you, and furthermore you have no proper weapons with which to start out in search of Jude."

"Perhaps you have a better plan, then," said Tanar.

"I have," said the girl. "Listen! Do you see where the stream enters the jungle," and she pointed across the clearing at the foot of the cliff toward the edge of a dark forest.

"Yes," said Tanar, "I see."

"I shall descend now and hide there in a large tree beside the stream. When Scurv comes out, tell him that you saw a deer there and ask him to loan you weapons, so that you may go and kill it. Meat is always welcome and he will postpone his attack upon you until you have returned with the carcass of your kill, but you will not return. When you enter the forest I shall be there to direct you to the village of Jude."

"Why are you doing this, Gura?" demanded Tanar.

"Never mind about that," said the girl. "Only do as I say. There is no time to lose as Scurv may come out from the cave at any moment,"

and without further words she commenced the descent of the cliff face.

Tanar watched her as, with the agility and grace of a chamois, the girl, oftentimes disdaining ladders, leaped lightly from ledge to ledge. Almost before he could realize it she was at the bottom of the cliff and moving swiftly toward the forest beyond, the foliage of which had scarcely closed about her when Scurv emerged from the cave. Directly behind him were Sloo and Dhung, and Tanar saw that each carried a club.

“I am glad you came out now,” said Tanar, losing no time, for he sensed that the three were bent upon immediate attack.

“Why?” growled Scurv.

“I just saw a deer at the edge of the forest. If you will let me take weapons, perhaps I can repay your hospitality by bringing you the carcass.”

Scurv hesitated, his stupid mind requiring time to readjust itself and change from one line of thought to another, but Sloo was quick to see the advantage of utilizing the unwelcome guest and she was willing to delay his murder until he had brought back his kill. “Get weapons,” she said to Dhung, “and let the stranger fetch the deer.”

Scurv scratched his head, still in a quandary, and before he had made up his mind one way or the other, Dhung reappeared with a lance and a stone knife, which, instead of handing to Tanar, he threw at him, but the Sarian caught the weapons, and, without awaiting further permission, clambered down the ladder to the next ledge and from thence downward to the ground. Several of the villagers, recognizing him as a stranger, sought to interfere with him, but Scurv, standing upon the ledge high above watching his descent, bellowed commands

that he be left alone, and presently the Sarian was crossing the open towards the jungle.

Just inside the concealing verdure of the forest he was accosted by Gura, who was perched upon the limb of a tree above him.

“Your warning came just in time, Gura,” said the man, “for Scurv and Sloo and Dhung came out almost immediately, armed and ready to kill me.”

“I knew that they would,” she said, “and I am glad that they will be disappointed, especially Dhung — the little beast! He begged to be allowed to torture you.”

“It does not seem possible that he can be your brother,” said Tanar.

“He is just like Scruv’s mother,” said the girl. “I knew her before she was killed. She was a most terrible old woman, and Dhung has inherited all of her venom and none of the kindly blood of the Amiocapians, which flows in the veins of my mother, despite the change that her horrid life has brought over her.”

“And now,” said Tanar, “point the way to Jude’s village and I shall be gone. Never, Gura, can I repay you for your kindness to me — a kindness which I can only explain on the strength of the Amiocapian blood which is in you. I shall never see you again, Gura, but I shall carry the recollection of your image and your kindness always in my heart.”

“I am going with you,” said Gura.

“You cannot do that,” said Tanar.

“How else may I guide you to the village of Jude then?” she demanded.

“You do not have to guide me; only tell me the direction in which it lies and I shall find it,” replied Tanar.

“I am going with you,” said the girl, determinedly. “There is only hate and misery in the cave of my father. I would rather be with you.”

“But that cannot be, Gura,” said Tanar.

“If I went back now to the cave of Scurv he would suspect me of having aided your escape and they would all beat me. Come, we cannot waste time here for if you do not return quickly, Scurv will become suspicious and set out upon your trail.” She had dropped to the ground beside him and now she started off into the forest.

“Have it as you wish, then, Gura,” said Tanar, “but I am afraid that you are going to regret your act — I am afraid that we are both going to regret it.”

“At least I shall have a little happiness in life,” said the girl, “and if I have that I shall be willing to die.”

“Wait,” said Tanar, “in which direction does the village of Jude lie?” The girl pointed. “Very well,” said Tanar, “instead of going on the ground and leaving our spoor plainly marked for Scurv to follow, we shall take to the trees, for after having watched you descend the cliff I know that you must be able to travel as rapidly among the branches as you do upon the ground.”

“I have never done it,” said the girl, “but wherever you go I shall follow.”

Although Tanar had been loath to permit the girl to accompany him, nevertheless he found that her companionship made what would have been otherwise a lonely adventure far from unpleasant.

12.

“I HATE YOU!”

The companions of Bohar the Bloody had not waited long for him after he had set out in pursuit of Stellara and had not returned. They hastened the work upon their boat to early completion, and, storing provisions and water, sailed out of the cove on the shore of which they had constructed their craft and bore away for Korsar with no regret for Bohar, whom they all cordially hated.

The very storm that had come near to driving Tanar past the island of Hime bore the Korsars down upon the opposite end, carried away their rude sail and finally dashed their craft, a total wreck, upon the rocks at the upper end of Hime.

The loss of their boat, their provisions and one of their number, who was smashed against a rock and drowned, left the remaining Korsars in even a more savage mood than was customary among them, and the fact that the part of the island upon which they were wrecked afforded no timber suitable for the construction of a boat made it necessary for them to cross over land to the opposite shore.

They were faced now with the necessity of entering a land filled with enemies in search of food and material for a new craft, and, to cap the climax of their misfortune, they found themselves with wet powder and forced to defend themselves, if necessity arose, with daggers and cutlasses alone.

The majority of them being old sailors they were well aware of where they were and even knew a great deal concerning the geography of Hime and the manners and customs of its people, for most of them

had accompanied raiding parties into the interior on many occasions when the Korsar ships had fallen upon the island to steal furs and hides, in the perfect curing and tanning of which the Himean women were adept with the result that Himean furs and skins brought high prices in Korsar.

A council of the older sailors decided then to set off across country toward a harbor on the far side of the island, where the timber of an adjoining forest would afford them the material for building another craft with the added possibility of the arrival of a Korsar raider.

As these disgruntled men plodded wearily across the island of Hime, Jude led the reluctant Stellara toward his village, and Gura guided Tanar in the same direction.

Jude had been compelled to make wide detours to avoid unfriendly villagers; nor had Stellara's unwilling feet greatly accelerated his pace, for she constantly hung back, and, though he no longer had to carry her, he had found it necessary to make a leather thong fast about her neck and lead her along in this fashion to prevent the numerous, sudden breaks for liberty that she had made before he had devised this scheme.

Often she pulled back, refusing to go further, saying that she was tired and insisting upon lying down to rest, for in her heart she knew that wherever Jude or another took her, Tanar would seek her out.

Already in her mind's eyes she could see him upon the trail behind them and she hoped to delay Jude's march sufficiently so that the Sarian would overtake them before they reached his village and the protection of his tribe.

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Gura was happy. Never before in all her life had she been so happy, and she saw in the end of their journey a possible end to this happiness and so she did not lead Tanar in a direct line to Carn, the village of Jude, but led him hither and thither upon various excuses so that she might have him to herself for as long as possible. She found in his companionship a gentleness and an understanding that she had never known in all her life before.

It was not love that Gura felt for Tanar, but something that might have easily been translated into love had the Sarian's own passion been aroused toward the girl, but his love for Stellara precluded such a possibility and while he found pleasure in the company of Gura he was yet madly impatient to continue directly upon the trail of Jude that he might rescue Stellara and have her for himself once more.

The village of Carn is not a cliff village, as is Garb, the village of Scurv. It consists of houses built of stone and clay and, entirely surrounded by a high wall, it stands upon the top of a lofty mesa protected upon all sides by steep cliffs, and overlooking upon one hand the forests and hills of Hime, and upon the other the broad expanse of the Korsar Az, or Sea of Korsar.

Up the steep cliffs toward Carn climbed Jude, dragging Stellara behind him. It was a long and arduous climb and when they reached the summit Jude was glad to stop and rest. He also had some planning to do, since in the village upon the mesa Jude had left a mate, and now he was thinking of some plan whereby he might rid himself of her, but the only plan that Jude could devise was to sneak into the city and murder her. But what was he to do with Stellara in the meantime? And then a happy thought occurred to him.

He knew a cave that lay just below the summit of the cliff and not

far distant and toward this he took Stellara, and when they had arrived at it he bound her ankles and her wrists.

“I shall not leave you here long,” he said. “Presently I shall return and take you into the village of Carn as my mate. Do not be afraid. There are few wild beasts upon the mesa, and I shall return long before anyone can find you.”

“Do not hurry,” said Stellara. “I shall welcome the wild beast that reaches me before you return.”

“You will think differently after you have been the mate of Jude for a while,” said the man, and then he left her and hurried toward the walled village of Carn.

Struggling to a sitting posture Stellara could look out across the country that lay at the foot of the cliff and presently, below her, she saw a man and a woman emerge from the forest.

For a moment her heart stood still, for the instant that her eyes alighted upon him she recognized the man as Tanar. A cry of welcome was upon her lips when a new thought stilled her tongue.

Who was the girl with Tanar? Stellara saw how close she walked to him and she saw her look up into his face and though she was too far away to see the girl’s eyes or her expression, there was something in the attitude of the slim body that denoted worship, and Stellara turned her face and buried it against the cold wall of the cave and burst into tears.

Gura pointed upward toward the high mesa. “There,” she said, “just beyond the summit of that cliff lies Carn, the village where Jude lives, but if we enter it you will be killed and perhaps I, too, if the women get me first.”

Tanar, who was examining the ground at his feet, seemed not to hear the girl’s words. “Someone has passed just ahead of us,” he said;

“a man and a woman. I can see the imprints of their feet. The grasses that were crushed beneath their sandals are still rising slowly — a man and a woman — and one of them was Stellara and the other Jude.”

“Who is Stellara?” asked the girl.

“My mate,” replied Tanar.

The habitual expression of sadness that had marked Gura’s face since childhood, but which had been supplanted by a radiant happiness since she had left the village of Garb with Tanar, returned as with tear-filled eyes she choked back a sob, which went unnoticed by the Sarian as he eagerly searched the ground ahead of them.

And in the cave above them warm tears bathed the unhappy cheeks of Stellara, but the urge of love soon drew her eyes back to Tanar just at the moment that he turned and called Gura’s attention to the well marked spoor he was following.

The eyes of the Sarian noted the despair in the face of his companion and the tears in her eyes.

“Gura!” he cried. “What is the matter? Why do you cry?” and impulsively he stepped close to her and put a friendly arm about her shoulders, and Gura, unnerved by kindness, buried her face upon his breast and wept. And this was what Stellara saw — this scene was what love and jealousy put their own interpretation upon — and the eyes of the Amiocapian maiden flashed with hurt pride and anger.

“Why do you cry, Gura?” demanded Tanar.

“Do not ask me,” begged the girl. “It is nothing. Perhaps I am tired; perhaps I am afraid. But now we may not think of either fatigue or fear, for if Jude is taking your mate toward the village of Carn we must hasten to rescue her before it is too late.”

“You are right,” exclaimed Tanar. “We must not delay,” and, followed by Gura, he ran swiftly toward the base of the cliff, tracing the

spoor of Jude and Stellara where it led to the precarious ascent of the cliffside. And as they hastened on, brutal eyes watched them from the edge of the jungle from which they had themselves so recently emerged.

Where the steep ascent topped the summit of the cliff bare rock gave back no clue to the direction that Jude had taken, but twenty yards further on where the soft ground commenced again Tanar picked up the tracks of the man to which he called Gura's attention.

"Jude's footprints are here alone," he said.

"Perhaps the woman refused to go further and he was forced to carry her," suggested Gura.

"That is doubtless the fact," said Tanar, and he hastened onward along the plain trail left by the Himean.

The way led now along a well marked trail, which ran through a considerable area of bushes that grew considerably higher than a man's head, so that nothing was visible upon either side and only for short distances ahead of them and behind them along the winding trail. But Tanar did not slacken his speed, his sole aim being to overhaul the Himean before he reached his village.

As Tanar and Gura had capped the summit of the cliff and disappeared from view, eighteen hairy men came into view from the forest and followed their trail toward the foot of the cliff.

They were bushy whiskered fellows with gay sashes around their waists and equally brilliant cloths about their heads. Huge pistols and knives bristled from their waist cloths, and cutlasses dangled from their hips — fate had brought these survivors of The Cid's ship to the foot of the cliffs below the village of Carn at almost the same moment that Tanar had arrived. With sensations of surprise, not unmingled with awe, they had recognized the Sarian who had been a prisoner upon the

ship and whom they thought they had seen killed by their musket fire at the edge of the natural well upon the island of Amiocap.

The Korsars, prompted by the pernicious stubbornness of ignorance, were moved by a common impulse to recapture Tanar. And with this end in view they waited until Gura and the Sarian had disappeared beyond the summit of the cliff, when they started in pursuit.

The walls of Carn lie no great distance from the edge of the tableland upon which it stands. In timeless Pellucidar events, which are in reality far separated, seem to follow closely, one upon the heels of another, and for this reason one may not say how long Jude was in the village of Carn, or whether he had had time to carry out the horrid purpose which had taken him thither, but the fact remained that as Tanar and Gura reached the edge of the bushes and looked across the clearing toward the walls of Carn they saw Jude sneaking from the city. Could they have seen his face they might have noticed a malicious leer of triumph and could they have known the purpose that had taken him thus stealthily to his native village they might have reconstructed the scenes of the bloody episode which had just been enacted within the house of the Himean. But Tanar only saw that Jude, whom he sought, was coming toward him, and that Stellara was not with him.

The Sarian drew Gura back into the concealment of the bushes that lined the trail which Jude was approaching. On came the Himean and while Tanar awaited his coming, the Korsars were making their clumsy ascent of the cliff, while Stellara, sick from jealousy and unhappiness, leaned disconsolately against the cold stone of her prison cave.

Jude, unconscious of danger, hastened back toward the spot where he had left Stellara and as he came opposite Tanar, the Sarian leaped upon him.

The Himean reached for his knife, but he was helpless in the grasp of Tanar, whose steel fingers closed about his wrists with such strength that Jude dropped his weapon with a cry of pain as he felt both of his arms crushed beneath the pressure of the Sarian's grip.

"What do you want?" he cried. "Why do you attack me?"

"Where is Stellara?" demanded Tanar.

"I do not know," replied Jude, "I have not seen her."

"You lie," said Tanar. "I have followed her tracks and yours to the summit of the cliff. Where is she?" He drew his knife. "Tell me, or die."

"I left her at the edge of the cliff while I went to Carn to arrange to have her received in a friendly manner. I did it all for her protection, Tanar. She wanted to go back to Korsar and I was but helping her."

"Again you lie," said the Sarian; "but lead me to her and we shall hear her version of the story."

The Himean held back until the point of Tanar's knife pressed against his ribs; then he gave in. "If I lead you to her will you promise not to kill me?" asked Jude. "Will you let me return in peace to my village?"

"I shall make no promises until I learn from her own lips how you have treated her," replied the Sarian.

"She has not been harmed," said Jude. "I swear it."

"Then lead me to her," insisted Tanar.

Sullenly the Himean guided them back along the path toward the cave where he had left Stellara, while at the other edge of the bushes eighteen Korsars, warned by the noise of their approach, halted, listening, and presently melted silently from view in the surrounding shrubbery.

They saw Jude and Gura and Tanar emerge from the bushes, but

they did not attack them; they waited to see for what purpose they had returned. They saw them disappear over the edge of the cliff at a short distance from the summit of the trail that led down into the valley. And then they emerged from their hiding places and followed cautiously after them.

Jude led Tanar and Gura to the cave where Stellara lay and when Tanar saw her, her dear wrists and ankles bound with thongs and her cheeks still wet with tears, he sprang forward and gathered her into his arms.

“Stellara!” he cried. “My darling!” But the girl turned her face away from him.

“Do not touch me,” she cried. “I hate you.”

“Stellara!” he exclaimed in amazement. “What has happened?” But before she could reply they were startled by a hoarse command from behind them, and, turning, found themselves looking into the muzzles of the pistols of eighteen Korsars.

“Surrender, Sarian!” cried the leader of the Korsars.

Gazing into the muzzles of about thirty-six huge pistols, which equally menaced the lives of Stellara and Gura, Tanar saw no immediate alternative but to surrender.

“What do you intend to do with us if we do surrender?” he demanded.

“That we shall decide later,” growled the spokesman for the Korsars.

“Do you expect ever to return to Korsar?” asked Tanar.

“What is that to you, Sarian?” demanded the Korsar.

“It has a considerable bearing upon whether or not we surrender,” replied Tanar. “You have tried to kill me before and you have found that I am hard to kill. I know something about your weapons and your

powder and I know that even at such close quarters I may be able to kill some of you before you can kill me. But if you answer my question fairly and honestly and if your answer is satisfactory I shall surrender.”

At Tanar’s mention of his knowledge of their powder the Korsars immediately assumed that he knew that it was wet, whereas he was only alluding to its uniformly poor quality and so the spokesman decided that it would be better to temporize for the time being at least. “As soon as we can build a boat we shall return to Korsar,” he said, “unless in the meantime a Korsar ship anchors in the bay of Carn.”

“Good,” commented the Sarian. “If you will promise to return the daughter of The Cid safe and unharmed to her people in Korsar I will surrender. And you must also promise that no harm shall befall this other girl and that she shall be permitted to go with you in safety to Korsar or to remain here among her own people as she desires.”

“How about the other man?” demanded the Korsar.

“You may kill him when you kill me,” replied Tanar.

Stellara’s eyes widened in fearful apprehension as she heard the words of the Sarian and she found that jealousy was no match for true love.

“Very well,” said the Korsar. “We accept the condition. The women shall return to Korsar with us, and you two men shall die.”

“Oh, no,” begged Jude. “I do not wish to die. I am a Himean. Carn is my home. You Korsars come there often to trade. Spare me and I shall see that you are furnished with more hides than you can pack in your boat, after you have built it.”

The leader of the band laughed in his face. “Eighteen of us can take what we choose from the village of Carn,” he said. “We are not such fools as to spare you that you may go and warn your people.”

“Then take me along as a prisoner,” wailed Jude.

“And have to feed you and watch you all the time? No, you are worth more to us dead than alive.”

As Jude spoke he had edged over into the mouth of the cave, where he stood half behind Stellara as though taking shelter at the expense of the girl.

With a gesture of disgust, Tanar turned toward the Korsars. “Come,” he said, impatiently. “If the bargain is satisfactory there is no use in discussing it further. Kill us, and take the women in safety to Korsar. You have given your word.”

At the instant that Tanar concluded his appeal to the Korsars, Jude turned before anyone could prevent him and disappeared into the cave behind him. Instantly Korsars leaped in pursuit, while the others awaited impatiently their return with Jude. But when they emerged they were empty handed.

“He escaped us,” said one of those who had gone after the Himean. “This cave is the mouth of a dark, long tunnel with many branches. We could see nothing and fearful that we should become lost, we returned to the opening. It would be useless to try to find the man within unless one was familiar with the tunnel which honeycombs the cliff beyond this cave. We had better kill this one immediately before he has an opportunity to escape too,” and the fellow raised his pistol and aimed it at Tanar, possibly hoping that his powder had dried since they had set out from the beach upon the opposite side of the island.

“Stop!” cried Stellara, jumping in front of the man. “As you all know I am the daughter of The Cid. If you return me to him in safety you will be well rewarded. I will see to that. You all knew that The Cid was taking this man to Korsar, but possibly you did not know why.”

“No,” said one of the Korsars, who, being only common sailors, had had no knowledge of the plans of their commander.

“He knows how to make firearms and powder far superior to ours and The Cid was taking him back to Korsar that he might teach the Korsars the secrets of powder making and the manufacture of weapons, that we do not know. If you kill him The Cid will be furious with you, and you all know what it means to anger The Cid. But if you return him, also, to Korsar your reward will be much larger.”

“How do we know that The Cid is alive?” demanded one of the Korsars; “and if he is not, who is there who will pay reward for your return, or for the return of this man?”

“The Cid is a better sailor than Bohar the Bloody — that you all know. And if Bohar the Bloody brought his boat safely through to Amiocap there is little doubt but that The Cid took his safely to Korsar. But even if he did not, even if The Cid perished, still will you receive your reward if you return me to Korsar.”

“Who will pay it?” demanded one of the sailors.

“Bulf,” replied Stellara.

“Why should Bulf pay a reward for your return?” asked the Korsar.

“Because I am to be his mate. It was The Cid’s wish and his.”

By no change of expression did the Sarian reveal the pain that these words inflicted like a knife thrust through his heart. He merely stood with his arms folded, looking straight ahead. Gura’s eyes were wide in surprise as she looked, first at Stellara and then at Tanar, for she recalled that the latter had told her that Stellara was his mate, and she had known, with woman’s intuition, how much the man loved this woman. Gura was mystified and, too, she was saddened because she guessed the pain that Stellara’s words had inflicted upon Tanar, and so her kind heart prompted her to move close to Tanar’s side and to lay her hand gently upon his arm in mute expression of sympathy.

For a time the Korsars discussed Stellara’s proposition in low whis-

pers and then the spokesman addressed her. "But if The Cid is dead there will be no one to reward us for returning the Sarian; therefore, we might as well kill him for there will be enough mouths to feed during the long journey to Korsar."

"You do not know that The Cid is dead," insisted Stellara; "but if he is, who is there better fitted to be chief of the Korsars than Bulf? And if he is chief he will reward you for returning this man when I explain to him the purpose for which he was brought back to Korsar."

"Well," said the Korsar, scratching his head, "perhaps you are right. He may be more valuable to us alive than dead. If he will promise to help us work the boat and not try to escape we shall take him with us. But how about the girl here?"

"Keep her until we are ready to sail," growled one of the other Korsars, "and then turn her loose."

"If you wish to receive any reward for my return you will do nothing of the sort," said Stellara with finality, and then to Gura, "What do you wish to do?" Her voice was cold and haughty.

"Where Tanar goes there I wish to go," replied Gura.

Stellara's eyes narrowed and for an instant they flashed fire, but immediately they resumed their natural, kindly expression, though tinged with sadness. "Very well, then," she said, turning sadly away, "the girl must return with us to Korsar."

The sailors discussed this question at some length and most of them were opposed to it, but when Stellara insisted and assured them of a still greater reward they finally consented, though with much grumbling.

The Korsars marched boldly across the mesa, past the walls of Carn, their harquebuses ready in their hands, knowing full well the fear of them that past raids had implanted in the breasts of the Himeans.

But they did not seek to plunder or demand tribute for they still feared that their powder was useless.

As they reached the opposite side of the mesa, where they could look out across the bay of Carn, a hoarse shout of pleasure arose from the throats of the Korsars, for there, at anchor in the bay, lay a Korsar ship. Not knowing how soon the vessel might weigh anchor and depart, the Korsars fairly tumbled down the precipitous trail to the beach, while in their rear the puzzled villagers watched them over the top of the wall of Carn until the last man had disappeared beyond the summit of the cliff.

Rushing to the edge of the water the Korsars tried to discharge their harquebuses to attract attention from the vessel. A few of the charges had dried and the resulting explosion awakened signs of life upon the anchored ship. The sailors on the shore tore off sashes and handkerchiefs, which they waved frantically as signals of distress, and presently they were rewarded by the sight of the lowering of a boat from the vessel.

Within speaking distance of the shore the boat came to a stop and an officer hailed the men on shore.

“Who are you,” he demanded, “and what do you want?”

“We are part of the crew of the ship of The Cid,” replied the sailors’ spokesman. “Our ship was wrecked in mid-ocean and we made our way to Amiocap and then to Hime, but here we lost the boat that we built upon Amiocap.”

Assured that the men were Korsars the officer commanded that the boat move in closer to the shore and finally it was beached close to where the party stood awaiting its coming.

The brief greetings and explanations over, the officer took them all

aboard and shortly afterward Tanar of Pellucidar found himself again upon a Korsar ship of war.

The commander of the ship knew Stellara, and after questioning them carefully he approved her plan and agreed to take Tanar and Gura back to Korsar with them.

Following their interview with the officer, Tanar found himself momentarily alone with Stellara.

“Stellara!” he said. “What change has come over you?”

She turned and looked at him coldly. “In Amiocap you were well enough,” she said, “but in Korsar you would be only a naked barbarian,” and, turning, she walked away from him without another word.

13.

PRISONERS

The voyage to Korsar was uneventful and during its entire extent Tanar saw nothing of either Stellara or Gura for, although he was not confined in the dark hold, he was not permitted above the first deck, and although he often looked up at the higher deck at the stern of the ship he never caught a glimpse of either of the girls, from which he concluded that Gura was confined in one of the cabins and that Stellara deliberately avoided him or any sight of him.

As they approached the coast of Korsar Tanar saw a level country curving upward into the mist of the distance. He thought that far away he discerned the outlines of hills, but of that he could not be certain. He saw cultivated fields and patches of forest land and a river running down to the sea — a broad, winding river upon the shore of which a city lay, inland a little from the ocean. There was no harbor at this point upon the coast, but the ship made directly for the mouth of the river, up which it sailed toward the city, which, as he approached it, he saw far surpassed in size and the pretentiousness of its buildings any habitation of man that he had ever seen upon the surface of Pellucidar, not even excepting the new capital of the confederated kingdoms of Pellucidar that the Emperor David was building.

Most of the buildings were white with red-tiled roofs, and there were some with lofty minarets and domes of various colors — blue and red and gold, the last shining in the sunlight like the jewels in the diadem of Dian the Empress.

Where the river widened the town had been built and here there

rode at anchor a great fleet of ships of war and many lesser craft — fishing boats and river boats and barges. The street along the riverfront was lined with shops and alive with people.

As their ship approached cannon boomed from the deck of the anchored warships, and the salute was returned by their own craft, which finally came to anchor in midstream, opposite the city.

Small boats put out from the shore and were paddled rapidly toward the warship, which also ordered under charge of an officer and a couple of sailors. As he was taken to shore and marched along the street he excited considerable attention among the crowds through which they passed, for he was immediately recognized as a barbarian captive from some uncivilized quarter of Pellucidar.

During the debarkation Tanar had seen nothing of either Stellara or Gura and now he wondered if he was ever to see them again. His mind was filled with the same sad thoughts that had been his companions during the entire course of the long journey from Hime to Korsar and which had finally convinced him that he had never known the true Stellara until she had avowed herself upon the deck of the ship in the harbor of Carn. Yes, he was all right upon Amiocap, but in Korsar he was only a naked savage, and this fact was borne in upon him now by the convincing evidence of the haughty contempt with which the natives of Korsar stared at him or exchanged rude jokes at his expense.

It hurt the Sarian's pride to think that he had been so deceived by the woman to whom he had given all his love. He would have staked his life upon his belief that here was the sweetest and purest and most loyal of characters, and to learn at last that she was shallow and insincere cut him to the quick and his suffering was lightened by but a single thought — his unquestioned belief in the sweet and enduring friendship of Gura.

It was with such thoughts that his mind was occupied as he was led into a building along the waterfront, which seemed to be in the nature of a guardhouse.

Here he was turned over to an officer in charge, and, after a few brief questions, two soldiers conducted him into another room, raised a heavy trap door in the floor and bade him descend a rude ladder that led downward into darkness below.

No sooner had his head descended below the floor joists than the door was slammed down above him. He heard the grating of a heavy bolt as the soldiers shut it and then the thud of their footsteps as they left the room above.

Descending slowly for about ten feet Tanar came at last to the surface of a stone floor. His eyes becoming accustomed to the change, he realized that the apartment into which he had descended was not in total darkness, but that daylight filtered into it from a small, barred window near the ceiling. Looking about him he saw that he was the only occupant of the room.

In the wall, opposite the window, he discerned a doorway and crossing to it he saw that it opened into a narrow corridor, running parallel with the length of the room. Looking up and down the corridor he discerned faint patches of light, as though the other open doorways lined one side of the hallway.

He was about to enter upon a tour of investigation when the noise of something scurrying along the floor of the corridor attracted his attention, and looking back to his left he saw a dark form creeping toward him. It stood about a foot in height and was, perhaps, three feet long, but in the shadows of the corridor it loomed too indistinctly for him to recognize its details. But presently he saw that it had two shining eyes that seemed to be directed upon him.

As it came boldly forward Tanar stepped back into the room he was about to quit, preferring to meet the thing in the lesser darkness of the apartment rather than in the gloomy corridor, if it was the creature's intent to attack him.

On the thing came and turning into the doorway it stopped and surveyed the Sarian. In his native country Tanar had been familiar with a species of wood rat, which the Sarian considered large, but never in all his life had he dreamed that a rat could grow to the enormous proportions of the hideous thing that confronted him with its bold, gleaming, beady eyes.

Tanar had been disarmed when he had been taken aboard the Korsar ship, but even so he had no fear of a rodent, even if the thing should elect to attack him, which he doubted. But the ferocious appearance of the rat gave him pause as he thought what the result might be if a number of them should attack a man simultaneously.

Presently the rat, still standing facing him, squealed. For a time there was silence and then the thing squealed again and, as from a great distance, Tanar heard an answering squeal, and then another and another, and presently they grew louder and greater in volume, and he knew the rat of the Korsar dungeon was calling its fellows to the attack and the feast.

He looked about him for some weapon of defense, but there was nothing but the bare stone of the floor and the walls. He heard the rat pack coming, and still the scout that had discovered him stood in the doorway, waiting.

But why should he, the man, wait? If he must die, he would die fighting and if he could take the rats as they came, one by one, he might make them pay for their meal and pay dearly. And so, with the agility of a tiger, the man leaped for the rodent, and so sudden and

unexpected was his spring that one hand fell upon the loathsome creature before it could escape. With loud squeals it sought to fasten its fangs in his flesh, but the Sarian was too quick and too powerful. His finger closed once upon the creature's neck. He swung its body around a few times until the neck broke and then he hurled the corpse toward the advancing pack that he could already see in the distance through the dim light in the corridor, in the center of which Tanar now stood awaiting his inevitable doom, but he was prepared to fight until he was dragged down by the creatures.

As he waited he heard a noise behind him and he thought that another pack was taking him in the rear, but as he glanced over his shoulder he saw the figure of a man, standing in front of a doorway further down the corridor.

"Come!" shouted the stranger. "You will find safety here." Nor did Tanar lose any time in racing down the corridor to where the man stood, the rats close at his heels.

"Quick, in here," cried his savior, and seizing Tanar by the arm he dragged him through the doorway into a large room in which there were a dozen or more men.

At the doorway the rat pack stopped, glaring in, but not one of them crossed the threshold.

The room in which he found himself was lighted by two larger windows than that in the room which he had just quitted and in the better light he had an opportunity to examine the man who had rescued him. The fellow was a copper-colored giant with fine features.

As the man turned his face a little more toward the light of the windows, Tanar gave an exclamation of surprise and delight. "Ja!" he cried, and before Ja could reply to the salutation, another man sprang forward from the far end of the room.

“Tanar!” exclaimed the second man. “Tanar, the son of Ghak!” As the Sarian wheeled he found himself standing face to face with David Innes, Emperor of Pellucidar.

“Ja of Anoroc and the Emperor!” cried Tanar. “What has happened? What brought you here?”

“It is well that we were here,” said Ja, “and that I heard the rat pack squealing just when I did. These other fellows,” and he nodded toward the remaining prisoners, “haven’t brains enough to try to save the newcomers that are incarcerated here. David and I have been trying to pound it into their stupid heads that the more of us there are the safer we shall be from the attack of the rats, but all they think is that they are safe now, so they do not care what becomes of the other poor devils that are shoved down here; nor have they brains enough to look into the future and realize that when some of us are taken out or die there may not be enough left to repel the attacks of the hungry beasts. But tell us, Tanar, where you have been and how you came here at last.”

“It is a long story,” replied the Sarian, “and first I would hear the story of my Emperor.”

“There is little of interest in the adventures that befell us,” said David, “but there may be points of great value to us in what I have managed to learn from the Korsars concerning a number of problems that have been puzzling me.

“When we saw the Korsars’ fleet sail away with you and others of our people, prisoners aboard them, we were filled with dismay and as we stood upon the shore of the great sea above The Land of Awful Shadow, we were depressed by the hopelessness of ever effecting your rescue. It was then that I determined to risk the venture which is responsible for our being here in the dungeon of the capital of Korsar.

“From all those who volunteered to accompany me I selected Ja,

and we took with us to be our pilot a Korsar prisoner named Fitt. Our boat was one of those abandoned by the Korsars in their flight and in it we pursued our course toward Korsar without incident until we were overwhelmed by the most terrific storm that I have ever witnessed.”

“Doubtless the same storm that wrecked the Korsars’ fleet that was bearing us away,” said Tanar.

“Unquestionably,” said David, “as you will know in a moment. The storm carried away all our rigging, snapping the mast short off at the deck, and left us helpless except for two pairs of oars.

“As you may know, these great sweeps are so heavy that, as a rule, two or three men handle a single oar, and as there were only three of us we could do little more than paddle slowly along with one man paddling on either side while the third relieved first one and then the other at intervals, and even this could be accomplished only after we had cut the great sweeps down to a size that one man might handle without undue fatigue.

“Fitt had laid a course which my compass showed me to be almost due north and this we followed with little or no deviation after the storm had subsided.

“We slept and ate many times before Fitt announced that we were not far from the island of Amiocap, which he says is half way between the point at which we had embarked and the land of Korsar. We still had ample water and provisions to last us the balance of our journey if we had been equipped with a sail, but the slow progress of paddling threatened to find us facing starvation, or death by thirst, long before we could hope to reach Korsar. With this fate staring us in the face we decided to land on Amiocap and refit our craft, but before we could do so we were overtaken by a Korsar ship and being unable either to escape or defend ourselves, we were taken prisoners.

“The vessel was one of those that had formed the armada of The Cid, and was, as far as they knew, the only one that had survived the storm. Shortly before they had found us they had picked up a boat-load of the survivors of The Cid’s ship, including The Cid himself, and from The Cid we learned that you and the other prisoners had doubtless been lost with his vessel, which he said was in a sinking condition at the time that he abandoned it. To my surprise I learned that The Cid had also abandoned his own daughter to her fate and I believe that this cowardly act weighed heavily upon his mind, for he was always taciturn and moody, avoiding the companionship of even his own officers.

“She did not die,” said Tanar. “We escaped together, the sole survivors, as far as we knew, of The Cid’s ship, though later we were captured by the members of another boat crew that had also made the island of Amiocap and with them we were brought to Korsar.”

“In my conversation with The Cid and also with the officers and men of the Korsar ship I sought to sound them on their knowledge of the extent of this sea, which is known as the Korsar Az. Among other things I learned that they possess compasses and are conversant with their use and they told me that to the west they had never sailed to the extreme limits of the Korsar Az, which they state reaches on, a vast body of water, for countless leagues beyond the knowledge of man. But to the east they have followed the shoreline from Korsar southward almost to the shore upon which they landed to attack the empire of Pellucidar.

“Now this suggests, in fact almost proves, that Korsar lies upon the same great continent as the empire of Pellucidar and if we can escape from prison, we may be able to make our way by land back to our own country.”

“But there is that ‘if,’” said Ja. “We have eaten and slept many times since they threw us into this dark hole, yet we are no nearer escape now than we were at the moment that they put us here; nor do we even know what fate lies in store for us.”

“These other prisoners tell us,” resumed David, “that the fact that we were not immediately killed, which is the customary fate of prisoners of war among the Korsars, indicates that they are saving us for some purpose; but what that purpose is I cannot conceive.”

“I can,” said Tanar. “In fact I am quite sure that I know.”

“And what is it?” demanded Ja.

“They wish us to teach them how to make firearms and powder such as ours,” replied the Sarian. “But where do you suppose they ever got firearms and powder in the first place?”

“Or the great ships they sail,” added Ja; “ships that are even larger than those which we build? These things were unknown in Pellucidar before David and Perry came to us, yet the Korsars appear to have known of them and used them always.”

“I have an idea,” said David; “yet it is such a mad idea that I have almost hesitated to entertain it, much less to express it.”

“What is it?” asked Tanar.

“It was suggested to me in my conversations with the Korsars themselves,” replied the Emperor. “Without exception they have all assured me that their ancestors came from another world — a world above which the sun did not stand perpetually at zenith, but crossed the heavens regularly, leaving the world in darkness half the time. They say that a part of this world is very cold and that their ancestors, who were seafaring men, became caught with their ships in the frozen waters; that their compasses turned in all directions and became useless to them and that when finally they broke through the ice they sailed away

into Pellucidar, which they found inhabited only by naked savages and wild beasts. And here they set up their city and built new ships, their numbers being augmented from time to time by other seafaring men from this world from which they say they originally came.

“They intermarried with the natives, which in this part of Pellucidar seemed to have been of a very low order.” David paused.

“Well,” asked Tanar, “what does it all mean?”

“It means,” said David, “that if their legend is true, or based upon fact, that their ancestors came from the same outer world from which Perry and I came, but by what avenue? that is the astounding enigma.”

Many times during their incarceration the three men discussed this subject, but never were they able to arrive at any definite solution of the mystery.

Food was brought them many times and several times they slept before Korsar soldiers came and took them from the dungeon.

They were led to the palace of The Cid, the architecture of which but tended to increase the mystery of the origin of this strange race in the mind of David Innes, for the building seemed to show indisputable proof of Moorish influence.

Within the palace they were conducted to a large room, comfortably filled with bewhiskered Korsars decked out in their gaudiest raiment, which far surpassed in brilliancy of coloring and ornamentation the comparatively mean clothes they had worn aboard ship. Upon a dais, at one end of the room, a man was seated upon a large, ornately carved chair. It was The Cid, and as David’s eyes fell upon him his mind suddenly grasped, for the first time, a significant suggestion in the title of the ruler of the Korsars.

Previously the name had been only a name to David. He had not considered it as a title; nor had it by association awakened any

particular train of thought, but now, coupled with the Moorish palace and the carved throne, it did.

The Cid! Rodrigo Diaz de Bivar — El Campeador — a national hero of eleventh century Spain. What did it mean? His thoughts reverted to the ships of the Korsars — their motley crews with harquebuses and cutlasses — and he recalled the thrilling stories he had read as a boy of the pirates of the Spanish Main. Could it be merely coincidence? Could a nation of people have grown up within the inner world, who so closely resembled the buccaneers of the seventeenth century, or had their forebears in truth found their way hither from the outer crust? David Innes did not know. He was frankly puzzled. But now he was being led to the foot of The Cid's throne and there was no further opportunity for the delightful speculation that had absorbed his mind momentarily.

The cruel, cunning eyes of The Cid looked down upon the three prisoners from out his brutal face. "The Emperor of Pellucidar!" he sneered. "The King of Anoroc! The son of the King of Sari!" and then he laughed uproariously. He extended his hand, his fingers parted and curled in a clutching gesture. "Emperor! King! Prince!" he sneered again, "and yet here you all are in the clutches of The Cid. Emperor — bah! I, The Cid, am the Emperor of all Pellucidar! You and your naked savages!" He turned on David. "Who are you to take the title of Emperor? I could crush you all," and he closed his fingers in a gesture of rough cruelty. "But I shall not. The Cid is generous and he is grateful, too. You shall have your freedom for a small price that you may easily pay." He paused as though he expected them to question him, but no one of the three spoke. Suddenly he turned upon David. "Where did you get your firearms and your powder? Who made them for you?"

“We made them ourselves,” replied David.

“Who taught you to make them?” insisted The Cid. “But never mind; it is enough that you know and we would know. You may win your liberty by teaching us.”

David could make gunpowder, but whether he could make any better gunpowder than the Korsars he did not know. He had left that to Perry and his apprentices in The Empire; and he knew perfectly well that he could not reconstruct a modern rifle such as was being turned out in the arsenals at Sari, for he had neither the drawings to make the machinery, nor the shops in which to make steel. But nevertheless here was one opportunity for possible freedom that might pave the way to escape and he could not throw it away, either for himself or his companions, by admitting their inability to manufacture modern fire-arms or improve the powder of the Korsars.

“Well,” demanded The Cid, impatiently, “what is your answer?”

“We cannot make powder and rifles while a man eats,” replied David; “nor can we make them from the air or from conversation. We must have materials; we must have factories; we must have trained men. You will sleep many times before we are able to accomplish all this. Are you willing to wait?”

“How many times shall we sleep before you have taught our people to make these things?” demanded The Cid.

David shrugged. “I do not know,” he said. “In the first place I must find the proper materials.”

“We have all the materials,” said The Cid. “We have iron and we have the ingredients for making powder. All that you have to do is to put them together in a better way than we have been able to.”

“You may have the materials, but it is possible that they are not of sufficiently good quality to make the things that will alone satisfy the

subjects of the Emperor of Pellucidar. Perhaps your niter is low grade; there may be impurities in your sulphur; or even the charcoal may not be properly prepared; and there are even more important matters to consider in the selection of material and its manufacture into steel suitable for making the firearms of the Pellucidarians."

"You shall not be hurried," said The Cid. He turned to a man standing near him. "See that an officer accompanies these men always," he said. "Let them go where they please and do what they please in the prosecution of my orders. Furnish them with laborers if they desire them, but do not let them delay and do not let them escape, upon pain of death." And thus ended their interview with The Cid of Korsar.

As it chanced, the man to be detailed to watch them was Fitt, the fellow whom David had chosen to accompany him and Ja in their pursuit of the Korsar fleet, and Fitt, having become well acquainted with David and Ja and having experienced nothing but considerate treatment from them, was far from unfriendly, though, like the majority of all other Korsars, he was inclined to be savage and cruel.

As they were passing out of the palace they caught a glimpse of a girl in a chamber that opened onto the corridor in which they were. Fitt, big with the importance of his new position and feeling somewhat like a showman revealing and explaining his wonders to the ignorant and uninitiated, had been describing the various objects of interest that they had passed as well as the personages of importance, and now he nodded in the direction of the room in which they had seen the girl, although they had gone along the corridor so far by this time that they could no longer see her. "That," he said, "is The Cid's daughter." Tanar stopped in his tracks and turned to Fitt.

"May I speak to her?" he asked.

"You!" cried Fitt. "You speak to the daughter of The Cid!"

“I know her,” said Tanar. “We two were left alone on the abandoned ship when it was deserted by its officers and crew. Go and ask her if she will speak to me.”

Fitt hesitated. “The Cid might not approve,” he said.

“He gave you no orders other than to accompany us,” said David. “How are we to carry on our work if we are to be prevented from speaking to anyone whom we choose? At least you will be safe in leading us to The Cid’s daughter. If she wishes to speak to Tanar the responsibility will not be yours.”

“Perhaps you are right,” said Fitt. “I will ask her.” He stepped to the doorway of the apartment in which were Stellara and Gura, and now, for the first time, he saw that a man was with them. It was Bulf. The three looked up as he entered.

“There is one here who wishes to speak to The Cid’s daughter,” he said, addressing Stellara.

“Who is he?” demanded Bulf.

“He is Tanar, a prisoner of war from Sari.”

“Tell him,” said Stellara, “that The Cid’s daughter does not recall him and cannot grant him an interview.” As Fitt turned and quit the chamber, Gura’s ordinarily sad eyes flashed a look of angry surprise at Stellara.

14.

TWO SUNS

David, Ja and Tanar were quartered in barracks inside the palace wall and immediately set to work to carry out a plan that David had suggested and which included an inspection, not only of the Korsars' powder factory and the arsenals in which their firearms were manufactured, but also visits to the niter beds, sulphur deposits, charcoal pits and iron mines.

These various excursions for the purpose of inspecting the sources of supply and the methods of obtaining it aroused no suspicion in the mind of the Korsar, though their true purpose was anything other than it appeared to be.

In the first place David had not the slightest intention of teaching the Korsars how to improve their powder, thereby transforming them into a far greater menace to the peace of his empire than they could ever become while handicapped by an inferior grade of gunpowder that failed to explode quite as often as it exploded. These tours of inspection, however, which often took them considerable distances from the city of Korsar, afforded an excuse for delaying the lesson in powder making, while David and his companions sought to concoct some plan of escape that might contain at least the seed of success. Also they gave the three men a better knowledge of the surrounding country, familiarized them with the various trails and acquainted them with the manners and customs of the primitive tribes that carried on the agriculture of Korsar and all of the labor of the mines, niter beds and charcoal burning.

It was not long before they had learned that all the Korsars lived in the city of Korsar and that they numbered about five hundred thousand souls, and, as all labor was performed by slaves, every male Korsar above the age of fifteen was free for military service, while those between ten and fifteen were virtually so since this included the period of their training, during which time they learned all that could be taught them of seamanship and the art of piracy and raiding. David soon came to realize that the ferocity of the Korsars, rather than their number, rendered them a menace to the peace of Pellucidar, but he was positive that with an equal number of ships and men he could overcome them and he was glad that he had taken upon himself this dangerous mission, for the longer the three reconnoitered the environs of Korsar the more convinced they became that escape was possible.

The primitive savages from whom the Korsars had wrested their country and whom they had forced into virtual slavery were of such a low order of intelligence that David felt confident that they could never be successfully utilized as soldiers or fighting men by the Korsars, whom they outnumbered ten to one; their villages, according to his Korsar informant, stretching away into the vast hinterland, to the farthest extremities of which no man had ever penetrated.

The natives themselves spoke of a cold country to the north, in the barren and desolate wastes of which no man could live, and of mountains and forests and plains stretching away into the east and southeast too, as they put it, “the very shores of Molop Az” — the flaming sea of Pellucidarian legend upon which the land of Pellucidar floats.

This belief of the natives of the uninterrupted extent of the land mass to the south and southeast corroborated David’s belief that Korsar lay upon the same continent as Sari, and this belief was further

carried out by the distinct sense of perfect orientation which the three men experienced the moment they set foot upon the shores of Korsar; or rather which the born Pellucidarians, Ja and Tanar, experienced, since David did not possess this inborn homing instinct. Had there been an ocean of any considerable extent separating them from the land of their birth, the two Pellucidarians felt confident that they could not have been so certain as to the direction of Sari as they now were.

As their excursions to various points outside the city of Korsar increased in number the watchfulness of Fitt relaxed, so that the three men occasionally found themselves alone together in some remote part of the back country.

Tanar, wounded by the repeated rebuffs of Stellara, sought to convince himself that he did not love her. He tried to make himself believe that she was cruel and hard and unfaithful, but all that he succeeded in accomplishing was to make himself more unhappy, though he hid this from his companions and devoted himself as assiduously as they to planning their escape. It filled his heart with agony to think of going away forever from the vicinity of the woman he loved, even though there was little or no hope that he might see her should he remain, for gossip of the approaching nuptials of Stellara and Bulf was current in the barracks where he was quartered.

The window of the room to which he had been assigned overlooked a portion of the garden of The Cid — a spot of great natural beauty in which trees and flowers and shrubs bordered gravelled pathways and a miniature lake and streamlet sparkled in the sunlight.

Tanar was seldom in his apartment and when he was he ordinarily gave no more than casual attention to the garden beyond the wall, but upon one occasion, after returning from an inspection of an iron mine, he had been left alone with his own sad thoughts, and, seating himself

upon the sill of the window, he was gazing down upon the lovely scene below when his attention was attracted by the figure of a girl as she came into view almost directly before him along one of the gravelled paths. She was looking up toward his window and their eyes met simultaneously. It was Gura.

Placing her finger to her lips, cautioning him to silence, she came quickly forward until she reached a point as close to his window as it was possible for her to come.

“There is a gate in the garden wall at the far end of your barracks,” she said in a low whisper attuned to reach his ears. “Come to it at once.”

Tanar stopped to ask no questions. The girl’s tone had been peremptory. Her whole manner bespoke urgency. Descending the stairway to the ground floor Tanar left the building and walked slowly toward its far end. Korsars were all about him, but they had been accustomed to seeing him, and now he held himself to a slow and careless pace that aroused no suspicion. Just beyond the end of the barracks he came to a small, heavily planked door set in the garden wall and as he arrived opposite this, it swung open and he stepped quickly within the garden, Gura instantly closing the gate behind him.

“At last I have succeeded,” cried the girl, “but I thought that I never should. I have tried so hard to see you ever since Fitt took you from The Cid’s palace. I learned from one of the slaves where your quarters were in the barracks and whenever I have been free I have been always beneath your window. Twice before I saw you, but I could not attract your attention and now that I have succeeded, perhaps it is too late.”

“Too late! What do you mean? Too late for what?” demanded Tanar.

“Too late to save Stellara,” said the girl.

“She is in danger?” asked Tanar.

“The preparations for her marriage to Bulf are complete. She cannot delay it much longer.”

“Why should she wish to delay it?” demanded the Sarian. “Is she not content with the man she has chosen?”

“Like all men, you are a fool in matters pertaining to a woman’s heart,” cried Gura.

“I know what she told me,” said Tanar.

“After all that you had been through together; after all that she had been to you, how could you have believed that she loved another?” demanded Gura.

“You mean that she does not love Bulf?” asked Tanar.

“Of course she does not love him. He is a horrid beast.”

“And she still loves me?”

“She has never loved anyone else,” replied the girl.

“Then why did she treat me as she did? Why did she say the things that she said?”

“She was jealous.”

“Jealous! Jealous of whom?”

“Of me,” said Gura, dropping her eyes.

The Sarian stood looking dumbly at the dark-haired Himean girl standing before him. He noted her slim body, her drooping shoulders, her attitude of dejection. “Gura,” he asked, “did I ever speak words of love to you? Did I ever give Stellara or another the right to believe that I loved you?”

She shook her head. “No,” she said, “and I told Stellara that when I found out what she thought. I told her that you did not love me and finally she was convinced and asked me to find you and tell you that she still loves you. But I have another message for you from myself.

I know you, Sarian. I know that you are not planning to remain here contentedly a prisoner of the Korsars. I know that you will try to escape and I have come to beg you to take Stellara with you, for she will kill herself before she will become the mate of Bulf."

"Escape," mused Tanar. "How may it be accomplished from the heart of The Cid's palace?"

"That is the man's work," said Gura. "It is for you to plan the way."

"And you?" asked Tanar. "You wish to come away with us?"

"Do not think of me," said Gura. "If you and Stellara can escape, I do not matter."

"But you do matter," said the man, "and I am sure that you do not wish to stay in Korsar."

"No, I do not wish to remain in Korsar," replied the girl, "and particularly so now that The Cid seems to have taken a fancy to me."

"You wish to return to Hime?" asked Tanar.

"After the brief taste of happiness I have had," replied the girl, "I could not return to the quarrels, the hatred and the constant unhappiness that constitute life within the cave of Scurv and which would be but continued in some other cave were I to take a mate in Hime."

"Then come with us," said the Sarian.

"Oh, if I only might!" exclaimed Gura.

"Then that is settled," exclaimed Tanar. "You shall come with us and if we reach Sari I know that you can find peace and happiness for yourself always."

"It sounds like a dream," said the girl, wistfully, "from which I shall awaken in the cave of Scurv."

"We shall make the dream come true," said the Sarian, "and now let us plan on how best we can get you and Stellara out of the palace of The Cid."

“That will not be so easy,” said Gura.

“No, it is the most difficult part of our escape,” agreed the Sarian; “but it must be done and I believe that the bolder the plan the greater its assurance of success.”

“And it must be done at once,” said Gura, “for the wedding arrangements are completed and Bulf is impatient for his mate.”

For a moment Tanar stood in thought, seeking to formulate some plan that might contain at least a semblance of feasibility. “Can you bring Stellara to this gate at once?” he asked Gura.

“If she is alone, yes,” replied the girl.

“Then go and fetch her and wait here with her until I return. My signal will be a low whistle. When you hear it, unlatch the gate.”

“I shall return as quickly as possible,” said Gura, and, as Tanar stepped through the doorway into the barrack yards, he closed and latched the gate behind him.

The Sarian looked about him and was delighted to note that apparently no one had seen him emerge from the garden. Instead of returning along the front of the barracks the way he had come, he turned in the opposite direction and made his way directly to one of the main gates of the palace. And this strategy was prompted also by another motive — he wished to ascertain if he could pass the guard at the main gate without being challenged.

Tanar had not adopted the garments of his captors and was still conspicuous by the scant attire and simple ornaments of a savage warrior and already his comings and goings had made him a familiar figure around the palace yard and in the Korsar streets beyond. But he had never passed through a palace gate alone before; nor without the ever present Fitt.

As he neared the gate he neither hastened nor loitered, but

maintained a steady pace and an unconcerned demeanor. Others were passing in and out and as the former naturally received much closer scrutiny by the guards than the latter, Tanar soon found himself in a Korsar street outside the palace of The Cid.

Before him were the usual sights now grown familiar — the narrow, dusty street, the small open shops or bazaars lining the opposite side, the swaggering Korsars in their brilliant kerchiefs and sashes, and the slaves bearing great burdens to and fro — garden truck and the fruits of the chase coming in from the back country, while bales of tanned hides, salt and other commodities, craved by the simple tastes of the aborigines, were being borne out of the city toward the interior. Some of the bales were of considerable size and weight, requiring the services of four carriers, and were supported on two long poles, the ends of which rested on the shoulders of the men.

There were lines of slaves carrying provisions and ammunition to a fleet of ships that was outfitting for a new raid, and another line bearing plunder from the hold of another ship that had but recently come to anchor in the river before the city.

All this activity presented a scene of apparent confusion, which was increased by the voices of the merchants hawking their wares and the shrill bickering of prospective purchasers.

Through the motley throng the Sarian shouldered his way back toward another gate that gave entrance to the palace ground close to the far end of the long, rambling barracks. As this was the gate through which he passed most often he was accorded no more than a glance as he passed through, and once within he hastened immediately to the quarters assigned to David. Here he found both David and Ja, to whom he immediately unfolded a plan that he had been perfecting since he left the garden of The Cid.

“And now,” he said, “before you have agreed to my plan, let me make it plain that I do not expect you to accompany me if you feel that the chances of success are too slight. It is my duty, as well as my desire, to save Stellara and Gura. But I cannot ask you to place your plans for escape in jeopardy.”

“Your plan is a good one,” replied David, “and even if it were not it is the best that has been suggested yet. And as for our deserting either you or Stellara or Gura, that, of course, is not even a question for discussion. We shall go with you and I know that I speak for Ja as well as myself.”

“I knew that you would say that,” said the Sarian, “and now let us start at once to put the plan to test.”

“Good,” said David. “You make your purchases and return to the garden and Ja and I will proceed at once to carry out our part.”

The three proceeded at once toward the palace gate at the far end of the barracks, and as they were passing through the Korsar in charge stopped them.

“Where now?” he demanded.

“We are going into the city to make purchases for a long expedition that we are about to make in search of new iron deposits in the back country, further than we have ever been before.”

“And where is Fitt?” demanded the captain of the gate.

“The Cid sent for him, and while he is gone we are making the necessary preparations.”

“All right,” said the man, apparently satisfied. “You may pass.”

“We shall return presently with porters,” said David, “for some of our personal belongings and then go out again to collect the balance of our outfit. Will you leave word that we are to be passed in the event that you are not here?”

“I shall be here,” said the man. “But what are you going to carry into the back country?”

“We expect that we may have to travel even beyond the furthest boundaries of Korsar, where the natives know little or nothing of The Cid and his authority, and for this reason it is necessary for us to carry provisions and articles of trade that we may barter with them for what we want, since we shall not have sufficient numbers in our party to take these things by force.”

“I see,” said the man; “but it seems funny that The Cid does not send muskets and pistols to take what he wants rather than spoil these savages by trading with them.”

“Yes,” said David, “it does seem strange,” and the three passed out into the street of Korsar.

Beyond the gate David and Ja turned to the right toward the market place, while Tanar crossed immediately to one of the shops on the opposite side of the street. Here he purchased two large bags, made of well tanned hide, with which he returned immediately to the palace grounds and presently he was before the garden gate where he voiced a low whistle that was to be the signal by which the girls were to know that he arrived.

Almost immediately the gate swung open and Tanar stepped quickly within. As Gura closed the gate behind him, Tanar found himself standing face to face with Stellara. Her eyes were moist with tears, her lips were trembling with suppressed emotion as the Sarian opened his arms and pressed her to him.

The market place of the city of Korsar is a large, open square where the natives from the interior barter their agricultural produce, raw hides and the flesh of the animals they have taken in the chase,

for the simple necessities which they wish to take back to their homes with them.

The farmers bring in their vegetables in large hampers made of reed bound together with grasses. These hampers are ordinarily about four feet in each dimension and are borne on a single pole by two men if lightly loaded, or upon two poles and by four carriers if the load is heavy.

David and Ja approached a group of men whose hampers were empty and who were evidently preparing to depart from the market, and after questioning several of the group they found two who were returning to the same village, which lay at a considerable distance almost due north of Korsar.

By the order of The Cid, Fitt had furnished his three prisoners with ample funds in the money of Korsar that they might make necessary purchases in the prosecution of their investigations and their experiments.

The money, which consisted of gold coins of various sizes and weights, was crudely stamped upon one side with what purported to be a likeness of The Cid, and upon the other with a Korsar ship. For so long a time had gold coin been the medium of exchange in Korsar and the surrounding country that it was accepted by the natives of even remote villages and tribes, so that David had little difficulty in engaging the services of eight carriers and their two hampers to carry equipment at least as far as their village, which in reality was much further than David had any intention of utilizing the services of the natives.

Having concluded his arrangements with the men, David and Ja led the way back to the palace gate, where the officer passed them through with a nod.

As they proceeded along the front of the barracks toward its opposite end their only fear was that Fitt might have returned from his interview with The Cid. If he had and if he saw and questioned them, all was lost. They scarcely breathed as they approached the entrance to their quarters, which were also the quarters of Fitt. But they saw nothing of him as they passed the doorway and hastened on to the door in the garden wall. Here they halted, directing the bearers to place the baskets close to the doorway. David Innes whistled. The door swung in, and at a word from Tanar the eight carriers entered, picked up two bundles just inside the gate and deposited one of them in each of the hampers waiting beyond the wall. The lids were closed. The slaves resumed their burden, and the party turned about to retrace its steps to the palace gate through which the carriers had just entered with their empty hampers.

Once again apprehension had chilled the heart of David Innes for fear that Fitt might have returned, but they passed the barracks and reached the gate without seeing him, and here they were halted by the Korsar in charge.

“It did not take you long,” he said. “What have you in the hampers?” and he raised the cover of one of them.

“Only our personal belongings,” said David. “When we return again we shall have our full equipment. Would you like to inspect it all at the same time?”

The Korsar, looking down at the skin bag lying at the bottom of the hamper, hesitated for a moment before replying. “Very well,” he said, “I will do it all at the same time,” and he let the cover drop back into place.

The hearts of the three men had stood still, but David Innes’s voice betrayed no unwonted emotion as he addressed the captain of the gate.

“When Fitt returns,” he said, “tell him that I am anxious to see him and ask him if he will wait in our quarters until we return.”

The Korsar nodded a surly assent and motioned for them to pass on through the gate.

Turning to the right, David led the party down the narrow street toward the market place. There he turned abruptly to the left, through a winding alleyway and double-backed to the north upon another street that paralleled that upon which the palace fronted. Here were poorer shops and less traffic and the carriers were able to make good time until presently the party passed out of the city of Korsar into the open country beyond. And then, by dint of threats and promises of additional pieces of gold, the three men urged the carriers to accelerate their speed to a swinging trot, which they maintained until they were forced to stop from exhaustion. A brief rest with food and they were off again; nor did they slacken their pace until they reached the rolling, wooded country at the foothills of the mountains, far north of Korsar.

Here, well within the shelter of the woods, the carriers set down their burdens and threw themselves upon the ground to rest, while Tanar and David swung back the covers of the hampers and untying the stout thongs that closed the mouths of the bags revealed their contents.

Half smothered and almost unable to move their cramped limbs, Stellara and Gura were lifted from the baskets and revealed to the gaze of the astounded carriers.

Tanar turned upon the men. “Do you know who this woman is?” he demanded.

“No,” said one of their number.

“It is Stellara, the daughter of The Cid,” said the Sarian.

“You have helped to steal her from the palace of her father. Do you know what that will mean if you are caught?”

The men trembled in evident terror. “We did not know she was in the basket,” said one of them. “We had nothing to do with it. It is you who stole her.”

“Will the Korsars believe you when we tell them of the great quantities of gold we paid you if we are captured?” asked Tanar. “No, they will not believe you and I do not have to tell you what your fate will be. But there is safety for you if you will do what I tell you to do.”

“What is that?” demanded one of the natives.

“Take up your hampers and hasten on to your village and tell no one, as long as you live, what you have done, not even your mates. If you do not tell, no one will know for we shall not tell.”

“We will never tell,” cried the men in chorus.

“Do not even talk about it among yourselves,” cautioned David, “for even the trees have ears, and if the Korsars come to your village and question you tell them that you saw three men and two women traveling toward the east just beyond the borders of the city of Korsar. Tell them that they were too far away for you to recognize them, but that they may have been The Cid’s daughter and her companion with the three men who abducted them.”

“We will do as you say,” replied the carriers.

“Then be gone,” demanded David, and the eight men hurriedly gathered up their hampers and disappeared into the forest toward the north.

When the two girls were sufficiently revived and rested to continue the journey, the party set out again, making their way to the east for a short distance and then turning north again, for it had been Tanar’s plan to throw the Korsars off the trail by traveling north, rather than

east or south. Later they would turn to the east, far north of the area which the Korsars might be expected to comb in search of them, and then again, after many marches, they would change their direction once more to the south. It was a circuitous route, but it seemed the safest.

The forest changed to pine and cedar and there were windswept wastes dotted with gnarled and stunted trees. The air was cooler than they had ever known it in their native land, and when the wind blew from the north they shivered around roaring camp fires. The animals they met were scarcer and bore heavier fur, and nowhere was there sign of man.

Upon one occasion when they stopped to camp Tanar pointed at the ground before him. "Look!" he cried to David. "My shadow is no longer beneath me," and then, looking up, "the sun is not above us."

"I have noticed that," replied David, "and I am trying to understand the reason for it, and perhaps I shall with the aid of the legends of the Korsars."

As they proceeded their shadows grew longer and longer and the light and heat of the sun diminished until they traveled in a semi-twilight that was always cold.

Long since they had been forced to fashion warmer garments from the pelts of the beasts they had killed. Tanar and Ja wanted to turn back toward the southeast, for their strange homing instinct drew them in that direction toward their own country, but David asked them to accompany him yet a little further for his mind had evolved a strange and wonderful theory and he wished to press on yet a little further to obtain still stronger proof of its correctness.

When they slept they rested beside roaring fires and once, when they awoke, they were covered by a light mantle of a cold, white substance that frightened the Pellucidarians, but that David knew was

snow. And the air was full of whirling particles and the wind bit those portions of their faces that were exposed, for now they wore fur caps and hoods and their hands were covered with warm mittens.

“We cannot go much further in this direction,” said Ja, “or we shall all perish.”

“Perhaps you are right,” said David. “You four turn back to the southeast and I will go yet a little further to the north and overtake you when I have satisfied myself that a thing that I believe is true.”

“No,” cried Tanar, “we shall remain together. Where you go we shall go.”

“Yes,” said Ja, “we shall not abandon you.”

“Just a little further north, then,” said David, “and I shall be ready to turn back with you,” and so they forged ahead over snow-covered ground into the deepening gloom that filled the souls of the Pellucidarians with terror. But after a while the wind changed and blew from the south and the snow melted and the air became balmy again, and still further on the twilight slowly lifted and the light increased, though the midday sun of Pellucidar was now scarcely visible behind them.

“I cannot understand it,” said Ja. “Why should it become lighter again, although the sun is even further away behind us?”

“I do not know,” said Tanar. “Ask David.”

“I can only guess,” said David, “and my guess seems so preposterous that I dare not voice it.”

“Look!” cried Stellara, pointing ahead. “It is the sea.”

“Yes,” said Gura, “a gray sea; it does not look like water.”

“And what is that?” cried Tanar. “There is a great fire upon the sea.”

“And the sea does not curve upward in the distance,” cried Stellara. “Everything is wrong in this country and I am afraid.”

David had stopped in his tracks and was staring at the deep red glow ahead. The others gathered around him and watched it, too. “What is it?” demanded Ja.

“As there is a God in heaven it can be but one thing,” replied David; “and yet I know that it cannot be that thing. The very idea is ridiculous. It is impossible and outlandish.”

“But what might it be?” demanded Stellara.

“The sun,” replied David.

“But the sun is almost out of sight behind us,” Gura reminded him.

“I do not mean the sun of Pellucidar,” replied David; “but the sun of the outer world, the world from which I came.”

The others stood in silent awe, watching the edge of a blood red disc that seemed to be floating upon a gray ocean across whose reddened surface a brilliant pathway of red and gold led from the shoreline to the blazing orb, where the sea and sky seemed to meet.

15.

MADNESS

“Now,” said Stellara, “we can go no further;” nor indeed could they for east and west and north stretched a great, sullen sea and along the shoreline at their feet great ice cakes rose and fell with sullen roars and loud reports as the sea ground the churning mass.

For a long time David Innes, Emperor of Pellucidar, stood staring out across that vast and desolate waste of water. “What lies beyond?” he murmured to himself, and then, shaking his head, he turned away. “Come,” he said, “let us strike back for Sari.”

His companions received his words with shouts of joy. Smiles replaced the half troubled expressions that had marked their drawn faces since the moment that they had discovered that their beloved noonday sun was being left behind them.

With light steps, with laughter and joking, they faced the long, arduous journey that lay ahead of them.

During the second march, after they had turned back from the northern sea, Gura discovered a strange object to the left of their line of march.

“It looks as though it might be some queer sort of native hut,” she said.

“We shall have to investigate it,” said David, and the five made their way to the side of the strange object.

It was a large, heavy, wicker basket that lay inverted upon the barren ground. All about it were the rotten remnants of cordage.

At David’s suggestion the men turned the basket over upon its side.

Beneath it they found well preserved remnants of oiled silk and a network of fine cord.

“What is it?” asked Stellara.

“It is the basket and all that remains of the gas bag of a balloon,” said David.

“What is a balloon,” asked the girl, “and how did it get here?”

“I can explain what a balloon is,” said David; “but if I were positive that I was correct in my conjecture as to how it came here, I would hold the answer to a thousand questions that have puzzled the men of the outer crust for ages.” For a long time he stood silently contemplating the weather-worn basket. His mind submerged in thought was oblivious to all else. “If I only knew,” he mused. “If I only knew, and yet how else could it have come here? What else could that red disc upon the horizon of the sea have been other than the midnight sun of the arctic regions.”

“What in the world are you talking about?” demanded Gura.

“The poor devils,” mused David, apparently oblivious of the girl’s presence. “They made a greater discovery than they could have hoped for in their wildest dreams. I wonder if they lived to realize it.” Slowly he removed his fur cap and stood facing the basket with bowed head, and for some unaccountable reason, which they could not explain, his companions bared their heads and followed his example. And after they had resumed their journey it was a long time before David Innes could shake off the effects of that desolate reminder of one of the world’s most pathetic tragedies.

So anxious were the members of the party to reach the cheering warmth of the beloved Pellucidar that they knew, that they pressed on toward the south with the briefest of rests; nor were they wholly content until once more their shadows lay directly beneath them.

Sari lying slightly east of south, their return from the north took them over a different route from that which they had followed up from Korsar. Of course the Pellucidarians did not know these points of compass as north or south, and even David Innes carried them in his mind more in accordance with the Pellucidarian scheme than that with which he had been familiar upon the outer crust.

Naturally, with the sun always at zenith and with no stars and no moon and no planets, the Pellucidarians have been compelled to evolve a different system of indicating direction than that with which we are familiar. By instinct they know the direction in which their own country lies and each Pellucidarian reckons all directions from this base line, and he indicates other directions in a simple and ingenious manner.

Suppose you were from Sari and were traveling from the ice girt sea above Korsar to any point upon Pellucidar, you would set and maintain your course in this manner. Extend the fingers of your right hand and hold it in a horizontal position, palm down, directly in front of your body, your little finger pointing in the direction of Sari — a direction which you know by instinct — and your thumb pointing to the left directly at right angles to the line in which your little finger is pointing. Now spread your left hand in the same way and lower it on top of your right hand, so that the little finger of your left hand exactly covers the little finger of your right hand.

You will now see the fingers and thumbs of your two hands cover an arc of one hundred and eighty degrees.

Sari lies southeast of Korsar, while The Land of Awful Shadow lies due south. Therefore a Sarian pointing in the direction toward The Land of Awful Shadow would say that he was traveling two left fingers from Sari, since the middle finger of the left hand would be pointing

about due south toward The Land of Awful Shadow. If he were going in the opposite direction, or north, he would merely add the word "back," saying that he was traveling two left fingers back from Sari, so that by this plan every point of compass is roughly covered, and with sufficient accuracy for all the requirements of the primitive Pellucidarians. The fact that when one is traveling to the right of his established base line and indicates it by mentioning the fingers of his left hand might, at first, be deemed confusing, but, of course, having followed this system for ages, it is perfectly intelligible to the Pellucidarians.

When they reached a point at which the city of Korsar lay three right fingers back from Sari, they were, in reality, due east of the Korsar city. They were now in fertile, semi-tropical land teeming with animal life. The men were armed with pistols as well as spears, bows and arrows and knives; while Stellara and Gura carried light spears and knives, and seldom was there a march that did not witness an encounter with one or more of the savage beasts of the primeval forests, verdure clad hills or rolling plains across which their journey led them.

They long since had abandoned any apprehension of pursuit or capture by the Korsars and while they had skirted the distant hinterland claimed by Korsar and had encountered some of the natives upon one or two occasions, they had seen no member of the ruling class with the result that for the first time since they had fallen into the clutches of the enemy they felt a sense of unquestioned freedom. And though the other dangers that beset their way might appear appalling to one of the outer world, they had no such effect upon anyone of the five, whose experiences of life had tended to make them wholly self-reliant, and, while constantly alert and watchful, unoppressed by the possibility of future calamity. When danger suddenly confronted

them, they were ready to meet it. After it had passed they did not depress their spirits by anticipating the next encounter.

Ja and David were anxious to return to their mates, but Tanar and Stellara were supremely happy because they were together, and Gura was content merely to be near Tanar. Sometimes she recalled Balal, her brother, for he had been kind to her, but Scurv and Sloo and Dhung she tried to forget.

Thus they were proceeding, a happy and contented party, when, with the suddenness and unexpectedness of lightning out of a clear sky, disaster overwhelmed them.

They had been passing through a range of low, rocky hills and were descending a narrow gorge on the Sari side of the range when, turning the shoulder of a hill, they came face to face with a large party of Korsars, fully a hundred strong. The leaders saw and recognized them instantly and a shout of savage triumph that broke from their lips was taken up by all their fellows.

David, who was in the lead, saw that resistance would be futile and in the instant his plan was formed. "We must separate," he said. "Tanar, you and Stellara go together. Ja, take Gura with you, and I shall go in a different direction, for we must not all be captured. One, at least, must escape to return to Sari. If it is not I, then let the one who wins through take this message to Ghak and Perry. Tell Perry that I am positive that I have discovered that there is a polar opening in the outer crust leading into Pellucidar and that if he ever gets in radio communication with the outer world, he must inform them of this fact. Tell Ghak to rush his forces by sea on Korsar, as well as by land. And now, good-bye, and each for himself."

Turning in their tracks the five fled up the gorge and being far more active and agile than the Korsars, they outdistanced them, and though

the rattle of musketry followed them and bits of iron and stone fell about them, or whizzed past them, no one was struck.

Tanar and Stellara found and followed a steep ravine that led upward to the right, and almost at the same time Ja and Gura diverged to the left up the course of a dry waterway, while David continued on back up the main gorge.

Almost at the summit and within the reach of safety, Tanar and Stellara found their way blocked by a sheer cliff, which, while not more than fifteen feet in height, was absolutely unscalable; nor could they find footing upon the steep ravine sides of the right or left, and as they stood there in this cul-de-sac, their backs to the wall, a party of twenty or thirty Korsars, toiling laboriously up the ravine, cut off their retreat; nor was there any place in which they might hide, but instead were compelled to stand there in full view of the first of the enemy that came within sight of them, and thus with freedom already within their grasp they fell again into the hands of the Korsars. And Tanar had been compelled to surrender without resistance because he did not dare risk Stellara's life by drawing the fire of the enemy.

Many of the Korsars were for dispatching Tanar immediately, but the officer in command forbade them for it was The Cid's orders that any of the prisoners that might be recaptured were to be returned alive. "And furthermore," he added, "Bulf is particularly anxious to get this Sarian back alive."

During the long march back to Korsar, Tanar and Stellara learned that this was one of several parties that The Cid had dispatched in search of them with orders never to return until they had rescued his daughter and captured her abductors. They also had impressed upon them the fact that the only reason for The Cid's insistence that the

prisoners be returned alive was because he and Bulf desired to mete out to them a death commensurate with their crime.

During the long march back to Korsar, Tanar and Stellara were kept apart as a rule, though on several occasions they were able to exchange a few words.

“My poor Sarian,” said Stellara upon one of these. “I wish to God that you had never met me for only sorrow and pain and death can come of it.”

“I do not care,” replied Tanar, “if I die tomorrow, or if they torture me forever, for no price is too high to pay for the happiness that I have had with you, Stellara.”

“Ah, but they will torture you — that is what wrings my heart,” cried the girl. “Take your life yourself, Tanar. Do not let them get you. I know them and I know their methods and I would rather kill you with my own hands than see you fall into their clutches. The Cid is a beast, and Bulf is worse than Bohar the Bloody. I shall never be his mate; of that you may be sure, and if you die by your own hand I shall follow you shortly. And if there is a life after this, as the ancestors of the Korsars taught them, then we shall meet again where all is peace and beauty and love.”

The Sarian shook his head. “I know what is here in this life,” he said, “and I do not know what is there in the other. I shall cling to this, and you must cling to it until some other hand than ours takes it from us.”

“But they will torture you so horribly,” she moaned.

“No torture can kill the happiness of our love, Stellara,” said the man, and then guards separated them and they plodded on across the weary, interminable miles. How different the country looked through

eyes of despair and sorrow from the sunlit paradise that they had seen when they journeyed through it, hand in hand with freedom and love.

But at last the long, cruel journey was over, a fitting prelude to its cruel ending, for at the palace gate Stellara and Tanar were separated. She was escorted to her quarters by female attendants whom she recognized as being virtually her guards and keepers, while Tanar was conducted directly into the presence of The Cid.

As he entered the room he saw the glowering face of the Korsar chieftain, and standing below the dais, just in front of him, was Bulf, whom he had seen but once before, but whose face no man could ever forget. But there was another there whose presence brought a look of greater horror to Tanar's face than did the brutal countenances of The Cid or Bulf, for standing directly before the dais, toward which he was being led, the Sarian saw David I, Emperor of Pellucidar. Of all the calamities that could have befallen, this was the worst.

As the Sarian was led to David's side he tried to speak to him, but was roughly silenced by the Korsar guards; nor were they ever again to be allowed to communicate with one another.

The Cid eyed them savagely, as did Bulf. "For you, who betrayed my confidence and abducted my daughter, there is no punishment that can fit your crime; there is no death so terrible that its dying will expiate your sin. It is not within me to conceive of any form of torture the infliction of which upon you would give me adequate pleasure. I shall have to look for suggestions outside of my own mind," and his eyes ran questioningly among his officers surrounding him.

"Let me have that one," roared Bulf, pointing at Tanar, "and I can promise you that you will witness such tortures as the eyes of man never before beheld; nor the body of man ever before endured."

"Will it result in death'?" asked a tall Korsar with cadaverous face.

“Of course,” said Bulf, “but not too soon.”

“Death is a welcome and longed for deliverance from torture,” continued the other. “Would you give either one of these the satisfaction and pleasure of enjoying even death?”

“But what else is there?” demanded The Cid.

“There is a living death that is worse than death,” said the cadaverous one.

“And if you can name a torture worse than that which I had in mind,” exclaimed Bulf, “I shall gladly relinquish all my claims upon this Sarian.”

“Explain,” commanded The Cid.

“It is this,” said the cadaverous one. “These men are accustomed to sunlight, to freedom, to cleanliness, to fresh air, to companionship. There are beneath this palace dark, damp dungeons into which no ray of light ever enters, whose thick walls are impervious to sound. The denizens of these horrid places, as you know, would have an effect opposite to that of human companionship and the only danger, the only weak spot in my plan, lies in the fact that their constant presence might deprive these criminals of their reason and thus defeat the very purpose to which I conceive their presence necessary. A lifetime of hideous loneliness and torture in silence and in darkness! What death, what torture, what punishment can you mete out to these men that would compare in hideousness with that which I have suggested?”

After he had ceased speaking the others remained in silent contemplation of his proposition for some time. It was The Cid who broke the silence.

“Bulf,” he said, “I believe that he is right, for I know that as much as I love life I would rather die than be left alone in one of the palace dungeons.”

Bulf nodded his head slowly. "I hate to give up my plan," he said, "for I should like to inflict that torture upon this Sarian myself. But," and he turned to the cadaverous one, "you are right. You have named a torture infinitely worse than any that I could conceive."

"Thus is it ordered," said The Cid, "to separate palace dungeons for life."

In utter silence, unbroken by the Korsar assemblage, Tanar and David were blindfolded; Tanar felt himself being stripped of all his ornaments and of what meager raiment it was his custom to wear, with the exception of his loin cloth. Then he was pushed and dragged roughly along, first this way and then that. He knew when they were passing through narrow corridors by the muffled echoes and there was a different reverberation of the footsteps of his guards as they crossed large apartments. He was hustled down flights of stone steps and through other corridors and at last he felt himself lowered into an opening, a guard seizing him under each arm. The air felt damp and it smelled of mold and must and of something else that was disgusting, but unrecognizable to his nostrils. And then they let go of him and he dropped a short distance and landed upon a stone flagging that felt damp and slippery to his bare feet. He heard a sound above his head — a grating sound as though a stone slab had been pushed across a stone floor to close the trap through which he had been lowered. Then Tanar snatched the bandage from his eyes, but he might as well have left it there for he found himself surrounded by utter darkness. He listened intently, but there was no sound, not even the sounds of the retreating footsteps of his guards — darkness and silence — they had chosen the most terrible torture that they could inflict upon a Sarian — silence, darkness and solitude.

For a long time he stood there motionless and then, slowly, he

commenced to grope his way forward. Four steps he took before he touched the wall and this he followed two steps to the end, and there he turned and took six steps to cross before he reached the wall on the opposite side, and thus he made the circuit of his dungeon and found that it was four by six paces — perhaps not small for a dungeon, but narrower than the grave for Tanar of Pellucidar.

He tried to think — to think how he could occupy his time until death released him. Death! Could he not hasten it? But how? Six paces was the length of his prison cell. Could he not dash at full speed from one end to the other, crushing his brains out by the impact? And then he recalled his promise to Stellara, even in the face of her appeal to him to take his own life — “I shall not die of my own hand.”

Again he made the circuit of his dungeon. He wondered how they would feed him, for he knew that they would feed him because they wished him to live as long as possible, as only thus might they encompass his torture. He thought of the bright sun shining down upon the table-lands of Sari. He thought of the young men and the maidens there free and happy. He thought of Stellara, so close, up there above him somewhere, and yet so infinitely far away. If he were dead, they would be closer. “Not by my own hand,” he muttered.

He tried to plan for the future — the blank, dark, silent future — the eternity of loneliness that confronted him, and he found that through the despair of utter hopelessness his own unconquerable spirit could still discern hope, for no matter what his plans they all looked forward to a day of freedom and he realized that nothing short of death ever could rob him of this solace, and so his plan finally developed.

He must in some way keep his mind from dwelling constantly upon the present. He must erase from it all consideration of the darkness, the silence and the solitude that surrounded him. And he must keep fit,

mentally and physically, for the moment of release or escape. And so he planned to walk and to exercise his arms and the other muscles of his body systematically to the end that he might keep in good condition and at the same time induce sufficient fatigue to enable him to sleep as much as possible, and when he rested preparatory to sleep he concentrated his mind entirely upon pleasant memories. And when he put the plan into practice he found that it was all that he had hoped that it would be. He exercised until he was thoroughly fatigued and then he lay down to pleasant day dreams until sleep claimed him. Being accustomed from childhood to sleeping upon hard ground, the stone flagging gave him no particular discomfort and he was asleep in the midst of pleasant memories of happy hours with Stellara.

But his awakening! As consciousness slowly returned it was accompanied by a sense of horror, the cause of which gradually filtered to his awakening sensibilities. A cold, slimy body was crawling across his chest. Instinctively his hand seized it to thrust it away and his fingers closed upon a scaly thing that wriggled and writhed and struggled.

Tanar leaped to his feet, cold sweat bursting from every pore. He could feel the hairs upon his head rising in horror. He stepped back and his foot touched another of those horrid things. He slipped and fell, and falling, his body encountered others — cold, clammy, wriggling. Scrambling to his feet he retreated to the opposite end of his dungeon, but everywhere the floor was covered with writhing, scaly bodies. And now the silence became a pandemonium of seething sounds, a black caldron of venomous hisses.

Long bodies curled themselves about his legs and writhed and wriggled upward toward his face. No sooner did he tear one from him and hurl it aside than another took its place.

This was no dream as he had at first hoped, but stark, horrible

reality. These hideous serpents that filled his cell were but a part of his torture, but they would defeat their purpose. They would drive him mad. Already he felt his mind tottering and then into it crept the cunning scheme of a madman. With their own weapons he would defeat their ends. He would rob them quickly of the power to torture him further, and he burst into a shrill, mirthless laugh as he tore a snake from around his body and held it before him.

The reptile writhed and struggled and very slowly Tanar of Pellucidar worked his hand upward to its throat. It was not a large snake for Pellucidar, measuring perhaps five feet in length with a body about six inches in diameter.

Grasping the reptile about a foot below its head with one hand, Tanar slapped it repeatedly in the face with the other and then held it close to his breast. Laughing and screaming, he struck and struck again, and at last the snake struck back, burying its fangs deep in the flesh of the Sarian.

With a cry of triumph Tanar hurled the thing from him, and then slowly sank to the floor upon the writhing, wriggling forms that carpeted it.

“With your own weapons I have robbed you of your revenge,” he shrieked, and then he lapsed into unconsciousness.

Who may say how long he lay thus in the darkness and silence of that buried dungeon in a timeless world. But at length he stirred; slowly his eyes opened and as consciousness returned he felt about him. The stone flagging was bare. He sat up. He was not dead and to his surprise he discovered that he had suffered neither pain nor swelling from the strike of the serpent.

He arose and moved cautiously about the dungeon. The snakes were gone. Sleep had restored his mental equilibrium, but he shud-

dered as he realized how close he had been to madness, and he smiled somewhat shamefacedly, as he reflected upon the futility of his needless terror. For the first time in his life Tanar of Pellucidar had understood the meaning of the word fear.

As he paced slowly around his dungeon one foot came in contact with something lying on the floor in a corner — something which had not been there before the snakes came. He stooped and felt cautiously with his hand and found an iron bowl fitted with a heavy cover. He lifted the cover. Here was food and without questioning what it was or whence it came, he ate.

16.

THE DARKNESS BEYOND

The deadly monotony of his incarceration dragged on. He exercised; he ate; he slept. He never knew how the food was brought to his cell, nor when, and after a while he ceased to care.

The snakes came usually while he slept, but since that first experience they no longer filled him with horror. And after a dozen repetitions of their visit they not only ceased to annoy him, but he came to look forward to their coming as a break in the deadly monotony of his solitude. He found that by stroking them and talking to them in low tones he could quiet their restless writhing. And after repeated recurrences of their visits he was confident that one of them had become almost a pet.

Of course in the darkness he could not differentiate one snake from another, but always he was awakened by the nose of one pounding gently upon his chest, and when he took it in his hands and stroked it, it made no effort to escape; not ever again did one of them strike him with its fangs after that first orgy of madness, during which he had thought and hoped that the reptiles were venomous.

It took him a long time to find the opening through which the reptiles found ingress to his cell, but at length, after diligent search, he discovered an aperture about eight inches in diameter, some three feet above the floor. Its sides were worn smooth by the countless passings of scaly bodies. He inserted his hand in the opening and feeling around discovered that the wall at this point was about a foot in thickness, and when he inserted his arm to the shoulder he could feel

nothing in any direction beyond the wall. Perhaps there was another chamber there — another cell like his — or possibly the aperture opened into a deep pit that was filled with snakes. He thought of many explanations and the more he thought the more anxious he became to solve the riddle of the mysterious space beyond his cell. Thus did his mind occupy itself with trivial things, and the loneliness and the darkness and the silence exaggerated the importance of the matter beyond all reason until it became an obsession with him. During all his waking hours he thought about that hole in the wall and what lay beyond in the Stygian darkness which his eyes could not penetrate. He questioned the snake that rapped upon his chest, but it did not answer him and then he went to the hole in the wall and asked the hole. And he was on the point of becoming angry when it did not reply when his mind suddenly caught itself, and with a shudder he turned away, realizing that this way led to madness and that he must, above all else, remain master of his mind.

But still he did not abandon his speculation; only now he conducted it with reason and sanity, and at last he hit upon a shrewd plan.

When next his food was brought and he had devoured it he took the iron cover from the iron pot, which had contained it, and hurled it to the stone flagging of his cell, where it broke into several pieces. One of these was long and slender and had a sharp point, which was what he had hoped he would find in the debris of the broken cover. This piece he kept; the others he put back into the pot and then he went to the aperture in the wall and commenced to scratch, slowly, slowly, at the hard mortar in which the stones around the hole were set.

He ate and slept many times before his labor was rewarded by the loosening of a single stone next to the hole. And again he ate and slept many times before a second stone was removed.

How long he worked at this he did not know, but the time passed more quickly now and his mind was so engrossed with his labors that he was almost happy.

During this time he did not neglect his exercising, but he slept less often. When the snakes came he had to stop his work, for they were continually passing in and out through the hole.

He wished that he knew how the food was brought to his cell, that he might know if there was danger that those who brought it could hear him scraping at the mortar in the wall, but as he never heard the food brought he hoped that those who brought it could not hear him and he was quite sure that they could not see him.

And so he worked on unceasingly until at last he had scratched away an opening large enough to admit his body, and then for a long time he sat before it, waiting, seeking to assure himself that he was master of his mind, for in this eternal night of solitude that had been his existence for how long he could not even guess, he realized that this adventure which he was facing had assumed such momentous proportions that once more he felt himself upon the brink of madness. And now he wanted to make sure that no matter what lay beyond that aperture he could meet it with calm nerves and a serene and sane mind, for he could not help but realize that keen disappointment might be lying in wait for him, since during all the long periods of his scratching and scraping since he had discovered the hole through which the snakes came into his cell he had realized that a hope of escape was the foundation of the desire that prompted him to prosecute the work. And though he expected to be disappointed he knew how cruel would be the blow when it fell.

With a touch that was almost a caress he let his fingers run slowly over the rough edges of the enlarged aperture. He inserted his head

and shoulders into it and reached far out upon the other side, groping with a hand that found nothing, searching with eyes that saw nothing, and then he drew himself back into his dungeon and walked to its far end and sat down upon the floor and leaned back against the wall and waited — waited because he did not dare to pass that aperture to face some new discouragement.

It took him a long time to master himself, and then he waited again. But this time, after reasoned consideration of the matter that filled his mind.

He would wait until they brought his food and had taken away the empty receptacle — that he might be given a longer interval before possible discovery of his absence, in the event he did not return to his cell. And though he went often to the corner where the food was ordinarily deposited, it seemed an eternity before he found it there. And after he had eaten it, another eternity before the receptacle was taken away; but at last it was removed. And once again he crossed his cell and stood before the opening that led he knew not where.

This time he did not hesitate. He was master of his mind and nerves.

One after the other he put his feet through the aperture until he sat with his legs both upon the far side of the wall. Then, turning on his stomach, he started to lower himself, because he did not know where the floor might be, but he found it immediately, on the same level as his own. And an instant later he stood erect and if not free, at least no longer a prisoner within his own cell.

Cautiously he groped about him in the darkness, feeling his way a few inches at a time. This cell, he discovered, was much narrower than his own, but it was very long. By extending his bands in both

directions he could touch both walls, and thus he advanced, placing a foot cautiously to feel each step before he took it.

He had brought with him from his cell the iron sliver that he had broken from the cover of the pot and with which he had scratched himself thus far toward freedom. And the possession of this bit of iron imparted to him a certain sense of security, since it meant that he was not entirely unarmed.

Presently, as he advanced, he became convinced that he was in a long corridor. One foot came in contact with a rough substance directly in the center of the tunnel. He took his hands from the walls and groped in front of him.

It was a rough-coated cylinder about eight inches in diameter that rose directly upward from the center of the tunnel, and his fingers quickly told him that it was the trunk of a tree with the bark still on, though worn off in patches.

Passing this column, which he guessed to be a support for a weak section of the roof of the tunnel, he continued on, but he had taken but a couple of steps when he came to a blank wall — the tunnel had come to an abrupt end.

Tanar's heart sank within him. His hopes had been rising with each forward step and now they were suddenly dashed to despair. Again and again his fingers ran over the cold wall that had halted his advance toward hoped for freedom, but there was no sign of break or crevice, and slowly he turned back toward his cell, passing the wooden column and retracing his steps in utter dejection.

But as he moved sadly along he mustered all his spiritual forces, determined not to let his expected disappointment crush him. He would go back to his cell, but he would still continue to use the tunnel. It would be a respite from the monotony of his own four walls. It

would extend the distance that he might walk and after all he would make it worth the effort that had been necessary to gain ingress to it.

Back in his own cell again he lay down to sleep, for he had denied himself sleep a great deal of late that he might prosecute the work upon which he had been engaged. When he awoke the snakes were with him again and his friend was tapping gently on his chest, and once again he took up the dull monotony of his existence, altered only by regular excursions into his new found domain, the black interior of which he came to know as well as he did his own cell, so that he walked briskly from the hole he had made to the wooden column at the far end of the tunnel, passed around it and walked back again at a brisk gait and with as much assurance as though he could see plainly, for he had counted the paces from one end to the other so many times that he knew to an instant when he had covered the distance from one extremity to the other.

He ate; he slept; he exercised; he played with his slimy, reptilian companion; and he paced the narrow tunnel of his discovery. And often when he passed around the wooden column at its far end, he speculated upon the real purpose of it.

Once he went to sleep in his own cell thinking about it, and when he awoke to the gentle tapping of the snake's snout upon his breast he sat up so suddenly that the reptile fell hissing to the flagging, for clear and sharp upon the threshold of his awakening mind stood an idea — a wonderful idea — why had he not thought of it before?

Excitedly he hastened to the opening leading into the tunnel. Snakes were passing through it, but he fought for precedence with the reptilian horde and tumbled through head first upon a bed of hissing snakes. Scrambling to his feet he almost ran the length of the corridor until his outstretched hands came in contact with the rough bole of

the tree. There he stood quite some time, trembling like a leaf, and then, encircling the column with his arms and legs, he started to climb slowly and deliberately aloft. This was the idea that had seized him in its compelling grip upon his awakening.

Upward through the darkness he went, and pausing now and then to grope about with his hands, he found that the tree trunk ran up the center of a narrow, circular shaft.

He climbed slowly upward and at a distance of about thirty feet above the floor of the tunnel, his head struck stone. Feeling upward with one hand he discovered that the tree was set in mortar in the ceiling above him.

This could not be the end! What reason could there be for a tunnel and a shaft that led nowhere? He groped through the darkness in all directions with his hand and he was rewarded by finding an opening in the side of the shaft about six feet below the ceiling. Quitting the bole of the tree he climbed into the opening in the wall of the shaft, and here he found himself in another tunnel, lower and narrower than that at the base of the shaft. It was still dark, so that he was compelled to advance as slowly and with as great caution as he had upon that occasion when he first explored his tunnel below.

He advanced but a short distance when the tunnel turned abruptly to the right, and ahead of him, beyond the turn he saw a ray of light!

A condemned man snatched from the jaws of death could not have greeted salvation with more joyousness than Tanar of Pellucidar greeted this first slender ray of daylight that he had seen for a seeming eternity. It shone dimly through a tiny crevice, but it was light, the light of heaven that he had never expected to again behold.

Enraptured, he walked slowly toward it, and as he reached it his hand came in contact with rough, unpainted boards that blocked

his way. It was through a tiny crack between two of these boards that the light was filtering.

As dim as the light was it hurt his eyes, so long unaccustomed to light of any kind. But by turning them away so that the light did not shine directly into them, he finally became accustomed to it, and when he did he discovered that as small as the aperture was through which the light came it let in sufficient to dispel the utter darkness of the interior of the tunnel and he also discovered that he could discern objects. He could see the stone walls on either side of the tunnel, and by looking closely he could see the boards that formed the obstacle that barred his further progress. And as he examined them he discovered that at one side there was something that resembled a latch, an invention of which he had been entirely ignorant before he had come aboard the Korsar ship upon which he had been made prisoner, for in Sari there are no locks nor latches.

But he knew the thing for what it was and it told him that the boards before him formed a door, which opened into light and toward liberty, but what lay immediately beyond?

He clinched his ear to the door and listened, but he heard no sound. Then very carefully he examined the latch, experimenting with it until he discovered how to operate it. Steadying his nerves, he pushed gently upon the rough planks. As they swung away from him slowly a flood of light rushed into the first narrow crack, and Tanar covered his eyes with his hands and turned away, realizing that he must become accustomed to this light slowly and gradually, or he might be permanently blinded.

With closed eyes he listened at the crack, but could hear nothing. And then with utmost care he started to accustom his eyes to the light,

but it was long before he could stand the glare that came through even this tiny crack.

When he could stand the light without pain he opened the door a little further and looked out. Just beyond the door lay a fairly large room, in which wicker hampers, iron and earthen receptacles and bundles sewed up in hides littered the floor and were piled high against the walls. Everything seemed covered with dust and cobwebs and there was no sign of a human being about.

Pushing the door open still further Tanar stepped from the tunnel into the apartment and looked about him. Everywhere the room was a litter of bundles and packages with articles of clothing strewn about, together with various fittings for ships, bales of hide and numerous weapons.

The thick coating of dust upon everything suggested to the Sarian that the room had not been visited lately.

For a moment he stood with his hand still on the open door and as he started to step into the room his hand stuck for an instant where he had grasped the rough boards. Looking at his fingers to ascertain the cause he discovered that they were covered with sticky pitch. It was his left hand and when he tried to rub the pitch from it he found that it was almost impossible to do so.

As he moved around the room examining the contents everything that he touched with his left hand stuck to it — it was annoying, but unavoidable.

An inspection of the room revealed several windows along one side and a door at one end.

The door was equipped with a latch similar to that through which he had just passed and which was made to open from the outside with a key, but which could be operated by hand from the inside. It was

a very crude and simple affair, and for that Tanar would have been grateful had he known how intricate locks may be made.

Lifting the catch Tanar pushed the door slightly ajar and before him he saw a long corridor, lighted by windows upon one side and with doors opening from it upon the other. As he looked a Korsar came from one of the doorways and, turning, walked down the corridor away from him and a moment later a woman emerged from another doorway, and then he saw other people at the far end of the corridor. Quickly Tanar of Pellucidar closed and latched the door.

Here was no avenue of escape. Were he back in his dark cell he could not have been cut off more effectually from the outer world than he was in this apartment at the far end of a corridor constantly used by Korsars; for with his smooth face and his naked body, he would be recognized and seized the instant that he stepped from the room. But Tanar was far from being overwhelmed by discouragement. Already he had come much further on the road to escape than he had previously dreamed could be possible and not only this thought heartened him, but even more the effect of daylight, which had for so long been denied him. He had felt his spirit and his courage expand beneath the beneficent influence of the light of the noonday sun, so that he felt ready for any emergency that might confront him.

Turning back once more into the room he searched it carefully for some other avenue of escape. He went to the windows and found that they overlooked the garden of The Cid, but there were many people there, too, in that part of the garden close to the palace. The trees cut off his view of the far end from which he had helped Stellara and Gura to escape, but he guessed that there were few, if any, people there, though to reach it would be a difficult procedure from the windows of this storeroom.

To his left, near the opposite side of the garden, he could see that the trees grew closely together and extended thus apparently the full length of the enclosure.

If those trees had been upon this side of the garden he guessed that he might have found a way to escape; at least as far as the gate in the garden wall close to the barracks, but they were not and so he must abandon thought of them.

There seemed, therefore, no other avenue of escape than the corridor into which he had just looked; nor could he remain indefinitely in this chamber where there was neither food nor water and with a steadily increasing danger that his absence from the dungeon would be discovered when they found that he did not consume the food they brought him.

Seating himself upon a bale of hide Tanar gave himself over to contemplation of his predicament and as he studied the matter his eyes fell upon some of the loose clothing strewn about the room. There he saw the shorts and shirts of Korsar, the gay sashes and head handkerchiefs, the wide topped boots, and with a half smile upon his lips he gathered such of them as he required, shook the dust from them and clothed himself after the manner of a Korsar. He needed no mirror though to know that his smooth face would betray him.

He selected pistols, a dirk and a cutlass, but he could find neither powder nor balls for his firearms.

Thus arrayed and armed he surveyed himself as best he might without a mirror. "If I could keep my back toward all Korsar," he mused, "I might escape with ease for I warrant I look as much a Korsar as any of them from the rear, but unless I can grow bushy whiskers I shall not deceive anyone."

As he sat musing thus he became aware suddenly of voices raised

in altercation just outside the door of the storeroom. One was a man's voice; the other a woman's.

"And if you won't have me," growled the man, "I'll take you."

Tanar could not hear the woman's reply, though he heard her speak and knew from her voice that it was a woman.

"What do I care for The Cid?" cried the man. "I am as powerful in Korsar as he. I could take the throne and be Cid myself, if I chose."

Again Tanar heard the woman speak.

"If you do I'll choke the wind out of you," threatened the man. "Come in here where we can talk better. Then you can yell all you want for no one can hear you."

Tanar heard the man insert a key in the lock and as he did so the Pellucidarian sought a hiding place behind a pile of wicker hampers.

"And after you get out of this room," continued the man, "there will be nothing left for you to yell about."

"I have told you right along," said the woman, "that I would rather kill myself than mate with you, but if you take me by force I shall still kill myself, but I shall kill you first."

The heart of Tanar of Pellucidar leaped in his breast when he heard that voice. His fingers closed upon the hilt of the cutlass at his side, and as Bulf voiced a sneering laugh in answer to the girl's threat, the Sarian leaped from his concealment, a naked blade shining in his right hand.

At the sound behind him Bulf wheeled about and for an instant he did not recognize the Sarian in the Korsar garb, but Stellara did and she voiced a cry of mingled surprise and joy.

"Tanar!" she cried. "My Tanar!" As the Sarian rushed Bulf fell back, drawing his cutlass as he retreated. Tanar saw that he was making for the door leading into the corridor and he rushed at the man to

engage him before he could escape, so that Bulf was forced to stand and defend himself.

“Stand back,” cried Bulf, “or you shall die for this,” but Tanar of Pellucidar only laughed in his face, as he swung a wicked blow at the man’s head, which Bulf but barely parried, and then they were at one another like two wild beasts.

Tanar drew first blood from a slight gash in Bulf’s shoulder and then the fellow yelled for help.

“You said that no one could hear Stellara’s cries for help from this apartment,” taunted Tanar, “so why do you think that they can hear yours?”

“Let me out of here,” cried Bulf. “Let me out and I will give you your freedom.” But Tanar rushed him into a corner and the sharp edge of his cutlass sheared an ear from Bulf’s head.

“Help!” shrieked the Korsar. “Help! it is Bulf. The Sarian is killing me.”

Fearful that his loud cries might reach the corridor beyond and attract attention, Tanar increased the fury of his assault. He beat down the Korsar’s guard. He swung his cutlass in one terrible circle that clove Bulf’s ugly skull to the bridge of his nose, and with a gurgling gasp the great brute lunged forward upon his face. And Tanar of Pellucidar turned and took Stellara in his arms.

“Thank God” he said, “that I was in time.”

“It must have been God Himself who led you to this room,” said the girl. “I thought you dead. They told me that you were dead.”

“No,” said Tanar. “They put me in a dark dungeon beneath the palace, where I was condemned to remain for life.”

“And you have been so near me all this time,” said Stellara, “and I thought that you were dead.”

“For a long time I thought that I was worse than dead,” replied the man. “Darkness, solitude and silence — God! That is worse than death.”

“And yet you escaped!” The girl’s voice was filled with awe.

“It was because of you that I escaped,” said Tanar. “Thoughts of you kept me from going mad — thought and hope urged me on to seek some avenue of escape. Never again as long as life is in me shall I feel that there can be any situation that is entirely hopeless after what I have passed through.”

Stellara shook her head. “Your hope will have to be strong, dear heart, against the discouragement that you must face in seeking a way out of the palace of The Cid and the city of Korsar.”

“I have come this far,” replied Tanar. “Already have I achieved the impossible. Why should I doubt my ability to wrest freedom for you and for me from whatever fate holds in store for us?”

“You cannot pass them with that smooth face, Tanar,” said the girl, sadly. “Ah, if you only had Bulf’s whiskers,” and she glanced down at the corpse of the fallen man.

Tanar turned, too, and looked down at Bulf, where he lay in a pool of blood upon the floor. And then quickly he faced Stellara. “Why not?” he cried. “Why not?”

17.

DOWN TO THE SEA

“What do you mean?” demanded Stellara.

“Wait and you shall see,” replied Tanar, and drawing his dirk he stooped and turned Bulf over upon his back. Then with the razor-sharp blade of his weapon he commenced to hack off the bushy, black beard of the dead Korsar, while Stellara looked on in questioning wonder.

Spreading Bulf’s headcloth flat upon the floor, Tanar deposited upon it the hair that he cut from the man’s face, and when he had completed his gruesome tonsorial effort he folded the hair into the handkerchief, and, rising, motioned for Stellara to follow him.

Going to the door that led into the tunnel through which he had escaped from the dungeon, Tanar opened it, and, smearing his fingers with the pitch that exuded from the boards upon the inside of the door, he smeared some of it upon the side of his face and then turned to Stellara.

“Put this hair upon my face in as natural a way as you can. You have lived among them all your life, so you should know well how a Korsar’s beard should look.”

Horrible as the plan seemed and though she shrank from touching the hair of the dead man, Stellara steeled herself and did as Tanar bid. Little by little, patch by patch, Tanar applied pitch to his face and Stellara placed the hair upon it until presently only the eyes and nose of the Sarian remained exposed. The expression of the former were altered by increasing the size and bushiness of the eyebrows with

shreds of Bulf's beard that had been left over, and then Tanar smeared his nose with some of Bulf's blood, for many of the Korsars had large, red noses. Then Stellara stood away and surveyed him critically. "Your own mother would not know you," she said.

"Do you think I can pass as a Korsar?" he asked.

"No one will suspect, unless they question you closely as you leave the palace."

"We are going together," said Tanar.

"But how?" asked Stellara.

"I have been thinking of another plan," he said. "I noticed when I was living in the barracks that sailors going toward the river had no difficulty in passing through the gate leaving the palace. In fact, it is always much easier to leave the palace than to enter it. On many occasions I have heard them say merely that they were going to their ships. We can do the same."

"Do I look like a Korsar sailor?" demanded Stellara.

"You will when I get through with you," said Tanar, with a grin.

"What do you mean?"

"There is Korsar clothing here," said Tanar; "enough to outfit a dozen and there is still plenty of hair on Bulf's head."

The girl drew back with a shudder. "Oh, Tanar! You cannot mean that."

"What other way is there?" he demanded. "If we can escape together is it not worth any price that we might have to pay?"

"You are right," she said. "I will do it." When Tanar completed his work upon her, Stellara had been transformed into a bearded Korsar, but the best that he could do in the way of disguise failed to entirely hide the contours of her hips and breasts.

“I am afraid they will suspect,” he said. “Your figure is too feminine for shorts and a shirt to hide it.”

“Wait,” exclaimed Stellara. “Sometimes the sailors, when they are going on long voyages, wear cloaks, which they use to sleep in if the nights are cool. Let us see if we can find such a one here.”

“Yes, I saw one,” replied Tanar, and crossing the room he returned with a cloak made of wide striped goods.

“That will give you greater height,” he said. But when they draped it about her, her hips were still too much in evidence.

“Build out my shoulders,” suggested Stellara, and with scarfs and handkerchiefs the Sarian built the girl’s shoulders out so that the cloak hung straight and she resembled a short, stocky man, more than a slender, well-formed girl.

“Now we are ready,” said the Sarian. Stellara pointed to the body of Bulf.

“We cannot leave that lying there,” she said. “Someone may come to this room and discover it and when they do every man in the palace — yes, even in the entire city — will be arrested and questioned.”

Tanar looked about the room and then he seized the corpse of Bulf and dragged it into a far corner, after which he piled bundles of hides and baskets upon it until it was entirely concealed, and over the blood stains upon the floor he dragged other bales and baskets until all signs of the duel had been erased or hidden.

“And now,” he said, “is as good a time as another to put our disguises to the test.” Together they approached the door. “You know the least frequented passages to the garden,” said Tanar. “Let us make our way from the palace through the garden to the gate that gave us escape before.”

“Then follow me,” replied Stellara, as Tanar opened the door and

the two stepped out into the corridor beyond. It was empty. Tanar closed the door behind him, and Stellara led the way down the passage.

They had proceeded but a short distance when they heard a man's voice in an apartment to the left.

"Where is she?" he demanded.

"I do not know," replied a woman's voice. "She was here but a moment ago and Bulf was with her."

"Find them and lose no time about it," commanded the man, sternly. And he stepped from the apartment just as Tanar and Stellara were approaching.

It was The Cid. Stellara's heart stopped beating as the Korsar ruler looked into the faces of Tanar and herself.

"Who are you?" demanded The Cid.

"We are sailors," said Tanar, quickly, before Stellara could reply.

"What are you doing here in my palace?" demanded the Korsar ruler.

"We were sent here with packages to the storeroom," replied Tanar, "and we are but now returning to our ship."

"Well, be quick about it. I do not like your looks," growled The Cid as he stamped off down the corridor ahead of them.

Tanar saw Stellara sway and he stepped to her side and supported her, but she quickly gained possession of herself, and an instant later turned to the right and led Tanar through a doorway into the garden.

"God!" whispered the man, as they walked side by side after quitting the building. "If The Cid did not know you, then your disguise must be perfect."

Stellara shook her head for even as yet she could not control her

voice to speak, following the terror induced by her encounter with The Cid.

There were a number of men and women in the garden close to the palace. Some of these scrutinized them casually, but they passed by in safety and a moment later the gravel walk they were following wound through dense shrubbery that hid them from view and then they were at the doorway in the garden wall.

Again fortune favored them here and they passed out into the barracks yards without being noticed.

Electing to try the main gate because of the greater number of people who passed to and fro through it, Tanar turned to the right, passed along the full length of the barracks past a dozen men and approached the gate with Stellara at his side.

They were almost through when a stupid looking Korsar soldier stopped them. "Who are you," he demanded, "and what business takes you from the palace?"

"We are sailors," replied Tanar. "We are going to our ship."

"What were you doing in the palace?" demanded the man.

"We took packages there from the captain of the ship to The Cid's storeroom," explained the Sarian.

"I do not like the looks of you," said the man. "I have never seen either one of you before."

"We have been away upon a long cruise," replied Tanar.

"Wait here until the captain of the gate returns," said the man. "He will wish to question you."

The Sarian's heart sank. "If we are late in returning to our ship, we shall be punished," said he.

"That is nothing to me," replied the soldier.

Stellara reached inside her cloak and beneath the man's shorts that

covered her own apparel and searched until she found a pouch that was attached to her girdle. From this she drew something which she slipped into Tanar's hands. He understood immediately, and stepping close to the soldier he pressed two pieces of gold into the fellow's palm. "It will go very hard with us if we are late," he said.

The man felt the cool gold within his palm. "Very well," he said, gruffly, "go on about your business, and be quick about it."

Without waiting for a second invitation Tanar and Stellara merged with the crowd upon the Korsar street. Nor did either speak, and it is possible that Stellara did not even breathe until they had left the palace gate well behind.

"And where now?" she asked at last.

"We are going to sea," replied the man.

"In a Korsar ship?" she demanded.

"In a Korsar boat," he replied. "We are going fishing."

Along the banks of the river were moored many craft, but when Tanar saw how many men were on or around them he realized that the plan he had chosen, which contemplated stealing a fishing boat, most probably would end disastrously, and he explained his doubts to Stellara.

"We could never do it," she said. "Stealing a boat is considered the most heinous crime that one can commit in Korsar, and if the owner of a boat is not aboard it you may rest assured that some of his friends are watching it for him, even though there is little likelihood that anyone will attempt to steal it since the penalty is death."

Tanar shook his head. "Then we shall have to risk passing through the entire city of Korsar," he said, "and going out into the open country without any reasonable excuse in the event that we are questioned."

"We might buy a boat," suggested Stellara.

“I have no money,” said Tanar.

“I have,” replied the girl. “The Cid has always kept me well supplied with gold.” Once more she reached into her pouch and drew forth a handful of gold pieces. “Here,” she said, “take these. If they are not enough you can ask me for more, but I think that you can buy a boat for half that sum.”

Questioning the first man that he approached at the river side, Tanar learned that there was a small fishing boat for sale a short way down the river, and it was not long before they had found its owner and consummated the purchase.

As they pushed off into the current and floated down stream, Tanar became conscious of a sudden conviction that his escape from Korsar had been effected too easily; that there must be something wrong, that either he was dreaming or else disaster and recapture lay just ahead.

Borne down toward the sea by the slow current of the river, Tanar wielded a single oar, paddleswise from the stern, to keep the boat out in the channel and its bow in the right direction, for he did not wish to make sail under the eyes of Korsar sailors and fishermen, as he was well aware that he could not do so without attracting attention by his bungling to his evident inexperience and thus casting suspicion upon them.

Slowly the boat drew away from the city and from the Korsar raiders anchored in mid-stream and then, at last, he felt that it would be safe to hoist the sail and take advantage of the land breeze that was blowing.

With Stellara’s assistance the canvas was spread and as it bellied to the wind the craft bore forward with accelerated speed, and then behind them they heard shouts and, turning, saw three boats speeding toward them.

Across the waters came commands for them to lay to.

The pursuing boats, which had set out under sail and had already acquired considerable momentum, appeared to be rapidly overhauling the smaller craft. But presently, as the speed of the latter increased, the distance between them seemed not to vary.

The shouts of the pursuers had attracted the attention of the sailors on board the anchored raiders, and presently a heavy shot struck the water just off their starboard bow.

Tanar shook his head. "That is too close," he said. "I had better come about."

"Why?" demanded Stellara.

"I do not mind risking capture," he said, "because in that event no harm will befall you when they discover your identity, but I cannot risk the cannon shots for if one of them strikes us, you will be killed."

"Do not come about," cried the girl. "I would rather die here with you than be captured, for capture would mean death for you and then I should not care to live. Keep on, Tanar, we may outdistance them yet. And as for their cannon shots, a small, moving boat like this is a difficult target and their marksmanship is none too good."

Again the cannon boomed and this time the ball passed over them and struck the water just beyond.

"They are getting our range," said Tanar.

The girl moved close to his side, where he sat by the tiller. "Put your arm around me, Tanar," she said. "If we must die, let us die together."

The Sarian encircled her with his free arm and drew her close to him, and an instant later there was a terrific explosion from the direction of the raider that had been firing on them. Turning quickly

toward the ship, they saw what had happened — an overcharged cannon had exploded.

“They were too anxious,” said Tanar.

It was some time before another shot was fired and this one fell far astern, but the pursuing boats were clinging tenaciously to their wake.

“They are not gaining,” said Stellara.

“No,” said Tanar, “and neither are we.”

“But I think we shall after we reach the open sea,” said the girl. “We shall get more wind there and this boat is lighter and speedier than theirs. Fate smiled upon us when it led us to this boat rather than to a larger one.” As they approached the sea their pursuers, evidently fearing precisely what Stellara had suggested, opened fire upon them with harquebuses and pistols. Occasionally a missile would come dangerously close, but the range was just a little too great for their primitive weapons and poor powder.

On they sailed out into the open Korsar Az, which stretched onward and upward into the concealing mist of the distance. Upon their left the sea inward forming a great bay, while almost directly ahead of them, though at so great a distance that it was barely discernible, rose the dim outlines of a headland, and toward this Tanar held his course.

The chase had settled down into a dogged test of endurance. It was evident that the Korsars had no intention of giving up their prey even though the pursuit led to the opposite shore of the Korsar Az, and it was equally evident that Tanar entertained no thought of surrender.

On and on they sped, the pursued and the pursuers. Slowly the headland took shape before them, and later a great forest was visible to the left of it — a forest that ran down almost to the sea.

“You are making for land?” asked Stellara.

“Yes,” replied the Sarian. “We have neither food nor water and if

we had I am not sufficiently a sailor to risk navigating this craft across the Korsar Az.”

“But if we take to the land, they will be able to trail us,” said the girl.

“You forgot the trees, Stellara,” the man reminded her.

“Yes, the trees,” she cried. “I had forgotten. If we can reach the trees I believe that we shall be safe.”

As they approached the shore inside the headland, they saw great combing rollers breaking among the rocks and the angry, sullen boom of the sea came back to their ears.

“No boat can live in that,” said Stellara.

Tanar glanced up and down the shoreline as far as he could see and then he turned and let his eyes rest sadly upon his companion.

“It looks hopeless,” he said. “If we had time to make the search we might find a safer landing place, but within sight of us one place seems to be as good as another.”

“Or as bad,” said Stellara.

“It cannot be helped,” said the Sarian. “To beat back now around that promontory in an attempt to gain the open sea again, would so delay us that we should be overtaken and captured. We must take our chances in the surf, or turn about and give up.”

Behind them their pursuers had come about and were waiting, rising and falling upon the great billows.

“They think that they have use,” said Stellara. “They believe that we shall tack here and make a run for the open sea around the end of that promontory, and they are ready to head us off.”

Tanar held the boat’s nose straight for the shoreline. Beyond the angry surf he could see a sandy beach, but between lay a barrier of rock upon which the waves broke, hurling their spume far into the air.

“Look!” exclaimed Stellara, as the boat raced toward the smother of boiling water. “Look! There! Right ahead! There may be a way yet!”

“I have been watching that place,” said Tanar. “I have been holding her straight for it, and if it is a break in the rocky wall we shall soon know it, and if it is not —”

The Sarian glanced back in the direction of the Korsars’ boats and saw that they were again in pursuit, for by this time it must have become evident to them that their quarry was throwing itself upon the rocky shoreline in desperation rather than to risk capture by turning again toward the open sea.

Every inch of sail was spread upon the little craft and the taut, bellowing canvas strained upon the cordage until it hummed, as the boat sped straight for the rocks dead ahead.

Tanar and Stellara crouched in the stem, the man’s left arm pressing the girl protectingly to his side. With grim fascination they watched the bowsprit rise and fall as it rushed straight toward what seemed must be inevitable disaster.

They were there! The sea lifted them high in the air and launched them forward upon the rocks. To the right a jagged finger of granite broke through the smother of spume. To the left the sleek, water-worn side of a huge boulder revealed itself for an instant as they sped past. The boat grated and rasped upon a sunken rock, slid over and raced toward the sandy beach.

Tanar whipped out his dirk and slashed the halyards, bringing the sail down as the boat’s keel touched the sand. Then, seizing Stellara in his arms, he leaped into the shallow water and hastened up the shore.

Pausing, they looked back toward the pursuing Korsars and to their astonishment saw that all three boats were making swiftly toward the rocky shore.

“They dare not go back without us,” said Stellara, “or they would never risk that surf.”

“The Cid must have guessed our identity, then, when a search failed to reveal you,” said Tanar.

“It may also be that they discovered your absence from the dungeon, and coupling this with the fact that I, too, was missing, someone guessed the identity of the two sailors who sought to pass through the gate and who paid gold for a small boat at the river,” suggested Stellara.

“There goes one of them on the rocks,” cried Tanar, as the leading boat disappeared in a smother of water.

The second boat shared the same fate as its predecessor, but the third rode through the same opening that had carried Tanar and Stellara to the safety of the beach and as it did the two fugitives turned and ran toward the forest.

Behind them raced a dozen Korsars and amidst the crack of pistols and harquebuses Tanar and Stellara disappeared within the dark shadows of the primeval forest.

The story of their long and arduous journey through unknown lands to the kingdom of Sari would be replete with interest, excitement and adventure, but it is no part of this story.

It is enough to say that they arrived at Sari shortly before Ja and Gura made their appearance, the latter having been delayed by adventures that had almost cost them their lives.

The people of Sari welcomed the Amiocapian mate that the son of Ghak had brought back to his own country. And Gura they accepted, too, because she had befriended Tanar, though the young men accepted her for herself and many were the trophies that were laid before the hut of the beautiful Himean maiden. But she repulsed them all for in her heart she held a secret love that she had never divulged,

but which, perhaps, Stellara had guessed and which may have accounted for the tender solicitude which the Amiocapian maid revealed for her Himean sister.

CONCLUSION

As Perry neared the end of the story of Tanar of Pellucidar, the sending became weaker and weaker until it died out entirely, and Jason Gridley could hear no more.

He turned to me. "I think Perry had something more to say," he said. "He was trying to tell us something. He was trying to ask something."

"Jason," I said, reproachfully, "didn't you tell me that the story of the inner world is perfectly ridiculous; that there could be no such place peopled by strange reptiles and men of the stone age? Didn't you insist that there is no Emperor of Pellucidar?"

"Tut-tut," he said. "I apologize. I am sorry. But that is past. The question now is what can we do."

"About what?" I asked.

"Do you not realize that David Innes lies a prisoner in a dark dungeon beneath the palace of The Cid of Korsar?" he demanded with more excitement than I have ever known Jason Gridley to exhibit.

"Well, what of it?" I demanded. "I am sorry, of course; but what in the world can we do to help him?"

"We can do a lot," said Jason Gridley, determinedly.

I must confess that as I looked at him I felt considerable solicitude for the state of his mind for he was evidently laboring under great excitement.

"Think of it!" he cried. "Think of that poor devil buried there in utter darkness, silence, solitude — and with those snakes! God!" he shuddered. "Snakes crawling all over him, winding about his arms and

his legs and his body, creeping across his face as he sleeps, and nothing else to break the monotony — no human voice, the song of no bird, no ray of sunlight. Something must be done. He must be saved.”

“But who is going to do it?” I asked.

“I am!” replied Jason Gridley.

BOOK IV
TARZAN AT THE EARTH'S CORE

FOREWORD

Pellucidar, as every schoolboy knows, is a world within a world, lying, as it does, upon the inner surface of the hollow sphere, which is the Earth.

It was discovered by David Innes and Abner Perry upon the occasion when they made the trial trip upon the mechanical prospector invented by Perry, wherewith they hoped to locate new beds of anthracite coal. Owing, however, to their inability to deflect the nose of the prospector, after it had started downward into the Earth's crust, they bored straight through for five hundred miles, and upon the third day, when Perry was already unconscious owing to the consumption of their stock of oxygen, and David was fast losing consciousness, the nose of the prospector broke through the crust of the inner world and the cabin was filled with fresh air.

In the years that have intervened, weird adventures have befallen these two explorers. Perry has never returned to the outer crust, and Innes but once — upon that occasion when he made the difficult and dangerous return trip in the prospector for the purpose of bringing back to the empire he had founded in the inner world the means to bestow upon his primitive people of the stone age the civilization of the twentieth century.

But what with battles with primitive men and still more primitive beasts and reptiles, the advance of the empire of Pellucidar toward civilization has been small; and in so far as the great area of the inner world is concerned, or the countless millions of its teeming life of

another age than ours, David Innes and Abner Perry might never have existed.

When one considers that these land and water areas upon the surface of Pellucidar are in opposite relationship to the same areas upon the outer crust, some slight conception of the vast extent of this mighty world within a world may be dreamed.

The land area of the outer world comprises some fifty-three million square miles, or one-quarter of the total area of the earth's surface; while within Pellucidar three-quarters of the surface is land, so that jungle, mountain, forest and plain stretch interminably over 124,110,000 square miles; nor are the oceans with their area of 41,370,000 square miles of any mean or niggardly extent.

Thus, considering the land area only, we have the strange anomaly of a larger world within a smaller one, but then Pellucidar is a world of deviation from what we of the outer crust have come to accept as unalterable laws of nature.

In the exact center of the earth hangs Pellucidar's sun, a tiny orb compared with ours, but sufficient to illuminate Pellucidar and flood her teeming jungles with warmth and life-giving rays. Her sun hanging thus perpetually at zenith, there is no night upon Pellucidar, but always an endless eternity of noon.

There being no stars and no apparent movement of the sun, Pellucidar has no points of compass; nor has she any horizon since her surface curves always upward in all directions from the observer, so that far above one's line of vision, plain or sea or distant mountain range go onward and upward until lost in the haze of the distance. And again, in a world where there is no sun, no stars and no moon, such as we know, there can be no such thing as time, as we know it. And so, in Pellucidar, we have a timeless world which must necessarily be free

from those pests who are constantly calling our attention to “the busy little bee” and to the fact that “time is money.” While time may be “the soul of this world” and the “essence of contracts,” in the beatific existence of Pellucidar it is nothing and less than nothing.

Thrice in the past have we of the outer world received communication from Pellucidar. We know that Perry’s first great gift of civilization to the stone age was gunpowder. We know that he followed this with repeating rifles, small ships of war upon which were mounted guns of no great caliber, and finally we know that he perfected a radio.

Knowing Perry as something of an empiric, we were not surprised to learn that his radio could not be tuned in upon any known wave or wave length of the outer world, and it remained for young Jason Gridley of Tarzana, experimenting with his newly discovered Gridley Wave, to pick up the first message from Pellucidar.

The last word that we received from Perry before his messages faltered and died out was to the effect that David Innes, first Emperor of Pellucidar, was languishing in a dark dungeon in the land of the Korsars, far across continent and ocean from his beloved land of Sari, which lies upon a great plateau not far inland from the Lural Az.

1.

THE O-220

Tarzan of the Apes paused to listen and to sniff the air. Had you been there you could not have heard what he heard, or had you you could not have interpreted it. You could have smelled nothing but the mustiness of decaying vegetation, which blended with the aroma of growing things.

The sounds that Tarzan heard came from a great distance and were faint even to his ears; nor at first could he definitely ascribe them to their true source, though he conceived the impression that they heralded the coming of a party of men.

Buto the rhinoceros, Tantor the elephant or Numa the lion might come and go through the forest without arousing more than the indifferent interest of the Lord of the Jungle, but when man came Tarzan investigated, for man alone of all creatures brings change and dissension and strife wheresoever he first sets foot.

Reared to manhood among the great apes without knowledge of the existence of any other creatures like himself, Tarzan had since learned to anticipate with concern each fresh invasion of his jungle by these two-footed harbingers of strife. Among many races of men he had found friends, but this did not prevent him from questioning the purposes and the motives of whosoever entered his domain. And so today he moved silently through the middle terrace of his leafy way in the direction of the sounds that he had heard.

As the distance closed between him and those he went to investigate, his keen ears cataloged the sound of padding, naked feet and

the song of native carriers as they swung along beneath their heavy burdens. And then to his nostrils came the scent spoor of black men and with it, faintly, the suggestion of another scent, and Tarzan knew that a white man was on safari before the head of the column came in view along the wide, well marked game trail, above which the Lord of the Jungle waited.

Near the head of the column marched a young white man, and when Tarzan's eyes had rested upon him for a moment as he swung along the trail they impressed their stamp of approval of the stranger within the ape-man's brain, for in common with many savage beasts and primitive men Tarzan possessed an uncanny instinct in judging aright the characters of strangers whom he met.

Turning about, Tarzan moved swiftly and silently through the trees until he was some little distance ahead of the marching safari, then he dropped down into the trail and awaited its coming.

Rounding a curve in the trail the leading askari came in sight of him and when they saw him they halted and commenced to jabber excitedly, for these were men recruited in another district — men who did not know Tarzan of the Apes by sight.

"I am Tarzan," announced the ape-man. "What do you in Tarzan's country?"

Immediately the young man, who had halted abreast of his askari, advanced toward the ape-man. There was a smile upon his eager face. "You are Lord Greystoke?" he asked.

"Here, I am Tarzan of the Apes," replied the foster son of Kala.

"Then luck is certainly with me," said the young man, "for I have come all the way from Southern California to find you."

"Who are you," demanded the ape-man, "and what do you want of Tarzan of the Apes?"

“My name is Jason Gridley,” replied the other. “And what I have come to talk to you about will make a long story. I hope that you can find the time to accompany me to our next camp and the patience to listen to me there until I have explained my mission.”

Tarzan nodded. “In the jungle,” he said, “we are not often pressed for time. Where do you intend making camp?”

“The guide that I obtained in the last village complained of being ill and turned back an hour ago, and as none of my own men is familiar with this country we do not know whether there is a suitable camp-site within one mile or ten.”

“There is one within half a mile,” replied Tarzan, “and with good water.”

“Good,” said Gridley; and the safari resumed its way, the porters laughing and singing at the prospect of an early camp.

It was not until Jason and Tarzan were enjoying their coffee that evening that the ape-man reverted to the subject of the American’s visit.

“And now,” he said, “what has brought you all the way from Southern California to the heart of Africa?”

Gridley smiled. “Now that I am actually here,” he said, “and face to face with you, I am suddenly confronted with the conviction that after you have heard my story it is going to be difficult to convince you that I am not crazy, and yet in my own mind I am so thoroughly convinced of the truth of what I am going to tell you that I have already invested a considerable amount of money and time to place my plan before you for the purpose of enlisting your personal and financial support, and I am ready and willing to invest still more money and all of my time. Unfortunately I cannot wholly finance the expedition that I have in mind from my personal resources, but that is not primarily

my reason for coming to you. Doubtless I could have raised the necessary money elsewhere, but I believe that you are peculiarly fitted to lead such a venture as I have in mind."

"Whatever the expedition may be that you are contemplating," said Tarzan, "the potential profits must be great indeed if you are willing to risk so much of your own money."

"On the contrary," replied Gridley, "there will be no financial profit for anyone concerned in so far as I now know."

"And you are an American?" asked Tarzan, smiling.

"We are not all money mad," replied Gridley.

"Then what is the incentive? Explain the whole proposition to me."

"Have you ever heard of the theory that the earth is a hollow sphere, containing a habitable world within its interior?"

"The theory that has been definitely refuted by scientific investigation," replied the ape-man.

"But has it been refuted satisfactorily?" asked Gridley.

"To the satisfaction of the scientists," replied Tarzan.

"And to my satisfaction, too," replied the American, "until I recently received a message direct from the inner world."

"You surprise me," said the ape-man.

"And I, too, was surprised, but the fact remains that I have been in radio communication with Abner Perry in the inner world of Pelucidar and I have brought a copy of that message with me and also an affidavit of its authenticity from a man with whose name you are familiar and who was with me when I received the message; in fact, he was listening in at the same time with me. Here they are."

From a portfolio he took a letter which he handed to Tarzan and a bulky manuscript bound in board covers.

"I shall not take the time to read you all of the story of Tanar of

Pellucidar," said Gridley, "because there is a great deal in it that is not essential to the exposition of my plan."

"As you will," said Tarzan. "I am listening."

For half an hour Jason Gridley read excerpts from the manuscript before him. "This," he said, when he had completed the reading, "is what convinced me of the existence of Pellucidar, and it is the unfortunate situation of David Innes that impelled me to come to you with the proposal that we undertake an expedition whose first purpose shall be to rescue him from the dungeon of the Korsars."

"And how do you think this may be done?" asked the ape-man. "Are you convinced of the correctness of Innes's theory that there is an entrance to the inner world at each pole?"

"I am free to confess that I do not know what to believe," replied the American. "But after I received this message from Perry I commenced to investigate and I discovered that the theory of an inhabitable world at the center of the earth with openings leading into it at the north and south poles is no new one and that there is much evidence to support it. I found a very complete exposition of the theory in a book written about 1830 and in another work of more recent time. Therein I found what seemed to be a reasonable explanation of many well known phenomena that have not been satisfactorily explained by any hypothesis endorsed by science."

"What, for example?" asked Tarzan.

"Well, for example, warm winds and warm ocean currents coming from the north and encountered and reported by practically all arctic explorers; the presence of the limbs and branches of trees with green foliage upon them floating southward from the far north, far above the latitude where any such trees are found upon the outer crust; then there is the phenomenon of the northern lights, which in the light

of David Innes's theory may easily be explained as rays of light from the central sun of the inner world, breaking occasionally through the fog and cloud banks above the polar opening. Again there is the pollen, which often thickly covers the snow and ice in portions of the polar regions. This pollen could not come from elsewhere than the inner world. And in addition to all this is the insistence of the far northern tribes of Eskimos that their forefathers came from a country to the north."

"Did not Amundson and Ellsworth in the Norge expedition definitely disprove the theory of a north polar opening in the earth's crust, and have not airplane flights been made over a considerable portion of the hitherto unexplored regions near the pole?" demanded the ape-man.

"The answer to that is that the polar opening is so large that a ship, a dirigible or an airplane could dip down over the edge into it a short distance and return without ever being aware of the fact, but the most tenable theory is that in most instances explorers have merely followed around the outer rim of the orifice, which would largely explain the peculiar and mystifying action of compasses and other scientific instruments at points near the so-called north pole — matters which have greatly puzzled all arctic explorers."

"You are convinced then that there is not only an inner world but that there is an entrance to it at the north pole?" asked Tarzan.

"I am convinced that there is an inner world, but I am not convinced of the existence of a polar opening," replied Gridley. "I can only say that I believe there is sufficient evidence to warrant the organization of an expedition such as I have suggested."

"Assuming that a polar opening into an inner world exists, by just

what means do you purpose accomplishing the discovery and exploration of it?"

"The most practical means of transportation that exists today for carrying out my plan would be a specially constructed rigid airship, built along the lines of the modern Zeppelin. Such a ship, using helium gas, would show a higher factor of safety than any other means of transportation at our disposal. I have given the matter considerable thought and I feel sure that if there is such a polar opening, the obstacles that would confront us in an attempt to enter the inner world would be far less than those encountered by the Norge in its famous trip across the pole to Alaska, for there is no question in my mind but that it made a wide detour in following the rim of the polar orifice and covered a far greater distance than we shall have to cover to reach a reasonably safe anchorage below the cold, polar sea that David Innes discovered north of the land of the Korsars before he was finally taken prisoner by them.

"The greatest risk that we would have to face would be a possible inability to return to the outer crust, owing to the depletion of our helium gas that might be made necessary by the maneuvering of the ship. But that is only the same chance of life or death that every explorer and scientific investigator must be willing to assume in the prosecution of his labors. If it were but possible to build a hull sufficiently light, and at the same time sufficiently strong, to withstand atmospheric pressure, we could dispense with both the dangerous hydrogen gas and the rare and expensive helium gas and have the assurance of the utmost safety and maximum of buoyancy in a ship supported entirely by vacuum tanks."

"Perhaps even that is possible," said Tarzan, who was now evincing increasing interest in Gridley's proposition.

The American shook his head. "It may be possible some day," he said, "but not at present with any known material. Any receptacle having sufficient strength to withstand the atmospheric pressure upon a vacuum would have a weight far too great for the vacuum to lift."

"Perhaps," said Tarzan, "and, again, perhaps not."

"What do you mean?" inquired Gridley.

"What you have just said," replied Tarzan, "reminds me of something that a young friend of mine recently told me. Erich von Harben is something of a scientist and explorer himself, and the last time that I saw him he had just returned from a second expedition into the Wiramwazi Mountains, where he told me that he had discovered a lake-dwelling tribe using canoes made of a metal that was apparently as light as cork and stronger than steel. He brought some samples of the metal back with him, and at the time I last saw him he was conducting some experiments in a little laboratory he has rigged up at his father's mission."

"Where is this man?" demanded Gridley.

"Dr. von Harben's mission is in the Urambi country," replied the ape-man, "about four marches west of where we now are."

Far into the night the two men discussed plans for the project, for Tarzan was now thoroughly interested, and the next day they turned back toward the Urambi country and von Harben's mission, where they arrived on the fourth day and were greeted by Dr. von Harben and his son, Erich, as well as by the latter's wife, the beautiful Favonia of Castrum Mare.

It is not my intention to weary you with a recital of the details of the organization and equipment of the Pellucidarian expedition, although that portion of it which relates to the search for and discovery of the native mine containing the remarkable metal now known as

Harbenite, filled as it was with adventure and excitement, is well worth a volume by itself.

While Tarzan and Erich von Harben were locating the mine and transporting the metal to the seacoast, Jason Gridley was in Friedrichshafen in consultation with the engineers of the company he had chosen to construct the specially designed airship in which the attempt was to be made to reach the inner world.

Exhaustive tests were made of the samples of Harbenite brought to Friedrichshafen by Jason Gridley. Plans were drawn, and by the time the shipment of the ore arrived everything was in readiness to commence immediate construction, which was carried on secretly. And six months later, when the O-220, as it was officially known, was ready to take the air, it was generally considered to be nothing more than a new design of the ordinary type of rigid airship, destined to be used as a common carrier upon one of the already numerous commercial airways of Europe.

The great cigar-shaped hull of the O-220 was 997 feet in length and 150 feet in diameter. The interior of the hull was divided into six large, air-tight compartments, three of which, running the full length of the ship, were above the medial line and three below. Inside the hull and running along each side of the ship, between the upper and lower vacuum tanks, were long corridors in which were located the engines, motors and pumps, in addition to supplies of gasoline and oil.

The internal location of the engine room was made possible by the elimination of fire risk, which is an ever-present source of danger in airships which depend for their lifting power upon hydrogen gas, as well as to the absolutely fireproof construction of the O-220; every part of which, with the exception of a few cabin fittings and furniture,

was of Harbenite, this metal being used throughout except for certain bushings and bearings in motors, generators and propellers.

Connecting the port and starboard engine and fuel corridors were two transverse corridors, one forward and one aft, while bisecting these transverse corridors were two climbing shafts extending from the bottom of the ship to the top.

The upper end of the forward climbing shaft terminated in a small gun and observation cabin at the top of the ship, along which was a narrow walkingway extending from the forward cabin to a small turret near the tail of the ship, where provision had been made for fixing a machine gun.

The main cabin, running along the keel of the ship, was an integral part of the hull, and because of this entirely rigid construction, which eliminated the necessity for cabins suspended below the hull, the O-220 was equipped with landing gear in the form of six large, heavily tired wheels projecting below the bottom of the main cabin. In the extreme stern of the keel cabin a small scout monoplane was carried in such a way that it could be lowered through the bottom of the ship and launched while the O-220 was in flight.

Eight air-cooled motors drove as many propellers, which were arranged in pairs upon either side of the ship and staggered in such a manner that the air from the forward propellers would not interfere with those behind.

The engines, developing 5600 horsepower, were capable of driving the ship at a speed of 105 miles per hour.

In the O-220 the ordinary axial wire, which passes the whole length of the ship through the center, consisted of a tubular shaft of Harbenite from which smaller tubular braces radiated, like the spokes

of a wheel, to the tubular girders, to which the Harbenite plates of the outer envelope were welded.

Owing to the extreme lightness of Harbenite, the total weight of the ship was 75 tons, while the total lift of its vacuum tanks was 225 tons.

For purposes of maneuvering the ship and to facilitate landing, each of the vacuum tanks was equipped with a bank of eight air valves operated from the control cabin at the forward end of the keel; while six pumps, three in the starboard and three in the port engine corridors, were designed to expel the air from the tanks when it became necessary to renew the vacuum. Special rudders and elevators were also operated from the forward control cabin as well as from an auxiliary position aft in the port engine corridor, in the event that the control cabin steering gear should break down.

In the main keel cabin were located the quarters for the officers and crew, gun and ammunition room, provision room, galley, additional gasoline and oil storage tanks, and water tanks, the latter so constructed that the contents of any of them might be emptied instantaneously in case of an emergency, while a proportion of the gasoline and oil tanks were slip tanks that might be slipped through the bottom of the ship in cases of extreme emergency when it was necessary instantaneously to reduce the weight of the load.

This, then, briefly, was the great, rigid airship in which Jason Gridley and Tarzan of the Apes hoped to discover the north polar entrance to the inner world and rescue David Innes, Emperor of Pellucidar, from the dungeons of the Korsars.

2.

PELLUCIDAR

Just before daybreak of a clear June morning, the O-220 moved slowly from its hangar under its own power. Fully loaded and equipped, it was to make its test flight under load conditions identical with those which would obtain when it set forth upon its long journey. The three lower tanks were still filled with air and she carried an excess of water ballast sufficient to overcome her equilibrium, so that while she moved lightly over the ground she moved with entire safety and could be maneuvered almost as handily as an automobile.

As she came into the open her pumps commenced to expel the air from the three lower tanks, and at the same time a portion of her excess water ballast was slowly discharged, and almost immediately the huge ship rose slowly and gracefully from the ground.

The entire personnel of the ship's company during the test flight was the same that had been selected for the expedition. Zuppner, who had been chosen as captain, had been in charge of the construction of the ship and had a considerable part in its designing. There were two mates, von Horst and Dorf, who had been officers in the Imperial air forces, as also had the navigator, Lieutenant Hines. In addition to these there were twelve engineers and eight mechanics, a negro cook and two Filipino cabin-boys.

Tarzan was commander of the expedition, with Jason Gridley as his lieutenant, while the fighting men of the ship consisted of Muviro and nine of his Waziri warriors.

As the ship rose gracefully above the city, Zuppner, who was at the controls, could scarce restrain his enthusiasm.

"The sweetest thing I ever saw!" he exclaimed. "She responds to the lightest touch."

"I am not surprised at that," said Hines; "I knew she'd do it. Why we've got twice the crew we need to handle her."

"There you go again, Lieutenant," said Tarzan, laughing; "but do not think that my insistence upon a large crew was based upon any lack of confidence in the ship. We are going into a strange world. We may be gone a long time. If we reach our destination we shall have fighting, as each of you men who volunteered has been informed many times, so that while we may have twice as many men as we need for the trip in, we may yet find ourselves short handed on the return journey, for not all of us will return."

"I suppose you are right," said Hines; "but with the feel of this ship permeating me and the quiet peacefulness of the scene below, danger and death seem remote."

"I hope they are," returned Tarzan, "and I hope that we shall return with every man that goes out with us, but I believe in being prepared and to that end Gridley and I have been studying navigation and we want you to give us a chance at some practical experience before we reach our destination."

Zuppner laughed. "They have you marked already, Hines," he said.

The Lieutenant grinned. "I'll teach them all I know," he said; "but I'll bet the best dinner that can be served in Berlin that if this ship returns I'll still be her navigator."

"That is a case of heads-I-win, tails-you-lose," said Gridley.

"And to return to the subject of preparedness," said Tarzan, "I am going to ask you to let my Waziri help the mechanics and engineers.

They are highly intelligent men, quick to learn, and if some calamity should overtake us we cannot have too many men familiar with the engines and other machinery of the ship."

"You are right," said Zuppner, "and I shall see that it is done."

The great, shining ship sailed majestically north; Ravensburg fell astern and half an hour later the somber gray ribbon of the Danube lay below them.

The longer they were in the air the more enthusiastic Zuppner became. "I had every confidence in the successful outcome of the trial flight," he said; "but I can assure you that I did not look for such perfection as I find in this ship. It marks a new era in aeronautics, and I am convinced that long before we cover the four hundred miles to Hamburg that we shall have established the entire airworthiness of the O-220 to the entire satisfaction of each of us."

"To Hamburg and return to Friedrichshafen was to have been the route of the trial trip," said Tarzan, "but why turn back at Hamburg?"

The others turned questioning eyes upon him as the purport of his query sank home.

"Yes, why?" demanded Gridley.

Zuppner shrugged his shoulders. "We are fully equipped and provisioned," he said.

"Then why waste eight hundred miles in returning to Friedrichshafen?" demanded Hines.

"If you are all agreeable we shall continue on toward the north," said Tarzan. And so it was that the trial trip of the O-220 became an actual start upon its long journey toward the interior of the earth, and the secrecy that was desired for the expedition was insured.

The plan had been to follow the Tenth Meridian east of Greenwich north to the pole. But to avoid attracting unnecessary notice a slight

deviation from this course was found desirable, and the ship passed to the west of Hamburg and out across the waters of the North Sea, and thus due north, passing to the west of Spitzbergen and out across the frozen polar wastes.

Maintaining an average cruising speed of about 75 miles per hour, the O-220 reached the vicinity of the north pole about midnight of the second day, and excitement ran high when Hines announced that in accordance with his calculation they should be directly over the pole. At Tarzan's suggestion the ship circled slowly at an altitude of a few hundred feet above the rough, snow-covered ice.

"We ought to be able to recognize it by the Italian flags," said Zuppner, with a smile. But if any reminders of the passage of the Norge remained below them, they were effectually hidden by the mantle of many snows.

The ship made a single circle above the desolate ice pack before she took up her southerly course along the 170th East Meridian.

From the moment that the ship struck south from the pole Jason Gridley remained constantly with Hines and Zuppner eagerly and anxiously watching the instruments, or gazing down upon the bleak landscape ahead. It was Gridley's belief that the north polar opening lay in the vicinity of 85 north latitude and 170 east longitude. Before him were compass, aneroids, bubble statoscope, air speed indicator, inclinometers, rise and fall indicator, bearing plate, clock and thermometers; but the instrument that commanded his closest attention was the compass, for Jason Gridley held a theory and upon the correctness of it depended their success in finding the north polar opening.

For five hours the ship flew steadily toward the south, when she developed an apparent tendency to fall off toward the west.

“Hold her steady, Captain,” cautioned Gridley, “for if I am correct we are now going over the lip of the polar opening, and the deviation is in the compass only and not in our course. The further we go along this course the more erratic the compass will become and if we were presently to move upward, or in other words, straight out across the polar opening toward its center, the needle would spin erratically in a circle. But we could not reach the center of the polar opening because of the tremendous altitude which this would require. I believe that we are now on the eastern verge of the opening and if whatever deviation from the present course you make is to the starboard we shall slowly spiral downward into Pellucidar, but your compass will be useless for the next four to six hundred miles.”

Zuppner shook his head, dubiously. “If this weather holds, we may be able to do it,” he said, “but if it commences to blow I doubt my ability to keep any sort of a course if I am not to follow the compass.”

“Do the best you can,” said Gridley, “and when in doubt put her to starboard.”

So great was the nervous strain upon all of them that for hours at a time scarcely a word was exchanged.

“Look!” exclaimed Hines suddenly. “There is open water just ahead of us.”

“That, of course, we might expect,” said Zuppner, “even if there is no polar opening, and you know that I have been skeptical about that ever since Gridley first explained his theory to me.”

“I think,” said Gridley, with a smile, “that really I am the only one in the party who has had any faith at all in the theory, but please do not call it my theory for it is not, and even I should not have been surprised had the theory proven to be a false one. But if any of you has been watching the sun for the last few hours, I think that you will have

to agree with me that even though there may be no polar opening into an inner world, there must be a great depression at this point in the earth's crust and that we have gone down into it for a considerable distance, for you will notice that the midnight sun is much lower than it should be and that the further we continue upon this course the lower it drops — eventually it will set completely, and if I am not much mistaken we shall soon see the light of the eternal noonday sun of Pellucidar.”

Suddenly the telephone rang and Hines put the receiver to his ear. “Very good, sir,” he said, after a moment, and hung up. “It was von Horst, Captain, reporting from the observation cabin. He has sighted land dead ahead.”

“Land!” exclaimed Zuppner. “The only land our chart shows in this direction is Siberia.”

“Siberia lies over a thousand miles south of 85, and we cannot be over three hundred miles south of 85,” said Gridley.

“Then we have either discovered a new arctic land, or we are approaching the northern frontiers of Pellucidar,” said Lieutenant Hines.

“And that is just what we are doing,” said Gridley. “Look at your thermometer.”

“The devil!” exclaimed Zuppner. “It is only twenty degrees above zero Fahrenheit.”

“You can see the land plainly now,” said Tarzan. “It looks desolate enough, but there are only little patches of snow here and there.”

“This corresponds with the land Innes described north of Korsar,” said Gridley.

Word was quickly passed around the ship to the other officers and the crew that there was reason to believe that the land below them

was Pellucidar. Excitement ran high, and every man who could spare a moment from his duties was aloft on the walkingway, or peering through portholes for a glimpse of the inner world.

Steadily the O-220 forged southward and just as the rim of the midnight sun disappeared from view below the horizon astern, the glow of Pellucidar's central sun was plainly visible ahead.

The nature of the landscape below was changing rapidly. The barren land had fallen astern, the ship had crossed a range of wooded hills and now before it lay a great forest that stretched on and on seemingly curving upward to be lost eventually in the haze of the distance. This was indeed Pellucidar — the Pellucidar of which Jason Gridley had dreamed.

Beyond the forest lay a rolling plain dotted with clumps of trees, a well-watered plain through which wound numerous streams, which emptied into a large river at its opposite side.

Great herds of game were grazing in the open pasture land and nowhere was there sight of man.

"This looks like heaven to me," said Tarzan of the Apes. "Let us land, Captain."

Slowly the great ship came to earth as air was taken into the lower vacuum tanks.

Short ladders were run out, for the bottom of the cabin was only six feet above the ground, and presently the entire ship's company, with the exception of a watch of an officer and two men, were knee deep in the lush grasses of Pellucidar.

"I thought we might get some fresh meat," said Tarzan, "but the ship has frightened all the game away."

"From the quantity of it I saw, we shall not have to go far to bag some," said Dorf.

“What we need most right now, however, is rest,” said Tarzan. “For weeks every man has been working at high pitch in completing the preparation for the expedition and I doubt if one of us has had over two hours sleep in the last three days. I suggest that we remain here until we are all thoroughly rested and then take up a systematic search for the city of Korsar.”

The plan met with general approval and preparations were made for a stay of several days.

“I believe,” said Gridley to Captain Zuppner, “that it would be well to issue strict orders that no one is to leave the ship, or rather its close vicinity, without permission from you and that no one be allowed to venture far afield except in parties commanded by an officer, for we have every assurance that we shall meet with savage men and far more savage beasts everywhere within Pellucidar.”

“I hope that you will except me from that order,” said Tarzan, smiling.

“I believe that you can take care of yourself in any country,” said Zuppner.

“And I can certainly hunt to better effect alone than I can with a party,” said the ape-man.

“In any event,” continued Zuppner, “the order comes from you as commander, and no one will complain if you exempt yourself from its provisions since I am sure that none of the rest of us is particularly anxious to wander about Pellucidar alone.”

Officers and men, with the exception of the watch, which changed every four hours, slept the clock around.

Tarzan of the Apes was the first to complete his sleep and leave the ship. He had discarded the clothing that had encumbered and annoyed him since he had left his own African jungle to join in the

preparation of the O-220, and it was no faultlessly attired Englishman that came from the cabin and dropped to the ground below, but instead an almost naked and primitive warrior, armed with hunting knife, spear, a bow and arrows, and the long rope which Tarzan always carried, for in the hunt he preferred the weapons of his youth to the firearms of civilization.

Lieutenant Dorf, the only officer on duty at the time, saw him depart and watched with unfeigned admiration as the black-haired jungle lord moved across the open plain and disappeared in the forest.

There were trees that were familiar to the eyes of the ape-man, and trees such as he had never seen before, but it was a forest and that was enough to lure Tarzan of the Apes and permit him to forget the last few weeks that had been spent amidst the distasteful surroundings of civilization. He was happy to be free from the ship, too, and, while he liked all his companions, he was yet glad to be alone.

In the first flight of his new-found freedom Tarzan was like a boy released from school. Unhampered by the hated vestments of civilization, out of sight of anything that might even remotely remind him of the atrocities with which man scars the face of nature, he filled his lungs with the free air of Pellucidar, leaped into a nearby tree and swung away through the forest, his only concern for the moment the joyousness of exultant vitality and life. On he sped through the primeval forest of Pellucidar. Strange birds, startled by his swift and silent passage, flew screaming from his path, and strange beasts slunk to cover beneath him. But Tarzan did not care; he was not hunting; he was not even searching for the new in this new world. For the moment he was only living.

While this mood dominated him Tarzan gave no thought to the passage of time any more than he had given thought to the timeless-

ness of Pellucidar, whose noonday sun, hanging perpetually at zenith, gives a lie to us of the outer crust who rush frantically through life in mad and futile effort to beat the earth in her revolutions. Nor did Tarzan reckon upon distance or direction, for such matters were seldom the subjects of conscious consideration upon the part of the ape-man, whose remarkable ability to meet every and any emergency he unconsciously attributed to powers that lay within himself, not stopping to consider that in his own jungle he relied upon the friendly sun and moon and stars as guides by day and night, and to the myriad familiar things that spoke to him in a friendly, voiceless language that only the jungle people can interpret.

As his mood changed Tarzan reduced his speed, and presently he dropped to the ground in a well-marked game trail. Now he let his eyes take in the new wonders all about him. He noticed the evidences of great age as betokened by the enormous size of the trees and the hoary stems of the great vines that clung to many of them — suggestions of age that made his own jungle seem modern — and he marvelled at the gorgeous flowers that bloomed in riotous profusion upon every hand, and then of a sudden something gripped him about the body and snapped him high into the air.

Tarzan of the Apes had nodded. His mind occupied with the wonders of this new world had permitted a momentary relaxation of that habitual wariness that distinguishes creatures of the wild.

Almost in the instant of its occurrence the ape-man realized what had befallen him. Although he could easily imagine its disastrous sequel, the suggestion of a smile touched his lips — a rueful smile — and one that was perhaps tinged with disgust for himself, for Tarzan of the Apes had been caught in as primitive a snare as was ever laid for unwary beasts.

A rawhide noose, attached to the downbent limb of an overhanging tree, had been buried in the trail along which he had been passing and he had struck the trigger — that was the whole story. But its sequel might have had less unfortunate possibilities had the noose not pinioned his arms to his sides as it closed about him.

He hung about six feet above the trail, caught securely about the hips, the noose imprisoning his arms between elbows and wrists and pinioning them securely to his sides. And to add to his discomfort and helplessness, he swung head downward, spinning dizzily like a human plumb-bob.

He tried to draw an arm from the encircling noose so that he might reach his hunting knife and free himself, but the weight of his body constantly drew the noose more tightly about him and every effort upon his part seemed but to strengthen the relentless grip of the rawhide that was pressing deep into his flesh.

He knew that the snare meant the presence of men and that doubtless they would soon come to inspect their noose, for his own knowledge of primitive hunting taught him that they would not leave their snares long untended, since in the event of a catch, if they would have it at all, they must claim it soon lest it fall prey to carnivorous beasts or birds. He wondered what sort of people they were and if he might not make friends with them, but whatever they were he hoped that they would come before the beasts of prey came. And while such thoughts were running through his mind, his keen ears caught the sound of approaching footsteps, but they were not the steps of men. Whatever was approaching was approaching across the wind and he could detect no scent spoor; nor, upon the other hand, he realized, could the beast scent him. It was coming leisurely and as it neared him, but before it came in sight along the trail, he knew that it was a hoofed

animal and, therefore, that he had little reason to fear its approach unless, indeed, it might prove to be some strange Pellucidarian creature with characteristics entirely unlike any that he knew upon the outer crust.

But even as he permitted these thoughts partially to reassure him, there came strongly to his nostrils a scent that always caused the short hairs upon his head to rise, not in fear but in natural reaction to the presence of an hereditary enemy. It was not an odor that he had ever smelled before. It was not the scent spoor of Numa the lion, nor Sheeta the leopard, but it was the scent spoor of some sort of great cat. And now he could hear its almost silent approach through the underbrush and he knew that it was coming down toward the trail, lured either by knowledge of his presence or by that of the beast whose approach Tarzan had been awaiting.

It was the latter who came first into view — a great ox-like animal with wide-spread horns and shaggy coat — a huge bull that advanced several yards along the trail after Tarzan discovered it before it saw the ape-man dangling in front of it. It was the thag of Pellucidar, the *Bos primigenius* of the paleontologist of the outer crust, a long extinct progenitor of the bovine races of our own world.

For a moment it stood eyeing the man dangling in its path.

Tarzan remained very quiet. He did not wish to frighten it away for he realized that one of them must be the prey of the carnivore sneaking upon them, but if he expected the thag to be frightened he soon realized his error in judgment for, uttering low grumblings, the great bull pawed the earth with a front foot, and then, lowering his massive horns, gored it angrily, and the ape-man knew that he was working his short temper up to charging pitch; nor did it seem that this was to take long for already he was advancing menacingly to the

accompaniment of thunderous bellowing. His tail was up and his head down as he broke into the trot that preluded the charge.

The ape-man realized that if he was ever struck by those massive horns or that heavy head, his skull would be crushed like an eggshell.

The dizzy spinning that had been caused by the first stretching of the rawhide to his weight had lessened to a gentle turning motion, so that sometimes he faced the thag and sometimes in the opposite direction. The utter helplessness of his position galled the ape-man and gave him more concern than any consideration of impending death. From childhood he had walked hand in hand with the Grim Reaper and he had looked upon death in so many forms that it held no terror for him. He knew that it was the final experience of all created things, that it must as inevitably come to him as to others and while he loved life and did not wish to die, its mere approach induced within him no futile hysteria. But to die without a chance to fight for life was not such an end as Tarzan of the Apes would have chosen. And now, as his body slowly revolved and his eyes were turned away from the charging thag, his heart sank at the thought that he was not even to be vouchsafed the meager satisfaction of meeting death face to face.

In the brief instant that he waited for the impact, the air was rent by as horrid a scream as had ever broken upon the ears of the ape-man and the bellowing of the bull rose suddenly to a higher pitch and mingled with that other awesome sound.

Once more the dangling body of the ape-man revolved and his eyes fell upon such a scene as had not been vouchsafed to men of the outer world for countless ages.

Upon the massive shoulders and neck of the great thag clung a tiger of such huge proportions that Tarzan could scarce credit the testimony of his own eyes. Great saber-like tusks, projecting from the upper jaw,

were buried deep in the neck of the bull, which, instead of trying to escape, had stopped in its tracks and was endeavoring to dislodge the great beast of prey, swinging its huge horns backward in an attempt to rake the living death from its shoulders, or again shaking its whole body violently for the same purpose and all the while bellowing in pain and rage.

Gradually the saber-tooth changed its position until it had attained a hold suited to its purpose. Then with lightning-like swiftness it swung back a great forearm and delivered a single, terrific blow on the side of the thag's head — a titanic blow that crushed that mighty skull and dropped the huge bull dead in its tracks. And then the carnivore settled down to feast upon its kill.

During the battle the saber-tooth had not noticed the ape-man; nor was it until after he had commenced to feed upon the thag that his eye was attracted by the revolving body swinging above the trail a few yards away. Instantly the beast stopped feeding; his head lowered and flattened, his upper lip turned back in a hideous snarl. He watched the ape-man. Low, menacing growls rumbled from his cavernous throat; his long, sinuous tail lashed angrily as slowly he arose from the body of his kill and advanced toward Tarzan of the Apes.

3.

THE GREAT CATS

The ebbing tide of the great war had left human flotsam stranded upon many an unfamiliar beach. In its full flow it had lifted Robert Jones, high private in the ranks of a labor battalion, from uncongenial surroundings and landed him in a prison camp behind the enemy line. Here his good nature won him friends and favors, but neither one nor the other served to obtain his freedom. Robert Jones seemed to have been lost in the shuffle. And finally, when the evacuation of the prison had been completed, Robert Jones still remained, but he was not downhearted. He had learned the language of his captors and had made many friends among them. They found him a job and Robert Jones of Alabama was content to remain where he was. He had been graduated from body servant to cook of an officers' mess and it was in this capacity that he had come under the observation of Captain Zuppner, who had drafted him for the O-220 expedition.

Robert Jones yawned, stretched, turned over in his narrow berth aboard the O-220, opened his eyes and sat up with an exclamation of surprise. He jumped to the floor and stuck his head out of an open port.

"Lawd, niggah!" he exclaimed; "you all suah done overslep' yo'sef."

For a moment he gazed up at the noonday sun shining down upon him and then, hastily dressing, hurried into his galley.

"'S funny," he soliloquized; "dey ain't no one stirrin' — mus' all of overslep' demsef." He looked at the clock on the galley wall. The hour hand pointed to six. He cocked his ear and listened. "She ain't

stopped,” he muttered. Then he went to the door that opened from the galley through the ship’s side and pushed it back. Leaning far out he looked up again at the sun. Then he shook his head. “Dey’s sumpin wrong,” he said. “Ah dunno whether to cook breakfas’, dinner or supper.”

Jason Gridley, emerging from his cabin, sauntered down the narrow corridor toward the galley. “Good morning, Bob!” he said, stopping in the open doorway. “What’s the chance for a bite of breakfast?”

“Did you all say breakfas’, suh?” inquired Robert.

“Yes,” replied Gridley; “just toast and coffee and a couple of eggs — anything you have handy.”

“Ah knew it!” exclaimed the black. “Ah knew dat ol’ clock couldn’t be wrong, but Mistah Sun he suah gone hay wire.”

Gridley grinned. “I’ll drop down and have a little walk,” he said. “I’ll be back in fifteen minutes. Have you seen anything of Lord Greystoke?”

“No suh, Ah ain’t seen nothin’ o’ Massa Ta’zan sence yesterday.”

“I wondered,” said Gridley; “he is not in his cabin.”

For fifteen minutes Gridley walked briskly about in the vicinity of the ship. When he returned to the mess room he found Zuppner and Dorf awaiting breakfast and greeted them with a pleasant “good morning.”

“I don’t know whether it’s good morning or good evening,” said Zuppner.

“We have been here twelve hours,” said Dorf, “and it is just the same time that it was when we arrived. I have been on watch for the last four hours and if it hadn’t been for the chronometer I could not swear that I had been on fifteen minutes or that I had not been on a week.”

"It certainly induces a feeling of unreality that is hard to explain," said Gridley.

"Where is Greystoke?" asked Zuppner. "He is usually an early riser."

"I was just asking Bob," said Gridley, "but he has not seen him."

"He left the ship shortly after I came on watch," said Dorf. "I should say about three hours ago, possibly longer. I saw him cross the open country and enter the forest."

"I wish he had not gone out alone," said Gridley.

"He strikes me as a man who can take care of himself," said Zuppner.

"I have seen some things during the last four hours," said Dorf, "that make me doubt whether any man can take care of himself alone in this world, especially one armed only with the primitive weapons that Greystoke carried with him."

"You mean that he carried no firearms?" demanded Zuppner.

"He was armed with a bow and arrows, a spear and a rope," said Dorf, "and I think he carried a hunting knife as well. But he might as well have had nothing but a pea-shooter if he met some of the things I have seen since I went on watch."

"What do you mean?" demanded Zuppner. "What have you seen?"

Dorf grinned sheepishly. "Honestly, Captain, I hate to tell you," he said, "for I'm damned if I believe it myself."

"Well, out with it," exclaimed Zuppner. "We will make allowances for your youth and for the effect that the sun and horizon of Pellucidar may have had upon your eyesight or your veracity."

"Well," said Dorf, "about an hour ago a bear passed within a hundred yards of the ship."

"There is nothing remarkable about that," said Zuppner.

“There was a great deal that was remarkable about the bear, however,” said Dorf.

“In what way?” asked Gridley.

“It was fully as large as an ox,” said Dorf, “and if I were going out after bear in this country I should want to take along field artillery.”

“Was that all you saw — just a bear?” asked Zuppner.

“No,” said Dorf, “I saw tigers, not one but fully a dozen, and they were as much larger than our Bengal tigers as the bear was larger than any bear of the outer crust that I have ever seen. They were perfectly enormous and they were armed with the most amazing fangs you ever saw — great curved fangs that extended from their upper jaws to lengths of from eight inches to a foot. They came down to this stream here to drink and then wandered away, some of them toward the forest and some down toward that big river yonder.”

“Greystoke couldn’t do much against such creatures as those even if he had carried a rifle,” said Zuppner.

“If he was in the forest, he could escape them,” said Gridley.

Zuppner shook his head. “I don’t like the looks of it,” he said. “I wish that he had not gone out alone.”

“The bear and the tigers were bad enough,” continued Dorf, “but I saw another creature that to me seemed infinitely worse.”

Robert, who was more or less a privileged character, had entered from the galley and was listening with wide-eyed interest to Dorf’s account of the creatures he had seen, while Victor, one of the Filipino cabin-boys, served the officers.

“Yes,” continued Dorf, “I saw a mighty strange creature. It flew directly over the ship and I had an excellent view of it. At first I thought that it was a bird, but when it approached more closely I saw that it was a winged reptile. It had a long, narrow head and it flew

so close that I could see its great jaws, armed with an infinite number of long, sharp teeth. Its head was elongated above the eyes and came to a sharp point. It was perfectly immense and must have had a wing spread of at least twenty feet. While I was watching it, it dropped suddenly to earth only a short distance beyond the ship, and when it arose again it was carrying in its talons some animal that must have been fully as large as a good sized sheep, with which it flew away without apparent effort. That the creature is carnivorous is evident as is also the fact that it has sufficient strength to carry away a man."

Robert Jones covered his large mouth with a pink palm and with hunched and shaking shoulders turned and tip-toed from the room. Once in the galley with the door closed, he gave himself over to unrestrained mirth.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Victor.

"Lawd-a-massy!" exclaimed Robert. "Ah allus thought some o' dem gem'n in dat dere Adventurous Club in Bummingham could lie some, but, shucks, dey ain't in it with this Lieutenant Dorf. Did you all heah him tell about dat flyin' snake what carries off sheep?"

But back in the mess room the white men took Dorf's statement more seriously.

"That would be a pterodactyl," said Zuppner.

"Yes," replied Dorf. "I classified it as a Pteranodon."

"Don't you think we ought to send out a search party?" asked Gridley.

"I am afraid Greystoke would not like it," replied Zuppner.

"It could go out under the guise of a hunting party," suggested Dorf.

"If he has not returned within an hour," said Zuppner, "we shall have to do something of the sort."

Hines and von Horst now entered the mess room, and when they learned of Tarzan's absence from the ship and had heard from Dorf a description of some of the animals that he might have encountered, they were equally as apprehensive as the others of his safety.

"We might cruise around a bit, sir," suggested von Horst to Zuppner.

"But suppose he returns to this spot during our absence?" asked Gridley.

"Could you return the ship to this anchorage again?" inquired Zuppner.

"I doubt it," replied the Lieutenant. "Our instruments are almost worthless under the conditions existing in Pellucidar."

"Then we had better remain where we are," said Gridley, "until he returns."

"But if we send a searching party after him on foot, what assurance have we that it will be able to find its way back to the ship?" demanded Zuppner.

"That will not be so difficult," said Gridley. "We can always blaze our trail as we go and thus easily retrace our steps."

"Yes, that is so," agreed Zuppner.

"Suppose," said Gridley, "that von Horst and I go out with Muviro and his Waziri. They are experienced trackers, prime fighting men and they certainly know the jungle."

"Not this jungle," said Dorf.

"But at least they know any jungle better than the rest of us," insisted Gridley.

"I think your plan is a good one," said Zuppner, "and anyway as you are in command now, the rest of us gladly place ourselves under your orders."

“The conditions that confront us here are new to all of us,” said Gridley. “Nothing that anyone of us can suggest or command can be based upon any personal experience or knowledge that the rest do not possess, and in matters of this kind I think that we had better reach our decision after full discussion rather than to depend blindly upon official priority of authority.”

“That has been Greystoke’s policy,” said Zuppner, “and it has made it very easy and pleasant for all of us. I quite agree with you, but I can think of no more feasible plan than that which you have suggested.”

“Very good,” said Gridley. “Will you accompany me, Lieutenant?” he asked, turning to von Horst.

The officer grinned. “Will I?” he exclaimed. “I should never have forgiven you if you had left me out of it.”

“Fine,” said Gridley. “And now, I think, we might as well make our preparations at once and get as early a start as possible. See that the Waziri have eaten, Lieutenant, and tell Muviro that I want them armed with rifles. These fellows can use them all right, but they rather look with scorn upon anything more modern than their war spears and arrows.”

“Yes, I discovered that,” said Hines. “Muviro told me a few days ago that his people consider firearms as something of an admission of cowardice. He told me that they use them for target practice, but when they go out after lions or rhino they leave their rifles behind and take their spears and arrows.”

“After they have seen what I saw,” said Dorf, “they will have more respect for an express rifle.”

“See that they take plenty of ammunition, von Horst,” said Gridley, “for from what I have seen in this country we shall not have to carry any provisions.”

“A man who could not live off this country would starve to death in a meat market,” said Zuppner.

Von Horst left to carry out Gridley’s orders while the latter returned to his cabin to prepare for the expedition.

The officers and crew remaining with the O-220 were all on hand to bid farewell to the expedition starting out in search of Tarzan of the Apes, and as the ten stalwart Waziri warriors marched away behind Gridley and von Horst, Robert Jones, watching from the galley door, swelled with pride. “Dem niggahs is sho nuf hot babies,” he exclaimed. “All dem flyin’ snakes bettah clear out de country now.” With the others Robert watched the little party as it crossed the plain and until it had disappeared within the dark precincts of the forest upon the opposite side. Then he glanced up at the noonday sun, shook his head, elevated his palms in resignation and turned back into his galley.

Almost immediately after the party had left the ship, Gridley directed Muviro to take the lead and watch for Tarzan’s trail since, of the entire party, he was the most experienced tracker; nor did the Waziri chieftain have any difficulty in following the spoor of the ape-man across the plain and into the forest, but here, beneath a great tree, it disappeared.

“The Big Bwana took to the trees here,” said Muviro, “and no man lives who can follow his spoor through the lower, the middle or the upper terraces.”

“What do you suggest, then, Muviro?” asked Gridley.

“If this were his own jungle,” replied the warrior, “I should feel sure that when he took to the trees he would move in a straight line toward the place he wished to go; unless he happened to be hunting, in which case his direction would be influenced by the sign and scent of game.”

“Doubtless he was hunting here,” said von Horst.

“If he was hunting,” said Muviro, “he would have moved in a straight line until he caught the scent spoor of game or came to a well-beaten game trail.”

“And then what would he do?” asked Gridley.

“He might wait above the trail,” replied Muviro, “or he might follow it. In a new country like this, I think he would follow it, for he has always been interested in exploring every new country he entered.”

“Then let us push straight into the forest in this same direction until we strike a game trail,” said Gridley.

Muviro and three of his warriors went ahead, cutting brush where it was necessary and blazing the trees at frequent intervals that they might more easily retrace their steps to the ship. With the aid of a small pocket compass Gridley directed the line of advance, which otherwise it would have been difficult to hold accurately beneath that eternal noonday sun, whose warm rays filtered down through the foliage of the forest.

“God! What a forest!” exclaimed von Horst. “To search for a man here is like the proverbial search for the needle in a haystack.”

“Except,” said Gridley, “that one might stand a slight chance of finding the needle.”

“Perhaps we had better fire a shot occasionally,” suggested von Horst.

“Excellent,” said Gridley. “The rifles carry a much heavier charge and make a louder report than our revolvers.”

After warning the others of his intention, he directed one of the blacks to fire three shots at intervals of a few seconds, for neither Gridley nor von Horst was armed with rifles, each of the officers carrying two .45 caliber Colts. Thereafter, at intervals of about half

an hour, a single shot was fired, but as the searching party forced its way on into the forest each of its members became gloomily impressed with the futility of their search.

Presently the nature of the forest changed. The trees were set less closely together and the underbrush, while still forming an almost impenetrable screen, was less dense than it had been heretofore and here they came upon a wide game trail, worn by countless hoofs and padded feet to a depth of two feet or more below the surface of the surrounding ground, and here Jason Gridley blundered.

“We won’t bother about blazing the trees as long as we follow this trail,” he said to Muviro, “except at such places as it may fork or be crossed by other trails.”

It was, after all, a quite natural mistake since a few blazed trees along the trail would not serve any purpose in following it back when they wished to return.

The going here was easier and as the Waziri warriors swung along at a brisk pace, the miles dropped quickly behind them and already had the noonday sun so cast its spell upon them that the element of time seemed not to enter into their calculations, while the teeming life about them absorbed the attention of blacks and whites alike.

Strange monkeys, some of them startlingly man-like in appearance and of large size, watched them pass. Birds of both gay and somber plumage scattered protestingly before their advance, and again dim bulks loomed through the undergrowth and the sound of padded feet was everywhere.

At times they would pass through a stretch of forest as silent as the tomb, and then again they seemed to be surrounded by a bedlam of hideous growls and roars and screams.

"I'd like to see some of those fellows," said von Horst, after a particularly savage outburst of sound.

"I am surprised that we haven't," replied Gridley; "but I imagine that they are a little bit leery of us right now, not alone on account of our numbers but because of the, to them strange and unfamiliar, odors which must surround us. These would naturally increase the suspicion which must have been aroused by the sound of our shots."

"Have you noticed," said von Horst, "that most of the noise seems to come from behind us; I mean the more savage, growling sounds. I have heard squeals and noises that sounded like the trumpeting of elephants to the right and to the left and ahead, but only an occasional growl or roar seems to come from these directions and then always at a considerable distance."

"How do you account for it?" asked Gridley.

"I can't account for it," replied von Horst. "It is as though we were moving along in the center of a procession with all the savage carnivores behind us."

"This perpetual noonday sun has its compensations," remarked Gridley with a laugh, "for at least it insures that we shall not have to spend the night here."

At that instant the attention of the two men was attracted by an exclamation from one of the Waziri behind them. "Look, Bwana! Look!" cried the man, pointing back along the trail. Following the direction of the Waziri's extended finger, Gridley and von Horst saw a huge beast slinking slowly along the trail in their rear.

"God!" exclaimed von Horst, "and I thought Dorf was exaggerating."

"It doesn't seem possible," exclaimed Gridley, "that five hundred miles below our feet automobiles are dashing through crowded streets

lined by enormous buildings; that there the telegraph, the telephone and the radio are so commonplace as to excite no comment; that countless thousands live out their entire lives without ever having to use a weapon in self-defense, and yet at the same instant we stand here facing a saber-tooth tiger in surroundings that may not have existed upon the outer crust for a million years.”

“Look at them!” exclaimed von Horst. “If there is one there are a dozen of them.”

“Shall we fire, Bwana?” asked one of the Waziri.

“Not yet,” said Gridley. “Close up and be ready. They seem to be only following us.”

Slowly the party fell back, a line of Waziri in the rear facing the tigers and backing slowly away from them. Muviro dropped back to Gridley’s side.

“For a long time, Bwana,” he said, “there has been the spoor of many elephants in the trail, or spoor that looked like the spoor of elephants, though it was different. And just now I sighted some of the beasts ahead. I could not make them out distinctly, but if they are not elephants they are very much like them.”

“We seem to be between the devil and the deep sea,” said von Horst.

“And there are either elephants or tigers on each side of us,” said Muviro. “I can hear them moving through the brush.”

Perhaps the same thought was in the minds of all these men, that they might take to the trees, but for some reason no one expressed it. And so they continued to move slowly along the trail until suddenly it broke into a large, open area in the forest, where the ground was scantily covered with brush and there were few trees. Perhaps a

hundred acres were included in the clearing and then the forest commenced again upon all sides.

And into the clearing, along numerous trails that seemed to center at this spot, came as strange a procession as the eyes of these men had ever rested upon. There were great ox-like creatures with shaggy coats and wide-spreading horns. There were red deer and sloths of gigantic size. There were mastodon and mammoth, and a huge, elephantine creature that resembled an elephant and yet did not seem to be an elephant at all. Its great head was four feet long and three feet wide. It had a short, powerful trunk and from its lower jaw mighty tusks curved downward, their points bending inward toward the body. At the shoulder it stood at least ten feet above the ground, and in length it must have been fully twenty feet. But what resemblance it bore to an elephant was lessened by its small, pig-like ears.

The two white men, momentarily forgetting the tigers behind them in their amazement at the sight ahead, halted and looked with wonder upon the huge gathering of creatures within the clearing.

“Did you ever see anything like it?” exclaimed Gridley.

“No, nor anyone else,” replied von Horst.

“I could catalog a great many of them,” said Gridley, “although practically all are extinct upon the outer crust. But that fellow there gets me,” and he pointed to the elephantine creature with the downward pointing tusks.

“A *Dinotherium* of the Miocene,” said von Horst.

Muviro had stopped beside the two whites and was gazing in wide-eyed astonishment at the scene before him.

“Well,” asked Gridley, “what do you make of it, Muviro?”

“I think I understand now, Bwana,” replied the black, “and if we are ever going to escape our one chance is to cross that clearing as

quickly as possible. The great cats are herding these creatures here and presently there will be such a killing as the eyes of man have never before seen. If we are not killed by the cats, we shall be trampled to death by these beasts in their efforts to escape or to fight the tigers.”

“I believe you are right, Muviro,” said Gridley.

“There is an opening just ahead of us,” said von Horst.

Gridley called the men around him and pointed out across the clearing to the forest upon the opposite side. “Apparently our only chance now,” he said, “is to cross before the cats close in on these beasts. We have already come into the clearing too far to try to take refuge in the trees on this side for the saber-teeth are too close. Stick close together and fire at nothing unless we are charged.”

“Look!” exclaimed von Horst. “The tigers are entering the clearing from all sides. They have surrounded their quarry.”

“There is still the one opening ahead of us, Bwana,” said Muviro.

Already the little party was moving slowly across the clearing, which was covered with nervous beasts moving irritably to and fro, their whole demeanor marked by nervous apprehension. Prior to the advent of the tigers the animals had been moving quietly about, some of them grazing on the short grass of the clearing or upon the leaves and twigs of the scattered trees growing in it; but with the appearance of the first of the carnivores their attitude changed. A huge bull mastodon raised his trunk and trumpeted shrilly, and instantly every herbivore was on the alert. And as eyes or nostrils detected the presence of the great cats, or the beasts became excited by the excitement of their fellows, each added his voice to the pandemonium that now reigned. To the squealing, trumpeting and bellowing of the quarry were added the hideous growls and roars of the carnivores.

“Look at those cats!” cried von Horst. “There must be hundreds

of them.” Nor was his estimate an exaggeration for from all sides of the clearing, with the exception of a single point opposite them, the cats were emerging from the forest and starting to circle the herd. That they did not rush it immediately evidenced their respect for the huge beasts they had corraled, the majority of which they would not have dared to attack except in superior numbers.

Now a mammoth, a giant bull with tail raised and ears up-cocked, curled his trunk above his head and charged. But a score of the great cats, growling hideously, sprang to meet him, and the bull, losing his nerve, wheeled in a wide circle and returned to the herd. Had he gone through that menacing line of fangs and talons, as with his great size and weight and strength he might have done, he would have opened a hole through which a stampede of the other animals would have carried the bulk of them to safety.

The frightened herbivores, their attention centered upon the menacing tigers, paid little attention to the insignificant man-things passing among them. But there were some exceptions. A thag, bellowing and pawing the earth directly in their line of march, terrified by the odor of the carnivores and aroused and angered by the excited trumpeting and squealing of the creatures about him, seeking to vent his displeasure upon something, lowered his head and charged them. A Waziri warrior raised his rifle to his shoulder and fired, and a prehistoric *Bos primigenius* crashed to the impact of a modern bullet.

As the report of the rifle sounded above the other noises of the clearing, the latter were momentarily stilled, and the full attention of hunters and hunted was focused upon the little band of men, so puny and insignificant in the presence of the mighty beasts of another day. A dinotherium, his little ears up-cocked, his tail stiffly erect, walked slowly toward them. Almost immediately others followed his example

until it seemed that the whole aggregation was converging upon them. The forest was yet a hundred yards away as Jason Gridley realized the seriousness of the emergency that now confronted them.

“We shall have to run for it,” he said. “Give them a volley, and then beat it for the trees. If they charge, it will have to be every man for himself.”

The Waziri wheeled and faced the slowly advancing herd and then, at Gridley’s command, they fired. The thunderous volley had its effect upon the advancing beasts. They hesitated and then turned and retreated; but behind them were the carnivores. And once again they swung back in the direction of the men, who were now moving rapidly toward the forest.

“Here they come!” cried von Horst. And a backward glance revealed the fact that the entire herd, goaded to terror by the tigers behind them, had broken into a mad stampede. Whether or not it was a direct charge upon the little party of men is open to question, but the fact that they lay in its path was sufficient to seal their doom if they were unable to reach the safety of the forest ahead of the charging quadrupeds.

“Give them another volley!” cried Gridley. And again the Waziri turned and fired. A dinothereum, a thag and two mammoths stumbled and fell to the ground, but the remainder of the herd did not pause. Leaping over the carcasses of their fallen comrades they thundered down upon the fleeing men.

It was now, in truth, every man for himself, and so close pressed were they that even the brave Waziri threw away their rifles as useless encumbrances to flight.

Several of the red deer, swifter in flight than the other members

of the herd, had taken the lead, and, stampeding through the party, scattered them to left and right.

Gridley and von Horst were attempting to cover the retreat of the Waziri and check the charge of the stampeding animals with their revolvers. They succeeded in turning a few of the leaders, but presently a great, red stag passed between them, forcing them to jump quickly apart to escape his heavy antlers, and behind him swept a nightmare of terrified beasts forcing them still further apart.

Not far from Gridley grew a single, giant tree, a short distance from the edge of the clearing, and finding himself alone and cut off from further retreat, the American turned and ran for it, while von Horst was forced to bolt for the jungle which was now almost within reach.

Bowled over by a huge sloth, Gridley scrambled to his feet, and, passing in front of a fleeing mastodon, reached the tree just as the main body of the stampeding herd closed about it. Its great bole gave him momentary protection and an instant later he had scrambled among its branches.

Instantly his first thought was for his fellows, but where they had been a moment before was now only a solid mass of leaping, plunging, terrified beasts. No sign of a human being was anywhere to be seen and Gridley knew that no living thing could have survived the trampling of those incalculable tons of terrified flesh.

Some of them, he knew, must have reached the forest, but he doubted that all had come through in safety and he feared particularly for von Horst, who had been some little distance in rear of the Waziri.

The eyes of the American swept back over the clearing to observe such a scene as probably in all the history of the world had never before been vouchsafed to the eyes of man. Literally thousands of creatures, large and small, were following their leaders in a break for

life and liberty, while upon their flanks and at their rear hundreds of savage saber-tooth tigers leaped upon them, dragging down the weaker, battling with the stronger, leaving the maimed and crippled behind that they might charge into the herd again and drag down others.

The mad rush of the leaders across the clearing had been checked as they entered the forest, and now those in the rear were forced to move more slowly, but in their terror they sought to clamber over the backs of those ahead. Red deer leaped upon the backs of mastodons and fled across the heaving bodies beneath them, as a mountain goat might leap from rock to rock. Mammoths raised their huge bulks upon lesser animals and crushed them to the ground. Tusks and horns were red with gore as the maddened beasts battled for their lives. The scene was sickening in its horror, and yet fascinating in its primitive strength and savagery — and everywhere were the great, savage cats.

Slowly they were cutting into the herd from both sides in an effort to encircle a portion of it and at last they were successful, though within the circle there remained but a few scattered beasts that were still unmaimed or uncrippled. And then the great tigers turned upon these, closing in and drawing tighter their hideous band of savage fury.

In twos and threes and scores they leaped upon the remaining beasts and dragged them down until the sole creature remaining alive within their circle was a gigantic bull mammoth. His shaggy coat was splashed with blood and his tusks were red with gore. Trumpeting, he stood at bay, a magnificent picture of primordial power, of sagacity, of courage.

The heart of the American went out to that lone warrior trumpeting his challenge to overwhelming odds in the face of certain doom.

By hundreds the carnivores were closing in upon the great bull; yet it was evident that even though they outnumbered him so over-

whelmingly, they still held him in vast respect. Growling and snarling, a few of them slunk in stealthy circles about him, and as he wheeled about with them, three of them charged him from the rear. With a swiftness that matched their own, the pachyderm wheeled to meet them. Two of them he caught upon his tusks and tossed them high into the air, and at the same instant a score of others rushed him from each side and from the rear and fastened themselves to his back and flanks. Down he went as though struck by lightning, squatting quickly upon his haunches and rolling over backward, crushing a dozen tigers before they could escape.

Gridley could scarce repress a cheer as the great fellow staggered to his feet and threw himself again upon the opposite side to the accompaniment of hideous screams of pain and anger from the tigers he pinioned beneath him. But now he was gushing blood from a hundred wounds, and other scores of the savage carnivores were charging him.

Though he put up a magnificent battle the end was inevitable and at last they dragged him down, tearing him to pieces while he yet struggled to rise again and battle with them.

And then commenced the aftermath as the savage beasts fought among themselves for possession of their prey. For even though there was flesh to more than surfeit them all, in their greed, jealousy and ferocity, they must still battle one with another.

That they had paid heavily for their meat was evident by the carcasses of the tigers strewn about the clearing and as the survivors slowly settled down to feed, there came the jackals, the hyaenodons and the wild dogs to feast upon their leavings.

4.

THE SAGOTHS

As the great cat slunk toward him, Tarzan of the Apes realized that at last he faced inevitable death, yet even in that last moment of life the emotion which dominated him was one of admiration for the magnificent beast drawing angrily toward him.

Tarzan of the Apes would have preferred to die fighting, if he must die; yet he felt a certain thrill as he contemplated the magnificence of the great beast that Fate had chosen to terminate his earthly career. He felt no fear, but a certain sense of anticipation of what would follow after death. The Lord of the Jungle subscribed to no creed. Tarzan of the Apes was not a church man; yet like the majority of those who have always lived close to nature he was, in a sense, intensely religious. His intimate knowledge of the stupendous forces of nature, of her wonders and her miracles had impressed him with the fact that their ultimate origin lay far beyond the conception of the finite mind of man, and thus incalculably remote from the farthest bounds of science. When he thought of God he liked to think of Him primitively, as a personal God. And while he realized that he knew nothing of such matters, he liked to believe that after death he would live again.

Many thoughts passed quickly through his mind as the saber-tooth advanced upon him. He was watching the long, glistening fangs that so soon were to be buried in his flesh when his attention was attracted by a sound among the trees about him. That the great cat had heard too was evident, for it stopped in its tracks and gazed up into the foliage of the trees above. And then Tarzan heard a rustling in the

branches directly overhead, and looking up he saw what appeared to be a gorilla glaring down upon him.

Two more savage faces showed through the foliage above him and then in other trees about he caught glimpses of similar shaggy forms and fierce faces. He saw that they were like gorillas, and yet unlike them; that in some respects they were more man than gorilla, and in others more gorilla than man. He caught glimpses of great clubs wielded by hairy hands, and when his eyes returned to the saber-tooth he saw that the great beast had hesitated in its advance and was snarling and growling angrily as its eyes roved upward and around at the savage creatures glaring down upon it.

It was only for a moment that the cat paused in its advance upon the ape-man. Snarling angrily, it moved forward again and as it did so, one of the creatures in the tree above Tarzan reached down, and, seizing the rope that held him dangling in mid-air, drew him swiftly upward. Then several things occurred simultaneously — the saber-tooth leaped to retrieve its prey and a dozen heavy cudgels hurtled through the air from the surrounding trees, striking the great cat heavily upon head and body with the result that the talons that must otherwise have inevitably been imbedded in the flesh of the ape-man grazed harmlessly by him, and an instant later he was drawn well up among the branches of the tree, where he was seized by three hairy brutes whose attitude suggested that he might have been as well off had he been left to the tender mercies of the saber-tooth.

Two of them, one on either side, seized an arm and the third grasped him by the throat with one hand while he held his cudgel poised above his head in the other. And then from the lips of the creature facing him came a sound that fell as startingly upon the ears

of the ape-man as had the first unexpected roar of the saber-tooth, but with far different effect.

“Ka-goda!” said the creature facing Tarzan.

In the language of the apes of his own jungle Ka-goda may be roughly interpreted according to its inflection as a command to surrender, or as an interrogation, “do you surrender?” or as a declaration of surrender.

This word, coming from the lips of a hairy gorilla man of the inner world, suggested possibilities of the most startling nature. For years Tarzan had considered the language of the great apes as the primitive root language of created things. The great apes, the lesser apes, the gorillas, the baboons and the monkeys utilized this with various degrees of refinement and many of its words were understood by jungle animals of other species and by many of the birds; but, perhaps, after the fashion that our domestic animals have learned many of the words in our vocabulary, with this difference that the language of the great apes has doubtless persisted unchanged for countless ages.

That these gorilla men of the inner world used even one word of this language suggested one of two possibilities — either they held an origin in common with the creatures of the outer crust, or else that the laws of evolution and progress were so constant that this was the only form of primitive language that could have been possible to any creatures emerging from the lower orders toward the estate of man. But the suggestion that impressed Tarzan most vividly was that this single word, uttered by the creature grasping him by the throat, postulated familiarity on the part of his fierce captors with the entire ape language that he had used since boyhood.

“Ka-goda?” inquired the bull.

“Ka-goda,” said Tarzan of the Apes.

The brute, facing Tarzan, half lowered his cudgel as though he were surprised to hear the prisoner answer in his own tongue. "Who are you?" he demanded in the language of the great apes.

"I am Tarzan — mighty hunter, mighty fighter," replied the ape-man.

"What are you doing in M'wa-lot's country?" demanded the gorilla man.

"I come as a friend," replied Tarzan. "I have no quarrel with your people."

The fellow had lowered his club now, and from other trees had come a score more of the shaggy creatures until the surrounding limbs sagged beneath their weight.

"How did you learn the language of the Sagoths?" demanded the bull. "We have captured gilaks in the past, but you are the first one who ever spoke or understood our language."

"It is the language of my people," replied Tarzan. "As a little balu, I learned it from Kala and other apes of the tribe of Kerchak."

"We never heard of the tribe of Kerchak," said the bull.

"Perhaps he is not telling the truth," said another. "Let us kill him; he is only a gilak."

"No," said a third. "Take him back to M'wa-lot that the whole tribe of M'wa-lot may join in the killing."

"That is good," said another. "Take him back to the tribe, and while we are killing him we shall dance."

The language of the great apes is not like our language. It sounds to man like growling and barking and grunting, punctuated at times by shrill screams, and it is practically untranslatable to any tongue known to man; yet it carried to Tarzan and the Sagoths the sense that we have

given it. It is a means of communicating thought and there its similarity to the languages of men ceases.

Having decided upon the disposition of their prisoner, the Sagoths now turned their attention to the saber-tooth, who had returned to his kill, across the body of which he was lying. He was not feeding, but was gazing angrily up into the trees at his tormentors.

While three of the gorilla men secured Tarzan's wrists behind his back with a length of buckskin thong, the others renewed their attention to the tiger. Three or four of them would cast well-aimed cudgels at his face at intervals so nicely timed that the great beast could do nothing but fend off the missiles as they sped toward him. And while he was thus occupied, the other Sagoths, who had already cast their clubs, sprang to the ground and retrieved them with an agility and celerity that would have done credit to the tiniest monkey of the jungle. The risk that they took bespoke great self-confidence and high courage since often they were compelled to snatch their cudgels from almost beneath the claws of the saber-tooth.

Battered and bruised, the great cat gave back inch by inch until, unable to stand the fusillade longer, it suddenly turned tail and bounded into the underbrush, where for some time the sound of its crashing retreat could be distinctly heard. And with the departure of the carnivore, the gorilla men leaped to the ground and fell upon the carcass of the thag. With heavy fangs they tore its flesh, oftentimes fighting among themselves like wild beasts for some particularly choice morsel; but unlike many of the lower orders of man upon similar occasions they did not gorge themselves, and having satisfied their hunger they left what remained to the jackals and wild dogs that had already gathered.

Tarzan of the Apes, silent spectator of this savage scene, had an

opportunity during the feast to examine his captors more closely. He saw that they were rather lighter in build than the gorillas he had seen in his own native jungle, but even though they were not as heavy as Bolgani, they were yet mighty creatures. Their arms and legs were of more human conformation and proportion than those of a gorilla, but the shaggy brown hair covering their entire body increased their beast-like appearance, while their faces were even more brutal than that of Bolgani himself, except that the development of the skull denoted a brain capacity seemingly as great as that of man.

They were entirely naked, nor was there among them any suggestion of ornamentation, while their only weapons were clubs. These, however, showed indications of having been shaped by some sharp instrument as though an effort had been made to insure a firm grip and a well-balanced weapon.

Their feeding completed, the Sagoths turned back along the game trail in the same direction that Tarzan had been going when he had sprung the trigger of the snare. But before departing several of them reset the noose, covered it carefully with earth and leaves and set the trigger that it might be sprung by the first passing animal.

So sure were all their movements and so deft their fingers, Tarzan realized that though these creatures looked like beasts they had long since entered the estate of man. Perhaps they were still low in the scale of evolution, but unquestionably they were men with the brains of men and the faces and skins of gorillas.

As the Sagoths moved along the jungle trail they walked erect as men walk, but in other ways they reminded Tarzan of the great apes who were his own people, for they were given neither to laughter nor song and their taciturnity suggested the speechlessness of the alalic. That certain of their sense faculties were more highly developed than

in man was evidenced by the greater dependence they placed upon their ears and noses than upon their eyes in their unremitting vigil against surprise by an enemy.

While by human standards they might have been judged ugly and even hideous, they did not so impress Tarzan of the Apes, who recognized in them a certain primitive majesty of bearing and mien such as might well have been expected of pioneers upon the frontiers of humanity.

It is sometimes the custom of theorists to picture our primordial progenitors as timid, fearful creatures, fleeing from the womb to the grave in constant terror of the countless, savage creatures that beset their entire existence. But as it does not seem reasonable that a creature so poorly equipped for offense and defense could have survived without courage, it seems far more consistent to assume that with the dawning of reason came a certain superiority complex — a vast and at first stupid egotism — that knew caution, perhaps, but not fear; nor is any other theory tenable unless we are to suppose that from the loin of a rabbit-hearted creature sprang men who hunted the bison, the mammoth and the cave bear with crude spears tipped with stone.

The Sagoths of Pellucidar may have been analogous in the scale of evolution to the Neanderthal men of the outer crust, or they may, indeed, have been even a step lower; yet in their bearing there was nothing to suggest to Tarzan that they had reached this stage in evolution through the expedience of flight. Their bearing as they trod the jungle trail bespoke assurance and even truculence, as though they were indeed the lords of creation, fearing nothing. Perhaps Tarzan understood their attitude better than another might have since it had been his own always in the jungle — unquestioning fearlessness — with which a certain intelligent caution was not inconsistent.

They had come but a short distance from the scene of Tarzan's capture when the Sagoths stopped beside a hollow log, the skeleton of a great tree that had fallen beside the trail. One of the creatures tapped upon the log with his club — one, two; one, two; one, two, three. And then, after a moment's pause, he repeated the same tapping. Three times the signal boomed through the jungle and then the signaler paused, listening, while others stooped and put their ears against the ground.

Faintly through the air, more plainly through the ground, came an answering signal — one, two; one, two; one, two, three.

The creatures seemed satisfied and climbing into the surrounding trees, disposed themselves comfortably as though settling down to a wait. Two of them carried Tarzan easily aloft with them, as with his hands bound behind his back he could not climb unassisted.

Since they had started on the march Tarzan had not spoken, but now he turned to one of the Sagoths near him. "Remove the bonds from my wrists," he said. "I am not an enemy."

"Tar-gash," said he whom Tarzan had addressed, "the gilak wants his bonds removed."

Tar-gash, a large bull with noticeably long, white canine fangs, turned his savage eyes upon the ape-man. For a long time he glared unblinkingly at the prisoner and it seemed to Tarzan that the mind of the half-brute was struggling with a new idea. Presently he turned to the Sagoth who had repeated Tarzan's request. "Take them off," he said.

"Why?" demanded another of the bulls. The tone was challenging.

"Because I, Tar-gash, say 'take them off,'" growled the other.

"You are not M'wa-lot. He is king. If M'wa-lot says take them off, we will take them off."

“I am not M’wa-lot, To-yad; I am Tar-gash, and Tar-gash says ‘take them off.’”

To-yad swung to Tarzan’s side. “M’wa-lot will come soon,” he said. “If M’wa-lot says take them off, we shall take them off. We do not take orders from Tar-gash.”

Like a panther, quickly, silently Tar-gash sprang straight for the throat of To-yad. There was no warning, not even an instant of hesitation. In this Tarzan saw that Tar-gash differed from the great apes with whom the Lord of the Jungle had been familiar upon the outer crust, for among them two bulls ordinarily must need have gone through a long preliminary of stiff-legged strutting and grumbled invective before either one launched himself upon the other in deadly combat. But the mind of Tar-gash had functioned with man-like celerity, so much so that decision and action had appeared to be almost simultaneous.

The impact of the heavy body of Tar-gash toppled To-yad from the branch upon which he had been standing, but so naturally arboreal were the two great creatures that even as they fell they reached out and seized the same branch and still fighting, each with his free hand and his heavy fangs, they hung there a second breaking their fall, and then dropped to the ground. They fought almost silently except for low growls, Tar-gash seeking the jugular of To-yad with those sharp, white fangs that had given him his name. To-yad, his every faculty concentrated upon defense, kept the grinning jaws from his flesh and suddenly twisting quickly around, tore loose from the powerful fingers of his opponent and sought safety in flight. But like a football player, Tar-gash launched himself through the air; his long hairy arms encircled the legs of the fleeing To-yad, bringing him heavily to the ground, and an instant later the powerful aggressor was on the back

of his opponent and To-yad's jugular was at the mercy of his foe, but the great jaws of Tar-gash did not close.

"Ka-goda?" he inquired.

"Ka-goda," growled To-yad, and instantly Tar-gash arose from the body of the other bull.

With the agility of a monkey the victor leaped back into the branches of the tree. "Remove the bonds from the wrists of the gilak," he said, and at the same time he glared ferociously about him to see if there was another so mutinously minded as To-yad; but none spoke and none objected as one of the Sagoths who had dragged Tarzan up into the tree untied the bonds that secured his wrists.

"If he tries to run away from us," said Tar-gash, "kill him."

When his bonds were removed Tarzan expected that the Sagoths would take his knife away from him. He had lost his spear and bow and most of his arrows at the instant that the snare had snapped him from the ground, but though they had lain in plain view in the trail beneath the snare the Sagoths had paid no attention to them; nor did they now pay any attention to his knife. He was sure they must have seen it and he could not understand their lack of concern regarding it, unless they were ignorant of its purpose or held him in such contempt that they did not consider it worth the effort to disarm him.

Presently To-yad sneaked back into the tree, but he huddled sullenly by himself, apart from the others.

Faintly, from a distance, Tarzan heard something approaching. He heard it just a moment before the Sagoths heard it.

"They come!" announced Tar-gash.

"M'wa-lot comes," said another, glancing at To-yad. Now Tarzan knew why the primitive drum had been sounded, but he wondered why they were gathering.

At last they arrived, nor was it difficult for Tarzan to recognize M'wa-lot, the king among the others. A great bull walked in front — a bull with so much gray among the hairs on his face that the latter had a slightly bluish complexion, and instantly the ape-man saw how the king had come by his name.

As soon as the Sagoths with Tarzan were convinced of the identity of the approaching party, they descended from the trees to the ground and when M'wa-lot had approached within twenty paces of them, he halted. "I am M'wa-lot," he announced. "With me are the people of my tribe."

"I am Tar-gash," replied the bull who seemed to be in charge of the other party. "With me are other bulls of the tribe of M'wa-lot."

This precautionary preliminary over, M'wa-lot advanced, followed by the bulls, the shes and the balus of his tribe.

"What is that?" demanded M'wa-lot, as his fierce eyes espied Tarzan.

"It is a gilak that we found caught in our snare," replied Tar-gash.

"That is the feast that you called us to?" demanded M'wa-lot, angrily. "You should have brought it to the tribe. It can walk."

"This is not the food of which the drum spoke," replied Tar-gash. "Nearby is the body of a thag that was killed by a tarag close by the snare in which this gilak was caught."

"Ugh!" grunted M'wa-lot. "We can eat the gilak later."

"We can have a dance," suggested one of Tarzan's captors. "We have eaten and slept many times since we have danced, M'wa-lot."

As the Sagoths, guided by Tar-gash, proceeded along the trail towards the body of the thag, the shes with balus growled savagely when one of the little ones chanced to come near to Tarzan. The bulls eyed him suspiciously and all seemed uneasy because of his presence.

In these and in other ways the Sagoths were reminiscent of the apes of the tribe of Kerchak and to such an extent was this true that Tarzan, although a prisoner among them, felt strangely at home in this new environment.

A short distance ahead of the ape-man walked M'wa-lot, king of the tribe, and at M'wa-lot's elbow was To-yad. The two spoke in low tones and from the frequent glances they cast at Tar-gash, who walked ahead of them, it was evident that he was the subject of their conversation, the effect of which upon M'wa-lot seemed to be highly disturbing.

Tarzan could see that the shaggy chieftain was working himself into a frenzy of rage, the inciting cause of which was evidently the information that To-yad was imparting to him. The latter seemed to be attempting to goad him to greater fury, a fact which seemed to be now apparent to every member of the tribe with the exception of Tar-gash, who was walking in the lead, ahead of M'wa-lot and To-yad, for practically every other eye was turned upon the king, whose evident excitement had imparted a certain fierce restlessness to the other members of his party. But it was not until they had come within sight of the body of the thag that the storm broke and then, without warning, M'wa-lot swung his heavy club and leaped forward toward Tar-gash with the very evident intention of braining him from behind.

If the life of the ape-man in his constant battle for survival had taught him to act quickly, it also had taught him to think quickly. He knew that in all this savage company he had no friends, but he also knew that Tar-gash, from very stubbornness and to spite To-yad, might alone be expected to befriend him and now it appeared that Tar-gash himself might need a friend, for it was evident that no hand was to be raised in defense of him nor any voice in warning. And so Tarzan of the Apes, prompted both by considerations of self-interest and fair

play, took matters into his own hands with such suddenness that he had already acted before any hand could be raised to stop him.

“Kreeg-ah, Tar-gash!” he cried, and at the same instant he sprang quickly forward, brushing To-yad aside with a single sweep of a giant arm that sent the Sagoth headlong into the underbrush bordering the trail.

At the warning cry of “Kreeg-ah,” which in the language of the great apes is synonymous to beware, Tar-gash wheeled about to see the infuriated M’wa-lot with upraised club almost upon him and then he saw something else which made his savage eyes widen in surprise. The strange gilak, whom he had taken prisoner, had leaped close to M’wa-lot from behind. A smooth, bronzed arm slipped quickly about the king’s neck and tightened. The gilak turned and stooped and surging forward with the king across his hip threw the great, hairy bull completely over his head and sent him sprawling at the feet of his astonished warriors. Then the gilak leaped to Tar-gash’s side and, wheeling, faced the tribe with Tar-gash.

Instantly a score of clubs were raised against the two.

“Shall we remain and fight, Tar-gash?” demanded the ape-man.

“They will kill us,” said Tar-gash. “If you were not a gilak, we might escape through the trees, but as you cannot escape we shall have to remain and fight.”

“Lead the way,” said Tarzan. “There is no Sagoth trail that Tarzan cannot follow.”

“Come then,” said Tar-gash, and as he spoke he hurled his club into the faces of the oncoming warriors and, turning, fled along the trail. A dozen mighty bounds he took and then leaped to the branch of an overhanging tree, and close behind him came the hairless gilak.

M’wa-lot’s hairy warrior bulls pursued the two for a short distance

and then gave up the chase as Tarzan was confident that they would, since among his own people it had usually been considered sufficient to run a recalcitrant bull out of the tribe and, unless he insisted upon returning, no particular effort was made to molest him.

As soon as it became evident that pursuit had been abandoned the Sagoth halted among the branches of a huge tree. "I am Tar-gash," he said, as Tarzan stopped near him.

"I am Tarzan," replied the ape-man.

"Why did you warn me?" asked Tar-gash.

"I told you that I did not come among you as an enemy," replied Tarzan, "and when I saw that To-yad had succeeded in urging M'wa-lot to kill you, I warned you because it was you that kept the bulls from killing me when I was captured."

"What were you doing in the country of the Sagoths?" asked Tar-gash.

"I was hunting," replied Tarzan.

"Where do you want to go now?" asked the Sagoth.

"I shall return to my people," replied Tarzan.

"Where are they?"

Tarzan of the Apes hesitated. He looked upward toward the sun, whose rays were filtering down through the foliage of the forest. He looked about him — everywhere was foliage. There was nothing in the foliage nor upon the boles or branches of the trees to indicate direction. Tarzan of the Apes was lost!

5.

BROUGHT DOWN

Jason Gridley, looking down from the branches of the tree in which he had found sanctuary, was held by a certain horrible fascination as he watched the feast of the great cats.

The scene that he had just witnessed — this stupendous spectacle of savagery — suggested to him something of what life upon the outer crust must have been at the dawn of humanity.

The suggestion was borne in upon him that perhaps this scene which he had witnessed might illustrate an important cause of the extinction of all of these animals upon the outer crust.

The action of the great saber-tooth tigers of Pellucidar in rounding up the other beasts of the forest and driving them to this clearing for slaughter evidenced a development of intelligence far beyond that attained by the carnivores of the outer world of the present day, such concerted action by any great number for the common good being unknown.

Gridley saw the vast number of animals that had been slaughtered and most of them uselessly, since there was more flesh there than the surviving tigers could consume before it reached a stage of putrefaction that would render it unpalatable even to one of the great cats. And this fact suggested the conviction that the cunning of the tigers had reached a plane where it might reasonably be expected to react upon themselves and eventually cause their extinction, for in their savage fury and lust for flesh they had slaughtered indiscriminately males and females, young and old. If this slaughter went on unchecked for ages,

the natural prey of the tigers must become extinct and then, goaded by starvation, they would fall upon one another.

The last stage of the ascendancy of the great cats upon the outer crust must have been short and terrible and so eventually it would prove here in Pellucidar.

And just as the great cats may have reached a point where their mental development had spelled their own doom, so in the preceding era the gigantic, carnivorous dinosaurs of the Jurassic may similarly have caused the extinction of their own contemporaries and then of themselves. Nor did Jason Gridley find it difficult to apply the same line of reasoning to the evolution of man upon the outer crust and to his own possible extinction in the not far remote future. In fact, he recalled quite definitely that statisticians had shown that within two hundred years or less the human race would have so greatly increased and the natural resources of the outer world would have been so depleted that the last generation must either starve to death or turn to cannibalism to prolong its hateful existence for another short period.

Perhaps, thought Gridley, in nature's laboratory each type that had at some era dominated all others represented an experiment in the eternal search for perfection. The invertebrate had given way to fishes, the fishes to the reptiles, the reptiles to the birds and mammals, and these, in turn, had been forced to bow to the greater intelligence of man.

What would be next? Gridley was sure that there would be something after man, who is unquestionably the Creator's greatest blunder, combining as he does all the vices of preceding types from invertebrates to mammals, while possessing few of their virtues.

As such thoughts were forced upon his mind by the scene below

him they were accompanied by others of more immediate importance, first of which was concern for his fellows.

Nowhere about the clearing did he see any sign of a human being alive or dead. He called aloud several times but received no reply, though he realized that it was possible that above the roaring and the growling of the feeding beasts his voice might not carry to any great distance. He began to have hopes that his companions had all escaped, but he was still greatly worried over the fate of von Horst.

The subject of second consideration was that of his own escape and return to the O-220. He had it in his mind that at nightfall the beasts might retire and unconsciously he glanced upward at the sun to note the time, when the realization came to him that there would never be any night, that forever throughout all eternity it would be noon here. And then he began to wonder how long he had been gone from the ship, but when he glanced at his watch he realized that that meant nothing. The hour hand might have made an entire circle since he had last looked at it, for in the excitement of all that had transpired since they had left the O-220 how might the mind of man, unaided, compute time?

But he knew that eventually the beasts must get their fill and leave. After them, however, there would be the hyaenodons and the jackals with their fierce cousins, the wild dogs. As he watched these, sitting at a respectful distance from the tigers or slinking hungrily in the background, he realized that they might easily prove as much of a bar to his escape as the saber-tooth tigers themselves.

The hyaenodons especially were most discouraging to contemplate. Their bodies were as large as that of a full grown mastiff. They walked upon short, powerful legs and their broad jaws were massive and

strong. Dark, shaggy hair covered their backs and sides, turning to white upon their breasts and bellies.

Gnawing hunger assailed Jason Gridley and also an overpowering desire to sleep, convincing him that he must have been many hours away from the O-220, and yet the beasts beneath him continued to feed.

A dead thag lay at the foot of the tree in which the American kept his lonely vigil. So far it had not been fed upon and the nearest tiger was fifty yards away. Gridley was hungry, so hungry that he eyed the thag covetously. He glanced about him, measuring the distance from the tree to the nearest tiger and trying to compute the length of time that it would take him to clamber back to safety should he descend to the ground. He had seen the tigers in action and he knew how swiftly they could cover ground and that one of them could leap almost as high as the branch upon which he sat.

Altogether the chance of success seemed slight for the plan he had in mind in the event that the nearest tiger took exception to it. But great though the danger was, hunger won. Gridley drew his hunting knife and lowered himself gently to the ground, keeping an alert eye upon the nearest tiger. Quickly he sliced several long strips of flesh from the thag's hind quarter.

The tarag feeding fifty yards away looked up. Jason sliced another strip, returned his knife to its sheath and climbed quickly back to safety. The tarag lowered its head upon its kill and closed its eyes.

The American gathered dead twigs and small branches that still clung to the living tree and with them he built a small fire in a great crotch.

Here he cooked some of the meat of the thag; the edges were

charred, the inside was raw, but Jason Gridley could have sworn that never before in his life had he tasted such delicious food.

How long his culinary activities employed him, he did not know, but when he glanced down again at the clearing he saw that most of the tigers had quitted their kills and were moving leisurely toward the forest, their distended bellies proclaiming how well they had surfeited themselves. And as the tigers retired, the hyaenodons, the wild dogs and the jackals closed in to the feast.

The hyaenodons kept the others away and Gridley saw another long wait ahead of him; nor was he mistaken. And when the hyaenodons had had their fill and gone, the wild dogs came and kept the jackals away.

In the meantime Gridley had fashioned a rude platform among the branches of the tree, and here he had slept, awakening refreshed but assailed by a thirst that was almost overpowering.

The wild dogs were leaving now and Gridley determined to wait no longer. Already the odor of decaying flesh was warning him of worse to come and there was the fear too that the tigers might return to their kills.

Descending from the tree he skirted the clearing, keeping close to the forest and searching for the trail by which his party had entered the clearing. The wild dogs, slinking away, turned to growl at him, baring menacing fangs. But knowing how well their bellies were filled, he entertained little fear of them; while for the jackals he harbored that contempt which is common among all creatures.

Gridley was dismayed to note that many trails entered the clearing; nor could he recognize any distinguishing mark that might suggest the one by which he had come. Whatever footprints his party had left had been entirely obliterated by the pads of the carnivores.

He tried to reconstruct his passage across the clearing to the tree in which he had found safety and by this means he hit upon a trail to follow, although he had no assurance that it was the right trail. The baffling noonday sun shining down upon him seemed to taunt him with his helplessness.

As he proceeded alone down the lonely trail, realizing that at any instant he might come face to face with some terrible beast of a long dead past, Jason Gridley wondered how the ape-like progenitors of man had survived to transmit any of their characteristics however unpleasant to a posterity. That he could live to reach the O-220 he much doubted. The idea that he might live to take a mate and raise a family was preposterous.

While the general aspect of the forest through which he was passing seemed familiar, he realized that this might be true no matter what trail he was upon and now he reproached himself for not having had the trees along the trail blazed. What a stupid ass he had been, he thought; but his regrets were not so much for himself as for the others, whose safety had been in his hands.

Never in his life had Jason Gridley felt more futile or helpless. To trudge ceaselessly along that endless trail, having not the slightest idea whether it led toward the O-220 or in the opposite direction was depressing, even maddening; yet there was naught else to do. And always that damned noonday sun staring unblinkingly down upon him — the cruel sun that could see his ship, but would not lead him to it.

His thirst was annoying, but not yet overpowering, when he came to a small stream that was crossed by the trail. Here he drank and rested for a while, built a small fire, cooked some more of his thag meat, drank again and took up his weary march — but much refreshed.

Aboard the O-220, as the hours passed and hope waned, the spirit of the remaining officers and members of the crew became increasingly depressed as apprehension for the safety of their absent comrades increased gradually until it became eventually an almost absolute conviction of disaster.

"They have been gone nearly seventy-two hours now," said Zuppner, who, with Dorf and Hines, spent most of his time in the upper observation cabin or pacing the narrow walkingway along the ship's back. "I never felt helpless before in my life," he continued ruefully, "but I am free to admit that I don't know what in the devil to do."

"It just goes to show," said Hines, "how much we depend upon habit and custom and precedence in determining all our action even in the face of what we are pleased to call emergency. Here there is no custom, habit or precedence to guide us."

"We have only our own resources to fall back upon," said Dorf, "and it is humiliating to realize that we have no resources."

"Not under the conditions that surround us," said Zuppner. "On the outer crust there would be no question but that we should cruise around in search of the missing members of our party. We could make rapid excursions, returning to our base often; but here in Pellucidar if we should lose sight of our base there is not one of us who believes he could return the ship to this same anchorage. And that is a chance we cannot take for the only hope those men have is that the ship shall be here when they return."

One hundred and fifty feet below them Robert Jones leaned far out of the galley doorway in an effort to see the noonday sun shining

down upon the ship. His simple, good-natured face wore a puzzled expression not untinged with awe, and as he drew back into the galley he extracted a rabbit's foot from his trousers pocket. Gently he touched each eye with it and then rubbed it vigorously upon the top of his head at the same time muttering incoherently below his breath.

From the vantage point of the walkingway far above, Lieutenant Hines scanned the landscape in all directions through powerful glasses as he had done for so long that it seemed he knew every shrub and tree and blade of grass within sight. The wild life of savage Pellucidar that crossed and re-crossed the clearing had long since become an old story to these three men. Again and again as one animal or another had emerged from the distant forest the glasses had been leveled upon it until it could be identified as other than man; but now Hines voiced a sudden, nervous exclamation.

"What is it?" demanded Zuppner. "What do you see?"

"It's a man!" exclaimed Hines. "I'm sure of it."

"Where?" asked Dorf, as he and Zuppner raised their glasses to their eyes.

"About two points to port."

"I see it," said Dorf. "It's either Gridley or von Horst, and whoever it is he is alone."

"Take ten of the crew at once, Lieutenant," said Zuppner, turning to Dorf. "See that they are well armed and go out and meet him. Lose no time," he shouted after the Lieutenant, who had already started down the climbing shaft.

The two officers upon the top of the O-220 watched Dorf and his party as it set out to meet the man they could see trudging steadily toward the ship. They watched them as they approached one another, though, owing to the contour of the land, which was rolling, neither

Dorf nor the man he had gone to meet caught sight of one another until they were less than a hundred yards apart. It was then that the Lieutenant recognized the other as Jason Gridley.

As they hastened forward and clasped hands it was typical of the man that Gridley's first words were an inquiry relative to the missing members of the party.

Dorf shook his head. "You are the only one that has returned," he said.

The eager light died out of Gridley's eyes and he suddenly looked very tired and much older as he greeted the engineers and mechanics who made up the party that had come to escort him back to the ship.

"I have been within sight of the ship for a long time," he said. "How long, I do not know. I broke my watch back in the forest a while back trying to beat a tiger up a tree. Then another one treed me just on the edge of the clearing in plain view of the ship. It seems as though I have been there a week. How long have I been gone, Dorf?"

"About seventy-two hours."

Gridley's face brightened. "Then there is no reason to give up hope yet for the others," he said. "I honestly thought I had been gone a week. I have slept several times, I never could tell how long; and then I have gone for what seemed long periods without sleep because I became very tired and excessively hungry and thirsty."

During the return march to the ship Jason insisted upon hearing a detailed account of everything that had happened since his departure, but it was not until they had joined Zuppner and Hines that he narrated the adventures that had befallen him and his companions during their ill-fated expedition.

"The first thing I want," he told them after he had been greeted by Zuppner and Hines, "is a bath, and then if you will have Bob cook

a couple of cows I'll give you the details of the expedition while I am eating them. A couple of handfuls of *Bos primigenius* and some wild fruit have only whetted my appetite."

A half hour later, refreshed by a bath, a shave and fresh clothing, he joined them in the mess room.

As the three men seated themselves, Robert Jones entered from the galley, his black face wreathed in smiles.

"Ah'm suttinly glad to see you all, Mas' Jason," said Robert. "Ah knew sumpin was a-goin' to happen though — Ah knew we was a-goin' to have good luck."

"Well, I'm glad to be back, Bob," said Gridley, "and I don't know of anyone that I am any happier to see than you, for I sure have missed your cooking. But what made you think that we're going to have good luck?"

"Ah jes had a brief conversation with mah rabbit's foot. Dat ole boy he never fails me. We suah be out o' luck if Ah lose him."

"Oh, I've seen lots of rabbits around, Bob," said Zuppner. "We can get you a bushel of them in no time."

"Yes suh, Cap'n, but you cain't get 'em in de dahk of de moon where dey ain't no dahk an' dey ain't no moon, an' othe'wise dey lacks efficiency."

"It's a good thing, then, that we brought you along," said Jason, "and a mighty good thing for Pellucidar, for she never has had a really effective rabbit's foot before in all her existence. But I can see where you're going to need that rabbit's foot pretty badly yourself in about a minute, Bob."

"How's dat, suh?" demanded Robert.

"The spirits tell me that something is going to happen to you if you don't get food onto this table in a hurry," laughed Gridley.

“Yes suh, comin’ right up,” exclaimed the black as he hastened into the galley.

As Gridley ate, he went over the adventures of the last seventy-two hours in careful detail and the three men sought to arrive at some definite conjecture as to the distance he had covered from the ship and the direction.

“Do you think that you could lead another party to the clearing where you became separated from von Horst and the Waziri?” asked Zuppner.

“Yes, of course I could,” replied Gridley, “because from the point that we entered the forest we blazed the trees up to the time we reached the trail, which we followed to the left. In fact I would not be needed at all and if we decide to send out such a party, I shall not accompany it.”

The other officers looked at him in surprise and for a moment there was an embarrassed silence.

“I have what I consider a better plan,” continued Gridley. “There are twenty-seven of us left. In the event of absolute necessity, twelve men can operate the ship. That will leave fifteen to form a new searching party. Leaving me out, you would have fourteen, and after you have heard my plan, if you decide upon sending out such a party, I suggest that Lieutenant Dorf command it, leaving you, Captain Zuppner, and Hines to navigate the ship in the event that none of us returns, or that you finally decide to set out in search of us.”

“But I thought that you were not going,” said Zuppner.

“I am not going with the searching party. I am going alone in the scout plane, and my advice would be that you send out no searching party for at least twenty-four hours after I depart, for in that time I shall either have located those who are missing or have failed entirely.”

Zuppner shook his head, dubiously. "Hines, Dorf and I have discussed the feasibility of using the scout plane," he said. "Hines was very anxious to make the attempt, although he realizes better than any of us that once a pilot is out of sight of the O-220 he may never be able to locate it again, for you must remember that we know nothing concerning any of the landmarks of the country in the direction that our search must be prosecuted."

"I have taken all that into consideration," replied Gridley, "and I realize that it is at best but a forlorn hope."

"Let me undertake it," said Hines. "I have had more flying experience than any of you with the possible exception of Captain Zuppner, and it is out of the question that we should risk losing him."

"Any one of you three is probably better fitted to undertake such a flight than I," replied Gridley; "but that does not relieve me of the responsibility. I am more responsible than any other member of this party for our being where we are and, therefore, my responsibility for the safety of the missing members of the expedition is greater than that of any of the rest of you. Under the circumstances, then, I could not permit anyone else to undertake this flight. I think that you will all understand and appreciate how I feel and that you will do me the favor to interpose no more objection."

It was several minutes thereafter before anyone spoke, the four seeming to be immersed in the business of sipping their coffee and smoking their cigarettes. It was Zuppner who broke the silence.

"Before you undertake this thing," he said, "you should have a long sleep, and in the meantime we will get the plane out and have it gone over thoroughly. You must have every chance for success that we can give you."

"Thank you!" said Gridley. "I suppose you are right about the

sleep. I hate to waste the time, but if you will call me the moment that the ship is ready I shall go to my cabin at once and get such sleep as I can in the meantime.”

While Gridley slept, the scout plane, carried aft in the keel cabin, was lowered to the ground, where it underwent a careful inspection and test by the engineers and officers of the O-220.

Even before the plane was ready Gridley appeared at the cabin door of the O-220 and descended to the ground.

“You did not sleep long,” said Zuppner.

“I do not know how long,” said Gridley, “but I feel rested and anyway I could not have slept longer, knowing that those fellows are out there somewhere waiting and hoping for succor.”

“What route do you expect to follow,” asked Zuppner, “and how are you planning to insure a reasonable likelihood of your being able to return?”

“I shall fly directly over the forest as far as I think it at all likely that they could have marched in the time that they have been absent, assuming that they became absolutely confused and have traveled steadily away from the ship. As soon as I have gained sufficient altitude to make any observation I shall try and spot some natural landmark, like a mountain or a body of water, near the ship and from time to time, as I proceed, I shall make a note of similar landmarks. I believe that in this way I can easily find my way back, since at the furthest I cannot proceed over two hundred and fifty miles from the O-220 and return to it with the fuel that I can carry.

“After I have reached the furthest possible limits that I think the party could have strayed, I shall commence circling, depending upon the noise of the motor to attract their attention and, of course,

assuming that they will find some means of signaling their presence to me, which they can do even in wooded country by building smudges.”

“You expect to land?” inquired Zuppner, nodding at the heavy rifle which Gridley carried.

“If I find them in open country, I shall land; but even if I do not find them it may be necessary for me to come down and my recent experiences have taught me not to venture far in Pellucidar without a rifle.”

After a careful inspection, Gridley shook hands with the three remaining officers and bid farewell to the ship’s company, all of whom were anxious observers of his preparation for departure.

“Good-bye, old man,” said Zuppner, “and may God and luck go with you.”

Gridley pressed the hand of the man he had come to look upon as a staunch and loyal friend, and then took his seat in the open cockpit of the scout plane. Two mechanics spun the propeller, the motor roared and a moment later the block was kicked away and the plane rolled out across the grassy meadowland towards the forest at the far side. The watchers saw it rise swiftly and make a great circle and they knew that Gridley was looking for a landmark. Twice it circled above the open plain and then darted away across the forest.

It had not been until he had made that first circle that Jason Gridley had realized the handicap that this horizonless landscape of Pellucidar had placed upon his chances of return. He had thought of a mountain standing boldly out against the sky, for such a landmark would have been almost constantly within the range of his vision during the entire flight.

There were mountains in the distance, but they stood out against no background of blue sky nor upon any horizon. They simply merged

with the landscape beyond them, curving upward in the distance. Twice he circled, his keen eyes searching for any outstanding point in the topography of the country beneath him, but there was nothing that was more apparent than the grassy plain upon which the O-220 rested.

He felt that he could not waste time and fuel by searching longer for a landmark that did not exist, and while he realized that the plain would be visible for but a comparatively short distance he was forced to accept it as his sole guide in lieu of a better one.

Roaring above the leafy roof of the primeval forest, all that transpired upon the ground below was hidden from him and it was tantalizing to realize that he might have passed directly over the heads of the comrades he sought, yet there was no other way. Returning, he would either circle or hold an exaggerated zig-zag course, watching carefully for sign of a signal.

For almost two hours Jason Gridley held a straight course, passing over forest, plain and rolling, hilly country, but nowhere did he see any sign of those he sought. Already he had reached the limit of the distance he had planned upon coming when there loomed ahead of him in the distance a range of lofty mountains. These alone would have determined him to turn back, since his judgment told him that the lost members of the party, should they have chanced to come this far, would by now have realized that they were traveling in the wrong direction.

As he banked to turn he caught a glimpse out of the corner of an eye of something in the air above him and looking quickly back, Jason Gridley caught his breath in astonishment.

Hovering now, almost above him, was a gigantic creature, the enormous spread of whose wings almost equalled that of the plane he was piloting. The man had a single glimpse of tremendous jaws, armed

with mighty teeth, in the very instant that he realized that this mighty anachronism was bent upon attacking him.

Gridley was flying at an altitude of about three thousand feet when the huge pteranodon launched itself straight at the ship. Jason sought to elude it by diving. There was a terrific crash, a roar, a splintering of wood and a grinding of metal as the pteranodon swooped down upon its prey and full into the propeller.

What happened then, happened so quickly that Jason Gridley could not have reconstructed the scene five seconds later.

The plane turned completely over and at the same instant Gridley jumped. He jerked the rip cord of his parachute. Something struck him on the head and he lost consciousness.

6.

A PHORORHACOS OF THE MIOCENE

“Where are your people?” Tar-gash asked again.

Tarzan shook his head. “I do not know,” he said.

“Where is your country?” asked Tar-gash.

“It is a long way off,” replied the ape-man. “It is not in Pellucidar;” but that the Sagoth could not understand any more than he could understand that a creature might be lost at all, for inherent in him was that same homing instinct that marked all the creatures of Pellucidar and which constitutes a wise provision of nature in a world without guiding celestial bodies.

Had it been possible to transport Tar-gash instantly to any point within that mighty inner world, elsewhere than upon the surface of an ocean, he could have unerringly found his way to the very spot where he was born, and because that power was instinctive he could not understand why Tarzan did not possess it.

“I know where there is a tribe of men,” he said, presently. “Perhaps they are your people. I shall lead you to them.”

As Tarzan had no idea as to the direction in which the ship lay and as it was remotely possible that Tar-gash was referring to the members of the O-220 expedition, he felt that he was as well off following where Tar-gash led as elsewhere, and so he signified his readiness to accompany the Sagoth.

“How long since you saw this tribe of men,” he asked after a while, “and how long have they lived where you saw them?”

Upon the Sagoth’s reply to these questions, the ape-man felt that he

might determine the possibility of the men to whom Tar-gash referred being the members of his own party, for if they were newcomers in the district then the chances were excellent that they were the people he sought; but his questions elicited no satisfactory reply for the excellent reason that time meant nothing to Tar-gash. And so the two set out upon a leisurely search for the tribe of men that Tar-gash knew of. It was leisurely because for Tar-gash time did not exist; nor had it ever been a very important factor in the existence of the ape-man, except in occasional moments of emergency.

They were a strangely assorted pair — one a creature just standing upon the threshold of humanity, the other an English Lord in his own right, who was, at the same time, in many respects as primitive as the savage, shaggy bull into whose companionship chance had thrown him.

At first Tar-gash had been inclined to look with contempt upon this creature of another race, which he considered far inferior to his own in strength, agility, courage and woodcraft, but he soon came to hold the ape-man in vast respect. And because he could respect his prowess he became attached to him in bonds of loyalty that were as closely akin to friendship as the savage nature of his primitive mind permitted.

They hunted together and fought together. They swung through the trees when the great cats hunted upon the ground, or they followed game trails ages old beneath the hoary trees of Pellucidar or out across her rolling, grassy, flower-spangled meadowland.

They lived well upon the fat of the land for both were mighty hunters.

Tarzan fashioned a new bow and arrows and a stout spear, and these, at first, the Sagoth refused even to notice, but presently when he saw how easily and quickly they brought game to their larder he

evinced a keen interest and Tarzan taught him how to use the weapons and later how to fashion them.

The country through which they traveled was well watered and was alive with game. It was partly wooded with great stretches of open land, where tremendous herds of herbivores grazed beneath the eternal noonday sun, and because of these great herds the beasts of prey were numerous — and such beasts!

Tarzan had thought that there was no world like his own world and no jungle like his own jungle, but the more deeply he dipped into the wonders of Pellucidar the more enamored he became of this savage, primitive world, teeming with the wild life he loved best. That there were few men was Pellucidar's chiefest recommendation. Had there been none the ape-man might have considered this the land of ultimate perfection, for who is there more conversant with the cruelty and inconsideration of man than the savage beasts of the jungle?

The friendship that had developed between Tarzan and the Sagoth — and that was primarily based upon the respect which each felt for the prowess of the other — increased as each seemed to realize other admirable, personal qualities and characteristics in his companion, not the least of which being a common taciturnity. They spoke only when conversation seemed necessary, and that, in reality, was seldom.

If man spoke only when he had something worthwhile to say and said that as quickly as possible, ninety-eight per cent of the human race might as well be dumb, thereby establishing a heavenly harmony from pate to tonsil.

And so the companionship of Tar-gash, coupled with the romance of strange sights and sounds and odors in this new world, acted upon the ape-man as might a strong drug, filling him with exhilaration and dulling his sense of responsibility, so that the necessity of finding

his people dwindled to a matter of minor importance. Had he known that some of them were in trouble his attitude would have changed immediately, but this he did not know. On the contrary he was only aware that they had every facility for insuring their safety and their ultimate return to the outer world and that his absence would not handicap them in any particular. However, when he did give the matter thought he knew that he must return to them, that he must find them, and that sooner or later he must go back with them to the world from which they had come.

But all such considerations were quite remote from his thoughts as he and Tar-gash were crossing a rolling, tree-dotted plain in their search for the tribe of men to which the Sagoth was guiding him. By comparison with other plains they had crossed, this one seemed strangely deserted, but the reason for this was evident in the close-cropped grass which suggested that great herds had grazed it off before moving on to new pastures. The absence of life and movement was slightly depressing and Tarzan found himself regretting the absence of even the dangers of the teeming land through which they had just come.

They were well out toward the center of the plain and could see the solid green of a great forest curving upward into the hazy distance when the attention of both was attracted by a strange, droning noise that brought them to a sudden halt. Simultaneously both turned and looked backward and up into the sky from which the sound seemed to come.

Far above and just emerging from the haze of the distance was a tiny speck. "Quick!" exclaimed Tar-gash. "It is a thipdar," and motioning Tarzan to follow him he ran swiftly to concealment beneath a large tree.

“What is a thipdar?” asked Tarzan, as the two halted beneath the friendly shade.

“A thipdar,” said the Sagoth, “is a thipdar;” nor could he describe it more fully other than to add that the thipdars were sometimes used by the Mahars either to protect them or to hunt their food.

“Is the thipdar a living thing?” demanded Tarzan.

“Yes,” replied Tar-gash. “It lives and is very strong and very fierce.”

“Then that is not a thipdar,” said Tarzan.

“What is it then?” demanded the Sagoth.

“It is an aeroplane,” replied Tarzan.

“What is that?” inquired the Sagoth.

“It would be hard to explain it to you,” replied the ape-man. “It is something that the men of my world build and in which they fly through the air,” and as he spoke he stepped out into the opening, where he might signal the pilot of the plane, which he was positive was the one carried by the O-220 and which, he assumed, was prosecuting a search for him.

“Come back,” exclaimed Tar-gash. “You cannot fight a thipdar. It will swoop down and carry you off if you are out in the open.”

“It will not harm me,” said Tarzan. “One of my friends is in it.”

“And you will be in it, too, if you do not come back under the tree,” replied Tar-gash.

As the plane approached, Tarzan ran around in a small circle to attract the pilot’s attention, stopping occasionally to wave his arms, but the plane sped on above him and it was evident that its pilot had not seen him.

Until it faded from sight in the distance, Tarzan of the Apes stood upon the lonely plain, watching the ship that was bearing his comrade away from him.

The sight of the ship awakened Tarzan to a sense of his responsibility. He realized now that someone was risking his life to save him and with this thought came a determination to exert every possible effort to locate the O-220.

The passage of the plane opened many possibilities for conjecture. If it was circling, which was possible, the direction of its flight as it passed over him would have no bearing upon the direction of the O-220, and if it were not circling, then how was he to know whether it was traveling away from the ship in the beginning of its quest, or was returning to it having concluded its flight.

“That was not a thipdar,” said Tar-gash, coming from beneath the tree and standing at Tarzan’s side. “It is a creature that I have never seen before. It is larger and must be even more terrible than a thipdar. It must have been very angry, for it growled terribly all the time.”

“It is not alive,” said Tarzan. “It is something that the men of my country build that they may fly through the air. Riding in it is one of my friends. He is looking for me.”

The Sagoth shook his head. “I am glad he did not come down,” he said. “He was either very angry or very hungry, otherwise he would not have growled so loudly.”

It was apparent to Tarzan that Tar-gash was entirely incapable of comprehending his explanation of the aeroplane and that he would always believe it was a huge, flying reptile; but that was of no importance — the thing that troubled Tarzan being the question of the direction in which he should now prosecute his search for the O-220, and eventually he determined to follow in the direction taken by the airship, for as this coincided with the direction in which Tar-gash assured him he would find the tribe of human beings for which they were searching, it seemed after all the wisest course to pursue.

The drone of the motor had died away in the distance when Tarzan and Tar-gash took up their interrupted journey across the plain and into broken country of low, rocky hills.

The trail, which was well marked and which Tar-gash said led through the hills, followed the windings of a shallow canyon, which was rimmed on one side by low cliffs, in the face of which there were occasional caves and crevices. The bottom of the canyon was strewn with fragments of rock of various sizes. The vegetation was sparse and there was every indication of an aridity such as Tarzan had not previously encountered since he left the O-220, and as it seemed likely that both game and water would be scarce here, the two pushed on at a brisk, swinging walk.

It was very quiet and Tarzan's ears were constantly upon the alert to catch the first sound of the hum of the motor of the returning aeroplane, when suddenly the silence was shattered by the sound of hoarse screeching which seemed to be coming from a point further up the canyon.

Tar-gash halted. "Dyal," he said.

Tarzan looked at the Sagoth questioningly.

"It is a Dyal," repeated Tar-gash, "and it is angry."

"What is a Dyal?" asked Tarzan.

"It is a terrible bird," replied the Sagoth; "but its meat is good, and Tar-gash is hungry."

That was enough. No matter how terrible the Dyal might be, it was meat and Tar-gash was hungry, and so the two beasts of prey crept warily forward, stalking their quarry. A vagrant breeze, wafting gently down the canyon, brought to the nostrils of the ape-man a strange, new scent. It was a bird scent, slightly suggestive of the scent of an ostrich, and from its volume Tarzan guessed that it might come from a very

large bird, a suggestion that was borne out by the loud screeching of the creature, intermingled with which was a scratching and a scraping sound.

Tar-gash, who was in the lead and who was taking advantage of all the natural shelter afforded by the fragments of rock with which the canyon bed was strewn, came to a halt upon the lower side of a great boulder, behind which he quickly withdrew, and as Tarzan joined him he signalled the ape-man to look around the corner of the boulder.

Following the suggestion of his companion, Tarzan saw the author of the commotion that had attracted their attention. Being a savage jungle beast, he exhibited no outward sign of the astonishment he felt as he gazed upon the mighty creature that was clawing frantically at a crevice in the cliffside.

To Tarzan it was a nameless creature of another world. To Tar-gash it was simply a Dyal. Neither knew that he was looking upon a phororhacos of the Miocene. They saw a huge creature whose crested head, larger than that of a horse, towered eight feet above the ground. Its powerful, curved beak gaped wide as it screeched in anger. It beat its short, useless wing in a frenzy of rage as it struck with its mighty three-toed talons at something just within the fissure before it. And then it was that Tarzan saw that the thing at which it struck was a spear, held by human hands — a pitifully inadequate weapon with which to attempt to ward off the attack of the mighty Dyal.

As Tarzan surveyed the creature he wondered how Tar-gash, armed only with his puny club, might hope to pit himself in successful combat against it. He saw the Sagoth creep stealthily out from behind their rocky shelter and move slowly to another closer to the Dyal and behind it, and so absorbed was the bird in its attack upon the man

within the fissure that it did not notice the approach of the enemy in its rear.

The moment that Tar-gash was safely concealed behind the new shelter, Tarzan followed him and now they were within fifty feet of the great bird.

The Sagoth, grasping his club firmly by the small end, arose and ran swiftly from his concealment, straight toward the giant Dyal, and Tarzan followed, fitting an arrow to his bow.

Tar-gash had covered but half the distance when the sound of his approach attracted the attention of the bird. Wheeling about, it discovered the two rash creatures who dared to interfere with its attack upon its quarry, and with a loud screech and wide distended beak it charged them.

The instant that the Dyal had turned and discovered them, Tar-gash had commenced whirling his club about his head and as the bird charged he launched it at one of those mighty legs, and on the instant Tarzan understood the purpose of the Sagoth's method of attack. The heavy club, launched by the mighty muscles of the beast man, would snap the leg bone that it struck, and then the enormous fowl would be at the mercy of the Sagoth. But if it did not strike the leg, what then? Almost certain death for Tar-gash.

Tarzan had long since had reason to appreciate his companion's savage disregard of life in the pursuit of flesh, but this seemed the highest pinnacle to which rashness might ascend and still remain within the realm of sanity.

And, indeed, there happened that which Tarzan had feared — the club missed its mark. Tarzan's bow sang and an arrow sank deep into the breast of the Dyal. Tar-gash leaped swiftly to one side, eluding the charge, and another arrow pierced the bird's feathers and hide.

And then the ape-man sprang quickly to his right as the avalanche of destruction bore down upon him, its speed undiminished by the force of the two arrows buried so deeply within it.

Before the Dyal could turn to pursue either of them, Tar-gash hurled a rock, many of which were scattered upon the ground about them. It struck the Dyal upon the side of the head, momentarily dazing him, and Tarzan drove home two more arrows. As he did so, the Dyal wheeled drunkenly toward him and as he faced about a great spear drove past Tarzan's shoulder and plunged deep into the breast of the maddened creature, and to the impact of this last missile it went down, falling almost at the feet of the ape-man.

Ignorant though he was of the strength and the methods of attack and defense of this strange bird, Tarzan nevertheless hesitated not an instant and as the Dyal fell he was upon it with drawn hunting knife.

So quickly was he in and out that he had severed its windpipe and was away again before he could become entangled in its death struggle, and then it was that for the first time he saw the man who had cast the spear.

Standing erect, a puzzled expression upon his face, was a tall, stalwart warrior, his slightly bronzed skin gleaming in the sunlight, his shaggy head of hair bound back by a deerskin band.

For weapons, in addition to his spear, he carried a stone knife, thrust into the girdle that supported his G-string. His eyes were well set and intelligent. His features were regular and well cut. Altogether he was as splendid a specimen of manhood as Tarzan had ever beheld.

Tar-gash, who had recovered his club, was advancing toward the stranger. "I am Tar-gash," he said. "I kill."

The stranger drew his stone knife and waited, looking first at Tar-gash and then at Tarzan.

The ape-man stepped in front of Tar-gash. "Wait," he commanded. "Why do you kill?"

"He is a gilak," replied the Sagoth.

"He saved you from the Dyal," Tarzan reminded Tar-gash. "My arrows would not stop the bird. Had it not been for his spear, one or both of us must have died."

The Sagoth appeared puzzled. He scratched his head in perplexity. "But if I do not kill him, he will kill me," he said finally.

Tarzan turned toward the stranger. "I am Tarzan," he said. "This is Tar-gash," and he pointed at the Sagoth and waited.

"I am Thoar," said the stranger.

"Let us be friends," said Tarzan. "We have no quarrel with you."

Again the stranger looked puzzled.

"Do you understand the language of the Sagoths?" asked Tarzan, thinking that possibly the man might not have understood him.

Thoar nodded. "A little," he said; "but why should we be friends?"

"Why should we be enemies?" countered the ape-man.

Thoar shook his head. "I do not know," he said. "It is always thus."

"Together we have slain the Dyal," said Tarzan. "Had we not come it would have killed you. Had you not cast your spear it would have killed us. Therefore, we should be friends, not enemies. Where are you going?"

"Back to my own country," replied Thoar, nodding in the direction that Tarzan and Tar-gash had been travelling.

"We, too, are going in that direction," said Tarzan. "Let us go together. Six hands are better than four."

Thoar glanced at the Sagoth.

"Shall we all go together as friends, Tar-gash?" demanded Tarzan.

“It is not done,” said the Sagoth, precisely as though he had behind him thousands of years of civilization and culture.

Tarzan smiled one of his rare smiles. “We shall do it, then,” he said. “Come!”

As though taking it for granted that the others would obey his command, the ape-man turned to the body of the Dyal and, drawing his hunting knife, fell to work cutting off portions of the meat. For a moment Thoar and Tar-gash hesitated, eyeing each other suspiciously, and then the bronzed warrior walked over to assist Tarzan and presently Tar-gash joined them.

Thoar exhibited keen interest in Tarzan’s steel knife, which slid so easily through the flesh while he hacked and hewed laboriously with his stone implement; while Tar-gash seemed not particularly to notice either of the implements as he sunk his strong fangs into the breast of the Dyal and tore away a large hunk of the meat, which he devoured raw. Tarzan was about to do the same, having been raised exclusively upon a diet of raw meat, when he saw Thoar preparing to make fire, which he accomplished by the primitive expedient of friction. The three ate in silence, the Sagoth carrying his meat to a little distance from the others, perhaps because in him the instinct of the wild beast was stronger.

When they had finished they followed the trail upward toward the pass through which it led across the hills, and as they went Tarzan sought to question Thoar concerning his country and its people, but so limited is the primitive vocabulary of the Sagoths and so meager Thoar’s knowledge of this language that they found communication difficult and Tarzan determined to master Thoar’s tongue.

Considerable experience in learning new dialects and languages rendered the task far from difficult and as the ape-man never for a

moment relinquished a purpose he intended to achieve, nor ever abandoned a task that he had set himself until it had been successfully concluded, he made rapid progress which was greatly facilitated by the interest which Thoar took in instructing him.

As they reached the summit of the low hills, they saw, hazily in the far distance, what appeared to be a range of lofty mountains.

“There,” said Thoar, pointing, “lies Zoram.”

“What is Zoram?” asked Tarzan.

“It is my country,” replied the warrior. “It lies in the Mountains of the Thipdars.”

This was the second time that Tarzan had heard a reference to thipdars. Tar-gash had said the aeroplane was a thipdar and now Thoar spoke of the Mountains of the Thipdars. “What is a thipdar?” he asked.

Thoar looked at him in astonishment. “From what country do you come,” he demanded, “that you do not know what a thipdar is and do not speak the language of the gilaks?”

“I am not of Pellucidar,” said Tarzan.

“I could believe that,” said Thoar, “if there were any other place from which you could be, but there is not, except Molop Az, the flaming sea upon which Pellucidar floats. But the only inhabitants of the Molop Az are the little demons, who carry the dead who are buried in the ground, piece by piece, down to Molop Az, and while I have never seen one of these little demons I am sure that they are not like you.”

“No,” said Tarzan, “I am not from Molop Az, yet sometimes I have thought that the world from which I come is inhabited by demons, both large and small.”

As they hunted and ate and slept and marched together, these three

creatures found their confidence in one another increasing so that even Tar-gash looked no longer with suspicion upon Thoar, and though they represented three distinct periods in the ascent of man, each separated from the other by countless thousands of years, yet they had so much in common that the advance which man had made from Tar-gash to Tarzan seemed scarcely a fair recompense for the time and effort which Nature must have expended.

Tarzan could not even conjecture the length of time he had been absent from the O-220, but he was confident that he must be upon the wrong trail, yet it seemed futile to turn back since he could not possibly have any idea as to what direction he should take. His one hope was that either he might be sighted by the pilot of the plane, which he was certain was hunting for him, or that the O-220, in cruising about, would eventually pass within signalling distance of him. In the meantime he might as well be with Tar-gash and Thoar as elsewhere.

The three had eaten and slept again and were resuming their journey when Tarzan's keen eyes espied from the summit of a low hill something lying upon an open plain at a considerable distance ahead of them. He did not know what it was, but he was sure that whatever it was, it was not a part of the natural landscape, there being about it that indefinable suggestion of discord, or, more properly, lack of harmony with its surroundings that every man whose perception has not been dulled by city dwelling will understand. And as it was almost instinctive with Tarzan to investigate anything that he did not understand, he turned his footsteps in the direction of the thing that he had seen.

The object that had aroused his curiosity was hidden from him almost immediately after he started the descent of the hill upon which

he had stood when he discovered it; nor did it come again within the range of his vision until he was close upon it, when to his astonishment and dismay he saw that it was the wreck of an aeroplane.

7.

THE RED FLOWER OF ZORAM

Jana, The Red Flower of Zoram, paused and looked back across the rocky crags behind and below her. She was very hungry and it had been long since she had slept, for behind her, dogging her trail, were the four terrible men from Pheli, which lies at the foot of the Mountains of the Thipdars, beyond the land of Zoram.

For just an instant she stood erect and then she threw herself prone upon the rough rock, behind a jutting fragment that partially concealed her, and here she looked back along the way she had come, across a pathless waste of tumbled granite. Mountain-bred, she had lived her life among the lofty peaks of the Mountains of the Thipdars, considering contemptuously the people of the lowland to which those who pursued her belonged. Perchance, if they followed her here she might be forced to concede them some measure of courage and possibly to look upon them with a slightly lessened contempt, yet even so she would never abate her effort to escape them.

Bred in the bone of The Red Flower was loathing of the men of Pheli, who ventured occasionally into the fastnesses of the Mountains of the Thipdars to steal women, for the pride and the fame of the mountain people lay in the beauty of their girls, and so far had this fame spread that men came from far countries, out of the vast river basin below their lofty range, and risked a hundred deaths in efforts to steal such a mate as Jana, The Red Flower of Zoram.

The girl's sister, Lana, had been thus stolen, and within her memory two other girls of Zoram, by the men from the lowland, and

so the fear, as well as the danger, was ever present. Such a fate seemed to The Red Flower worse than death, since not only would it take her forever from her beloved mountains, but make her a low-country woman and her children low-country children than which, in the eyes of the mountain people, there could be no deeper disgrace, for the mountain men mated only with mountain women, the men of Zoram, and Clovi, and Daroz taking mates from their own tribes or stealing them from their neighbors.

Jana was beloved by many of the young warriors of Zoram, and though, as yet, there had been none who had fired her own heart to love she knew that some day she would mate with one of them, unless in the meantime she was stolen by a warrior from another tribe.

Were she to fall into the hands of one from either Clovi or Daroz she would not be disgraced and she might even be happy, but she was determined to die rather than to be taken by the men from Pheli.

Long ago, it seemed to her now, who had no means for measuring time, she had been searching for thipdar eggs among the lofty crags above the caverns that were the home of her people when a great hairy man leaped from behind a rock and endeavored to seize her. Active as a chamois, she eluded him with ease, but he stood between her and the village and when she sought to circle back she discovered that he had three companions who effectually barred her way, and then had commenced the flight and the pursuit that had taken her far from Zoram among lofty peaks where she had never been before.

Not far below her, four squat, hairy men had stopped to rest. "Let us turn back," growled one. "You can never catch her, Skruk, in country like this, which is fit only for thipdars and no place for men."

Skruk shook his bullet head. "I have seen her," he said, "and I shall have her if I have to chase her to the shores of Molop Az."

“Our hands are torn by the sharp rock,” said another. “Our sandals are almost gone and our feet bleed. We cannot go on. We shall die.”

“You may die,” said Skruk, “but until then you shall go on. I am Skruk, the chief, and I have spoken.”

The others growled resentfully, but when Skruk took up the pursuit again they followed him. Being from a low country they found strenuous exertion in these high altitudes exhausting, it is true, but the actual basis for their disinclination to continue the pursuit was the terror which the dizzy heights inspired in them and the perilous route along which The Red Flower of Zoram was leading them.

From above Jana saw them ascending, and knowing that they were again upon the right trail she stood erect in plain view of them. Her single, soft garment made from the pelt of tarag cubs, whipped about her naked legs, half revealing, half concealing the rounded charms of her girlish figure. The noonday sun shone down upon her light, bronzed skin, glistening from the naked contours of a perfect shoulder and imparting golden glints to her hair that was sometimes a lustrous brown and again a copper bronze. It was piled loosely upon her head and held in place by slender, hollow bones of the dimorphodon, a little long-tailed cousin of the thipdar. The upper ends of these bone pins were ornamented with carving and some of them were colored. A fillet of soft skin ornamented in colors encircled her brow and she wore bracelets and anklets made of the vertebrae of small animals, strung upon leather thongs. These, too, were carved and colored. Upon her feet were stout, little sandals, soled with the hide of the mastodon and from the center of her headband rose a single feather. At her hip was a stone knife and in her right hand a light spear.

She stooped and picking up a small fragment of rock hurled it down at Skruk and his companions. “Go back to your swamps, jaloks

of the low country," she cried. "The Red Flower of Zoram is not for you," and then she turned and sped away across the pathless granite.

To her left lay Zoram, but there was a mighty chasm between her and the city. Along its rim she made her way, sometimes upon its very verge, but unshaken by the frightful abyss below her. Constantly she sought for a means of descent, since she knew that if she could cross it she might circle back toward Zoram, but the walls rose sheer for two thousand feet offering scarce a handhold in a hundred feet.

As she rounded the shoulder of the peak she saw a vast country stretching away below her — a country that she had never seen before — and she knew that she had crossed the mighty range and was looking on the land that lay beyond. The fissure that she had been following she could see widening below her into a great canyon that led out through foothills to a mighty plain. The slopes of the lower hills were wooded and beyond the plain were forests.

This was a new world to Jana of Zoram, but it held no lure for her; it did not beckon to her for she knew that savage beasts and savage men of the low countries roamed its plains and forests.

To her right rose the mountains she had rounded; to her left was the deep chasm, and behind her were Skruk and his three companions.

For a moment she feared that she was trapped, but after advancing a few yards she saw that the sheer wall of the abyss had given way to a tumbled mass of broken ledges. But whether there were any means of descent, even here, she did not know — she could only hope.

From pausing often to search for a way down into the gorge, Jana had lost precious time and now she became suddenly aware that her pursuers were close behind her. Again she sprang forward, leaping from rock to rock, while they redoubled their speed and stumbled after her in pursuit, positive now that they were about to capture her.

Jana glanced below, and a hundred feet beneath her she saw a tumbled mass of granite that had fallen from above and formed a wide ledge. Just ahead the mountain jutted out forming an overhanging cliff.

She glanced back. Skruk was already in sight. He was stumbling awkwardly along in a clumsy run and breathing heavily, but he was very near and she must choose quickly.

There was but one way — over the edge of the cliff lay temporary escape or certain death. A leather thong, attached a foot below the point of her spear, she fastened around her neck, letting the spear hang down her back, threw herself upon the ground and slid over the edge of the cliff. Perhaps there were handholds; perhaps not. She glanced down. The face of the cliff was rough and not perpendicular, leaning in a little toward the mountain. She felt about with her toes and finally she located a protuberance that would hold her weight. Then she relinquished her hold upon the top of the cliff with one hand and searched about for a crevice in which to insert her fingers, or a projection to which she could cling.

She must work quickly for already the footsteps of the Phelians were sounding above her. She found a hold to which she might cling with scarcely more than the tips of her fingers, but it was something and the horror of the lowland was just above her and only death below.

She relinquished her hold upon the cliff edge with her other hand and lowered herself very slowly down the face of the cliff, searching with her free foot for another support. One foot, two, three she descended, and then attracted by a noise above her she glanced up and saw the hairy face of Skruk just above her.

“Hold my legs,” he shouted to his companions, at the same time throwing himself prone at the edge of the cliff, and as they obeyed his command he reached down a long, hairy arm to seize Jana, and the

girl was ready to let go all holds and drop to the jagged rocks beneath when Skruk's hand should touch her. Still looking upward she saw the fist of the Phelian but a few inches from her face.

The outstretched fingers of the man brushed the hair of the girl. One of her groping feet found a tiny ledge and she lowered herself from immediate danger of capture. Skruk was furious, but that one glance into the upturned face of the girl so close beneath him only served to add to his determination to possess her. No lengths were too far now to go to achieve his heart's desire, but as he glanced down that frightful escarpment his savage heart was filled with fear for the safety of his prize. It seemed incredible that she had descended as far as she had without falling and she had only commenced the descent. He knew that he and his companions could not follow the trail that she was blazing and he realized, too, that if they menaced her from above she might be urged to a greater haste that would spell her doom.

With these thoughts in his mind Skruk arose to his feet and turned to his companions. "We shall seek an easier way down," he said in a low voice, and then leaning over the cliff edge, he called down to Jana. "You have beaten me, mountain girl," he said. "I go back now to Pheli in the lowland. But I shall return and then I shall take you with me as my mate."

"May the thipdars catch you and tear out your heart before ever you reach Pheli again," cried Jana. But Skruk made no reply and she saw that they were going back the way that they had come, but she did not know that they were merely looking for an easier way into the bottom of the gorge toward which she was descending, or that Skruk's words had been but a ruse to throw her off her guard.

The Red Flower of Zoram, relieved of immediate necessity for haste, picked her way cautiously down the face of the cliff to the first

ledge of tumbled granite. Here, by good fortune, she found the egg of a thipdar, which furnished her with both food and drink.

It was a long, slow descent to the bottom of the gorge, but finally the girl accomplished it, and in the meantime Skruk and his companions had found an easier way and had descended into the gorge several miles above her.

For a moment after she reached the bottom Jana was undecided as to what course to pursue. Instinct urged her to turn upward along the gorge in the general direction of Zoram, but her judgment prompted her to descend and skirt the base of the mountain to the left in search of an easier route back across them. And so she came leisurely down toward the valley, while behind her followed the four men from Pheli.

The canyon wall at her left, while constantly lessening in height as she descended, still presented a formidable obstacle, which it seemed wiser to circumvent than to attempt to surmount, and so she continued on downward toward the mouth of the canyon, where it debauched upon a lovely valley.

Never before in all her life had Jana approached the lowland so closely. Never before had she dreamed how lovely the lowland country might be, for she had always been taught that it was a horrid place and no fit abode for the stalwart tribes of the mountains.

The lure of the beauties and the new scenes unfolding before her, coupled with a spirit of exploration which was being born within her, led her downward into the valley much farther than necessity demanded.

Suddenly her attention was attracted by a strange sound coming suddenly from on high — a strange, new note in the diapason of her savage world, and glancing upward she finally descried the creature that must be the author of it.

A great thipdar, it appeared to be, moaning dismally far above her head — but what a thipdar! Never in her life had she seen one as large as this.

As she watched she saw another thipdar, much smaller, soaring above it. Suddenly the lesser one swooped upon its intended prey. Faintly she heard sounds of shattering and tearing and then the two combatants plunged earthward. As they did so she saw something separate itself from the mass and as the two creatures, partially supported by the wings of the larger, fell in a great, gliding spiral a most remarkable thing happened to the piece that had broken loose. Something shot out of it and unfolded above it in the air — something that resembled a huge toadstool, and as it did so the swift flight of the falling body was arrested and it floated slowly earthward, swinging back and forth as she had seen a heavy stone do when tied at the end of a buckskin thong.

As the strange thing descended nearer, Jana's eyes went wide in surprise and terror as she recognized the dangling body as that of a man.

Her people had few superstitions, not having advanced sufficiently in the direction of civilization to have developed a priesthood, but here was something that could be explained according to no natural logic. She had seen two great, flying reptiles meet in battle, high in air and out of one of them had come a man. It was incredible, but more than all it was terrifying. And so The Red Flower of Zoram, reacting in the most natural way, turned and fled.

Back toward the canyon she raced, but she had gone only a short distance when, directly in front of her, she saw Skruk and his three companions.

They, too, had seen the battle in mid-air and they had seen the

thing floating downward toward the ground, and while they had not recognized it for what it was they had been terrified and were themselves upon the point of fleeing when Skruk descried Jana running toward them. Instantly every other consideration was submerged in his desire to have her and growling commands to his terrified henchmen he led them toward the girl.

When Jana discovered them she turned to the right and tried to circle about them, but Skruk sent one to intercept her and when she turned in the opposite direction, the four spread out across her line of retreat so as to effectually bar her escape in that direction.

Choosing any fate rather than that which must follow her capture by Skruk, Jana turned again and fled down the valley and in pursuit leaped the four squat, hairy men of Pheli.

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At the instant that Jason Gridley had pulled the rip cord of his parachute a fragment of the broken propeller of his plane had struck him a glancing blow upon the head, and when he regained consciousness he found himself lying upon a bed of soft grasses at the head of a valley, where a canyon, winding out of lofty mountains, opened onto leveller land.

Disgusted by the disastrous end of his futile search for his companions, Gridley arose and removed the parachute harness. He was relieved to discover that he had suffered no more serious injury than a slight abrasion of the skin upon one temple.

His first concern was for his ship and though he knew that it must be a total wreck he hoped against hope that he might at least salvage his rifle and ammunition from it. But even as the thought entered his mind it was forced into the background by a chorus of savage yelps

and growls that caused him to turn his eyes quickly to the right. At the summit of a little rise of ground a short distance away he saw four of the ferocious wolf dogs of Pellucidar. As hyaenodons they were known to the paleontologists of the outer crust, and as jaloks to the men of the inner world. As large as full grown mastiffs they stood there upon their short, powerful legs, their broad, strong jaws parted in angry growls, their snarling lips drawn back to reveal their powerful fangs.

As he discovered them Jason became aware that their attention was not directed upon him — that they seemed not as yet to have discovered him — and as he looked in the direction that they were looking he was astounded to see a girl running swiftly toward them, and at a short distance behind the girl four men, who were apparently pursuing her.

As the vicious growls of the jaloks broke angrily upon the comparative silence of the scene, the girl paused and it was evident that she had not before been aware of the presence of this new menace. She glanced at them and then back at her pursuers.

The hyaenodons advanced toward her at an easy trot. In piteous bewilderment she glanced about her. There was but one way open for escape and then as she turned to flee in that direction her eyes fell upon Jason Gridley, straight ahead in her path of flight and again she hesitated.

To the man came an intuitive understanding of her quandary. Menaced from the rear and upon two sides by known enemies, she was suddenly faced by what might indeed be another, cutting off all hope of retreat.

Acting impulsively and in accordance with the code that dominates his kind, Gridley ran toward the girl, shouting words of encouragement and motioning her to come to him.

Skruk and his companions were closing in upon her from behind and from her right, while upon her left came the jaloks. For just an instant longer, she hesitated and then seemingly determined to place her fate in the hands of an unknown, rather than surrender it to the inevitable doom which awaited her either at the hands of the Phelians or the fangs of the jaloks, she turned and sped toward Gridley, and behind her came the four beasts and the four men.

As Gridley ran forward to meet the girl he drew one of his revolvers, a heavy .45 caliber Colt.

The hyaenodons were charging now and the leader was close behind her, and at that instant Jana tripped and fell, and simultaneously Jason reached her side, but so close was the savage beast that when Jason fired the hyaenodon's body fell across the body of the girl.

The shot, a startling sound to which none of them was accustomed, brought the other hyaenodons to a sudden stop, as well as the four men, who were racing rapidly forward under Skruk's command in an effort to save the girl from the beasts.

Quickly rolling the body of the jalok from its intended victim, Jason lifted the girl to her feet and as he did so she snatched her stone knife from its scabbard. Jason Gridley did not know how near he was to death at that instant. To Jana, every man except the men of Zoram was a natural enemy. The first law of nature prompted her to kill lest she be killed, but in the instant before she struck the blade home she saw something in the eyes of this man, something in the expression upon his face that she had never seen in the eyes or face of any man before. As plainly as though it had been spoken in words she understood that this stranger was prompted by solicitousness for her safety; that he was prompted by a desire to befriend rather than to harm her, and though in common with the jaloks and the Phelians she had been terrified by

the loud noise and the smoke that had burst from the strange stick in his hand she knew that this had been the means that he had taken to protect her from the jaloks.

Her knife hand dropped to her side, and, as a slow smile lighted the face of the stranger, The Red Flower of Zoram smiled back in response.

They stood as they had when he had lifted her from the ground, his left arm about her shoulders supporting her and he maintained this unconscious gesture of protection as he turned to face the girl's enemies, who, after their first fright, seemed on the point of returning to the attack.

Two of the hyaenodons, however, had transferred their attention to Skruk and his companions, while the third was slinking, bare-fanged, toward Jason and Jana.

The men of Pheli stood ready to receive the charge of the hyaenodons, having taken positions in line, facing their attackers, and at sufficient intervals to permit them properly to wield their clubs. As the beasts charged two of the men hurled their weapons, each singling out one of the fierce carnivores. Skruk hurled his weapon with the greater accuracy, breaking one of the forelegs of the beast attacking him, and as it went down the Phelian standing next to Skruk leaped forward and rained heavy blows upon its skull.

The cudgel aimed at the other beast struck it a glancing blow upon the shoulder, but did not stop it and an instant later it was upon the Phelian whose only defense now was his crude stone knife. But his companion, who had reserved his club for such an emergency, leaped in and swung lustily at the savage brute, while Skruk and the other, having disposed of their adversary, came to the assistance of their fellows.

The savage battle between men and beast went unnoticed by Jason, whose whole attention was occupied by the fourth wolf dog as it moved forward to attack him and his companion.

Jana, fully aware that the attention of each of the men was fully centered upon the attacking beasts, realized that now was the opportune moment to make a break for freedom. She felt the arm of the stranger about her shoulders, but it rested there lightly — so lightly that she might easily disengage herself by a single, quick motion. But there was something in the feel of that arm about her that imparted to her a sense of greater safety than she had felt since she had left the caverns of her people — perhaps the protective instinct which dominated the man subconsciously exerted its natural reaction upon the girl to the end that instead of fleeing she was content to remain, sensing greater safety where she was than elsewhere.

And then the fourth hyaenodon charged, growling, to be met by the roaring bark of the Colt. The creature stumbled and went down, stopped by the force of the heavy charge — but only for an instant — again it was up, maddened by pain, desperate in the face of death. Bloody foam crimsoned its jowls as it leaped for Jason's throat.

Again the Colt spoke, and then the man went down beneath the heavy body of the wolf dog, and at the same instant the Phelians dispatched the second of the beasts which had attacked them.

Jason Gridley was conscious of a great weight upon him as he was borne to the ground and he sought to fend those horrid jaws from his throat by interposing his left forearm, but the jaws never closed and when Gridley struggled from beneath the body of the beast and scrambled to his feet he saw the girl tugging upon the shaft of her crude, stone-tipped spear in an effort to drag it from the body of the jalok.

Whether his last bullet or the spear had dispatched the beast the man did not know, and he was only conscious of gratitude and admiration for the brave act of the slender girl, who had stood her ground at his side, facing the terrible beast without loss of poise or resourcefulness.

The four jaloks lay dead, but Jason Gridley's troubles were by no means over, for scarcely had he arisen after the killing of the second beast when the girl seized him by the arm and pointed toward something behind him.

"They are coming," she said. "They will kill you and take me. Oh, do not let them take me!"

Jason did not understand a word that she had said, but it was evident from her tone of voice and from the expression upon her beautiful face that she was more afraid of the four men approaching them than she had been of the hyaenodons, and as he turned to face them he could not wonder, for the men of Pheli looked quite as brutal as the hyaenodons and there was nothing impressive or magnificent in their appearance as there had been in the mien of the savage carnivores — a fact which is almost universally noticeable when a comparison is made between the human race and the so-called lower orders.

Gridley raised his revolver and levelled it at the leading Phelian, who happened to be another than Skruk. "Beat it!" he said. "Your faces frighten the young lady."

"I am Gluf," said the Phelian. "I kill."

"If I could understand you I might agree with you," replied Jason, "but your exuberant whiskers and your diminutive forehead suggest that you are all wet."

He did not want to kill the man, but he realized that he could not let him approach too closely. But if he had any compunction in the

matter of manslaughter, it was evident that the girl did not for she was talking volubly, evidently urging him to some action, and when she realized that he could not understand her she touched his pistol with a brown forefinger and then pointed meaningly at Gluf.

The fellow was now within fifteen paces of them and Jason could see that his companions were starting to circle them. He knew that something must be done immediately and prompted by humanitarian motives he fired his Colt, aiming above the head of the approaching Phelian. The sharp report stopped all four of them, but when they realized that none of them was injured they broke into a torrent of taunts and threats, and Gluf, inspired only by a desire to capture the girl so that they might return to Pheli, resumed his advance, at the same time commencing to swing his club menacingly. Then it was that Jason Gridley regretfully shot, and shot to kill. Gluf stopped in his tracks, stiffened, whirled about and sprawled forward upon his face.

Wheeling upon the others, Gridley fired again, for he realized that those menacing clubs were almost as effective at short range as was his Colt. Another Phelian dropped in his tracks, and then Skruk and his remaining companion turned and fled.

"Well," said Gridley, looking about him at the bodies of the four hyaenodons and the corpses of the two men, "this is a great little country, but I'll be gosh-darned if I see how anyone grows up to enjoy it."

The Red Flower of Zoram stood looking at him admiringly. Everything about this stranger aroused her interest, piqued her curiosity and stimulated her imagination. In no particular was he like any other man she had ever seen. Not one item of his strange apparel corresponded to anything that any other human being of her acquaintance wore. The remarkable weapon, which spat smoke and fire to the accompaniment of a loud roar, left her dazed with awe and

admiration; but perhaps the outstanding cause for astonishment, when she gave it thought, was the fact that she was not afraid of this man. Not only was the fear of strangers inherent in her, but from earliest childhood she had been taught to expect only the worst from men who were not of her own tribe and to flee from them upon any and all occasions. Perhaps it was his smile that had disarmed her, or possibly there was something in his friendly, honest eyes that had won her immediate trust and confidence. Whatever the cause, however, the fact remained that The Red Flower of Zoram made no effort to escape from Jason Gridley, who now found himself completely lost in a strange world, which in itself was quite sad enough without having added to it responsibilities for the protection of a strange, young woman, who could understand nothing that he said to her and whom, in turn, he could not understand.

8.

JANA AND JASON

Tar-gash and Thoar looked with wonder upon the wreckage of the plane and Tarzan hastily searched it for the body of the pilot. The ape-man experienced at least temporary relief when he discovered that there was no body there, and a moment later he found footprints in the turf upon the opposite side of the plane — the prints of a booted foot which he recognized immediately as having been made by Jason Gridley — and this evidence assured him that the American had not been killed and apparently not even badly injured by the fall. And then he discovered something else which puzzled him exceedingly. Mingling with the footprints of Gridley and evidently made at the same time were those of a small sandaled foot.

A further brief examination revealed the fact that two persons, one of them Gridley and the other apparently a female or a youth of some Pellucidarian tribe, who had accompanied him, had approached the plane after it had crashed, remained in its vicinity for a short time and then returned in the direction from which they had come. With the spoor plain before him there was nothing for Tarzan to do other than to follow it.

The evidence so far suggested that Gridley had been forced to abandon the plane in air and that he had safely made a parachute descent, but where and under what circumstances he had picked up his companion, Tarzan could not even hazard a guess.

He found it difficult to get Thoar away from the aeroplane, the

strange thing having so fired his curiosity and imagination that he must need remain near it and ask a hundred questions concerning it.

With Tar-gash, however, the reaction was entirely different. He had glanced at it with only a faint show of curiosity or interest, and then he had asked one question, "What is it?"

"This is the thing that passed over us and which you said was a flying reptile," replied Tarzan. "I told you at that time that one of my friends was in it. Something happened and the thing fell, but my friend escaped without injury."

"It has no eyes," said Tar-gash. "How could it see to fly?"

"It was not alive," replied Tarzan.

"I heard it growl," said the Sagoth; nor was he ever convinced that the thing was not some strange form of living creature.

They had covered but a short distance along the trail made by Gridley and Jana, after they had left the aeroplane, when they came upon the carcass of a huge pteranodon. Its head was crushed and battered and almost severed from its body and a splinter of smooth wood projected from its skull — a splinter that Tarzan recognized as a fragment of an aeroplane propeller — and instantly he knew the cause of Gridley's crash.

Half a mile further on the three discovered further evidence, some of it quite startling. An opened parachute lay stretched upon the ground where it had fallen and at short distances from it lay the bodies of four hyaenodons and two hairy men.

An examination of the bodies revealed the fact that both of the men and two of the hyaenodons had died from bullet wounds. Everywhere upon the trampled turf appeared the imprints of the small sandals of Jason's companion. It was evident to the keen eyes of Tarzan that two other men, both natives, had taken part in the battle which had been

waged here. That they were of the same tribe as the two that had fallen was evidenced by the imprints of their sandals, which were of identical make, while those of Tarzan's companion differed materially from all the others.

As he circled about, searching for further evidence, he saw that the two men who had escaped had run rapidly for some distance toward the mouth of a large canyon, and that, apparently following their retreat, Jason and his companion had set out in search of the plane. Later they had returned to the scene of the battle, and when they had departed they also had gone toward the mountains, but along a line considerably to the right of the trail made by the fleeing natives.

Thoar, too, was much interested in the various tracks that the participants in the battle by the parachute had left, but he said nothing until after Tarzan had completed his investigation.

"There were four men and either a woman or a youth here with my friend," said Tarzan.

"Four of them were low countrymen from Pheli," said Thoar, "and the other was a woman of Zoram."

"How do you know?" asked Tarzan, who was always anxious to add to his store of woodcraft.

"The low country sandals are never shaped to the foot as closely as are those of the mountain tribes," replied Thoar, "and the soles are much thinner, being made usually of the hides of the thag, which is tough enough for people who do not walk often upon anything but soft grasses or in soggy marshland. The sandals of the mountain tribes are soled with the thick hide of Maj, the cousin of Tander. If you will look at the spoor you will see that they are not worn at all, while there are holes in the sandals of these dead men of Pheli."

"Are we near Zoram?" asked Tarzan.

“No,” replied Thoar. “It lies across the highest range ahead of us.”

“When we first met, Thoar, you told me that you were from Zoram.”

“Yes, that is my country,” replied Thoar.

“Then, perhaps, this woman is someone whom you know?”

“She is my sister,” replied Thoar.

Tarzan of the Apes looked at him in surprise. “How do you know?” he demanded.

“I found an imprint where there was no turf, only soft earth, and there the spoor was so distinct that I could recognize the sandals as hers. So familiar with her work am I that I could recognize the stitching alone, where the sole is joined to the upper part of the sandal, and in addition there are the notches, which indicate the tribe. The people of Zoram have three notches in the underside of the sole at the toe of the left sandal.”

“What was your sister doing so far from her own country and how is it that she is with my friend?”

“It is quite plain,” replied Thoar. “These men of Pheli sought to capture her. One of them wanted her for his mate, but she eluded them and they pursued her across the Mountains of the Thipdars and down into this valley, where she was set upon by jaloks. The man from your country came and killed the jaloks and two of the Phelians and drove the other two away. It is evident that my sister could not escape him, and he captured her.”

Tarzan of the Apes smiled. “The spoor does not indicate that she ever made any effort to escape him,” he said.

Thoar scratched his head. “That is true,” he replied, “and I cannot understand it, for the women of my tribe do not care to mate with the men of other tribes and I know that Jana, my sister, would rather die

than mate outside the Mountains of the Thipdars. Many times has she said so and Jana is not given to idle talk.”

“My friend would not take her by force,” said Tarzan. “If she has gone with him, she has gone with him willingly. And I think that when we find them you will discover that he is simply accompanying her back to Zoram, for he is the sort of man who would not permit a woman to go alone and unprotected.”

“We shall see,” said Thoar, “but if he has taken Jana against her wishes, he must die.”

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As Tarzan, Tar-gash and Thoar followed the spoor of Jason and Jana a disheartened company of men rounded the end of the great Mountains of the Thipdars, fifty miles to the east of them, and entered the Gyor Cors, or great Plains of the Gyors.

The party consisted of ten black warriors and a white man, and, doubtless, never in the history of mankind had eleven men been more completely and hopelessly lost than these.

Muviro and his warriors, than whom no better trackers ever lived, were totally bewildered by their inability even to back-track successfully.

The stampeding of the maddened beasts, from which they had barely escaped with their lives and then only by what appeared nothing short of a miracle, had so obliterated all signs of the party’s former spoor that though they were all confident that they had gone but a short distance from the clearing, into which the beasts had been herded by the tarags, they had never again been able to locate the clearing, and now they were wandering hopelessly and, in accordance with von Horst’s plans, keeping as much in the open as possible in

the hope that the cruising O-220 might thus discover them, for von Horst was positive that eventually his companions would undertake a search for them.

Aboard the O-220 the grave fear that had been entertained for the safety of the thirteen missing members of the ship's company had developed into a conviction of disaster when Gridley failed to return within the limit of the time that he might reasonably be able to keep the scout plane in the air.

Then it was that Zuppner had sent Dorf out with another searching party, but at the end of seventy hours they had returned to report absolute failure. They had followed the trail to a clearing where jackals fed upon rotting carrion, but beyond this there was no sign of spoor to suggest in what direction their fellows had wandered.

Going and coming they had been beset by savage beasts and so ruthless and determined had been the attacks of the giant tarags that Dorf reported to Zuppner that he was confident that all of the missing members of the party must by this time have been destroyed by these great cats.

"Until we have proof of that, we must not give up hope," replied Zuppner, "nor may we relinquish our efforts to find them, whether dead or alive, and that we cannot do by remaining here."

There was nothing now to delay the start. While the motors were warming up, the anchor was drawn in and the air expelled from the lower vacuum tanks. As the giant ship rose from the ground Robert Jones jotted down a brief note in a greasy memorandum book: "We sailed from here at noon."

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When Skruk and his companion had left the field to the victorious

Jason, the latter had returned his six-gun to its holster and faced the girl. "Well," he inquired, "what now?"

She shook her head. "I cannot understand you," she said. "You do not speak the language of gilaks."

Jason scratched his head. "That being the case," he said, "and as it is evident that we are never going to get anywhere on conversation which neither one of us understands, I am going to have a look around for my ship, in the meantime, praying to all the gods that my thirty-thirty and ammunition are safe. It's a cinch that she did not burn for she must have fallen close by and I could have seen the smoke."

Jana listened attentively and shook her head.

"Come on," said Jason, and started off in the direction that he thought the ship might lie.

"No, not that way," exclaimed Jana, and running forward she seized his arm and tried to stop him, pointing back to the tall peaks of the Mountains of the Thipdars, where Zoram lay.

Jason essayed the difficult feat of explaining in a weird sign language of his own invention that he was looking for an aeroplane that had crashed somewhere in the vicinity, but the conviction soon claimed him that that would be a very difficult thing to accomplish even if the person to whom he was trying to convey the idea knew what an aeroplane was, and so he ended up by grinning good-naturedly, and, seizing the girl by the hand, gently leading her in the direction he wished to go.

Again that charming smile disarmed The Red Flower of Zoram and though she knew that this stranger was leading her away from the caverns of her people, yet she followed docilely, though her brow was puckered in perplexity as she tried to understand why she was not

afraid, or why she was willing to go with this stranger, who evidently was not even a gilak, since he could not speak the language of men.

A half hour's search was rewarded by the discovery of the wreck of the plane, which had suffered far less damage than Jason had expected.

It was evident that in its plunge to earth it must have straightened out and glided to a landing. Of course, it was wrecked beyond repair, even if there had been any facilities for repairs, but it had not burned and Jason recovered his thirty-thirty and all his ammunition.

Jana was intensely interested in the plane and examined every portion of it minutely. Never in her life had she wished so much to ask questions, for never in her life had she seen anything that had so aroused her wonder. And here was the one person in all the world who could answer her questions, but she could not make him understand one of them. For a moment she almost hated him, and then he smiled at her and pressed her hand, and she forgave him and smiled back.

"And now," said Jason, "where do we go from here? As far as I am concerned one place is as good as another."

Being perfectly well aware that he was hopelessly lost, Jason Gridley felt that the only chance he had of being reunited with his companions lay in the possibility that the O-220 might chance to cruise over the very locality where he happened to be, and no matter whither he might wander, whether north or south or east or west, that chance was as slender in one direction as another, and, conversely, equally good. In an hour the O-220 would cover a distance fully as great as he could travel in several days of outer earthly time. And so even if he chanced to be moving in a direction that led away from the ship's first anchorage, he could never go so far that it might not easily and quickly overtake him, if its search should chance to lead it in his direction. Therefore he turned questioningly to the girl, pointing first in one

direction, and then in another, while he looked inquiringly at her, attempting thus to convey to her the idea that he was ready and willing to go in any direction she chose, and Jana, sensing his meaning, pointed toward the lofty Mountains of the Thipdars.

“There,” she said, “lies Zoram, the land of my people.”

“Your logic is unassailable,” said Jason, “and I only wish I could understand what you are saying, for I am sure that anyone with such beautiful teeth could never be uninteresting.”

Jana did not wait to discuss the matter, but started forthwith for Zoram and beside her walked Jason Gridley of California.

Jana’s active mind had been working rapidly and she had come to the conclusion that she could not for long endure the constantly increasing pressure of unsatisfied curiosity. She must find some means of communicating with this interesting stranger and to the accomplishment of this end she could conceive of no better plan than teaching the man her language. But how to commence! Never in her experience or that of her people had the necessity arisen for teaching a language. Previously she had not dreamed of the existence of such a means. If you can feature such a state, which is doubtful, you must concede to this primitive girl of the stone age a high degree of intelligence. This was no accidental blowing off of the lid of the teapot upon which might be built a theory. It required, as a matter of fact, a greater reasoning ability. Give a steam engine to a man who had never heard of steam and ask him to make it go — Jana’s problem was almost as difficult. But the magnitude of the reward spurred her on, for what will one not do to have one’s curiosity satisfied, especially if one happens to be a young and beautiful girl and the object of one’s curiosity an exceptionally handsome young man. Skirts may change, but human nature never.

And so The Red Flower of Zoram pointed at herself with a slim, brown forefinger and said, "Jana." She repeated this several times and then she pointed at Jason, raising her eyebrows in interrogation.

"Jason," he said, for there was no misunderstanding her meaning. And so the slow, laborious task began as the two trudged upward toward the foothills of the Mountains of the Thipdars.

There lay before them a long, hard climb to the higher altitudes, but there was water in abundance in the tumbling brooks, dropping down the hillside, and Jana knew the edible plants, and nuts, and fruits which grew in riotous profusion in many a dark, deep ravine, and there was game in plenty to be brought down, when they needed meat, by Jason's thirty-thirty.

As they proceeded in their quest for Zoram, Jason found greater opportunity to study his companion and he came to the conclusion that nature had attained the pinnacle of physical perfection with the production of this little savage. Every line and curve of that lithe, brown body sang of symmetry, for The Red Flower of Zoram was a living poem of beauty. If he had thought that her teeth were beautiful he was forced to admit that they held no advantage in that respect over her eyes, her nose or any other of her features. And when she fell to with her crude stone knife and helped him skin a kill and prepare the meat for cooking, when he saw the deftness and celerity with which she made fire with the simplest and most primitive of utensils, when he witnessed the almost uncanny certitude with which she located nests of eggs and edible fruit and vegetables, he was conscious that her perfections were not alone physical and he became more than ever anxious to acquire a sufficient understanding of her tongue to be able to communicate with her, though he realized that he might doubtless suffer a rude awakening and disillusionment when, through an under-

standing of her language, he might be able to judge the limitations of her mind.

When Jana was tired she went beneath a tree, and, making a bed of grasses, curled up and fell asleep immediately, and, while she slept, Gridley watched, for the dangers of this primitive land were numerous and constant. Fully as often as he shot for food he shot to protect them from some terrible beast, until the encounters became as prosaic and commonplace as does the constant eluding of death by pedestrians at congested traffic corners in cities of the outer crust.

When Jason felt the need of sleep, Jana watched and sometimes they merely rested without sleeping, usually beneath a tree for there they found the greatest protection from their greatest danger, the fierce and voracious thipdars from which the mountains took their name. These hideous, flying reptiles were a constant menace, but so thoroughly had nature developed a defense against them that the girl could hear their wings at a greater distance than either of them could see the creatures.

Jason had no means for determining how far they had travelled, or how long they had been upon their way, but he was sure that considerable outer earthly time must have elapsed since he had met the girl, when they came to a seemingly insurmountable obstacle, for already he had made considerable progress toward mastering her tongue and they were exchanging short sentences, much to Jana's delight, her merry laughter, often marking one of Jason's more flagrant errors in pronunciation or construction.

And now they had come to a deep chasm with overhanging walls that not even Jana could negotiate. To Jason it resembled a stupendous fault that might have been caused by the subsidence of the mountain range for it paralleled the main axis of the range. And if this were true

he knew that it might extend for hundreds of miles, effectually barring the way across the mountains by the route they were following.

For a long time Jana sought a means of descent into the crevice. She did not want to turn to the left as that route might lead her eventually back to the canyon that she had descended when pursued by Skruk and his fellows and she well knew how almost unscalable were the perpendicular sides of this terrific gorge. Another thing, perhaps, which decided her against the left hand route was the possibility that in that direction they might again come in contact with the Phelians, and so she led Jason toward the right and always she searched for a way to the bottom of the rift.

Jason realized that they were consuming a great deal of time in trying to cross, but he became also aware of the fact that time meant nothing in timeless Pellucidar. It was never a factor with which to reckon for the excellent reason that it did not exist, and when he gave the matter thought he was conscious of a mild surprise that he, who had been always a slave of time, so easily and naturally embraced the irresponsible existence of Pellucidar. It was not only the fact that time itself seemed not to matter but that the absence of this greatest of all task masters singularly affected one's outlook upon every other consideration of existence. Without time there appeared to be no accountability for one's acts since it is to the future that the slaves of time have learned to look for their reward or punishment. Where there is no time, there is no future. Jason Gridley found himself affected much as Tarzan had been in that the sense of his responsibility for the welfare of his fellows seemed deadened. What had happened to them had happened and no act of his could alter it. They were not there with him and so he could not be of assistance to them, and as it was difficult

to visualize the future beneath an eternal noonday sun how might one plan ahead for others or for himself?

Jason Gridley gave up the riddle with a shake of his head and found solace in contemplation of the profile of The Red Flower of Zoram.

“Why do you look at me so much?” demanded the girl; for by now they could make themselves understood to one another.

Jason Gridley flushed slightly and looked quickly away. Her question had been very abrupt and surprising and for the first time he realized that he had been looking at her a great deal. He started to answer, hesitated and stopped. Why *had* he been looking at her so much? It seemed silly to say that it was because she was beautiful.

“Why do you not say it, Jason?” she inquired.

“Say what?” he demanded.

“Say the thing that is in your eyes when you look at me,” she replied.

Gridley looked at her in astonishment. No one but an imbecile could have misunderstood her meaning, and Jason Gridley was no imbecile.

Could it be possible that he had been looking at her *that* way? Had he gone stark mad that he was even subconsciously entertaining such thoughts of this little barbarian who seized her meat in both hands and tore pieces from it with her flashing, white teeth, who went almost as naked as the beasts of the field and with all their unconsciousness of modesty? Could it be that his eyes had told this untutored savage that he was harboring thoughts of love for her? The artificialities of a thousand years of civilization rose up in horror against such a thought.

Upon the screen of his memory there was flashed a picture of the haughty Cynthia Furnois of Hollywood, daughter of the famous

director, Abelard Furnois, née Abe Fink. He recalled Cynthia's meticulous observance of the minutest details of social usages and the studied perfection of her deportment that had sometimes awed him. He saw, too, the aristocratic features of Barbara Green, daughter of old John Green, the Los Angeles realtor, from Texas. It is true that old John was no purist and that his total disregard of the social precedence of forks often shocked the finer sensibilities that Mrs. Green and Barbara had laboriously achieved in the universities of Montmartre and Coconut Grove, but Barbara had had two years at Marlborough and knew her suffixes and her hardware.

Of course Cynthia was a rotten little snob, not only on the surface but to the bottom of her shallow, selfish soul, while Barbara's snob-bishness, he felt, was purely artificial, the result of mistaking for the genuine the silly artificialities and affectations of the almost celebrities and sudden rich that infest the public places of Hollywood.

But nevertheless these two did, after a fashion, reflect the social environment to which he was accustomed and as he tried to answer Jana's question he could not but picture her seated at dinner with a company made up of such as these. Of course, Jana was a bully companion upon an adventure such as that in which they were engaged, but modern man cannot go adventuring forever in the Stone Age. If his eyes had carried any other message to Jana than that of friendly comradeship he felt sorry, for he realized that in fairness to her, as well as to himself, there could never be anything more than this between them.

As Jason hesitated for a reply, the eyes of The Red Flower of Zoram searched his soul and slowly the half expectant smile faded from her lips. Perhaps she was a savage little barbarian of the Stone Age, but she was no fool and she was a woman.

Slowly she drew her slender figure erect as she turned away from him and started back along the rim of the rift toward the great gorge through which she had descended from the higher peaks when Skruk and his fellows had been pursuing her.

“Jana,” he exclaimed, “don’t be angry. Where are you going?”

She stopped and with her haughty little chin in air turned a withering look back upon him across a perfect shoulder. “Go your way, jalok,” she said, “and Jana will go hers.”

9.

TO THE THIPDAR'S NEST

Heavy clouds formed about the lofty peaks of the Mountains of the Thipdars — black, angry clouds that rolled down the northern slopes, spreading far to east and west.

“The waters have come again,” said Thoar. “They are falling upon Zoram. Soon they will fall here too.”

It looked very dark up there above them and presently the clouds swept out across the sky, blotting out the noonday sun.

It was a new landscape upon which Tarzan looked — a sullen, bleak and forbidding landscape. It was the first time that he had seen Pellucidar in shadow and he did not like it. The effect of the change was strikingly apparent in Thoar and Tar-gash. They seemed depressed, almost fearful. Nor was it man alone that was so strangely affected by the blotting out of the eternal sunlight, for presently from the upper reaches of the mountains the lower animals came, pursuing the sunlight. That they, too, were strangely affected and filled with terror was evidenced by the fact that the carnivores and their prey trotted side by side and that none of them paid any attention to the three men.

“Why do they not attack us, Thoar?” asked Tarzan.

“They know that the water is about to fall,” he replied, “and they are afraid of the falling water. They forget their hunger and their quarrels as they seek to escape the common terror.”

“Is the danger so great then?” asked the ape-man.

“Not if we remain upon high ground,” replied Thoar. “Sometimes the gulleys and ravines fill with water in an instant, but the only danger

upon the high land is from the burning spears that are hurled from the black clouds. But if we stay in the open, even these are not dangerous for, as a rule, they are aimed at trees. Do not go beneath a tree while the clouds are hurling their spears of fire.”

As the clouds shut off the sunlight, the air became suddenly cold. A raw wind swept down from above and the three men shivered in their nakedness.

“Gather wood,” said Tarzan. “We shall build a fire for warmth.” And so the three gathered firewood and Tarzan made fire and they sat about it, warming their naked hides; while upon either side of them the brutes passed on their way down toward the sunlight.

The rain came. It did not fall in drops, but in great enveloping blankets that seemed to beat them down and smother them. Inches deep it rolled down the mountainside, filling the depressions and the gulleys, turning the canyons into raging torrents.

The wind lashed the falling water into a blinding maelstrom that the eye could not pierce a dozen feet. Terrified animals stampeded blindly, constituting themselves the greatest menace of the storm. The lightning flashed and the thunder roared, and the beasts progressed from panic to an insanity of fear.

Above the roar of the thunder and the howling of the wind rose the piercing shrieks and screams of the monsters of another day, and in the air above flapped shrieking reptiles fighting toward the sunlight against the pounding wrath of the elements. Giant pteranodons, beaten to the ground, staggered uncertainly upon legs unaccustomed to the task, and through it all the three beast-men huddled at the spot where their fire had been, though not even an ash remained.

It seemed to Tarzan that the storm lasted a great while, but like the others he was enured to the hardships and discomforts of primitive

life. Where a civilized man might have railed against fate and cursed the elements, the three beast-men sat in stoic silence, their backs hunched against the storm, for each knew that it would not last forever and each knew that there was nothing he could say or do to lessen its duration or abate its fury.

Had it not been for the example set by Tarzan and Thoar, Tar-gash would have fled toward the sunlight with the other beasts, not that he was more fearful than they, but that he was influenced more by instinct than by reason. But where they stayed, he was content to stay, and so he squatted there with them, in dumb misery, waiting for the sun to come again.

The rain lessened; the howling wind died down; the clouds passed on and the sun burst forth upon a steaming world. The three beast-men arose and shook themselves.

“I am hungry,” said Tarzan.

Thoar pointed about them to where lay the bodies of lesser beasts that had been crushed in the mad stampede for safety.

Now even Thoar was compelled to eat his meat raw, for there was no dry wood wherewith to start a fire, but to Tarzan and Tar-gash this was no hardship. As Tarzan ate, the suggestion of a smile smoldered in his eyes. He was recalling a fussy old nobleman with whom he had once dined at a London club and who had almost suffered a stroke of apoplexy because his bird had been slightly underdone.

When the three had filled their bellies, they arose to continue their search for Jana and Jason, only to discover that the torrential rain had effectually erased every vestige of the spoor that they had been following.

“We cannot pick up their trail again,” said Thoar, “until we reach the point where they continued on again after the waters ceased to fall.

To the left is a deep canyon, whose walls are difficult to scale. In front of us is a fissure, which extends along the base of the mountains for a considerable distance in both directions. But if we go to the right we shall find a place where we can descend into it and cross it. This is the way that they should have gone. Perhaps there we shall pick up their trail again.” But though they continued on and crossed the fissure and clambered upward toward the higher peaks, they found no sign that Jana or Jason had come this way.

“Perhaps they reached your country by another route,” suggested Tarzan.

“Perhaps,” said Thoar. “Let us continue on to Zoram. There is nothing else that we can do. There we can gather the men of my tribe and search the mountains for them.”

In the ascent toward the summit Thoar sometimes followed trails that for countless ages the rough pads of the carnivores had followed, or again he led them over trackless wastes of granite, taking such perilous chances along dizzy heights that Tarzan was astonished that any of them came through alive.

Upon a bleak summit they had robbed a thipdar’s nest of its eggs and the three were eating when Thoar became suddenly alert and listening. To the ears of the ape-man came faintly a sound that resembled the dismal flapping of distant wings.

“A thipdar,” said Thoar, “and there is no shelter for us.”

“There are three of us,” said Tarzan. “What have we to fear?”

“You do not know them,” said Thoar. “They are hard to kill and they are never defeated until they are killed. Their brains are very small. Sometimes when we have cut them open it has been difficult to find the brain at all, and having no brain they have no fear of anything, not even death, for they cannot know what death is; nor do they seem

to be affected much by pain, it merely angers them, making them more terrible. Perhaps we can kill it, but I wish that there were a tree.”

“How do you know that it will attack us?” asked Tarzan.

“It is coming in this direction. It cannot help but see us, and whatever living thing they see they attack.”

“Have you ever been attacked by one?” asked Tarzan.

“Yes,” replied Thoar; “but only when there was no tree or cave. The men of Zoram are not ashamed to admit that they fear the mighty thipdars.”

“But if you have killed them in the past, why may we not kill this one?” demanded the ape-man.

“We may,” replied Thoar, “but I have never chanced to have an encounter with one, except when there were a number of my tribesmen with me. The lone hunter who goes forth and never returns is our reason for fearing the thipdar. Even when there are many of us to fight them, always there are some killed and many injured.”

“It comes,” said Tar-gash, pointing.

“It comes,” said Thoar, grasping his spear more firmly.

Down to their ears came a sound resembling the escaping of steam through a petcock.

“It has seen us,” said Thoar.

Tarzan laid his spear upon the ground at his feet, plucked a handful of arrows from his quiver and fitted one to his bow. Tar-gash swung his club slowly to and fro and growled.

On came the giant reptile, the dismal flapping of its wings punctuated occasionally by a loud and angry hiss. The three men waited, poised, ready, expectant.

There were no preliminaries. The mighty pteranodon drove straight toward them. Tarzan loosed a bolt which drove true to its

mark, burying its head in the breast of the pterodactyl. The hiss became a scream of anger and then in rapid succession three more arrows buried themselves in the creature's flesh.

That this was a warmer reception than it had expected was evidenced by the fact that it rose suddenly upward, skimmed above their heads as though to abandon the attack, and then, quite suddenly and with a speed incomprehensible in a creature of its tremendous size, wheeled like a sparrow hawk and dove straight at Tarzan's back.

So quickly did the creature strike that there could be no defense. The ape-man felt sharp talons half buried in his naked flesh and simultaneously he was lifted from the ground.

Thoar raised his spear and Tar-gash swung his cudgel, but neither dared strike for fear of wounding their comrade. And so they were forced to stand there futilely inactive and watch the monster bear Tarzan of the Apes away across the tops of the Mountains of the Thipdars.

In silence they stood watching until the creature passed out of sight beyond the summit of a distant peak, the body of the ape-man still dangling in its talons. Then Tar-gash turned and looked at Thoar.

"Tarzan is dead," said the Sagoth. Thoar of Zoram nodded sadly. Without another word Tar-gash turned and started down toward the valley from which they had ascended. The only bond that had united these two hereditary enemies had parted, and Tar-gash was going his way back to the stamping grounds of his tribe.

For a moment Thoar watched him, and then, with a shrug of his shoulders, he turned his face toward Zoram.

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As the pteranodon bore him off across the granite peaks, Tarzan hung

limply in its clutches, realizing that if Fate held in store for him any hope of escape it could not come in midair and if he were to struggle against his adversary, or seek to battle with it, death upon the jagged rocks below would be the barren reward of success. His one hope lay in retaining consciousness and the power to fight when the creature came to the ground with him. He knew that there were birds of prey that kill their victims by dropping them from great heights, but he hoped that the pteranodons of Pellucidar had never acquired this disconcerting habit.

As he watched the panorama of mountain peaks passing below him, he realized that he was being carried a considerable distance from the spot at which he had been seized; perhaps twenty miles.

The flight at last carried them across a frightful gorge and a short distance beyond the pteranodon circled a lofty granite peak, toward the summit of which it slowly dropped, and there, below him, Tarzan of the Apes saw a nest of small thipdars, eagerly awaiting with wide distended jaws the flesh that their savage parent was bringing to them.

The nest rested upon the summit of a lofty granite spire, the entire area of the summit encompassing but a few square yards, the walls dropping perpendicularly hundreds of feet to the rough granite of the lofty peak the spire surmounted. It was, indeed, a precarious place at which to stage a battle for life.

Cautiously, Tarzan of the Apes drew his keen hunting knife from its sheath. Slowly his left hand crept upward against his body and passed over his left shoulder until his fingers touched the thipdar's leg. Cautiously, his fingers encircled the scaly, birdlike ankle just above the claws.

The reptile was descending slowly toward its nest. The hideous demons below were screeching and hissing in anticipation. Tarzan's

feet were almost in their jaws when he struck suddenly upward with his blade at the breast of the thipdar.

It was no random thrust. What slender chance for life the ape-man had depended upon the accuracy and the strength of that single blow. The giant pteranodon emitted a shrill scream, stiffened convulsively in mid-air and, as it collapsed, relaxed its hold upon its prey, dropping the ape-man into the nest among the gaping jaws of its frightful brood.

Fortunately for Tarzan there were but three of them and they were still very young, though their teeth were sharp and their jaws strong.

Striking quickly to right and left with his blade he scrambled from the nest with only a few minor cuts and scratches upon his legs.

Lying partially over the edge of the spire was the body of the dead thipdar. Tarzan gave it a final shove and watched it as it fell three hundred feet to the rocks below. Then he turned his attention to a survey of his surroundings, but almost hopelessly since the view that he had obtained of the spire while the thipdar was circling it assured him that there was little or no likelihood that he could find any means of descent.

The young thipdars were screaming and hissing, but they had made no move to leave their nest as Tarzan started a close investigation of the granite spire upon the lofty summit of which it seemed likely that he would terminate his adventurous career.

Lying flat upon his belly he looked over the edge, and thus moving slowly around the periphery of the lofty aerie he examined the walls of the spire with minute attention to every detail.

Again and again he crept around the edge until he had catalogued within his memory every projection and crevice and possible handhold that he could see from above.

Several times he returned to one point and then he removed the

coils of his grass rope from about his shoulders and holding the two ends in one hand, lowered the loop over the edge of the spire. Carefully he noted the distance that it descended from the summit and what a pitiful span it seemed — that paltry twenty-five feet against the three hundred that marked the distance from base to apex.

Releasing one end of the rope, he let that fall to its full length, and when he saw where the lower end touched the granite wall he was satisfied that he could descend at least that far, and below that another twenty-five feet. But it was difficult to measure distances below that point and from there on he must leave everything to chance.

Drawing the rope up again he looped the center of it about a projecting bit of granite, permitting the ends to fall over the edge of the cliff. Then he seized both strands of the rope tightly in one hand and lowered himself over the edge. Twenty feet below was a projection that gave him precarious foothold and a little crevice into which he could insert the fingers of his left hand. Almost directly before his face was the top of a buttress-like projection and below him he knew that there were many more similar to it. It was upon these that he had based his slender hope of success.

Gingerly he pulled upon one strand of the rope with his right hand. So slender was his footing upon the rocky escarpment that he did not dare draw the rope more than a few inches at a time lest the motion throw him off his balance. Little by little he drew it in until the upper end passed around the projection over which the rope had been looped at the summit and fell upon him. And as it descended he held his breath for fear that even this slight weight might topple him to the jagged rocks below.

And now came the slow process of drawing the rope unaided through one hand, fingering it slowly an inch at a time until the center

was in his grasp. This he looped over the top of the projection in front of him, seating it as securely as he could, and then he grasped both strands once more in his right hand and was ready to descend another twenty-five feet.

This stage of the descent was the most appalling of all, since the rope was barely seated upon a shelving protuberance from which he was aware it might slip at any instant. And so it was with a sense of unspeakable relief that he again found foothold near the end of the frail strands that were supporting him.

At this point the surface of the spire became much rougher. It was broken by fissures and horizontal cracks that had not been visible from above, with the result that compared with the first fifty feet the descent from here to the base was a miracle of ease, and it was not long before Tarzan stood again squarely upon his two feet and level ground. And now for the first time he had an opportunity to take stock of his injuries.

His legs were scratched and cut by the teeth and talons of the young thipdars, but these wounds were as nothing to those left by the talons of the adult reptile upon his back and shoulders. He could feel the deep wounds, but he could not see them; nor the clotted blood that had dried upon his brown skin.

The wounds pained and his muscles were stiff and sore, but his only fear lay in the possibility of blood poisoning and that did not greatly worry the ape-man, who had been repeatedly torn and mauled by carnivores since childhood.

A brief survey of his position showed him that it would be practically impossible for him to recross the stupendous gorge that yawned between him and the point at which he had been so ruthlessly torn from his companions. And with that discovery came the realization that

there was little or no likelihood that the people toward which Tar-gash had been attempting to guide him could be the members of the O-220 expedition. Therefore it seemed useless to attempt the seemingly impossible feat of finding Thoar and Tar-gash again among this maze of stupendous peaks, gorges and ravines. And so he determined merely to seek a way out of the mountains and back to the forests and plains that held a greater allure for him than did the rough and craggy contours of inhospitable hills. And to the accomplishment of this end he decided to follow the line of least resistance, seeking always the easiest avenues of descent.

Below him, in various directions, he could see the timber line and toward this he hastened to make his way.

As he descended the way became easier, though on several occasions he was again compelled to resort to his rope to lower himself from one level to another. Then the steep crags gave place to leveller land upon the shoulders of the mighty range and here, where earth could find lodgment, vegetation commenced. Grasses and shrubs, at first, then stunted trees and finally what was almost a forest, and here he came upon a trail.

It was a trail that offered infinite variety. For a while it wound through a forest and then climbed to a ledge of rock that projected from the face of a cliff and overhung a stupendous canyon.

He could not see the trail far ahead for it was continually rounding the shoulders of jutting crags.

As he moved along it, sure-footed, silent, alert, Tarzan of the Apes became aware that somewhere ahead of him other feet were treading probably the same trail.

What wind there was was eddying up from the canyon below and carrying the scent spoor of the creature ahead of him as well as his

own up toward the mountain top, so that it was unlikely that either might apprehend the presence of the other by scent; but there was something in the sound of the footsteps that even at a distance assured Tarzan that they were not made by man, and it was evident too that they were going in the same direction as he for they were not growing rapidly more distinct, but very gradually as though he was slowly overhauling the author of them.

The trail was narrow and only occasionally, where it crossed some ravine or shallow gulley, was there a place where one might either descend or ascend from it.

To meet a savage beast upon it, therefore, might prove, to say the least, embarrassing but Tarzan had elected to go this way and he was not in the habit of turning back whatever obstacles in the form of man or beast might bar his way. And, too, he had the advantage over the creature ahead of him whatever it might be, since he was coming upon it from behind and was quite sure that it had no knowledge of his presence, for Tarzan well knew that no creature could move with greater silence than he, when he elected to do so, and now he passed along that trail as noiselessly as the shadow of a shadow.

Curiosity caused him to increase his speed that he might learn the nature of the thing ahead, and as he did so and the sound of its footsteps increased in volume, he knew that he was stalking some heavy, four-footed beast with padded feet — that much he could tell, but beyond that he had no idea of the identity of the creature; nor did the winding trail at any time reveal it to his view. Thus the silent stalker pursued his way until he knew that he was but a short distance behind his quarry when there suddenly broke upon his ears the horrid snarling and growling of an enraged beast just ahead of him.

There was something in the tone of that awful voice that increased

the ape-man's curiosity. He guessed from the volume of the sound that it must come from the throat of a tremendous beast, for the very hills seemed to shake to the thunder of its roars.

Guessing that it was attacking or was about to attack some other creature, and spurred, perhaps, entirely by curiosity, Tarzan hastened forward at a brisk trot, and as he rounded the shoulder of a buttressed crag his eyes took in a scene that galvanized him into instant action.

A hundred feet ahead the trail ended at the mouth of a great cave, and in the entrance to the cave stood a boy — a lithe, handsome youth of ten or twelve — while between the boy and Tarzan a huge cave bear was advancing angrily upon the former.

The boy saw Tarzan and at the first glance his eyes lighted with hope, but an instant later, evidently recognizing that the newcomer was not of his own tribe, the expression of hopelessness that had been there before returned to his face, but he stood his ground bravely, his spear and his crude stone knife ready.

The scene before the ape-man told its own story. The bear, returning to its cave, had unexpectedly discovered the youth emerging from it, while the latter, doubtless equally surprised, found himself cornered with no avenue of escape open to him.

By the primitive jungle laws that had guided his youth, Tarzan of the Apes was under no responsibility to assume the dangerous rôle of savior, but there had always burned within his breast the flame of chivalry, bequeathed him by his English parents, that more often than not found him jeopardizing his own life in the interests of others. This child of a nameless tribe in an unknown world might hold no claim upon the sympathy of a savage beast, or even of savage men who were not of his tribe. And perhaps Tarzan of the Apes would not have admitted that the youth had any claim upon him, yet in reality he

exercised a vast power over the ape-man — a power that lay solely in the fact that he was a child and that he was helpless.

One may analyze the deeds of a man of action and speculate upon them, whereas the man himself does not appear to do so at all — he merely acts; and thus it was with Tarzan of the Apes. He saw an emergency confronting him and he was ready to meet it, for since the moment that he had known that there was a beast upon the trail ahead of him he had had his weapons in readiness, years of experience with primitive men and savage beasts having taught him the value of preparedness.

His grass rope was looped in the hollow of his left arm and in the fingers of his left hand were grasped his spear, his bow and three extra arrows, while a fourth arrow was ready in his right hand.

One glance at the beast ahead of him had convinced him that only by a combination of skill and rare luck could he hope to destroy this titanic monster with the relatively puny weapons with which he was armed, but he might at least divert its attention from the lad and by harassing it draw it away until the boy could find some means of escape. And so it was that within the very instant that his eyes took in the picture his bow twanged and a heavy arrow sank deeply into the back of the bear close to its spine, and at the same time Tarzan voiced a savage cry intended to apprise the beast of an enemy in its rear.

Maddened by the pain and surprised by the voice behind it, the creature evidently associated the two, instantly whirling about on the narrow ledge.

Tarzan's first impression was that in all his life he had never gazed upon such a picture of savage bestial rage as was depicted upon the snarling countenance of the mighty cave bear as its fiery eyes fell upon the author of its hurt.

In quick succession three arrows sank into its chest as it charged, howling, down upon the ape-man.

For an instant longer Tarzan held his ground. Poising his heavy spear he carried his spear hand far back behind his right shoulder, and then with all the force of those giant muscles, backed by the weight of his great body, he launched the weapon.

At the instant that it left his hand the bear was almost upon him and he did not wait to note the effect of his throw, but turned and leaped swiftly down the trail; while close behind him the savage growling and the ponderous footfalls of the carnivore proved the wisdom of his strategy.

He was sure that upon this narrow, rocky ledge, if no obstacle interposed itself, he could outdistance the bear, for only Ara, the lightning, is swifter than Tarzan of the Apes.

There was the possibility that he might meet the bear's mate coming up to their den, and in that event his position would be highly critical, but that, of course, was only a remote possibility and in the meantime he was sure that he had inflicted sufficiently severe wounds upon the great beast to sap its strength and eventually to prove its total undoing. That it possessed an immense reserve of vitality was evidenced by the strength and savagery of its pursuit. The creature seemed tireless and although Tarzan was equally so he found fleeing from an antagonist peculiarly irksome and to a considerable degree obnoxious to his self esteem. And so he cast about him for some means of terminating the flight and to that end he watched particularly the cliff walls rising above the trail down which he sped, and at last he saw that for which he had hoped — a jutting granite projection protruding from the cliff about twenty-five feet above the trail.

His coiled rope was ready in his left hand, the noose in his right,

and as he came within throwing distance of the projection, he unerringly tossed the latter about it. The bear tore down the trail behind him. The ape-man pulled heavily once upon the end of the rope to assure himself that it was safely caught above, and then with the agility of Manu, the monkey, he clambered upward.

10.

ONLY A MAN MAY GO

It required no Sherlockian instinct to deduce that Jana was angry, and Jason was not so dense as to be unaware of the cause of her displeasure, which he attributed to natural feminine vexation induced by the knowledge that she had been mistaken in assuming that her charms had effected the conquest of his heart. He judged Jana by his own imagined knowledge of feminine psychology. He knew that she was beautiful and he knew that she knew it, too. She had told him of the many men of Zoram who had wanted to take her as their mate, and he had saved her from one suitor, who had pursued her across the terrible Mountains of the Thipdars, putting his life constantly in jeopardy to win her. He felt that it was only natural, therefore, that Jana should place a high valuation upon her charms and believe that any man might fall a victim to their spell, but he saw no reason why she should be angry because she had not succeeded in enthralling him. They had been very happy together. He could not recall when ever before he had been for so long a time in the company of any girl, or so enjoyed the companionship of one of her sex. He was sorry that anything had occurred to mar the even tenor of their friendship and he quickly decided that the manly thing to do was to ignore her tantrum and go on with her as he had before, until she came to her senses. Nor was there anything else that he might do for he certainly could not permit Jana to continue her journey to Zoram without protection. Of course it was not very nice of her to have called him a jalok, which he knew to be a Pellucidarian epithet of high insult, but he would

overlook that for the present and eventually she would relent and ask his forgiveness.

And so he followed her, but he had taken scarcely a dozen steps when she wheeled upon him like a young tiger, whipping her stone knife from its sheath. "I told you to go your way," she cried. "I do not want to see you again. If you follow me I shall kill you."

"I cannot let you go on alone, Jana," he said quietly.

"The Red Flower of Zoram wants no protection from such as you," she replied haughtily.

"We have been such good friends, Jana," he pleaded. "Let us go on together as we have in the past. I cannot help it if —" He hesitated and stopped.

"I do not care that you do not love me," she said. "I hate you. I hate you because your eyes lie. Sometimes lips lie and we are not hurt because we have learned to expect that from lips, but when eyes lie then the heart lies and the whole man is false. I cannot trust you. I do not want your friendship. I want nothing more of you. Go away."

"You do not understand, Jana," he insisted.

"I understand that if you try to follow me I will kill you," she said.

"Then you will have to kill me," he replied, "for I shall follow you. I cannot let you go on alone, no matter whether you hate me or not," and as he ceased speaking he advanced toward her.

Jana stood facing him, her little feet firmly planted, her crude stone dagger grasped in her right hand, her eyes flashing angrily.

His hands at his sides, Jason Gridley walked slowly up to her as though offering his breast as a target for her weapon. The stone blade flashed upward. It poised a moment above her shoulder and then The Red Flower of Zoram turned and fled along the rim of the rift.

She ran very swiftly and was soon far ahead of Jason, who was

weighted down by clothes, heavy weapons and ammunition. He called after her once or twice, begging her to stop, but she did not heed him and he continued doggedly along her trail, making the best time that he could. He felt hurt and angry, but after all the emotion which dominated him was one of regret that their sweet friendship had been thus wantonly blasted.

Slowly the realization was borne in upon him that he had been very happy with Jana and that she had occupied his thoughts almost to the exclusion of every other consideration of the past or future. Even the memory of his lost comrades had been relegated to the hazy oblivion of temporary forgetfulness in the presence of the responsibility which he had assumed for the safe conduct of the girl to her home land.

“Why, she has made a regular monkey out of me,” he mused. “Odysseus never met a more potent Circe. Nor one half so lovely,” he added, as he regretfully recalled the charms of the little barbarian.

And what a barbarian she had proven herself — whipping out her stone knife and threatening to kill him. But he could not help but smile when he realized how in the final extremity she had proven herself so wholly feminine. With a sigh he shook his head and plodded on after The Red Flower of Zoram.

Occasionally Jason caught a glimpse of Jana as she crossed a ridge ahead of him and though she did not seem to be travelling as fast as at first, yet he could not gain upon her. His mind was constantly harassed by the fear that she might be attacked by some savage beast and destroyed before he could come to her rescue with his rifle. He knew that sooner or later she would have to stop and rest and then he was hopeful of overtaking her, when he might persuade her to forget her anger and resume their former friendly comradeship.

But it seemed that The Red Flower of Zoram had no intention

of resting, though the American had long since reached a state of fatigue that momentarily threatened to force him to relinquish the pursuit until outraged nature could recuperate. Yet he plodded on doggedly across the rough ground, while the weight of his arms and ammunition seemed to increase until his rifle assumed the ponderous proportions of a field gun. Determined not to give up, he staggered down one hill and struggled up the next, his legs seeming to move mechanically as though they were some detached engine of torture over which he had no control and which were bearing him relentlessly onward, while every fiber of his being cried out for rest.

Added to the physical torture of fatigue, were hunger and thirst, and knowing that only thus might time be measured, he was confident that he had covered a great distance since they had last rested and then he topped the summit of a low rise and saw Jana directly ahead of him.

She was standing on the edge of the rift where it opened into a mighty gorge that descended from the mountains and it was evident that she was undecided what course to pursue. The course which she wished to pursue was blocked by the rift and gorge. To her left the way led back down into the valley in a direction opposite to that in which lay Zoram, while to retrace her steps would entail another encounter with Jason.

She was looking over the edge of the precipice, evidently searching for some avenue of descent when she became aware of Jason's approach.

She wheeled upon him angrily. "Go back," she cried, "or I shall jump."

"Please, Jana," he pleaded, "let me go with you. I shall not annoy you. I shall not even speak to you unless you wish it, but let me go with you to protect you from the beasts."

The girl laughed. "You protect me!" she exclaimed, her tone caustic with sarcasm. "You do not even know the dangers which beset the way. Without your strange spear, which spits fire and death, you would be helpless before the attack of even one of the lesser beasts, and in the high Mountains of the Thipdars there are beasts so large and so terrible that they would devour you and your fire spear in a single gulp. Go back to your own people, man of another world; go back to the soft women of which you have told me. Only a man may go where The Red Flower of Zoram goes."

"You half convince me," said Jason with a rueful smile, "that I am only a caterpillar, but nevertheless even a caterpillar must have guts of some sort and so I am going to follow you, Red Flower of Zoram, until some goggle-eyed monstrosity of the Jurassic snatches me from this vale of tears."

"I do not know what you are talking about," snapped Jana; "but if you follow me you will be killed. Remember what I told you — only a man may go where goes The Red Flower of Zoram," and as though to prove her assertion she turned and slid quickly over the edge of the precipice, disappearing from his view.

Running quickly forward to the edge of the chasm, Jason Gridley looked down and there, a few yards below him, clinging to the perpendicular face of the cliff, Jana was working her way slowly downward. Jason held his breath. It seemed incredible that any creature could find hand or foothold upon that dizzy escarpment. He shuddered and cold sweat broke out upon him as he watched the girl.

Foot by foot she worked her way downward, while the man, lying upon his belly, his head projecting over the edge of the cliff, watched her in silence. He dared not speak to her for fear of distracting her attention and when, after what seemed an eternity, she reached the

bottom, he fell to trembling like a leaf and for the first time realized the extent of the nervous strain he had been undergoing.

“God!” he murmured. “What a magnificent display of nerve and courage and skill!”

The Red Flower of Zoram did not look back or upward once as she resumed her way, following the gorge upward, searching for some point where she might clamber out of it above the rift.

Jason Gridley looked down into the terrible abyss. ““Only a man may go where goes The Red Flower of Zoram,”” he mused.

He watched the girl until she disappeared behind a mass of fallen rock, where the gorge curved to the right, and he knew that unless he could descend into the gorge she had passed out of his life forever.

“Only a man may go where goes The Red Flower of Zoram!”

Jason Gridley arose to his feet. He readjusted the leather sling upon his rifle so that he could carry the weapon hanging down the center of his back. He slipped the holsters of both of his six-guns to the rear so that they, too, were entirely behind him. He removed his boots and dropped them over the edge of the cliff. Then he lay upon his belly and lowered his body slowly downward, and from a short distance up the gorge two eyes watched him from behind a pile of tumbled granite. There was anger in them at first, then skepticism, then surprise, and then terror.

As gropingly the man sought for some tiny foothold and then lowered himself slowly a few inches at a time, the eyes of the girl, wide in horror, never left him for an instant.

“Only a man may go where goes The Red Flower of Zoram!”

Cautiously, Jason Gridley groped for each handhold and foothold — each precarious support from which it seemed that even his breath-

ing might dislodge him. Hunger, thirst and fatigue were forgotten as he marshalled every faculty to do the bidding of his iron nerve.

Hugging close to the face of the cliff he did not dare turn his head sufficiently to look downward and though it seemed he had clung there, lowering himself inch by inch, for an eternity, yet he had no idea how much further he had to descend. And so impossible of accomplishment did the task that he had set himself appear that never for an instant did he dare to hope for a successful conclusion. Never for an instant did any new hold impart to him a feeling of security, but each one seemed, if possible, more precarious than its predecessor, and then he reached a point where, grope as he would, he could find no foothold. He could not move to right or left; nor could he ascend. Apparently he had reached the end of his resources, but still he did not give up. Replacing his torn and bleeding feet upon the last, slight hold that they had found, he cautiously sought for new handholds lower down, and when he had found them — mere protuberances of rough granite — he let his feet slip slowly from their support as gradually he lowered his body to its full length, supported only by his fingers, where they clutched at the tiny projections that were his sole support.

As he clung there, desperately searching about with his feet for some slight projection, he reproached himself for not having discarded his heavy weapons and ammunition. And why? Because his life was in jeopardy and he feared to die? No, his only thought was that because of them he would be unable to cling much longer to the cliff and that when his hands slipped from their holds and he was dashed into eternity, his last, slender hope of ever again seeing The Red Flower of Zoram would be gone. It is remarkable, perhaps, that as he clung thus

literally upon the brink of eternity, no visions of Cynthia Furnois or Barbara Green impinged themselves upon his consciousness.

He felt his fingers weakening and slipping from their hold. The end came suddenly. The weight of his body dragged one hand loose and instantly the other slipped from the tiny knob it had been clutching, and Jason Gridley dropped downward, perhaps eighteen inches, to the bottom of the cliff.

As he came to a stop, his feet on solid rock, Jason could not readily conceive the good fortune that had befallen him. Almost afraid to look, he glanced downward and then the truth dawned upon him — he had made the descent in safety. His knees sagged beneath him and as he sank to the ground, a girl, watching him from up the gorge, burst into tears.

A short distance below him a spring bubbled from the canyon side, forming a little brooklet which leaped downward in the sunlight toward the bottom of the canyon and the valley, and after he had regained his composure he found his boots and hobbled down to the water. Here he satisfied his thirst and washed his feet, cleansing the cuts as best he could, bandaged them crudely with strips torn from his handkerchief, pulled his boots on once more and started up the canyon after Jana.

Far above, near the summit of the stupendous range, he saw ominous clouds gathering. They were the first clouds that he had seen in Pellucidar, but only for this reason did they seem remarkable or important. That they presaged rain, he could well imagine; but how could he dream of the catastrophic proportions of their menace.

Far ahead of him The Red Flower of Zoram was clambering upward along a precarious trail that gave promise of leading eventually over the rim of the gorge to the upper reaches that she wished to gain. When she had seen Jason's life in imminent jeopardy, she had been

filled with terror and remorse, but when he had safely completed the descent her mood changed, and with the perversity of her sex she still sought to elude him. She had almost gained the summit of the escarpment when the storm broke and with it came a realization that the man behind her was ignorant of the danger which now more surely menaced him than had the descent of the cliff.

Without an instant's hesitation The Red Flower of Zoram turned and fled swiftly down the steep trail she had just so laboriously ascended. She must reach him before the waters reached him. She must guide him to some high place upon the canyon's wall, for she knew that the bottom of this great gorge would soon be a foaming, boiling torrent, spreading from side to side, its waters, perhaps, two hundred feet in depth. Already the water was running deep in the canyon far below her and spilling over the rim above her, racing downward in torrents and cataracts and waterfalls that carried earth and stone with them. Never in her life had Jana witnessed a storm so terrible. The thunder roared and the lightning flashed; the wind howled and the water fell in blinding sheets, and yet constantly menaced by instant death the girl groped her way blindly downward upon her hopeless errand of mercy. How hopeless it was she was soon to see, for the waters in the gorge had risen, she saw them just below her now, nor was the end in sight. Nothing down there could have survived. The man must long since have been washed away.

Jason was dead! The Red Flower of Zoram stood for an instant looking at the rising waters below her. There came to her an urge to throw herself into them. She did not want to live, but something stayed her; perhaps it was the instinct of primeval man, whose whole existence was a battle against death, who knew no other state and might not conceive voluntary surrender to the enemy, and so she turned

and fought her way upward as the waters rising below her climbed to overtake her and the waters from above sought to hurl her backward to destruction.

Jason Gridley had witnessed cloudbursts in California and Arizona and he knew how quickly gulleys and ravines may be transformed into raging torrents. He had seen a river a mile wide formed in a few hours in the San Simon Flats, and when he saw the sudden rush of waters in the bottom of the gorge below him and realized that no storm that he had ever previously witnessed could compare in magnitude with this, he lost no time in seeking higher ground; but the sides of the canyon were steep and his upward progress discouragingly slow, as he saw the waters rising rapidly behind him. Yet there was hope, for just ahead and above him he saw a gentle acclivity rising toward the summit of the canyon rim.

As he struggled toward safety the boiling torrent rose and lapped his feet, while from above the torrential rain thundered down upon him, beating him backward so that often for a full minute at a time he could make no headway.

The raging waters that were filling the gorge reached his knees and for an instant he was swept from his footing. Clutching at the ground above him with his hands, he lost his rifle, but as it slid into the turgid waters he clambered swiftly upward and regained momentary safety.

Onward and upward he fought until at last he reached a spot above which he was confident the flood could not reach and there he crouched in the partial shelter of an overhanging granite ledge as Tarzan and Thoar and Tar-gash were crouching in another part of the mountains, waiting in dumb misery for the storm to spend its wrath.

He wondered if Jana had escaped the flood and so much confidence did he have in her masterful ability to cope with the vagaries

of savage Pellucidarian life that he harbored few fears for her upon the score of the storm.

In the cold and the dark and the wet he tried to plan for the future. What chance had he to find The Red Flower of Zoram in this savage chaos of stupendous peaks when he did not even know the direction in which her country lay and where there were no roads or trails and where even the few tracks that she might have left must have been wholly obliterated by the torrents of water that had covered the whole surface of the ground?

To stumble blindly on, then, seemed the only course left open to him, since he knew neither the direction of Zoram, other than in a most general way, nor had any idea as to the whereabouts of his fellow members of the O-220 expedition.

At last the rain ceased; the sun burst forth upon a steaming world and beneath the benign influence of its warm rays Jason felt the cold ashes of hope rekindled within his breast. Revivified, he took up the search that but now had seemed so hopeless.

Trying to bear in mind the general direction in which Jana had told him Zoram lay, he set his face toward what appeared to be a low saddle between two lofty peaks, which appeared to surmount the summit of the range. Thirst no longer afflicted him and the pangs of hunger had become deadened. Nor did it seem at all likely that he might soon find food since the storm seemed to have driven all animal life from the higher hills, but fortune smiled upon him. In a water worn rocky hollow he found a nest of eggs that had withstood the onslaught of the elements. The nature of the creature that had laid them he did not know; nor whether they were the eggs of fowl or reptile did he care. They were fresh and they were food and so large were they that the contents of two of them satisfied his hunger.

A short distance from the spot where he had found them grew a low stunted tree, and having eaten he carried the three remaining eggs to this meager protection from the prying eyes of soaring reptiles and birds of prey. Here he removed his clothing, hanging it upon the branches of the tree where the sunlight might dry it, and then he lay down beneath the tree to sleep, and in the warmth of Pellucidar's eternal noon he found no discomfort.

How long a time he slept he had no means of estimating, but when he awoke he was completely rested and refreshed. He was imbued with a new sense of self-confidence as he arose, stretching luxuriously, to don his clothes. His stretch half completed, he froze with consternation — his clothes were gone! He looked hastily about for them or for some sign of the creature that had purloined them, but never again did he see the one, nor ever the other.

Upon the ground beneath the tree lay a shirt that, having fallen, evidently escaped the eye of the marauder. That, his revolvers and belts of ammunition, which had lain close to him while he slept, were all that remained to him.

The temperature of Pellucidar is such that clothing is rather a burden than a necessity, but so accustomed is civilized man to the strange apparel with which he has encumbered himself for generations that, bereft of it, his efficiency, self-reliance and resourcefulness are reduced to a plane approximating the vanishing point.

Never in his life had Jason Gridley felt so helpless and futile as he did this instant as he contemplated the necessity which stared him in the face of going forth into this world clothed only in a torn shirt and an ammunition belt. Yet he realized that with the exception of his boots he had lost nothing that was essential either to his comfort or his efficiency, but perhaps he was appalled most by the realization of the

effect that this misfortune would have upon the pursuit of the main object of his quest — how could he prosecute the search for The Red Flower of Zoram thus scantily appareled?

Of course The Red Flower had not been overburdened with wearing apparel; yet in her case this seemed no reflection upon her modesty, but the anticipation of finding her was now dampened by a realization of the ridiculousness of the figure he would cut, and already the mere contemplation of such a meeting caused a flush to overspread him.

In his dreams he had sometimes imagined himself walking abroad in some ridiculous state of undress, but now that such a dream had become an actuality he appreciated that in the figment of the subconscious mind he had never fully realized such complete embarrassment and loss of self-confidence as the actuality entailed.

Ruefully he tore his shirt into strips and devised a G-string; then he buckled his ammunition belt around him and stepped forth into the world, an Adam armed with two Colts.

As he proceeded upon his search for Zoram he found that the greatest hardship which the loss of his clothing entailed was the pain and discomfort attendant upon travelling barefoot on soles already lacerated by his descent of the rough granite cliff. This discomfort, however, he eventually partially overcame when with the return of the game to the mountains he was able to shoot a small reptile, from the hide of which he fashioned two crude sandals.

The sun, beating down upon his naked body, had no such effect upon his skin as would the sun of the outer world under like conditions, but it did impart to him a golden bronze color, which gave him a new confidence similar to that which he would have felt had he been able to retrieve his lost apparel, and in this fact he saw what he

believed to be the real cause of his first embarrassment at his nakedness — it had been the whiteness of his skin that had made him seem so naked by contrast with other creatures, for this whiteness had suggested softness and weakness, arousing within him a disturbing sensation of inferiority; but now as he took on his heavy coat of tan and his feet became hardened and accustomed to the new conditions, he walked no longer in constant realization of his nakedness.

He slept and ate many times and was conscious, therefore, that considerable outer earthly time had passed since he had been separated from Jana. As yet he had seen no sign of her or any other human being, though he was often menaced by savage beasts and reptiles, but experience had taught him how best to elude these without recourse to his weapons, which he was determined to use only in extreme emergencies for he could not but anticipate with misgivings the time, which must sometime come, when the last of his ammunition would have been exhausted.

He had crossed the summit of the range and found a fairer country beyond. It was still wild and tumbled and rocky, but the vegetation grew more luxuriantly and in many places the mountain slopes were clothed in forests that reached far upward toward the higher peaks. There were more streams and a greater abundance of smaller game, which afforded him relief from any anxiety upon the score of food.

For the purpose of economizing his precious ammunition he had fashioned other weapons; the influence of his association with Jana being reflected in his spear, while to Tarzan of the Apes and the Waziri he owed his crude bow and arrows. Before he had mastered the intricacies of either of his new weapons he might have died of starvation had it not been for his Colts, but eventually he achieved a sufficient degree of adeptness to insure him a full larder at all times.

Jason Gridley had long since given up all hope of finding his ship or his companions and had accepted with what philosophy he could command the future lot from which there seemed no escape, in which he visioned a lifetime spent in Pellucidar, battling with his primitive weapons for survival amongst the savage creatures of the inner world.

Most of all he missed human companionship and he looked forward to the day that he might find a tribe of men with which he could cast his lot. Although he was quite aware from the information that he had gleaned from Jana that it might be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for him to win either the confidence or the friendship of any Pellucidarian tribe whose attitude towards strangers was one of habitual enmity; yet he did not abandon hope and his eyes were always on the alert for a sign of man; nor was he now to have long to wait.

He had lost all sense of direction in so far as the location of Zoram was concerned and was wandering aimlessly from camp to camp in the idle hope that some day he would stumble upon Zoram, when a breeze coming from below brought to his nostrils the acrid scent of smoke. Instantly his whole being was surcharged with excitement, for smoke meant fire and fire meant man.

Moving cautiously down the mountain in the direction from which the wind was blowing, his eager, searching eyes were presently rewarded by sight of a thin wisp of smoke arising from a canyon just ahead. It was a rocky canyon with precipitous walls, those upon the opposite side from him being lofty, while that which he was approaching was much lower and in many places so broken down by erosion or other natural causes as to give ready ingress to the canyon bottom below.

Creeping stealthily to the rim Jason Gridley peered downward into the canyon. Along the center of its grassy floor tumbled a mountain

torrent. Giant trees grew at intervals, lending a park-like appearance to the scene; a similarity which was further accentuated by the gorgeous blooms which starred the sward or blossomed in the trees themselves.

Beside a small fire at the edge of a brook squatted a bronzed warrior, his attention centered upon a fowl which he was roasting above the fire. Jason, watching the warrior, deliberated upon the best method of approaching him, that he might convince him of his friendly intentions and overcome the natural suspicion of strangers that he knew to be inherent in these savage tribesmen. He had decided that the best plan would be to walk boldly down to the stranger, his hands empty of weapons, and he was upon the point of putting his plan into action when his attention was attracted to the summit of the cliff upon the opposite side of the narrow canyon.

There had been no sound that had been appreciable to his ears and the top of the opposite cliff had not been within the field of his vision while he had been watching the man in the bottom of the canyon. So what had attracted his attention he did not know, unless it had been the delicate powers of perception inherent in that mysterious attribute of the mind which we are sometimes pleased to call a sixth sense.

But be that as it may, his eyes moved directly to a spot upon the summit of the opposite cliff where stood such a creature as no living man upon the outer crust had ever looked upon before — a giant armored dinosaur it was, a huge reptile that appeared to be between sixty and seventy feet in length, standing at the rump, which was its highest point, fully twenty-five feet above the ground. Its relatively small, pointed head resembled that of a lizard. Along its spine were thin, horny plates arranged alternately, the largest of which were almost three feet high and equally as long, but with a thickness of little more than an inch. The stout tail, which terminated in a long, horny spine,

was equipped with two other such spines upon the upper side and toward the tip. Each of these spines was about three feet in length. The creature walked upon four lizard-like feet, its short, front legs bringing its nose close to the ground, imparting to it an awkward and ungainly appearance.

It appeared to be watching the man in the canyon, and suddenly, to Jason's amazement, it gathered its gigantic hind legs beneath it and launched itself straight from the top of the lofty cliff.

Jason's first thought was that the gigantic creature would be dashed to pieces upon the ground in the canyon bottom, but to his vast astonishment he saw that it was not falling but was gliding swiftly through the air, supported by its huge spinal plates, which it had dropped to a horizontal position, transforming itself into a gigantic animate glider.

The swish of its passage through the air attracted the attention of the warrior squatting over his fire. The man leaped to his feet, snatching up his spear as he did so, and simultaneously Jason Gridley sprang over the edge of the cliff and leaped down the rough declivity toward the lone warrior, at the same time whipping both his six-guns from their holsters.

11.

THE CAVERN OF CLOVI

As Tarzan swarmed up the rope the bear, almost upon his heels and running swiftly, squatted upon its haunches to overcome its momentum and came to a stop directly beneath him. And then it was that there occurred one of those unforeseen accidents which no one might have guarded against.

It chanced that the granite projection across which Tarzan had cast his noose was at a single point of knife-like sharpness upon its upper edge, and with the weight of the man dragging down upon it the rope parted where it rested upon this sharp bit of granite, and the Lord of the Jungle was precipitated upon the back of the cave bear.

With such rapidity had these events transpired it is a matter of question as to whether the bear or Tarzan was the more surprised, but primitive creatures who would survive cannot permit surprise to disconcert them. In this instance both of the creatures accepted the happening as though it had been planned and expected.

The bear reared up and shook itself in an effort to dislodge the man-thing from its back, while Tarzan slipped a bronzed arm around the shaggy neck and clung desperately to his hold while he dragged his hunting knife from its sheath. It was a precarious place in which to stage a struggle for life. On one side the cliff rose far above them, and upon the other it dropped away dizzily into the depth of a gloomy gorge, and here the efforts of the cave bear to dislodge its antagonist momentarily bade fair to plunge them both into eternity.

The growls and roars of the quadruped reverberated among the

mighty peaks of the Mountains of the Thipdars, but the ape-man battled silently, driving his blade repeatedly into the back of the lunging beast, which was seeking by every means at its command to dislodge him, though ever wary against precipitating itself over the brink into the chasm.

But the battle could not go on forever and at last the blade found the spinal cord. The creature stiffened spasmodically and Tarzan slipped quickly from its back. He found safe footing upon the ledge as the mighty carcass stumbled forward and rolled over the edge to hurtle downward to the gorge's bottom, carrying with it four of Tarzan's arrows and his spear.

The ape-man found his rope lying upon the ledge where it had fallen, and gathering it up he started back along the trail in search of the bow that he had been forced to discard in his flight, as well as to find the boy.

He had taken only a few steps when, upon rounding the shoulder of a crag, he came face to face with the youth. At sight of him the latter stopped, his spear ready, his stone knife loosened in its sheath. He had been carrying Tarzan's bow, but at sight of the ape-man he dropped it at his feet, the better to defend himself in the event that he was attacked by the stranger.

"I am Tarzan of the Apes," said the Lord of the Jungle. "I come as a friend, and not to kill."

"I am Ovan," said the boy. "If you did not come to our country to kill, then you came to steal a mate, and thus it is the duty of every warrior of Clovi to kill you."

"Tarzan seeks no mate," said the ape-man.

"Then why is he in Clovi?" demanded the youth.

"He is lost," replied the ape-man. "Tarzan comes from another

world that is beyond Pellucidar. He has become separated from his friends and he cannot find his way back to them. He would be friend with the people of Clovi.”

“Why did you attack the bear?” demanded Ovan, suddenly.

“If I had not attacked it it would have killed you,” replied the ape-man.

Ovan scratched his head. “It seemed to me,” he said presently, “that there could be no other reason. It is what one of the men of my own tribe would have done, but you are not of my tribe. You are an enemy and so I could not understand why you did it. Do you tell me that though I am not of your tribe you would have saved my life?”

“Certainly,” replied Tarzan.

Ovan looked long and steadily at the handsome giant standing before him. “I believe you,” he said presently, “although I do not understand. I never heard of such a thing before, but I do not know that the men of my tribe will believe. Even after I have told them what you have done for me they may still wish to kill you, for they believe that it is never safe to trust an enemy.”

“Where is your village?” asked Tarzan.

“It is not at a great distance,” replied Ovan.

“I will go there with you,” said Tarzan, “and talk with your chief.”

“Very well,” said the boy. “You may talk with Avan the chief. He is my father. And if they decide to kill you I shall try to help you, for you saved my life when the ryth would have destroyed me.”

“Why were you in the cave?” demanded Tarzan. “It was plainly apparent that it was the den of a wild beast.”

“You, too, were upon the same trail,” said the boy, “while you chanced to be behind the ryth. It was my misfortune that I was in front of it.”

“I did not know where the trail led,” said the ape-man.

“Neither did I,” said Ovan. “I have never hunted before except in the company of older men, but now I have reached an age when I would be a warrior myself, and so I have come out of the caves of my people to make my first kill alone, for only thus may a man hope to become a warrior. I saw this trail and, though I did not know where it led, I followed it; nor had I been long upon it when I heard the footsteps of the ryth behind me and when I came to the cave and saw that the trail ended there, I knew that I should never again see the caves of my people, that I should never become a warrior. When the great ryth came and saw me standing there he was very angry, but I should have fought him. Perhaps I might have killed him, though I do not believe that that is at all likely.

“And then you came and with this bent stick cast a little spear into the back of the ryth, which so enraged him that he forgot me and turned to pursue you as you knew that he would. They must indeed be brave warriors who come from the land from which you come. Tell me about your country. Where is it? Are your warriors great hunters and is your chief powerful in the land?”

Tarzan tried to explain that his country was not in Pellucidar, but that was beyond Ovan’s powers of conception, and so Tarzan turned the conversation from himself to the youth and as they followed a winding trail toward Clovi, Ovan discoursed upon the bravery of the men of his tribe and the beauty of its women.

“Avan, my father, is a great chief,” he said, “and the men of my tribe are mighty warriors. Often we battle with the men of Zoram and we have even gone as far as Daroz, which lies beyond Zoram, for always there are more men than women in our tribe and the warriors must seek their mates in Zoram and Daroz. Even now Carb has gone to

Zoram with twenty warriors to steal women. The women of Zoram are very beautiful. When I am a little larger I shall go to Zoram and steal a mate.”

“How far is it from Clovi to Zoram?” asked Tarzan.

“Some say that it is not so far, and others that it is farther,” replied Ovan. “I have heard it said that going to Zoram is much farther than returning inasmuch as the warriors usually eat six times on the journey from Clovi to Zoram, but returning a strong man may make the journey eating only twice and still retain his strength.”

“But why should the distance be shorter returning than going?” demanded the ape-man.

“Because when they are returning they are usually pursued by the warriors of Zoram,” replied Ovan.

Inwardly Tarzan smiled at the naïveté of Ovan’s reasoning, while it again impressed upon him the impossibility of measuring distances or computing time under the anomalous condition obtaining in Pellucidar.

As the two made their way toward Clovi, the boy gradually abandoned his suspicious attitude toward Tarzan and presently seemed to accept him quite as he would have a member of his own tribe. He noticed the wound made by the talons of the thipdar on Tarzan’s back and shoulders and when he had wormed the story from his companion he marvelled at the courage, resourcefulness and strength that had won escape for this stranger from what a Pellucidarian would have considered an utterly hopeless situation.

Ovan saw that the wounds were inflamed and realized that they must be causing Tarzan considerable pain and discomfort, and so when first their way led near a brook he insisted upon cleansing them

thoroughly, and collecting the leaves of a particular shrub he crushed them and applied the juices to the open wounds.

The pain of the inflammation had been as nothing compared to the acute agony caused by the application thus made by Ovan and yet the boy noticed that not even by the tremor of a single muscle did the stranger evidence the agony that Ovan well knew he was enduring, and once again his admiration for his new-found companion was increased.

“It may hurt,” he said, “but it will keep the wounds from rotting and afterward they will heal quickly.”

For a short time after they resumed their march the pain continued to be excruciating, but it lessened gradually until it finally disappeared, and thereafter the ape-man felt no discomfort.

The way led to a forest where there were straight, tough, young saplings, and here Tarzan tarried long enough to fashion a new spear and to split and scrape half a dozen additional arrows.

Ovan was much interested in Tarzan’s steel-bladed knife and in his bow and arrows, although secretly he looked with contempt upon the latter, which he referred to as little spears for young children. But when they became hungry and Tarzan bowled over a mountain sheep with a single shaft, the lad’s contempt was changed to admiration and thereafter he not only evinced great respect for the bow and arrows, but begged to be taught how to make and to use them.

The little Clovian was a lad after the heart of the ape-man and the two became fast friends as they made their way toward the land of Clovi, for Ovan possessed the quiet dignity of the wild beast; nor was he given to that garrulity which is at once the pride and the curse of civilized man — there were no boy orators in the peaceful Pliocene.

“We are almost there,” announced Ovan, halting at the brink of a canyon. “Below lie the caves of the Clovi. I hope that Avan, the chief,

will receive you as a friend, but that I cannot promise. Perhaps it might be better for you to go your way and not come to the caves of the Clovi. I do not want you to be killed."

"They will not kill me," said Tarzan. "I come as a friend." But in his heart he knew that the chances were that these primitive savages might never accept a stranger among them upon an equal or a friendly footing.

"Come, then," said Ovan, as he started the descent into the canyon. Part way down the trail turned up along the canyon side in the direction of the head of the gorge. It was a level trail here, well kept and much used, with indications that no little engineering skill had entered into its construction. It was by no means the haphazard trail of beasts, but rather the work of intelligent, even though savage and primitive men.

They had proceeded no great distance along the trail when Ovan sounded a low whistle, which, a moment later, was answered from around the bend in the trail ahead, and when the two had passed this turn Tarzan saw before him a wide, natural ledge of rock entirely overhung by beetling cliffs and in the depth of the recess thus formed in the cliffside he saw the dark mouth of a cavern.

Upon the flat surface of the ledge, which comprised some two acres, were congregated fully a hundred men, women and children.

All eyes were turned in their direction as they came into view and on sight of Tarzan the warriors sprang to their feet, seizing spears and knives. The women called their children to them and moved quickly toward the entrance to the cavern.

"Do not fear," cried the boy. "It is only Ovan and his friend, Tarzan."

"We kill," growled some of the warriors.

“Where is Avan the chief?” demanded the boy.

“Here is Avan the chief,” announced a deep gruff voice, and Tarzan shifted his gaze to the figure of a stalwart, brawny savage emerging from the mouth of the cavern.

“What have you there, Ovan?” demanded the chief. “If you have brought a prisoner of war, you should have disarmed him first.”

“He is no prisoner,” replied Ovan. “He is a stranger in Pellucidar and he comes as a friend and not as an enemy.”

“He is a stranger,” replied Avan, “and you should have killed him. He has learned the way to the caverns of Clovi and if we do not kill him he will return to his people and lead them against us.”

“He has no people and he does not know how to return to his own country,” said the boy.

“Then he does not speak true words, for that is not possible,” said Avan. “There can be no man who does not know the way to his own country. Come! Stand aside, Ovan, while I destroy him.”

The lad drew himself stiffly erect in front of Tarzan. “Who would kill the friend of Ovan,” he said, “must first kill Ovan.”

A tall warrior, standing near the chief, laid his hand upon Avan’s arm. “Ovan has always been a good boy,” he said. “There is none in Clovi near his age whose words are as full of wisdom as his. If he says that this stranger is his friend and if he does not wish us to kill him, he must have a reason and we should listen to him before we decide to destroy the stranger.”

“Very well,” said the chief; “perhaps you are right, Ulan. We shall see. Speak, boy, and tell us why we should not kill the stranger.”

“Because at the risk of his life he saved mine. Hand to hand he fought with a great ryth from which I could not have escaped had it not been for him; nor did he offer to harm me, and what enemy of the

Clovi is there, even among the people of Zoram or Daroz who are of our own blood, that would not slay a Clovi youth who was so soon to become a warrior? Not only is he very brave, but he is a great hunter. It would be well for the tribe of Clovi if he came to live with us as a friend."

Avan bowed his head in thought. "When Carb returns we shall call a council and decide what to do," he said. "In the meantime the stranger must remain here as a prisoner."

"I shall not remain as a prisoner," said Tarzan. "I came as a friend and I shall remain as a friend, or I shall not remain at all."

"Let him stay as a friend," said Ulan. "He has marched with Ovan and has not harmed him. Why should we think that he will harm us when we are many and he only one?"

"Perhaps he has come to steal a woman," suggested Avan.

"No," said Ovan, "that is not so. Let him remain and with my life I will guarantee that he will harm no one."

"Let him stay," said some of the other warriors, for Ovan had long been the pet of the tribe so that they were accustomed to humoring him and so unspoiled was he that they still found pleasure in doing so.

"Very well," said Avan. "Let him remain. But Ovan and Ulan shall be responsible for his conduct."

There were only a few of the Clovians who accepted Tarzan without suspicion, and among these was Maral, the mother of Ovan, and Rela, his sister. These two accepted him without question because Ovan had accepted him. Ulan's friendship, too, had been apparent from the first; nor was it without great value for Ulan, because of his intelligence, courage and ability was a force in the councils of the Clovi.

Tarzan, accustomed to the tribal life of primitive people, took his

place naturally among them, paying no attention to those who paid no attention to him, observing scrupulously the ethics of tribal life and conforming to the customs of the Clovi in every detail of his relations with them. He liked to talk with Maral because of her sunny disposition and her marked intelligence. She told him that she was from Zoram, having been captured by Avan when, as a young warrior, he had decided to take a mate. And to her nativity he attributed her great beauty, for it seemed to be an accepted fact among the Clovians that the women of Zoram were the most beautiful of all women.

Ulan he had liked from the first, being naturally attracted to him because he had been the first of the Clovians to champion his cause. In many ways Ulan differed from his fellows. He seemed to have been the first among his people to discover that a brain may be used for purposes other than securing the bare necessities of existence. He had learned to dream and to exercise his brain along pleasant paths that gave entertainment to himself and others — fantastic stories that sometimes amused and sometimes awed his eager audiences; and, too, he was a maker of pictures and these he exhibited to Tarzan with no small measure of pride. Leading the ape-man into the rocky cavern that was the shelter, the storehouse and the citadel of the tribe, he lighted a crude torch which illuminated the walls, revealing the pictures that Ulan had drawn there. Mammoth and saber-tooth and cave bear were depicted, with the red deer, the hyaenodon and other familiar beasts, and in addition thereto were some with which Tarzan was unfamiliar and one that he had never seen elsewhere than in Pal-ul-don, where it had been known as a gryf. Ulan told him that it was a gyor and that it was found upon the Gyor Cors, or Gyor Plains, which lie at the end of the range of the Mountains of the Thipdars beyond Clovi.

The drawings were in outline and were well executed. The other

members of the tribe thought they were very wonderful for Ulan was the first ever to have made them and they could not understand how he did it. Perhaps if he had been a weakling he would have lost caste among them because of this gift, but inasmuch as he was also a noted hunter and warrior his talents but added to his fame and the esteem in which he was held by all.

But though these and a few others were friendly toward him, the majority of the tribe looked upon Tarzan with suspicion, for never within the memory of one of them had a strange warrior entered their village other than as an enemy. They were waiting for the return of Carb and the warriors who had accompanied him, when, the majority of them hoped, the council would sentence the stranger to death.

As they became better acquainted with Tarzan, however, others among them were being constantly won to his cause and this was particularly true when he accompanied them upon their hunts, his skill and his prowess winning their admiration, and his strange weapons which they had at first viewed with contempt, soon commanding their unqualified respect.

And so it was that the longer that Carb remained away the better Tarzan's chances became of being accepted into the tribe upon an equal footing with its other members; a contingency for which he hoped since it would afford him a base from which to prosecute his search for his fellows and allies familiar with the country, whose friendly services he could enlist to aid him in his search.

He was confident that Jason Gridley, if he still lived, was lost somewhere among these stupendous mountains and if he could but find him they might eventually, with the assistance of the Clovians, locate the camp of the O-220.

He had eaten and slept with the Clovi many times and had

accompanied them upon several hunts. It had been noon when he arrived and it was still noon, so whether a day or a month had passed he did not know. He was squatting by the cook-fire of Maral, talking with her and with Ulan, when from down the gorge there sounded the whistled signal of the Clovians announcing the approach of a friendly party and an instant later a youth rounded the shoulder of the cliff and entered the village.

“It is Tomar,” announced Maral. “Perhaps he brings news of Carb.”

The youth ran to the center of the ledge upon which the village stood and halted. For a moment he stood there dramatically with upraised hand, commanding silence, and then he spoke. “Carb is returning,” he cried. “The victorious warriors of Clovi are returning with the most beautiful woman of Zoram. Great is Carb! Great are the warriors of Clovi!”

Cook fires and the routine occupations of the moment were abandoned as the tribe advanced to await the coming of the victorious war party.

Presently it came into sight, rounding the shoulder of the cliff and filing on to the ledge — twenty warriors led by Carb and among them a girl, her wrists bound behind her back, a rawhide leash around her neck, the free end held by a brawny warrior.

The ape-man’s greatest interest lay in Carb, for his position in the tribe, perhaps even his life itself might rest with the decision of this man, whose influence, he had learned, was great in the councils of his people.

Carb was evidently a man of great physical strength; his regular features imparted to him much of the physical beauty that is an attribute of his people, but an otherwise handsome countenance was marred by thin, cruel lips and cold, unsympathetic eyes.

From contemplation of Carb the ape-man's eyes wandered to the face of the prisoner, and there they were arrested by the startling beauty of the girl. Well, indeed, thought Tarzan, might she be acclaimed the most beautiful woman of Zoram, for it was doubtful that there existed many in this world or the outer who might lay claim to greater pulchritude than she.

Avan, the chief, standing in the center of the ledge, received the returning warriors. He looked with favor upon the prize and listened attentively while Carb narrated the more important details of the expedition.

"We shall hold the council at once," announced Avan, "to decide who shall possess the prisoner, and at the same time we may settle another matter that has been awaiting the return of Carb and his warriors."

"What is that?" demanded Carb.

Avan pointed at Tarzan. "There is a stranger who would come into the tribe and be as one of us."

Carb turned his cold eyes in the direction of the ape-man and his face clouded. "Why has he not been destroyed?" he asked. "Let us do away with him at once."

"That is not for you to decide," said Avan, the chief. "The warriors in council alone may say what shall be done."

Carb shrugged. "If the council does not destroy him, I shall kill him myself," he said. "I, Carb, will have no enemy living in the village where I live."

"Let us hold the council at once, then," said Ulan, "for if Carb is greater than the council of the warriors we should know it." There was a note of sarcasm in his voice.

"We have marched for a long time without food or sleep," said

Carb. "Let us eat and rest before the council is held, for matters may arise in the council which will demand all of our strength," and he looked pointedly at Ulan.

The other warriors, who had accompanied Carb, also wished to eat and rest before the council was held, and Avan, the chief, acceded to their just demands.

The girl captive had not spoken since she had arrived in the village and she was now turned over to Maral, who was instructed to feed her and permit her to sleep. The bonds were removed from her wrists and she was brought to the cook-fire of the chief's mate, where she stood with an expression of haughty disdain upon her beautiful face.

None of the women revealed any inclination to abuse the prisoner — an attitude which rather surprised Tarzan until the reason for it had been explained to him, for he had upon more than one occasion witnessed the cruelties inflicted upon female prisoners by the women of native African tribes into whose hands the poor creatures had fallen.

Maral, in particular, was kind to the girl. "Why should I be otherwise?" she asked when Tarzan commented upon the fact. "Our daughters, or even anyone of us, may at any time be captured by the warriors of another tribe, and if it were known that we had been cruel to their women, they would doubtless repay us in kind; nor, aside from this, is there any reason why we should be other than kind to a woman who will live among us for the rest of her life. We are few in numbers and we are constantly together. If we harbored enmities and if we quarreled our lives would be less happy. Since you have been here you have never seen quarreling among the women of Clovi; nor would you if you remained here for the rest of your life. There have been quarrelsome women among us, just as at some time there have

been crippled children, but as we destroy the one for the good of the tribe we destroy the others.”

She turned to the girl. “Sit down,” she said pleasantly. “There is meat in the pot. Eat, and then you may sleep. Do not be afraid; you are among friends. I, too, am from Zoram.”

At that the girl turned her eyes upon the speaker. “You are from Zoram?” she asked. “Then you must have felt as I feel. I want to go back to Zoram. I would rather die than live elsewhere.”

“You will get over that,” said Maral. “I felt the same way, but when I became acquainted I found that the people of Clovi are much like the people of Zoram. They have been kind to me; they will be kind to you, and you will be happy as I have been. When they have given you a mate you will look upon life very differently.”

“I shall not mate with one of them,” cried the girl, stamping her sandaled foot. “I am Jana, The Red Flower of Zoram, and I choose my own mate.”

Maral shook her head sadly. “Thus spoke I once,” she said; “but I have changed, and so will you.”

“Not I,” said the girl. “I have seen but one man with whom I would mate and I shall never mate with another.”

“You are Jana,” asked Tarzan, “the sister of Thoar?”

The girl looked at him in surprise, and as though she had noticed him now for the first time her eyes quickly investigated him. “Ah,” she said, “you are the stranger whom Carb would destroy.”

“Yes,” replied the ape-man.

“What do you know of Thoar, my brother?”

“We hunted together. We were travelling back to Zoram when I became separated from him. We were following the tracks made by you

and a man who was with you when a storm came and obliterated them. Your companion was the man whom I was seeking.”

“What do you know of the man who was with me?” demanded the girl.

“He is my friend,” replied Tarzan. “What has become of him?”

“He was caught in a canyon during the storm and he must have been drowned,” replied Jana sadly. “You are from his country?”

“Yes.”

“How did you know he was with me?” she demanded.

“I recognized his tracks and Thoar recognized yours.”

“He was a great warrior,” she said, “and a very brave man.”

“Are you sure that he is dead?” asked Tarzan.

“I am sure,” replied The Red Flower of Zoram.

For a time they were silent, both occupied with thoughts of Jason Gridley. “You were his friend,” said Jana. She had moved close to him and had seated herself at his side. Now she leaned still closer. “They are going to kill you,” she whispered. “I know the people of these tribes better than you, and I know Carb. He will have his way. You were Jason’s friend and so was I. If we can escape I can lead the way back to Zoram, and if you are Thoar’s friend and mine the people of Zoram will have to accept you.”

“Why do you whisper?” asked a gruff voice behind them, and turning they saw Avan, the chief. Without waiting for a reply, he turned to Maral. “Take the woman to the cavern,” he said. “She will remain there until the council has decided who shall have her as mate, and in the meantime I will place warriors at the entrance to the cavern to see that she does not escape.”

As Maral motioned Jana toward the cavern, the latter arose, and as she did so she cast an appealing glance at Tarzan. The ape-man, who

was already upon his feet, looked quickly about him. Perhaps a hundred members of the tribe were scattered about the ledge, while near the opening to the trail which led down the canyon and which afforded the only avenue of escape, fully a dozen warriors loitered. Alone he might have won his way through, but with the girl it would have been impossible. He shook his head and his lips, which were turned away from Avan, formed the word, "Wait," and a moment later The Red Flower of Zoram had entered the dark cavern of the Clovians.

"And as for you, man of another country," said Avan, addressing Tarzan, "until the council has decided upon your fate, you are a prisoner. Go, therefore, into the cavern and remain there until the council of warriors has spoken."

A dozen warriors barred his way to freedom now, but they were lolling idly, expecting no emergency. A bold dash for freedom might carry him beyond them before they could realize that he was attempting escape. He was confident that the voice of the council would be adverse to him and when its decision was announced he would be surrounded by all the warriors of Clovi, alert and ready to prevent his escape. Now, therefore, was the most propitious moment; but Tarzan of the Apes made no break for liberty; instead he turned and strode toward the entrance to the cavern, for The Red Flower of Zoram had appealed to him for aid and he would not desert the sister of Thoar and the friend of Jason.

12.

THE PHELIAN SWAMP

As Jason Gridley leaped down the canyon side toward the lone warrior who stood facing the attack of the tremendous reptile gliding swiftly through the air from the top of the opposite cliff side, there flashed upon the screen of his recollection the picture of a restoration of a similar extinct reptile and he recognized the creature as a stegosaurus of the Jurassic; but how inadequately had the picture that he had seen carried to his mind the colossal proportions of the creature, or but remotely suggested its terrifying aspect.

Jason saw the lone warrior standing there facing inevitable doom, but in his attitude there was no outward sign of fear. In his right hand he held his puny spear, and in his left his crude stone knife. He would die, but he would give a good account of himself. There was no panic of terror, no futile flight.

The distance between Jason and the stegosaurus was over great for a revolver shot, but the American hoped that he might at least divert the attention of the reptile from its prey and even, perhaps, frighten it away by the unaccustomed sound of the report of the weapon, and so he fired twice in rapid succession as he leaped downward toward the bottom of the canyon. That at least one of the shots struck the reptile was evidenced by the fact that it veered from its course, simultaneously emitting a loud, screaming sound.

Attracted to Jason by the report of the revolver and evidently attributing its hurt to this new enemy, the reptile, using its tail as a rudder

and tilting its spine plates up on one side, veered in the direction of the American.

As the two shots shattered the silence of the canyon, the warrior turned his eyes in the direction of the man leaping down the declivity toward him, and then he saw the reptile veer in the direction of the newcomer.

Heredity and training, coupled with experience, had taught this primitive savage that every man's hand was against him, unless that man was a member of his own tribe. Only upon a single occasion in his life had experience controverted these teachings, and so it seemed inconceivable that this stranger, whom he immediately recognized as such, was deliberately risking his life in an effort to succor him; yet there seemed no other explanation, and so the perplexed warrior, instead of seeking to escape now that the attention of the reptile was diverted from him, ran swiftly toward Jason to join forces with him in combatting the attack of the creature.

From the instant that the stegosaurus had leaped from the summit of the cliff, it had hurtled through the air with a speed which seemed entirely out of proportion to its tremendous bulk, so that all that had transpired in the meantime had occupied but a few moments of time, and Jason Gridley found himself facing this onrushing death almost before he had had time to speculate upon the possible results of his venturesome interference.

With wide distended jaws and uttering piercing shrieks, the terrifying creature shot toward him, but now at last it presented an easy target and Jason Gridley was entirely competent to take advantage of the altered situation.

He fired rapidly with both weapons, trying to reach the tiny brain, at the location of which he could only guess and for which his bullets

were searching through the roof of the opened mouth. His greatest hope, however, was that the beast could not for long face that terrific fusillade of shots, and in this he was right. The strange and terrifying sound and the pain and shock of the bullets tearing into its skull proved too much for the stegosaurus. Scarcely half a dozen feet from Gridley it swerved upward and passed over his head, receiving two or three bullets in its belly as it did so.

Still shrieking with rage and pain it glided to the ground beyond him.

Almost immediately it turned to renew the attack. This time it came upon its four feet, and Jason saw that it was likely to prove fully as formidable upon the ground as it had been in the air, for considering its tremendous bulk it moved with great agility and speed.

As he stood facing the returning creature, the warrior reached his side.

“Get on that side of him,” said the warrior, “and I will attack him on this. Keep out of the way of his tail. Use your spear; you cannot frighten a dyrodor away by making a noise.”

Jason Gridley leaped quickly to one side to obey the suggestions of the warrior, smiling inwardly at the naive suggestion of the other that his Colt had been used solely to frighten the creature.

The warrior took his place upon the opposite side of the approaching reptile, but before he had time to cast his spear or Jason to fire again the creature stumbled forward, its nose dug into the ground and it rolled over upon its side dead.

“It is dead!” said the warrior in a surprised tone. “What could have killed it? Neither one of us has cast a spear.”

Jason slipped his Colts into their holsters. “These killed it,” he said, tapping them.

“Noises do not kill,” said the warrior skeptically. “It is not the bark of the jalok or the growl of the ryth that rends the flesh of man. The hiss of the thipdar kills no one.”

“It was not the noise that killed it,” said Jason, “but if you will examine its head and especially the roof of its mouth you will see what happened when my weapons spoke.”

Following Jason’s suggestion the warrior examined the head and mouth of the dyrodor and when he had seen the gaping wounds he looked at Jason with a new respect. “Who are you,” he asked, “and what are you doing in the land of Zoram?”

“My God!” exclaimed Jason. “Am I in Zoram?”

“You are.”

“And you are one of the men of Zoram?” demanded the American.

“I am; but who are you?”

“Tell me, do you know Jana, The Red Flower of Zoram?” insisted Jason.

“What do you know of The Red Flower of Zoram, stranger?” demanded the other. And then suddenly his eyes widened to a new thought. “Tell me,” he cried, “by what name do they call you in the country from which you come?”

“My name is Gridley,” replied the American; “Jason Gridley.”

“Jason!” exclaimed the other; “yes, Jason Gridley, that is it. Tell me, man, where is The Red Flower of Zoram? What did you with her?”

“That is what I am asking you,” said Jason. “We became separated and I have been searching for her. But what do you know of me?”

“I followed you for a long time,” replied the other, “but the waters fell and obliterated your tracks.”

“Why did you follow me?” asked Jason.

“I followed because you were with The Red Flower of Zoram,”

replied the other. "I followed to kill you, but he said you would not harm her; he said that she went with you willingly. Is that true?"

"She came with me willingly for a while," replied Jason, "and then she left me; but I did not harm her."

"Perhaps he was right then," said the warrior. "I shall wait until I find her and if you have not harmed her, I shall not kill you."

"Whom do you mean by 'he'?" asked Jason. "There is no one in Pellucidar who could possibly know anything about me, except Jana."

"Do you not know Tarzan?" asked the warrior.

"Tarzan!" exclaimed Jason. "You have seen Tarzan? He is alive?"

"I saw him. We hunted together and we followed you and Jana, but he is not alive now; he is dead."

"Dead! You are sure that he is dead?"

"Yes, he is dead."

"How did it happen?"

"We were crossing the summit of the mountains when he was seized by a thipdar and carried away."

Tarzan dead! He had feared as much and yet now that he had proof it seemed unbelievable. His mind could scarcely grasp the significance of the words that he had heard as he recalled the strength and vitality of that man of steel. It seemed incredible that that giant frame should cease to pulsate with life; that those mighty muscles no longer rolled beneath the sleek, bronzed hide; that that courageous heart no longer beat.

"You were very fond of him?" asked the warrior, noticing the silence and dejection of the other.

"Yes," said Jason.

"So was I," said the warrior; "but neither Tar-gash nor I could save

him, the thipdar struck so swiftly and was gone before we could cast a weapon.”

“Who is Tar-gash?” asked Jason.

“A Sagoth — one of the hairy men,” replied the warrior. “They live in the forest and are often used as warriors by the Mahars.”

“And he was with you and Tarzan?” inquired Jason.

“Yes. They were together when I first saw them, but now Tarzan is dead and Tar-gash has gone back to his own country and I must proceed upon my search for The Red Flower of Zoram. You have saved my life, man from another country, but I do not know that you have not harmed Jana. Perhaps you have slain her. How am I to know? I do not know what I should do.”

“I, too, am looking for Jana,” said Jason. “Let us look for her together.”

“Then if we find her, she shall tell me whether or not I shall kill you,” said the warrior.

Jason could not but recall how angry Jana had been with him. She had almost killed him herself. Perhaps she would find it easier to permit this warrior to kill him. Doubtless the man was her sweetheart and if he knew the truth he would need no urging to destroy a rival, but neither by look nor word did he reveal any apprehension as he replied.

“I will go with you,” he said, “and if I have harmed The Red Flower of Zoram you may kill me. What is your name?”

“Thoar,” replied the warrior.

Jana had spoken of her brother to Jason, but if she had ever mentioned his name, the American had forgotten it, and so he continued to think that Thoar was the sweetheart and possibly the mate of The Red Flower and his reaction to this belief was unpleasant; yet why it

should have been he could not have explained. The more he thought of the matter the more certain he was that Thoar was Jana's mate, for who was there who might more naturally desire to kill one who had wronged her. Yes, he was sure that the man was Jana's mate. The thought made him angry for she had certainly led him to believe that she was not mated. That was just like a woman, he meditated; they were all flirts; they would make a fool of a man merely to pass an idle hour, but she had not made a fool of him. He had not fallen victim to her lures, that is why she had been so angry — her vanity had been piqued — and being a very primitive young person the first thought that had come to her mind had been to kill him. What a little devil she was to try to get him to make love to her when she already had a mate, and thus Jason almost succeeded in working himself into a rage until his sense of humor came to his rescue; yet even though he smiled, way down deep within him something hurt and he wondered why.

"Where did you last see Jana?" asked Thoar. "We can return there and try and locate her tracks."

"I do not know that I can explain," replied Jason. "It is very difficult for me to locate myself or anything else where there are no points of compass."

"We can start together at the point where we found your tracks with Jana's," said Thoar.

"Perhaps that will not be necessary if you are familiar with the country on the other side of the range," said Jason. "Returning toward the mountains from the spot where I first saw Jana, there was a tremendous gorge upon our left. It was toward this gorge that the two men of the four that had been pursuing her ran after I had killed two of their number. Jana tried to find a way to the summit, far to the right of this gorge, but our path was blocked by a deep rift which paralleled

the base of the mountains, so that she was compelled to turn back again toward the gorge, into which she descended. The last I saw of her she was going up the gorge, so that if you know where this gorge lies it will not be necessary for us to go all the way back to the point at which I first met her.”

“I know the gorge,” said Thoar, “and if the two Phelians entered it it is possible that they captured her. We will search in the direction of the gorge then and if we do not find any trace of her, we shall drop down to the country of the Phelians in the lowland.”

Through a maze of jagged peaks Thoar led the way. To him time meant nothing; to Jason Gridley it was little more than a memory. When they found food they ate; when they were tired they slept, and always just ahead there were perilous crags to skirt and stupendous cliffs to scale. To the American it would have seemed incredible that a girl ever could find her way here had he not had occasion to follow where The Red Flower of Zoram led.

Occasionally they were forced to take a lower route which led into the forests that climbed high along the slopes of the mountains, and here they found more game and with Thoar’s assistance Jason fashioned a garment from the hide of a mountain goat. It was at best but a sketchy garment; yet it sufficed for the purpose for which it was intended and left his arms and legs free. Nor was it long before he realized its advantages and wondered why civilized man of the outer crust should so encumber himself with useless clothing, when the demands of temperature did not require it.

As Jason became better acquainted with Thoar he found his regard for him changing from suspicion to admiration, and finally to a genuine liking for the savage Pellucidarian, in spite of the fact that this sentiment was tinged with a feeling that, while not positive animosity,

was yet akin to it. It was difficult for Jason to fathom the sentiment which seemed to animate him. There could be no rivalry between him and this primitive warrior and yet Jason's whole demeanor and attitude toward Thoar was such as might be scrupulously observed by any honorable man toward an honorable opponent or rival.

They seldom, if ever, spoke of Jana; yet thoughts of her were uppermost in the mind of each of them. Jason often found himself reviewing every detail of his association with her; every little characteristic gesture and expression was indelibly imprinted upon his memory, as were the contours of her perfect figure and the radiant loveliness of her face. Not even the bitter words with which she had parted with him could erase the memory of her joyous comradeship. Never before in his life had he missed the companionship of any woman. At times he tried to crowd her from his thoughts by recalling incidents of his friendship with Cynthia Furnois or Barbara Green, but the vision of The Red Flower of Zoram remained persistently in the foreground, while that of Cynthia and Barbara always faded gradually into forgetfulness.

This state of mental subjugation to the personality of an untutored savage, however beautiful, annoyed his ego and he tried to escape it by dwelling upon the sorrow entailed by the death of Tarzan; but somehow he never could convince himself that Tarzan was dead. It was one of those things that it was simply impossible to conceive.

Failing in this, he would seek to occupy his mind with conjectures concerning the fate of von Horst, Muviro and the Waziri warriors, or upon what was transpiring aboard the great dirigible in search of which his eyes were often scanning the cloudless Pellucidarian sky. But travel where it would, even to his remote Tarzana hills in far off

California, it would always return to hover around the girlish figure of The Red Flower of Zoram.

Thoar, upon his part, found in the American a companion after his own heart — a dependable man of quiet ways, always ready to assume his share of the burden and responsibilities of the savage trail they trod.

So the two came at last to the rim of the great gorge and though they followed it up and down for a great distance in each direction they found no trace of Jana, nor any sign that she had passed that way.

“We shall go down to the lowlands,” said Thoar, “to the country that is called Pheli and even though we may not find her, we shall avenge her.”

The idea of primitive justice suggested by Thoar’s decision aroused no opposing question of ethics in the mind of the civilized American; in fact, it seemed quite the most natural thing in the world that he and Thoar should constitute themselves a court of justice as well as the instrument of its punishment, for thus easily does man slough off the thin veneer of civilization, which alone differentiates him from his primitive ancestors.

Thus a gap of perhaps a hundred thousand years which yawned between Thoar of Zoram and Jason Gridley of Tarzana was closed. Imbued with the same hatred, they descended the slopes of the Mountains of the Thipdars toward the land of Pheli, and the heart of each was hot with the lust to kill. No greedy munitions manufacturer was needed here to start a war.

Down through stately forests and across rolling foothills went Thoar and Jason toward the land of Pheli. The country teemed with game of all descriptions and their way was beset by fierce carnivores, by stupid, irritable herbivores of ponderous weight and short tempers

or by gigantic reptiles beneath whose charging feet the earth trembled. It was by the exercise of the superior intelligence of man combined with a considerable share of luck that they passed unscathed to the swamp land where Pheli lies. Here the world seemed dedicated to the reptilia. They swarmed in countless thousands and in all sizes and infinite varieties. Aquatic and amphibious, carnivorous and herbivorous, they hissed and screamed and fought and devoured one another constantly, so that Jason wondered in what intervals they found the time to propagate their kind and he marvelled that the herbivores among them could exist at all. A terrific orgy of extermination seemed to constitute the entire existence of a large proportion of the species and yet the tremendous size of many of them, including several varieties of the herbivores, furnished ample evidence that considerable numbers of them lived to a great age, for unlike mammals, reptiles never cease to grow while they are living.

The swamp, in which Thoar believed the villages of the Phelians were to be found, supported a tremendous forest of gigantic trees and so interlaced were their branches that oftentimes the two men found it expedient to travel among them rather than upon the treacherous, boggy ground. Here, too, the reptiles were smaller, though scarcely less numerous. Among these, however, there were exceptions, and those which caused them the greatest anxiety were snakes of such titanic proportions that when he first encountered one Jason could not believe the testimony of his own eyes. They came upon the creature suddenly as it was in the act of swallowing a trachodon that was almost as large as an elephant. The huge herbivorous dinosaur was still alive and battling bravely to extricate itself from the jaws of the serpent, but not even its giant strength nor its terrific armament of teeth, which included a reserve supply of over four hundred in the lower jaw alone,

availed it in its unequal struggle with the colossal creature that was slowly swallowing it alive.

Perhaps it was their diminutive size as much as their brains or luck that saved the two men from the jaws of these horrid creatures. Or, again, it may have been the dense stupidity of the reptiles themselves, which made it comparatively easy for the men to elude them.

Here in this dismal swamp of horrors not even the giant tarags or the equally ferocious lions and leopards of Pellucidar dared venture, and how man existed there it was beyond the power of Jason to conceive. In fact he doubted that the Phelians or any other race of men made their homes here.

“Men could not exist in such a place,” he said to Thoar. “Pheli must lie elsewhere.”

“No,” said his companion, “members of my tribe have come down here more than once in the memory of man to avenge the stealing of a woman and the stories that they have brought back have familiarized us all with the conditions existing in the land of Pheli. This is indeed it.”

“You may be right,” said Jason, “but, like these snakes that we have seen, I shall have to see the villages of the Phelians before I will believe that they exist here and even then I won’t know whether to believe it or not.”

“It will not be long now,” said Thoar, “before you shall see the Phelians in their own village.”

“What makes you think so?” asked Jason.

“Look down below you and you will see what I have been searching for,” replied Thoar, pointing.

Jason did as he was bid and discovered a small stream meandering through the swamp. “I see nothing but a brook,” he said.

“That is what I have been searching for,” replied Thoar. “All of my people who have been here say that Phelians live upon the banks of a river that runs through the swamp. In places the land is high and upon these hills the Phelians build their homes. They do not live in caverns as do we, but they make houses of great trees so strong that not even the largest reptiles can break into them.”

“But why should anyone choose to live in such a place?” demanded the American.

“To eat and to breed in comparative peace and contentment,” replied Thoar. “The Phelians, unlike the mountain people, are not a race of warriors. They do not like to fight and so they have hidden their villages away in this swamp where no man would care to come and thus they are practically free from human enemies. Also, here, meat abounds in such quantities that food lies always at their doors. For them then the conditions are ideal and here, more than elsewhere in Pellucidar, may they find contentment.”

As they advanced now they exercised the greatest caution, knowing that any moment they might come within sight of a Phelian village. Nor was it long before Thoar halted and drew back behind the bole of a tree through which they were passing, then he pointed forward. Jason, looking, saw a bare hill before them, just a portion of which was visible through the trees. It was evident that the hill had been cleared by man, for many stumps remained. Within the range of his vision was but a single house, if such it might be called.

It was constructed of logs, a foot or two in diameter. Three or four of these logs, placed horizontally and lying one upon the other, formed the wall that was presented to Jason's view. The other side wall paralleled it at a distance of five or six feet, and across the top of the upper logs were laid sections of smaller trees, about six inches in

diameter, and placed not more than a foot apart. These supported the roof, which consisted of several logs, a little longer than the logs constituting the walls. The roof logs were laid close together, the interstices being filled with mud. The front of the building was formed by shorter logs set upright in the ground, a single small aperture being left to form a doorway. But the most noticeable feature of Phelian architecture consisted of long pointed stakes, which protruded diagonally from the ground at an angle of about forty-five degrees, pointing outward from the base of the walls entirely around the building at intervals of about eighteen inches. The stakes themselves were six or eight inches in diameter and about ten feet long, being sharpened at the upper end, and forming a barrier against which few creatures, however brainless they might be, would venture to hurl themselves.

Drawing closer the two men had a better view of the village, which contained upon that side of the hill they were approaching and upon the top four buildings similar to that which they had first discovered. Close about the base of the hill grew the dense forest, but the hill itself had been entirely denuded of vegetation so that nothing, either large or small, could approach the habitation of the Phelians without being discovered.

No one was in sight about the village, but that did not deceive Thoar, who guessed that anything which transpired upon the hillside would be witnessed by many eyes peering through the openings between the wall logs from the dim interiors of the long buildings, beneath whose low ceilings Phelians must spend their lives either squatting or lying down, since there was not sufficient headroom to permit an adult to stand erect.

“Well,” said Jason, “here we are. Now, what are we going to do?”

Thoar looked longingly at Jason's two Colts. "You have refused to use those for fear of wasting the deaths which they spit from their blue mouths," he said, "but with one of those we might soon find Jana if she was here or quickly avenge her if she is not."

"Come on then," said Jason. "I would sacrifice more than my ammunition for The Red Flower of Zoram." As he spoke he descended from the tree and started toward the nearest Phelian dwelling. Close behind him was Thoar and neither saw the eyes that watched them from among the trees that grew thickly upon the river side of the hill — cruel eyes that gleamed from whiskered faces.

13.

THE HORIBS

Avan, chief of the Clovi, had placed warriors before the entrance to the cavern and as Tarzan approached it to enter they halted him.

“Where are you going?” demanded one.

“Into the cavern,” replied Tarzan.

“Why?” asked the warrior.

“I wish to sleep,” replied the ape-man. “I have entered often before and no one has ever stopped me.”

“Avan has issued orders that no strangers are to enter or leave the cavern until after the council of the warriors,” exclaimed the guard.

At this juncture Avan approached. “Let him enter,” he said. “I sent him hither, but do not let him come out again.”

Without a word of comment or question the Lord of the Jungle passed into the interior of the gloomy cavern of Clovi. It was several moments before his eyes became accustomed to the subdued light within and permitted him to take account of his surroundings.

That portion of the cavern which was visible and with which he was familiar was of considerable extent. He could see the walls on either side, and, very vaguely, a portion of the rear wall, but adjoining that was utter darkness, suggesting that the cavern extended further into the mountainside. Against the walls upon pallets of dry grasses covered with hide lay many warriors and a few women and children, almost all of whom were wrapped in slumber. In the greater light near the entrance a group squatted engaged in whispered conversation as, silently, he moved about the cavern searching for the girl from Zoram.

It was she who recognized him first, attracting his attention by a low whistle.

“You have a plan of escape?” she asked as Tarzan seated himself upon a skin beside her.

“No,” he said, “all that we may do is to await developments and take advantage of any opportunity that may present itself.”

“I should think that it would be easy for you to escape,” said the girl; “they do not treat you as a prisoner; you go about among them freely and they have permitted you to retain your weapons.”

“I am a prisoner now,” he replied. “Avan just instructed the warriors at the entrance not to permit me to leave here until after the council of warriors had decided my fate.”

“Your future does not look very bright then,” said Jana, “and as for me I already know my fate, but they shall not have me, Carb nor any other!”

They talked together in low tones with many periods of long silence, but when Jana turned the conversation upon the world from which Jason had come, the silences were few and far between. She would not let Tarzan rest, but plied him with questions, the answers to many of which were far beyond her powers to understand. Steam and electricity and all the countless activities of civilized existence which are dependent upon them were utterly beyond her powers of comprehension, as were the heavenly bodies or musical instruments or books, and yet despite what appeared to be the darkest depth of ignorance, to the very bottom of which she had plumbed, she was intelligent and when she spoke of those things pertaining to her own world with which she was familiar, she was both interesting and entertaining.

Presently a warrior near them opened his eyes, sat up and stretched.

He looked about him and then he arose to his feet. He walked around the apartment awakening the other warriors.

“Awaken,” he said to each, “and attend the council of the warriors.”

When he approached Tarzan and Jana he recognized the former and stopped to glare down at him.

“What are you doing here?” he demanded.

Tarzan arose and faced the Clovian warrior, but he did not reply to the other’s question.

“Answer me,” growled Carb. “Why are you here?”

“You are not the chief,” said Tarzan. “Go and ask your question of women and children.”

Carb sputtered angrily. “Go!” said Tarzan, pointing toward the exit. For an instant the Clovian hesitated, then he continued on around the apartment, awakening the remaining warriors.

“Now he will see that you are killed,” said the girl.

“He had determined on that before,” replied Tarzan. “We are no worse off than we were.”

Now they lapsed into silence, each waiting for the doom that was to be pronounced upon them. They knew that outside upon the ledge the warriors were sitting in a great circle and that there would be much talking and boasting and argument before any decision was reached, most of it unnecessary, for that has been the way with men who make laws from time immemorial, a great advantage, however, lying with our modern lawmakers in that they know more words than the first apemen.

As Tarzan and Jana waited a youth entered the cavern. He bore a torch in the light of which he searched about the interior. Presently he discovered Tarzan and came swiftly toward him. It was Ovan.

“The council has reached its decision,” he said. “They will kill you and the girl goes to Carb.”

Tarzan of the Apes rose to his feet. “Come,” he said to Jana, “now is as good a time as any. If we can cross the ledge and reach the trail only a swift warrior can overtake us. And if you are my friend,” he continued, turning to Ovan, “and you have said that you are, you will remain silent and give us our chance.”

“I am your friend,” replied the youth; “that is why I am here, but you would never live to cross the ledge to the trail, there are too many warriors and they are all prepared. They know that you are armed and they expect that you will try to escape.”

“There is no other way,” said Tarzan.

“There is another way,” replied the boy, “and I have come to show it to you.”

“Where?” asked Jana.

“Follow me,” replied Ovan, and he started back into the remote recesses of the cavern, which were fitfully illumined by his flickering torch, while behind him followed Jana and the ape-man.

The walls of the cavern narrowed, the floor rose steeply ahead of them, so that in places it was only with considerable difficulty that they ascended in the semi-darkness. At last Ovan halted and held his torch high above his head, revealing a small, natural chamber, at the far end of which there was a dark fissure.

“In that dark hole,” he said, “lies a trail that leads to the summit of the mountains. Only the chief and the chief’s first son ever know of this trail. If my father learns that I have shown it to you, he will have to kill me, but he shall never know for when next they find me I shall be asleep upon a skin in the cavern far below. The trail is steep and rough, but it is the only way. Go now. This is the return I make you for

having saved my life.” With that he dashed the torch to the floor, leaving them in utter darkness. He did not speak again, but Tarzan heard the soft falls of his sandaled feet groping their way back down toward the cavern of the Clovi.

The ape-man reached out through the darkness and found Jana’s hand. Carefully he led her through the stygian darkness toward the mouth of the fissure. Feeling his way step by step, groping forward with his free hand, the ape-man finally discovered the entrance to the trail.

Clambering upward over broken masses of jagged granite through utter darkness, it seemed to the two fugitives that they made no progress whatever. If time could be measured by muscular effort and physical discomfort, the two might have guessed that they passed an eternity in this black fissure, but at length the darkness lessened and they knew that they were approaching the opening in the summit of the mountains; nor was it long thereafter before they emerged into the brilliant light of the noonday sun.

“And now,” said Tarzan, “in which direction lies Zoram?”

The girl pointed. “But we cannot reach it by going back that way,” she said, “for every trail will be guarded by Carb and his fellows. Do not think that they will let us escape so easily. Perhaps in searching for us they may even find the fissure and follow us here.”

“This is your world,” said Tarzan. “You are more familiar with it than I. What, then, do you suggest?”

“We should descend the mountains, going directly away from Clovi,” replied Jana, “for it is in the mountains that they will look for us. When we have reached the lowland we can turn back along the foot of the range until we are below Zoram, but not until then should we come back to the mountains.”

The descent of the mountains was slow because neither of them was familiar with this part of the range. Oftentimes, their way barred by yawning chasms, they were compelled to retrace their steps to find another way around. They ate many times and slept thrice and thus only could Tarzan guess that they had consumed considerable time in the descent, but what was time to them?

During the descent Tarzan had caught glimpses of a vast plain, stretching away as far as the eye could reach. The last stage of their descent was down a long, winding canyon, and when, at last, they came to its mouth they found themselves upon the edge of the plain that Tarzan had seen. It was almost treeless and from where he stood it looked as level as a lake.

“This is the Gyor Cors,” said Jana, “and may we not have the bad fortune to meet a Gyor.”

“And what is a Gyor?” asked Tarzan.

“Oh, it is a terrible creature,” replied Jana. “I have never seen one, but some of the warriors of Zoram have been to the Gyor Cors and they have seen them. They are twice the size of a tandor and their length is more than that of four tall men, lying upon the ground. They have a curved beak and three great horns, two above their eyes and one above their nose. Standing upright at the backs of their heads is a great collar of bony substance covered with thick, horny hide, which protects them from the horns of their fellows and spears of men. They do not eat flesh, but they are irritable and short tempered, charging every creature that they see and thus keeping the Gyor Cors for their own use.”

“Theirs is a vast domain,” said Tarzan, letting his eyes sweep the illimitable expanse of pasture land that rolled on and on, curving slowly upward into the distant haze, “and your description of them

suggests that they have few enemies who would care to dispute their dominion.”

“Only the Horibs,” replied Jana. “They hunt them for their flesh and hide.”

“What are Horibs?” asked Tarzan.

The girl shuddered. “The snake people,” she whispered in an awed tone.

“Snake people,” repeated Tarzan, “and what are they?”

“Let us not speak of them. They are horrible. They are worse than the Gyors. Their blood is cold and men say that they have no hearts, for they do not possess any of the characteristics that men admire, knowing not friendship or sympathy or love.”

Along the bottom of the canyon through which they had descended a mountain torrent had cut a deep gorge, the sides of which were so precipitous that they found it expedient to follow the stream down into the plain in order to discover an easier crossing, since the stream lay between them and Zoram.

They had proceeded for about a mile below the mouth of the canyon; around them were low, rolling hills which gradually merged with the plain below; here and there were scattered clumps of trees; to their knees grew the gently waving grasses that rendered the Gyor Cors a paradise for the huge herbivorous dinosaurs. The noonday sun shone down upon a scene of peace and quiet, yet Tarzan of the Apes was restless. The apparent absence of animal life seemed almost uncanny to one familiar with the usual teeming activity of Pellucidar; yet the ape-man knew that there were creatures about and it was the strange and unfamiliar scent spoors carried to his nostrils that aroused within him a foreboding of ill omen. Familiar odors had no such effect upon him, but here were scents that he could not place, strangely

disagreeable in the nostrils of man. They suggested the scent spoor of Histah the snake, but they were not his.

For Jana's sake Tarzan wished that they might quickly find a crossing and ascend again to the higher levels on their journey to Zoram, for there the creatures would be well known to them, and the dangers which they portended familiar dangers with which they were prepared to cope, but the vertical banks of the raging torrent as yet offered no means of descent and now they saw that the appearance of flatness which distance had imparted to the great Gyor Cors was deceptive, since it was cut by ravines and broken by depressions, some of which were of considerable extent and depth. Presently a lateral ravine, opening into the now comparatively shallow gorge of the river, necessitated a detour which took them directly away from Zoram. They had proceeded for about a mile in this direction when they discovered a crossing and as they emerged upon the opposite side the girl touched Tarzan's arm and pointed. The thing that she saw he had seen simultaneously.

"A Gyor," whispered the girl. "Let us lie down and hide in this tall grass."

"He has not seen us yet," said Tarzan, "and he may not come in this direction."

No description of the beast looming tremendously before them could convey an adequate impression of its titanic proportions or its frightful mien. At the first glance Tarzan was impressed by its remarkable likeness to the Gryfs of Pal-ul-don. It had the two large horns above the eyes, a medial horn on the nose, a horny beak and a great, horny hood or transverse crest over the neck, and its coloration was similar but more subdued, the predominant note being a slaty gray with yellowish belly and face. The blue bands around the eyes were

less well marked and the red of the hood and the bony protuberances along the spine were less brilliant than in the Gryf. That it was herbivorous, a fact that he had learned from Jana, convinced him that he was looking upon an almost unaltered type of the gigantic triceratop that had, with its fellow dinosaurs, ruled the ancient Jurassic world.

Jana had thrown herself prone among the grasses and was urging Tarzan to do likewise. Crouching low, his eyes just above the grasses, Tarzan watched the huge dinosaur.

“I think he has caught our scent,” he said. “He is standing with his head up, looking about him; now he is trotting around in a circle. He is very light on his feet for a beast of such enormous size. There, he has caught a scent, but it is not ours; the wind is not in the right direction. There is something approaching from our left, but it is still at a considerable distance. I can just hear it, a faint suggestion of something moving. The Gyor is looking in that direction now. Whatever is coming is coming swiftly. I can tell by the rapidly increasing volume of sound, and there are more than one — there are many. He is moving forward now to investigate, but he will pass at a considerable distance to our left.” Tarzan watched the Gyor and listened to the sound coming from the, as yet, invisible creatures that were approaching. “Whatever is approaching is coming along the bottom of the ravine we just crossed,” he whispered. “They will pass directly behind us.”

Jana remained hiding low in the grasses. She did not wish to tempt Fate by revealing even the top of her head to attract the attention of the Gyor. “Perhaps we had better try to crawl away while his attention is attracted elsewhere,” she suggested.

“They are coming out of the ravine,” whispered Tarzan. “They are coming up over the edge — a number of men — but in the name of God what is it that they are riding?”

Jana raised her eyes above the level of the grasses and looked in the direction that Tarzan was gazing. She shuddered. "They are not men," she said; "they are the Horibs and the things upon the backs of which they ride are Gorobors. If they see us we are lost. Nothing in the world can escape the Gorobors, for there is nothing in all Pellucidar so swift as they. Lie still. Our only chance is that they may not discover us."

At sight of the Horibs the Gyor emitted a terrific bellow that shook the ground and, lowering his head, he charged straight for them. Fully fifty of the Horibs on their horrid mounts had emerged from the ravine. Tarzan could see that the riders were armed with long lances — pitiful and inadequate weapons, he thought, with which to face an enraged triceratop. But it soon became apparent that the Horibs did not intend to meet that charge head-on. Wheeling to their right they formed in single file behind their leader and then for the first time Tarzan had an exhibition of the phenomenal speed of the huge lizards upon which they were mounted, which is comparable only to the lightning-like rapidity of a tiny desert lizard known as a swift.

Following tactics similar to those of the plains Indians of western America, the Horibs were circling their prey. The bellowing Gyor, aroused to a frenzy of rage, charged first in one direction and then another, but the Gorobors darted from his path so swiftly that he never could overtake them. Panting and blowing, he presently came to bay and then the Horibs drew their circle closer, whirling dizzily about him, while Tarzan watched the amazing scene, wondering by what means they might ever hope to dispatch the ten tons of incarnate fury that wheeled first this way and then that at the center of their circle.

Presently a Horib darted in close to the Gyor at such speed that the mount and the rider were little more than a blur. The Gyor wheeled to

meet him, head down, the three terrible horns set to impale him, and then two other Horibs darted in from the rear upon either side.

As swiftly as they had darted in all three wheeled and were out again, part of the racing circle, but in the sides of the Gyor they had left two lances deeply imbedded. The fury of the wounded triceratop transcended any of his previous demonstrations. His bellowing became a hoarse, coughing scream as once again he lowered his head and charged.

This time he did not turn and charge in another direction as he had in the past, but kept on in a straight line, possibly in the hope of breaking through the encircling Horibs, and to his dismay the ape-man saw that he and Jana were directly in the path of the charging beast. If the Horibs did not turn him, they were lost.

A dozen of the reptile-men darted in upon the rear of the Gyor. A dozen more lances sank deeply into its body, proving sufficient to turn him in an effort to avenge himself upon those who had inflicted these new hurts.

This charge had carried the Gyor within fifty feet of Tarzan and Jana. It had given the ape-man an uncomfortable moment, but its results were almost equally disastrous for it brought the circling Horibs close to their position.

The Gyor stood now with lowered head, breathing heavily and bleeding from more than a dozen wounds. A Horib now rode slowly toward him, approaching him directly from in front. The attention of the triceratop was centered wholly upon this single adversary as two more moved toward him diagonally from the rear, one on either side, but in such a manner that they were concealed from his view by the great transverse crest encircling his neck behind the horns and eyes. The three approached thus to within about fifty feet of the brute and

then those in the rear darted forward simultaneously at terrific speed, leaning well forward upon their mounts, their lances lowered. At the same instant each struck heavily upon either side of the Gyor, driving their spears far in. So close did they come to their prey that their mounts struck the shoulders of the Gyor as they turned and darted out again.

For an instant the great creature stood reeling in its tracks and then it slumped forward heavily and rolled over upon its side — the final lances had pierced its heart.

Tarzan was glad that it was over as he had momentarily feared discovery by the circling Horibs and he was congratulating himself upon their good fortune when the entire band of snake-men wheeled their mounts and raced swiftly in the direction of their hiding place. Once more they formed their circle, but this time Tarzan and Jana were at its center. Evidently the Horibs had seen them, but had temporarily ignored them until after they had dispatched the Gyor.

“We shall have to fight,” said Tarzan, and as concealment was no longer possible he arose to his feet.

“Yes,” said Jana, arising to stand beside him. “We shall have to fight, but the end will be the same. There are fifty of them and we are but two.”

Tarzan fitted an arrow to his bow. The Horibs were circling slowly about them inspecting their new prey. Finally they came closer and halted their mounts, facing the two.

Now for the first time Tarzan was able to obtain a good view of the snake-men and their equally hideous mounts. The conformation of the Horibs was almost identical to man insofar as the torso and extremities were concerned. Their three-toed feet and five-toed hands were those of reptiles. The head and face resembled a snake, but pointed ears and

two short horns gave a grotesque appearance that was at the same time hideous. The arms were better proportioned than the legs, which were quite shapeless. The entire body was covered with scales, although those upon the hands, feet and face were so minute as to give the impression of bare skin, a resemblance which was further emphasized by the fact that these portions of the body were a much lighter color, approximating the shiny dead whiteness of a snake's belly. They wore a single apron-like garment fashioned from a piece of very heavy hide, apparently that of some gigantic reptile. This garment was really a piece of armor, its sole purpose being, as Tarzan later learned, to cover the soft, white bellies of the Horibs. Upon the breast of each garment was a strange device — an eight-pronged cross with a circle in the center. Around his waist each Horib wore a leather belt, which supported a scabbard in which was inserted a bone knife. About each wrist and above each elbow was a band or bracelet. These completed their apparel and ornaments. In addition to his knife each Horib carried a long lance shod with bone. They sat on their grotesque mounts with their toes locked behind the elbows of the Gorobors, anomodont reptiles of the Triassic, known to paleontologists as *pareiasauri*. Many of these creatures measured ten feet in length, though they stood low upon squat and powerful legs.

As Tarzan gazed in fascination upon the Horibs, whose "blood ran cold and who had no hearts," he realized that he might be gazing upon one of the vagaries of evolution, or possibly upon a replica of some form that had once existed upon the outer crust and that had blazed the trail that some, to us, unknown creature must have blazed from the age of reptiles to the age of man. Nor did it seem to him, after reflection, any more remarkable that a man-like reptile might evolve from

reptiles than that birds should have done so or, as scientific discoveries are now demonstrating, mammals must have.

These thoughts passed quickly, almost instantaneously, through his mind as the Horibs sat there with their beady, lidless eyes fastened upon them, but if Tarzan had been astounded by the appearance of these creatures the emotion thus aroused was nothing compared with the shock he received when one of them spoke, addressing him in the common language of the gilaks of Pellucidar.

“You cannot escape,” he said. “Lay down your weapons.”

14.

THROUGH THE DARK FOREST

Jason Gridley ran swiftly up the hill toward the Phelian village in which he hoped to find The Red Flower of Zoram and at his side was Thoar, ready with spear and knife to rescue or avenge his sister, while behind them, concealed by the underbrush that grew beneath the trees along the river's bank, a company of swarthy, bearded men watched the two.

To Thoar's surprise no defending warriors rushed from the building they were approaching, nor did any sound come from the interior. "Be careful," he cautioned Jason, "we may be running into a trap," and the American, profiting by the advice of his companion, advanced more cautiously. To the very entrance of the building they came and as yet no opposition to their advance had manifested itself.

Jason stopped and looked through the low doorway, then, stooping, he entered with Thoar at his heels.

"There is no one here," said Jason; "the building is deserted."

"Better luck in the next one then," said Thoar; but there was no one in the next building, nor in the next, nor in any of the buildings of the Phelian village.

"They have all gone," said Jason.

"Yes," replied Thoar, "but they will return. Let us go down among the trees at the riverside and wait for them there in hiding."

Unconscious of danger, the two walked down the hillside and entered the underbrush that grew luxuriantly beneath the trees. They followed a narrow trail, worn by Phelian sandals.

Scarcely had the foliage closed about them when a dozen men

sprang upon them and bore them to the ground. In an instant they were disarmed and their wrists bound behind their backs; then they were jerked roughly to their feet and Jason Gridley's eyes went wide as they got the first glimpse of his captors.

"Well, for Pete's sake!" he exclaimed. "I have learned to look with comparative composure upon woolly rhinoceroses, mammoths, trachodons, pterodactyls and dinosaurs, but I never expected to see Captain Kidd, Lafitte and Sir Henry Morgan in the heart of Pellucidar."

In his surprise he reverted to his native tongue, which, of course, none of the others understood.

"What language is that?" demanded one of their captors. "Who are you and from what country do you come?"

"That is good old American, from the U.S.A.," replied Jason; "but who the devil are you and why have you captured us?" and then turning to Thoar, "these are not the Phelians, are they?"

"No," replied Thoar. "These are strange men, such as I have never before seen."

"We know who you are," said one of the bearded men. "We know the country from which you come. Do not try to deceive us."

"Very well, then, if you know, turn me loose, for you must know that we haven't a war on with anyone."

"Your country is always at war with Korsar," replied the speaker. "You are a Sarian. I know it by the weapons that you carry. The moment I saw them, I knew that you were from distant Sari. The Cid will be glad to have you and so will Bulf. Perhaps," he added, turning to one of his fellows, "this is Tanar, himself. Did you see him when he was a prisoner in Korsar?"

"No, I was away upon a cruise," replied the other. "I did not see him, but if this is indeed he we shall be well rewarded."

“We might as well return to the ship now,” said the first speaker. “There is no use waiting any longer for these flat-footed natives with but one chance in a thousand of finding a good looking woman among them.”

“They told us further down the river that these people sometimes captured women from Zoram. Perhaps it would be well to wait.”

“No,” said the other, “I should like well enough to see one of these women from Zoram that I have heard of all my life, but the natives will not return as long as we are in the vicinity. We have been gone from the ship too long now and if I know the captain, he will be wanting to slit a few throats by the time we get back.”

Moored to a tree along the shore and guarded by five other Korsars was a ship’s longboat, but of a style that was reminiscent of Jason’s boyhood reading as were the bearded men with their bizarre costumes, their great pistols and cutlasses and their ancient harquebuses.

The prisoners were bundled into the boat, the Korsars entered and the craft was pushed off into the stream, which here was narrow and swift.

As the current bore them rapidly along Jason had an opportunity to examine his captors. They were as villainous a looking crew as he had ever imagined outside of fiction and were more typically piratical than the fiercest pirates of his imagination. What with earrings and, in some instances, nose rings of gold, with the gay handkerchiefs bound about their heads and body sashes around their waists, they would have presented a gorgeous and colorful picture at a distance sufficiently great to transform their dirt and patches into a pleasing texture.

Although in the story of Tanar of Pellucidar that Jason had received by radio from Perry, he had become familiar with the appearance and nature of the Korsars, yet he now realized that heretofore

he had accepted them more as he had accepted the pirates of history and of his boyhood reading — as fictionary or, at best, legendary — and not men of flesh and bone such as he saw before him, their mouths filled with oaths and coarse jokes, the grime and filth of reality marking them as real human beings.

In these savage Korsars, their boat, their apparel and their ancient firearms, Jason saw conclusive proof of their descent from men of the outer crust and realized how they must have carried to the mind of David Innes an overwhelming conviction of the existence of a polar opening leading from Pellucidar to the outer world.

While Thoar was disheartened by the fate that had thrown them into the hands of these strange people, Jason was not at all sure but that it might prove a stroke of fortune for himself, as from the conversation and comments that he had heard since their capture it seemed reasonable to assume that they were to be taken to Korsar, the city in which David Innes was confined and which was, therefore, the first goal of their expedition to effect the rescue of the Emperor of Pellucidar.

That he would arrive there alone and a prisoner were not in themselves causes for rejoicing; yet, on the whole, he would be no worse off than to remain wandering aimlessly through a country filled with unknown dangers without the faintest shadow of a hope of ever being able to locate his fellows. Now, at least, he was almost certain of being transported to a place that they also were attempting to reach and thus the chances of a reunion were so much the greater.

The stream down which they floated wound through a swampy forest, crossing numerous lagoons that sometimes were of a size that raised them to the dignity of lakes. Everywhere the waters and the banks teemed with reptilian life, suggesting to Jason Gridley that he

was reviewing a scene such as might have been enacted in a Mesozoic paradise countless ages before upon the outer crust. So numerous and oftentimes so colossal and belligerent were the savage reptiles that the descent of the river became a running fight, during which the Korsars were constantly upon the alert and frequently were compelled to discharge their harquebuses in defense of their lives. More often than not the noise of the weapons frightened off the attacking reptiles, but occasionally one would persist in its attack until it had been killed; nor was the possibility ever remote that in one of these encounters some fierce and brainless saurian might demolish their craft and with its fellows devour the crew.

Jason and Thoar had been placed in the middle of the boat, where they squatted upon the bottom, their wrists still secured behind their backs. Close to Jason was a Korsar whose fellows addressed him as Lajo. There was something about this fellow that attracted Jason's particular attention. Perhaps it was his more open countenance or a less savage and profane demeanor. He had not joined the others in the coarse jokes that were directed against their captives; in fact, he paid little attention to anything other than the business of defending the boat against the attacking monsters.

There seemed to be no one in command of the party, all matters being discussed among them and in this way a decision arrived at; yet Jason had noticed that the others listened attentively when Lajo spoke, which was seldom, though always intelligently and to the point. Guided by the result of these observations he selected Lajo as the most logical Korsar through whom to make a request. At the first opportunity, therefore, he attracted the man's attention.

"What do you want?" asked Lajo.

"Who is in command here?" asked Jason.

“No one,” replied the Korsar. “Our officer was killed on the way up. Why do you ask?”

“I want the bonds removed from our wrists,” replied Jason. “We cannot escape. We are unarmed and outnumbered and, therefore, cannot harm you; while in the event that the boat is destroyed or capsized by any of these reptiles we shall be helpless with our wrists tied behind our backs.”

Lajo drew his knife.

“What are you going to do?” asked one of the other Korsars who had been listening to the conversation.

“I am going to cut their bonds,” replied Lajo. “There is nothing to be gained by keeping them bound.”

“Who are you to say that their bonds shall be cut?” demanded the other belligerently.

“Who are you to say that they shall not?” returned Lajo quietly, moving toward the prisoners.

“I’ll show you who I am,” shouted the other, whipping out his knife and advancing toward Lajo.

There was no hesitation. Like a panther Lajo swung upon his adversary, striking up the other’s knife-hand with his left forearm and at the same time plunging his villainous looking blade to the hilt in the other’s breast. Voicing a single blood-curdling scream the man sank lifeless to the bottom of the boat. Lajo wrenched his knife from the corpse, wiped it upon his adversary’s shirt and quietly cut the bonds that confined the wrists of Thoar and Jason. The other Korsars looked on, apparently unmoved by the killing of their fellow, except for a coarse joke or two at the expense of the dead man and a grunt of approbation for Lajo’s act.

The killer removed the weapons from the body of the dead man

and cast them aft out of reach of the prisoners, then he motioned to the corpse. "Throw it overboard," he commanded, addressing Jason and Thoar.

"Wait," cried another member of the crew. "I want his boots."

"His sash is mine," cried another, and presently half a dozen of them were quarreling over the belongings of the corpse like a pack of dogs over a bone. Lajo took no part in this altercation and presently the few wretched belongings that had served to cover the nakedness of the dead man were torn from his corpse and divided among them by the simple expedient of permitting the stronger to take what they could; then Jason and Thoar eased the naked body over the side, where it was immediately seized upon by voracious denizens of the river.

Interminable, to an unknown destination, seemed the journey to Jason. They ate and slept many times and still the river wound through the endless swamp. The luxuriant vegetation and flowering blooms which lined the banks long since had ceased to interest, their persistent monotony making them almost hateful to the eyes.

Jason could not but wonder at the superhuman efforts that must have been necessary to row this large, heavy boat upstream in the face of all the terrific assaults which must have been launched upon it by the reptilian hordes that contested every mile of the downward journey.

But presently the landscape changed, the river widened and the low swamp gave way to rolling hills. The forests, which still lined the banks, were freer from underbrush, suggesting that they might be the feeding grounds of droves of herbivorous animals, a theory that was soon substantiated by sight of grazing herds, among which Jason recognized red deer, bison, bos and several other species of herbiv-

orous animals. The forest upon the right bank was open and sunny and with its grazing herds presented a cheerful aspect of warmth and life, but the forest upon the left bank was dark and gloomy. The foliage of the trees, which grew to tremendous proportions, was so dense as practically to shut out the sunlight, the space between the boles giving the impression of long, dark aisles, gloomy and forbidding.

There were fewer reptiles in the stream here, but the Korsars appeared unusually nervous and apprehensive of danger after they entered this stretch of the river. Previously they had been drifting with the current, using but a single oar, scull fashion, from the stern to keep the nose of the boat pointed downstream, but now they manned the oars, pressing Jason and Thoar into service to row with the others. Loaded harquebuses lay beside the oarsmen, while in the bow and stern armed men were constantly upon watch. They paid little attention to the right bank of the river, but toward the dark and gloomy left bank they directed their nervous, watchful gaze. Jason wondered what it was that they feared, but he had no opportunity to inquire and there was no respite from the rowing, at least not for him or Thoar, though the Korsars alternated between watching and rowing.

Between oars and current they were making excellent progress, though whether they were close to the end of the danger zone or not, Jason had no means of knowing any more than he could guess the nature of the menace which must certainly threaten them if aught could be judged by the attitude of the Korsars.

The two prisoners were upon the verge of exhaustion when Lajo noticed their condition and relieved them from the oars. How long they had been rowing, Jason could not determine, although he knew that while no one had either eaten or slept, since they had entered this stretch of the river, the time must have been considerable. The

distance they had come he estimated roughly at something over a hundred miles, and he and Thoar had been continuously at the oars during the entire period, without food or sleep, but they had barely thrown themselves to the bottom of the boat when a cry, vibrant with excitement, arose from the bow. "There they are!" shouted the man, and instantly all was excitement aboard the boat.

"Keep to the oars!" shouted Lajo. "Our best chance is to run through them."

Although almost too spent with fatigue to find interest even in impending death, Jason dragged himself to a sitting position that raised his eyes above the level of the gunwales of the boat. At first he could not even vaguely classify the horde of creatures swimming out upon the bosom of the placid river with the evident intention of intercepting them, but presently he saw that they were man-like creatures riding upon the backs of hideous reptiles. They bore long lances and their scaly mounts sped through the waters at incredible speed. As the boat approached them he saw that the creatures were not men, though they had the forms of men, but were grotesque and horrid reptiles with the heads of lizards to whose naturally frightful mien, pointed ears and short horns added a certain horrid grotesquery.

"My God!" he exclaimed. "What are they?"

Thoar, who had also dragged himself to a sitting posture, shuddered. "They are the Horibs," he said. "It is better to die than to fall into their clutches."

Carried downward by the current and urged on by the long sweeps and its own terrific momentum, the heavy boat shot straight toward the hideous horde. The distance separating them was rapidly closing; the boat was almost upon the leading Horib when an harquebus in the bow spoke. Its loud report broke the menacing silence that had over-

hung the river like a pall. Directly in front of the boat's prow the horde of Horibs separated and a moment later they were racing along on either side of the craft. Harquebuses were belching smoke and fire, scattering the bits of iron and pebbles with which they were loaded among the hissing enemy, but for every Horib that fell there were two to take its place.

Now they withdrew to a little distance, but with apparently no effort whatever their reptilian mounts kept pace with the boat and then, one after another on either side, a rider would dart in and cast his lance; nor apparently ever did one miss its mark. So deadly was their aim that the Korsars were compelled to abandon their oars and drop down into the bottom of the boat, raising themselves above the gunwales only long enough to fire their harquebuses, when they would again drop down into concealment to reload. But even these tactics could not preserve them for long, since the Horibs, darting in still closer to the side of the boat, could reach over the edge and lance the inmates. Straight to the muzzles of the harquebuses they came, apparently entirely devoid of any conception of fear; great holes were blown entirely through the bodies of some, others were decapitated, while more than a score lost a hand or an arm, yet still they came.

Presently one succeeded in casting the noose of a long leather rope over a cleat upon the gunwale and instantly several of the Horibs seized it and headed their mounts toward the river's bank.

Practically exhausted and without weapons to defend themselves, Jason and Thoar had remained lying upon the bottom of the boat almost past caring what fate befell them. Half covered by the corpses of the Korsars that had fallen, they lay in a pool of blood. About them harquebuses still roared amid screams and curses, and above all rose the shrill, hissing screech that seemed to be the war cry of the Horibs.

The boat was dragged to shore and the rope made fast about the bole of a tree, though three times the Korsars had cut the line and three times the Horibs had been forced to replace it.

There was only a handful of the crew who had not been killed or wounded when the Horibs left their mounts and swarmed over the gunwales to fall upon their prey. Cutlasses, knives and harquebuses did their deadly work, but still the slimy snake-men came, crawling over the bodies of their dead to fall upon the survivors until the latter were practically buried by greater numbers.

When the battle was over there were but three Korsars who had escaped death or serious wounds — Lajo was one of them. The Horibs bound their wrists and took them ashore, after which they started unloading the dead and wounded from the boat, killing the more seriously wounded with their knives. Coming at last upon Jason and Thoar and finding them unwounded, they bound them as they had the living Korsars and placed them with the other prisoners on the shore.

The battle over, the prisoners secured, the Horibs now fell upon the corpses of the dead, nor did they rest until they had devoured them all, while Jason and his fellow prisoners sat nauseated with horror during the grizzly feast. Even the Korsars, cruel and heartless as they were, shuddered at the sight.

“Why do you suppose they are saving us?” asked Jason.

Lajo shook his head. “I do not know,” he said.

“Doubtless to feed us to their women and children,” said Thoar.

“They say that they keep their human prisoners and fatten them.”

“You know what they are? You have seen them before?” Lajo asked Thoar.

“Yes, I know what they are,” said Thoar, “but these are the first that

I have ever seen. They are the Horibs, the snake people. They dwell between the Rela Am and the Gyor Cors.”

As Jason watched the Horibs at their grizzly feast, he became suddenly conscious of a remarkable change that was taking place in their appearance. When he had first seen them and all during the battle they had been of a ghastly bluish color, the hands, feet and faces being several shades paler than the balance of the body, but as they settled down to their gory repast this hue gradually faded to be replaced by a reddish tinge, which varied in intensity in different individuals, the faces and extremities of a few of whom became almost crimson as the feast progressed.

If the appearance and blood-thirsty ferocity of the creatures appalled him, he was no less startled when he first heard them converse in the common language of the men of Pellucidar.

The general conformation of the creatures, their weapons, which consisted of long lances and stone knives, the apron-like apparel which they wore and the evident attempt at ornamentation as exemplified by the insignia upon the breasts of their garments and the armlets which they wore, all tended toward establishing a suggestion of humanity that was at once grotesque and horrible, but when to these other attributes was added human speech the likeness to man created an impression that was indescribably repulsive.

So powerful was the fascination that the creatures aroused in the mind of Jason that he could divert neither his thoughts nor his eyes from them. He noticed that while the majority of them were about six feet in height, there were many much smaller, ranging downward to about four feet, while there was one tremendous individual that must have been fully nine feet tall; yet all were proportioned identically and the difference in height did not have the appearance of being at all

related to a difference in age, except that the scales upon the largest of them were considerably thicker and coarser. Later, however, he was to learn that differences in size predicated differences in age, the growth of these creatures being governed by the same law which governs the growth of reptiles, which, unlike mammals, continue to grow throughout the entire duration of their lives.

When they had gorged themselves upon the flesh of the Korsars, the Horibs lay down, but whether to sleep or not Jason never knew since their lidless eyes remained constantly staring. And now a new phenomenon occurred. Gradually the reddish tinge faded from their bodies to be replaced by a dull brownish gray, which harmonized with the ground upon which they lay.

Exhausted by his long tour at the oars and by the horrors that he had witnessed, Jason gradually drifted off into deep slumber, which was troubled by hideous dreams in which he saw Jana in the clutches of a Horib. The creature was attempting to devour The Red Flower of Zoram, while Jason struggled with the bonds that secured him.

He was awakened by a sharp pain in his shoulder and opening his eyes he saw one of the homosaurians, as he had mentally dubbed them, standing over him, prodding him with the point of his sharp lance. "Make less noise," said the creature, and Jason realized that he must have been raving in his sleep.

The other Horibs were rising from the ground, voicing strange whistling hisses, and presently from the waters of the river and from the surrounding aisles of the gloomy forest their hideous mounts came trooping in answer to the summons.

"Stand up!" said the Horib who had awakened Jason. "I am going to remove your bonds," he continued. "You cannot escape. If you try

to you will be killed. Follow me,” he then commanded after he had removed the thongs which secured Jason’s wrists.

Jason accompanied the creature into the midst of the herd of periosauri that was milling about, snapping and hissing, along the shore of the river.

Although the Gorobors all looked alike to Jason, it was evident that the Horibs differentiated between individuals among them for he who was leading Jason threaded his way through the mass of slimy bodies until he reached the side of a particular individual.

“Get up,” he said, motioning Jason to mount the creature. “Sit well forward on its neck.”

It was with a sensation of the utmost disgust that Jason vaulted onto the back of the Gorobor. The feel of its cold, clammy, rough hide against his naked legs sent a chilly shudder up his spine. The reptile-man mounted behind him and presently the entire company was on the march, each of the other prisoners being mounted in front of a Horib.

Into the gloomy forest the strange cavalcade marched, down dark, winding corridors overhung with dense vegetation, much of which was of a dead pale cast through lack of sunlight. A clammy chill, unusual in Pellucidar, pervaded the atmosphere and a feeling of depression weighed heavily upon all the prisoners.

“What are you going to do with us?” asked Jason after they had proceeded in silence for some distance.

“You will be fed upon eggs until you are fit to be eaten by the females and the little ones,” replied the Horib. “They tire of fish and Gyor flesh. It is not often that we get as much gilak meat as we have just had.”

Jason relapsed into silence, discovering that, as far as he was

concerned, the Horib was conversationally a total loss and for long after the horror of the creature's reply weighed upon his mind. It was not that he feared death; it was the idea of being fattened for slaughter that was peculiarly abhorrent.

As they rode between the never ending trees he tried to speculate as to the origin of these gruesome creatures. It seemed to him that they might constitute a supreme effort upon the part of Nature to reach a higher goal by a less devious route than that which evolution had pursued upon the outer crust from the age of reptiles upwards to the age of man.

During the march Jason caught occasional glimpses of Thoar and the other prisoners, though he had no opportunity to exchange words with them, and after what seemed an interminable period of time the cavalcade emerged from the forest into the sunlight and Jason saw in the distance the shimmering blue waters of an inland lake. As they approached its shores he discerned throngs of Horibs, some swimming or lolling in the waters of the lake, while others lay or squatted upon the muddy bank. As the company arrived among them they showed only a cold, reptilian interest in the returning warriors, though some of the females and young evinced a suggestive interest in the prisoners.

The adult females differed but slightly from the males. Aside from the fact that they were hornless and went naked, Jason could discover no other distinguishing feature. He saw no signs of a village, nor any indication of arts or crafts other than those necessary to produce their crude weapons and the simple apron-like armor that the warriors wore to protect the soft skin of their bellies.

The prisoners were now dragged from their mounts and herded

together by several of the warriors, who conducted them along the edge of the lake toward a slightly higher bank.

On the way they passed a number of females laying eggs, which they deposited in the soft, warm mud just above the water line, covering them lightly with mud, afterwards pushing a slender stake into the ground at the spot to mark the nest. All along the shore at this point were hundreds of such stakes and further on Jason saw several tiny Horibs, evidently but just hatched, wriggling upward out of the mud. No one paid the slightest attention to them as they stumbled and reeled about trying to accustom themselves to the use of their limbs, upon all four of which they went at first, like tiny, grotesque lizards.

Arrived at the higher bank the warrior in charge of Thoar, who was in the lead, suddenly clapped his hand over the prisoner's mouth, pinching Thoar's nose tightly between his thumb and first finger, and, without other preliminaries, dove head foremost into the waters of the lake carrying his victim with him.

Jason was horrified as he saw his friend and companion disappear beneath the muddy waters, which, after a moment of violent agitation, settled down again, leaving only an ever widening circular ripple to mark the spot where the two had disappeared. An instant later another Horib dove in with Lajo and in rapid succession the other two Korsars shared a similar fate.

With a superhuman effort Jason sought to tear himself free from the clutches of his captor, but the cold, clammy hands held him tightly. One of them was suddenly clapped over his mouth and nose and an instant later he felt the warm waters of the lake close about him.

Still struggling to free himself he was conscious that the Horib was carrying him swiftly beneath the surface. Presently he felt slimy mud beneath him, along which his body was being dragged. His lungs cried

out in tortured agony for air, his senses reeled and momentarily all went black before him, though no blacker than the stygian darkness of the hole into which he was being dragged, and then the hand was removed from his mouth and nose; mechanically his lungs gasped for air and as consciousness slowly returned Jason realized that he was not drowned, but that he was lying upon a bed of mud inhaling air and not water.

Total darkness surrounded him; he felt a clammy body scrape against his, and then another and another. There was a sound of splashing, gurgling water and then silence — the silence of the tomb.

15.

PRISONERS

Standing upon the edge of the great Gyor plains surrounded by armed creatures, who had but just demonstrated their ability to destroy one of the most powerful and ferocious creatures that evolution has ever succeeded in producing, Tarzan of the Apes was yet loath to lay down his weapons as he had been instructed and surrender, without resistance, to an unknown fate.

“What do you intend to do with us?” he demanded of the Horib who had ordered him to lay down his weapons.

“We shall take you to our village where you will be well fed,” replied the creature. “You cannot escape us; no one escapes the Horibs.”

The ape-man hesitated. The Red Flower of Zoram moved closer to his side. “Let us go with them,” she whispered. “We cannot escape them now; there are too many of them. Possibly if we go with them we shall find an opportunity later.”

Tarzan nodded and then he turned to the Horib. “We are ready,” he said.

Mounted upon the necks of Gorobors, each in front of a Horib warrior, they were carried across a corner of the Gyor Cors to the same gloomy forest through which Jason and Thoar had been taken, though they entered it from a different direction.

Rising at the east end of the Mountains of the Thipdars, a river flows in a southeasterly direction entering upon its course the gloomy forest of the Horibs, through which it runs down to the Rela Am, or River of Darkness. It was near the confluence of these two rivers that

the Korsars had been attacked by the Horibs and it was along the upper reaches of the same river that Tarzan and Jana were being conducted down stream toward the village of the lizard-men.

The lake of the Horibs lies at a considerable distance from the eastern end of the Mountains of the Thipdars, perhaps five hundred miles, and where there is no time and distances are measured by food and sleep it makes little difference whether places are separated by five miles or five hundred. One man might travel a thousand miles without mishap, while another, in attempting to go one mile, might be killed, in which event the one mile would be much further than the thousand miles, for, in fact, it would have proved an interminable distance to him who had essayed it in this instance.

As Tarzan and Jana rode through the dismal forest, hundreds of miles away Jason Gridley drew himself to a sitting position in such utter darkness that he could almost feel it. "God!" he exclaimed.

"Who spoke?" asked a voice out of the darkness, and Jason recognized the voice as Thoar's.

"It is I, Jason," replied Gridley.

"Where are we?" demanded another voice. It was Lajo.

"It is dark. I wish they had killed us," said a fourth voice.

"Don't worry," said a fifth, "we shall be killed soon enough."

"We are all here," said Jason. "I thought we were all done for when I saw them drag you into the water one by one."

"Where are we?" demanded one of the Korsars. "What sort of hole is this into which they have put us?"

"In the world from which I come," said Jason, "there are huge reptiles, called crocodiles, who build such nests or retreats in the banks of rivers, just above the water line, but the only entrance leads down

below the waters of the river. It is such a hole as that into which we have been dragged.”

“Why can’t we swim out again?” asked Thoar.

“Perhaps we could,” replied Jason, “but they would see us and bring us back again.”

“Are we going to lie here in the mud and wait to be slaughtered?” demanded Lajo.

“No,” said Jason; “but let us work out a reasonable plan of escape. It will gain us nothing to act rashly.”

For some time the men sat in silence, which was finally broken by the American. “Do you think we are alone here?” he asked in a low tone. “I have listened carefully, but I have heard no sound other than our own breathing.”

“Nor I,” said Thoar.

“Come closer then,” said Jason, and the five men groped through the darkness and arranged themselves in a circle, where they squatted leaning forward till their heads touched. “I have a plan,” continued Jason. “When they were bringing us here I noticed that the forest grew close to the lake at this point. If we can make a tunnel into the forest, we may be able to escape.”

“Which way is the forest?” asked Lajo.

“That is something that we can only guess at,” replied Jason. “We may guess wrong, but we must take the chance. But I think that it is reasonable to assume that the direction of the forest is directly opposite the entrance through which we were carried into this hole.”

“Let us start digging at once,” exclaimed one of the Korsars.

“Wait until I locate the entrance,” said Thoar.

He crawled away upon his hands and knees, groping through the darkness and the mud. Presently he announced that he had found

the opening, and from the direction of his voice the others knew where to start digging.

All were filled with enthusiasm, for success seemed almost within the range of possibility, but now they were confronted with the problem of the disposal of the dirt which they excavated from their tunnel. Jason instructed Lajo to remain at the point where they intended excavating and then had the others crawl in different directions in an effort to estimate the size of the chamber in which they were confined. Each man was to crawl in a straight line in the direction assigned him and count the number of times that his knees touched the ground before he came to the end of the cavern.

By this means they discovered that the cave was long and narrow and, if they were correct in the directions they had assumed, it ran parallel to the lake shore. For twenty feet it extended in one direction and for over fifty in the other.

It was finally decided that they should distribute the earth equally over the floor of the chamber for a while and then carry it to the further end, piling it against the further wall uniformly so as not to attract unnecessary attention in the event that any of the Horibs visited them.

Digging with their fingers was slow and laborious work, but they kept steadily at it, taking turns about. The man at work would push the dirt behind him and the others would gather it up and distribute it, so that at no time was there a fresh pile of earth upon the ground to attract attention should a Horib come. Horibs did come; they brought food, but the men could hear the splash of their bodies in the water as they dove into the lake to reach the tunnel leading to the cave and being thus warned they grouped themselves in front of the entrance to their tunnel effectually hiding it from view. The Horibs who came into

the chamber at no time gave any suggestion of suspicion that all was not right. While it was apparent that they could see in the dark it was also quite evident that they could not discern things clearly and thus the greatest fear that their plot might be discovered was at least partially removed.

After considerable effort they had succeeded in excavating a tunnel some three feet in diameter and about ten feet long when Jason, who was excavating at the time, unearthed a large shell, which greatly facilitated the process of excavation. From then on their advance was more rapid, yet it seemed to them all that it was an endless job; nor was there any telling at what moment the Horibs would come to take them for the feast.

It was Jason's wish to get well within the forest before turning their course upward toward the surface, but to be certain of this he knew that they must first encounter roots of trees and pass beyond them, which might necessitate a detour and delay; yet to come up prematurely would be to nullify all that they had accomplished so far and to put a definite end to all hope of escape.

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And while the five men dug beneath the ground in the dark hole that was stretching slowly out beneath the dismal forest of the Horibs a great ship rode majestically high in air above the northern slopes of the Mountains of the Thipdars.

"They never passed this way," said Zuppner. "Nothing short of a mountain goat could cross this range."

"I quite agree with you, sir," said Hines. "We might as well search in some other direction now."

“God!” exclaimed Zuppner, “if I only knew in what direction to search.”

Hines shook his head. “One direction is as good as another, sir,” he said.

“I suppose so,” said Zuppner, and, obeying his light touch upon the helm, the nose of the great dirigible swung to port. Following an easterly course she paralleled the Mountains of the Thipdars and sailed out over the Gyor Cors. A slight turn of the wheel would have carried her to the southeast, across the dismal forest through whose gloomy corridors Tarzan and Jana were being borne to a horrible fate. But Captain Zuppner did not know and so the O-220 continued on toward the east, while the Lord of the Jungle and The Red Flower of Zoram rode silently toward their doom.

From almost the moment that they had entered the forest Tarzan had known that he might escape. It would have been the work of but an instant to have leaped from the back of the Gorobor upon which he was riding to one of the lower branches of the forest, some of which barely grazed their heads as they passed beneath, and once in the trees he knew that no Horib nor any Gorobor could catch him, but he could not desert Jana; nor could he acquaint her with his plans for they were never sufficiently close together for him to whisper to her unheard by the Horibs. But even had he been able to lay the whole thing before her, he doubted her ability to reach the safety of the trees before the Horibs recaptured her.

If he could but get near enough to take hold of her, he was confident that he could effect a safe escape for both of them and so he rode on in silence, hoping against hope that the opportunity he so desired would eventually develop.

They had reached the upper end of the lake and were skirting

its western shore and, from remarks dropped by the Horibs in their conversations, which were far from numerous, the ape-man guessed that they were almost at their destination, and still escape seemed as remote as ever.

Chafing with impatience Tarzan was on the point of making a sudden break for liberty, trusting that the unexpectedness of his act would confuse the lizard-men for just the few seconds that would be necessary for him to throw Jana to his shoulder and swing to the lower terrace that beckoned invitingly from above.

The nerves and muscles of Tarzan of the Apes are trained to absolute obedience to his will; they are never surprised into any revelation of emotion, nor are they often permitted to reveal what is passing in the mind of the ape-man when he is in the presence of strangers or enemies, but now, for once, they were almost shocked into revealing the astonishment that filled him as a vagrant breeze carried to his nostrils a scent spoor that he had never thought to know again.

The Horibs were moving almost directly up wind so that Tarzan knew that the authors of the familiar odors that he had sensed were somewhere ahead of them. He thought quickly now, but not without weighing carefully the plan that had leaped to his mind the instant that that familiar scent spoor had impinged upon his nostrils. His major consideration was for the safety of the girl, but in order to rescue her he must protect himself. He felt that it would be impossible for them both to escape simultaneously, but there was another way now — a way which seemed to offer excellent possibilities for success.

Behind him, upon the Gorobor, and so close that their bodies touched, sat a huge Horib. In one hand he carried a lance, but the other hand was free. Tarzan must move so quickly that the fellow could not touch him with his free hand before he was out of reach. To do

this would require agility of an almost superhuman nature, but there are few creatures who can compare in this respect with the ape-man. Low above them swung the branches of the dismal forest; Tarzan waited, watching for the opportunity he sought. Presently he saw it — a sturdy branch with ample head room above it — a doorway in the ceiling of somber foliage. He leaned forward, his hands resting lightly upon the neck of the Gorobor. They were almost beneath the branch he had selected when he sprang lightly to his feet and almost in the same movement sprang upward into the tree. So quickly had he accomplished the feat that he was gone before the Horib that had been guarding him realized it. When he did it was too late — the prisoner had gone. With others, who had seen the escape, he raised a cry of warning to those ahead, but neither by sight nor sound could they locate the fugitive, for Tarzan travelled through the upper terrace and all the foliage beneath hid him from the eyes of his enemies.

Jana, who had been riding a little in the rear of Tarzan, saw his escape and her heart sank for in the presence of the Horibs The Red Flower of Zoram had come as near to experiencing fear as she ever had in her life. She had derived a certain sense of comfort from the presence of Tarzan and now that he was gone she felt very much alone. She did not blame him for escaping when he had the opportunity, but she was sure in her own heart that Jason would not thus have deserted her.

Following the scent spoor that was his only guide, Tarzan of the Apes moved rapidly through the trees. At first he climbed high to the upper terraces and here he found a new world — a world of sunlight and luxuriant foliage, peopled by strange birds of gorgeous plumage which darted swiftly hither and thither. There were flying reptiles, too, and great gaudy moths. Snakes coiled upon many a branch and

because they were of varieties unknown to him, he did not know whether they constituted a real menace or not. It was at once a beautiful and a repulsive world, but the feature of it which attracted him most was its silence, for its denizens seemed to be voiceless. The presence of the snakes and the dense foliage rendered it an unsatisfactory world for one who wished to travel swiftly and so the ape-man dropped to a lower level, and here he found the forest more open and the scent spoor clearer in his nostrils.

Not once had he doubted the origin of that scent, although it seemed preposterously unbelievable that he should discover it here in this gloomy wood in vast Pellucidar.

He was moving very rapidly for he wished, if possible, to reach his destination ahead of the Horibs. He hoped that his escape might delay the lizard-men and this was, in fact, the case, for they had halted immediately while a number of them had climbed into the trees searching for Tarzan. There was little in their almost expressionless faces to denote their anger, but the sickly bluish cast which overspread their scales denoted their mounting rage at the ease with which this gilak prisoner had escaped them, and when, finally, thwarted in their search, they resumed their interrupted march, they were in a particularly ugly mood.

Far ahead of them now Tarzan of the Apes dropped to the lower terraces. Strong in his nostrils was the scent spoor he had been following, telling him in a language more dependable than words that he had but little farther to go to find those he sought, and a moment later he dropped down into one of the gloomy aisles of the forest, dropping as from heaven into the astonished view of ten stalwart warriors.

For an instant they stood looking at him in wide-eyed amazement

and then they ran forward and threw themselves upon their knees about him, kissing his hands as they shed tears of happiness. "Oh, Bwana, Bwana," they cried; "it is indeed you! Mulungu has been good to his children; he has given their Big Bwana back to them alive."

"And now I have work for you, my children," said Tarzan; "the snake people are coming and with them is a girl whom they have captured. I thank God that you are armed with rifles and I hope that you have plenty of ammunition."

"We have saved it, Bwana, using our spears and our arrows whenever we could."

"Good," said Tarzan; "we shall need it now. How far are we from the ship?"

"I do not know," said Muviro.

"You do not know?" repeated Tarzan.

"No, Bwana, we are lost. We have been lost for a long while," replied the chief of the Waziri.

"What were you doing away from the ship alone?" demanded Tarzan.

"We were sent out with Gridley and von Horst to search for you, Bwana."

"Where are they?" asked Tarzan.

"A long time ago, I do not know how long, we became separated from Gridley and never saw him again. At that time it was savage beasts that separated us, but how von Horst became separated from us we do not know. We had found a cave and had gone into it to sleep; when we awoke von Horst was gone; we never saw him again."

"They are coming!" warned Tarzan.

"I hear them, Bwana," replied Muviro.

"Have you seen them — the snake people?" asked Tarzan.

“No, Bwana, we have seen no people for a long time; only beasts — terrible beasts.”

“You are going to see some terrible men now,” Tarzan warned them; “but do not be frightened by their appearance. Your bullets will bring them down.”

“When, Bwana, have you seen a Waziri frightened?” asked Muviro proudly.

The ape-man smiled. “One of you let me take his rifle,” he said, “and then spread out through the forest. I do not know exactly where they will pass, but the moment that any of you makes contact with them commence shooting and shoot to kill, remembering, however, that the girl rides in front of one of them. Be careful that you do not harm her.”

He had scarcely ceased speaking when the first of the Horibs rode into view. Tarzan and the Waziri made no effort to seek concealment and at sight of them the leading Horib gave voice to a shrill cry of pleasure. Then a rifle spoke and the leading Horib writhed convulsively and toppled sideways to the ground. The others in the lead, depending upon the swiftness of their mounts, darted quickly toward the Waziri and the tall, white giant who led them, but swifter than the Gorobors were the bullets of the outer world. As fast as Tarzan and the Waziri could fire the Horibs fell. Never before had they known defeat. They blazed blue with rage, which faded to a muddy gray when the bullets found their hearts and they rolled dead upon the ground.

So swiftly did the Gorobors move and so rapidly did Tarzan and the Waziri fire that the engagement was decided within a few minutes of its inception, and now the remaining Horibs, discovering that they could not hope to overcome and capture gilaks armed with these strange weapons that hit them more swiftly than they could hurl their

lances, turned and scattered in an effort to pass around the enemy and continue on their way.

As yet Tarzan had not caught a glimpse of Jana, though he knew that she must be there somewhere in the rear of the remaining Horibs, and then he saw her as she flashed by in the distance, borne swiftly upon the back of a fleet Gorobor. What appeared to be the only chance to save her now was to shoot down the swift beast upon which she was being borne away. Tarzan swung his rifle to his shoulder and at the same instant a riderless Gorobor struck him in the back and sent him sprawling upon the ground. By the time he had regained his feet, Jana and her captor were out of sight, hidden by the boles of intervening trees.

Milling near the Waziri were a number of terrified, riderless Gorobors. It was from this number that the fellow had broken who had knocked Tarzan down. The beasts seemed to be lost without the guidance of their masters, but when they saw one of their number start in pursuit of the Horibs who had ridden away, the others followed and in their mad rush these savage beasts constituted as great a menace as the Horibs themselves.

Muviro and his warriors leaped nimbly behind the boles of large trees to escape them, but to the mind of the ape-man they carried a new hope, offering as they did the only means whereby he might overtake the Horib who was bearing away The Red Flower of Zoram, and then, to the horror and astonishment of the Waziri, Tarzan leaped to the back of one of the great lizards as it scuttled abreast of him. Locking his toes beneath its elbows, as he had seen the Horibs do, he was carried swiftly in the mad rush of the creature to overtake its fellows and its masters. No need to urge it on, if he had known what means to employ to do so, for probably still terrified and excited by

the battle it darted with incredible swiftness among the boles of the gray trees, outstripping its fellows and leaving them behind.

Presently, just ahead of him, Tarzan saw the Horib who was bearing Jana away and he saw, too, that he would soon overtake him, but so swiftly was his own mount running that it seemed quite likely that he would be carried past Jana without being able to accomplish anything toward her rescue, and with this thought came the realization that he must stop the Horib's mount.

There was just an instant in which to decide and act, but in that instant he raised his rifle and fired. Perhaps it was a wonderful bit of marksmanship, or perhaps it was just luck, but the bullet struck the Gorobor in the spine and a moment later its hind legs collapsed and it rolled over on its side, pitching Jana and the Horib heavily to the ground. Simultaneously Tarzan's mount swept by and the ape-man, risking a bad fall, slipped from its back to go tumbling head over heels against the carcass of the Horib's mount.

Leaping to his feet, he faced the lizard-man and as he did so the ground gave way beneath him and he dropped suddenly into a hole, almost to his armpits. As he was struggling to extricate himself something seized him by the ankles and dragged him downward — cold fingers that clung relentlessly to him dragging him into a dark, subterranean hole.

16.

ESCAPE

The O-220 cruised slowly above the Gyor Cors, watchful eyes scanning the ground below, but the only living things they saw were huge dinosaurs. Disturbed by the motors of the dirigible, the great beasts trotted angrily about in circles and occasionally an individual, sighting the ship above him, would gallop after it, bellowing angrily, or again one might charge the elliptical shadow that moved along the ground directly beneath the O-220.

“Sweet-tempered little fellows,” remarked Lieutenant Hines, who had been watching them from a messroom port.

“Jes’ which *am* dem bad dreams, Lieutenant?” asked Robert Jones.

“Triceratops,” replied the officer.

“Ah’ll try most anything once, suh, but not dem babies,” replied Robert.

Unknown to the bewildered navigating officer, the ship was taking a southeasterly course. Far away, on its port side, loomed a range of mountains, hazily visible in the up-curving distance, and now a river cut the plain — a river that came down from the distant mountains — and this they followed, knowing that men lost in a strange country are prone to follow the course of a river, if they are so fortunate as to find one.

They had followed the river for some distance when Lieutenant Dorf telephoned down from the observation cabin. “There is a considerable body of water ahead, sir,” he reported to Captain Zuppner.

“From its appearance I should say that we might be approaching the shore of a large ocean.”

All eyes were now strained ahead and presently a large body of water became visible to all on board. The ship cruised slowly up and down the coast for a short distance, and as it had been some time since they had had fresh water or fresh meat, Zuppner decided to land and make camp, selecting a spot just north of the river they had been following, where it emptied into the sea. And as the great ship settled gently to rest upon a rolling, grassy meadow, Robert Jones made an entry in his little black diary.

“Arrived here at noon.”

~

While the great ship settled down beside the shore of the silent Pellucidarian sea, Jason Gridley and his companions, hundreds of miles to the west, pushed their tunnel upward toward the surface of the ground. Jason was in front, laboriously pushing the earth backward a few handfuls at a time to those behind him. They were working frantically now because the length of the tunnel already was so great that it was with difficulty that they could return to the cavern in time to forestall discovery when they heard Horibs approaching.

As Jason scraped away at the earth above him, there broke suddenly upon his ears what sounded like the muffled reverberation of rifle shots. He could not believe that they were such, and yet what else could they be? For so long had he been separated from his fellows that it seemed impossible that any freak of circumstance had brought them to this gloomy corner of Pellucidar, and though hope ran high yet he cast this idea from his mind, substituting for it a more natural conclusion — that the shots had come from the harquebuses of Korsars,

who had come up from the ship that Lajo had told him was anchored somewhere below in the Relá Am. Doubtless the captain had sent an expedition in search of the missing members of his crew, but even the prospects of falling again into the hands of the fierce Korsars appeared a heavenly one by comparison to the fate with which they were confronted.

Now Jason redoubled his efforts, working frantically to drive his narrow shaft upward toward the surface. The sound of the shots, which had lasted but a few minutes, had ceased, to be followed by the rapidly approaching thunder of many feet, as though heavy animals were racing in his direction. He heard them passing almost directly overhead and they seemed so close that he was positive he must be near the surface of the ground. Another shot sounded almost directly above him; he heard the thud of a heavy body and the earth about him shook to the impact of its fall. Jason's excitement had arisen to the highest pitch when suddenly the earth gave way above him and something dropped into the shaft upon his head.

His mind long imbued with the fear that their plan for escape would be discovered by the Horibs, Jason reacted instinctively to the urge of self-preservation, the best chance for the accomplishment of which seemed to be to drag the discoverer of their secret out of sight as quickly as possible, and with this end in view he backed quickly into the tunnel, dragging the interloper with him, and to a certain point this was not difficult, but it so happened that Tarzan had clung to his rifle. The rifle chanced to strike the ground in a horizontal position, as the ape-man was dragged into the tunnel, and the muzzle and butt lodged upon opposite sides of the opening, thus forming a rigid bar across the mouth of the aperture, to which the ape-man clung as Jason dragged frantically upon his ankles, and then slowly the steel thews of the

Jungle Lord tensed and as he drew himself upward, he drew Jason Gridley with him. Strain and struggle as he would, the American could not overcome the steady pull of those giant thews. Slowly, irresistibly, he was dragged into the shaft and upward toward the surface of the ground.

By this time, of course, he knew that the creature to which he clung was no Horib, for his fingers were closed upon the smooth skin of a human being, and not upon the scaly hide of a lizard-man, but yet he felt that he must not let the fellow escape.

The Horib, who had been expecting Tarzan's attack, had seen him disappear mysteriously into the ground; nor did he wait to investigate the miracle, but seizing Jana by the wrist he hurried after his fellows, dragging the struggling girl with him.

The two were just disappearing among the boles of the trees down a gloomy aisle of the somber forest when Tarzan, emerging from the shaft, caught a single fleeting glimpse of them. It was almost the growl of an enraged beast that escaped his lips as he realized that this last calamity might have definitely precluded the possibility of effecting the girl's rescue. Chafing at the restraint of the clutching fingers clinging desperately to his ankles, the ape-man kicked violently in an effort to dislodge them and with such good effect that he sent Jason tumbling back into his tunnel, while he leaped to the solid ground and freedom to spring into pursuit of the Horib and The Red Flower of Zoram.

Calling back to his companions to hurry after him, Jason clambered swiftly to the surface of the ground just in time to see a half-naked bronzed giant before he disappeared from view behind the bole of a large tree, but that single glimpse awakened familiar memories and his heart leaped within him at the suggestion it implied. But how could

it be? Had not Thoar seen the Lord of the Jungle carried to his doom? Whether the man was Tarzan or not was of less import than the reason for his haste. Was he escaping or pursuing? But in either event something seemed to tell Jason Gridley that he should not lose sight of him; at least he was not a Horib, and if not a Horib, then he must be an enemy of the lizard-men. So rapidly had events transpired that Jason was confused in his own mind as to the proper course to pursue; yet something seemed to urge him not to lose sight of the stranger and acting upon this impulse, he followed at a brisk run.

Through the dark wood ran Tarzan of the Apes, guided only by the delicate and subtle aroma that was the scent spoor of The Red Flower of Zoram and which would have been perceptible to no other human nostrils than those of the Lord of the Jungle. Strong in his nostrils, also, was the sickening scent of the Horibs and fearful lest he come upon them unexpectedly in numbers, he swung lightly into the trees and, with undiminished speed, raced in the direction of his quarry; nor was it long before he saw them beneath him — a single Horib dragging the still-struggling Jana.

There was no hesitation, there was no diminution in his speed as he launched himself like a living projectile straight for the ugly back of the Horib. With such force he struck the creature that it was half stunned as he bore it to the ground. A sinewy arm encircled its neck as Tarzan arose dragging the creature up with him. Turning quickly and bending forward, Tarzan swung the body over his head and hurled it violently to the ground, still retaining his hold about its neck. Again and again he whipped the mighty body over his head and dashed it to the gray earth, while the girl, wide-eyed with astonishment at this exhibition of Herculean strength, looked on.

At last, satisfied that the creature was dead or stunned, Tarzan

released it. Quickly he appropriated its stone knife and picked up its fallen lance, then he turned to Jana. "Come," he said, "there is but one safe place for us," and lifting her to his shoulder he leaped to the low hanging branch of a nearby tree. "Here, at least," he said, "you will be safe from Horibs, for I doubt if any Gorobor can follow us here."

"I always thought that there were no warriors like the warriors of Zoram," said Jana, "but that was before I had known you and Jason;" nor could she, as Tarzan well knew, have voiced a more sincere appreciation of what he had done for her, for to the primitive woman there are no men like her own men. "I wish," she continued sadly after a pause, "that Jason had lived. He was a great man and a mighty warrior, but above all he was a kind man. The men of Zoram are never cruel to their women, but they are not always thoughtful and considerate. Jason seemed always to think of my comfort before everything except my safety."

"You were very fond of him, were you not?" asked Tarzan.

The Red Flower of Zoram did not answer. There were tears in her eyes and in her throat so that she could only nod her head.

Once in the trees, Tarzan had lowered Jana to her feet, presently discovering that she could travel quite without assistance, as might have been expected of one who could leap lightly from crag to crag upon the dizzy slopes of Thipdars' heights. They moved without haste back to the point where they had last seen Muviro, and his Waziri warriors, but as the way took them downwind Tarzan could not hope to pick up the scent spoor of his henchmen and so his ears were constantly upon the alert for any slightest sound that might reveal their whereabouts. Presently they were rewarded by the sound of footsteps hurrying through the forest toward them.

The ape-man drew the girl behind the bole of a large tree and

waited, silent, motionless, for all footfalls are not the footfalls of friends.

They had waited for but a moment when there came into view upon the ground below them an almost naked man clothed in a bit of filthy goatskin, which was almost undistinguishable as such beneath a coating of mud, while the original color of his skin was hidden beneath a similar covering. A great mass of tousled black hair surmounted his head. He was quite the filthiest appearing creature that Tarzan had ever looked upon, but he was evidently no Horib and he was unarmed. What he was doing there alone in the grim forest, the ape-man could not imagine, so he dropped to the ground immediately in front of the surprised wayfarer.

At sight of the ape-man, the other stopped, his eyes wide with astonishment and incredulity. "Tarzan!" he exclaimed. "My God, it is really you. You are not dead. Thank God you are not dead."

It was an instant before the ape-man could recognize the speaker, but not so the girl hiding in the tree above. The instant that she had heard his voice she had known him.

A slow smile overspread the features of the Lord of the Jungle. "Gridley!" he exclaimed. "Jason Gridley! Jana told me that you were dead."

"Jana!" exclaimed Jason. "You know her? You have seen her? Where is she?"

"She is here with me," replied Tarzan.

The Red Flower of Zoram had slipped to the ground upon the opposite side of the tree and now she stepped from behind its trunk.

"Jana!" cried Jason, coming eagerly toward her.

The girl drew herself to her full height and turned a shoulder

toward him. "Jalok!" she cried contemptuously. "Must I tell you again to keep away from The Red Flower of Zoram?"

Jason halted in his tracks, his arms dropped limply to his sides, his attitude one of utter dejection.

Tarzan looked silently on, his brows momentarily revealing his perplexity; but it was not his way to interfere in affairs that were wholly the concern of others. "Come," he said, "we must find the Waziri."

Suddenly loud voices just ahead apprised them of the presence of other men and in the babel of excited voices Tarzan recognized the tones of his Waziri. Hurrying forward the three came upon a scene that was momentarily ludicrous, but which might soon have developed into tragedy had they not arrived in time.

Ten Waziri warriors armed with rifles had surrounded Thoar and the three Korsars and each party was jabbering volubly in a language unknown to the other.

The Pellucidarians, never before having seen human beings of the rich, deep, black color of the Waziri and assuming that all strangers were enemies, apprehended only the worst and were about to make a concerted effort to escape their captors, while Muviro, believing that these men might have some sinister connection with the disappearance of his master, was determined to hold and question them; nor would he have hesitated to kill them had they resisted him. It was, therefore, a relief to both parties when Tarzan, Jason and Jana appeared, and the Waziri saw their Big Bwana greet one of their captives with every indication of friendship.

Thoar was even more surprised to find Tarzan alive than Jason had been, and when he saw Jana the natural reserve which ordinarily marked his bearing was dissipated by the joy and relief which he felt

in finding her safe and well; nor any less surprised and happy was Jana as she rushed forward and threw herself into her brother's arms.

His breast filled with emotion such as he had never experienced before, Jason Gridley stood apart, a silent witness of this loving reunion, and then, probably for the first time, there came to him an acute realization of the fact that the sentiment which he entertained for this little barbarian was nothing less than love.

It galled him even to admit it to himself and he felt that he was contemptible to harbor jealousy of Thoar, not only because Thoar was his friend, but because he was only a primitive savage, while he, Jason Gridley, was the product of ages of culture and civilization.

Thoar, Lajo and the other two Korsars were naturally delighted when they found that the strange warriors whom they had looked upon as enemies were suddenly transformed into friends and allies, and when they heard the story of the battle with the Horibs they knew that the greatest danger which threatened them was now greatly minimized because of the presence of these warriors armed with death-dealing weapons that made the ancient harquebuses of the Korsars appear as inadequate as sling shots, and that escape from this horrible country was as good as accomplished.

Resting after their recent exertion, each party briefly narrated the recent adventures that had befallen them and attempts were made to formulate plans for the future, but here difficulties arose. Thoar wished to return to Zoram with Jana. Tarzan, Jason and the Waziri desired only to find the other members of their expedition; while Lajo and his two fellows were principally concerned with getting back to their ship.

Tarzan and Jason, realizing that it might not be expedient to acquaint the Korsars with the real purpose of their presence in Pellucidar and finding that the men were familiar with the story of Tanar, gave

them to believe that they were merely searching for Sari in order to pay a friendly visit to Tanar and his people.

“Sari is a long way,” said Lajo. “He who would go to Sari from here must sleep over a hundred times upon the journey, which would take him across the Korsar Az and then through strange countries filled with enemies, even as far as The Land of Awful Shadow. Maybe one would never reach it.”

“Is there no way overland?” asked Tarzan.

“Yes,” replied Lajo, “and if we were at Korsar, I might direct you, but that, too, would be a terrible journey, for no man knows what savage tribes and beasts beset the long marches that must lie between Korsar and Sari.”

“And if we went to Korsar,” said Jason, “we could not hope to be received as friends. Is this not true, Lajo?”

The Korsar nodded. “No,” he said. “You would not be received as friends.”

“Nevertheless,” said Tarzan to Jason, “I believe that if we are ever to find the O-220 again our best chance is to look for it in the vicinity of Korsar.”

Jason nodded in acquiescence. “But that will not accord with Thoar’s plans,” he said, “for, if I understand it correctly, we are much nearer to Zoram now than we are to Korsar and if we decide to go to Korsar, our route will lead directly away from Zoram. But unless we accompany them with the Waziri, I doubt if Thoar and Jana could live to reach Zoram if they returned by the route that he and I have followed since we left the Mountains of the Thipdars.”

Tarzan turned to Thoar. “If you will come with us, we can return you very quickly to Zoram if we find our ship. If we do not find it within a reasonable time, we will accompany you back to Zoram.

In either event you would have a very much better chance of reaching your own country than you would if you and Jana set out alone from here.”

“We will accompany you, then,” said Thoar, and then his brow clouded as some thought seemed suddenly to seize upon his mind. He looked for a moment at Jason, and then he turned to Jana. “I had almost forgotten,” he said. “Before we can go with these people as friends, I must know if this man offered you any injury or harm while you were with him. If he did, I must kill him.”

Jana did not look at Jason as she replied. “You need not kill him,” she said. “Had that been necessary The Red Flower of Zoram would have done it herself.”

“Very well,” said Thoar, “I am glad because he is my friend. Now we may all go together.”

“Our boat is probably in the river where the Horibs left it after they captured us,” said Lajo. “If it is we can soon drop down to our ship, which is anchored in the lower waters of the Rela Am.”

“And be taken prisoners by your people,” said Jason. “No, Lajo, the tables are turned now and if you go with us, it is you who will be the prisoners.”

The Korsar shrugged. “I do not care,” he said. “We will doubtless get a hundred lashes apiece when the captain finds that we have been unsuccessful, that we have brought back nothing and that he has lost an officer and many members of his crew.”

It was finally decided that they would return to the Rela Am and look for the longboat of the Korsars. If they found it they would float down in search of the ship, when they would at least make an effort to persuade the captain to receive them as friends and transport them to the vicinity of Korsar.

On the march back to the Rela Am they were not molested by the Horibs, who had evidently discovered that they had met their masters in the Waziri. During the march Jason made it a point to keep as far away from Jana as possible. The very sight of her reminded him of his hopeless and humiliating infatuation, and to be very near her constituted a form of refined agony which he could not endure. Her contempt, which she made no effort to conceal galled him bitterly, though it was no greater than his own self-contempt when he realized that in spite of every reason that he had to dislike her, he still loved her — loved her more than he had thought it was possible for him to love any woman.

The American was glad when a glimpse of the broad waters of the Rela Am ahead of them marked the end of this stage of their journey, which his own unhappy thoughts, combined with the depressing influence of the gloomy forest, had transformed into one of the saddest periods of his life.

To the relief of all, the boat was found still moored where the Horibs had left it; nor did it take them long to embark and push out upon the waters of the River of Darkness.

The river widened as they floated down toward the sea until it became possible to step a mast and set sail, after which their progress was still more rapid. Though the way was often beset by dangers in the form of angry and voracious saurians, the rifles of the Waziri proved adequate protection when other means of defense had failed.

The river became very wide so that but for the current they might have considered it an arm of the sea and at Lajo's direction they kept well in toward the left bank, near which, he said, the ship was anchored. Dimly visible in the distance was the opposite shore, but only so because the surface of Pellucidar curved upward. At the same

distance upon the outer crust, it would have been hidden by the curvature of the earth.

As they neared the sea it became evident that Lajo and the two other Korsars were much concerned because they had not sighted their ship.

“We have passed the anchorage,” said Lajo at last. “That wooded hill, which we just passed, was directly opposite the spot where the ship lay. I cannot be mistaken because I noted it particularly and impressed it upon my memory as a landmark against the time when we should return from our expedition up the river.”

“He has sailed away and left us,” growled one of the Korsars, applying a vile epithet to the captain of the departed ship.

Continuing on down to the ocean they sighted a large island directly off the mouth of the river, which Lajo told them afforded good hunting with plenty of fresh water and as they were in need of meat they landed there and made camp. It was an ideal spot inasmuch as that part of the island at which they had touched seemed to be peculiarly free from the more dangerous forms of carnivorous mammals and reptiles; nor did they see any sign of the presence of man. Game, therefore, was abundant.

Discussing their plans for the future, it was finally decided that they would push on toward Korsar in the longboat, for Lajo assured them that it lay upon the coast of the same landmass that loomed plainly from their island refuge. “What lies in that direction,” he said, pointing south, “I do not know, but there lies Korsar, upon this same coast,” and he pointed in a direction a little east of north. “Otherwise I am not familiar with this sea, or with this part of Pellucidar, since never before has an expedition come as far as the Rela Am.”

In preparation for the long cruise to Korsar, great quantities of meat

were cut into strips and dried in the sun, or smoked over slow fires, after which it was packed away in bladders that had been carefully cleaned and dried. These were stowed in the boat together with other bladders filled with fresh water, for, although it was their intention to hug the coast on the way to Korsar, it might not always be expedient to land for water or food and there was always the possibility that a storm arising they might be blown out to sea.

At length, all preparations having been made, the strangely assorted company embarked upon their hazardous journey toward distant Korsar.

Jana had worked with the others preparing the provisions and the containers and though she had upon several occasions worked side by side with Jason, she had never relaxed toward him; nor appeared to admit that she was cognizant of his presence.

“Can’t we be friends, Jana?” he asked once. “I think we would both be very much happier if we were.”

“I am as happy as I can be,” she replied lightly, “until Thoar takes me back to Zoram.”

17.

REUNITED

As favorable winds carried the longboat and its company up the sunlit sea, the O-220, following the same route, made occasional wide circles inland upon what Zuppner now considered an almost hopeless quest for the missing members of the expedition, and not only was he hopeless upon this score, but he also shared the unvoiced hopelessness of the balance of the company with regard to the likelihood of their ever being able to find the polar opening and return again to the outer world. With them, he knew that even their tremendous reserve of fuel and oil would not last indefinitely and if they were unable to find the polar opening, while they still had sufficient in reserve to carry them back to civilization, they must resign themselves to remaining in Pellucidar for the rest of their lives.

Lieutenant Hines finally broached this subject and the two officers, after summoning Lieutenant Dorf to their conference, decided that before their fuel was entirely exhausted they would try to locate some district where they might be reasonably free from attacks by savage tribesmen, or the even more dangerous menace of the mighty carnivores of Pellucidar.

While the remaining officers of the O-220 pondered the serious problems that confronted them, the great ship moved serenely through the warm Pellucidarian sunlight and the members of the crew went quietly and efficiently about their various duties.

Robert Jones of Alabama, however, was distressed. He seemed never to be able to accustom himself to the changed conditions of

Pellucidar. He often mumbled to himself, shaking his head vehemently, and frequently he wound a battered alarm clock or took it down from the hook upon which it hung and held it to his ear.

Below the ship there unrolled a panorama of lovely sea coast, indented by many beautiful bays and inlets. There were rolling hills and plains and forests and winding rivers blue as turquoise. It was a scene to inspire the loftiest sentiments in the lowliest heart nor was it without its effect upon the members of the ship's company, which included many adventurous spirits, who would experience no regret should it develop that they must remain forever in this, to them, enchanted land. But there were others who had left loved ones at home and these were already beginning to discuss the possibilities and the probabilities of the future. With few exceptions, they were keen and intelligent men and fully as cognizant of the possible plight of the O-220 as was its commander, but they had been chosen carefully and there was not one who waived even momentarily in loyalty to Zuppner, for they well knew that whatever fate was to be theirs, he would share it with them and, too, they had confidence that if any man could extricate them from their predicament, it was he. And so the great ship rode its majestic way between the sun and earth and each part, whether mechanical or human, functioned perfectly.

The Captain and his Lieutenant discussed the future as Robert Jones laboriously ascended the climbing shaft to the walkingway upon the ship's back, a hundred and fifty feet above his galley. He did not come entirely out of the climbing shaft onto the walkingway, but merely looked about the blue heaven and when his gaze had completed the circle, he hesitated a moment and then looked straight up, where, directly overhead, hung the eternal noonday sun of Pellucidar.

Robert Jones blinked his eyes and retreated into the shaft, closing

the hatch after him. Muttering to himself, he descended carefully to the galley, crossed it, took the clock off its hook and, walking to an open port, threw it overboard.

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To the occupants of the longboat dancing over the blue waves, without means of determining either time or distance, the constant expectation of nearing their journey's end lessened the monotony as did the oft recurring attacks of the frightful denizens of this Mesozoic sea. To the highly civilized American the utter timelessness of Pellucidarian existence brought a more marked nervous reaction than to the others. To a lesser degree Tarzan felt it, while the Waziri were only slightly conscious of the anomalous conditions. Upon the Pellucidarians, accustomed to no other state, it had no effect whatever. It was apparent when Tarzan and Jason discussed the matter with them that they had practically no conception of the meaning of time.

But time did elapse, leagues of ocean passed beneath them and conditions changed.

As they moved along the coast their course changed; though without instruments or heavenly bodies to guide them they were not aware of it. For a while they had moved northeast and then, for a long distance, to the east, where the coast curved gradually until they were running due north.

Instinct told the Korsars that they had come about three quarters of the distance from the island where they had outfitted to their destination. A land breeze was blowing stiffly and they were tacking briskly up the coast at a good clip. Lajo was standing erect in the bow apparently sniffing the air, as might a hunting dog searching out a scent spoor. Presently he turned to Tarzan.

“We had better put in to the coast,” he said. “We are in for a stiff blow.” But it was too late, the wind and the sea mounted to such proportions that finally they had to abandon the attempt and turn and flee before the storm. There was no rain nor lightning, for there were no clouds — just a terrific wind that rose to hurricane violence and stupendous seas that threatened momentarily to engulf them.

The Waziri were frankly terrified, for the sea was not their element. The mountain girl and her brother seemed awed, but if they felt fear they gave no outward indication of it. Tarzan and Jason were convinced that the boat could not live and the latter made his way to where Jana sat huddled upon a thwart. The howling of the wind made speech almost impossible, but he bent low placing his lips close to her ear.

“Jana,” he said, “it is impossible for this small boat to ride out such a storm. We are going to die, but before we die, whether you hate me or not, I am going to tell you that I love you,” and then before she could reply, before she could humiliate him further, he turned away and moved forward to where he had been before.

He knew that he had done wrong; he knew that he had no right to tell Thoar’s sweetheart that he loved her; it had been an act of disloyalty and yet a force greater than loyalty, greater than pride, had compelled him to speak those words — he could not die with them unspoken. Perhaps it had been a little easier because he could not help but have noticed the seemingly platonic relationship which existed between Thoar and Jana and being unable to picture Jana as platonic in love, he had assumed that Thoar did not appreciate her. He was always kind to her and always pleasant, but he had never been quite as thoughtful of her as Jason thought that he should have been. He felt that perhaps it was one of the strange inflections of Pellucidarian character, but it was difficult to know either Jana or Thoar and also to

believe that, for they were evidently quite as normal human beings as was he, and though they had much of the natural primitive reserve and dignity that civilized man now merely affects; yet it seemed unlikely that either one of them could have been for so long a time in close association without inadvertently, at least, having given some indication of their love. "Why," mused Jason, "they might be brother and sister from the way they act."

By some miracle of fate the boat lived through the storm, but when the wind diminished and the seas went down there were only tumbling waters to be seen on every hand; nor any sign of land.

"Now that we have lost the coast, Lajo, how are we going to set our course for Korsar?" asked Tarzan.

"It will not be easy," replied Lajo. "The only guide that we have is the wind. We are well out on the Korsar Az and I know from which direction the wind usually blows. By keeping always on the same tack we shall eventually reach land and probably not far from Korsar."

"What is that?" asked Jana, pointing, and all eyes turned in the direction that she indicated.

"It is a sail," said Lajo presently. "We are saved."

"But suppose the ship is manned by unfriendly people?" asked Jason.

"It is not," said Lajo. "It is manned by Korsars, for no other ships sail the Korsar Az."

"There is another," exclaimed Jana. "There are many of them."

"Come about and run for it," said Tarzan; "perhaps they have not seen us yet."

"Why should we try to escape?" asked Lajo.

"Because we have not enough men to fight them," replied Tarzan. "They may not be your enemies, but they will be ours."

Lajo did as he was bid, nor had he any alternative since the Korsars aboard were only three unarmed men, while there were ten Waziri with rifles.

All eyes watched the sails in the distance and it soon became apparent that they were coming closer, for the longboat, with its small sail, was far from fast. Little by little the distance between them and the ships decreased until it was evident that they were being pursued by a considerable fleet.

“Those are no Korsars,” said Lajo. “I have never seen ships like those before.”

The longboat wallowed through the sea making the best headway that it could, but the pursuing ships, stringing out as far as the eye could reach until their numbers presented the appearance of a vast armada, continued to close up rapidly upon it.

The leading ship was now closing up so swiftly upon them that the occupants of the longboat had an excellent view of it. It was short and broad of beam with rather a high bow. It had two sails and in addition was propelled by oars, which protruded through ports along each side, there being some fifty oars all told. Above the line of oars, over the sides of the ship, were hung the shields of the warriors.

“Lord!” exclaimed Jason to Tarzan; “Pellucidar not only boasts Spanish pirates, but Vikings as well, for if those are not viking ships they certainly are an adaptation of them.”

“Slightly modernized, however,” remarked the Lord of the Jungle. “There is a gun mounted on a small deck built in the bow.”

“So there is,” exclaimed Jason, “and I think we had better come about. There is a fellow up there turning it on us now.”

Presently another man appeared upon the elevated bow deck of the enemy. “Heave to,” he cried, “or I’ll blow you out of the water.”

“Who are you?” demanded Jason.

“I am Ja of Anoroc,” replied the man, “and this is the fleet of David I, Emperor of Pellucidar.”

“Come about,” said Tarzan to Lajo.

“Someone in this boat must have been born on Sunday,” exclaimed Jason. “I never knew there was so much good luck in the world.”

“Who are you?” demanded Ja as the longboat came slowly about.

“We are friends,” replied Tarzan.

“The Emperor of Pellucidar can have no friends upon the Korsar Az,” replied Ja.

“If Abner Perry is with you, we can prove that you are wrong,” replied Jason.

“Abner Perry is not with us,” said Ja; “but what do you know of him?”

By this time the two boats were alongside and the bronzed Mezop warriors of Ja’s crew were gazing down curiously upon the occupants of the boat.

“This is Jason Gridley,” said Tarzan to Ja, indicating the American. “Perhaps you have heard Abner Perry speak of him. He organized an expedition in the outer world to come here to rescue David Innes from the dungeons of the Korsars.”

The three Korsars of the longboat made Ja suspicious, but when a full explanation had been made and especially when he had examined the rifles of the Waziri, he became convinced of the truth of their statements and welcomed them warmly aboard his ship, about which were now gathered a considerable number of the armada. When word was passed among them that two of the strangers were friends from the outer world who had come to assist in the rescue of David Innes, a number of the captains of other ships came aboard Ja’s flagship to

greet Tarzan and Jason. Among these captains were Dacor the Strong One, brother of Dian the Beautiful, Empress of Pellucidar; Kolk, son of Goork, who is chief of the Thurians; and Tanar, son of Ghak, the Hairy One, King of Sari.

From these Tarzan and Jason learned that this fleet was on its way to effect the rescue of David. It had been building for a great while, so long that they had forgotten how many times they had eaten and slept since the first keel was laid, and then they had had to find a way into the Korsar Az from the Lural Az, where the ships were built upon the island of Anoroc.

“Far down the Sojar Az beyond the Land of Awful Shadow we found a passage that led to the Korsar Az. The Thurians had heard of it and while the fleet was building they sent warriors out to see if it was true and they found the passage and soon we shall be before the city of Korsar.”

“How did you expect to rescue David with only a dozen men?” asked Tanar.

“We are not all here,” said Tarzan. “We became separated from our companions and have been unable to find them. However, there were not very many men in our expedition. We depended upon other means than manpower to effect the rescue of your Emperor.”

At this moment a great cry arose from one of the ships. The excitement rose and spread. The warriors were all looking into the air and pointing. Already some of them were elevating the muzzles of their cannons and all were preparing their rifles, and as Tarzan and Jason looked up they saw the O-220 far above them.

The dirigible had evidently discovered the fleet and was descending toward it in a wide spiral.

“Now I *know* someone was born on Sunday,” said Jason. “That is our ship. Those are our friends,” he added, turning to Ja.

All that transpired on board the flagship passed quickly from ship to ship until every member of the armada knew that the great thing hovering above them was no gigantic flying reptile, but a ship of the air in which were friends of Abner Perry and their beloved Emperor, David I.

Slowly the great ship settled toward the surface of the sea and as it did so Jason Gridley borrowed a spear from one of the warriors and tied Lajo’s head handkerchief to its tip. With this improvised flag he signalled, “O-220 ahoy! This is the war fleet of David I, Emperor of Pellucidar, commanded by Ja of Anoroc; Lord Greystoke, ten Waziri and Jason Gridley aboard.”

A moment later a gun boomed from the rear turret of the O-220, marking the beginning of the first international salute of twenty-one guns that had ever reverberated beneath the eternal sun of Pellucidar, and when the significance of it was explained to Ja he returned the salute with the bow gun of his flagship.

The dirigible dropped lower until it was within speaking distance of the flagship.

“Are you all well aboard?” asked Tarzan.

“Yes,” came back the reassuring reply in Zuppner’s booming tone.

“Is von Horst with you?” asked Jason.

“No,” replied Zuppner.

“Then he alone is missing,” said Jason sadly.

“Can you drop a sling and take us aboard?” asked Tarzan.

Zuppner maneuvered the dirigible to within fifty feet of the deck of Ja’s flagship, a sling was lowered and one after another the members of the party were taken on board the O-220, the Waziri first and then

Jana and Thoar, followed by Jason and Tarzan, the three Korsars being left prisoners with Ja with the understanding that they were to be treated humanely.

Before Tarzan left the deck of the flagship he told Ja that if he would proceed toward Korsar, the dirigible would keep in touch with him and in the meantime they would be perfecting plans for the rescue of David Innes.

As Thoar and Jana were hoisted aboard the O-220, they were filled with a boundless amazement. To them such a creation as the giant dirigible was inconceivable. As Jana expressed it afterward: "I knew that I was dreaming, but yet at the same time I knew that I could not dream about such a thing as this because no such thing existed."

Jason introduced Jana and Thoar to Zuppner and Hines, but Lieutenant Dorf did not come to the cabin until after Tarzan had boarded the ship, and it was the latter who introduced them to Dorf.

He presented Lieutenant Dorf to Jana and then, indicating Thoar, "This is Thoar, the brother of The Red Flower of Zoram."

As those words broke upon the ears of Jason Gridley he reacted almost as to the shock of a physical blow. He was glad that no one chanced to be looking at him at the time and instantly he regained his composure, but it left him with a distinct feeling of injury. They had all known it and none of them had told him. He was almost angry at them until it occurred to him that they had all probably assumed that he had known it too, and yet try as he would he could not quite forgive Jana. But, really, what difference did it make, for, whether sister or mate of Thoar or another, he knew that The Red Flower of Zoram was not for him. She had made that definitely clear in her attitude toward him, which had convinced him even more definitely than had her bitter words.

The reunited officers of the expedition had much to discuss and many reminiscences to narrate as the O-220 followed above the slowly moving fleet. It was a happy reunion, clouded only by the absence of von Horst.

As the dirigible moved slowly above the waters of the Korsar Az, Zuppner dropped occasionally to within speaking distance of Ja of Anoroc, and when the distant coast of Korsar was sighted a sling was lowered and Ja was taken aboard the O-220, where plans for the rescue of David were discussed, and when they were perfected Ja was returned to his ship, and Lajo and the two other Korsars were taken aboard the dirigible.

The three prisoners were filled with awe and consternation as Jason and Tarzan personally conducted them throughout the giant craft. They were shown the armament, which was carefully explained to them, special stress being laid upon the destructive power of the bombs which the O-220 carried.

“One of these,” said Jason to Lajo, “would blow The Cid’s palace a thousand feet into the air and, as you see, we have many of them. We could destroy all of Korsar and all the Korsar ships.”

While Ja’s fleet was still a considerable distance off the coast, the O-220 raced ahead at full speed toward Korsar, for the plan which they had evolved was such that, if successful, David’s release would be effected without the shedding of blood — a plan which was especially desirable since if it was necessary to attack Korsar either from the sea or the air, the Emperor’s life would be placed in jeopardy from the bombs and cannons of his friends, as well as from a possible spirit of vengeance which might animate The Cid.

As the dirigible glided almost silently over the city of Korsar, the

streets and courtyards filled with people staring upward in awe-struck wonder.

Three thousand feet above the city the ship stopped and Tarzan sent for the three Korsar prisoners.

“As you know,” he said to them, “we are in a position to destroy Korsar. You have seen the great fleet coming to the rescue of the Emperor of Pellucidar. You know that every warrior manning those ships is armed with a weapon far more effective than your best; even with their knives and spears and their bows and arrows they might take Korsar without their rifles, but they have the rifles and they have better ammunition than yours and in each ship of the fleet cannons are mounted. Alone the fleet could reduce Korsar, but in addition to the fleet there is this airship. Your shots could never reach it as it sailed back and forth above Korsar, dropping bombs upon the city. Do you think, Lajo, that we can take Korsar?”

“I know it,” replied the Korsar.

“Very well,” said Tarzan. “I am going to send you with a message to The Cid. Will you tell him the truth?”

“I will,” replied Lajo.

“The message is simple,” continued Tarzan. “You may tell him that we have come to effect the release of the Emperor of Pellucidar. You may explain to him the means that we have to enforce our demands, and then you may say to him that if he will place the Emperor upon a ship and take him out to our fleet and deliver him unharmed to Ja of Anoroc, we will return to Sari without firing a shot. Do you understand?”

“I do,” said Lajo.

“Very well, then,” said Tarzan. He turned to Dorf, “Lieutenant, will you take him now?” he asked.

Dorf approached with a bundle in his hand. "Slip into this," he said.

"What is it?" asked Lajo.

"It is a parachute," said Dorf.

"What is that?" demanded Lajo.

"Here," said Dorf, "put your arms through here." A moment later he had the parachute adjusted upon the Korsar.

"Now," said Jason, "a great distinction is going to be conferred upon you — you are going to make the first parachute jump that has ever been witnessed in Pellucidar."

"I don't understand what you mean," said Lajo.

"You will presently," said Jason. "You are going to take Lord Greystoke's message to The Cid."

"But you will have to bring the ship down to the ground before I can," objected Lajo.

"On the contrary we are going to stay right where we are," said Jason; "you are going to jump overboard."

"What?" exclaimed Lajo. "You are going to kill me?"

"No," said Jason with a laugh. "Listen carefully to what I tell you and you will land safely. You have seen some wonderful things on board this ship so you must have some conception of what we of the outer world can do. Now you are going to have a demonstration of another very wonderful invention and you may take my word for it that no harm will befall you if you do precisely as I tell you to. Here is an iron ring," and he touched the ring opposite Lajo's left breast; "take hold of it with your right hand. After you jump from the ship, pull it; give it a good jerk and you will float down to the ground as lightly as a feather."

"I will be killed," objected Lajo.

“If you are a coward,” said Jason, “perhaps one of these other men is braver than you. I tell you that you will not be hurt.”

“I am not afraid,” said Lajo. “I will jump.”

“Tell The Cid,” said Tarzan, “that if we do not presently see a ship sail out alone to meet the fleet, we shall start dropping bombs upon the city.”

Dorf led Lajo to a door in the cabin and flung it open. The man hesitated.

“Do not forget to jerk the ring,” said Dorf, and at the same time he gave Lajo a violent push that sent him headlong through the doorway and a moment later the watchers in the cabin saw the white folds of the parachute streaming in the air. They saw it open and they knew that the message of Tarzan would be delivered to The Cid.

What went on in the city below we may not know, but presently a great crowd was seen to move from the palace down toward the river, where the ships were anchored, and a little later one of the ships weighed anchor and as it drifted slowly with the current its sails were set and presently it was moving directly out to sea toward the fleet from Sari.

The O-220 followed above it and Ja’s flagship moved forward to meet it, and thus David Innes, Emperor of Pellucidar, was returned to his people.

As the Korsar ship turned back to port the dirigible dropped low above the flagship of the Sarian fleet and greetings were exchanged between David and his rescuers — men from another world whom he had never seen.

The Emperor was half starved and very thin and weak from his long period of confinement, but otherwise he had been unharmed, and

great was the rejoicing aboard the ships of Sari as they turned back to cross the Korsar Az toward their own land.

Tarzan was afraid to accompany the fleet back to Sari for fear that their rapidly diminishing store of fuel would not be sufficient to complete the trip and carry them back to the outer world. He followed the fleet only long enough to obtain from David explicit directions for reaching the polar opening from the city of Korsar.

“We have another errand to fulfill first,” said Jason to Tarzan. “We must return Thoar and Jana to Zoram.”

“Yes,” said the ape-man, “and drop these two Korsars off near their city. I have thought of all that and we shall have fuel enough for that purpose.”

“I am not going to return with you,” said Jason. “I wish to be put aboard Ja’s flagship.”

“What?” exclaimed Tarzan. “You are going to remain here?”

“This expedition was undertaken at my suggestion. I feel responsible for the life and safety of every man in it and I shall never return to the outer world while the fate of Lieutenant von Horst remains a mystery.”

“But how can you find von Horst if you go back to Sari with the fleet?” asked Tarzan.

“I shall ask David Innes to equip an expedition to go in search of him,” replied Jason, “and with such an expedition made up of native Pellucidarians I shall stand a very much better chance of finding him than we would in the O-220.”

“I quite agree with you,” said Tarzan, “and if you are unalterably determined to carry out your project, we will lower you to Ja’s ship immediately.”

As the O-220 dropped toward Ja’s flagship and signalled it to heave

to, Jason gathered what belongings he wished to take with him, including rifles and revolvers and plenty of ammunition. These were lowered first to Ja's ship, while Jason bid farewell to his companions of the expedition.

"Good-bye, Jana," he said, after he had shaken hands with the others.

The girl made no reply, but instead turned to her brother.

"Good-bye, Thoar," she said.

"Good-bye?" he asked. "What do you mean?"

"I am going to Sari with the man I love," replied The Red Flower of Zoram.

Book V
BACK TO THE STONE AGE

1.

LIVING DEATH

The eternal noonday sun of Pellucidar looked down upon such a scene as the outer crust of earth may not have witnessed for countless ages past, such a scene as only the inner world of the earth's core may produce today.

Hundreds of saber-toothed tigers were driving countless herbivorous animals into a clearing in a giant forest; and two white men from the outer crust were there to see, two white men and a handful of black warriors from far distant Africa.

The men had come in a giant dirigible with others of their kind through the north polar opening at the top of the world at the urgent behest of Jason Gridley, but that is a story that has been once told.

This is the story of the one who was lost.

"It doesn't seem possible," exclaimed Gridley, "that five hundred miles below our feet automobiles are dashing through crowded streets lined by enormous buildings; that there the telegraph, the telephone, and the radio are so commonplace as to excite no comment; that countless thousands live out their entire lives without ever having to use a weapon in self-defense, and yet at the same instant we stand here facing saber-toothed tigers in surroundings that may not have existed upon the outer crust since a million years."

"Look at them!" exclaimed von Horst. "Look at what they've driven into this clearing already, and more coming."

There were great ox-like creatures with shaggy coats and wide-spreading horns. There were red deer and sloths of gigantic size.

There were mastodons and mammoths, and a huge, elephantine creature that resembled an elephant and yet did not seem to be an elephant at all. Its great head was four feet long and three feet broad. It had a short, powerful trunk and from its lower jaw mighty tusks curved downward, their points bending inward toward the body. At the shoulder it stood at least ten feet above the ground, and in length it must have been fully twenty feet. But what resemblance it bore to an elephant was lessened by its small, pig-like ears.

The two white men, momentarily forgetting the tigers behind them in their amazement at the sight ahead, halted and looked with wonder upon the huge gathering of creatures within the clearing. But it soon became apparent that if they were to escape with their lives they must reach the safety of the trees before they were either dragged down by the saber-teeth or trampled to death by the frightened herbivores which were already milling around looking for an avenue of escape.

"There is still one opening ahead of us, bwana," said Muviro, the black chief of the Waziri.

"We shall have to run for it," said Gridley. "The beasts are all headed in our direction now. Give them a volley, and then beat it for the trees. If they charge, it will be every man for himself."

The volley turned them back for an instant; but when they saw the great cats behind them, they wheeled about once more in the direction of the men.

"Here they come!" cried von Horst. Then the men broke into a run as they sought to reach the trees that offered the only sanctuary.

Gridley was bowled over by a huge sloth; then he scrambled to his feet just in time to leap from the path of a fleeing mastodon and reach a tree just as the main body of the stampeding herd closed about it. A moment later, temporarily safe among the branches, he looked about

for his companions; but none was in sight, nor could any living thing so puny as man have remained alive beneath that solid mass of leaping, plunging, terrified beasts. Some of his fellows, he felt sure, might have reached the forest in safety; but he feared for von Horst, who had been some little distance in rear of the Waziri.

But Lieutenant Wilhelm von Horst had escaped. In fact, he had succeeded in running some little distance into the forest without having to take to the trees. He had borne off to the right away from the escaping animals, which had veered to the left after they entered the forest. He could hear them thundering away in the distance, squealing and trumpeting, grunting and bellowing.

Winded and almost exhausted, he sat down at the foot of a tree to catch his breath and rest. He was very tired and just for a moment he closed his eyes. The sun was directly overhead. When he opened his eyes again the sun was still directly overhead. He realized that he had dozed, but he thought that it had been for but an instant. He did not know that he had slept for a long time. How long, who may say? For how may time be measured in this timeless world whose stationary sun hangs eternally motionless at zenith?

The forest was strangely silent. No longer did he hear the trumpeting and squealing of the herbivores or the growls and snarls of the cats. He called aloud to attract the attention of his friends, but there was no response; then he set out in search of them, taking what he thought was a direct route back toward the main camp where the dirigible was moored and toward which he knew they would be sure to go. But instead of going north, as he should have done, he went west.

Perhaps it was just as well that he did, for presently he heard voices. He stopped and listened. Men were approaching. He heard them distinctly, but he could not recognize their language. They might be

friendly; but, in this savage world, he doubted it. He stepped from the trail he had been following and concealed himself behind a clump of bushes, and a moment later the men that he had heard came into view. They were Muviro and his warriors. They were speaking the dialect of their own African tribe. At sight of them von Horst stepped into the trail. They were as glad to see him as he was to see them. Now if they could but find Gridley they would be happy; but they did not find him, though they searched for a long time.

Muviro knew no better than von Horst where they were or the direction of camp; and he and his warriors were much chagrined to think that they, the Waziri, could be lost in any forest. As they compared notes it seemed evident that each had made a large circle in opposite directions after they had separated. Only thus could they account for their coming together face to face as they had, since each insisted that he had not at any time retraced his steps.

The Waziri had not slept, and they were very tired. Von Horst, on the contrary had slept and was rested; so, when they found a cave that would give them all shelter, the Waziri went in where it was dark and slept while von Horst sat on the ground at the mouth of the cave and tried to plan for the future. As he sat there quietly a large boar passed; and, knowing that they would require meat, the man rose and stalked it. It had disappeared around a curve in the trail; but though he thought that he was close behind it he never seemed to be able to catch sight of it again, and there was such a patchwork of trails crossing and crisscrossing that he was soon confused and started back toward the cave.

He had walked a considerable distance before he realized that he was lost. He called Muviro's name aloud, but there was no response; then he stopped and tried very carefully to figure out in what direction

the cave must be. He looked up at the sun mechanically, as though it might help him. It hung at zenith. How could he plot a course where there were no stars but only a sun that hung perpetually straight above one's head? He swore under his breath and set out again. He could only do his best.

For what seemed a very long time he plodded on, but it was still noon. Often, mechanically, he glanced up at the sun, the sun that gave him no bearings nor any hint of the lapse of time, until he came to hate the shining orb that seemed to mock him. The forest and the jungle teemed with life. Fruits and flowers and nuts grew in profusion. He never need lack for a variety of food if he but knew which he might safely eat and which he might not. He was very hungry and thirsty, and it was the latter that worried him most. He had a pistol and plenty of ammunition. In this lush game country he could always provide himself with meat, but he must have water. He pushed on. It was water that he was looking for now more than for his companions or for camp. He commenced to suffer from thirst, and he became very tired again and sleepy. He shot a large rodent and drank its blood; then he made a fire and cooked the carcass. It was only half cooked beneath the surface which was charred in places. Lieutenant Wilhelm von Horst was a man accustomed to excellent food properly prepared and served, but he tore at the carcass of his unsavory kill like a famished wolf and thought that no meal had ever tasted more delicious. He did not know how long he had been without food. Now he slept again, this time in a tree; for he had caught a glimpse of a great beast through the foliage of the jungle, a beast with enormous fangs and blazing eyes.

Again, when he awoke, he did not know how long he had slept; but the fact that he was entirely rested suggested that it had been a long time. He felt that it was entirely possible in a world where there was no

time that a man might sleep a day or a week. How was one to know? The thought intrigued him. He commenced to wonder how long he had been away from the dirigible. Only the fact that he had not quenched his thirst since he had been separated from his comrades suggested that it could not have been but a day or two, though now he was actually suffering for water. It was all that he could think of. He started off in search of it. He must have water! If he didn't he would die — die here alone in this terrible forest, his last resting place forever unknown to any human being. Von Horst was a social animal; and, as such, this idea was repugnant to him. He was not afraid to die; but this seemed such an entirely futile end — and he was very young, still in his twenties.

He was following a game trail. There were many of them; they crossed and crisscrossed all through the forest. Some of them must lead to water; but which one? He had chosen the one he was following because it was broader and more plainly marked than the others. Many beasts had passed along it and, perhaps, for an incalculable time, for it was worn deep; and von Horst reasoned that more animals would follow a trail that led to water than would follow any other trail. He was right. When he came to a little river, he gave a cry of delight and ran to it and threw himself face down upon the bank. He drank in great gulps. Perhaps it should have harmed him, but it did not. It was a clean little river that ran among boulders over a gravelly bottom, a gem of a river that carried on its bosom to the forest and the lowlands the freshness and the coolness and the beauty of the mountains that gave it birth. Von Horst buried his face in the water, he let it purl over his bare arms, he cupped his hands and dipped it up and poured it over his head, he reveled in it. He felt that he had never known a luxury so rare,

so desirable. His troubles vanished. Everything would be all right now — he had water! Now he was safe!

He looked up. Upon the opposite bank of the little river squatted such a creature as was never in any book, the bones of which were never in any museum. It resembled a gigantic winged kangaroo with the head of a reptile, pterodactyl-like in its long, heavily fanged jaws. It was watching von Horst intently, its cold, reptilian, lidless eyes staring at him expressionlessly. There was something terribly menacing in its fixed gaze. The man started to rise slowly; then the hideous thing came to sudden life. With a hissing scream it cleared the little river in a single mighty bound. Von Horst turned to run, meanwhile tugging at the pistol in his holster; but before he could draw it, before he could escape, the thing pounced upon him and bore him to earth; then it picked him up in claw-like hands and held him out and surveyed him. Sitting erect upon its broad tail it towered fifteen feet in height, and at close range its jaws seemed almost large enough to engulf the puny man-thing that gazed in awe upon them. Von Horst thought that his end had come. He was helpless in the powerful grip of those mighty talons, beneath one of which his pistol hand was pinned to his side. The creature seemed to be gloating over him, debating, apparently, where to take the first bite; or at least so it seemed to von Horst.

At the point where the stream crossed the trail there was an opening in the leafy canopy of the forest, through which the eternal noonday sun cast its brilliant rays upon the rippling water, the green sward, the monstrous creature, and its relatively puny captive. The reptile, if such it were, turned its cold eyes upward toward the opening; then it leaped high into the air, and as it did so it spread its wings and flapped dismally upward.

Von Horst was cold with apprehension. He recalled stories he had

read of some great bird of the outer crust that carried its prey aloft and then killed it by letting it fall to the ground. He wondered if this were to be his fate, and he thanked his Maker that there would be so few to mourn him — no wife nor children to be left without protector and provider, no sweetheart to mourn his loss, pining for the lover who would never return.

They were above the forest now. The strange, horizonless landscape stretched away in all directions, fading gradually into nothingness as it passed from the range of human vision. Beyond the forest, in the direction of the creature's flight, lay open country, rolling hills, and mountains. Von Horst could see rivers and lakes and, in the far, hazy distance, what appeared to be a great body of water — an inland sea, perhaps, or a vast, uncharted ocean; but in whatever direction he might look lay mystery.

His situation was not one that rendered the contemplation of scenery a factor of vital interest, but presently whatever interest he had in it was definitely wiped out. The thing that carried him suddenly relinquished its hold with one paw. Von Horst thought that it was going to drop him, that the end had come. He breathed a little prayer. The creature raised him a few feet and then lowered him into a dark, odorous pocket which it held open with its other paw. When it released its hold upon him, von Horst was in utter darkness. For an instant he was at a loss to explain his situation; then it dawned upon him that he was in the belly pouch of a marsupial. It was hot and stifling. He thought he would suffocate, and the reptilian stench was almost overpowering. When he could endure it no longer he pushed himself upward until his head protruded from the mouth of the pouch.

The creature was flying horizontally by now, and the man's view

was restricted to what lay almost directly beneath. They were still over the forest. The foliage, lying like billowed clouds of emerald, looked soft and inviting. Von Horst wondered why he was being carried away alive and whither. Doubtless to some nest or lair to serve as food, perhaps for a brood of hideous young. He fingered his pistol. How easy it would be to fire into that hot, pulsing body; but what would it profit him? It would mean almost certain death — possibly a lingering death if he were not instantly killed, for the only alternative to that would be fatal injuries. He abandoned the thought.

The creature was flying at surprising speed, considering its size. The forest passed from view; and they sped out over a tree-dotted plain where the man saw countless animals grazing or resting. There were great red deer, sloths, enormous primitive cattle with shaggy coats; and near clumps of bamboo that bordered a river was a herd of mammoths. There were other animals, too, that von Horst was unable to classify. Presently they flew above low hills, leaving the plain behind, and then over a rough, volcanic country of barren, black, cone-shaped hills. Between the cones and part way up their sides rioted the inevitable tropical verdure of Pellucidar. Only where no root could find a foothold was there no growth. One peculiar feature of these cones attracted von Horst's attention; there was an opening in the top of many of them, giving them the appearance of miniature extinct volcanoes. They ranged in size from a hundred feet to several hundred in height. As he was contemplating them, his captor commenced to circle directly above one of the larger cones; then it dropped rapidly directly into the yawning crater, alighting on the floor in the shaft of light from the sun hanging perpetually at zenith.

As the creature dragged him from its pouch, von Horst could, at first, see little of the interior of the crater; but as his eyes quickly

became accustomed to the surrounding gloom he saw what appeared to be the dead bodies of many animals and men laid in a great circle around the periphery of the hollow cone, their heads outward from the center. The circle was not entirely completed, there being a single gap of several yards. Between the heads of the bodies and the wall of the cone was stacked a quantity of ivory colored spheres about two feet in diameter.

These things von Horst observed in a brief glance; then he was interrupted by being lifted into the air. The creature raised him, faced out, until his head was about on a level with its own; then the man felt a sharp, sickening pain in the back of his neck at the base of the brain. There was just an instant of pain and momentary nausea; then a sudden fading of all feeling. It was as though he had died from the neck down. Now he was aware of being carried toward the wall of the cone and of being deposited upon the floor. He could still see; and when he tried to turn his head, he found that he could do so. He watched the creature that had brought him here leap into the air, spread its wings, and flap dismally away through the mouth of the crater.

2.

THE PIT OF HORROR

As von Horst, lying there in that gloomy cavern of death, contemplated his situation, he wished that he had died when he had had the opportunity and the power for self-destruction. Now he was helpless. The horror of his situation grew on him until he feared that he should go mad. He tried to move a hand, but it was as though he had no hands. He could not feel them, nor any other part of his body below his neck. He seemed just a head lying in the dirt, conscious but helpless. He rolled his head to one side. He had been placed at the end of the row of bodies at one side of the gap that had been left in the circle. Across the gap from him lay the body of a man. He turned his head in the other direction and saw that he was lying close to the body of another man; then his attention was attracted by a cracking and pounding in the opposite direction. Again he rolled his head so that he could see what lived in this hall of the dead. His eyes were attracted to one of the ivory colored spheres that lay almost directly behind the body at the far side of the gap. The sphere was jerking to and fro. The sounds seemed to be coming from its interior. They became louder, more insistent. The sphere bobbed and rolled about; then a crack appeared in it, a jagged hole was torn in its surface, and a head protruded. It was a miniature of the hideous head of the creature that had brought him here. Now the mystery of the spheres was solved — they were the eggs of the great marsupial reptile; but what of the bodies?

Von Horst, fascinated, watched the terrible little creature burst

its way from its egg. At last, successful, it rolled out upon the floor of the crater, where it lay inert for some time, as though resting after its exertions. Then it commenced to move its limbs, tentatively trying them. Presently it rose to its four feet; then it sat upright upon its tail and spread its wings. It flapped them at first weakly, then vigorously for a moment. This done, it fell upon its discarded shell and devoured it. The shell gone, it turned without hesitation toward the body of the man at the far side of the gap. As it approached it, von Horst was horrified to see the head turn toward the creature, the eyes wide with terror. With a hissing roar the foul little creature leaped upon the body, and simultaneously a piercing scream of terror burst from the lips of the man von Horst had thought was dead. The horror-filled eyes, the contorted muscles of the face reflected the mad efforts of the brain to direct the paralyzed nerve centers, to force them to react to the will to escape. So obvious was the effort to burst the invisible bonds that held him that it seemed inevitable that he must succeed, but the paralysis was too complete to be overcome.

The hideous fledgling fell upon the body and commenced to devour it; and though the victim may have felt no pain, his screams and groans continued to reverberate within the hollow cone of horror until, presently, the other creatures awaiting, doubtless, a similar fate raised their voices in a blood-curdling cacophony of terror. Now, for the first time, von Horst realized that all of these creatures were alive, paralyzed as he was. He closed his eyes to shut out the gruesome sight, but he could not close his ears to the abominable, soul-searing din.

Presently he turned his head away from the feeding reptile, toward the man lying upon his right, and opened his eyes. He saw that the man had not joined in the frightful chorus and that he was regarding him through steady, appraising eyes. He was a young man with a shock

of coal-black hair, fine eyes, and regular features. He had an air about him, an air of strength and quiet dignity, that attracted von Horst; and he was favorably impressed, too, because the man had not succumbed to the hysteria of terror that had seized the other inmates of the chamber. The young lieutenant smiled at him and nodded. For an instant a faint expression of surprise tinged the others countenance; then he, too, smiled. He spoke then, addressing von Horst in a language that was not understandable to the European.

"I'm sorry," said von Horst "but I cannot understand you." Then it was the other's turn to shake his head in denial of comprehension.

Neither could understand the speech of the other; but they had smiled at one another, and they had a common bond in their expectancy of a common fate. Von Horst felt that he was no longer so much alone, almost that he had found a friend. It made a great difference, that slender contact of fellowship, even in the hopelessness of his situation. By comparison with what he had felt previously he was almost contented.

The next time he looked in the direction of the newly hatched reptile the body of its victim had been entirely devoured; there was not even a bone left, and with distended stomach the thing crawled into the round patch of brilliant sunlight beneath the crater opening and curled up for sleep.

The victims had relapsed into silence and again lay as though dead. Time passed; but how much time, von Horst could not even guess. He felt neither hunger nor thirst, a fact which he attributed to his paralysis; but occasionally he slept. Once he was awakened by the flapping of wings, and looked up to see the foul fledgling fly through the crater opening from the nest of horror in which it had been hatched.

After awhile the adult came with another victim, an antelope;

and then von Horst saw how he and the other creatures had been paralyzed. Holding the antelope level with its great mouth, the reptile pierced the neck at the base of the brain with the needle-sharp point of its tongue; then it deposited the helpless creature at von Horst's left.

In this timeless void of living death there was no means of determining if there was any regularity of recurring events. Fledglings emerged from their shells, ate them, devoured their prey (always at the far edge of the gap to von Horst's left), slept in the sunlight, and flew away, apparently never to return; the adult came with new victims, paralyzed them, laid them at the edge of the gap nearest von Horst, and departed. The gap crept steadily around to the left; and as it crept, von Horst realized that his inevitable doom was creeping that much nearer.

He and the man at his right occasionally exchanged smiles, and sometimes each spoke in his own tongue. Just the sound of their voices expressing thoughts that the other could not understand was friendly and comforting. Von Horst wished that they might converse; how many eternities of loneliness it would have relieved! The same thought must often have been in the mind of the other, and it was he who first sought to express it and to overcome the obstacle that separated them from full enjoyment of their forced companionship. Once, when von Horst turned his eyes toward him, he said, "Dangar," and tried to indicate himself by bending his eyes toward himself and inclining his chin toward his chest. He repeated this several times.

Finally von Horst thought that he grasped his meaning. "Dangar?" he asked, and nodded toward the other.

The man smiled and nodded and then spoke a word that was evidently an affirmative in his language. Then von Horst pronounced his own name several times, indicating himself in the same way that

Dangar had. This was the beginning. After that it became a game of intense and absorbing interest. They did nothing else, and neither seemed to tire. Occasionally they slept; but now, instead of sleeping when the mood happened to seize one of them, each waited until the other wished to sleep; thus they could spend all their waking hours in the new and fascinating occupation of learning how to exchange thoughts.

Dangar was teaching von Horst his language; and since the latter had already mastered four or five languages of the outer crust, his aptitude for learning another was greatly increased, even though there was no similarity between it and any of the others that he had acquired.

Under ordinary circumstances the procedure would have been slow or seemingly hopeless; but with the compelling incentive of companionship and the absence of disturbing elements, other than when a fledgling hatched and fed, they progressed with amazing rapidity; or so it seemed to von Horst until he realized that in this timeless world weeks, months, or even years of outer terrestrial time might have elapsed since his incarceration.

At last the time arrived when he and Dangar could carry on a conversation with comparative ease and fluency, but as they had progressed so had the fateful gap of doom crept around the circle of the living dead closer and closer to them. Dangar would go first; then von Horst.

The latter dreaded the former event even more than he did the latter, for with Dangar gone he would be alone again with nothing to occupy his time or mind but the inevitable fate that awaited him as he listened for the cracking of the shell that would release death in its most horrible form upon him.

At last there were only three victims between Dangar and the gap. It would not be long now.

“I shall be sorry to leave you,” said the Pellucidarian.

“I shall not be alone long,” von Horst reminded him.

“No. Well, it is better to die than to remain here far from one’s own country. I wish that we might have lived; then I could have taken you back to the land of Sari. It is a beautiful land of hills and trees and fertile valleys; there is much game there, and not far away is the great Lural Az. I have been there to the island of Anoroc, where Ja is king.

“You would like Sari. The girls are very beautiful. There is one there waiting for me now, but I shall never return to her. She will grieve; but —” (he sighed) “— she will get over it, and another will take her for his mate.”

“I should like to go to Sari,” said von Horst. Suddenly his eyes widened in surprise. “Dangar! Dangar!” he exclaimed.

“What is it?” demanded the Pellucidarian. “What has happened?”

“I can feel my fingers! I can move them!” cried von Horst. “And my toes, too.”

“It does not seem possible, Von,” exclaimed Dangar incredulously.

“But it is; it is! Just a little, but I can move them.”

“How do you explain it? I cannot feel anything below my neck.”

“The effects of the poison must be wearing off. Perhaps the paralysis will leave me entirely.”

Dangar shook his head. “Since I have been here I have never seen it leave a victim that the Trodon stung with its poison tongue. And what if it does? Will you be any better off?”

“I think I shall,” replied von Horst slowly. “I have had much leisure in which to dream and plan and imagine situations since I have been imprisoned here. I have often dreamed of being released from this

paralysis and what I should do in the event that I were. I have it all planned out.”

“There are only three between you and death,” Dangar reminded him.

“Yes, I know that. All depends upon how quickly release comes.”

“I wish you luck, Von, even though, if it comes to you, I shall not be here to know — there are only two between me and the end. The gap is creeping closer.”

From that moment von Horst concentrated all his faculties upon overcoming the paralysis. He felt the glow of life creep gradually up his limbs, yet still he could move only his extremities, and these but slightly.

Another Trodon hatched, leaving but one between Dangar and death; and after Dangar, it would be his turn. As the horrid creature awoke from its sleep in the sunlight and winged away through the opening in the peak of the cone, von Horst succeeded in moving his hands and flexing his wrists; his feet, too, were free now; but oh, how slow, how hideously slow were his powers returning. Could Fate be so cruel as to hold out this great hope and then snatch it from him at the moment of fruition? Cold sweat broke out upon him as he weighed his chances — the odds were so terribly against him.

If only he could measure time that he might know the intervals of the hatching of the eggs and thus gain an approximate idea of the time that remained to him. He was quite certain that the eggs must hatch at reasonably regular intervals, though he could not actually know. He wore a wrist watch; but it had long since stopped, nor could he have consulted it in any event, since he could not raise his arm.

Slowly the paralysis disappeared as far as his knees and elbows. He could bend these now, and below them his limbs felt perfectly

normal. He knew that if sufficient time were vouchsafed him he would eventually be in full command of all his muscles once again.

As he strained to break the invisible bonds that held him another egg broke, and shortly thereafter Dangar lay with no creature at his right — he would be next.

“And after you, Dangar, come I. I think I shall be free before that, but I wished to save you.”

“Thank you, my friend,” replied the Pellucidarian, “but I am resigned to death. I prefer it to living on as I now am — a head attached to a dead body.”

“You wouldn’t have to live like that for long, I’m sure,” said von Horst. “My own experience convinces me that eventually the effects of the poison must wear off. Ordinarily there is enough to keep the victim paralyzed long beyond the time that he would be required to serve as food for the fledglings. If I could only free myself, I could save you, I am sure.”

“Let us talk of other things,” said Dangar. “I would not be a living dead man, and to entertain other hopes can serve but to tantalize and to make the inevitable end more bitter.”

“As you will,” said von Horst, with a shrug, “but you can’t keep me from thinking and trying.”

And so they talked of Sari and the land of Amoz, from whence Dian the Beautiful had come, and The Land of Awful Shadow, and the Unfriendly Islands in the Sojar Az; for von Horst saw that it pleased Dangar to recall these, to him, pleasant places; though when the Sarian described the savage beasts and wild men that roamed them, von Horst felt that as places of residence they left much to be desired.

As they talked, von Horst discovered that he could move his shoulders and his hips. A pleasant glow of life suffused his entire body.

He was about to break the news to Dangar when the fateful sound of breaking shell came simultaneously to the ears of both men.

“Goodbye, my friend,” said Dangar. “We of Pellucidar make few friends outside our own tribes. All other men are enemies to kill or be killed. I am glad to call you friend. See, the end comes!”

Already the newly hatched Trodon had gobbled its own shell and was eyeing Dangar. In a moment it would rush upon him. Von Horst struggled to rise, but something seemed to hold him yet. Then, with gaping jaws, the reptile started toward its prey.

3.

THE ONLY HOPE

Once again von Horst struggled to rise; again he sank back defeated. Perspiration stood out in cold beads over his entire body. He wanted to curse and scream, but he remained silent. Silent, too, was Dangar. He did not cry out as had the others when death crept upon them. It was creeping upon him now — closer and closer. Von Horst raised himself to his left elbow; then he sank back, but as he did so he tried to reach for the gun at his hip — the gun he had tried unsuccessfully to reach before. This time he succeeded. His fingers closed upon the grip. He dragged the gun from its holster. Again, he partially raised himself upon an elbow. The Trodon was almost upon Dangar when von Horst fired. Voicing a piercing scream it leaped high in air, fluttered its wings futilely for an instant, and then fell heavily to the floor of the pit — dead.

Dangar looked at von Horst in amazement and in gratitude. “You have done it,” he said; “and I thank you, but what good will it do. How can we ever escape from this pit? Even if there were a way I could not take advantage of it — I who cannot move even a finger.”

“That remains to be seen,” replied von Horst. “When the paralysis has left you we shall find a way for that even as I have for this. But a moment since what would you have given for your chance of escaping the Trodon? Nothing, absolutely nothing; yet you are alive and the Trodon is dead. Who are you to say that the impossible cannot be accomplished?”

“You are right,” replied Dangar. “I shall never doubt you again.”

“Now to gain time,” exclaimed von Horst. He picked up Dangar, then, and carried him across the gap and laid him down beside the last victim that the adult Trodon had brought in. As he lay down beside him, he remarked, “The next one to hatch will get neither of us, for it will go to the other side of the gap.”

“But what about the old one when it brings in the next victim?” asked Dangar. “Won’t it see that our positions have been changed? And there is the body of one of its young, too; what do you suppose it will do about that?”

“I doubt that the Trodon will notice us at all,” replied von Horst, “but if it does, I shall be ready for it. I still have my pistol and plenty of ammunition; and as for the dead chicken, I’ll dispose of that immediately. I think we can use it.”

He rose then and dragged the carcass to one side of the pit, hiding it behind several eggs. Then he examined it closely, feeling of its skin. Apparently satisfied, he drew his hunting knife and fell to work to remove the skin from the carcass.

He worked rapidly but carefully, his whole attention riveted upon his task, so that it came somewhat in the nature of a surprise when the sunlight beating in through the mouth of the crater was momentarily disturbed.

Glancing up, he saw the Trodon returning with another victim; and instantly he flattened himself prone against the wall of the pit behind some eggs that he had arranged for this purpose, at the same time drawing his pistol.

Just the top of his head and his eyes protruded above one of the eggs, these and the cold, black muzzle of his weapon, as he watched the unsuspecting reptile deposit its victim beside Dangar. As he had anticipated, the creature paid no attention to the Pellucidarian; and

a moment later it had vanished through the opening in search of other prey.

Without further interruption, von Horst completed the skinning of the fledgling; then he dragged the body to the spot that Dangar had previously occupied.

The Sarian laughed. "A clever way to dispose of the carcass," he said, "if it works."

"I think it will," replied von Horst. "These brainless little devils are guided by instinct at first. They always go to the same spot for their first meal, and I'll wager they'll eat anything they find there."

"But what are you going to do with the skin?"

"Wait and see. It constitutes the most important part of my plan for escape. I'll admit that it's a rather hare-brained scheme; but it's the only one that I have been able to formulate, and it has some chance for success. Now I must go back and get busy at it again." Von Horst returned to his work; and now he cut the skin into a continuous strip, starting from the outside. It took him a long time, and when he had completed the work it was necessary to trim the rough edges of the outside cut and scrape the inside surface of the long, flat strap that had resulted from his labors. While von Horst was measuring the strap by the crude tip-of-nose-to-tip-of-the-fingers method, his attention was attracted by the hatching of another Trodon.

"Sixty-six, sixty-seven, sixty-eight," counted von Horst as he watched the fledgling devour the shell of its egg.

"That's over two hundred feet. Should be more than enough."

The other preliminaries having been gone through, the Trodon approached the skinned carcass of its brother. Both von Horst and Dangar watched with interest, as, without an instant's hesitation, the reptile fell upon the body and devoured it.

After it had flown away, von Horst crossed over and lay down beside Dangar. "You were right," admitted the latter, "it never knew the difference."

"I think they are so low in the scale of intelligence that they are guided almost exclusively by instinct, even the adults. That is why the old one did not notice that I was missing and that you were in a different place. If I am right, my plan will have a better chance of success.

"Do you feel any different, Dangar? Do you feel any life returning to your limbs?"

The Sarian shook his head. "No," he replied, rather, dejectedly. "I'm afraid that will never happen, but I can't understand how you recovered. That still gives me hope. Can you explain it?"

"I don't know. I have a theory. You can see that all the victims of the Trodon are thin-skinned animals. That might indicate that the needle point of its tongue, by means of which the poison is injected, can either break only thin skin or can penetrate only to a shallow depth. While I was skinning the chicken I took off my leather jacket, and in examining it I discovered that the tongue of the Trodon ran through two thicknesses of leather and canvass lining at the back of the collar before entering my flesh. Look; see the round, green stain encircling the puncture. Perhaps some of the poison was wiped off, or perhaps the sting didn't puncture me deeply enough to have full effect.

"Anyhow, I am more than ever convinced that no matter how much poison a victim receives, short of a lethal dose, he will recover eventually. You unquestionably received a larger dose than I, but you have been here longer than I; so it may not be long now before you will note signs of recovery."

"I am commencing to have hope," replied Dangar.

"Something will have to be done soon," said the other. "Now that the paralysis has left me and my body is functioning normally, I am commencing to feel both hunger and thirst. I shall have to put my plan to the test at the first opportunity before I become too weak to carry through with it."

"Yes," said Dangar. "Get out if you can. Don't think of me."

"I'll take you with me."

"But that will be impossible — even if you can get out of this hole yourself, which I doubt."

"Nevertheless, I shall take you; or I will not go myself."

"No," demurred Dangar. "That would be foolish. I won't permit it."

"How are you going to prevent it?" laughed von Horst. "Leave it all to me. The plan may fail anyway. But I'm going to start putting it into effect at once."

He crossed the pit and took his long strap of reptile hide from behind the eggs where he had concealed it. Then he made a running noose in one end. This he spread on the floor at a point near where the adult Trodon would deposit its next victim. Carefully he ran the strap to his hiding place behind the eggs, left a coil there, and then took the remainder to a point beneath the mouth of the crater but just outside the circle of brilliant sunlight. Here he neatly coiled most of what remained of the strap, so that it might pay out smoothly. He took great pains with this. The remaining loose end he carried to his hiding place; then he settled himself comfortably to wait.

How long he waited, of course he never knew; but it seemed an eternity. Hunger and thirst assailed him, as did doubts and fears of the effectiveness of his plan. He tried not to sleep, for to sleep now might prove fatal; but he must have dozed.

He awakened with a start to see the great Trodon squatting in the

shaft of sunlight injecting its paralyzing poison into the neck of a new victim. Von Horst felt suddenly very weak. It had been a close call. Another moment, perhaps, and it would have been too late to test his plan. He doubted that he could hold out until the reptile returned again. Everything, therefore, depended upon success at the first cast of the die — his life and Dangar's. Quickly he gathered his nervous forces under control. Again he was cool, collected. He loosened his pistol in its holster and took a new grip on the strap.

The Trodon crossed the pit, bearing the paralyzed victim to its place in the lethal circle. It placed one great hind paw in the open noose. Von Horst sent a running wave of the rope across the floor that lifted the noose up the creature's leg above the ankle; then he gave a quick jerk. The noose tightened a little. Was it enough? Would it hold? As he had expected, the creature paid no attention to the strap. It appeared not to feel it, and von Horst was quite sure that it did not. So low was its nervous organization, he believed, that only a sharp blow on the leg would have carried any sensation to the brain.

After it had deposited the latest victim, the reptile turned toward the center of the pit, leaped into the air and fluttered aloft. Von Horst held his breath. Would the noose be shaken loose? Heaven forbid. It held. Von Horst leaped to his feet and ran toward the center of the pit, his pistol cocked and ready in his hand; and as the Trodon rose through the mouth of the crater and cleared the top of the hill, the man fired three shots in rapid succession.

He did not need the horrid screams of the wounded creature to tell him that his aim had been true, for he saw the great reptile careen in air and plunge from sight beyond the rim of the crater; then von Horst leaped for the end of the strap, seized it, braced himself, and waited.

There was danger that the body of the creature, tumbling down

the steep side of the cone-shaped hill, might not come to rest before it jerked the strap from his hands; so he quickly wound it around his body and hurriedly made it fast. He might be killed; but he wouldn't loose his strap or jeopardize his last chance of escape from the pit. For a moment the strap played out rapidly from the coil; then it stopped. Either the body of the Trodon had come to rest or the noose had slipped from the hind leg. Which?

Von Horst pulled on the strap fearfully. Soon it tautened; then he knew that it was still attached to the creature. A vague doubt assailed him as to whether the Trodon had been killed or not. He knew how tenacious of life such creatures might be. Suppose it were not dead? What dire possibilities such an event might entail!

The man tugged on the strap. It did not give. Then he swung on it with all his weight. It remained as before. Still, clinging to the loose end, he crossed the pit to Dangar, who was gazing at him wide-eyed with astonishment.

"You should have been a Sarian," said Dangar with admiration.

Von Horst smiled. "Come," he said. "Now for you." He stooped and lifted the Pellucidarian from the ground and carried him to the center of the pit beneath the crater mouth; then he made the loose end of the strap secure about his body beneath the arms.

"What are you going to do?" asked Dangar.

"Just now I am going to make the inner world a little safer for thin-skinned animals," replied von Horst.

He went to the side of the pit, commenced breaking the eggs with the butt of his pistol. In two eggs, those most closely approaching the end of the period of incubation, he discovered quite active young. These he destroyed; then he returned to Dangar.

"I hate to leave these other creatures here," he said, gesturing

toward the unhappy victims; "but there is no other way. I cannot get them all out."

"You'll still be lucky if you get yourself out." commented Dangar.

Von Horst grinned. "We'll both be lucky," he replied, "but this is our lucky day." There was no word for day in the language of the inner world, where there is neither day nor night; so von Horst substituted a word from one of the languages of the outer world. "Be patient and you'll soon be out."

He grasped the strap and started up hand-over-hand. Dangar lay on his back watching him, renewed admiration shining in his eyes. It was a long, dangerous climb; but at length von Horst reached the mouth of the crater. As he topped the summit and looked down, he saw the carcass of the Trodon lodged on a slight ledge a short distance beneath him. The creature was quite evidently dead. That was the only interest that the man had in it; so he turned at once to his next task, which was to haul Dangar to the mouth of the crater.

Von Horst was a powerful man; but his strength had already been tested to its limit and perhaps it had been partially sapped by the long period of paralysis he had endured. Added to this was the precarious footing that the steep edge of the crater mouth afforded; yet he never for a moment lost hope of eventual success; and though it was slow work, he was finally rewarded by seeing the inert form of the Pellucidarian lying at the summit of the hill beside him.

He would have been glad to rest now, but his brief experience of Pellucidar warned him that this exposed hilltop was no place to seek sanctuary. He must descend to the bottom, where he could see a few trees and a little stream of water, take Dangar with him, and search for a hiding place. The hillside was very steep, but fortunately it was broken by rudimentary ledges that offered at least a foothold. In any

event, there was no other way to descend; and so von Horst lifted Dangar across one of his broad shoulders and started the perilous descent. Slipping and stumbling, he made his slow way down the steep hillside; and constantly he kept his eyes alert for danger. Occasionally he fell, but always managed to catch himself before being precipitated to the bottom.

He was fairly spent when he finally staggered into the shade of a clump of trees growing beside the little stream that he had seen from the summit of the hill. Laying Dangar on the sward, he slaked his thirst with the clear water of the brook. It was the second time that he had drunk since he had left the camp where the great dirigible, O-220, had been moored. How much time had elapsed he could not even guess; days it must have been, perhaps weeks or even months; yet for most of that time the peculiar venom of the Trodon had not only paralyzed him but preserved the moisture in his body, keeping it always fresh and fit for food for the unhatched fledgling by which it was destined to be devoured.

Refreshed and strengthened, he rose and looked about. He must find a place in which to make a more or less permanent camp, for it was quite obvious that he could not continue to carry Dangar in his wanderings. He felt rather helpless, practically alone in this unknown world. In what direction might he go if he were free to go? How could he ever hope to locate the O-220 and his companions in a land where there were no points of compass? When, even if there had been, he had only a vague idea of the direction of his previous wanderings and less of the route along which the Trodon had carried him?

As soon as the effects of the poison should have worn off and Dangar was free from the bonds of paralysis, he would have not only an active friend and companion but one who could guide him to a

country where he might be assured of a friendly welcome and an opportunity to make a place for himself in this savage world, where, he was inclined to believe, he must spend the rest of his natural life. It was by far not this consideration alone that prompted him to remain with the Sarian but, rather, sentiments of loyalty and friendship.

A careful inspection of the little grove of trees and the area contiguous to it convinced him that this might be as good a place as any to make a camp. There was fresh water, and he had seen that game was plentiful in the vicinity. Fruits and nuts grew upon several of the trees; and to his question as to their edibility, Dangar assured him that they were safe.

“You are going to stay here?” asked the Sarian.

“Yes, until you recover from the effects of the poison.”

“I may never recover. What then?” Von Horst shrugged.

“Then I shall be here a long while,” he laughed.

“I could not expect that even of a brother,” objected Dangar. “You must go in search of your own people.”

“I could not find them. If I could, I would not leave you here alone and helpless.”

“You would not have to leave me helpless.”

“I don’t understand you,” said von Horst.

“You would kill me, of course; that would be an act of mercy.”

“Forget it,” snapped von Horst. The very idea revolted him.

“Neither one of us may forget it,” insisted Dangar. “After a reasonable number of sleeps, if I am not recovered, you must destroy me.” He used the only measure of time that he knew — sleeps. How much time elapsed between sleeps or how long each sleep endured, he had no means of telling.

“That is for the future,” replied von Horst shortly. “Right now

I'm interested only in the matter of making camp. Have you any suggestions?"

"There is greatest safety in caves in cliff sides," replied Dangar. "Holes in the ground are often next best; after that, a platform or a shelter built among the branches of a tree."

"There are no cliffs here," said von Horst, "nor do I see any holes in the ground; but there are trees."

"You'd better start building, then," advised the Pellucidarian, "for there are many flesh eaters in Pellucidar; and they are always hungry."

With suggestions and advice from Dangar, von Horst constructed a platform in one of the larger trees, using reeds that resembled bamboo, which grew in places along the margin of the stream. These he cut with his hunting knife and lashed into place with a long, tough grass that Dangar had seen growing in clumps close to the foot of the hill.

At the latter's suggestion, he added walls and a roof as further protection against the smaller arboreal carnivora, birds of prey, and carnivorous flying reptiles.

He never knew how long it took him to complete the shelter; for the work was absorbing, and time flew rapidly. He ate nuts and fruit at intervals and drank several times, but until the place was almost completed he felt no desire to sleep.

It was with considerable difficulty, and not without danger of falling, that he carried Dangar up the rickety ladder that he had built to gain access to their primitive abode; but at length he had him safely deposited on the floor of the little hut; then he stretched out beside him and was asleep almost instantly.

4.

SKRUF OF BASTI

When von Horst awoke he was ravenously hungry. As he raised himself to an elbow, Dangar looked at him and smiled. "You have had a long sleep," he said, "but you needed it."

"Was it very long?" asked von Horst.

"I have slept twice while you slept once," replied Dangar, "and I am now sleepy again."

"And I am hungry," said von Horst, "ravenously hungry; but I am sick of nuts and fruit. I want meat; I need it."

"I think you will find plenty of game down stream," said Dangar. "I noticed a little valley not far below here while you were carrying me down the hill. There were many animals there."

Von Horst rose to his feet. "I'll go and get one."

"Be Careful," cautioned the Pellucidarian. "You are a stranger in this world. You do not know all the animals that are dangerous. There are some that look quite harmless but are not. The red deer and the thag will often charge and toss you on their horns or trample your life out, though they eat no meat. Look out for the bucks and the bulls of all species and the shes when they have young. Watch above, always, for birds and reptiles. It is well to walk where there are trees to give you shelter from these and a place into which to climb to escape the others."

"At least I am safe from one peril," commented von Horst.

"What is that?" asked Dangar.

"In Pellucidar, I shall never die of ennui."

“I do not know what you mean. I do not know what ennui is.”

“No Pellucidarian ever could,” laughed von Horst, as he quit the shelter and descended to the ground.

Following Dangar’s suggestion, he followed the stream down toward the valley that the Sarian had noticed, being careful to remain as close to trees as possible and keeping always on the alert for the predatory beasts, birds, and reptiles that are always preying upon lesser creatures.

He had not gone far when he came in sight of the upper end of the valley and saw a splendid buck antelope standing alone as though on guard. He offered a splendid shot for a rifle, but the distance was too great to chance a pistol shot; so von Horst crept closer, taking advantage of the cover afforded by clumps of tall grasses, the bamboo-like reeds, and the trees. Cautiously he wormed his way nearer and nearer to his quarry that he might be sure to bring it down with the first shot. He still had a full belt of cartridges, but he knew that when these were gone the supply could never be replenished — every one of them must count.

His whole attention centered upon the buck, he neglected for the moment to be on the watch for danger. Slowly he crept on until he reached a point just behind some tall grasses that grew but a few paces from the still unsuspecting animal. He raised his pistol to take careful aim, and as he did so a shadow passed across him. It was but a fleeting shadow, but in the brilliant glare of the Pellucidarian sun it seemed to have substance. It was almost as though a hand had been laid upon his shoulder. He looked up, and as he did so he saw a hideous thing diving like a bullet out of the blue apparently straight for him — a mighty reptile that he subconsciously recognized as a pteranodon of the Cretaceous. With a roaring hiss, as of a steam locomotive’s exhaust,

the thing dropped at amazing speed. Mechanically, von Horst raised his pistol although he knew that nothing short of a miracle could stop or turn that frightful engine of destruction before it reached its goal; and then he saw that he was not its target. It was the buck. The antelope stood for a moment as though paralyzed by terror; then it sprang away — but too late. The pteranodon swooped upon it, seized it in its mighty talons, and rose again into the air.

Von Horst breathed a sigh of relief as he wiped the perspiration from his forehead. "What a world!" he muttered, wondering how man had survived amidst such savage surroundings.

Farther down the little valley he now saw many animals grazing. There were deer and antelope and the great, shaggy bos so long extinct upon the outer crust. Among them were little, horse-like creatures, no larger than a fox terrier, resembling the *Hyracotherium* of the Eocene, early progenitors of the horse, which but added to the amazing confusion of birds, mammals, and reptiles of various eras of the evolution of life on the outer crust.

The sudden attack of the pteranodon upon one of their number frightened the other animals in the immediate vicinity; and they were galloping off down the valley, snorting, squealing and bucking, leaving von Horst to contemplate the flying hoofs of many a fine dinner. There was nothing to do but follow them if he would have meat; and so he set off after them, keeping close to the fringe of trees along the stream which wound along one side of the valley. But to add to his discomfort, those that had initiated the stampede bore down upon the herds grazing below them, imparting their terror to these others, with the result that the latter joined them; and in a short time all were out of sight.

Most of them kept on down the valley, disappearing from the man's

view where the valley turned behind the hills; but he saw a few large sheep run into a canyon between two nearby cones, and these he decided to pursue. As he entered the canyon he saw that it narrowed rapidly, evidently having been formed by the erosion of water which had uncovered the broken lava rocks of a previous flow. Only a narrow trail ran between some of the huge blocks, hundreds of which were scattered about in the wildest confusion.

The sheep had been running rapidly; and as they had started considerably ahead of him, he knew that they must be out of earshot by now; so he made no effort to hide his pursuit, but moved at a quick walk along the winding trail between the rocks. He came at last to a point where the trail debouched upon a wider portion of the canyon and as he was about to enter it he heard plainly the sound of running feet coming toward him from the upper portion of the canyon, which he could not see. And then he heard a disconcerting series of growls and snarls from the same direction. He had already seen enough of *Pellucidar* and its bloodthirsty fauna to take it for granted that practically everything that had life might be considered a potential menace; so he leaped quickly behind a large lava rock and waited.

He had scarcely concealed himself, when a man came running from the upper end of the gorge. It seemed to von Horst that the newcomer was as fleet as a deer. And it was well for him that he was fleet, for behind him came the author of the savage snarls and growls that von Horst had heard — a great, dog-like beast as large and savage as a leopard. As fleet as the man was, however, the beast was gaining on him; and it was apparent to von Horst that it would overtake its quarry and drag him down before he had crossed the open space.

The fellow was armed only with a crude stone knife, which he now carried in one hand, as though determined to make what fight for

his life he might when he could no longer outdistance his pursuer; but he must have realized, as did von Horst, how futile his weapon would be against the powerful beast bearing down upon him.

There was no question in von Horst's mind as to what he should do. He could not stand idly by and see a human being torn to pieces by the cruel fangs of the hyaenodon, and so he stepped from behind the rock that had concealed him from both the man and the beast; and, jumping quickly to one side where he might obtain an unobstructed shot at the creature, raised his pistol, took careful aim, and fired. It was not a lucky shot; it was a good shot, perfect. It bored straight through the left side of the brute's chest and buried itself in his heart. With a howl of pain and rage, the carnivore bounded forward almost to von Horst; then it crumpled at his feet, dead.

The man it had been pursuing, winded and almost spent, came to a halt. He was wide-eyed and trembling as he stood staring at von Horst in wonder and amazement. As the latter turned toward him he backed away, gripping his knife more tightly.

"Go away!" he growled. "I kill!" He spoke the same language that Dangar had taught von Horst, which, he had explained, was the common language of all Pellucidar; a statement that the man from the outer crust had doubted possible.

"You kill what?" demanded von Horst.

"You."

"Why do you wish to kill me?"

"So that I shall not be killed by you."

"Why should I kill you?" asked von Horst. "I just saved your life. If I had wished you to die, I could have just left you to that beast."

The man scratched his head.

"That is so," he admitted after some reflection; "but still I do not

understand it. I am not of your tribe; therefore there is no reason why you should not wish to kill me. I have never seen a man like you before. All other strangers that I have met have tried to kill me. Then, too, you cover your body with strange skins. You must come from a far country.”

“I do,” von Horst assured him; “but the question now is, are we to be friends or enemies?” Again the man ran his nails through his shock of black hair meditatively. “It is very peculiar,” he said. “It is something that I have never before heard of. Why should we be friends?”

“Why should we be enemies?” countered von Horst. “Neither one of us has ever harmed the other. I am from a very far country, a stranger in yours. Were you to come to my country, you would be treated well. No one would wish to kill you. You would be given shelter and fed. People would be kindly toward you, just because they are kindly by nature and not because you could be of any service to them. Here, it is far more practical that we be friends; because we are surrounded by dangerous beasts, and two men can protect themselves better than one.

“However, if you wish to be my enemy, that is up to you. I may go my way, and you yours; or, if you wish to try to kill me, that, too, is a matter for you to decide; but do not forget how easily I killed this beast here. Just as easily could I kill you.”

“Your words are true words,” said the man. “We shall be friends. I am Skruf. Who are you?”

In his conversations with Dangar, von Horst had noticed that no Pellucidarians that the other had mentioned had more than one name, to which was sometimes added a descriptive title such as the Hairy One, the Sly One, the Killer, or the like; and as Dangar usually called him Von, he had come to accept this as the name he would use in the

inner world; so this was the name that he gave to Skruf.

“What are you doing here?” asked the man. “This is a bad country because of the Trodons.”

“I have found it so,” replied von Horst. “I was brought here by a Trodon.”

The other eyed him skeptically. “You would be dead now if a Trodon had ever seized you.”

“One did, and took me to its nest to feed its young. I and another man escaped.”

“Where is he?”

“Back by the river in our camp. I was hunting for food when I met you. I was following some sheep up this canyon. What were you doing here?”

“I was escaping from the Mammoth Men,” replied Skruf. “Some of them captured me. They were taking me back to their country to make a slave of me, but I escaped from them. They were pursuing me, but when I reached this canyon I was safe. In places it is too narrow to admit a mammoth.”

“What are you going to do now?”

“Wait until I think they have given up the chase and then return to my own country.”

Von Horst suggested that Skruf come to his camp and wait and that then the three of them could go together as far as their trails were identical, but first he wished to bag some game. Skruf offered to help him, and with the latter’s knowledge of the quarry it was not long before they had found the sheep and von Horst had killed a young buck. Skruf was greatly impressed and not a little frightened by the report of the pistol and the, to him, miraculous results that von Horst achieved with it.

After skinning the buck and dividing the weight of the carcass between them, they set off for camp, which they reached without serious interruption. Once a bull thag charged them, but they climbed trees and waited until it had gone away, and another time a saber-tooth crossed their path; but his belly was full, and he did not molest them. Thus, through the primitive savagery of Pellucidar, they made their way to the camp.

Dangar was delighted that von Horst had returned safely, for he knew the many dangers that beset a hunter in this fierce world. He was much surprised when he saw Skruf; but when the circumstances were explained to him he agreed to accept the other as a friend, though this relationship with a stranger was as foreign to his code as to Skruf's.

Skruf came from a land called Basti which lay in the same general direction as Sari, though much closer; so it was decided that they would travel together to Skruf's country as soon as Dangar recovered.

Von Horst could not understand how these men knew in what direction their countries lay when there were no means of determining the points of the compass, nor could they explain the phenomenon to him. They merely pointed to their respective countries, and they pointed in the same general direction. How far they were from home neither knew; but by comparing notes, they were able to assume that Sari lay very much farther away than Basti. What von Horst had not yet discovered was that each possessed, in common with all other inhabitants of Pellucidar, a well developed homing instinct identical with that of most birds and which is particularly apparent in carrier pigeons.

As sleeps came and went and hunting excursions were made necessary to replenish their larder, Skruf grew more and more impatient of the delay. He was anxious to return to his own country,

but he realized the greater safety of numbers and especially that of the protection of von Horst's miraculous weapon that killed so easily at considerable distances. He often questioned Dangar in an effort to ascertain if there was any change in his condition, and he was never at any pains to conceal his disappointment when the Sarian admitted that he still had no feeling below his neck.

On one occasion when von Horst and Skruf had gone farther afield than usual to hunt, the latter broached the subject of his desire to return to his own country; and the man of the outer crust learned for the first time the urge that prompted the other's impatience.

"I have chosen my mate," explained Skruf, "but she demanded the head of a tarag to prove that I am a brave man and a great hunter. It was while I was hunting the tarag that the Mammoth Men captured me. The girl has slept many times since I went away. If I do not return soon some other warrior may bring the head of a tarag and place it before the entrance to her cave; then, when I return, I shall have to find another who will mate with me."

"There is nothing to prevent your returning to your own country whenever you see fit," von Horst assured him.

"Could you kill a tarag with that little thing that makes such a sharp noise?" inquired Skruf.

"I might." Von Horst was not so certain of this; at least he was not certain that he could kill one of the mighty tigers quickly enough to escape death from its formidable fangs and powerful talons before it succumbed.

"The way we have come today," remarked Skruf, tentatively, "is in the direction of my country. Let us continue on."

"And leave Dangar?" asked von Horst.

Skruf shrugged. "He will never recover. We cannot remain with him

forever. If you will come with me, you can easily kill a tarag with the thing you call pistol; then I will place it before the entrance to the girl's cave, and she will think that I killed it. In return, I will see that the tribe accepts you. They will not kill you. You may live with us and be a Bastian. You can take a mate, too; and there are many beautiful girls in Basti."

"Thanks," replied von Horst; "but I shall remain with Dangar. It will not be long now before he recovers. I am sure that the effects of the poison will disappear as they did in my case. The reason that they have persisted so much longer is that he must have received a much larger dose than I."

"If he dies, will you come with me?" demanded Skruf.

Von Horst did not like the expression in the man's eyes as he asked the question. He had never found Skruf as companionable as Dangar. His manner was not as frank and open. Now he was vaguely suspicious of his intentions and his honesty, although he realized that he had nothing tangible upon which to base such a judgment and might be doing the man an injustice. However, he phrased his reply to Skruf's question so that he would be on the safe side and not be placing a premium on Dangar's life. "If he lives," he said, "we will both go with you when he recovers." Then he turned back toward the camp.

Time passed. How much, von Horst could not even guess. He had attempted to measure it once, keeping his watch wound and checking off the lapse of days on a notched stick; but where it is always noon it is not always easy to remember either to wind or consult a watch. Often he found that it had run down; and then, of course, he never knew how long it had been stopped before he discovered that it was not running; nor, when he slept, did he ever know for how long a time. So presently he became discouraged; or, rather, he lost interest.

What difference did the duration of time make, anyway? Had not the inhabitants of Pellucidar evidently existed quite as contentedly without it as they would have with? Doubtless they had been more contented. As he recalled his world of the outer crust he realized that time was a hard task master that had whipped him through life a veritable slave to clocks, watches, bugles, and whistles.

Skruf often voiced his impatience to be gone, and Dangar urged them not to consider him but to leave him where he was if they would not kill him. And so the two men slept or ate or hunted through the timeless noon of the eternal Pellucidarian day; but whether it was for hours or for years, von Horst could not tell.

He tried to accustom himself to all this and to the motionless sun hanging forever in the exact center of the hollow sphere, the interior surface of which is Pellucidar and the outer, the world that we know and that he had always known; but he was too new to his environment to be able to accept it as did Skruf and Dangar who never had known aught else.

And then he was suddenly awakened from a sound sleep by the excited cries of Dangar. "I can move!" exclaimed the Sarian. "Look! I can move my fingers."

The paralysis receded rapidly, and as Dangar rose unsteadily to his feet the three men experienced a feeling of elation such as might condemned men who had just received their reprieves. To von Horst it was the dawning of a new day, but Dangar and Skruf knew nothing of dawns. However, they were just as happy.

"And now," cried Skruf, "we start for Basti. Come with me, and you shall be treated as my brothers. The people will welcome you, and you shall live in Basti forever."

5.

INTO SLAVERY

The route that Skruf took from the country of the black craters to the land of Basti was bewilderingly circuitous, since it followed the windings of rivers along the banks of which grew the trees and thickets that offered the oft needed sanctuary in this world of constant menace, or led through gloomy forests, or narrow, rocky gorges. Occasionally, considerable excursions from the more direct route were necessitated when periods of sleep were required, for then it became imperative that hiding places be discovered where the three might be reasonably safe from attack while they slept. Von Horst became so confused and bewildered during the early stages of the long journey that he had not the remotest conception of even the general direction in which they were traveling, and often doubted Skruf's ability to find his way back to his own country; but neither the Bastian nor Dangar appeared to entertain the slightest misgiving.

Game was plenty — usually far too plenty and too menacing — and von Horst had no difficulty in keeping them well supplied; but the steady drain upon his store of ammunition made him apprehensive for the future, and he determined to find some means of conserving his precious cartridges that he might have them for occasions of real emergency when his pistol might mean a matter of life and death to him.

His companions were, culturally, still in the stone age, having no knowledge of any weapon more advanced than clubs, stone knives, and stone tipped spears; so, having witnessed the miraculous ease and comparative safety with which von Horst brought down even large

beasts with his strange weapon, they were all for letting him do the killing.

For reasons of his own, largely prompted by his suspicions concerning Skruf's loyalty, von Horst did not wish the others to know that his weapon would be harmless when his supply of ammunition was exhausted; and they were too ignorant of all matters concerning firearms to deduce as much for themselves. It was necessary, therefore, to find some plausible excuse for insisting that their hunting be done with other weapons.

Skruf was armed with a knife and a spear when they set out upon their journey; and as rapidly as he could find the materials and fashion them, Dangar had fabricated similar weapons for himself. With his help, von Horst finally achieved a spear; and shortly thereafter commenced to make a bow and arrows. But long before they were completed he insisted that they must kill their game with the primitive weapons they possessed because the report of the pistol would be certain to attract the attention of enemies to them. As they were going through a country in which Skruf assured them they might meet hunting and raiding parties from hostile tribes, both he and Dangar appreciated the wisdom of von Horst's suggestion; and thereafter the three lay in wait for their prey with stone-shod spears.

The ease with which von Horst adapted himself to the primitive life of his cave-men companions was a source of no little wonder even to himself. How long a time had elapsed since he left the outer crust, he could not know; but he was convinced that it could not have been more than a matter of months; yet in that time he had sloughed practically the entire veneer of civilization that it had taken generations to develop, and had slipped back perhaps a hundred thousand years until he stood upon a common footing with men of the old stone age.

He hunted as they hunted, ate as they ate, and often found himself thinking in terms of the stone age.

Gradually his apparel of the civilized outer crust had given way to that of a long dead era. His boots had gone first. They had been replaced by sandals of mammoth hide. Little by little his outer clothing, torn and rotten, fell apart until it no longer covered his nakedness; then he had been forced to discard it and adopt the skin loin cloth of his companions. Now, indeed, except for the belt of cartridges, the hunting knife, and the pistol, was he a veritable man of the Pleistocene.

With the completion of his bow and a quantity of arrows, he felt that he had taken a definite step forward. The thought amused him. Perhaps now he was ten or twenty thousand years more advanced than his fellows. But he was not to remain so long. As soon as he had perfected himself in the use of the new weapons, both Dangar and Skruf were anxious to possess similar ones. They were as delighted with them as children with new toys; and soon learned to use them, Dangar, especially, showing marked aptitude. Yet the pistol still intrigued them. Skruf had constantly importuned von Horst to permit him to fire it, but the European would not let him even touch it.

"No one can safely handle it but myself," he explained. "It might easily kill you if you did."

"I am not afraid of it," replied Skruf. "I have watched you use it. I could do the same. Let me show you."

But von Horst was determined to maintain the ascendancy that his sole knowledge of the use of the pistol gave him, and it was later to develop that his decision was a wise one. But the best corroborating evidence of his assurance to Skruf that the weapon would be dangerous to anyone but von Horst was furnished by Skruf himself.

All during the journey Skruf kept referring to his desire to take

home the head of a tarag that he might win the consent of his lady-love. He was constantly suggesting that von Horst shoot one of the great brutes for him, until it became evident to both von Horst and Dangar that the fellow was terrified at the thought of attempting to kill one by himself. Von Horst had no intention of tempting fate by seeking an encounter with this savage monster, a creature of such enormous proportions, great strength, and awful ferocity that it has been known to drag down and kill a bull mastodon single-handed.

They had not chanced to cross the path of one of the monsters; and von Horst was hopeful that they would not, but the law of chance was against him. No one may blame von Horst for a disinclination to pit himself against this monster of a bygone age with the puny weapons that he carried. Even his pistol could do little more than enrage the creature. Could he reach its heart with any weapon it would die eventually, but probably not quickly enough to save him from a terrible mauling and almost certain death. Yet, of course, there was always a chance that he might conquer the great brute.

Then it happened, and so suddenly and unexpectedly that there was no opportunity for preparation. The three men were walking single file along a forest trail. Von Horst was in the lead, followed by Skruf. Suddenly, without warning, a tarag leaped from the underbrush directly in their path not three paces from von Horst. To the eyes of the European it appeared as large as a buffalo, and perhaps it was. Certainly it was a monstrous creature with gaping jaws and flaming eyes.

The instant that it struck the ground in front of the men it leaped for von Horst. Skruf turned and fled, knocking Dangar down in his precipitate retreat. Von Horst had not even time to draw his pistol, so quickly was the thing upon him. He happened to be carrying his spear

in his right hand with the tip forward. He never knew whether the thing he did was wholly a mechanical reaction or whether by intent. He dropped to one knee, placed the butt of the spear on the ground and pointed the head at the beast's throat; and in the same instant the tarag impaled itself upon the weapon. Von Horst held his ground; the shaft of the spear did not break; and notwithstanding all its strength and size, the beast could not quite reach the man with its talons.

It screamed and roared and threshed about, tearing at the spear in an agony of pain and rage; and every instant von Horst expected that the shaft must break and let the beast fall upon him. Then Dangar ran in and, braving the dangers of those clawing talons, thrust his spear into the tarag's side — not once, but twice, three times the sharp stone point sank into the heart and lungs of the great tiger until, with a final scream, it sank lifeless to the ground. And when it was all over, Skruf descended from a tree in which he had taken refuge and fell upon the carcass with his crude knife. He paid no attention to either von Horst or Dangar as he hacked away until he finally severed the head. Then he wove a basket of long grasses and strapped the trophy to his back. All this he did without even a by-your-leave, nor did he thank the men who had furnished the trophy with which he hoped to win a mate.

Both von Horst and Dangar were disgusted with him, but perhaps the European was more amused than angry; however, the remainder of that march was made in silence, nor did one of them refer to the subject again in any way, though the stench from the rotting head waxed more and more unbearable as they proceeded on their way to the country of the Bastians.

The three men had hidden themselves away in a deserted cave high in a cliffside to sleep, shortly following the encounter with the tarag which had occurred after Skruf had made his final appeal for a chance

to show what he could do with a pistol, when von Horst and Dangar were awakened by a shot. As they leaped to their feet, they saw Skruf toppling to the floor of the cave as he hurled the pistol from him. Von Horst rushed to the man's side where he lay writhing and moaning, but a brief examination convinced the European that the fellow was more terrified than hurt. His face was powder marked, and there was a red welt across one cheek where the bullet had grazed it. Otherwise, the only damage done was to his nervous system; and that had received a shock from which it did not soon recover. Von Horst turned away and picked up his pistol. Slipping it into its holster, he lay down again to sleep. "The next time it will kill you, Skruf," he said. That was all. He was confident that the man had learned his lesson. For some time after the incident in the cave, Skruf was taciturn and surly; and on several occasions von Horst detected the man eyeing him with an ugly expression on his dark countenance; but eventually this mood either passed or was suppressed, for as they neared Basti he grew almost jovial.

"We'll soon be there," he announced after a long sleep. "You're going to see a tribe of fine people, and you're going to be surprised by the reception you'll get. Basti is a fine country; you'll never leave it."

On that march, they left the low country and the river they had been following and entered low hills beyond which loomed mountains of considerable height. Eventually Skruf led them into a narrow gorge between chalk cliffs. It was a winding gorge along which they could see but a short distance either ahead or behind. A little stream of clear water leaped and played in the sunlight on its way down to some mysterious, distant sea. Waving grasses grew upon thin topsoil at the summit of the cliffs; and there was some growth at the edges of the

stream where soil, washing down from above, had lodged — some flowering shrubs and a few stunted trees.

Skruf was in the lead. He appeared quite excited, and kept repeating that they were almost at the village of the Bastians. “Around the next turn,” he said presently, “the lookout will see us and give the alarm.”

The prophesy proved correct, for as they turned a sharp corner of the cliff upon their left, a voice boomed out from above them in a warning that reverberated up and down the gorge. “Someone comes” it shouted, and then to those below him, “Stop! or I kill. Who are you who come to the land of the Bastians?”

Von Horst looked up to see a man standing upon a ledge cut from the face of the chalk cliff. Beside him were a number of large boulders that he could easily shove off onto anyone beneath.

Skruf looked up at the man and replied, “We are friends. I am Skruf.”

“I know you,” said the lookout, “but I do not know the others. Who are they?”

“I am taking them to Frug, the chief,” replied Skruf. “One is Dangar, who comes from a country he calls Sari; the other comes from another country very far away.”

“Are there more than three?” asked the lookout.

“No,” replied Skruf; “there are only three.”

“Take them to Frug, the chief,” directed the lookout.

The three continued along the gorge, coming at length to a large, circular basin in the surrounding walls of which von Horst saw many caves. Before each cave was a ledge, and from one ledge to the next ladders connected the different levels. Groups of women and children clustered on the ledges before the mouths of the caves, staring down

at them questioningly, evidently having been warned by the cry of the lookout. A row of warriors stretched across the basin between them and the cliffs where the caves lay. They, too, appeared to have been expecting the party, and were ready to receive them in whatever guise they appeared, whether as friends or foes.

“I am Skruf,” cried that worthy. “I wish to see Frug. You all know Skruf.”

“Skruf has been gone for many sleeps,” replied one. “We thought he was dead and would come no more.”

“But I am Skruf,” insisted the man.

“Come forward then, but first throw down your weapons.”

They did as they were bid; but Skruf, who was in the lead, did not observe that von Horst retained his pistol. The three men advanced, and as they did so they were completely surrounded by the warriors of Basti who were now pressing forward.

“Yes, he is Skruf,” remarked several as they drew nearer; but there was no cordiality in their tones, no slightest coloring of friendship. They halted presently before a huge man, a hairy man. He wore a necklace of the talons of bears and tigers. It was Frug.

“You are Skruf,” he announced. “I see that you are Skruf, but who are these?”

“They are prisoners,” replied Skruf, “that I have brought back to be slaves to the Basti. I have also brought the head of a tarag that I killed. I shall place it before the cave of the woman I would mate with. Now I am a great warrior.”

Von Horst and Dangar looked at Skruf in amazement.

“You have lied to us, Skruf,” said the Sarian. “We trusted you. You said that your people would be our friends.”

“We are not the friends of our enemies,” growled Frug, “and all men who are not Bastians are our enemies.”

“We are not enemies,” said von Horst. “We have hunted and slept with Skruf as friends for many sleeps. Are the men of Basti all liars and cheats?”

“Skruf is a liar and a cheat,” said Frug; “but I did not promise that I would be your friend, and I am chief. Skruf does not speak for Frug.”

“Let us go our way to my country,” said Dangar. “You have no quarrel with me or my people.”

Frug laughed. “I do not quarrel with slaves,” he said. “They work, or I kill them. Take them away and put them to work,” he ordered, addressing the surrounding warriors.

Immediately several Bastians closed in on them and seized them. Von Horst saw that resistance would be futile. He might kill several of them before he emptied his pistol; but they would almost certainly overpower him in the end; or, more probably, run a half dozen spears through him. Even though they did not, and he escaped temporarily, the lookout in the gorge below would but have to topple a couple of boulders from his ledge to finish him as effectually.

“I guess we’re in for it,” he remarked to Dangar.

“Yes,” replied the Sarian. “I see now what Skruf meant when he said that we would be surprised by the reception we got and that we would never leave Basti.”

The guards hustled them to the foot of the cliff and herded them up ladders to the highest ledge. Here were a number of men and women working with crude stone instruments chipping and scraping away at the face of the chalk cliff, scooping out a new ledge and additional caves. These were the slaves. A Bastian warrior squatting upon his heels in the shadow of the entrance to a new cave that was being

excavated directed the work. Those who had brought Dangar and von Horst to the ledge turned them over to this man.

“Was it Skruf who took these men prisoners?” asked the guard. “It looked like him from here, but it doesn’t seem possible that such a coward could have done it.”

“He tricked them,” explained the other. “He told them they would be received here as friends and be well treated. He brought back the head of a tarag, too; he is going to put it at the entrance to the cave where the slave girl, La-ja, sleeps. He asked Frug for her, and the chief told him he could have her if he brought back the head of a tarag. Frug thought that was a good joke — the same as saying no.”

“Men of Basti do not mate with slaves,” said the guard.

“They have,” the other reminded him; “and Frug has given his word, and he will keep it — only I’d have to see Skruf kill a tarag before I’d believe it.”

“He didn’t kill it,” said Dangar.

The two men looked at him in surprise. “How do you know?” asked the guard.

“I was there,” replied Dangar, “when this man killed the tarag. He killed it with a spear while Skruf climbed a tree. After it was dead he came down and cut off its head.”

“That sounds like Skruf,” said the warrior who had accompanied them to the ledge; then the two turned their attention to von Horst.

“So you killed a tarag with a spear?” one demanded, not without signs of respect.

Von Horst shook his head. “Dangar and I killed it together,” he explained. “It was really he who killed it.”

Then Dangar told them how von Horst had faced the beast alone

and impaled it on his spear. It was evident during the recital that their respect for von Horst was increasing.

“I hope that I am lucky enough to get your heart,” said the guard; then he found tools for them and set them to work with the other slaves.

“What do you suppose he meant when he said that he hoped he would be lucky enough to get my heart,” asked von Horst after the guard had left them.

“There are men who eat men,” replied Dangar. “I have heard of them.”

6.

LA-JA

The shadowy coolness of the cave in which von Horst and Dangar were put to work was a relief from the glare and heat of the sun in the open. At first the men were only dimly aware of the presence of others in the cave; but when their eyes became accustomed to the subdued light, they saw a number of slaves chipping at the walls. Some of them were on crude ladders, slowly extending the cave upward. Most of the slaves were men; but there were a few women among them, and one of the latter was working next to von Horst. A Bastian warrior who was directing the work in the cave watched von Horst for a few moments; then he stopped him. "Don't you know anything?" he demanded.

"You are doing this all wrong. Here!" He turned to the woman next to the European. "You show him the way, and see that he does it properly."

Von Horst turned toward the woman, his eyes now accustomed to the subdued light of the cave. She had stopped work and was looking at him. The man saw that she was young and very good looking. Unlike the Bastian women he had seen, she was a blond.

"Watch me," she said. "Do as I do. They will not ill treat you if you are slow, but they will if you make a poor job of what you are doing."

Von Horst watched her for awhile. He noted her regular features, the long lashes that shaded her large, intelligent eyes, the alluring contours of her cheek, her neck, and her small, firm breasts. He decided that she was very much better looking than his first glance had suggested.

Suddenly she turned upon him. "If you watch my hands and the tools you will learn more quickly," she said.

Von Horst laughed. "But nothing half so pleasant," he assured her.

"If you wish to do poor work and get beaten, that is your own affair."

"Watch me," he invited. "See if I have not improved already just from watching your profile."

With his stone chisel and mallet he commenced to chip away at the soft chalk; then, after a moment, he turned to her again. "How is that?" he demanded.

"Well," she admitted reluctantly, "it is better; but it will have to be *much* better. When you have been here as long as I have, you will have learned that it is best to do good work."

"You have been here long?" he asked.

"For so many sleeps that I have lost count. And you?"

"I just came."

The girl smiled. "Came! You mean that you were just brought."

Von Horst shook his head. "Like a fool, I came. Skruf told us that we would be well received, that his people would treat us as friends. He lied to us."

"Skruf!" The girl shuddered. "Skruf is a coward and a liar; but it is well for me that he is a coward. Otherwise he might bring the head of a tarag and place it before the entrance to the cave where I sleep."

Von Horst opened his eyes in astonishment. "You are La-ja, then?" he demanded.

"I am La-ja, but how did you know?" In her musical tones her name was very lovely — the broad a's, the soft j, and the accent on the last syllable.

"A guard said that Frug had told Skruf that he might have you if he

brought the head of a tarag. I recalled the name; perhaps because it is so lovely a name.”

She ignored the compliment. “I am still safe, then,” she said, “for that great coward would run from a tarag.”

“He did,” said von Horst, “but he brought the head of the beast back to Basti with him.”

The girl looked horrified and then skeptical. “You are trying to tell me that Skruf killed a tarag?” she demanded.

“I am trying to tell you nothing of the sort. Dangar and I killed it; but Skruf cut off its head and brought it with him, taking the credit.”

“He’ll never have me!” exclaimed La-ja tensely. “Before that, I’ll destroy myself.”

“Isn’t there something else you can do? Can’t you refuse to accept him?”

“If I were not a slave, I could; but Frug has promised me to him; and, being a slave, I have nothing to say in the matter.”

Von Horst suddenly felt a keen personal interest — just why, it would have been difficult for him to explain. Perhaps it was the man’s natural reaction to the plight of a defenseless girl; perhaps her great beauty had something to do with it. But whatever the cause, he wanted to help her.

“Isn’t there any possibility of escape?” he asked. “Can’t we get out of here after dark? Dangar and I would help you and go with you.”

“After dark?” she asked. “After what is dark?” Von Horst grinned ruefully. “I keep forgetting,” he said.

“Forgetting what?”

“That it is never dark here.”

“It is dark in the caves,” she said.

“In my country it is dark half the time. While it is dark, we sleep; it is light between sleeps.”

“How strange!” she exclaimed. “Where is your country, and how can it ever be dark? The sun shines always. No one ever heard of such a thing as the sun’s ceasing to shine.”

“My country is very far away, in a different world. We do not have the same sun that you have. Some time I will try to explain it to you.”

“I thought you were not like any man I had ever seen before. What is your name?”

“Von,” he said.

“Von — yes, that is a strange name, too.”

“Stranger than Skruf or Frug?” he asked, grinning.

“Why, yes; there is nothing strange about those names.”

“If you heard all of my name, that might sound strange to you.”

“Is there more than Von?”

“Very much more.”

“Tell it to me.”

“My name is Frederich Wilhelm Eric von Mendeldorf und von Horst.”

“Oh, I could never say all that. I think I like Von.”

He wondered why he had told her that Frederich Wilhelm Eric von Mendeldorf und von Horst was his name. Of course he had used it for so long that it seemed quite natural to him; but now that he was no longer in Germany, perhaps it was senseless to continue with it. Yet what difference did it make in the inner world? Von was an easy name to pronounce, an easy one to remember — Von he would continue to be, then.

Presently the girl yawned. “I am sleepy,” she said. “I shall go to my cave and sleep. Why do you not sleep at the same time; then we shall

be awake at the same time, and — why, I can show you about your work.”

“That’s a good idea,” he exclaimed, “but will they let me sleep now? I just started to work.”

“They let us sleep whenever we wish to, but when we awaken we have to come right back to work. The women sleep in a cave by themselves, and there is a Basti woman to watch them and see that they get to work as soon as they are awake. She is a terrible old thing.”

“Where do I sleep?” he asked.

“Come, I’ll show you. It is the cave next to the women’s.”

She led the way out onto the ledge and along it to the mouth of another cave. “Here is where the men sleep,” she said. “The next cave is where I sleep.”

“What are you doing out here?” demanded a guard.

“We are going to sleep,” replied La-ja.

The man nodded; and the girl went on to her cave, while von Horst entered that reserved for the men slaves. He found a number of them asleep on the hard floor, and was soon stretched out beside Dangar, who had accompanied them.

How long he slept, von Horst did not know. He was awakened suddenly by loud shouting apparently directly outside the entrance to the cave. At first he did not grasp the meaning of the words he heard; but presently, after a couple of repetitions, he was thoroughly awake; and then he grasped their full import and recognized the voice of the speaker.

It was Skruf; and he was shouting, over and over.

“Come out, La-ja! Skruf has brought you the head of a tarag. Now you belong to Skruf.”

Von Horst leaped to his feet and stepped out onto the ledge. There,

before the entrance to the adjoining cave, lay the rotting head of the tarag; but Skruf was nowhere in sight.

At first von Horst thought that he had entered the cave in search of La-ja; but presently he realized that the voice was coming from below. Looking over the edge of the ledge, he saw Skruf standing on a ladder a few feet below. Then he saw La-ja run from the cave, her countenance a picture of tragic despair.

He had stepped to the head of the ladder, beside which lay the tarag's head, and so was directly in front of the mouth of the cave as La-ja emerged. Something about her manner, her expression, frightened him. She did not seem to see him as she ran past him toward the edge of the cliff. Intuitively, he knew what was in her mind; and as she passed him, he threw an arm about her and drew her back.

"Not that, La-ja," he said quietly.

She came to herself with a start, as though from a trance. Then she clung to him and commenced to sob. "There is no other way," she cried. "He must not get me."

"He shall not," said the man; then he looked down upon Skruf. "Get out of here," he said, "and take your rotten head with you." With his foot, he pushed the mass of corruption over the edge of the ledge so that it fell full upon Skruf. For an instant it seemed that it had toppled him from the ladder, but with the agility of a monkey he regained his hold.

"Go on down," directed von Horst, "and don't come up here again. This girl is not for you."

"She belongs to me; Frug said I could have her. I'll have you killed for this." The man was almost frothing at the mouth, so angry was he.

"Go down, or I'll come down there and throw you down," threatened von Horst.

A hand was laid on his shoulder. He swung around. It was Dangar who stood beside him. "Here comes the guard," he said. "You are in for it now. I am with you. What shall we do?"

The guard was coming along the ledge, the same big fellow that had received them. There were other guards in the several caves that were being excavated, but so far the attention of only this one seemed to have been attracted.

"What are you doing, slave?" he bellowed. "Get to work! What you need is a little of this."

He swung a club in his hairy right fist.

"You're not going to hit me with that," said von Horst. "If you come any closer, I'll kill you."

"Your pistol, Von," whispered Dangar.

"I can't waste ammunition," he replied.

The guard had paused. He seemed to be attempting to discover just how the slave intended killing him and with what. To all appearances the man was unarmed; and while he was tall, he was far from being as heavy a man as the guard. Finally the fellow must have concluded that von Horst's words were pure bluff, for he came on again.

"You'll kill me, will you?" he roared; then he rushed forward with club upraised.

He was not very fast on his feet, and his brain was even slower — his reactions were pitifully retarded. So when von Horst leaped forward to meet him, he was not quick enough to change his method of attack in time to meet the emergency. Von Horst stepped quickly to one side as the fellow lunged abreast of him; then he swung a terrific blow to the Bastian's chin, a blow that threw him off balance on the very brink of the ledge. As he tottered there, von Horst struck him again; and this time he toppled out into space; and, with a scream of

fright, plunged down toward the bottom of the cliff a hundred feet below.

Dangar and the girl stood there wide-eyed in consternation.

“What have you done, Von!” cried the latter. “They will kill you now — and all on my account.”

Even as she spoke, another guard emerged from one of the caves farther along the ledge; and then the remaining two came from the other caves in which they had been directing the work of the slaves. The scream of the fellow that von Horst had knocked from the ledge had attracted their attention.

“Get behind me,” von Horst directed La-ja and Dangar, “and fall back to the far end of the ledge. They can’t take us if they can’t get behind us.”

“They’ll have us cornered then, and there will be no hope for us,” objected the girl. “If we go into one of the caves where it is not so light and where there are loose bits of rock to throw at them we may be able to hold them off. But even so, what good will that do? They will get us anyway, no matter what we do.”

“Do as I tell you,” snapped von Horst, “and be quick about it.”

“Who are you to give me orders?” demanded La-ja. “I am the daughter of a chief.”

Von Horst wheeled and pushed her back into Dangar’s arms. “Take her to the far end of the ledge,” he ordered; then he fell back with them, as Dangar dragged the furious La-ja along the ledge. The guards were advancing toward the three. They did not know exactly what had happened, but they knew that something was wrong.

“Where is Julp?” demanded one.

“Where you will be if you don’t do as I tell you,” replied von Horst.

“What do you mean by that, slave? Where is he?”

“I knocked him off the ledge. Look down.” The three paused and peered over the edge. Below them they saw the body of Julp, and now the angry voices of those who had gathered about it rose to them. Skruf was there. He alone could surmise what had befallen Julp, and he was telling the others about it in a loud tone of voice as Frug joined the group.

“Bring that slave down to me,” Frug shouted to the guards on the ledge.

The three started forward again to seize von Horst. The man whipped his pistol from its holster. “Wait!” he commanded. “If you don’t wish to die, listen to me. There is the ladder. Go down.”

The three eyed the pistol, but they did not know what it was. To them it was nothing more than a bit of black stone. Perhaps they thought that von Horst purposed throwing it at them or using it as a club. The idea made them grin; so they came on, contemptuously.

Now, the woman who guarded the women slaves came from their cave, attracted by all the commotion outside, and joined the men. She was an unprepossessing slattern of indeterminate age with a vicious countenance. Von Horst guessed that she might be even more formidable than the men, but he shrank from the necessity of shooting down a woman. In fact, he did not wish to shoot any of them — poor ignorant cave dwellers of the stone age — but it was their lives or his and Dangar’s and La-ja’s.

“Go back!” he cried. “Go down the ladder. I don’t wish to kill you.”

For answer, the men laughed at him and came on. Then von Horst fired. One of the men was directly behind the leader, and at the shot they both collapsed, screaming, and rolled from the ledge. The other man and the woman stopped. The report of the pistol would alone

have been sufficient to give them pause, so terrifying was it to them; but when they saw their comrades pitch from the ledge their simple minds were overwhelmed.

“Go down,” von Horst commanded them, “before I kill you, too. I shall not give you another chance.”

The woman snarled and hesitated, but the man did not wait. He had seen enough. He sprang toward the ladder and hastened to descend, and a moment later the woman gave up and followed him. Von Horst watched them; and when they had reached the next ledge below, he motioned Dangar to him. “Give me a hand with this ladder,” he said, and the two dragged it up to the ledge on which they stood. “This will stop them for a while,” he remarked.

“Until they bring another ladder,” suggested Dangar.

“That will take a little time,” replied von Horst, “— a long time if I take a shot at them while they are doing it.”

“Now, what are we to do next?” inquired Dangar.

La-ja was eyeing von Horst from beneath lowering brows, her eyes twin pits of smoldering anger; but she did not speak. Von Horst looked at her and was glad that she did not. He saw trouble ahead in that beautiful, angry face — beautiful even in anger.

The other slaves were now coming fearfully from the caves. They looked about for the guards and saw none; then they saw that the ladder had been drawn up.

“What has happened?” one asked.

“This fool has killed three guards and driven the others away,” snapped La-ja. “Now we must either remain here and starve to death or let them come up and kill us.”

Von Horst paid no attention to them. He was looking up, scanning

the face of the cliff that inclined slightly inward to the summit about thirty feet above him.

“He killed three guards and drove the others off the ledge?” demanded one of the slaves, incredulously.

“Yes,” said Dangar; “alone, he did it.”

“He is a great warrior,” said the slave, admiringly.

“You are right, Thorek,” agreed another. “But La-ja is right, too; it is death for us now no matter what happens.”

“Death but comes a little sooner; that is all,” replied Thorek. “It is worth it to know that three of these eaters of men have been killed. I wish that I had done it.”

“Are you going to wait up here until you starve to death or they come up and kill you?” demanded von Horst.

“What else is there to do?” demanded a slave from Amdar.

“There are nearly fifty of us,” said von Horst. “It would be better to go down and fight for our lives than wait here to die of thirst or be killed like rats, if there were no other way; but I think there is.”

“Your words are the words of a man,” exclaimed Thorek. “I will go down with you and fight.”

“What is the other way?” asked the man from Amdar.

“We have this ladder,” explained von Horst, “and there are other ladders in the caves. By fastening some of them together we can reach the top of the cliff. We could be a long way off before the Bastians could overtake us, for they would have to go far down the gorge before they came to a place where they could climb out of it.”

“He is right,” said another slave.

“But they might overtake us,” suggested another who was timid.

“Let them!” cried Thorek. “I am a mammoth man. Should I fear

to fight with my enemies? Never. All my life I have fought them. It was for this that my mother bore me and my father trained me.”

“We talk too much,” said von Horst. “Talk will not save us. Let those who wish to, come with me; let the others remain here. Fetch the other ladders. See what you can find with which to fasten them together.”

“Here comes Frug!” shouted a slave. “He is coming up with many warriors.”

Von Horst looked down to see the hairy chief climbing upward toward the ledge; behind him came many warriors. The man from the outer crust grinned, for he knew that his position was impregnable.

“Thorek,” he said, “take men into the caves to gather fragments of rock, but do not throw them down upon the Bastians until I give you the word.”

“I am a mammoth man,” replied Thorek, haughtily. “I do not take orders from any but my chief.”

“Right now I am your chief,” snapped von Horst. “Do as I tell you. If each of us tries to be chief, if no one will do as I order, we may stay here until we rot.”

“I take orders from no man who is not a better man than I,” insisted Thorek.

“What does he mean, Dangar?” asked von Horst.

“He means you’ll have to fight him — and win — before he’ll obey you,” explained the Sarian.

“Are all the rest of you fools too?” demanded von Horst. “Do I have to fight each one of you before you will help me to help you escape?”

“If you defeat Thorek, I will obey you,” said the man from Amdar.

“Very well, then,” agreed von Horst. “Dangar, if any of these idiots

will help you, go in and get rocks to hold off Frug until the matter is settled. Just try to keep them from setting up another ladder to this ledge. Thorek, you and I will go into one of the caves and see who is head man. If we tried to decide the matter out here, we'd probably both wind up at the bottom of the cliff."

"All right," agreed the mammoth man. "I like your talk. You will make a great chief — if you win; but you won't. I am Thorek, and I am a mammoth man."

Von Horst was almost amused by the evidences of haughty pride that these primitive people revealed. He had seen it in La-ja in an exaggerated form and now, again, in Thorek. Perhaps he admired them a little for it — he had no patience with spineless worms — but he felt that they might have mixed a little common sense with it. He realized, however, that it reflected a tremendous ego, such as the human race must have possessed in its earliest stages to have permitted it to cope with the forces that must constantly have threatened it with extinction.

He turned to Thorek. "Come," he said; "let's get it over, so that something worth while can be done." As he spoke, he entered one of the caves; and Thorek followed him.

"With bare hands?" asked von Horst.

"With bare hands," agreed the mammoth man.

"Come on, then."

Von Horst, from boyhood, had been a keen devotee of all modes of defense and offense with various weapons and with none at all. He had excelled as an amateur boxer and wrestler. Heretofore it had availed him little of practical value, other than a certain prideful satisfaction in his ability; but now it was to mean very much indeed. It was to establish his position in the stone age among a rugged people who admitted no superiority that was not physical.

At his invitation, Thorek charged down upon him like a wild bull. In height they were quite evenly matched, but Thorek was stockier and outweighed von Horst by ten or fifteen pounds. Their strength was, perhaps, about equal, though the Pellucidarian looked far more powerful because of his bulging muscles. It was skill that would count, and Thorek had no skill. His strategy consisted in overwhelming an antagonist by impetus and weight, crushing him to earth, and pummeling him into insensibility. If he killed him in the process — well, that was just the other fellow's tough luck.

But when he threw himself at von Horst, von Horst was not there. He had ducked beneath the flailing arms and sidestepped the heavy body; then he had landed a heavy blow at Thorek's jaw that had snapped his head and dazed him. But the fellow still kept his feet, turned, and came lumbering in again for more; and he got it. This time he went down. He tried to stagger to his feet, and another blow sent him sprawling. He didn't have a chance. Every time he got part way to his feet, he was knocked flat again. At last he gave up and lay where he had fallen.

“Who is chief?” demanded von Horst.

“You are,” said Thorek.

7.

FLIGHT OF THE SLAVES

As von Horst turned and ran out of the cave, Thorek rose groggily to his feet and followed him. On the ledge a number of the slaves were lined up with Dangar ready to hurl rocks on the ascending Bastians, whom von Horst saw had reached the second ledge below that was occupied by the slaves. He looked about and saw Thorek emerging from the cave. "Take some men and get the ladders," von Horst directed his late antagonist.

The other slaves looked quickly at the mammoth man to see how he would accept this command. What they saw astonished them. Thorek's face was already badly swollen, there was a cut above one eye and his nose was bleeding. His whole face and much of his body were covered with blood, which made his injuries appear graver than they really were.

Thorek turned toward the other slaves. "Some of you go into each cave and bring out the ladders," he said. "Let the women find thongs with which to bind them together."

"Who is chief?" asked one of the men so addressed.

"He is chief," replied Thorek, pointing at von Horst.

"He is not my chief, and neither are you," retorted the man, belligerently.

Von Horst was suddenly hopeless. How could he get anywhere, how could he accomplish anything, with such stupid egotists to contend with? Thorek, however, was not at all discouraged. He suddenly leaped upon the fellow; and before the man had time to gather his slow

wits, lifted him above his head and hurled him from the cliff. Then he turned to the others. "Get the ladders," he said, and as one man they set about doing his bidding.

Now von Horst turned his attention again to Frug and the other warriors below. They offered an excellent target; and he could easily have driven them back had he cared to, but he had another plan. In low tones he issued instructions to his companions, having them line up along the ledge while the Bastians climbed to that directly below. In the meantime the ladders had been carried out; and the women were busy lashing several of them together, making two long ladders.

La-ja stood sullenly apart, glaring at von Horst, and making no pretense of helping the other women with their work; but the man paid no attention to her, which probably added to her resentment and her wrath. Frug was bellowing threats and commands from the ledge below, and from the bottom of the cliff the women and children were shouting encouragement to their men.

"Bring me the man called Von," shouted Frug, "and none of the rest of you shall be punished."

"Come up and get him," challenged Thorek.

"If the men of Basti were better than old women they would do something more than stand down there and shout," taunted von Horst. He threw a small fragment of rock that struck Frug on the shoulder. "See," he exclaimed, "how easily we could drive away the old women who are not strong enough to hurl their spears up here!"

That insult was too much for the Bastians. Instantly spears began to fly; but the slaves were ready, and as the weapons rose to their level they reached out and seized many of them. As the others dropped back to the Bastians, they were hurled again; and soon the slaves were armed, as von Horst had hoped.

“Now, the rocks,” he directed; and the slaves commenced to pelt their antagonists with small missiles until they took refuge in the caves on the level below. “Don’t let them come out,” ordered von Horst. “Dangar, you take five men and let every Bastian that shows his head get a rock on it; the rest of you men raise the ladders.”

When the ladders, rickety and sagging, were leaned, against the cliff they just topped its summit; and von Horst breathed a sigh of relief as he saw the success of his plan thus more nearly assured. He turned to Thorek. “Take three men and go to the top of the cliff. If the way is clear, tell me; and I will send up the women and the rest of the men.”

As Thorek and the three climbed aloft, the ladders creaked and bent; but they held, and presently the mammoth man called down that all was well.

“Now, the women,” said von Horst; and all the women but one started up the ladders. That one was La-ja. She ignored the ladders as she had ignored von Horst, and again the man paid no attention to her. Soon all but Dangar and his five men, von Horst, and La-ja had climbed safely to the cliff top. One by one, von Horst sent the five up; and he and Dangar kept the Bastians below confined in the caves where they might not know what was going on upon the ledge above; for he knew that they could bring other ladders from the caves in which they were hiding and enough of them reach the ledge that he and Dangar were defending to overcome them easily.

La-ja, now, was his greatest problem. Had she been a man, he would have left her; and his better judgment told him that he should leave her anyway, but he could not. Perhaps she was a stubborn little fool; but he realized that he could not know what strange standards of pride, custom, environment, and heredity had bequeathed her. How

might he judge her? Her attitude might seem right and proper to her, no matter how indefensible it appeared to him.

“I wish you would go up with the others, La-ja,” he said. “We three may be recaptured if you don’t.”

“Go yourself, if you wish,” she retorted. “La-ja will remain here.”

“Do not forget Skruf,” he reminded her.

“Skruf will never have me. I can always die,” she replied.

“You will not come, then?” he asked.

“I would rather stay with Skruf than go with you.”

Von Horst shrugged and turned away. The girl was watching him intently to see what effects her insult had upon him, and she flushed with anger when he showed no resentment.

“Give them a few more rocks, Dangar,” directed von Horst; “then get to the cliff top as fast as you can.”

“And you?” asked the Sarian.

“I shall follow you.”

“And leave the girl?”

“She refuses to come,” replied von Horst.

Dangar shrugged. “She needs a beating,” he said.

“I would kill any man that laid a hand on me,” said La-ja, belligerently.

“Nevertheless, you need a beating,” insisted Dangar; “then you would have more sense.” He gathered up several rocks and hurled them at a head that appeared from one of the caves below; then he turned and swarmed up one of the ladders.

Von Horst walked toward the other ladder. It took him close to La-ja. Suddenly he seized her. “I am going to take you with me,” he said.

“You are not,” she cried, and commenced to strike and kick him.

Without great difficulty he carried her as far as the ladder; but when

he tried to ascend it, she clung to it. He struggled upward and gained a couple of rounds, but she fought so viciously and clung so desperately that he soon saw they must be overtaken if the Bastians reached this ledge.

Already he heard their voices raised more loudly from below, indicating that they had come from the caves. He heard Frug directing the raising of a ladder. In a moment they would be upon them. He looked down at the beautiful face of the angry girl. He could drop her and leave her to the tender mercies of the Bastians. There was still time for him to gain the summit of the cliff alone. But there was another way, a way he shrank from; yet he saw no alternative if he were to save them both. He drew back a clenched fist and struck her heavily on the side of the head, and instantly she went limp in his arms; then he climbed upward as rapidly as he could with the dead weight of the unconscious girl hampering his every movement. He had almost reached the top when he heard a shout of triumph below him. Glancing downward, he saw a Bastian just clambering onto the ledge upon which the ladder rested. If the fellow could lay hands upon the ladder he could drag them down to death or recapture. Von Horst shifted the weight of the girl so that her body hung balanced over his left shoulder. This freed his left hand so that he could cling to the ladder as he drew his pistol with his right. He had to swing out and backward to get a bead on the Bastian; and he had to do all this in a fraction of the time it takes to tell it; for if the first man reached the ledge, there would be another directly behind him; and one shot would not stop them both.

He fired just as the Bastian was about to step from the ladder to the ledge. The fellow toppled backward. There were yells and curses from below; and though von Horst could not see what happened, he was

certain that the falling body had knocked others from the ladder. Once again he hastened upward, and a moment later Dangar and Thorek reached down and dragged him and the girl to the summit of the cliff.

“Your luck is with you,” said Thorek. “Look; they are right behind you.”

Von Horst looked down. The Bastians had raised other ladders and were clambering rapidly onto the ledge below. Some of them were already climbing the ladders that the slaves had raised to the cliff top. Others of the slaves were standing near von Horst looking down at the Bastians. “We had better run,” said one. “They will soon be up here.”

“Why run?” demanded Thorek. “Are we not armed even better than they? We have most of their spears.”

“I have a better plan,” said von Horst. “Wait until the ladders are full.”

He called other slaves to him then, and waited. It was but a matter of seconds when the ladders were both filled with climbing Bastians; then von Horst gave the word, and a score of hands pushed the ladders outward from the face of the cliff. Screams of terror broke from the lips of the doomed Bastians as the slaves toppled the ladders over backward, and a dozen bodies hurtled down the face of the cliff to fall at the feet of the women and children.

“Now,” said von Horst, “let’s get out of here.” He looked down at the girl still lying on the sward where they had placed her, and he was suddenly stunned by the realization that she might be dead — that the blow he had struck her had killed her. He dropped to his knees beside her and placed an ear over her heart. It was beating, and beating strongly. With a sigh of relief, he lifted the inanimate form to his shoulder again.

“Where to now?” he asked, addressing the entire gathering of escaped slaves.

“At first we’d better get out of the Bastian country,” counseled Thorek. “After that, we can plan.”

The way led through hills and mountain gorges, and finally out into a lovely valley teeming with wild life; but though they often encountered fierce beasts they were not attacked.

“There are too many of us,” explained Dangar when von Horst commented upon their apparent immunity. “Occasionally you’ll find a beast that will attack a whole tribe of men, but ordinarily they are afraid of us when we are in numbers.”

Long before they reached the valley, La-ja regained consciousness. “Where am I?” she demanded. “What has happened?”

Von Horst lowered her from his shoulder and steadied her until he saw that she could stand. “I brought you away from Basti,” he explained. “We are free now.”

She looked at him, knitting her brows as though trying to recall a fleeting memory that eluded her. “You brought me!” she said. “I said I would not come with you. How did you do it?”

“I — er — I put you to sleep,” he fumbled hesitatingly. The thought that he had struck her humiliated him.

“Oh, I remember,” she said; “you struck me.”

“I had to,” he replied. “I am very sorry, but there was no other way. I could not leave you there among those beasts.”

“But you did strike me.”

“Yes, I struck you.”

“Why did you wish to bring me? Why did you care whether or not I was left to Skruf?”

“Well, you see — I — but how could I leave you there?”

“If you think I am going to be your mate now, you are mistaken,” she said with emphasis.

Von Horst hushed. The young lady seemed to be jumping to embarrassing conclusions. She was certainly candid. Perhaps that was a characteristic of the stone age. “No,” he replied; “after the things that you said to me and did to me, I had no reason either to believe that you would be my mate or that I would wish you to be.”

“Well,” she snapped; “I wouldn’t be — I should prefer Skruf.”

“Thanks,” said von Horst. “Now we understand one another.”

“And hereafter,” said La-ja, “you can attend to your own affairs and leave me alone.”

“Certainly,” he replied stiffly, “just so long as you obey me.”

“I obey no one.”

“You’ll obey me,” he said determinedly, “or I’ll punch your head again,” The words surprised him much more than they seemed to surprise the girl. How could he have said such a thing to a woman? Was he reverting to some primordial type? Was he becoming, indeed, a man of the old stone age? She walked away from him then and joined the women. On her lips was a strange little melody, such perhaps as women of the outer crust hummed to the singing stars when the world was young.

When they reached the valley, some of the men made a kill; and they all ate. Then they held a council, discussing plans for the future.

Each individual wished to go his way to his own country, and while there was safety in numbers there was also danger to each in going into the country of another. There were some, like Dangar, who could promise a friendly reception to those who wished to accompany them to their land; but there were few who dared take the chance. Both von

Horst and Dangar recalled the fair promises of Skruf and the manner in which they had been belied.

To von Horst, it was a strange world; but then, he realized, it might be anywhere from fifty thousand to half a million years younger than the world with which he was familiar, with a corresponding different philosophy and code of ethics. Yet these people were quite similar to types of the outer crust. They were more naive, perhaps; less artificial, and they certainly had fewer inhibitions; but they revealed, usually in a slightly exaggerated form, all the characteristics of present day men and women of a much older humanity.

He considered La-ja. Envisioning her frocked in the latest mode, he realized that she might pass unnoticed, except for her great beauty, in any capital of Europe. No one would dream, to look at her, that she had stepped from the Pleistocene. He was not so certain, however, as to what one might think who crossed her.

The result of the council was a decision of each to return to his own country. There were several from Amdar, and they would go together. There were others from Go-hal. Thorek came from Ja-ru, the country of the mammoth-men; La-ja from Lo-har; Dangar, from Sari. These three, with von Horst, could proceed together for awhile, as their paths lay in the same general direction.

After the council, they sought and found a place to sleep — a place of caves in cliffs. As they awoke, each individual or each party set out in the direction of his own country with only instinct as his guide. The countries of most of them were not far distant. Sari was the farthest. From what von Horst could gather, it might be half way around this savage world; but what was a matter of distance when there was no time by which to measure the duration of a journey?

There were no goodbyes. A group or an individual walked out of

the lives of those others with whom they had suffered long imprisonment, with whom they had fought and won to freedom; and there was no sign of regret at parting — just the knowledge that when next they met, they would meet as mortal enemies, each eager to slay the other. This was true of most of them, but not of all. There was a real friendship existing between von Horst and Dangar, and something that approached it between these two and Thorek. Where La-ja stood, who might know? She was very aloof. Perhaps because she was the daughter of a chief; perhaps because she was a very beautiful young woman whose pride had been hurt, or who was nursing a knowledge that her woman's intuition had vouchsafed her, or because she was by nature reserved. Whatever her reason, she kept her own counsel.

Several sleeps after the party of slaves had broken up, Thorek announced that his path now diverged from theirs. "I wish that you were coming to Ja-ru with me," he said to von Horst. "You should have been a mammoth man; we are all great warriors. If we ever meet again, let us meet as friends."

"That suits me," replied von Horst. "May it hold for all of us." He looked at Dangar and La-ja.

"A Sarian may be friends with any brave warrior," said the former. "I would be friends always with you."

"I would be friends with Thorek and Dangar," said La-ja.

"And not with Von?" asked the Sarian.

"I would not be friends with Von," she replied.

Von Horst shrugged and smiled. "But I am your friend, always, La-ja," he said.

"I do not wish you for a friend," she replied. "Did I not say so?"

"I'm afraid you can't help yourself."

"We'll see about that," she said, enigmatically.

So Thorek left them, and the three continued on their way. It seemed a hopeless, aimless journey to von Horst. In the bottom of his consciousness, he did not believe that either Dangar or La-ja had the slightest conception of where they were going. He did not possess the homing instinct himself, and so he could not conceive that such a sense existed in man or woman.

When they were confronted by high mountains they circled them. They followed mysterious rivers until they found a ford, and then they crossed in constant danger from weird reptiles that had been long extinct upon the outer crust. The fords were quite bad enough; they never dared swim a river. Never did they know what lay ahead of them, for this country was as strange to the two Pellucidarians as it was to von Horst.

They came through low hills to a narrow valley upon the far side of which grew a dense forest, such a forest as von Horst had never seen before in this world or his own. Even at a distance it looked grim and forbidding. As they passed down the valley, von Horst was glad that their way did not lead through the forest; for he knew how depressing the long gloom of a broad forest might become.

Presently La-ja stopped. "Which way is your country, Dangar?" she asked.

He pointed down the valley. "That way," he said, "until we reach the end of these high hills; then I turn to the right."

"It is not my way," said La-ja. "Lo-har lies this way," and she pointed straight toward the forest. "Now I must leave you and go to my own country."

"The forest does not look good to me," said Dangar. "Perhaps you would never get through it alive. Come to Sari with Von and me. You will be well treated."

The girl shook her head. "I am the daughter of a chief," she said. "I must return to Lo-har and bear sons, for my father has none; otherwise there will be no good chief to rule over my father's people after he is dead."

"But you cannot go alone," said von Horst. "You could never come through alive. You would merely be throwing away your life, and then you would never have any sons at all."

"I must go," she insisted, "or for what purpose am I the daughter of a chief?"

"Aren't you afraid?" asked von Horst.

"I am the daughter of a chief," she said, with her chin in the air, defiantly; but von Horst thought that her square little chin trembled. Perhaps it was just a shadow.

"Goodbye, Dangar," she said presently, and turned away from them toward the forest. She did not say goodbye to von Horst; she did not even look at him.

The man from the outer crust watched the trim, clean cut figure of the girl as she made her way toward the wood. He noted for the thousandth time the poise of that blond head, the almost regal carriage, the soft and graceful tread of the panther.

The man did not know what motivated him, he could not interpret the urges that seemed to possess him; something quite beyond reason, something that exhilarated one as might an inspiration, prompted him. He did not wish to reason it out; he wished merely to obey.

He turned to Dangar. "Goodbye," he said.

"Goodbye?" exclaimed Dangar. "Where are you going?"

"I am going to Lo-har with La-ja," replied von Horst.

8.

THE FOREST OF DEATH

Dangar looked at von Horst with surprise as the latter announced that he was going with La-ja.

“Why?” he asked.

Von Horst shook his head.

“I do not know,” he replied. “I have one excellent reason, and that is that I could not see a girl go alone through this savage country, into that beastly looking forest; but I know that there is something else, much deeper, that impels me; something as inexplicable and inescapable as instinct.”

“I will come with you,” said Dangar.

Von Horst shook his head.

“No. Go on to Sari. If I live, I’ll follow you later.”

“You could never find Sari.”

“With your help, I can.”

“How can I help you if I am not with you?” demanded Dangar.

“You can blaze the trail. Put marks on trees. Place stones upon the ground, like this, showing the direction you are going.” He placed some stones in a row pointing in the direction they had been going, forming an arrow. “Mostly you follow animal trails; so you will have only to indicate the places that you branch off from the main trails. If you will do these things, I can follow you. I shall blaze my trail from here to wherever I go; so that I can find my way back.”

“I do not like to leave you,” said Dangar.

“It is best,” replied von Horst. “There is a girl waiting for you

in Sari. There is no one waiting for me anywhere. We do not know how far it is to La-ja's country. We might never reach it; we might never return if we did. It is best that you go on to Sari."

"Very well," said Dangar. "I shall be expecting you there. Good-bye." He turned and started off down the little valley.

Von Horst watched him for a moment, thinking of the strange circumstances that had brought them together across five hundred thousand years; thinking also of the even more remarkable fact that they had found so much in common upon which to build an enduring friendship. He sighed and turned in the direction that La-ja had gone.

The girl was half way to the forest, swinging along easily with her chin up and never looking back. She looked so little against the background of that mighty forest, and so brave. Something very much like tears momentarily dimmed the man's eyes as he watched her; then he set out after her.

Something of what he was doing he realized, but not all. He knew that it was quite likely that he was following the girl into an untracked wilderness from which neither of them would ever emerge; and that he was cutting himself off, doubtlessly forever, from his only friend in all this savage world, from the chance to go to a country where he might live in comparative security and make new friends — and all this for a girl who shunned and snubbed him. But what he did not know was that Jason Gridley would eventually decide to remain in the inner world, when the rest of the expedition sailed for the north polar opening and the outer crust, and proceed to Sari, there to form an expedition to search for him. He did not know that he was quite probably throwing away this one chance for succor; but if he had known it, there is little likelihood that it would have altered his decision.

He overtook La-ja just at the edge of the forest. She had heard his footsteps behind her and had turned to see who or what was following her. She did not seem greatly surprised. In fact, it seemed to von Horst that nothing could surprise La-ja.

“What do you want?” she inquired.

“I am going with you to Lo-har,” he replied.

“The warriors of Lo-har will probably kill you when you get there,” she prophesied cheerfully.

“I am going with you just the same,” insisted von Horst.

“I did not ask you to come. You had better go back and go to Sari with Dangar.”

“Listen to me, La-ja,” he begged. “I cannot let you go alone, knowing the dangers you may have to face — wild beasts and savage men. I must go with you as long as there is no one else to go; so why can’t we be friends? Why do you dislike me so? What have I done?”

“If you come with me it will have to be as though we were friends — just friends — whether we are friends or not,” she replied, ignoring his last two queries. “Do you understand that — just as friends?”

“I understand,” he said. “Have I ever asked more of you?”

“No.” She rather snapped the word.

“Nor shall I. My only thought is for your safety. When you are among your own people, I shall leave you.”

“If they don’t kill you before you can escape,” she reminded him.

“Why should they wish to kill me?” he demanded.

“You are a stranger; and we always kill strangers, so that they will not kill us — or nearly always. Sometimes, if we have reason to like them very much we let them live; but Gaz will not like you. He will kill you if the others don’t.”

“Who is Gaz? Why should he wish to kill me?”

“Gaz is a great warrior, a mighty hunter; single-handed he has killed a ryth.”

“I am not a ryth; so I still don’t see why he should wish to kill me,” insisted von Horst.

“He will not like it when he learns that we have been together for so many sleeps. He is a very jealous man.”

“What is he to you?” demanded von Horst.

“He hoped to mate with me before I was captured by the Bastian. If he has not taken another mate, he will still wish to. Gaz has a very quick temper and a very bad one. He has killed many men. Often he kills them first and then inquires about them later. Thus has he killed many men whom he would not have killed had he taken the time to discover that they had not harmed him.”

“Do you wish to mate with him?” asked von Horst.

She shrugged her shapely shoulders. “I must mate with someone, for I must bear sons that Lo-har may have a chief when my father dies; and La-ja would mate only with a mighty man. Gaz is a mighty man.”

“I asked you if you wished to mate with him — do you love him, La-ja?”

“I do not love anyone,” she replied; “and, furthermore, it is none of your affair. You are always meddling and asking questions that do not concern you. Come, if you are coming with me. We cannot get to Lo-har by standing still talking nonsense.”

“You will have to lead the way,” he said. “I do not know where Lo-har lies.”

They started on. “Where is your country?” she asked. “Perhaps it lies beyond Lo-har in the same direction. That would be fine for you, provided, of course, that you got out of Lo-har alive.”

“I do not know where my country is,” he admitted.

She knitted her brows and looked at him in astonishment. "You mean that you could not find your way home?" she demanded.

"Just that. I wouldn't have the faintest idea even in which direction to start."

"How strange," she commented. "I have never heard of any so stupid as that, other than the poor creatures whose heads are sick. They know nothing at all. I have seen a few such. They get that way from blows on the head. Once a boy I knew fell out of a tree and landed on his head. He was never right again. He used to think he was a tarag and go roaring and growling about on his hands and knees, but one day his father got tired of listening to him and killed him."

"Do you think I am like that boy?" asked von Horst.

"I have never seen you act like a tarag," she admitted; "but you do have very peculiar ways, and in many things you are very stupid."

Von Horst could not repress a smile, and the girl saw him. She appeared nettled. "Do you think it anything to laugh about?" she demanded. "Say, what are you doing? Why do you chop at so many trees with your knife? That is enough to make one think that there may be something the matter with your head."

"I am marking the trail that we pass," he explained, "so that I can find my way back after I leave you."

She seemed very interested. "Perhaps your head is not so sick after all," she said. "Even my father never thought of anything like that."

"He wouldn't have to if he can find his way about as easily as you Pellucidarians can," von Horst reminded her.

"Oh, it is not always so easy to find our way any place except to our own countries," she explained. "Take us anywhere in Pellucidar and we can find our way home, but we might not be able to find our

way back again to the place we had been taken. With your method, we could. I shall have to tell this to my father.”

As they penetrated more deeply into the forest, von Horst was impressed by its strangely somber and gloomy atmosphere. The dense foliage of the tree tops formed an unbroken roof above their heads, shutting out all direct rays of the sun. The result was a perpetual twilight, with a temperature considerably lower than any he had experienced in the open — the two combining to retard the growth of underbrush, so that the ground between the boles of the trees was almost bare of anything other than a carpet of dead leaves. What few plants had had the hardihood to withstand these conditions were almost colorless — unhealthy, grotesque appearing forms that but added to the melancholy aspect of the repellent wood.

From the moment that they entered the forest the ground rose rapidly until they were climbing a very considerable ascent; then they suddenly topped a ridge and descended into a ravine, but the forest continued unbroken as far as they could see.

As La-ja crossed the ravine and started up the farther ascent, von Horst asked her why she didn't try to find an easier way by following the ravine down until they reached the end of the hills.

“I am following a straight line to Lo-har,” she replied.

“But suppose you came to a sea?” he asked.

“I would go around it, of course,” she replied; “but where I can go at all, I go in a straight line.”

“I hope there are no Alps on our route,” he remarked, half aloud.

“I do not know what Alps are,” said La-ja, “but there will be plenty of other animals.”

“There will have to be more animals than we have seen since we got

into this wood,” remarked von Horst, “if we are to eat. I haven’t seen even so much as a bird.”

“I have noticed that,” replied La-ja. “I have also noticed that there are no fruits or nuts, nor any other edible thing. I do not like this forest. Perhaps it is the Forest of Death.”

“What is the Forest of Death?”

“I have heard of it. My people speak of it. It lies down some distance from Lo-har. In it live a race of horrible people who are not like any other people. Perhaps this is it.”

“Well, we haven’t seen anything so far that could harm us,” von Horst reassured her.

They had climbed out of the ravine and were on more level ground. The forest seemed even denser than it had been farther back. Only a dim, diffused light relieved the darkness.

Suddenly La-ja stopped. “What was that?” she asked in a whisper. “Did you see it?”

“I saw something move, but I did not see what it was,” replied the man. “It disappeared among the trees ahead of us and to the right. Is that what you saw?”

“Yes. It was right over there.” She pointed. “I do not like this forest. I do not know why, but it is as though it were vile — unclean.”

Von Horst nodded. “It is eerie. I shall be glad when we are well out of it.”

“There!” exclaimed La-ja. “There it is again. It is all white. What could it be?”

“I don’t know. I just had the briefest glimpse of it; but I thought — I thought it was something almost human. It is so dark in here that it is difficult to discern objects clearly unless one is very close to them.”

They walked on in silence, keeping a sharp lookout in all direc-

tions; and von Horst noticed that the girl remained very close to him. Often her shoulder touched his breast as though she sought the reassurance of personal contact. He was doubly glad now that he had insisted upon coming with her. He knew that she would not admit that she was frightened; and he would not suggest it, but he knew that she was frightened. For some inexplicable reason — inexplicable to him — he was glad that she was. Perhaps it satisfied the protective instinct in him. Perhaps it made her seem more feminine, and von Horst liked feminine women.

They had gone some little distance from the point at which they had seen the mysterious creature moving among the trees, without seeing any other suggestion of life in the forest, when they were startled by a series of shrieks, mingled with which were roars and a strange hissing sound. They both stopped, and La-ja pressed close to von Horst. He felt her tremble ever so slightly; and threw an arm about her, reassuringly. The sounds were coming rapidly closer. The screams, sounding strangely human, were filled with terror and despair, rising to a piercing crescendo of fright. Then the author of them burst into view — a naked man, his face distorted by terror. And such a man! His skin was a dead white, without life or beauty; and his hair was white. Two great canine tusks curved downward to his chin, the pink irises of his eyes surrounded blood-red pupils to make an already repellent countenance still further hideous.

Behind him, hissing and roaring, galloped a small dinosaur. It was not much larger than a Shetland pony; but its appearance might easily have caused even the bravest of men misgivings, so similar was it in everything but size to the mighty *Tyrannosaurus Rex*, the king of the tyrant reptiles of the Cretaceous.

At sight of La-ja and von Horst, the dinosaur veered suddenly in

their direction and came hissing and roaring down upon them like a steam locomotive gone amuck. So close was it that there was not even time to seek safety behind a tree; and von Horst's reaction was the natural and almost mechanical one of a man of his training. He whipped his revolver from its holster and fired; then he leaped quickly out of the path of the charging brute, dragging La-ja with him.

The dinosaur, badly hit, roared with rage, nearly going down. As it stumbled past him, the man fired again, placing a heavy .45 slug just behind the left shoulder. This time the beast fell; but knowing the remarkable life tenacity of the reptilia, von Horst was not over confident that all danger was past. Grasping La-ja by a hand, he ran quickly to the nearest tree, behind the bole of which they sought concealment. Above them and out of reach were the lowest branches — a perfect sanctuary that they could not gain. If the two bullets had not permanently stopped the dinosaur, their principal hope lay in the possibility that after it regained its feet, if it did not immediately see them it would go blundering off in the wrong direction.

From behind the tree, von Horst watched the beast pawing up the matted vegetation as it sought to regain its feet. He could see that it was far from dead, although badly hit. La-ja pressed close to him. He could feel her heart beating against his side. It was a tense moment as the dinosaur finally staggered up. For a moment it swayed as though about to fall again; then it swung slowly about in a circle, its muzzle raised, sniffing the air. Presently it started in their direction — slowly, cautiously. Its appearance now seemed far more menacing to von Horst than had its mad charge. It gave the impression of being a cold, calculating, efficient engine of destruction, an animated instrument of revenge that would demand an eye for an eye and not give up the ghost until vengeance had been achieved. It was coming straight toward the

tree behind which they were hiding. Whether it had discovered the small portion of von Horst's head that was revealed beyond the edge of the bole, the man did not know; but it was certainly coming toward them guided either by sight or by scent.

It was a tense moment for von Horst. For the instant he was uncertain as to what he should do. Then he decided. Leaning close to La-ja, he whispered, "The beast is coming. Run for that tree behind us, keeping this tree between you and the beast, so that it does not see you; then keep going from one tree to another until you are safely away. When it is dead I will call to you."

"And what will you do? Will you come with me?"

"I'll wait here to make sure that it dies," he replied. "I can give it a few more shots if necessary."

She shook her head. "No."

"Hurry!" he urged. "It is quite close. It is looking for us."

"I shall remain here with you," said La-ja with finality.

From her tone of voice he knew that there was nothing more to be said. From past experience he knew his La-ja. With a shrug, he gave up the argument; then he looked out once more to see the dinosaur within a few paces of the tree.

Suddenly he leaped from behind the tree and started on a run across the front of the beast. He had acted so quickly that La-ja was stunned to inaction by surprise. But not the dinosaur. It did just what von Horst had hoped and believed it would. With a bellow of rage, it took after him. Thus he drew it away from the girl. This accomplished, he turned and faced the brute. Standing his ground, he fired rapidly from his automatic, placing his bullets in the broad chest. Yet the thing came on.

Von Horst emptied his weapon; the dinosaur was almost upon him;

he saw La-ja running rapidly toward him, as though in an effort to divert the charge of the infuriated reptile with the comparatively puny spear that she carried. He tried to leap aside from the path of the charging beast, but it was too close. It rose upon its hind feet and struck at his head with a taloned fore paw, felling him, unconscious, to the ground.

9.

THE CHARNEL CAVES

Von Horst experienced a sensation of peace and well being. He was vaguely aware that he was awakening from a long and refreshing sleep. He did not open his eyes. He was so comfortable that there seemed no reason to do so, but rather to court a continuance of the carefree bliss he was enjoying. This passive rapture was rudely interrupted by a growing realization that his head ached. With returning consciousness his nervous system awoke to the fact that he was far from comfortable. The sensation of peace and well being faded as the dream it was. He opened his eyes and looked up into the face of La-ja, bending solicitously close above his own. His head was pillowed in her lap. She was stroking his forehead with a soft palm.

“You are all right, Von?” she whispered. “You will not die?”

He smiled up at her, wryly. “O Death! Where is thy sting?” he apostrophized.

“It didn’t sting you,” La-ja assured him; “it hit you with its paw.”

Von Horst grinned. “My head feels as though it had hit me with a sledge hammer. Where is it? What became of it?” He turned his head painfully to one side and saw the dinosaur laying motionless near them.

“It died just as it struck you,” explained the girl. “You are a very brave man, Von.”

“You are a very brave girl,” he retorted. “I saw you running in to help me. You should not have done that.”

“Could I have stood and watched you being killed when you had deliberately drawn the charge of the zarith upon yourself to save me?”

“So that is a zarith?”

“Yes, a baby zarith,” replied the girl. “It is well for us that it was not a full grown one, but of course one would never meet a full grown zarith in a forest.”

“No? Why not?”

“For one reason they are too big; and, then, they couldn’t find any food here. A full grown zarith is eight times as long as a man is tall. It couldn’t move around easily among all these trees; and when it stood up on its hind feet, it’d bump its head on the branches. They kill thags and tandors and other large game that seldom enters the forests — at least not forests like this one.”

Von Horst whistled softly to himself as he tried to visualize a reptile nearly fifty feet in length that fed on the great bos, the progenitors of modern cattle, and upon the giant mammoth. “Yes,” he soliloquized, “I imagine it’s just as well that we ran into Junior instead of papa. But, say, La-ja, what became of that man-thing the zarith was chasing?”

“He never stopped running. I saw him looking back after you made the loud noise with that thing you call peestol; but he did not stop. He should have come back to help you, I think; though he must have thought that you were sick in the head not to run. It takes a very brave man not to run from a zarith.”

“There wasn’t any place to run. If there had been, I’d still be running.”

“I do not believe that,” said La-ja. “Gaz would have run, but not you.”

“You like me a little better, La-ja?” he asked. He was starved for

friendship — for even the friendship of this savage little girl of the stone age.

“No,” said La-ja, emphatically. “I do not like you at all, but I know a brave man when I see one.”

“Why don’t you like me, La-ja?” he asked a little wistfully. “I like you. I like you — a lot.”

He hesitated. How much did he like her?

“I don’t like you because you are sick in the head, for one thing; for another, you are not of my tribe; furthermore, you try to order me around as though I belonged to you.”

“I’m sure sick in the head now,” he admitted; “but that doesn’t effect my good disposition or my other sterling qualities, and I can’t help not being a member of your tribe. You can’t hold that against me. It was just a mistake on the part of my father and mother in not having been born in Pellucidar; and really you can’t blame them for that, especially when you consider that they never even heard of the place. And, La-ja, as for ordering you around; I never do it except for your own good.”

“And I don’t like the way you talk sometimes, with a silent laugh behind your words. I know that you are laughing at me — making fun of me because you think that the world you came from is so much better than Pellucidar — that its people have more brains.”

“Don’t you think that you will ever learn to like me?” he asked, quite solemn now.

“No,” she said; “you will be dead before I could have time.”

“Gaz, I suppose, will attend to that?” he inquired.

“Gaz, or some other of my people. Do you think you could stand now?”

"I am very comfortable," he said. "I have never had such a nice pillow."

She took his head, quite gently, and laid it on the ground; then she stood up. "You are always laughing at me with words," she said.

He rose to his feet. "*With* you, La-ja; never *at* you," he said.

She looked at him steadily as though meditating his words. She was attempting, he was sure, to conjure some uncomplimentary double meaning from them; but she made no comment.

"Do you think you can walk?" was all that she said.

"I don't feel much like dancing even a saraband," he replied, "but I think I can walk all right. Come on, lead the way to Lo-har and the lightsome Gaz."

They resumed their journey deeper into the gloomy wood, speaking seldom as they toiled up the steep ascents that constantly confronted them. At length they came to a sheer cliff that definitely blocked their further progress in a straight line. La-ja turned to the left and followed along its foot. As she did not hesitate or seem in the slightest doubt, von Horst asked her why she turned to the left instead of to the right. "Do you know the shortest way when you cannot go in a straight line?" he asked.

"No," she admitted; "but when one does not know and cannot follow one's head, then one should always turn to the left and follow one's heart."

He nodded, comprehendingly. "Not a bad idea," he said. "At least it saves one from useless speculation." He glanced up the face of the cliff, casually measuring its height with his eyes. He saw the same great trees of the forest growing close to the edge, indicating that the forest continued on beyond; and he saw something else — just a fleeting

glimpse of something moving, but he was sure that he recognized it. "We are being watched," he said.

La-ja glanced up. "You saw something?" she asked.

He nodded. "It looked like our white-haired friend, or another just like him."

"He was not our friend," remonstrated the literal La-ja.

"I was laughing with words, as you say," he explained.

"I wish that I liked you," said La-ja.

He looked at her in surprise. "I wish that you did, but why do you wish it?"

"I would like to like a man who can laugh in the face of danger," she replied.

"Well, please try; but do you really think that fellow is dangerous? He didn't look very dangerous when we saw him presenting the freedom of the forest to the zarith."

She knit her brows and looked at him with a puzzled expression. "Sometimes you seem quite like other people," she said; "and then you say something, and I realize that your head is very sick."

Von Horst laughed aloud. "I opine that the twentieth century brand of humor doesn't go so well in the Pleistocene."

"There you go again!" she snapped. "Even my father, who is very wise, would not know what you were talking about half the time."

As they moved along the foot of the cliff, they kept constantly alert for any further sign that they were being watched or followed.

"What makes you think that this white-haired man is dangerous?" he asked.

"He alone might not be dangerous to us; but where there is one there must be a tribe, and any tribe of strange people would be dangerous to us. We are in their country. They know the places where they

might most easily set upon us and kill us. We do not know what is just beyond the range of our vision.

“If this is the Forest of Death, the people who dwell here are dangerous because they are not as other men. I have heard it said. None of my people who are living has ever been here, but stories handed down from father to son tell of strange things that have happened in the Forest of Death. My people are brave people, but none of them would go to that forest. There are things in Pellucidar that warriors cannot fight with weapons. It is known that there are such things in the Forest of Death. If we are indeed in it, we shall never live to reach Lo-har.”

“Poor Gaz!” exclaimed von Horst.

“What do you mean?”

“I am sorry for him because he will not have the pleasure of killing me or taking you for his mate.”

She looked at him in disgust, continuing on in silence. They both watched for signs of the trailers they were sure were following them; but no sound broke the deathly silence of the wood, nor did they see aught to confirm their suspicions; so at length they decided that whatever it was they had seen at the cliff top had departed and would not molest them.

They came to the mouth of a cave in the cliff; and as they had not slept for some time, von Horst suggested that they go in and rest. His head still ached, and he felt the need of sleep. The mouth of the cave was quite small, making it necessary for von Horst to get down on his hands and knees and crawl in to investigate. He shoved his spear in ahead of him and felt around with it to assure himself that no animal was lairing in the darkness of the interior as well as to discover if the cave were large enough to accommodate them.

Having satisfied himself on both these points, he entered the cave; and a moment later La-ja joined him. A cursory exploration assured them that the cave ran back some little distance into the cliff, but as they were only interested in enough space wherein to sleep they lay down close to the entrance. Von Horst lay with his head to the opening, his spear ready to thrust at any intruder that might awaken him. La-ja lay a few feet from him farther back in the cave. It was very dark and quiet. A gentle draft of fresh air came through the entrance dispelling the damp and musty odors which von Horst had come to expect in caves. Soon they were asleep.

When von Horst awoke, his head no longer ached; and he felt much refreshed. He turned over on his back and stretched, yawning.

“You are awake?” asked La-ja.

“Yes. Are you rested?”

“Entirely. I just woke up.”

“Hungry?”

“Yes, and thirsty, too,” she admitted.

“Let’s get started, then,” he suggested. “It looks as though we’d have to get out of this forest before we find food.”

“All right.” she said, “but what makes it so dark out?”

Von Horst got to his knees and faced the entrance to the cave. He could see nothing. Even the gloom of the forest had been blotted out. He thought it possible that he had become turned around in his sleep and was looking in the wrong direction, but no matter which way he turned he was confronted always by the same impenetrable blackness. Then he crawled forward, feeling with his hands. Where he had thought the entrance to be he found the rounded surface of a large boulder. He felt around its edges, discovering loose dirt.

“The entrance has been blocked up, La-ja,” he said.

“But what could have done it without awakening us?” she demanded.

“I don’t know,” he admitted, “but in some way the mouth of the cave has been filled with a boulder and loose dirt. There isn’t a breath of air coming in as there was when we entered.”

He tried to push the boulder away, but he could not budge it. Then he started to scrape away the loose dirt, but what he scraped away was replaced by more sifting in from the outside. La-ja came to his side and they exerted their combined weight and strength in an effort to move the boulder, but to no avail.

“We are penned up here like rats in a trap,” said von Horst in deep disgust.

“And with our air supply shut off we’ll suffocate if we don’t find some way to get out.”

“There must be another opening,” said von Horst.

“What makes you think so?” asked the girl.

“Don’t you recall that when we came in there was a draft of air entering from the outside?” he asked.

“Yes, that’s right; there was.”

“Well, if the air came in this entrance in a draft, it must have gone out some other opening; and if we can find that opening, perhaps we can get out, too.”

“Do you suppose the white-haired man and his people blocked the entrance?” asked La-ja.

“I imagine so,” replied von Horst. “It must have been men of some kind; no animal could have done it so quietly as not to have awakened us; and, of course, for the same reason, an earthquake is out of the question.”

“I wonder why they did it?” mused the girl.

“Probably an easy and safe way to kill strangers who come to their country,” suggested von Horst.

“Just let us starve to death or suffocate,” said the girl in disgust. “Only cowards would do that.”

“I’ll bet Gaz would never do anything like that,” said von Horst.

“Gaz? He has killed many men with his bare hands. Sometimes he bites the great vein in their neck and they bleed to death, and once he pushed a man’s head back until he broke his neck.”

“What a nice little play fellow!”

“Gaz never plays. He loves to kill — that is his play.”

“Well, if I’m going to meet him, I’ll have to get out of here. Let’s follow the cave back and see if we can find the other opening. Stay close behind me.” Von Horst rose slowly to gauge the height of the cave and found that they could stand erect; then he groped his way cautiously toward the rear, touching a wall with one hand. He moved very slowly, feeling ahead with each foot for solid ground before he planted it. They had not gone far when von Horst felt what appeared to be twigs and leaves beneath his feet. He stooped and felt of them. They were dry branches with dead leaves still clinging to them and long thick grasses. The floor of the cave here was strewn thickly with them.

“Must have been a sleeping place for some animal or perhaps for men,” he suggested. “I wish we had a light; I don’t like groping along in the dark like this.”

“I have my fire stones,” said La-ja. “If we had some tinder, I could light a bundle of these grasses.”

“I’ll make some,” said von Horst.

He stooped and cleared a place on the floor, exposing the bare ground; then he gathered some of the dried leaves and powdered them

between his palms, making a little pile of the tinder on the bare ground.

“Come and try it, now,” he said. “Here,” he guided her hand to the tinder.

La-ja knelt beside him and struck her fire stones together close above the little single fragment, and it commenced to glow. La-ja bent low and blew gently upon it. Suddenly it burst into flame. Von Horst was ready with a bundle of the grasses he had gathered for the purpose, and a moment later he held a blazing torch in his hand.

In the light of the torch they looked about them. They were in a large chamber formed by the widening of the cave. The floor was littered with twigs and grasses among which were a number of gnawed bones. Whether it was the den of beasts or men, von Horst could not tell; but from the presence of the bedding he judged that it was the latter. Yet there was no article of cast-off clothing, no broken or discarded weapon or tool that he could find, no potsherds. If men had dwelt here they must have been of a very low order.

Before their torch burned low they gathered grasses and made a quantity of them, and thus supplied with the assurance of light for a considerable time they continued on through the large chamber into a narrow corridor that wound and twisted into the heart of the escarpment. Presently they came to another even larger chamber. This, too, bore evidence of having been inhabited; but the relics here were of a grisly nature. The floor was strewn with the bones and skulls of human beings. A foul odor of decaying flesh permeated the air of this subterranean charnel chamber.

“Let’s get out of here,” said von Horst.

“There are three openings beside the one we came in,” said La-ja. “Which one shall we take?”

Von Horst shook his head. "We may have to try them all," he said. "Let's start with the one farthest on our right. It may be as good a guess as any; and at best it's only a guess, no matter which one we decide on."

As they approached the opening they were almost overpowered by the stench that came from it, but von Horst was determined to investigate every possible avenue of escape; so he stepped through the opening into a smaller chamber. The sight that met his eyes brought him to a sudden halt. A dozen human corpses were piled against the far wall of the chamber. A single glance showed von Horst that there was no outer opening leading from the room; so he beat a hasty retreat.

One of the two remaining openings from the large chamber was smoke blackened, and on the floor of the cave just in front of it were the ashes and charcoal of many wood fires. It's appearance gave von Horst an idea. He walked to the second opening and held his smoking torch close to it, but the smoke rose steadily; then he went to that before which fires had been built, and now the smoke from his torch was drawn steadily into the opening.

"This one must lead to the outer opening," he said, "and it also served as a chimney when they cooked their feasts. Nice lot, whoever they are that inhabit these caves. I think I prefer Gaz. We'll try this one, La-ja."

A narrow corridor rose steeply. It was blackened with soot, and the draft that wafted continually up it was laden with the stench from the horror chambers below.

"It can't be far to the top," said von Horst. "The cliff didn't look more than fifty feet high, and we have been climbing a little all the time since we first entered the cave."

"It's getting light ahead," said La-ja.

“Yes, there’s the opening!” exclaimed von Horst.

Ten feet from the surface they passed the openings to two corridors or chambers, one on either side of the shaft they were ascending; but so engrossed were they in escaping from the foul air that surrounded them that they scarce noticed them. Nor did they see the forms lurking in the darkness just within.

La-ja was just behind von Horst. It was she who discovered the danger first — but too late. She saw hands reach out of one of the openings just as von Horst passed it, seize him, and drag him in. She voiced a cry of warning, and at the same instant she was seized and drawn into the opening on the opposite side.

10.

GORBUSES

Von Horst struggled and fought to free himself. He shouted aloud to La-ja to run to the opening they had seen ahead of them and make her escape. He did not know that she, too, had been captured. It seemed that a dozen hands clung to each of his arms, and though he was a powerful man he could neither escape nor wrench his arm free long enough to draw his pistol. His spear had been snatched from him at the moment of his seizure. It was very dark in the corridor down which he was being dragged along a steep declivity; so that he could not see whether they were men or beasts that had captured him. Yet, though they did not speak, he was sure that they were men. Presently, at a sudden turning of the corridor, they came into a lighted chamber — a vast subterranean room illuminated by many torches. And here von Horst saw the nature of the creatures into whose hands he had fallen. They were of the same race as the man he had seen fleeing from the zanth. They were mostly men; but there were a few women among them and perhaps a dozen children. All had white skins, white hair, and the pink and red eyes of Albinos, which in themselves are not disgusting. It was the bestial, brutal faces of these creatures that made them appear so horrible.

Most of the assemblage, which must have numbered several hundred people, sat or squatted or lay near the wall of the roughly circular chamber, leaving a large open space in the center. To this space von Horst was dragged; then he was thrown to the ground, his hands tied behind his back, and his ankles secured.

As he lay on his side, taking in all that he could see of the repulsive concourse, his heart suddenly sank. From the mouth of a corridor opposite that through which he had been brought into the chamber he saw La-ja being dragged. They brought her to the open space where he lay and bound her as they had bound him. The two lay facing one another. Von Horst tried to smile, but there was not much heart in it. From what he had seen of these people and what he had guessed of their customs, he could draw no slightest ray of hope that they might escape a fate similar to that of those whose ghastly remains they had seen in those other two chambers of the cave.

“It looks like a hard winter,” he said.

“Winter? What is winter?” she asked.

“It is the time of year — oh, but then you don’t even know what a year is. What’s the use? Let’s talk about something else.”

“Why do we have to talk?”

“I don’t know why I have to, but I do. Ordinarily I’m not a very loquacious person, but right now I’ve got to talk or go crazy.”

“Be careful what you say, then,” she whispered, “if you are thinking of talking of a way to escape.”

“Do you suppose these things can understand us?” he demanded.

“Yes, we can understand you,” said one of the creatures standing near them, in hollow, sepulchral tones.

“Then tell us why you captured us. What are you going to do with us?”

The fellow bared his yellowed teeth in a soundless laugh. “He asks what we are going to do with them,” he announced in loud tones that were none the less suggestive of the grave because of their loudness.

The audience rocked with silent mirth. “What are we going to do

with them?" echoed several, and then they went off into gales of hideous, mirthless laughter that was as silent as the tomb.

"If they want to know, lets show them now," suggested one.

"Yes, Torp," said another, "now, now."

"No," said he who had been addressed as Torp, the same fellow who had originally spoken to von Horst. "We already have plenty, many of which have aged too long as it is." He stepped closer to the prisoners; and, stooping, pinched their flesh, digging a filthy forefinger between their ribs. "They need fattening," he announced. "We shall feed them for a while. Plenty of nuts and a little fruit will put a layer of juicy fat on their ribs." He rubbed his palms together and licked his flabby lips. "Some of you take them away and put them in that little room over there, get nuts and fruit for them; and keep them there until they get fat." As he finished speaking, another of the creatures entered the room from one of the runways that led above. He was very much excited as he ran into the center of the cavern.

"What's the matter with you, Durg?" demanded Torp.

"I was chased by a zarith," exclaimed Durg, "but that is not all. A strange gilak with a woman made many loud noises with a little black stick, and the zarith fell down and died. The strange gilak saved Durg's life; but why, I do not know."

The men who had gathered about von Horst and La-Ja to take them to the chamber in which they were to be fattened had removed the thongs from their ankles and dragged them to their feet just as Durg finished his story; so that he saw them now for the first time.

"There they are!" he exclaimed excitedly. "There is the same gilak that saved Durg's life. What are you going to do with them, Torp?"

"They are going to be fattened," replied Torp; "they are too thin."

"You should let them go, because they saved my life," urged Durg.

“Should I let them go because the man is a fool?” demanded Torp. “If he had any sense he would have killed and eaten you. Take them away.”

“He saved a Gorbus!” cried Durg, addressing the assembled tribe. “Should we let him be killed for that? I say, let them go free.”

“Let them go!” cried a few, but there were more who shrieked, “Fatten them! Fatten them!”

As the men were pushing them toward the entrance to the chamber in which they were to be confined, von Horst saw Durg facing Torp angrily.

“Some day I am going to kill you,” threatened the former. “We need a good chief. You are no good.”

“I am chief,” screamed Torp. “It is I who will kill you.”

“You?” demanded Durg with disgust. “You are only a killer of women. You murdered seven of them. You never murdered a man. I murdered four.”

“You poisoned them,” sneered Torp.

“I did not!” shrieked Durg. “I killed three of them with a cleaver and stabbed the other with a dagger.”

“In the back?” asked Torp.

“No, not in the back, you woman killer.” As von Horst was pushed from the large cavern into the darkness of the small one that adjoined it the two Gorbuses were still quarrelling; and as the European meditated upon what he had heard, he was struck not so much by the gruesomeness of their words as by Durg’s use of two English words — cleaver and dagger.

This was sufficiently remarkable in itself, and even more so coming from the lips of a member of a tribe that was apparently so low in the scale of evolution that they had no weapons of any description. How

could Durg know what a dagger was? How could he ever have heard of a cleaver? And where did he learn the English words for them? Von Horst could discover no explanation of the mystery.

The Gorbuses left them in the smaller cave without bothering to secure their ankles again, though they left their hands tied behind them. There were leaves and grasses on the floor, and the two prisoners made themselves as comfortable as they could. The torch-light from the larger cave relieved the gloom of their prison cell, permitting them to see one another dimly as they sat on the musty bedding that littered the floor.

“What are we going to do now?” demanded La-ja.

“I don’t know of anything that we can do right now,” replied the man, “but it appears that later on we are going to be eaten — when we are fatter. If they feed us well we should do our best to get fat. We must certainly leave a good impression behind us when we go.”

“That is stupid,” snapped the girl. “Your head must be very sick indeed to think of anything so stupid.”

“Perhaps ‘thick’ would be a better word,” laughed von Horst. “Do you know, La-ja, it is just too bad.”

“What is too bad?”

“That you have no sense of humor,” he replied. “We could have a much better time if you had.”

“I never know when you are serious and when you are laughing with words,” she said. “If you will tell me when the things you say are supposed to be funny, perhaps I can laugh at them.”

“You win, La-ja,” the man assured her.

“Win what?” she demanded.

“My apology and my esteem — you have a sense of humor, even though you don’t know it.”

“You said a moment ago,” said La-ja, “that you didn’t know of anything that we could do right now. Don’t you wish to escape, or would you rather stay here and get eaten?”

“Of course I’d prefer escaping,” replied von Horst, “but I don’t see any possibility of it at present while all those creatures are in the big cave.”

“What have you got that thing you call peestol for?” demanded La-ja, not without a note of derision. “You killed a zarith with it. You could much more easily kill these Gorbuses; then we could escape easily.”

“There are too many of them, La-ja,” he replied. “If I fired away all my ammunition, I could not possibly kill enough of them to make escape certain; furthermore my hands are tied behind me. But even were they free, I’d wait to the very last moment before attempting it.

“You have no way of knowing it, La-ja; but when I have used up all these shiny little things tucked in my belt, the pistol will be of no more use to me; for I can never get any more of them. Therefore, I must be very careful not to waste them.

“However, you may rest assured that before I’ll let ’em eat either one of us, I’ll do a little shooting. My hope is that they will be so surprised and frightened by the reports that they’ll fall over one another in their efforts to escape.”

As he ceased speaking, a Gorbus entered their little cave. It was Durg. He carried a small torch which illuminated the interior, revealing the rough walls, the litter of leaves and grasses, the two figures lying uncomfortably with bound hands.

Durg looked them over in silence for a moment; then he squatted on the floor near them. “Torp is a stubborn fool,” he said in his hollow

voice. "He ought to set you free, but he won't. He's made up his mind that we're going to eat you, and I guess we shall.

"It's too bad though. No one ever saved a Gorbush's life before; it was unheard of. If I had been chief, I would have let you go."

"Maybe you can help us anyway," suggested von Horst.

"How?" asked Durg.

"Show us how we can escape."

"You can't escape," Durg assured him emphatically.

"Those people don't stay in that other cave all the time, do they?" demanded the European.

"If they go away, Torp will leave a guard here to see that you don't get away."

Von Horst mused for a moment. Finally he looked up at their grotesque visitor. "You'd like to be chief, wouldn't you?" he demanded.

"S-s-sh!" cautioned Durg. "Don't let anyone hear you say that. But how did you know?"

"I know many things," replied von Horst in a whisper, mysteriously.

Durg eyed him half fearfully. "I knew that you were not as other gilaks," he said. "You are different. Perhaps you are from that other life, that other world, of which Gorbushes get fleeting glimpses out of the dim background of almost forgotten memories. Yes, they are forgotten; and yet there are always reminders of them constantly tormenting us. Tell me — who are you? From whence came you?"

"I am called Von; and I come from the outer world — from a world very different from this one."

"I knew it!" exclaimed Durg. "It must be that there is another world. Once we Gorbushes lived in it. It was a happy world; but because of what we did we were sent away from it to live here in this dark forest, miserable and unhappy."

“I do not understand,” said von Horst. “You didn’t come from my world; there is no one like you there.”

“We were different there,” said Durg. “We all feel that we were different. To some the memories are more distinct than to others, but they are never wholly clear. We get fleeting glimpses that are blurred and dim and that fade quickly before we can decipher them or fix them definitely in our memories. It is only those that we murdered that we see clearly — we see them and the way that we murdered them; but we do not see ourselves as we were then, except rarely; and then the visions are only hazy suggestions. But we know that we were not as we are here. It is tantalizing; it drives us almost to madness — never quite to see, never quite to recall.

“I can see the three that I killed with the cleaver — my father and two older brothers — I did it that I might get something they had; I do not know what. They stood in my way. I murdered them. Now I am a naked Gorbis feeding on human bodies. Some of us think that thus we are punished.”

“What do you know about cleavers?” asked von Horst, now much interested in the weird recital and its various implications.

“I know nothing of cleavers except that it was with a cleaver I killed my father and my two brothers. With a dagger, I stabbed a man. I do not know why. I can see him — his pain distorted features clearly, the rest of him very vaguely. He had on blue clothes with shiny buttons. Ah, now he has faded away — all but his face. He is glaring at me. I almost had something then — clothes, buttons! What are they? I almost knew — now they are gone. What were the words? What words did I just say? They have gone, too. It is ever thus. We are plagued by half pictures that are snatched away from us immediately.”

“You all suffer thus?” asked von Horst.

“Yes,” said Durg. “We all see those we have murdered; those are the only memories that we retain permanently.”

“You are all murderers?”

“Yes. I am one of the best. Torp’s seven women are nothing. Some he killed while they were embracing him with love — he smothered them or choked them. One he strangled with her own hair. He is always bragging about that one.”

“Why did he kill them?” demanded La-ja.

“He wished something that they had. It was thus with all of us. I can’t imagine what it was I wished when I killed my father and brothers, nor what any of the others wished. Whatever it was, we didn’t get it; for we have nothing here. The only thing we ever crave is food, and we have plenty of that. Anyway, no one would kill for food. It gives no satisfaction. It is nauseating. We eat because if we didn’t we believe that we would die and go to a worse place than this. We are afraid of that.”

“You don’t enjoy eating?” asked von Horst. “What do you enjoy?”

“Nothing. There is no happiness in the Forest of Death. There are cold and hopelessness and nausea and fear. Oh, yes; there is hate. We hate one another. Perhaps we get some satisfaction from that, but not a great deal. We are all hating, and you can’t get a great deal of pleasure doing what every one else is doing.

“I derived a little pleasure from wishing to set you free — that was different; that was unique. It is the first pleasure I have ever had. Of course I am not certain just what pleasure is, but I thought I recognized the sensation as pleasure because while I was experiencing it I forgot all about cold and hopelessness and nausea and fear. Anything that makes one forget must be a pleasure.”

“You are all murderers?” asked La-ja.

“We have each killed something,” replied Durg. “Do you see that old woman sitting over there with her face in her hands? She killed the happiness of two people. She remembers it quite clearly. A man and a woman. They loved each other very much. All that they asked was to be left alone and allowed to be happy.

“And that man standing just beyond her. He killed something more beautiful than life. Love. He killed his wife’s love.

“Yes, each of us has killed something; but I am glad that it was men that I killed and not happiness or love.”

“Perhaps you are right,” said von Horst. “There are far too many men in the world but not half enough happiness or love.”

A sudden commotion in the outer cave interrupted further conversation. Durg jumped to his feet and left them; and von Horst and La-ja, looking out, saw two prisoners being dragged into the cavern.

“More food for the larder,” remarked the man.

“And they don’t even enjoy eating it,” said La-ja. “I wonder if what Durg told us is true — about the murders, I mean, and the other life they half recall.”

Von Horst shook his head. “I don’t know; but if it is, it answers a question that has been bothering generations of men of the outer crust.”

“Look,” said La-ja. “They are bringing the prisoners this way.”

“To the fattening pen,” said von Horst with a grin.

“One of them is a very big man, is he not?” remarked La-ja. “It takes many Gorbuses to force him along.”

“That fellow looks familiar to me,” said von Horst. “Not the big one — the other. There are so many Gorbuses around them that I can’t get a good look at either of them.”

The new prisoners were brought to the smaller cave and thrust in

roughly, so that they almost fell upon the two already there. The larger man was blustering and threatening; the other whined and complained. In the semi-darkness of the interior it was impossible to distinguish the features of either.

They paid no attention to von Horst or La-ja although they must have been aware of their presence; yet the former felt certain that the loud bragging of the larger man must be for the purpose of impressing them, as the Gorbuses had departed; and the fellow's companion did not appear to be the type that anyone would wish to impress. He was quite evidently a coward and in a blue funk of terror. He was almost gibbering with fright as he bemoaned the fate that had ever brought him to the Forest of Death; but the other man paid no attention to him, each rambling on quite independently of the other.

As von Horst, half amused, listened to them, several Gorbuses approached the cave, bearing fruits and nuts. One of them carried a torch, the light from which illuminated the interior of the cave as the fellow entered; and in the flickering light, the faces of the prisoners were revealed to each other.

"You!" fairly screamed the big fellow who had been blustering, as his eyes fell upon von Horst. It was Frug, and his companion was Skruf.

11.

FATTENED FOR SLAUGHTER

As the full significance of the situation revealed itself to von Horst, he was of two minds as to whether he should laugh or curse. Their predicament had been bad enough before, but with the presence of these two it might be infinitely worse. Frug's reaction when he recognized them augured no good. However, if the situation was menacing it was also amusing; and von Horst smiled as he contemplated the excitement of the massive cave man.

"And the girl, too!" exclaimed Skruf.

"Yes," said von Horst, "it is indeed we. To what do we owe the pleasure of this unexpected visit? We had thought of you as being safely beside the home fires of Basti cooking your meat, and here you are waiting to be cooked as someone else's meat! Ah, but is not life filled with surprises? Some pleasurable, some — er — not so pleasurable."

"If I could break these bonds and get my hands on you!" shouted Frug.

"Yes? What would you do then, my man?" inquired von Horst.

"I'd break your neck; I'd pound your face to a pulp; I'd —"

"Wait," begged von Horst. "Permit me to suggest a different order of procedure. If you were to break my neck first, as you intimate is your intention; you would derive little pleasure from beating my face to a pulp, as I should be dead and therefore unable to appreciate what you were doing to me. Really, Frug, you are not very bright. I cannot conceive how a person of such limited intelligence ever came to be

chosen chief of Basti, but perhaps you were chosen because of the circumference of your biceps rather than for that of your cranium."

The Gorbuses had dumped a quantity of fruit and nuts upon the floor of the cave and departed, leaving the cavern again in semi-darkness. Frug was still struggling with his bonds. Skruf was whimpering and moaning. Von Horst was contemplating the food. "We can negotiate the softer fruit with our hands tied behind us," he remarked to La-ja, "but how do they expect us to crack the shells of some of those nuts."

"Perhaps we can free our hands," suggested the girl. "Roll over close to me, with your back against mine; then try to untie the thongs that bind my wrists. If you can free me, I can easily free you."

She had spoken in a low whisper lest Frug or Skruf hear and act upon the suggestion before she and von Horst were free. The European wriggled his body into position behind that of the girl; then he fell to work upon the knots at her wrists. It was a slow process, partially because he could not see what he was doing and partially because of the limited use he had of his hands; but after what seemed an eternity he felt a knot loosening. With practice he became more adept, and soon the second knot gave to his perseverance. There were several more; but eventually the last one succumbed, and La-ja's hands were free. Immediately she rolled over, facing his back; and he could feel her nimble fingers searching out the secret of the knots. When she touched his hands or arms he experienced a strange thrill that was new to him. He had felt the contact of her flesh before but always then she had been angry and resentful, sometimes violently so; and he had experienced no pleasurable reaction. Now it was different; because, for the first time, she was ministering to him and of her own free will.

"What are you two doing?" demanded Frug. "You are very quiet.

If you think you are going to eat all the food they brought, I'll tell you you'd better not. I'll kill you if you try that."

"Before or after you break my neck?" asked von Horst.

"Before, of course," snapped Frug. "No, after. No — what difference does it make? You talk like a fool."

"And after you have killed me and broken my neck, or broken my neck and killed me, in whichever order you finally decide to proceed, you and Skruf will undoubtedly eat the food. Am I right?"

"Of course you're right," growled Frug.

"And do you know the purpose for which the food is intended?" inquired von Horst.

"For us to eat, of course."

"But why should they care whether or not we eat?" asked the European. "Are you laboring under the delusion that they are at all concerned about either our happiness or our comfort?"

"Then why did they bring it?" demanded Skruf.

"To fatten us," explained von Horst. "It seems that they like their meat fat, or perhaps I should say that it tastes less nauseating to them fat and fresh."

"Fatten us? Eat us?" gasped Skruf.

Frug made no comment, but von Horst could see that he was redoubling his efforts to free himself of his bonds. A moment later La-ja succeeded in negotiating the last knot, and von Horst felt the thongs slip from his wrists. He sat up and gathered a handful of fruit, passing it to La-ja; then he turned to Frug.

"My hands are free," he said. "I am going to remove your bonds, and then you can liberate Skruf. You are not going to kill me. If you try to, I'll kill you. I still have the weapon with which Skruf has seen me kill many beasts and you have seen some of your own warriors killed.

I am going to set you free for two reasons. One is, that you may eat. The other is not a very good reason unless you have more brains than I give you credit for. I hope for the best, but I am skeptical.”

“My brains are all right,” growled Frug. “What is your other reason for setting us free?”

“We are all in the same fix here,” von Horst reminded him. “If we don’t escape, we shall be killed and eaten. Working together, we may be able to escape. If we waste our time trying to kill one another or trying to keep from being killed, none of us will escape. Now what do you and Skruf intend to do about it? It is up to you. I shall free your hands in any event; and I shall kill you before you can lay your hands on me, if you try to.”

Frug shook his head. “I swore to kill you,” he said. “You got me into this trouble. If you hadn’t escaped from Basti, I wouldn’t be here. It was while we were tracking you that we were captured. You killed some of my warriors. You liberated all of our slaves, and now you ask me not to kill you.”

Von Horst shrugged, “You are mis-stating the facts,” he said. “I am not asking you not to kill me; I am asking you not to make me kill you. Frug, while I have this weapon, you haven’t a chance on earth to kill me. Perhaps I should have said a chance in the earth.”

“Promise him, Frug,” begged Skruf. “He is right. We can’t escape if we fight among ourselves. At least you and I can’t, for he can kill us both. I have seen him kill with the little black stick. He does not have to be near the thing he wishes to kill.”

“Very well,” Frug finally assented. “We will not try to kill one another until after we have escaped from these people.”

Von Horst moved over to the Chief of Basti and removed the bonds from his wrists; then Frug released Skruf. All but the latter

immediately fell to eating. Skruf sat apart, his face resolutely turned away from the food.

“Why don’t you eat?” demanded Frug.

“And get fat?” cried Skruf. “The rest of you can get fat and be eaten, but I shall remain so thin that no one will eat me.”

Time passed, as it must even in a timeless world. They ate and slept, but von Horst and La-ja never slept at the same time — Frug and Skruf had indicated too great an interest in the pistol. When von Horst slept, La-ja watched. Durg came occasionally to talk with them. He always appeared friendly, but he could hold out no hope that they might eventually escape the fate that Torp had decreed for them.

Von Horst had often wondered where the nuts and fruits came from with which they were fed, as he had seen no sign of either in the grim forest he and La-ja had traversed. He had a theory that perhaps the end of the forest was not far distant, and this he wished to determine. He had by no means given up hope of escape. When he asked Durg where the Gorbuses got the food for them, he was told that it grew at no great distance, near the edge of the Forest of Death. This was what von Horst was most anxious to hear. He also learned the direction in which they went to gather the fruit. But when he attempted to persuade Durg to assist them in their attempt to escape, he met with flat refusal; and finally he desisted, being careful to give Durg the impression that he had wholly abandoned the idea.

The rich nuts, the lack of exercise soon began to show in added layers of fat. Only Skruf remained noticeably thin, steadfastly refusing to eat more than enough to sustain life. Frug put on fat far more rapidly than either von Horst or La-ja.

Finally Skruf called his attention to it. “They will eat you first,” he prophesied. “You are very fat.”

“Do you think so?” asked the chief, feeling of the fold of fat that encircled his waist. He seemed perturbed. “I thought we were going to try to escape,” he said to von Horst.

“I have been hoping that the Gorbuses would leave for a while,” replied the European, “but only a few of them go away at a time.”

“Most of them are asleep now,” remarked La-ja. “Many of their torches have gone out.”

“That’s right,” said von Horst, looking out into the other chamber. “I’ve never seen so many of them asleep at one time.”

“I think they have been feeding,” said La-ja. “They have been going out in small parties constantly since I slept last. Perhaps that is why they are sleepy.”

“There go some more torches,” whispered von Horst. “There are only a few burning now.”

“And all the rest of the Gorbuses are nodding.” La-ja could not hide her excitement. “If they all fall asleep, we can get away.”

But they did not all sleep. One remained awake, nursing his torch. It was Torp. Finally he arose and approached the cave where the prisoners were confined. When they saw him coming they lay down in such positions as to hide the fact that their hands were free, as they had in the past whenever a Gorbus came to their cave. Torp entered, carrying his torch. He looked them over carefully. Finally he poked Skruf with a foot. “There is no use waiting for you to get fat,” he grumbled. “We will kill you after this sleep; then we won’t have to feed you any more.”

“Kill the other first,” begged Skruf; “They are much fatter than I. Give me a chance, and I will get fat.”

Torp yawned.

“We’ll kill you all at the same time,” he said; then he turned to leave the cave.

Von Horst looked beyond him and saw that every torch in the outer room was extinguished — the place lay in utter darkness. Then he leaped silently to his feet, drawing his pistol as he did so. Raising the pistol, von Horst struck Torp a single heavy blow on the skull. Without a sound, the fellow dropped in his tracks. Von Horst seized his torch.

“Come!” he whispered.

Silently the four ran across the larger cavern to one of the exits and up the steeply inclined shaft to the corridor that led to the outer world. As they passed from the dim precincts of the cavern even the grim and gloomy wood looked fair and lovely by comparison.

How long they had been imprisoned von Horst could not even guess, but he felt that it must have been a long time. They had lost count of sleeps, there had been so many; and they had all, with the exception of Skruf, put on considerable weight, indicating that their imprisonment had been of long duration. At a trot they set off in the direction they believed led to the nearest edge of the Forest of Death, for they were determined to put as much distance as possible between themselves and the caves of the Gorbuses before their escape was discovered.

When in good condition, Pellucidarians can maintain a steady trot for great distances; but it was not long before all except Skruf were panting from the exertion — additional proof that they had been long confined. At length they were forced to slacken their gait to a walk.

“When do we commence killing one another, Frug?” inquired von Horst. “The truce was to last only until we had escaped — and we have escaped.”

Frug eyed the pistol in its holster and pulled on his beard,

meditatively. "Let us wait until we have left the forest and separated," he suggested; "then, if we ever meet again, I shall kill you."

"For your sake let us hope that we never meet again," laughed von Horst, "but what assurance have I that in the meantime you and Skruf will honor the agreement? I certainly have no reason to trust Skruf."

"No one trusts Skruf," replied Frug; "but you have my word that I will not kill either one of you until after we separate, and I promise Skruf that I will kill him if he does."

With this loose understanding von Horst had to be satisfied; but he felt some confidence in Frug's word, because the very nature of the man seemed to preclude any possibility of duplicity on his part. He was brutal and savage, but he was also forthright and candid. If he intended killing you, he climbed to a house top and screamed it to the world. He was not the sort to sneak up on a man from behind and stab him in the back — that was more like Skruf.

And so they hurried on until, at last, much sooner than they had expected, the forest thinned, the type of trees changed, and they came into what seemed a new world. Once again the noon-day sun beat down upon lush vegetation growing between the boles of an open forest. Flowers bloomed, birds sang. Presently they saw an open plain upon which they stood at the outer rim of the forest land. No sign of pursuit had developed, and the Pellucidarians were certain that the Gorbuses would never venture out into the sunlight beyond their gloomy wood.

"They won't follow us here," said Frug. "No man has ever seen a Gorbus outside the Forest of Death."

"Then lets find a place to sleep," suggested von Horst. "We need rest. Afterward we can go on until we are ready to separate."

"Which way do you go?" demanded Frug.

Von Horst looked questioningly at La-ja. "Which way?" he asked. The girl pointed out across the plain.

"That is the way I go, too," said von Horst.

"We turn this way," said Frug, pointing to the left. "We shall skirt the forest until we can pass around it. I will never enter the Forest of Death again."

"Then after we have slept we separate," said von Horst.

"Yes," replied Frug. "I hope that we shall meet again soon, that I may kill you."

"When you get an idea into that thick skull of yours, you certainly stick to it," commented von Horst with a grin.

"We will look for a place to sleep," announced the Bastian. "There may be caves in this cliff."

They discovered a place where they could descend the escarpment, and on a natural ledge they found an outjutting stratum beneath which erosion had worn a large niche in which a dozen men might have found shelter from the hot rays of the sun.

"You sleep first, La-ja," said von Horst, "and I will watch."

"I am not sleepy," she replied. "You sleep. I have slept since you."

It was a bare rock that von Horst stretched out upon, such a bed as some far distant forebear might have found good but it was a far cry from box springs and hair mattresses. Yet so quickly had the man sloughed the last veneer of civilization and reverted to some primordial type, he seemed quite content with the naked rock; and in a moment he was asleep.

When he awoke he felt that he must have slept for a long time, so thoroughly rested and refreshed was he. He stretched luxuriously before turning over to greet La-ja and see if the others were awake.

When he did turn, he found himself alone. Frug and Skruf were gone and La-ja, too.

He stepped to the edge of the shelf before the cave and looked out across the plain and to the left and to the right. There was no one in sight. He thought at first that La-ja had run away from him, and then it occurred to him that Frug and Skruf had stolen her. Anger and resentment swelled in his bosom at the duplicity of the Bastian chief in whose word he had trusted, and then of a sudden a new thought came to him. After all, had Frug broken his pledge? He had only promised not to kill; he had not promised not to abduct!

12.

MAMMOTH MEN

From the foot of the cliff where the cave lay, the plain stretched away knee deep in lush grasses; and from his position above, von Horst saw where a new trail had been recently trampled toward the left. That was the direction which Frug had said he and Skruf would take to avoid the Forest of Death on their return to Basti. The grass was not trampled out across the plain in the direction of Lo-har; there was just the one plain trail toward the left — a trail that would be easy to follow as long as it ran through the deep grass. Von Horst wished that he knew how long he had slept, so that he might have some idea of the start the abductors had; for he was certain that they were abductors. It was inconceivable that La-ja would have accompanied them back to Basti voluntarily. The trail appeared quite plain from above, but when he reached the foot of the cliff he saw that it was not so apparent. A close examination showed that only the grasses that had been actually crushed and broken by the passage of the three remained down to mark the trail; all others had returned to their normal positions. It was this discovery that gave von Horst greatest concern, as it seemed to indicate that the two men and the girl were far ahead of him.

At the foot of the cliff there were some indications of a struggle. The grasses here had been crushed and broken over a considerable area. The man could visualize what had taken place. La-ja had tried to break away from her captors and had probably put up a good fight, but finally she had been overcome and carried away.

He stood looking along that dim trail that led away into a new

unknown. It led away from Sari, to what unknown dangers he could not even guess. Should he follow it? And for what? There was little likelihood that he could overtake the three; and if they reached Basti, none that he could rescue the girl. Why should he wish to risk his life in an attempt to save her — an attempt that was almost certain to fail? She disliked him. She had not taken even decent precautions to hide the fact. And if he did rescue her it would be only to be killed by her savage fellow tribesmen for his pains. He thought of Gaz, the terrible man who crushed lives out with his bare hands.

Were he to turn in the opposite direction he might skirt that end of the forest and pick up Dangar's trail. The thought of Dangar and the pleasurable anticipation of the friendly welcome awaiting him in Sari filled him with longing. He desired companionship; he longed to feel the warmth of a friend's hand again, to see the light of a friendly smile. He was tired of indifference, and enmity, and hatred. With a sigh, he turned back and followed the dim trail toward the left. Off there somewhere in the distance was a little figure with a wealth of golden hair, perhaps an *ignis fatuus* luring him to his doom.

"I wonder why I do it," he said half aloud; and then he shrugged his shoulders and swung on into the unknown.

Profiting by past experience and the schooling he had received from Dangar, he kept in mind constantly the necessity of directing his steps so that he would never be too far from some haven of safety were he threatened by any of the savage creatures that haunt the Pellucidarian scene. Trees were the prime factor in his defensive strategy. Never before had trees loomed so large in his consciousness, and all too often did he have to seek sanctuary among their branches. Now it would be a huge cave lion that drove him to shelter; again a mighty tarag, or some fearsome reptile of a forgotten age.

Along the route that he followed he found the places that Frug and Skruf and La-ja had slept; and here he slept, too. For food he had the eggs of birds and reptiles, fruits that grew upon some of the trees or bushes along his route, and various edible tubers that Dangar or La-ja had taught him to find and recognize. He made fire as had his primitive progenitors who trod the outer crust with the bos and the cave bear, and he took the time to fashion a new bow and arrows that he might have meat without wasting his precious ammunition. A sturdy spear he fashioned, too, its tip fire hardened as were the tips of his arrows.

He tried to make up for the time thus lost by pushing on throughout the endless day until utter exhaustion forced him to halt for sleep. Often, between his own sleeps, he passed one and sometimes two of the sleeping places of those he pursued; and this assurance that he was gaining on them heartened him and spurred him on, yet there were times when his quest seemed utterly hopeless and discouragement sat heavily upon him. The great forest seemed to run on interminably, but at last it ended at the foot of a transverse range of rough hills. Here he had difficulty in following the trail, for the ground was no longer carpeted with tall grass but was oftentimes hard and stony.

Beyond the hills stretched another rolling plain through which wound a large river. He viewed it first from the summit of the pass that he had followed through the hills along an ancient trail worn deep by the feet of men and beasts through countless ages. There was a fringe of forest along the river and little patches of wood scattered about the plain which stretched away to his right to merge in the distance with what seemed the blue of an ocean. Ahead of him, far away, another forest bounded the plain upon that side, while to his left the hills curved around to meet the forest in the distance. Game dotted the landscape as far as the eye could reach. In the nearer foreground he

could distinguish bos and red deer, antelopes, tapirs, sheep, and several species of herbivorous dinosaurs; while at the edge of the forest skirting the river he made out the huge forms of mammoths and giant sloths. It was a scene of such primitive beauty and interest that von Horst stood spellbound for several minutes, fascinated by its loveliness. For the moment he forgot everything but the scene below him; but presently his empty belly recalled him to the realities of life; so that it was no aesthete that crept silently down toward the plain, but a primitive hunter of the stone age. He followed the stream when he reached the foot of the hills, taking advantage of the cover offered by the trees that bordered it. He thought that he might get a sheep, several of which were grazing close to the fringing trees; but he knew how wary they were and how difficult to stalk.

The river wound in great loops, and to save time he took short cuts across the low hillocks which the river skirted in its wide bends like a great serpent gliding smoothly toward the sea. While he was below the summits of the hillocks he could not see the sheep, nor they him; yet he moved always cautiously since he never knew what dangers might confront him upon the hillocks' opposite slopes, for the country was game filled; and where the herbivores are, there also are the flesh eaters.

As he topped one little hill he saw that which brought him to a sudden halt — a great, hairy mammoth lying upon its side moaning. It lay upon a small level flat beside the river at which was evidently a watering place or a ford, and not its moaning alone proclaimed that it was suffering but the agonized trembling of its huge bulk as well. Notwithstanding the fact that von Horst knew that these mighty beasts might be highly dangerous, there was ordinarily such a sweet placidity in their appearance and such a suggestion of dependability and intel-

ligence in their great bulk and dignified mien that he was wont to be lulled into a feeling of security in their presence; and there had been aroused within him a considerable fondness and respect for these shaggy progenitors of the modern elephant.

To see one suffering thus filled him with compassion; and though his better judgment warned him against it, he could not resist the urge to approach more closely and investigate; though what he might accomplish was doubtless scarcely more than a nebulous conjecture in his mind. As he came closer the small eyes of the pachyderm discovered him; and it raised its head and trumpeted angrily, but it made no effort to rise. Thus assured that it was helpless, von Horst came close and examined it; and as he did so he discovered numerous sharp pointed splinters of bamboo protruding an inch or so above the surface of the mud, in which the beast lay at the river's edge; so that he had to move with great care to avoid stepping on them.

Almost immediately he saw the cause of the beast's helplessness and suffering — several of these splinters were imbedded in the sole of each great pad; so that the creature could not stand without suffering extreme agony. It was evident that the sharp stakes had been planted by men; and the purpose of them was quite apparent; for how more easily could men of the old stone age, with their primitive weapons, bring down the giant mammoth and render it helpless that they might dispatch it in safety?

The presence of the stakes suggested the proximity of men, and von Horst had already had sufficient evidence to convince him that all men in this savage world were enemies; yet, though he looked carefully in all directions, he saw no sign that any were about; then he turned his attention once more to the beast and its predicament. If he could remove the splinters and permit the mammoth to arise, what might

he expect from the pain racked creature? Von Horst ran his fingers through his hair dubiously; then the beast moaned again and so piteously that the man, casting discretion to the winds, decided to do what he could to assuage its suffering.

As he started to pick his way among the splinters closer to those huge pads, he realized that the beast would only be impaled upon others the moment it arose after he had removed those that it had already collected; so he set to work to pick the sharpened stakes from the ground over the entire area that they covered, a strip about twenty feet wide across the trail leading to the river; and as he worked, the eyes of the mammoth were on him constantly, watching his every move.

As he worked near the great beast's head he noticed a patch of white hair the width of a man's hand growing down the side of the animal's cheek. He had seen many mammoths, but he had never seen one similarly marked. It gave the beast a strange, patriarchal expression, as though he wore an enormous white sideburn. Von Horst noted the strange marking casually as he went about his work, but his principal interest was centered on speculation as to what the gigantic beast would do when it was able to rise. Some of the stakes were planted within reach of the mighty trunk; but the man gathered these, as he did the others, apparently unconcerned by the risk he took. And always the little eyes watched his every move, but whether in sullen hate or wary curiosity he could not guess.

At length came the time when all the stakes that he could locate had been removed, and the next were those embedded in the great pads. Without a moment's hesitation von Horst walked to the hind feet of the pachyderm and, one by one, drew out the torturing slivers. Then he moved to the front feet, well within reach of the sinuous trunk and

the great, curving tusks. Methodically, he commenced to remove the slivers from the fore pads, the powerful trunk weaving above him like a huge serpent.

He felt it touch him, the moist tip of it gliding over his naked body. It encircled him, but he paid no attention to it. He had invited death by a humane gesture, and he was game. The trunk wrapped about his torso — gently, almost caressingly. It did not tighten; it did not interfere with his work; yet he sensed it might close instantly at the slightest false move on his part. Death seemed very close.

When he had removed the last sliver he stood slowly erect. For a moment he waited; then, very gently, he laid hold of the trunk and sought to push it from him. There was no resistance. He moved unhurriedly, with great deliberation; yet he was under high nervous strain. At last he stood free and moved slowly away. He did not stop, but continued on along the river in the direction he had been going when he discovered the mammoth. For a moment he was obsessed by a powerful urge to run — to put as much distance between himself and the beast as he could before it regained its feet; but he did not. Instead, he moved on slowly, nonchalantly, casting an occasional glance behind him.

The beast lay quiet for a moment; then slowly it commenced to raise its bulk from the ground. Tentatively, it tried bearing its weight on its front feet; and it stood thus for a moment; then it rose and stood with all four feet on the ground. It took a few steps. Evidently its feet did not pain it greatly. It raised its trunk and trumpeted; then it moved off on the trail of the man.

At first, von Horst argued to himself that it was not following him and that presently it would turn aside and go about its own affairs, but it did not — it came steadily after him at a speed considerably in excess

of that at which von Horst was walking. The man shrugged resignedly. What a sentimental fool he had been! He might have known that this savage beast could not feel gratitude. He should have left it alone or put it out of its misery with a single well placed bullet. Now it was too late. Presently it would overtake him and toss him. Such were his thoughts as he walked slowly along the trail. Overtake him it did. The sinuous trunk wrapped suddenly about him and he was lifted from the ground.

"This," thought von Horst, "is the end." The mammoth stopped and passed him back to its right side where it placed him on the ground; but it still let its trunk rest lightly about him, holding him facing its side; and what von Horst saw there awoke within him a realization of the sagacity of the animal, for this side, upon which it had lain, was thickly studded with bamboo slivers such as he had plucked from his feet. It wished the man to remove them as he had removed those others.

Von Horst breathed a sigh of relief as he set about his work, and when it was completed he once again moved on along the trail he had been following. From the tail of an eye he saw the mammoth swing about in its tracks and depart in the opposite direction. In a few moments it was lost to sight. The man felt that he was well out of a nasty situation that what he described to himself as maudlin sentimentality had gotten him into. But now that it was well over and he had seen the last of the great beast he was glad that he had gone to its aid.

His hunger, momentarily forgotten, manifested itself once more as he started to stalk the sheep again. From the summit of a rise he saw them, and again he was the primitive huntsman of the Pleistocene. Only a cartridge belt and a forty-five differentiated him in appearance from his progenitors of the stone age. From the next rise of ground that he mounted he saw the sheep again, much closer now; but he saw

something else, far to the right across the river. At first glance he thought it only a herd of mammoths moving down a gently sloping plain from the foot-hills, coming toward the river; but instantly he recognized the truth — astride the neck of each of the great beasts rode a man.

The sight recalled to his memory Thorek, the mammoth-man of Ja-ru. These, indeed, must be mammoth-men; perhaps the country to which he had wandered was Ja-ru. However, the fact that he had been on friendly terms with Thorek induced no illusions as to the reception he might expect from the savage tribesmen of his erstwhile companion in slavery. Discretion counseled him to keep out of sight; and so he moved cautiously down the hill toward a clump of trees that grew beside the river, where, concealed from their view, he could still watch the approach of the company.

As he reached the trees he saw the embers of a camp fire still glowing; and his heart leaped in his bosom, for he knew that he was now close on the trail of La-ja and her abductors. Which way had they gone from here? They could not be far, for no matter how much the timelessness of Pellucidar might deceive the mind of man it could not befuddle the laws of combustion — fire would consume wood as quickly and embers would remain hot as long here as upon the outer crust and no longer.

He hastily examined the ground about the camp site. For the moment the mammoth-men were forgotten in contemplation of the nearness of La-ja and the surge of rage against Frug and Skruf, now almost within reach of his vengeance. He loosened the gun in its holster. He would give no quarter, but would shoot them down as he would a couple of mad dogs; nor was there a question of doubt as to the rightness of his contemplated act, so easily does man slough the

thin veneer of inhibitions with which civilization conceals but does not eradicate primal instincts and characteristics of mankind. There were no laws here for him other than those he made himself.

His search revealed the footsteps of those he sought in the soft earth at the river's edge. He recognized them all — the imprints of the great, splay feet of the men, those of La-ja, small and perfect. They led to the river and did not return. By that he knew that they had crossed. He looked in that direction and saw the mammoth-men steadily approaching. They were much nearer now, the long, swinging strides of the mammoths covering ground rapidly.

Trees and bushes grew upon the far bank of the river, grew in isolated clumps as though planted by the hand of some master landscape gardener. Between two such clusters of bushes he could still see the mammoth-men, but he could see to no great distance either to the right or left. He wished to cross the river in pursuit of those he sought, but he did not wish to attract the attention of the mammoth-men to him. Cautiously he moved down stream until a clump of bushes on the opposite bank hid him from the view of the approaching warriors; then, careless of the possible presence of dangerous reptiles, he plunged into the stream, which was neither wide nor swift. A few powerful strokes carried him to the opposite bank, where he again sought the trail of the trio. Nor did he have far to search, for he found it almost immediately leading out toward the plain where the mammoth-men rode.

To follow immediately would be to reveal his presence to the approaching warriors, who could not fail to see him should he expose himself now, as they were not over a quarter of a mile away. They had changed their course slightly and were moving up stream more nearly parallel, with the course of the river. Presently they would pass him,

and he would be free to continue his search for La-ja. As he waited, he stood partially concealed behind a bush, only a little of his face showing. Thus he watched the mammoth-men. They were moving steadily upon their course, like soldiers of any age upon the march, the monotony of which lulls even exuberant spirits into quiescence. But suddenly there was a change. A rider looking toward the river suddenly halted his mount and shouted to his fellows, pointing back down stream at something evidently some distance below the point where von Horst was hiding. Simultaneously he started in the direction he had pointed, urging his lumbering mount into a swifter gait; and after him trooped the remainder of the company.

Savage, primitive to the degree was the sight of that war-like company to von Horst — extinct men upon extinct mounts; animated monuments of savage might. The European was thrilled; and, too, his curiosity was aroused. What had the warrior seen? What were they approaching or pursuing? Risking discovery, von Horst moved stealthily around the end of the bush that had concealed him, until he could look down the valley in the direction the mammoth-men were riding.

At first he saw nothing. A tiny hillock, scarcely more than a mound, shut off his view. Assured that the attention of the riders was riveted upon whatever quarry lay ahead of them and that they would not notice him, von Horst crept forward to the mound and up its side until he could see beyond its summit. What he saw brought his heart into his mouth.

13.

CAPTURED

Von Horst sprang from his concealment and ran out into the open; and as he did so he reached for his gun, but his holster was empty. There was no time to go back and search for the weapon. He recalled loosening it in its holster before he plunged into the river, and now he assumed that it had fallen out at that time. It was a tragic loss; but there was nothing that he could do about it, and that which he saw before him tended to crowd all other considerations into the background. Running toward the river from out upon the plain and pursued now by the mammoth-men were three figures which he instantly recognized as La-ja and her abductors. The trees that dotted both sides of the river grew closer together just ahead and formed a little forest toward which the three were running. Skruf had seized La-ja by a hand and was dragging her along, while Frug brought up the rear. Although La-ja was running it was evident that she was attempting to break loose from Skruf, and Frug was striking at her with a heavy switch in an effort to goad her to greater speed. It seemed certain that they would reach the forest ahead of the mammoth-men if nothing delayed them, though by a small margin. Perhaps then they might escape, yet La-ja was trying to delay them. Her only reason, as far as von Horst could imagine, was that she would prefer to be the captive of the mammoth-men than to remain a prisoner of the Bastians.

Uppermost in von Horst's mind was the desire to reach the great brute that was striking the girl. Never before in his life had the instinct to kill an enemy so overwhelmingly mastered him. He even forgot the

menace of the advancing mammoth-men in the heat of his hate and blood lust.

He came diagonally upon the three from the side and a little to the rear, but so engrossed were they with one another and their flight that they did not see him until he was almost upon them and had shouted a curt command to Frug to stop striking the girl. A new fear was added to the terror already reflected in Skruf's eyes, a new hope leaped to La-ja's, a glad cry to her lips as she voiced the one word, "Von!" What a wealth of relief and hope were expressed in that single monosyllable! Surprise and rage were in Frug's snarled recognition as he vouchsafed his reply and registered his contempt for the man by striking again at La-ja. And then, just at the edge of the wood, von Horst leaped for him, leaped for his throat; and the two went down, rolling on the flower starred turf in what each hoped was a duel to the death.

Both men were powerful; but Frug outweighed his antagonist by thirty pounds, an advantage that, however, was offset by von Horst's agility and skill. All that was in the mind of either was to kill the other — everything else was forgotten. Each fought for a hold upon the other's throat, each struck terrific blows at the other's face. The cave-man grunted and cursed; von Horst fought in silence. And thus the mammoth-men came upon them, surrounding them. A dozen leaped from their huge mounts and fell upon the two. These, too, were mighty men. They dragged the combatants apart and made them prisoners.

It was then that von Horst had an opportunity to look around for La-ja. She was nowhere in sight; neither was Skruf. The chief of the mammoth-men was looking for them, too; and when he saw that they were missing he sent a party of his men across the river in search of them. The remainder mounted the mammoths after having two of the great beasts swing von Horst and Frug to their heads in front of their

riders; then, without waiting for the party that had gone in search of La-ja and Skruf, they set off again in the direction they had been going at the time the discovery of the three had interrupted their march.

The mammoth-men appeared very sure of themselves, so much so that they did not even bind their prisoners' hands; which was the equivalent of saying that escape was impossible; nor did von Horst doubt but that such was the case. The leader and some of the others questioned him. They asked him his name, from what country he came, where he was going. They were gruff, unfriendly men; and it was easy to see that they hated all strangers. So accustomed was von Horst to this characteristic of Pellucidarians that he made no effort to assure them that he was friendly, reasoning, and rightly, that it would have been a waste of energy and breath.

As they moved on up the river they presently discovered a huge mammoth ahead of them. It was in the open, so that they could not stalk it; but evidently they particularly wished it.

"It is he," said one. "I would know him as far as I could see him."

"The trap did not get him," commented the leader. "He is too wise to be fooled by traps."

"What good would he be if we did catch him?" demanded another. "He is an ugly customer. Already he has killed ten men that we know of who hunted him. He could never be trained now, he is too old."

"Mamth wishes him," said the leader. "That is enough; Mamth is chief. He will use him in the little canyon. He will give us great sport."

The great beast had been moving off across the plain when they first saw him; now he turned and faced them — a huge creature, larger than any of those the mammoth-men rode.

"It's he all right," said the warrior, upon whose mount von Horst rode; "it's Ah Ara, Ma Rahna."

It was then that von Horst first noticed the great patch of white hair on the animal's left jowl. "Ah Ara, Ma Rahna; Old White, The Killer," he mused. The killer! He realized now how foolhardy he had been in approaching the beast at all. The fact that he had not been killed suggested that the huge creature was not only endowed with great intelligence but with a well developed sense of gratitude. Only thus could he account for his being still alive.

The leader of the band issued some instructions, and the party spread out and started to circle Old White, which remained facing them, making no effort to escape.

"Trog's going to try to drive him," remarked the warrior with von Horst. "If he can bring in Ah Ara he will be a great man."

"Can he?" asked von Horst.

The warrior shrugged. "The sun-bleached bones of ten warriors are a better answer than any living tongue can offer."

Slowly the warriors drew around behind Ah Ara in a half circle; then they closed and moved forward. In the meantime the quarry had turned again to face them. His little eyes gleamed, his trunk weaved slowly to and fro as he rocked his head from side to side. The warriors commenced to shout and wave their spears. They came closer. It seemed incredible that the animal did not turn and break for freedom; but it did not — Ah Ara stood his ground.

Suddenly he raised his trunk and, with a loud scream, charged. Straight for the center of the line he came — a solid line, for the mammoths were touching side to side. He lowered his head; and when he struck, two mammoths were knocked down. As he passed over them he seized one of the riders and hurled him fifty feet; then as he passed over him, he trampled him. After that he appeared to pay no more attention to the party, but moved on majestically in the direction he

had been going before the interruption. It seemed to von Horst that his whole manner screamed contempt for the man-things that had dared to delay him.

Trog shook his head ruefully and turned toward the river. The two felled mammoths came to their feet — one of them was riderless, but he followed on with the others. No one paid any attention to the mangled warrior lying on the plain. Perhaps he was dead, but he may not have been. It was evident to von Horst that these men held human life lightly and that they were without compassion. He wondered if Thorek would recall that he had suggested that they be friends should they meet again, for it was possible that he might meet him now that he was a prisoner of Thorek's fellows. Prompted by this recollection of the man who had escaped from the Bastians with him he turned toward the warrior riding behind him.

“Do you know Thorek?” he asked.

“Yes; what do you know of him?”

“We are friends.”

The warrior laughed. “No stranger is friend to a mammoth-man,” he said.

“Did Thorek return from Basti?” asked von Horst.

“No,” and then suddenly, “What is your name?”

“Von. If Thorek were here he would tell you that we are friends.”

“Well, perhaps Thorek was your friend; but no other mammoth-man will be. Friendship for a stranger is weakness in a warrior. Strangers are to be killed; that is why they are strangers. If there were no strangers there would be no one to kill except one another, and that would not be good for the tribe. We would soon kill each other off. Men must fight and kill; it is the life blood of warriors.”

Presently they came to the river and crossed it, keeping slightly

above the regular ford; then Trog and some of the others dismounted and examined the ground in the trail leading in to the river. Von Horst watched them with amusement, for he recognized the spot well. He saw that the men were surprised and angry at what they discovered.

“Ah Ara has been down here,” exclaimed Trog. “There is blood here; but where are the stakes? They have all been removed.”

“I saw mud and blood on the right side of Ah Ara as he passed close to me when he charged through our line,” volunteered a warrior.

“Yes; he was down here,” growled Trog. “We had him, but how could he have escaped?”

“He is very old and very wise,” said one.

“He could never be old enough or wise enough to pick the splinters from his pads and his side, to pick them all out of the ground,” remonstrated Trog. “That could only be done by a man.”

“Here are the foot-prints of a man,” exclaimed a warrior.

“But who would dare approach Ah Ara and take the splinters from him? Had a man done that we should find his body close by.” Trog shook his head. “I do not understand.”

They found the splinters where von Horst had tossed them aside, and they set them out again with great care and well concealed upon the opposite side of the river; then they mounted and rode back toward the hills from which they had been coming when von Horst first sighted them.

“We’ll get him yet,” remarked von Horst’s warrior.

“How?” asked the European.

“When he gets splinters in his feet the pain is so great that he cannot stand; the pads of a tandor are thick, but they are very sensitive. When we come back and find him down we put heavy thongs of mammoth hide about his neck. These are fastened to three mammoths

on each side of him, mammoths trained for this work; then we take the splinters from the ground around him and from his pads and let him get up. After that it is easy. The six mammoths drag him until he tires of being choked. After that he will follow quietly.”

“Will you ever be able to train Ah Ara, provided you get him?” asked von Horst.

The warrior shook his head. “He would never be safe. Mamth will put him in the little canyon, and he will afford us much amusement.”

“In what way?”

The warrior looked at von Horst and grinned. “I think you will find out soon enough,” he said.

After the party reached the foothills it followed a well worn trail that led up to a wide plateau upon which several mighty canyons debouched from the mountains beyond. The plateau was covered with lush grasses and was crossed by several streams that issued from the mouths of the canyons, into one of which Trog led his savage troop. The grandeur of the scenery within the canyon was impressive, and to such an extent that for the moment von Horst almost forgot the hopelessness of his situation. Within its narrow mouth the canyon widened into a lovely valley walled by precipitous cliffs that were broken occasionally by the narrow mouths of smaller canyons. A stream flowed through the bed of the canyon, trees and flowering shrubs grew in profusion, fish leaped in the river, and birds of weird, prehistoric shapes and coloration flew from tree to tree.

Von Horst sighed. “What a lovely place,” he thought, “if only La-ja and I were here alone.”

La-ja! What had become of her? Had she escaped from Skruf, or was she still his captive? She would have been better off here among the mammoth-men, or at least no worse off; for no one could have been

more repugnant to her than Skruf. At least, were she here, she would have had one friend whom she might trust even though he were unable to do anything for her.

Von Horst sighed. He had a premonition that he would never again see La-ja, and it suddenly occurred to him that this strange world was going to be a very much more terrible place to live in because of that. He realized that something had gone out of his life that nothing could replace. Perhaps it hurt his pride to admit it even to himself, for the girl had certainly given him sufficient proof on numerous occasions that he meant nothing whatever to her; yet he could not forget the pathetic longing note in her voice when she had recognized him and called to him just before the mammoth-men had separated them forever.

Depressed by this sad reverie, his future fate seemed to mean nothing to him. He did not care what the mammoth-men did to him. The sooner it was over, the better. Without a single companion for whom he cared, he might as well be dead as alive; for there was no chance that he might ever return to the outer world, nor little more that he would find Sari should he escape from his present predicament.

While he was occupied by these unhappy thoughts the troop turned into one of the smaller canyons, and shortly thereafter he saw the caves of the mammoth-men pitting the face of the lofty cliff ahead. A considerable number of men, women, and children were on the ground at the foot of the cliff where a grove of trees offered shelter from the noonday sun. Some of the women busied themselves around cooking fires; others were fashioning sandals or loin cloths. Men chipped laboriously at stone weapons in the making, scraped spear shafts into shape, or merely loafed at ease. At sight of the returning troop, they quit whatever had been occupying them and clustered

about to inspect the prisoners and exchange gossip with the arriving warriors.

Trog looked very important. "Where is Mamth?" he demanded.

"He is in his cave, sleeping," said a woman.

"Go and awaken him," commanded Trog.

"Go yourself," replied the woman; "I do not wish to be killed."

Trog, who, with the other warriors of his party, had dismounted, was standing near the woman; and at her refusal he swung his spear quickly and felled her with the haft, knocking her unconscious; then he turned to another woman. "Go and awaken Mamth," he said.

The woman laughed in his face. "Guva has no man," she said, "but I have. You will not knock me down with your spear. You would not have knocked Guva down if she had had one. Go and awaken Mamth yourself."

"I am not afraid of your man," blustered Trog.

"Then why don't you knock me down," taunted the woman, "for I am not going to awaken Mamth."

The crowd gathered about commenced to laugh at Trog, adding to his discomfiture and his rage. He stood there, red in the face, swinging his spear to and fro and looking from one to another of them.

"What are you looking for?" demanded the woman, "widows and orphans?"

"You will pay for this," growled Trog; then his eyes alighted on von Horst. "Go and awaken Mamth," he commanded.

The European grinned. "Where is he?" he asked.

Trog pointed to a cave entrance part way up the cliff. "He is in there," he growled. "Get along with you!" He swung his spear, striking at von Horst. The prisoner dodged, and seizing the weapon wrenched

it from Trog's grasp; then he broke it across his knee and flung it on the ground at the mammoth-man's feet.

"I am neither a woman nor a child," he said; and, turning, started toward the cliff and Mamth's cave, in his ears the shouts and laughter of the tribesmen.

"I kill!" shouted Trog, and started after him, drawing his stone knife.

Von Horst wheeled and waited the mad charge of the mammoth-man. Trog approached him at a run, brandishing his knife above his shoulder. When he struck, von Horst seized his wrist, turned quickly, stooped low and, drawing the man's arm across his shoulder, hurled him over his head and heavily to the ground; then he continued on his way to the foot of the cliff and up the rude ladders that led to Mamth's cave. Glancing back over his shoulder he saw Trog still lying where he had fallen, apparently insensible, while the crowd laughed uproariously, evidencing to von Horst that his act had not prejudiced them against him and, also, that Trog did not appear to be overly popular.

He wondered just how popular he himself would be with Mamth when he awakened him, for he had gathered from what he had just heard that Mamth did not relish being awakened from his sleep; and he had seen just how primitive these people were and how little control they had of their tempers — like primitive people everywhere, even those who were supposed to be civilized and yet had primitive minds. When at last he came to the mouth of the cave he looked in, but he could see nothing, because of the darkness of the interior. He shouted Mamth's name in a loud voice and waited. There was no response. The laughter below had ceased. The watchers were waiting in tense expectancy the result of his temerity.

Von Horst shouted again, this time more loudly; and this time there was a response — a bull-like bellow and the sound of movement within. Then a perfect mountain of a man emerged from the cave, his hair disheveled, his beard awry, his eyes sleep bleared and bloodshot. When he saw von Horst he stopped in amazement.

“Who are you?” he demanded. “Why did you awaken Mamth? Do you wish to be killed?”

“I am a prisoner,” replied von Horst. “Trog sent me to awaken you because he was afraid to do it himself; and as for being killed, that is probably what I was taken prisoner for.”

“Trog sent you, did he?” demanded Mamth. “Where is he?”

Von Horst pointed toward the foot of the cliff where Trog still lay. Mamth looked down.

“What is the matter with him?”

“He tried to kill me with a dagger,” explained the prisoner.

“And you killed him?”

“I don’t think so. He is probably merely stunned.”

“What did he wish of me?”

“He wished to show you the two prisoners he brought in. I am one of them.”

“He disturbed my sleep for that!” grumbled Mamth. “Now I cannot get to sleep again.” He pointed, to the ladder. “Go down.” Von Horst did as he was bid, and Mamth followed him. When they reached the ground Trog was regaining consciousness. Mamth went and stood over him.

“So-ho!” he exclaimed. “So you were afraid to come and awaken Mamth, but you sent a prisoner who might have sneaked into the cave and killed Mamth in his sleep. You are a fool. And you let the prisoner

knock the wits from your head. You are a fine one to be sub-chief. What happened?"

"He must have hit me over the head with a big rock when I wasn't looking," said Trog.

"He did not," cried a woman. "Trog was going to hit the prisoner with his spear. The prisoner took Trog's spear from him and broke it in two. There it lies. Then Trog tried to kill the prisoner with his knife. The prisoner picked Trog up and threw him over his head."

A number of them commenced to laugh as the woman recalled the events, but they did not laugh so loudly in the presence of Mamth.

The chief looked searchingly at von Horst. "So you broke Trog's spear and then threw him over your head!" he exclaimed. "Where is the other prisoner?"

"Here," said one of the warriors guarding Frug.

Mamth looked at the Bastian. "He is even bigger than the other," he said. "They should furnish us good sport in the little canyon. Take them away. Gorph, take this one to your cave and see that he does not escape." He jerked a thumb toward von Horst. "Truth, you take charge of the other. Have them ready when Mamth wishes them. Trog, you are no longer a sub-chief. Mamth will appoint a better man."

14.

“HE DIES!”

Gorph was a short, stocky, middle-aged man with a wealth of whiskers and small, close-set eyes. Von Horst judged him a mean customer even before the fellow gave any indication of his true nature, which he was not long in doing; for as soon as Mamth indicated that he was to take over the prisoner he stepped up to von Horst, seized him roughly by the shoulder and gave him a push toward the foot of the cliff and the nearest ladder. “Get along!” he growled, “and be quick about it.” Then, without other reason than pure brutality, he prodded his prisoner in the back with the point of his spear — a vicious jab that brought blood. Resentment and rage flared in the breast of the man from the outer crust, the sudden pain goading him to instant action. He wheeled and crouched. Gorph, sensing attack, jabbed at him again with his spear; but von Horst pushed the weapon aside and leaped close, pinioning the mammoth-man’s head beneath his right arm; then he commenced to spin, faster and faster. Gorph’s feet left the ground, his body whirled, almost horizontal, in a flattening circle; von Horst released his hold and sent the fellow spinning to the ground.

Mamth broke into a loud guffaw, which was echoed by the other spectators. Gorph staggered dizzily to his feet; but before he was fully erect von Horst clamped the same hold upon him, and once again whirled and threw him. When Gorph arose this time, dizzy and befuddled, the other was standing over him. His fists were clenched, an arm was back ready to deliver a blow to the bewhiskered chin that

would have put the mammoth-man out for good; but then his rage left him as suddenly as it had come.

“The next time you try anything like that on me, Gorph, I’ll kill you,” he said. “Pick up your spear and go along. I’ll follow.”

He had given no thought as to what the reaction of the other mammoth-men might be to his attack upon one of their fellows; nor had he cared; but their laughter assured him that they had enjoyed the discomfiture of Gorph, as they would probably enjoy the discomfiture of any creature. Gorph stood for a moment, hesitant. He heard the laughter and the taunts of his fellows. He was trembling with rage; but he looked at the man who had bested him, standing there waiting to best him again; and his courage proved unequal to his anger.

He stepped over to retrieve his spear, and as he passed von Horst he spoke in a low tone of voice. “I’ll kill you yet,” he said.

The European shrugged and followed him. Gorph walked to a ladder and started to ascend. “See that nothing happens to him, Gorph,” shouted Mamth. “He’ll be a good one for the little canyon.”

“You see,” remarked von Horst, “that between Mamth and me it’ll be best for your health that you treat me well.”

Gorph mumbled in his beard as he climbed to the third tier of caves, von Horst following him upward. Here the mammoth-man followed the wide ledge to the right and stopped before a large entrance in which squatted three women. One was middle-aged, the other two much younger. Of these, she who appeared to be the elder was short and squat like Gorph, an unprepossessing girl with a sinister countenance. Their only clothing was scanty loin-cloths.

“Who is that?” demanded the woman.

“Another mouth to feed,” grumbled Gorph; “one of the prisoners

that Trog brought in. We keep him and guard him, but if he falls off the cliff it will not be my fault.”

The elder of the two girls grinned. “He might,” she said.

The man walked to the younger girl and kicked her. “Get me food,” he growled, “and be quick about it.”

The girl winced and scurried into the cave. Gorph squatted beside the other two women. The elder was fashioning a pair of sandals with soles of mammoth-hide; the other just sat staring vacantly at nothing.

Gorph eyed her, scowling. “How much longer shall I have to hunt for you, Grum?” demanded Gorph. “Why don’t you get a man? Won’t any of them have you?”

“Shut up,” growled Grum. “If they won’t have me it’s because I look like you — because I am like you. If you’d been a woman you’d never have had a mate. I hate you.”

Gorph leaned over and struck her in the face. “Get out of here!” he cried; “go get yourself a man.”

“Leave her alone,” said the older woman wearily.

“Keep out of this,” warned Gorph, “or I’ll kick your ribs in.”

The woman sighed.

“That is all that Mumal does,” sneered Grum. “She just sits and sighs — she and that monkey-faced Lotai. Sometimes I could kill them both.”

“You are a bad daughter,” said Mumal. “The time that I bore you was a bad time indeed.”

“Get out!” growled Gorph. “I told you to get out.” He pointed a stubby finger at Grum.

“Try to put me out,” snapped the girl. “I’d scratch out your eyes. Get me a man. If you were any good you’d get men for both your daughters. You’re a coward. You’re afraid to fight men for us.”

"If I ever made a man marry you he'd sneak up behind me in the woods the first chance he got and kill me."

"I'd help him," said Grum.

"Lotai!" bellowed Gorph. "Where is the food?"

"Coming!" called the girl from the interior of the cave, and a moment later she came with a handful of dried meat. She tossed it on the ground in front of Gorph and backed away to the far corner of the entrance, where she sat in huddled misery.

Gorph attacked the meat like a ravenous wolf, breaking off great hunks between his powerful teeth and swallowing them whole.

"Water!" he snapped, when he had finished.

The girl called Lotai arose and hurried back into the cave. A moment later she returned with a gourd which she handed to Gorph.

"That is all," she said; "there is no more water." Gorph gulped it down and arose. "I am going to sleep now," he said. "I'll kill anyone who awakens me. Mumal, you and Grum go for water. Lotai, watch the prisoner. If he tries to escape, scream; and I'll come out and —"

"And what?" inquired von Horst.

"Do as I told you," said Gorph to the women, ignoring von Horst's query; then he lumbered into the cave.

The two older women followed him, returning shortly each with a large gourd; then they descended the ladders on their way for water. Von Horst looked at the young girl who had been left to guard him. Now that the others had gone the strained expression that had clouded her face had disappeared, and she was more beautiful than before.

"Happy family," he remarked.

She looked at him questioningly. "Do you think so?" she asked. "Perhaps the others are happy, though they do not seem so. I know that I am not."

Once again von Horst was faced with the literal-mindedness of the stone age. He was reminded of La-ja.

“I was only laughing with words,” he explained.

“Oh,” she said, “I see. You do not really think that we are happy?”

“Is it always like this?” he demanded.

“Sometimes it is worse; but when Mumal and I are alone, we are happy. Grum hates me because I am pretty and she is not; Gorph hates everyone. I think he even hates himself.”

“It is strange that you have no mate,” said von Horst; “you are very good looking.”

“No man will take me because he would have to take Grum, too, if Gorph insisted — that is a law of the mammoth-men. You see, she is older than I; and should have a man first.”

“What did Grum mean when she said that Gorph was afraid to fight men for you?”

“If we picked out men that we wanted they would have to take us if Gorph fought them and won; but I would not wish a man that way. I would wish my man to want me so much that he would fight to get me.”

“And that is the only way that Grum could get a mate?” asked von Horst.

“Yes, because she has no brother to fight for her, nor any friend to do it for her.”

“You mean that any man who would fight for her could get her a mate?”

“Why, yes; but who would do it?”

“A friend might,” he said; “or any man who wanted you badly enough.” She shook her head.

“It is not so easy as that. If a man who was not her father or brother

fought for her and lost, he would have to take her. And Grum has made it even worse by choosing Horg as the man she wishes to mate with. No one could defeat Horg. He is the biggest and strongest man in the tribe.”

“Rather a precarious method of getting a mate,” mused von Horst. “If your man is vanquished, you get him; but you may get a corpse.”

“No,” she explained. “They fight with bare hands until one of them gives up. Sometimes they are badly hurt, but seldom is anyone killed.”

They sat in silence for a while, the girl watching the man intently. Von Horst was thinking of La-ja and wondering what fate had befallen her. He was sad in the knowledge that she had passed out of his life forever — the haughty, imperious little slave girl who hated him. He wondered if she really did hate him. There were times when he doubted that she did. He shook his head. Who could ever understand a woman?

Lotai stirred.

“What is your name?” she asked.

“Von,” he replied.

“I think you are a very nice man,” she said.

“Thank you. I think you are a very nice girl.”

“You are not like any man I have ever seen before. I think you are a man that I would trust. You would never beat me. You would always be kind, and you would talk to me as men talk to men. That is something our men never do. At first, maybe, they are nice; but soon they only speak to give orders or to scold.

“Oh, some of them are not so bad as others,” she added. “I think that Gorph, my father, is the worst. He is very bad. He never says a pleasant word to any of us, and he is worse with me than with the

others. He beats me and kicks me. I think that he hates me. But that is all right, because I hate him.

“There was one very nice man. I liked him, but he went away and never came back. He must be dead. He was a big man and a great warrior; but he was kind to women and children, and he laughed and was pleasant. The women would all have liked him for a mate, but he never would take a mate to live always in his cave. Thorek was different that way.”

“Thorek?” exclaimed von Horst. “He did not come back to Ja-ru?”

“You know him?” asked Lotai.

“We were prisoners of the Bastians, and we escaped together. We were friends. He should have been here before this. Since we parted I have traveled far and slept many times. Something must have happened to him.”

The girl sighed. “He was such a nice man; but then, what difference does it make? He was not for me. I will get a mate like Gorph and be kicked and beaten the rest of my life.”

“The women of Ja-ru have a hard time of it, I should say,” remarked von Horst.

“Not all of them. Only those like Mumal and myself. Some of them are big and strong and like to fight. If they are kicked, they kick back. These have a happy time. Mumal and I are different. She is not of Ja-ru. Gorph stole her from another tribe. I am like her, and Grum is like Gorph. We would run away and go back to my mother’s country; but it is very far, and the dangers are great. We would be killed long before we got to Sari.”

“Sari,” mused von Horst. “That is the country that Dangar came from. That is where I should like to go when I escape from here.”

“You will never escape,” said Lotai. “You will go into the little canyon, and you will never come out.”

“What is this little canyon I have heard so much about?” demanded the man.

“You will find out soon enough. Here come Mumal and Grum with the water. We must not talk together too much in front of Grum and Gorph. If they thought that I was friendly with a prisoner they would kick me and beat me all the more.”

The two women came into view up the ladder from below, each balancing a heavy gourd of water on her head. Mumal looked tired and dejected. Grum was hot and irritable, her evil face twisted in a black frown. She paused in the entrance to the cave.

“I am going to sleep,” she said. “See that you don’t make any noise;” then she entered the cave.

Mumal stooped and stroked Lotai’s hair as she passed. “I too am going to sleep, little one,” she said.

“I should like to sleep myself,” remarked Lotai after the others had entered the cave.

“Why don’t you?” asked von Horst.

“I have to watch you.”

“I’ll promise not to go away while you are guarding me,” he assured her. “Go in and sleep. I’d like to myself.”

She looked at him intently for a long time before she spoke. “I believe that you would not try to escape if you told me you would not,” she said, “but if Gorph found you out here while I was asleep in the cave it would be just as bad for me as though you had escaped. If you will go in though and not come out while I am sleeping it will be safe. We can go into a far corner of the cave and sleep, and then they won’t bother us.”

Von Horst was very tired, and he must have slept a long time. When he awoke, Lotai was not there. He found her with the others on the ledge before the cave. They were eating jerked venison, washing it down with great draughts of water. Gorph and Grum ate noisily, like beasts.

No one offered von Horst food. It lay in a little pile on a piece of skin in which it had been wrapped, filthy looking and malodorous; but it was food, and von Horst was famished. He walked over to it where it lay close to Gorph, and stooped to take some. As he did so Gorph struck his hand away.

“This fine food is not for slaves,” he growled. “Go to the back of the cave and get the scraps and the bones that are there.”

From the vile odor that he had noticed in the cave, von Horst could surmise the nature of the food that was intended for him, food that only actual starvation could drive him to eat. He knew that his future life with these people, however short or however long it might be, would depend largely upon the attitude that he took at this time. He reached again for the food; and again Gorph struck at his hand, but this time von Horst seized the fellow’s wrist, jerked him to his feet, and struck him a heavy blow on the jaw. Gorph dropped in his tracks. Von Horst gathered up a handful of the venison, picked up a gourd of water and crossed to the opposite side of the entrance where Mumal and Lotai sat wide eyed and trembling. There he sat down and commenced to eat.

Grum had not spoken, and now she sat with her eyes upon von Horst; but what was passing in the dark convolutions of that savage brain none might guess. Was she filled with rage that a stranger had struck down her father? Was she selfishly resentful that he had taken food? Or was she secretly admiring his courage, strength, and skill?

Presently consciousness returned to Gorph. He opened his eyes and raised himself on one elbow. He looked puzzled and was evidently trying to gather the threads of what had transpired. He stared at von Horst and the venison he was eating. Presently he rubbed his jaw, feeling of it gingerly as though to discover if it were broken; then he fell to eating. During all that had transpired no one had spoken; but von Horst was satisfied — he knew that he would not again be denied food and needed no verbal assurance of the fact.

The endless Pellucidarian day dragged on. Von Horst ate and slept. Gorph hunted, sometimes returning with the carcass of a kill or cuts from those he had hunted with companions, sometimes empty handed. Von Horst saw parties of mammoth-men come and go on their huge mounts. He talked with Lotai and with Mumal. Occasionally Grum joined in the conversations, but more often she sat in silence staring at von Horst.

The man wondered what his fate was to be and when he would know. The timelessness of Pellucidar offered no standard for the measurement of duration. It was this fact, he judged, that made the Pellucidarians seem so often to be dilatory. “Immediately” here might encompass the passage of an hour or a day of the outer crust’s solar time or, conceivably, a much longer period. Perhaps Mamth thought that he was handling the fate of the two prisoners with dispatch, but to von Horst it seemed an eternity. He had never seen Frug since they had been separated at the foot of the cliff, and if he never saw him again it would be far too soon.

On one occasion von Horst was sitting on the ledge before the entrance to the cave thinking of La-ja, as he often did, and wondering if she still lived. He was alone, for Gorph was hunting, Mumal and Lotai had gone up the canyon for a potato-like tuber; and Grum was

asleep in the cave. He was enjoying the solitude, free from the scolding and cruelty of the family when either Grum or Gorph were present. He was day-dreaming, recalling pleasant memories, conjuring the faces and figures of friends of by-gone days — friends that he would never see again; but the thought did not make him particularly sad. It was good to recall the happier events of the past. His reveries were interrupted by the shuffling of sandaled feet within the cave. Grum was awake. Presently she came out on the ledge. She stood looking at him intently for a moment.

“You would make me a good mate,” she said. “I want you.”

Von Horst laughed.

“What makes you think I would make a good mate?” he asked.

“I saw the way you handled Gorph,” she replied. “I was told what you did to Trog. I want you for my mate.”

“But I am a stranger and a prisoner. I think I’ve heard one of you say that your women couldn’t mate with the men of other tribes.”

“I will see Mamth about that. Perhaps he would consent. You would make a good warrior for Mamth.”

Von Horst stretched comfortably and grinned. He felt quite safe. “Mamth would never give his consent,” he said.

“Then we will run away,” announced Grum. “I am tired of living here; I hate them all.”

“You’ve got it all figured out, haven’t you?”

“I have. It is all settled,” replied Grum.

“But suppose I don’t want you for a mate?” he inquired.

“It will be better than death,” she reminded him. “If you stay here you will go to your death in the little canyon.”

“We could not escape. If escape had been possible, I would have been gone long since. I have constantly watched for my chance.”

“We can escape,” said Grum. “I know a way that you do not know of.”

“How about Horg?” he asked. “I thought you wanted Horg.”

“I do, but I can’t get him.”

“If I helped you to get Horg, would you help me to escape?” he asked, as an idea suddenly developed in his mind.

“How could you get Horg for me?”

“I have an idea that I could. If we could go to Mamth together, and you asked him to let me be your mate, he would refuse; then I could explain the plan I have that would get Horg for you. I think he would like it.”

“Will you do it?” she demanded.

“Will you help me escape?”

“Yes,” she promised.

As they talked, von Horst saw a party of mammoth-men returning to the village on their huge mounts. They came with shouts and laughter, like conquering warriors; and there was one among them riding double behind another warrior, who was surrounded by a great crowd of jabbering, gesticulating natives as soon as he dismounted. The man from the outer crust watched them with but little interest and only casual curiosity. He could not know the cause of their exultation.

Shortly after the return of the warriors, von Horst noticed considerable activity in the grove at the foot of the cliff. Cooking fires were being built on the ground, which was unusual, as most of the cooking was done by individual families on the ledges before their caves.

“There is going to be a karoo,” said Grum. “We shall all go down and have much to eat and drink.”

“What is a karoo?” he asked. It was a word he had not heard before.

Grum explained that it was a feast and celebration in honor of some noteworthy event, in which all of the members of the tribe joined. She did not know the reason for this karoo, but judged that it was to celebrate something important that the returning party had accomplished.

“We can’t go down until Gorph returns or Mamth sends for us,” she said, “because my orders are to remain here and watch you; but when Gorph comes he will take you down, as otherwise one of us would have to remain here with you and miss the celebration. You are a nuisance. I wish you were dead.”

“Then you wouldn’t get Horg,” he reminded her.

“I won’t get him anyway. There is nothing that you can do to get him for me. I’ll have to take you instead, but you’re not the man that Horg is. Wait until you see him. Compared with you he is as the tander is to the thag; and, besides, he has a mighty beard. His face is not as yours, smooth like a woman’s. Always you are scraping off your beard with the strange, shiny knife that you carry.”

Presently Lotai and Mumal returned to the cave, to be followed shortly by Gorph. The man carried the carcass of an antelope he had killed; the women, a supply of tubers; and after they had deposited these things in the cave Gorph ordered them all to descend to the ground. Here there was a considerable gathering, several hundred men, women, and children, comprising von Horst concluded, the entire membership of the tribe. There, was much talking and laughing — a holiday spirit seemed to possess the gathering, making a strange contrast to their usual demeanor. The strange warrior was still surrounded by such a large crowd that von Horst did not catch a glimpse

of him at first. Little attention was paid to the prisoners as Frug squatted disconsolately with his back to the bole of a tree, while von Horst stood watching with interest the largest concourse of really primitive people that he had ever seen.

Presently Mamth discovered him. "Come here!" he shouted; then he turned to the warrior who seemed the center of attraction. "Here's a prisoner such as no man ever saw before. Take a look at him. He has a face as smooth as a woman's and yellow hair. He tossed Trog and Gorph around as though they were babies. Come here you!" he again commanded von Horst.

As the prisoner approached, the warrior pushed his way through the crowd to see him; and a moment later they stood face to face.

"Thorek!" exclaimed von Horst.

"Well! Well!" roared the mammoth-man. "It is Von or I'm a jalok. So this is the man who tossed Trog and Gorph around? I am not surprised. I can toss either of them, and he tossed me."

"You know him?" demanded Mamth.

"Know him? We are friends. Together we escaped from Basti, taking the slaves with us."

"Friends!" exclaimed Mamth. "He is a stranger. Mammoth-men do not make friends of strangers."

"I did, and he made a good friend," retorted Thorek. "Because of that he should have the friendship of all mammoth-men. He is a great warrior, and should be allowed to live with us and take a mate from among our women; or he should be permitted to go his way unmolested."

The heavy visage of Mamth was furrowed by a black scowl. "No!" he shouted. "He is a stranger and an enemy, and he dies as should all the enemies of the mammoth-men. Mamth has been saving him for

the little canyon. When Mamth is ready, he goes there. Mamth has spoken.”

15.

THE BRIDEGROOM

The sentence of death had been pronounced; but von Horst was not shocked, because he was not surprised. He had known all along that death in some form would end his captivity if he did not escape. When it would come, in this timeless world, could not be even a matter of conjecture. Thorek was angry; but he could do nothing to save his friend, because Mamth was chief and his word law. He sulked and grumbled beneath his breath, but when the feast started he fell to with the rest and soon apparently forgot his grievance in enjoyment of food and drink. Von Horst and Frug were permitted to join in the celebration; and after a taste of the brew that was being served, von Horst concluded that it would not require much of it to cause a man to forget more than a grievance. It was fermented by the women — a mixture of wild maize, several herbs, and honey — and while far from unpalatable it had the kick of an army mule. One taste sufficed for von Horst.

Both men and women partook of it freely with varying results. Some became more loquacious and hilarious, others morose and quarrelsome; so that there was usually a fight progressing in some part of the grove. There were some who did not drink at all, and von Horst noticed that Lotai and Mumal were among these. Grum, on the contrary, was evidently a two-fisted drinker; and while she carried it well, it accentuated her distinctive characteristics, so that she became more bellicose, domineering, and assertive. Von Horst watched her not without some amusement, as she approached an enormous man and threw her arms about his neck, revealing a characteristic that it had

taken several potent droughts to coax to the surface. Grum evidencing affection bordered upon the ludicrous. Evidently the large man felt the same way about it, for he roughly disengaged her arms from about his neck and gave her a violent push that sent her sprawling on the ground. She was up in an instant, a veritable fury, her face distorted with rage. Von Horst thought that she was going to attack the ungallant one, but instead she barged down on Mamth.

“I want a mate,” she screamed. “I want Horg.” Mamth turned toward the big man. “What does Horg say?” he demanded.

So that was Horg. Von Horst appraised the fellow and was glad that he had not elected to fight him for the sake of the delectable Grum. The man was a giant. He must have weighed close to three hundred pounds, and he bulged with muscles.

Horg guffawed loudly. “Take that she-tarag as a mate!” he bellowed. “I’d as soon take a Mahar.”

“You heard him,” said Mamth. “Go back to the karoo and leave the man alone. He is not for you.”

“He is for me,” screamed Grum. “I have a warrior who will fight Horg for me.”

Every eye sought Gorph, and a great laugh followed. “Come on, Gorph,” a warrior shouted; “show us how you will best Horg, but don’t kill him.”

Horg laughed uproariously. “Come on, Gorph,” he cried. “If you beat me I’ll take Grum off your hands, and I don’t blame you for wanting to be rid of her.”

“She’s drunk too much tumal,” growled Gorph. “I never promised to fight Horg for her. Horg is my friend; I do not wish to harm him.”

This elicited another roar of laughter, and Horg thought that it was so funny that he rolled on the ground bellowing his amusement.

Grum said nothing. She just watched Horg and Gorph in silence for a moment; then she turned to Mamth.

“I didn’t say that Gorph was going to fight Horg for me. Gorph is a coward. He would fight nothing if he could get out of it. I have a *man* who will fight Horg — and do it now.”

“Who is he?” demanded Mamth.

Von Horst experienced a distinct sinking feeling around the pit of his stomach. He knew what was coming. Grum pointed a stubby, grimy finger at him. “There he is,” she cried in a loud voice.

“He’s not a mammoth-man,” objected Mamth. “How can he fight for you?”

“Because no one else will,” admitted Grum.

Mamth shook his head, but he did not have time to voice a definite refusal before Horg spoke up.

“Let him fight me,” he said. “This is a karoo, and we should have some amusement.”

“You will promise not to kill him?” demanded Mamth. “I am saving him for the little canyon.”

“I will not kill him,” promised Horg.

Von Horst approached the two. “And when I have beaten you,” he demanded, “you will make Grum your mate?”

“That is the way of the mammoth-men,” said Mamth. “He will have to take her, but you will not beat him.”

“Beat me!” bellowed Horg. “Let me get hold of him.”

“How do we fight?” asked von Horst. “Are there any rules?”

“You fight as the beasts fight,” explained Mamth. “You may use no weapon, no stone nor stick. You fight until one of you is unable to fight any longer or gives up.”

“I am ready,” said von Horst.

“Are you ready, Horg?” demanded Mamth.

Horg laughed nonchalantly and contemptuously. “I am ready,” he said.

“Then fight!” commanded Mamth.

The spectators formed a circle about the combatants as the two approached one another. Horg was in fine spirits. The tumal he had drunk accounted partially for that, and certainty of an easy victory took care of the rest. He cracked jokes with his friends at the expense of both von Horst and Grum. They were rather broad jokes and not at all of the parlor variety, but every one enjoyed them immensely — that is, everyone but Grum. She was furious.

“Wait until I get you,” she screamed. “You’ll wish you’d never been born.”

Von Horst grinned as he featured the life that was in store for Horg should the mammoth-man lose. Death would be sweeter.

Suddenly Horg made a rush at von Horst, the brawny arms, the ham-like hands endeavoring to close upon him; but von Horst stooped and dodged beneath them; then he wheeled and struck Horg on the jaw — a blow that staggered him. Before the mammoth-man could recover, he was struck again; and again his head rocked. Now he was furious. He cracked no more jokes. He bellowed like an angry elephant and charged again. Again von Horst dodged him, and the great hulk went lumbering on a dozen paces before it could stop.

When Horg turned he saw von Horst charging him. This was what he wished. Now he could get hold of the fellow, and once he got hold of him he could crush him, break his bones if he wished unless he gave up.

He stood waiting, his feet spread far apart, his arms open. Von Horst ran swiftly straight toward Horg. Just before he reached him

he leaped into the air; flexed his knees, drawing his feet close to his body, and then with all his strength backed by the momentum of his charge he kicked Horg with both feet full in the face. The result was astonishing — especially to Horg. He turned a complete back somersault, landed on his head, and dropped face down in the dirt.

Groggy and only half conscious, he staggered slowly to his feet. Von Horst was waiting for him. "Have you had enough?" he asked. He did not wish to punish the man further in the condition he was in. The crowd was yelling encouragement to him; and with the fickleness and cruelty of crowds was jeering at its fallen champion. Grum, seeing her hopes about to be realized, screamed at the top of her voice as she urged von Horst to finish the almost helpless man; but Horg would not give in.

Perhaps he heard Grum and preferred death. He lunged for his lighter antagonist, growling beast-like.

"I kill!" he screamed.

Thus was von Horst compelled to continue, for he knew that Horg had uttered no idle threat. If the fellow could get those great paws on him, get one good hold, he would kill him. In both his hands he seized one of the outstretched wrists, swung quickly around, bent suddenly forward, and hurled the mighty man over his head — a trick of jujitsu far simpler than it appeared to the amazed onlookers. Horg fell heavily and lay still. Von Horst approached and stood over him. There were cries of "Kill him! Kill him!" for the blood-lust of these primitive savages was aroused, stimulated perhaps by the tumal they had drunk.

Von Horst turned to Mamth. "Have I won?" he asked.

The chief nodded. "You have won," he said.

The victor looked at Grum. "Here is your mate," he said. "Come and take him."

The woman ran forward and fell upon the prostrate Horg, beating and kicking him. Von Horst turned away in disgust. The others, laughing, returned to the food and the tumal.

Thorek came and slapped von Horst on the back. "I told them you were a great warrior," he exulted.

"You should know," said von Horst with a grin.

"Come and join the karoo," said Thorek. "You have had nothing to eat or drink. That is not the way to make karoo."

"Why should I make karoo?" demanded von Horst. "I do not even know what is being celebrated."

"They have captured Old White, The Killer. That is something to celebrate. There never was such a wise old mammoth, nor one as large. After the next sleep we shall start training him, and when he is trained Mamth will ride him. He is a fit mammoth for a chief."

"I should like to see him trained," remarked von Horst; for he thought it might be an interesting occasion if Old White objected, which he was sure that he would.

"I'll ask Mamth if you can come," said Thorek. "It will probably be after the next sleep. Every one will wish to sleep after the karoo."

The two men talked for awhile, exchanging experiences that had befallen them since they had separated; then Thorek wandered away to drink with his fellows, and von Horst sought out Lotai. Together they watched the celebration, which was by this time loud and boisterous. Fights were more numerous, the laughter deafening. Usually dignified old warriors were performing foolish antics and laughing uproariously at themselves. Many of the women were thick tongued and bleary eyed. As von Horst watched them he was struck by the very obvious fact that human nature had undergone little or no change from the stone age to the present time. Except for the difference in language

and apparel these might be people from any present-day country of the outer crust. Presently he saw Grum approaching unsteadily. For the moment she had relaxed surveillance over her new mate. Von Horst attracted her attention and beckoned to her.

“What do you want?” she demanded.

“You have not forgotten our bargain?” inquired the man.

“What bargain?” she asked.

“If I got Horg for you, you were to help me escape.”

“When they are asleep after the karoo I will show you the way, but you cannot go now. The tarags would get you. After the prisoners are taken to the little canyon, the tarags will be gone; then you could go.”

“It will be too late then,” he said, “for I am to go to the little canyon; and if I have surmised correctly from what I have heard, I shall not return.”

“No,” she admitted with a shrug, “you will not. But I promised to show you how you might escape. It is the only way I know; if you can’t use it, that is not my fault.” Then she staggered away in search of Horg, and von Horst returned to Lotai.

The celebration dragged on — interminably, it seemed to von Horst; but at last those who could still walk reeled to their caves to sleep.

Horg had drunk himself into a stupor, and Grum was beating him over the head with a stick in an effort either to punish or arouse him — perhaps to kill him. Von Horst could not guess which.

Lotai, Mumal, and Gorph were climbing to their caves — the last so befuddled that climbing the ladder toward his ledge seemed to von Horst almost to verge upon suicide.

The European passed close to Grum. “They are all going to their caves to sleep,” he whispered. “Now is your chance to tell me.”

“Go to the ledge before Gorph’s cave, and wait there for me.”

As he climbed the ladders toward the ledge he could hear Grum berating Horg as she beat him, and he smiled as he speculated on the similarity between the people of the old stone age and those of modern-day civilization. The principal difference seemed to lie in the matter of inhibitions. He had known women of the outer crust who were like Grum — their thoughts were taloned.

He sat down upon the ledge to wait. He was quite alone. The others had gone into the cave to sleep. He thought of Lotai and the sad lives that she and Mumal led. He thought too of La-ja, and these thoughts were sad thoughts. It seemed strange that this little savage should have won to such a place in his life that a future without her loomed dull and grey. Could it be that he loved her? He sought to analyze his feelings that he might refute such a theory, but he only arrived at another sigh with the realization that no matter what logic he brought to bear, the fact remained that her passing from his life had left an emptiness that hurt.

Presently Grum came. Her little eyes were blood-shot, her frowzy hair at its frowziest. She was the personification of a stench, both morally and physically.

“Well,” she said, “I guess Horg knows that he has a mate.”

“Why did you beat him?” asked von Horst.

“You’ve got to start right with them,” she explained. “If you give them the least little toe-hold you’re lost, just as Mumal is.”

He nodded in understanding of her philosophy; for, again, he had known women of the outer crust who were like her. Perhaps their technique was more refined, but their aim was identical. Marriage to them, meant a struggle for supremacy. It was a 50-50 proposition of their own devising — they took fifty and demanded the other fifty.

“Now,” he said, “tell me how I may escape.”

“There is a hole in the rear of Gorph’s cave,” explained Grum. “It drops down a few feet into a tunnel. When I was a little girl Gorph was beating me. I broke away and hid in this hole. I knew he would not dare to follow me, because he had always told us that this tunnel led to the Molop Az. Gorph chased me and tried to get hold of me, reaching into the hole to seize me; so I had to move back into the tunnel to escape him. He threatened to kill me when I came out — if I didn’t fall into the Molop Az and get burned up.

“I was very much afraid of Gorph then when I was a little girl. When this happened he had been drinking too much tumal, and I knew that if I came out he really would kill me; so I determined to stay where I was until I thought he was asleep.

“Then I got to thinking about Molop Az. Perhaps I could go far enough in the tunnel to see it and return safely. After all it didn’t make much difference to me if I did fall into it. Gorph was very cruel, and sooner or later he was sure to kill me. Of that I was convinced; so I thought I might as well take a chance with the Molop Az. Being young, I was very curious. The more I thought about it the more I wished to investigate it. I decided to follow the tunnel and see the Molop Az.”

“What is the Molop Az?” asked von Horst.

“It is a sea of fire, Pellucidar floats upon it. We know that, because there are places in Pellucidar where the smoke and fire come up through the ground from the Molop Az. There are holes in mountains where melted rock flows up.

“The dead that are buried in the ground are taken down bit by bit by little demons and burned up in Molop Az. There is no doubt about that because when we dig up a body that has been buried we find that some of it has been carried away — perhaps all of it.”

“And did you find the Molop Az?”

She shook her head

“No. The tunnel does not lead to Molop Az; it leads to the little canyon. From there, except at certain times, you could easily make your escape from Ja-ru; just go up the canyon and climb the cliff at the upper end. Beyond, you can drop down into another canyon that leads out of our country into a country where mammoth-men seldom if ever go.”

“Thanks,” said von Horst.

“But you can’t go now. The tarags would get you. They are in the far end of the tunnel. They will be there until the prisoners are taken to the little canyon.”

“What is the little canyon?” he asked.

She looked at him in surprise. “What would a little canyon be but a little canyon?” she demanded.

“What happens there?”

“You will find out soon enough. Now I am going back to Horg. You got him for me, and I have kept my promise. I don’t know whether he was worth the trouble, but at least I shall have a cave of my own.” She turned then and left him.

“At least I shall have a cave of my own!” von Horst grinned. Evidently it was an immemorial custom that girls should wed to escape their families.

16.

OLD WHITE

Below him the leaves of the trees moved to a gentle breeze as von Horst came from the cave after sleeping. The air was fresh and clear, and the breeze was cool, tempering the heat of the high sun, as though it blew across the snow of far mountains. The man looked about him and saw that life was astir again in the cliff village of the mammoth-men. He heard his name called from below and saw Thorek beckoning to him to come down. Gorph had to yet come from the cave; so von Horst descended and joined Thorek at the foot of the cliff. Many warriors were assembling. Mamth was there, and though he saw von Horst he paid no attention to him. "We are going to train Old White," said Thorek.

"Mamth has said that you may come with us. You may ride with me upon my mammoth."

Presently the herd appeared, driven by herders mounted on their great beasts. These were all well trained mammoths, and they moved quietly and obediently. When all the warriors were mounted Mamth led the way up the main canyon. The gorges that ran into it were mostly narrow with steep, rocky sides. Before the entrance to one of them Mamth halted. The opening into the gorge was very narrow and across it were bars each of which was a good size tree. The top bar was roped securely into place by a large rope that had been made by braiding long grass. Warriors removed the rope; and two of the mammoths, directed by their riders, lifted the bars and removed them; then the party filed into the gorge. Beyond the entrance it widened and

the floor was level. They had ridden up it but a short distance when von Horst saw a huge mammoth standing in the shade of a tree. It was swaying to and fro on its great feet, its head and trunk undulating to the cadence of its swaying body. On its left jowl was a patch of white hair. It was Old White, the Killer. Von Horst would have recognized the huge beast among hundreds of its kind.

At sight of the party the animal raised its trunk and screamed. The rocky hills trembled to the giant's warning. It started toward them, and then von Horst saw that one of its feet was secured to a great log. It could move about, but the log prevented it from moving rapidly. Two mammoths were ridden in on either side of Old White. When he attempted to raise his trunk to seize the riders the other mammoths caught and held it with theirs, and it required the combined strength of the two to do it.

Now a third warrior rode close and clambered over the back of one of the tame mammoths to sit astride Old White's neck, and the close contact of the man threw the captive into a fury. Trumpeting and bellowing, he sought to escape from the beasts that pressed close on either side. He fought to raise his trunk and snatch the man-thing from him as he lurched erratically about the floor of the gorge dragging the great log in his wake.

Old White, the Killer, was wise with great age; and when he realized that he could accomplish nothing by force he suddenly became quiet and apparently as docile as a lamb; then commenced his training. The rider struck him a sharp blow with the flat of his hand on his back just behind where the warrior sat, and simultaneously a mammoth in his rear and those on either side of him pushed him forward. A blow on the head in front of the rider was a signal to stop, and the three great training mammoths stopped him. Time and again he was rehearsed

in these movements; then he was taught to turn to the right or left by a kick on the opposite jowl. Old White learned quickly. Mamth was delighted. Here, indeed, was a powerful and intelligent beast worthy to be the mount of a chief. The trainers watched Old White carefully, his ears, his tail, his trunk, his eyes, for these were the indices of his temper; and they all proclaimed resignation and docility.

“Never have I seen a wild mammoth subdued so easily or taught so quickly,” exclaimed Mamth. “He is already trained. Let him be ridden alone now without the other mammoths. Later we will remove the log.”

The riders withdrew the other three mammoths to a short distance from Old White; and the great beast stood gently swinging his trunk to and fro, a picture of contentment and docility. The young warrior riding him struck him sharply on the back, signaling him to move forward. As quickly as a snake strikes, Old White swung his trunk up and seized his rider; and simultaneously he was transformed into a raging devil of hate and fury.

Screaming with rage, he raised the struggling warrior high above his head; then he dashed him heavily to the ground in front of him. The three warriors who had been assisting with his training urged their mounts in, but too late. Old White placed a great foot on the warrior and trampled him into the earth. Then he seized the warrior on the nearest mount and hurled him across the gorge, and all the while he trumpeted and bellowed. As he lunged for another of the warriors the two turned their mammoths and retreated; but Old White pursued them, dragging the heavy log after him. That was the end of the mighty captive’s training. Mamth, disappointed and angry, ordered all from the gorge, the bars of the gate were replaced; and they rode back down the canyon toward the village.

Von Horst had been an interested spectator, his interest augmented

because of his former remarkable experience with Old White. His sympathies were with the mammoth, and he was secretly pleased by the manner in which the wise old beast had completely deceived his captors and won at least a partial revenge for the sufferings and indignities that he had been subjected to.

Von Horst had also been interested in learning the method used by the mammoth-men in controlling their ponderous mounts; and as they left the gorge he asked Thorek if he might pilot the animal the two were riding; and Thorek, amused, consented. Thus he acquired an accomplishment that appeared quite as useless as anything that he had ever learned in his life.

“Will you ever be able to tame Old White?” he asked.

Thorek shook his head. “Not unless Mamth is crazy,” he replied, “will he ever risk another warrior on that brute. He is a natural killer. Such as he are never tamed. He has killed many warriors, and knowing how easy it is to kill us he would never be safe.”

“What will become of him?”

“He will be destroyed, but not before he has afforded the tribe some entertainment.” They rode on in silence. Von Horst’s thoughts were rummaging in the attic of memory rediscovering many a half forgotten souvenir. Bold and fresh and clear among them was the figure of La-ja. He turned his face a little toward Thorek.

“Lotai is a fine girl,” he said.

Thorek looked surprised, and scowled. “What do you know of Lotai?” he demanded.

“I am quartered in Gorph’s cave,” Thorek grunted.

“Lotai will make some warrior a good mate,” ventured von Horst.

“He will have to fight me,” said Thorek.

Von Horst smiled. “Grum has a mate,” he said. “Whoever takes

Lotai will not have to take Grum, too. He will only have to fight you. But I did not know that you cared. Lotai does not know that you care.”

“How do you know?”

“She said so.”

“Do you want her?” demanded Thorek.

“She is very desirable, but she loves another.”

“And you are afraid to fight him?”

“No,” replied von Horst “I am not afraid to fight him. I have already done so and beaten him.”

“And you have mated with her?” Thorek’s tone sounded like the growl of a beast.

“No. I know that she loves him.”

“Who is he? He’ll not have her. I’ll kill him. Who is he? Tell me.”

“You,” said von Horst, grinning.

Thorek looked very foolish. “You are sure?” he asked.

“Positive. She has told me.”

“Before the next sleep I shall ask Mamth, and I shall take Lotai to my cave.”

“Do you have to ask Mamth?”

“Yes; he is chief.”

“Ask him now,” suggested von Horst.

“As well now as later,” agreed Thorek. He urged his mount forward until he rode abreast of Mamth.

“I would like Lotai, the daughter of Gorph, to be my mate,” he said to the chief.

Mamth scowled. “No,” he said.

“Why?” demanded Thorek. “I am a great warrior. I have no mate. I want Lotai.”

“So do I,” said Mamth.

Thorek flushed. He was about to make some rejoinder when von Horst put a warning finger to his own lips and slowed the mammoth down until it had again taken its place in the column.

"I have a plan," said von Horst.

"What sort of a plan?" asked Thorek.

"A plan whereby you may get Lotai and at the same time do something that will make her very happy."

"And what is that?"

"She and her mother, Mumal, are very unhappy here. Mumal wishes to return to Sari, the country from which Gorph stole her; and Lotai wishes to go with her."

"Well, what can I do about it?" demanded Thorek.

"You can take them. It is the only way that you can get Lotai."

"I cannot take them," said Thorek. "I could never get them out of the village."

"Would you go to Sari with them if you could?"

"I would only be killed by the men of Sari."

"The Sarians would not kill you. Mumal is a Sarian, and I have a friend named Dangar who would see that you were taken into the tribe. He would do anything that I asked."

"It is useless," insisted Thorek. "I could never leave the village with two women."

"Would you, if you could?" demanded von Horst.

"Yes; if Lotai would go with me I would go anywhere."

"In the back of Gorph's cave there is an opening into a tunnel."

"Yes, I know of it; it leads to Molop Az."

"It leads to the little canyon. When the tarags at the other end are gone you may go out that way with Lotai and Mumal."

“How do you know that it leads to the little canyon?” demanded Thorek.

“I have talked with one who went through it as far as the place where the tarags are.”

Thorek rode in silence for a time before he spoke again. The party came to the village and dismounted. The herders drove the mammoths away. Mamth was irritable and glum. He turned on von Horst.

“Get to Gorph’s cave,” he ordered, “and stay there. Perhaps before the next sleep we shall take you to the little canyon.”

“That is the end for you, my friend,” said Thorek. “I am sorry. I thought that perhaps we might find a way for you to go with us to Sari; but the way will not be open, the tarags will not be gone until after you have been taken to the little canyon; then it will be too late.”

Von Horst shrugged. “There is not very much that one can do about it,” he said.

“There is nothing,” asserted Thorek.

He walked on beside von Horst toward the ladder that led upward to Gorph’s cave. “Perhaps this is the last time that we shall talk together,” he said.

“Perhaps,” agreed von Horst.

“Will you speak to Lotai for me?”

“Certainly. What shall I say?”

“Ask her if she will go with me to Sari, she and Mumal. If she will, raise your right arm straight toward the sun when next you see me. If she will not, raise your left arm. I shall be watching. If they will go, tell them that when the others go to the little canyon, they must hide. I will do the same, and after all are gone we can enter the tunnel and go as far as the tarags. When the tribe has left the little canyon, we can come out and go away in search of Sari.”

“Goodbye,” said von Horst. They had reached the foot of the ladder. “Goodbye and good luck. I will speak to Lotai as soon as possible.” Von Horst found Lotai and Mumal alone in front of the cave, and immediately explained the plan that he and Thorek had discussed. Both women were delighted, and they sat for a long time planning on the future. Presently Gorph came and demanded food. As usual he was surly and brutal. He glowered and growled at von Horst.

“I shall not have to feed you again,” he said. “Mamth has spoken, and soon all will be in readiness in the little canyon. You will be taken there with the other prisoners, and you will not come back.”

“I shall miss you, Gorph,” said von Horst.

The mammoth-man looked at him in stupid amazement. “I shall not miss you,” he said.

“I shall miss your pleasant ways and your hospitality.”

“You are a fool,” said Gorph. He gobbled his food and arose. “I am going into the cave to sleep,” he said. “If word is passed that we are going to the little canyon, wake me.”

As he crossed to enter the cave he aimed a vicious kick at Lotai, which she dodged by rolling quickly out of the way. “Why don’t you get a man?” he demanded. “I am sick of seeing you around; I am tired of feeding you;” then he passed on into the cave.

The three sat in silence. They dared not plan for fear they might be overheard. The thoughts of the women were filled with happiness — thoughts of escape, of Sari, of love, and of happiness. The man thought not of the future but of the past — of the world of his birth, of his friends, and his family, of a beautiful girl who had touched his life briefly and yet had filled it. There was no future for him — only a brief interval of uncertainty and then death.

A young man climbed agilely up the ladders to the ledge before

Gorph's cave. He halted and surveyed the three, his eyes resting on Lotai.

"You are to go to the cave of Mamth," he said. "He has chosen you to be his mate."

Lotai turned very white; her wide eyes were horror filled. She tried to speak; but she only gasped, her fingers clutching at her throat.

Von Horst looked at the messenger. "Tell Mamth that Lotai has been ill," he said, "but that she will come presently."

"She had better not be long," warned the man, "if she doesn't want a beating."

After he had departed the three sat whispering together for some time; then Lotai arose and went into the cave. Von Horst and Mumal remained where they were for a short time; then they too, feeling the urge to sleep, went into the cave.

Von Horst was awakened by loud voices outside the cave; then Gorph entered, calling Lotai. There was no reply. Von Horst sat up.

"Lotai is not here," he said. "Don't make so much noise; I want to sleep."

"Where is she?" demanded Gorph. "She has got to be here."

"Perhaps, but she is not. Mamth sent for her to come to his cave. Go and inquire of Mamth where she is."

Two warriors entered the cave. "She did not come to Mamth's cave," said one of them. "He sent us to fetch her."

"Perhaps something happened to her," suggested von Horst.

The two, with Gorph, searched the cave. They questioned Mumal, but she only replied as had von Horst that Mamth had sent for Lotai. At last they departed, and the others followed them to the ledge. Presently von Horst saw a number of warriors commence a search of the village. They searched every cave, but they did not find Lotai.

Von Horst could see Mamth standing among the trees at the foot of the cliff, and he guessed from his gestures that he was very angry. Nor was he mistaken. Presently the chief came himself to the cave of Gorph and searched it; and he questioned Gorph, and Mumal, and von Horst. He wanted to blame one or all of them, but he had no evidence to support him. He stopped in front of von Horst, scowling.

“You are bad luck,” he said, “but it will not be for long — we go now to the little canyon.”

To the little canyon! The end of his adventure in Pellucidar was approaching. Well, what of it? One must die. It is little easier one time than another. Even the very old and hopeless cling tenaciously to life. They may not wish to, but they cannot help it — it is just another of Nature’s immutable laws.

He followed the warriors down the ladders to the foot of the cliff. Here the clan was gathering, men, women, and children. A herd of mammoths was being driven into the village; and the great beasts were lifting men, women, and children to their backs. Von Horst looked about in search of Thorek, but he could not find him; then he was ordered to the back of a mammoth, where he sat behind a warrior. He saw Frug on another beast, as well as other prisoners similarly mounted. There were men from Amdar, from Go-hal, from Lo-har. Von Horst had never met any of the other prisoners except Frug; but he had heard them spoken of by Mumal, Grum, and Lotai. He would have been glad to have talked with the man from Lo-har, because that was La-ja’s country. Because of that he felt closer to him. His heart might have warmed even to the redoubtable Gaz.

Presently he caught sight of Thorek. He was standing at one side among the trees staring steadily at von Horst; and the instant that the

man from the outer crust caught his eye, he raised his right arm aloft toward the sun.

Thorek nodded and turned away. Immediately thereafter Mamth moved off upon his great mount, and the others followed. The hairy warriors with their women and children, the monstrous beasts that bore them, presented a picture of primitive savagery that thrilled von Horst despite its sinister connotation. It was indeed an inspiring prelude to death. He looked about him. Riding beside and almost abreast of him, he discovered Gorph alone upon the back of his mammoth.

“Where is Mumal?” inquired von Horst.

Gorph looked at him and scowled. “She is sick,” he said. “I hope she dies; then I could get me a good mate. I will not hunt for two of them and their brats.”

Presently the trail wound up the side of the canyon to the summit of a ridge that paralleled a steep-sided canyon. Here the tribe dismounted, turning the mammoths over to the herders; after which the men, women, and children ranged themselves along the edge of the canyon which formed an amphitheater below them.

“This,” said the warrior with whom von Horst had ridden, “is the little canyon.”

17.

THE LITTLE CANYON

At the edge of the canyon was a ledge along which the members of the tribe pressed to obtain a view of the floor of the canyon some thirty feet below. At the upper end of the canyon a massive corral had been built in which were several mammoths, and in the wall opposite the spectators a cave entrance was barred with small timbers. As von Horst stood looking down into the little canyon, Horg came carrying a rope in one end of which was a noose. "Stick your leg through this," he said to von Horst, "and hold on tight."

Two other warriors approached and took hold of the rope with the first. "Get over the edge," directed Horg. "Your troubles will soon be over. I would almost like to change places with you."

Von Horst grinned. "No thanks," he said. "I know when I'm well off."

"When you reach the bottom, step out of the rope," instructed Horg; then the three lowered him to the floor of the canyon.

As they pulled the rope up again they tossed down a stone knife and a stone tipped spear; then they lowered another prisoner. It was Frug.

The chief of the Basti glowered at von Horst. "You've got me into a nice mess," he growled.

"You are rationalizing, my friend," replied von Horst. "You are also passing the buck, as my American friends so quaintly put it; all of which confirms an opinion I have long held — that styles in whiskers and bowler hats may change, but human nature never."

“I don’t know what you are talking about.”

“It is quite immaterial. If I am any sort of a judge, nothing that we may say or think down here at the bottom of the little canyon will ever be material to anyone, not even to ourselves.” From above were dropped weapons for Frug; and then, one by one, the three remaining prisoners were lowered and armed. The five doomed men stood in a little group waiting for death, wondering, perhaps, in what form the grim reaper would present himself. They were stalwart men, all; and each in his own mind had doubtless determined to sell his life as dearly as possible. The fact that they had been armed must have held out a faint hope that they might be given a chance, however slender, to win life and freedom in combat.

Von Horst was scrutinizing the three he had not previously seen. “Which of you is from Lo-har?” he asked.

“I am from Lo-har,” said the youngest of the three. “Why do you ask?”

“I have been long with a girl from Lo-har,” replied von Horst. “Together we escaped from Basti, where we were being held in slavery. We were on our way to Lo-har when two men from Basti stole her from me while I slept.”

“Who was this girl?” inquired the man from Lo-har.

“La-ja.”

The man whistled in surprise. “The daughter of Brun, the Chief,” he said. “Well, you are just as well off here as you would have been had you succeeded in reaching Lo-har with her.”

“Why?” demanded von Horst. “What do you mean?”

“I mean that you can only be killed here; and if you had reached Lo-har with La-ja, Gaz would have killed you. He has been on the warpath ever since La-ja disappeared. It is a good thing for the Bastians

that he did not know who stole her. Gaz is a mighty man. Single handed he might destroy a whole tribe such as the Bastians.”

Gaz again! Von Horst was almost sorry that he was never to have the opportunity to see this doughty warrior.

He turned to Frug. “The man from Lo-har doesn’t think much of you Bastians,” he taunted.

“Is he a Bastian?” demanded the Lo-harian.

“He is the chief,” explained von Horst.

“I am Daj of Lo-har,” cried the young warrior. “You stole the daughter of my chief, you eater of men. I kill!”

He leaped toward Frug, holding his stone-tipped spear like a bayoneted rifle. Frug sprang back, parrying the first thrust. A shout of approval rose from the savage audience on the ledge above. Then the two men settled down to a stern relentless dual. Frug outweighed his opponent by fifty pounds, but the other had the advantage of youth and agility. The former sought to rush Daj and bear him down by sheer physical weight, but Daj was too quick for him. Each time, he leaped aside; and on Frug’s third attempt, Daj dodged as he had before; then he wheeled quickly and jabbed his spear into the Bastian’s side.

The mammoth-men shouted their approval. “Kill! Kill!” they screamed. Frug roared with pain and rage, wheeled again and lumbered down upon Daj. This time the Lo-harian stood his ground until Frug was almost upon him; then he crouched suddenly beneath the extended weapon of his adversary and thrust viciously upward into the belly of the Bastian. As Frug writhed, screaming, upon the ground, Daj wrenched his weapon from the other’s belly and plunged it through his heart. Thus died the Chief, Frug of Basti; thus was La-ja avenged by one of her own clan.

Amidst the shouts and yells of the mammoth-men, the man from

Amdar shouted, "Look! Tarags! There," and pointed toward the opposite side of the canyon.

With the others, von Horst looked. The grating that had been before the entrance to the cave had been raised by warriors from above, and now five great tarags were slinking onto the floor of the canyon — five mighty, saber-toothed tigers.

"Tandors!" exclaimed the man from Go-hal. "They are turning the tandors loose on us. They give us a spear and a knife to fight tarags and tandors."

"They think well of us as fighting men," said von Horst, grinning, as he glanced toward the upper end of the canyon and saw that the mammoths had been released from the corral.

There were five mammoths, bulls that were untamable killers. One of them towered above his fellows, a huge monster, bellowing angrily as it caught the scent of the tarags and the men. The five moved ponderously down toward the center of the canyon, while the great cats crossed directly toward the five men awaiting their doom. Thus the paths of the beasts seemed certain to meet before the tarags reached the men. But one of the latter trotted ahead, so that it seemed apparent that it would cross in front of the mammoths and reach the four prisoners without interruption.

Von Horst was sufficiently familiar with the tempers of both mammoths and tigers to know that, being hereditary enemies, they would attack one another if they came in contact. Just what this would mean to himself and his fellow prisoners he could only guess. Perhaps enough of them might be disabled in the ensuing battle to permit the men to dispatch those that were not killed. Whether or not they would be any better off then, he did not know. It might be that those who survived would be released. He asked Daj of Lo-har about it.

“The mammoth-men never let a prisoner escape if they can help it,” replied Daj. “If we are not killed by the beasts, we shall be killed in some other way.”

“If we can reach the upper end of the canyon,” said von Horst, “we may be able to escape. I see a little trail there running from beside the corral to the summit. I have been told that if we can escape in that way the mammoth-men will not pursue us, as it would take them into a country that, for some reason, they never enter.”

“The tarags and the tandors will never permit us to reach the upper end of the canyon,” replied Daj.

The tarag that was in the lead was preparing to charge. He crouched low, now, and crept forward. His sinuous tail twitched nervously. His blazing eyes were fixed upon von Horst who stood a little in advance of his fellows. Behind this tarag the others had met the tandors. The canyon thundered to the roaring and trumpeting and screaming of the challenging beasts.

“Run for the upper end of the canyon,” von Horst called back to his companions. “Some of you may escape.”

The tarag charged, his lips stretched in a hideous snarl that bared his great saber teeth to the gums, his jaws distended. Roaring, he charged upon the puny man-thing. Once before had von Horst stopped the charge of a tarag with a stone-tipped spear. That time he had accorded the palm to luck. It seemed incredible that such luck would hold again. Yet, had it been wholly luck? Skill and strength and iron nerve had been contributing factors in his victory. Would they hold again against this devil-faced demon?

As the tarag rose in its final spring, von Horst dropped to one knee and planted the butt of the spear firmly against the ground. He was very cool and deliberate, though he had to move with lightning speed.

He held the point of the spear forward, aiming it at the broad white chest of the saber-tooth; then, as the beast struck, the man rolled to one side, leaping quickly to his feet.

The spear sank deep into the chest of the tarag, and with a hideous scream the beast rolled in the dust of the canyon floor. But it was up again in an instant seeking with ferocious growls and terrifying roars the author of its hurt. It turned its terrible eyes upon von Horst and tried to reach him; but the butt of the spear, sticking into the ground, drove the point farther into its body; and it stopped to claw at the offending object. Its roars, now, were deafening; but von Horst saw that it was reduced to nothing more menacing than noise and looked about him to see what chance he had to reach the upper end of the canyon. His companions were moving in that direction. To his right, the tarags and mammoths were engaged in a titanic struggle. Three of the former had centered their attack upon the smallest of the bulls. The other four bulls stood in a little group, tail to tail, while the remaining tarag, the largest of the five, circled them.

Von Horst moved in the direction of the upper end of the canyon. He hoped that he might go unnoticed by the beasts, but the great tarag that was circling the four bulls saw him. It stopped in its tracks, eyeing him; and then it came for him. No longer was there a spear with which to dispute the outcome of the encounter with the fanged and taloned beast — the outcome that now must be a foregone conclusion.

The man gauged the distance to the end of the canyon. Could he reach it before the mighty carnivore overtook him? He doubted it. Then he saw the huge bull that he had noticed before break from the group and start forward as though to intercept the tarag. Von Horst imagined that the tandor thought the great cat was trying to escape him and was thus emboldened to pursue and attack.

Now there might be a chance to escape. If the mammoth overtook the saber-tooth before the latter reached von Horst; or if the saber-tooth's charge were diverted by a threatened attack by the mammoth; then he might easily reach safety while all of the animals in the canyon were occupied with one another. With this slender hope to speed him on, he started to run. But the tarag was not to be denied this easy prey. It paid no attention to the mammoth as it continued on in pursuit of the man. Von Horst, glancing back across a shoulder, was astounded by the terrific speed of the huge mammoth. Like a thorough-bred, it raced to head off the carnivore. The latter gained rapidly upon von Horst. It was a question which would reach him first, and to the man it seemed only a question as to the manner of his death. Would he die with those terrible talons at his vitals, or would he be tossed high in air and then trampled beneath tons of prehistoric flesh?

Upon the rim of the canyon the savage cave-men were howling their delight and approval of this exciting race with death. Mamth had discovered that three of his prisoners had located the path at the upper end of the canyon and were on their way to freedom. That the path was not guarded was due to the fact that the mammoth-men believed that no one but themselves knew of it, and it was so faintly traced upon the canyon's wall that no one who did not know of its existence could have discovered it.

But now that Mamth saw that the three had reached the end of the canyon and started to ascend, he hurriedly sent warriors to intercept them. Whether they would reach the head of the canyon in time to do so was problematical.

Below, on the floor of the canyon, the tarag leaped to seize von Horst. The savage beast was apparently either indifferent to the close proximity of the mammoth racing now parallel with it, or else it sought

to wrest the prey from its competitor. Then a strange thing happened. The mammoth's trunk shot out with lightning speed and circled the body of the tarag, halting its spring in mid-air. Once the mighty Titan swung the screaming, clawing creature to and fro; then, with all its great strength, it hurled it high in the air and to one side.

Whether by intent or chance it hurled it to the rim of the canyon among the spectators, scattering them in all directions. Infuriated, and only slightly injured, the tarag charged among the fleeing tribesmen, striking them down to right and left.

But none of this von Horst witnessed. He was too much engrossed with his own perilous adventure. And perilous it seemed. For no sooner had the mammoth disposed of the tarag than it encircled the man with its powerful trunk and lifted him high in the air. To von Horst it signified the end. He breathed a silent prayer that it might be soon over and without suffering. As the beast wheeled he had a fleeting glimpse of the melee on the ledge above — the mad tarag, a score of spearmen rallying courageously to meet its savage attack; then he saw the three tarags and the four mammoths engaged in a terrific battle to the accompaniment of trumpeting, screams, growls, and roars that were almost deafening.

The bull that was carrying him aloft moved straight down the canyon at a shuffling trot. Von Horst wondered why he had not been tossed or trampled. Was the creature playing with him to prolong his torture? What was in the sagacious brain of the ponderous monster? Now the trunk curled back, and to von Horst's amazement he was lowered gently to the beast's neck. For a moment the trunk held him there until he gained his equilibrium; then it was removed.

Past the madly battling beasts the mammoth bore von Horst toward the lower end of the little canyon. The man settled himself more firmly

back of the great ears which he grasped as additional support, and as he did so he chanced to glance down. Upon the mammoth's left jowl grew a patch of white hair!

Ah Ara, ma Rahna — Old White, the Killer! Could it be that the great beast recognized him? Was it repaying the man for the service he had rendered it? Von Horst could scarcely believe this; yet, why else had it refrained from killing him? What was it doing now other than seeking to save him?

Von Horst was well aware of the great sagacity of these huge beasts and the unusual wisdom ascribed to Old White by the mammoth-men; so it was this knowledge and the hope that springs eternal that tended to convince him against his better judgment that he had found a faithful friend and a mighty ally. But what might it avail him? They were still trapped in the little canyon in which blood-mad beasts battled to the death. If he were at the upper end of the canyon, he might escape by the trail; but he was not — he was being borne toward the lower end across which was a massive gate of logs.

That Old White was seeking escape from the canyon in this direction was soon evident. He was directing his shuffling trot straight for the barrier. Now, as he approached it, he increased his gait; and as he came within fifty feet of it, he lowered his head and charged.

Von Horst was aghast. Ahead, upon the instant of impact with the logs of the barrier, lay death for both of them. He thought of slipping from the back of the charging beast. But why? Death beneath the fangs and talons of the great cats might be far more hideous than that which lay just ahead — the terrific impact and then oblivion. There would be no suffering.

The mammoth seems a slow moving, ungainly animal; but it is far from such. Now, in the full rush of its charge, Old White bore down

upon the gate of logs with the speed of an express train — a living battering ram of incalculable power. Von Horst lay flat, his arms hooked beneath the great ears. He waited for the end, and he had faced so many dangers in savage Pellucidar since he disembarked from the O-220 that he was not greatly concerned by the imminence of death. Perhaps, now that he had lost La-ja, it would be a welcome surcease of constant battling for survival. After all, was life worth this unremitting strife?

It was all over in a split second. The mighty skull crashed into the heavy barrier. Logs, splintered like matchwood, flew in all directions. The great beast stumbled to its knees over the lower bars, nearly unseating the man; then caught itself and rushed from the little canyon to freedom.

18.

BISON-MEN

That he was free seemed almost incredible to von Horst. A veritable miracle, the reward for his humane treatment of his giant savior, had wrought his salvation in an extremity from which only a miracle might have saved him. But what of the future? He had a mount, but what could he do about it? Where was it taking him? Could he control it? Could he even escape it? And if he did, where was he to go? He knew now that there was practically no hope that he might ever find Sari. Even though he might retrace his steps to The Forest of Death, through which he must pass to pick up Dangar's trail, he knew that it would be suicidal to enter that grim and forbidding wood. He would have liked to make his way to Lo-har because that was La-ja's country. From the point at which he had left The Forest of Death he knew the general direction of Lo-har, and so he decided that when he was again a free agent he would seek out the land of La-ja. There might always be at least the hope that she found her way there. That she could, though, through this fearsome land of grotesque and terrible dangers appeared such a remote possibility as to verge closely upon the impossible.

And how was he to reach it even though chance might put him on the right trail? He was unarmed except for the crude stone knife the mammoth-men had given him and the now useless belt of cartridges which he had clung to for some reason almost as inexplicable as the fact that his captors had not taken it from him.

It is true that the time he had spent in Pellucidar and his increased knowledge of her ways had given him greater confidence in his ability

to take care of himself, but it had also impressed upon him a healthy respect for the dangers that he knew must confront him. So much for the future. How about the present?

Old White had reduced his speed and was ambling down the main canyon away from the village of the mammoth-men and the little canyon. No sign of pursuit had developed, and von Horst thought it probable that the tribesmen had been so occupied with the saber-toothed tiger rampant among them that they had failed to notice the sudden departure of Old White and himself.

Presently the mammoth came out of the foot-hills and set its course down toward the river upon the banks of which von Horst had come upon it and where he had later been captured by the mammoth-men. The gentle slope of the plain ahead was dotted with feeding animals, sight of which raised the question in von Horst's mind as to how he was to procure food with only a stone knife as a weapon. He was also concerned with the destination of Old White. Were the animal to leave him in the open plain he might never pass through these great herds to the trees by the river, and he must reach the sanctuary of trees if he were to have even a chance for survival. There he could find partial concealment and the materials for the bow and arrows and the spear he must have to wage the eternal battle for life which constitutes the whole existence of man in that savage world.

But now Old White was veering off to the left on a course parallel to the river. Von Horst did not want to go in that direction, for the country lay open and only sparsely treed as far as the eye could reach. Trees, plenty of them, trees beside water he must reach.

He had witnessed the unsuccessful attempt to tame Old White. He had seen him obey the signals of his rider before he killed him, and he wondered if the great beast remembered what he had learned; or,

remembering, if he would obey. Perhaps an attempt to guide him would recall to the mammoth the indignities that had been heaped upon him by his captors and the manner in which he had rid himself of his last rider.

Von Horst hesitated a moment; then he shrugged and kicked Old White with his left foot. Nothing happened. He kicked again several times. Now the beast changed its direction toward the right and von Horst kept on kicking until it was headed straight for the river. Thereafter he kept the beast on this course by the signals he had learned from the mammoth-men — that they had both learned thus.

When the river was reached von Horst struck Old White a sharp blow on top of the head, and the beast stopped; then the man slipped to the ground. He wondered what the animal would do now, but it did nothing — only stood placidly waving its trunk to and fro. Von Horst stepped in front of its shoulder and stroked its trunk. “Good boy,” he said in quiet tones, as a man speaks to his horse. Old White wound his trunk about the man gently; then he released him, and von Horst walked away toward the trees and the river. He lay down on his belly and drank, and the mammoth came and drank beside him.

Von Horst could not know how long he remained there among the trees beside the river. He caught fish and gathered nuts and fruit and ate and slept several times; and he fashioned a bow and arrows and a good, stout spear. He made his spear with a thought to tarags. It was longer than the spears he had had before, but not too long; and it was heavy. The wood of which it was made was long-grained and pliant. It would not break easily.

While he was there he saw Old White often. The great beast fed in a great patch of bamboo that grew beside the river only a short distance from the tree in which von Horst had constructed a rude

shelter. Often, when not feeding, it came and stood beneath the tree that housed the man. Upon such occasions von Horst made it a point always to handle the beast and talk to it, for it offered him the only companionship that he had. After a while he came to look forward to Old White's return, and worry a little if he seemed gone over-long. It was a strange friendship, this between a man and a mammoth; and in it von Horst thought he recognized a parallel to the accidents that had resulted eons before in the beginning of the domestication of animals upon the outer crust.

His weapons completed, von Horst determined to set off upon his search for Lo-har. He did not expect ever to find the country, but he had to have an objective. It was just as likely that he would stumble upon Sari as that he should find Lo-har, but he could not simply remain where he was waiting for death by accident or old age. Furthermore, a sense of humor as well as curiosity impelled him to wish to see the fabulous Gaz.

Old White was standing under a nearby tree, out of the heat of the noon-day sun, swaying gently to and fro; and von Horst walked over to give him a final goodbye caress, for he had grown to be genuinely fond of his gigantic friend and companion.

"I'm going to miss you, old boy," he said. "You and I've been places and done things. Good luck to you!" and he gave the rough trunk a final slap as he turned and walked away into the unknown upon his hopeless quest.

As his eyes scanned the broad, horizonless vista that melted into a soft vignette at the uttermost range of human eye-sight it was difficult to reconcile the complete primitiveness of this untouched world with his knowledge that a bare five-hundred miles beneath his feet might be a city teeming with the traffic and the concerns of countless humans

like himself who went their various ways and lived their lives confronted by no greater menace than a reckless driver or a banana peel thrown carelessly upon the pavement.

It amused him to speculate upon what his friends might say could they see him now, the trim, sophisticated Lieutenant Frederick Wilhelm Eric von Mendeldorf und von Horst naked but for a loin-cloth, a man of the Pleistocene if ever there was one. And then his thoughts turned back to Pellucidar and La-ja. He wondered why she disliked him so, and he winced at the insistent realization this reverie conjured. He had sought to deny it and beat it down below the threshold of his consciousness, but it persisted with the insistent determination of a stricken conscience. *He loved her*; he loved this little barbarian who was as unconscious of the existence of an alphabet as of finger-bowls.

He plodded on sunk deep in reverie, which is no way to plod Pellucidar where one must be either very quick or very dead. He did not hear the thing that walked behind him, for it walked on padded feet — he was thinking of La-ja of Lo-har. Then, suddenly, he was startled into consciousness of his surroundings and the need for constant vigilance; but too late. Something seized him around the waist and swept him off his feet. As he was lifted high in air he squirmed and looked down into the rough and hairy face of Old White; then he was lowered gently to the broad neck. He almost laughed aloud in his relief. Instantly he felt new hope for the future — that will companionship do, even the companionship of a dumb beast.

“You old son-of-a-gun!” he exclaimed. “You nearly scared the breech-cloth off me, but I am glad to see you! Guess you get lonesome, too, eh? Neither of us seems to have many friends. Well, we’ll stick together as long as you’ll stick.”

Through dangers that must otherwise have seemed fatal Old White

bore the man-thing for whom he had conceived this strange attachment. Even the mighty tarag slunk aside out of the path of the mammoth; no bull of the great herds through which they passed charged. Once a thipdar circled about them, the great Pteranodon of the Lias which could carry off a full grown bull Bos. Beneath the shadow of its twenty foot wing spread they moved, the mammoth unconcerned, the man apprehensive; but it did not dive to the attack.

They stopped at intervals to feed and water and to sleep; but as time meant nothing in this timeless world, von Horst made no effort to compute it. He only knew that they must be a long way from Ja-ru. Often he walked to rest his muscles, and Old White plodded so close to him that his hairy trunk usually touched the naked body of the man.

To occupy his mind, von Horst had taught the beast several things — to raise him to its head upon command and to lower him to the ground, to kneel and to lie down, to walk or trot or charge at the proper signal, to lift and carry objects, to place his head against a tree and push it down, or to encircle one with its trunk and uproot it.

Old White seemed to enjoy learning and to be proud of his accomplishments. That he was highly intelligent, von Horst had long realized; and there was one characteristic of the mighty beast that proved it to the man beyond doubt. That was Old White's sense of humor. It was so well developed that there could be no mistaking it, and there were occasions when von Horst could have sworn that the mammoth grinned in appreciation of his own jokes, one of which was to seize the man by an ankle from behind and swing him into the air; but he never dropped him nor ever hurt him, always lowering him to the ground gently. Again, if he thought von Horst had slept too long, he would place a foot upon his body and pretend to trample him, holding him down; or he would fill his trunk with water and shower

him. The man never knew what to expect nor when to expect it, but he soon learned that Old White would never harm him.

Von Horst had no idea how far they had traveled; but he knew it must have been a considerable distance, yet they had passed no village nor seen a human being. He marveled at the vast expanse of uninhabited country given over entirely to wild animals. Thus had been the outer crust at one time. Yet, as he thought of conditions there now, it seemed incredible.

Whether he was nearer to Lo-har than before he could not guess. Often the excursion seemed hare-brained and hopeless. But what else was there for him to do? He might as well keep moving whether in the right direction or the wrong. Had he had a human companion — had La-ja been with him — he might have been reconciled to settle permanently in one of the many beautiful valleys he had crossed; but to live always alone in one place was unthinkable. And so he pushed on, exploring a new world that no one might ever know about but himself.

Each new rise of ground that he approached aroused his enthusiasm for the unknown. What lay beyond the summit? What new scenes would be revealed? Thus once, as Old White moved ponderously up a slight acclivity, the man's mind conjectured what might lie beyond the summit they were approaching, his anticipation of new scenes and his enthusiasm seemingly undiminished; then he heard a deep bellow, followed by others. Mingled with them seemed to be the voices of men.

To von Horst men meant enemies, so definitely had he habituated himself to the reactions of the stone age; but he determined to have a look at these people. Perhaps they were Lo-harians. Perhaps he had reached Lo-har! The sounds suggested men driving a herd of cattle in

which were many bulls, for the deep tones of the bellows gave color to his belief that there were mostly bulls beyond the ridge.

Slipping from Old White's back, von Horst ordered the great beast to remain where it was; then he crept stealthily forward, hoping to reach the summit of the ridge unobserved. In this he was successful, and a moment later he was looking down upon a scene that might well have made him question the credibility of his eyesight.

He lay upon the edge of a low cliff, and below him were four creatures such as might have materialized only from a bad dream. They had the bodies of men — squat, stocky men. Their faces, their shoulders, and their breasts were covered with long, brown hair. From opposite sides of their foreheads protruded short, heavy horns much like the horns of a bison; and they had tails with a bushy tuft of hair at the end. From their throats issued the bull-like bellows he had heard, as well as the speech of men.

They carried no weapons; and it was evident that they were being held at bay by some creature or creatures that were hidden from the sight of von Horst by the overhanging of the cliff upon which he lay, for every time they started to approach closer to the cliff fragments of stone would fly out and drive them back. This always set them to bellowing angrily; and sometimes one or another of them would stamp the ground or paw up the dust with a foot, for all the world like a mad bull; so that von Horst thought of them then and always as the bison-men.

From the fact that missiles were being hurled at these creatures by their prey, von Horst assumed that the latter might be human beings; though, of course, in Pellucidar they might be any strange variety of man or beast. That they were bison-men, he doubted; as he noticed

that none of the four threw rocks in return, as he was reasonably certain they would have done had they been sufficiently intelligent.

Occasionally he caught a word or two as the four spoke to one another, and he discovered that they spoke the common language of the human beings of Pellucidar. Presently one of them raised his voice and shouted to whatever it was they had brought to bay at the foot of the cliff.

“Stop throwing rocks, gilak,” he said. “It will only go worse with you when we get you, and we shall get you — be sure of that. You have neither food nor water; so you must come out or starve.”

“What do you want of us?” demanded a voice from the bottom of the cliff.

“We want the woman,” replied the bison-man who had previously spoken.

“You don’t want me?” demanded the voice.

“Only to kill you; but if you give us the woman, we will spare you.”

“How do I know you’ll keep your word?”

“We do not lie,” replied the bison-man. “Bring her here and we will let you go.”

“I bring her,” announced the voice from below.

“The son of a pig!” ejaculated von Horst beneath his breath.

A moment later he saw a man emerge from below the overhang of the cliff, dragging a woman by the hair. Instantly he was upon his feet, charged with horror and with rage; for at the first glance he had recognized them — Skruf and La-ja.

A sheer drop of thirty or forty feet to the ground below left him temporarily helpless, and for a moment he could only stand and look down upon the tragedy; then he fitted an arrow to his bow, but Skruf

was partially shielded by the body of the girl. Von Horst could not shoot without endangering her.

“La-ja!” he cried. The girl tried to turn her head back in the direction of his voice. Skruf and the bison-men looked up at the figure standing upon the top of the cliff.

“One side, La-ja!” he called. “Go to one side!” Instantly she swung to the right, turning Skruf sideways so that he was fully exposed to the archer whose bow was already drawn. The bow-string twanged. Skruf screamed and went down clutching at the feathered shaft sunk deep in his body, and as he fell he released his hold upon La-ja’s hair.

“Run!” commanded von Horst. “Run parallel to the cliff and I will follow until I find a way down.”

Already, recovered from their first surprise, the bison-men were running toward the girl; but she had a little start, and with luck she might outdistance them. Their heavy, squat figures did not seem designed for speed.

Von Horst turned and called to Old White to follow; then he ran along the cliff-top a little behind La-ja. Almost at once he realized that the appearance of the bison-men belied their agility — they were overhauling the girl. Again he fitted an arrow to his bow. Just for an instant he paused — long enough to take aim at the leading bison-man and release the shaft; then he sprang forward, but he had lost ground that he could not regain. However, he had temporarily widened the gap between La-ja and her pursuers; for the leading bison-man lay groveling on the ground, an arrow through his back.

The others were closing up, and again von Horst was forced to stop and shoot. As before, the girl’s closest pursuer pitched to the ground. The fellow rolled over and over, but when he stopped he lay very still. Now there were only two, but again von Horst had lost distance.

He tried to gain on them but he could not. At last he halted and sent two more arrows after the remaining bison-men. The nearer fell, but he missed the other. Twice after that he loosed his shafts; but the last one fell short, and he knew that the man was out of range — out of range and rapidly gaining on his quarry. Just ahead of the fleeing girl loomed a forest of giant trees. If she could reach these she might elude her pursuer, and she was fleet of foot.

In silence the three raced on, von Horst on the cliff-top barely maintaining his ground; then the girl disappeared among the boles of the great trees; and a moment later the bison-man followed her. Von Horst was frantic. The interminable cliff offered no avenue of descent. There was nothing to do but continue on until he found such a place, but in the meantime what would become of La-ja?

To have found her so unexpectedly, to have been so close to her, and then to have lost her left him heart-sick and hopeless. Still, he knew now that she lived; and that was something. And now, close behind him, he heard the familiar trumpeting of Old White; and a moment later a hairy trunk encircled him and swung him to the now familiar seat in the hollow back of the massive skull.

Just beyond the edge of the forest they came upon a rift in the escarpment; and here the mammoth, finding precarious foothold, picked his way carefully down. Von Horst turned him back to the point at which La-ja had disappeared; but here he was forced to dismount, as the trees grew too closely to permit the great beast to enter the forest, and he could neither uproot nor push over the giant boles.

As von Horst left Old White to enter the forest he had a premonition that this was the last time that he would ever see his faithful friend and ally; and it was with a heavy heart that he passed into the grim, forbidding wood.

Only for an instant was his mind occupied with thoughts of Old White, for at a distance he heard a faint scream; and then a voice called his name twice — “Von! Von!” — the voice of the woman he loved.

19.

KRU

Guided only by the memory of that faint cry in the distance, von Horst pushed on into the forest. Never had he seen trees of such size growing in such close proximity, often so near to one another that there was just room for him to pass between. There was no trail, and because of the zig-zag course he was forced to pursue he soon lost all sense of direction. Twice he had called La-ja's name aloud, hoping that she would reply and thus give him a new clue to her whereabouts, but there had been no answer. He realized that about all he had accomplished had been to apprise her captor that he was being pursued and thus put him on his guard; so, though he moved as rapidly as he could, he was most watchful. As he hurried on he became more and more imbued with a sense of frustration and the futility of his search, feeling that he was quite probably moving in circles and getting nowhere. He was even impressed by the probability that he might never even find his way out of this labyrinthine maze of gloomy trees, to say nothing of reaching La-ja in time to be of any service to her. And thus his mind was occupied by gloomy thoughts when he came suddenly to the end of the forest. Before him lay the mouth of a canyon leading into low but rugged hills, and here at last was a trail. It wound, well marked, into the canyon.

With renewed hope von Horst stepped confidently out to follow wherever the way might lead; for a brief examination told his now practiced eyes that someone had recently entered the canyon at this point, and faintly in the dust of the trail he saw the imprint of a tiny

foot. The canyon was little more than a narrow, rocky gorge winding snake-like into the hills; and as he proceeded he passed the mouths of other similar gorges that entered it at intervals; but the main trail was plain, and he continued upon it, certain now that he must soon overtake La-ja and her captor.

He had been for some little time in the gorge and was becoming impatient with each fresh disappointment when he rounded a bend and did not see those he sought ahead of him, when he heard a noise behind. He turned quickly and saw a bison-man creeping stealthily upon him. The instant that the fellow realized he had been discovered he voiced a bellow that might have issued from the throat of an angry bull. It was answered from down the gorge and from up, and then others came rapidly into view both in front and behind.

Von Horst was trapped. Upon either side the walls of the canyon, while not high, were unscalable; and behind him were bison-men cutting off retreat, and in front were bison-men effectually blocking his advance. Now they were all bellowing. The rocky walls of the gorge reverberated the angry, bestial chorus of challenge and of menace. They had been waiting for him. Von Horst knew it now. They had heard him call to La-ja. They had known he was following, and they had waited in the concealment of one of the gorges he had passed. How easily they had trapped him. But what might he have done to prevent it? How else might he search for La-ja without following where she went?

What was he to do now? The bison-men were coming toward him very slowly. They seemed to hold him in great respect. He wondered if the abductor of La-ja had had either the time or opportunity to tell his fellows of the havoc this strange gilak had played with the four that had first met him. That was one of the tantalizing characteristics of the

inner world — that one might never know the measure of elapsed time, which might easily gauge the difference between life and death.

“What are you doing here in our country?” demanded the nearest of the bison-men.

“I have come for the woman,” replied von Horst. “She is mine. Where is she?”

“Who are you? We never saw a gilak like you before, or one who could send death from a long way off on little sticks.”

“Get me the woman,” demanded von Horst, “or I’ll send death to you all.” He withdrew an arrow from his quiver and fitted it to his bow.

“You cannot kill us all,” said the creature. “You have not as many sticks as there are Ganaks.”

“What are Ganaks?” asked von Horst.

“We are Ganaks. We will take you to Drovan. If he says not to kill you, we will not kill you.”

“Is the woman there?”

“Yes.”

“Then I will go. Where is she?”

“Follow the Ganaks in front of you up the gorge.” They all moved on then in the direction that von Horst had been going, and presently they came to a large, open valley in which there were many trees dotted picturesquely over gently rolling ground. Out upon the plain a short distance lay what appeared to be a circular, palisaded village; and toward this the bison-men led the way.

As he came nearer, von Horst saw that there were fields of growing crops outside the village and that in these fields men and women were working — human beings like himself, not Ganaks; but there were many Ganak bulls loitering around. These performed no labor.

A single small gateway led into the village which consisted of a

complete circle of mud huts, one adjoining the other except in this one spot where the gateway lay. Trees grew all around the circle in front of the huts, spreading shade trees. In the center of the large compound was a cluster of huts; and here too there were shade trees.

To these central huts his guides led von Horst, and here he saw a large bison-man standing in the shade switching the flies from his legs with his tufted tail. Facing him stood La-ja with her captor, and half surrounding them was a curious throng of Ganaks.

As the new party approached, the big bull looked in their direction. He had massive horns, and the hair upon his face and shoulders and chest was heavy. His small, round eyes, set wide apart, were red-rimmed and fierce as they glowered menacingly at von Horst. His head was lowered, much after the manner of a beast's.

"What is this?" he demanded, indicating von Horst.

"This is the gilak that killed the three who were with me," said La-ja's captor.

"Tell me again how he killed them," directed the big bull.

"He sent little sticks to kill them," said the other.

"Little sticks do not kill, Trun. You are a fool or a liar."

"Little sticks did kill the three that were with me and another that was there, a gilak. I saw them kill, Drovan. See them? They are in that thing upon his back."

"Fetch a slave," commanded Drovan, "an old one that is not much good."

Von Horst stood there gazing at La-ja. He scarcely saw or heard what was going on about him. La-ja was looking at him. Her face was almost expressionless.

"So you are not dead yet," she said.

"I heard you call me, La-ja," he said "I came as soon as I could."

She raised her chin. "I did not call you," she said haughtily.

Von Horst was dumbfounded. He had heard her call, plainly, twice. Suddenly he became angry. His face flushed. "You are a little fool," he said. "You are absolutely without appreciation or gratitude. You are not worth saving." Then he turned his back on her.

Instantly he regretted his words; but he was hurt — hurt as he never had been in his life before. And he was too proud to retract what he had said.

A bison-man approached bringing an old slave woman with him. He led her to Drovan. The chief gave her a rough push.

"Go over there and stand," he ordered.

The old woman moved slowly away — a bent and helpless old creature.

"That's far enough," shouted Drovan. "Stand there where you are."

"You!" he bellowed, pointing at von Horst. "What is your name?"

The man eyed the half-beast insolently. He was mad all the way through — mad at himself and the world. "When you speak to me, don't bellow," he said.

Drovan lashed his legs angrily with his tail and lowered his head like a mad bull about to charge. He took a few slow steps toward von Horst; and then he stopped and pawed the ground with one foot and bellowed, but the man did not retreat, nor did he show fear.

Suddenly the chief espied the old slave woman standing out in the compound as he had directed her; then he turned again to von Horst. He pointed at the old woman.

"If your sticks will kill," he said, "kill her. But I do not believe that they will kill."

"My sticks will kill," said von Horst. "The Ganaks will see that they will kill."

He took a few steps out into the compound toward the old slave woman and fitted an arrow to his bow; then he turned toward Drovan and pointed at La-ja.

“Will you set that girl and myself free if I show you that my little sticks will kill?” he demanded.

“No,” growled the chief.

Von Horst shrugged. “Let it be on your own shoulders,” he said; and with that he drew back the feathered shaft, and before anyone could guess his intention or interfere he drove it through Drovan’s heart.

Instantly the compound was a riot of bellowing bulls. They fell upon von Horst before he could fit another arrow to his bow and by weight of numbers bore him to the ground, striking him with their fists and trying to gore him with their horns; but there were so many of them that they interfered with one another.

The man was pretty nearly done for when the attention of his attackers was attracted by a voice of authority.

“Do not kill,” it commanded. “Let him up. It is I, Kru the Chief, who speaks.”

Instantly the bulls abandoned von Horst and turned on the speaker.

“Who says Kru is chief?” demanded one. “It is I, Tant, who will be chief now that Drovan is dead.”

During the argument von Horst had dragged himself to his feet. He was half stunned for a moment, but he soon gathered his wits. Quickly he hunted for his bow and found it. Some of the arrows that had dropped from his quiver during the melee he found and retrieved.

Now his mind was alert. He looked about him. All the bulls were watching the two claimants for the chieftainship, but some of them were ranging themselves closer to Kru than to Tant. A few went

hesitantly to Tant's side. It looked like Kru to von Horst. He stepped over near those who were assembling around Kru.

Surreptitiously he fitted an arrow to his bow. He knew that he was taking a wild chance; and his better judgment told him to mind his own business, but he was still angry and indifferent as to whether he lived or not. Suddenly he straightened up. "Kru is chief!" he cried. Simultaneously he drove an arrow into Tant's chest. "Are there any others who will not accept Kru as chief?" he demanded.

Some of them who had gathered around Tant ran to strike him down; they charged with lowered horns like bulls. But those about Kru charged to meet them; and as they fought, von Horst moved backward slowly until he stood with his back against the chiefs hut. Close to him stood La-ja. He paid no attention to her, although it was plain to her that he was aware of her presence.

The man was engrossed in the strange tactics of these half-beasts. When they did not clinch they dove with lowered heads for the belly of an antagonist, seeking to disembowel him with their heavy horns. Oftentimes they met head on with such terrific force that both were knocked down. When they clinched, each antagonist seized another by the shoulders; and, straining and tugging, they sought to gore each other in the face or neck or chest.

It was a scene of savage fury made more terrifying by the bellowing and snorting of the combatants; but it was soon over, for those who opposed Kru were few in numbers and without a leader. One by one, those who survived broke away and retreated, leaving the field to Kru.

The new chief, overcome by his importance, strutted about pompously. He sent immediately for the women of Drovan and Tant, of which there were about thirty; and after selecting half of them for himself turned the others over to his followers to be divided by lot.

In the meantime von Horst and La-ja remained in the background practically unnoticed by the bison-men, nor did they call attention to themselves, as it was obvious that the bulls were worked up to a frenzy of hysterical excitement by all that had so recently transpired and by the sight and smell of blood. Presently, however, the eyes of an old bull fell upon them; and he commenced to bellow deep in his chest and paw the ground. He approached them, lowering his head as though about to charge. Von Horst fitted an arrow to his bow. The bull hesitated; then he turned toward Kru.

"The gilaks," he said. "When do we kill the gilaks or set them to work?"

Kru looked in the direction of the speaker. Von Horst waited for the chiefs answer. It had been upon the hope of his gratitude that he had based his hopes for liberty for himself and La-ja, for he was still thinking of the girl's welfare. He found that he could not do otherwise, no matter how ungrateful she might be. He wondered how much gratitude, then, he might expect from this brutal bison-man if La-ja accorded him none.

"Well," said the old bull, "do we kill the gilaks or do we put them to work in the fields?"

"Kill the she!" cried one of the women.

"No," growled Kru, "the she shall not be killed. Take them away and put them in a hut and guard them. Later Kru will decide what to do with the man."

Von Horst and La-ja were taken to a filthy hut. They were not bound. The man's weapons were not taken away from him, and he could only assume that their captors were too stupid and unimaginative to sense the necessity for such precautions. La-ja went to one side of the hut and sat down, von Horst to the other. They did not speak. The

man did not even look at the woman, but her eyes were often upon him.

He was unhappy and almost without hope. If she had been kind to him, even civil, he might have envisioned a future worth fighting for with enthusiasm; but now, without hope of her love, there seemed nothing. The knowledge that he loved her aroused in him only self-contempt, while it should have been a source of pride. He felt only a dull sense of duty to her because she was a woman. He knew that he would try to save her. He knew that he would fight for her, but he felt no elation.

Presently he lay down and slept. He dreamed that he slept in a clean bed between cool sheets, and that when he awoke he put on fresh linen and well pressed clothes and went down to a sumptuous dinner at a perfectly appointed table. A waiter, bringing a salver of food, bumped against his shoulder.

He awoke to see a woman standing beside him. She had kicked his shoulder. "Wake up," she said. "Here is your fodder."

She dumped an armful of fresh-cut grass and some vegetables on the filthy floor beside him. "It is for the woman, too," she said.

Von Horst sat up and looked at the woman. She was not a Ganak, but a human being like himself. "What is the grass for?" he asked.

"To eat," she replied.

"We do not eat grass," he said, "and there are not enough vegetables here to make a meal for one."

"You will eat grass here or you will starve," said the woman. "We slaves are not allowed many vegetables."

"How about meat?" inquired von Horst.

"The Ganaks do not eat meat; so there is no meat to eat. I have

been here for more sleeps than I can remember, and I have never seen anyone eat meat. You'll get used to the grass after awhile."

"Do they put all their prisoners to work in the fields?" asked von Horst.

"You never can tell what they will do. As a rule they keep the women and work them in the fields until they get too old; then they kill them. If they are short of slaves they keep the men for awhile; otherwise they kill them immediately. They have kept me for many sleeps. I belong to Splay. They will give this woman to someone, because she is young. They will probably kill you, as they have plenty of slaves now — more than they care to feed."

When the woman had gone, von Horst gathered up the vegetables and placed them beside La-ja. The girl looked up at him. Her eyes flashed.

"Why do you do such things?" she demanded. "I do not want you to do anything for me. I do not want to like you."

Von Horst shrugged. "You are succeeding very well," he said, dryly.

She mumbled something that he could not catch and commenced to divide the vegetables into two parts. "You eat your share and I shall eat mine," she said.

"There are not enough for one, let alone two. You'd better keep them all," he insisted. "Anyway, I don't care much for raw vegetables."

"Then you can leave them. I'll not eat them. If you don't like the vegetables, eat the grass."

Von Horst relapsed into silence and commenced to gnaw on a tuber. It was better than nothing — that was about all he could say for it. As the girl ate she occasionally glanced at the man furtively. Once he glanced up and caught her eyes on him, and she looked away quickly.

“Why do you dislike me, La-ja?” he asked. “What have I done.”

“I don’t wish to talk about it. I don’t wish to talk to you at all.”

“You’re not fair,” he remonstrated. “If I knew what I’d done, I might correct it. It would be much pleasanter if we were friends, for we may have to see a lot of each other before we get to Lo-har.”

“We’ll never get to Lo-har.”

“Don’t give up hope. These people are stupid. We ought to be able to out-wit them and escape.”

“We won’t; but if we did you wouldn’t be going to Lo-har.”

“I’m going wherever you go,” he replied doggedly.

“Why do you want to go to Lo-har? You’d only be killed. Gaz would break you in two. But why do you want to go at all?”

“Because you are going,” he said. He spoke scarcely above a whisper, as though to himself.

She looked at him intently, questioningly. Her expression underwent a barely perceptible change, which he did not note because he was not looking at her. It seemed a little less uncompromising. There was the difference between granite and ice — ice is very cold and hard, but it does thaw.

“If you would only tell me what I have done,” he insisted — “why you do not like me.”

“That, I could not say to you,” she replied. “If you were not a fool, you’d know.”

He shook his head. “I’m sorry,” he said, “but I guess I am; so please tell me because I am such a fool.”

“No,” she replied emphatically.

“Couldn’t you give me a clue? — just a little hint?”

She thought for a moment. “Perhaps I could do that,” she said.

“You remember that you struck me and carried me away from Basti by force?”

“I did it for your own good, and I apologized,” he reminded her.

“But you did it.”

“Yes.”

“And you didn’t do anything about it,” she insisted.

“I don’t know what you mean,” he said hopelessly.

“If I believed that, I might forgive you; but I don’t believe anyone can be such a fool.”

He sought to find some explanation of the riddle; but though he racked his brains, he could think of none. What *could* he have done about it?

“Perhaps,” said La-ja presently, “neither one of us understands the other. Tell me just exactly why you insist on going to Lo-har with me; and if your reason is what I am beginning to suspect it is, I’ll tell you why I have not liked you.”

“That’s a bet,” exclaimed the man. “I want to go to Lo-har because —”

Two bison-men burst into the hut, cutting him short. “Come!” they commanded. “Now Kru is going to have you killed.”

20.

THE BELLOWING HERD

The two Ganaks motioned La-ja to accompany them. "Kru has sent for you, too," they said; "but he is not going to kill you," they added, grinning. As they passed through the village toward the hut of the chief, many of the Ganaks were lying in the shade of the numerous trees that grew within the compound. Some were eating the grass that had been cut by the slaves; others were placidly chewing their cud, drowsing with half-closed eyes. Some of the children played. Sporadically and briefly, but the adults neither played nor laughed nor conversed. They were typical ruminants, seemingly as stupid. They wore neither ornaments nor clothing, nor had they any weapons.

To their lack of weapons, coupled with their stupidity, von Horst attributed the fact that they had not relieved him of his. He still had his bow and arrows and a knife, though he had not recovered his spear which he had dropped during the fight following his slaying of Drovan.

The prisoners were led before Kru who lay in the shade of the great tree that overspread his hut, the hut that had been Drovan's so recently. He looked at them through his red-rimmed eyes, but mostly he looked at La-ja. "You belong to me," he said to her; "you belong to the chief. Pretty soon you go in hut; now you stay outside, watch *gilak man* die. You will see how you die if you make Kru mad." Then he turned to a bull lying beside him. "Splay, go tell the slaves to bring the dancing water and the death-tree."

“What’s the idea?” demanded von Horst. “Why should you kill me? If it hadn’t been for me you wouldn’t be chief.”

“Too many men slaves,” grunted Kru. “They eat too much. Dancing water good; death-tree fun.”

“Fun for whom — me?”

“No, fun for Ganaks; no fun for gilak.” Presently Splay returned with a number of slaves. Several of the men carried a small tree that had been stripped of its branches; other men and the women bore quantities of small sticks and rude jars and gourds filled with a liquid.

At sight of them the bison-men commenced to gather from all parts of the village; their women came too, but the young were chased away. They sat down forming a great circle about the tree before the chiefs hut. A slave passed a jar to one in the circle. He took a long draught and passed it to the next in line. Thus it started around the circle. The slaves bearing the other gourds and jars followed it around just outside the circle. When it had been emptied another was started at that point.

The men slaves who bore the small tree trunk dug a hole in the ground in an open space between the chiefs hut and the village gate. When the hole was sufficiently deep they set the tree upright in it and stamped dirt around it. It protruded about six feet above the surface of the ground. And while this was going on many gourds and jars had been passed around the circle. Now men and women were bellowing, and presently a woman arose and began to leap and skip in clumsy, awkward simulation of a dance. Soon others joined her, both men and women, until all the adults of the village were leaping and staggering and lurching about the compound.

“Dancing-water,” said von Horst to La-ja, with a grin.

“Yes, it is the water that takes men’s brains away. Sometimes it

makes brave men of cowards and beasts of brave men and always fools of all men. Gaz drinks much of it before he kills.”

“That must be the tree of death over there.” Von Horst nodded in the direction of the sapling the slaves had finished setting up. Now they were piling dry grass and leaves and sticks all around it.

“The death tree!” whispered La-ja. “What is it for?”

“For me,” said the man.

“But how? I do not understand. It can’t be that they are going to — Oh, no; they can’t be.”

“But they are, La-ja. Odd, isn’t it?”

“What is odd?”

“That these creatures that are so near the beasts couldn’t think of such a thing by themselves nor accomplish it. That only man of all the animals has the faculty of devising torture for amusement.”

“I had never thought of that,” she said; “but it is true, and it is also true that only man makes the drink that steals away his brains and makes him like the beasts.”

“Not like the beasts, La-ja — only more human; for it removes his inhibitions and permits him to be himself.”

She did not reply, but stood staring at the stake in the center of the compound, fascinated. Von Horst watched her lovely profile, wondering what was passing in that half savage little brain. He knew that the end must be nearing rapidly, but he had made no move to escape the horrible death the slaves were preparing for him. If there had been only himself to consider, he could have made a break for liberty and died fighting; but there was the girl. He wanted to save her far more than he wanted to save himself.

All about them the bison-men were dancing and bellowing. He

heard Kru shout, "Fire! Fire! Give us a fire to dance around. More dance-water! Bring more dance-water, slaves!"

As the slaves refilled the jars and gourds, others built a large fire near the stake; and the bellowing herd immediately commenced to circle it. With the lighting of the fire the demeanor of the bison-men became more uncontrolled, more boisterous, and more bestial; and with the added stimulus of the new supply of drink they threw aside all discretion.

To right and left they were falling to the ground — those remaining on their feet so drunk that they could scarcely stagger. Then someone raised the cry, "The gilak! To the death-tree with him!"

It was taken up on all sides by those who could still speak, and then Kru came staggering toward von Horst.

"To the death tree with him!" he bellowed. "The girl!" he exclaimed. It was as though he had forgotten her until his eyes fell on her on that minute. "Come with me! You are Kru's." He reached out a dirty paw to seize her.

"Not so fast!" said von Horst, stepping between them; then he struck Kru in the face, knocking him down, seized La-ja by the hand and started to run for the village gate, which the slaves had left open when they brought in the tree and the fire-wood. Behind them was the whole herd of bison-men, bellowing with rage as they commenced to get it through their befuddled minds that the prisoners were making a break for escape. In front of them were the slaves. Would they try to stop them? Von Horst dropped La-ja's hand and removed his now useless cartridge belt. Useless? Not quite. A slave tried to stop him, and he swung the loaded belt to the side of his head, knocking him down.

That and one look at von Horst's face sent the other slaves scurrying out of his way, but now some of the bison-men were taking up

the pursuit. However, a single backward glance assured von Horst that either he or La-ja could out-distance them at the moment; as they had difficulty in remaining on their feet at all, while those that did moved about so erratically as to make the idea of pursuit by them appear ridiculous. Nevertheless, they were coming, and the gate was a long way off. To von Horst's disgust, he saw that a few of the bison-men were steadying. But their vile drink held most of them in a state of helplessness. A few, however, had rallied and formed a definitely menacing group as they followed the two fugitives.

"I'll give 'em something to think about besides us," said von Horst, and as they passed the roaring fire he threw his cartridge belt into it.

As they neared the gate he spoke again to La-ja. "Run," he said. "I'll try to hold them for a moment or two;" then he wheeled and faced the oncoming bison-men. There were only about a dozen of them sober enough to control their actions or hold to a fixed purpose. The majority of the others were milling about the fire or lying helpless on the ground, and even the dozen were erratic in their movements.

Von Horst loosed an arrow at the nearest of the pursuers. It caught him in the belly, and he went down shrieking and bellowing. A second arrow bowled over another. The remainder were quite close now, too close for comfort. He sent another arrow into a third; and that stopped them, momentarily at least. Then the cartridges in the fire began to explode. At the first detonation those who were pursuing the fugitives turned to see what had caused this startling sound, and simultaneously von Horst wheeled and started for the gate.

He found La-ja standing directly behind him, but she too turned and ran the instant that she saw that he was leaving.

"I thought I told you to run," he said.

"What good would it have done, if you had been recaptured or

killed?" she demanded. "They would only have caught me again. But it would have done them no good. Kru would not have had me."

He saw then that she carried her stone knife in her hand, and a lump rose in his throat from pity for her. He wanted to take her in his arms from sympathy, but when one is running from imminent death one cannot very well take a woman who hates one into one's arms.

"But you might have escaped and reached Lo-har," he protested.

"There are other things in the world beside reaching Lo-har," she replied enigmatically.

They were past the gates now. Behind them rose the din of exploding cartridges and the mad bellowing of the bison-men. Before them stretched an open, rolling, tree-dotted valley. To their left was the great forest, to their right a fringe of trees at the base of low, wooded cliffs.

Von Horst bore to the right.

"The forest is closer," suggested La-ja.

"It is in the wrong direction," he replied. "Lo-har should lie in the direction we are going. It does, doesn't it?"

"Yes, in this general direction."

"But more important is the fact that if we got into the great forest we'd lose ourselves in no time — and no telling where we'd come out."

La-ja glanced back.

"I think they're gaining on us," she said. "They are very fast."

Von Horst realized that they'd never reach the cliffs ahead of their pursuers, that their break for liberty had only delayed the inevitable.

"I have a few more arrows left," he said. "We can keep on until they overtake us. Something may happen — a miracle, and it will have to be a miracle. If nothing does, we can make a stand for it. I may be able

to kill off enough of them to frighten the others away while we make a fresh start for the cliffs.”

“Not a chance,” said La-ja. “Look back there near the village.”

Von Horst whistled. More warriors were emerging from the gateway. Evidently Kru was sending all who could stand on their feet to join in the pursuit.

“It looks like a hard winter,” he remarked.

“Winter?” queried La-ja. “I see nothing but Ganaks. Where is the winter?”

She was panting from exertion, and her words came in little gasps.

“Well, let it pass. We’d better save our breath for running.”

Thereafter they bent all their energies to the task of out-distancing the bison-men, but without hope. Constantly they lost ground; yet they were nearing the cliffs and the little fringe of wood that half hid them.

Von Horst did not know why he felt so certain that they might be safe if they reached the cliffs; yet he did feel it, and his judgment seemed justified by the fact that the bison-men appeared so anxious to overtake them as quickly as possible. If they had known that the fugitives could not escape even after reaching the cliffs, it seemed reasonable to assume that they would have shown less haste and excitement and would have trailed more slowly and with far less exertion.

Presently La-ja stumbled and fell. Von Horst wheeled and was at her side instantly. She seemed very weak as he helped her to her feet.

“It’s no use,” she said. “I cannot go on. I have been running away from Skruf for a long time, always without sufficient food or rest. It has made me weak. Go on without me. You might easily save yourself. There is nothing more that you can do for me.”

“Don’t worry,” he said. “We’ll make our stand here. We’d have had to made it pretty soon anyway.”

He turned to glance at the oncoming half-beasts. In a moment they'd be within arrow range. There were nine of them, and he had six arrows left. If he got six of the pursuers he might bluff off the other three, but how about the swarm that was now pouring up the valley from the village?

He was thinking how futile was his foolish little stand against such odds, when something impelled him to turn suddenly and look at La-ja. It was one of those strange, psychic phenomena which most of us have experienced, and which many trained researchers ridicule; yet the force which caused von Horst to turn about seemed almost physical, so powerfully did it affect him and so peremptorily. And as he turned he voiced a cry of alarm and leaped forward, seizing La-ja's right wrist.

"La-ja!" he cried: "Thank the Lord I saw you." He wrenched her stone knife from her fingers, and then dropped her hand. He had broken out into a cold sweat and was trembling.

"How could you? La-ja, how could you?"

"It is best," she said. "If I were dead you might escape. Soon they will take us; and then we shall both die; for they will kill you, and I will kill myself. I will not let Kru have me."

"No," he said, "that is right; but wait until all hope is gone."

"It is gone. You have already done too much for me. The least I can do is to make you free to save yourself. Give me back my knife." He shook his head.

"But if they get me, and I have no knife, how can I escape Kru?"

"I'll let you have it," he said, "if you'll promise not to do that until after I am dead. As long as I live there is hope."

"I promise," she said. "I do not want to die. I just wanted to save you."

“Because you hate me?” he asked with a half-smile.

“Perhaps,” she replied unsmilingly. “Perhaps I do not want to be under such obligations to one I don’t like — or perhaps —”

He handed the knife back to her. “You have promised me,” he reminded her.

“I shall keep my promise. Look; they are very close.”

He turned then and saw that the bison-men were almost within bow-shot. He fitted an arrow and waited. They saw, and came more slowly. Now they spread out to afford him a poorer target. He had not given them credit for that much sense.

“I’ll get some of them,” he called back to La-ja. “I wish you would run for the cliffs. I think you could make it. I am sure I can hold them for a while.”

The girl did not reply and he could not take his eyes from the bison-men long enough even to glance back at her. His bow twanged. A bison-man screamed and fell.

“I’m getting pretty hot at this archery stuff,” he commented aloud. This evidence of childish pride upon the very threshold of death amused him, and he smiled. He thought that if he were home he could give exhibitions at town fairs. Perhaps he could even learn to shoot backward through a mirror as he had seen rifle experts do. It was all very amusing. He pictured the embarrassment of his fellow officers and other friends when they saw large colored lithographs announcing the coming of “Lieutenant Frederich Wilhelm Eric von Mendeldorf und von Horst, Champion Archer of the World. Admission 25 pfennings.”

He loosed another arrow, still smiling. “I think I shall charge more admission,” he mused as another bison-man dropped. “I’m pretty good.”

La-ja interrupted his amusing train of thought with an exclamation

of despair. "A tandor is coming, Von," she cried. "It is coming for us. Its tail is up, and it is coming straight for us. It must be an old bull that has gone mad. They are terrible."

Von Horst glanced back. Yes, a mammoth was coming; and it was coming straight as an arrow in their direction. There could be no doubt but that it had seen them and was trotting up to charge. When it got closer it would trumpet, its tail and trunk and ears would all go up; and it would barge down on them like a runaway locomotive. There would be no escaping it, Bison-men in front, a mad mammoth in the rear!

"This doesn't seem to be our lucky day," he said.

"Day?" inquired La-ja. "What is day?" The bison-men were watching the mammoth. Behind them their fellows were approaching rapidly. Soon there would be fully a hundred of them. Von Horst wondered if they would stand the charge of a mammoth. They bore no arms. How could they defend themselves. Then he glanced back at the mammoth, and his heart leaped. It was quite close now, and it was about to charge. He could see the patch of white hair on its left jowl quite plainly. He voiced the call with which the great beast had been so familiar. Simultaneously the great trunk went up, a thunderous trumpeting shook the earth, and Old White charged.

Von Horst swept La-ja into his arms and stood there in the path of the gigantic monster. Could it be that Old White did not know him, or had he really gone mad and bent on killing, no matter whom, just for the sake of killing?

The girl clung to the man. He felt her arms about his neck, her firm young breasts pressed against his body, and he was resigned. If it were death, he could not have chosen a happier end — in the arms of the woman he loved.

With a squeal of rage, Old White brushed past them so close that he almost bowled them over and bore down upon the bison-men. These scattered but they did not run. Then it was that von Horst saw how they fought the mighty tander.

Leaping aside, they sprang in again, goring at the great beast's side and belly as he raced past. They were thrown down by the impact, but they were on their feet again instantly. As a group lured Old White in one direction, fifty Ganaks rushed in upon his sides and rear seeking to reach and tear him with their stout horns. Perhaps they had overcome other mammoths in this way, for it was evident that they were but following an accustomed routine; but Old White was not as other mammoths. When he had felt a few horns tear his tough sides he ceased charging. He did not let any of them get behind him again. He moved slowly toward them, reminding von Horst of a huge cat stalking a bird. The bison-men waited for the charge, ready to leap aside and then in to gore him; but he did not charge. He came close and then made a short, quick rush, seized a bison-man, raised him high above his head and hurled him with terrific force among his fellows, downing a dozen of them. Before they could collect themselves, Old White was among them, trampling and tossing, until those who managed to elude him were glad to run for their village as fast as they could go.

The mammoth pursued them for a short distance picking up a few stragglers and hurling them far ahead among the frightened, bellowing herd; then he turned about and came at his slow, swinging pace toward von Horst and the girl.

"Now he will kill us!" she cried. "Why didn't we run away while we had the chance?"

21.

DESERTED

“He won’t hurt us,” von Horst assured her.

“How do you know he won’t?” she demanded. “You saw what he did to the Ganaks.”

“We are friends, Old White and I.”

“This is no time to laugh with words,” she said. “It is very brave but it isn’t good sense.”

The mammoth was nearing them. La-ja involuntarily pressed close to von Horst. He threw a protective arm about her and held her still closer. He was aware that her attitude seemingly belied her repeated assurances of dislike and wondered if fear could so quickly overcome her pride. That did not seem at all like La-ja. He was puzzled, but he was not too insistent upon questioning any circumstance that brought her into his arms. The fact was enough. All that he could do was acknowledge another debt of gratitude to Old White.

The mammoth stopped in front of them. He seemed to be questioning the presence of the girl. Von Horst’s only fear was that the great, savage beast might not accept her. He had known but one human friend. All others had been enemies to be killed. The man spoke to him and stroked the trunk that was reaching tentatively toward the girl. Then he gave the command to lift them to his back. There was a moment’s hesitation as the sensitive tip moved slowly over La-ja. The girl did not shrink. For that von Horst was thankful. How very brave she was! The trunk encircled them, and again the girl’s arms went around the man’s neck. Old White tightened his grip. Von Horst

repeated the command to lift them, and they were swung from the ground and deposited just behind the great head. At the man's signal, the mammoth moved off in the direction of Lo-har.

La-ja breathed a little sigh that was half gasp. "I do not understand," she said. "How can you make a wild tandor do what you tell him to do?"

Von Horst told her then of his first encounter with Old White and of all that had occurred since — his captivity among the mammoth-men, of the little canyon, and of his eventual escape.

"I saw you attack Frug," she said; "and then Skruf dragged me across the river, and I never knew whether you were killed by Frug or by the mammoth-men, or if they captured you.

"Skruf hid with me in a cave beside the river. He put a gag in my mouth so that I couldn't cry out and attract the attention of the mammoth-men. We heard them hunting us. I would rather have been captured by them than taken back to Basti, and Skruf knew it. I thought you might be a prisoner among them, too."

She caught herself quickly, as though she had spoken without thought. "Of course I didn't care. It was only that the country of the mammoth-men is much nearer Lo-har than Basti is. I did not want to be taken all the way back to Basti.

"We hid for a long time; then we started out again, but at the first sleep I escaped. The thongs he tied me with were so loose that I slipped my hands from them.

"I ran away toward Lo-har. I went a long way and thought that I was safe. I slept many times; so I know I must have come far. I was very lucky. I met only a few of the flesh-eaters and these always when there was a place to hide — a tree or a cave with a very small entrance. I saw no man until once I looked behind me from the top of a low hill and

saw Skruf following me. He was a long way off, but I knew him at once. He saw me. It was very plain that he saw me, for he stopped suddenly and stood still for a moment; then he started after me at a trot. I turned and ran. I tried every way that I knew to throw him off my track, and after a long time I thought that I had succeeded. But I had not. He came upon me while I was sleeping, and started to drag me back to Basti. It was then that the bison-men discovered us. You know the rest.”

“You have had a hard time of it, La-ja,” said von Horst. “I can’t understand how you have come through alive.”

“I think I have had a very easy time of it,” she replied. “Very few girls who are stolen from the tribe ever escape their captors. Many of them are killed; the others have to mate with men they do not like. That I would not do. I would kill myself first. I think I am a very lucky girl.”

“But think of all the dangers and hardships you have had to face,” he insisted.

“Oh, yes,” she admitted, “it is not easy to be alone always with enemies. It is not pleasant, but I have not had so many dangers. The Gorbuses were the worst. I did not like them.”

Von Horst was amazed. It seemed incredible that a girl could pass through what she had without being a nervous wreck, yet La-ja appeared to take it all as a matter of course. It was difficult for him not to compare her with girls of his own world and forget how different her environment had been. Where they walked with assurance, she might be as terrified as would they in Pellucidar — though it was not easy to visualize La-ja as terrified under any circumstances.

It often pleased him to dream of taking her back to the outer world with him. There were so many things, commonplace to him, that

would astonish her — her first ride on a train, in an automobile, in an airplane; the sight of the great buildings, the giant liners, huge cities. He tried to imagine what the reaction would be of one who had never seen any of these things, nor dreamed of their existence, nor of the civilization that had produced them.

She would find many things foolish and impractical — the wearing of high-heeled shoes that pinched her feet; she would think it foolish to wear furs when it was not cold, to dress warmly in the daytime and go half naked at night. All clothes would hamper her; she would not like them. But with the beauty of her face and figure, her pride, and her femininity she would soon learn to like them, of that he was quite certain.

Poor little La-ja! What a crime it would be to let civilization spoil her. However, that was nothing for him to worry about. She would not have him even in Pellucidar, nor was there much likelihood that he would ever himself see the outer world again, much less take her or anyone else back with him.

With reveries such as these and desultory conversation with La-ja he whiled the time while Old White bore them in the direction of Lo-har. Even the larger beasts of prey they encountered on the way turned aside from the path of the great bull mammoth, so that their journey was one of ease, free from the constant menace of these fierce flesh-eaters which would have constantly harassed them had they been on foot.

They had slept three times and eaten not a few when La-ja announced that they were approaching Lo-har. They had halted to rest and sleep — it would be the last sleep before they reached Lo-har, and La-ja seemed preoccupied and dejected. During this last journey together she had been friendly and companionable, so that von Horst's

hopes had risen; though he had had to admit to himself that she still gave him no reason to believe that she did more than tolerate him. However, he had been very happy — happier than he had been since he had entered this strange world; perhaps happier than he had ever been, for he had never been in love before.

They had made camp and he had gone out on the plain and brought down a small antelope with an arrow from his bow. Now they were grilling cuts over a small fire. Old White had moved ponderously to a clump of young trees which he was rapidly denuding of foliage. The noon-day sun beat down upon the open plain beside which they were camped and upon which great herds grazed peacefully, for the moment undisturbed by any prowling carnivore.

Von Horst felt the peace and contentment that hung over the scene like a white cloud above a summer sea, and his mood was in harmony with his environment. His eyes rested upon La-ja, devouring her; and almost upon his lips was an avowal of the passion that filled his whole being.

She chanced to turn and catch his eyes upon her; for a moment they held; then she looked off across the plain. She pointed.

“When we set out again,” she said, “I go in that direction — alone.”

“What do you mean?” he demanded. “That is not the direction of Lo-har — it is straight ahead, in the direction we have been traveling.”

“A great lake lies to our left,” she explained. “We have had to make a detour to pass around it. You cannot see it from here because it lies in a deep basin rimmed by cliffs.”

“You are not going alone,” he said. “I am going with you.”

“Haven’t I made it clear to you many times that I do not want you to come with me? How many times must I tell you that I do not like

you? Go away and leave me. Let me go back to my own people in peace.”

Von Horst flushed. Bitter words were in his throat, but he choked them. All he said was, “I am going with you, because I — because — well, because you can’t go on alone.”

She rose. “I do not need you, and I do not want you,” she said; then she went and lay down in the shade of a tree to sleep.

Von Horst sat brooding disconsolately. Old White, his meal finished, drank from the stream beside the camp and came and stood beneath a nearby tree, dozing. Von Horst knew that he would remain there and constitute a better guard than any man; so he stretched himself upon the ground and was soon asleep.

When he awoke, Old White was still standing in the shade, his great shaggy body rocking gently to and fro; the herds still grazed over the broad plain; the eternal noon-day sun still shone down serenely upon the peaceful scene. He might have slept for no more than a minute; or, he realized, he might have been sleeping for a week of outer-earthly time. He looked for La-ja. She was not where he had last seen her. A sudden presentiment of evil brought him to his feet. He looked quickly in all directions. The girl was nowhere in sight. He called her name aloud again and again, but there was no response.

Then he went quickly to where she had been sleeping and searched the ground in the vicinity of the camp. There was no sign that either man or beast had been there other than themselves; but this was not entirely strange, as the grass, close cropped by the grazing herds, would have registered no sign of an ordinary passing.

Presently he dismissed the possibility that La-ja had been taken forcibly by either beast or man. Had such an attempt been made she would have called to him for help, and surely Old White would have

protected the camp from any intruder. There was but one explanation — La-ja had gone on alone, eluding him. She had told him that she did not want him to come with her. His insistence that he would come anyway had left her no alternative other than the thing she had done — she had simply run away from him.

His pride was hurt, but that hurt was as nothing to the ache in his heart. The bottom had dropped out of his world. There seemed nothing in life to look forward to. What was he to do? Where might he go? He had no idea where Sari lay, and only in Sari might he hope to find a friend in all this vast, savage world. But only for a moment was he undecided; then he called to Old White, and at his command the beast swung him to its back. As the mammoth moved off, von Horst guided it in the new direction La-ja had pointed out before they had slept. His mind was made up. He was going to Lo-har. While life remained in him he would not give up hope of winning the girl he loved.

He urged Old White on in the hope of overtaking the girl. Not knowing how long he had slept he had no idea how far ahead of him she might be. She had told him that Lo-har lay but a single march from their last camp site, yet on and on they went until he was half dead with fatigue; and at last Old White refused to go farther without rest, yet there was neither sign of La-ja nor of any village nor even of the great lake that she had told him they must skirt.

He wondered if he were searching in the right direction, for it was easily possible that the village might lie either to the right or left of his line of march; but it seemed strange that he should have passed close to any village without seeing some sign of man. Hunting parties were always abroad, and the sight of a stranger would have brought them to investigate and probably to have killed. He banked on his acquaint-

tance with La-ja, however, to get him a peaceable hearing from her father, Brun, the chief, when it was his intention to ask to be taken into the tribe.

At last he was forced to halt that Old White might feed and rest; but it was not until they finally did so beside a stream that he realized how much he, too, was in need of both food and sleep. He had brought with him, wrapped in its own hide, some of the antelope he had killed at his last camp; and upon this and some fruit he broke his long fast; then he slept.

He must have slept for a long time, for he was very tired; but with his safety assured by the watchful presence of Old White he slept soundly. When he awoke, something was touching his breast. He did not immediately open his eyes, for he recognized the feel of the moist tip of Old White's trunk upon his naked flesh. He just lay there luxuriating in the sensuous delight of the brief, lazy moments that lie between awakening and full consciousness. But as consciousness returned, bringing command of all the senses, he gradually became aware of an odor that was not the odor of Old White. It was a strong, acrid scent; and slowly he raised his lids.

A sudden numbness seized him as he recognized the creature that stood over him sniffing at his body with its moist muzzle moving over his bare flesh. It was that most gigantic and feared of all Pellucidarian beasts of prey, the ryth, a colossal cave bear long extinct upon the outer crust.

He closed his eyes again and feigned death, for he had heard that a bear will not maul a dead body unless it is its own kill. He had little belief in the truth of the statement, but it was the proverbial straw and the only one. All that he could do was lie still and hope for the best.

The nose left his body. There was no sound but the breathing of

the beast. What was it doing? The suspense was maddening, and at last he could endure it no longer. The bear was standing over him with its head turned to one side, looking away, sniffing, listening. Von Horst lay in a gentle depression beneath a wide-spreading tree. He could see but a short distance in the direction the bear was looking. Nor could the bear see farther than the summit of the gentle slope that ran down to the bank of the stream beside which von Horst lay, but it must have scented or heard something approaching.

Von Horst thought that it must be Old White returning. He must have wandered much farther from camp than usual. There would be a battle royal when he returned and saw the *ryth* menacing his friend. The man knew that Old White was afraid of nothing, and he knew the reputation of the mighty cave bear for fearlessness and bellicosity. He had been told that one of these great beasts could kill a mammoth with a single blow of its mighty paw; but Old White was not just *a* mammoth; he was *the* mammoth. The mammoth-men had said there was never one like him for size and ferocity and cunning. And then a man topped the rise and walked in full view of the bear and von Horst. He was quartering down the slope so that he was not facing them directly; and he had not yet seen them, for they were in the dense shade of the tree.

He was half way down the slope, and von Horst thought the bear was going to let him pass, when he saw them. Simultaneously von Horst recognized him. It was Daj, the young warrior from Lo-har whom he had met in the little canyon in Ja-ru, the land of the mammoth-men.

When Daj saw the bear he looked for the nearest tree. It was man's only defense against such a creature. As he started to run, the bear voiced a deafening roar and started for him. Von Horst sprang to his

feet. He was saved, for he could clamber into the tree above now before the bear could turn and reach him. But what of Daj? The tree nearest him was evidently a little too far away to be reached before the bear overtook him, yet Daj was straining every muscle to reach it.

As von Horst had risen he had gathered up his bow and arrows that had lain on the ground beside him. In them he saw a possibility of saving Daj. Fitting an arrow to his bow he took aim and let drive. The missile sank deep in the bear's rump eliciting a roar of rage and pain and bringing it around with an alacrity and agility that belied its great bulk as it sought the temerarious creature that dared assault it; and upon the instant, without a pause, it charged von Horst.

He had saved Daj; but perhaps he had overestimated the safety of his own position, for he had not reckoned with the surprising agility and speed of the enormous rylh.

The instant that he had loosed the first arrow he had fitted another to his bow which he bent now until the point of the arrow rested upon his thumb, and when he loosed it he drooped his weapon and sprang for a tree branch directly above him.

He did not know if he had scored a hit or not. The bear did not pause, but came thundering down upon him. He felt the wind of its raking talons against his legs as he drew them to the safety of the tree. A deep sigh of relief registered acknowledgement of his escape from a seemingly hopeless situation.

When he looked down he saw the bear standing beneath him pawing at the feathered shaft that protruded from the left side of its chest. It was roaring, but not so strongly now; and blood was flowing from its mouth. Von Horst saw that his last shot had delivered a serious wound, though perhaps not fatal. Those mighty, prehistoric creatures were most tenacious of life.

The bear pawed viciously at the shaft and then sprawled forward, struggled spasmodically, and lay still. Von Horst guessed that it had driven or twisted the arrow into its own heart, but he did not venture down at once. He looked for Daj but could not see him, as much foliage intervened; then he called his name aloud.

“Who are you?” came the answer.

“The mammoth-men called me Von; we met in the little canyon. Now do you recall me?”

“Yes. Because of you I escaped death that day. I could not very well forget you. What has happened to the bear? It is lying down. It looks as though it were dead, but what could have killed it?”

“Wait until I make sure that it’s dead,” cautioned von Horst. “If it is, we’ll come down.”

With his stone knife he hacked a branch from the tree and threw it down upon the bear. As the beast gave no sign that it had felt it, von Horst was satisfied that it was dead, and slipped down to the ground.

As he was retrieving his weapons Daj approached him, a friendly smile upon his face. “Now you have saved my life again,” he said. “I do not know why, because we are not of the same tribe.”

“We are of the same race,” said von Horst; “we are both gilaks.”

The Pellucidarian shrugged. “If everyone felt that way there would be too many gilaks in Pellucidar and all the game would soon be killed off.”

Von Horst smiled as he thought of the vast area of the inner world with its handful of inhabitants and of the teeming city slums of the outer crust.

“For the good of the gilaks of Pellucidar,” he said, “may you never be persuaded to the brotherhood of man.”

“I do not know what you are talking about,” admitted Daj; “but what I would like to know is what made the ryth die.”

Von Horst showed him the bloody arrows that he had withdrawn from the carcass. “The one in his chest killed him,” he said. “It punctured his heart.”

“Those little slivers of wood killed a ryth!” exclaimed Daj.

“There was a lot of luck mixed in with them,” admitted von Horst; “but if you get one of them into the heart of anything, it will kill.”

“Yes, but how did you get it in? You couldn’t go close enough to a ryth to stick it in without being killed, and they’re too light to throw in as you might a spear.”

Von Horst showed Daj his bow and explained its use, and the Pellucidarian was much interested. After he had examined it for a moment he handed it back.

“We’d better move away from here,” he said. “That ryth was down here on the plain hunting. His mate may be around somewhere. If he doesn’t show up she’ll follow his scent until she finds him. This will not be a good place to be.”

“Where are you going?” asked von Horst.

“To Lo-har,” replied Daj. “I have been many sleeps on the way from Ja-ru, but now I shall be there in three or four more sleeps.”

“Three or four?” demanded von Horst. “I thought I was very close to Lo-har.”

“No,” said Daj, “but where are you going?”

“To Lo-har,” replied von Horst.

“Why?”

“I have no other place to go. I am from another world to which I cannot possibly return. I know one person in Sari who would be my friend, but I cannot find my way to Sari. In Lo-har I know two people

who should not dislike me. I am going there to ask Brun to make me a member of the tribe.”

“Whom do you know in Lo-har?” asked Daj.

“You and La-ja,” replied von Horst.

Daj scratched his head.

“Brun will probably have you killed,” he said. “If he doesn’t, Gaz will kill you; but if you want to go to Lo-har, I will take you. You might as well die there as anywhere.”

22.

GAZ

Three long marches in the direction from which he had just come brought von Horst and Daj to the camp site at which La-ja had deserted the former and convinced him that the girl had deliberately set him upon the wrong trail. The realization of this fact, coupled with the desertion of Old White, disheartened him to such an extent that he seriously considered abandoning his evidently futile pursuit of La-ja; but when Daj was ready to set out after they had slept, von Horst accompanied him; though it only added to his depression when he found that the route toward Lo-har was that which he and La-ja had been following up until the moment that she had sent him off in the wrong direction. One long march brought them to a sandstone canyon and the cliff-dwellings of Lo-har, where Daj was received with more show of enthusiasm and affection than von Horst had previously seen exhibited by the humans of Pellucidar. But of von Horst they were wary and suspicious, appraising him with hostile eyes while Daj explained innumerable times that the stranger was a friend who had liberated him from captivity and twice saved his life.

“What does he want in Lo-har?” demanded the sentry who had first halted them at a safe distance from the village, and the question was constantly repeated by others as they advanced.

In reply Daj explained that von Horst was a great warrior from another world who wished to come and live in Lo-har, joining the tribe; and all the while, paying no attention to the muttering and grumbling about him, von Horst searched for La-ja with eager eyes.

“Where is Brun?” demanded Daj. “He will decide whether or not the stranger remains.”

“Brun is not here,” replied a warrior.

“Where is he?”

“Perhaps he is dead. Many sleeps have passed since he went away to search for La-ja, his daughter.”

“Then who is acting chief now?” asked Daj.

“Gaz,” replied the other.

Daj appeared puzzled. “He was chosen by the warriors?” he asked.

The other shook his head. “No; he took the power, threatening to kill any who interfered. Gaz is a mighty man. No one has as yet disputed his right, though many would do so if they were not afraid, for we are not happy under Gaz.”

“Where is he?” Daj’s eyes were wandering about the village.

“He has gone after La-ja.”

Von Horst was instantly alert and attentive.

“Where has she gone?” he asked.

Both the warrior and Daj looked at him questioning, for Daj knew nothing of von Horst’s love for La-ja. “Why do you want to know, stranger?” demanded the warrior suspiciously.

“If I know where the woman has gone, I shall be able to find the man.”

Daj and the warrior nodded. “That is right,” said the former, and then he asked a question that von Horst had wished to ask but had not dared. “Why has Gaz gone after La-ja? She has been missing for many sleeps, and her father has already gone after her. If Gaz were going after her, why didn’t he go before this?”

“You do not understand.” said the warrior. “La-ja returned a few sleeps ago, and Gaz claimed her as his mate; but she would have

nothing to do with him. When he would have taken her to his cave by force, she eluded him and ran away.”

“And Gaz?” asked von Horst.

“He followed her. Doubtless before this he has caught her and she is his mate. It is well for a girl, especially a chiefs daughter, to show spirit. Gaz will like her better for it. Those who are too easy to get are not liked for so long a time as the others. Perhaps La-ja only ran away out of sight of the village and then waited for Gaz. Many a girl has done this.”

“Which way did she go?” demanded von Horst again. His voice was hoarse and dead in his throat.

“If you know what is well for you you will not interfere with Gaz now but wait until he returns. He will be bad enough then. If I were you, stranger, I’d get as far away from Lo-har as I could before Gaz comes back.”

“Which way did he go?” repeated von Horst.

The warrior shook his head. “That way,” he said, pointing up the canyon. “Beyond the divide at the head of the canyon is a beautiful valley. It is such a place as a man might take his woman — or a woman lure her man.”

Von Horst shuddered; then without a word he set off toward the head of the canyon and the beautiful valley to which a woman might lure her man.

The warrior and Daj stood looking after him. The latter shook his head. “It is too bad,” he said; “he is a great warrior and a good friend.”

The warrior shrugged. “What difference does it make?” he asked. “Gaz will only kill him a little sooner; that is all.”

As von Horst clambered the steep ascent at the head of the canyon his mind was a turmoil of hopes and fears and passion — of love and

hate. The last vestige of centuries of civilization had fallen away, leaving him a stark cave man of the stone age. As some primitive ancestor of the outer crust may have done eons before, he sought his rival with murder in his heart. As for the woman he desired, he would take her now whether she wished it or not.

Beyond the summit he looked down into the most beautiful valley he had ever seen, but he gave it scarcely a glance. What his eyes sought was something far more beautiful. He sought for some sign of the direction in which the two had gone as he dropped down toward the floor of the valley, and at last he found it in a well marked game trail that wound beside a little stream that meandered down toward a larger river that he could faintly distinguish in the haze of the distance. Here was an occasional print of a tiny sandaled foot and often overlapping them those of a large foot that could have belonged only to a huge man.

Von Horst started along the trail at a trot. He wanted to call the girl's name aloud; but he knew that she would not reply even though she heard him, for had she not made it plain that a love such as his could arouse no corresponding emotion. He wondered vaguely what had become of his pride, that he could pursue a woman who hated him and have it in his heart to take her by force against her will. He thought that he should be ashamed of himself, but he was not. For a while he was puzzled; and then he realized that he had changed — that he was not the same man who had entered the inner world God only knew how long ago. Environment had metamorphosed him — savage Pellucidar had claimed him as her own.

The very thought of Gaz raised him to a fury. He realized that he had been hating the man for longer than he knew. He had no fear of him, as he had no fear of death. Perhaps it was the latter that kept him

from fearing Gaz, for from all that he had heard of the man Gaz spelled death.

At a steady trot he pushed on. How far ahead they were he had no way of knowing. How much of truth or falsity there was in the insinuations of the warrior who had set him on the trail he could not even guess — the very thought of them made him frantic, the thought that he might be too late; but what was even worse was the haunting fear that La-ja had come willing and waited. She had told him that it was her duty to mate with a mighty warrior, and why not Gaz? Von Horst groaned aloud and quickened his pace. If ever a man suffered the tortures of the damned, it was he.

He came upon a place where the trail branched, a smaller, less worn trail running off at right angles toward the stream that lay to his right. After a moment's careful inspection he determined that the two he sought had taken the smaller trail, and in the mud of both river banks at the crossing he again found the spoor, this time well defined. From there the trail ran directly into the mouth of a small side canyon, and afterward he had only to follow the floor of the canyon upward. Presently he heard a commotion ahead and the hoarse voice of a man shouting. He could not distinguish the words. The voice came from beyond a bend in the canyon which hid the speaker from his sight.

From now on he should have gone cautiously, but he did not. Instead he pushed on even faster, taking no precautions; and thus he came suddenly upon Gaz and La-ja. The latter was clinging precariously to a tiny ledge upon the face of a lofty escarpment. Her feet rested upon this narrow support, her body was flattened against the face of the cliff, her arms were outspread, her palms pressed tightly against the hard stone. Gaz, unable to scale the cliff, stood on the ground below shouting orders for La-ja to descend to him. At sight of

the two and their positions that so eloquently told a story, von Horst breathed a sigh of relief — he had not been too late!

Suddenly Gaz picked up a rock and hurled it at La-ja. “Come down!” he roared, “or I’ll knock you down.” The rock struck the face of the cliff close beside La-ja’s head. Gaz stooped to take up another.

Von Horst shouted at him, and the man wheeled in surprise. The man from the outer crust reached over his shoulder for an arrow to fit to his bow. He had no compunctions whatsoever about shooting down a man armed only with a crude spear and a stone knife. To his astonishment, he found that his quiver was empty. Where could his arrows have gone? He was sure he had had them when he entered the village. Then he recalled how the natives had pulled and hauled him around, milling and pressing against him. It must have been then that someone had taken his arrows.

Gaz was coming toward him belligerently. “Who are you?” he demanded. “What do you want here?”

“I have come for you, Gaz,” replied von Horst. “I have come to kill you and take the girl for myself.”

Gaz roared and came on. He thought it a huge joke that any warrior should challenge his supremacy. La-ja turned her head far enough so that she could look down. What were her feelings when she recognized von Horst, as she must have done immediately? Who may know? As a matter of fact she gave no indication that she even saw him; but once, a moment later, when he glanced away from Gaz momentarily, von Horst saw that the girl was descending. What her intentions were, he could not even guess. She might be going to help the man of her choice in the impending battle, or she might be going to take advantage of the preoccupation of the two men to run away again.

“Who are you?” demanded Gaz. “I never saw you before.”

“I am von Horst, and La-ja is my woman,” growled the other.

“Do you know who I am?”

“You’re the man I’ve crossed a world to kill,” replied von Horst. “You’re Gaz.”

“Go away!” shouted La-ja. “Go away before Gaz kills you. I won’t have you — not if you killed a thousand Gazes would I have you. Run! Run while you can.” Von Horst looked at Gaz. He was a monster-man, an enormous, bearded fellow who might have weighed well over three hundred pounds; and he was as gross and repulsive and brutal in appearance as he was large. His snaggle teeth were bared in a snarl as he charged von Horst. The latter had no fear. He had met warriors of the stone age before. They had no skill; and the hairy, massive bodies of some of them suggested strength far greater than they possessed. Von Horst had discovered that he was stronger than any he had met. They had had only an advantage in weight, nor was that always an advantage; as it lessened their agility.

Von Horst’s patience with La-ja was at an end. He wanted to be done with Gaz as quickly as possible so that he could take the girl in hand. He even contemplated giving her a sound beating. He thought that she deserved it. He was thinking in terms of the stone age.

As Gaz charged down upon him, von Horst struck him a heavy blow in the face as he stepped aside out of the path of the huge body. Gaz staggered and let out a bellow of rage, and as he turned to rush von Horst again he drew his stone knife from his G-string. He, too, wished to end the duel at once; for he was crazed with chagrin that this smaller man had defied him and had done the first damage in the fight — all in the presence of the woman he had chosen to be his mate. Much more of the same and he would be the laughing stock of the village.

Von Horst saw the weapon in Gaz's hand and drew his own. This time he waited, and Gaz came in more slowly. When he was quite near von Horst, he leaped in, swinging a terrific knife blow at his antagonist's chest. Von Horst parried with his left arm, plunged his blade into Gaz's side, and leaped away; but as he did so, his foot struck a stone protruding above the ground, and he went down. Instantly Gaz was on top of him, hurling his great carcass full upon the body of his fallen antagonist. One great paw reached for von Horst's throat, the other drove the stone blade down toward his heart.

The European caught the other's wrist, stopping the descending knife; but with his other hand Gaz was choking the life from him, and at the same time he was trying to wrench his knife hand free and plunge the weapon into von Horst's heart. As von Horst had fallen he had dropped his own knife. Now, while he held Gaz's weapon from him he groped for his own on the ground about him. Occasionally he relinquished his search to strike Gaz a heavy blow in the face, which always caused him to loosen his hold upon the other's throat, giving von Horst an opportunity to gulp in a mouthful of fresh air; but the man from the outer world realized that he was weakening rapidly and that unless he found his knife the end would come quickly.

He had struck Gaz again heavily, and when he reached down again to grope for his weapon his hand contacted it immediately, as though someone had placed it in his grasp. He did not pause then to seek an explanation; in fact the only thing that mattered was that he possessed the knife.

He saw Gaz glance back and heard him curse; then he drove his blade deep into the left side of the caveman. Gaz screamed and, releasing his hold on von Horst's throat, sought to seize his knife arm;

but the other eluded him, and again and again the stone knife was driven into his bleeding side.

Then Gaz tried to get up and away from von Horst, but the latter seized his beard and held him. Relentlessly he struck again and again. Gaz's roars and screams diminished. His body commenced to slump; then, with a final shudder, it collapsed upon the victor.

Von Horst pushed it aside and rose. Panting, blood-covered, he looked about for the woman — his woman now. He saw her standing there nearby wide-eyed, incredulous. She came slowly toward him. "You have killed Gaz!" she said in an awed whisper.

"And what of it?" he demanded.

"I didn't think you could do it. I thought that he would kill you."

"I'm sorry to disappoint you," he snapped. "I wonder if you realize what it means."

"I am not disappointed," she said. "And what does it mean?"

"It means that I am going to take you. You are mine. Do you understand? You are mine!"

A slow smile broke like sunlight through the clouds of doubt.

"I have been yours almost from the first," she said, "but you were too stupid to realize it."

"What?" he ejaculated. "What do you mean? You have done nothing but repulse me and try to drive me away from you. When I slept, you ran off and left me after directing me on the wrong trail."

"Yes," she answered, "I did all those things. I did them because I loved you. I knew that if I told you I returned your love you would follow me to Lo-har, and I thought that if you came here you would be killed. How could I guess that you could kill Gaz, whom no man has ever before been able to kill?"

"La-ja!" he whispered, and took her in his arms.

Together they returned to the village of Lo-har. The warriors and the women clustered about them.

“Where is Gaz?” they asked.

“Gaz is dead,” said La-ja.

“Then we have no chief.”

“Here is your chief,” replied the girl, laying a hand upon von Horst’s shoulder.

Some of the warriors laughed, others grumbled. “He is a stranger. What has he done that he should be chief?”

“When Brun went away, you let Gaz be chief because you were afraid of him. You hated him; and he was a poor chief, but none of you was brave enough to try to kill him, Von killed Gaz in a fair fight with knives, and he has taken the daughter of your chief as mate. Until Brun returns what warrior among you is better qualified to be chief than Von? If any thinks differently let him step forward and fight Von with his bare hands.”

And so Lieutenant Frederick Wilhelm Eric von Mendeldorf und von Horst became chief of the cliff-dwellers of Lo-har. He was a wise chief, for he combined with the psychology of the cave man, that he had acquired, all the valuable knowledge of another environment. He became almost a god to them, so that they no longer regretted the loss of Brun.

And then, after a while, came rumors of a strange people that were reported to have come up out of the south. They had weapons against which neither man nor beast could stand — weapons that made a great noise and vomited smoke and killed at a distance.

When von Horst heard these rumors he thrilled with excitement. Such men could only be members of the company that had come from the outer crust in the giant dirigible O-220 — his friends. Doubtless

they were searching for him. He called his warriors to him. "I am going out to meet these strangers of whom we have heard rumors. I think they are my friends. But if they are not my friends, they will be able to kill many of us with the weapons they have before we can get near enough to kill them. How many of you wish to go with me?"

They all volunteered, but he took only about fifty warriors. La-ja accompanied them, and when they set out they had only the vaguest of rumors to guide them. But as they went south and talked with men of other tribes, whom they captured along the way, the reports became more definite; and then at last von Horst's scouts came back from the front and reported that they had seen a body of men camped by a river a short distance away.

Led by von Horst, the cave-men of Lo-har crept close to the camp of the strangers. Here von Horst saw armed men who bore rifles and bandoleers of cartridges. The arrangement and discipline of the camp, the sentries, the military air assured him that these people had had contact with civilization. But he was still too far away to recognize faces if there were any there that he knew. But of one thing he was confident — this was no party from the O-220.

He whispered to his warriors for a moment; then he rose alone and walked slowly down toward the camp. He had taken but a few steps in the open before a sentry discovered him and gave the alarm. Von Horst saw men rise all about the camp and look toward him. He raised both hands above his head as a sign that he came in peace. No one spoke as he crossed the open ground to the very edge of the camp; then a man ran forward with glad cry.

"Von!"

It was a moment before von Horst recognized who it was that spoke his name. It was Dangar, and behind Dangar were Thorek, Lotai, and

Mumal. Von Horst was astounded. How had these come together? Who were the armed men?

Presently a tall, fine looking man came forward. "You are Lieutenant von Horst?" he asked.

"Yes; and you?"

"David Innes. When the O-220 returned to the outer crust and Jason Gridley decided to go back with it, he made me promise that I would equip an expedition and make a thorough search for you. I did so immediately I returned to Sari. I had no luck until some of my men met Dangar returning to Sari after a long absence. He guided us to The Forest of Death. Once we had passed through that we had no idea in what direction to search until we came upon Thorek, Lotai, and Mumal escaping from the land of the mammoth-men.

"They told us that they believed that you had escaped, and they thought you might be searching for Lo-har. We had never heard of Lo-har, but we succeeded in taking a prisoner who knew the direction in which the country lay. Later we came upon a man named Skruf whom you had wounded with an arrow. We promised him protection and he directed us to the village of the bison-men. Now we were nearing Lo-har, but still it was difficult to find. These people only knew the general direction in which it lay. Our one hope was to capture a Lo-harian. This we did before the last sleep. He is with us now and guiding us much against his will toward his own country, for he thinks we will turn upon him and his people."

"Who is he?" asked von Horst.

"Brun, the chief of the Lo-harians," replied Innes.

Von Horst signaled for his tribesmen to come in to the camp, and asked that Brun be brought. Innes sent for him, telling him that some

of his own people had come to meet him. But when Brun came and saw von Horst he drew himself up very proudly and turned his back.

“I do not know this man,” he said. “He is not of Lo-har.”

“Look at those who are coming, Brun,” suggested von Horst. “You will know them all, especially La-ja.”

“La-ja!” exclaimed the chief. “I had given her up for dead. I have searched a world for her.”

The men of Lo-har camped with the men of Sari in friendship, and there was much palaver; and a great deal of food was eaten, and they slept twice in that one camp before they spoke of breaking it.

“You will come back to Sari with us, Lieutenant?” asked Innes. “Gridley may come back on another expedition at any time now; it may be your only chance to return to the outer crust.”

Von Horst glanced at a little, yellow haired cave-girl gnawing on a bone.

“I am not at all sure that I care to return to the outer crust,” he said.

BOOK VI
LAND OF TERROR

CHAPTER 1

When Jason Gridley got in touch with me recently by radio and told me it was The Year of Our Lord Nineteen Hundred and Thirty-nine on the outer crust, I could scarcely believe him, for it seems scarcely any time at all since Abner Perry and I bored our way through the Earth's crust to the inner world in the great iron mole that Perry had invented for the purpose of prospecting for minerals just beneath the surface of the Earth. It rather floored me to realize that we have been down here in Pellucidar for thirty-six years.

You see, in a world where there are no stars and no moon, and a stationary sun hangs constantly at zenith, there is no way to compute time; and so there is no such thing as time. I have come to believe that this is really true, because neither Perry nor I show any physical evidence of the passage of time. I was twenty when the iron mole broke through the crust of Pellucidar, and I don't look nor feel a great deal older now.

When I reminded Perry that he was one hundred and one years old, he nearly threw a fit. He said it was perfectly ridiculous and that Jason Gridley must have been hoaxing me; then he brightened up and called my attention to the fact that I was fifty-six. Fifty-six! Well, perhaps I should have been had I remained in Connecticut; but I'm still in my twenties down here.

When I look back at all that has happened to us at the Earth's core, I realize that a great deal more time has elapsed than has been apparent to us. We have seen so much. We have done so much. We have lived! We couldn't have crowded half of it into a lifetime on the outer crust.

We have lived in the Stone Age, Perry and I — two men of the Twentieth Century — and we have brought some of the blessings of the Twentieth Century to these men of the Old Stone Age. They used to kill each other with stone hatchets and stone-shod spears before we came, and only a few tribes had even bows and arrows; but we have taught them how to make gunpowder and rifles and cannon, and they are commencing to realize the advantages of civilization.

I shall never forget, though, Perry's first experiments with gunpowder. When he got it perfected he was so proud you couldn't hold him. "Look at it!" he cried, as he exhibited a quantity of it for my inspection. "Feel of it. Smell of it. Taste it. This is the proudest day of my life, David. This is the first step toward civilization, and a long one."

Well, it certainly did seem to have all the physical attributes of gunpowder; but it must have lacked some of its spirit, for it wouldn't burn. Outside of that it was pretty good gunpowder. Perry was crushed; but he kept on experimenting, and after a while he produced an article that would kill anybody.

And then there was the beginning of the battle fleet. Perry and I built the first ship on the shores of a nameless sea. It was a flat-bottom contraption that bore a startling resemblance to an enormous coffin. Perry is a scientist. He had never built a ship and knew nothing about ship design; but he contended that because he was a scientist, and therefore a highly intelligent man, he was fitted to tackle the problem from a scientific bases. We built it on rollers, and when it was finished we started it down the beach toward the water. It sailed out magnificently for a couple of hundred feet and then turned over. Once again Perry was crushed; but he kept doggedly at it, and eventually we achieved a navy of sailing ships that permitted us to dominate the seas

of our little corner of this great, mysterious inner world, and spread civilization and sudden death to an extent that amazed the natives. When I left Sari on this expedition I am about to tell you of, Perry was trying to perfect poison gas. He claimed that it would do even more to bring civilization to the Old Stone Age.

CHAPTER 2

The natives of Pellucidar are endowed with a homing instinct that verges on the miraculous, and believe me they need it, for no man could find his way anywhere here if he were transported beyond sight of a familiar landmark unless he possessed this instinct; and this is quite understandable when you visualize a world with a stationary sun hanging always at zenith, a world where there are neither moon nor stars to guide the traveler — a world where because of these things there is no north, nor south, nor east, nor west. It was this homing instinct of my companions that led me into the adventures I am about to narrate.

When we set out from Sari to search for von Horst, we followed vague clues that led us hither and yon from one country to another until finally we reached Lo-har and found our man; but returning to Sari it was not necessary to retrace our devious way. Instead, we moved in as nearly a direct line as possible, detouring only where natural obstacles seemed insurmountable.

It was a new world to all of us and, as usual, I found it extremely thrilling to view for the first time these virgin scenes that, perhaps, no human eye had ever looked upon before. This was adventure at its most glorious pinnacle. My whole being was stirred by the spirit of the pioneer and the explorer.

But how unlike my first experiences in Pellucidar, when Perry and I wandered aimlessly and alone in this savage world of colossal beasts, of hideous reptiles and of savage men. Now I was accompanied by a band of my own Sarians armed with rifles fabricated under Perry's

direction in the arsenal that he had built in the land of Sari near the shore of the Lural Az. Even the mighty ryth, the monstrous cave bear that once roamed the prehistoric outer crust, held no terrors for us; while the largest of the dinosaurs proved no match against our bullets.

We made long marches after leaving Lo-har, sleeping quite a number of times, which is the only way by which time may be even approximately measured, without encountering a single human being. The land across which we traveled was a paradise peopled only by wild beasts. Great herds of antelope, red deer, and the mighty bos roamed fertile plains or lay in the cool shade of the park-like forests. We saw the mighty mammoth and huge mai, the mastodon; and, naturally, where there was so much flesh, there were the flesh-eaters — the tarag, the mighty sabre-tooth tiger; the great cave lions, and various types of carnivorous dinosaurs. It was an ideal hunters' paradise; but there were only beasts there to hunt other beasts. Man had not yet come to bring discord to this living idyll.

These beasts were absolutely unafraid of us; but they were inordinately curious, and occasionally we were surrounded by such great numbers of them as to threaten our safety. These, of course, were all herbivorous animals. The flesh-eaters avoided us when their bellies were full; but they were always dangerous at all times.

After we crossed this great plain we entered a forest beyond which we could see mountains in the far distance. We slept twice in the forest, and then came into a valley down which ran a wide river which flowed out of the foothills of the mountains we had seen.

The great river flowed sluggishly past us down toward some unknown sea; and as it was necessary to cross it I set my men at work building rafts.

These Pellucidarian rivers, especially the large ones with a sluggish

current, are extremely dangerous to cross because they are peopled more often than not by hideous, carnivorous reptiles, such as have been long extinct upon the outer crust. Many of these are large enough to have easily wrecked our raft; and so we kept a close watch upon the surface of the water as we poled our crude craft toward the opposite shore.

It was because our attention was thus focused that we did not notice the approach of several canoes loaded with warriors, coming downstream toward us from the foothills, until one of my men discovered them and gave the alarm when they were only a matter of a couple of hundred yards from us.

I hoped that they would prove friendly, as I had no desire to kill them, for, primitively armed as they were, they would be helpless in the face of our rifles; and so I gave the sign of peace, hoping to see it acknowledged in kind upon their part; but they made no response.

Closer and closer they came, until I could see them quite plainly. They were heavy-built, stocky warriors with bushy beards, a rather uncommon sight in Pellucidar where most of the pure-blood white tribes are beardless.

When they were about a hundred feet from us, their canoes all abreast, a number of warriors rose in the bow of each boat and opened fire upon us.

I say, "opened fire," from force of habit. As a matter of fact what they did was to project dart-like missiles at us from heavy sling-shots. Some of my men went down, and immediately I gave the order to fire.

I could see by their manner how astonished the bearded warriors were at the sound and effect of the rifles; but I will say for them that they were mighty courageous, for though the sound and the smoke must have been terrifying they never hesitated, but came on toward

us even more rapidly. Then they did something that I had never seen done before nor since in the inner world. They lighted torches, made of what I afterward learned to be a resinous reed, and hurled them among us.

These torches gave off volumes of acrid black smoke that blinded and choked us. By the effects that the smoke had upon me, I know what it must have had upon my men; but I can only speak for myself, because, blinded and choking, I was helpless. I could not see the enemy, and so I could not fire at them in self-defense. I wanted to jump into the river and escape the smoke; but I knew that if I did that I should be immediately devoured by the ferocious creatures lurking beneath the surface.

I felt myself losing consciousness, and then hands seized me, and I knew that I was being dragged somewhere just as consciousness left me.

When I regained consciousness, I found myself lying bound in the bottom of a canoe among the hairy legs of the warriors who had captured me. Above me, and rather close on either hand, I could see rocky cliffs; so I knew that we were paddling through a narrow gorge. I tried to sit up; but one of the warriors kicked me in the face with a sandaled foot and pushed me down again.

They were discussing the battle in loud, gruff voices, shouting back and forth the length of the boat as first one and then another sought to make himself heard and express his individual theory as to the strange weapon that shot fire and smoke with a thunderous noise and dealt death at a great distance. I could easily understand them, as they spoke the language that is common to all human beings in Pellucidar, insofar as I know, for I have never heard another. Why all races and

tribes, no matter how far separated, speak this one language, I do not know. It has always been a mystery to both Perry and myself.

Perry suggests that it may be a basic, primitive language that people living in the same environment with identical problems and surroundings would naturally develop to express their thoughts. Perhaps he is right — I do not know; but it is as good an explanation as any.

They kept on arguing about our weapons, and getting nowhere, until finally the warrior who had kicked me in the face said, “The prisoner has got his senses back. He can tell us how sticks can be made to give forth smoke and flame and kill warriors a long way off.”

“We can make him give us the secret,” said another, “and then we can kill all the warriors of Gef and Julok and take all their men for ourselves.”

I was a little puzzled by that remark, for it seemed to me that if they killed all the warriors there would be no men left; and then, as I looked more closely at my bearded, hairy captors, the strange, the astounding truth suddenly dawned upon me. These warriors were not men; they were women.

“Who wants any more men?” said another. “I don’t. Those that I have give me enough trouble — gossiping, nagging, never doing their work properly. After a hard day hunting or fighting, I get all worn out beating them after I get home.”

“The trouble with you, Rhump,” said a third, “you’re too easy with your men. You let them run all over you.”

Rhump was the lady who had kicked me in the face. She may have been a soft-hearted creature; but she didn’t impress me as such from my brief acquaintance with her. She had legs like a pro-football guard, and ears like a cannoneer. I couldn’t imagine her letting anyone get away with anything because of a soft heart.

“Well,” she replied, “all I can say, Fooge, is that if I had such a mean-spirited set of weaklings as your men are, I might not have as much trouble; but I like a little spirit in my men.”

“Don’t say anything about my men,” shouted Fooge, as she aimed a blow at Rhump’s head with a paddle.

Rhump dodged, and sat up in the boat reaching for her sling-shot, when a stentorian voice from the stern of the canoe shouted, “Sit down, and shut up.”

I looked in the direction of the voice to see a perfectly enormous brute of a creature with a bushy black beard and close-set eyes. One look at her explained why the disturbance ceased immediately and Rhump and Fooge settled back on their thwarts. She was Gluck, the chief; and I can well imagine that she might have gained her position by her prowess.

Gluck fixed her bloodshot eyes upon me. “What is your name?” she bellowed.

“David,” I replied.

“Where are you from?”

“From the land of Sari.”

“How do you make sticks kill with smoke and a loud noise?” she demanded.

From what I had heard of their previous conversation, I knew that the question would eventually be forthcoming; and I had my answer ready for I knew that they could never understand a true explanation of rifles and gunpowder. “It is done by magic known only to the men of Sari,” I replied.

“Hand him your paddle, Rhump,” ordered Gluck.

As I took the paddle, I thought that she was going to make me help propel the canoe; but that was not in her mind at all.

“Now,” she said, “use your magic to make smoke and a loud noise come from that stick; but see that you do not kill anybody.”

“It is the wrong kind of a stick,” I said. “I can do nothing with it;” and handed it back to Rhump.

“What kind of a stick is it, then?” she demanded.

“It is a very strong reed that grows only in Sari,” I replied.

“I think you are lying to me. After we get to Oog, you had better find some of those sticks, if you know what’s good for you.”

As they paddled up through the narrow gorge, they got to discussing me. I may say that they were quite unreserved in their comments. The consensus of opinion seemed to be that I was too feminine to measure up to their ideal of what a man should be.

“Look at his arms and legs,” said Fooge. “He’s muscled like a woman.”

“No sex appeal at all,” commented Rhump.

“Well, we can put him to work with the other slaves,” said Gluck. “He might even help with the fighting if the village is raided.”

Fooge nodded. “That’s about all he’ll be good for.”

Presently we came out of the gorge into a large valley where I could see open plains and forests, and on the right bank of the river a village. This was the village of Oog, our destination, the village of which Gluck was the chief.

CHAPTER 3

Oog was a primitive village. The walls of the huts were built of a bamboo-like reed set upright in the ground and interwoven with a long, tough grass. The roofs were covered with many layers of large leaves. In the center of the village was Gluck's hut, which was larger than the others which surrounded it in a rude circle. There was no palisade and no means of defense. Like their village, these people were utterly primitive, their culture being of an extremely low order. They fabricated a few earthenware vessels, which bore no sort of decoration, and wove a few very crude baskets. Their finest craftsmanship went into the building of their canoes, but even these were very crude affairs. Their slingshots were of the simplest kind. They had a few stone axes and knives, which were considered treasures; and as I never saw any being fabricated while I was among these people, I am of the opinion that they were taken from prisoners who hailed from countries outside the valley. Their smoke-sticks were evidently their own invention, for I have never seen them elsewhere; yet I wonder how much better I could have done with the means at their command.

Perry and I used often to discuss the helplessness of twentieth-century man when thrown upon his own resources. We touch a button and we have light, and think nothing of it; but how many of us could build a generator to produce that light? We ride on trains as a matter of course; but how many of us could build a steam engine? How many of us could make paper, or ink, or the thousand-and-one little commonplace things we use every day? Could you refine ore, even if you could recognize it when you found it? Could you even make a stone

knife with no more tools at your command than those possessed by the men of the Old Stone Age, which consisted of nothing but their hands and other stones?

If you think the first steam engine was a marvel of ingenuity, how much more ingenuity must it have taken to conceive and make the first stone knife.

Do not look down with condescension upon the men of the Old Stone Age, for their culture, by comparison with what had gone before, was greater than yours. Consider, for example, what marvelous inventive genius must have been his who first conceived the idea and then successfully created fire by artificial means. That nameless creature of a forgotten age was greater than Edison.

As our canoe approached the river bank opposite the village, I was unbound; and when we touched I was yanked roughly ashore. The other canoes followed us and were pulled up out of the water. A number of warriors had come down to greet us, and behind them huddled the men and the children, all a little fearful it seemed of the blustering women warriors.

I aroused only a mild curiosity. The women who had not seen me before looked upon me rather contemptuously.

“Whose is he?” asked one. “He’s not much of a prize for a whole day’s expedition.”

“He’s mine,” said Gluck. “I know he can fight, because I’ve seen him; and he ought to be able to work as well as a woman; he’s husky enough.”

“You can have him,” said the other. “I wouldn’t give him room in my hut.”

Gluck turned toward the men. “Glula,” she called, “come and get

this. Its name is David. It will work in the field. See that it has food, and see that it works.”

A hairless, effeminate little man came forward. “Yes, Gluck,” he said in a thin voice, “I will see that he works.”

I followed Glula toward the village; and as we passed among the other men and children, three of the former and three children followed along with us, all eying me rather contemptuously.

“These are Rumla, Foola and Geela,” said Glula; “and these are Gluck’s children.”

“You don’t look much like a man,” said Rumla; “but then neither do any of the other men that we capture outside of the valley. It must be a strange world out there, where the men look like women and the women look like men; but it must be very wonderful to be bigger and stronger than your women.”

“Yes,” said Geela. “If I were bigger and stronger than Gluck, I’d beat her with a stick every time I saw her.”

“So would I,” said Glula. “I’d like to kill the big beast.”

“You don’t seem very fond of Gluck,” I said.

“Did you ever see a man who was fond of a woman?” demanded Foola. “We hate the brutes.”

“Why don’t you do something about it, then?” I asked.

“What can we do?” he demanded. “What can we poor men do against them? If we even talk back to them, they beat us.”

They took me to Gluck’s hut, and Glula pointed out a spot just inside the door. “You can make your bed there,” he said. It seemed that the choice locations were at the far end of the hut away from the door, and the reason for this, I learned later, was that the men were all afraid to sleep near the door for fear raiders would come and steal them. They knew what their trials and burdens were in Oog; but they

didn't know but what they might be worse off in either Gef or Julok, the other two villages of the valley, which, with the village of Oog, were always warring upon one another, raiding for men and slaves.

The beds in the hut were merely heaps of grass; and Glula went with me and helped me gather some for my own bed. Then he took me just outside the village and showed me Gluck's garden patch. Another man was working in it. He was an upstanding looking chap, evidently a prisoner from outside the valley. He was hoeing with a sharpened stick. Glula handed me a similar crude tool, and set me to work beside the other slave. Then he returned to the village.

After he was gone, my companion turned to me, "My name is Zor," he said.

"And mine is David," I replied. "I am from Sari."

"Sari.' I have heard of it. It lies beside the Loral Az. I am from Zoram."

"I have heard much of Zoram," I said. "It lies in the Mountains of the Thipdars."

"From whom have you heard of Zoram?" he asked.

"From Jana, the Red Flower of Zoram," I replied, "and from Thoar, her brother."

"Thoar is my good friend," said Zor. "Jana went away to another world with her man."

"You have slept here many times?" I asked.

"Many times," he replied.

"And there is no escape?"

"They watch us very closely. There are always sentries around the village, for they never know when they may expect a raid, and these sentries watch us also."

"Sentries or no sentries," I said, "I don't intend staying here the

rest of my natural life. Some time an opportunity must come when we might escape.”

The other shrugged. “Perhaps,” he said; “but I doubt it. However, if it ever does, I am with you.”

“Good. We’ll both be on the lookout for it. We should keep together as much as possible; sleep at the same time, so that we may be awake at the same time. To what woman do you belong?”

“To Rhump. She’s a she-jalok, if there ever was one; and you?”

“I belong to Gluck.”

“She’s worse. Keep out of the hut as much as you can, when she’s in it. Do your sleeping while she’s away hunting or raiding. She seems to think that slaves don’t need any sleep. If she ever finds you asleep, she’ll kick and beat you to within an inch of your life.”

“Sweet character,” I commented.

“They are all pretty much alike,” replied Zor. “They have none of the natural sensibilities of women and only the characteristics of the lowest and most brutal types of men.”

“How about their men?” I asked.

“Oh, they’re a decent lot; but scared of their lives. Before you’ve been here long, you’ll realize that they have a right to be.”

We had been working while we talked, for the eyes of the sentries were almost constantly upon us. These sentries were posted around the village so that no part of it was left open to a surprise attack; and, likewise, all of the slaves were constantly under observation as they worked in the gardens. These warrior-women sentries were hard task-masters, permitting no relaxation from the steady grind of hoeing and weeding. If a slave wished to go to his master’s hut and sleep, he must first obtain permission from one of the sentries; and more often than not it was refused.

I do not know how long I worked in the gardens of Gluck the Chief. I was not permitted enough sleep; and so I was always half dead from fatigue. The food was coarse and poor, and was rationed to us slaves none too bountifully.

Half starved, I once picked up a tuber which I had unearthed while hoeing; and, turning my back on the nearest sentry, commenced to gnaw upon it. Notwithstanding my efforts of concealment, however, the creature saw me, and came lumbering forward. She grabbed the tuber from me and stuck it into her own great mouth, and then she aimed a blow at me that would have put me down for the count had it landed; but it didn't. I ducked under it. That made her furious, and she aimed another at me. Again I made her miss; and by this time she was livid with rage and whooping like an Apache, applying to me all sorts of vile Pellucidarian epithets.

She was making so much noise that she attracted the attention of the other sentries and the women in the village. Suddenly she drew her bone knife and came for me with murder in her eye. Up to this time I had simply been trying to avoid her blows for Zor had told me that to attack one of these women would probably mean certain death; but now it was different. She was evidently intent upon killing me, and I had to do something about it.

Like most of her kind, she was awkward, muscle-bound and slow; and she telegraphed every move that she was going to make; so I had no trouble in eluding her when she struck at me; but this time I did not let it go at that. Instead I swung my right to her jaw with everything that I had behind it, and she went down and out as cold as a cucumber.

"You'd better run," whispered Zor. "Of course you can't escape; but at least you can try, and you'll surely be killed if you remain here."

I took a quick look around, in order to judge what my chances of escape might be. They were nil. The women running from the village were almost upon me. They could have brought me down with their slingshots long before I could have gotten out of range; so I stood there waiting, as the women lumbered up; and when I saw that Gluck was in the lead I realized that the outlook was rather bleak.

The woman I had felled had regained consciousness and was coming to her feet, still a little groggy, as Gluck stopped before us and demanded an explanation.

“I was eating a tuber,” I explained, “when this woman came and took it away from me and tried to beat me up. When I eluded her blows she lost her temper, and tried to kill me.”

Gluck turned to the woman I had knocked down. “You tried to beat one of my men?” she demanded.

“He stole food from the garden,” replied the woman.

“It doesn’t make any difference what he did,” growled Gluck, “Nobody can beat one of my men, and get away with it. If I want them beaten, I’ll beat them myself. Perhaps this will teach you to leave my men alone,” and with that she hauled off and knocked the other down. Then she stepped closer and commenced to kick the prostrate woman in the stomach and face.

The latter, whose name was Gung, seized one of Gluck’s feet and tripped her. Then followed one of the most brutal fights I have ever witnessed. They pounded, kicked, clawed, scratched and bit one another like two furies. The brutality of it sickened me.*

* Editor’s note [R.S.]: The rest of this paragraph is sickening in itself — I have deleted it from the text, but include it in this footnote. The Pellucidar books are full of satirical and sarcastic comments on modern society, and most of them quite enjoyably on target. I do not know what demon possessed Burroughs, who treats

The battle continued for some time, first one being on top and then another. Gung had known from the first that it was either her life or Gluck's; and so she fought with the fury of a cornered beast.

I shall not further describe this degrading spectacle. Suffice it to say that Gung really never had a chance against the powerful, brutal Gluck; and presently she lay dead.

Gluck, certain that her antagonist was dead, rose to her feet and faced me. "You are the cause of this," she said. "Gung was a good warrior and a fine hunter; and now she is dead. No man is worth that. I should have let her kill you; but I'll remedy that mistake." She turned to Zor. "Get me some sticks, slave," she commanded.

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"I am going to beat you to death."

"You're a fool, Gluck," I said. "If you had any brains, you would know that the whole fault is yours. You do not let your slaves have enough sleep; you overwork them, and you starve them; and then you think that they should be beaten and killed because they steal food or fight in self-defense. Let them sleep and eat more; and you'll get more work out of them."

"What you think isn't going to make much difference after I get through with you," growled Gluck.

Presently Zor returned with a bundle of sticks from among which

his female heroines with respect throughout the books, when he wrote this deplorable nonsense. Here is the deleted text: *If these women were the result of taking women out of slavery and attempting to raise them to equality with man, then I think that they and the world would be better off if they were returned to slavery. One of the sexes must rule; and man seems temperamentally better fitted for the job than woman. Certainly if full power over man has resulted in debauching and brutalizing women to such an extent, then we should see that they remain always subservient to man, whose overlordship is, more often than not, tempered by gentleness and sympathy.*

Gluck selected a heavy one and came toward me. Possibly I am no Samson; but neither am I any weakling, and I may say without boasting that one cannot survive the dangers and vicissitudes of the Stone Age for thirty-six years, unless he is capable of looking after himself at all times. My strenuous life here has developed a physique that was already pretty nearly tops when I left the outer crust; and in addition to this, I had brought with me a few tricks that the men of the Old Stone Age had never heard of, nor the women either; so when Gluck came for me I eluded her first blow and, seizing her wrist in both hands, turned quickly and threw her completely over my head. She landed heavily on one shoulder but was up again and coming for me almost immediately, so mad that she was practically foaming at the mouth.

As I had thrown her, she had dropped the stick with which she had intended to beat me to death. I stooped and recovered it; and before she could reach me, I swung a terrific blow that landed squarely on top of her cranium. Down she went — down and out.

The other women-warriors looked on in amazement for a moment; then one of them came for me, and several others closed in. I didn't need the evidence of the Stone Age invectives they were hurling at me, to know that they were pretty sore; and I realized that my chances were mighty slim; in fact they were nil against such odds. I had to do some very quick thinking right then.

"Wait," I said, backing away from them, "you have just seen what Gluck does to women who abuse her men. If you know what's good for you, you'll wait until she comes to."

Well, that sort of made them hesitate; and presently they turned their attention from me to Gluck. She was laid out so cold that I didn't know but that I had killed her; but presently she commenced to move,

and after awhile she sat up. She looked around in a daze for a moment or two, and then her eyes alighted on me. The sight of me seemed to recall to her mind what had just transpired. She came slowly to her feet and faced me. I stood ready and waiting, still grasping the stick. All eyes were upon us; but no one moved or said anything; and then at last Gluck spoke.

“You should have been a woman,” she said; and then, turning, she started back toward the village.

“Aren’t you going to kill him?” demanded Fooge.

“I have just killed one good warrior; I am not going to kill a better one,” snapped Gluck. “When there is fighting, he will fight with the women.”

When they had all left, Zor and I resumed our work in the garden. Presently Gung’s men came and dragged her corpse down to the river, where they rolled it in. Burial is a simple matter in Oog, and the funeral rites are without ostentation. Morticians and florists would starve to death in Oog.

It was all quite practical. There was no hysteria. The fathers of her children simply dragged her along by her hairy legs, laughing and gossiping and making ribald jests.

“That,” I said to Zor, “must be the lowest and the saddest to which a human being can sink, that he go to his grave unmourned.”

“You will be going down to the river yourself pretty soon,” said Zor; “but I promise you that you’ll have one mourner.”

“What makes you think that I’ll be going down to the river so soon?”

“Gluck will get you yet,” he replied.

“I don’t think so. I think Gluck’s a pretty good sport, the way she took her beating.”

“‘Good sport’ nothing,” he scoffed. “She’d have killed you the moment she came to, if she hadn’t been afraid of you. She’s a bully; and, like all bullies, she’s a coward. Sometime when you’re asleep, she’ll sneak up on you and bash your brains out.”

“You tell the nicest bedtime stories, Zor,” I said.

CHAPTER 4

Of course the principal topic of conversation between Zor and me was for some time concerned with my set-to with Gluck, and prophecies on Zor's part that I was already as good as dead — just an animated corpse, in fact. But after I had slept twice, and nothing had happened to me, we drifted on to other topics and Zor told me how he happened to be so far from Zoram and what had led to his capture by the warrior-women of Oog.

Zor, it seemed, had been very much in love with a girl of Zoram, who one day wandered too far from the village and was picked up by a party of raiders from another country.

Zor immediately set out upon the trail of the abductors, which carried him through many strange lands for what he estimated to have been a hundred sleeps.

Of course it was impossible to know how far he had traveled; but he must have covered an enormous distance — perhaps two or three thousand miles; but he never overtook the girl's abductors; and finally he was captured by a tribe living in a palisaded village in the heart of a great forest.

"I was there for many sleeps," he said, "my life constantly in danger, for they were instantly threatening to kill me to appease someone they called, 'Ogar.' Without any apparent reason at all, I quite suddenly became an honored guest instead of a prisoner. No explanation whatever was made to me. I was allowed to go and come as I pleased; and, naturally, at the first opportunity, I escaped. Inasmuch as there are several villages of these Jukans in the forest, I hesitated to go on in

that direction for fear of being captured by some of the other villagers; and so I climbed out of the valley with the intention of making a wide detour; but after I came down out of the mountains into this valley, I was captured.”

“Where does the Valley of the Jukans lie?” I asked.

“There,” he said, pointing in the direction of the snowcapped mountains that bordered one side of the valley.

“That, I think, is the direction I shall have to go to reach Sari,” I said.

“You think?” he demanded. “Don’t you know?”

I shook my head. “I haven’t that peculiar instinct that the Pellucidarians have, which inevitably guides them toward their homes.”

“That is strange,” he said. “I can’t imagine anyone not being able to go directly toward his home, no matter where he may be.”

“Well, I am not a Pellucidarian, you see,” I explained; “and so I have not that instinct.”

“Not a Pellucidarian?” he demanded. “But there is nobody in the world who is not a Pellucidarian.”

“There are other worlds than Pellucidar, Zor, even though you may never have heard of them; and I am from one of those other worlds. It lies directly beneath our feet, perhaps twenty sleeps distant.”

He shook his head. “You are not, by any chance, a Jukan, are you?” he asked. “They, too, have many peculiar ideas.”

I laughed. “No, I am not a Jukan,” I assured him. And then I tried to explain to him about that other world on the outer crust; but, of course, it was quite beyond his powers of comprehension.

“I always thought you were from Sari,” he said.

“I am, now. It is my adopted country.”

“There was a girl from Sari among the Jukans,” he said. “She was

not a prisoner in the village where I was, but in another village a short distance away. I heard them talking about her. Some said they were going to kill her to appease Ogar. They were always doing something to appease this person Ogar, of whom they were terribly afraid; and then I heard that they were going to make her a queen. They were always changing their minds like that.”

“What was the girl’s name?” I asked.

“I never heard it,” he said; but I did hear that she was very beautiful. She is probably dead now, poor thing; but of course one can never tell about the Jukans. They may have made her a queen; they may have killed her; or they may have let her escape.”

“By the way,” I said, “what is the direction of Sari? You know, I was only guessing at it.”

“You were right. If you were ever to escape, which you never will, you would have to cross those mountains there; and that would take you into the Valley of the Jukans; so you’d still be about as bad off as you are now. If I should ever escape, I’d have to go the same way in order to get on the trail of the people who stole Rana.”

“Then we’ll go together,” I said.

Zor laughed. “When you get your mind set on anything, you never give up, do you?”

“I’ll certainly not give up the idea of escaping,” I told him.

“Well, it’s nice to think about; but that’s as far as we’ll ever get with all these bewhiskered she-jaloks watching us every minute.”

“An opportunity is bound to come,” I said.

“In the meantime, look what else is coming!” he exclaimed, pointing up the valley.

I looked in the direction he indicated and saw a strange sight. Even

as far away as they were, I recognized them as enormous birds upon which human beings were mounted.

“Those are the Juloks,” said Zor; and at the same time he shouted to a sentry and pointed. Immediately the alarm was raised and our warrior-women came pouring out of the village. They carried knives and slingshots and the reeds which they fired to make their smoke-screen. About every tenth warrior carried a torch from which the others might light their reeds.

As Gluck came out of the village she tossed us each a knife and a slingshot, handed us smoke-reeds, and told us to join the women in the defense of the village.

We moved out in what might be described as a skirmish line to meet the enemy, which was close enough now so that I could see them distinctly. The warriors were women, bushy-bearded and coarse like those of the Village of Oog; and their mounts were dyals, huge birds closely resembling the *Phororhacos*, the Patagonian giant of the Miocene, remains of which have been found on the outer crust. They stand seven to eight feet in height, with heads larger than that of a horse and necks about the same thickness as those of horses. Three-toed feet terminate their long and powerful legs, which propel their heavy talons with sufficient force to fell an ox, while their large, powerful beaks render them a match for some of the most terrible of the carnivorous mammals and dinosaurs of the inner world. Having only rudimentary wings, they cannot fly; but their long legs permit them to cover the ground at amazing speed.

There were only about twenty of the Julok warrior-women. They came toward us slowly at first; and then, when about a hundred yards away, charged. Immediately our women lighted their torches and hurled them at the advancing enemy; and following this, they loosed

their dart-like missiles upon the foe from their slingshots. Not all of the torches had been thrown at first, so that there were plenty in reserve as the enemy came closer to the blinding smoke. Now they were upon us; and I saw our women fighting like furies, with fearless and reckless abandon. They leaped into close quarters, trying to stab the dyals or drag their riders from their backs.

The smoke was as bad for us, of course, as it was for the enemy; and I was soon almost helpless from choking and coughing. Zor was fighting beside me; but we were not much help to our cause, as neither of us was proficient in the use of the slingshot.

Presently, out of smothering smoke, came a riderless dyal, the leather thong which formed its bridle dragging on the ground. Instantly, an inspiration seized me; and I grasped the bridle rein of the great bird.

“Quick!” I cried to Zor. “Perhaps this is the chance we have been waiting for. Mount the thing!”

He did not hesitate an instant, and, with my assistance, scrambled to the back of the great bird, which was confused and helpless by the smoke that it had inhaled. Then Zor gave me a hand up behind him.

We didn’t know anything about controlling the creature, but we pulled its head around in the direction we wanted to go and then kicked its sides with our sandaled feet. It started slowly at first, groping its way through the smoke; but finally, when we came out where it was clearer and it sensed an opportunity to escape from the acrid fumes, it lit out like a scared rabbit; and it was with difficulty that Zor and I maintained our seats.

We headed straight for the mountains, on the other side of which lay the country of the Jukans, with little fear that our escape would be noticed until after the battle was over and the smoke had cleared away.

That was a ride! Nothing but another dyal or an express train could have overtaken us. The creature was frightened and was really bolting. However, we were still able to guide it in the direction we wished to go. When we reached the foothills it was tired and was compelled to slow down, and after that we moved at a decorous pace up toward the higher mountains. And they were high! Snow-capped peaks loomed above us, an unusual sight in Pellucidar.

“This is an ideal way to cover ground,” I said to Zor. “I have never traveled so rapidly in Pellucidar before. We are certainly fortunate to have captured this dyal, and I hope that we can find food for him.”

“If there’s any question about that,” replied Zor, “the dyal will settle it himself.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“He’ll eat us.”

Well, he didn’t eat us; and we didn’t keep him very long, for, as soon as we reached the snow, he positively refused to go any farther; and as he became quite belligerent we had to turn him loose.

CHAPTER 5

The climate of Pellucidar is almost eternally Spring-like; and therefore the apparel of the inhabitants of this inner world is scant, being seldom more than a loin-cloth and sandals. The atmosphere near the surface is slightly denser than that of the outer crust because of centrifugence; but for the same reason it is much shallower than that of the exterior of the globe, with the result that it is extremely cold upon the heights of the higher mountains; so you may well imagine that Zor and I did not linger long in the snows of the upper levels.

He had crossed the mountains by this same pass when he had come out of the Valley of the Jukans; so we were not delayed by the necessity for searching out a crossing.

The sun beat down upon us out of a clear sky; but it was still intensely cold, and in our almost naked state we could not have survived long. I can assure you that it was with a feeling of relief that we crossed the summit of the divide and started down the other slope. We were both numb with cold before we reached a warmer level.

The trail we followed had been made by game passing from one valley to another, and we were lucky that we met none of the carnivorous species while we were above the timber-line. Afterward, of course, we had the sanctuary of the trees into which to escape them. Our arms were most inadequate; for a stone knife is a poor weapon against a cave bear, the mighty ryth of the inner world, which stands eight feet at the shoulders and measures fully twelve feet in length, doubtless a perfect replica of *Ursus spelaeus*, which roamed the outer

crust contemporaneously with Paleolithic man. Nor were our sling-shots much less futile, since we were far from proficient in their use.

Perhaps you can imagine how helpless one might feel, almost naked and practically unarmed, in this savage world. I often marvel that man survived at all, either here or upon the outer crust, he is by Nature so poorly equipped either for offense or defense. It is claimed that environment has a great deal to do with the development of species; and so it has always seemed strange to me, if this be true, that man is not fully as fleet of foot as the antelope, for in the environment in which he lived for ages he must have spent a great many of his waking hours running away from something— great beasts, which, not even by the wildest stretch of the imagination, could he have been supposed to have met and overcome with his bare hands, or even with a club or a knife. Personally, I feel that the human race must have developed in a wooded country where there was always a tree handy to offer a man an avenue of escape from the terrible creatures that must have been constantly hunting him.

Well, we finally got down where it was warmer and where there were plenty of trees; and it was very fortunate for us, too, that there were trees, for the very first living creature that we met after negotiating the pass was a tarag, an enormous striped cat, the replica of which, our saber-toothed tiger, has long been extinct upon the outer crust.

For large animals, they are extraordinarily fleet of foot; and they act so quickly when they sight their prey that unless an avenue of immediate escape is open or their intended victim is sufficiently well armed and alert, the result is a foregone conclusion — and the tarag feeds. Like all the other carnivorous animals of Pellucidar, they seem to be always hungry, their great carcasses requiring enormous quantities of food to rebuild the tissue wasted by their constant activity. They seem

always to be roaming about. I do not recall ever having seen one of them lying down.

The tarag that we met, Zor and I chanced to see simultaneously, which was at the very instant that he saw us. He didn't pause an instant but charged immediately at unbelievable speed. Zor and I each voiced a warning and took to a tree.

I was directly in the path of the beast as it charged; and having its eye on me it leaped for me; and it almost got me, too, its talons just scraping one of my sandals as it sprang high into the air after me.

Zor was in an adjoining tree and looked over at me and smiled. "That was a close call," he said. "We'll have to keep a better lookout."

"We'll have to have some weapons," I replied. "That is even more important."

"I'd like to know where you are going to get them," he said.

"I'll make them," I replied.

"What kind of weapons?"

"Oh, a couple of bows and some arrows, to start with, and two short, heavy hurling spears."

"What are bows and arrows?" he asked.

I explained them to him as well as I could; but he shook his head. "I'll make myself a spear," he said. "The men of Zoram kill even the ryth and the thipdar with the spear. That, and a knife are all the weapons I need."

After a while the tarag went away; and we came down to earth, and a little later we found a place to camp near a small stream. We were fortunate in not having to hunt very long for such a site, for places to camp in Pellucidar, which also mean places to sleep, must offer safety from prowling beasts of prey; and this means, ordinarily, nothing less than a cave the mouth of which can be barricaded.

It is a great world, this, and a great life; but eventually one becomes accustomed to being hunted. At first it used to keep my nerves constantly on edge; but after a while I took it just as casually as you of the outer world accept the jeopardies of traffic, hold-up men, and the other ordinary threats upon your life that civilization affords so abundantly.

We found a cave a couple of feet above high water in a cliff the face of which was washed by this mountain stream — a clear, cold stream in which we knew there would lurk no dangerous reptiles, a fact which was quite important to us since we had to wade into the stream to reach our cave. It was an ideal spot; and since neither of us had had sufficient sleep since being captured by the warrior-women of Oog, we were glad of the opportunity to lie up in safety until we were thoroughly rested.

After investigating the cave and finding it untenanted, dry, and large enough to accommodate us comfortably, we carried in leaves and dry grass for our beds, and were soon asleep.

How long I slept, I don't know. It may have been an hour or a week of your time; but the important thing was that when I awoke I was thoroughly rested. I may also add that I was ravenously hungry.

CHAPTER 6

One seldom appreciates the little conveniences of everyday life until one is compelled to do without them. The chances are that you own a pocket knife, and that somewhere around the house or the garage there is a chisel and a saw, and perhaps a jack-plane and a hatchet and an axe; and it is also quite possible that, being a civilized man as you are, notwithstanding the fact that you have all these edge tools, you might have a devil of a time making a useable bow and the arrows to go with it, even though you had access to a lumber yard where you might select the proper materials cut more or less to the sizes you required. At the same time, you would have plenty of food in the pantry and the refrigerator; and there wouldn't be any large, inconsiderate beasts of prey lying in wait for you. The conditions would be ideal, and you could take all the time you required; but you would still have quite a job cut out for you. Consider then, your situation should you have at your disposal only a stone knife, your bare hands, and your materials on the hoof, as you might say. Add to this that you were hungry and that the filling of your belly depended largely upon the possession of a bow and arrow, to say nothing of the preservation of your life from the attacks of innumerable savage creatures which hungered for your flesh. This latter situation was the one in which I found myself after I awoke from my long sleep; but it really didn't give me undue concern, as I was by this time fully inured to the vicissitudes of life in the Stone Age.

Zor awoke shortly after I; and we went out together to search for materials for our weapons. We knew exactly what we wanted and it

didn't take us long to find it in the lush vegetation of Pellucidar, notwithstanding the fact that hard woods are more or less scarce.

A species of the genus *Taxus* is more or less widely distributed throughout Pellucidar; and I had discovered that its wood made the best bows. For arrows I used a straight, hollow reed that becomes very hard when dry. The tips which I inserted in the end of the reeds were of wood, fire-hardened.

A modern archer of the civilized outer world would doubtless laugh at the crude bow I made then at the edge of the Valley of the Jukans. If he uses a yew bow, the wood for it was allowed to season for three years before it was made into a bow, and then the bow was probably not used for two more years; but I could not wait five years before eating; and so I hacked the limb I had selected from the tree with my stone knife and took the bark from it and tapered it crudely from the center toward each end. I prefer a six foot, eighty pound bow for a three-foot arrow, because of the great size and formidability of some of the beasts one meets here; but of course my bow did not attain this strength immediately. Every time we had a fire, I would dry it out a little more, so that it gradually attained its full efficiency. The strings for my bows I can make from several long-fibered plants; but even the best of them do not last long, and I am constantly having to renew them.

While I was making my bow and arrows, Zor fashioned a couple of the short heavy spears such as are used by the warriors of Zoram. They are formidable weapons but only effective under a hundred feet, and only at that distance when hurled by a very powerful man; while my arrows can penetrate to the hearts of the largest beasts at a full hundred yards or more.

While we were working on our weapons we subsisted upon nuts

and fruits; but as soon as they were completed we set out after meat; and this took us down into the valley, a large portion of which was thickly forested. We found the game a little wary, which suggested that it had been hunted; and therefore presupposed the presence of man. I finally made a very poor shot and succeeded only in wounding an antelope which made off into the forest, carrying my arrow with it. As I was quite sure that the wound would eventually bring it down, and as I have never liked to abandon a wounded animal and permit it to suffer, we followed the quarry into the forest.

The spoor was plain, for the trail was well marked with blood where the animal passed. Finally we caught up with it, and I dispatched it with another arrow through the heart.

I imagine that we relaxed our vigilance a little while we were cutting off a hind quarter and some of the other choice portions of our kill; for I certainly had no idea that we were not alone until I heard a man speak.

“Greetings,” said a voice; and looking around I saw fully twenty warriors who had come from among the trees behind us.

“Jukans,” whispered Zor.

There was that about their appearance which was rather startling. Their hair, which was rudely trimmed to a length of an inch or more, grew straight out from their scalps; but I think it was their eyes, more than any other feature, which gave them their strange appearance. As a rule, the iris was quite small and the whites of the eyeball showed all around it. Their mouths were flabby and loose, those of many of them constantly hanging open.

“Why do you hunt in our forest?” said he who had first spoken.

“Because we are hungry,” I replied.

“You shall be fed then,” he said. “Come with us to the village. You shall be welcome guests in the village of Meeza, our king.”

From what Zor had told me of these people, I was not particularly anxious to go to one of their villages. We had hoped to skirt the forest in which their villages are located, and thus avoid them; but now it looked as though we were in for it after all.

“There is nothing that we would rather do,” I said, “than visit your village; but we are in a great hurry, and we are going in the other direction.”

“You are coming to our village,” said the leader. His voice rose and cracked in sudden excitement, and I could see that even the suggestion had angered him.

“Yes,” said several of the others, “you are coming to our village.” They, too, seemed to be on the verge of losing control of themselves.

“Oh, of course,” I said, “if you wish us to come, we shall be glad to; but we didn’t want to put you to so much trouble.”

“That is better,” said the leader. “Now we shall all go to the village, and eat and be happy.”

“I guess we’re in for it,” said Zor, as the warriors gathered around us and conducted us farther into the forest.

“They may continue to be friendly,” he went on; “but one can never tell when their mood will change. All I can suggest is that we humor them as much as possible, for you saw the effect that even the slight suggestion of crossing them had upon them.”

“Well, we won’t cross them then,” I said.

We marched for some little distance until we came at last to a crudely palisaded village that stood in a small clearing. The warriors at the gate recognized our escort and we were immediately admitted.

The village inside the palisade presented a strange appearance. It

was evidently laid out according to no plan whatever, the houses having been placed according to the caprice of each individual builder. The result was most confusing, for there was no such thing as a street in the sense in which we understand it, for the spaces between the buildings could not be called streets. Sometimes they were only a couple of feet wide, and sometimes as much as twenty feet, and scarcely ever were they straight for more than the length of a couple of houses. The design of the houses was as capricious as their location, apparently no two of them having been built according to the same plan. Some were built of small logs; some of wattle and mud; some of bark; and there were many entirely of grass over a light framework. They were round, or square, or oblong, or conical. I noted one in particular that was a tower fully twenty feet high; while next to it was a woven grass hut that rose no more than three feet above the ground. It had a single opening, just large enough for its occupants to crawl in and out on their hands and knees.

In the narrow alleyways between the buildings, wild-eyed children played, women cooked, and men loafed; so it was with the greatest difficulty our escort forced its way toward the center of the village. We were constantly stepping over or around men, women or children, most of whom paid no attention to us, while others flew into frightful rages if we touched them.

We saw some strange sights during that short journey through the village. One man, sitting before his doorway, struck himself a terrific blow on the head with a rock. "Stop," he screamed, "or I'll kill you." "Oh you will, will you?" he answered himself, and then hit himself again; whereupon he dropped the rock and commenced to choke himself.

I do not know how his altercation with himself turned out, for we turned the corner of his house and lost sight of him.

A little farther on, we came upon a woman who was holding down a screaming child while she attempted to cut its throat with a stone knife. It was more than I could stand; and though I knew the risk I took, I seized her arm and pulled the knife from the child's throat.

"Why are you doing that?" I demanded.

"This child has never been sick," she replied; "and so I know there must be something the matter with it. I am putting it out of its misery." Then, suddenly, her eyes ablaze, she leaped up and struck at me with her knife.

I warded off the blow, and simultaneously one of my escort knocked the woman down with the haft of his spear, while another pushed me roughly forward along the narrow alleyway. "Mind your own business," he screamed, "or you will get in trouble here."

"But you are not going to let the woman kill that child, are you?" I demanded.

"Why should I interfere with her? I might want to cut somebody's throat some day, myself; and I wouldn't want anyone to interfere with my fun. I might even want to cut yours."

"Not a bad idea," remarked another warrior.

We turned the corner of the house, and a moment later I heard the screams of the child again, but I was helpless to do anything about it, and now I had my own throat to think about.

Presently we came to a large open space below a low, rambling, crazy-looking structure. It was the palace of Meeza, the king. In the center of the plaza before the palace was a huge, grotesque, obscene figure representing a creature that was part man and part beast. Circling around it were a number of men turning "cartwheels." No one

seemed to be paying any attention to them, although there were quite a number of people in the square.

As we passed the figure, each member of our escort said, "Greetings, Ogar!" and moved on toward the palace. They made Zor and me salute the hideous thing in the same manner.

"That is Ogar," said one of our escort. "You must always salute him when you pass. We are all the children of Ogar. We owe everything to him. He made us what we are. He gave us our great intelligence. He made us the most beautiful, the richest, the most powerful people in Pellucidar."

"Who are those men cavorting around him?" I asked.

"Those are the Priests of Ogar," replied the warrior.

"And what are they doing?" I asked.

"They are praying for the whole village," he replied. "They save us the trouble of praying. If they didn't pray for us, we'd have to; and praying is very strenuous and tiring."

"I should think it might be," I said.

We were admitted to the palace, which was as bizarre and mad a structure as I have ever seen; and there the leader of our escort turned us over to another Jukanian, a functionary of the palace.

"Here," he said, "are some very good friends who have come to visit Meeza and bring him presents. Do not, by any mischance, cut their throats, or permit anyone else to do so, lest they have difficulty in talking with Meeza, who is anxious, I know, to converse with them."

The palace functionary had been sitting on the floor when we entered, nor did he arise or discontinue his activities. Instead, he dismissed our escort and asked Zor and me to sit down and join him.

He had dug a hole in the dirt floor with the point of his knife, and into this hole he poured some water which he mixed with the loose

earth he had excavated until the contents of the hole was of the consistency of soft modeling clay; then he took some in the palm of one hand, shaped it until it was round, patted it flat, and set it carefully on the floor beside him.

He inclined his head toward us and waved an inviting hand toward the hole. "Join me, please," he said. "You will find this not only exquisitely entertaining but highly enlightening and character building;" so Zor and I joined the palace functionary, and made mud pies.

CHAPTER 7

Gofo, the palace functionary in whose charge we had been placed, seemed quite pleased with us and our work. He told us that his undertaking was quite important, something of an engineering discovery that was going to revolutionize Pellucidar; and when he had finished telling us that, he shoved all the mud back into the hole, leveled it off, and patted it down with his hands until it was smooth on the surface like the rest of the floor.

“Well, well,” he said, “that was a delicious meal. I hope you enjoyed it.”

“What meal?” I blurted, for I was nearly famished. I hadn’t eaten since I last slept.

He contracted his brows as though in an effort to recall something. “What were we doing?” he demanded.

“We were making mud pies,” I said.

“Tut, tut,” he said. “You have a very poor memory; but we will rectify that at once.” He clapped his hands, then, and shouted something I did not understand; whereupon three girls entered from an adjoining apartment. “Bring food at once,” demanded Gofo.

A short time later, the girls returned with platters of food. There were meat, vegetables, and fruit; and they certainly looked delicious. My mouth fairly watered in anticipation.

“Set it down,” said Gofo; and the three girls placed the platters on the floor. “Now eat it,” he said to them; and, dutifully, they fell to upon the food.

I moved a little closer to them and reached for a piece of meat; whereupon Gofo slapped my hand away and cried, "No, no."

He watched the girls very carefully as they consumed the food. "Eat it all," he said; "every bit of it;" and they did as he bid, while I sat gloomily watching my meal disappear.

When the girls had finished the meal, he ordered them from the room; and then turned to me with a sly wink. "I'm too smart for them," he said.

"Unquestionably," I agreed; "but I still don't understand why you made the girls eat our food."

"That's just the point. I wanted to discover if it were poisoned; now I know it wasn't."

"But I'm still hungry," I said.

"We'll soon rectify that," said Gofo; and again he clapped his hands and shouted.

Only one of the girls came in this time. She was a nice appearing, intelligent looking girl. Her expression was quite normal, but she looked very sad.

"My friends would sleep," said Gofo. "Show them to their sleeping quarters."

I started to say something, but Zor touched me on the arm. "Don't insist any longer on food," he said, guessing correctly what I had been on the point of saying. "It doesn't take much to upset these people, and then you can never tell what they will do. Right now, we are very fortunate that this Gofo is friendly."

"What are you two whispering about?" demanded Gofo.

"My friend was just wondering," I said, "if we were going to have the pleasure of being with you again after we have slept."

Gofo looked pleased. "Yes," he said; "but in the meantime, I want

to put you on your guard. Just remember that there are a great many eccentric people in the village and that you must be very careful what you say and do. I, alone, am probably the only sane person here.”

“I am glad you told us,” I said; and then we followed the girl out of the apartment. In the next room, the other two girls were preparing food; and the sight and smell of it nearly drove me frantic.

“We have not eaten for a long time,” I said to the girl who was accompanying us. “We are famished.”

She nodded. “Help yourselves,” she said.

“It won’t get you in trouble?” I asked.

“No. Gofo has probably already forgotten that he has sent you to sleep. If he came in and saw you eating, he would think that it was he who had suggested it; and these girls will forget almost as soon as you are through that you have been here or that you have eaten. They are little better than imbeciles. In fact, everyone in the village is crazy except me.”

I felt sorry for the poor thing, knowing that she believed that she had impressed us with the truth of her statement. I will admit that she didn’t look crazy; but it is one of the symptoms of insanity to believe that everyone else is insane but you.

“What is your name?” I asked, as we sat down on the floor, and commenced to eat.

“Kleeto,” she said; “and yours?”

“David,” I replied, “and my friend is Zor.”

“Are you crazy, too?” she asked.

I shook my head and smiled. “No, indeed,” I said.

“That’s what they all say,” she observed. She caught herself suddenly, as though she had said something she should not have said, and quickly added, “Of course I know you’re not crazy, because I

peeked through the doorway and saw you working in the mud with Gofo.”

I wondered if she were ribbing me a bit, and then I realized that to her poor unbalanced mind the thing that we had been doing might seem entirely natural and rational. With a sigh, I continued my meal — a sigh for the poor warped brain that dominated such a lovely girl.

Zor and I were famished; and Kleeto looked on in amazement at the amount of food we consumed. The two other girls paid no attention to us, but went on with their work preparing more food. At last we could eat no more; and Kleeto led us to a darkened room and left us to sleep.

I don't know how long we were in the palace of Meeza. I know we slept many times; and we lived off the fat of the land. Kleeto saw to that, for she seemed to have taken a liking to us. Nobody seemed to know what we were doing in the palace; but after they became accustomed to seeing us around, they paid no more attention to us, except that we were not permitted to leave the building, which meant, of course, that we could not escape; but we bided our time, hoping that some day something would occur to give us the opportunity for which we so longed.

Gofo, who was major-domo of the palace, never could recall why we were there. I used to see him sitting with that puzzled look on his face gazing at us intently, and I knew perfectly well that he was trying to recall who we were and why we were in the palace.

As time went on, I became more and more impressed with Kleeto's intelligence. She had an excellent memory, and by comparison with the others that we met she was unquestionably sane. Zor and I used to like to talk with her whenever the opportunity arose. She told us much about the ways of the people and the gossip of the palace.

“Which village are you from?” she asked one day.

“Village? I don’t understand,” I said. “Zor is from the land of Zoram, and I am from the land of Sari.”

She looked puzzled for a moment. “Do you mean to tell me that you are not Jukans from another village?” she demanded.

“Certainly not. What made you think we were?”

“Because Gofo said that you were his friends, and were to be treated well; so I was positive you were not prisoners and, therefore, must be Jukans from another village. I will admit, however, that I was puzzled, because you seemed to be far too intelligent to be Jukans. They, as you have doubtless discovered, are all maniacs.”

A light commenced to dawn in my mind then. “Kleeto, you are not a Jukan?” I asked.

“Certainly not,” she said. “I am a prisoner here. I come from the land of Suvi.”

I had to laugh at that; and she asked me why I was laughing. “Because all the time, I thought you were crazy; and you thought we were crazy.”

“I know it,” she said. “It is very funny indeed; but after you have lived here awhile, you don’t know who is crazy and who isn’t. Some of the Jukans look and act perfectly normal; and they may be the craziest of the lot. Now neither Meeza, the king, nor Moko, his son, look like imbeciles; and, well, they are not exactly imbeciles either; but they are both maniacs of the worst type, irresponsible and cruel, always ready to kill.”

“Gofo doesn’t seem such a bad lot,” I said.

“No, he’s harmless. You were lucky to fall into his hands. If Noak, his assistant, had been on duty when you were brought into the palace, it might have been a very different story.”

“You have been here a long while, Kleeto?” I asked.

“Yes, for more sleeps than I can count. In fact, I have been here for so long that they have forgotten that I am not one of them. They think I am a Jukan.”

“It should be easy for you to escape, then,” I suggested.

“It would do me no good to escape alone,” she said. “What chance would I have to reach Suvi, alone and unarmed?”

“We might all go together,” I said.

She shook her head. “There has never been a single opportunity, since I have been here, when three people might have escaped from the palace, let alone getting out of the village. There have been many prisoners here, and I have never heard of one escaping. By the way,” she added, “you said you were from Sari, didn’t you?”

“Yes,” I replied.

“There is a prisoner here from Sari, a girl,” she said.

“In this village?” I demanded. “I had heard that there was a Sarian girl in one of the Jukan villages; but I did not know that she was here. Do you know her name?”

“No,” replied Kleeto, “and I have not even seen her; but I understand that she is very beautiful.”

“Where is she?” I asked.

“Somewhere in the palace. The High Priest keeps her hidden. You see, Meeza wants to take her as one of his wives; Moko, his son, wants her; and the High Priest wants to sacrifice her to Ogar.”

“Which of these will get her?” I asked.

“The High Priest already has her; but he is afraid of Meeza; and Meeza is afraid to take her away from the High Priest for fear of bringing down the wrath of Ogar on his head.”

“So for the moment she is safe,” I said.

“In the palace of Meeza, the king, no one is ever safe,” replied Kleeto.

CHAPTER 8

Sleeping and eating constituted our principal activities in the palace of Meeza, the king. It was no life for a couple of warriors, and the boredom of it fairly drove us mad.

“We’ll be as crazy as the rest of them, if we don’t get out of here pretty soon,” said Zor.

“I don’t know what we’re going to do about it,” I said.

“Perhaps we can persuade Goofo to let us go out into the city,” suggested Zor. “At least that would give us a little exercise and break the monotony of our life here.”

“It might give us an opportunity to escape, as well,” I said. Zor arose, yawning, and stretched. He was getting fat and loggy. “Let’s go find him.”

As we were about to leave the chamber, we heard a scream — just a single scream, followed by silence.

“Now I wonder what that was?” said Zor.

“It was very close by,” I said. “Perhaps we had better wait. You can never tell what trouble you may run into, if anything happens to excite these people; and it sounded to me as though that scream may have come from Goofo’s office.”

Presently Kleeto entered the room in what was evidently a state of excitement. “What’s the matter?” I asked. “What makes you so nervous?”

“Did you hear the scream?” she asked.

“Yes.”

“That was Goofo. Noak just stabbed him in the back.”

Zor whistled.

“Did he kill him?” I demanded.

“I don’t know; but it is very probable. At any rate, he is badly wounded; and Noak is major-domo of the palace. It will go hard with all of us now. Noak has more brains than Gofo, and a good memory. He won’t forget all about us the way Gofo did.”

“I don’t think he’s ever seen us,” said Zor.

“That won’t make any difference,” said Kleeto. “He’ll commence to investigate now and find out all about everybody in his part of the palace.”

“It’s too bad we aren’t dressed like Jukans,” I said; “then we might make Noak think we were visitors from another village.”

The Jukans’ loin-cloths were of monkey skin cured with the hair on; and they wore monkey-skin anklets and necklaces of human teeth; and, as I have mentioned before, their hair was cut quite short; so it would have been very difficult for us to pass as Jukans in our present state.

“Couldn’t you find us each an outfit, Kleeto?” asked Zor.

“I know where there is one outfit,” replied the girl. “It belonged to a man who used to serve under Gofo. He suddenly conceived the idea that he shouldn’t wear any apparel at all; so he threw it away and went naked. All the things he discarded were put in one of the store-rooms; and, as far as I know, they are still there.”

“Well, let’s hope he hasn’t come back to get his things,” said Zor.

“He hasn’t,” said Kleeto; “and he never will. He came naked into the presence of the king; and Meeza had him destroyed.”

“Now if we could find another outfit,” said Zor, “we might even get out of the palace without being noticed.”

As we talked, I was standing facing the doorway, which was covered

by hangings made from a number of softly tanned skins of some small animal. I saw the hanging move slightly; and guessing that someone was eavesdropping, I stepped quickly to it and drew it aside. Beyond it stood a man with a foul face. His close-set, beady black eyes, his long nose and receding chin, gave him a rat-like appearance. He stood there looking at us for a moment in silence; then he turned and scurried away precisely like a rat.

“I wonder if he heard?” said Kleeto.

“Who was he?” asked Zor.

“That was Ro,” replied the girl. “He is one of Noak’s henchmen.”

“It looks as though we are in for it,” said Zor, “for he certainly must have heard us.”

“Perhaps he’ll forget all about us before he finds anyone to tell it to,” I said.

“Not he,” rejoined Kleeto. “Sometimes it seems as though the meaner they are, the better their memory.”

“Now,” I said, “would be a good time to get out of here, if we could disguise ourselves as Jukans. Suppose you get that one outfit, Kleeto, and we’ll fix Zor up. If he can go around the palace, undetected, he may find an opportunity to get the things necessary to outfit me.”

“But how about my hair?” demanded Zor.

“Can’t you find us a knife, Kleeto?” I asked.

“Yes. We have a number of knives with which we prepare the food. I’ll get you a couple of them right away.”

After Kleeto got the knives, she left us to see if she could find the garments for Zor; and I set about cutting his hair, which had grown quite long. It was quite a job; but at last it was completed.

“Open your eyes wide and let your chin drop,” I told him, laughingly, “and you might pass for a Jukan.”

Zor made a wry face. "Come on," he said, "and I'll make an imbecile out of you now."

He had just about completed hacking off my hair, when Kleeto returned with a Jukan outfit.

"You'd better go into your sleeping quarters and change," she said. "Someone might come in here."

After Zor left the room, Kleeto returned to her work in the kitchen; and I was left alone. As usual, when I was alone, and my mind not occupied with futile plans to escape, my thoughts went back to Sari and to my mate, Dian the Beautiful. Doubtless she had given me up for lost; and if I never returned, my fate would remain a mystery to her and to my fellow Sarians.

Sari seemed a long way off; and in truth it was; and almost hopeless any thought that I might ever return; for even should I escape from the Jukans, how might I ever hope to find Sari, I who was not endowed with the homing instinct of the Pellucidarians?

Of course Zor could point the general direction of Sari; but without him, or another Pellucidarian at my side, I might wander for a lifetime in a great circle; or even if I traveled in what I felt to be a straight line, the chances were very remote that I would ever hit upon the relatively tiny spot that is Sari. However, no doubts would deter me from making the attempt to escape should the opportunity ever be presented; nor should I ever cease to try to return to my Dian as long as life remained to me.

Thus was my mind occupied when the hangings of the doorway were thrust aside and a man strode into the apartment. He was a well muscled fellow; but his face was neither that of a man nor a beast. Stiff, upstanding hair grew almost to his eyes, so that he had no forehead whatsoever, or at least only a narrow strip above his brows about

an inch wide. His eyes were so close-set as to seem almost one; and his ears were pointed like a beast's. His nose was not bad; but his lips were thin and cruel. He stood there looking at me in silence for a few moments, a sneer curling his lips.

"So," he said at last, "you are going to escape, are you?"

"Who are you?" I demanded.

"I am Noak, the major-domo of the palace of Meeza," he replied.

"So what?" I demanded. Everything about the fellow antagonized me; and I could tell from his attitude that he had come looking for trouble; so I made no effort to appease him. Whatever he intended doing, he was going to do no matter what I said or did; and I wanted to get it over with.

"You have even cut your hair so that you will look more like a Jukan. All you need now is a loin-cloth and ornaments of a Jukan, I suppose."

"That is all," I said, looking at his loin-cloth.

Suddenly his eyes blazed in maniacal fury. "So you thought you could escape from Noak, did you? Well, I'll fix you. You'll never escape from anybody, when I get through with you." And with that, he drew his stone knife and came for me.

Now, I had kept one of the knives that Kleeto had obtained for us; and Zor had retained the other; so I was not without some means of defense, and I was ready for him when he came.

I hope that you never have to fight with a madman. It is one of the most frightful experiences that I have ever passed through. Noak was not only mad, but he was a powerful man as well; but really the most harrowing part of the encounter was the horror of that bestial face, the mad light in those terrible eyes, the froth of rage upon those cruel lips, the bared, yellow fangs.

I parried his first blow and struck at his chest with my own weapon; but he partially avoided me, and I succeeded only in inflicting a slight flesh wound. Even this, however, goaded him into an increased fury of rage; and now he struck at me again at close quarters, at the same time clutching for my throat with his free hand. Once more I eluded him; and then, with a scream, he sprang into the air and lit full on top of me. I lost my balance then and toppled backward to the floor, with the maniac on top of me. He raised his knife to finish me; but I clutched his wrist and somehow succeeded in tearing the weapon from his grasp. Then he bared those yellow fangs and bit at me, seeking to fasten them upon my jugular.

I was forced to release his wrist then, to push him away from me; and I succeeded in getting my fingers at his throat. I still clung to my knife; and now as we strained and struggled in each other's grasp I got the point of it beneath his heart; and with all my strength I drove it home.

He screamed and struggled spasmodically for a few seconds; then he relaxed in death.

I pushed his body from me and staggered to my feet, half nauseated by the horror of the encounter and the nearness of that repulsive face to mine.

As I stood there panting for breath, I heard a sound at the doorway behind me. I wheeled about, ready for another enemy; but it was only Kleeto. She stood there, wide-eyed, looking at the corpse upon the floor.

"You have killed Noak," she said, in a half whisper.

"And I have the outfit of a Jukan," I replied.

CHAPTER 9

Before I came to Pellucidar, I had never killed a man. In fact, I had never seen anyone who had met a violent death; but since then I have killed many men, always, however, in self-defense or in defense of others. It must always have been thus, and must always be, in a society where there is no regularly constituted force of guardians of the peace and safety of man. Here, in Pellucidar, each man must be, to a great extent, his own police force, his own judge and jury. This does not mean that right always prevails; more often it is might; but where an individual has both right and might on his side, he feels a far greater personal satisfaction in his conquests than he possibly could by calling in a policeman and turning a malefactor over to the slow processes of the courts, where even right may not always prevail.

I presume that Kleeto had witnessed such deaths many times; and so it was not the killing of Noak that affected her, but rather the fear of what must happen to me if my crime were discovered.

“Now you are in for it,” she said.

“There wasn’t much of anything else I could do about it, was there?” I inquired; “unless I was content to let him kill me.”

“I would never have thought that you could kill him. He was very powerful.”

“Well, it’s done now, and can’t be undone; and the next problem is how to remove the evidence.”

“We might bury it,” she said. “There is no other way of hiding it.”

“But where?” I asked.

“Your sleeping quarters,” she said. “That would be the safest place.”

A newly dead body is a difficult thing to handle before rigor mortis sets in, and for some reason it seems about twice as heavy and four times as awkward as in life; but I managed to get Noak’s body across one of my shoulders and carry it into the sleeping quarters occupied by Zor, and myself. Zor, dressed like a Jukan, was just coming out as I approached with my burden.

“Now what!” he exclaimed.

“Noak tried to kill me,” I said.

“That is Noak?” His tone was incredulous.

“It was,” I replied.

“David had to kill him,” said Kleeto; “and I think it is just as well for all of us that Noak is dead.”

“Why are you bringing him here?” asked Zor.

“I’m going to bury him in our sleeping quarters.”

Zor scratched his head. “From the looks of him, he’ll be better company dead than alive. Come on, bring him in and I’ll help you dig.”

We dug a narrow trench about three feet deep near one of the walls of our sleeping chamber. Kleeto got another knife from the kitchen and helped us; but even with the three of us working it was rather a slow process. We’d loosen up the hard-packed earth of the floor with the points of our stone knives, and then scoop the loose dirt out with our hands; but after awhile it was done, and we rolled Noak in and covered him up, tamping the earth down solidly all around him. The excess earth we spread evenly over the floor of the chamber and tramped it down as best we could. We placed some sleeping mats over the grave, and in the dim light of the room I am sure that nothing would have appeared amiss to anyone who might have come to investigate.

“Now,” I said to Zor, after we had completed our labors, “let’s get out of here.”

“Where shall we go?” he asked.

“We should try to get out of the palace and into the city,” I replied, “and we should do it right now before Noak is missed. Come on, Kleeto, you may get back to Suvi, after all.”

“You’re going to take me with you?” asked the girl in a tone of surprise.

“Surely. You’re one of us, aren’t you? Without your help, we wouldn’t have had a chance.”

“I’m afraid that having a woman along might make it difficult for you,” she said. “You two had better go on alone. You might possibly get me out of the palace; but I doubt very much that you could pass me through the gates of the village.”

“That remains to be seen,” I said, “and anyway we won’t go without you.”

“Of course not,” said Zor. “If they stop us at the gate, we’ll tell them we’re visitors from another village, on our way home.”

“Tell them we’re from Gamba,” said Kleeto. “That is the farthest village. Few ever come from there to this village; so there is little likelihood that they could check up on us.”

Well, we didn’t even get out of the palace. The guard wouldn’t let us pass without permission from Noak; and when we insisted, I saw that they were becoming suspicious, so I said, “All right, we’ll go and get Noak.”

We were very much disheartened as we retraced our steps, for now it seemed hopeless to even think of escape. We talked it over, and finally Zor and I came to the conclusion that the only hope we had was to familiarize ourselves with the palace on the chance that there might

be some less well-guarded exit. There was just one ray of hope shining through our gloom. It was the fact that no one had suspected that we were not Jukans.

Kleeto said that she believed there was another way out of the palace, because she had heard that Meeza and Moko often went out into the city, and she was quite sure that they did not leave by the main entrance.

“I think that they have some secret way,” she said.

“Zor and I will try to find it,” I said. “You stay here; and if we find a way to escape, we’ll come back and get you.”

The palace of Meeza, the king, must have covered several acres of ground. It was a village in itself, and like the outer village its design followed the vagaries of a mad mind. There were turning, twisting, gloomy corridors that led nowhere, ending in a blank wall. There were pitch-dark rooms without windows, and many little courts that were in reality rooms without roofs. How the inmates found their way around is quite beyond me; and I did not see how we could find our way back to Kleeto, if we discovered an avenue of escape. I said as much to Zor; but he assured me that he could retrace our steps. Evidently every foot of the way was indelibly stamped upon his memory, the result of a faculty, no doubt, that was definitely associated with his inherent homing instinct.

As we wandered through the palace, we were constantly meeting people; but no one seemed to suspect us, with the result that we became over-confident and very bold, prying into places where we had no business to be, as we searched for the secret way which we hoped would lead us to freedom. At last, we became hungry and tired; and, as up to then we had found no food, we decided to lie down and sleep;

so we curled up in a corner of a dark room and prayed that food would be easy to find when we awoke.

Many of you who live upon the outer crust fear the darkness that comes with night. You think of it as the time that hunting beasts prowl and criminals carry on their nefarious practices; but I can truthfully assure you that for twelve hours out of the twenty-four, I would gladly trade the perpetual sun of the inner world for the sheltering darkness of your nights. Under the cover of darkness, we might have found many opportunities to escape from the village of Meeza. Under the beneficent shelter of darkness, we might have carried on our operations in safety not only because it was dark but because where night regularly follows day it is the time set apart for sleeping; and so there would have been but comparatively few eyes to detect us; but where there is no night, there is no regular time to sleep; and so at least half of the people are abroad at all times, or, what is more likely, two-thirds of them. So you can see that our chances of sneaking out, unnoticed, were extremely thin. Yes, I would have given a great deal for one good, dark night.

When we awoke, we continued our aimless search for the secret exit from the palace. We tried to do it systematically, following one corridor after another to its end. We found portions of the palace that seemed to have been untenanted for years and others crowded with Jukans so thickly that we passed among them unnoticed, protected by their very numbers.

Just as there seemed to be no plan to the palace, which covered several acres of ground, the activities of its inmates appeared equally aimless. We encountered all degrees of mental ineptitude, from harmless halfwits to raving maniacs, from gibbering idiots to men of apparently normal intelligence.

One man was running madly around in a small circle. Another squatted cross-legged upon the floor, staring at a spot on a wall a couple of feet in front of him; while directly behind him a man was hacking another to pieces with a stone hatchet, not even the terrible screams of the victim attracting the attention of the sitter. Two men and a woman looked on, apathetically; but presently their attention was attracted by a bushy-headed maniac, who came galloping through the apartment on all fours, shrieking, "I'm a ryth. I'm a ryth."

That was all right with them, too, until he attempted to prove that he was a ryth by biting one of the men. The two were lying on the floor, biting and clawing at one another, as Zor and I passed on through the chamber in our interminable search.

We had slept three times since we had parted from Kleeto, and had always managed to find sufficient food, on a couple of occasions sitting down at meals with idiots who seemed not even to notice our presence.

Once we had gone for some time without food and were both famished, when we came to a large room in which there was a long table where perhaps a hundred men were eating. As there were several vacant places at the table, we sauntered over and sat down, assuming that, as upon the other two occasions, no one would pay any attention to us; but we were very much mistaken. Sitting at the far end of the table was a man wearing a feather headdress. "Who are those two men?" he shouted, as we sat down. "I have never seen them before."

"I know who they are," cried a man sitting opposite us; and I looked up into the rat-like face of Ro.

"Well, who are they?" demanded the man with the headdress. "And what are they doing here at the king's table?"

"I do not know what they are doing at the king's table, Meeza," replied Ro; "but I know who they are. They were brought in to Goofu

many, many sleeps ago; and they disappeared when Noak disappeared.”

So we had by accident stumbled into the king’s dining room; and the man with the feather headdress was Meeza. It certainly looked as though we might have to do some explaining.

“Well,” cried Meeza, “who are you and what are you doing here?”

“We are visitors from Gamba,” replied Zor.

“I think they are lying,” said Ro. “The last time I saw them, they were not dressed like Jukans, but like strangers from another country.”

“What are your names?” demanded Meeza. Although he had more than the usual amount of control for a Jukan, I could see that he was commencing to get excited. So unstable are they that the least little thing is apt to upset them; and after that there is no telling what will happen.

“My companion’s name is Zor,” I replied, “and mine is David.”

“Zor,” repeated Meeza. “That might be the name of a Jukan, but not David. Take that one and tie him up.” Meeza was pointing at me. “Zor, you shall be a welcome guest in the palace of Meeza, the king.”

“And what about David?” asked Zor.

“We need an offering to appease Ogar,” replied Meeza, “and David will do very well. Take him away, men.”

“But David is all right,” insisted Zor. “He is my friend, and I know he is all right. You should not harm him, Meeza.”

Meeza leaped to his feet, his eyes blazing in a frenzy of rage. “You dare disagree with me?” he screamed. “I should have your heart cut out,” and then his voice dropped and he said in gentle tones, “But you are my honored friend. Come, eat and drink with us.”

As I was being dragged away, I saw two servants come in bearing a huge mastodon tusk filled to the brim with some liquid. It was handed

to Meeza, who drank from it, and then passed it to the man at his right. Thus, it started the rounds of the table as I was finally dragged from the room.

My escort wound through several corridors and finally led me into a small room, the doorway of which was closed with a crude gate which was held in place by wooden bars on the outside. Into this dimly lighted cell they shoved me, tied my hands behind my back, and left me.

The outlook was anything but rosy. Here I was, definitely a prisoner and condemned to be sacrificed to their heathenish god. The only ray of sunshine penetrating the bleak outlook emanated from the clumsy, crazy manner in which they had bound my hands behind me. Even while they were doing it, I felt that it would not be difficult to free myself; and this I succeeded in doing shortly after they had left me; but the barred gate that closed my cell defied my every effort to force it, and I was still a prisoner condemned to death.

CHAPTER 10

As I lay there in my dark cell, I found food for thought in these strange people into whose clutches Fate had thrust me. They were unquestionably maniacs and yet they had achieved a few more of the attributes of civilization than any of the native tribes of Pellucidar with which I was familiar. They lived in villages instead of caves; they sat at tables to eat instead of squatting on the bare ground; and they had a god whom they worshipped in the form of an idol.

I wondered what strange freak of Fate had rendered an entire nation mad, and whether future generations would become more violent or if the seed of madness would eventually die out; and while I was thinking of these things I fell asleep and dreamed of Sari and Abner Perry and Dian the Beautiful, so that when I awoke my heart was heavy with regret that I could not have slept on, dreaming thus, forever.

When I awoke I was ravenously hungry, for, though I had sat at the king's table, I had had no chance to eat, so quickly had I been hustled out. I wondered if they would bring me food, but knowing these people as I did I realized that they might forget me entirely and that I might lie here until I starved to death.

For want of something better to do, I thought I would pace off the dimensions of my cell — anything to keep my mind occupied. It was quite dark and so I groped my way to one of the side walls and then moved slowly toward the back of the cell, keeping one hand upon the wall. I was surprised that what I had first thought to be a small room

should be so large. In fact, it proved perfectly enormous. Finally the truth dawned upon me. They had locked me up in a corridor.

I crossed it and found that it was only a couple of paces in width. Where did it lead? I determined to follow it and find out; but first I returned to the wall against which I had started, so that, by keeping my hand constantly against that wall, I could always return to the part from which I had started, if I so desired. This precaution was quite necessary for the reason that there might be branching corridors or cross corridors that I might miss in the darkness did I not keep one hand constantly upon the same wall.

Like all the other corridors I had seen, this one ran first in one direction and then another; but always it ran through utter darkness.

I had been following the passageway for some time when I heard voices ahead of me. They were faint and muffled at first; but as I continued to grope my way along they became plainer; so I knew that I was approaching them. At last I could make them out. They were the voices of a man and a woman. They seemed to be arguing about something, and presently I could hear their words.

“If you will come away with me, I will take you back to your own country,” said the man. “If you remain here, Bruma will sacrifice you to Ogar. Not even Meeza could save you, although he would like to have you for himself.”

“I do not believe you,” said a woman’s voice, “because you know you could never get me out of the city. As soon as I was missed, Bruma and Meeza would have the city searched.”

“Little good would it do them,” said the man, “for we should be well out of the city before anyone knew that we had gone. Right here is a corridor that leads to a cave in the forest beyond the walls of the

village, right here behind this door.” And with that, he struck a panel of wood with his knuckles so close to my ear that it made me jump.

So this was the corridor leading out of the palace. The poor crazy halfwits had locked me into the only avenue by which I could escape. It was very amusing. How I wished that Kleeto and Zor were with me. It would be quite futile to attempt to return for them now. In the first place I couldn’t have gotten out of the corridor into the palace, and if I had been able to do so how was I to reach Zor, who was now an honored guest of Meeza. I should certainly have been recognized had I gone prowling around the king’s quarters looking for my friend, nor could I have found my way to Kleeto along the devious passageways of the palace. Still, I hated to abandon my friends; and so I stood there in the darkness trying to conjure some plan out of the thin air whereby I might get word to Zor and Kleeto.

As I stood there thinking, I could hear the man beyond the partition speaking in low tones to the woman; but his voice did not carry his words to me until presently he raised it.

“I tell you that I love you,” he said, “and Meeza or no Meeza, Bruma or no Bruma, I am going to have you.”

“I already have a mate,” replied the woman; “and if I didn’t, I would as soon mate with a jalok as you.”

“You compare me with a jalok, slave!” cried the man, his voice rising in anger. “I, Moko, the king’s son! You dare insult me!”

“It was the jalok I insulted,” said the woman.

“By Ogar!” screamed the man, “no one shall have you now, nor shall you ever see Sari again. For this insult, slave, you die.”

So this was the girl from Sari. I waited to hear no more, but hurled myself against the panel in front of me. It crashed inward beneath my weight; and I stepped into a room to see a girl in the clutches of Moko,

the son of Meeza. The girl's back was toward me, but over her shoulder the man saw me. His eyes were blazing with maniacal fury as he sought to free the hand in which he held his knife from the grasp of his intended victim.

"Get out of here," he screamed at me. "Get out!"

"Not until I am done with you," I said, as I advanced toward him, stone knife in hand.

"I am Moko," he said, "the king's son. I tell you to get out. Disobey me, and you die."

"It is not I who am going to die," I said, as I closed on him.

With a scream, he pushed the girl from him and came for me. He was far more skilled in the use of a knife than I; and had I depended solely upon that weapon, I should have died there in the palace of Meeza, the king. But I didn't depend upon my knife and I didn't die. I parried his first blow with my right forearm and crossed with my left to his chin. He went down to that blow but was up again almost immediately and coming for me again, but I could see that he was a little groggy: He struck at me wildly; but I stepped to one side and he missed, and as he went by I plunged my knife between his ribs. With a single, hideous shriek he sank to the floor and lay still; then I turned toward the girl, and my eyes went wide in astonishment. For a moment I could not believe their testimony.

"Dian!" I cried. "It is you?"

She ran to me and threw her arms around my neck. "David!" she sobbed. We stood there clasped in each other's arms, and it was a couple of minutes before either of us could speak.

"David," she said at last, "I couldn't believe my eyes when I recognized you shortly after you entered the room. I was quite sure that you had not recognized me, because my back was toward you; and it was

all that I could do to keep from crying out to you; but I didn't because it would have distracted your attention from Moko."

"Tell me how you happen to be here," I said.

"It is a long story, David," she replied. "Wait until we have more time. Right now we should be thinking of getting out of here, and Moko has told me the way."

"Yes," I replied, "I heard; but I have a problem. There are two other prisoners here whom I should help to escape: Zor of Zoram, who was captured with me; and Kleeto, a girl from Suvi, who befriended us and made it possible for us to obtain the apparel of Jukans, which has served to at least partially disguise us."

"We must try to help them," said Dian, "and I suppose that you have some plan fully worked out."

"That is the trouble," I replied. "I have none," and then I explained the difficulties which confronted me.

When I had concluded she shook her head. "It seems almost hopeless," she said; "but I hate to abandon them."

"There is one thing that we must do, and that is get out of this room before some one comes and discovers us with the body of Moko. Suppose we follow the corridor now and ascertain if it really leads to freedom; then we will be in a better position to make our plans for the future."

Before we left the chamber I fixed up the broken door as best I could, lest it attract attention and indicate the avenue by which we had escaped; then I dragged Moko's body out into the dark corridor.

"If they should find it in this room," I said, "it is from this room that their search would start; and naturally if they knew about the corridor, they would immediately jump to the conclusion that we had

escaped in that way; but if it isn't here, they won't know where to start."

"You are right," said Dian, "for no one knew that Moko came to this room, nor would they look for me here because this is not the room in which I was imprisoned. Moko brought me here."

Hand in hand, Dian and I followed the dark corridor until finally we came to a heavy wooden gate that barred further progress.

"Beyond this should lie freedom," I said, as I felt over it for the latch.

CHAPTER 11

The cave which lay beyond the gate was of limestone formation in a hillside just outside the village. Enough light came through the outer opening to dimly illuminate the interior immediately about us. We could not immediately determine the extent of the cave; but while the walls at one side were discernible, at our left they were lost in darkness out of which trickled a little stream of clear, cold water that made its way across the floor to disappear through the outer opening.

My greatest concern was that the cave might be the lair of some wild animal; but we heard nothing and there was no odor to substantiate my fears; and when we walked to the opening we realized there would be little danger on that score, for there was a sheer drop of about twenty feet to the floor of a wooded ravine. We were even safe from the more dangerous winged reptiles of Pellucidar because of the heavy growth of forest in the ravine, through which only the smaller winged creatures could fly. A tree, which grew close to the cliff at one side of the opening, would furnish us a means of descent whenever we chose to leave the cave, which would have been immediately had it not been for Zor and Kleeto.

I didn't like the idea of remaining in the cave, however, as I knew it was an avenue sometimes used by members of the royal family and therefore we might be discovered at almost any moment. Neither did I relish the idea of making a camp outside of the cave, because of our proximity to the village.

Not wishing to leave Dian alone in the cave, I took her with me and descended the tree to the ground, from which vantage point we

discovered that there were many caves in the cliff. I investigated several of them and finally found one, the mouth of which could easily be barricaded. It was small and dry, and after carrying in leaves and grasses, with which we covered the floor, we had as snug and comfortable a home as any Pellucidarian might wish for. From the trees I gathered nuts and fruits while Dian dug tubers from the ground, and thus supplied with provisions we returned to our cave to rest and plan.

This was the first time that we had had a moment of leisure in comparative safety since I had found Dian again, and so I took advantage of it to have Dian tell me of the circumstances that had led up to her imprisonment in the village of Meeza.

She said that when my warriors returned to Sari, they reported that I had been killed in the battle with the warrior-women. Do-gad, nephew of the king of Suvi, had been a visitor in Sari at the time; and when he had found that I was dead he had constantly annoyed her with importunities to become his mate. Depressed by grief and disgusted with the man, she had been very short with him, commanding him to leave Sari; and when he had continued to remain there, scheming to obtain her, she had Ghak, the king of Sari, send him away. It was only because he was the nephew of the king of Suvi that he had escaped with his life.

Notwithstanding the reports that had been brought to her, Dian would not believe that I was dead, and organized an expedition to go in search of me.

The route which the expedition had to take lay through the country of the Suvians and there, much to Dian's surprise, they were received in a hostile manner by the King of Suvi, whose mind had been poisoned against the Sarians by Do-gad, his nephew.

Her camp was surrounded and attacked by a force of warriors greatly outnumbering her own.

Naturally her force was defeated and Dian was taken prisoner. Dian was taken before the king.

“I am sorry,” he said, “that you are a woman. Were you a man, I would know how to treat you, for the affront you have put upon me deserves death.”

“What affront?” asked Dian.

“Without reason, you ordered Do-gad, my nephew, expelled from Sari.”

“Is that what he said?” she asked.

“Yes,” replied the king, “and he also told me that he barely escaped with his life.”

“Did he tell you why he was expelled from Sari?” demanded Dian.

“Because he was a Suvian,” replied the king.

“That is not true,” said Dian. “He heard that my mate was dead, and he importuned me to become his mate. I refused; but he continued to annoy me. It was then that I told him to leave Sari. Had he left at once, all would have been well; but he persisted in remaining and annoying me; then I had to ask Ghak to send him away. Ghak was furious, and so Do-gad was indeed fortunate to have escaped with his life.”

“If you have spoken the truth,” said the king, “it is Do-gad who will be punished, not you.”

“I have spoken the truth,” said Dian, “and that you should know because Do-gad’s statement that he was driven from Sari because he was a Suvian is silly. The Suvians and Sarians have been on friendly terms since the establishment of the Empire of Pellucidar. Many Suvians, as you know, have come to Sari and been treated royally. We are

not so stupid as to wantonly incur the enmity of an ally who has always been one of the strongest supporters of the empire.”

The king nodded. “You speak with reason, and I am sure now that you have spoken the truth. I am sorry that my warriors attacked your camp and that you have been subjected to the indignity of arrest. You are free to go, or you may remain, as you wish; but tell me, why did you come to Suvi?”

“I have never believed the rumors that David, Emperor of Pellucidar, is dead,” replied Dian. “With my warriors, I was going to search for him.”

“I will furnish warriors to take the places of those who were killed,” said the king, “and you may continue on your way.”

“It is too late,” replied Dian, “for the only two men who could guide us to the place where David was last seen were killed. I shall have to return to Sari to obtain other guides.”

“You shall have an escort then back to Sari,” said the king.

Do-gad, when he heard of what had happened and that he was to be punished, escaped from the village with about a score of his followers. They followed the trail toward Sari for one march, and then lay in wait for Dian and her escort.

Without thought of danger, Dian’s escort walked into the ambush; and when Dian saw what had happened and that Do-gad’s party outnumbered hers and was almost certain to be victorious, she escaped during the fight.

As Do-gad and his men were between her and Sari, she sought to make a detour so as to avoid and elude them.

Pellucidar is a savage world in which a lone woman is most helpless. First one danger and then another drove her farther and farther away from Sari. Every time she sought to turn back, something barred

her way; and then finally she became aware that Do-gad was on her trail, and her one thought then was to escape from him. How long and how far she wandered, she had no idea. That she escaped so many dangers was a miracle; but at last she fell into the hands of the Jukans, and had long since given up hope of escape when Fate drew me to her. But now that we were together again all that we had passed through seemed as nothing by comparison with the deep joy that we experienced in the renewal of the companionship that we had thought lost forever.

Dian told me the news of our friends in Sari and, best of all, that the Federated Kingdoms of Pellucidar were continuing loyal to the Empire. Once before, when I had been long absent, the Federation had started to disintegrate; but now it appeared that danger of this was past. All that concerned us now was to plan for escape with Zor and Kleeto.

Once more I set to work making weapons, this time two bows and a supply of arrows for both Dian and myself, as well as two short spears. These were weapons in the use of which Dian was proficient, and I had no doubt but that the two of us could win through to Sari once we had left the Valley of the Jukans behind. It was tragic that we must jeopardize this chance because of Zor and Kleeto, but there was nothing else that we could in honor do; and so, while I worked upon my weapons, I sought also for a reasonable plan whereby I might hope to bring Zor and Kleeto out of the village.

CHAPTER 12

By the time my weapons were completed, I had formulated a plan for releasing Zor and Kleeto which I hoped would prove effective, although it entailed considerable risk. The worst part of it was that it entailed leaving Dian alone in the cave, without protection, while I entered the city. I didn't like it because of this, and she didn't like it because of the risk which I would have to run, of capture; but there seemed no other way, and so I decided to make my attempt immediately.

With a brownish pigment, which we made by crushing a certain variety of nuts, Dian lightly traced lines and wrinkles on my face, in an effort to disguise me; and when she had completed her task she said she would scarcely have known me herself, so greatly had the procedure changed my facial expression.

"I wish that it were all over and that you were back here with me again," she said. "I shall live in dread for your safety until your return."

"If, after you have slept three times," I told her, "and I have not returned, try to make your way to Sari."

"If you do not return, it will make no difference to me where I go," she said.

I kissed her goodbye then; and, after barricading the entrance to the cave and concealing it with brush and grasses, I left and started for the village. The cave was well stocked with food, and I had taken in several gourds of water before leaving; so I knew she would be safe on the score of provisions and water for far longer than three sleeps, and I

was certain that the cave was sufficiently well barricaded and hidden that she would be in no danger of discovery by either men or animals.

I made my way to the village gate, where I was halted by the guard, which consisted of a dozen wild-eyed maniacs.

“Who are you?” demanded one. “And what do you want here?”

“I am a visitor from Gamba,” I said. “I have come to join my friend, Zor, who is visiting Meeza, the king.”

They conferred in whispers for awhile; and, finally, the one who had originally addressed me, spoke again. “How do we know you are from Gamba?” he demanded.

“Because I am a friend of Zor,” I replied; “and he is from Gamba.”

“That sounds reasonable,” said one of them. “What is your name?”

“Innes,” I replied, using my surname.

“‘In-ess,’” the fellow repeated. “That is a strange name; so you must be from Gamba.”

The others nodded their heads, sagely. “There is no doubt about it,” said another; “he is from Gamba.”

“I do not like the looks of it,” said a third. “He has no spear. No man could travel safely all the way from Gamba with only a knife.”

Evidently the fellow had a little more sense than his companions, for his objection was clean and to the point.

“That is right,” said the original speaker. “You have no spear, and therefore you cannot be from Gamba.”

“I tell you he is from Gamba,” shouted another.

“Then where’s his spear?” demanded the bright one, confidently.

“I lost it back on the plains, before I entered the forest,” I explained. “I was hungry and would have eaten; but when I hurled my spear into an antelope, he turned and ran off with it. That, my

wonderful friends, is what became of my spear. Come, let me in, or Meeza will be angry.”

“Well,” said the captain of the gate, “I think you’re all right. I’ve thought so right along. You may come into the village. Where do you want to go?”

“I want to go to the palace of Meeza, the king,” I replied.

“Why do you want to go there?” he demanded.

“Because that is where my friend, Zor, is.”

Then the bright one had an idea. “How do you know he’s there,” he demanded, “if you just came from Gamba?”

“Yes,” demanded all the others, practically in chorus; “how do you know he’s there?”

“I don’t know he’s there; but —”

“Ah-ah. He admits he doesn’t know. He has come here for some bad purpose, and should be killed.”

“Wait a minute!” I exclaimed. “You didn’t let me finish. I said I didn’t know that he was there; but I do know that he came to visit Meeza; and so, naturally, I assume that he is in Meeza’s palace.”

“Excellent reasoning,” said the captain of the gate. “You may come in.”

“Send someone to the palace with me,” I said to the captain; “so that they will know that I am all right, and will let me in to see my friend, Zor.”

To my annoyance, he detailed the suspicious one; and the two of us set off together through the narrow alleyways toward the palace. The scenes in the insane city were much the same as those I had witnessed at the time that I had first arrived, indescribably lunatic, grotesque or bestial, according to the mood of each actor; and in the plaza before

the palace, the priests were still turning cartwheels around Ogar, the god of the Jukans.

My guide was still suspicious of me and did not hesitate to inform me of the fact. "I think you are an impostor and a liar," he said, "and I do not believe that you are from Gamba or that you have a friend named Zor."

"It is very strange," I said, "that you should think that."

"Why?" he demanded.

"Because you are, by far, the most intelligent man I have ever met, and so you should know that I am speaking the truth."

I could see that he was flattered for he preened himself and strutted a little before he made any reply; then he said, "Of course, I am intelligent; but you are very stupid. If you had not been, you would have known that I was joking all the time. Of course, I knew from the start that you were from Gamba."

"You are a very amusing fellow," I said. "You have a wonderful sense of humor. I am certain, now, that I shall have no difficulty in entering the palace and finding my friend, since I have a man of such high standing and great intelligence as you for my friend."

"You will have no trouble whatsoever," he assured me, "since I shall take you into the palace myself, and directly to the king's quarters."

Well, the fellow was as good as his word. He seemed to be well known and far more important than I had imagined, for the guard at the palace passed us immediately; and once more I entered the room where Gofo had received Zor and me. There was a new major-domo there, but he paid no attention to us. He appeared to be a victim of hypochondria, for he sat on the floor weeping copiously. One of the rules of the palace was that the major-domo question everyone who entered. We could not proceed farther without his permission.

“I can’t be bothered,” said the major-domo, when my guide asked this permission. “I am a very sick man, very, very sick.”

“What’s the matter with you?” I asked.

“Nothing,” he said, “and that’s the trouble. I am just sick of nothing.”

“You are in a very bad state,” I said.

He glanced up at me with a look of animation. “Do you really believe so?” he said.

“There’s no doubt about it,” I assured him.

“Where did you say you wanted to go?” he asked.

“I have to come to visit my friend, Zor, who is the guest of Meeza, the king.”

“Then what are you waiting for?” he demanded, angrily. “Get out of here and leave me alone;” so my guide and I passed on out of the chamber.

“Sometimes I think he is crazy,” said my guide. “Most people are.”

“I wonder if he could be,” I replied.

As we passed near the kitchen where Kleeto had worked, we met her face-to-face in the corridor. She looked squarely at me but without the faintest indication of recognition. I wondered if my disguise was that effective or if Kleeto had just been too bright to show that she recognized me.

As we proceeded farther into the palace, my guide moved more and more slowly. Something seemed to be troubling him, and at last it came out.

“Perhaps you had better go on alone from here,” he said.

“I don’t know where to go,” I replied. “Why can’t you come with me?”

“Many strange things have been happening in the palace,” he replied “and Meeza may not be so glad to see a stranger.”

“What has happened?” I asked.

“Well for one thing, Moko, the king’s son, has disappeared; so has the beautiful Sarian girl who was to be sacrificed to Ogar; then there was a prisoner named David, who disappeared. His hands were tied behind him, and he was locked up in a cell. He also was to have been sacrificed to Ogar; but when they went to the cell to get him, he had disappeared.”

“How very strange!” I exclaimed. “Haven’t they any idea what became of him, or of Moko, or of the girl from Sari?”

“Not the slightest,” he replied; “but Bruma will find out what became of them, as soon as he finds another sacrifice for Ogar; then Ogar will tell him.”

“I shouldn’t think Bruma would have any difficulty finding a sacrifice,” I said.

“Well, he has to have a very special one,” replied my guide. “It should be a man who is not a Jukan, or, perhaps, a Jukan from another village;” then he turned suddenly and looked at me strangely. I didn’t have to ask, to know what was in his mind.

CHAPTER 13

I had plenty on my mind as we approached the quarters of Meeza. I think I must have felt something like a condemned man who is hoping that a higher court will order a new trial, or the governor issue him a pardon. There was about that much hope, and that was about all there was. The looks that that fellow had given me seemed to have sealed my doom, for if the thought had occurred to him, it would certainly occur to Bruma, who was looking for a victim. He kept looking at me with that funny, wild expression in his eyes; and presently he said, "I think Ogar will be pleased with you."

"I hope so," I replied.

"Right ahead of us lie the quarters of Meeza," he said. "Perhaps we shall find Bruma there."

"Well," I said, "thank you for bringing me here. If you feel you might get in trouble for bringing a stranger to the king's quarters, you may leave me now, for I can find my way alone."

"Oh, no," he said. "I shall go all the way with you because I am sure that you will be very welcome and that I shall be praised for bringing you."

Presently we entered a large room in which were many people. At the far end was a platform upon which Meeza was seated. The king was flanked on either side by some ten or twelve husky warriors, there to protect him against any of his subjects who might suddenly develop a homicidal mania. Although Meeza wore no crown, other than his feather headdress, I am sure that his head was not only uneasy but extremely insecure.

In the center of the room, a man was standing with his arms in a grotesque position; and his features were contorted into an expression of fiendish malevolence. My guide indicated him with a nod of his head and a wink, as he nudged me in the ribs with his elbow.

“He’s crazy,” he said. “He thinks he is Ogar’s brother.”

“And he’s not?” I asked.

“Don’t be a fool,” snapped my guide. “He’s crazy. I am Ogar’s brother.”

“Oh,” I said. “He’s very crazy, indeed.”

The man certainly presented a most startling appearance, standing absolutely rigid, not a muscle moving, his eyes staring straight ahead. Presently a man ran forward and commenced to turn cartwheels around him. My guide nudged me again. “He’s crazy, too,” he said.

No one seemed to pay any attention either to the gentleman with delusions of grandeur or his whirling satellite. I could not help but think, as I watched these two, how close to the borderline of insanity some of the so-called great men of the outer crust must have been, for certainly many of them have appeared to be motivated by delusions of grandeur; and you doubtless will be able to think of several of your own time who loved to strike poses.

“Ah,” said my guide. “There is Bruma now.” Suddenly he appeared very excited. He seized me by the arm and dragged me across the floor toward a fat, greasy-looking individual with a feather headdress fully as large as that worn by Meeza but consisting of black feathers instead of white.

My guide grew more and more excited as we approached Bruma. I racked my brain for some plan of escape from my dilemma; but things looked pretty black for me, with, as far as I could see, not a

single chance for escape. Trembling with excitement, the fellow dragged me into Bruma's presence.

"Here, Bruma," he cried, "is a —"

That was as far as he got. Suddenly he stiffened, his eyes rolled up and set, and he pitched forward to the floor at Bruma's feet, in the throes of an epileptic fit. As he lay there, jerking spasmodically and frothing at the mouth, Bruma looked inquiringly at me.

"What did he want?" he demanded.

"He was about to say, 'Here is a good friend of mine, who is looking for a man named Zor,'" I replied.

"And who are you?" he asked.

"I am Napoleon Bonaparte," I replied.

Bruma shook his head. "I never heard of you," he said. "Zor is over there, near the king; but I still think he would make a good sacrifice for Ogar."

"And Meeza doesn't think so?" I asked.

"No," replied Bruma, emphatically; then he leaned close to me and whispered, "Meeza is crazy."

My guide was still enjoying his fit, which was a lucky break for me, as it probably would give me time to find Zor and get out of there before he regained consciousness; so I left Bruma and walked over toward the throne.

It didn't take me long to find Zor; and, though I went and stood directly in front of him, he did not recognize me. People with whom he had been talking were standing near, and I did not dare reveal my identity in their presence.

Finally, I touched him on the arm. "Come with me a minute," I said. "There is a friend of yours over here, who wants to see you for a minute."

“What friend?” he demanded.

“The friend with whom you worked in the garden of Gluck,” I replied.

“You are trying to trap me,” he said. “That man is gone forever, unless he is recaptured. He certainly wouldn’t be fool enough to come back here of his own volition.”

“He is here,” I said in a whisper. “Come with me, Zor.”

He hesitated. What could I do? I knew that he was suspicious of all these people and that he might think this a ruse to get him off somewhere, out of sight for a moment, and murder him. The Jukans are that way. However, I could not reveal my identity while there were so many people within earshot of even a whisper. I glanced back at my guide. No one was paying any attention to him; but he seemed to be recovering from his seizure. I knew that I should have to do something quickly now before the fellow regained consciousness. As I raised my eyes from the prostrate form of my former guide, I saw Bruma’s gaze fixed upon me, and then I saw him start toward me across the floor; then I turned back to Zor.

“You must come with me,” I said; “and you must know that I am speaking the truth, for how else would I know about the garden of Gluck?”

“That is right,” said Zor. “I did not think of that. Where do you want me to go?”

“Back to get Kleeto,” I said in a whisper.

He looked at me very intently then, and presently his eyes widened a little.

“I am a fool,” he said; “come.” But I couldn’t come for just then Bruma confronted us.

“Where is this Napolapart from?” he asked Zor. Zor looked puzzled. “Your friend, Napolapart,” insisted Bruma.

“I never heard of anybody by that name,” said Zor.

“Ah-ah, an impostor,” said Bruma, glaring at me. “This man, Napolapart, said that he was a friend of yours.”

“You misunderstood me, Bruma,” I interrupted. “I said my name was Napoleon Bonaparte.”

“Oh,” said Zor. “Of course I know Napoleon Bonaparte very well. He is an old friend of mine.”

“There is something very familiar about his face,” said Bruma. “I think I must have known him, too. Where have I known you, Napolapart?”

“I have never been here before,” I said.

“Where are you from then?” he demanded.

“From Gamba,” I replied.

“Excellent!” exclaimed Bruma, “Just the man I am looking for as a sacrifice to Ogar.”

Now here was a pretty mess, and mighty disheartening, too, with my plan right on the verge of success. What could I do? I had heard that crazy people should be humored; but how could I humor Bruma?

CHAPTER 14

I am not inclined to panics; but the situation in which I now found myself tended to induce that state to a greater degree than any other which I can recall in my long experience in this savage world of danger.

Here I was, in a palace from which I could not find my way without a guide, surrounded by maniacs, all of whom were potential enemies; but the most terrifying feature of the situation lay in the fact that Dian would most assuredly be lost were I not able to return to her. I reproached myself for thus jeopardizing her safety for two who really had no hold upon my loyalty, other than that dictated by a sense of decency and common humanity. Right then, I would have sacrificed them both without a single qualm of conscience, could I, by such means, have returned to Dian. I realized that I had over-estimated both my luck and my cunning. The former seemed to have deserted me and the latter was about to be nullified by the still more cunning minds of madmen. Finally, I decided to try to bluff it through. I knew that Zor would be with me if it came to a fight; and I also knew that if we should try to fight our way from the palace, the reactions of the Jukans were unpredictable. I drew my knife and looked Bruma straight in the eyes.

“You are not going to sacrifice me to Ogar,” I said in a loud tone of voice that attracted the attention of all around us, including Meeza, the king.

“Why?” demanded Bruma.

“Because I am a guest of Meeza,” I replied, “and I demand his protection.”

“Who is this man?” cried the king.

“His name is Napolapart,” replied Bruma, “and he comes from Gamba. I shall sacrifice him to Ogar; so that Ogar will tell us what has become of Moko, your son.”

I was facing away from Meeza at the time, because I was looking at Bruma and listening to him. Beyond the crowd I could see the doorway leading into the throne room. The backs of nearly all except those on the dais upon which Meeza sat were toward the door, and the attention of those on the dais was riveted upon Bruma and me; thus I was the only one to see a cadaverous figure stagger from the corridor and lean weakly against the frame of the doorway.

“Will Ogar tell us where Moko is, if you offer this sacrifice to him?” demanded Meeza of Bruma.

“If the sacrifice is acceptable to Ogar, he will tell us,” replied the high priest. “If it is not acceptable, we shall have to try another.”

I turned toward Meeza. “You do not need Ogar to tell you where Moko is,” I said, “for I can tell you. Will you let Zor and me go in peace, if I tell you?”

“Yes,” said the king.

I turned and pointed toward the doorway. “There is Moko,” I said.

All eyes turned in the direction I had pointed to see Moko stagger forward into the room. He looked like a cadaver temporarily endowed with the power of locomotion. His body and his extremities were very thin, and his body was literally covered with blood that had dried and caked upon it from a now partially healed wound below his heart.

So I hadn’t killed Moko, after all; and now, by an ironical trick of Fate, he had come back, perhaps to save me. I watched him stagger

across the room to Meeza's throne, where he sank to the floor, exhausted.

"Where have you been?" demanded the king. There was nothing in his voice that denoted paternal affection or sympathy.

Weak, gasping for breath, Moko replied in a feeble whisper, "He tried to kill me. When I regained consciousness, I was in darkness for he had dragged me into the corridor of which only the king and his son have knowledge. He was gone, and with him the girl from Sari."

"Who was he?" demanded Meeza.

"I do not know," replied Moko.

"It must have been the man, David, who escaped from the cell in which he was confined," suggested Bruma.

"We shall find them," said Meeza. "Send warriors out to search the forest for them, and search in the great cave in the Ravine of the Kings."

Immediately warriors started for the door, and Zor and I joined them. I do not believe that Bruma saw us go, as his attention was fixed upon Moko over whom he was chanting some weird jargon, doubtless something in the nature of a healing incantation.

"What shall we do?" asked Zor.

"We must find Kleeto," I replied; "and then try to leave the village with these warriors, pretending that we are going out to help search for David."

"You can't get a woman out of the village," said Zor. "Don't you remember what Kleeto told us?"

"That's right," I replied. "I had forgotten; but I have another way."

"What is it?"

"It is the corridor through which I escaped before; but the only trouble is that it leads to the large cave which they are going to search."

“What became of the girl from Sari?” he asked.

“I took her with me and hid her in another cave near the large one.”

“Of course, you are going to take her with us?”

“Absolutely,” I replied, “for when I found her with Moko, I made an amazing discovery.”

“What was that?” asked Zor.

“That the girl from Sari was actually my mate, Dian the Beautiful.”

“It was a fortunate chance, then, that caused you to be captured by the Jukans.”

We found Kleeto in the kitchen of the major-domo. She was surprised and delighted to see us; but at first she could scarcely believe that it was I, so greatly had Dian’s handiwork disguised me. She had not recognized me when she met my guide and me in the corridor; but she recalled having seen us pass.

We talked matters over and decided to enter the corridor and go as far as the rear entrance to the cave. There we should wait until the Jukans had completed their investigation and left. We were quite sure that they would not investigate the corridor; but if they did, we should simply have to keep ahead of them so as not to be detected, even if we had to come all the way back to the entrance.

Now, however, another obstacle presented itself. None of us knew how to reach the entrance to the corridor. Neither Zor nor Kleeto had ever been there, and I could not retrace my steps to it, even though my life and Dian’s depended upon it.

“We shall have to attempt to pass out through the city, then,” said Zor.

“You two go, then,” said Kleeto. “I am sure that they would not permit me to pass.”

“There must be some other way,” said Zor.

“There is,” I said. “You and I will go out of the village to search for David. When the Jukans have finished their search in the Ravine of the Kings, we can enter the cave and come back for Kleeto, for after you have found your way from the corridor to these quarters, you could easily retrace your steps, while I could not.”

“It is a good plan,” said Zor; “but it will not be necessary for you to come back with me and leave your mate, for all I shall have to do is guide Kleeto out of the palace; and it will not require two men for that.”

“That is right,” said Kleeto; “but I do not wish you to risk your lives for me. I never expected to escape, anyway; so you might as well go along and make sure of yours.”

“David has already risked his life and that of his mate to come back here to rescue us,” said Zor. “We shall take you with us, if it is possible to do so.”

We left Kleeto and went out into the city, presently finding ourselves at the outer gate. As warriors were still passing through in search of me, we had no trouble in leaving the city.

We found the Ravine of the Kings full of searching warriors; so we joined them in order to be near Dian and learn if she were discovered.

“If she is,” I said, “we shall have to fight, for I shall not permit her to be taken back into the city alive.”

Mingling with the Jukans, and pretending to be hunting for myself, I made my way close to the cave where Dian was hidden. The barricade was still up, and the brush covered it. Nothing had been disturbed. Inside that cave, not ten feet from me, was the woman I loved, the only woman I had ever loved, the only woman I ever should love. She was doubtless worrying as much about my safety as I had worried

about hers; and yet I dared not call out to let her know that I was there, close to her and safe, for all about us were the Jukans.

I saw some of them descending from the large cave; so I knew they had made their investigation there and that it would be safe for Zor to enter as soon as the searchers had left the ravine and make his way through the corridor to the interior of the palace.

There may not be any such thing as time in Pellucidar; but I think an eternity must have passed before the Jukans gave up their search in the ravine and left it. Zor and I had managed to conceal ourselves without appearing to do so, so that no one noticed that we remained behind when the others left.

“And now,” I said to Zor, “you can make your attempt to reach Kleeto and bring her back here. The entrance to the corridor is directly opposite the mouth of the cave. After you enter the corridor, always keep your left hand against the wall; and you will be bound to retrace my steps through the palace and the corridor —” I stopped aghast, as a recollection came suddenly to my mind.

“What’s the matter?” demanded Zor, noticing my perturbation.

“How stupid of me to have forgotten!” I exclaimed.

“What are you talking about?” he demanded.

“You will not be able to pass the gate at the farther end of the corridor,” I said. “It was behind that gate that I was imprisoned, and it defied my every effort to batter it down.”

“Is there no other way?” he asked.

“Yes, there is; but I do not know how you can find it. There is a doorway from the corridor to the room in which I found Moko and Dian. Perhaps you will feel it, and recognize it when you come to it; but as I recall it, it seems only a part and parcel of the wooden wall

that faces most of the corridor. It is, I should say, about half way between the cave and the far end of the corridor.”

“If the gate is still locked, I shall find that door,” Zor assured me.

“Your chances will be mighty slim, if you have to go that way,” I told him, “because I am sure that that room lay in the quarters of either Moko or Meeza, for it was near there that they had Dian imprisoned. If you are discovered there, you will certainly be destroyed. Perhaps you had better give up the idea entirely, if the gate at the end of the corridor is still fastened. We shall then have done all that we humanly could to bring Kleeto out.”

“If I am not back at the end of two sleeps,” said Zor, “I shall never be back; and you and your mate may commence your journey to Sari.”

I bade him goodby, then, with a heavy heart, and watched him climb the tree and enter the mouth of the large cave above.

CHAPTER 15

As soon as Zor had started upon his mission, I returned to the cave where Dian was hidden; and, making sure that no one was in sight in the ravine, I started removing the brush and the barricade. As I was doing so, I called to her; but receiving no reply I presumed that she was asleep; and so I proceeded to remove the remainder of the barrier as quietly as possible so as not to disturb her, for sleep in Pellucidar is precious.

I do not know when I have been as happy as I was at that moment. My spirits were high, for now it seemed certain to me that we had an excellent chance of escaping from the Valley of the Jukans and returning to our beloved Sari.

When I had made an opening large enough to admit my body, I crawled into the cave backwards and replaced the barrier as best I could, intending to lie down beside Dian and get a little sleep myself.

How surprised she would be when she awakened to find me there beside her. I couldn't resist the temptation to reach out and touch her. The cave was small, and she could not possibly be more than an arm's length from me; but though I felt in all directions I did not find her. It was then that the terrible truth dawned upon me — Dian was gone!

To be cast from such heights of hopefulness to such a depth of despair almost unnerved me. More like a maniac than a sane man, I felt over every inch of the floor of the cave. I found some food and water. I found my weapons, too; but no Dian.

No longer was there thought of sleep; no longer thoughts of Zor or Kleeto; only Dian mattered now.

Taking a spear and the bow and arrows that I had made for myself, I pushed away the barrier and came out into the open. For a moment I stood there, undecided. Where was I to look for Dian? Something seemed to tell me, I do not know what, that she had not been taken back into the village; and I decided to go down the ravine, away from the village, which was the direction that we should have taken to leave the Valley of the Jukans on our way towards Sari. That much I knew, because I had asked Dian the direction of our country, and she had told me which way we must go to reach it.

All through the Ravine of the Kings, the ground had recently been walked over by the searching Jukans; so that any possible trace of Dian's spoor would have been obliterated; but I hoped that if I went far enough I might eventually pick it up, for not having the homing instinct of the Pellucidarians, I had been forced to develop myself into an excellent tracker. I could follow a spoor that an ordinary man could not detect and I banked heavily upon this ability to pick the spoor of Dian and whomever had stolen her.

I came to the end of the Jukan forest without meeting man or beast, or finding any trace of Dian.

According to Dian's directions, I turned right here and skirted the forest. She had told me that this would lead me to the far end of the valley where I should come upon a stream, and that I should follow this stream to a small inland sea into which it emptied; then I was to follow the shore of this sea to the left. Eventually, I would see a lofty mountain peak far ahead of me, which would indicate the direction of Sari. After that, I should have to depend upon my own resourcefulness to find my way, for she could not recall any other outstanding landmark, for she, born with the homing instinct, had not needed to particularly note any of them.

I had reached the lower end of the valley and the river without seeing any trace of Dian, and had just about come to the conclusion that I had been wrong in assuming that she had been brought in this direction, whereas it was equally possible that she might have been captured by the Jukans and returned to the village. Should I return to Meeza's village or should I go on? That was the question. My better judgment told me that I should turn back; but I finally decided to go on yet a little farther; but eventually I gave it up as hopeless and turned back.

The forest in the Valley of the Jukans stops rather abruptly where it meets the plain, although a few scattered trees dot the latter. For purposes of better concealment, I traveled just inside the edge of the forest where the plain was always visible to me and trees always within easy reach as avenues of escape from the more dangerous carnivores.

From the village of Meeza to the lower end of the valley, where I had turned back, must be about twenty miles. I had been without sleep for some time and, being practically exhausted, I sought out a tree in which I could rig myself up a sleeping platform well concealed by verdure from prying eyes, and far enough above the ground to be safe from hunting beasts; and here I was soon asleep.

I do not know how long I slept; but when I awoke I found that it had rained, for the forest was dripping with water. That the rain had not awakened me was evidence of how exhausted I must have been; but now I was refreshed, and soon I was on the ground once more, ready to continue my return journey toward the village of Meeza, the king. I was refreshed, and I was also ravenously hungry, which was an approximate index as to the length of time I had slept.

As I did not care to take the time to hunt, I gathered a little fruit with the intention of eating it on the way; but almost immediately after

reaching the ground, I discovered that which drove all thought of hunger from my mind, for passing directly beneath my tree were footprints of a man and woman in the rain-soaked earth — a man and a woman who had been walking hurriedly toward the lower end of the valley. Instantly I cast aside all thought of returning to the village, convinced in my own mind that these were the footprints of Dian and her abductor.

I could not tell how old the tracks were, for I could not know how long I had slept; but I knew that the rain had been comparatively recent and that the two people had passed either during or after the storm.

This lack of means for measuring time here in Pellucidar can be extremely annoying and aggravating. I might have slept for a week of earthly time, as far as I knew; and these people might be far in advance of me, or they might be but just a short distance ahead, hidden by the trees of the forest.

As the trail remained quite distinct, I could follow it rapidly. In fact, I had adopted a dog-trot which I had learned from experience that I could maintain for great lengths of time, as only thus could I hope to overtake them, as I could see that they had been hurrying.

Near the lower end of the valley, the trail came out of the forest; and then, far ahead, I saw two figures; as yet too far away from me to recognize. Now I no longer trotted; I ran. Often I lost sight of them for a considerable time as one or the other of us dropped down into swales or hollows; but each time that they reappeared I could see that I had gained on them.

At length, after losing sight of them for a short time, I topped a rise and saw them just below me. They were standing in a clearing facing a couple of jaloks, the fierce, wild dogs of Pellucidar; and then it

was that I recognized them — Zor and Kleeto. Armed only with their crude, stone knives, they were hopelessly facing the two great brutes that were slinking toward them. Their situation would have been almost hopeless had I not happened upon them in the nick of time; and even now it was none too certain that we should all three escape alive, for the jalok is an animal of great strength and terrible ferocity. They are man-eaters of the worst type, and hunt men in preference to any other game.

As I ran down the hill toward Zor and Kleeto their backs were toward me as they stood facing the brutes; and so they did not see me, nor did they hear my sandaled feet on the soft turf. The jaloks paid no attention to me, as they have little or no fear of man, and probably looked upon me as just another victim.

As I ran, I fitted an arrow to my bow; and when I was quite sure that I was safely in range I stopped a few paces behind Zor and Kleeto and drew a bead on the larger jalok, a huge dog which stood a good six inches higher than his mate. I drew the shaft back until the tip of the arrow touched my left hand. The bow string twanged and the arrow sank deep in the chest of the dog. Simultaneously, Zor and Kleeto wheeled about and recognized me; and both jaloks charged.

With a celerity born of long continued, urgent need of self-preservation, I had fitted another arrow to my bow and driven it into the breast of the she. The shot brought her down; but the dog, growling ferociously, the arrow protruding from his breast, came leaping toward us. It was then, when he was almost upon us, that I hurled my spear, a short, heavy, javelin-like weapon.

Fortunately for us, my aim was true, and this heavier missile brought the great beast down; and a second later I put an arrow through his heart. Similarly, I dispatched the female.

Zor and Kleeto were profuse in the expression of their gratitude. They were mystified as to how it had happened that I had been behind them. They said that they had gone to the cave where Dian had been hidden, and found it empty; and immediately had come to the conclusion that she and I had started on toward Sari.

Then I told them how it had happened that I had been behind them and of my fears that Dian had been stolen; and then when I had not been able to find any trace of her spoor I had become convinced that she had been taken back into the village.

“No,” said Kleeto, “I can assure you that she has not. I should have heard of it immediately, had she been brought into the major-domo’s quarters. I heard the warriors talking as they returned from the search, and it was quite evident from what they said that they had found no trace of her; so I think that you may rest assured that she is not in the village of Meeza.”

Well, it was, of course, something of a relief to know that; but where was she? And who had been her abductor? I recalled that Moko had wanted her to run away with him; and I questioned Kleeto as to the possibility of its having been he who had found her hiding place and taken her away.

“It is possible,” she said.

“But he had been badly wounded. The last time I saw him, he was so weak he could scarcely stand.”

“Oh, he has had plenty of time to recover from that,” she said.

I shook my head in despair. This baffling question of elapsed time was maddening. To me, it seemed that not more than two days had elapsed since I saw Moko fall exhausted at the foot of his father’s throne, yet Kleeto assured me that there had been plenty of time for his wound to heal. How was I possibly to know, then, how long it had

been since Dian had been taken from the cave? If another than Moko had taken her, it might have been a great many days ago, as measured by outer earthly time. If it were Moko, it might not have been so long ago; but still, he might have had ample time to take her where I should never find her.

The fact that I could find no trace of her spoor was the most disheartening fact of all, yet I realized that she still might have passed this way but so long ago that all traces of her passage had been obliterated.

“What are you going to do?” asked Zor.

“I am going back to Sari,” I replied, “and I am going to bring an army here to the Valley of the Jukans and wipe their accursed race off the face of Pellucidar. Their hereditary taint of insanity is a menace to all mankind; and you?” I asked. “Where are you going?”

“I suppose I shall never find Rana,” he replied. “It seems hopeless now to prosecute the search any further. Kleeto has asked me to come back to Suvi with her,” he added, in what I thought was a rather embarrassed manner.

“Then we can continue on together,” I said, “for Suvi lies in the direction of Sari; and with Kleeto as a guide, my great handicap will be nullified.”

“What do you mean?” she asked.

“He can’t find his way home,” said Zor, laughing as though it were a huge joke.

Kleeto opened her eyes in amazement. “You mean you could not find your way back to Sari alone?”

“I’m sorry,” I replied; “but I couldn’t.”

“I never heard of such a thing,” said Kleeto.

“He says he is from another world,” said Zor. “At first, I did not

believe him; but now that I have come to know him, I do not doubt his word.”

“What other world is there?” demanded Kleeto.

“He says that Pellucidar is round like the eggs of one of the great turtles, and hollow, too. Pellucidar, he says, is on the inside, and his world is on the outside.”

“Can’t anyone in your world, then, find his way home, if he gets lost?” asked the girl.

“Yes,” I explained; “but not in the way that you do. Some time I shall explain it to you; but right now we have other things to think about, and the most important, at the moment, is to get as far away from the Valley of the Jukans as we can.”

We started on again, then, on the long trail toward Sari; and I should have been very happy and contented, had it not been for my anxiety concerning the fate of Dian. If I only knew in what direction she had been taken. Even to know who had taken her, would have been some satisfaction; but I knew neither, and I could not even guess; and prayed that time would unravel the mystery.

We had passed out of the valley and followed the river down to the shore of the inland sea, of which Dian had told me, when we passed the skeleton of a large deer from which all the flesh had been stripped by the carnivorous creatures of all sizes and descriptions which infest Pellucidar.

So often does one come across these bleaching evidences of tragedy in Pellucidar that they occasion no comment or even a single glance; but as I passed close to this one I saw an arrow lying among the bones. Naturally, I picked it up to put it in my quiver; and, as I did so, I must have exclaimed aloud in astonishment, for both Zor and Kleeto turned questioningly toward me.

“What is the matter?” asked the former.

“I made this arrow,” I said. “I made it for Dian. I always mark our arrows for identification. This one bears her mark.”

“Then she has been this way,” said Kleeto.

“Yes, she is on the way back to Sari,” I said; then I got to thinking. It was odd that it had never occurred to me before, that I had found my weapons in the cave but not Dian’s. Why should her abductor have taken her weapons and not mine? I put the question to Zor and Kleeto.

“Perhaps she came alone,” suggested Kleeto.

“She would never have deserted me,” I said.

Zor shook his head. “I do not understand it,” he said. “Very few of the men of Pellucidar know how to use this strange weapon which you make. The Jukans certainly possess none. Who else could have shot this but Dian the Beautiful, herself?”

“She must have shot it,” I said.

“But if she were stolen, her captor would never permit her to carry weapons,” argued Zor.

“You are right,” I said.

“Then she must be alone,” said Zor, “or — or she came away with someone of her own free will.”

I couldn’t believe that; but no matter how much I racked my brain, it was impossible for me to arrive at any explanation.

CHAPTER 16

It is remarkable how life adapts itself to its environment, and, I may say, especially man, who is entirely hairless and unprotected from the elements and comparatively slow and weak. Here was I, a man of the Twentieth Century, with perhaps a thousand years of civilization as my background, trekking through the wildernesses of a savage world with a man and a girl of the Old Stone Age, and quite as self-reliant and as much at home as they. I, who would not have ventured upon the streets of my native city in my shirt-sleeves, was perfectly comfortable, and not at all self-conscious, in a G-string and a pair of sandals. It has often made me smile to contemplate what my strait-laced New England friends would have thought, could they have seen me; and I know that they would have considered Kleeto an abandoned wench, yet, like practically every girl I have ever known here in Pellucidar, she was fine and clean; and virtuous almost to prudery; but she did have a failing; a failing that is not uncommon to all girls on the outer crust — she talked too much. Yet her naive and usually happy prattle often distracted my mind from the sorrow which weighed it down.

Having found that I was from another world, Kleeto must know all about it; and she asked a million questions. She was a very different Kleeto from the Kleeto I had known in the palace of Meeza, the king, for then she was suppressed by the seeming hopelessness of her position and her fear of the maniacs among whom she lived; but now that she was free and safe, the natural buoyancy of her spirits re-asserted itself and the real Kleeto bloomed again.

It was quite evident to me that Zor had fallen in love with Kleeto,

and there is no doubt but what the little rascal led him on — there are coquettes wherever there are women. It was impossible to tell if she were in love with him; but I think she was because she treated him so badly. Anyway, I know it was she who suggested that he go to Suvi.

“Why did you leave Suvi, Kleeto?” I once asked her.

“I ran away,” she said, with a shrug. “I wanted to go to Kali; but I got lost; and so I wandered around until I was finally captured by the Jukans.”

“If you were lost,” said Zor, “why didn’t you go back to Suvi?”

“I was afraid,” replied Kleeto.

“Afraid of what?” I asked.

“There was a man there that wished to take me as his mate, but I did not want him; but he was a big strong man, and his uncle was King of Suvi. It was because of him that I ran away, and because of him that I dared not go back.”

“But now you are not afraid to return?” I asked.

“I shall have you and Zor with me,” she said; “and so I shall not be afraid.”

“Is this man, by any chance, named Do-gad?” I asked.

“Yes,” she said. “Do you know him?”

“No,” I said; “but some day I am going to meet him.”

It was a strange coincidence that both Dian and Kleeto had been captured by the Jukans while they were trying to escape from Do-gad. The fellow would have plenty to account for to Zor and me.

Once again it was, to me, new country that we were passing through. In fact, so enormous is the land area of Pellucidar, so sparsely peopled is it, and so little explored, that almost all of it is new country practically untouched by man. It is, however, a vast melting pot of life where animals of nearly all the geological periods of the outer crust

exist contemporaneously. I have been told that there are considerable areas entirely destitute of animal life; and I know that there are others where the reptilia of the Triassic and Jurassic Ages of the outer crust reign in undisputed possession because no other creature dare enter their domain. Other areas are peopled solely by the birds and mammals that flourished on the outer crust from the Cretaceous to the Pliocene; but by far the larger part of the Pellucidar known to me from my own exploration and from hearsay is inhabited by all these forms of life, with here and there an isolated community of men living mostly in caves. Only since the founding of the Empire had there been anything approaching a city built in Pellucidar, unless one might call the underground caverns of the Mahars cities, or apply the same name to the crazy conglomeration of huts occupied by the Jukans.

One city only must always be excepted from this very general statement. That is the City of Korsar, near the north polar opening, which I believe to have been originally founded by the crew of a pirate ship which, by some miracle, found its way through the polar opening from the Arctic Ocean into Pellucidar.

The civilization of these people, however, has never spread toward the South. They are, by nature, a maritime people; but having no sun, or moon, or stars to guide them, they do not dare venture out of sight of land on the great ocean that lies at their very door, the Korsar Az.

We had slept many times, and were still moving along the shore of the sea, when we came suddenly upon a group of enormous mastodons in a little, flat-floored valley through which a river ran. There were three mastodons in the group, a bull, a cow, and a calf; and we could see by the actions of the adults that something was amiss, for they kept running back and forth, trumpeting loudly.

We were about to give them a wide berth, when I discovered the

cause of their excitement. The calf had wandered into a slough near the edge of the river and had become mired down. It would have been suicide for either the cow or the bull, with their tremendous weight, to have ventured into the soft ground in an effort to save the calf.

Like most people, I am sentimental about young animals; and when I heard that poor little fellow bawling, my heart went out to him.

“Let’s see if we can get him out of there,” I said to Zor.

“And get killed for our pains,” replied the man from Zoram.

“Old Maj is pretty intelligent,” I said. “I think he would know that we were trying to help.”

Zor shrugged. “Sometimes I think that you are really a Jukan,” he said, laughing. “You have some of the craziest ideas.”

“Oh, well,” I said, “if you’re afraid, of course —”

“Who said I was afraid?” demanded Zor.

That was enough. I knew that he would come with me now, if he died for it, for the men of Zoram are especially jealous of their reputation for bravery; so I started down toward the mastodons, and both Zor and Kleeto came with me. I didn’t go very close to them at first but down to the edge of the marsh about a hundred yards from them where I could look over the ground and ascertain if there were any possibilities of helping the calf. At this point there was only about twenty feet of marsh between solid ground and the river, and it was covered with driftwood that had been deposited there during high water. The surface of the marsh had dried out under the hot sun, and after testing this crust I found that it would support our weight; so the only feasible plan whereby we might get the calf out was obvious. I explained it to Zor and Kleeto, and then the three of us set about gathering larger pieces of driftwood which we placed in front of the calf to form something of a corduroy road from it to the solid ground.

At first, the little fellow was frightened and started plunging when we approached him; but presently he seemed to sense that we were not going to harm him and quieted down. The bull and cow were also very much excited at first; but after awhile they stopped their trumpeting and stood watching us. I think they realized what we were trying to do. The last few feet of our improvised road had to be laid down within a few feet of them, and was in easy reach of their trunks; but they did not offer to molest us.

With the road completed came the job of trying to get the calf onto it. He probably weighed at least a ton; so lifting him was out of the question.

Zor and I found a large log and laid it parallel and close to him; then we got a long piece of driftwood that was staunch and strong — the bole of a small tree — placed one end across the log, and slowly worked it under one of his forelegs. In the meantime, Kleeto, following my instructions, was ready with the largest piece of driftwood she could lift. Zor and I got on the outer end of our lever and threw all our weight onto it. Time and again we repeated this, until finally the leg commenced to pull out of the muck; and, as soon as it was free, Kleeto shoved the piece of driftwood beneath it.

The calf then tried to scramble out on the roadway; but he couldn't quite make it, and so we went around to the other side and repeated the operation on his other foreleg. This was easier because he could help himself a little now with his free leg; and as soon as he had both of them on solid footing he wallowed around for a moment and finally dragged himself out.

I had never seen anything so touching as the solicitude of the bull and cow when the little fellow finally stood beside them on solid

ground. They felt him all over for a moment or two to see that he was all right and then dragged him away from the edge of the marsh.

Kleeto, Zor, and I sat down on the big log to rest, for it had been fatiguing work. We expected the mammoths to go away; but they didn't. They stopped a couple of hundred feet from us and watched us.

After we had rested, we started on again, looking for a place to cross the river; and as soon as we did the bull started toward us, followed by the cow and the calf. That didn't look so good, and we kept close to the edge of the marsh so that we could escape them if they showed any disposition to be nasty. We kept glancing back over our shoulders, and presently I noticed that the mastodons were not gaining on us. Apparently it was merely a coincidence that they were going in the same direction that we were.

We had to go quite a little distance up river before we found a place where we could make a safe crossing. It was not a very large river, and the bottom where we crossed was gravelly. When we reached the opposite bank we saw that the mastodons were entering the river behind us.

Well, they tagged along after us until we found a safe place to camp. They didn't approach very close to us at any time; and when we stopped they stopped.

"It looks as though they were just following us," said Kleeto.

"It certainly does," agreed Zor; "but I wonder why?"

"You've got me," I said. "I don't think they intend to harm us. They don't show any signs of nervousness or excitement, such as they would if they were angry or afraid of us."

"Old Maj isn't afraid of anything," said Zor. Maj is the Pellucidarian name for the mastodon.

“I’m going to see if they’re friendly,” I said.

“You better locate a nice tree before you try anything,” said Zor; “and be sure it’s a big one. That old bull could uproot almost anything around here.”

We had halted near some caves, where we intended to camp, and I figured that if the mastodons were inclined to be unfriendly I could beat them to the cave we had selected before they could overhaul me; at least I hoped so.

I walked slowly toward them, and they just stood there looking at me without showing any signs of nervousness. When I was about a hundred feet from them, the calf started to come toward me; then the cow moved a little restlessly and made a funny little noise. I guess she was trying to call him back, but he came on; and I stood still and waited. He stopped two or three times and looked back at the cow and the bull; but each time he came on again and, finally, he stopped a few feet from me. He stuck his trunk way out in front of him, and I reached out my hand very slowly and touched it. I scratched it a little bit; and he came a step or two closer. I put my hand on his head then and scratched his forehead. He seemed to like it; but presently he started winding his trunk around me, and I did not like that; so I took it and unwound it forcibly.

The bull and the cow hadn’t moved; but, believe me, they were watching us. All of a sudden the cow raised her trunk and trumpeted; and the little fellow wheeled around and went lumbering back to her as fast as he could go, while I walked back and joined Zor and Kleeto.

That was the beginning of a very strange friendship, for when we awoke after our sleep the mastodons were still hanging around; and they tagged along behind us for every march after that for a long time.

I used to talk to them a lot and call them Maj; and once when they

were not near camp when we awoke after a sleep I shouted the name several times; and presently the three of them came out of the nearby forest, where they had evidently been feeding. We had become quite accustomed to them, and they to us, with the result that they often came quite close to us. In fact, I often stroked their trunks, which, for some reason, they seemed to enjoy; but why they were following us we could not guess, nor did we ever know. The closest conjecture that I could arrive at was that they were grateful to us for having saved the calf from the marsh in which he would surely have died had we not come along. Their presence with us more than repaid us for our efforts in behalf of the calf, for while they were with us we were never once menaced by any of the many predatory animals which abound in the country through which we passed, as even the most savage of them respect the strength of Maj.

We had slept many times since leaving the Valley of the Jukans; so that I knew that we had traveled a considerable distance, when we prepared to make camp after a long march at the foot of a cliff in which there was a cave where we might find security while we slept. The remains of a campfire in front of the cave indicated that it had been used comparatively recently; and the face of the cliff beside the mouth of the cave bore evidence that a number of wayfarers had found shelter there in times past, for many of them had scratched their marks in the limestone, a custom which is quite prevalent among the more intelligent tribes of Pellucidar, where each individual has his own personal mark which answers the purpose of a signature.

As I glanced at them casually, my attention was suddenly riveted upon one evidently made quite recently. It was an equilateral triangle with a dot in the center. It was Dian's mark. I called the attention of Kleeto and Zor to it; and they became quite as excited as I.

“She has been here quite recently and alone,” said Zor.

“What makes you think she was alone?” I demanded.

“If there had been another with her, he also would have made his mark,” replied Zor; “but hers is the only one freshly made.”

Could it have been that Dian had deliberately deserted me? I could not believe it, and yet I knew that the evidence must seem conclusive to anyone who did not know Dian the Beautiful as well as I.

CHAPTER 17

It was at this camp that the mastodons left us. When we awoke I called them many times; but they did not come; and I think we all felt a little depressed about it as we started off once more on the long trek toward Sari.

For some inexplicable reason, I was haunted by a presentiment of evil after the mastodons left us; nor was I alone in this. Both Zor and Kleeto shared my depression. As though to further accentuate our mood, the sky became overcast with dark and ominous clouds; and presently there broke upon us a terrific electrical storm. The wind howled about us, almost hurling us to the ground. The air was filled with flying leaves and branches; and the trees of the forest swayed and groaned ominously. Our situation was most precarious, with trees crashing down all about us. The rain fell in great masses which swept against us with staggering force. I had never seen such a storm before in Pellucidar.

Constantly buffeted by wind and water, we staggered on until at last we came to a comparatively open space which we felt would be far safer than the denser forest. Here we huddled together with our backs toward the storm, waiting like dumb creatures for the battle of the elements to subside.

Great animals, which ordinarily would have threatened our very existence, passed close by us as they fled before the storm; but we had no fear of them for we knew that they were even more terrified than we, and that hunting and feeding were far from their thoughts. Aside from the danger from flying branches, we felt comparatively safe; and

so were not as alert as customarily, although, as a matter of course, we could have heard or seen little above the storm and the blinding rain. The crashing thunder, following peal after peal, almost continuously, combined with the howling wind to drown out any other sound.

At the very height of the storm we were suddenly seized from behind by powerful fingers. Our weapons were wrenched from us and our hands secured behind our backs; then, at last, we saw our captors. There were fifteen or twenty of them, the largest men I have ever seen. Even the smallest of them stood fully seven feet in height. Their faces were extremely ugly, and a pair of great, tusk-like yellow teeth imparted no additional beauty to them. They appeared to be very low in the scale of human evolution, being entirely naked and armed only with the most primitive weapons — a very crude stone knife and a club. In addition to these, each of them carried a grass rope.

They paid no more attention to the storm than as though it did not exist; but they seemed mightily pleased over their capture.

“Good,” grunted one, pinching Kleeto’s flesh.

“What do you intend doing with us?” I demanded.

One of them leaned close to me, leering and blowing his foul breath in my face. “Eat you,” he said.

“Stay out of Azar, if you do not want to be eaten,” said another.

“Azar!” ejaculated Kleeto. “Oh, now I know. All my life I have heard of the man-eating giants of Azar. There is no hope for us now, David.”

I must admit that the outlook was not very bright; but it has been my custom never to abandon hope. I tried to cheer Kleeto up a bit, and so did Zor; but we were not very successful, not even when the storm passed as quickly as it had broken upon us and the sun shone down again out of a clear sky, suggesting, as I told her, that our storm might clear and our good luck return as had the sun.

The Azarians dragged us along through the forest; and presently we came to a palisaded village, or rather, I should say, a palisaded enclosure, for after we entered it we found there no sign of habitation whatsoever. The storm had wreaked quite a little havoc in the enclosure, several trees having been blown down, one of them having leveled a portion of the palisade.

There were a number of Azarian women and children in the enclosure, all quite as uncouth and repulsive as the males, while tied to individual trees were several human beings like ourselves, evidently prisoners.

Our captors tied us to trees and then set about rebuilding the damaged palisade. The women and children paid very little attention to us. A few of the former came up and pinched our flesh to see what condition we were in, an all too suggestive gesture.

I was tied to a tree close to one of the prisoners who had been there before us, and I got into conversation with him. "How long will it be," I asked him, "before they eat us?"

He shrugged. "When our flesh is in a condition that suits them," he replied. "They feed us principally on nuts with a little fruit, and never give us any flesh."

"Do they abuse you?" I asked.

"No," he replied, "for that would retard our fattening. They may sleep many times before they eat any of us, for they consider human flesh a rare delicacy, which they do not often enjoy. I have been here for more sleeps than I can remember; and I have seen only two prisoners eaten. That is not a pleasant sight. They break all their bones with clubs, and then roast them alive."

"Is there no chance to escape?" I asked.

"Not for us," he said. "Two escaped during the storm. Their trees

blew down, breaking their ropes, and they ran off into the forest with their hands still bound behind them. They will not last very long; but their deaths will be easier thus than as though they had remained here to be beaten and roasted. I feel very sorry for one of them. She was a beautiful girl from Sari — Dian the Beautiful, the man called her.”

For a moment I was speechless. The shock was as great as a physical blow. Dian out in that savage forest with her hands bound behind her! I must do something; but what could I do? I started rubbing the rope that bound my wrists against the rough bark of the tree behind me. It was something, no matter how hopeless. Perhaps the man who escaped with her would find a way to free her, I thought. That gave me a little hope.

“You say a man escaped with her?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“Who was he? Do you know?”

“He was a man from Suvi. His name was Do-gad.”

That was another terrific jolt. Of all the men in the world, that it should have been Do-gad. Now, more than ever, I must escape.

The Azarian warriors finished the palisade and lay down to sleep. They, and their women and their children slept on the ground like beasts, their only shelter the shade of the trees beneath which they lay.

When they awoke, the men went out to hunt. They brought back animals, for they always craved flesh. The women and children gathered fruit and nuts, quantities of which were fed to us to fatten us.

Sleep after sleep came and went; and constantly, when I was unobserved, I rubbed my bonds against the rough bark of the tree. I knew that I was making progress; but after I gained my freedom what might I do with it? There were always Azarians inside the palisade; the palisade was too tall for me to scale; and there was but a single gate,

which remained closed always; but still there was always the chance that some combination of circumstances might open the way for me. My greatest handicap, however, lay in the fact that I should have to release Zor and Kleeto, for I could not desert them. They, too, were working to cut their bonds; but it was more than could possibly be expected that we should all achieve the desired results simultaneously.

And so time dragged its slow way even in this timeless world; and my thoughts were constantly upon Dian out there somewhere alone, always in tragic danger if not already dead. But was she alone? Yes, even though Do-gad had escaped with her, I was positive that she was alone, if she were still alive, for she would have found some way to escape from him or she would have killed herself.

Such were my unhappy thoughts as, tethered to a tree, I waited there in the compound of the man-eating giants of Azar for a horrible fate that now seemed inevitable.

CHAPTER 18

The long Pellucidarian day dragged on. It was the same day upon which I had broken through the earth's crust from the outer world thirty-six years before, and it was exactly the same time of day — high noon — for the stationary sun still stood at zenith. It was the same day and hour that this world was born, the same day and hour that would see its death — the eternal day, the eternal hour, the eternal minute of Pellucidar.

With the exception of two or three women and some half-grown children, the Azarians slept. Those who remained awake were busy around the pit in the center of the compound. It was a pit about seven feet long, two feet wide, and some foot and a half or two feet deep. They were removing ashes from it. They worked in a very slovenly manner, scooping the ashes out with their hands and throwing them upon the ground. The children, vicious little beasts, quarreled among themselves. Sometimes a woman would cuff one of them, sending it sprawling. I had never seen any sign of affection among these people, who were much lower than the beasts.

When they had removed all the ashes they made a bed of dry leaves and twigs in the bottom of the pit. Over these they placed larger branches, and finally over all they placed several good-sized logs. Knowing what I did about them, it was all too suggestive. They were preparing for the feast. Who would be the first victim?

A kind of terror that was almost panic gripped me. The horror of such a death was borne in more forcibly upon me now that I actually saw the preparations in progress. Every moment that no eye was turned

upon me, I worked frantically to sever my bonds. It was an arduous and fatiguing labor, made more arduous and fatiguing by the conviction that it was futile. I saw that Zor and Kleeto were also working upon their bonds; but with what success I had no way of knowing.

The Azarians had taken my bow-and-arrows and spear away from me at the time we were captured, and had left them lying there upon the ground; but they had neglected to take our knives. I presume that they felt that with our hands bound behind us we could not use our weapons. Perhaps the best reason that they had not taken them, however, was the fact that they are very stupid and unimaginative. Yet, perhaps their indifference was warranted, for what could I accomplish single-handed against these huge creatures?

As these thoughts were passing through my mind, I continued to work upon my bonds and suddenly I felt the last strand part. My hands were free! I still thrill to the memory of that moment; but though my freedom availed me nothing it still imparted to me a new sense of self-confidence. Had I not felt the responsibility of my loyalty to Zor and Kleeto, I should have made a run for it, for I was confident that I could scale the palisade at a point where it was topped by a small tree which the Azarians had leaned against it at an angle of about forty-five degrees; but because of Zor and Kleeto I had to abandon the idea.

Presently the Azarians who had been sleeping began to awaken. Some of the males came and inspected the preparations that the women and children had been making; then one, who appeared to be the chief, came over to us. He examined us carefully, feeling of our ribs and pinching our thighs. He stopped longest before Kleeto; then he turned to two of the warriors who had accompanied him. "This one," he said.

The two warriors removed her bonds. From where I stood I could

see that she had almost succeeded in wearing them away; but the Azarians did not seem to notice. So Kleeto was to be the next victim! What could I do to prevent it, I with my puny, little stone knife against all those Gargantuan giants? But I determined to do something. I planned it all out carefully. When the attention of the Azarians was distracted from us, I would rush over and cut Zor's bonds with my knife; then the two of us would throw ourselves upon them, hoping to disconcert them momentarily while at least one of us three escaped over the top of the palisade.

They dragged Kleeto over beside the pit, and here ensued a discussion which I could not overhear; and then something happened which gave me an inspiration. From beyond the palisade I heard the trumpeting of a mastodon. We had seen no signs of the great beasts in this locality other than the three which had followed us. Could that be Old Maj himself out there looking for us? It seemed incredible; and yet there was a chance; and, like a drowning man grasping for a straw, I grasped at that absurdity, and raising my voice I called to the great beast as I had in the past. Instantly every eye was focused upon me; but I called again, and this time louder, and, from the near distance, came a trumpeting reply; but the Azarians did not seem to connect the two, and turned once more to their preparations for their grisly feast. They threw Kleeto to the ground, and while some held her there, others went to fetch clubs with which to break her body; and then I raised my voice again and shouted loudly for Maj; then while every Azarian eye was intent upon Kleeto, I ran quickly to Zor and cut the remaining strands of his bonds.

"They come," he whispered. "Listen!"

"Yes." I could plainly hear the crashing of great bodies through the trees. The trumpeting rose to such proportions that the Azarians

momentarily turned their attention from Kleeto and looked questioningly in the direction from which the disturbance came. Then, of a sudden, the palisade flew apart like matchwood, and the great bulls of Maj burst into the village.

The astounded Azarians stood in helpless astonishment. Zor and I rushed to Kleeto's side and snatched her to her feet; and then Maj and his mate and the calf were upon us.

"Maj, Maj," I cried, hoping that he would recognize us; and I am sure that he did. Some of the Azarians sought to protect their village with their clubs and knives, and these the mastodons lifted with their trunks and threw high into the air; then Old Maj seized me and I thought that he was going to kill me, but instead he charged on through the village and holding me low beneath his tusks he lowered his head and crashed through the palisade on the opposite side of the village from that which he had entered.

He lumbered on with me for a long time, stopping at last close to a river which ran through a broad plain; then he set me down.

I had been saved; but where were Zor and Kleeto? Had they been as fortunate as I, or were they still prisoners of the man-eating giants of Azar?

I was pretty well shaken by that arduous trip through the forest, for I may say that with all his good intentions Old Maj had handled me rather roughly; so the moment he released me I lay down in the long grass beside the river to rest, and Old Maj stood guard above me, weaving his great bulk to and fro, his little red-rimmed eyes gazing back along the trail we had come. Presently he raised his trunk and trumpeted shrilly, and immediately he was answered from the distance. I recognized the higher note of the cow and the squeal of the calf, and wondered if Zor and Kleeto were with them.

Presently the two mastodons came into view; but they were alone. What had been the fate of my companions? Had they escaped or were they still captives in the village of the Azarians? I was depressed not only because of my apprehension as to them, but as to my own situation as well. Had there been the slightest likelihood that I could have succored them I should have been glad to return to the village and make the attempt; but it was quite unlikely that I could find my way back, and even had I been able to do so there was practically no chance that I might have been able to aid them.

Their loss meant a great deal to me, for more than sentimental reasons even, for I had been depending upon Kleeto to lead me back to the vicinity of Sari. Now, without a guide, and with no course to follow, the chances were very remote that I should ever reach my home again. Still further weighing down my spirits was my concern over the fate of Dian. I had escaped from the Azarians; but I was far from happy, and perhaps some worse fate lay before me in the endless and aimless wandering that lay ahead.

CHAPTER 19

Imagine yourself the size of a microscopic microbe and that you are standing on the outside of a tennis ball, somehow miraculously suspended in space. The surface of the tennis ball would drop away from you in all directions, and no matter where you looked there would be a well defined horizon. Suddenly you are transported to the interior of the tennis ball, which is illuminated by a stationary sun hanging in its exact center. In all directions the interior surface of the hall would curve upward and there would be no horizon. Thus it was with me, as I stood beside that river in Pellucidar. It was as though I stood in the center of a shallow bowl some three hundred miles in diameter. The air was clear, the sun was bright, and under these conditions I assumed that the limit of my vision was about one hundred and fifty miles, although of course no object was clearly discernible at such extreme distance — the periphery of my bowl merely faded off into a vignette, blending into the haze of the distance which was beyond the range of my vision.

At a hundred miles, a single tree standing upon a plain was discernible, whereas a mountain was not. That was because, beneath the eternal noon-day sun, the tree cast a shadow, while the mountain did not, and there being no sky to form a sharply contrasting background it simply merged with the landscape behind it and appeared as level ground.

I may say that in order to recognize a tree at a hundred miles I was largely aided by my imagination; but I could easily distinguish land from water, even at the periphery of my bowl, for the water reflected

the sunlight more strongly. I could see the river, upon the bank of which I stood, emptying into an ocean some fifty miles away.

To me, these aspects of the Pellucidarian scene were now familiar; but you may well imagine how strangely they must have affected Perry and me when we first broke through the crust from the outer world. However, though familiar with it, I have never become entirely reconciled to the loss of a horizon. Always, for some reason, it imparts to me a sense of frustration, perhaps because of a subconscious feeling that I should be seeing farther than I do. Again, notwithstanding the enormous size of my bowl, I have a quite definite feeling that I am a victim of claustrophobia. I am in a bowl from which I can never climb, because no matter how far I travel or in what direction the rim of the bowl moves steadily forward at the same rate. Fortunately for my peace of mind and my sanity, I do not let my thoughts dwell long upon this subject; and I only mention these things here to give you of the outer crust a little clearer conception of some of the conditions which pertain in Pellucidar so that you may better visualize the weird scene which is now commonplace to me.

As I stood there in the center of that great bowl, my only companion the great mastodons, I sought to arrive at some logical plan for the future.

It was within the range of possibility that the body of water which I saw in the distance was that great ocean, uncharted and unexplored, which has as many names as there are tribes along its shores. I had known it in one place as the Lural Az, in another as the Darel Az, and, below the Land of Awful Shadow, the Sojar Az.

If my assumptions were correct, I might follow its shoreline to Amoz and thence to Sari.

I could see islands far out upon its bosom, isles of mystery whose

secrets I could never know. What strange men and beasts inhabited those emerald gems floating upon the azure sea? The inaccessible and the unknowable always intrigue my imagination; and once more I determined, as I had often before, that if I were fortunate enough to return to Sari, I would build a seaworthy vessel and explore the waters of Pellucidar.

How little I knew of this land in which I had spent so many years! When I first came here, I spoke authoritatively upon many subjects concerning which I realize now I had little or no knowledge. I assumed, for instance, that those things which came within the range of my experience were typical of all Pellucidar. I assumed, for instance, that the Mahars, those rhamphorhynchus-like reptiles who were the dominant race of that portion of the inner world with which I was familiar, were dominant throughout the entire area of Pellucidar; but now I realize that I do not know this, for the land area of Pellucidar is enormous, and I had seen only a very tiny portion of it.

Likewise my assertion that three-quarters of the surface of Pellucidar is land, giving a total land area considerably greater than that of the outer crust, was based solely upon Perry's theory that depressions upon the outer crust were protuberances upon the inner crust; so that land areas in Pellucidar corresponded roughly with the oceans of the outer world; but of course that is only a theory, and I do not know that it is true.

With a seaworthy ship and the navigating instruments that Perry has been able to fabricate, I could become a Columbus, a Magellan, a Captain Cook, and a Balboa, all rolled into one. For an adventurous spirit, the prospect was most alluring; but inasmuch as right at the moment I didn't even know my way home the realization of it seemed slightly remote, to say the least.

I followed the river down toward the sea until I found a cave where I might sleep; and after gathering some berries and digging a few tubers with which to partially satisfy my hunger, I crawled in and fell asleep.

As I have repeated, probably ad nauseam, I do not know how long I slept; but when I emerged from my cave the mastodons were nowhere in sight, and though I called them many times they did not appear; and I never saw them again.

Now I was indeed alone, and I had never felt so lonely in my life. The company of the great beasts had not only given me a feeling of security but of companionship, and now I felt as one might feel who had lost his last friend in all the world. With a sigh, I turned my face toward the great sea; and, armed only with a puny stone knife, set out once more upon my perilous and almost hopeless quest for Sari.

Before long I found material for weapons; and once more I set to work to fabricate a bow, some arrows, and a spear. I kept at this steadily until the job was completed. Of course, I don't know how long it took; but I was quite ready to sleep again by the time my weapons were completed. You have no idea with how much greater sense of security I faced the future, now that I was again adequately armed.

As I approached the river I saw a number of low hillocks in the distance. They appeared to be devoid of vegetation, which is rather unusual in this world of lush tropical verdure; but what aroused my interest more than this was the fact that I saw a number of animals moving about upon them. They were too far away for me to identify them; but because of their numbers I assumed that they were a herd of herbivorous animals. As I had eaten no meat for some time, I welcomed the opportunity to make a kill and therefore set about approaching as close as I could to them without being seen. I found

good cover in the gorge of the river from which I could not even see the hillocks; so I knew that the animals would not be able to apprehend me until I was quite close to them.

I advanced cautiously and as noiselessly as possible, until I felt that I was about opposite the hillocks; then I clambered up the steep river bank and wormed my way on my belly through long grass toward a point where I hoped to get a closer view of my quarry. The grass ended abruptly at the base of one of the hillocks, and as I emerged from it I came upon a scene that quite took my breath away.

The hillocks consisted of sticks and stones and boulders of all sizes; and scurrying over them were enormous ants carrying on — on a Brobdingnagian scale — the same activities that I had watched their diminutive cousins of the outer crust engaged in upon countless occasions. The creatures were of enormous proportions, their bodies being fully six feet long, the highest point of their heads being at least three feet above the ground — and such heads they were! These enormous heads presented a most ferocious appearance with their huge eyes, their jointed antennae, and powerful mandibles.

If you have watched the common ant in the garden carrying enormous loads often many times larger than themselves, you may be able to gain some slight conception of the enormous strength of these creatures. Many of them carried great boulders that it would have taken several men to lift; and I saw one with the trunk of a good-sized tree in its mandibles.

I could now see that what I had thought were natural hillocks were in reality enormous ant hills. At the foot of the hills was a clearing covering many acres where numerous ants were engaged in what, despite my incredulity, I presently discovered were agricultural pursuits. They labored in symmetrically planted fields where plants and

flowers were growing. The rows were straight, and the plants equally spaced. Not a weed was visible, and there were rows evidently recently set out in which each plant was covered by a large leaf to protect it from the hot rays of the sun.

So astounded and fascinated was I that I remained for some time watching the creatures carrying on their building operations and caring for their crops. Some of the workers in the field were collecting tender shoots from the growing plants and others extracting honey from the flowers and carrying their burdens back into the ant hills. There were streams of ants moving constantly in opposite directions to and from the hills. All was activity and bustle.

I noticed that some of the ants were larger than others, and that the larger ones did no work; and then I noticed that their mandibles were much more powerful than those of their fellows, and I realized that they were the soldier ants guarding the workers.

It was all very interesting; but I realized that I could not lie there on my belly in the grass forever, watching these formicidial activities no matter how enthralling they might be. I could never fill my belly with meat by watching ants at work; and so, with a sigh of regret, I arose to leave. That was an almost fatal error.

Lying quietly and almost entirely concealed by the tall grasses, the ants had not perceived me; but when I arose they were instantly conscious of my presence. I do not know whether they saw me or not, for notwithstanding their large eyes it is possible that they may be blind, as some species of ants are; but ants do not need to see, since they are furnished with delicate organs of hearing in the head, in the three thoracic and two of the abdominal segments, and in the shins of the legs, in addition to which their elbowed feelers or antennae are abundantly supplied with tooth-like projections connected with nerve

endings which function as olfactory organs; therefore, though they might not be able to see me, they could certainly hear me or smell me — at any rate, they knew I was there; and several of the great soldier ants started toward me.

One look at those terrible faces and formidable mandibles was enough. I turned to beat a retreat; but glancing back over my shoulder I saw that I was too late. The soldier ants were racing after me on their six powerful legs much faster than I could run. My back was to the wall! It was a case of fight or die or, perhaps, fight and die.

I wheeled, and as I wheeled I fitted an arrow to my bow. My first shaft drove straight through one of the great eyes of the leading ant, and it dropped, writhing, to the ground. I brought down another an instant later, and then two more in quick succession; but my stand was futile. The others were upon me, and I was borne to the ground.

I remember the thoughts that flashed through my mind that death had overtaken me at last, and that I was to die alone, and that no man would ever know how or where. My beautiful Dian, if she still lived, good old Perry, and my countless other friends of the inner world would never know.

I waited for a pair of those great mandibles to crush the life from me. Two of the creatures were feeling me over with their antennae, and then presently one of them picked me up by the small of my back, the pressure of the mandibles no greater than was necessary to hold me. The creature carried me as easily as you would carry a kitten, and it bore me off in that erratic manner which ants sometimes display, zig-zagging to and fro, often bumping my head or scraping my feet against obstacles or other ants.

Only occasionally did any of the other creatures pay any attention to me, though once or twice my captor stopped while another ant felt

me over with his antennae. These, I thought, might be officers of the army or high officials. Perhaps they were inspecting me to see what I was and giving instructions for my disposal.

Eventually, after wandering around aimlessly, my captor headed toward a hole near the base of an ant hill. It was not a large opening, and he had difficulty in negotiating it with me in his mandibles. Twice I got stuck crossways, which was not very pleasant as the opening was rimmed with rocks. The creature tried to push me through, but he couldn't make it; so finally he laid me down, grabbed me by my legs and backed into the hole, dragging me in after him.

I realized then how the flies and caterpillars felt which I had seen dragged into the nests of ants. Perhaps, as I did, they took one last, despairing look at the beautiful world that they were leaving forever.

CHAPTER 20

Captivity is a state sufficiently harrowing; but captivity that can end only in death is infinitely worse; and when your captors are creatures with whom you cannot communicate, the horror of the situation is increased many-fold. If I could have talked with these creatures, I might have ascertained what they intended doing with me. I might even have been able to bargain for my release; but as it was, I could do nothing but wait for the end. What that would be I could only surmise, but I assumed that I had been brought in as food.

The creature dragged me a short way into the interior of the hill and then up a short ascending tunnel into a large chamber, which was evidently situated just beneath the surface of the ground, for there was an opening in the domelike ceiling through which the sunlight poured.

My first hasty survey of the chamber revealed the fact that there were a number of ants in it, three of them with enormously distended abdomens hanging from the ceiling by their feet. Occasionally an ant would come through the opening in the ceiling and apparently force something down the throat of one of these creatures, which I later learned were living reservoirs of honey which supplied food for their fellows and creatures which were being fattened for food. I recalled that, as a boy, I had read of the existence of these honey-pots in some families of the Formicidae. I recalled that the idea had intrigued me; but I had always pictured ants as being tiny creatures; but now the sight of these enormously distended, pendant bodies was peculiarly revolting.

My captor had dropped me unceremoniously upon the floor of the

chamber; then he had gone to a couple of other ants, and they had felt each other with their antennae, which I came to discover was the means they adopt for communicating with one another. After this the creature left the chamber and the other ants apparently paid no attention to me.

Naturally, uppermost in my mind were thoughts of escape; and, seeing the ants engaged in their own affairs, I moved cautiously toward the aperture through which I had been dragged into the chamber.

My hopes rose high, for I knew that I could find my way out of the ant hill, and there was a chance that I might thus escape if I moved slowly and with extreme caution so as not to attract the attention of the creatures working upon the outside of the hill; but no sooner had I reached the opening than one of the ants was upon me and, seizing me in its mandibles, it dragged me back into the room.

“Don’t waste your energy,” said a voice from the shadows close to the wall. “You cannot escape.”

I looked in the direction from which the voice had come, and saw a figure huddled against the wall not far from me.

“Who are you?” I demanded.

“A prisoner like yourself,” replied the voice.

I moved closer to the figure, for that human voice had imparted to me renewed courage and renewed hope. Even though the owner of the voice were a stranger and doubtless an enemy, he promised companionship of a sort; and among these silent, ferocious insects, companionship with another of my own species was a priceless boon.

The ants paid no attention to me as I moved closer to my fellow prisoner, for I was not going nearer to the doorway; and I finally was close enough to see him. No wonder I had not seen him before, for in the shadowed part of the chamber close to the wall he appeared as

black as night. Later I was to discover that there was a slight copper tint to his skin.

“You are the only other prisoner?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said. “They have devoured the others. It will probably be my turn next, though it may be yours.”

“Is there no escape?” I demanded.

“None. You should know. You have just tried it and failed.”

“My name is David,” I said. “I am from Sari.”

“I am U-Val,” he said. “I come from Ruva.”

“Let us be friends,” I said.

“Why not?” he asked. “We are surrounded by enemies, and we shall soon be dead.”

As we talked, I had been watching an ant extracting honey from one of the honey-pots depending from the ceiling. I watched it clamber down the wall and cross the floor in our direction; and then, suddenly, to my surprise, it leaped upon me and threw me to the ground upon my back and, holding me down, squirted honey into my mouth. It forced me to swallow it, too. When this forced feeding was over, the creature left me.

U-Val laughed, as I spluttered and coughed. “You will get used to it,” he said. “They are fattening you for food, and they won’t leave it to you to choose the kind or quantity of food which you consume. They know exactly what you should have, in what quantities, and at what intervals to get the best results. They will feed you grain presently, which they have partially digested and regurgitated. It is very good and quite fattening. You will enjoy it.”

“I shall vomit,” I said, disgustedly.

He shrugged. “Yes, perhaps at first; but after awhile you will become used to it.”

“If I don’t eat, I shalln’t get fat; and then perhaps they won’t kill me,” I suggested.

“Don’t be too sure of that,” he said. “I think we are being fattened for the queen and her young, or perhaps for the warrior ants. If we don’t get fat, we shall probably be fed to the slaves and workers.”

“Do you think there is any advantage in being eaten by a queen?” I asked.

“It makes no difference to me,” he said.

“Possibly one might have a feeling of greater importance.”

“You are joking?” he asked.

“Naturally.”

“We do not joke much in Ruva,” he said, “and certainly I do not feel much like joking here. I am going to die; and I do not wish to die.”

“Where is Ruva?” I asked.

“You have never heard of Ruva?” he demanded.

“No,” I admitted.

“That is very strange,” he said. “It is a most important island — one of The Floating Islands.”

“And where are they?” I demanded.

“Now where would an island float?” he demanded. “In the sea, of course.”

“But what sea, and where?” I insisted.

“The Bandar Az,” he explained. “What other sea is there?”

“Well, I have seen the Korsar Az,” I replied, “the Sojar Az, the Darel Az, and the Lural Az. There may be others, too, that I have not heard of or seen.”

“There is only one sea,” said U-Val, “and that is the Bandar Az. I have heard that far away there are some people who call it the Lural Az; but that is not its name.”

“If you live on an island, how do you happen to be a prisoner here on the mainland?” I asked.

“Well, sometimes Ruva floats near the mainland; and when it does we often come ashore to hunt for meat, of which we have little on the island, and to gather fruits and nuts which do not happen to grow there. If we are lucky, we may take back a few men and women as slaves. I was hunting on the mainland when I was captured.”

“But suppose you should escape —”

“I shall not escape,” he replied.

“But just suppose you should. Would you be able to find Ruva again? Might it not have floated away?”

“Yes; but I would find my canoe. If I could not find it, I would build another one; and then I would follow Ruva. It moves very slowly in a slow current. I should follow it and overtake it.”

The ants did not bother us except to feed us, and time hung heavily upon our hands. I learned to eat the food which they forced down me without vomiting, and I recall that I slept many times. The monotony became almost insupportable; and I suggested to U-Val that, as long as we were going to be killed anyway, we might as well be killed trying to make our escape. U-Val didn’t agree with me.

“I am going to die too soon, anyway,” he said. “I don’t want to hasten it.”

Once a winged ant came into the room, and all the other ants gathered around it. They were all feeling the newcomer and one another with their sensitive antennae.

“Oh ho!” exclaimed U-Val. “One of us is about to die.”

“How do you know? What do you mean?”

“The one with the wings has come to select a meal, possibly for the

queen, possibly for the warriors; and as we are the only prisoners here, it will be one of us or maybe both.”

“I am going to fight,” I said.

“What with?” he demanded. “That little stone knife? You might kill a few of them; but it would do you no good. There are too many of them.”

“I am going to fight,” I repeated, doggedly. “They can’t murder me without a battle.”

“All right,” said U-Val, “if you want to fight, I’ll fight too; but it won’t do us any good.”

“It will do me some good to kill a few of these hellish creatures.”

After the winged ant had conferred awhile with its fellows, it came over to us and felt over our entire bodies with its antennae, sometimes pinching our flesh lightly with its mandibles. When it had completed its examination it returned again to confer with the other ants.

“I think you are the fattest and the tenderest,” said U-Val.

“You mean you hope so.”

“Well, of course, I do not wish to see you die,” he said; “but neither do I wish to die myself. However, whichever one they choose, I will fight, as you suggest.”

“We can at least get a little revenge by killing one or two of them,” I said.

“Yes, that will be something,” he replied.

The winged ant left the chamber, and after awhile two of the great soldier ants came in. Again there was a conference of antennae, after which one of the ants led the two soldiers over toward us. It went directly to U-Val and touched him with its antennae.

“It is I,” said U-Val.

“If they start to take you away, use your knife; and I will help you,” I said.

The ant that had brought the soldiers over to us went away about its business; and then one of the soldiers advanced upon U-Val with opened mandibles.

“Now!” I called to U-Val, as I drew my stone knife.

CHAPTER 21

As the warrior ant was about to seize U-Val, he struck at it with his stone knife severing one of its antennae; and at the same instant I leaped upon it from the side, driving my knife into its abdomen. Instantly it turned upon me, trying to seize me in its mandibles; and U-Val struck again, piercing one of its eyes, while I drove my knife home several times in quick succession. The creature rolled over upon its side, writhing and floundering; and we had to beat a hasty retreat to escape the menace of its powerful legs.

The other warrior ant approached its fellow and felt of it; then it backed away, apparently confused; but in some way it must have communicated with the other ants in the room for immediately they became very excited, running hither and thither but finally converging upon us in a body.

They were a menacing sight. Their utter silence, their horrible blank, expressionless faces carried a sinister menace that is indescribable.

The creatures were almost upon us when there was an interruption from above. Rocks and debris commenced to fall into the chamber from the ceiling; and, glancing up, I saw that something was tearing at the opening and enlarging it rapidly. One of the honey-pots fell to the floor and burst. A long, furry nose was thrust through the opening in the ceiling, and a slender tongue reached down into the chamber, licking up the ants, as more of the ceiling fell in to add further to the confusion which suddenly seized them. They seemed to forget us entirely; and immediately there was a scramble for the opening leading

into the tunnel. The ants crawled over one another and jammed the entrance in panic; and constantly the great tongue licked them up, and more of the ceiling fell in.

U-Val and I ran and crouched close against the wall at the far side of the chamber in an effort to escape the falling boulders, while above us the beast tore away with powerful claws as it sought to enlarge the opening.

The long, powerful tongue sought out every corner of the room. Twice it passed over our bodies; but each time it discarded us as it sought for more ants. When there were no more left, the tongue and the head were withdrawn from the great hole that the creature had made in the top of the ant hill.

The chamber was filled with debris that reached to the edge of the great rent in the ceiling. It formed an avenue of escape; and there was not an ant in sight.

“Come,” I said to U-Val, “let’s get out of here before the ants recover from their confusion.”

Together we scrambled up the pile of rubble; and when we stood again in the open there was not an ant in sight; but there was a colossal ant bear, as large as an elephant, digging at another part of the hill. In appearance the creature was almost identical with the South American ant bear of the outer crust but highly specialized as to size, because of the enormous ants upon which it fed.

Perry and I had often speculated upon the amazing similarity between many of the animals of Pellucidar and of the outer crust; and Perry had formulated a theory to explain this which I believe is based on quite sound reasoning.

It has been quite clearly demonstrated that at some time in the past, tropical conditions existed at what are now the Arctic regions; and it is

Perry's belief that at this time animals passed freely through the polar opening from the outer crust to the inner world; but be that as it may there was a great ant bear, and to it we owed our lives.

Animated by a common impulse, U-Val and I hastened away from the ant hills and down toward the ocean; and I may say that I never left any place before with a greater sense of relief, not even the village of Meeza, King of the Jukans.

At the edge of the surf, U-Val stopped and gazed out across the ocean, shading his eyes with his hand as he strained them into the distance.

As I followed his gaze I was suddenly struck with a change in the seascape since last I had seen it.

"That is strange," I said.

"What?" demanded U-Val.

"The last time I looked out across this water, there were islands out there. I saw them distinctly. I could not have been mistaken."

"You were not mistaken," said U-Val. "They were The Floating Islands, of which Ruva is one."

"And now you will never see your own country again," I said. "That is too bad."

"Of course I shall see it again," said U-Val, "that is, if I am not killed as I am going to it."

"But even if you had a boat, how would you know in what direction to go?" I asked.

"I will always know where Ruva lies, no matter where it is. I do not know how. I simply know." He pointed. "Beyond the range of our vision it lies directly there."

Now here was a new phase of that amazing homing instinct which is inherent to all Pellucidarians. Here was a man whose country floated

around aimlessly, possibly, upon a great ocean, at the mercy of tide and current and wind; yet no matter where it might be U-Val, given means of transportation, could go directly to it, or at least so he thought. I wondered if it were true.

The point on the coast at which U-Val had left his canoe was in the direction that I had intended going; so I went with him to look for it.

“If it is not there,” he said. “I shall have to build another; and while I am doing it, Ruva will have drifted much farther. I hope that I shall find my boat.”

Find it he did, where he had hidden it among some tall reeds in a tiny inlet.

U-Val said that he had to make a number of spears before attempting the long journey in search of Ruva. He said that he should probably be attacked many times by sea monsters during the trip; and the only weapon that he could use against them with any degree of success was long spear.

“We shall have to have many of them,” he said.

“‘We?’” I repeated. “I am not going with you.”

He looked astonished. “You are not?” he demanded. “But where will you go? You have told me that you don’t know how to find your way to your own country. You had much better come with me.”

“No,” I said. “I know that Sari does not lie out in the middle of an ocean and that if I went there I should never find it; whereas, if I stick to the seashore, I may eventually come to it, if this is, as I think, the ocean near which it lies.”

“It is not as I had planned,” he said; and I thought that his tone was a little sullen.

“I’ll stay with you until you shove off,” I told him, “for I have to

make more weapons for myself — a short spear, a bow, and some arrows.”

He asked me what bow-and-arrows were, as he had never heard of them. He thought that they might be handy and in some ways better than a spear.

Once again I set to work making weapons. It may seem to you that I had very bad luck with my weapons, constantly losing them as I did; but making them entailed very little work as they were most crudely done. However, they had always answered my purpose; and, after all, that is the only thing that matters.

U-Val kept reverting to the subject of my accompanying him. He seemed absolutely set upon it and was continually trying to persuade me to change my mind.

I couldn't understand why he was so insistent for he had never given the slightest indication of harboring any affection for me. Accident had thrown us, two alien people, together; and about the most that one might say about it was that we were not unfriendly.

U-Val was a fine-looking chap; and in the bright sunlight he was a deep black with a copper glint. His features were quite regular; and he was, all in all, quite handsome. The first man-like creatures I had seen on Pellucidar, when Perry and I first broke through the crust from the outer world, were black men; but they were arboreal creatures with long tails, and low in the scale of human evolution. U-Val, however, was of an entirely different type and, I should say, fully as intelligent as any of the white race of Pellucidar that I had seen.

After I had finished my weapons, I helped him with the making of his spears as I had promised to stay with him until he sailed. At last, the weapons were completed and the boat stocked with water and food. The former he carried in sections cut from large, bamboo-like

plants, which, he maintained, would keep the water fresh indefinitely. His food supply consisted of tubers and nuts, a diet that would be varied by the addition of such fish as he might be able to spear en route.

When all was ready, he suggested that we sleep before separating so that we might both be fresh for the start of our journeys.

Just before I awoke, I dreamed of Dian. She had taken both my hands in hers; and then, in one of those weird transformations which occur in dreams, she suddenly became a Hartford, Connecticut, policeman, fettering my hands behind me with handcuffs. Just as the lock snapped, I awoke.

I was lying on my side, and U-Val was standing over me. It was a moment before I gathered my wits, and when I did I found that in fact my hands were bound behind my back.

At first I couldn't realize what had happened to me. The recollection of the dream still clung persistently in my mind. But what was U-Val doing in it? He didn't belong in the same picture with a cop from Hartford, Connecticut — and where was the cop? Where was Dian?

Presently my brain cleared, and I realized that I was still alone with U-Val; and that it must have been he who had bound my hands behind my back. But why?

"U-Val," I demanded, "what's the meaning of this?"

"It means that you are going to Ruva with me," he replied.

"But I don't want to go to Ruva."

"That's the reason I bound your hands. Now you'll have to go. You can't do anything about it."

"But why do you want me to come with you?"

U-Val thought for a moment before he answered; then he said,

“Well, there’s no reason why you shouldn’t know, because there’s nothing you can do about it. I’m taking you back to Ruva as my slave.”

“Where I come from,” I said, “you’d almost qualify as a rat.”

“What’s a rat?” he asked. I had used the English word, which, of course, he did not understand.

“You are — almost. A rat has some redeeming qualities; I suppose; though I don’t know just what they are. You have none. You accepted my friendship. Together we suffered imprisonment and faced death. Together we fought against a common enemy for our freedom. Together we escaped. And now you bind me in my sleep, planning to take me back to your country as your slave.”

“What’s wrong with that?” he demanded. “You are not a Ruvan; therefore, we are enemies. You should be glad that I didn’t kill you while you slept. I let you live because a man with slaves is an important man in Ruva. Now that I have a slave I shall be able to get a mate. No woman of Ruva, who is worth having, will mate with a man who has no slaves. It takes a brave man and a fine warrior to capture a slave.”

“The way you did?”

“I do not have to tell them how I got you,” he said.

“But I can tell them,” I reminded him.

“You won’t, though,” he said.

“And why?”

“Because a man may kill a bad slave.”

“My hands will not always be bound behind my back,” I said.

“Nevertheless, with my friends, I can kill you, if you tell this about me.”

“I shall tell no lies.”

“You had better tell nothing. Come! We’ll be going. Get up!” He gave me a kick in the ribs. I was furious, but helpless.

It is not easy to get up when your hands are bound behind your back, but with the aid of head, shoulder, and elbow I finally got to one knee and then to my feet.

U-Val pushed me, none too gently, toward his canoe. "Get in," he commanded. I sat down in the bow. U-Val cast off, and took his place in the stern. With his great paddle he headed the frail craft out of the inlet toward the open sea; and thus commenced a journey on an uncharted ocean in a frail craft, without sextant or compass, toward a destination that was constantly shifting its position.

CHAPTER 22

As I contemplated the vast expanse of ocean ahead and the inadequate craft that was supposed to transport us to our elusive destination, I wouldn't have given U-Val a lead nickel for his slave. As a matter of fact, I seemed more of a liability than an asset, for I was merely dead weight that U-Val had to carry; but I was reckoning without full appreciation of U-Val's resourcefulness.

After we had gone about a mile from land, a small saurian rose from the depths; and when his cold, forbidding eyes discovered us, he came for us, his jaws distended, his long neck arched, the water rippling from his sleek body.

He presented a most formidable appearance; and, though not one of the larger species, he was, I knew, fully as formidable as he appeared and quite capable of ending our voyage almost before it was started.

I had encountered these terrible creatures before, and so I knew something of what to expect of blind and senseless ferocity. They are wanton destroyers, killing, apparently, solely for the sake of killing, though I will have to admit that they seem never to be able to satisfy their ravenous hunger, and eat nearly everything they kill.

Bound and helpless in the bow of the canoe, I would fall easy prey to the killer, which would doubtless pluck me out and devour me before finishing U-Val. Such were my thoughts as the saurian bore down upon us. Yet there was that about the situation which offered some compensation even for the loss of my life, and I couldn't resist the temptation to take full advantage of it.

“You are about to lose your slave,” I called to U-Val, “and no one will ever know you owned one. Being a rat didn’t pay, U-Val.”

U-Val made no reply. The saurian was about a hundred feet away now and coming rapidly, hissing like a leaky steam valve. The canoe was broadside to him.

U-Val swung the craft around, presenting the stern, where he sat, to the charging reptile; then he seized one of the long spears we had made, and stood up.

I hated to admit it; but it certainly seemed that U-Val had plenty of intestinal fortitude, and he unquestionably didn’t intend to give up his slave without a struggle.

The saurian came straight for him. U-Val poised his twenty foot spear, and when the creature was within fifteen feet of the boat he drove the point of the weapon deep into the reptile’s carcass. It was done with all the skill and assurance of a professional matador giving the *coup de grâce* to a bull.

Perhaps half a minute the saurian lashed about in an effort to reach U-Val; but the man, clinging to his end of the spear, skillfully held the canoe in a straight course in front of the beast; so that all its efforts to reach us only succeeded in propelling the craft through the water, until, at last, with a final, convulsive shudder, it rolled over, belly up, dead. The point of U-Val’s spear had pierced its heart.

Had it been a more highly organized creature it would have died sooner. It is really astonishing the length of time it takes for perceptions of even mortal injuries to reach the brains of some of the lower orders of Pellucidar. I have seen a lidi painfully wounded in the tail totally unconscious of its hurt for almost a full minute; but then it is sometimes a matter of sixty feet from the tip of a lidi’s tail to its minute brain at the far extremity of its huge body.

U-Val dragged the carcass to the side of the canoe and hacked off some of its flesh with his stone knife. Before he had finished, the water was alive with terrible, carnivorous fishes and reptiles attracted by the promise of flesh. As they fought over the remains of the saurian, U-Val seized his paddle and drove the canoe out of further immediate danger as rapidly as he could; then, when we were at a safe distance, he laid aside his paddle and cut the meat of the saurian into thin strips which he strung across one of the spears to dry in the sun.

All this time, U-Val never addressed me. He resumed his paddling, and I curled up under my shelter and fell asleep. Let the master paddle for the shore, I thought dreamily just before I lost consciousness.

When I awoke we were out of sight of land. U-Val was paddling steadily with long, powerful strokes, yet seeming utterly tireless. I must have slept for a long time as land a hundred miles away, possibly a hundred and fifty, would have been visible, as the atmosphere was quite clear. At a rough guess, I should say that U-Val must have been paddling for at least fifteen hours — paddling a twenty foot canoe heavily laden. The strength and endurance of the men of the maritime tribes of Pellucidar is astounding.

The canoe was beautifully designed for speed; and, although hewn from a single tree trunk, was extremely light. The bottom was a trifle more than an inch thick, and from there the thickness tapered to the gunwales which flared outward to a breadth of four inches. The hull was as smooth as glass, and how they achieved such perfection with the crude implements at their command is a mystery to me.

The wood of the tree from which the canoe was hewn is as tough as wrought iron and very oily. To this latter characteristic is partially attributable the ease with which it glides through the water.

The cargo was stowed amidships and covered with the enormous

leaves of a palm-like jungle tree. Each of us had shelters made of these leaves which we could lower quickly when it was necessary. At least, U-Val could lower his; but with my hands bound, I, of course, could not lower mine; nor was there any occasion for me to do so. It is always desirable to be protected from the eternal noonday sun, which has long since burned me to the color of a South Sea Islander. Shortly after the encounter with the saurian, U-Val laid aside his paddle and came forward to where I sat.

“I am going to free your hands, slave,” he said. “You will paddle. You will also help me if we are attacked by any of the larger beasts, such as an azdyryth. You will remain always at this end of the canoe. If you come aft, I’ll kill you. I shall only tie you up when I wish to sleep. Otherwise, you might kill me.”

“You need not tie me while you sleep,” I replied. “I will not kill you then, I promise you. We might be attacked while you slept, and then you wouldn’t have time to free me. You may need me, badly, you know.”

He thought this over for awhile, and at last he agreed that I was right. “Anyway, it wouldn’t do you any good to kill me,” he said, “for you might never find your way to land again. The Bandar Az reaches farther than any man knows. Perhaps it has no farther shore. That is what many men think. No, you would not dare to kill me.”

“I have promised that I will not kill you while you sleep,” I replied; “but some day I will kill you — not because you made me your prisoner, though, under the circumstances, that is reason enough in itself; but because you kicked me while I lay bound and helpless. For that, U-Val, I will kill you.”

He had finished removing the bonds from my wrists; and he

returned to his seat without commenting on what I had said, but he had something else to say.

“There is a paddle forward under the pangos leaves. Take it, slave, and paddle,” he commanded. “I shall steer.”

At first I was minded to refuse; but I saw no good reason for it, as I needed the exercise badly after lying so long in the ant hill, stuffed with grain and honey; so I took up the paddle and went to work.

“Faster!” commanded U-Val. “Faster, slave!”

I told him where to go; and it wasn’t Heaven, either.

“What you need is a beating,” he growled; and with that he started forward with a length of bamboo in his hand. I dropped the paddle and picked up one of the long spears.

“Come on, U-Val!” I cried. “Come on and beat your slave.”

“Put down that spear!” he commanded. “That is no way for a slave to act. Don’t you know anything?”

“I don’t know how to be a slave,” I admitted. “At least not to a stupid clout like you. If you had any brains, neither one of us would have to paddle. But why don’t you come on up here and beat me? I’d like nothing better than to have you try it.”

“Put down that spear, and I will,” he said.

“Go back and sit down. Go way back and sit down.”

He thought the matter over for awhile, and then evidently decided that if he wanted a live slave or a live master he’d better not push the matter too far; so he went aft again and sat down. So did I, but I didn’t paddle.

After awhile he picked up his paddle and went to work, but he was quite surly about it. He was not a very bright person, and evidently he was much concerned about what attitude he should take with a recalcitrant slave, never having had a slave before. But what troubled him

most was the suggestion I had made that it was stupid for either of us to paddle.

Finally he broke a long silence by saying, "How could we get anywhere without paddling?"

"By sailing," I replied.

He didn't know what I meant, for there is no equivalent for sailing in the Pellucidarian language. They just haven't reached that stage in progress. They have stone weapons; and they have learned to make fire, but sailing is something their greatest minds have not, as yet, conceived.

We had a steady wind blowing in the direction U-Val had been paddling; so I saw no reason why we shouldn't take advantage of it, for after all paddling under a noonday sun is no joke.

"What is sailing?" he asked.

"I'll show you. Let me have some of that grass rope you have back there."

"What for?" he demanded.

"Give it to me, and I'll show you. Do you want the canoe to go without paddling, or do you want to paddle? It makes no difference to me because I don't intend to paddle, anyway."

"Listen!" he fairly shouted. "I'm sick of this. Don't you know you're my slave? Don't you know you have to paddle if I tell you to? If you don't paddle, I'll come up and tie you up again and give you a good beating — that's what you need."

"I won't paddle, and you won't beat me. If you come up here, I'll run a spear through you. Now, toss that rope up and quit being a fool. I want to show you something that'll save you a lot of hard work."

He kept on paddling away, and the scowl on his face would have soured cream. The wind freshened. The canoe rose and fell as it

topped the waves and dropped into the troughs. The sun beat down out of a cloudless sky. U-Val was dripping sweat from every pore. At last he laid down his paddle; and, without a word, tossed a coil of rope forward to me.

It wasn't easy to rig a sail alone; but finally, with spears, a couple of lengths of bamboo, the grass rope, and several pangos leaves from the cargo covering, I fashioned a spread of "canvas" that would take the wind. Instantly the canoe shot forward, cutting the waves in brave style.

"Steer!" I called to U-Val. He started to paddle.

"Don't paddle!" I told him. "Put your paddle in the water astern with the edge up; then turn it first one way and then another until you learn what happens; then you will know how to steer."

He could steer all right, but he had been so surprised to see the canoe move forward without paddling that he had become confused. Presently, however, he was steering; but he didn't say anything for a long time.

At last he asked, "Suppose the wind should blow from another direction?"

"Then you'd have to paddle," I told him. "If you had a boat properly constructed you could sail almost into the wind."

"Could you build such a canoe?" he asked.

"I could show you how to."

"You will be a very valuable slave," he said. "You will show me how to build a canoe that will go without paddling."

"As long as I am a slave, I'll show you nothing," I replied.

CHAPTER 23

I don't know how long that voyage lasted. I slept many times, but I rigged up a contraption of spears and ropes so designed that U-Val could not approach without awakening me.

The wind held steadily in the same quarter. The canoe slipped through the water like a living thing, and U-Val was so pleased that he was almost decent. Several times — yes, many times — we were attacked by the fierce denizens of this Paleolithic sea; but I had recovered my bow-and-arrows from beneath the cargo covering; and my arrows, together with U-Val's spears, always succeeded in averting the sudden death with which the terrible jaws of these horrific monsters threatened us.

The monotony of that voyage was the one thing about it which impressed me, and which I shall never forget. Even the hideous saurians rushing to attack us made less of an impression upon my mind than the deadly monotony of that vast expanse of horizonless water that stretched in all directions about us beyond the limits of human vision. Never a smudge of smoke from some distant steamer, for there were no steamers. Never a sail, for there were no sails — just empty ocean.

And then, at long last, I sighted land dead ahead. At first it was just a dark haze in the distance, but I knew that it could be nothing but land. I called U-Val's attention to it; but, though he strained his eyes, he could not discern it. I was not greatly surprised, as I had long since discovered that my eyesight was much keener than that of the Pelucidarians. Perhaps the possession of a marvelous homing instinct

lessened the need of long range vision for them. They had never had to strain their eyes into the distance searching for familiar landmarks. That is just a theory of my own. It may be quite wrong. But this I will say for them: their hearing and their sense of smell were far keener than mine.

Not being able to see what I saw, U-Val insisted that I saw nothing. Human nature has not changed at all since the Stone Age.

We sailed on; and even though U-Val saw no land he held our course straight for that distant smudge that slowly took more definite shape, a fact which assured me that it must be the floating island of Ruva. Again, as I had a thousand times before, I marveled at that amazing instinct, inexplicable alike to those who possess it and to those who do not. How can it be explained? I haven't even a theory.

At last, U-Val saw the land ahead. "You were right," he admitted grudgingly. "There is land ahead; and it is Ruva, but I don't understand how you could have seen it so much sooner than I."

"That is quite easily explained," I replied.

"How?" he demanded.

"I can see farther than you can."

"Nonsense!" he snapped. "No one can see any farther than I."

What was the use of arguing with a mind like that? Anyway, I had something more important to discuss with him. I fitted an arrow to my bow.

"Why are you doing that?" he demanded, glancing quickly around. "There is nothing to shoot."

"There is you," I said.

For a moment he didn't quite grasp the implication. When he did, he reached for a spear.

“Don’t touch it!” I commanded, “or I’ll put an arrow through your heart.”

He let his hand drop to his side. “You wouldn’t dare,” he said without much conviction.

“And why not? I can see land ahead, and I can reach it without any help from you.”

“It would do you no good. My people would kill you.”

“Perhaps, and perhaps not,” I countered. “I should tell them that I am your friend and that you sent me to Ruva to get a rescue party to come to the mainland to save you because you are being held a prisoner. If they are all as stupid as you, they will believe me; and they will take me back to the mainland to guide them to you. When we reach there, I shall pretend to go alone to spy upon the tribe that captured you; and I shall not come back. That is the last they will ever see of me.”

“But you wouldn’t kill me, David,” he plead. “We have been friends. We fought side by side. When I could have killed you, I spared your life.”

“But you kicked me in the belly when I was bound and helpless,” I reminded him.

“I am sorry,” he wailed; “and, anyway, I didn’t kick you very hard. Oh, please don’t kill me, David. Let me live, and I will do everything I can for you.”

“Well, I am not going to kill you, because for some reason I couldn’t bring myself to kill a helpless man in cold blood if there were any way to avoid it without jeopardizing my own life; so I will make you a proposition. If I spare your life, you must promise to take me among your people, not as a slave but as a friend whom you will

protect from other members of your tribe; and at the first opportunity you will help me return to the mainland.”

“I promise,” he said, eagerly. A little too eagerly, I thought. I should have killed him then; and I knew it, but I couldn’t bring myself to the point of murder.

“Very well, see that you keep your promise,” I said, laying aside my bow.

As we neared the floating island of Ruva it appeared as low, level land, thickly grown with trees. It floated low in the water, its upper surface scarcely more than five feet above the waterline; and nowhere could I detect any sign of hills. The coast directly in view was irregular, being broken by small inlets or bays; and into one of these U-Val steered our craft. I took down our sail, and he paddled to shore.

It was good to feel ground beneath my feet again and to be able to stretch and move about.

U-Val made the canoe fast to a tree; and then, cupping his hands, voiced a high, piercing call. Then he listened. Presently, from far away came an answering cry.

“Come!” said U-Val. “They are by the fishing hole;” and he started off toward the interior along a well defined trail that wound through the forest.

The trees, of no great size, grow close together. They are of a species I had never seen before, as soft and spongy as some varieties of cactus but without spines or thorns. It is these trees which really not only make The Floating Islands, of which Ruva is one, but also make them a fit abode for human beings. The roots of the trees, closely interlaced, keep the islands from disintegrating and form a natural basket which holds the soil in which the vegetation grows. The trees also furnish a portion of the food supply of the islanders and all of

their supply of fresh water, which they can obtain at any time by either tapping the bole of a tree or cutting off a limb. The tender young shoots are edible, and the fruit of the tree is one of the principal staples of food. There is little other vegetation on the island, and little need for other. Some long grass grows among the trees and there are several parasitic vines which sport gorgeous blooms. A few varieties of birds live on the island, affording the inhabitants a little variety in diet from the staple tree — food and fish, as they eat both their flesh and their eggs.

We had walked about a mile when we came to an area that had been partially cleared. A few scattered trees had been left, probably for the purpose of holding the soil together with live roots. In the center of the clearing a hole had been cut, possibly a hundred feet in diameter, forming a small pool. Some fifty people of both sexes and all ages were gathered in the clearing. Several of them stood beside the pool with their spears poised, waiting for a fish to swim within striking distance. The fishes must have learned from experience what would happen to them if they swam too close to the shoreline, for the center of the pool, out of range of a spear-thrust, fairly teemed with fish. Occasionally a foolish or unwary individual would swim within range, when instantly he would be impaled upon a barbed spearhead. The skill of these spearmen was most uncanny — they never missed; but because of the wariness of the fish, their catches were few.

As U-Val and I entered the clearing, the first man to notice us said, “U-Val has returned!” Then every eye was turned upon us; but there was no enthusiastic greeting for the returned prodigal.

A big fellow came toward us. “You have brought back a slave,” he said. It was not a question, merely a statement of fact.

“I am not a slave,” I rejoined. “U-Val and I were imprisoned

together. We fought together. We escaped together; and so, in honor, U-Val could not make me his slave.”

“If you are not a slave, you are an enemy,” replied the man; “and enemies we kill.”

“I would come here as a friend,” I said. “There is no reason why we should be enemies. As a matter of fact, I can be a very valuable friend.”

“How?” he demanded.

“I can show you how to build canoes that will travel without paddling,” I replied; “and I can show you how to catch the fish in the middle of the pool, which you are unable to reach with your spears.”

“I don’t believe you can do either of those things,” he said, “for if they could have been done, we could have done them. We know all there is to know about canoes and fishing. No one can teach us anything new.”

I turned to U-Val. “Didn’t I make your canoe go without paddling?” I demanded.

U-Val nodded. “Yes, it went even faster than I could paddle; but I can show them how to do that.”

“Yes,” I replied; “but you can only show them how it is done when the wind is directly behind you; but I can show them how to build canoes in which they can travel no matter in what direction the wind is blowing. That, you cannot do.”

“Is that true, U-Val?” asked the man.

“Yes, Ro-Tai, it is true,” replied U-Val.

“And can he catch fish from the middle of the pool?”

“That, I do not know.”

Ro-Tai turned to me. “If you can do these things at all,” he said, “you can do them just as well if you are a slave.”

“But I won’t do them if I am a slave. I won’t show you how to, either.”

“You will, or we’ll kill you,” snapped Ro-Tai.

“If you kill me, you’ll never learn how to do it,” I reminded him.

While we had been talking, a number of men had congregated about us, interested listeners. Now one of them spoke up. “We should accept this man as a friend, Ro-Tai,” he said, “on condition that he teaches us these things.”

“Yes,” said another, “Ul-Van has spoken words of wisdom. I do not believe that the stranger can do these things; and, if he cannot, we can either make him a slave or kill him.”

Quite a discussion ensued in which everybody took part. Some were opposed to accepting a stranger as a friend; but the majority of them agreed with Ul-Van, who seemed to me to be by far the most intelligent member of the company.

Finally, someone said, “Ro-Tai is chief. Let him decide.”

“Very well,” said Ro-Tai, “I shall decide;” then he turned to me. “Go now and catch a fish from the center of the pool.”

“I shall have to make some preparation,” I said. “I haven’t everything that I need.”

“You see,” remarked one of the dissenters, “that he is unable to do it. He is trying to gain time so that he may escape.”

“Nonsense,” said Ul-Van. “Let him make his preparations, and then if he fails it will be time enough to say that he cannot do it.”

Ro-Tai nodded. “Very well,” he said, “let him make his preparations but you, Ul-Van, must stay with him always, to see that he does not try to escape.”

“If he cannot do it, he shall be my slave,” said U-Val, “for I brought him here.”

“If he can’t do it, he’ll be killed,” said Ro-Tai, “for trying to make fools of us.”

As soon as I was turned over to Ul-Van, I told him that I wanted a light, stout cord about thirty feet long.

“Come with me,” he said; and led me off along another trail beyond the pool. Presently we came to a second clearing in which were the sleeping shelters of the tribe. They were small, beehive huts, entirely covered with large leaves. At the bottom of each hut was a single opening, and into one of these Ul-Van crawled, emerging presently with a length of the braided grass rope such as I had seen in U-Val’s canoe. It was far too heavy for my purpose; but as it was made up of a number of smaller strands braided together, I saw that by unbraiding it I could get a single strand that would answer my purpose. This, he permitted me to do; and I finally had a light cord about forty feet long.

Thus equipped, I returned to the pool. Here I fastened one end of the cord securely to the butt of an arrow and tied the other end around my right wrist; then I stepped to the end of the pool and fitted my arrow to the bow.

Every eye was upon me now as I stepped to the edge of the pool. Milling around in the center of the pool, leaping out of the water, were literally hundreds and hundreds of fish; but none of them approached within spear length of the shore.

I coiled the slack of the rope carefully at my feet, raised the bow and drew the arrow back its full length. I was very nervous, and well I might have been, for I had never tried this thing before; and I did not know if the arrow could carry true with the weight of the rope trailing behind it, and my life depended upon success.

I took careful aim at a spot where the fish were thickest. The bow twanged and the arrow sped straight for its mark. A fish jumped into

the air and sounded. The rope payed out rapidly. I braced my feet and prepared for the shock; and when it came I was almost jerked into the pool, but I managed to keep my footing.

I let the fish play for awhile without endeavoring to draw him in, for I was none too sure of the strength of my line, even though it had withstood the first great shock. I wanted to tire him, and every time that there was a little slack in the rope I pulled it in. Finally the struggling ceased, and the fish floated to the surface, belly up. I pulled it ashore and handed it to Ro-Tai, who immediately demanded that I make bows and arrows for every warrior of the tribe. Right there we ran into a snag. There was no growth on Ruva suitable for making bows. The result was that I was kept busy shooting fish.

Ro-Tai had to admit that I had taught them something, and his attitude toward me relaxed a little; but U-Val was still pretty sore at me. He wanted me as his slave, and he wanted all the credit for what I had done. Ul-Van told me that U-Val was very unpopular and that I was fortunate in not having him for a master.

The fish that I caught they cleaned and smoked, and when they thought they had a sufficient supply Ro-Tai insisted that I show them how to build a canoe that would travel through the water without paddling.

Immediately I was faced by an insurmountable obstacle. No trees suitable for canoe building grew upon Ruva or any of the other floating islands. All of their canoes had been built upon the mainland where the proper wood could be found. To build a canoe was a terrific undertaking, necessitating an expedition in which some twenty or thirty men were often absent from Ruva for a hundred sleeps or more.

The canoes would be roughly hewn on the mainland and then

towed to Ruva, where the long and arduous job of finishing was completed.

These canoes remained in families for generations. Ul-Van told me that his had been in his family for ten generations, at least. They are passed on from the father to the eldest son.

As the women and children seldom leave the islands, only enough canoes are needed to carry the men. A new canoe is built only when the number of men in the tribe exceeds the carrying capacity of the canoes they have; and this, Ul-Van told me, seldom occurs more than a couple of times during the lifetime of a man, as the casualties among the warriors just about balance the birth-rate of males.

CHAPTER 24

I shall not bore you with a detailed description of my attempts to convert one of their canoes into a sailboat. I discovered, after considerable experimenting, that I could harden the wood of the native trees over a bed of hot coals; and, with this make-shift material, I constructed a keel and an outrigger. My only tools were some large shells with sharp edges, a stone knife, a stone chisel, and a hammer of stone. Fortunately for me, the wood was very soft and I worked it into shape before hardening it. I made the keel with a broad flange at the top and fastened it to the bottom of the canoe with fire-hardened, wooden pegs which I knew would expand when wet. For my mast, I spliced length of bamboo to the proper height and then bound three of these together with grass cord. The sail was perhaps the most difficult problem; but I solved it by building a primitive loom and teaching a couple of the women how to weave, using a long, tough grass.

While I was working on the canoe, I became pretty well acquainted with the members of the tribe and their customs. There were about forty families on this island, averaging about four members to the family. There were also twenty-five or thirty slaves — men and women from the white races of the mainland. These slaves attended to practically all of the manual labor; but their life was not a difficult one, and, for the most part, they were well treated.

The men are monogamous and very proud of their bloodline. Under no circumstances will they mate with a white, as they consider the white race far inferior to theirs. I could never quite accustom myself to this reversal of the status of the two races from what I had

always been accustomed to; but it really was not as difficult as it might appear, for I must admit that the blacks treated us with far greater toleration here than our dark-skinned races are accorded on the outer crust. Perhaps I was getting a lesson in true democracy.

The canoe upon which I had been working had been drawn up on the seashore about half a mile from the village. Usually, there were a number of villagers hanging around watching me; and Ul-Van was always with me, having been detailed by Ro-Tai to keep a watch on me and prevent me from escaping.

Once, while Ul-Van and I were alone, I saw a canoe approaching in the distance, and called Ul-Van's attention to it. At first he couldn't see it; but when it came closer, and he could recognize it as a canoe, he showed considerable excitement.

"They are probably Ko-vans," he said. "It is a raiding party."

"There are three more canoes coming into sight now behind the first one," I told him.

"That is bad," said Ul-Van. "We must return to the village at once and warn Ro-Tai."

When Ul-Van had reported to Ro-Tai, the latter sent boys to the fishing pool and to other parts of the island where he knew his warriors to be; and soon all were congregated in the village.

The women and children were sent into the huts; the men stood about nervously, an unorganized crowd presenting a fine target for the spears of the enemy.

"You are not going to remain here, are you?" I asked Ro-Tai.

"This is our village. We shall remain here and defend it," he replied.

"Why don't you go out and meet them?" I asked. "You could take them by surprise. Send a scout out to see what trail they are taking and then hide your warriors on either side of it; then when the Ko-vans

walk into your trap, you can fall upon them in force from both sides. They will be surprised and disorganized, and those whom you do not kill will run back to their canoes as fast as they can go. It is not necessary for you to let them reach your village at all."

"All my life, I have fought when raiders came," replied Ro-Tai with dignity; "and I, and my father, and his father before him, have always held the warriors in the village to await attack."

"That doesn't make it right," I said. "As a matter of fact, you have always been doing it in the wrong way. If you'll let me have ten men, I'll stop those Ko-Vans before they come anywhere near your village."

"I believe him," said one of the principal men of the village. "He has not deceived us yet."

"His plan is a good one," said Ul-Van.

"Very well," said Ro-Tai. "Take ten men and go and see if you can stop the Ko-vans. The rest of us will remain here to fight with them, if you fail."

"I shall not fail," I said; then I selected Ul-Van and nine other men, and together we started back toward the ocean. I sent one man ahead to reconnoiter, with orders to report back to me as soon as he had discovered what trail the Kovans took after they landed.

"They will take this trail," said Ul-Van. "They always do."

"Do they raid you often?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied. "They were here only a few sleeps before you came. They killed several of our warriors and stole some of our slaves. Among them was a woman slave that belonged to me. I did not like to lose her for she was very beautiful, and my mate was very fond of her. She said that she was an Amozite, and I have heard from other slaves that the women of Amoz are considered very beautiful. She told my woman that she and her mate lived in a country called Sari."

“What was her name?” I asked.

Before Ul-Van could reply, my scout came racing back, breathless. “The Ko-vans have landed,” he said. “They are coming along this trail.”

“How many of them are there?” I asked.

“About twenty,” he replied.

I posted my men on either side of the trail, well hidden behind trees. Each of the warriors carried two spears and a stone knife. I told them not to move or to make any sound until I gave the signal; then they were to stand up and each hurl one of his spears, immediately charging in to close quarters with his remaining spear.

I climbed a tree from which I could not only see my own men but watch the trail for a short distance along which the Ko-vans were approaching, quite oblivious of the fate that awaited them.

I had not long to wait, for presently a hideously painted warrior came into view; and close behind him, in single file, followed the others. They were armed precisely as were the Ruvans — two spears and a stone knife — and they were of the same race of fine-looking blacks. Only in their war-paint did they differ in appearance from the warriors of Ruva.

Silently I fitted an arrow to my bow and waited until the entire file was well within the ambush. I bent the bow and took careful aim. This was savage warfare, warfare of the Stone Age. Of course, we lacked poison gas, and we couldn’t drop bombs on women and children and hospitals; but in our own primitive way we could do fairly well; and so I released my arrow, and as it sunk deep into the body of the last man in the file, I gave the signal for the Ruvan warriors to attack.

With savage war cries they rose and hurled their spears. The Ko-vans, taken entirely by surprise, were thrown into confusion to which

I added by driving half a dozen more arrows into as many of them in rapid succession.

Eleven of the twenty went down in the first onslaught. The remaining nine turned to flee; but the trail was narrow and blocked by the dead and wounded. The survivors stumbled and fell as they attempted to climb over one another and their dead and dying comrades in their mad effort to escape, with the result that they fell easy prey to the Ruvan warriors who rushed in with fiendish yells and speared them to the last man.

As I dropped from the tree, they were driving their spears into the hearts of the wounded. Not a Ko-van escaped. Not one of my men received even so much as a scratch.

Bearing the weapons of the vanquished, we marched back to the village in triumph.

When the villagers saw us, they looked at us in astonishment. "Was there no fight?" demanded Ro-Tai. "What became of the Ko-vans? Are they following you?"

"The Ko-vans are all dead," said Ul-Van. "There were twenty of them, and we killed them all."

"You killed twenty Ko-vans without losing a man?" demanded Ro-Tai. "Such a thing has never happened before."

"You can thank David," said Ul-Van. "We did only what he told us to do, and we were victorious."

Ro-Tai made no comment. With the others, he listened to the account of the victorious warriors, which lost nothing of glory in the telling; but I will admit that every last man of them gave me full credit.

At last, Ro-Tai spoke. "The warriors of Ruva will feast in celebration of the victory over the Ko-vans. Let the slaves prepare food and

tu-mal, that the warriors may drink and be happy. Only the warriors of Ruva shall partake of this feast.”

Some of the slaves were detailed to prepare the food and make the tu-mal, an alcoholic drink of some potency. The remaining male slaves were sent to carry the dead Ko-vans to the sea, where they would be thrown to the fierce denizens of the deep.

As soon as I could get Ul-Van’s attention I asked him the name of the slave woman who had been captured by the Kovans.

“Amar,” he said. “That was her name.”

I couldn’t tell whether I was disappointed or not. From his description, I had thought that it might be Dian, for she was beautiful, she had been born in Amoz, and she had lived with her mate in Sari; but of course many women have been born in Amoz, and many of them have been taken as mates by the men of Sari, and as nearly all Amozite women are beautiful the description might have fitted many besides Dian; and, anyhow, how could Dian be on one of the floating islands?

Three sleeps intervened before the feast was ready, for the tu-mal had to ferment, and special foods had to be prepared, many of which cooked for long periods underground wrapped in pangos leaves and laid upon hot stones.

I returned to my work upon the canoe, and Ul-Van remained with me. He was still very much elated over our victory, which he said was absolutely unprecedented in the memory of any living Ruvan.

“We not only killed them all, and have all their weapons, but we have four fine canoes in addition. Never, never has anything like this happened; and you are the one who did it, David.”

CHAPTER 25

Ever since I had come to Ruva, I had noticed that U-Val hung around a girl called O-Ra. There were several other young bucks after her, but she showed no preference for any of them. I think O-Ra was something of a Paleolithic gold-digger. She wanted a man with a slave; and not one of her suitors owned one. Thus a situation was created which did not tend to increase U-Val's love for me. I think he spent a great deal of time doing nothing but hating me. I used to catch him glaring at me, and I think he was trying to screw up his courage to a pitch where he could denounce me and claim me as his slave. His fear of me was purely psychological — an unreasoning complex — for he had proved in his encounters with the great saurians which had attacked us during our voyage from the mainland to Ruva that he was no coward. I think we have all seen examples of this type of cowardice many times. I have known men who could face death coolly but were in mortal terror of some little woman half their size, and I have known heroes who were afraid of mice.

Possibly because they didn't like him, the men of the tribe made U-Val the butt of crude jokes because of his profitless attention to O-Ra; and I may say that Stone Age humor is often raw. However, much of it has come down intact for perhaps a million years to the present day on the outer crust. I recognized in many of the Paleolithic jokes old friends with which I had been well acquainted back in Hartford, Connecticut.

Finally the food and tu-mal for the feast were about ready; and Ro-Tai announced that the warriors would retire to their huts and that

after the sleep the feast would be served. As Ul-Van had been detailed to keep watch over me, I had to go into his hut with him; and while I was waiting for sleep to come, I overheard a conversation in a nearby hut. A man was speaking, and he was trying to persuade a woman to enter the hut with him, which would have consummated the simple marriage ceremony of the Ruvans; but the woman was adamant in her refusal.

“No,” she said. “I will not mate with a man who has no slave.”

“I have a slave,” replied the man; and I recognized the voice of U-Val.

The woman laughed, scornfully. “You keep your slave well hidden, U-Val,” she said. “What is it — a man or a woman? Or did the brave U-Val capture a little girl?”

“My slave is a great warrior,” replied U-Val. “He is the man called David. Did you not see me bring him to the island?”

“But he said that he was your friend, not your slave; and you did not deny it.”

“I did not deny it because he had threatened to kill me if I claimed him as my slave.”

“When you claim him,” said O-Ra, “I will become your mate, for the man would make a valuable slave.”

“Yes,” assented U-Val; but there was not much conviction in his tone. He had reason to doubt that I would make a very tractable slave.

“When you have your slave, you may ask me again,” said O-Ra; and then she must have gone away, for I heard no more; and presently I fell asleep.

A boy came and awakened us, saying that Ro-Tai was awake and was summoning the warriors to the feast.

I followed Ul-Van out of the hut, and found a place beneath the

shade of a tree where I could watch the proceedings. Leaves had been laid on the ground, covering a strip about three feet wide and twenty-five feet long. This was the banquet table, and along the length of it the slaves were piling food and setting great joints of bamboo filled with tu-mal, the warriors arranging themselves along both sides. Ro-Tai, who was standing at the center of one side of the spread was looking about as though searching for someone. Suddenly his eyes alighted upon me and he called to me.

“Come, David,” he said, “and join the other warriors in the feast.”

It was then that U-Val spoke up, finding his courage at last. “Slaves do not eat with the warriors of Ruva, Ro-Tai,” he said.

“What do you mean?” demanded Ro-Tai.

“I mean that the man, David, is my slave. I captured him on the mainland, and brought him to Ruva. I have let him play at being a free man long enough. Now I claim him as my slave.”

There was a rumble of disapproval, and then Ro-Tai spoke. “Even if David were your slave, by his act he has won his liberty; and I, Ro-Tai, the chief of Ruva, give him his liberty, which it is my right to do. I give him his liberty and I make him a warrior of Ruva.”

“I shall not feast with a white slave!” exclaimed U-Val; and, turning, he stalked away. He took a few steps and then stopped and wheeled about. “If I cannot have him as my slave, I can at least kill him, for he is an enemy of Ruva, and kill him I shall!”

“Have you forgotten that you ate grain and honey with me in the hill of the giant ants, U-Val?” I called to him. “You had better come and eat now. You can kill me afterward, and you will need the tu-mal to give you courage; but don’t forget, U-Val, that I have promised to kill you.”

“Why have you promised to kill him?” demanded Ro-Tai.

“Because, while I thought he was my friend, he bound my hands behind me while I slept, and when I awoke he told me that I was his slave; and he kicked me in the ribs while I lay on the ground helpless. It was because of that kick that I promised to kill him.”

“You may kill him in self-defense, but not otherwise,” said Ro-Tai. “And see that you don’t pick a quarrel with him,” he added. “I haven’t so many warriors that I can afford to lose even one unnecessarily.”

Now, at a sign from Ro-Tai, the warriors seated themselves cross-legged upon the ground before the feast. There were no knives or forks for each warrior had two good hands, and each made the most of both of them. There was not much conversation for the feasters were too busy eating and drinking.

The women and children and slaves formed a circle about us, hungrily watching us devour the food. When we were through, they would come and finish what remained.

It was not long before the feasters began to get pretty high on tu-mal, and correspondingly noisy. I drank no tu-mal, and when I had satisfied my hunger I got up and strolled away; and no sooner had I left than U-Val came and seated himself at the feast. As I watched him I saw that he ate very little, but that he was drinking quantities of tu-mal; and I knew then that I must be on my guard.

I wanted to go and work on the canoe, which was nearly completed; but I could not because Ul-Van couldn’t go with me. The slaves were all busy; and so I sat apart by myself, for I had learned long since that the less you have to do with the women of primitive men the better you are liked. Many of them even resent an outsider talking to their women; but after awhile O-Ra came over and sat down beside me. While she didn’t belong to anybody, she had several suitors; so that a tête-à-tête with her wasn’t a particularly healthful occupation. I was

compensated for this, however, by the fact that I knew it would make U-Val madder than ever.

“U-Val is going to kill you,” she said. “He told me so just before he went to fill up on tu-mal.”

“Why are you warning me?” I asked.

“Because I don’t like U-Val, and I hope you kill him,” she replied; “then he can’t bother me any more.”

“But you would have become his mate if he had owned a slave,” I said. “How could you do that, if you hated him?”

“He could have died suddenly,” she said with a smile; “and then I would have owned the slave. After that I could have mated with the man I want; and then I would have had my man and my slave both.”

“You would have killed him?” I asked.

She shrugged. “He would have died,” she said.

O-Ra was way ahead of her time. She had been born about a million years too soon, or at least on the wrong side of the crust. She had highly advanced ideas for a girl of the Stone Age.

“Well, I hope you get your man, O-Ra,” I said; “but I’d hate to be in his sandals.”

She laughed, and rose. Then she said excitedly in a whisper, “Here comes U-Val now. I think I’ll wait and see the fun.”

“I would if I were you,” I said, “for somebody is going to be killed. You ought to enjoy that.”

U-Val came toward us a little unsteadily. His habitual scowl was even blacker than usual.

“What are you doing trying to steal my woman?” he demanded.

“Is she your woman?” I asked.

“I’ll say I’m not,” said O-Ra.

“She’s going to be,” said U-Val, “and anyway no dirty white slave is going to talk to a Ruvan woman while I’m around.”

I wasn’t going to be tricked into attacking him no matter what he said, for Ro-Tai had made it quite clear that it wouldn’t be safe for me to kill him in other than self-defense.

“Why don’t you fight, you dirty coward?” he shouted.

By this time the attention of others had been attracted, and members of the tribe were gathering to form a circle about us. Some of the men were pretty drunk, and they urged on first U-Val and then me. Like O-Ra, they wanted to see a fight and a killing. Ro-Tai and Ul-Van were among the spectators.

U-Val was applying to me every vile Pellucidarian epithet that he could recall, and he recalled plenty and most of them were pretty raw-fighting words, if there ever were any.

“What’s the matter?” demanded Ul-Van. “Are you afraid of him, David?”

“Ro-Tai told me that I could only kill him in self-defense,” I said, “and he hasn’t attacked me yet. Words can’t kill me; but if I could use my fists on him, that would help some.”

“You can use your fists,” said Ro-Tai; “but don’t either of you draw a weapon.”

“You don’t care, then, what I do to him just so long as I do it with my hands?” I asked.

Ro-Tai nodded; and with permission granted, I stepped in and planted a right on U-Val’s nose. Blood spurted in all directions, and U-Val went practically crazy with rage. He had gone down with the blow, sort of stunned and dazed; but when he regained his senses he leaped up and down like a jumping-jack, beating his breast and screaming; then he came for me.

I dropped him again with a body blow to the solar plexus. He was a pretty sick man when he staggered to his feet; but when he saw everyone laughing at him, he lost the last shred of his self-control, whipped out his stone knife, and came for me with murder in his eye.

Now was my opportunity. I could kill him now, according to the rules that Ro-Tai had made; but as he came for me I did not draw my own knife. I wanted to be absolutely in the clear, for I knew that if I killed him there would be some that would insist that I pay with my life. They wouldn't like the idea of a white man living among them who had killed a black. He might become too arrogant.

"Your knife! Your knife!" cried Ul-Van. "Draw your knife, David!" But I didn't have to draw my knife yet, and I hoped that I would not have to draw it at all. I knew a great many jujitsu tricks and holds, and I felt that U-Val was in for the surprise of his life.

As he closed with me I used a very simple trick for disarming him, and then I got his head beneath one arm and started whirling him around. He was absolutely helpless. His feet flew off the ground and his body described a circle in the air. Faster and faster I whirled; then suddenly I lifted him and let him go. His body flew completely over the heads of the spectators and lit heavily on the ground beyond.

I hurried through the crowd to his side. He lay with his head bent under, quite motionless. Immediately the crowd followed and formed a new circle about us. I put my ear to U-Val's chest and listened; then I rose and turned toward Ro-Tai.

"He is dead," I said. "You will all bear witness that I killed him in self-defense."

"And with your bare hands!" exclaimed Ul-Van in evident amazement.

“Have slaves take the body down to the ocean,” said Ro-Tai; and turning on his heel he walked away.

The fight seemed to have had a sobering effect upon most of the warriors. Some of them gathered around me and felt of my muscles. “You must be very strong,” said one.

“It doesn’t take a great deal of strength,” I said. “It is just in knowing how.”

Immediately they wanted to be taught; so I showed them a few of the simpler holds — how to disarm a man attacking with a knife; how to throw a man; how to take a prisoner and force him to accompany you, and at the same time render him helpless to harm you.

When I was through they immediately started practicing on one another, and they were still at it when Ul-Van and I started back to the seashore to go to work upon the canoe.

I was anxious to complete the work as I hoped to be able to use the canoe to sail to the mainland and escape from Ruva.

I had a plan which I proceeded to explain to Ul-Van, although I did not tell him that its real purpose was to permit me to escape.

“When this canoe is finished,” I said, “a party of us can sail to the mainland and get a log from which I can make a better boat. We can tow it back to Ruva and do all the work on it here.”

“That is a good idea,” said Ul-Van; “but we shall have to wait until the islands float within sight of the mainland.”

“Why?” I asked.

“Because we could never find the mainland, otherwise.”

“Do you mean to say that you don’t know in what direction the mainland lies?”

“Bandar Az is very large,” he said, “and the islands are constantly drifting. We never go to the mainland unless we can see it. Of course, it

makes no difference then how far Ruva drifts away from us, for Ruva is our homeland; and no matter where it lies, we can always return to it.”

“Will it be long before we sight the mainland?” I asked.

“I do not know,” he replied. “Occasionally, there are times when babies grow to manhood without ever sighting the mainland; and then there are times when we are in sight of it constantly for hundreds and hundreds of sleeps.”

My chances of escape looked pretty slim, if I had to wait for twenty years of outer crust time before we sighted the mainland again. I was pretty blue.

Presently Ul-Van exclaimed jubilantly, “Why, of course, we can reach the mainland! Why didn’t we think of it before? Your home is on the mainland. All you would have to do would be to steer a course for your home.”

I shook my head. “That is something I could not do. You see, I am not a Pellucidarian. I am from another world, and I could not steer a straight course to my home as you Pellucidarians can.”

That seemed very strange to Ul-Van. It was beyond his comprehension.

Another hope was blasted! I seemed now irretrievably doomed to a life of exile upon this floating bit of earth. I might never again see my beloved Sari; never renew my search for Dian the Beautiful.

I worked on in silence upon the canoe. Ul-Van helped me as best he could, for this was work such as a warrior might do. We had not spoken for some time when he said, “Oh, by the way, David, that slave-girl I was telling you about had another name. Amar was a name my mate gave her. Her real name was Dian.”

CHAPTER 26

Now my entire outlook on life changed. I knew definitely where Dian was. I was sure that she was alive, and I had every reason to believe that she was comparatively safe among the Ko-vans, for Ul-Van assured me that they treated their slaves well. But how was I to rescue her? First I would have to reach Ko-va, and that I could not do alone for it had drifted out of sight of Ruva. Usually, Ul-Van said, they were in sight of one another; but some freak of current or wind had separated them. Eventually they would float together again. On occasions they had even touched each other. Formerly the fighting had been continuous when this occurred; but both tribes had been so depleted by this constant warfare that, for many generations, truces had been declared whenever the two islands approached within spear-throw of each other.

At last I hit upon a plan, and when we returned to the village to eat I went directly to Ro-Tai.

"I have a plan," I said, "whereby you may make a successful raid upon Ko-va. With the loss of the twenty warriors we killed, their fighting strength has been weakened; and if you will let me help you plan the attack, we should be able to recapture all of the slaves they took from you and doubtless take all of their slaves, as well."

Ro-Tai was very much interested. He thought the plan an excellent one and said that he would embark upon the expedition after the next sleep.

Later, I was talking the matter over with Ul-Van when a discouraging thought occurred to me. "How," I asked him, "can you find

Ko-va, if you cannot see it, any more than you can find the mainland when it is out of sight, for Ko-va is not your home?"

"Some of our women were born on Ko-va," he said, "and captured by us. We will take one of them with us in one of the canoes, and she will direct our passage."

"How did the Ko-vans who came to raid Ruva find the island?" I asked.

"Unquestionably, at least one of them was born on Ruva," replied Ul-Van, "and doubtless stolen in a raid while he was a small child. We often capture Ko-van boys and raise them among us as our own warriors for the same purpose. It happened that the last two we had were killed in a recent raid; but we have several Ko-van women."

It seemed to me an eternity before the expedition was prepared to set out; but at last all was in readiness and fifty warriors manned five canoes, one of which was that which I had converted into a lateen rigged outrigger.

Ro-Tai, the chief, and Ul-Van were in this canoe with me; and we had with us a woman who had been born on Ko-va to point the way.

I was not a little concerned as to the success of my venture. I had wanted to experiment with my craft before setting forth upon this considerable voyage, but Ro-Tai would not hear of it. Now that all was ready, he wanted to get started without further delay.

I did not know what speed I could attain and there was a question as to whether the paddle-driven canoes might outdistance us. Also, I was not at all sure as to the seaworthiness of my craft. I was fearful that a good gust of wind might capsize it, for it carried considerable canvas.

The Ruvans were still skeptical about the possibility of making a canoe move through the water without paddles. Fifty pair of eyes were on me as I raised the sail and took my place in the stern with the

steering paddle. Gradually the boat got under way with a brisk breeze. The warriors in the other canoes bent to their paddles; and the little armada was under way.

“It moves!” exclaimed Ro-Tai in an awe-struck tone.

“It is pulling away from the other canoes,” said Ul-Van.

“Will wonders never cease!” exclaimed one of the older men. “What will they think of next? To think that I should live to see a thing like this!”

The warriors in the other canoes were paddling furiously, but still we drew away from them. I sailed on, occasionally looking back to note the position of the other canoes; and when I thought we were separated almost too far for safety, I brought the canoe into the wind and waited.

We were a savage-looking band, for the Ruvans had donned their war-paint and were hideously decorated. They had even insisted upon painting me; and when Ul-Van got through with me I could have passed for a full-blooded Ruvan, for he had succeeded in smearing every inch of my body with pigments of one color or another. The canoes were well stocked with spears, each warrior having brought three; and I had made for myself an additional supply of arrows and one of the short, javelin-like spears which I prefer.

I discussed with Ro-Tai his plan of attack when we should have landed on Ko-va. He said that they would do as they had always done — march in a body straight to the village which lay in the center of the island. If the Ko-vans chanced to have seen us approach, they would be ready for us. If not, we might take them partially by surprise. I didn't like this plan at all, and finally persuaded him to adopt one which I felt certain would assure us far greater success and which I explained to him in detail. He acceded with some reluctance, and he

acceded at all solely because of the success I had had in our skirmish with the Ko-vans who had come to raid Ruva.

I was the first to sight the island, which was similar in all respects to Ruva except that it was a little larger. As we approached it we saw no sign of life; and I was in hope that we might be able to surprise the village, for my plan of attack would prove far more successful in such an event.

I came to a short distance from the island and lay to waiting for the other canoes to overtake us. Ul-Van and I lowered the sail, and the warriors shipped their paddles; and when the other canoes came abreast of us we all moved in together toward the shore.

When we had disembarked, Ro-Tai asked me to explain my plan of attack to the entire company; and when I had done so, we started into the forest in a long, thin line which gradually opened out as we approached the village. I took a position in the center of the line; Ro-Tai in the center of the left wing; Ul-Van in the center of the right wing. We kept the men close enough together so that they could see and pass on hand signals, which I explained to them and which were very simple. I sent one scout ahead to the village with explicit instructions as to what he was to do.

We moved forward in absolute silence, and when we had advanced about two miles my scout returned to me. He told me that the village was but a short distance ahead; that he had reached the edge of the clearing, and from what he could see he believed that the warriors were sleeping or away, for he saw only women, children, and slaves outside the huts.

I now gave the signal to start the enveloping movement, and it was passed on to right and left by hand signals. The center of the line moved forward now very slowly while the wings curved inward as they

advanced more rapidly, the idea being to entirely surround the village before attacking.

When those in the center of the line reached a point where they could see the clearing, they lay down and hid; but always they kept in sight of the warrior next to them. Finally, the signal that I awaited came. It meant that the two wings had joined on the opposite side of the village.

So far, not a Ko-van was aware that an enemy was upon the island.

Now I gave the signal to charge. It was simply a war cry that was taken up by all the Ruvan warriors as, simultaneously, we dashed toward the village. The women and children, terrified, started to run first in one direction and then in another; but always they found Ruvan warriors blocking their escape.

Now the Ko-van warriors came crawling from their huts, heavy-eyed with sleep. Taken wholly by surprise, they fell easy prey to our spear-men. Only a few of them fell before the others surrendered.

I had expected to see ruthless slaughter; but such was not the case. As Ro-Tai explained to me afterward, if they killed all the Ko-vans they would have no one to raid for slaves and women; and even now, in victory, he exacted but little tribute. He demanded the slaves that had been stolen from Ruva and an equal number of Ko-van slaves, as well as three young boys who would be brought up as Ruvans.

My first concern was to look for Dian; but she was not among the slaves who were in the village. I questioned the chief, and he told me that a man-slave had stolen a canoe and escaped, taking Dian with him.

“He was a man from Suvi,” said the chief. “I have forgotten his name.”

“Was it Do-gad?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said, “that was it. Do-gad was his name.”

Once more my high hopes were dashed, and now my quest seemed hopeless and I was further harassed by the thought that Dian was again in the power of her nemesis. What was I to do? I had a sailboat, but I could not find the mainland, nor was there anyone to guide me to it.

Presently I conceived a forlorn hope, and going among the Ko-van slaves, I questioned each one, asking him from what country he came; and finally one of them, a girl, said she was from Suvi.

“Are there any other Suvian slaves here?” I asked.

“No,” she said, “not since Do-gad escaped.”

I went, then, to the chief of the Ruvans. “Ro-Tai,” I said, “I have tried to serve you well. I have taught you how to catch the fish in the center of the pool. I have shown you how you may make your canoes go without paddling; and I have helped you to win two battles and take many slaves.”

“Yes,” he said, “you have done all these things, David. You are a good warrior.”

“I want to ask a favor in return,” I said.

“What is it?” he asked.

“I want you to promise to let me return to the mainland and my own country whenever I can.”

He shook his head. “I cannot do that, David,” he said. “You are now a Ruvan warrior, and no Ruvan may go to live in any other country.”

“I have another favor to ask, then,” I said, “that I think you will not find too difficult to grant.”

“What is it?” he asked.

“I should like to have a slave,” I said.

“Certainly,” he agreed. “When we return to Ruva, you may select one of the slaves that we have taken today.”

“I do not want any that you have selected,” I said. “I want that girl over there;” and I pointed to the slave from Suvi.

Ro-Tai raised his eyebrows and hesitated for a moment; but then he said, “Why not? You are both white. You should have a mate, and you cannot mate with a Ruvan.”

Well, I would let him think what he pleased, just so long as I acquired a slave from Suvi.

I walked over to the girl. “You are my slave,” I said. “Come with me. What is your name?”

“Lu-Bra,” she said; “but I do not want to be your slave. I do not want to go with you. I belong to a woman here, and she is kind to me.”

“I shall be kind to you,” I said. “You need have no fear of me.”

“But I still do not want to go with you. I would rather die.”

“You are going with me, nevertheless, and you are not going to die, and you are not going to be harmed in any way. You may believe me that you are going to be very glad that I selected you.”

Well, she had to come along with me. There was nothing she could do about it; but she was not very happy. I didn’t want to tell her what I had in mind, for the success of the plan I had concocted depended solely upon the secrecy with which I could carry it out.

The warriors of Ruva ate in the village of the Ko-vans, who were their unwilling hosts; and then we returned to the ocean with our slaves and embarked for Ruva; and Lu-Bra, the slave-girl from Suvi, went with me.

The wind had risen since we landed on Ko-va; and now it was blowing half a gale and the seas were commencing to run high. It looked to me like a risky venture to embark in the face of such

ominous weather; but the Ruvans seemed to think nothing of it. The wind had not only freshened but it had changed; so that now I could run directly before it, and our canoe fairly flew through the water. We didn't have to wait for the others this time, and they were soon specks far astern. The warriors who were fortunate enough to have been selected as the crew of this boat were highly enthusiastic. They had never traveled so fast before, and they had never traveled at all without hard work. Now they just sat idle and contented, and watched the waves go by.

But I was not so contented. My improvised mast and cordage were being subjected to terrific strain. There were creakings and squeakings that filled me with apprehension; and the sea and the wind were rising. I can tell you that I breathed a sigh of relief when I glimpsed Ruva in the distance, although there was still plenty of time for disaster to overtake us before we ran into one of her sheltering coves.

The sky was overcast with ominous clouds. The air about us was filled with spindrift. The wind howled and shrieked like malevolent demons seeking to terrify those whom they were about to destroy. The seas became mountainous. I glanced at my companions, and I was aware that for the first time they were showing marked concern. I was considerably worried myself, for I didn't see how this frail craft could possibly survive the fury of the storm. Why my sail and mast did not carry away, I still cannot conceive; but they held. The great flowing seas never quite engulfed us, and we drew rapidly nearer and nearer the shore.

As we came closer, I witnessed a strange and terrifying sight. The entire island, as far as I could see, was rising and falling as though in the throes of a terrific and continuous earthquake. Mountainous waves were breaking on the low shoreline and carrying tons of water into the

forest. Pieces of the island were breaking off and disintegrating. How could we hope to make a landing under such conditions? And then Ro-Tai voiced that very doubt.

“We can’t land here,” he said. “We must try to make the lee side of the island.”

I knew that that would be impossible. To change our course now would throw us into the trough of these enormous seas, and the craft would be capsized almost immediately. There was just one slender hope; and I held my course straight for that tossing, leaping shoreline.

We were almost upon it. I held my breath, and I imagine the Ruvans did likewise. We rose to the crest of a great sea. With my stone knife I cut the sheet, and the sail streamed out, flapping in the gale. We were only a few yards from the shore toward which we were rushing with the speed of an express train; and, for the few seconds that were required to assure the success of my mad scheme, the canoe clung to the crest of a great wave and we were carried inland and hurled among the trees of the forest.

Why no one was killed is still a mystery to me. Some were injured; but the rest of us managed to hold the canoe from being carried back into the ocean by the receding waters.

Before another large wave descended upon us, we stumbled deeper into the forest. We were being constantly hurled to the ground by the upheaval of the ground beneath us; and sometimes a wave would reach us but broken and rendered harmless by the trees of the forest.

At last we reached the village, where we found most of the huts lying collapsed upon the ground, while the Ruvans who had not accompanied the expedition, and the slaves, lay prone and terrified in the clearing.

My fear was that the entire island would disintegrate. I did not see

how it could withstand the terrific forces that were wrenching at it, pulling it this way and that, raising and lowering it, twisting and turning it. I asked Ul-Van what he thought our chances were.

“I have seen but one such storm before in my lifetime,” he said. “Portions of the island were broken off and lost; but the main part of the island withstood the worst that wind and sea could do. If the storm does not last too long, I think that we are safe.”

“And what about the men in the other canoes?” I asked.

Ul-Van shrugged. “Some of them may reach shore,” he said; “but it is more likely that none of them ever will. It was your sail that saved us, David.”

CHAPTER 27

That storm meant more to me than the destruction of Ruva or its menace to my own existence, for I knew that out there somewhere among those mountainous waves was Dian in a frail canoe. Her chances for survival seemed to me absolutely non-existent. I tried to drive these destructive fears from my mind, and with the abating of the storm I partially succeeded; and hope was at last again renewed when the warriors we had given up for lost returned to the village. Not a canoe had been lost, nor not a man. It was a marvel of extraordinary seamanship.

The first concern of the Ruvans was to rebuild their village; and in this work everyone joined, including the women and children. When this work was completed, I told Ro-Tai that I was going to repair the damage done to the sailing canoe. He asked me if I wanted any help, but I told him that I would need no one other than my slave, Lu-Bra. He did not insist upon my taking anyone else, nor did he put any watch over me this time. Evidently he had accepted me as a full-fledged member of the tribe; and so Lu-Bra and I went down to the seashore to commence our task.

Having found that I had no intention of harming her, the girl's spirits had returned and she seemed quite content and happy.

While I worked on the canoe, I had her gather food and prepare it. She also collected a supply of water from the trees, and filled bamboo containers with it. These things I hid in the forest near my work.

I made some bone fish-hooks for her, and taught her how to fish

in the quiet waters of the inlet. The fish she caught, she smoked and dried and packed away for future use.

I did not acquaint her with my plan; but I had to place some trust in her, as it was necessary to caution her to silence relative to our collection and storage of food and water. She asked no questions, and that was a good sign, for a person who asks no questions can usually keep his own counsel.

She had been a prisoner of the Ko-vans for a considerable period, probably for a number of years of outer earthly time. She had been there when Dian and Do-gad had been brought from the mainland, and had become well acquainted with Dian who told her that after she had escaped from the man-eating giants of Azar, she had also succeeded in escaping from Do-gad but that he had pursued her and that the very moment he had overtaken her they had both been captured by the Ruvans.

I shuddered to think of all that my lovely Dian had been compelled to endure because her love for me had driven her forth in search of me. That she should die without knowing that I was comparatively safe seemed a cruel blow of Fate. She could not even know that I had escaped from the Jukans after I had left her in the cave and gone back to rescue Zor and Kleeto.

My work upon the canoe progressed nicely; but I was still highly impatient for the moment when I could put my plan into execution. The only danger now was that it might be discovered if some Ruvan stumbled upon our cache of food and water. I would have hard work explaining that away.

At last it was finished; and on the way back to the village I warned Lu-Bra to be sure not to mention this fact. "Certainly not," she said. "Do you think I want to give our plan away?"

Our plan! “Why do you call it our plan?” I asked. “You don’t even know what I have in mind.”

“Oh yes I do,” she said; “and it is our plan, because I have worked and helped you.”

“That is right,” I said; “and whatever the plan is, it is ours together; and we will carry it out together, and we will say nothing about it to anyone else. Is that right?”

“Absolutely,” she said.

“And what do you think the plan is?” I asked her.

“You are going back to the mainland in that canoe which goes without paddles; and you are taking me with you to point the direction to Suvi, because you cannot do it yourself. That is why you chose me from among the other slaves of Ko-va. I am not a fool, David. It is all quite plain to me, and you need have no fear that I shall divulge our secret to anyone.”

I liked the use of the word “our.” It almost assured her loyalty, even aside from anything else that she had said.

“I was very fortunate,” I said.

“In what way?” she demanded.

“In finding you, instead of another slave, on Ko-va. You are intelligent and loyal, and you also know when you are well off. But how did you know that I could not find my way to the mainland without someone’s help?”

“Who, in Suvi, does not know all about David, Emperor of Pellucidar?” she demanded. “Who does not know that he is from another world, and that he can do almost everything better than we of Pellucidar, but that if he is taken out of sight of familiar landmarks, he could never find his way home again? That is a marvel to us Pellucidarians, something which we cannot understand. It must be a strange world in

which you lived, where no one dared go far from home, knowing that he could never find it again.”

“But we do find our way around, even better than Pellucidarians,” I said, “because we not only can find our way home, but we can find our way to any place in our world.”

“That,” she said, “is incomprehensible.”

I had been working on the canoe very steadily, and, of course, there being no way of measuring time, I had no way of knowing how long we had been absent from the village. Having had our own food supply, we had eaten occasionally, but neither of us slept. The fact that both of us were very sleepy should have told us that we had been absent for a considerable period of time; and this must have been true, for when we returned we discovered that preparations had been almost completed for a huge feast to celebrate our victory over the Ko-vans. Everybody was very excited about it, but all that Lu-Bra and I wanted to do was to go to our huts and sleep.

O-Ra, who often sought my company when I was in the village, asked me what in the world Lu-Bra and I could be doing to be away so much.

“We are working on the canoe that goes without paddles,” I replied.

“I shall have to come with you the next time you go,” she said, “because I have never seen it.”

Well, that was just what I didn’t want, because I had planned that the next time Lu-Bra and I went to the canoe we would never return. We had only returned this time in order to get a good sleep before we set out upon our voyage; but I said, “That will be fine, O-Ra; but why don’t you wait until I have finished it?”

“Oh, I can come then, too, and have a ride in it,” she said. “Do you know, David, I wish that you were not white. I cannot imagine a finer

mate than you. I think I shall ask Ro-Tai to make an exception in your case, so that I may be your mate.”

“Because I have a slave?” I asked, laughing.

“No,” she said. “I should get rid of Lu-Bra because I think you like her too well. I would not care to have a rival.”

The young lady was quite frank. Sometimes these Paleolithic maidens are; but not always. Dian had been just the opposite.

“Well,” I said, “you may make somebody a fine mate, but not me. I already have one.”

O-Ra shrugged. “Oh, you’ll never see her again,” she said. “You’ve got to live here all the rest of your life, and you might as well have a mate.”

“Forget it, O-Ra,” I said, “and pick out a nice man of your own race.”

“Do you mean that you don’t want me?” she demanded, angrily.

“It is not a question of wanting you or not wanting you,” I replied. “It is that, as I told you before, I already have a mate; and in my country we never have but one at a time.”

“That’s not the reason,” she snapped. “You’re in love with Lu-Bra. That’s why you go out together alone all the time. Any fool could see that.”

“Well, have it your own way, O-Ra,” I said. “I’m going to get some sleep now;” and I turned and left her.

When I awoke I was thoroughly rested; and, shortly after, Lu-Bra awoke. When we came out of the hut we saw that they were already gathering for the feast. I was ravenously hungry and wanted to eat, and I knew that Lu-Bra must want to also. The fact that a feast was going on gave us an excellent opportunity to escape without detection, since every member of the tribe would be in the village during the feast,

and there would be no likelihood of anyone discovering us while we launched the canoe and loaded it up with our supplies.

I suggested this to Lu-Bra. "I think we can get out of here, now, without being seen," I said. "They will think that we are still asleep in our hut, if they miss us, which they may not."

"Good," she said. "We can keep the huts between us and them until we enter the forest;" and so we bade farewell to the village of the Ruvans for what we hoped would be the last time.

We hurried to the canoe; and, with our combined efforts, managed finally to drag it into the water; then we hastened to load it with our provisions.

We had just about completed our work when I saw someone approaching through the forest from the direction of the village. It was too late now to conceal what we were doing, and I knew that whoever it was would know what we were contemplating the moment that they saw us loading the canoe with water and food.

Lu-Bra was returning from the cache with her arms full, and I was just starting back for another load, when O-Ra burst upon the scene.

"So that's what you're doing," she flared, angrily. "You are going to run away, and you are going to take that white-faced thing with you."

"You guessed it the first time, O-Ra," I said.

"Well, you're not going to do it. I'll see to that," she snapped. "But if you want to escape from Ruva, I'll go with you instead of that girl. If you won't do that, I'll give the alarm."

"But I have to take Lu-Bra," I said. "Otherwise, I could never find the mainland." I thought maybe by explaining I could mollify her. "You know, O-Ra, that you could not show me how to reach the mainland."

"Very well, take her along, too, then, as guide; but I am going as your mate."

“No, O-Ra,” I said. “I am sorry; but that would not work out.”

“You won’t take me?” she asked.

“No, O-Ra.”

Her eyes flashed angrily for a moment, and then she turned and walked back into the forest. It seemed to me that she had given up very easily.

Lu-Bra and I hurried as fast as we could to load the remainder of our provisions in the canoe. We couldn’t afford to leave without taking everything that we had collected, for we had no idea how long we would be on the water before we reached the mainland.

We had stowed away the last load, and Lu-Bra had taken her place in the canoe, when I heard the sounds of approaching men; and I knew that O-Ra had returned to the village and reported what she had discovered. I pushed off and paddled away from shore just as forty or fifty Ruvan warriors burst into sight. Ro-Tai was in the lead, and he shouted to me to come back; but I turned the nose of the canoe toward the open sea and started to hoist the sail. There was a slight off-shore wind, and it seemed an eternity before the sail caught the little breeze that reached us. Both Lu-Bra and I paddled frantically; but if we did not get more wind we never could escape the Ruvans, who were now piling into their canoes to take up the pursuit.

The leading canoe shot out from the shore; but now we were far enough out so that we were catching a little more wind and moving just a little more rapidly. However, they were overhauling us; and all the time Ro-Tai was shouting for me to come back; and his canoe was drawing nearer.

They came within a spear-throw of us; but now we were holding about even. Ro-Tai stood up in the canoe with his spear poised to throw.

“Come back,” he said, “or you die!”

Lu-Bra had crossed from Ko-va in the canoe, and since then she had asked many questions relative to its handling. Whether or not she could steer it I didn't know, but I had to take the chance; and so I called her to me and told her to take the steering paddle; then I fitted an arrow to my bow and stood up.

“Ro-Tai, I do not want to kill you,” I said; “but if you don't lay down that spear I shall have to.”

He hesitated a moment. A gust of wind bellied our sail bravely, and the canoe leaped ahead just as Ro-Tai hurled his weapon. I knew that it would fall short; and so I did not shoot him, for I liked Ro-Tai and he had been kind to me.

“Do not forget, Ro-Tai,” I called back, “that I could have killed you but that I did not. I am your friend; but I want to return to my own country.”

We were pulling away from them rapidly now. For awhile they followed us; but, seeing the futility of further pursuit, they at last turned back.

CHAPTER 28

How long that voyage lasted, God only knows. A dozen times we were attacked by huge nameless monsters, and three times we ran into storms that threatened to terminate our voyage and our lives simultaneously; but somehow we pulled through, until at last we were faced with the knowledge that our food and water would soon be gone.

Lu-Bra proved to be a very wonderful girl. She was courageous and uncomplaining. I felt sorry for her.

“You would have been better off on Ruva, Lu-Bra,” I said. “It is commencing to look very much as though I had led you to death instead of to freedom.”

“Whatever happens, I am content, David,” she said. “I would rather be dead than a slave.”

“Your being with me is a strange coincidence, Lu-Bra, which I have never before mentioned. It was another girl from Suvi who was going to lead me toward Sari. We were both prisoners of the Jukans, and then of the man-eating giants of Azar. Whether she died there or escaped them, I do not know.”

“What was her name?” asked Lu-Bra.

“Kleeto,” I said.

“I knew her,” said Lu-Bra. “We were children together, before I was stolen.”

On and on we sailed, Lu-Bra, my living compass, pointing the way. We had rationed the food to a point where we had barely enough to sustain life, and only two or three sips of water a day. We were both weak and emaciated. We had had poor luck with our fishing, possibly

because neither one of us was from a maritime nation. On land, I could have brought in plenty of game; but out here on the water, although it teemed with food, I seemed scarcely ever to make a direct hit. Why that should have been, I do not know, for I have become an excellent shot with bow-and-arrow.

After the last morsel of food was consumed we made a catch with one of my bone fishhooks. It was a little fish about a foot long; but we cut it in two and devoured it raw. Shortly after this, our water supply was exhausted. I prayed for another storm with rain; but the sky remained clear, and the merciless noonday sun beat down upon us; and across that wide expanse of unfriendly ocean there was no sign of land.

Lu-Bra was lying under her shelter in the bottom of the canoe. She spoke to me in a weak voice. "David," she asked, "are you afraid to die?"

"I do not want to die," I replied; "but I am not afraid to. Possibly it is another wonderful adventure in which we shall go to a new country and meet new people and many of our old friends who have gone before us, and after awhile we shall all be gathered there."

"I hope so, David," she said, "for I am dying now. I hate to desert you, David, for companionship is all either of us have left now. When I am gone, you will be alone; and it is not good to die alone."

I turned away my head to hide the tears that came to my eyes, and as I did so I saw something that brought an exclamation of astonishment and incredulity to my lips. It was a sail!

What was a sail doing upon that ocean where there could be no sails? And then a possibility of the truth dawned upon me.

"Lu-Bra!" I cried. "You shall not die. We are saved, Lu-Bra."

"What do you mean, David?" she asked. "Land?"

“No,” I said, “a sail; and if this is the Lural Az, as you have told me it must be, it can only be a friendly sail.”

I changed our course and headed for the strange ship, which I soon saw was bearing down upon us. They must have seen our sail, too. As we came nearer I recognized the vessel as one of the type that Perry had designed and built after his first disastrous attempt to build a battleship. I could have wept for joy.

I lowered our sail and waited. The little vessel hove to beside us and tossed me a line, and as I looked up into the faces peering down from above, I recognized Ja the Mezop who had commanded one of the first vessels of our fleet.

“David!” he cried. “You? It has been hundreds of sleeps since we gave you up for dead.”

Lu-Bra was too weak to clamber aboard Ja’s vessel. She could only raise herself to a sitting position, and I was too weak to help her; but willing hands soon lifted us both aboard; and as I reached the deck a woman ran toward me and threw her arms about me. It was Dian the Beautiful.

After they had given us a little food and water and we were somewhat revived and strengthened, Dian told me her story.

She had helped Do-gad escape from Ko-va, on Do-gad’s explicit promise that he would respect her and help her to return to Sari; but he had broken his word to her, and she had killed him. Of this metal are the beautiful daughters of Amoz.

Then she had paddled on toward the mainland, guided unerringly by her homing instinct. She had evidently been out of the track of the great storm which I had feared must have spelled her doom; but she had passed safely through the three storms that Lu-Bra and I had encountered.

We are back in Sari now, contented and happy. Lu-Bra was returned to Suvi; and the warriors who escorted her brought back word that made me still happier, and also gave me some slight idea as to the length of time that I was a prisoner on Ruva, for the word that they brought me was that Zor and Kleeto had reached Suvi safely, and that they had mated and already had a little son.

Book VII
SAVAGE PELLUCIDAR

PART I.

THE RETURN TO PELLUCIDAR

Chapter I

David Innes came back to Sari. He may have been gone a week, or he may have been gone for years. It was still noon. But Perry had completed his aeroplane. He was very proud of it. He could scarcely wait to show it to David Innes.

“Does it fly?” asked Innes.

“Of course it flies,” snapped Perry. “What good would an aeroplane be which did not fly?”

“None,” replied Innes. “Have you flown it yet?”

“No, of course not. The day of the first flight is going to be epochal in the annals of Pellucidar. Do you think I’d fly it without you being here to see?”

“That’s mighty nice of you, Abner; and I appreciate it. When are you going to fly it?”

“Right now, right now. Come and see it,”

“Just what do you propose using an aeroplane for?” asked Innes.

“To drop bombs, of course, just think of the havoc it will raise! Think of these poor people who have never seen an aeroplane before running out from their caves as it circles overhead. Think of the vast stride it will be in civilizing these people! Why, we should be able to wipe out a village with a few bombs.”

“When I went back to the outer crust after the Great War that ended in 1918,” said Innes, “I heard a lot about the use of aeroplanes

in war; but I also heard about a weapon which causes far more suffering and death than bombs.”

“What was that?” demanded Perry, eagerly.

“Poison gas,” said Innes.

“Ah, well,” said Perry, “perhaps I shall put my mind to that later.”

Dave Innes grinned. He knew that there was not a kinder hearted person living than Abner Perry. He knew that Perry’s plans for slaughter were purely academic. Perry was a theoretician, pure and simple. “All right,” he said, “let’s have a look at your plane.”

Perry led him to a small hangar — a strange anachronism in stone-age Pellucidar. “There!” he said, with pride. “There she is; the first aeroplane to fly the skies of Pellucidar.”

“Is that an aeroplane?” demanded Innes. “It certainly doesn’t look like one.”

“That is because it utilizes some entirely new principles,” explained Perry.

“It looks more like a parachute with a motor and a cockpit on top of it.”

“Exactly!” said Perry. “You grasped the idea instantly yet there is more to it than the eye perceives. You see one of the dangers of flying is, naturally, that of falling; now, by designing a plane on the principles of a parachute, I have greatly minimized that danger.”

“But what keeps it in the air at all? What gets it up?”

“Beneath the plane is a blower, operated by the engine. This blows a strong current of air constantly straight up from beneath the wing; and, of course, the air flow, while the ship is in motion supports it as is true in other, less advanced, designs; while the blower assists it in quickly attaining altitude.”

“Are you going to try to go up in that thing?” demanded Innes.

“Why, no; I have been saving that honor for you. Think of it! The first man to have flown in the heavens of Pellucidar. You should be grateful to me, David.”

Dave Innes had to smile; Perry was so naive about the whole thing. “Well,” he said, “I don’t want to disappoint you, Abner; and so I’ll give the thing a trial — just to prove to you that it won’t fly.”

“You’ll be surprised,” said Perry. “It will soar aloft like a lark on the wing.”

A considerable number of Sarians had gathered to inspect the plane and witness the flight. They were all skeptical, but not for the same reasons that David Innes was skeptical. They knew nothing about aeronautics, but they knew that man could not fly. Dian the Beautiful was among them. She is Dave Innes’s mate.

“Do you think it will fly?” she asked Innes.

“No.”

“Then why risk your life?”

“If it doesn’t fly, there will be no risk; and it will please Abner if I try,” he replied.

“There will be no honor,” she said, “for it will not be the first aeroplane to fly over Pellucidar. The great ship that you called a dirigible brought a plane. Was it not Jason Gridley who flew it until it was brought down by a thipdar?”

They were walking around the plane examining it carefully. The frame of the single parachute-like wing was of bamboo: the “fabric” was fabricated of the peritoneum of a large dinosaur. It was a thin, transparent membrane well suited to the purpose. The cockpit was set down into the top of the wing; the motor stuck out in front like a sore thumb; and behind a long tail seemed to have been designed to

counter-balance the weight of the engine. It carried the stabilizers, fin, rudder, and elevators.

The engine, the first gas engine built in Pellucidar, was an achievement of the first magnitude. It had been built practically by hand by men of the stone age, under the direction of Perry, and without precision instruments.

“Will it run?” asked Innes.

“Of course it will run,” replied Perry. “It is, I will concede, a trifle noisy; and is susceptible to some refinements, but a sweet thing nevertheless.”

“I hope so,” said Innes.

“Are you ready, David?” asked the inventor.

“Quite,” replied Innes.

“Then climb into the cockpit and I’ll explain the controls to you. You will find everything very simple.”

Ten minutes later Innes said he knew all about flying the ship that he would ever know, and Perry climbed down to the ground.

“Everybody get out of the way!” he shouted. “You are about to witness the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Pellucidar.”

A mechanic took his place at the propeller. It was so far off the ground that he had to stand on a specially constructed ladder. A man on either side stood ready to pull the blocks from beneath the wheels.

“Contact!” shouted Perry.

“Contact!” replied Innes.

The man at the propeller gave it a turn. The engine spluttered and died. “By golly!” exclaimed Innes. “It really fired. Try it again.”

“Give her more throttle,” said Perry.

The mechanic spun her again, and this time the engine took hold. The mechanic leaped from the ladder and dragged it away. David

opened the throttle a little wider, and the engine almost leaped from its seat. It sounded as though a hundred men were building a hundred boilers simultaneously.

David shouted to the two men to pull the blocks, but no one could hear him above the din of the motor. He waved and pointed and signalled, and finally Perry grasped what he wanted, and had the blocks withdrawn. Everyone stood in wide-eyed silence as David opened the throttle wider. The engine raced. *The plane moved!* But it moved backward! It swung around and nearly crashed into the crowd of Sarians before Innes could cut the motor.

Perry approached, scratching his head. "What in the world did you do, David," he asked, "to make an aeroplane back up?"

David Innes laughed.

"What are you laughing at?" demanded Perry. "Don't you realize that we may have stumbled upon something sensational in aerodynamics? Just think of a fighter plane that could go either forward or backward! just think of how it could dodge enemy planes! Think of its maneuverability! What *did* you do, David?"

"The honor is wholly yours, Abner," replied Innes. "You did it."

"But how did I do it?"

"You've reversed the pitch of your propeller blades. The plane cannot go in any other direction than backward."

"Oh," said Perry, weakly.

"But it does move," said Innes, encouragingly, "and the fault is easily remedied."

There being no such thing as time in Pellucidar, no one cared how long it took to effect a change in the propeller. Everyone except Perry and a couple of his mechanics lay down in the shade, under trees or

under the plane until Perry announced that the propeller had been reversed.

Innes took his place in the cockpit, a mechanic spun the prop, the engine started, the blocks were yanked away. The engine roared and pounded and leaped. The Plane almost jumped from the ground in harmony with the vibration. Innes was thrown about so violently in the cockpit that he could scarcely find the controls or keep his hands and feet on them.

Suddenly the plane started forward. It gained momentum. It rushed down the long, level stretch that Perry had selected on which to build his hangar. Innes struggled with the controls, but the thing wouldn't rise. It bounced about like a ship in a heavy sea until Innes was dizzy; and then, suddenly the fabric burst into flame.

David Innes discovered the flames as he was nearing the end of the runway. He shut off the motor, applied the brakes, and jumped. A moment later the gas tank burst, and Abner Perry's latest invention went up in smoke.

Chapter 2

Even though Abner Perry's first gun powder would not burn, his aeroplane would not leave the ground, and his first ship turned bottomside up when it was launched, nevertheless he had achieved a great deal since Fate and the Iron Mole had deposited him at the center of the Earth.

He had discovered ores and smelted them; he had manufactured steel; he had made cement and produced a very good grade of concrete. He had discovered oil in Sari and refined it to produce gasoline; he had manufactured small arms and cannon. He had found and mined

gold, silver, platinum, lead, and other metals. He was probably the busiest man in a whole world and the most useful. The great trouble was that the men of the stone age, or at least most of them, were not far enough advanced to appreciate what Perry had done and could do for them.

Often warriors armed with his rifles would throw them away in battle and go after the enemy with stone hatchets, or they would seize them by the muzzles and use them as clubs. He built a pumping plant near the village of Sari and pumped water through concrete pipes right into the village yet many of the women still insisted upon walking half a mile to the spring and carrying water back in gourds balanced on the tops of their heads. Time meant nothing to them and carrying water on their heads gave them a fine carriage.

But Perry kept on just the same. He was never discouraged. He was almost perpetually good natured; and when he wasn't praying, he was swearing like a trooper. David Innes loved him, and so did Dian the Beautiful One and Ghak the Hairy One, who was King of Sari. In fact everyone who knew Abner Perry loved him. The young Sarians who worked for him looked up to him and worshipped him as though he were a god. And Abner Perry was very happy.

After the aeroplane failed, he started in on another invention that he had had in mind for some time. If he had known what was to come of it, he would probably have thrown away all his plans; but of course he could not know.

~

David Innes took a company of warriors and went on a tour of inspection of some of the other kingdoms of the loose confederation which constitutes the Empire of Pellucidar, of which he had been elected

Emperor, following the incident of the aeroplane. He went first to Amoz, which is two hundred miles north-east of Sari on the Lural Az, a great uncharted, unexplored ocean. Six hundred miles north-east of Amoz lies Kali. Kali is the last of the kingdoms in this direction which still gives allegiance to the Empire. Suvi, four hundred miles westerly from Kali, dropped out of the confederation and made war upon Kali. The king of Suvi, whose name is Fash, had once held Dian the Beautiful prisoner; and that act had never been avenged.

David Innes had this in mind when he went north. It would be well to teach Fash a lesson and, perhaps, place on the throne of Suvi a man loyal to the Empire.

Sari is not on the sea coast; so the party marched to Greenwich, a hundred and fifty miles, and there took one of the ships of the Navy, which had been built under Perry's direction. Greenwich was established and named by David Innes and Abner Perry. Through it passes the prime meridian of Pellucidar, also an invention of Innes and Perry.

From Greenwich, they sailed to Amoz in the EPS *Sari*. The EPS is a conceit of Perry's. It means Empire of Pellucidar ship, like USS *California*. The *Sari*, like most of the ships of Pellucidar, was manned by red skinned Mezops from the Island of Anoroc, a seafaring race of fighting men. They had known only canoes until Perry and Innes introduced them to sails, but they soon mastered the new ships and learned what little of navigation Dave Innes could teach them about dead-reckoning, with only crude compasses to aid them.

Beneath a stationary sun, without the aid of stars or moon, there can be few navigational aids. The Mezops knew all there was to know about tides and currents in the coastal waters near their island. Innes and Perry gave them the compass, the log, and a chronometer which was never accurate and which could never be corrected; so it was

seldom used. Their navigation was mostly by guess and by God, but they got places. They could always sail the most direct course toward home because of the marvelous homing sense which is common to all Pellucidarians, a Providential compensation for their lack of guiding celestial bodies.

Kander is King of Amoz. The title, like that of Emperor, was Perry's idea. Kander, like the other kings of the confederation, is chief of a tribe of cave men. He is about as far advanced in the scale of evolution and civilization as the Cro-Magnons of the outer crust were in their time; but like the Cro-Magnons, he is intelligent.

From him Innes learned that Fash was warring with Kali again and had boasted that he would move on down south and conquer Amoz and Sari, making himself Emperor of Pellucidar. Now Innes had brought but fifty warriors with him, but he decided to go on to Kali and learn first hand what was happening there. First he sent a runner back to Sari with a verbal message instructing Ghak to gather the fleet at Amoz and proceed to Kali with as many warriors as the ships would accommodate; then he got a detail of fifty warriors from Kander and sailed north for Kali, the hundred warriors straining the capacity of the EPS *Sari*.

Six hundred miles by water brought the *Sari* opposite Kali, which lies some forty miles inland; and from here he dispatched a runner to Oose, King of Kali. The runner was Hodon the Fleet One, a Sarian warrior of proven courage and loyalty; and it requires courage to carry a message across savage Pellucidar. Fierce beasts and fiercer reptiles are a constant menace, and hostile tribes may be in ambush along the way.

All the forty miles to Kali, Hodon had good fortune with him. Once he met a tarag, the giant sabertooth tiger; and the beast charged him,

but an experienced runner knows how best to safeguard himself. He does not run in a straight line across open plains, but from tree to tree, much after the manner of a merchant ship zigzagging to elude a submarine.

The sabertooth, which is a confirmed man-eater, may be aware of this strategy from hunting of men; but, be that as it may, this particular beast timed its charge to a nicety and launched it at the moment that Hodon was farthest from any tree.

It was a thrilling race — for Hodon a race with Death; for few men have met and killed a tarag singlehanded. An occasional super-warrior may boast that he has done so with the long, stout spear which they usually carry; but Hodon, running light, carried no spear. He had only his speed upon which he might depend for his life, his speed and a stone knife.

The tarag covered the ground in great, bounding leaps which would quickly have overhauled an ordinary man; but Hodon is no ordinary man. He has not won the distinction of having Fleet One added to his name for nothing. And now he really ran.

The great beast was but a few yards behind him when Hodon sprang into the tree that was his goal and scrambled out of harm's way; then he sat upon a branch and spit down into the face of the tarag and called him all the vile names to which a Pellucidarian can lay his tongue, and they are many.

The tarag wasted no time waiting for Hodon to come down, as experience may have taught him that he would starve to death before any man-thing would come down to be eaten; so he made off in search of other prey.

A little farther on another tree saved Hodon from the talons of a thipdar, a huge pterodactyl such as winged the steaming skies of the

Mesozoic. This mighty pteranodon, with a wingspread of twenty feet, hunted high in the air — a preposterous eagle or hawk, ready to swoop down upon any living thing. The only defense against it is the shelter of a tree, and once again Hodon reached this sanctuary just in time.

Hissing with rage, the reptile soared away; and when it was out of sight Hodon continued on to Kali, which he reached without further adventure.

The village of Kali consists mostly of caves in a lime stone cliff, with a few rude, thatched shelters at its base, which are used for cooking, eating, and communal gatherings.

As Hodon approached the village he was met by a score of warriors, which was what he might have expected on approaching any well guarded village. They demanded his business there; and when he told them that he bore a message from the Emperor of Pellucidar to Oose, the King of Kali, they looked at one another; and some of them grinned behind his back.

“I will take word to the king,” said one. “Wait here.”

Presently the man returned and instructed Hodon to follow him, and all the warriors who had come to meet him accompanied them. It might have been a guard of honor, but Hodon had a feeling that it more nearly resembled the guard of a prisoner.

He was conducted to one of the thatched shelters, where a man sat upon a stool, surrounded by other warriors.

“What message do you bring to Oose, King of Kali, from the Emperor of Pellucidar?” demanded the man.

Now, Hodon had never before been to Kali, nor had he ever seen Oose; but it was evident to him that this man was the king. He thought that he was an ill-favored fellow, and he took an instinctive dislike to him.

“You are the king?” he asked, wishing to make sure before he delivered the message. “You are the king of Kali?”

“Yes,” replied the man. “I am the king of Kali. What message do you bring?”

“The Emperor wishes you to know that his ship is anchored off the coast of Kali with a hundred warriors. He has heard that you are having trouble with Fash, the king of Suvi; and he wishes to talk the matter over with you, that an expedition may be sent against Fash to punish him for his treason to the Empire. I am to take word back to him as to whether you will come to the coast to talk with him, or if you would prefer that he came here; for he knows that it is not always easy for a village to feed a hundred extra men.”

“I will send a runner to the Emperor,” said the king of Kali. “You will remain here and rest.”

“My orders are to bring the message to the Emperor myself,” replied Hodon.

“I give orders here,” said the king; and then he spoke to the leader of the warriors who surrounded Hodon. “Take this man to a high cave and place a guard over him. See that he does not escape.”

“What is the meaning of this?” demanded Hodon. “I am a Sarian and one of the Emperor’s men. What you are doing is treason.”

“Take him away,” said the king.

Up rickety wooden ladders Hodon’s guard forced him to climb to the highest level. Here a narrow ledge ran in front of several cave mouths. A guard of two warriors already squatted on the ledge near the top of the ladder; two others sat before the mouth of one of the eaves. Into this cave Hodon was ordered, and at the same time the king of Kali dispatched a runner to the coast with a message for David Innes.

When Hodon's eyes became accustomed to the darkness of the interior of the cave, he saw that he was not alone. The cave was a large one, and fully fifty men squatted or lay upon the floor.

"Who are you?" demanded one of these, as Hodon groped his way in search of a place to sit down.

"I seem to be a prisoner," replied Hodon.

"We are all prisoners," said the man. "I did not recognize you as you came in. Are you a Kalian?"

"Are you?" asked Hodon.

"We are all Kilians."

"Then why are you prisoners in Kali?" demanded Hodon.

"Because the warriors of Suvi attacked and overcame the village while most of the men were on the hunt and as we returned they fell upon us from ambush, killing many and capturing the rest."

"Then the man sitting in the shelter at the foot of the cliff is not king of Kali?" asked Hodon.

"He calls himself King of Kali, because he has captured the village," replied the man; "but I am king of Kali."

"You are Oose?" demanded Hodon.

"I am Oose, and the man who calls himself King of Kali is Fash, the king of Suvi."

"Then I have given the Emperor's message to the Emperor's enemy," said Hodon, "but how was I to know?"

"The message was for me?" asked Oose.

"For you," said Hodon, and then he repeated the message to Oose.

"It is bad," said Oose, "for now Fash is warned."

"How many warriors has he?" asked Hodon.

"I can count only to ten times the number of my fingers," said Oose. "We men of Kali are not wise like the men of Sari who had been

taught many things by Innes and Perry, but if I counted all of my fingers ten times; then I should say that Fash has five times that many warriors.”

Hodon shook his head. “I must escape,” he said; “for when I do not return after a couple of sleeps, the Emperor will come after me; and he will be outnumbered five to one.”

“You cannot escape,” said Oose. “Four warriors squat upon the ledge, and many warriors are at the foot of the Cliff.”

“Are we allowed on the ledge?” asked Hodon.

“If you have a good reason you will be allowed to go to the little cave at the far end of the ledge.”

“I have a good reason,” said Hodon, and he went to the mouth of the cave and spoke to one of the warriors on guard there.

The fellow grunted surly permission, and Hodon came out upon the ledge and moved slowly toward the little cave at the far end. He did not look down; but always up, scanning the face of the cliff to its summit, which was only a few feet above his head.

~

A warrior came to the shore of the Lural Az. He saw a ship anchored in a little cove a short distance off shore, and he shouted until he had attracted attention of those on board. A small boat floated beside the ship, and presently a number of copper colored warriors dove from the deck of the ship and clambered into the small boat, which they paddled toward the shore. When they had come close, they shouted to the warrior and asked him who he was and what he wanted.

“I bring a message from the king of Kali to the Emperor of Pellucidar,” the man replied; then the boat was brought to the shore,

and the messenger taken aboard. A few moments later he was hauled to the deck of the *Sari* and brought before David Innes.

“You bring a message from the king of Kali?” asked Innes. “Why did my own warrior not return with it as I ordered?”

“Hodon was ill; and he was very, very tired,” replied the messenger. “That there might be no delay, the King sent me.”

“What is the message?”

“The King asks that you come to Kali. He cannot leave Kali now because of the danger of attack.”

“I understand,” said Innes. “I shall come at once.”

“I will go ahead and tell the King. He will be very pleased. Will you come alone?”

“I will bring a hundred warriors with me,” replied Innes.

So David Innes started for Kali, and the messenger of Fash went ahead to carry the word to his king.

~

Hodon walked slowly along the ledge, examining every inch of the cliff face above him until he came to the little cave at the far end. Here the cliff dipped downward, and its summit was scarcely four feet above Hodon’s head. He turned and looked back along the ledge. One of the guards was watching him; so Hodon stooped and entered the little cave. He turned around immediately, waited a moment, and then looked out. The guard was still looking at him. Hodon retreated into the cave, remained there a short time, and then came boldly out. His heart sank — two members of the guard had their eyes on him. He knew that he must have just a moment while no one was looking in order to put his plan into successful operation. Now there was nothing to do but return to the prison cave.

Here he tried to think of some plan that would help him to carry out that which he had in mind, and finally he hit upon one. He moved over beside Oose, and sat down close to him; then he explained his plan in low whispers.

“We will do it,” said Oose; “but do not forget what I told you — you cannot escape.”

“I can try,” said Hodon.

After a while — whether an hour, a day, or a week of outer Earthly time, who may know? — the guard upon the ledge was changed; then Hodon went immediately to the mouth of the cave and asked permission to go to the small cave at the end of the ledge. Again he was granted permission.

He walked along the ledge slowly. This time he looked down. At the bottom of the cliff he saw women and children, but only a few warriors — perhaps just enough to guard the village. Where were the others? Hodon thought that he knew, and he chafed to make good his escape. If he did, would he be in time?

Just as he reached the little cave he heard shouts and yells behind him. They were muffled, as though they came from the interior of a cave. He glanced back, and saw the four guards running toward the prison cave. Hodon smiled.

Chapter 3

After David Innes left for Kali, Abner Perry busied himself upon a new project. He was determined to have something worth while to show Innes when he returned, for he was still a little depressed over the signal failure of his aeroplane.

He sent hunters out to slay dinosaurs — the largest they could find

— with orders to bring back only the peritonea of those they killed; and while they were gone he succeeded in capping a gas well which had been blowing millions of cubic feet of natural gas into the air of Pellucidar for — well, who knows for how long?

He had many women braiding rope, and others weaving a large basket — a basket four feet in diameter and three feet high. It was the largest basket the Sarians had ever seen.

While this work was going on, the messenger arrived from Innes instructing Ghak to set forth with many warriors. When they had departed there were few warriors left, and they had to remain in the village as a guard, except for a couple of hunters sent out daily for fresh meat. The village was full of women; but that did not interfere with Perry's plans, as the warriors had returned with more than enough peritonea.

The peritonea was stretched and dried and rubbed until they were thoroughly cured; then Perry cut them into strange shapes according to a pattern he had fashioned, and the women sewed them together with very fine stitches and sealed the seams with a cement that Perry thought would not be attacked by the constituents of natural gas.

When this work was complete, Perry attached the great bag to the basket with the ropes the women had braided; and to the bottom of the basket he attached a heavier rope that was five or six hundred feet long. No one in Sari had ever seen a rope like that, but they had long since ceased to marvel much at anything that Perry did.

With little ropes, many little ropes, Perry fastened the basket to the ground by means of pegs driven into the earth all around it; then he ran a clay pipe from the gas well into the opening at the small end of the bag. Perry had given birth to the balloon! To him it was the forerunner of a fleet of mighty dirigibles which could carry tons of

high-explosive bombs, and bring civilization to countless underprivileged cliff dwellers.

~

Hodon smiled, just a fleeting little smile that vanished almost as it was born; then he stooped before the little cave at the far end of the ledge and leaped upward. Hodon was proud of his legs; so was all Sari. They were the best legs in the Empire of Pellucidar, so far as anyone knew to the contrary; and they were just as marvelous at jumping as they were at running. They easily carried Hodon upward until his fingers could seize the top of the cliff. It was solid limestone. Hodon had determined that when he first examined the cliff. Had there been top soil right up to the edge of the cliff, the thing would not have been so easy — it might, in fact, have been impossible of accomplishment; but there was no top soil, and the hard stone did not crumble. It held magnificently, doing its part to thwart the evil machinations of the wicked Fash.

Sometimes we are annoyed by the studied perversities of inanimate objects, like collar buttons and quail on toast; but we must remember that, after all, some of them are the best friends of man. Take the dollar bill, for instance — but why go on? You can think of as many as I can.

So Hodon the Fleet One clambered over the summit of the cliff of Kali, and no man saw him go. When he had come he had carried a stone knife, but they had taken that from him. Now he must go absolutely unarmed across perhaps forty miles of danger ridden terrain, but he was not afraid. Sometimes I think that the men of the old stone age must have been very brave. They must have had to be very brave, as otherwise they could not have survived. The coward might have survived for a while — just long enough for him to starve

to death — but it took a brave man to go out and brave the terrific creatures he must have had to face to find food for himself and his family.

Hodon's only thought now was to reach David Innes before he ran into the ambush that he was sure Fash had laid for him. He moved swiftly, but he moved silently. Always every sense was alert for danger. His keen eyes ranged far ahead; his sensitive nostrils picked up every scent borne to them by each vagrant breeze. He was glad that he was running upwind, for now he could be warned of almost any danger that lay ahead.

Suddenly he caught a scent which brought a frown of puzzlement to his brow. It told him that there was a woman ahead of him — a lone woman — where there should not have been a woman. His judgment told him that there must be at least one man where there was a woman so far from a village, but his nostrils told him that there was no man.

He kept on in the direction of the woman, for that was the direction in which he was going. Now he went even more warily, if that were possible; and at last he saw her. Her back was toward him. She was moving slowly, looking in all directions. He guessed that she was afraid. She did not know that she was not alone until a hand fell upon her shoulder. She wheeled, a dagger in her hand — a slim dagger laboriously chipped from basalt — and as she wheeled, she struck a vicious blow at Hodon's breast.

Being a Pellucidarian, he had expected something like this; for one does not accost a strange lady with impunity in the stone age. So he was ready. He seized her wrist, and held it. Then she tried to bite him.

Hodon smiled down into her flashing eyes, for she was young and beautiful. "Who are you?" he demanded. "What are you doing out here so far from your village alone?"

“That is my business,” she said. “Let me go! You cannot keep me, for if you do I’ll surely kill you.”

“I can’t waste time on you,” said Hodon, “but you are too young and good looking to be left for the first stray tarag to make a meal of. You may come along with me, if you wish. We have only your dagger, but I’ll use it for you.”

“Tell me who you are,” she said, a trifle more amicably.

“I am Hodon of Sari,” he said.

“A Sarian! They are the friends of my father’s people. You are a Sarian, you will not harm me.”

“Who said I would. I *am* a Sarian. Now who are you?”

“I am O-aa, the daughter of Oose, King of Kali.”

“And you are running away because Fash has conquered your people. Am I right?” He released his hold upon her wrist, and she returned her dagger to its sheath.

“Yes, you are right,” she replied. “After Fash had conquered Kali, he took me for himself; but I escaped. It was well for Fash that I did, because I could have killed him. You see, I am the daughter of a king, and my mother was —”

“I have no time to listen to your life history,” said Hodon. “Are you coming with me, or not?”

“Where are you going?”

He told her.

“I do not like your manner; and I shall probably not like you,” said O-aa, “but I will come with you. You are better than nobody. Being the daughter of a king, I am accustomed to being treated with respect. All of my father’s people —”

“Come!” said Hodon. “You talk too much,” and he started off again in the direction of the coast.

O-aa trotted along at his side. "I suppose you will delay me," grumbled Hodon.

"I can run as fast and as far as you can. My mother's father was the fastest runner in all his country, and my brother —"

"You are not your mother's father nor are you your brother," said Hodon. "I am only interested in how fast and how far you can run. If you cannot keep up with me, you will be left behind. The fate of the Emperor is much more important than yours."

"You don't call this running, do you?" demanded O-aa, derisively. "Why, when I was a little girl I used to run down and capture the orthopi. Everyone marveled at my swiftness. Even my mother's father and my brother could not run down and capture the orthopi."

"You are probably lying," said Hodon, increasing his speed.

"For that, my brother will probably kill you," said O-aa. "He is a mighty warrior. He —"

Hodon was running so fast now that O-aa had not the breath for both running and talking, which was what Hodon had hoped for.

~

Ghak the hairy one, King of Sari, embarked a thousand warriors on two ships. They were much larger ships than the *Sari* which was the first successful ship that Perry had built and now practically obsolete. While the *Sari* had but two guns, one-pounders, one in the bow and the other in the stern, the newer ships had eight guns, four on each side on a lower deck; and they fired shells which occasionally burst when they were supposed to, but more often did not burst at all or prematurely. However, the cannon made a most satisfactory racket and emitted vast clouds of black smoke.

When Perry's first one-pounder was fired for the first time, the

cannon ball rolled out and fell on the ground in front of the cannon. Innes said that this had its advantages, since there would be no waste of ammunition — they could just pick the balls up and use them over again; but Perry's new pieces hurled a shell a full mile. He was very proud of them. The trouble was that the ships never found anyone to shoot at. There was no other known navy in Pellucidar except that of the Korsars, and Korsar is five thousand miles from Sari by water.

As Ghak's expeditionary force beat up the coast toward Kali, David Innes and his hundred warriors marched inland toward the village. Half of Innes's men were armed with the Perry musket, a smoothbore muzzle-loading flintlock; the other half carried bows and arrows. All had knives, and many carried the short spear that all Pellucidarians prefer. It hung by a leather thong about their necks and swung down their backs.

These men were all veterans — the *corps élite* of the Pellucidarian army. Perry had named them The Imperial Guard, and Innes had succeeded in inculcating some ideas of discipline upon their ruggedly individualistic egos. They marched now in a loose column of fours, and there were an advance guard and flankers. A hundred yards in front of the advance guard three warriors formed the point. Innes was taking no chance on an ambush.

They had covered about half the distance to Kali when the point halted at the summit of a little rise; then one of them turned and raced back toward the main body.

He came directly to Innes. "Many warriors are coming this way," he reported.

Innes disposed his men and advanced slowly. The musketeers were in the first line. As a rule the noise and smoke of one of their ragged volleys would frighten away almost any enemy; which was well;

because they seldom hit anybody. After they fired, the archers moved up through their ranks and formed the first line while the musketeers reloaded.

But none of this was necessary now; as a messenger came racing back from the point to say that the force approaching them was friendly — Oose's warriors coming to welcome them to Kali and escort them to the village, Innes went forward to investigate personally. At the top of the rise he found a hairy caveman waiting for him. Beyond, he saw a large force of warriors.

"Where is Oose?" he demanded.

"Oose is sick. He has a pain in his belly. He could not come; so he sent me to guide you to Kali."

"Why did he send so many warriors?"

"Because we are at war with Suvi, and Fash's warriors may be nearby."

Innes nodded. The explanation seemed reasonable. "Very well," he said, "lead the way."

His warriors advanced. Soon they were in contact with the warriors of the other party, and these offered them food. They seemed to wish to make friends. They moved among the warriors of The Imperial Guard, handing out food, passing rough jokes. They seemed much interested in the muskets, which they took in their hands and examined interestedly. Soon all the muskets of The Imperial Guard were in the hands of these friendly warriors, and four or five of them surrounded each member of the Guard.

~

Hodon had taken a short cut. He and O-aa had come over a hill through a forest, and now they halted at the edge of the forest and

looked down into the little valley below. In the valley were hundreds of warriors. Hodon's keen eyes picked out David Innes among them; they saw the muskets of the musketeers. Hodon was puzzled. He knew that most of those warriors were the warriors of Fash of Suvi, but there was no battle. The men appeared to be mingling in peace and friendship.

"I cannot understand it," he said. He was thinking out loud.

"I can," said O-aa.

"What do you understand?" asked Hodon. "Tell me in a few words without any genealogical notes."

O-aa bridled. "My brother —" she began.

"Oh, bother your brother!" cried Hodon. "Tell me what you think you understand. You can tell me while we are walking down there to join David Innes."

"You would be fool enough to do that," the girl sneered.

"What do you mean?"

"That is one of Fash's tricks. Wait and see. If you go down, you will soon be back in the prison cave — if they do not kill you instead; which would be good riddance."

She had scarcely ceased speaking, when the leader of the friendly warriors voiced a war whoop and, with several of his men, leaped upon David Innes and bore him to the ground. At the signal, the rest of the friendly warriors leaped upon the members of The Imperial Guard whom they had surrounded. There was some resistance, but it was futile. A few men were killed and a number wounded, but the outcome was inevitable. Inside of five minutes the survivors of The Imperial Guard had their hands tied behind their backs.

Then Fash came from behind a bush where he had been hiding and confronted David Innes. "You call yourself Emperor," he said with a

sneer. "You would like to be Emperor of all Pellucidar. You are too stupid. It is Fash who should be Emperor."

"You may have something there," said David Innes, "at least for the time being. What do you intend doing with us?"

"Those of your men who will promise to obey me shall live; I will kill the others."

"For every one of my men you kill, five Suvians shall die."

"You talk big, but you can do nothing. You are through, David Innes. You should have stayed in that other world you are said to have come from. It does not pay to come to Pellucidar and meddle. As for you, I do not know. Perhaps I shall kill you; perhaps I shall hold you and trade you for ships and guns. Now that I am also King of Kali, I can make use of ships with which to conquer the rest of Pellucidar. Now I am Emperor! I shall build a city on the shore of the Lural Az and all Pellucidar shall soon know who is Emperor."

"You have a big mouth," said Innes. "Perhaps you are digging your grave with it."

"I have a big fist, too," growled Fash, and with that, he knocked David Innes down.

At word from Fash, a couple of warriors yanked Innes to his feet. He stood there, the blood running from his mouth. A shout of anger rose from the men of The Guard.

David Innes looked straight into the shifty eyes of Fash, the king of Suvi. "You had better kill me, Fash," he said, "before you unbind my wrists."

~

Hodon looked on in consternation. There was nothing that he could do. He moved back into the forest, lest some of Fash's warriors see

him. Not that they could have caught him, but he did not wish them to know that their act had been witnessed by a friend of David Innes.

“You were right,” he said to O-aa. “It was a trick of Fash’s.”

“I am always right,” said O-aa. “It used to make my brother very angry.”

“I can well understand that,” said Hodon.

“My brother —”

“Yes, yes,” said Hodon; “but haven’t you any other relatives than a brother and a mother’s father?”

“Yes, indeed,” cried O-aa. “I have a sister. She is very beautiful. All the women in my mother’s family have always been very beautiful. They say my mother’s sister was the most beautiful woman in Pellucidar. I look just like her.”

“So you have a mother’s sister!” exclaimed Hodon. “The family tree is growing. I suppose that will give you something more to talk about.”

“That is a peculiar thing about the women of my family,” said O-aa; “they seldom talk, but when they do —”

“They never stop,” said Hodon, sadly.

“I could talk if I had some one of intelligence to listen to me,” said O-aa.

Chapter 4

The gas bag of Perry’s balloon filled rapidly. It billowed upon the ground and grew larger. It rose above its basket. The eyes of the Sarians grew wide in astonishment. It grew fat stretching its envelope. It tugged at the guy ropes.

Perry shut off the gas. There were tears on the old man's cheeks as he stood there fondling the great thing with his eyes.

"It is a success!" he murmured. "The very *first* time it is a success."

Dian the Beautiful came and slipped her arm through his. "It is wonderful, Abner," she said; "but what is it for?"

"It is a balloon, my dear," explained Perry. "It will take people up into the air."

"What for?" asked Dian the Beautiful.

Perry cleared his throat. "Well, my dear, for many reasons."

"Yes?" inquired Dian. "What, for instance?"

"Come, come," said Perry; "you wouldn't understand."

"How could they get down again?" she asked.

"You see that big rope? It is attached to the bottom of the basket. The other end of the rope passes around the drum of this windlass we have built. After the balloon has ascended as high as we wish it to we turn the windlass and pull it down."

"Why would anyone wish to go up there?" asked Dian. "There is nothing up there but air and we have plenty of air down here."

"Just think of all the country you could see from way up there," said Perry. "You could see all the way to the Lural Az. With my binoculars, you might see all the way to Amoz."

"Could I see David, if he were coming back?"

"You could see his ships on the Lural Az a long way off," said Perry, "and you could see a large body of marching men almost as far as Greenwich."

"I shall go up in your balloon, Perry," said Dian the Beautiful. "Go and get your bi-bi-whatever you called them, that I may look through them and see if David is returning. I have slept many times

and we have had no word from him since his messenger came summoning Ghak.”

“I think that we had better test it first,” said Perry. “There might be something wrong with it. There have been isolated instances where some of my inventions have not functioned entirely satisfactorily upon their initial trial.”

“Yes,” agreed Dian the Beautiful.

“I shall put a bag of earth of more than twice your weight in the basket, send it up, and haul it down. That should prove an entirely adequate test.”

“Yes,” said Dian, “and please hurry.”

“You are sure you are not afraid to go up?” asked Perry.

“When was a woman of Sari ever afraid?” demanded Dian.

~

Hodon retraced his steps to the summit of the cliff above Kali. He had a plan, but it all depended upon Fash’s imprisoning David Innes in the cave on the upper ledge of the village.

Just before he reached the summit of the cliff, he stopped and told O-aa to remain hidden among some bushes. “*And do not talk!*” he commanded.

“Why?” asked O-aa. “Who are you to tell me that I cannot talk?”

“Never mind about that,” said Hodon, “and don’t start telling me about any of your relations. They make me sick, just remember this: if you talk, one of the warriors on guard may hear you and then there will be an investigation. And remember one more thing: if you talk before I come back here, I’ll cut your throat. Can you remember that?”

“Wait until my brother —”

“Shut up!” snapped Hodon and walked away toward the top of the cliff.

As he neared it he got down on his belly and crawled. He wormed his way forward like an Apache Indian; and like an Apache Indian he carried a little bush in one hand. When he was quite close to the cliff edge, he held the little bush in front of his face and advanced but an inch at a time. At last he could peer over the edge and down upon the village of Kali. Once in position he did not move. He waited, waited with the infinite patience of primitive man.

He thought of David Innes, for whom he would have gladly laid down his life. He thought of O-aa and he smiled. She had spirit and the Sarians liked women with spirit. Also she was undeniably beautiful. The fact that she knew it detracted nothing from her charm. She would have been a fool if she hadn't known it, and a hypocrite if she had pretended that she did not know that she was beautiful. It was true that she talked too much, but a talkative woman was better than a sullen one.

Hodon thought that O-aa might be very desirable but he knew that she was not for him — she had too frankly emphasized her dislike of him. However one sometimes took a mate against her will. He would give the matter thought. One trouble with that was that David Innes did not approve of the old fashioned method of knocking a lady over the head with a club and dragging her off to one's cave. He had made very strict laws on the subject. Now no man could take a mate without the girl's consent.

As these thoughts were passing through his mind he saw warriors approaching the village. They kept coming into view from an opening in the forest. Yes, it was the Suvians with their prisoners. He saw David Innes walking with his head up, just as he always walked in paths of

peace or paths of war. No one ever saw David Innes's chin on his chest. Hodon was very proud of him.

There was a brief halt at the foot of the cliff, and then some of the prisoners were herded toward the cliff and up the ladders. Would David Innes be one of these? So much depended on it that Hodon felt his heart beating a little faster.

All the prisoners could not be accommodated in the prison cave on the upper ledge. Some of them would have to be confined elsewhere or destroyed. Hodon was sure that no member of The Imperial Guard would accept Fash's offer and prove a traitor to the Empire.

Yes! At last here came David Innes! The guards were particularly cruel to him. They prodded him with spears as he climbed the rickety ladders. They had removed the bonds from his wrists, but they had seen that he was at a safe distance from Fash before they did so.

Up and up he climbed. At last he was on the topmost ladder. Inwardly, Hodon whooped for joy. Now there was a chance. Of course his plan was full of bugs, but there was one chance in a hundred that it might succeed — one wild chance.

Just one little hour of night would have simplified things greatly but Hodon knew nothing of night. From the day of his birth he had known only one long, endless day, with the stationary sun hanging perpetually at zenith. Whatever he did now, as always, would have to be done in broad daylight among a people who had no set hours for sleeping; so that at least a half of them could be depended upon to be awake and watchful at all times.

He watched until he saw David Innes enter the prison cave; then he crawled back to O-aa. She was fast asleep! How lovely she looked. Her slim, brown body was almost naked, revealing the perfection of its contours. Hodon knelt beside her. For a moment he forgot David

Innes, duty, honor. He seized O-aa and lifted her in his arms. He pressed his lips to hers. She awakened with a start. With the speed and viciousness of a cat, she struck — she struck him once across the mouth with her hand, and then her dagger sprang from its sheath.

Hodon leaped quickly back, but not quite quickly enough; the basalt blade ripped a six-inch slash in his chest. Hodon grinned.

“Well done,” he said. “Some day you are going to be my mate, and I shall be very proud of you.”

“I would as soon mate with a jalok,” she said.

“You will mate with me of your own free will,” said Hodon, “and now come and help me.”

Chapter 5

“You think you understand perfectly what you are to do?” asked Hodon a few minutes later, after carefully explaining his plan to O-aa.

“You are bleeding,” said O-aa.

“It is nothing but a flesh wound,” said Hodon.

“Let me get some leaves and stop it.”

“Later,” said Hodon. “You are sure you understand?”

“Why did you want to kiss me?” asked O-aa. “Was it just because I am so beautiful?”

“If I tell you, will you answer my question?”

“Yes,” said O-aa.

“I think it was just because you are O-aa,” said Hodon.

O-aa sighed. “I understand all that I am to do,” she said. “Let us commence.”

Together they gathered several large and small pieces of sandstone from a weathered outcropping, and inched them up to the very edge of

the cliff. One very large piece was directly over the ladder which led to the next ledge below; others were above the mouth of the prison cave.

When this was accomplished, Hodon went into the forest and cut several long lianas and dragged them close to the cliff; then he fastened an end of each of them to trees which grew a few yards back.

“Now!” he whispered to O-aa.

“Do not think,” she said, “because I have helped you and have not slipped my dagger between your ribs, that I do not hate you. Wait until my brother —”

“Yes,” said Hodon. “After we have finished this you may tell me all about your brother. You will have earned the right. You have been splendid, O-aa. You will make a wonderful mate.”

“I shall make a wonderful mate,” agreed O-aa, “but not for you.”

“Come on,” said Hodon, “and keep your mouth shut — if you can.”

She gave him a venomous look, but she followed him toward the edge of the cliff. Hodon looked over to be sure that everything was as he hoped it would be. He nodded his head at O-aa, and grinned.

He pushed the great stone nearer the edge, and O-aa did the same with some of her smaller ones. She watched Hodon very closely, and when she saw him pushing his over the edge, she stood up and hurled one of hers down.

The big stone struck the two guards squatting at the top of the ladder, carrying them and the ladder crashing down from ledge to ledge, carrying other ladders with them.

Hodon ran to the rocks that O-aa was hurling down, and O-aa ran to the lianas and dropped them over the edge. Hodon was calling David Innes by name. One of the other two guards had been hit and

had fallen over the cliff; then David Innes and some of the other prisoners ran from the cave.

Only one guard opposed them. Neither O-aa or Hodon had been able to strike him with a rock. David Innes rushed him, and the guard met him on the narrow ledge with his short spear. As he lunged at Innes, the latter seized the weapon and struggled to wrench it from the Suvian's grasp. The two men wrestled for the weapon on the brink of eternity. At any moment either of them might be precipitated to the foot of the cliff. The other prisoners seemed too stunned or too anxious to escape to go to Innes's assistance, but not Hodon. Sensing the danger to his chief, he slid down one of the lianas and ran to Innes's side. With a single blow he knocked the Suvian over the edge of the cliff; then he pointed to the lianas.

"Hurry!" he said. "They are already starting up the Canyon to climb the cliff and head us off."

Each on a different liana, the two men clambered to the summit. Already most of the Kalians had disappeared into the forest. Innes had been the only Sarian confined on the upper ledge. Oose had not run away. He and another Kalian were talking with O-aa. Oose's companion was a squat, bearded fellow with a most unprepossessing countenance. He looked like a throwback to a Neanderthal type. As Hodon and Innes approached the three, they heard O-aa say, "I will not!"

"Yes, you will," snapped Oose. "I am your father and your king. You will do as I tell you. Blug is a mighty hunter, a mighty fighter. He will make a fine mate. He has a large cave and three other women to lighten your labors."

O-aa stamped a sandaled foot. "I tell you I will not. I would just as soon mate with a Sagoth."

Now, the Sagoths are those half human gorilla men who did the

strong arm work for the Mahars, the reptiles who dominated Pellucidar before David Innes drove them away — at least away from that portion of the inner world of which he was Emperor. O-aa could scarcely have voiced a more comprehensive insult.

Blug growled angrily. “Enough!” he said. “I take her.” He reached for O-aa, but Hodon stepped between them and struck Blug’s hand away.

“You do not take her,” he said. “O-aa chooses her own mate.”

Blug, being more or less of an inarticulate low-brow, with a short temper, replied to words with action. He swung a terrific blow at Hodon that might well have felled a bos, had there been a bos there and had the blow landed; but there was no bos and the blow did not land. Hodon ducked under it, picked Blug up and hurled him heavily to the ground.

Blug was surprised and so was Oose, for Hodon looked like no match for the massive Blug. Hodon’s muscles rolled smoothly beneath his bronzed skin — deceptively. They had great strength and they possessed agility. Blug had only strength; but he had courage, too — the courage of stupidity. He scrambled to his feet and charged Hodon — charged like a wild bull. And this time Hodon struck him full in the mouth and dropped him in his tracks.

“Enough of this!” snapped David Innes. “If you stand here fighting, we shall all be captured.”

“Enough,” said Oose to Blug.

“I shall kill him later, then,” said Blug.

“What — again?” asked Hodon. He looked about him.

“Where is O-aa?” he asked.

O-aa had fled. While the two men fought, she had run away. Maybe

she thought, as Blug and Oose had thought, that Blug would easily kill Hodon.

“I did not see her go,” said Oose. “When I find her, I shall beat her and give her to Blug.”

“Not if I’m around,” said Hodon.

“You should not interfere in the affairs of others, Hodon,” counselled David.

“It is my affair,” said Hodon.

Innes shrugged. “Very well,” he said; “but if it’s your own funeral, too, do not say that I did not warn you. Now we must get away from here.”

“There are some caves farther up the coast,” said Oose, “that we have used at other times that Kali has been invaded. My people have probably gone there. We had better go there also.”

“I shall remain near here,” said Innes. “Many of my warriors are prisoners here. I cannot desert them.”

“I will stay with you,” said Hodon.

Oose and Blug moved away into the forest. “If you are around here when I come back,” said the latter to Hodon, “I will kill you. I will bring my mate back to see me do it. I shall find O-aa at the other caves, and there I shall take her.”

“You have a big mouth,” said Hodon. “It fills so much of your head that there is no room for brains.”

Blug did not retort. He could think of nothing to say, his powers of repartee being limited; so he disappeared into the forest wrapped in the gloomy cloak of anger.

“I hear the Suvians coming,” said Innes.

“Yes,” replied Hodon. “Come with me. I have become a little

familiar with parts of this land, and I know where we can find a hiding place.”

“I do not like to hide,” said David Innes.

“Nor I; but two men cannot fight five hundred.”

“You are right,” said Innes. “Lead the way. I will follow you.”

They moved away very quietly, Hodon trying to find rocks to step on wherever he could and Innes stepping always in the exact spots that Hodon stepped. When they came to a little stream, Hodon entered it and walked up its bed. It would take an excellent tracker to follow them at all.

Chapter 6

Perry beamed with satisfaction, and Dian the Beautiful clapped her hands ecstatically. Many other Sarians, mostly women and children, stood open mouthed and goggle eyed. Every head was tilted back, every eye looked straight aloft to where a great gas bag partially eclipsed the eternal noonday sun. The balloon was a success.

Its basket loaded with rock, it had risen at the end of its rope, as four stalwart Sarians payed out on the windlass. Everyone was surprised, none more so than Abner Perry; for this was the first one of his “inventions” that functioned on its initial trial. He would not have been greatly surprised had it instead of going up bored itself into the ground.

“This is a great day for Pellucidar, Dian,” he said. “Won’t David be surprised!”

~

True enough David was due for a big surprise.

As those who had been left behind in Sari watched the swaying balloon, like little children with a new toy, Ghak the Hairy One and his thousand fighting men sailed on toward Kali.

And Hodon led David Innes to a little canyon into the head of which tumbled a mountain brook in a waterfall of exquisite beauty. Continually watered by the spray and warmed by the never failing sun, lush vegetation swarmed up the side of the cliff and spread out on the floor of the valley. Great sprays of orchids trailed down the rocky face of the cliff, gorgeous corsages pinned to the breast of the mountain. Flowers that withered and died forever on the outer crust eons ago challenged the beauty of the orchids, and hidden behind this mass of greenery and blooms was a little cave — a cave that could be defended by a single warrior against an army of stone age men.

“Beautiful!” exclaimed Innes, “and not far from Kali. We can stay here until Ghak comes. We will take turns watching for him. Really, we should watch by the sea; but I want to be where I can also watch Kali; here my warriors are imprisoned. Perhaps an opportunity will come for us to get them out of the prison caves.”

Fruit and nuts grew in abundance on the trees and shrubs of the little canyon; but fighting men require meat; and one must have weapons to have meat. These two had not even a stone knife between them, but the first men had no weapons originally. They had to make them.

Innes and Hodon went into the little stream and hunted around until they found a large mussel. They pried it open with a sharp stone, and each took a half shell. With these they cut two pieces of bamboo-like arborescent grass to form the hafts of two spears. Searching again they collected a number of stones: soft stones, hard stones, flat stones, stones with sharp edges; and with some of these they chipped and

scraped at others until they had fashioned two spear heads and a couple of crude knives. While Hodon was finding the toughest fibers with which to bind the spear heads to the hafts, Innes made a bow and some arrows, for this was one of his favorite weapons.

How long all this took, of course there was no way of telling, only that they ate several times and slept once. All in all, it may have taken them a week of outer earthly time, or half a day, or a year. Occasionally one of them would go to a high point in the hills and look out across the country toward the coast always hoping to see Ghak the Hairy One and his warriors.

~

Hodon was hunting. He had gone out north-east of Kali a little farther this time than usual; for his luck had not been good. He had seen some game — red deer and orthopi, the little primitive three toed horse that once ranged the outer crust — but something had always happened to frighten them away before he could get within spear range.

Of a sudden he heard a terrific roaring, and the crash of a heavy body coming through the undergrowth of the forest. Hodon looked for a tree that could be easily and swiftly scaled. He knew the author of that roar. It was a cave lion and the less business he had with a cave lion the happier he would be and the longer he would live.

He had just found a nice tree when he saw something burst from the underbrush in the direction from which the roaring was coming, but it was not a cave lion. It was O-aa. She was running like a scared rabbit and right behind her was the cave lion.

Hodon forgot the tree. The lion was not making as good progress through the underbrush as was O-aa. She was leaping as lightly and almost as swiftly as a springbok. Hodon ran to meet her.

“Go back!” she cried. “It is Ta-ho.”

Hodon could see that it was Ta-ho, but he didn't go back. As O-aa passed him, he knelt and jammed the butt of his spear into the ground, holding the haft at an angle, the stone point ahead of him.

The spear was a little short for the purpose for which he was using it. With a long spear some great hunters had killed the cave lion and the sabertooth tiger thus; but with a short spear such as his, one would be almost sure to be mauled to death before death came to the beast. However, Hodon had never hesitated from the moment that he had seen O-aa.

The great lion rose snarling above him, its face a hideous mask of savagery; and then its momentum hurled it upon the spear point. Instantly Hodon leaped to one side and drew his puny stone knife; then he threw himself upon the back of the pain maddened beast tangling the fingers of one hand in its mane while with the other he plunged his knife through the thick hide into the beast's side.

The lion threw itself from side to side. It turned to seize the man-thing. It rolled upon the ground to dislodge him; and then, quite suddenly, it rolled over on its side. The spear had pierced its heart.

Hodon stood up and looked around him, searching for O-aa. She was nowhere in sight. He called her by name, but there was no answer. So, he had risked his life for her and she had run away from him! At that moment Hodon almost became a misogynist.

He started out to look for her with the intention of giving her a good beating when he found her. Being an excellent tracker it did not take him long to pick up her trail. He followed it as silently as though he were stalking the wariest of game for that he knew she would be.

Beyond the edge of the forest he saw her. Evidently she thought that she had eluded him, for she was walking along quite nonchalantly.

The sight of her impertinent little back goaded Hodon to fury. He decided that a beating was far from adequate punishment; so he drew his stone knife from its scabbard and ran quietly after her determined to cut her throat.

After all, Hodon the Fleet One was only a cave man of the stone age. His instincts were primitive and direct, but they were sometimes faulty — as in this instance. He thought that the feeling that he harbored for O-aa was hate, when, as a matter of fact, it was love. Had he not loved her, he would not have cared that she ran away from him while he was risking his life for her. There are few sentiments more closely allied and inextricably intermingled than love and hate, but of this Hodon was not aware. At that moment he hated O-aa with utter single-mindedness and abandon.

He caught up with O-aa and seized her by the hair, spinning her around so that he looked down into her upturned face. That was a mistake, if he really wished to kill her. Only a man with a stone where his heart should have been could have slit O-aa's throat while looking into her face.

O-aa's eyes were very wide. "You are going to kill me?" she asked. "When my brother —"

"Why did you run away from me?" demanded Hodon. "I might have been killed."

"I did not run away until I saw Ta-ho roll over dead," said O-aa.

"Why did you run away then?" Hodon's knife hand hung at his side, and he loosened his grasp on O-aa's hair. Hodon's rage was oozing out through his eyes as they looked into the eyes of O-aa.

"I ran away because I am afraid of you. I do not wish to mate with you or any other man until I am ready. No man has won me yet."

"I have fought for you," Hodon reminded her. "I have killed Ta-ho in your defense."

"Ta-ho is not a man," said O-aa, as though that settled the whole matter.

"But I fought Blug for you. Every time I fight for you you run away. Why do you do that?"

"That time, I was running away from Blug. I thought he would kill you and then come after me; and anyway, fighting Blug was nothing — you didn't kill him. I saw Blug and my father afterward, but they did not see me."

"So, I shall have to kill a man before you will mate with me?" demanded Hodon.

"Why, of course. I think you will have to kill Blug. I do not understand why he did not kill you when you fought. If I were you I should keep out of Blug's way. He is a very great fighter. I think he would break you in two. I should like to see that fight."

Hodon looked at her for a long minute; then he said, "I think you are not worth having for a mate."

O-aa's eyes flashed. "It is a good thing for you that my brother did not hear you say that," she said with asperity.

"There you go," said Hodon, "dragging in your family again. I am sick and tired of hearing of your family all the time."

As they talked, unconscious of any but themselves, six strange-looking creatures crept toward them through the underbrush.

Chapter 7

The four Sarians at the windlass wound the balloon down to earth, and held it there while others removed the stone ballast. Everyone clustered

around, examining it and heaping praise on Abner Perry. And Perry was so proud and happy that he felt like doing a little dance.

“And now,” said Dian, “I shall go up.”

“Perhaps you had better wait until David comes,” counselled Perry. “Something might happen.”

“It took all that rock up,” argued Dian, “and I do not weigh as much as the rock.”

“That is not the point,” said Perry. “It would take you up, all right; but I don’t think you should go until after David gets back. As I said before, something might happen.”

“Well, I am going,” said Dian.

“What if I forbade it?” asked Perry.

“I should go anyhow. Am I not Empress of Pellucidar?” She smiled as she said it; but Perry knew that, Empress of Pellucidar or not, Dian the Beautiful would go up in the balloon if she wished to.

“Very well,” he said; “I’ll let you go up a little way.”

“You’ll let me go up to the end of the rope,” she said. “I want to see if David is coming home.”

“Very well,” said Perry, resignedly. “Get in.”

The other Sarians clustered around Dian as she clambered into the basket. Here was a new experience far beyond anything that they had ever imagined, and Dian the Beautiful was about to have it. They all envied her. They made little jokes and told her what to look for when she got up to the sun. They asked her all the questions outer Earth people might have asked under similar circumstances — all but one: nobody asked her if she were afraid. One does not ask a Sarian if he is afraid.

Perry signalled to the four men at the windlass and the balloon

commenced to rise. Dian the Beautiful clapped her hands happily. "Faster!" she called to the four men at the windlass.

"Slower!" said Perry. "Take it easy."

Up and up went the great gas bag. A little breeze caught it, and it swayed to, and fro. Dian felt very small up there all alone with that huge thing billowing above her.

"Can you see David?" some one shouted.

"Not yet," shouted Dian, "but I can see the Lural Az. Send me up higher!"

Soon almost all the rope was out, and Perry was glad; for then he could start pulling the balloon down. He was anxious to see Dian the Beautiful on *terra firma* again. Perhaps Perry had a premonition.

~

The terrible creatures crept closer and closer to Hodon and O-aa. They were men, naked black men with long, prehensile tails. Their brows protruded above small, close-set eyes; and there was practically no head above the brows. Short, stiff black hair grew straight out from their skulls; but their outstanding feature was a pair of tusks that curved down from the upper jaw to below the chin.

"I wish," O-aa was saying, "that you would go away and leave me alone. I do not like you. If my brother —"

It was then that the creatures charged, roaring like beasts. With hands and tails, they seized Hodon and O-aa; and the two were helpless in their grasp. Chattering and jabbering among themselves they dragged their prisoners off into the forest.

Hodon tried to talk to them; but they did not understand him, nor could he understand them. They were very rough, slapping and cuffing their captives without provocation.

“Now we shall die,” said O-aa.

“What makes you think so?” asked Hodon. “If they had intended to kill us, they could have done so when they attacked us.”

“Do you not know what they are?” asked O-aa.

“No,” said Hodon. “I have never seen nor heard of such creatures before.”

“They are the sabertooth men,” she said. Of course she did not use the word saber. What she said was, roughly, the taragtooth-men — the tarag being the sabertooth tiger. “They are man eaters,” she added for good measure.

“You mean they are taking us home to eat?” demanded Hodon.

“Exactly,” said O-aa.

“If you had come with me long ago, this would not have happened to you,” said Hodon.

“Oh, there are worse things than being eaten by a sabertooth man,” rejoined O-aa.

“Maybe you are right,” agreed Hodon; “having to hear about your family, for instance.”

“My brother is a mighty fighter,” said O-aa. “He could break you in two, and my sister is very beautiful. You have no women in Sari so beautiful as my sister. She is almost as beautiful as I. My mother’s father was so strong that he could carry the carcass of a full grown bos on his back.”

“Now, I know you are lying,” said Hodon. “Why must you lie so much, and always about your family? I am not interested in your family. I am only interested in you.”

“My father is a king,” said O-aa.

“He can be a Sagoth, for all I care. I do not wish to mate with your father.”

“Now you will never mate with anybody,” said O-aa. “Instead, you will be eaten by a sabertooth man and his mate.”

“Maybe the same man will eat us both,” said Hodon, grinning. “Then we shall be truly mated.”

“If he does that to me I will give him a pain in his belly,” said O-aa.

“You do not like me very well,” said Hodon.

“You are very stupid, if you have only just discovered that,” replied O-aa.

“I do not understand why you don’t like me. I am not bad to look at. I would be kind to you, and I can certainly protect you.”

“This looks like it,” said O-aa.

Hodon subsided.

Two of the sabertooth men each had his tail wrapped around the neck of one of the captives. Thus they dragged them along, while other sabertooth men pushed, and slapped, and kicked their prisoners from the rear. The grotesque blacks kept jabbering. They reminded Hodon of the little hairy men who lived in the trees of the forests.

The cliff of Kali is the last rampart of a range of mountains that extends toward the north-east, parallel with the coast of the Lural Az. It was into these mountains that O-aa and Hodon were being dragged. The terrain became rougher as they ascended, the limestone formation giving way to volcanic rock. Extinct volcanos were visible on either hand. The vegetation was sparse and poor. It was a tough country.

Buffeted and bruised, the prisoners were dragged at last to a yawning hole in the side of a mountain. Inside it was dark as a pocket, but the sabertooth men did not even pause on the threshold. Still jabbering, they entered the cavern and raced along as though in broad daylight. Neither O-aa nor Hodon could see a thing. They felt the smooth surface of the rock beneath their sandals and they could tell

that they were ascending. Presently the ascent became so steep that they would have fallen back had not their captors supported them. Up and up they went, dragged by their necks. In the grip of the choking tails they were gasping for breath.

At last the ascent became absolutely perpendicular and here were long lianas depending from above and there was daylight. Above them they could see a round opening into which the sun shone, and they could see that they were ascending a circular shaft. They did not know it, but they were in a volcanic tube.

The sabertooth men swarmed up the lianas, dragging O-aa and Hodon with them; and when they reached the top of the tube both their prisoners were unconscious. Then they released them, and the two lay as though dead where they had fallen.

~

Dian the Beautiful looked out across forest and rolling hills and fertile plains. She saw great herds of bos and red deer and herbivorous dinosaurs feeding on the lush vegetation. She saw the Lural Az curving upward, like Professor Einstein's time and space, until it was simply lost in the distance; for there is no horizon in Pellucidar. She saw Anoroc Island, where the copper colored Mezops dwell in their tree houses; and beyond Anoroc, the Luana Islands. She could have seen Greenwich, had it been more than an imaginary spot on an imaginary map. But she saw no sign of David Innes, though she strained her eyes until the tears came to them.

The four men at the windlass kept letting out more and more rope, their eyes on the balloon and not on the drum. Perry was watching the balloon, too. He felt that Dian the Beautiful had gone high enough and had been up long enough to have seen all that there was to see; so he

turned to the men at the windlass to order them to haul the balloon down. What he saw brought a scream of horror from his throat.

~

At the same time, David Innes stood upon a promontory above Kali and looked out toward the Lural Az. He was looking for Ghak the Hairy One, but his search was no more successful than had Dian's been. Slowly he made his way back to the hidden canyon. Hodon would have returned with meat, he thought; and they would feast, but Hodon was not there.

David went into the cave and slept, and when he awoke there was still no sign of Hodon. So David went out and made a kill himself. He ate many times and slept twice more, and still Hodon had not returned. Now David became worried, for he knew that Hodon would have returned had all been well with him. He determined to go and search for him, though he knew that it would be like searching for a needle in a hay stack.

He found Hodon's almost obliterated tracks, and he came upon the carcass of the cave lion. The dagger wounds in the beast's side and the spear wound in its breast told a graphic story. Then he discovered the prints of O-aa's little sandals.

What he read when he came to the spot at which the two had been captured by the sabertooth men filled him with apprehension. He saw great splayed, manlike footprints, and the trail of the party leading away to the north-east. For the most part, the spoor of O-aa and Hodon was obliterated by that of their captors; but David Innes saw enough to know that a party of creatures unknown to him had captured O-aa and Hodon.

There was but one thing to do: he must follow. This he did until

the trail entered the dark mouth of the volcanic tube. He went in a short distance, but he could neither see nor hear anything; he felt a strong wind sucking in past him toward the interior of the cave. He came out and examined the terrain. Above him lay the slope of an extinct volcano. He could see the rim of the crater sharply defined against the blue of the sky. Suddenly he had an inspiration, and he commenced the ascent of the mountain.

~

When Hodon and O-aa regained consciousness they were still lying where they had fallen. All around them rose the walls of a volcanic crater, the level floor of which was covered with verdure. In the center was a small lake of blue water. Rude shelters were dotted about.

They found themselves surrounded by sabertooth people — men, women, and children. There was much jabbering in the strange, monkey-like language of these hideous people. They snarled and growled at one another and occasionally one of them would try to grab either O-aa or Hodon with a long, prehensile tail. Three or four large males stood close to the captives, and every time one of their fellows tried to seize either of them, he would be set upon and chased away. It was apparent to Hodon that they were being guarded, but why?

After they regained consciousness, these guards jerked them to their feet and led them away toward one of the shacks — an open structure with a flimsy grass roof. Here a large male squatted on the ground, and beside him was the strangest looking human being either Hodon or O-aa had ever seen. He was a little, wizened old man with a white beard that almost concealed the rest of his features. He had no teeth, and his eyes were the eyes of a very old man.

“Well,” he said, looking them over, “you’re certainly in a fix. Back

in Cape Cod, we'd say you was in a Hell of a fix; but we ain't back in Cape Cod, and you never heard of Hell, unless this here place is it, which I sometimes believe; for doesn't the Good Book tell us that people go down to Hell? or doesn't it? Well, I dunno; but I came down to get to this here place, an' I don't believe Hell could be much worse." He spoke in Pellucidarian with a Cape Cod accent. "Well," he continued, taking a breath, "here you are. Do you know what's goin' to happen to you?"

"No," said Hodon; "do you?"

"Well, they'll probably fatten you up and eat you. That's what they usually do. They might keep you a long time. They're funny that way. You see they ain't no such thing as time down here; so how's a body to know how long it will be before you get fat or before they eat you? God only knows how long I been here. I had black hair and a good set o' teeth when I come, but look at me now! Maybe they'll keep you until your teeth fall out. I hope so, because I get danged lonesome for company down here. These here things aren't very good company."

"Why haven't they I eaten you?" asked Hodon.

"Well, that there's a long story. I'll tell you all about it — if they don't eat you too quick."

The large sabertooth man sitting beside the old man now commenced to jabber at him, and the old man jabbered back in the same strange tongue; then he turned to Hodon.

"He wants to know where you come from and if there's more like you real handy. He says that if you'll guide his people to your village, he won't have you killed right away."

"Tell him I've got to rest first," said Hodon. "Maybe I can think of a village where the people are all nice and fat."

The old man turned and translated this to the sabertooth man, who replied at some length.

“He says that’s all right, and he’ll send some of his people with you right away.”

“Tell him I’ve got to rest first,” said Hodon.

After some further conversation between the sabertooth man and the old man, the latter said: “You can come with me now. I’m to look after you until you have rested.”

He got up, and Hodon and O-aa followed him to another shelter, which was much more substantially built than the others.

“This is my cabin,” said the old man. “Sit down and make yourselves at home. I built this myself. Got all the comforts of home!” The comforts of home were a bunk filled with dried grass, a table, and a bench.

“Tell me how you got here, and why they don’t eat you,” said Hodon.

“Well, the reason they don’t eat me, or rather the reason they didn’t eat me at first, was because I saved the life of that fellow you seen sitting beside me. He’s chief. I think about the only reason they don’t eat me now is because I’m too damned old and tough.

“Now, as to how I got here, I come from a place you never even heard of in a world you never heard of. You don’t know it, but you’re living in the center of a round ball; and on the outside is another world, entirely different from this one. Well, I come from that other world on the outside.

“I was a seafarin’ man up there. Used to go whalin’ up around the Arctic. Last time I went was an awful open summer up there. We went farther north than we’d ever been before, and no ice — just a great open polar sea as far as the eye could reach.

“Well, everything was lovely till we run into the worst dod-blasted storm you ever seen; and the *Dolly Dorcas* was wrecked. The *Dolly Dorcas* was my ship. I dunno what become of the others, but there was eight of us in the boat I was in. We had food an’ water an’ a compass an’ sails as well as oars; but still it didn’t look very good. We was way up in the Arctic Ocean an’ winter comin’ on. We could just about kiss ourselves goodbye.

“We sailed what we thought was south for a long time, and all the time the compass kept acting stranger an’ stranger. You’d thought the dod-blasted thing had gone crazy. Then we ran out o’ food, an’ the fust thing you knowed we commenced to eat one another — startin’ in on the weakest first. Then some of ’em went crazy; an’ two jumped overboard, which was a dirty trick when they knew we craved meat so bad.

“Well, to make a long story short, as the feller said, finally they wasn’t nobody left but me; and then, dod-blast it, if the weather didn’t commence to get warmer, and pretty soon I sighted land and found fruits and nuts, and fresh water. Believe me, it was just in time too; for I was so doggone hungry I was thinkin’ of cuttin’ off one of my legs an’ eatin’ it.”

O-aa sat wide eyed and wondering, drinking in every word. Hodon had never known her to be silent for so long. At last she had met her match.

“What’s become of your brother and your mother’s father?” asked Hodon.

“Eh! What’s that?” demanded the old man.

“I was speaking to O-aa,” said Hodon.

“Well, don’t interrupt me. You talk too much. Now, where was I? You got me all confused.”

“You were thinking of eating your leg,” said O-aa.

“Yes, yes. Well, to make a long story short, as the feller said, I was in Pellucidar. How I ever lived, I’ll be doggone if I know; but I did. I got in with one tribe after another, an’ none of ’em killed me for one reason or another. I learned the language an’ how to hunt with spears. I made out somehow. Finally I stole a canoe an’ set sail on the biggest doggone ocean you ever seen. My beard was a yard long when I landed near here an’ got captured by these things.

“Well, I better start feedin’ you an’ fattenin’ you up. I reckon this gal will be pretty tasty eatin’ right soon.” He reached out and pinched O-aa’s flesh. “Yum!” he exclaimed. “She’s just about right now.”

“Do you eat human flesh?” demanded Hodon.

“Well, you see I sort o’ acquired a taste for it after the *Dolly Dorcas* was wrecked. Ole Bill was a mite tough an’ rank, but there was a Swede I et who was just about the nicest eatin’ you ever see. Yes, I eat what the Lord furnishes. I reckon I’m goin’ to enjoy both of you.”

“I thought you said you hoped they wouldn’t eat us, because you would like to have our company,” said O-aa.

“Yes, I’m sort o’ torn between two loves, as the feller said: I loves to eat an’ I loves to talk.”

“We like to listen,” said Hodon.

“Yes,” agreed O-aa; “we could listen to you forever.”

~

What Perry had seen that had brought the scream to his lips was the end of the rope slipping from the drum. He had forgotten to have it made fast! He sprang forward and seized at the rope, but the free balloon leaped upward carrying the rope’s end far above him. Of

course his gesture was futile, as a dozen men could not have held the great gas bag that Perry had made.

The old man looked up at the great balloon, rapidly growing smaller as it rose; then he sat down, and, covering his face with his hands, commenced to sob; for he knew that Dian the Beautiful was already as good as dead. No power on earth or within it could save her now.

How high she would be carried he could not even guess, nor how far from Sari. She would doubtless die from lack of oxygen, and then her body would be carried for a thousand miles or more before the bag would lose sufficient gas to bring it down.

He loved Dian the Beautiful as he would have loved a daughter, and he knew that David Innes worshipped her. Now he had killed Dian and wrecked David's life — the two people he loved most in the world. His silly inventions had done a little good and some harm, but whatever good they had accomplished had been wiped out by this. Worst of all, he realized, was his criminal absent-minded carelessness.

~

Dian felt the sudden upward rush of the balloon. She looked down over the edge of the basket and instantly realized what had happened. Everything was growing smaller down there. Soon she could no longer distinguish people. She wondered what would become of her. Perhaps she would be carried up to the sun and incinerated. She saw that the wind was carrying the balloon in a south-westerly direction.

She did not realize the greatest error of all that Perry had made; neither did Perry. He had arranged no rip cord on the gas bag. With that, Dian could have let gas out of the bag gradually and made a landing within a comparatively few miles from Sari. Perry was always

leaving some essential thing off of everything he built. His first musket had no trigger.

Dian the Beautiful guessed that she was as good as dead. She cried, but not because she was afraid to die. She cried because she would never see David again.

And David, far away, reached the rim of the crater and looked over. Below him, scarcely a hundred feet, he saw a round valley, green with verdure. He saw a little lake and grass thatched shelters and people. He saw Hodon and O-aa. His surmise had been correct.

He saw the strange sabertooth people. There were a couple of hundred of them. How could he, single handed, rescue Hodon and O-aa from such an overwhelming number of enemies?

David Innes was resourceful; but the more he cudgeled his brains, the more hopeless a solution of his problem appeared. It would profit them nothing if he went down into the crater. That would mean simply his own capture; then he could do nothing for them.

He examined the crater closely. The inside walls were perpendicular and unscalable in all but a single place. There the wall had crumbled inward, the rubble forming an incline that reached to the top of the rim that was little more than fifty feet above the floor of the crater at that point. There was an avenue of escape, but how could he call Hodon's attention to it. How could he create a diversion that would take the attention of their captors from them long enough for them to make a break for freedom. Suddenly he recalled the wind rushing past him as he had stood in the darkness of the cavern that was the entrance to the crater. He turned and started down the mountainside.

~

The old man had been talking constantly. Even O-aa could not get a word in edgewise, but at last he paused for a moment, probably to refresh his mind concerning the past, in which he lived.

Hodon seized upon this moment to voice a suggestion that had been in his mind for some time. "Why don't you escape?" he asked the old man.

"Eh? What? Escape? Why — er — I haven't thought of it since before my last bicuspid dropped out. But of course I couldn't escape."

"I don't see why not," said Hodon. "I don't see why the three of us couldn't escape. Don't you see that low place there? We could run up there in no time if you could find some way to get their attention somewhere else."

"M-m-m," murmured the old man thoughtfully. "Sometimes many of them are asleep at the same time. It might be done, but I doubt it. Anyway, what good would it do me to escape? I'd only be killed by the first tribe that captured me if some of the beasts didn't get me before."

"No," said Hodon. "I would take you to Sari. They would treat you well there. You might meet some old friends. There are two men from Hartford, Connecticut there."

The old man became instantly alert. "What do you know about Hartford, Connecticut?" he demanded.

"Nothing," said Hodon, "but these men do. I have heard them speak of it many times."

"How did they get down here? That must be a story like mine. I'll bet they'd like to hear my story."

"I know they would," said O-aa, who was nobody's fool. "I think you ought to come with us."

"I'll think it over," said the old man.

~

David Innes made his way to the entrance to the tube. He gathered dry wood and leaves and green grass, and he piled it far into the tube, with the grass on top. Then he made fire and lighted it. As soon as he saw that it was burning freely, he ran from the tube and started up the side of the mountain as fast as he could go.

When he reached the top and looked over he saw smoke rising from the opening into the tube. Already a jabbering crowd of sabertooth men were gathering about it. Others were joining them. David was just about to risk everything by shouting to Hodon to run for the low place in the rim, when he saw O-aa, Hodon, and another walking toward it. He saw that the third member of the party was not one of the natives; so he assumed it must be another prisoner.

~

The diversion that Hodon had hoped for had occurred almost miraculously, and the three lost no time in taking advantage of it.

"You are sure, are you, that these men from Hartford, Connecticut, are where we are going?" demanded the old man. "Dod-burn you, if they ain't, I'll eat you the first chance I get."

"Oh, they're there all right," said O-aa. "I saw them just before we left."

Hodon looked at her in amazement not unmingled with admiration. "We may see one of them before we get to Sari," he said. "He was with me just before we were captured."

"I hope so," said the old man. "I'd sure like to see some one from Hartford. By gum, I'd even like to see some one from Kansas."

“Oh,” said O-aa with a shrug. “We know lots of people from Kansas. You can see all you want.”

Hodon’s expression turned to one of awe, but now they were at the base of the shelving rubble. He looked back. Every single sabertooth was gathered around the smoking vent; not an eye was turned in their direction. “Start up slowly,” he cautioned. “Do not start to hurry unless they discover what we are doing; then you’ll really have to climb. Once on the outside you and I, O-aa, can outdistance any of them, but I don’t know about the old man.”

“Listen, son,” said that worthy. “I can run circles around you and all your family. Why, when I was a young man they used to race me against race horses. I’d give ’em two lengths start and beat ’em in a mile.”

Hodon didn’t know what a horse was; but he had an idea that whatever it was the old man was lying; so he said nothing. He was thinking that between O-aa and the old man it was a toss-up.

They reached the summit without being detected; and as they started down, Hodon saw David coming toward him. He hurried forward to meet him, “It was you who started the fire that made the smoke, wasn’t it? But how did you know we were in the crater?”

“Is this one of the men from Hartford?” demanded the little old man.

“Yes,” said Hodon, “but don’t start telling him the story of your life now. Wait until we get out of reach of your friends.”

~

Dian was surprised to discover that the nearer the sun she got the colder she was. She was also mystified by the noises she heard in her ears and the difficulty she had in breathing; but even so, she gave little

thought to her own danger. She could think only of David. David whom she would never see again.

The balloon was drifting now at an even altitude. It would rise no higher. Eventually it would commence to drop lower; but before it came to earth, Dian the Beautiful might be dead of hunger and exhaustion. Being practically naked, except for a most sketchy loin cloth, she was already chilled through and shivering.

A hunting party far below saw the strange thing floating toward them; and they ran and hid beneath trees, thinking it some new and terrible reptile. Dacor the Strong One, Dian's brother, was in the party. Little did he dream that his sister floated there high above him. He and his companions would tell of the awful creature they had seen; and the story would grow in the telling, but nothing which they could fabricate could equal the truth, if they could have known it.

~

The sabertooth people are not very bright, but they do know what a volcano is; because there is an intermittently active one in the mountains not far from their own crater; so, putting two and two together, they assumed that their own volcano was about to become active. Had they been just a little bit more intelligent, they would have reasoned that wood smoke does not come from a volcano; but all they knew was that it was smoke and smoke meant fire; and they were afraid.

The best thing to do, then, was to get out of the crater; so they turned to the low point in the crater's rim. It was then that they discovered that their prisoners had escaped.

As they swarmed out of the crater, they were not only frightened but angry. No prisoner had ever escaped before, and they didn't purpose letting these prisoners get away with it. Being good trackers

capable of moving with great speed, they had no doubt but that they would soon overhaul the fugitives. The latter, however, were also fleet of foot; and they had two advantages: they did not have to watch for spoor to follow, and they were fleeing for their lives. There is no greater spur to honest and concentrated effort than this. Even the old man revealed amazing possibilities as he scampered in the wake of the others.

David and Hodon, being congenitally opposed to flight, hated the position in which they found themselves, but what were they to do? David alone was armed. He carried his crude bow and arrow and a stone knife but these were not enough to repel an attack by a numerically greater force of savage beasts such as the sabertooth men.

While they did not yet know that they were being followed, they assumed that they would be; and the old man had assured them that they would.

"I been there since before my teeth began falling out," he said, "an' you can lay to it that they'll follow us all the way to hell an' gone, for they ain't no prisoner ever escaped from 'em in my time."

Hodon, who was leading, guided them toward the little canyon where he and David had found sanctuary; and they succeeded in reaching its mouth before the first of the pursuers came within sight. It was just after they entered it that a chorus of savage roars told them that the sabertooth men had overtaken them.

David glanced back. Racing toward him were three or four of the swiftest males and strung out behind them were other bucks and shes and young — the whole tribe was on their heels!

"Get the others into the cave, Hodon!" he called. "I'll hold them up until you're all in."

Hodon hesitated. He wanted to come back and fight at David's side.

"Go on!" shouted the latter. "We'll all be lost if you don't," then Hodon raced on toward the cave with O-aa and the old man.

David wheeled about and sent an arrow into the breast of the leading savage. The fellow screamed and clutched at the shaft; then he spun around like a top and crashed to earth. A second and a third arrow in quick succession found their marks, and two more sabertooth warriors writhed upon the ground. The others paused. David fitted another arrow to his bow and backed away toward the cave.

The sabertooths jabbered and chattered among themselves. Finally a huge buck charged. Hodon and O-aa were in the cave; and the former, reaching down, grasped the hand of the old man and dragged him up. David was still backing toward the cave, holding his fire. His supply of arrows would not last forever; so he must not miss.

The great brute was almost upon him before he loosed his shaft. It drove straight through the heart of the buck, but there were others coming behind him. Not until he had dropped two more in rapid succession did the others pause momentarily; then David turned and raced for the cave. At his heels came the whole tribe of sabertooths, roaring and screaming. They came in mighty leaps and bounds, covering the ground twice as rapidly as David.

Hodon stood in the mouth of the cave. "Jump!" he cried to David. He leaned out and down, extending his hand. As David leaped upward toward the cave mouth, a sabertooth at his heels reached out to seize him; but simultaneously a bit of rock struck the fellow full between the eyes, and he tumbled forward on his face. O-aa, grinning, brushed the dust from her hands.

Hodon pulled David into the cave. "I never thought you'd make it," he said.

There were extra spears and arrows in the cave and a little food. The waterfall dropped so close that they could reach out and catch water in a cupped hand. They would not suffer from thirst. One man with a spear could defend the entrance against such ill-armed brutes as the sabertooths. Altogether, they felt rather secure.

"These brutes won't stay here forever," said David. "When they find they can't get us, they'll go away."

"You don't know 'em," said the old man. "They'll stick around here 'till Hell freezes over, but the joke's goin' to be on them."

"What do you mean?" asked David.

"Why, instead of gettin' four of us, they're only goin' to get one," explained the old man.

"How's that?" inquired David.

"We can't get no food in here," said the old man; "so we gotta eat each other. I reckon I'll be the last man. I'm too dod-burned old and tough to eat. Even the sabertooths wouldn't eat me. This here'll make a tender morsel. I reckon we'll start on her."

"Shut up!" snapped David. "We're not cannibals."

"Well, neither was I back at Cape Cod. I would have reared up on my hind legs an' hit anybody then that had said I'd ever eat man, woman, or child; but then I hadn't never nearly starved to death, nor I didn't know what good eatin' some people can be after you get used to it. Before you come along I was tellin' these other two, about that sweet Swede I et once."

"You also said," interposed O-aa, "that after you'd eaten all your friends you were about to cut your leg off and start eating yourself."

"Yes," admitted the old man, "that's plumb right."

“Then,” said O-aa, “when you get hungry, you’d better start eating yourself; because you’re not going to eat any of us.”

“That’s what I calls plumb selfish,” said the old man. “If we don’t eat each other, the sabertooths are goin’ to eat us; an’ I’d think you’d rather be eaten by a friend than by one of them critters.”

“Look here — er — what is your name, anyway?” David spoke with marked asperity.

The old man puckered his brow in thought. “Dod-burn it,” he exclaimed at last. “What the dickens is my name? I’ll be dod-burned if I ain’t plumb forgot. You see I ain’t heard it since I was a young man.”

“I think,” said O-aa to David, “that his name is Dolly Dorcas.”

“Well, never mind,” said David; “but get this straight: there’s to be no more talk of eating one another. Do you understand?”

“Wait until you get good an’ hungry,” said the old man; “then it won’t be a matter of talking about it.”

David rationed out what food there had been stored in the cave — mostly nuts and tubers; as these would not spoil quickly. Each had his share. They took turns watching, while the others slept, if they cared to; and as there was nothing else to do, they slept a great part of the time. It is a custom of Pellucidarians. They seem to store up energy thus, so that they need less sleep, afterward. Thus they prepare themselves for long journeys or arduous undertakings.

Some of the sabertooths remained in the canyon at all times. They made several attempts to storm the cave; but after being driven off easily, they gave up. They would starve their quarry out.

The food supply in the cave dwindled rapidly. David presently suspected that it dwindled fastest while the old man was on watch and the others slept; so once he feigned sleep and caught the old man

taking a little food from the supply of each of the others and hiding it in a crevice in the back of the cave.

He awoke the others and told them, and O-aa wanted to kill the old man at once. "He deserves to die," said David, "but I have a better plan than that of killing him ourselves. We'll drop him down to the sabertooths."

The old man whimpered and begged, and promised never to do it again; so they let him live, but they did not let him stand watch alone again.

At last their food was all gone, and the sabertooths were still in the canyon. The besieged were ravenous. They drank quantities of water to allay the craving for food. They were getting weaker and weaker, and David realized that the end was near. They slept a great deal, but fitfully.

Once, when O-aa was standing watch, David awoke with a start; and was horrified to see the old man sneaking up behind her with a spear. His intentions were all too obvious. David called a warning and leaped for him but just in time.

Hodon awoke. The old man was groveling on the floor of the cave. O-aa and David were looking down at him.

"What has happened?" demanded Hodon.

They told him. Hodon came toward the old man. "This time he dies," he said.

"No! No!" shrieked the terrified creature. "I was not going to keep it all for myself. I was going to share it with you."

"You beast!" exclaimed Hodon, picking up the spear the old man had dropped.

Screaming the latter leaped to his feet; and, running to the mouth of the cave, sprang out.

A hundred sabertooths were in the canyon. Straight toward them the old man ran, screaming at the top of his voice, his eyes wild with terror, his toothless mouth contorted.

The sabertooths fell aside, shrinking from him; and through the lane they made the old man fled and disappeared in the forest beyond the end of the canyon.

~

Ghak the Hairy One, with a thousand warriors, marched up to Kali. He did not know that Fash, the king of Suvi, had conquered it; so he was surprised when his advance guard was attacked as they neared the cliff. However, it made no difference to Ghak the Hairy One whether he fought Suvian or Kalian.

Fash had thought that the advance guard constituted the whole force with which he had to deal, as it was his own custom to hold all his warriors in one body when he attacked. He did not know that David Innes had taught the Sarians a different method of warfare, which was unfortunate for Fash.

When Ghak's main body came up, Fash's men scattered in all directions. A number retreated to the eaves of Kali. The Sarians swarmed up after them before they could remove the ladders. Men fought hand to hand on the narrow ledges all the way up to the highest ledge. Here, cornered Suvians leaped to their death; and at last Ghak the Hairy One stood victorious above the caves of Kali.

Then the Sarian prisoners came from their prison caves and for the first time Ghak learned that David's little force had been either killed or made prisoner and that David was missing. All agreed that he must be dead.

Ghak's force rested and fed at the Kali cliff; and then victorious

but sad, started back to their ships waiting on the Lural Az. They had scarcely left the cliff when a strange figure of a man came dashing out of the forest — a toothless little old man with an enormous white beard. His beard was stained with juice of berries and the pulp of fruit. He jibbered and yammered like the little hairy men who live in the trees of the forest.

The warriors of Sari had never seen a creature like this before; so they captured him, as they might have captured any strange animal and took him to show to Ghak.

“Who are you?” demanded Ghak.

“Are you going to kill me?” The old man was whimpering, the tears rolling down his cheeks.

“No,” Ghak assured him. “Tell me who you are and what you are doing here.”

“My name is not Dolly Dorcas,” said the old man, “and I was going to divide O-aa with the others, but Hodon wanted to kill me.”

“Hodon!” exclaimed Ghak. “What do you know of Hodon?”

“I know that he was going to kill me, but I ran away.”

“Where is Hodon?” demanded Ghak.

“He and David and O-aa are in the cave. The sabertooth men are waiting to eat them.”

“What cave? Where is it?” asked Ghak.

“If I told you, you’d take me back there and Hodon would kill me,” said the old man.

“If you lead us to where David and Hodon are, no one will kill you. I promise you that,” Ghak assured him.

“And you’ll see that I get plenty to eat?”

“All you can hold.”

“Then follow me, but look out for the sabertooths; they will eat you all unless you kill them.”

~

O-aa looked very wan and weak. Hodon looked at her and tears almost came to his eyes; then he spoke to David.

“David,” he said, “perhaps I have done wrong. I have hoarded my ration of food, eating only half of it.”

“It was yours to do with as you wished,” said David. “We shall not take it from you.”

“I do not want it,” said Hodon. “I saved it for O-aa, and now she needs it.”

O-aa looked up and smiled. “I hoarded mine too, Hodon,” she said. “I saved it for you. Here it is.” She took a little package of food wrapped in the large leaves that grew over the mouth of the cave and handed it to Hodon.

David walked to the mouth of the cave and looked out down the little canyon; but everything was blurred, as though he were looking through a mist.

Hodon knelt beside O-aa. “A woman would do that only for the man she loved,” he said.

O-aa nodded and crept into his arms. “But I have not killed Blug,” said Hodon.

O-aa drew his lips down to hers.

“What will your brother and sister say?” asked Hodon.

“I have no brother or sister,” said O-aa.

Hodon held her so tight that she gasped for breath.

Presently the mist cleared, and David could see quite plainly. He saw sabertooths who had been outside the canyon running in. They

were jabbering excitedly. Then he saw human warriors approaching, warriors who carried muskets. There were many of them. When the sabertooths charged them, they were mowed down by a ragged volley. The noise was terrific, and clouds of black smoke filled the mouth of the canyon.

At the noise of the muskets, O-aa and Hodon ran to the mouth of the cave.

“Ghak has come,” said David. “Now everything is all right.”

It was well that he was to have a brief interlude of happiness before he returned to Sari.

PART II.

MEN OF THE BRONZE AGE

Chapter I

When the last of the sabertooth men had been killed or had fled, David, Hodon, and O-aa joined Ghak and his warriors. Immediately, Hodon espied the little old man and advanced upon him.

“I kill,” said Hodon.

The little old man screamed and hid behind Ghak. “You promised that you would not let Hodon kill me,” he whimpered, “if I guided you here.”

“I shall keep my promise,” said Ghak. “Leave the man alone, Hodon! What has he done that you should want to kill him?”

“He tried to kill O-aa; so that he could eat her,” replied Hodon.

“I was not going to keep her all for myself,” whined the old man; “I was going to share her with Hodon and David.”

“Who is this old man,” demanded Ghak, “who says that his name is not Dolly Dorcas?”

“He was a prisoner of the sabertooth men,” said David. “I think he is a little crazy.”

“He led me here,” said Ghak; “so you have him to thank for your rescue. Do not harm him. What does he mean by saying his name is not Dolly Dorcas?”

“He told us,” explained David, “that he was wrecked on a ship named the *Dolly Dorcas* near the North Pole of the outer world from which I come; then, in a small boat, he drifted through the North Polar

Opening into Pellucidar. O-aa got things a little mixed and thought his name was Dolly Dorcas.”

“He ate all the men that were in the boat with him,” said O-aa; “and he said that when they were all gone, he was about to cut off one of his own legs and eat that, when he found food. He is a very hungry man.”

“I do not see how he could eat anybody,” said Ghak; “he has no teeth.”

“You’d be surprised,” said the little old man.

“Well, you — What is your name anyway, if it isn’t Dolly Dorcas?” demanded Ghak.

“I don’t remember,” said the old man.

“Well, then, we shall just call you Ah-gilak; and that will be your name.” (Ah-gilak means in Pellucidarian, old man.)

“Well,” said the little old man, “at least Ah-gilak is a better name for a man than Dolly Dorcas.”

“And remember this, Ah-gilak,” continued Ghak, “if you ever try to eat anybody again, I’ll let Hodon kill you.

“Some of them were very good eating,” sighed Ah-gilak, reminiscently, “especially that Swede.”

“Let us go to the village of Kali now,” said David. “O-aa, Hodon, and I must have food. We nearly starved to death in that cave. Then I shall send a runner north to the caves where Oose and the remnants of his people are hiding, after which we will go down to the Lural Az, where your ships lie, Ghak, and embark for home; if you feel that you have taught the Suvians their lessons sufficiently well.”

Between the canyon and the village of Kali, they saw a party of men coming from the north. At sight of so many armed warriors, these people turned to flee; but O-aa called to them, “Come back! It is all

right; these are our friends;" then she said to Ghak, "those are my people; I recognized my father, the king of Kali."

When the newcomers approached more closely, Hodon saw that Blug was with Oose; and he went and put his arm around O-aa. When Blug saw that, he ran forward.

"I told you that if you were around here when I came back, I'd kill you," he shouted.

"Go away!" said O-aa. "Hodon is my mate."

"What is that?" demanded Oose, her father. "I told you you were to mate with Blug, and I meant it; Blug shall have you."

"I kill!" shouted Blug, as he bore down on Hodon.

The Sarian met him with a clean right to the chin, and Blug dropped in his tracks. The Sarian warriors yelled in delight; but Blug was up in an instant, and this time he managed to clinch. The two men fell to the ground, fighting like a couple of wild cats. It was not a pretty fight, as the Marquis of Queensberry was entirely unknown to these men of the Stone Age. They gouged and bit and scratched, as Blug tried to fasten his teeth in Hodon's jugular.

They were both covered with blood, and one of Blug's eyes was hanging out on his cheek, when Hodon espied a rock lying near at hand. He happened to be on top for the moment; and, seizing the rock, he raised it high and brought it down with all his strength full on Blug's face.

Blug had never been beautiful; but without any features to speak of left, and those scrambled, he was something of a sight. Hodon raised the rock and struck again; the third time, Blug relaxed and lay still; but Hodon did not stop striking him until his whole head was a jelly; then he stood up.

He looked at Oose. "O-aa is my mate," he said.

Oose looked down at Blug. "Blug is not much good any more," he said. "If O-aa wants you she may have you."

They looked around, then, for O-aa. She had disappeared. "It has always been thus," said Hodon. "Three times I have fought for her, and three times she has run away while I was fighting."

"When you catch her, you should beat her," said Oose.

"I will," said Hodon.

He searched for O-aa for a long time, but he did not find her; then he came to the village of Kali, where his fellow Sarians were eating and resting.

When David Innes had rested sufficiently, the Sarians bid the Kalians farewell and departed for their ships, which lay off the coast forty miles away.

Hodon went with them. He was very sad, for he thought that O-aa had run away from him because she did not really wish to be his mate.

And O-aa? When she had seen Blug get his arms around Hodon, and the two men had fallen to the ground, she had known that Hodon would be killed; so she had run away, rather than remain and mate with Blug. She started south, intending to find Sari, which lay eight hundred miles away. She knew that she had a long journey before her and that the chances were quite remote that she would survive all the innumerable dangers of the way; but, with Hodon dead, she did not care much.

She was a cave girl, and death was such a familiar occurrence in her life that she did not fear it particularly. Early man must have been a fatalist; otherwise he would have gone crazy from fear. O-aa was a fatalist. She said to herself, "If the tarag, or the thipdar, or Ta-ho happened to meet me at just the right time and place, I shall be killed. Whatever they and I are doing now must lead up to that moment when

we meet or do not meet; nothing can change it." That is the way she felt; so she did not worry — but she kept her eyes and her ears open, just the same.

O-aa had never been to Sari, but she knew that it lay inland from the Lural Az and that between Kali and Sari there were a few tribes which belonged to the Federation and would be friendly to her. She would follow along the shore of the Lural Az until she found one of these tribes, and then she could get better directions for the remainder of her journey.

She knew that David Innes and the other Sarians would soon be going down to the sea and their ships, but she wanted to avoid them for fear that they would send her back to her father and Bug; so she went quite a distance south before she turned toward the east and the Lural Az, that great body of uncharted water, teeming with giant saurians, such as ruled the Cretaceous seas in the Mesozoic period of the outer crust. O-aa was a hill girl and was afraid of the great sea, but no less terrible were the dangers that threatened her on land.

And as O-aa came down to the sea of which she was so afraid, eyes watched her from the concealment of bushes that she was approaching.

~

Abner Perry was a broken man; he could neither eat nor sleep, for he knew that it was his own culpable carelessness that had tossed Dian the Beautiful to the mercy of the winds on high. He had dispatched three runners to try to follow the course of the drifting balloon; but he held too little hope that, should they find it when it came to earth, they would find Dian alive: cold, hunger, and thirst would long since have

taken their grim toll of her strength. For the first time in his life, Abner Perry seriously considered taking his own life.

~

Dian the Beautiful had been mildly surprised by the sudden upward rush of the balloon, but she had not guessed what it portended until she looked down over the edge of the basket and saw the end of the rope which had secured the balloon to the windlass dangling high above the village of Sari.

Dian the Beautiful is a cave girl of the Stone Age. She knew nothing about balloons other than what she had gathered from Abner Perry while he was building this one. Only in a vague way did she know what made it go up in the air. She knew nothing about ripcords, and so she did not realize that once again Perry had blundered; he had neglected to equip the balloon with this safety device.

Had she known more about ballooning, she would have known that she might have climbed the suspension lines to the net and cut a hole in the gas bag with her dagger, letting the gas escape. But Dian the Beautiful did not know this; and so she watched her friends shrink to tiny dots far below; and eventually, with the village of Sari, disappear in the distance.

Dian knew that the sun was a ball of fire; and so she was surprised to discover that the closer she got to the sun, the colder she became. It didn't make sense, and it upset a theory that was as old as the human race in Pellucidar. But then the balloon upset some long-standing theories, too. She knew that the basket and the peritona of dinosaurs, of which the gas bag was fabricated, were far too heavy to sail up into the air. Why they should do so was beyond her; so she decided that it was because Perry could do anything.

The prevailing winds of Pellucidar blow, generally, from the north to south for half the outer-Earthly year and from south to north the other half, depending upon whether it is winter at one Pole or the other. The wind that carried Dian away from Sari was blowing in a south-westerly direction and bearing her toward Thuria, The Land of Awful Shadow.

Beneath the eternal noonday sun, the surface temperature of Pellucidar is usually high, requiring of her inhabitants a minimum of clothing; so Dian's costume was scanty to a degree. A bit of skin, caught with a rawhide thong across one shoulder, hung gracefully and becomingly in a long point to below her knees in one place, leaving one well-shaped leg entirely bare almost to her waist. It had been designed with as much subtlety as the finest creation of a French couturier, to accentuate and reveal, to hide and intrigue; but it had not been designed for great altitudes. Dian was cold.

Dian was hungry and thirsty, too; but there were neither food nor drink in this new world into which she had soared; so she did what Pellucidarians usually do when they are hungry and cannot obtain food — she lay down and slept. This conserves energy and prolongs life; it also gives one some respite from the gnawing of hunger and the pangs of thirst.

Dian did not know how long she slept, but when she awoke she was over The Land of Awful Shadow. She was in shadow herself, and now it was very cold. Above her was the Dead World, as the Pellucidarians call it, that tiny satellite of Pellucidar's sun that, revolving coincidentally with the rotation of the Earth, remained constantly in a fixed position above that part of the inner world known as The Land of Awful Shadow. Below her was Thuria, which lies partially within the shadow, and, to her right, the Lidi Plains where the Thurians graze

and train their gigantic saddle animals, the huge diplodocuses of the Upper Jurassic, which they call lidi.

The greater cold had awakened Dian, and now she was suffering from that and from hunger and from thirst. Hope had left her, for she knew that she must soon die; and she thought that her dead body would continue to float around above Pellucidar forever.

When the balloon emerged again into sunlight, Dian lay down and slept; and, from exhaustion, she must have slept a long time, for when she awoke she was above the nameless strait that extends for a thousand miles or more and connects the Sojar Az with the Korsar Az. She knew what it was, for it bounds the south-western portion of the continent on which Sari lies — beyond it was the *terra incognita* of her people, and no man knew what lay in that land of mystery.

The strait is about two hundred miles wide at the point at which Dian was crossing it; and the land curving gently upward around her, gave her such a range of vision that she could see the opposite shore.

Even in her hopelessness she could not but be impressed by the fact that she was looking upon a new world, the first of all her people to set eyes upon it. It gave her a little thrill, in which, possibly, was something of terror.

Her absorption was broken in upon by a hissing sound that came from above and behind her. Turning and looking up, she saw that terror of the Pellucidarian skies — a giant thipdar circling above the gas bag. The body of this huge pterodactyl measures some forty feet in length, while its bat-like wings have a spread of fully thirty feet. Its mighty jaws are armed with long, sharp teeth and its claws are equipped with horrible talons.

As a rule it attacks anything in sight. If it attacked the gas bag and ripped it open, Dian would be plummeted into the water below. She

was helpless; she could only watch the terrible creature circling about the balloon and listen to its angry hisses.

The gas bag had the thipdar baffled. It paid no attention to him, but floated on serenely; it neither tried to escape nor give battle. What was the thing, anyway? He wondered if it were good to eat; and to find out, he gave it a tentative nip. Instantly some foul smelling stuff blew into his nostrils. He hissed angrily, and flew off a short distance; then he wheeled and came screaming toward the gas bag again.

Dian tried to think only of David, as one might concentrate on prayer who knew the end was near.

Chapter 2

O-aa, always alert to danger, nevertheless was not aware of the man hiding in the bushes. He was a large man with broad shoulders, a deep chest, and mighty forearms and biceps. He wore a loin cloth, made of the feathers of birds — yellow feathers with two transverse bars of red feathers. It was artistic and striking. He had rings in his ears; they were made of fish bone. A few strands of his hair were braided and made into a small knot at the top of the back of his head; into this knot were stuck three long, yellow feathers barred with red. He carried a stone knife and a spear tipped with the tooth of a huge shark. His features were strong and regular; he was a handsome man, and he was sun-tanned to a golden bronze.

As O-aa came opposite him, he leaped from his concealment and seized her by the hair; then he started to drag her through the bushes down toward the beach. He soon found that that was not so easy as he had hoped. Dragging O-aa was like dragging a cat with hydrophobia; O-aa didn't drag worth a cent. She pulled back; she bit; she scratched;

she kicked; and when she wasn't biting, she was emitting a stream of vitriolic vituperation that would have done credit to Pegler when on the subject of Mr. Brown.

Cave people of the Stone Age are of few words and short tempers; the prehistoric Adonis who was dragging O-aa along by the hair was no exception that proved the rule; he was wholly orthodox. After a couple of bites, he raised his spear and clunked O-aa on the head with the haft of it; and O-aa took the full count. Then he swung her across one shoulder and trotted down to the beach, where a canoe was drawn up on the sand. He dumped O-aa into it and then pulled it out into the water.

He held it against the incoming rollers; and at precisely the psychological moment, he leaped in and paddled strongly. The light craft rose on the next roller, dove into the trough beyond, and O-aa was launched upon the great sea she so greatly feared.

When she recovered consciousness her heart sank. The canoe was leaping about boisterously, and land was already far away. The man sat upon the deck of the tapering stern and paddled with a very broad, flat paddle. O-aa appraised him furtively. She noted and appreciated his pulchritude at the same time that she was seeking to formulate a plan for killing him.

She also examined the canoe. It was about twenty feet long, with a three foot beam; it was decked over fore and aft for about six feet, leaving an eight foot cockpit; transverse booms were lashed across it at each end of the cockpit, protruding outboard about four feet on either side; lashed to the underside of the ends of these booms was a twenty foot length of bamboo, about six inches in diameter, running parallel with the craft on each side, the whole constituting a double outrigger canoe. It was a clumsy craft to handle, but it was uncapsizable; even

O-aa, who knew nothing about boats or seas, could see that; and she felt reassured. She would have been even more reassured had she known that the compartments beneath the two decks were watertight and that in addition to this, they held fresh water in bamboo containers and a quantity of food.

The man saw that she had regained consciousness. "What is your name?" he asked.

"My name is O-aa," she snapped; "I am the daughter of a king. When my mate, my father, and my seven brothers learn of this, they will come and kill you."

The man laughed. "My name is La-ak," he said. "I live on the Island of Canda. I have six wives; you will be the seventh. With seven wives I shall be a very important man; our chief has only seven. I came to the mainland to get another wife; I did not have to look long, did I?" Again he laughed.

"I will not mate with you," O-aa snapped.

Once again La-ak laughed. "You will be glad to," he said, "after my other six wives teach you how to behave that is, you will if you live through it; they will not stand for any foolishness. They have already killed two women whom I brought home, who refused to become my wives. In my country no man may take a mate without her consent. I think it is a very foolish custom; but it is an old one, and we have to abide by it."

"You had better take me back to the mainland," said O-aa, "for I will not mate with you; and I shall certain kill some of your wives before they kill me; then you will be worse off than you are now."

He looked at her for a long time before he spoke again, "I believe you," he said; "but you are very beautiful, and I do not intend to be cheated of you entirely. What happens in this canoe, no one in Canda

will ever know, for I'll throw you overboard before we get there," then he laid down his paddle and came toward her.

~

David Innes, Hodon, and the little old man, Ah-gilak, boarded the ship of Ghak the Hairy One; and when all of the other warriors had boarded this and the other ships, the fleet set sail.

Ah-gilak looked around him with a critical and contemptuous eye. "Dod-burn it" he ejaculated. "What dod-burned landlubber built this tub? There ain't a gol-durned thing right about her. I reckon as how she'd sail sidewise just as well as she would ahead! an' a lateen sail!" he added, disgustedly. "Now, you should have saw the *Dolly Dorcas*; there was a sweet ship."

Ghak the Hairy One glared at him with a dangerous gleam in his eye, for Ghak was proud of every ship in the Navy of the Empire of Pellucidar. They were the first ships he had ever seen and they carried the first sails; to him they were the last word in perfection and modernity. Abner Perry had designed them; did this little, toothless runt think he could do better than Abner Perry? With a great, hairy hand Ghak seized Ah-gilak by the beard.

"Wait!" cautioned David. "I think Ah-gilak knows what he is talking about. He sailed ships on the outer Earth. Perry never did. Perry did the best he could down here, with no knowledge of ship design and no one to help him who had ever seen a ship before. He would be the first to welcome some one who could help us build a better navy. I think we can use Ah-gilak after we get home."

Ghak reluctantly released Ah-gilak's beard. "He talks too much," he said, and, turning, walked away.

"If I hadn't been wrecked in the Arctic and washed down into

this dod-burned world,” said Ah-gilak, “I would probably have commanded the fastest clipper ship in the world today. I was aimin’ for to build it just as soon as I got back to Cape Cod.”

“Clipper ship!” said David. “There aren’t any more clipper ships. I don’t suppose there’s been one built in more than fifty years.”

“Why, dod-burn you,” exclaimed Ah-gilak; “they hadn’t been building ’em more’n five year when the *Dolly Dorcas* went down — let’s see — that was 1845.”

David Innes looked at him in amazement. “Are you sure of that date?” he demanded.

“Sure as I am that I’m standin’ here, as the feller said,” replied Ah-gilak.

“How old were you when the *Dolly Dorcas* was lost?” asked David.

“I was forty years old. I can always remember, because my birthday was the same as President Tyler’s. He would have been fifty-five on March 29th, 1845, if he lived; an’ I was just fifteen years younger than him. They was talkin’ about a feller named Polk runnin’ for President when we sailed.”

“Do you know how old you are now?” asked David.

“Well, I sort o’ lost track o’ time down here in this dod-burned world; but I reckon I must be close to sixty.”

“Not very close,” said David; “you’re a hundred and fifty-three.”

“Well, of all the dod-burned liars, you sure take the cake! A hundred an’ fifty-three! God an’ Gabriel! Do I look a hundred an’ fifty-three?”

“No,” said David; “I’d say that you don’t look a day over a hundred and fifty.”

The old man looked at David disgustedly. “I ain’t mentionin’ no names,” he said; “but some folks ain’t got no more sense than a white

pine dog with a poplar tail, as the feller said;" then he turned and walked away.

Hodon had been listening to the conversation; but he knew nothing about years or ages, and he wondered what it all meant. Anyway, he would not have been much interested, had he; for he was thinking of O-aa, and wondering where she was. He was sorry now that he had not stayed on shore and searched for her.

The flag ship of the little fleet of three ships was called *Amoz* in honor of Dian the Beautiful, who came from the land of Amoz. It was crowded with five hundred warriors. It had eight guns, four on a side, on a lower deck. There were solid shot, chain shot, and shells for each of the guns, all of which were muzzle loading. They had to be run back on crude wooden tracks to load, and then run forward again, with their muzzles sticking out of port holes to fire; they were the pride of the Navy.

The sailors who manned the *Amoz* and the other ships were copper colored Mezops from the Anoroc Islands; and the Admiral of the Fleet was Ja, King of Anoroc. The lateen sail of the *Amoz* was enormous; it required the combined strength of fifty husky Mezops to raise it. Like the gas bag of Perry's balloon and the fabric of his late aeroplane, it was made of the peritonea of dinosaurs. This was one of Perry's prime discoveries, for there were lots of dinosaurs and their peritonea were large and tough. Habitually, they objected to giving them up; so it was quite an exciting job collecting peritonea, for dinosaurs such as carry A-1 peritonea are large, ferocious, and ill-mannered.

The fleet had been under way for but a short time, when Ah-gilak, casting a weather eye about from long habit, discovered a cloud astern. "We're a-goin' to have a blow," he said to Ja, and pointed.

Ja looked and nodded. "Yes," he said, and gave orders to shorten sail.

The cloud was not very large when it was first discovered, but it was undeniably a wind cloud. As it came closer, it grew in extent; and it became black. Ragged shreds of it whipped ahead. Around the ship was a sudden, deadly calm.

"We're a-goin' to have more 'n a gale. That there looks like a dod-burned hurricane."

Now there was a sudden gust of wind that made the sagging sail flap angrily. Ja had ordered it close reefed; and the Mezops were battling with the whipping peritonea, as the wind increased in violence.

And now the storm was upon them. Rolling black clouds shut out the eternal sun, lightning flashed, and thunder roared; rain began to fall — not in drops or sheets, but in solid masses. The wind wailed and shrieked like some ferocious demon of destruction. Men clung to the ship's rails, to one another, to anything that they could lay hands on to keep from being blown overboard.

David Innes went among them, ordering them below; at last only the Mezop sailors and a few Sarians remained on the upper deck — they and the little old man, Ah-gilak. Innes and Ghak and Hodon clustered behind Ja and Ah-gilak. The little old man was in his element.

"I bin wrecked seven times," he shrieked above the storm, "an' I can be wrecked again, as the feller said; an' dod-burn it if I don't think I'm goin' to be."

The sea had risen, and the waves were growing constantly in immensity. The clumsy, overloaded ship wallowed out of one great sea only to be half swallowed by another.

So dark was it and so thick the rain that neither of the other ships could be seen. David was fearful for the safety of the little *Sari*; in fact, he was fearful for the fate of all three of the ships if the storm did not abate soon or if it increased in violence. As though possessed of sardonic humor, the hurricane raged even more violently while the thought was yet in David's mind.

The *Amoz* rose upon the crest of a watery mountain to plunge into a watery abyss. The men clung to whatever they could as the ship buried its nose deep in the sea; and a huge following wave combed over the stern, submerging them.

David thought it was the end. He knew that the ship would never rise again from beneath those tons of raging water, yet still he clung to the thing he had seized. Slowly, ponderously, like some gigantic beast trying to drag itself from quick-sand, the *Amoz* staggered up, shaking the water from its deck.

"Dod-burn me!" screamed Ah-gilak; "but this is a sweet ship. It didn't take half that sea to swamp the *Dolly Dorcas*, and I thought she was a sweet ship. Well live and learn, as the feller said."

There were not as many men on the deck as there had been. David wondered how many of the poor devils had been lost. He looked at those about him; Ghak, and Ja, and Hodon, and Ah-gilak were all there.

David looked up at the waves as they towered above the ship, and he looked down into the abysses as the ship started down from the crest. "Seventy feet," he said, half to himself; "a good seventy feet."

Suddenly Ah-gilak yelled, "Make fast there an' say your prayers!"

David glanced astern. The most stupendous wave he had ever seen trembled above them — hundreds of tons of water poised to crush the ship; then it came!

Dian the beautiful awaited the end with supreme indifference; she had reached the limit of human endurance; but she was not afraid. In fact, she was just a little fascinated by the situation, and wondered whether the screaming thipdar winging toward her was coming for her or the gas bag — not that it would make much difference to her in the end.

Suddenly the giant pterodactyl veered to one side, and rushed past. Dian watched it as it soared away, waiting for it to turn and renew the attack; but it did not return, it had finally discovered something of which it was afraid.

Dian looked down over the edge of the basket. She could see the land beyond the strait quite plainly now; she seemed to be much lower, and wondered. She did not know that the gas was leaking from the balloon where the thipdar had nipped it.

It was some time before she realized the truth — that the balloon was actually descending; and now she had something more to worry about: would it reach the shore, or would it come down in the water? If the latter, she would make food for some saurian; or for a horde of them that would tear her to pieces.

And on the land a short distance back from the shore she saw an amazing sight for Pellucidar — a city, a walled city. She would not have known what it was had David not told her of the cities of his world. Well, she might be about as well off among the saurians as among strange human beings. There was little choice, but upon reflection she hoped that the balloon reached the land before it came down.

It was quite low now, and the land was still a good half mile away. She tried to gauge the relation between its drop and its horizontal progress toward the land. She looked down over the edge of the basket

and saw that the rope was already dragging in the water. The rope was five hundred feet long. After a part of the rope was submerged the balloon didn't seem to drop any more; but its progress toward land was also retarded, as it dragged the submerged rope through the water. However, it appeared now that it would reach the land first. Dian was congratulating herself on this as she peered down into the strait when she saw the head of a creature which she knew as an aztarag, or tiger of the sea, break the water near the trailing rope.

She was congratulating herself upon the fact that she was not down there, when the creature seized the rope in its mighty jaws and started for the center of the strait.

This was too much! Tired, hungry, thirsty, and exhausted, though no longer cold, Dian almost broke down. With an effort she kept back the tears for now there was no hope.

But was there one! If she could cut the rope, the balloon would be freed; and would continue on toward shore. Relieved of the weight of five hundred feet of heavy rope, it would certainly drift far inland before it came down, but she couldn't reach the rope; it was fastened to the underneath side of the basket.

There must be some way! She drew her stone knife and commenced to hack at the wickerwork of the basket's floor. At last she had a hole large enough to get her arm through. Feeling around, she found the large rope. It was attached to the basket by many smaller ropes which ran to the periphery of the basket's bottom.

Dian commenced to saw on these smaller ropes. She could see through the hole in the bottom of the basket, and she saw that the balloon was being rapidly dragged toward the water — the aztarag had sounded and was pulling the balloon down behind it!

The girl worked frantically, for once the basket was submerged she

would be lost — the sea beneath her was alive with hungry creatures. She saw a gigantic shark just below her; it thrust its snout out of water; and she could almost touch it, as the last rope parted.

Instantly the balloon leaped into the air, and once more started its precarious and seemingly endless journey toward the mysterious world beyond the nameless strait.

Chapter 3

As O-aa saw La-ak coming toward her she stood up. “Go back to your paddle,” she said, “or I will jump overboard.”

La-ak hesitated; for he guessed, rightly, that the girl meant what she said; furthermore, he knew that eventually she must sleep; then he could overpower her. “You are a fool,” he said, as he resumed his paddle; “one lives but once.”

“O-aa lives in her own way,” retorted the girl.

She sat facing the stern; so that she might watch La-ak. She saw his spear lying beside him; she saw the dagger at his hip. These were instruments of escape, but she could not get them. She glanced around over the great sea that she so feared. Very, very dimly, through the haze of distance, she thought that she could see the mainland; elsewhere there was no sign of land — just the vast expanse of blue water rolling gradually upward in the distance to merge with the blue sky that arched over them and down again to merge with the blue water again on the opposite side. To her left she saw a little cloud, far away. It meant nothing to O-aa, who was a hill girl and consequently less cloud conscious than those who live much upon the sea.

Astern, she saw something else — a long, slender neck toppled by a hideous head with great-fanged jaws. Occasionally she caught a

glimpse of a sleek, seal-like body rising momentarily above the slow ground swells. She knew this thing as a Ta-ho-az, or a sea lion. It was not the harmless, playful creature that sports in the waters of our own Pacific Ocean; but a terrible engine of destruction whose ravenous appetite was never satisfied.

The fearsome creature was gliding smoothly through the water toward the canoe. That long neck would arch over the gunwale and snatch either La-ak or herself, probably both; or the creature would place a giant flipper on the craft and capsize or swamp it. O-aa thought quickly. She wished to be saved from La-ak, but not at the risk of her own life, if that uncomfortable circumstance could be avoided.

She stood up and pointed, taking a couple of steps toward La-ak as she did so. "Look!" she cried.

La-ak turned to look behind him, and as he did so O-aa sprang forward and seized his spear; then she thrust it with all her strength into the body of La-ak beneath his left shoulder.

With a scream of agony and rage, La-ak tried to turn upon her; but O-aa held to the end of the spear's haft; and when La-ak turned, the sharp shark's tooth with which the spear was tipped, tore into his heart. Thus died La-ak of the Island of Canda.

O-aa looked back at the Ta-ho-az. It was approaching, but leisurely; as though it was quite sure that its quarry could not escape, and consequently saw no occasion for haste.

O-aa looked at the pretty yellow and red feather loin cloth on the body of La-ak and at the feathers in his hair. These she had admired greatly; so she removed them, after jerking the spear from the dead man; and then she rolled the naked body of La-ak over the stern of the canoe, after which she picked up the paddle; and with strong, if clumsy, strokes sent the craft ahead.

She glanced back often to see what the Ta-ho-az was doing; and at last, to her relief, she saw that it was doing what she had hoped it would do — it had stopped to devour the body of La-ak. This, she guessed, would occupy it for some time; since, though its jaws were enormous, its neck was slender; and it must necessarily nibble rather than gulp.

O-aa had never handled a paddle before, which is not strange, since never before had she been in a boat of any description; but she had watched La-ak; and now she did remarkably well, considering her ignorance and the clumsiness of the craft.

She was hungry, thirsty, and sleepy, and, as now she had lost sight of all land and had no idea in which direction to paddle, she decided that it would be foolish to paddle at all; since, there being so many different directions, and the nearest land being in one direction only, the chances were all in favor of her paddling in a wrong direction. It would be much pleasanter just to drift with the wind.

Of course she was endowed with that homing instinct that is the common heritage of all Pellucidarians to compensate them for lack of heavenly bodies to guide them, but out here on this vast expanse of water in an environment so totally unfamiliar, for the first time in her life she did not trust it.

The little cloud that she had seen had grown to a big cloud, and was coming nearer. O-aa looked at it and thought that it was going to rain, for which she would be thankful; since it would give her water to drink; then she turned her attention to other things.

She had noticed that there was one plank in the after deck where La-ak had sat that didn't seem to fit as well as the others; and though it was a trivial thing, she had wondered at it. It had suggested something to her — that no one would come out upon this great ocean without

food or water. Now she investigated; for O-aa, as you may have gathered, was no fool; and she found that the board, skillfully grooved on both edges, pulled out, revealing a large compartment beneath. In this compartment were extra weapons, fishhooks, lines, nets, bamboo water containers, and smoked meats and dried fruits and vegetables.

O-aa ate and drank her fill; then, she lay down to sleep, while the great, black cloud billowed toward her, and the lightning flashed and the thunder boomed. O-aa slept the dreamless sleep of utter exhaustion plus a full and contented stomach.

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David was sure that the *Amoz* was doomed, as he saw the giant wave curling above her stern; then it broke over them, crushing them to the deck, tearing at them to break their holds on the supports to which they clung, driving the prow of the ship deep into the sea.

Not a man there but knew she could never recover from this blow; but, she did. Rolling and wallowing she slowly emerged; and as the water sluiced from her deck, David saw the little old man going with it toward the bow, and he lunged after him.

The mast had gone, leaving only a stump, around which was tangled cordage and a section of the sail, that had fouled and ripped away. Just as he reached this, David caught the little old man by one ankle; then, as he himself was being washed toward the stern, he managed to seize hold of the cordage and retain his hold until the last of the water had gone over the side.

He thought that a man one hundred and fifty-three years old could never recover from such a shock; and he was about to pick him up and carry him back, when Ah-gilak scrambled to his feet.

“Dod-burn it!” ejaculated the old man, “I durn near got my feet wet that time, as the feller said.”

“Are you all right?” David asked.

“Never felt so fit in my life,” replied Ah-gilak. “Say, you come after me, didn’t you? Why, you dod-burned fool, you might have been washed overboard.” That was all he ever said about it.

That last wave marked the height of the storm. The wind continued to blow a gale, but the hurricane was past. The sea still ran high, but was diminishing. After what the *Amoz* had withstood, she seemed safe enough now. With no headway, she wallowed in the trough of the sea; often standing on her beam ends, but always righting herself.

“It’d take a dod-burned act of Congress to upset this tub,” said Ah-gilak. “You can’t sail her, an’ you can’t steer her; but, by gum, you can’t wreck her; an’ if I’d a had her instead o’ the *Dolly Dorcas* I wouldn’t be down here now in this dod-burned hole-in-the-ground, but back in Cape Cod, probably votin’ for John Tyler again, or some other good Democrat.”

David went below, at the risk of life and limb, to see how the men there had fared. With the coming of the storm, they had closed all ports, and fastened the guns down more securely. Fortunately, none of them had broken loose; and there were only a few minor casualties among the men, from being thrown about during the wild pitching of the ship.

The Mezop sailors above had not fared so well; all but twenty-five of them had been washed overboard. And the boats were gone, the mast was gone, and most of the sail. The *Amoz* was pretty much of a derelict. Neither of the other ships was in sight; and David had given them both up for lost, especially the little *Sari*.

Their situation looked rather hopeless to these men of the Stone

Age. "If the boats hadn't been lost," said Ghak, "some of us could get ashore."

"Why can't we break up the deck and build a raft — several of them?" suggested Hodon. "We could paddle rafts to shore, but we couldn't ever paddle the *Amoz*."

"You dod-burned landlubbers give me a pain," snorted Ah-gilak. "We got the stub of a mast, part of the sail, and plenty cordage; we can jury rig the dod-durned tub, an' get to shore twice as fast an' ten times as easy as buildin' rafts an' paddlin'. Give me some hands, an' I'll have her shipshape in two shakes of a dead lamb's tail, as the feller said. How fer is to port?"

David shrugged. "That depends on how far the hurricane carried us and in what direction. We may be fifty miles from port, or we may be five hundred. Your guess would be better than mine."

"How's the fresh water?" demanded Ah-gilak.

"We've enough for many sleeps," said Ja.

"Dod-burn it!" cried the old man; "how in tarnation's a fellow goin' to do any figurin' with a bunch of landlubbers that ain't never knowed what time it was they was born."

"On the contrary," said David, "they always know what time it is."

"How come?" demanded Ah-gilak.

"It is always noon."

Ah-gilak snorted. He was in no mood for persiflage. "Well," he said, "we'll do the dod-burndest best we can. We may run short of water, but we got plenty food," he cast his eyes on the warriors coming up from the lower deck.

~

O-aa was awakened by the pitching of the canoe, and opened her eyes to see a wall of water towering above her. She lay in a watery canyon, with another wall of water hemming her in on the other side. This was a harrowing situation that was quite beyond her experience; nothing could save her; one of the walls would topple over on her. But nothing of the kind happened. Instead, the wall came down; and the canoe was lifted to the summit of one just like it. Here, O-aa could see a tumbling mass of wind-torn water as far as the eye could reach. The sky was black with angry, rolling clouds that were split by vivid flashes of lightning to the accompaniment of peals of earth-shaking thunder. The wind howled and shrieked in a fury of malign hate. Then the canoe sank into another canyon.

This went on and on; there seemed to be no end to it. The cockpit was half full of water; but La-ak had built well — the canoe could neither capsize nor sink and it was so light that it rode the crest of even the most mountainous waves; nothing short of a bolt of lightning could destroy it. This, however, O-aa did not know; she thought that each wave would be the last, as far as she was concerned; but as wave after wave lifted her upon its crest and then dropped her into a new abyss that was exactly like the last one, she took courage; until presently she was enjoying the experience. O-aa had never been on a roller coaster; but she was getting the same sort of thrill out of this experience; and it lasted much longer, and she didn't have to buy any tickets.

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The *Sari*, being a lighter ship than either of the other two, was blown along before the hurricane much faster; also, as it carried a much smaller sail, its mast did not go by the board as quickly as had that of

the *Amoz*. The third ship had lost its mast even before that of the *Amoz* had gone; so when the wind abated a little, the *Sari*, while also by this time a demasted derelict, was far ahead of her sister ships.

Having but a single, open deck, she had lost most of her complement; but she was still staunch of frame and timber — for Perry and David had built her well, much better than the first ship Perry had designed, and for which she was named, which had turned bottomside up at its launching.

The continuing gale, which persisted after the worst of the hurricane had past, was blowing the *Sari* merrily along to what fate or what destination no man knew. The survivors were only glad that they were alive; like most men of the Stone Age, they had no questions to ask of the future, the present being their only immediate concern; though, belying that very assertion, they did catch what rain water they could to augment the supply already aboard.

The deck of the *Sari* was still a more or less precarious resting place, when one of the Mezops sighted something floating dead ahead. He called his companions' attention to it, and several of them worked their way around the rail to have a look at what he had discovered.

Now, anything floating on this lonely sea was worthy of remark; it was not like the waters off the coast of California, where half the deck loads of Oregon lumbermen bob around to menace navigation and give the Coast Guard the jitters.

"It's a canoe," said Ko, the big Mezop who had discovered it.

"Is there anyone in it?" asked Raj, the captain of the *Sari* and a chief among the Mezops.

"Wait until it comes up again," said Ko.

"It must be a wonderful canoe, to have lived through such a storm," said Raj.

"It had a most peculiar look," said Ko. "Here it comes again! I think I see someone in it."

"It is a strange canoe," said Raj. "There are things sticking out from its sides."

"I once saw one like it," said another Mezop; "perhaps many thousand sleeps ago. It was blown to our island with a man who said that he came from an island called Canda, far out on the Lural Az. The canoe had bamboo floats on either side of it. It could not capsize. It had watertight compartments; so it could not sink. We killed the man. I think this canoe is from Canda."

Presently the *Sari*, which presented a larger surface to the wind than the canoe, overhauled it. O-aa was watching it. Having heard about the great ships of the Sarians from Hodon and David, she guessed that this must be one of them; and she was not afraid. Here was rescue, if she could get aboard. She waved to the men looking over the rail at her.

"It is a girl," said Raj. "Get a rope; we will try to get her aboard."

"She is from Canda," said the sailor who had seen the man from Canda, "she wears the same feather loin cloth that the man from Canda wore. We had better let her drown."

"No," said Raj; "she is a girl." Just what were the implications of this statement, you may guess as well as I. Raj was a man of the Stone Age; so, in many respects he was probably far more decent than men of the civilized outer world; but he was still a man.

One of the outriggers of the canoe bumped against the side of the *Sari* just as Ko threw a rope to O-aa. The girl seized it as the ship heeled over to starboard and rose on another wave while the canoe dropped into the trough, but O-aa held on. She was jerked from the canoe and banged against the side of the ship; but she clambered up

the rope like a monkey — cave girls are that way, probably from climbing inadequate and rickety ladders and poles all their lives.

As she clambered over the side, Raj took her by the arm. “She is not only a girl,” he said, “but she is beautiful; I shall keep her for myself.”

O-aa slapped him in the face, and jerked away. “I am the daughter of a king,” she said. “My mate, my father, and my nine brothers will find you out and kill you if you harm me.”

~

A man from Thuria, who was searching for a herd of lidi which had strayed, followed them to the end of the world which is bounded by the nameless strait. There a shadow passed across him. He looked up, thinking to see a thipdar; but there was a tree close by, and he was not afraid. What he saw filled him with amazement and not a little awe. A great round thing, to the bottom of which something seemed to be attached, was floating high in the air out across the nameless strait. He watched it for a long time, until it was only a speck; then he went on searching for his lost lidi which he never found.

He thought a great deal about this remarkable experience as he made his way back to Thuria on his giant lidi. What could the thing have been? He was sure that it was not alive, for he had seen no wings nor any movement of any kind; the thing had seemed just to drift along on the wind.

Being a Stone Age man living in a savage world, he had had so many exciting adventures that he didn’t even bother to mention most of them after he got home; unless he hadn’t had any adventures at all and hadn’t killed any one or anything, nor hadn’t been nearly killed himself; then he told his mate about that, and they both marvelled.

But this thing that he had seen above the nameless strait was different; this was something really worth talking about. No one else in the world had ever seen anything like that, and the chances were that nobody would believe him when he told about it. He would have to take that chance, but nothing could change the fact that he had seen it.

As soon as he got home, he commenced to talk about it; and, sure enough, no one believed him, his mate least of all. That made him so angry that he beat her.

“You were probably off in that village of Liba with that frowzy, fat, she-jalok; and are trying to make me believe that you went all the way to the end of the world,” she had said; so perhaps he should have beaten her.

He had been home no great time, perhaps a couple of sleeps, when a runner came from Sari. Everybody gathered around the chief to hear what the runner had to say.

“I have run all the way from Sari,” he said “to ask if any man of Thuria has seen a strange thing floating through the air. It is round —”

“And it has something fastened to the bottom of it!” fairly shouted the man whom no one would believe.

“Yes!” cried the runner. “You have seen it?”

“I have seen it,” said the man.

His fellow Thurians looked at him in amazement; after all he had told the truth — that was the amazing part of it. His mate assumed an air of importance and an I-told-you-so expression as she looked around at the other women.

“Where did you see it?” demanded the runner.

“I had gone to the end of the world in search of my lost lidi,” explained the man, “and I saw this thing floating out across the nameless strait.”

“Then she is lost,” cried the runner.

“Who is lost?” demanded the chief.

“Dian the Beautiful who was in the basket which hung from the bottom of the great round ball that Perry called a balloon.”

“She will never be found,” said the chief. “No man knows what lies beyond the nameless strait. Sometimes, when it is very clear, men have thought that they saw land there; that is why it is called a strait; but it may be an ocean bigger than the Sojar Az, which has no farther shore as far as any man knows.”

Chapter 4

Relieved of the weight of the rope, the balloon soared aloft much higher than it had been when the rope first started to drag in the waters of the nameless strait. Soon it was over the land and the city. Dian looked down and marvelled at this wondrous thing built by men.

It was a mean little city of clay houses and narrow winding streets, but to a cave girl of the Stone Age who had never before seen a city, it was a marvelous thing. It impressed her much as New York City impresses the outlanders from Pittsburgh or Kansas City, who see it for the first time.

The balloon was floating so low now that she could see the people in the streets and on the roofs of the buildings. They were looking up at her in wonder. If Dian had never seen a city, she had at least heard of them; but these people had not only never before seen a balloon, but they had never heard of such a thing.

When the balloon passed over the city and out across the country beyond, hundreds of people ran out and followed it. They followed it for a long way as it slowly came closer and closer to the ground.

Presently Dian saw another city in the distance, and when she came close to this second city she was quite close to the ground — perhaps twenty feet above it; then she saw men running from the city. They carried shields and bows and arrows, and for the first time she noticed that those who had followed her all the way from the first city were all men and that they, too, carried shields and bows and arrows.

Before the basket touched the ground the men from the two cities were fighting all around it. At first they fought with bows and arrows, but when they came to close quarters they drew two-bladed short-swords from scabbards that hung at their sides and fought hand-to-hand. They shouted and screamed at one another, and altogether made a terrible din.

Dian wished that she could make the balloon go up again, for she did not wish to fall into the hands of such ferocious people, but down came the balloon right in the midst of the fighting. Of course the gas bag dragged it, bumping and jumping along the ground, closer and closer to the second city. Warriors of both sides seized the edge of the basket and pulled and hauled, the men from the first city trying to drag it back and those of the second city trying to haul it on toward their gates.

“She is ours!” cried one of the latter. “See! She tries to come to Lolo-lolo! Kill the infidels who would steal our Noada!”

“She is ours!” screamed the men of the first city; “we saw her first. Kill the infidels who would cheat us of our Noada!”

Now the basket was near the gates of the city, and suddenly a dozen men rushed forward, seized hold of Dian, lifted her from the basket, and carried her through the gates, which were immediately slammed on friend and foe alike.

Relieved of the weight of Dian, the balloon leaped into the air, and drifted across the city. Even the fighters stopped to watch the miracle.

“Look!” exclaimed the warrior of the second city, “it has brought us our Noada, and now it returns to Karana.”

Lolo-lolo was another city of clay houses and winding, crooked streets through which Dian the Beautiful was escorted with what, she realized, was deepest reverence.

A warrior went ahead, shouting, “Our Noada has come!” and as she passed, the people, making way for her little cortege, knelt, covering their eyes with their hands.

None of this could Dian understand, for she knew nothing of religion, her people being peculiarly free from all superstition. She only knew that these strange people seemed friendly, and that she was being received more as an honored guest than as a prisoner. Everything here was strange to her; the little houses built solidly along both sides of the narrow streets; the yellow skins of the people; the strange garments that they wore — leather aprons, painted with gay designs, that fell from their waists before and behind; the leather helmets of the men; the feather headdress of the women. Neither men nor women wore any garment above the waist, while the children and young people were quite naked.

The armlets and anklets and other metal ornaments of both men and women, as well as the swords, the spear heads, and the arrow tips of the warriors were of a metal strange to Dian. They were bronze, for these people had passed from the Stone Age and the Age of Copper into the Bronze Age. That they were advancing in civilization was attested by the fact that their weapons were more lethal than those of the Stone Age people — the more civilized people become, the more deadly are the inventions with which they kill one another.

Dian was escorted to an open square in the center of the village. Here the buildings were a little larger, though none was over one story in height. In the center of one side of the quadrangle was a domed building, the most imposing in the city of Lolo-lolo; although to describe it as imposing is a trifle grandiloquent. It was, however, remarkable, in that these people could design and construct a dome as large as this one.

The shouting warrior who had preceded the escort had run ahead to the entrance of this building, where he shouted, "Our Noada comes!" repeating it until a number of weirdly costumed men emerged. They wore long leather coats covered with painted ornamentation, and the head of each was covered by a hideous mask.

As Dian approached the entrance to the building, these strange figures surrounded her; and, kneeling, covered the eye holes of their masks with their hands.

"Welcome, our Noada! Welcome to your temple in Lolo-lolo! We, your priests welcome you to The House of the Gods!" they chanted in unison.

The words welcome, priests, and gods were new words to Dian; she did not know what they meant; but she was bright enough to know that she was supposed to, and to realize that they thought her somebody she was not and that this belief of theirs was her best safeguard; so she merely inclined her head graciously and waited for what might come next.

The square behind her had filled with people, who now began to chant a weird pagan song to the beating of drums, as Dian the Beautiful was escorted into The House of the Gods by the priests of Noada.

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Under the expert direction of Ah-gilak, the men of the *Amoz* set up a jury rig; and once more the ship moved on its journey. A man from Amoz was the compass, sextant, chronometer, and navigator; for the naval base of Pellucidar was the little bay beside which were the cliffs of Amoz. Guided by his inherent homing instinct, he stood beside the wheelsman and pointed toward Amoz. His relief was another Amozite, and the period of his watch was terminated when he felt like sleeping. The arrangement was most satisfactory, and the results obtained were far more accurate than those which might have been had by use of compass, sextant, and chronometer.

The wind had not abated and the seas were still high; but the EPS *Amoz* wallowed and plowed along toward port, which all aboard were now confident it would reach eventually.

“Dod-burn the old hooker,” said Ah-gilak; “she’ll get there some day, as the feller said.”

~

When O-aa said to Raj, “I am the daughter of a king,” the Mezop cocked an ear, for the word had been grafted onto the language of Pellucidar by Abner Perry, and those who had a right to the title were the heads of “kingdoms” that belonged to the federation known as the Empire of Pellucidar. If the girl was just any girl, that was one thing; but if her people belonged to the Federation, that was something very different indeed.

“Who is your father?” demanded Raj.

“Oose, King of Kali,” she replied; “and my mate is Hodon the Fleet One, of Sari. My nine brothers are very terrible men.”

“Never mind your nine brothers,” said Raj; “that you are a Kalian, or that your mate is Hodon of Sari is enough. You will be well treated on this ship.”

“And that will be a good thing for you,” said O-aa, “for if you hadn’t treated me well, I should have killed you. I have killed many men. My nine brothers and I used to raid the village of Suvi all alone, and I always killed more men than any of my brothers. My mother’s brother was also a great killer of men, as are my three sisters. Yes, it will be very well for you if you treat me nicely. I always —”

“Shut up,” said Raj, “you talk too much and you lie too much. I shall not harm you, but we Mezops beat women who talk too much; we do not like them.”

O-aa stuck her chin in the air, but she said nothing; she knew a man of his word when she met one.

“If you are not from Canda,” said the sailor who had once seen a man from Canda, “where did you get that feather loin cloth?”

“I took it from La-ak, the Candian, after I had killed him,” replied O-aa, “and that is no lie.”

The *Sari* was blown along before the gale, and at the same time it was in the grip of an ocean current running in the same direction; so it was really making excellent headway, though to O-aa it seemed to be going up and down only.

When they came opposite the Anoroc Islands, the Mezops became restless. They could not see the islands; but they knew exactly the direction in which they lay, and they didn’t like the idea of being carried past their home. The four boats of the *Sari* had been so securely lashed to the deck against the rail that the storm had not been able to tear them away; so Raj, suggested to the Sarians that he and his fellow Mezops take two of the boats and paddle to Anoroc, and that

the Sarians take the other two and make for shore, since the ship was also opposite Sari.

The high seas made it extremely difficult and dangerous to launch the boats; but the Mezops are excellent sailors, and they finally succeeded in getting both their boats off; and with a final farewell they paddled away over the high seas.

O-aa looked on at all of this with increasing perturbation. She saw the frail boats lifted high on mighty waves only to disappear into the succeeding trough. Sometimes she thought that they would never come up again. She had watched the lowering of the boats and the embarkation of the Mezops with even greater concern; so, when the Sarians were ready to launch their boats, she was in more or less of a blue funk.

They told her to get into the first boat, but she said that she would go in the second — she wanted to delay the dread moment as long as possible. What added to her natural fear of the sea, was the fact that she was quite aware that the Sarians were not good sailors. Always they have lived inland, and had never ventured upon the sea until David and Perry had decreed that they become a naval power, and even then they had always gone as cargo and not as sailors.

O-aa watched the lowering of the first boat in fear and trepidation. They first lowered the boat into the sea with two men in it; these men tried to hold it from pounding against the side of the ship, using paddles for the purpose. They were not entirely successful. O-aa expected any minute to see it smashed to pieces. The other Sarians who were to go in the first boat slid down ropes; and when they were all in the boat, the *Sari* suddenly heeled over and capsized it. Some of the men succeeded in seizing the ropes down which they had slid,

and these were hauled to the deck of the *Sari*; for the others there was no hope. O-aa watched them drown.

The remaining Sarians were dubious about lowering the second boat; no one likes to be drowned in a high sea full of ravenous reptiles. They talked the matter over.

"If half the men had taken paddles and held the boat away from the *Sari*, instead of trying to paddle before the ship rolled away from them, the thing would not have happened," said one. Others agreed with him.

"I think we can do it safely," said another. O-aa didn't think so.

"If we drift around on the *Sari*, we shall die of thirst and starvation," said a third; "we won't have a chance. Once in the boat, we will have a chance. I am for trying it." Finally the others agreed.

The boat was lowered successfully, and a number of men slid down into it to hold it away from the ship's side.

"Down you go," said a man to O-aa, pushing her toward the rail.

"Not I," said O-aa. "I am not going."

"What! You are going to remain on board the *Sari* alone?" he demanded.

"I am," said O-aa; "and if you ever get to Sari, which you won't and Hodon is there, tell him that O-aa is out on the Lural Az in the *Sari*. He will come and get me."

The man shook his head, and slid over the side. The others followed him. O-aa watched them as they fended the boat from the side of the ship until it rolled away from them; then they drove their paddles into the water and stroked mightily until they were out of danger. She watched the boat being tossed about until it was only a speck in the distance. Alone on a drifting derelict on a storm-tossed

ocean, O-aa felt much safer than she would have in the little boat which she was sure would never reach land.

O-aa had what she considered an inexhaustible supply of food and water, and some day the *Sari* would drift ashore; then she would make her way home. The greatest hardship with which she had to put up was the lack of some one with whom to talk; and, for O-aa, that was a real hardship.

The wind blew the ship toward the south-west, and the ocean current hastened it along in the same direction. O-aa slept many times, and it was still noon. The storm had long since abated. Great, smooth swells lifted the *Sari* gently and gently lowered it. Where before the ocean had belabored the ship, now it caressed her.

When O-aa was awake she was constantly searching for land, and at last she saw it. It was very dim and far away; but she was sure that it was land, and the *Sari* was approaching it — but, oh, so slowly. She watched until she could no longer hold her eyes open, and then she slept. How long she slept no man may know; but when she awoke the land was very close, but the *Sari* was moving parallel with it and quite rapidly. O-aa knew that she could never reach the land if the ship kept on its present course, but there was nothing that she could do about it.

A strong current runs through the nameless strait from the Sojar Az, into which the *Sari* had drifted, to the Korsar Az, a great ocean that bounds the western shore of the land mass on which Sari is located. None of this O-aa knew, nor did she know that the land off the port side of the *Sari* was that dread *terra incognita* of her people.

The wind, that had been blowing gently from the east, changed into the north and increased, carrying the *Sari* closer inshore. Now she was so close that O-aa could plainly discern things on land. She saw

something that aroused her curiosity, for she had never seen anything like it before; it was a walled city. She had not the slightest idea what it was. Presently she saw people emerging from it; they were running down to the shore toward which the *Sari* was drifting. As they came closer, O-aa saw that there were many warriors.

O-aa had never seen a city before, and these people had never seen a ship. The *Sari* was drifting in slowly, and O-aa was standing on the stump of the bowsprit, a brave figure in her red and yellow feather loincloth and the three feathers in her hair.

The *Sari* was quite close to shore now and the people could see O-aa plainly. Suddenly they fell upon their knees and covered their eyes with their hands, crying, "Welcome, our Noada! The true Noada has come to Tanga-tanga!"

Just then the *Sari* ran aground and O-aa was pitched head-foremost into the water. O-aa had learned to swim in a lake above Kali, where there were no reptiles; but she knew that these waters were full of them; she had seen them often; so when she came to the surface she began swimming for shore as though all the saurians in the world were at heels. Esther Williams would not have been ashamed of the time in which the little cave girl of Kali made the 100 meters to shore.

As she scrambled ashore, the awe-struck warriors of Tanga-tanga knelt again and covered their eyes with their hands. O-aa glanced down to see if she had lost her loincloth, and was relieved to find that she had not.

Chapter 5

O-AA looked at the kneeling warriors in amazement; the situation was becoming embarrassing. “What are you doing that for,” she demanded. “Why don’t you get up?”

“May we stand in your presence?” asked a warrior.

O-aa thought quickly; perhaps this was a case of mistaken identity, but she might as well make the best of it. If they were afraid of her, it might be well to keep them that way.

“I’ll think it over,” she said.

Glancing around, she saw some of the warriors peeking at her; but the moment she looked at them they lowered their heads. Even after they had looked at her, O-aa discovered, they still didn’t realize their mistake. She saw that they were yellow men, with painted leather aprons, and strange weapons; they wore helmets that O-aa thought were very becoming.

After she had taken her time looking them over, she said, “Now you may stand;” and they all arose.

Several of the warriors approached her. “Our Noadā,” one of them said, “we have been waiting for you for a long time — ever since the first Xexot learned that only with your help can we hope to reach Karana after we die; perhaps that was a million sleeps ago. Our priests told us that some time you would come. Not so many sleeps ago one came out of the air whom we thought was our Noadā, but now we know that she was a false Noadā. Come with us to Tanga-tanga, where your priests will take you into your temple.”

O-aa was puzzled. Much that the man had said to her was as Greek to a Hottentot; but little O-aa was smart enough to realize that she seemed to be sitting pretty, and she wasn’t going to upset the apple cart

by asking questions. Her greatest fear was that they might start asking her questions.

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Dian the Beautiful had learned many things since she had come to the city of Lolo-lolo; and she had learned them without asking too many questions, for one of the first things she had learned was that she was supposed to know everything — even what people were thinking.

She had learned that this race of yellow men called themselves Xexots; and that she had come direct from a place called Karana, which was up in the sky somewhere, and that if they were good, she would see that they were sent there when they died; but if they were bad, she could send them to the Molop Az, the flaming sea upon which Pellucidar floats.

She already knew about the Molop Az, as what Pellucidarian does not? The dead who are buried in the ground go there; they are carried down, piece by piece, to the Molop Az by the wicked little men who dwell there. Everyone knows this, because when graves are opened it is always discovered that the bodies have been partially or entirely borne off. That is why many of the peoples of Pellucidar place their dead in trees where the birds may find them and carry them bit by bit to the Dead World that hangs above the Land of Awful Shadow. When people killed an enemy, they always buried his body in the ground; so that it would be sure to go to Molop Az.

She also discovered that being a Noada, was even more important than being an empress. Here in Lolo-lolo, even the king knelt down and covered his eyes when he approached her; nor did he arise again until she had given him permission.

It all puzzled Dian a great deal, but she was learning. People

brought her presents of food and ornaments and leather and many, many little pieces of metal, thin and flat and with eight sides. These the priests, who eventually took most of the presents, seemed to value more than anything else; and if there were not a goodly supply left in the temple every day, they became very angry and scolded the people. But no matter how puzzled she was, Dian dared not ask questions; for she was intuitively aware that if they came to doubt that she was all wise, they would doubt that she was really a Noada; and then it would go hard with her. After they had worshipped her so devoutly, they might tear her to pieces if they discovered that she was an imposter.

The king of Lolo-lolo was called a Go-sha; his name was Gamba. He came often to worship at the shrine of the Noada. The high priest, Hor, said that he had never come to the temple before except on feast days; when he could get plenty to eat and drink and watch the dancing.

“You are very beautiful, my Noada,” said Hor; “perhaps that is why the Go-sha comes more often now.”

“Perhaps he wants to go to Karana when he dies,” suggested Dian.

“I hope that that is all he wants,” said Hor. “He has been a very wicked man, failing to pay due respect to the priesthood and even deriding them. It is said that he does not believe in Karana or Molop Az or the teachings of Pu and that he used to say that no Noada would ever come to Lolo-lolo because there was no such thing as a Noada.”

“Now he knows better,” said Dian.

Shortly after this conversation, Gamba came to the temple while Hor was asleep; he knelt before Dian and covered his eyes with his hands.

“Arise, Gamba,” said Dian.

She was seated on a little platform upon a carved stool covered with

painted leather and studded with bronze; she wore a soft leather robe fastened at the waist with a girdle. The robe was caught over one shoulder, leaving the other bare, and on one side it was slit to her hip and fastened there with a bronze disc. Around her neck were eight strands of carved ivory beads, each strand of a different length, the longest reaching below her waist. Bronze bracelets and anklets adorned her limbs, while surmounting this barbaric splendor was a headdress of feathers.

Dian the Beautiful, who had never before worn more than a sketchy loin cloth, was most uncomfortable in all this finery, not being sufficiently advanced in civilization to appreciate the necessity for loading the feminine form with a lot of useless and silly gew-gaws. She knew that Nature had created her beautiful and that no outward adornment could enhance her charms.

Gamba appeared to be in hearty accord with this view, as his eyes seemed to ignore the robe. Dian did not like the look in them.

“Did the Go-sha come to worship?” inquired Dian the Goddess.

Gamba smiled. Was there a suggestion of irony in that smile? Dian thought so.

“I came to visit,” replied Gamba. “I do not have to come here to worship you — that I do always.”

“It is well that you worship your Noada,” said Dian; “Pu will be pleased.”

“It is not the Noada I worship,” said Gamba, boldly; “it is the woman.”

“The Noada is not pleased,” said Dian, icily; “nor is Pu; nor will Hor, the high priest, be pleased.”

Gamba laughed. “Hor may fool the rest of them; but he doesn’t fool me, and I don’t believe that he fools you. I don’t know what

accident brought you here, nor what that thing was you came in; but I do know you are just a woman, for there is no such thing as a Noda; and there are a lot of my nobles and warriors who think just as I do.”

“The Noda is not interested,” said Dian, “the Go-sha may leave.”

Gamba settled himself comfortably on the edge of the dais. “I am the Go-sha,” he said. “I come and go as I please. I please to remain.”

“Then I shall leave,” said Dian, rising.

“Wait,” said Gamba. “If you are as wise as I think you are, you will see that it is better to have Gamba for a friend than an enemy. The people are dissatisfied; Hor bleeds them for all he can get out of them; and since he has had you with whom to frighten them, he has bled them worse. His priests threaten them with your anger if they do not bring more gifts, especially pieces of bronze; and Hor is getting richer, and the people are getting poorer. They say now that they have nothing left with which to pay taxes; soon the Go-sha will not have the leather to cover his nakedness.”

“Of these things, you should speak to Hor,” said Dian.

“By that speech you convict yourself,” exclaimed Gamba, triumphantly, “but yours is a difficult role; I am surprised that you have not tripped before.”

“I do not know what you mean,” said Dian.

“The Noda is the representative of Pu in Pellucidar, according to Hor; she is omnipotent; she decides; she commands — not Hor. When you tell me to speak to Hor of the things of which the people complain, you admit that it is Hor who commands — not you.”

“The Noda does command,” snapped Dian; “she commands you to take your complaints to Hor; just as the common people take their complaints to the lesser priests — they do not burden their Noda with them, nor should you. If they warrant it, Hor will lay them before me.”

Gamba slapped his thigh. "By Pu!" he exclaimed, "but you are a bright girl. You slipped out of that one very cleverly. Come! let us be friends. We could go a long way together in Lolo-lolo. Being the wife of the Go-sha would not be so bad, and a lot more fun than being a Noada cooped up in a temple like a prisoner — which you are. Yes, you are a prisoner; and Hor is your jailer. Think it over, Noada; think it over."

"Think what over?" demanded a voice from the side of the room.

They both turned. It was Hor. He came and knelt before Dian, covering his eyes with his hands; then he rose and glared at Gamba, but he spoke to Dian. "You permit this man to sit upon this holy spot?" he demanded.

Gamba eyed Dian intently, waiting for her reply. It came: "If it pleases him," she said, haughtily.

"It is against the laws that govern the temple," said Hor.

"I make the laws which govern the temple," said Dian; "and I make the laws which govern the people of Lolo-lolo," and she looked at Gamba.

Hor looked very uncomfortable. Gamba was grinning.

Dian rose. "You are both excused," she said, and it sounded like a command — it was a command. Then Dian stepped down from the dais and walked toward the door of the temple.

"Where are you going?" demanded Hor.

"I am going to walk in the streets of Lolo-lolo and speak with my people."

"But you can't," cried Hor. "It is against the rules of the temple."

"Didn't you just hear your Noada say that she makes the temple laws?" asked Gamba, still grinning.

“Wait, then,” cried Hor, “until I summon the priests and the drums.”

“I wish no priests and no drums,” said Dian. “I wish to walk alone.”

“I will go with you.” Gamba and Hor spoke in unison, as though the line had been rehearsed.

“I said that I wished to go alone,” said Dian; and with that, she passed through the great doorway of the temple out into the eternal sunlight of the square.

“Well,” said Gamba to Hor, “you got yourself a Noda, didn’t you?” and he laughed ironically as he said it.

“I shall pray Pu to guide her,” said Hor, but his expression was more that of an executioner than a suppliant.

“She’ll probably guide Pu,” said Gamba.

As the people saw their Noda walking alone in the square, they were filled with consternation; they fell upon their knees at her approach and covered their eyes with their hands until she bade them arise. She stopped before a man and asked him what he did.

“I work in bronze,” said the man. “I made those bracelets that you are wearing, Noda.”

“You make many pieces for your work?” Dian had never known a money system before she came to Lolo-lolo; but here she had learned that one could get food and other things in exchange for pieces of bronze, often called “pieces” for short. They were brought in quantities to the temple and given to her, but Hor took them.

“I get many pieces for my work,” replied the man, “but —” He hung his head and was silent.

“But what?” asked Dian.

“I am afraid to say,” said the man; “I should not have spoken.”

“I command you to speak,” said Dian.

“The priests demand most of what I make, and the Go-sha wants the rest. I have barely enough left to buy food.”

“How much were you paid for these bracelets that I am wearing?” demanded Dian.

“Nothing.”

“Why nothing?”

“The priests said that I should make them and give them as an offering to the Noada, who would forgive my sins and see that I got into Karana when I died.”

“How much are they worth?”

“They are worth at least two hundred pieces,” said the man; “they are the most beautiful bracelets in Lolo-lolo.”

“Come with me,” said Dian, and she continued across the square.

On the opposite side of the square from the temple was the house of the Go-sha. Before the entrance stood a number of warriors on guard duty. They knelt and covered their eyes as Noada approached, but when they arose and Dian saw their faces she saw no reverence there — only fear and hate.

“You are fighting men,” said Dian. “Are you treated well?”

“We are treated as well as the slaves,” said one, bitterly.

“We are given the leavings from the tables of the Go-sha and the nobles, and we have no pieces with which to buy more,” said another.

“Why have you no pieces? Do you fight for nothing?”

“We are supposed to get five pieces every time Go-sha sleeps, but we have not been paid for many sleeps.”

“Why?”

“The Go-sha says that it is because the priests take all the pieces for you,” said the first warrior, boldly.

“Come with me,” said Dian.

“We are on guard here, and we cannot leave.”

“I, your Noadā, command it; come!” said Dian, imperiously.

“If we do as the Noadā commands us,” said one, “She will protect us.”

“But Gamba will have us beaten,” said another.

“Gamba will not have you beaten if you always obey me. It is Gamba who will be beaten if he harms you for obeying me.”

The warriors followed her as she stopped and talked with men and women, each of which had a grievance against either the priests or the Go-sha. Each one she commanded to follow her; and finally, with quite a goodly procession following her, she returned to the temple.

Gamba and Hor had been standing in the entrance watching her; now they followed her into the temple. She mounted the dais and faced them.

“Gamba and Hor,” she said, “you did not kneel as your Noadā passed you at the temple door. You may kneel now.”

The men hesitated. They were being humiliated before common citizens and soldiers. Hor was the first to weaken; he dropped to his knees and covered his eyes. Gamba looked up defiantly at Dian. Just the shadow of a smile, tinged by irony, played upon her lips. She turned her eyes upon the soldiers standing beside Gamba.

“Warriors,” she said, “take this —” She did not have to say more, for Gamba had dropped to his knees; he had guessed what was in her mind and trembling on her lips.

After she had allowed the two to rise, she spoke to Hor. “Have many pieces of bronze brought,” she said.

“What for?” asked Hor.

“The Noadā does not have to explain what she wishes to do with her own,” said Dian.

“But Noda,” sputtered Hor; “the pieces belong to the temple.”

“The pieces and the temple, too, belong to me; the temple was built for me, the pieces were brought as gifts for me. Send for them.”

“How many?” asked Hor.

“All that six priests can carry. If I need more, I can send them back.”

With six priests trailing him, Hor left the apartment, trembling with rage; but he got many pieces of bronze, and he had them brought into the throne room of the temple.

“To that man,” said Dian, pointing at the worker in bronze, “give two hundred pieces in payment for these bracelets for which he was never paid.”

“But, Noda,” expostulated Hor, “the bracelets were gift offerings.”

“They were forced offerings — give the man the pieces.” She turned to Gamba. “How many times have you slept since your warriors were last paid?”

Gamba flushed under his yellow skin. “I do not know,” he said, surlily.

“How many?” she asked the warriors.

“Twenty-one times,” said one of them.

“Give each of these men five pieces for each of the twenty-one sleeps,” directed Dian, “and have all the warriors come immediately to get theirs;” then she directed the payment of various sums to each of the others who had accompanied her to the temple.

Hor was furious; but Gamba, as he came to realize what this meant, was enjoying it, especially Hor’s discomfiture; and Dian became infinitely more desirable to him than she had been before. What a mate she would be for a Go-sha!

“Now,” said Dian, when all had received their pieces, “hereafter,

all offerings to your Noada will be only what you can afford to give — perhaps one piece out of every ten or twenty; and to your Go-sha, the same. Between sleeps I shall sit here, and Hor will pay to everyone who comes the number of pieces each has been forced to give. Those who think one piece in ten is fair, may return that amount to Hor. If you have any other grievances, bring them to your Noada; and they will be corrected. You may depart now.”

They looked at her in wonder and adoration, the citizens and the warriors whose eyes had first been filled with fear and hatred of her; and after they had kneeled, they paid to Hor one piece out of every ten they had received. Laughing and jubilant, they left the temple to spread the glad tidings through the city.

“Pu will be angry,” said Hor; “the pieces were Pu’s.”

“You are a fool,” said Dian, “and if you don’t mend your ways I shall appoint a new high priest.”

“You can’t do that,” Hor almost screamed, “and you can’t have any more of my pieces of bronze!”

“You see,” said Gamba to Dian, “that what I told you is true — Hor collects all the pieces for himself.”

“I spoke with many people in the square before the temple,” said Dian, “and I learned many things from them — one of them is that they hate you and they hate me. That is why I called you a fool, Hor; because you do not know that these people are about ready to rise up and kill us all — the robbed citizens and the unpaid warriors. After I return their pieces that have been stolen from them, they will still hate you two; but they will not hate me; therefore, if you are wise, you will always do what I tell you to do — and don’t forget that I am your Noada.”

Chapter 6

Dian slept. Her sleeping apartment was darkened against the eternal noonday sun. She lay on a leather couch — a tanned hide stretched over a crude wooden frame. She wore only a tiny loin cloth, for the apartment was warm. She dreamed of David.

A man crept into her apartment on bare feet, and moved silently toward the couch. Dian stirred restlessly; and the man stopped, waiting. Dian dreamed that a tarag was creeping upon David; and she leaped up, awake, to warn him; so that she stood face to face with one of the lesser priests who carried a slim bronze dagger in one hand.

Face to face with Death in that darkened chamber, Dian thought fast. She saw that the man was trembling, as he raised the dagger to the height of his shoulder — in a moment, he would leap forward and strike.

Dian stamped her foot upon the floor. “Kneel!” she commanded, imperiously.

The man hesitated; his dagger hand dropped to his side, and he fell to his knees.

“Drop the dagger,” said Dian. The man dropped it, and Dian snatched it from the floor.

“Confess!” directed the girl. “Who sent you here? but do I need ask? It was Hor?”

The priest nodded. “May Pu forgive me, for I did not wish to come. Hor threatened me; he said he would have me killed if I did not do this thing.”

“You may go now,” said Dian, “and do not come again.”

“You will never see me again, my Noada,” said the priest. “Hor lied;

he said you were not the true Noadā, but now I know that you are — Pu watches over and protects you.”

After the priest had left the apartment, Dian dressed slowly and went to the temple throne room. As usual, she was ushered in by priests to the accompaniment of drums and chants. The priests, she noticed, were nervous; they kept glancing at her apprehensively. She wondered if they, too, had been commissioned to kill her.

The room was filled with people — priests, citizens, warriors. Gamba was there and Hor. The latter dropped to his knees and covered his eyes long before she was near him. There seemed to be considerable excitement.

By the time she took her place upon the dais everyone in the room was kneeling. After she had bidden them arise, they pressed forward to lay their grievances at her feet. She saw the priests whispering excitedly among themselves.

“What has happened, Hor?” she asked. “Why is everyone so excited?”

Hor cleared his throat. “It was nothing,” he said; “I would not annoy my Noadā with it.”

“Answer my question,” snapped Dian.

“One of the lesser priests was found hanging by his neck in his room,” explained Hor. “He was dead.”

“I know,” said Dian; “it was the priest called Saj.”

“Our Noadā knows all,” whispered one citizen to another.

After the people had aired their grievances and those who felt that they had been robbed were reimbursed, Dian spoke to all those assembled in the temple.

“Here are the new laws,” she said: “Of all the pieces of bronze which you receive, give one out of ten to the Go-sha. These pieces will

be used to keep the city clean and in repair and to pay the warriors who defend Lolo-lolo. Give the same number of pieces for the support of my temple. Out of these pieces the temple will be kept in repair, the priests fed and paid, and some will be given to the Go-sha for the pay of his warriors, if he does not have enough, for the warriors defend the temple. You will make these payments after each twenty sleeps. Later, I will select an honest citizen to look after the temple pieces.

“Now, one thing more. I want fifty warriors to watch over me at all times. They will be the Noda’s Guard. After every sleep that your Noda sleeps, each warrior will receive ten pieces. Are there fifty among you who would like to serve on the Noda’s guard?”

Every warrior in the temple stepped forward, and from them Dian selected the fifty largest and strongest.

“I shall sleep better hereafter,” she said to Hor. Hor said nothing.

But if Hor said nothing, he was doing a great deal of thinking; for he knew that if he were ever to regain his power and his riches, he must rid himself of the new Noda.

While the temple was still jammed with citizens and warriors, alarm drums sounded outside in the city; and as the warriors were streaming into the square, a messenger came running from the city gates.

“The Tanga-tangas have come!” he cried; “they have forced the gates and they are in the city!”

Instantly all was confusion; the citizens ran in one direction — away from the gates — and the warriors ran in the other to meet the raiding Tanga-tangas. Gamba ran out with his warriors, just an undisciplined mob with bronze swords. A few had spears, but the bows and arrows of all of them were in their barracks.

The fifty warriors whom Dian had chosen remained to guard her

and the temple. The lesser priests fell to praying, repeating over and over, "Our Noada will give us victory! Our Noada will save us!" But Hor was more practical; he stopped their praying long enough to have them close the massive temple doors and bar them securely; then he turned to Dian.

"Turn back the enemy," he said; "strike them dead with the swords of our warriors, drive them from the city, and let them take no prisoners back into slavery. Only you can save us!"

Dian noticed an exultant note in Hor's voice, but she guessed that he was not exulting in her power to give victory to the Lolo-lolos. She was on a spot, and she knew it.

They heard the shouting of fighting men and the clash of weapons, the screams of the wounded and the dying. They heard the battle sweep into the square before the temple; there was clamoring before the temple doors and the sound of swords beating upon them.

Hor was watching Dian. "Destroy them, Noada!" he cried with thinly veiled contempt in his voice.

The massive doors withstood the attack, and the battle moved on beyond the temple. Later it swept back, and Dian could hear the victory cries of the Tanga-tangas. After a while the sounds died away in the direction of the city gates; and the warriors opened the temple doors, for they knew that the enemy had departed.

In the square lay the bodies of many dead; they were thick before the temple doors — mute evidence of the valor with which the warriors of Lolo-lolo had defended their Noada.

When the results of the raid were finally known, it was discovered that over a hundred of Gamba's warriors had been killed and twice that number wounded; that all the Tanga-tangan slaves in the city had been liberated and that over a hundred men and women of Lolo-lolo

had been taken away into slavery; while the Lolo-loloans had taken but a single prisoner.

This prisoner was brought to the temple and questioned in the presence of Dian and Gamba and Hor. He was very truculent and cocky.

“We won the great victory,” he said; “and if you do not liberate me the warriors of our Noada will come again, and this time they will leave not a single Lolo-loloan alive that they do not take back into slavery.”

“You have no Noada,” said Gamba. “There is one Noada, and she is here.”

The prisoner laughed derisively. “How then did we win such a glorious victory?” he demanded. “It was with the help of our Noada, the true Noada — this one here is a false Noada; our victory proves it.”

“There is only one Noada,” said Hor, but he didn’t say which one.

“You are right,” agreed the prisoner; “there is only one Noada, and she is in Tanga-tanga. She came in a great temple that floated upon the water, and she leaped into the sea and swam to the shore where we were waiting to receive her. She swam through the waters that are infested with terrible monsters, but she was unharmed; only Pu or a Noada could do that — and now she has given us this great victory.”

The people of Lolo-lolo were crushed; scarcely a family but had had a member killed, wounded, or taken into slavery. They had no heart for anything; they left the dead lying in the square and in the streets until the stench became unbearable, and all the time the lesser priests, at the instigation of Hor, went among them, whispering that their Noada was a false Noada, or otherwise this catastrophe would never have befallen them.

Only a few came to the temple now to worship, and few were the offerings brought. One, bolder than another, asked Dian why she had

let this disaster overwhelm them. Dian knew that she must do something to counteract the effects of the gossip that the lesser priests were spreading, or her life would not be worth a single piece of bronze. She knew of the work of Hor and the priests, for one of the warriors who guarded her had told her.

“It was not I who brought this disaster upon you,” she answered the man; “it was Pu. He was punishing Lolo-lolo because of the wickedness of those who robbed and cheated the people of Lolo-lolo.”

It was not very logical; but then the worshipers of Pu were not very logical, or they would not have worshipped him; and those who heard her words, spread them through the city; and there arose a faction with which Hor and the lesser priests were not very popular.

Dian sent for Gamba and commanded him to have the dead removed from the city and disposed of, for the stench was so terrible that one could scarcely breathe.

“How can I have them removed?” he asked; “no longer have we any slaves to do such work.”

“The men of Lolo-lolo can do it, then,” said Dian.

“They will not,” Gamba told her.

“Then take warriors and compel them to do it,” snapped the Noada.

“I am your friend,” said Gamba, “but I cannot do that for you, the people would tear me to pieces.”

“Then I shall do it,” said Dian, and she summoned her warrior guard and told them to collect enough citizens to remove the dead from the city; “and you can take Hor and all the other priests with you, too,” she added.

Hor was furious. “I will not go,” he said.

“Take him!” snapped Dian, and a warrior prodded him in the small of the back with his spear and forced him out into the square.

Gamba looked at her with admiration. “Noada or not,” he said, “you are a very brave woman. With you as my mate, I could defy all my enemies and conquer Tanga-tanga into the bargain.”

“I am not for you,” said Dian.

The city was cleaned up, but too late — an epidemic broke out. Men and women died; and the living were afraid to touch them, nor would Dian’s guard again force the citizens to do this work. Once more the lesser priests went among the people spreading the word that the disasters which had befallen them were all due to the false Noada.

“Pu,” they said, “is punishing us because we have received her.”

Thus things went from bad to worse for Dian the Beautiful; until, at last, it got so bad that crowds gathered in the square before the temple, cursing and reviling her; and then those who still believed in her, incited by the agents of Gamba, fell upon them; and there was rioting and bloodshed.

Hor took advantage of this situation to spread the rumor that Gamba and the false Noada were planning to destroy the temple and rule the city, defying Pu and the priests; and that when this happened, Pu would lay waste the city and hurl all the people into the Molop Az. This was just the sort of propaganda of terror that would influence an ignorant and superstitious people. Remember, they were just simple people of the Bronze Age. They had not yet reached that stage of civilization where they might send children on holy crusades to die by thousands; they were not far enough advanced to torture unbelievers with rack and red hot irons, or burn heretics at the stake; so they believed this folderol that more civilized people would have spurned with laughter while killing all Jews.

At last Gamba came to Dian. "My own warriors are turning against me," he told her. "They believe the stories that Hor is spreading; so do most of the citizens. There are some who believe in you yet and some who are loyal to me; but the majority have been terrified into believing that Hor speaks the truth and that if they do not destroy us, Pu will destroy them."

"What are we to do?" asked Dian.

"The only chance we have to live, is to escape from the city," replied Gamba, "and even that may be impossible. We are too well known to escape detection — your white skin would betray you, and every man, woman, and child in Lolo-lolo knows his Go-sha."

"We might fight our way out," suggested Dian. "I am sure that my warriors are still loyal to me."

Gamba shook his head. "They are not," he said. "Some of my own warriors have told me that they are no longer your protectors, but your jailers. Hor has won them."

Dian thought a moment, and then she said, "I have a plan — listen." She whispered for a few minutes to Gamba, and when she had finished, Gamba left the temple; and Dian went to her sleeping apartment — but she did not sleep. Instead, she stripped off her robe of office and donned her own single garment that she had worn when she first came to Lolo-lolo; then she put the long leather robe on over it.

By a back corridor she came to a room that she knew would be used only before and after ceremonies; in it were a number of large chests. Dian sat down on one of them and waited.

A man came into the temple with his head so bandaged that only one eye was visible; he had come, as so many came, to be healed by his Noada. Unless they died, they were always healed eventually.

The temple was almost deserted; only the members of the Noada's

Guard loitered there near the entrance. They were there on Hor's orders to see that the Noada not escape, Hor having told them that she was planning to join Gamba in his house across the square, from which they were arranging to launch their attack against the temple.

The man wore the weapons of a common warrior, and he appeared very tired and weak, probably from loss of blood. He said nothing; he just went and waited before the throne, waited for his Noada to come — the Noada that would never come again. After a while he commenced to move about the throne room, looking at different objects. Occasionally he glanced toward the warriors loitering near the door. They paid no attention to him. In fact they had just about forgotten him when he slipped through a doorway at the opposite side of the room.

The temple was very quiet, and there were only a few people in the square outside. The noonday sun beat down; and, as always, only those who had business outside were in the streets. Lolo-lolo was lethargic; but it was the calm before the storm. The lesser priests and the other enemies of Gamba and the Noada were organizing the mob that was about to fall upon them and destroy them. In many houses were groups of citizens and warriors waiting for the signal.

Two priests came into the throne room of the temple; they wore their long, leather robes of office and their hideous masks; they passed out of the temple through the group of warriors loitering by the door. Once out in the square, they commenced to cry, "Come, all true followers of Pu! Death to the false Noada! Death to Gamba!" It was the signal!

Warriors and citizens poured from houses surrounding the square. Some of them ran toward the house of the Go-sha, and some ran

for the temple; and they were all shouting, "Death! Death to Gamba! Death to the false Noadal!"

The two priests crossed the square and followed one of the winding streets beyond, chanting their hymn of death; and as they passed, more citizens and warriors ran screaming toward the square, thirsting for the blood of their quarry.

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The survivors of the *Amoz* had finally brought the ship into the harbor beneath the cliffs of Amoz. David and Hodon and Ghak the Hairy One and the little old man whose name was not Dolly Dorcas had at last completed the long trek from Amoz and come again to Sari.

David found the people saddened and Perry in tears. "What is the matter?" he demanded. "What is wrong? Where is Dian that she has not come to meet me?"

Perry was sobbing so, that he could not answer. The headman, who had been in charge during their absence, spoke: "Dian the Beautiful is lost to us," he said.

"Lost! What do you mean?" demanded David; then they told him, and David Innes's world crumbled from beneath him. He looked long at Perry, and then he went and placed a hand upon his shoulder. "You loved her, too," he said; "you would not have harmed her. Tears will do no good. Build me another balloon, and perhaps it will drift to the same spot to which she was carried."

They both worked on the new balloon; in fact everyone in Sari worked on it, and the work gave them relief from sorrowing. Many hunters went out, and the dinosaurs which were to furnish the peritonea for the envelope of the gas bag were soon killed. While they were

out hunting, the women wove the basket and braided the many feet of rope; and while this was going on, the runner returned from Thuria.

David was in Sari when he came, and the man came at once to him. "I have news of Dian the Beautiful," he said. "A man of Thuria saw the balloon floating across the nameless strait at the end of the world, high in the air.

"Could he see if Dian was still in it?" asked David.

"No," replied the runner, "it was too high in the air."

"At least we know where to look," said David, but his heart was heavy; because he knew that there was little chance that Dian could have survived the cold, the hunger, and the thirst.

Before the second balloon was finished the survivors of the *Sari* returned to the village; and they told Hodon all that they knew of O-aa. "She told us to tell you," said one, "that she was adrift in the *Sari* on the Lural Az. She said that when you knew that, you would come and get her."

Hodon turned to David. "May I have men and a ship with which to go in search of O-aa?" he asked.

"You may have the ship and as many men as you need," replied David.

Chapter 7

Chanting their horrid song of death, the two priests walked through the narrow streets of Lolo-lolo all the way to the gates of the city. "Go to the great square," they shouted to the guard. "Hor has sent us to summon you. Every fighting man is needed to overcome those who would defend the false Noada and Gamba. Hurry! We will watch the gates."

The warriors hesitated. "It is Hor's command," said one of the priests; "and with Gamba and the Noda dead, Hor will rule the city; so you had better obey him, if you know what's good for you."

The warriors thought so, too; and they hurried off toward the square. When they had gone, the two priests opened the gates and passed out of the city. Turning to the right, they crossed to a forest into which they disappeared; and as soon as they were out of sight of the city, they removed their masks and their robes of office.

"You are not only a very brave girl," said Gamba, "but you are a very smart one."

"I am afraid that I shall have to be a whole lot smarter," replied Dian, "if I am ever to get back to Sari."

"What is Sari?" asked Gamba.

"It is the country from which I came."

"I thought you came from Karana," said Gamba.

"Oh, no you didn't," said Dian, and they both laughed.

"Where is Sari?" asked Gamba.

"It is across the nameless strait," replied Dian. "Do you know where we might find a canoe?"

"What is a canoe?" asked Gamba.

Dian was surprised. Was it possible that this man did not know what a canoe was? "It is what men use to cross the water in," she replied.

"But no one ever crosses the water," protested Gamba. "No one could live on the nameless strait. It is full of terrible creatures; and when the wind blows, the water stands up on end."

"We shall have to build a canoe," said Dian.

"If my Noda says so, we shall have to build a canoe," said Gamba, with mock reverence.

“My name is Dian,” said the girl; so the man who had been a king and the woman who had been a goddess went down through the forest toward the shore of the nameless strait.

Beneath the long robes of the priests, they had brought what weapons they could conceal. They each had a sword and a dagger, and Gamba had a bow and many arrows.

On the way to the shore, Dian looked for trees suitable for the building of a canoe. She knew that it would be a long and laborious job; but if the Mezops could do it with stone tools, it should be much easier with the daggers and swords of bronze; and then, of course there was always fire with which to hollow out the inside.

When they came to the shore of the nameless strait, they followed it until Gamba was sure there would be no danger of their being discovered by the people of Lolo-lolo or the people of Tanga-tanga.

“They do not come in this direction much,” he said, “nor often so far from the cities. The hunters go more in the other direction or inland. There are supposed to be dangerous animals here, and there is said to be a tribe of wild savages who come up from below to hunt here.”

“We should have an interesting time building the canoe,” commented Dian.

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At last the second balloon was completed. It was just like the first, except that it had a rip cord and was stocked with food and water, David's extra weight and the weight of the food and water being compensated for by the absence of the heavy rope which had been attached to the first balloon.

When the time came to liberate the great bag, the people of Sari

stood in silence. They expected that they would never see David Innes again, and David shared their belief.

“Dod-burn it!” exclaimed the little old man whose name was not Dolly Dorcas, “there goes a man, as the feller said.”

~

Ope, the high priest of the temple at Tanga-tanga, had acquired a Noada; but she was not at all what he had imagined Noada should be. At first she had been docile and tractable, amenable to suggestion; that was while O-aa was learning the ropes, before she learned that she was supposed to be all-wise and all-powerful, deriving her omniscience and omnipotence from some one they called Pu who dwelt in a place called Karana.

Later on, she became somewhat of a trial to Ope. In the first place, she had no sense of the value of pieces of bronze. When they were brought as offerings to her, she would wait until she had a goodly collection in a large bowl which stood beside her throne; then, when the temple was filled with people, she would scoop handfuls of the pieces from the bowl and throw them to the crowd, laughing as she watched them scramble for them.

This made O-aa very popular with the people, but it made Ope sad. He had never had such large congregation's in the temple before, but the net profits had never been so small. Ope spoke to the Noada about this — timidly, because, unlike Hor of Lolo-lolo, he was a simple soul and guileless; he believed in the divinity of the Noada.

Furp, the Go-sha of Tanga-tanga, was not quite so simple; but, like many an agnostic, he believed in playing safe. However, he talked this matter over with Ope, because it had long been the custom for Ope to split the temple take with him, and now his share was approaching

the vanishing point, so he suggested to Ope that it might be well to suggest to the Noada that, while charity was a sweet thing, it really should begin at home. So Ope spoke to the Noada, and Furp listened.

“Why,” he asked, “does the Noada throw away the offerings that are brought to the temple?”

“Because the people like them,” replied O-aa. “Haven’t you noticed how they scramble for them?”

“They belong to the temple.”

“They are brought to me,” contradicted O-aa. “Anyway, I don’t see why you should make a fuss over some little pieces of metal. I do not want them. What good are they?”

“Without them we could not pay the priests, or buy food, or keep the temple in repair,” explained Ope.

“Bosh!” exclaimed O-aa, or an expletive with the same general connotation. “The people bring food, which we can eat; and the priests could keep the temple in repair in payment for their food; they are a lazy lot, anyway. I have tried to find out what they do besides going around frightening people into bringing gifts, and wearing silly masks, and dancing. Where I come from, they would either hunt or work.”

Ope was aghast. “But you come from Karana, Noada!” he exclaimed. “No one works in Karana.”

O-aa realized that she had pulled a boner, and that she would have to do a little quick thinking. She did.

“How do you know?” she demanded. “Were you ever in Karana?”

“No, Noada,” admitted Ope.

Furp was becoming more and more confused, but he was sure of one point, and he brought it out. “Pu would be angry,” he said, “if he

knew that you were throwing away the offerings that the people brought to his temple, and Pu can punish even a Noada.”

“Pu had better not interfere,” said O-aa; “my father is a king, and my eleven brothers are very strong men.”

“What?” screamed Ope. “Do you know what you are saying? Pu is all-powerful, and anyway a Noada has no father and no brothers.”

“Were you ever a Noada?” asked O-aa. “No, of course you never were. It is time you learned something about Noadas. Noadas have a lot of everything. I have not one father only, but three, and besides my eleven brothers, I have four sisters, and they are all Noadas. Pu is my son, he does what I tell him to. Is there anything more you would like to know about Noadas?”

Ope and Furp discussed this conversation in private later on. “I never before knew all those things about Noadas,” said Ope.

“Our Noada seems to know what she’s talking about,” observed Furp.

“She is evidently more powerful than Pu,” argued Ope, “as otherwise he would have struck her dead for the things she said about him.”

“Perhaps we had better worship our Noada instead of Pu,” suggested Furp.

“You took the words out of my mouth,” said Ope.

Thus, O-aa was sitting pretty in Tanga-tanga, as Hodon the Fleet One set sail from Amoz on his hopeless quest and David Innes drifted toward the end of the world in the *Dinosaur II*, as Perry christened his second balloon.

PART III.

TIGER GIRL

Chapter I

“You say there is another shore,” said Gamba to Dian; “perhaps there is, but we shall never reach it.”

“We can try,” replied the girl. “Had we remained in your land we should surely have been killed, either by the savages of which you told me, by the wild beasts, or by your own people. If we must die, it is better to die trying to reach safety than to have remained where there never could be safety for us.”

“I sometimes wish,” said Gamba, “that you had never come to Lolo-lolo.”

“You don’t wish it any more than I,” replied the girl.

“We were getting along very well without a Noada,” continued the man, “and then you had to come and upset everything.”

“Things should have been upset,” said Dian “You and Hor were robbing the people. Pretty soon they would have risen and killed you both, which would have been a good thing for Lolo-lolo.”

“I might not have gotten into all this trouble,” said Gamba, “if I hadn’t fallen in love with you. Hor knew it; and he made that an excuse to turn the people against me.”

“You had no business falling in love with me. I already have a mate.”

“He is a long way off,” said Gamba, “and you will never see him again. If you had come to my house and been my wife before all this

happened, you and I could have ruled Lolo-lolo as long as we lived. For a bright girl it seems to me that you are very stupid.”

“You were stupid to fall in love with me,” said Dian, “but in a moment it may not make any difference one way or another — look what is coming,” and she pointed.

“Pu be merciful!” cried the man. “This is the end. I told you that we should not come out upon this water which stands on end and is filled with death.”

A great head upon a slender neck rose ten feet above the surface of the sea. Cold, reptilian eyes glared at them, and jaws armed with countless teeth gaped to seize them. The creature moved slowly towards them as though knowing that they could not escape, the water rippling along its glossy sides.

“Your bow and arrow!” cried Dian. “Put an arrow into its body at the waterline, and bend your bow as you have never bent it before. When it comes closer we will use our swords.”

Gamba stood up in the canoe and drew a three-foot arrow back to its very tip; and when he released it, it drove true to its mark; burying two-thirds of its length into the saurian’s body at the waterline. Screaming with pain and hissing with rage, the creature seized the end of the shaft and jerked it from the wound; and with it came a stream of blood spurting out and crimsoning the surface of the water. Then, still hissing and screaming, it bore down upon the two relatively puny humans in the frail canoe. Dian was standing now, her bronze sword grasped tightly in one hand, her bronze knife in the other. Gamba drove another arrow into the reptile’s breast; and then dropped his bow into the bottom of the canoe and seized his sword.

Now, as though by magic, hundreds of small fishes, about a foot long, attracted by the blood of the saurian, were attacking the

maddened creature, which paused to wrench the second shaft from its breast. Ignoring the voracious, sharp-fanged fishes which were tearing it to pieces, it came on again to attack the authors of its first hurts. With arched neck it bore down upon them; and as it struck to seize Dian, she met it with her bronze sword; striking at the long neck and inflicting a terrible wound, which caused the creature to recoil. But it came on again, raising a flipper with which it could easily have overturned or swamped the frail craft.

Gamba, realizing the danger, struck a terrific blow at the flipper while it was still poised above the gunwale of the canoe; and so much strength did he put into it that he severed the member entirely; and simultaneously Dian struck again at the neck. The great head flopped sideways, and with a final convulsive struggle the saurian rolled over on its side.

“You see,” said Dian, “that there is still hope that we may reach the other shore. There are few creatures in any sea more terrible than the one which we have killed.”

“I wouldn’t have given one piece of bronze for our chances,” said Gamba.

“They didn’t look very bright,” admitted Dian, “but I have been in much worse dangers than that before; and I have always come through all right. You see, I did not live in a walled city as you have all your life; and my people were always open to the attacks of wild beasts, and the men of enemy tribes.”

They had taken up their paddles again, but now they were out where the full strength of the current gripped them; and they were moving far more rapidly down the strait than they were across it. Because of the current it was hard to keep the bow of the canoe pointed in the right direction. It was a constant and exhausting

struggle. They were still in sight of the shoreline they had left, though the distant shore was not yet visible.

“We’re not making very much progress in the right direction,” said Dian.

“I am very tired,” said Gamba. “I do not believe that I can paddle much longer.”

“I am about exhausted myself,” said the girl. “Perhaps we had better let the current carry us along. There is only one place that it can take us and that is into the Korsar Az. There, there will be no strong current and we can come to shore. As a matter of fact, I believe that we can get much closer to Sari along that coast than we would have been if we had been able to paddle directly across the strait.” So Dian the Beautiful and Gamba the Xexot drifted along the nameless strait toward the Korsar Az.

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Borne along by a gentle wind, David Innes drifted down across the Land of Awful Shadow toward the end of the world and the nameless strait, in the balloon which Abner Perry had named the *Dinosaur II*. He knew that his was an almost hopeless venture, with the chances of his balloon coming down near the exact spot where Dian had landed almost nil; and even if it did, where was he to look for her?

Where would she be, in a strange land, entirely unknown to her, provided that she was still alive, which seemed beyond reason; for, supplied with warm coverings as he was, and provided with food and water, he had already suffered considerably from the cold; and he knew that Dian had been without food, or water, or covering of any kind, other than her scant loincloth, at the time that her balloon had broken away.

Yet somehow he thought that she was not dead. It did not seem possible to him that that beautiful creature, so full of life and vigor, could be lying somewhere cold and still, or that her body had been devoured by wild beasts. And so he clung to hope with an almost fanatic zeal.

At last he came to the nameless strait, across which he had never been. He saw the waters of it below him, and far to his right two figures in a canoe. He wondered idly who they might be and where they might be going upon those lonely, danger-ridden waters; and then he forgot them and strained his eyes ahead in search of the farther shore, where, if at all, he felt sure that he might find his mate.

His balloon was floating at an altitude of only about a thousand feet when he approached the opposite side of the strait. His attention was attracted by two things. On the beach below him lay the wreck of a dismasted ship, which he recognized immediately; for he and Perry had designed her and superintended her building. He recognized her, and he knew that she was the *Sari*.

The other thing that had attracted his attention was a walled city, not far from the shore of the nameless strait. He knew that O-aa had been aboard the *Sari* when she had been abandoned by her crew; and he realized that perhaps O-aa had been captured by the people who lived in that city.

The presence of a walled city in Pellucidar was sufficiently amazing to arouse many conjectures in his mind. In a walled city there might live a semi-civilized people who would have befriended O-aa; and if Dian had landed near it, she might be in the city, too; or the people might have heard something about her, for a balloon would certainly have aroused their interest and their curiosity.

Now he saw that his balloon had accomplished that very thing; for

people were running from the city gates, staring up at him, and calling to him. They might be cursing and threatening him, for all he knew; but he decided to come down, for here were people, and here there would be rumors; and even the faintest rumor might lead him upon the right track. So he pulled the ripcord, and the *Dinosaur II* settled slowly towards Tanga-tanga.

As the basket of the balloon touched the ground David Innes found himself surrounded by yellow-skinned warriors, wearing leather aprons painted with gay designs, that fell from their waists both before and behind. On their heads were leather helmets; and they carried swords and knives of bronze, as well as bows and arrows.

Some of the warriors shouted, "It is Pu. He has come to visit our Noadá."

"It is not Pu," cried others. "He comes in the same thing that brought the false Noadá of Lolo-lolo."

David Innes understood the words, but not the purport of them; only that the reference to the false Noadá who had come in a balloon convinced him that Dian the Beautiful had been here. He did not know who Pu might be, but he saw that they were divided among themselves as to his identity; and he also saw that no weapon was drawn against him.

"I have come down out of the sky," he said, "to visit your chief. Take me to him."

To many of the men of Tanga-tanga this sounded as though Pu spoke; and many who had said that it was not Pu wavered in their convictions.

"Go to the house of Furp, the Go-sha," said one who was evidently an officer to a warrior, "and tell him that we are bringing a stranger to

the temple to visit him and our Noada. If he is indeed Pu, our Noada will recognize him.”

The gas bag, partially deflated, still billowed limply above the basket; and when David Innes stepped out and relieved it of his weight the balloon rose slowly and majestically into the air and floated away inland across the city of Tanga-tanga.

When David stood among them, those who thought that he was Pu, the god, fell upon their knees and covered their eyes with their hands. David looked at them in astonishment for a moment and then he quite suddenly realized that they must believe him a deity coming down from heaven; and that the name of this deity was Pu; and he thought to himself, what would a god do under like circumstances? He hazarded a guess, and he guessed right.

“Arise,” he said. “Now escort me to the temple,” for he recalled that the officer had said that that was where they were taking him. The officer’s reference to “our Noada” and to “Furp, the Go-sha,” meant little or nothing to him; but he decided to maintain a godly silence on the subject until he did know.

They led him through the city gate and along narrow, crooked streets flanked by mean little houses of clay. Here he saw women and children, the women wearing painted leather aprons like the men and having headdresses of feathers, while the children were naked. He noted with some measure of astonishment the bronze weapons and ornaments, and realized that these people had advanced into the age of bronze. Their walled city, their painted aprons, craftsmanship displayed in their weapons and ornaments, suggested that if the inner world were closely following the stages of human development upon the outer crust, these people might soon be entering the iron age.

To David Innes, if his mind had not been solely devoted to the

finding of his mate, these people might have presented an interesting study in anthropology; but he thought of them now only as a means to an end.

They had seen Dian's balloon. Had they seen her? Did they know what had become of her?

Chapter 2

In the center of the city was an open plaza, on one side of which was a large, domed building, a replica of the temple where Dian the Beautiful had ruled for a short time in the city of Lolo-lolo. To this building David Innes was conducted.

Within it were many people. Some of them fell upon their knees and covered their eyes as he entered. These were the ones who were not taking any chances; but the majority stood and waited. Upon a dais at the far end of the room sat a girl in a long leather robe, gorgeously painted in many colors with strange designs. Upon her head was a massive feather headdress. Upon her arms were many bronze bracelets and armlets, and around her neck were strands of ivory beads.

As David Innes came toward the throne O-aa recognized him. They had brought her word that one who might be Pu had come to visit Furp the Go-sha; and now, nimble-witted as ever, she realized that she must perpetuate this erroneous belief as the most certain way in which to insure David's safety.

She rose and looked angrily upon those who had remained standing.

"Kneel!" she commanded imperiously. "Who dares stand in the presence of Pu?"

David Innes was close enough now to recognize her; and as she

saw recognition in his eyes, she forestalled anything he might be about to say: “The Noadā welcomes you, Pu, to your temple in the city of Tanga-tanga;” and she held out her hands to him and indicated that he was to step to the dais beside her. When he had done so, she whispered, “Tell them to rise.”

“Arise!” said David Innes in a commanding voice. It was a sudden transition from mortality to godhood, but David rose to the occasion, following the lead of little O-aa, daughter of Oose, king of Kali.

“What are your wishes, Pu?” asked O-aa. “Would you like to speak with your Noadā alone?”

“I wish to speak with my Noadā alone,” said David Innes with great and godly dignity; “and then I will speak with Furp the Go-sha,” he added.

O-aa turned to Ope the high priest. “Clear the Temple,” she said, “but tell the people to be prepared to return later with offerings for Pu. Then they shall know why Pu has come and whether he is pleased with the people of Tanga-tanga, or angry at them. And, Ope, have the lesser priests fetch a lesser bench for me, as Pu will sit upon my throne while he is here.”

After the temple was cleared and the bench was brought and they were alone O-aa looked into David’s eyes and grinned.

“Tell me what you are doing here, and how you got here,” she said.

“First tell me if you have heard anything of Dian the Beautiful,” insisted David.

“No,” replied O-aa, “what has happened to her? I supposed, of course, that she was in Sari.”

“No,” replied David, “she is not in Sari. Abner Perry built a balloon and it got away, carrying Dian the Beautiful with it.”

“What is a balloon?” asked O-aa; and then she said, “Oh, is it a

great, round ball with a basket fastened to it in which a person may ride through the air?"

"Yes," said David, "that is it."

"Then it was Dian who came before I did. They have told me about this thing that happened. The what-you-call-it, balloon, came down low over Tanga-tanga; and they thought that the woman in it was their Noadá come from Karana; and they went out and fought with the men of Lolo-lolo for her. But the men of Lolo-lolo got her and she was Noadá there until maybe thirty sleeps ago, maybe more. Then the people turned against her; and she disappeared with Gamba, the Goshá of Lolo-lolo, whom the people also wished to kill. What became of them no man knows; but the woman must have been Dian the Beautiful, for she came in that thing that floated through the air. But how did you get here, David Innes?"

"I also came in a balloon," replied David. "I had Abner Perry build one, thinking that it might float in the same direction as had that which bore Dian away; for at this time of year the direction of the wind seldom varies, and a balloon is borne along by the wind."*

"They told me that this visitor, who some of them thought might be Pu, had come down from Karana. Now I understand what they meant."

"What is Karana?" asked David.

"It is where Pu lives," explained O-aa. "It is where I live when I am not on earth. It is where those who worship Pu go when they die. It is a mighty good thing for me that Pu came from Karana when he did," she added.

"Why?" asked David. "What do you mean?"

* A rare blunder in E. R. Burroughs's tale. In Pellucidar, with the sun always at zenith, there are no years, no seasons, and no seasonal weather phenomena. [R.S.]

“Ope, the high priest, and Furp, the Go-sha, don’t like me,” replied O-aa. “They liked me at first, but now they don’t like me any more. They don’t like me at all. The people bring offerings to me, and many of these offerings are little pieces of metal, like the metal in my bracelets.”

“It is bronze,” said David Innes.

“Whatever it is, Ope the high priest and Furp the Go-sha are very anxious to get hold of as much of it as they can; but I throw much of it back to the people because it is a lot of fun watching them fight for it; and that is why Ope and Furp do not like me. But it has made me very popular with the people of Tanga-tanga; and so, not only do Ope and Furp dislike me, but they fear me, also. I cannot understand why Ope and Furp and the People are so anxious to have these silly little pieces of metal.”

David Innes smiled. He was thinking of how typical it was of woman that even this little cave girl had no sense of the value of money, before she even knew what money was, or what it was for. “You had better let Ope and Furp have their silly little pieces of metal,” he said. “I think you will live longer if you do; for these little pieces of metal men will commit murder.”

“It is all very strange,” said O-aa. “I do not understand it, but I do not dare ask questions because a Noada is supposed to know everything.”

“And I suppose that Pu is supposed to know more than a Noada,” remarked David, with a wry smile.

“Of course,” said O-aa. “As I know everything that there is to be known, you must know everything that there is to be known, and a great deal that there isn’t to be known.”

“There is one thing that I don’t know, but that I would like to know

very much,” he said; “and that is where Dian is, and whether she is still alive. After that I would like to know how we are going to get out of here and get back to Sari. You would like to get back, wouldn’t you, O-aa?”

“It makes no difference to me now,” she said, sadly. “Since Hodon the Fleet One was killed by Blug I do not care where I am.”

“But Hodon was not killed by Blug,” said David. “It was Blug who was killed.”

“And I ran away thinking that Hodon was dead and that I would have to mate with Blug,” exclaimed O-aa. “Oh, why didn’t I wait and see! Tell me, where is Hodon?”

“Before I left Sari he asked for a ship and some men that he might go out upon the Lural Az and search for you; for he received the message that you sent to him in the event that he was not dead.”

“And he will never find me,” said O-aa, “and he will be lost on that terrible ocean.”

After a while the people came back and brought offerings for Pu. David Innes saw the little pieces of metal and he smiled — crude little coins, crudely minted. For these the high priest and the king would drag the goddess from her pedestal; and doubtless kill her into the bargain. Unquestionably, these men of the bronze age were advancing toward a higher civilization.

O-aa took a handful of the coins and threw them to the people, who scrambled, screaming, upon the floor of the temple, fighting for them. Ope the high priest and Furp the Go-sha looked on with sullen scowls, but O-aa felt safer now because she had Pu right there at her side.

After the people had left the temple Ope and Furp remained; and Ope, suddenly emboldened by his anger at the loss of so many pieces

of metal, said to David, "How is it that you are so much older than the Noda?" O-aa was momentarily horrified, for she recalled that, she had once told Ope and Furp that she was the mother of Pu. She had also told them that Pu did everything she told him to do. To be a successful liar one must be quick to cover up; so, before David could answer, O-aa answered for him.

"You should know, Ope, being my high priest, that a Noda may look any age she wishes. It pleases me not to look older than my son."

David Innes was astounded by the effrontery of the girl. Metaphorically, he took his hat off to her. These people, he thought, would look far before they could find a better goddess than O-aa.

Ope, the high priest, tried another tack. "Will Pu, who knows all, be kind enough to tell our Noda that she should not throw away the pieces of bronze that the people bring here as offerings?"

David thought that since he was supposed to know all, it would be best to pretend that he did.

"The Noda was quite right," said David. "She has done this to teach you not to exact so much from the people. I have known for a long time that your priests were demanding more from them than they could afford to give; and that is one reason why I came from Karana to talk with you; and with Furp, who also exacts more in taxes than he should."

Ope and Furp looked most unhappy; but Furp spoke up and said, "I must pay my warriors and keep the city in repair; and Ope must pay the priests and keep up the temple."

"You are telling Pu the things that he already knows," said David. "Hereafter you will exact less taxes and fewer offerings; demanding only what you require for the proper maintenance of the city and the temple."

Ope was a simple fellow, who believed against his will that this was indeed Pu the god; and he was afraid; but Furp was a skeptic, as well as something of an atheist; at least, he bordered on atheism. But, with Ope, he bowed to the will of Pu; at least temporarily, and with mental reservation.

“There are many things that trouble my mind,” said Ope to David, “Perhaps you will explain them to me. We have always been taught that there was Pu; and that he had one daughter, who was our Noadas. But now I am not only told that Pu is the son of our Noadas, but that she had three fathers, eleven brothers, and four sisters, all of the latter being Noadas.”

Even O-aa flushed at the recital of this bare-faced lie which she had told Ope in order to impress him with her knowledge of conditions in Karana. For a moment she was lost, and could think of nothing to say. She only wondered what reply David Innes would make.

“It is all very simple,” he said, “when you understand it. As my high priest, Ope, you must know that Pu is all-powerful.”

Ope nodded. “Yes, of course, I know that,” he said importantly.

“Then you will understand why it is that Pu can be either the son or the father of your Noadas. We can change about as we wish; and the Noadas can have as many brothers, or as many sisters, or as many fathers, as I wish her to have. Is that clear to you?”

“Perfectly clear,” said Ope. But it was not clear to Furp; and when he left the temple he started to implant in the minds of many a suspicion that the man who had come down out of the skies was not Pu at all, nor was the woman a true Noadas. Furp planted the seed and was willing to wait and let it germinate, as he knew it would.

Chapter 3

It happened that when Hodon the Fleet One reached the coast of Amoz, to set sail upon the Lural Az in search of O-aa, that Raj, the Mezop who had commanded the *Sari*, was there; and Hodon asked Raj to come with him and take command of the little ship in which he and his warriors were about to embark.

The Mezops were a seafaring people, and Hodon was fortunate in obtaining the services of one to command his ship; and it was also additionally fortunate that it was Raj, because Raj knew exactly where the *Sari* had been abandoned; and he also knew the winds and the ocean currents. Knowing these, and where they would ordinarily have carried the *Sari*, Raj set his course for the mouth of the nameless strait. After many sleeps they reached it; but they had to stand off for several more sleeps because of a terrific storm, which because of the seamanship of Raj, they weathered.

When the storm abated, the wind and the currents swept the little ship into the mouth of the nameless strait, swept it close past the coast of the Xexot country, and the spot where the wreck of the *Sari* had lain until the storm they had just weathered had broken her up and removed all vestiges of the clue of the whereabouts of O-aa that it had previously constituted, and which would have led them immediately to the city of Tanga-tanga.

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David Innes and O-aa sat upon the dais in the temple of Pu, ignorant of the fact that their friends were passing so near them.

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Dian the Beautiful and Gamba, paddling through the nameless strait toward the Korsar Az, did not see the great balloon that passed in the air high behind them. Only a few thousand yards separated Dian the Beautiful and David at that moment; and it was a cruel fate that had prevented them from knowing how close they had been to a reunion; for David could have brought the balloon down on the shore, and Dian could have returned to it.

Dian had seen to it that the canoe was stocked with food and water before they embarked upon their perilous journey. They took turns sleeping as they let the current carry them along. Time and again they were attacked by fearful creatures of the deep, for this strange thing upon the surface of the water attracted many to them. Some were motivated only by curiosity, but voracious appetites actuated the majority of them; and it was a constant source of surprise to Gamba that they emerged from each encounter victorious.

"I didn't think that we would live to sleep once after we set out from shore," he said.

"I was not so sure myself," replied Dian, "but now I think that we shall get through to the Korsar Az, and then go up the coast to a point opposite Amoz. We can cut across country there; but I believe that greater dangers lie ahead of us on land than on the sea."

"Is it a savage country?" asked Gamba.

"For a long way back from the shores of the Korsar Az it is a very savage country," replied Dian. "I have never been there, but our men who have ventured into it to hunt say that it is infested with savage beasts, and even more savage men."

"I wish," said Gamba, "that I had never seen you. If you had not come to Lolo-lolo, I should still be Go-sha and safe behind the walls of my city."

“I wish you would stop harping on that,” said Dian, “but I may say that if you had been a better Go-sha you would still have been there; and if you want to go back, we can paddle to shore, and I will let you out.”

After many sleeps they reached the end of the nameless strait, which narrowed right at the entrance to the Korsar Az; so that the waters rushed through with terrific velocity, and the little canoe was almost swamped many times before it floated out on the comparatively smooth surface of the Korsar Az. Now they turned in a north-easterly direction hugging the coast; and it was then that the storm that had held Hodon off the mouth of the nameless strait in the Sojar Az, struck them and carried them far from shore.

Driving rain blinded them, and great seas constantly threatened to swamp them; so that while one paddled in an effort to keep the canoe from turning broadside into the trough of the seas, the other bailed with one of the gourds that Dian had thoughtfully brought along for that purpose.

They were both exhausted when a shoreline suddenly rose before them, dimly visible through the rain. Now Dian could see a wide, white beach up which enormous rollers raced, to break thunderously upon the shore; and toward this the storm was carrying them, nor could any puny efforts which they might put forth avert the inevitable end.

It did not seem possible to the girl that they could survive that terrific surf; but she determined to try to ride it in, and so she told Gamba to paddle with all his strength; and she did likewise.

On and on the little canoe raced; and then, riding just below the crest of an enormous roller, it shot with terrific speed towards the shore; and, like a surfboard, it was carried far up on the beach.

Surprised that they still lived, they leaped out and held it as the

water receded; then they dragged it farther up on the shore, out of reach of the breakers.

“I think,” said Gamba, “that you must really be a Noadá; for no mortal being could come through what we have come through, and live.”

Dian smiled. “I have never said that I wasn’t,” she replied.

Gamba thought this over, but he made no comment. Instead, he said presently, “As soon as the storm is over we can start for Amoz. It is good to be on land again and to know that we shall not have to face the dangers of the sea any more.”

“We have a lot more sea to cross,” said Dian, “before we reach Amoz.”

“What do you mean?” demanded Gamba. “Have we not been driven ashore; are we not on land?”

“Yes, we are on land,” replied Dian, “but that storm blew us away from that land where Amoz lies; and as it certainly did not blow us all the way across the enormous Korsar Az, it must have blown us onto an island.”

Gamba appeared stunned. “Now there is no hope for us,” he said. “This is indeed the end. You are no true Noadá, or you would not have permitted this to happen.”

Dian laughed. “You give up too easily,” she said. “You must have been a very poor Go-sha indeed.”

“I was a good Go-sha until you came along,” snapped Gamba, “but now, great Noadá,” he said sarcastically, “what do we do next?”

“As soon as the storm dies down,” replied Dian, “we launch the canoe and set out for shore.”

“I do not want to go on the water again,” said Gamba.

“Very well, then,” replied Dian, “you may remain here; but I am going.”

Beyond the beach rose cliffs to the height of a hundred feet or more. Topping them Dian could see green, jungle-like verdure; and not far away a waterfall leaped over the cliff into the sea, which lashed the face of the cliff itself at this point, throwing spray so high into the air that at these times the waterfall was hidden. In the other direction the sea again broke against the face of the cliff. They stood upon a narrow, crescent-shaped bit of land that the sea had never as yet claimed. To Gamba, as to you and me, the cliffs looked unscalable; but to Dian the cave girl they appeared merely difficult. However, as she had no intention of scaling them, it made no difference.

They were very uncomfortable for a long while, as they sat drenched by the heavy downpour. There was no cave into which they could crawl, and sleep was out of the question. They just sat and endured; Dian stoically, Gamba grumblingly.

At last, however, they saw the sun shining far out upon the sea, and they knew that the storm was passing over them and that it would soon be gone. Often it is a relief to have that eternal noonday sun hidden by a cloud; but now when the cloud passed they were glad of the sun's warmth again.

“Let us sleep,” said Dian, “and if the sea has gone down when we awaken I shall set out again in search of the big land. I think you would be wise if you came with me, but do as you please. It makes no difference to me.”

“You have a heart of stone,” said the man. “How can you talk like that to a man who loves you?”

“I am going to sleep now,” said Dian, “and you had better do

likewise;" and she curled up in the wet grass with the hot sun beating down upon her beautiful body.

Dian dreamed that she was back in Sari, and that her people were gathered around her; and that David was there and she was very happy, happier than she had been for a long time.

Presently one of the people standing around her kicked her lightly in the ribs, and Dian awakened. She opened her eyes to see that there really were people surrounding her, but they were not the people of Sari. They were big men, who carried long, heavy spears and great bows; and their loincloths were made of the skins of tarags, and the heads of tarags had been cleverly fashioned to form helmets that covered their heads, with the great tusks pointing downward on either side of their heads at an angle of forty-five degrees, and the quivers which held their arrows at their backs were of the skin of the great carnivores — of the black and yellow hide of the tarag, the huge sabertooth tiger that has been so long extinct upon the outer crust.

"Get up," said one of the men; and Dian and Gamba both came to their feet.

"What do you want of us?" demanded Dian. "We were leaving as soon as the sea went down."

"What were you doing here?" asked the man.

"The storm drove us onto this shore," replied Dian. "We were trying to reach the mainland."

"Who are you?"

"I am Dian, the mate of David Innes, the Emperor of Pellucidar."

"We never heard of you, or him, and I do not know what an emperor is."

"He is what you might call the chief of chiefs," explained Dian.

“He has an army and a navy and many guns. He would be your friend if you would protect me and this man.”

“What is a navy? What are guns?” demanded this man. “And why should we be kind to you? We are not afraid of this David Innes; we are not afraid of anyone in Pellucidar. We are the men of Tandar.”

“What is Tandar?” demanded Dian.

“You mean to say you have never heard of Tandar?” exclaimed the warrior.

“Never,” said Dian.

“Neither have I,” said Gamba.

The warrior looked at them disgustedly. “This is the Island of Tandar that you are on,” he said; “and I am Hamlar, the Chief.”

“The sea is going down,” said Dian, “and we shall soon be leaving.”

Hamlar laughed; it was a nasty sort of a laugh. “You will never leave Tandar,” he said; “no one who comes here ever does.”

Dian shrugged. She knew her world, and she knew that the man meant what he said.

“Come,” said Hamlar; and there was nothing to do but follow him.

Warriors surrounded them as Hamlar led the way toward the waterfall. Dian was barefooted, as she had left her sandals on the thwart of the canoe to dry. She would not ask Hamlar if she might get them, for she was too proud to ask favors of an enemy. She kept looking up at the face of the cliff to see where these men had come down, but she saw no sign of a place here that even she could scale; and then Hamlar reached the waterfall and disappeared beneath it, and a moment later Dian found herself on a narrow ledge that ran beneath the falls; and then she followed the warrior ahead of her into the mouth of a cavern that was as dark as pitch and damp with dripping water.

She climbed through the darkness, feeling her way, until presently

she saw a little light ahead. The light came from above down a shaft that inclined slightly from the vertical, and leaning against its wall was a crude ladder. Dian had delayed those behind her in the darkness of the cavern, but now she clambered up the ladder like a monkey, soon overtaking those ahead of her. She could hear the warriors behind her growling at Gamba for climbing so slowly; and she could hear his grunts and cries as they prodded him with their spears.

From the top of the shaft a winding trail led through the jungle. Occasionally Dian caught glimpses of large animals slinking along other paths that paralleled or crossed the one they were on; and she saw the yellow and black of the tarag's hide.

A mile inland from the coast they came to a clearing at the foot of a towering cliff, in the sandstone face of which caves and ledges had been laboriously excavated and cut. She looked with amazement upon these cliff dwellings, which must have required many generations to construct. At the foot of the cliff, warriors lolled in the shade of the trees, while women worked and children played.

At least a score of great tarags slept, or wandered about among the people. She saw a child pull the tail of one, and the great carnivore turned upon it with an ugly snarl. The child jumped back, and the tarag continued its prowling. Aside from that one child, no one seemed to pay any attention to the brutes at all.

Attracted by the sight of Dian and Gamba, warriors, women and children clustered about; and it was evident from their remarks that they seldom saw strangers upon their island. The women wore loin-cloths and sandals of the skins of tarags. Like the men, the women were rather handsome, with well-shaped heads, and intelligent eyes.

Hamlar motioned to one of the women. "Manai," he said, "this one is yours," and he pointed to Dian. "Does anyone want the man?"

he asked, looking around. "If not, we will kill him and feed him to the tarags."

Gamba looked around then, too, hopefully; but at first no one indicated any desire to possess him. Finally, however, a woman spoke up and said, "I will take him. He can fetch wood and water for me and beat the skins of the tarags to soften them;" and Gamba breathed a sigh of relief.

"Come," said Manai to Dian, and led the way up a series of ladders to a cave far up in the face of the cliff.

"This," she said, stopping upon a ledge before its opening, "is the cave of Hamlar, the chief, who is my mate." Then she went in and came back with a bundle of twigs tied tightly together with strips of rawhide. "Clean out the cave of Hamlar and Manai," she said, "and see that none of the dirt falls over the edge of the cliff. You will find a big gourd in the cave. Put the dirt into it and carry it down to the foot of the cliff and dump it in the stream."

So Dian the Beautiful, Empress of Pellucidar, went to work as a slave for Manai, the mate of Hamlar, chief of Tandar; and she thought that she was fortunate not to have been killed. After she had cleaned the cave and carried the dirt down and dumped it in the stream, Manai, who had returned to the women at the foot of the cliff, called to her. "What is your name?" she asked.

"Dian," replied the girl.

"There is meat in the cave," said Manai. "Go and get it and bring it down here and make a fire and cook it for Hamlar and Manai, and for Bovar, their son."

While Dian was broiling the meat she saw Gamba pounding a tarag skin with two big sticks; and she smiled when she thought that not many sleeps ago he had been a king, with slaves to wait upon him.

Hamlar came and sat down beside Manai. "Does your slave work, or is she lazy?" he asked.

"She works," said Manai.

"She had better," said Hamlar, "for if she doesn't work, we will have to kill her and feed her to the tarags. We cannot afford to feed a lazy slave. Where is Bovar?"

"He is asleep in his cave," replied Manai. "He told me to awaken him when we eat."

"Send the slave for him," said Hamlar. "The meat is almost ready."

"Bovar's cave is next to ours, just to the right of it," Manai told Dian. "Go there and awaken him."

So again Dian the Beautiful clambered up the long series of ladders to the ledge far up on the face of the cliff; and she went to the opening next to that of Hamlar's cave and called Bovar by name. She called several times before a sleepy voice answered.

"What do you want?" it demanded.

"Manai, your mother, has sent me to tell you that the meat is ready and that they are about to eat."

A tall young warrior crawled out of the cave and stood erect. "Who are you?" he demanded.

"I am Manai's new slave," replied Dian.

"What is your name?" asked Bovar.

"Dian," replied the girl.

"That is a pretty name," he said; "and you are a pretty girl. I think you are the prettiest girl I ever saw. Where do you come from?"

"I come from Amoz, which lies beside the Darel Az," replied Dian.

"I never heard of either one of them," said Bovar; "but no matter where you come from, you are certainly the prettiest girl I ever saw," repeated Bovar.

“Come down to your meat,” said Dian as she turned to the ladder and started to descend.

Bovar followed her, and they joined Hamlar and Manai beside the leg of meat that was roasting over the fire on a pointed stick that Dian had driven through it, which was supported by forked sticks at either end.

“The meat is cooked,” said Manai who had been turning it during Dian’s absence. Dian took it from the fire then and laid it upon some leaves that were spread upon the ground, and Hamlar took his knife of stone and cut off a large piece and held it on a pointed stick to cool a little; and then Manai cut off a piece, and then Bovar.

“May I eat?” asked Dian.

“Eat,” said Hamlar.

Dian drew her bronze knife from its sheath and cut off a piece of meat. The knife cut slickly and smoothly, not like the crude stone weapons of the Tandars.

“Let me see that,” said Bovar; and Dian handed him the knife.

“No one ever saw anything like this,” said Bovar; and handed it to his father. Both Hamlar and Manai examined it closely.

“What is it?” demanded Hamlar.

“It is a knife,” said Dian.

“I don’t mean that,” said Hamlar. “I mean, what is it made of?”

“It is a metal which the Xexots call ‘androde’,” replied the girl.

Bovar held out his hand for the knife and Manai gave it to him.

“Who are the Xexots?” said Hamlar.

“They are people who live a long way from here at the other end of the nameless strait.”

“Do these people all have knives made of this metal?” asked Hamlar.

“Knives and swords, too.” She did not tell him that her sword and Gamba’s were in the canoe; for she hoped some day to be able to run away and put to sea again.

Dian held her hand out towards Bovar for the knife. “I shall keep it,” he said. “I like it.”

“Give it back to her,” said Manai. “It is hers. We are not thieves.” So Bovar handed the knife back to Dian; but he made up his mind then and there to possess it, and he knew just how to go about it. All that he would have to do would be to push Dian off the ledge that ran in front of this cave; and he was sure that Manai would let him have the knife; provided, of course, that no one saw him push Dian.

Chapter 4

Many sleeps had passed since Pu came to Tanga-tanga, but neither David Innes nor O-aa had been able to concoct any scheme whereby they might escape. The temple guard was composed entirely of warriors handpicked by Furp; and as far as David Innes and O-aa were concerned, these guardsmen were their jailers.

Furp was convinced that they were just ordinary mortals who had come to Tanga-tanga by accident; but he knew that most of the people believed in them, and so he did not dare to act against them too openly. He would gladly have had them killed; for now he was not receiving from Ope, the high priest, even a quarter as many pieces of bronze as he had before the advent of the Noadä.

It was a little better since Pu had come, but the avaricious Furp wanted much more. Ope, the high priest, was secretly their enemy, and for the same reason that Furp was; but being a simple and superstitious

fool, he had convinced himself that it was really a true god and goddess who sat upon the dais of the temple.

Though their enemies were powerful, those who believed in Pu and the Noada were many; and they were loved by these because the amount of their taxes and offerings had been greatly reduced, and now they had pieces of bronze with which to buy more food, and such other things as they required.

Both David and O-aa felt the undercurrent of intrigue against them, and they also felt that many of the common people were their friends; but these were never allowed to speak with them alone, as they were always surrounded by the priests of the temple, or the temple guards.

"I wish I might talk with some of these people alone," said David upon one of the few occasions where he had an opportunity to speak even to O-aa without being overheard by a priest or a warrior. "I think they are our friends, and if anyone were plotting against us, they would tell us if they had the opportunity."

"I am sure of it," said O-aa. "They have always liked me; and now they like you, too; for between us we have saved them a great many pieces of metal."

Suddenly David snapped his fingers, "I have it!" he exclaimed. "In the world from which I come there is a great and old religious faith whose communicants may come and confess their sins and be forgiven. They come alone and whisper to the priest, telling him what is troubling their hearts; and no one but the priest may hear them. Pu is going to ordain that the people of Tanga-tanga have this privilege, with one great advantage over confessors in that other world, in that they may confess their sins directly to the ear of their god."

"Ope won't let you do it," said O-aa.

"There is a good, old American expression, which you would not

understand, that explains succinctly just how I purpose winning Ope over.”

“What are you going to do, then?” inquired O-aa.

“I am going to scare the pants off him,” said David.

“What are pants?” asked O-aa.

“That is neither here nor there,” replied David.

“Here comes Ope now,” said O-aa. “I shall watch while you scare his pants off.”

Ope, the high priest, came sinuously towards them; his gait reminding David of the silent approach of a snake.

David glared at the high priest sternly. “Ope,” he said in a terrible voice, “I know what you have been thinking.”

“I-I-I-I don’t know what you mean,” stammered the high priest.

“Oh, yes you do,” said David, “Don’t you know that you could be struck dead for thinking such thoughts?”

“No, most gracious Pu; honestly, I have not thought a bad thought about you. I have not thought of harming you —” and then he stopped suddenly; realizing, perhaps, that he had given himself away.

“I even know what you are thinking this instant,” cried David; and Ope’s knees smote together. “See that there is no more of it,” continued David; “and be sure that you obey my slightest wish, or that of your Noad.”

Ope dropped to his knees and covered his eyes with his palms. “Most glorious Pu,” he said, “you shall never have reason to upbraid me again.”

“And you’d better tell Furp to be careful what he thinks,” said O-aa.

“I shall tell him,” said Ope, “but Furp is a wicked man, and he may not believe me.”

“In spite of the wickedness of Tanga-tanga, I am going to bring

a great blessing to its people,” said David. “Have built for me immediately against the wall beside the dais a room two paces square, with a door, and place two benches within it. The room should be two and a half paces high, and have no ceiling.”

“It shall be done at once, most glorious Pu,” said Ope, the high priest.

“See that it is,” said David, “and when it is done, summon the people to the temple; for I would speak to them and explain this wonderful blessing that I am bringing them.”

Ope, the high priest, was dying to know what the blessing was, but he did not dare ask; and he was still worrying and cudgeling his brain as he went away to arrange to have artisans build a clay room such as David had demanded.

I am sure that he is really Pu, thought Ope, the high priest. I am thinking good thoughts of him and of our Nooda; and I always must. I must keep thinking good thoughts of them, good thoughts; and I must not let Furp put any bad thoughts into my head. He thought this last thought in the hope that Pu was listening to it and would place all the blame upon Furp for the bad thoughts which Ope knew only too well he had been entertaining.

When the little room beside the dais was completed David directed that the people be summoned to the temple; and the lesser priests went out in their hideous masks and beat upon drums and summoned the people to come to the temple of Pu; and the temple was so crowded with people that no more could get in, and those who could not get into the temple filled the plaza.

It was O-aa who addressed them: “Pu has decided to confer upon the people of Tanga-tanga a great blessing,” she said. “Many of you have sinned; and if you have sinned much and have not been forgiven

by Pu, it will be difficult for you to get into Karana after you die. Therefore, Pu has had constructed this little room here, where you may go, one at a time, and sit with Pu and confess your sins, that Pu may grant you forgiveness. You cannot all come at once, but between sleeps Pu will listen to the sins of twenty. Go forth into the plaza now and explain this to the others who are there; and then let twenty return to the temple to confess.”

The people rushed out into the plaza then, and explained this marvelous thing to those who had not heard O-aa’s words; and there was almost a riot before twenty had been selected to lay their sins before Pu prior to the next sleep.

David went into the little room, and the first of those who were to confess came and kneeled before him, covering his eyes with his hands. David told him to raise and sit on the other bench; and then he said, “You may now confess your sins, and be forgiven.”

“Many sleeps ago,” said the man, “before you and our Noada came, I stole pieces of metal from a neighbor who had money; because the priests and the Go-sha had taken so many of mine from me that I did not have any to buy food for my family.”

“When you are able to do so, you may return the pieces to the man from whom you took them,” said David, “and you shall be forgiven. Did you know,” continued David, “that if you have heard words spoken against Pu or the Noada, and have not come and told them, it is a sin?”

“I did not know that,” said the man, “but I have heard words spoken against you and the Noada. The warriors of Furp go among the people, telling them that you and the Noada are not from Karana; are from Molop Az, and that some day soon you will destroy Tanga-tanga and take all its people to the Molop Az for the Little Men to devour.

I did not believe that, and there are a good many others who do not believe it, but there are some who do; and these warriors are trying to incite them to murder you and the Noada.”

“What is your name?” asked David; and when the man had told him David scratched the name with the point of his dagger in the clay of the wall of the little room. The man watched this process almost fearfully, for he knew nothing of the alphabets, or of writing. “This,” said David, “is the sign of your forgiveness. It will stand as long as the temple stands, and Pu and the Noada remain here in safety. Now go on about your business, whatever it may be, and as you work learn the names of as many as possible who are loyal to Pu and the Noada; so that if we are ever in trouble you may summon them to the temple to defend us.”

The man left the temple, and it did not occur to him that it was strange that god and a Noada who were all powerful should require the help of mortals to defend them.

After many sleeps David had spoken with many of the citizens; and he had scratched upon the walls of the little room the names of those that he thought could be depended upon to be loyal to him and to O-aa. Nor was Furp idle during this time, for he had determined to rid himself of these two who were constantly increasing their hold upon the people; and depriving him of the pieces of bronze which he had been accustomed to collect from the temple and from the people.

Both Furp and Ope were quite concerned about this new confessional which permitted Pu to speak secretly with the people; but they would have been more concerned had they known that Pu, who now controlled the finances of the temple, was giving pieces of bronze to those who were loyal to him, in the privacy of the confessional, with which to purchase swords, and bows and arrows.

Ah-gilak, the little old man from Cape Cod, was much concerned over the fate of David Innes, whom he greatly admired, not only because of his ability and courage, but because David was from Hartford, Connecticut; and he felt that in this outlandish world at the center of the earth New Englanders were bound together by a common tie.

“Dod-burn it,” he said to Abner Perry, shortly after David had departed, “how is this ding-busted idiot goin’ to get back if that contraption carries him across the nameless strait that everyone says is at the end of the world?”

“I don’t know,” said Abner Perry sadly; “and to think that it is all my fault, all my fault. Because I am a careless absentminded old fool, I have sent the two I loved best to death.”

“Well, settin’ around cryin’ over split milk ain’t goin’ to butter no parsnips, as the feller said,” rejoined Ah-gilak. “What we ought to do is do sump’n about it.”

“What can we do?” asked Abner Perry. “There is nothing that I would not do. I have been seriously considering building another balloon with which to follow them.”

“Humph!” ejaculated Ah-gilak. “You sure are the dod-burndest old fool I’ve ever heard tell of. What good could you do if you did float over the nameless strait in one of them contraptions? We’d only have three of you to look for, instead of two. But I got a idea that I’ve been thinking about ever since David left.”

“What is it?” asked Perry.

“Well, you see,” explained the little old man, “afore the *Dolly Dorcas* was wrecked in the Arctic Ocean in 1845, I’d been a-plannin’ that when I got back to Cape Cod I’d build me a clipper ship, the

finest, fastest clipper ship that ever cut salt water. But then, of course the *Dolly Dorcas* she did get wrecked, and I drifted down here into this dod-burned hole in the ground; and I ain't never had no chance to build no clipper ship; but now, if I had the men and the tools, I could build one; and we could go down and cross this here nameless strait, and maybe we could find David and this here Dian the Beautiful."

Abner Perry brightened immediately at the suggestion. "Do you think you could do it, Ah-gilak?" he asked. "For if you can, I can furnish you the men and the tools. We haven't got a ship left seaworthy enough to navigate the nameless strait in safety; and if you can build one and sail it, I can furnish the men to build it, and the men to man it."

"Let's start, then," said Ah-gilak. "Procrastination is the mother of invention, as the feller said."

With this hope held out to him, Abner Perry was a new man. He sent for Ghak the Hairy One, who was king of Sari; and who theoretically ruled the loose federation of the Empire of Pellucidar while David was absent. Perry explained to Ghak what Ah-gilak had proposed, and Ghak was as enthusiastic as either of them. Thus it was that the entire tribe of Sarians, men, women and children, trekked to Amoz, which is on the Darel Az, a shallow sea that is really only a bay on the coast of the Lural Az.

They took with them arms and ammunition and tools — axes with hammers and chisels and mattocks, all the tools that Perry had taught them to make, after he himself had achieved steel following his discovery and smelting of iron ore, and the happy presence of carbon in the foothills near Sari.

Ghak sent runners to Thuria, Suvi, and Kali; and eventually a thousand men were gathered at Amoz, felling trees and shaping the timbers;

and hunters went forth and killed dinosaurs for the peritonea which was to form the sails.

Ah-gilak did not design the huge clipper ship he had planned to build at Cape Cod, but a smaller one that might be equally fast, and just as seaworthy.

Ja, the Mezop, came from the Anoroc Islands with a hundred men who were to help with the building of the ship and man it after it was launched; for the Mezops are the seafaring men of the Empire of Pellucidar.

The women fabricated the shrouds and the rigging from the fibers of an abaca-like plant; and even the children worked, fetching and carrying.

No man may know how long it took to build that clipper ship, in a world where it is always noon and there are no moving celestial bodies to mark the passage of time; a fact which always annoyed Ah-gilak.

“Dod-burn that dod-blasted sun!” he exclaimed. “Why don’t it rise and set like a sun oughta? How’s a feller goin’ to know when to quit work? Gad and Gabriel! It ain’t decent.”

But the Pellucidarians knew when to quit work. When they were hungry they stopped and ate; when they were sleepy they crawled into the darkest place they could find and went to sleep. Then the little old man from Cape Cod would dance around in a frenzy of rage and profanity, if their sleeping or their eating interfered with the building of the clipper. However, the work progressed, and eventually the clipper was ready to launch. The ways were greased, and every preparation had been made. A hundred men stood by the blocks, ready to pull them away.

“Dod-burn it!” exclaimed Ah-gilak. “We got to christen ’er, and we plumb forgot to find a name for her.”

“You designed her and you built her,” said Abner Perry; “and so I think that you are the one who should have the privilege of naming her.”

“That’s fair enough,” said Ah-gilak, “and I’m going to call her the *John Tyler*, because I voted for him for president at the last election; that is, I voted for him and William Henry Harrison; but then Harrison died.”

“Why, that was a hundred and eighteen years ago, man!” exclaimed Abner Perry.

“I don’t give a dod-blasted whoop if it was a thousand and eighteen years ago,” said Ah-gilak. “I voted for Harrison and Tyler at the last election.”

“Do you know what year it is now?” asked Abner Perry.

“David Innes tried to tell me that I was a hundred and fifty-three years old,” said Ah-gilak; “but he has lived down here in this dod-burned hole in the ground so long he’s crazy. They don’t none of you know what year this is. They ain’t no years here; they ain’t no months! they ain’t no weeks; they ain’t no days; they ain’t nothin’ but noon. How you going to count time when it’s always noon? Anyhow I’m going to name her the *John Tyler*.”

“I think that’s an excellent name,” said Abner Perry.

“Now we ought to have a bottle of something to bust on her bow while I christen her,” said Ah-gilak. “If a thing’s worth doin’ at all, don’t put it off till tomorrow, as the feller said.”

The best substitute for a bottle of champagne which they could find was a clay jug filled with water. Ah-gilak held it in his hand and stood by the bow of the clipper. Suddenly he turned to Abner Perry. “This ain’t right,” he said. “Who ever heard of a man christening a ship?”

“Stellara, the mate of Tartar, the son of Ghak is here,” said Abner Perry. “Let her christen the *John Tyler*,” and so Stellara came, and Ah-gilak told her what to do; and at his signal the men pulled the blocks away immediately after Stellara had broken the jug of water on the bow of the clipper and said, “I christen thee the *John Tyler*.”

The ship slipped down the ways into the Darel Az; and the people of Thuria and Sari and Amoz and Suvi and Kali, screamed with delight.

The cannon had been put aboard her before they launched her; and now they set about rigging her, and this work Ah-gilak insisted must be done by the Mezops, who were to be the sailors that manned the ship; so that they would know every rope and spar. It was all a tremendous undertaking for people of the stone age, for they had so much to learn and when the ship was rigged the Mezops had to be drilled in making sail and taking it in quickly. Fortunately they were not only seafaring men, but semi-arboreal, as they lived in trees on their native islands. They ran up the shrouds like monkeys, and out upon the yardarms as though they had been born upon them.

“They may be red Injuns,” said Ah-gilak to Perry, “but they’re goin’ to make fine sailormen.”

Vast quantities of water in bamboo containers was stored aboard, as was the salt meat, vegetables, nuts, and quantities of the rough flour that Abner Perry had taught the Pellucidarians to make.

At last the Mezops were well drilled, and the *John Tyler* prepared to sail. Ah-gilak was skipper, Ja was the first mate and navigator. The second and third mates were Jav and Ko, while Ghak the Hairy One commanded two hundred picked warriors; for, being cavemen, they anticipated having to do battle after they had landed in the *terra incognita* beyond the nameless strait.

They had neither compass, nor sextant, nor any chronometer; but they had a man from Thuria aboard who could point the general direction; and Ja knew the great ocean currents that flowed directly along their course.

With all sails set to a fair wind, the *John Tyler* tossed the white water from her bow as she sailed gallantly out into the Lural Az in her quest for David Innes and Dian the Beautiful; and, for the first time since Dian had floated away toward the Land of Awful Shadow, Abner Perry felt hope budding in his breast; and for the first time in one hundred thirteen years the little old man from Cape Cod was really happy.

Chapter 5

“I am tired of being a slave,” said Gamba to Dian, as they met beside the stream where Dian was filling a large gourd with water and Gamba was washing the loincloths of his mistress. “That woman nearly works me to death.”

“It is better than being killed and fed to the tarags,” said Dian.

“I am afraid of the tarags,” said Gamba. “I don’t see why they let the terrible things hang around the way they do.”

“They are tame,” said Dian. “Manai told me that they catch them when they are cubs and tame them for hunting and for battle. There is a tribe on the other side of the island, two or three long marches away, with which Hamlar’s tribe is always at war. The name of this tribe is Manat; and as the Tandars have tamed and trained tarags, so the Manats have tamed and trained Ta-hos.”

“What a terrible place,” grumbled Gamba. “Why did we have to be cast ashore here?”

“You do not know when you are well off,” said Dian. “If you had stayed in Lolo-lolo, you would have been killed; and if that woman had not taken you to be her slave, you would have been fed to the tarags. Are you never satisfied? Bovar said that you were very lucky to find a master at all, because nobody likes your yellow skin.”

“And I do not like Bovar,” snapped Gamba.

“Why?” asked Dian.

“Because he is in love with you.”

“Nonsense!” said Dian.

“It is true,” said Gamba. “He is always following you around with his eyes when he is not following you around with his feet.”

“He does not want me,” said Dian; “he wants my bronze knife,” as she called the metal androde.

“In the name of Pu!” exclaimed Gamba. “Look what’s coming!”

Dian turned to see three great tarags slinking toward them. She and Gamba were some little distance from the cliff, and the tarags were between the cliff and them. Gamba was terrified, but Dian was not. The great beasts came and rubbed against the girl and nuzzled her hands, while Gamba sat frozen with terror.

“They will not hurt us,” said Dian. “They are my friends. Every time, that I can, I bring them pieces of meat.”

One of the beasts came and smelled of Gamba; and then it bared its terrible fangs and growled, and the man shook as with palsy. Dian came and pushed against the beast’s shoulder to turn it away, at the same time scratching it around one of its ears; then she walked away with her gourd of water, and the three beasts followed her.

For a long time Gamba sat there, wholly unnerved and unable to resume his work. But presently a woman came and spoke to him. “Get to work,” she said, “you lazy jalok. What do you suppose I am feeding

you for, to sit around and do nothing? Much more of this and you will be tarag meat.”

“I am sick,” said Gamba.

“Well, you had better get well,” said the woman, “for I won’t feed any sick slave.” So Gamba, who had been a king, resumed his washing; and when it was done, he wrung the water out of the loincloths and took them and stretched them on a flat rock, where he rubbed them and rubbed them with a smooth stone to squeeze every remaining drop of water from them and to keep them soft as they dried in the hot sun. While he was doing this, his mistress came by again.

“You have not cleaned the cave since my last sleep,” she said irritably.

“I have been doing the washing,” said Gamba. “When that is done, I intended to clean the cave.”

“You could have done both twice over if you hadn’t been loafing,” said the woman. “I don’t know what to do. It is almost impossible to get a decent slave lately. I have had to feed the last three to the tarags, and it looks as though you would go the same way.”

“I will try to do better,” said Gamba. “I will work very hard.”

“See that you do,” said the woman, whose name was Shrud.

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Dian shared a cave with some other slaves on the very lowest level. Such, of course, in a cave village, may be the least desirable, as the lower level is close to the ground and more easily accessible to wild beasts and enemies. She could go into it and sleep when her work was done; but it always seemed that she had no more than closed her eyes before Manai, or Hamlar, or Bovar, called her.

It was Bovar who called her most often, and usually for no other

reason than that he wished to talk with her. He had long since given up all thoughts of killing her in order to obtain her bronze dagger, for he had become infatuated with her; but according to the customs of his tribe, he could not take a slave as a mate. However, this fact did not wholly discourage Bovar, for he knew of a cave hidden deep in the jungle; and he toyed with the thought of stealing Dian and taking her there.

Once, after a fitful sleep, Bovar awoke cross and irritable. As he came out on the ledge before his cave he saw Dian walking toward the jungle. Two great tarags paced beside her. Dian was having ideas. She was going to run away, find the beach where her canoe lay, and paddle out upon the Korsar Az in an effort to reach the mainland. She had asked Gamba to go with her, but he had said that they would only be caught and fed to the tarags; so she had decided to go alone.

As Bovar reached the foot of the lowest ladder, one of the great tigers lay stretched in sleep across his path. He gave it a vicious kick in the ribs to make it get out of his way; and the beast sprang up with bared fangs, growling hideously. Bovar prodded it with his long, heavy spear; and it screamed and stepped back; then it slunk away, still growling. Paying no more attention to the tarag, Bovar looked around at the men and women of his tribe, who were down at the foot of the cliff. No one was paying any attention to him. The men were lying around in the shade of trees, half asleep; and the women were working. Bovar walked nonchalantly towards the jungle into which Dian had disappeared. He did not look back; if he had, he would have seen a tarag slinking after him.

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Gamba was scrubbing the floor of his mistress' cave. He had carried up a gourd of water and a smooth flat stone and a bundle of grasses. His knees were raw and bleeding from contact with the sandstone floor. As Shrud passed him on her way out of the cave, she kicked him in the side.

"Work fast, you lazy slave," she said.

This was more than Gamba could endure; it was the last straw, that he, a king, should be so abused and humiliated. He decided that death were better, but that he would have his revenge before he died, so he reached out and seized Shrud by an ankle, and as she fell forward he dragged her back into the cave. She clawed and struck at him, but he leaped upon her and drove his bronze dagger into her heart again and again.

When he realized what he had done, Gamba was terrified. Now he wished that he had gone with Dian, but perhaps she had not gone yet. He washed the blood from his dagger; and dragged Shrud's body to the very farthest end of the cave, where it was darkest; then he came out onto the ledge. Dian was nowhere in sight.

Gamba hastened down the ladders to the lowest level; and going to Dian's cave, he called her name; but there was no response. He started to cross the clearing toward the jungle in the direction that he thought Dian would take to reach the cove where their canoe lay; but he had gone only a short distance when Shrud's mate called to him.

"Where are you going, slave?" he demanded.

"Shrud has sent me into the jungle for fruit," replied Gamba.

"Well, hurry up about it," said the man. "I have work for you to do."

A moment later a runaway slave disappeared into the jungle.

It was noon in the city of Tanga-tanga and in all directions the world curved upward to be lost in the midst of the distance that merged with the blue vault of heaven to form a dome, in the center of which blazed the fiery sun that hung always at zenith.

In the temple a frightened man sat on a bench in the little room, facing his god.

“It will be soon, most gracious Pu,” he said; “and if they find that I have been here, they will kill me, for there are those who know that I know.”

“How will it come?” asked David.

“A great crowd will come to the temple with offerings. There will be warriors among them, and they will press close to the dais; and when one gives the word, they will fall upon you and our Noada and kill you. Furp will not be here, so that no blame may be attached to him by the people; but it is Furp who is directing it.”

David read aloud to the man the names that he had scratched upon the wall of the little room, the names of those who were loyal to him and to O-aa. He read them twice, and then the third time. “Can you remember those names?” he asked.

“Yes,” replied the man; “I know them all well.”

“Go to them, then, and tell them that Pu says that the time has come. They will know what you mean.”

“As I do,” said the man; and he knelt, covering his eyes with his hands; and then he arose and left the temple.

David returned to the dais and sat upon his throne; and presently O-aa entered from her apartments, with the lesser priests in their

hideous masks and the drums, according to the custom of the temple. She had come to the dais and seated herself beside David Innes.

“The time has come,” he whispered to her.

“I have a sword and a dagger under my robe,” she said.

Ope the high priest had never been able to persuade David to wear any robes of office, nor had David discarded his weapons. He had told Ope that Pu always dressed thus, and that it was only those who served Pu who wore the robes of office.

Time dragged heavily for these two, who might be waiting for death, but presently men commenced to struggle into the temple. David recognized some among these as those who were loyal to him. He held the first two fingers of his right hand across his breast. It was the sign that had been decided upon to recognize friend from foe; and all the men who had come in, even those whom he had not recognized, answered his sign.

They came and knelt before the dais and covered their eyes; and after they had been bidden to arise, they still stayed close to the dais; and so that it might seem reasonable that they should remain there, David preached to them as he imagined a god might preach to his people. He spoke to them of loyalty and the rewards of loyalty, and the terrible fate of those who were untrue to their faith. He spoke slowly, that he might consume time.

More and more men were entering the temple. There were no women, which was unusual; and as each entered David made the sign; and some of them answered and some did not, but those who answered pressed close around the dais until they entirely surrounded the three sides of it, the fourth side being against the wall of the temple.

David continued to talk to them in quiet tones that gave no

indication that he anticipated anything unusual, but he watched them carefully; and he noticed that many of those who had not answered this sign were nervous, and now some of them tried to push through closer to the dais; but the loyal ones stood shoulder to shoulder and would not let them pass; and everyone in the temple waited for the signal.

At last it came. A warrior screamed. "Death!" Just the one word he spoke, but it turned the quiet temple into a bedlam of cursing, battling men.

Instantly the signal was given, the loyal ones had wheeled about with drawn swords to face the enemies of their gods; and David had arisen and drawn his sword, too.

The fighting men surged back and forth before the dais. One of Furp's men broke through and struck at O-aa; and David parried the blow and struck the man down; then he leaped to the floor of the temple and joined his supporters; and his presence beside them gave them courage and strength beyond anything that they had ever dreamed of possessing, and it put the fear of God into the hearts of the enemy.

Twenty of Furp's men lay bleeding on the floor and the others turned to flee the wrath of Pu, only to find that retreat was cut off; for, according to David's plan, a solid phalanx of his supporters, armed with bow and arrow, sword, and dagger, barred the way.

"Throw down your arms!" cried David. "Throw down your arms, or die!"

After they had divested themselves of swords and daggers, he told his people to let them go; but he warned them never again to raise their hands against Pu or their Noada.

"And now," he said, "go back to him who sent you; and tell him that

Pu has known all his wicked thoughts and has been prepared for him; and because of what he has done he will be turned over to the people to do with as they see fit; and when you go, take your dead and wounded with you.”

The vanquished warriors passed out of the temple with their dead and wounded, and David noted with a smile that they crossed directly to the house of the Go-sha.

“It was easy to defeat the warriors of Furp when Pu was on our side,” said one of David’s supporters. “Now that will be the last of Furp, and Pu and his Noadá will rule Tanga-tanga.”

“Don’t be too sure of that,” said David. “Furp sent only a handful of men to the temple, for he did not anticipate any resistance. There will be more fighting before this is settled; and if you know of any more loyal men in the city, see that they are armed and ready to come at any moment. Let one hundred remain here constantly, for I am sure that Furp will attack. He will not give up his power so easily.”

“Nor a chance to get all of our pieces of bronze as he once did,” said one of the men bitterly.

The one hundred men remained and the others left and went through the city searching for new recruits.

David looked at O-aa and smiled and she smiled back. “I wish my eleven brothers had been here,” she said.

Chapter 6

When Gamba entered the jungle, he commenced to run, hoping to overtake Dian; but the jungle was such a maze of trails that he soon realized that he was lost; and then he caught a glimpse of a large, yellow-striped creature slinking through the underbrush. Gamba was

most unhappy. He wished that he had not killed Shrud, for then he would not have had to run away. He cursed the moment when Dian had come to Lolo-lolo; he cursed Dian; he cursed everybody but himself, who alone was responsible for his predicament; and, still cursing, he climbed a tree.

The tarag that had been stalking him came and stood under the tree and looked up and growled. "Go away," said Gamba, and picked a fruit that grew upon the tree and threw it at the tarag. The great beast snarled and then lay down under the tree.

~

As soon as Dian had entered the jungle she accelerated her pace; and the two great beasts which accompanied her strode upon either side, for here the trail was wide. Dian was glad of their presence, for they suggested protection, even though she did not know whether or not they would protect her in an emergency.

Presently she came to a natural clearing in the jungle; and when she was half-way across it she heard her name called. Surprised, she turned about to see Bovar.

"Where are you going?" he demanded.

"To the village," she said.

"You are going in the wrong direction, then. The village is back this way."

"These trails are confusing," said Dian. "I thought I was going in the right direction." She realized now that there was nothing to do but go back to the village and wait for another opportunity to escape. She was terribly disappointed, but not wholly disheartened; because, if it had been so easy to go into the jungle this time without arousing suspicion, there would be other times when it would be just as easy.

As Bovar came toward her she saw a tarag slink into the clearing behind him; and she recognized it immediately as the third member of the terrible trinity the affections of which she had won.

“You won’t have to go back to the village now,” said Bovar. “You can keep on going in the direction that you were.”

“What do you mean?” demanded Dian.

“I mean that I think you were trying to escape, and I am going to help you. I know a cave deep in the jungle where no one will ever find us and where, when I am not with you, you will be safe from man and beast.”

“I shall go back to the village,” said Dian; “and if you will promise not to annoy me, I will not tell Hamlar nor Manai what you would have done.”

“You shall not go back to the village,” said Bovar. “You are going with me. If you do not go willingly, I will drag you through the jungle by the hair.”

Dian drew her bronze knife. “Come and try it,” she said.

“Don’t be a fool,” said Bovar. “In the village you are a slave. You have to clean three caves and prepare the food for four people and wash loincloths and fetch carry all day. In the jungle you would have but one cave to clean and but two people to cook for; and if you behaved yourself I would never beat you.”

“You will never beat me whether I behave myself or not,” replied Dian.

“Throw down that knife,” added Bovar. Dian laughed at him and that made Bovar furious. “Drop it and come with me, or I will kill you,” he said. “You shall never go back to the village now to spread stories about me. Take your choice, slave. Come with me or die.”

Two of the tarags stood close beside Dian, imparting to her a sense

of security — whether false or not she did not know, but at least their presence encouraged her to hope. The third tarag lay on its belly a few yards behind Bovar, the tip of its tail constantly moving. Dian knew what that sign often portended, and she wondered.

Bovar did not know that the tarag had followed him, nor that it lay there behind him, watching his every move. What was in the great beast's mind, no one may know. Since cubhood it had been taught to fear these men-things and their long, sharp spears.

Bovar took a few steps toward Dian, his spear poised to thrust. Dian had not thought that he would carry out his threat; but now, looking into his eyes, she saw determination there. She saw the tarag behind Bovar rise with bared fangs and then she had an inspiration. This cave girl knew that an unfailing invitation to any dangerous animal to attack is flight; and so she turned suddenly and ran across the clearing, banking her safety on the affections of these savage beasts.

Bovar sprang after her, his spear poised for the cast; and then the great beast behind him charged and sprang, and the two which had stood beside Dian leaped upon him with thunderous roars.

Dian heard one piercing scream and turned to see Bovar go down with all those terrible fangs buried in his body. That one piercing scream marked the end of Bovar, son of Hamlar the chief; and Dian watched while the great beasts tore the chief's son to pieces and devoured him. Inured to savagery in a savage world, the scene that she witnessed did not horrify her. Her principle reactions to the event were induced by the knowledge that she had been relieved from an annoying enemy, that she now would not have to return to the village, and that she had acquired a long, heavy spear.

Dian went and sat down in the shade of a tree and waited for the three beasts to finish their grisly meal. She was glad to wait for them,

for she wanted their company and protection as far as the entrance to the shaft which led down to the beach where her canoe lay; and while she was waiting she fell asleep.

Dian was awakened by something rubbing against her shoulder and opened her eyes to see one of the tarags nuzzling her. The other two had slumped down near her, but when she awoke they stood up; and then the three of them strode off into the jungle and Dian went with them. She knew that they were going for water and when they had drunk they would sleep; nor was she wrong, for when they had had their fill of water they threw themselves down in the shade near the stream; and Dian laid down with them and they all slept.

~

Gamba, in his tree a quarter of a mile away from the clearing where Bovar had died, had heard a human scream mingling with the horrid roars and snarls of attacking beasts, and he had thought that Dian had been attacked and was dead; and Gamba, who had been king of Lolo-lolo, felt very much alone in the world and extremely sorry for himself.

~

In Tanga-tanga, Ope the high priest was in a quandary and very unhappy. He and the lesser priests had all been absent from the temple throne room at the time that the followers of Furp had attacked Pu and the Noada; and now he was trying to explain his absence to his god. His quandary was occasioned by the fact that he did not know which side was going to win in the impending battle, of the imminence of which he was fully cognizant.

“It might have seemed a coincidence to some,” David was saying, “that you and all of the lesser priests were absent at the time that

Furp's men attacked us, but Pu knows that it was no coincidence. You absented yourselves when you knew that we were in danger so that the people might have no grounds upon which to reproach you, no matter what the outcome of the attempt might be. You must now determine once and for all whether you will support us or the Go-sha."

The lesser priests were gathered around Ope at the foot of the dais and they looked to him for leadership. He could feel their eyes upon him. He knew the great numerical strength of the Go-sha's retainers, but he did not know that Pu, also, had a great number, nor did he know that they were armed. He thought that warriors would be met, if at all, by an unarmed mob which they could easily mow down with arrow, spear and sword.

"I am waiting for your answer," said David.

Ope decided to play safe; he could explain his reasons to Furp later. "We shall be loyal to Pu and our Noda in the future as in the past," he said.

"Very well, then," said David. "Send the lesser priests out into the city to spread the word among the people that they must arm themselves and be prepared to defend the temple."

Ope had not expected anything of this sort and he was chagrined, for at the bottom of his heart he hoped that Furp would succeed in destroying these two, that he might again enjoy to the fullest extent the perquisites and graft of his office; but he realized that he must at least appear to comply with Pu's instructions.

"It shall be done at once," he said. "I shall take the lesser priests into my private chambers and explain their duties to them."

"You will do nothing of the sort," said David. "The lesser priests have heard the instructions that Pu has given. They will go out into the

city at once and with each one of them I will send one of these loyal citizens to see that my instructions are carried out honestly.”

“But —” commenced Ope.

“But nothing!” snapped David, and he looked at the lesser priests. “You will leave at once, and you will each be accompanied by one of these men,” and as he detailed those who were to accompany the lesser priests, he told them that they had his permission, the permission of their god, to destroy any priest who failed to exhort the people enthusiastically to defend the temple of Pu.

It was not long thereafter that men commenced to congregate in the plaza before the temple. Through the great temple doorway David could see the house of the Go-sha; and soon he saw warriors emerging from it, and others coming into the plaza from other directions. They marched straight toward the temple, before which stood the temple guards and the loyal citizens who had armed themselves to protect Pu and their Noda.

Furp’s men tried to shoulder their way through to the temple, but they were immediately set upon, and the battle began. Soon the plaza was filled with the clash of swords, the shouts and curses of men, and the screams and groans of the wounded and dying.

From every narrow, crooked street loyal citizens swarmed to the defense of the temple; so that not one of Furp’s men ever reached the great doorway.

Who may know how long that battle lasted, for it was noon when it commenced and noon when it ended; but to David and O-aa it seemed like an eternity. When the last of Furp’s retainers who were not dead or wounded were driven from the plaza, the dead lay thick upon every hand; and David Innes was the master of Tanga-tanga.

Furp and a couple of hundred of his retainers had fled the city;

and it was later discovered that they had gone to Lolo-lolo and enlisted in the service of the new Go-sha there, who was glad to acquire so many trained fighting men.

David sent word to the people that as long as he remained he would rule Tanga-tanga; and that when he left he would appoint a new Go-sha, one who would not rob them; and then he sent for Ope the high priest.

“Ope,” he said, “in your heart you have always been disloyal to your Noada and to Pu; therefore, you are dismissed from the priesthood and banished from Tanga-tanga. You may go to Lolo-lolo and join Furp, and you may thank Pu that he has not destroyed you as you deserve.”

Ope was aghast. He was not prepared for this, as he had felt that he had played safe.

“B-but, Pu,” he cried. “The people — the people, what of them? They will not be pleased. They might even turn against you in their wrath. I have been their high priest for many thousand sleeps.”

“If you prefer to leave the issue to the people,” said David “I will summon them and tell them how disloyal you have been, and turn you over to them.”

At that suggestion Ope trembled, for he knew that he was most unpopular among the people. “I shall abide by the will of Pu,” he said, “and leave Tanga-tanga immediately; but it pains me to think that I must abandon my people and leave them without a high priest to whom they may bring their grievances.”

“And their pieces of metal,” said O-aa.

“The people shall not be without a high priest,” said David; “for I now ordain Kanje as the high priest of the temple of Pu.” Kanje was one of the lesser priests whom David knew to be loyal.

Ope was conducted to the gates of the city by members of the temple guard, who had orders to see that he spoke to no one; and so the last of David's active and powerful enemies was disposed of, and he could devote his time to plans for returning to Sari, after prosecuting a further search for Dian, who, in his heart of hearts, he believed to be lost to him forever.

He sent men out to fell a certain type of tree in a near-by forest, and to bring them into the city; and he sent hunters out to kill several boses, which on the outer crust were the prehistoric progenitors of our modern cattle. These hunters were instructed to bring the meat in and give it to the people; and to bring hides to the women to be cleaned and cured.

When the trees were brought in he had them cut into planks and strips, and in person he supervised the building of a large canoe with mast and sails and water-tight compartments forward and aft.

The people wondered at the purpose for which this strange thing was being built, for they were not a sea-faring people; and in all their lives had seen only one craft that floated on the water — that in which their Noada had come to them.

When the canoe was completed, he summoned the people to the plaza and told them that he and the Noada were going to visit some of their other temples in a far land, and that while they were gone the people must remain loyal to Kanje and the new Go-sha whom David appointed; and he warned Kanje and the new Go-sha to be kind to the people and not to rob them.

“For, wherever I am, I shall be watching you,” he said.

He had the people carry the canoe down to the nameless strait, and stock it with provisions and with water, and with many weapons —

spears, and bows and arrows, and bronze swords; for he knew that the crossing would be perilous.

The entire population of Tanga-tanga, with the exception of the warriors at the gates, had come down to the shore to bid Pu and the Noada farewell; and to see this strange thing set out upon the terrible waters. O-aa had come down with the people, but David had remained at the temple to listen to a report from some of the warriors he had sent out in search of a clue to the whereabouts of Dian. These men reported that they had captured a Lolo-lolo hunter, who claimed to have seen Gamba and Dian as they set forth upon the waters of the nameless strait in their little canoe. So David knew that if Dian were not already dead, she might have returned to Sari.

As he started for the gate of the city he heard sounds of fighting; and when he reached the gate he saw that his people by the shore had been attacked by a horde of warriors from Lolo-lolo and were falling back toward the city.

O-aa had been in the canoe, waiting for David, when the attack came; and in order to escape capture, she had paddled out upon the nameless strait, intending to hold the craft there until the attackers had been dispersed and David could come down to the shore; but the current seized the canoe and carried it out into the strait, and though she paddled valiantly she could do nothing to alter its course.

Chapter 7

The ship in which Hodon sailed in search of the *Sari* and O-aa was named *Lo-har*, in honor of Laja who had come among the Sarians from the country called Lo-har. It was a little ship, but staunch; and Raj the Mezop brought it through that nameless strait, and out upon

the broad bosom of the Korsar Az in safety; and there they were becalmed and the current carried them where it would. Their fresh water was almost exhausted and they looked in vain for rain; and then in the distance they sighted land, toward which the current was carrying them. When they were scarcely a mile off shore, the current changed and Hodon saw that they were going to be carried past the end of what he now saw to be an island; so he filled the canoe with empty water containers, and with twenty strong paddlers he set forth for the shore; and as he neared it he saw a waterfall tumbling into the sea over the edge of a cliff.

As the canoe was being drawn up on a narrow beach in a little cove at the far end of which was the waterfall, Hodon saw another canoe that had been dragged up on the shore; and while his men carried the containers to the waterfall to fill them, he investigated.

In the bottom of the canoe were strange weapons such as he had never seen before, for the swords he found there were of a metal he had never seen before, and the spears and arrows were tipped with it. Upon a thwart rested two tiny sandals. Hodon picked one of them up and examined it, and instantly he recognized it as the work of a Sarian woman; for the women of each tribe have a distinctive way of making their sandals, so that they are easily recognized, as are the imprints they make upon soft earth or sand.

What Sarian woman other than Dian the Beautiful could these tiny sandals belong to? She alone was missing from Sari. Hodon was excited, and he hastened to the waterfall to tell his warriors; and they were excited, too, when they heard that Dian might be on this island.

As the men filled the remaining bamboo containers Hodon discovered the little ledge behind the falls and, in investigating, found the opening into the cavern. He felt his way into it until he came at last to

the bottom of the shaft where rested the crude ladder up which Dian's captors had taken her. Hodon returned to his men and they carried the fresh water back to the canoe; and as they looked out toward the *Lo-har* they saw that a breeze had sprung up and that the little ship was standing in toward shore.

~

After the tarag, tired of waiting beneath the tree, arose and slunk off into the jungle, Gamba came down onto the ground and continued his flight. He walked quite a distance this time before he was treed again by sounds which he could not clearly interpret, but which resembled the growls of beasts mingled with the conversation of men; and presently there passed beneath him a dozen warriors, each one of which was accompanied by a Ta-ho on a leash. Gamba recognized them instantly as Manats from the other side of the island; for, although he had never seen one of them before, he had heard them and their fierce fighting beasts described many times by the Tandars.

Gamba remained very quiet in his tree, for these Manats looked like fierce and terrible men, almost as fierce and terrible as their grim beasts.

And while Gamba watched them pass beneath him and disappear along the winding trail beyond him, Dian and her three beasts slept beside the little stream where they had quenched their thirst.

Dian was awakened when one of her beasts sprang to its feet with a hideous roar. Approaching were the twelve warriors of Manat with their fighting Ta-hos. The three tarags, roaring and growling, stood between Dian and the approaching Manats.

With cries of encouragement, the Manats turned their twelve beasts loose; and Dian, seeing how greatly her defenders were outnumbered,

turned and fled and while the tarags were battling for their lives, a Manat warrior pursued her.

Dian ran like a deer, far outdistancing the Manat. She had no idea in what direction she was running. She followed jungle trails which turned and twisted, and which eventually brought her back to the very clearing in which Bovar had been killed, and there she saw the Manats and their fighting beasts, but there were only seven of the latter now. Before they had died, her tarags had destroyed five of them.

The warriors did not see Dian, and for that she breathed a sigh of relief as she turned and hurried back along the trail she had come — hurried straight into the arms of the warrior who had been following her. They met at a sharp turn in the trail and he seized her before she could escape. Dian reached for her dagger, but the man caught her wrist; and then he disarmed her.

“You came back to me,” he said, in a gruff voice, “but for making me run so far I shall beat you when I get you back to the village of Manat.”

Dian said nothing, for she knew that nothing she might say could avail her.

Gamba, sitting disconsolate and terrified in his tree, saw the twelve terrible men of Manat return. There were only seven Ta-hos with them now, but this time there was a woman. Gamba recognized her immediately and his sorrow almost overcame him — sorrow for himself and not for Dian; for now he knew that she could never lead him to the cove where the canoe lay and that if he found it himself, he would have to embark on those terrible waters alone. It is wholly impossible that anyone could have been more unhappy than Gamba. He dared not return to the village; he did not know in which direction the cove lay; and he was alone in a jungle haunted by hungry man-eaters, he who

had always lived in the safety of a walled city. From wishing that he had never seen Dian, he commenced to wish that he had never been born. Finally he decided to find a stream near which grew trees bearing edible fruits and nuts; and to live up in these trees all the rest of his life, coming down only for water.

While Gamba was bemoaning his fate, Dian, the leash of one of the dead Ta-hos around her neck, was being led across the Island of Tandar toward the country of the Manats; but she was not bemoaning anything, nor being sorry for herself. She could not clutter her mind with useless thoughts while every moment it must be devoted to thoughts of escape. There was never any telling at what instant an emergency might arise, which would offer her an opportunity; yet, deep in the bottom of her heart, her fate must have seemed utterly hopeless.

The warrior who had captured Dian was an ill-natured brute, and the fact that he had lost his Ta-ho in the fight with the tarags had not tended to improve his disposition. He jerked at the rope around Dian's neck roughly and unnecessarily; and occasionally on no pretext at all, he cuffed her; and every time he did one of these things he was strengthening the girl's resolve to kill him. She would almost have abandoned an opportunity to escape for the pleasure of driving a dagger into his heart.

~

With all sails set, the *John Tyler* rode the water of the nameless strait. Ja and Abner Perry and Ah-gilak stood upon the quarterdeck.

"I think," said Abner Perry, "that we should disembark a searching party as soon as possible. We may have a long shoreline to search and

a big country, which we must comb until we find some clue to the whereabouts of Dian;" and the others agreed with him.

As they approached the shore the lookout shouted, "Canoe dead ahead."

As they bore down upon the little craft the bow was filled with warriors and Mezops, watching the canoe and its single occupant. They saw a figure in a long cloak and an enormous feather headdress; and when they got closer they saw that it was a woman.

O-aa had never seen a ship built or rigged like this one, which had evidently discovered her and was headed for her; but as far as she knew, only the men of the Empire of Pellucidar built any sort of ships, and so she hoped against hope that these might be men of the federation.

As the ship came about and lay to near her, she paddled to its side. A rope was thrown to her and she was hauled to the deck.

"Dod-burn it!" exclaimed Ah-gilak. "Gad and Gabriel! If it isn't O-aa! What in the name of all that's dod-blasted are you doing in that get-up, girl; and out here alone in a canoe?"

"Don't talk so much, old man," retorted O-aa, who could never forget that Ah-gilak had once planned on killing and eating her that time that they were being besieged in the cave by the sabertoothed men. "Instead of talking," she continued, "get to shore and rescue David Innes."

"David Innes!" exclaimed Abner Perry. "Is David Innes there?"

"He is in that city you can see," replied O-aa, "and if the warriors from Lolo-lolo get in there, they will kill him."

The ship was under way again and Ah-gilak brought it as close into shore as he dared, and dropped anchor. Then Ghak and his two hundred warriors, and all but about twenty-five of the Mezops, took

to the boats and made for shore. Nearly three hundred veterans they were and they were armed with muskets; crude things, but effective against men of the stone age, or of the bronze age either; for, besides making a good deal of noise, they emitted volumes of black smoke; and those whom they didn't kill, they nearly frightened to death.

In a long thin line, as David had taught them, they approached the city where the warriors of Lolo-lolo were attempting to force the gates.

When they were discovered, the Lolo-loloans turned to repel them, looking with contempt upon that long, thin line of a few hundred men who had the temerity to threaten a thousand bowmen. But the thunder of the first ragged volley and the black smoke belching at them, as twenty or thirty of their comrades fell screaming to the ground, gave them pause; but they advanced bravely in the face of a second volley. However, with the third volley, those who had not been killed or wounded turned and fled, and Ghak the Hairy One led his troop to the walls of Tanga-tanga.

"Who are you?" demanded a warrior standing upon the top of the wall.

"We are friends, and we have come for Pu," replied Ghak, who had been coached by O-aa.

Almost immediately the gates were thrown open and David Innes emerged. From the temple he had heard the firing and he was sure that could have come only from the muskets of the empire.

Tears were streaming down Abner Perry's cheeks as he welcomed David aboard the *John Tyler*.

David listened while they told him of their plans to search for Dian, but he shook his head and told them that it was useless; that Dian had set out upon the nameless strait in a canoe with a single companion and that if she were not already back in Sari, she must be dead.

O-aa had inquired about Hodon, and when she had been told that he had come this way in search of her, she begged David Innes to continue on through the nameless strait into the Korsar Az in search of him; as he must have gone there if he had not already been wrecked.

~

While Gamba was searching for a stream where there were trees bearing nuts and fruits he was suddenly confronted by a band of strange warriors bearing weapons such as he had never seen before. He tried to escape them, but they overtook and captured him.

“Who are you?” demanded Hodon.

“I am Gamba, the Go-sha of Lolo-lolo,” replied the frightened man.

“I think we should kill him,” said a Mezop. “I do not like the color of his skin.”

“Where is Lolo-lolo,” asked Hodon.

“It is on the other side of the nameless strait,” replied Gamba, “where the country of the Xexots lies.”

“You came from the other side of the nameless strait?”

“Yes; I came in a thing called a ‘canoe.’”

“Did you come alone?” asked Hodon.

“No; I came with a woman who said that she came from a country called Sari, and that her name was Dian the Beautiful.”

“Where is she?” demanded Hodon.

“She was captured by the Manats, who live on the other side of this island.”

“Can you lead us there?”

“No,” replied Gamba; “I am lost. I do not even know the way to the coast where our canoe lies. If I were you, I would not go to the country of the Manats. They are terrible men and they lead Ta-hos, who can

kill and devour you. There were twelve Manats who captured Dian, and they had seven Ta-hos with them.”

“Can you show us where she was captured?”

“I can show you where I last saw her,” replied Gamba; and this he did. There the trail of men and beasts was plain and to these men of the stone age the following of that trail was simple. They marched rapidly and almost without rest; and though ordinarily it was three long marches to the village of the Manats, Hodon and his hundred warriors reached it shortly after the first sleep.

The men who had captured Dian had only just arrived and her captor had taken her to his cave.

“Now,” he said, “I am going to give you the beating I promised you. It will teach you to behave.” He seized her by the hair and, stooping, picked up a short stick; and as he stooped Dian snatched her bronze dagger that the man had taken from her from the sheath at his side, and as he raised the stick she plunged it into his heart. With a scream he clutched at his breast; and then Dian gave him a push that sent him out of the cave to topple over the ledge and fall to the ground below.

A moment later she heard shouts and war-cries; and she thought that they were caused by the anger of the Manats because of the killing of one of their fellows; and she stood in the shadow of the cave’s entrance with the dagger in her hand, determined to sell her life dearly and take a heavy toll of her enemies.

From below rose the shouts of the warriors and the roars and growls of the Ta-hos; and then, like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, came the roar of musketry.

Dian could not believe her ears. What other people in all Pellucidar, other than the men of the empire and the inhabitants of far Korsar, had firearms? It was too good to hope that these might be Sarians; and

if they were from Korsar, she was as well off here among the Manats as to be captured by the Korsarians.

She stepped to the mouth of the cave and looked out. The fighting was going on almost directly beneath her. The Ta-hos were doing the most damage among the attackers, but one by one they were being shot down; for the Manat warriors, confused by the noise and the smoke, made only an occasional sally, only to be driven back with heavy losses; and at last the remnants of them turned and fled, as the last of the Ta-hos was killed.

Dian had long since seen that these men were no Korsars. She recognized the copper skins of the Mezops and knew that she had been saved.

She stood upon the ledge and called down to them, and the men looked up and cheered. Then she went down and greeted Hodon and the others; and the first question that she asked was of David. "Why is he not with you?" she asked. "Has anything happened to him?"

"He left Sari in a balloon such as carried you away," explained Hodon, "in the hope that it would take him to the same spot where yours landed. We do not know what became of him."

"Why are you here?" asked Dian.

"We were looking for O-aa, who, when last seen, was adrift on the *Sari*."

"How did you happen to come here and find me?" asked Dian.

"We landed on the island for water and I saw your sandals on the thwart of your canoe; then we came inland in search of you and we found a man who had seen you captured by these Manats. After that it was easy enough to follow their trail."

They started immediately on the long trek back to the other side of

the island; and when they entered the jungle Gamba came down out of a tree where he had been hiding during the fighting.

“This man said that he came here in a canoe with you,” said Hodon. “Did he offer to harm you in any way?”

“No,” said Dian.

“Then we shall let him live,” said Hodon.

PART IV.

SAVAGE PELLUCIDAR

Chapter 1

As the *John Tyler* sailed through the nameless strait toward the Korsar Az in what seemed to David a fruitless search for the ship *Lo-har* and Hodon the Fleet One, a forgotten incident flashed into David's mind. As he had drifted across the strait in the balloon that Abner Perry had built for him that he might prosecute his search for Dian the Beautiful, he had seen, far below, a canoe with two occupants moving with the current toward the Korsar Az. And now, recalling what one of the Xexots had told him of seeing Dian and Gamba, the former king of Lolo-lolo, escaping in a canoe, he was certain that it must have been Dian and Gamba whom he had seen. So now he was anxious as O-aa to sail on into the Korsar Az.

Ah-gilak, the little old man from Cape Cod who could not recall his name but knew that it was not Dolly Dorcas, didn't care where he sailed the ship he had designed and now skippered. He was just content to sail it, a small version of the great clipper ship he had dreamed of building nearly a hundred years before as soon as he got back to Cape Cod.

Of course Abner Perry was more than anxious to prosecute the search for Dian, since it had been through his carelessness that the balloon had escaped and borne her away. Ja and Jav and Ko and the other Mezops of the crew, being borne to the sea, were happy in this, to them, wonderful ship. Ghak the Hairy One, king of Sari, who

commanded the two hundred warriors aboard, would have gone to the fiery sea of Molop Az for either David or Dian. The two hundred warriors, while loyal and valiant, were mostly unhappy. They are hill people, the sea is not their element, and most of them were often sick.

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On the *Lo-har*, Hodon and Dian decided to cruise about the Korsar Az for a while before giving up the search for O-aa, whom they had about given up for lost. Then they would return to Sari.

The Korsar Az is a great ocean extending, roughly, two thousand miles from north to south. It is an uncharted wilderness of unknown waters, and all but a short distance of its enormous shoreline a *terra incognita* to the crews of the *Lo-har* and the *John Tyler*, most of whom thought that its waters extended to the ends of the world and were bordered by lands inhabited by fierce enemies and roved by terrifying beasts, in all but the first of which conceits they were eminently correct.

Leaving Tandar, the island upon which he had found Dian, Hodon cruised to the south, while the *John Tyler*, entering the great sea from the nameless strait, turned her prow toward the north. Thus, fate separated them farther and farther.

Usually within sight of land, the *John Tyler* cruised in a northeasterly direction along the great peninsula upon the opposite side of which lie most of the kingdoms of the Empire of Pellucidar. For thirteen or fourteen hundred miles the ship held this course, while Ghak's two hundred sturdy warriors, sick and hating the sea, became more and more unhappy and discontented until they were close upon the verge of mutiny.

They were at heart loyal to Ghak and David; but they were men

of the stone age, rugged individualists unaccustomed to discipline. Finally they came to Ghak in a body and demanded that the ship turn back and head for home.

Ghak and David listened to them, Ghak with deep sympathy, for he, too, was sick of the sea and longed to feel the solid earth beneath his feet once more. And David listened with understanding and a plan. He spread a crude map before them.

"We are here," he said, pointing, "opposite the narrowest part of the peninsula." He moved his finger in a south-easterly direction. "Here is Sari. Between us and Sari lie seven hundred miles of probably rugged country inhabited by savage tribes and overrun by fierce beasts. You would have to fight your way for all the seven hundred miles." He ran his finger back along the coast and through the nameless strait and then up along the opposite shore of the peninsula to Sari. "The *John Tyler* is a safe and seaworthy ship," he said. "If you remain aboard her, you may be sick and uncomfortable at times, but you will reach Sari in safety. If you wish, we will land you here; or you may remain aboard. If you stay with the ship, there must be no more grumbling, and you must obey orders. Which do you wish to do?"

"How far is it back to Sari by sea?" asked one of the warriors.

"This is, of course, a crude map," said David, "and we may only approximate correct distances; but I should say that by sea the distance to Sari is around five thousand miles."

"And only seven hundred miles by land," said the man.

"About that. It may be more, it may be less."

"If it were seven hundred miles by sea and five thousand by land," spoke up another warrior, "and I had to fight for every mile, I'd choose to go by land."

As one man, the two hundred cheered and that settled the matter.

“Well, dod-burn my hide!” grumbled Ah-gilak. “Of all the gol-durned idjits I almost nearly ever seen! ’Druther hoof it fer seven hundred miles than ride home in style an’ comfort on the sweetest ship ever sailed these do blasted seas. Ain’t got no more sense ’n a white pine dog with a poplar tail. Howsumever, good riddance says I. There’ll be more victuals for the rest of us, an’ plenty water.”

“Then everybody’s happy,” said David, smiling.

At the point they chose to land the Sarian warriors, there was a narrow beach at the foot of cliffs which extended in both directions as far as they could see. The lead showed no bottom at sixteen fathoms four hundred yards off shore. Closer than that Ah-gilak would not take his ship.

“Too gol-durned close now,” he said, “but what wind there is is right.”

Standing on and off a light breeze and a calm sea, the boats were lowered and the first contingent was put ashore. David, Abner Perry, Ghak, and O-aa were standing together watching the warriors disembark.

“You will accompany them, Ghak?” asked David.

“I will do whatever you wish,” replied the king of Sari.

“Your place is with them,” said David; “and if you go with them, you’ll be back in Sari much sooner than we shall by sea.”

“Why don’t we all go with them, then?” suggested Perry.

“I have been thinking the same thing,” said David, “but for myself. Not you. It would be too tough a trek for you, Abner. Don’t forget that you must be well over ninety by this time.”

Perry bridled. “Stuff and nonsense!” he exclaimed. “I can keep up with the best of you. And don’t you forget, David, that if I am over

ninety, you are over fifty. I'm going along, and that settles it. I must get back to Sari. I have important things to do."

"You will be much more comfortable aboard the *John Tyler*," coaxed David. "And what have you so important to do, that can't wait in a world where time stands eternally still?"

"I have in mind to invent a steam locomotive and build a railway," said Perry. "I also wish to invent a camera. There is much to be done, David."

"Why a camera?" asked David. "You can't kill anyone with a camera."

Perry looked hurt. The man who had brought gunpowder, muskets, cannon, and steel for swords and spears and knives to this stone age world was inherently the sweetest and kindest of men. But he just couldn't help "inventing."

"Be that as it may, David," he said with dignity, "I am going with Ghak," and David knew that that was that.

"How about you, O-aa?" asked David. "With two hundred warriors fully armed with Perry's appurtenances of civilization, I am sure that we can make the journey with safety; and you can be back in Kali with your own people far sooner than by making the long trip by sea."

"Hodon is somewhere on the Korsar Az searching for me, I am sure," replied O-aa; "so I shall stay with the *John Tyler*. I should much rather go with you than remain with the little old man whose name is not Dolly Dorcas and whom I do not like, but by so doing I might miss Hodon."

"Why do you call him the little man whose name is not Dolly Dorcas, and why do you dislike him?" asked Perry.

"He has forgotten his own name. He had none. So I called him Dolly Dorcas. I thought that was his name, but it was the name of the

ship he was on that was wrecked. So he was always saying, ‘my name is not Dolly Dorcas,’ until we gave him the name Ah-gilak. And I do not like him, because he eats people. He wanted to eat me. He ate the men who were ship-wrecked with him. He was even going to start eating himself. He has told us these things. He is an evil old man. But I shall go with him, because I wish to find my Hodon.”

“Gracious me!” exclaimed Perry. “I had no idea Ah-gilak was such a terrible person.”

“He is,” said O-aa, “but he had better leave me alone, or my thirteen brothers will kill him.”

Chapter 2

As the *John Tyler* drew away from shore, little O-aa leaned on the rail and watched the last of the Sari warriors clamber up the cliff and disappear in the junglelike growth which surmounted it. A moment later she heard savage cries floating out over the water, and then the loud reports of muskets and the screams of wounded men.

“Men do not have to wait long for trouble on land,” said Ko, the Mezop Third Mate, who leaned against the rail at her side. “It is well that you decided to return by sea, little one.”

O-aa shot a quick glance at him. She did not like the tone of his voice when he called her little one. “My people can take care of themselves,” she said. “If necessary they will kill all the men between here and Sari. And I can take care of myself, too,” she added.

“You will not have to take care of yourself,” said Ko. “I will take care of you.”

“You will mind your own business,” snapped O-aa.

Ko grinned. Like nearly all the red Mezops he was handsome, and

like all handsome men he thought that he had a way with the women and was irresistible. "It is a long way to Sari," he said, "and we shall be much together; so let us be friends, little one."

"We shall not be much together, we shall not be friends, and don't call me little one. I do not like you, red man." Little O-aa's eyes snapped.

Ko continued to grin. "You will learn to like me — little one," he said. O-aa slapped him full in the face. Ko's grin vanished, to be replaced by an ugly snarl. "I'll teach you," he growled, reaching for her.

O-aa drew the long, slim steel dagger David had given her after she came aboard the *John Tyler*; and then a thin, cracked voice cried, "Avast there, you swabs! What goes on?" It was Ah-gilak the skipper.

"This she-tarag was going to knife me," said Ko.

"That's only part of it," said O-aa. "If he ever lays a hand on me I'll carve his heart out."

Ja, attracted by the controversy, crossed the deck to them in time to hear Ah-gilak say, "She is a bad one. She needs a lesson."

"You had better not try to give me a lesson, eater of men," snapped O-aa, "unless you want your old belly ripped open."

"What is this all about, O-aa?" asked Ja.

"This," said O-aa, pointing at Ko, "spoke to me as no one but Hodon may speak to me. And he called me little one — me, the daughter of Oose, King of Kali. And when I slapped him, he would have seized me — had I not had my knife."

Ja turned on Ko. "You will leave the girl alone," he said. Ko scowled but said nothing, for Ja is king of the Mezops of Anoroc Island, one whom it is well to obey. Ko turned and walked away.

"Dod-burn it!" exclaimed Ah-gilak. "They's always trouble when

you got a woman aboard. I never did like shippin' a woman. I got me a good mind to set her ashore."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," said Ja.

"I'm skipper of this here ship," retorted Ah-gilak. "I can put her ashore if I've a mind to."

"You talk too much, old man," said Ja, and, walked away.

"You gol-durned red Indian," grumbled Ah-gilak. "That's insubordination. Tarnation! It's mutiny, by gum. I'll clap you in irons the fust thing you know," but he was careful to see that Ja was out of earshot before he voiced his anger and made his threats, for now, except for himself, all the officers and crew of the *John Tyler* were Mezops and Ja was their king.

The *John Tyler* beat back along the coast toward the nameless strait; and every waking moment O-aa scanned the surface of the great sea that curved upward, horizonless, to merge in the distant haze with the vault of the heavens. But no sign of another ship rewarded her ceaseless vigil. There was life, the terrible marine life of this young world; but no ship bearing Hodon.

O-aa was very lonely. The Mezops, with the exception of Ko, were not unfriendly; but they are a taciturn people. And, further, she had little in common with them that might have promoted conversation. And she hated the sea, and she was afraid of it. She might cope with enemies among men, but she could not cope with the sea. She had begun to regret that she had not gone overland to Sari with David Innes and his party.

Time dragged heavily. The ship seemed to stand still. There were adverse winds; and once, when she came on deck after sleeping, they were becalmed and a dense fog lay upon the water. O-aa could not see the length of the ship. She could see no ocean. There was only the

lapping of little waves against the hull and the gentle movement of the ship to indicate that she was not floating off into space in this new element. It was a little frightening.

Every sail was set and flapping idly. A figure materialized out of the fog. O-aa saw that it was the little old man, and the little old man saw that the figure by the rail was O-aa. He glanced around. There was no one else in sight. He came closer.

“You are a voodoo,” he said. “You brought bad winds. Now you have brought calm and fog. As long as you are aboard we’ll have bad luck.” He edged closer. O-aa guessed what was in his mind. She whipped out her dagger.

“Go away, eater of men,” she said. “You are just one step from death.”

Ah-gilak stopped. “Gol-durn it, girl,” he protested, “I ain’t goin’ to hurt you.”

“At least for once you have spoken the truth, evil old man,” said O-aa. “You are not going to hurt me. Not while I have my knife. All that you intended to do was to throw me overboard.”

“Of all the dod-gasted foolishness I ever heard, that there takes the cake, as the feller said.”

“Of all the dod-gasted liars,” O-aa mimicked, “you take the cake, as the feller said. Now go away and leave me alone.” O-aa made a mental note to ask some one what the cake was. There is no cake in the stone age and no word for it.

Ah-gilak walked forward and was lost in the fog. O-aa stood now with her back against the rail, that no one might sneak up on her from behind. She knew that she had two enemies aboard — Ko and Ah-gilak. She must be always on the alert. The outlook was not pleasant.

The voyage would be very long, and during it there would be many opportunities for one or the other of them to harm her.

Again she berated herself for not having accompanied David and his party. The sea was not her element. She longed for the feel of solid ground beneath her feet. Even the countless dangers of that savage world seemed less menacing than this vile old man who bragged of his cannibalism. She had seen men look at her with hunger in their eyes, but the hunger look in the watery old eyes of Ah-gilak was different. It connoted hunger for food; and it frightened her more even than would have the blazing eyes of some terrible carnivore, for it was unclean, repulsive.

A little breeze bellied the sails of the *John Tyler*. It sent the fog swirling about the deck. Now the ship moved again. Looking across the deck, O-aa saw something looming close alongside the *John Tyler*. It was a land — a great, green-clad cliff half hid by the swirling fog. She heard Ah-gilak screaming orders. She heard the deep voice of Ja directing the work of the sailors—a calm, unruffled voice.

O-aa ran across the deck to the opposite rail. The great cliff towered high above, lost in the fog. It was scarcely a hundred feet away. At the waterline was a narrow beach that could scarcely be dignified by the name of beach. It was little more than a foothold at the base of this vertical escarpment.

Here was land — beloved land! Its call was irresistible. O-aa stepped to the top of the rail and dived into the sea. She struck out strongly for the little ledge. A kind Providence protected her. No voracious denizen of this swarming sea attacked her, and she reached her goal safely.

As she drew herself up onto the ledge the fog closed in again, and

the *John Tyler* disappeared from view. But she could still hear the voices of Ah-gilak and Ja.

O-aa took stock of her situation. If the tide was out, then the ledge would be submerged at high tide. She examined the face of the cliff in her immediate vicinity, and concluded that the tide *was* out, for she could see the marks of high tides far above her head.

Because of the fog, she could not see far either to the right or to the left above her. To most, such a situation would have been appalling; but the people of Kali are cliff dwellers. And O-aa, being a Kalian, had spent all of her life scaling cliffs. She had found that there are few cliffs that offer no footholds. This is especially true of cliffs the faces of which support vegetation, and this cliff was clothed in green.

O-aa wished that the fog would go away before the tide came in. She would have liked to examine the cliff more carefully before starting the ascent. She could no longer hear voices aboard the *John Tyler*. O-aa was alone in a strange world that contained no other living thing. A tiny little world encompassed by fog.

A wave rolled in and lapped her ankles. O-aa looked down. The tide was coming in. Something else was coming in, also. A huge reptile with formidable jaws was swimming toward her, and it was eyeing her quite as hungrily as had Ah-gilak. It was a nameless thing to O-aa, this forty foot monster. It would have advantaged little O-aa nothing to have known that this creature that was intent on reaching up and dragging her down into the sea was a Tylosaurus, one of the rulers of the Cretaceous seas of the outer crust, eons ago.

Chapter 3

Ah-gilak had seen the green cliff loom close alongside the *John Tyler* at the same moment as had O-aa, but it connoted something very different to the ancient skipper than to O-aa. To the one it meant disaster, to the other escape. And each reacted in his own way. Ah-gilak screamed orders and O-aa dived overboard.

With the lightly freshening breeze, the ship hauled away from danger, at least from the imminent threat of that particular cliff. But who knew what lay just ahead in the fog?

Again the wind died, the sails hung limp, the fog closed in tighter than before. The tide and a strong current bore the helpless ship on. But where? Abner Perry's crude compass did 180s and 360s, as the current and the tide turned the *John Tyler* slowly this way and that.

"She ain't nuthin' but a dod-burned derelict," groaned Ah-gilak, "jest driftin' around. It all comes from shippin' a woman, durn 'em. If we're driftin' to sea, we're all right. If we're driftin' t'other way, she'll go ashore. Gad an' Gabriel! I'd ruther pitch a whole slew o' women overboard than lose a sweet ship like the *John Tyler*."

"Shut up!" said Ja. "You talk too much. Listen!"

With a palm, Ah-gilak cupped an ear. "I don't hear nuthin'," he said.

"You're deaf, old man," said Ja.

"I can hear as good as the next feller, as the feller said," remonstrated Ah-gilak.

"Then you can hear the surf that I hear," said Ja.

"Surf?" screamed Ah-gilak. "Where? How far?"

"There," said Ja, pointing. "And close."

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The *Lo-har* was fogbound. She had been cruising north-east after a futile search in the other direction. Hodon was loath to give up and admit that O-aa was hopelessly lost to him. Dian the Beautiful was apathetic. She knew that David might have been borne almost anywhere by the balloon that had carried him in search of her, and that she stood as good a chance of finding him while searching for O-aa as in any other way. But she was resigned to the fact that she would never see him again; so she encouraged Hodon to search for his O-aa.

Raj and the other Mezops were content just to sail. They loved the sea. Gamba, the Xexot, who had been a king, did not love the sea. It frightened him, but then Gamba was afraid of many things. He was not of the stuff of which kings are supposed to be made. And he was always whining and finding fault. Hodon would long since have pitched him overboard had not Dian interceded in his behalf.

“How many more sleeps before we reach your country?” he asked Dian.

“Many,” she replied.

“I have already lost count of the number of times I have slept since I came aboard this thing you call a ship. We should be close to your country by now. The world is not so large that one can travel for so many sleeps without seeing it all.”

“Pellucidar is very large,” said Dian. “You might travel many thousands of sleeps and yet see but little of it. Furthermore, we have not been traveling toward Sari.”

“What?” shrieked Gamba. “Not traveling toward your country?”

“Hodon has been searching for his mate.”

“He did not find her,” said Gamba, “so I suppose that we are not traveling toward Sari.”

“No,” said Dian. “We are getting farther and farther from Sari, at least by water.”

“Make him turn around, and sail toward Sari,” demanded Gamba. “I, Gamba the King do not like the ocean nor the ship.”

Dian smiled. “King of what?” she asked.

“I shall probably be king of Sari when we get there,” said Gamba.

“Well, take my advice and don’t tell Ghak the Hairy One,” said Dian.

“Why not? Who is this Ghak the Hairy One?”

“He is king of Sari,” explained Dian, “and he is a very large person and very fierce when he is crossed.”

“I am not afraid of him,” said Gamba.

Again Dian smiled.

~

O-aa did not scream as the great jaws of the reptile opened wide to seize her, nor did she faint. Had our foremothers of the stone age wasted time screaming and fainting when danger threatened, the human race would have died aborning. And perhaps the world would have been a better, kinder place to live for all the other animals who do not constantly make war upon one another as do men.

Like a human fly, O-aa scrambled up the face of the cliff a few feet; then she looked back and made a face at Tylosaurus, after which she considered carefully her new position. Because of the fog, she could see but a few yards in any direction. How high the cliff she could not know, the greenery which covered it consisted of lichen and stout liana-like vines which depended from above. As there was no earth on this vertical rock in which plant life might take root, it was obvious to O-aa that the lianas were rooted in earth at the top of the cliff. She

examined them carefully. Not only were they, in themselves, tough and sturdy; but the aerial tendrils with which the vines clung to the face of the cliff added still greater strength and permanency. Making use of this natural ladder, O-aa ascended.

Some fifty feet above the surface of the sea she came to the mouth of a large cave from which emanated a foul stench — the stink of putrid carrion — and as she drew herself up and peered over the sill of the opening, three hissing, screaming little horrors rushed forward to attack her. O-aa recognized them as the young of the thipdar. Paleontologists would have classified them as pterodactyls of the Lias, but they would have been surprised at the enormous size to which these flying reptiles grow in the Inner World. A wing span of twenty feet is only average. They are one of the most dreaded of Pellucidar's many voracious carnivores.

The three that attacked O-aa were about the size of turkeys, and they came for her with distended jaws. Clinging to her support with one hand, O-aa whipped out her knife, and beheaded the leader of the attack. But the others came on, their little brains, reacting only to the urge of hunger, had no room for fear.

The girl would gladly have retreated, but the insensate little terrors gave her no respite. Squawking and hissing, they hurled themselves upon her. She struck a terrific blow at one of them, and missed. The momentum of the blow carried her blade against the vine to which she clung, severing it just above her left hand; and O-aa toppled backward.

Fifty feet below her lay the ocean and, perhaps, Tylosaurus and Death. We, whose reactions have been slowed down by generations of civilization and soft, protected living, would doubtless have fallen to the ocean and, perhaps, Tylosaurus and Death. But not O-aa. Simultaneously, she transferred the knife to her mouth, dropped the

severed vine and grabbed for new support with both hands. She found it and held. “Whe-e-oo!” breathed O-aa.

It had been a close call. She started up again, but this time she detoured around the cave of the thipdars. She had much to be thankful for, including the fog. No adult thipdar had been in the cave, nor need she fear the return of one as long as the fog held.

A hundred feet above the sea she found the summit of the vertical cliff. From here, the mountain sloped upward at an angle of about forty-five degrees. Easy going for O-aa this. Practically level ground. There were trees. They kept looming up out of the fog as she advanced. Trees are beloved of Pellucidarians. Beneath their branches, sanctuary from the great earth bound carnivores.

Now that she had found trees, O-aa had no further need of fog. She wished that it would lift. She was getting as sick of the fog as she had been of the sea. But she knew that the fog was better than the sea. It would go away some time. The sea, never.

She climbed upward, alert, listening, sniffing the air. And presently she emerged from the fog into the bright sunlight of Pellucidar’s eternal noon. The scene was beautiful, and if you think that primitive peoples do not appreciate beauty you are crazy. In any event, O-aa did. The mountain continued to rise gently toward its peak. Splendid trees dotted its slope. Green grass grew lush, starred with many flowers; and below her, shining bright in the sun, the fog rolled, a silent, silver sea.

By the time she reached the summit, the fog had disappeared as miraculously as it had come. O-aa looked in all directions, and her heart sank. In all directions she saw water. This single mountain rose from the depths of the ocean to form a small island. A mile away, she could see the mainland. But that mile of water seemed to the little

cave girl of the mountains as effectual a barrier to escape as would a hundred miles of turbulent sea.

And then O-aa saw something else — something that sent her heart into a real nose dive. Sneaking toward her was a jalok, the fierce dog of Pellucidar. And there was no tree nearby.

Chapter 4

The *John Tyler* went ashore and the surf pounded her against the rocks. Ah-gilak burst into tears as he envisioned the breaking up of his beloved clipper ship. The he cursed fate and the fog and the calm, but especially he cursed O-aa. “Shut up, old man!” commanded Ja. He gave orders that the boats be lowered on the off-shore side of the ship. The powerful Mezops manned them and held them from the ship’s side with their spears as the rollers came in.

Ja and Jav and Ko checked off the men to see that all were present. “Where is the girl?” asked Ja. No one had seen her, and Ja sent men to search the ship for her. They returned to report that she was not on board, and Ja turned fierce eyes on Ah-gilak.

“What did you do with her, old man?” demanded Ja.

“I did nothing to her.”

“You wanted to put her ashore. I think you threw her overboard.”

“We do not need him any more,” said Jav. “I think we should kill him.”

“No! No!” screamed Ah-gilak. “I did not throw the girl overboard. I do not know what became of her. Do not kill me, I am just a poor old man who would not harm any one.”

“We all know that you are a liar,” said Ja, “so nothing you may say makes any difference. However, as no one saw you throw the girl

overboard I shall give you the benefit of the doubt and not kill you. Instead, I shall leave you aboard the ship.”

“But it will break up and I shall be drowned,” pleaded Ah-gilak.

“That is your affair, not mine,” said Ja. So the Mezops abandoned the wreck of the *John Tyler*, leaving Ah-gilak behind.

The Mezops reached the shore in safety and shortly after, the fog lifted. A strong wind sprang up, blowing from the land toward the sea. The Mezops saw the sails of the *John Tyler* fill.

“The old man is in bad way,” said Jav.

“Look!” cried Ko. “The ship is moving out to sea.”

“The tide came in and floated her,” said Ja. “Maybe we should not have abandoned her so soon. I do not like the land.”

“Perhaps we could overhaul her in the boats,” suggested one.

So they manned the boats and paddled after the *John Tyler*. Ah-gilak saw them coming and guessed their intention. Impelled by the urges — fear of the Mezops and a desire for revenge — he took the wheel and steered a course that took full advantage of the wind; and the *John Tyler* picked up speed and showed a pretty pair of heels to the sweating Mezops, who soon gave up the chase and started back toward shore.

“The old son of a sithic!” exclaimed Jav. The sithic is a toadlike reptile.

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The jalok is a big, shaggy hyaenodon, with a body as large as a leopard’s but with longer legs. Jaloks usually hunt in packs, and not even the largest and fiercest of animals is safe from attack. They are without fear, and they are always hungry. O-aa knew all about jaloks, and she wished that she was up a tree — literally. She certainly was,

figuratively. She was also behind the eight ball, but O-aa knew nothing of eight balls. To be behind the eight ball and up a tree at the same time is very bad business.

O-aa drew her knife and waited. The jalok lay down and cradled his powerful jaws on his outstretched front legs, and eyed O-aa. This surprised the girl. She had expected the beast to rush her. The animal looked like a big, shaggy dog; but O-aa was not deceived by appearances. She knew that sometimes jaloks were tamed, but they were never domesticated. This one was probably not hungry, and was waiting until he was.

I can't stay here forever, just waiting to be eaten, thought O-aa; so she started along slowly in the direction she had been going. The jalok got up and followed her.

Below her stretched a gentle declivity down to a narrow coastal plain. A little stream, starting from some place at her left, wound down the mountainside. It was joined by other little streams to form a little river that meandered across the plain down to the sea. It was all a scene of exquisite beauty — a little gem set in an azure sea. But for the moment it was all lost on O-aa as she glanced behind and saw the jalok following her.

If I climb a tree, thought O-aa, *the jalok will lie down beneath it until I come down or fall out*. O-aa knew her jaloks; so she kept on walking.

She had descended about a half mile when she heard a savage growl ahead and to her left. As she looked, a codon broke from the cover of some tall grass, and charged her. O-aa knew that she was lost, but she held her knife in readiness and waited her end. Then something flashed by her. It was the jalok. He met the codon, a huge timber wolf, long extinct upon the outer crust, at the moment that it leaped for O-aa.

Then followed what bade fair to be a battle royal between these two savage, powerful beasts; and O-aa took advantage of their preoccupation to make good her escape. As she ran down the mountainside, the roars and growls of the battling beasts filled her ears. But not for long. Suddenly they stopped. O-aa glanced back, and again her heart sank. The jalok was coming toward her at a run. Behind him, she could see the still form of the codon lying where it had died.

O-aa stood still. The end was inevitable. She might as well face it now. The jalok stopped a few yards from her; then it moved toward her again *wagging its tail!* That has meant the same thing in the dog family from the Cretaceous age to the present day, on the outer crust or in the Inner World at the earth's core.

O-aa sheathed her knife and waited. The jalok came close and looked up into her face, and O-aa placed a hand upon its head and scratched it behind an ear. The great beast licked her hand, and when O-aa started down toward the sea again, it walked at her side, brushing against her. Not since she had lost Hodon had O-aa felt so safe. She tangled her fingers in the shaggy collar that ringed the jalok's neck, as though she would never let him go again.

Until this moment she had not realized how friendless and alone she had been since she had said goodbye to David and Abner Perry and Ghak. But now she had both a friend and a protector. O-aa was almost happy.

As they neared the beach, the jalok moved toward the right; and O-aa followed him. He led her to a little cove. Here she saw an outrigger canoe drawn up on the beach above high water. The jalok stopped beside it and looked up at her. In the canoe were the weapons and the loincloth of a man. And in these things, O-aa read a story. She could see by the general appearance of the articles in the canoe

that they had lain untouched for some time. She knew that a man did not go naked and unarmed far from his weapons. And thus she reconstructed the story: A warrior had paddled from the mainland with his jalok to hunt, perhaps. He had gone into the sea to bathe, and had been seized and devoured by one of the innumerable voracious creatures which swarm in the waters of the Korsar Az. Or perhaps a thipdar had swooped down and seized him. At any rate, she was confident that he had gone never to return and, she had fallen heir to his weapons, his canoe, and his jalok. But there remained a mile of terrifying water between herself and the mainland!

She looked across to the farther shore just in time to see the *John Tyler* put to sea. She could not know that the ship bore only Ah-gilak. The others, far down the coast, were too far away for her to see them. She looked at the canoe and out again across the water. The jalok lay at her feet. She ruffled his shaggy mane with a sandaled foot, and he looked up at her and bared his fangs in a canine grin — terrible fangs set in mighty jaws that could tear her to pieces in a moment.

O-aa sat down on the ground beside the jalok and tried to plan for the future. What she was really trying to do was raise her courage to a point that would permit her to launch the canoe and paddle across that fearsome mile. Every time it reached the sticking point she would look out and see a terrible head or a dorsal fin break the surface of the sea. Then her courage would do a nose dive. And when she realized that the wind was against her, she breathed a sigh of relief for so excellent an excuse to delay her departure.

She examined the contents of the canoe more closely. She saw a stone knife, a stone tipped spear, a tomahawk with a well shaped stone head and a wooden haft, a bow, a quiver of arrows, two paddles, a pole six or seven feet long, a woven fiber mat, and some cordage of braided

grasses. These articles suggested something to O-aa that would never have entered her head before she began her adventures on that unfamiliar medium which rolled and tossed in illimitable vastness to form the Sojar Az and Korsar Az. O-aa had learned much that was no part of the education of a cave girl from Kali.

She examined further and found a hole in a thwart and beneath it a corresponding receptacle in the bottom of the canoe. Now she knew what the pole was for and the fiber mat and the cordage. All she had to do, she decided, was wait for a favorable wind. That would be much better than paddling; and as she intended to wait for a strong wind, it would result in a much shorter passage, which would cut down the odds that were always against the survival of any who put to sea in Pellucidar.

Her doom postponed until the wind changed, O-aa realized that she was hungry. She took the spear, the quiver of arrows, and the bow and set forth to hunt. The jalok accompanied her.

Chapter 5

Ah-gilak lashed the wheel and went below to ascertain the damage that had resulted from the ship's pounding on the rocks. He found her sound as a roach, for the Sarians had selected their lumber well and built well.

Returning to the wheel, he took stock of his situation. It did not appear too rosy. Twenty or thirty men were required to man the *John Tyler*. Obviously, one little old man could not. With the wind he had now, he could hold on as long as there was ocean ahead. He might even maneuver the ship a little, for Ah-gilak had spent a lifetime under sail. But a storm would be his undoing.

Without stars or moon, with a stationary sun, he could not navigate even had he had the necessary instruments and a dependable chart, none of which he had. Nor could he have navigated the nameless strait could he have found it. Ah-gilak was in a bad way, and he knew it; so he decided to beach the *John Tyler* at the earliest opportunity and take his chances on land.

~

O-aa followed the little river. She moved warily, taking advantage of cover-trees, tall grasses, underbrush. She moved silently, as silently as the great beast at her side. Her left hand grasped her bow and several arrows, another arrow was fitted to the bow and drawn part way back, presenting an analogy to a loaded .45 with a full clip in the magazine and the safety off.

Suddenly three horses broke from nearby underbrush, and in quick succession two arrows brought two of them down. O-aa rushed in and finished them with her knife, while the jalok pursued and dragged down the third.

O-aa picked up the two horses she had shot and waited while the jalok devoured his kill; then they started back toward the canoe. The girl knew her prey as orthopi; but you would have recognized them as *Hyracotherii* of the Lower Eocene, the early ancestors of Seabiscuit and Whirlaway, little creatures about the size of foxes.

The girl gave one of the orthopi to the jalok; then she made fire and cooked much of the other for herself. Her hunger satisfied, she lay down beneath a tree and slept.

When she awoke, she looked around for the jalok; but he was nowhere to be seen. O-aa was swept by a wave of loneliness. She had been heartened by the promise of companionship and protection

which the savage beast had offered. Suddenly the future looked very black. In her fit of despondency, the shore of the mainland seemed to have receded; and she peopled the world with terrifying menaces, which was wholly superfluous, as Nature had already attended to that.

She gave herself up to self-pity for only a short time; then she lifted her chin and braced her shoulders and was the self-sufficient cave girl of Kali once more. She looked out across the water, and realized that the wind had changed while she slept and was blowing strongly toward the mainland.

Going to the canoe, she stepped the mast and rigged the sail to the best of her ability, which was not mean; for O-aa was a highly intelligent young person, observant and with a retentive memory. She tugged on the canoe and found that she could move it, but before she dragged it into the sea she decided to look around once more for the jalok.

She was glad that she had, for she saw him coming down toward her carrying something on his back. When he was closer, she saw that it was the carcass of a small deer which he had thrown across his shoulders, still holding to it with his jaws — carrying it as the African lion has been known to carry its prey.

He came up to her, wagging his tail, and laid his kill at her feet. O-aa was so glad to see him that she dropped to her knees and put both arms around his shaggy collar and hugged him. Doubtless, this was something new in the jalok's life; but he seemed to understand and like it, for he bared his fangs in a grin and licked the girl's face.

Now O-aa was faced with a problem. If she waited to cook some of the deer and eat, the wind might change. On the other hand she couldn't bear to abandon so much good meat. The alternative was to take it with her, but would the jalok let her take the carcass away from

him? She determined to experiment. Seizing the deer, she started to drag it down toward the water's edge. The jalok watched her; then, apparently getting the idea, he took hold of it and helped her. O-aa realized what she had become almost convinced of, that here was a well trained hunting animal that had worked with and for his dead master.

Having deposited the deer on the beach, O-aa dragged the canoe down to the water. It taxed her strength, but at last she was rewarded by seeing it afloat. Then she carried the deer to it.

She had no name for the jalok, and did not know how to call him to get into the canoe. She did not need to know. As she climbed over the gunwale, he leaped aboard and took his station in the bow.

The stern of the canoe was still resting on the sandy bottom, but the sail had filled and was tugging to free it. A few vigorous shoves with a paddle freed the little craft, and O-aa was on her way across the frightful water.

Steering with a paddle, O-aa kept the nose of her craft pointed at a spot on the opposite shore and the wind always directly astern. As the wind freshened, the canoe fairly raced through the water. This was much better than paddling and much faster. O-aa could imagine that this would be a delightful way to travel were it not for the innumerable horrors that infested the ocean and the terrific storms which occasionally whipped it into fury.

Constantly searching the surface of the sea for signs of danger, the girl glanced back and saw the long neck and small head of a tandoraz, which, in Pellucidarian, means mammoth of the sea. The reptile was following the canoe and gaining on it slowly. O-aa well knew what was in that tiny brain. She also knew that the best she could do with any of her weapons was to infuriate it.

Had she known a god, she would have prayed to him for more wind; but, knowing no god, she had to depend entirely on her own resources. Suddenly her eye's fell upon the deer. If she couldn't destroy the tandoraz, perhaps she might escape it if she could but delay it.

The shore was not far away now, and the canoe was racing through the water almost as fast as the reptile was swimming; although O-aa was none too sure that the creature was exerting itself anywhere near to the limit of its powers. Nor was it.

With a steel knife that David had given her she ripped open the belly of the carcass and eviscerated it. Glancing back, she saw that the tandoraz was almost upon her. The cold, reptilian eyes glared down upon her. The snake-like jaws gaped wide.

Dragging the viscera to the stern of the canoe, she dropped it overboard directly in front of the hissing creature. The next couple of seconds were an eternity. Would the thing take the bait? Would the stupid mind in its tiny brain be thus easily diverted from the fixed idea that it had been following?

The odor of fresh animal matter and blood turned the scale in O-aa's favor. The neck arched and the head struck viciously at the viscera. As the tandoraz stopped to tear at this luscious tid-bit, the canoe drew away. The distance widened. The shore was quite close now, but there was a heavy surf pounding on a sandy beach.

O-aa had resumed the paddle and was steering once more. Her heart was filled with rejoicing. Her escape from death had been all too close, and by comparison the menace of the heavy surf seemed trivial. She looked back at the tandoraz, and her heart missed a beat. Evidently sensing that its prey was escaping, it was coming through the water at terrific speed in pursuit.

O-aa glanced forward again. She was confident that the canoe would reach the surf before the tandoraz could overhaul it. But what then? She didn't believe that the canoe could live in what seemed to her the mountainous waves that broke upon the shore and rolled far up the beach. The reptile would be upon them as they were thrown into the water. It could not get them all. She could only hope that the thing would seize the carcass of the deer rather than upon her or the jalok which still sat in the bow of the canoe all unconscious of the tragedy of the past few minutes.

Again the "mammoth of the sea" loomed above her. The canoe was caught by a great roller and lifted high. O-aa felt a sudden surging rush as though the canoe, sentient of impending danger, sought to escape in a burst of speed.

Riding high now, just over the crest of the roller, the outrigger raced toward the beach like a frightened deer; and in a swirl of foamy water came to rest on the sand well out of reach of the tandoraz. O-aa leaped out and held it from being drawn out again by the receding waves, and with the next she dragged it well up to safety. Then she threw herself down on the sand, exhausted.

The jalok came and sat down beside her. She stroked its shaggy coat.

"We made it," she said. "I didn't think we would."

The jalok said nothing. At least not in words. He put a great paw on her and licked her ear.

"I shall have to give you a name," said O-aa. "Let me see. Ah, I have it! Rahna. That is a good name for you, Rahna."

Rahna means killer.

Chapter 6

O-aa sat up and took stock of her situation. Beyond the sandy beach the ground rose slowly to a low ridge four or five hundred yards inland. Beyond the ridge were rolling hills, upcurving in this horizonless world to blend with distant mountains which, in turn, blended into the haze of distance.

The ground between O-aa and the ridge was carpeted with Bermuda grass and stunted shrubs, with here and there a windblown tree. The trees reminded O-aa that she was courting death to lie here thus in the open, an invitation to the first winged reptile that might discover her.

She arose and returned to the canoe, where she threw the carcass of the deer across one shoulder and gathered up her weapons. Then she looked down at the jalok and said, "Come, Rahna!" and walked to the nearest tree.

~

A man coming down out of the rolling hills paused at the edge of the low ridge which O-aa had seen a few hundred yards inland. At the man's side was a jalok. The man was naked but for a G-string. He carried a stone tipped spear, a stone knife, a bow and arrows. When he saw the girl, he dropped to the ground, where he was hidden by low bushes. He spoke to the jalok, and it lay down beside him.

The man noted the canoe pulled up on the beach. He noted the jalok which accompanied the girl. He saw the carcass of the deer. At first he had thought the girl a man, but closer inspection revealed that he had been mistaken. He was also mystified, for he knew that here there should be no girl with a jalok and a canoe. This was the

man's country, and the men of the stone age knew all that went on in their own little neck-of-the-woods.

~

O-aa cut a generous hindquarter from the carcass and gave it to Rahna. She used the tomahawk and her steel knife. Then she gathered dry grasses and bits of dead wood, made fire, and cooked her own meal. O-aa, a slender little blonde, tore at the meat with firm, white teeth; and devoured enough for a couple of farm hands. Pellucidarians store up energy through food, for oftentimes they may have to go for long periods without food. Similarly, they store up rest by long sleeps.

Having stored up all the energy she could hold, O-aa lay down to store up rest. She was awakened by the growling of Rahna. He was standing beside her, his hair bristling along his spine.

O-aa saw a man approaching. A jalok paced at his side. The girl seized her bow and arrows and stood up. Both jaloks were growling now. O-aa fitted an arrow to her bow. "Go away!" she said.

"I am not going to hurt you," said the man, who had seen that O-aa was very lovely and very desirable.

"I could have told you that myself," replied the girl. "If you tried to, I could kill you. Rahna could kill you. My mate, my father, or my seven brothers could kill you." It had occurred to O-aa that possibly thirteen brothers were too many to sound plausible.

The man grinned and sat down. "Who are you?" he asked.

"I am O-aa, daughter of Oose, King of Kali. My mate is Hodon the Fleet One. My seven brothers are very large, fierce men. My three sisters are the most beautiful women in Pellucidar, and I am more beautiful than they."

The man continued to grin. "I never heard of Kali," he said. "Where is it?"

"There," said O-aa, pointing. "You must be a very ignorant person," she added, "for Kali is the largest country in the world. It requires the caves of a whole mountain range to house her warriors who are as many as the grasses that you can see as far as you can see."

"You are very beautiful," said the man, "but you are a great liar. If you were not so beautiful, I would beat you for lying so much. Maybe I shall anyway."

"Try it," challenged O-aa. "I have not killed anyone since I last slept."

"Ah," said the man, "so that is it? You killed my brother."

"I did not kill your brother. I never saw your brother."

"Then how did you get his canoe, his jalok, and his weapons? I recognize them all."

It was then that O-aa realized that she had lied a little too much for her own health; so she decided to tell the truth. "I will tell you," she said.

"And see that you tell the truth," said the man.

"You see that mountain that sticks up out of the sea?" she asked, pointing at the island. The man nodded. "I leaped into the sea," continued O-aa, "on the other side of that mountain from a big canoe to escape an old man whose name is not Dolly Dorcas. Then I crossed to this side of the mountain where I saw Rahna."

"His name is not Rahna," said the man.

"Maybe it wasn't but it is now. And don't interrupt me any more. Rahna saved me from a codon, and we became friends. We came down to the edge of the water and found a canoe with these weapons and a man's loincloth in it. If it was your brother's canoe, I think he must

have gone in the water and been eaten by a tandoraz, or possibly a thipdar flew down and got him. I did not kill your brother. How could I have killed a warrior when I was armed only with a knife? As you can see, all my other weapons are those I found in the canoe.”

The man thought this over. “I believe that you are telling the truth at last,” he said; “because had you killed my brother, his jalok would have killed you.”

“Now will you go away and leave me alone?” demanded O-aa.

“Then what will you do?”

“I shall return to Kali.”

“Do you know how far it is to Kali?”

“No. Kali is not far from the shore of the Lural Az. Do you know how far it is to the Lural Az?”

“I never heard of the Lural Az,” said the man.

“You are a very ignorant person,” said O-aa.

“Not as ignorant as you, if you think you can reach Kali by going in the direction you pointed. In that direction there is a range of mountains that you cannot cross.”

“I can go around it,” said O-aa.

“You are a very brave girl,” said the man. “Let us be friends. Come with me to my village. Perhaps we can help you on your way to Kali. At least, warriors can go with you as far as the mountains, beyond which none of our people have ever gone.”

“How do I know that you will not harm me?” asked O-aa.

The man threw down all his weapons and came toward her with his hands raised. Then she knew that he would not harm her. “We will be friends,” she said. “What is your name?”

“I am Utan of the tribe of Zurts.” He turned and spoke to his jalok, saying, “Padang.”

“Tell your jalok that we are friends,” he said to O-aa.

“Padang, Rahna,” said O-aa. Padang is Pellucidarian for friend or friends.

The two jaloks approached one another a little stiff-legged; but when they had sniffed about each other, they relaxed and wagged their tails, for they had been raised together in the village of Zurts. But there was no playful bouncing, as there might have been between domesticated beasts dogs. These were savage wild beasts with all the majesty and dignity that is inherent in their kind. Adult wild beasts have far more dignity than man. When people say in disgust that a person acts like a beast, they really mean that he acts like a man.

“You can handle a paddle?” Utan asked O-aa.

“I have paddled all over the seas of Pellucidar,” said O-aa.

“There you go again! Well, I suppose that I shall have to get used to it. Anyway, you can help me paddle my brother’s canoe to a safe place.”

“It is my canoe,” said O-aa.

Utan grinned. “And I suppose that you are going to paddle it across the mountains to Kali?”

“I could if I wanted to,” said O-aa.

“The better I know you,” said Utan, “the less I doubt it. If there are other girls like you in Kali, I think I shall go with you and take one of them for my mate.”

“They wouldn’t have you,” said O-aa. “You are too short. You can’t be much more than six feet tall. All our men are seven feet — except those who are eight feet.”

“Come on, little liar,” said Utan, “and we will get the canoe.”

Together they dragged the outrigger into the water. O-aa climbed

into the bow, the two jaloks leaped in, and just at the right moment Utan gave the craft a shove and jumped in himself.

“Paddle now!” he said. “And paddle hard.”

The canoe rose to the crest of a roller and slid down the other side. The two paddled furiously until they were beyond the heavy rollers; then they paralleled the shore until they came to the mouth of a small river, up which Utan turned.

It was a pretty little river overhung by trees and full of crocodiles. They paddled up it for about a mile until they came to rapids. Here, Utan turned in to the bank on their right; and together, they dragged the canoe up among the lush verdure, where it was well hidden.

“Your canoe will be quite safe here,” said Utan, “until you are ready to paddle it over the mountains to Kali. Now we will go to my village.”

Chapter 7

Hodon, Raj, Dian, and Gamba were standing on the quarterdeck of the *Lo-har*; and, as always, Hodon was searching the surface of the sea for the little speck that, in his heart of hearts, he knew he would never see — the little speck that would be the *Sari* in which O-aa had been carried away by winds and currents on the Sojar Az and, doubtless, through the nameless strait into the Korsar Az. The little lateen rigged *Lo-har* had been beset by fog and calm, but now the weather had cleared and a fair wind filled the single sail.

Hodon shook his head sadly. “I am afraid it is hopeless, Dian,” he said. Dian the Beautiful nodded in acquiescence.

“My men are becoming restless,” said Raj. “They have been away from home for many, many sleeps. They want to get back to their women.”

“All right,” said Hodon. “Turn back for Sari.”

As the little ship came about, Gamba pointed. “What is that?” he asked.

They all looked. In the haze of the distance there was a white speck on the surface of the sea. “It is a sail,” said Raj.

“O-aa!” exclaimed Hodon.

The wind was blowing directly from the direction in which the sail lay; so the *Lo-har* had to tack first one way and then another. But it was soon apparent that the strange ship was sailing before the wind directly toward them, and so the distance between was constantly growing shorter.

“That is not the *Sari*,” said Raj. “That is a big ship with more sail than I have ever seen before.”

“It must be a Korsar,” said Dian. “If it is, we are lost.”

“We have cannon,” said Hodon, “and men to fight them.”

“Turn around,” said Gamba, “and go the other way. Maybe they have not seen us.”

“You always want to run away,” said Dian, contemptuously. “We shall hold our course and fight them.”

“Turn around!” screamed Gamba. “It is a command! I am king!”

“Shut up!” said Raj. “Mezops do not run away.”

“Nor Sarians,” said Dian.

~

The village of the Zurts, to which Utan led O-aa, lay in a lovely valley through which a little river wandered. It was not a village of caves such as O-aa was accustomed to in Kali. The houses here were of bamboo thatched with grass, and they stood on posts some ten feet above the ground. Crude ladders led up to their doorways.

There were many of these houses; and in the doorways, or on the ground below them, were many warriors and women and children and almost as many jaloks as there were people.

As Utan and O-aa approached, the jaloks of the village froze into immobility, the hair along their backbones erect. Utan shouted, "Padang!" And when they recognized him, some of the warriors shouted, "Padang!" Then the jaloks relaxed and Utan and O-aa entered the village in safety; but there had to be much sniffing and smelling on the part of the jaloks before an *entente cordiale* was established.

Warriors and women gathered around Utan and O-aa, asking many questions. O-aa was a curiosity here, for she was very blonde, while the Zurts had hair of raven black. They had never seen a blonde before.

Utan told them all that he knew about O-aa, and asked Jalu the chief if she might remain in the village. "She is from a country called Kali which lies the other side of the Terrible Mountains. She is going to try to cross them, and from what I have seen of her she will cross them if any one can."

"No one can," said Jalu, "and she may remain — for thirty sleeps," he added. "If one of our warriors has taken her for a mate in the meantime, she may remain always."

"None of your warriors will take me for a mate," said O-aa, "and I will leave long before I have slept thirty times."

"What makes you think none of my warriors will take you for a mate?" demanded Jalu.

"Because I wouldn't have one of them."

Jalu laughed. "If a warrior wanted you he would not ask you. He would take you."

It was O-aa's turn to laugh. "He would get a knife in his belly," she said. "I have killed many men. Furthermore, I have a mate. If I am

harméd, he would come and my eleven brothers and my father, the king; and they would kill you all. They are very fierce men. They are nine feet tall. My mate is Hodon the Fleet One. He is a Sarian. The Sarians are very fierce people. But if you are kind to me, no harm will befall you. While I am here, Rahna and I will hunt for you. I am a wonderful hunter. I am probably the best hunter in all Pellucidar."

"I think you are probably the best liar," said Jalu. "Who is Rahna?"

"My jalok," said O-aa, laying her hand on the head of the beast standing beside her.

"Women do not hunt, nor do they have jaloks," said Jalu.

"I do," said O-aa.

A half smile curved the lip of Jalu. He found himself admiring this yellow haired stranger girl. She had courage, and that was a quality that Jalu the chief understood and admired. He had never seen so much of it in a woman before.

A warrior stepped forward. "I will take her as my mate," he said, "and teach her a woman's place. What she needs is a beating."

O-aa's lip curved in scorn. "Try it, bowlegs," she said.

The warrior flushed, for he was very bowlegged and was sensitive about it. He took another step toward O-aa, threateningly.

"Stop, Zurk!" commanded Jalu. "The girl may remain here for thirty sleeps without mating. If she stays longer, you may take her — if you can. But I think she will kill you."

Zurk stood glaring at O-aa. "When you are mine," he snarled, "the first thing I will do is beat you to death."

Jalu turned to one of the women. "Hala," he directed, "show this woman a house in which she may sleep."

"Come," said Hala to O-aa.

She took her to a house at the far end of the village. "No one lives

here now," she said. "The man and the woman who lived here were killed by a tarag not long ago."

O-aa looked at the ladder and up at the doorway. "How can my jalok get up there?" she asked.

Hala looked at her in surprise. "Jaloks do not come into the houses," she explained. "They lie at the foot of the ladders to warn their owners of danger and to protect them. Did you not know this?"

"We do not have tame jaloks in my country," said O-aa.

"You are lucky that you have one here, now that you have made an enemy of Zurk. He is a bad man; not at all like Jalu, his father."

So, thought O-aa, *I have made an enemy of the chief's son*. She shrugged her square little shoulders.

~

Ah-gilak had bowled along in a south-westerly direction for some time before a good wind. Then the wind died. Ah-gilak cursed. He cursed many things, but principally he cursed O-aa, who had brought all his misfortunes upon him, according to his superstition.

When the wind sprang up again, it blew in the opposite direction from that in which it had been blowing before the calm. Ah-gilak danced up and down in rage. But he could do nothing about it. He could sail in only one way, and that was with the wind. So he sailed back in a north-easterly direction. He lashed the wheel and went below to eat and sleep.

Chapter 8

As the *Lo-har* and *John Tyler* approached one another, the former made no effort to avoid the larger ship. Her guns were loaded and manned, and she was prepared to fight.

It was Raj who first noticed something peculiar about the strange ship. "There is no one on deck," he said. "There is no one at the wheel. She is a fine ship," he added half to himself. Then an idea popped into his head. "Let's capture her," he said.

"No! No!" cried Gamba. "They haven't seen us. Sail away as fast as you can."

"Can you bring the *Lo-har* alongside her?" asked Dian.

"Yes," said Jav. He summoned his men from below and gave them their orders.

The *Lo-har* came about ahead of the *John Tyler* which was making far better headway than the smaller vessel. As the *John Tyler* overhauled her, Jav drew in closer to the other ship. As their sides touched, the agile Mezops swarmed aboard the *John Tyler* with lines and made the *Lo-har* fast to her.

The impact of the two ships as they came together awoke Ah-gilak. "Dod-burn it! what now?" he cried, as he scrambled up the ladder to the main deck. "Tarnation!" he exclaimed as he saw the score of Mezops facing him. "I've gone plumb looney after all." He shut his eyes and turned his head away. Then he peeked from a corner of one eye. The copper colored men were still there.

"It's the little Ah-gilak," said one of the Mezops. "He eats people."

Now Ah-gilak saw more people coming over the side of his ship, and saw the sail of the little *Lo-har*. He saw Raj and Hodon, and a beautiful girl whom he had never seen before. With them was a yellow

man. But now Ah-gilak realized what had happened and the great good luck that had overtaken him at the very moment when there seemed not a ray of hope in all the future.

“Gad and Gabriel!” he exclaimed. “It never rains but they’s a silver lining, as the feller said. Now I got a crew. Now we can get the hell out o’ this here Korsar Az an’ back to Sari.”

“Who else is aboard?” asked Hodon.

“Not a livin’ soul but me.” He thought quickly and decided that perhaps he had better not tell all the truth. “You see we had a little bad luck — run ashore in a storm. When the crew abandoned ship, I guess they plumb forgot me; and before I could get ashore, the wind changed and the tide came in an’, by all tarnation, the first thing I knew I was a-sailed off all by myself.”

“Who else was aboard?” insisted Hodon.

“Well, they was Ja, and Jav, and Ko, an’ a bunch of other Mezops. They was the ones that abandoned ship. But before that O-aa got a yen to go ashore —”

“O-aa?” cried Hodon. “She was aboard this ship? Where is she?”

“I was just a’tellin you. She got a yen to go ashore, and jumped overboard.”

“Jumped overboard?” Hodon’s voice rang with incredulity. “I think you are lying, old man,” he said.

“Cross my heart, hope to die,” said Ah-gilak.

“How did she get aboard this ship?” continued Hodon.

“Why, we picked her up out of a canoe in the nameless strait; and she told us where David was, an’ we went back an’ rescued him.”

“David?” exclaimed Dian. “Where is he?”

“Well, before the *John Tyler* went ashore, David an’ Abner Perry an’ Ghak an’ all his Sarian warriors decided they could get back to

Sari quicker across country than they could by sailin' back. Course they was plumb looney, but —”

“Where did they go ashore?” asked Dian.

“Gad an’ Gabriel! How’d I know? They ain’t no charts, they ain’t no moon, they ain’t no stars, and the dang sun don’t never move; so they ain’t no time. They might o’ went ashore twenty years ago, for all a body can tell.”

“Would you recognize the coast where they landed?” persisted Dian.

“I might an’ I might not. Reckon as how I could though.”

“Could you recognize the spot where O-aa jumped overboard?” asked Hodon.

“Reckon not. Never seed it. She jumped over in a fog.”

“Haven’t you any idea?”

“Well, now maybe.” Ah-gilak being certain that O-aa had drowned or been eaten by one of the reptiles that swarm the Korsar Az, felt that it would be safe to give what information he could. “As a matter of fact,” he continued, “’t warn’t far from where the *John Tyler* went ashore.”

“And you would recognize that spot?”

“I might an’ I might not. If I recalls correctly they was an island ’bout a mile off shore near where the *John Tyler* hit.”

“Well, let’s get going,” said Hodon.

“Where?” demanded Ah-gilak.

“Back along the coast to where O-aa ‘jumped overboard’ and to where David Innes went ashore.”

“Now wait, young feller,” remonstrated Ah-gilak. “Don’t you go forgettin’ that I’m skipper o’ this ship. It’s me as’ll give orders aboard this hooker.”

Hodon turned to Raj. "Have your men bring all the water, provisions, ammunition, and personal belongings from the *Lo-har*; then set her adrift."

Ah-gilak pointed a finger at Hodon. "Hold on young feller —"

"Shut up!" snapped Hodon, and then to Raj. "You will captain the *John Tyler*, Raj."

"Gad and Gabriel!" screamed Ah-gilak. "I designed her, I named her, an' I been skipper of her ever since she was launched. You can't do this to me."

"I can, I have, and I'll do more if you give me any trouble," said Hodon. "I'll throw you overboard, you old scoundrel."

Ah-gilak subsided and went away and sulked. He knew that Hodon's was no idle threat. These men of the Stone Age held life lightly. He set his mind to the task of evolving a plan by which he could be revenged without incriminating himself. Ah-gilak had a shrewd Yankee mind unfettered by any moral principles or conscience.

He leaned against the rail and glared at Hodon. Then his eyes wandered to Dian, and he glared at her. Another woman! Bad luck! And with this thought the beginnings of a plan commenced to take shape. It was not a wholly satisfactory and devastating plan, but it was better than nothing. And presently he was aided by a contingency which Hodon had not considered.

With the useful cargo of the *Lo-har* transferred to the *John Tyler* and the former set adrift, Raj came to Hodon, a worried expression on his fine face.

"This," he said, with a wave of a hand which embraced the *John Tyler*, "is such a ship as I and my men have never seen before. She is a mass of sails and ropes and spars, all unfamiliar to us. We cannot sail her."

For a moment Hodon was stunned. Being a landsman, such a possibility had never occurred to him. He looked astern at the little *Lo-har*, from which the larger ship was rapidly drawing away. Hodon realized that he had been a trifle precipitate. While there was yet time, perhaps it would be well to lower the boats and return to the *Lo-har*. The idea was mortifying.

Then Raj made a suggestion. "The old man could teach us," he said. "If he will," he added with a note of doubt in his voice.

"He will," snapped Hodon, and strode over to Ah-gilak. Raj accompanied him.

"Ah-gilak," he said to the old man, "you will sail the ship, but Raj will still be captain. You will teach him and his men all that is necessary."

"So you are not going to throw me overboard?" said Ah-gilak with a sneer.

"Not yet," said Hodon, "but if you do not do as I have said and do it well, I will."

"You got your nerve, young feller, askin' me, a Yankee skipper to serve as sailin' master under this here gol-durned red Indian."

Neither Hodon nor Raj had the slightest idea what a red Indian was, but from Ah-gilak's tone of voice they were both sure that the copper colored Mezop had been insulted.

"I'll sail her fer ye," continued Ah-gilak, "but as skipper."

"Come!" said Hodon to Raj. "We will throw him overboard."

As the two men seized him, Ah-gilak commenced to scream. "Don't do it," he cried. "I'll navigate her under Raj. I was only foolin'. Can't you take a joke?"

So the work of training Raj and his Mezops commenced at once. They were quick to learn, and Ah-gilak did a good job of training

them; because his vanity made it a pleasure to show off his superior knowledge. But he still nursed his plan for revenge. His idea was to cause dissension, turning the copper colored Mezops against the white Hodon and Dian. Of course Ah-gilak had never heard of Communists, but he was nonetheless familiar with one of their techniques. As he worked with the Mezops, he sought to work on what he considered their ignorance and superstition to implant the idea that a woman on shipboard would be certain to bring bad luck and that Dian was only there because of Hodon. He also suggested to them that the latter felt superior to the Mezops because of his color, that he looked down on them as inferior, and that it was not right that he should give orders to Raj. He nursed the idea that it would be well for them all should Dian and Hodon accidentally fall overboard.

The Mezops were neither ignorant nor superstitious, nor had they ever heard of race consciousness or racial discrimination. They listened, but they were not impressed. They were only bored. Finally, one of them said to Ah-gilak, "Old man, you talk too much about matters which have nothing to do with sailing this ship. We will not throw Hodon the Fleet One overboard, neither will we throw Dian the Beautiful overboard. If we throw anyone overboard it will be you."

Ah-gilak subsided.

Chapter 9

After O-aa had slept, she came to the doorway of her house and looked around. The village seemed very quiet. There were only a few people in sight and they were at the far end of the village. She descended the ladder. Rahna, who had been lying at the foot of it, stood up and wagged his tail. O-aa scratched him between his ears.

“I am hungry,” she said; “so you must be, too. We will hunt.”

She had brought her weapons. Those of the Stone Age who would survive have their weapons always at hand.

“Come, Rahna!” she said, and started up the valley away from the village.

A man, standing in the doorway of a hut farther down the village street, saw them leave. It was Zurk, the son of Jalu the chief. When a turn in the little valley hid them from his sight, he started after them with his jalok. He was a heavy barreled man, short on his bowed legs; and he lurched from side to side a little as though one leg were shorter than the other. His face was coarse and brutal, with beetling brows overhanging close-set eyes.

O-aa and Rahna moved silently up the valley, searching for game. There was a high wind blowing from the direction of the sea, and presently the sun was obscured by black clouds. There was a flash of lightning followed by the deep roar of thunder. The wind rose to violence and rain commenced to fall. But none of these things appeased O-aa’s hunger; so she continued to hunt.

The valley turned suddenly to the right, paralleling the coast; and it became narrower. Its walls were neither high nor steep at this point; so O-aa ascended the right hand wall and came out upon a tree-dotted mesa. Here there were tall grasses in which the smaller game might hide.

And Zurk followed with his jalok. O-aa’s spoor in the light mud of the new fallen rain was easy to follow. When Zurk came out upon the mesa, O-aa, who had been advancing slowly, was not far ahead. So intent was she on her search for game that Zurk closed rapidly on her without attracting her attention or that of Rahna. The wind and the rain and the rumbling thunder were all on the side of Zurk.

Zurk's plan was made. He would shoot the girl's jalok; then she would be at his mercy. He closed up the distance between them to make sure that he would not miss. He fitted an arrow to his bow. He made no sound, but something made O-aa look behind her at that very moment.

Her own bow was ready for the kill, for any game that she or Rahna might flush. Recognizing Zurk, seeing his bow drawn, she wheeled and loosed an arrow. Zurk's bow string twanged simultaneously with hers, but the arrow was aimed at O-aa and not at Rahna.

Zurk missed, but O-aa's arrow drove through the man's shoulder. Then O-aa turned and fled. Zurk knew that on his short bowed legs he could not overtake her. He spoke sharply to his jalok and pointed at the fleeing girl. "Rah!" he snapped. Rah means kill.

The powerful, savage brute bounded in pursuit.

~

The seas fled before the wind, mounting as the wind mounted. The *John Tyler* carried but a rag of sail. She handled well, she was seaworthy. Ah-gilak was proud of her. Even when the storm reached almost tornado proportions he did not fear for her.

Gamba the king, cowering below, was terrified, reduced almost to gibbering idiocy by fear. Dian watched him with disgust. And this thing had dared to speak to her of love! Hodon was nervous below deck. Like all mountain men, he wanted to be out in the open. He wanted to face the storm and the danger where he could see them. Below, he was like a caged beast. The ship was pitching wildly, but Hodon managed to fight his way to a ladder and then to the deck above.

Both the wind and the current had combined with malevolent fury

in an attempt to hurl the *John Tyler* on the all too near shore. Dead ahead loomed the green island upon which O-aa had been cast when she leaped overboard in the fog. Ah-gilak realized that he could make no offing there, that he would have to pass between the island and the shore, only a bare mile away. And through uncharted waters, below the tumbling surface of which might he reefs and rocks. Ah-gilak was not happy.

Hodon saw the mountainous waves and wondered that any ship could live in such a sea. Being a landsman, he saw the high seas as the only menace. Ah-gilak feared for the things he could not see — the reefs and the rocks and the current that he and the ship fought. It was a titanic battle.

Hodon, clinging to a stanchion to keep from falling, was quite unconscious of a real danger that confronted him on the deck of the *John Tyler*. The ship rose to meet the great seas and then drove deep into the troughs, but so far she had shipped but little green water.

Ah-gilak saw the man, and his toothless mouth grimaced. The wind and the blinding rain beat about him. The tornado whipped his long white beard. *There won't be no call to throw the dod-burned idjit overboard*, he thought. Raj saw Hodon and called a warning to him, but the wind drove his voice down his throat.

Just before the ship reached the shelter of the island's lee, a monstrous sea loomed above her. It broke, tons of it, over her, submerging her. The *John Tyler* staggered to the terrific impact, then slowly she rose, shaking the water from her.

Ah-gilak looked and grinned. Hodon was no longer by the stanchion. In the shelter of the island, Ah-gilak hove to and dropped anchor. The *John Tyler* had weathered the storm and was safe.

Raj's eyes searched the tumbling waters, but they were rewarded

by no sight of Hodon. The Mezop shook his head sadly. He had liked the Sarian. Later, when Dian came on deck, he told her; and she, too, was sad. But death comes quickly and often in the Stone Age.

“Perhaps it is just as well,” said Dian. “They are both gone now, and neither is left to grieve.” She was thinking of how often she had wished for death when she had thought David was dead.

Ah-gilak shed crocodile tears, but he did not fool the Mezops. Had they not known that it would have been impossible, they would have thought that he had been instrumental in throwing Hodon overboard; and Ah-gilak would have gone over, too.

~

A great comber threw Hodon far up the beach, and left him exhausted and half dead. The enormous sea had buffeted him. His head had been beneath the surface more often than it had been above. But the tide and the wind and the current had been with him. As had a kindly Providence, for no terrible creature of the deep had seized him. Perhaps the very turbulence of the water had saved him, keeping the great reptiles down in the relative quiet far below the surface.

Hodon lay for a long time where the sea had spewed him. Occasionally a wave would roll up and surge around him, but none had the depth or volume to drag him back into the sea.

At last he got slowly to his feet. He looked back and saw the *John Tyler* riding at anchor behind the island. Because of the torrential rain he could but barely discern her; so he knew that those on board could not see him at all. He thought of building a fire in the hope that its smoke might carry a message to them, but there was nothing with which to make fire.

Before the storm struck them, Ah-gilak had said that he thought the

ship was approaching the spot at which the Mezops had abandoned her. If that were the case, then the island was close to the place at which O-aa was supposed to have leaped overboard. If she had survived which he doubted, she would be making her way right now toward Kali, hundreds of miles away. Perhaps, somewhere in this unknown land of terrors, she was even now pursuing her hopeless journey.

That he might ever find her in all this vast expanse of plain and hill and mountain he knew to be wholly unlikely, even were she there. But there was the chance. And there was his great love for her. Without a backward glance, Hodon the Fleet One turned his face and his steps north-east toward Kali.

Chapter 10

O-aa ran like the wind. She did not know that Zurk had set his jalok on her. She thought only of escaping the man, and she knew that on his bowed legs he could never overtake her.

Zurk pulled upon the arrow embedded in his shoulder. It had just missed his heart. The rough stone tip tore at the tender wound. Blood ran down the man's body. His features were contorted with pain. He swore. He was very careful as he withdrew the shaft lest the point should be deflected and touch his heart. The girl and the jalok were out of sight, having passed through bushes into a slight depression.

Rahna had followed his mistress, loping easily along a few yards behind her. Suddenly another jalok flashed past him, straight for the fleeing girl.

~

Hodon the fleet one turned his face and his steps north-east toward Kali. Hodon knew nothing about the points of the compass, but his homing instinct told him the direction to Sari; and, knowing where Kali lay in relation to Sari, his homeland, he knew the direction he must take.

He had been walking for some time, when, emerging from a clump of bushes, he came upon a man sitting with his back against the bole of a tree. Hodon was armed only with a knife, which was not well in a world where the usual greeting between strangers is, "I kill."

He was very close to the man before he saw him, and in the instant that he saw him, he saw that his body was smeared with blood and a little stream of blood ran down his chest from a wound in his breast close to his left shoulder.

Now the Sarians, because of the influence of David Innes and Abner Perry, are less savage and brutal than the majority of Pellucidarians. Although Perry had taught them how to slaughter their fellow men scientifically with muskets, cannon, and gunpowder, he had also preached to them the doctrine of the brotherhood of man; so that their policy now was based on the admonition of a man they had never heard of who had lived in a world they would never see, to "speak softly and carry a big stick," for Abner Perry had been a worshiper of Teddy Roosevelt.

The man's head was bowed, his chin lay upon his breast. He was barely breathing. But when he realized that some one had approached him he looked up and snarled. He expected to be killed, but he could do nothing about it.

Hodon turned back to the bushes through which he had just passed and gathered some leaves. He made a little ball of the most tender of them and came back to the man. He knelt beside him and

plugged the hole in his chest with a little ball of leaves, stopping the flow of blood.

There was questioning in Zurk's dull eyes as he looked into those of the stranger. "Aren't you going to kill me?" he whispered.

Hodon ignored the question. "Where is your village?" he asked. "Is it far?"

"Not far," said Zurk.

"I will help you back to it," said Hodon, "if you promise me that the warriors will not kill me."

"They will not kill you," said Zurk. "I am the chief's son. But why do you do this for a stranger?"

"Because I am a Sarian," said Hodon proudly.

Hodon helped Zurk to his feet, but the man could scarcely stand. Hodon realized that he could not walk; so he carried him pickaback, Zurk directing him toward the village.

The wind blew and rain fell, but the storm was abating as Hodon carried the chief's son into the village. Warriors came from their houses, with ready weapons, for Hodon was a stranger to be killed on sight. Then they saw Zurk, who was unconscious now, and hesitated.

Hodon faced them. "Instead of standing there scowling at me," he said, "come and take your chief's son and carry him to his house where the women can care for him."

When they had lifted Zurk from his back, Hodon saw that the man was unconscious and that he might be killed after all. "Where is the chief?" he asked.

Jalu was coming toward them from his house. "I am the chief," he said. "You are either a very brave man or a fool to have wounded my son and then brought him to me."

"I did not wound him," said Hodon. "I found him wounded and

brought him here, else he would have died. He told me that if I did this the warriors would not kill me.”

“If you have spoken the truth the warriors will not kill you,” said Jalu.

“If the man dies before he regains consciousness, how will you know that I have spoken the truth?” asked Hodon.

“We will not know,” said Jalu. He turned to one of his warriors. “Have him treated well, but see that he does not escape.”

“The brotherhood of man is all right,” said Hodon, “if the other fellow knows about it.” They did not know what he was talking about. “I was a fool not to let him die,” he added.

“I think you were,” agreed Jalu.

Hodon was taken to a house and a woman was sent to take him food. Two warriors stood guard at the foot of the ladder. The woman came with food. It was Hala. She looked at the handsome prisoner with questioning eyes. He did not look stupid, but then one could not always tell just by looks.

“Why did you bring Zurk back when you know that you might be killed? What was he to you?” she asked.

“He was a fellow man, and I am a Sarian,” was Hodon’s simple explanation.

“You, a Sarian?” demanded Hala.

“Yes. Why?”

“There is a Sarian with us, or there was. She went away, I think to hunt; and she has not returned.”

Hodon paled. “What was her name?” he asked.

“Oh, I was wrong,” said Hala. “She is not a Sarian. It is her mate that is a Sarian. She comes from another country where the men are nine feet tall. She has eleven brothers and her father is a king.”

“And her name is O-aa,” said Hodon.

“How do you know?” demanded Hala.

“There is only one O-aa,” said Hodon, enigmatically. “Which way did she go?”

“Up the valley,” said Hala. “Zurk followed her. Zurk is a bad man. It must have been O-aa who wounded him.”

“And I have saved him!” exclaimed Hodon. “Hereafter I shall leave the brotherhood of man to others.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“It is meaningless,” said Hodon. “I must get out of here and follow her.”

“You cannot get out,” said Hala. Suddenly her eyes went wide in understanding. “You are Hodon the Fleet One,” she said.

“How did you know that?”

“That is the name of O-aa’s mate. She said so, and that he is a Sarian.”

“I must get out,” said Hodon.

“I would help you if I could,” said Hala. “I liked O-aa and I like you, but you will only get out of this village alive if Zurk regains consciousness and says that he promised that you would not be killed.”

“Will you go then and find out if he has regained consciousness?” he asked her.

~

O-aa heard a savage growl close behind her. She turned to see a strange jalok reared on its hind feet to seize her and drag her down. As she leaped, quick as a chamois, to one side, she saw something else. She saw Rahna spring upon the strange jalok and hurl it to the ground. The fight that ensued was bloody and terrifying. The two savage beasts

fought almost in silence. There were only snarls of rage. As they tore at one another, O-aa circled them, spear in hand, seeking an opportunity to impale Rahna's antagonist. But they moved so quickly that she dared not thrust for fear of wounding Rahna instead of the other.

Rahna needed no help. At last he got the hold for which he had been fighting — a full hold of the other jalok's throat. The mighty jaws closed, and Rahna shook the other as a terrier shakes a rat. It was soon over. Rahna dropped the carcass and looked up into O-aa's eyes. He wagged his tail, and O-aa went down on her knees and hugged him, all bloody as he was.

She found the leaves she needed, and a little stream, and there she washed Rahna's wounds and rubbed the juices of the leaves into them. After that, she flushed a couple of hares and some strange birds that have not been on earth for a million years. She fed Rahna and she ate her own meat raw, for there was nothing dry with which to make fire.

She did not dare go back to the village, both because she feared that she might have killed Zurk and feared that she hadn't. In one event, Jalu would kill her if her deed were discovered; in the other, Zurk would kill her. She would go on toward Kali, but first she would sleep. Beneath a great tree she lay down, and the fierce hyaenodon lay down beside her.

Chapter 11

The great storm passed on. Again the sun shone. The seas subsided. Saddened, Dian suggested that they turn back toward Sari. "What is the use of going on?" she demanded. "They are all dead."

"Perhaps not," said Raj. "Perhaps not all. David, Abner, Ghak, and

over two hundred warriors can make their way anywhere in Pellucidar. They may be waiting for us in Sari when we return.”

“Then let’s return as soon as possible,” said Dian.

“And even for O-aa and Hodon there may be hope.”

Dian shook her head. “Had they been together, possibly; but alone, no. And then, even if Hodon reached shore, he was armed with only a knife.”

So they weighed anchor, put about, and laid a course for the nameless strait.

~

At the same time, David, Perry, and Ghak, were holding a council of war, so to speak. There was no war except with the terrain. With the two hundred fierce Sarians, armed with muskets and well supplied with ammunition, the party had moved through the savage world with not a single casualty.

They lived off a country rich in game, fruits, vegetables, berries, nuts. But the terrain had almost beaten them. The backbone of the great peninsula they were attempting to cross is a mountain range as formidable as the Himalayas and practically insurmountable for men clothed only in G-strings. Its upper reaches ice-locked and snow-bound presented an insurmountable barrier to these almost naked men of the Stone Age.

When they reached the mountains, they had moved in a northerly direction searching for a pass. Many sleeps had passed, but still the unbroken facade of the Terrible Mountains barred the way to Sari. Time and again they had followed deep canyons, hoping that here at last was a gap through which they could pass. And time and again they had had to retrace their steps. Now, as far as the eye could reach

until vision was lost in the haze, the Terrible Mountains stretched on seemingly into infinity.

“There is no use going on in this direction,” said David Innes.

“Well, where in the world shall we go?” demanded Abner Perry.

“Back,” said David. “There are no mountains on the Lidi Plains nor in the Land of Awful Shadow. We can cross there to the east coast and follow it up to Sari.”

So they turned back toward the south-west, and started anew the long, long trek for home.

Later, many sleeps later, the three man point, which David always kept well ahead of his main body, sighted warriors approaching. One of the warriors of the point ran back to notify David, and presently the Sarians advanced in a long thin skirmish line. Their orders were not to fire until fired upon, and then to fire one volley over the heads of the enemy. David had found that this was usually enough. At the roar and the smoke, the enemy ordinarily fled.

To David’s astonishment, the strange warriors also formed a line of skirmishers. This was a tactical innovation, brought to Pellucidar by David. He had thought that only warriors trained under the system of the Army of the Empire used it. The two lines moved slowly toward another.

“They look like Mezops,” said David to Ghak. “They are copper colored.”

“How could there be Mezops here?” demanded Ghak

David shrugged. “I do not know.”

Suddenly the advancing line of copper colored warriors halted. All but one. He advanced, making the sign of peace. And presently David recognized him.

“First I saw the muskets,” said Ja, “and then I recognized you.”

Ja told of the loss of O-aa and the abandonment of the *John Tyler* and how it had sailed out to sea with only Ah-gilak.

“So they are both lost,” said David sadly.

“Ah-gilak is no loss,” said Ja; “but the girl — yes.”

And so Ja and Jav and Ko and the other Mezops joined the Sarians, and the march was resumed toward the Lidi Plains and the Land of the Awful Shadow.

~

A warrior came to the foot of the ladder leading to the house where Hodon was confined. He spoke to the guards, and one of them called to Hodon. “Sarian, come down. Jalu has sent for you.”

Jalu sat on a stool in front of the house where Zurk lay. He was scowling, and Hodon thought that Zurk had died. “Zurk has spoken,” said Jalu. “He said that you had told the truth. He said more. It was O-aa who loosed the arrow that wounded him. Zurk said that she was right to do it. He had followed her to kill her. Now he is sorry. I will send warriors with you to search for her. If you find her, or if you do not, the warriors will either bring you back here or accompany you to the foot of the Terrible Mountains, which is where O-aa wished to go. I do this because of what you did for Zurk when you might have killed him. Zurk has asked me to do this. When do you wish to start?”

“Now,” said Hodon.

With twenty warriors and their jaloks, he set out in search of O-aa.

~

O-aa slept for a long time or for but a second. Who may know in the timeless world of Pellucidar? But it must have been for some consid-

erable outer crust time; because things happened while she slept that could not have happened in a second.

She was awakened by Rahna's growls. She awoke quickly and completely, in full possession of all her faculties. When one is thus awakened in a Stone Age world, one does not lie with closed eyes and stretch luxuriously and then cuddle down for an extra cat nap. One snaps out of sleep and lays hold of one's weapons.

Thus, did O-aa; and looked quickly around. Rahna was standing with his back toward her, all the hairs along his spine standing on end. Beyond him, creeping toward them, was a tarag, the huge tiger of the Inner World. A jalok is no match for a tarag; but Rahna stood his ground, ready to die in protection of his mistress.

O-aa took in the scene instantly and all its implications. There was but one course to pursue were she to save both Rahna and herself. She pursued it. She swarmed up the tree beneath which she had been sleeping, taking her bow and arrows with her.

"Rahna!" she called, and the jalok looked up and saw her. Then the tarag charged. Freed from the necessity of sacrificing his life to save the girl's, Rahna bounded out of harm's way. The tarag pursued him, but Rahna was too quick for him.

Thus thwarted, the savage beast screamed in rage; then he leaped upward and tried to scramble into the tree after O-aa; but the limb he seized was too small to support his great weight, and he fell to the ground upon his back. Rahna rushed in and bit him, and then leaped away. Once more the great cat sprang after the jalok, but Rahna could run much faster. O-aa laughed and described the tarag and its ancestors with such scurrilous vituperation as she could command and in a loud tone of voice.

The tarag is probably not noted for its patience; but this tarag was

very hungry, and when one is hungry one will exercise a little patience to obtain food. The tarag came and lay down under the tree. It glared up at O-aa. It should have been watching Rahna. The jalok crept stealthily behind it; then rushed in and bit it savagely, in the rear, bounding away again instantly. Again the futile pursuit.

And again it came and lay down beneath the tree, but this time it kept its eyes on Rahna. O-aa fitted an arrow to her bow and drove it into the tarag's back. With a scream of pain and rage, the cat leaped into the air. But it would take more than one puny arrow to do more than infuriate it.

Another arrow. This time the tarag saw from whence it came, and very slowly and methodically it began to climb the bole of the tree. O-aa retreated into the higher branches. Rahna ran in and tore at the tarag's rump, but the beast continued its upward climb.

O-aa no longer felt like laughing. She guessed what the end would be. The mighty cat would climb after her until their combined weight snapped the tapering stem and carried them both to the ground.

It was upon this scene that Hodon and Utan and the other warriors broke. Utan recognized Rahna and knew that O-aa must be in the tree. Rahna turned on this new menace, and Utan shouted to O-aa to call him off. He did not want to have to kill the courageous animal.

With relief, O-aa heard the voices of men. Any man would have been welcome at that moment, and she shouted the single word, "Padang" to Rahna. Jalu had armed Hodon, and now twenty-one bow strings twanged and twenty-one arrows pierced the body of the tarag. But even these did not kill him. They did bring him down out of the tree and set him upon these enemies.

The men scattered, but they kept pouring arrows into the beast,

and each time he charged one of them, jaloks leaped in and tore at him. But at last he died. An arrow reached his savage heart.

O-aa came down from the tree. She just stood and looked at Hodon in wide eyed silence. Then two tears ran down her cheeks, and in front of all the warriors Hodon the Fleet One took her in his arms.

Chapter 12

Jalu's twenty warriors accompanied O-aa and Hodon to the Terrible Mountains. "You can never cross them," said Utan. "You had better come back and join our tribe. Jalu said that he would accept you."

Hodon shook his head. "We belong in Sari, my mate and I. We may never reach Sari, but we must try."

"We will reach Sari," said O-aa. "You and I and Rahna can go anywhere. There is nothing we Sarians cannot do."

"I thought that you were from Kali where the men are nine feet tall," said Utan.

"I am from where my mate is from," said O-aa. "I am a Sarian."

"If I thought that there was another girl like you in Kali, I would go there," said Utan.

"There is no other girl like O-aa in all Pellucidar," said Hodon the Fleet One.

"I believe you," said Utan.

Jalu's warriors ate and slept, and then they started back for their village; and Hodon and O-aa took the long trail — in the wrong direction. They moved toward the north-east. But after all it proved to be the right direction, for before they had slept again they met David and his party. For all of them it was like meeting old friends who had returned from death.

Who may say how long it took them to make the incredible march of nearly two thousand five hundred miles down to the Lidi Plains and the Land of Awful Shadow and across to the east coast and back up to Sari? But at last they came to the village, the village that most of them had never expected to see again; and among the first to welcome them was Dian the Beautiful. The *John Tyler* had made the long trip in safety.

Everyone was happy except Ah-gilak and Gamba. Ah-gilak had been happy until he saw O-aa. Gamba was never happy. Abner Perry was so happy that he cried, for those whom he thought his carelessness had condemned to death were safe and at home again. Already, mentally, he was inventing a submarine.

The End