

## CHAPTER VI - 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 Grace-ful 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 omni-potent 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 under side 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.