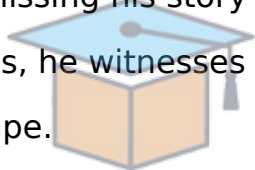


XI -At the earths core

In Chapter XI of "At the Earth's Core," the protagonist faces interrogation by the Mahars—intelligent dinosaur-like creatures ruling the inner world of Pellucidar. Disbelieving his account of the outer world, they condemn him to the experimental pits for vivisection, dismissing his story as an insult to their intelligence. Chained among other human victims, he witnesses a horrifying scene of vivisection, which fuels his desperation to escape.



Utilizing a small surgical tool dropped by one of the Mahars, he ingeniously frees himself from the chains. His escape is perilous, navigating through the dark corridors, he stumbles upon a chamber where Mahars sleep, realizing he's back in the vicinity of his initial capture, indicating a twisted stroke of fate or perhaps providence leading him back to ally with his fellow captives, Perry and Ghak.

Deciding to act swiftly before being discovered, they disguise themselves with a heap of skins and navigate through the Mahar's domain. The protagonist embarks alone to fulfill a crucial part of their escape plan, which involves killing three Mahars in their sleep to obtain a great secret Perry has instructed him to find.

Intriguingly, while attempting to perform this task, he stumbles into the very chamber holding the Mahar's great secret, only to confront two of the creatures. In a deadly altercation, he manages to kill them, finding himself both the hunter and the hunted within moments. His encounter is vivid with raw combat, desperation, and the will to survive, leading him to discover the room holding the significant secret they sought—a skin-bound book amidst an experimental setup. The chapter closes with his situation more precarious than ever, challenged not only by physical adversaries but the looming threat of their broader plot being discovered, emphasizing his perilous journey for freedom and knowledge in the alien underworld of Pellucidar.