

## V -At the earths core

In Chapter V of "At the Earth's Core," titled "Slaves," the protagonist and Perry encounter the dominant species of Pellucidar, the Mahars, for the first time. These creatures are described as large, reptilian beings with a terrifying appearance, including long narrow heads, sharp fangs, and membranous wings. Perry identifies them as a type of prehistoric creature, highlighting their enormous size compared to the fossils found on the surface world.

The two are taken to a large public building in Phutra, where they learn that the Mahars communicate through a form of sign language due to having no spoken language or ears. Instead, they seem to possess a sixth sense related to the fourth dimension, allowing them to communicate among themselves. Assigned to arrange ancient Maharan archives, the protagonist reflects on Dian the Beautiful, realizing his feelings for her might be deeper than friendship. Perry and the protagonist fabricate weapons in anticipation of an escape attempt.

Meeting Hooja, who was captured along with others but without Dian, heightens the protagonist's worries for her safety. Plans for escape are discussed, with Ghak, a native, agreeing to help under the possibility of returning to his people. Perry then reveals that the Mahars are a female-only species, reproducing through chemically fertilized eggs, a secret held tightly in Phutra. This discovery leads to a plan not just for escape but to bring a transformative secret to the human races of Pellucidar.

The chapter emphasizes themes of discovery, the clash of civilizations, and the beginnings of a grand scheme to overturn the existing power dynamics of Pellucidar. It sets the stage for a broader adventure while exploring the relationship between captor and captive, and the concept of what defines a monster. The protagonist's determination to find Dian underscores a personal quest amid larger socio-political upheaval.