



Savage Pellucidar

Edgar Rice Burroughs

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PART 1.THE RETURN TO PELLUCIDAR

CHAPTER 1

DAVE 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 Dave 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?"

Dave 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. Dave 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 villa 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. Dave 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.

Dave 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.

Dave 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 Dave 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 eaves 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 Kalians."

"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 up wind, 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—"