

Tofte, Arthur - The Day The Earth Stood Still (v1.0) Jacked.

THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL.
1976 by Arthur Tofte.

Aa novelization written by Arthur Tofte based on the original short story, Farewell to the Master, by Harry Bates, published in Astounding Stories - October, 1940.

Chapter 1.

Out of the sky it came--silent and mysterious and menacing. For more than two days, people of Earth watched as it moved in orbit in a crisscross pattern around the globe.

Never again would there be doubts about "flying saucers" and puzzling UFO's. Here was an unidentified flying object that was being seen by half the world's population.

Office workers in the great cities rushed to their windows to look out at its passage overhead. Peoples of the South Seas looked up and were awed. On the wide plains of Russia, farmers turned off their machines to stare at it. Throngs of worshippers on the Ganges stopped their sanctifying ablutions long enough to look. All over the world there was the same reaction: mystification... and fear. Even the most conservative scientific authorities. agreed that it was real, that it was alien, and that it offered potential danger to mankind.

Its shape, oddly enough, was quite traditional. At least it looked like the "flying saucers" that people had been claiming to see for almost a century. The big difference was that this one made no effort to conceal itself. Circular in design, it was not more than 35 or 40 meters in diameter. Its middle bulged up to approximately 20 meters. Its color was a metallic green. People had plenty of opportunity to study it, for it often hovered over heavily-populated cities for minutes at a time. Thousands of photographs were taken by amateur and professional photographers.

Pursuit planes were sent up to intercept the strange craft. At their approach it always sped off, almost faster than the eye could follow. None of the planes had the speed to keep up with it.

Nor could it be seen how the alien ship was powered. There were no jet exhausts or other evidence of propulsion equipment of any kind. It simply skimmed through the air effortlessly and silently. The green surface was smooth and even. No lights. No port-holes. No marks to show where openings might be.

Military men of all nations admitted they were baffled. Scientists were hopeful that this could be the breakthrough in man's age-old hope to communicate with a civilization other than his own. And what a civilization it must be--to design and build a spaceship capable of doing what this one was doing.

Yet, with it all, was a growing sense of apprehension, even of fear. What was the purpose that brought the stranger to planet Earth? Was it friendly? Was it hostile?

What deadly weapons did the alien ship carry with it? All the fictional stories of invasions by aliens were recalled by people as they stared up at the green circular ship slipping through the air overhead.

Then it happened....

Fifty hours after it had been first sighted entering the Earth's atmosphere as a glowing fireball, the ship landed!

With the ease of a floater plane, it settled down slowly and yet firmly on an open park near the heart of Washington, D.C.

And there it sat for a day and a night. Nothing happened to indicate there was anybody in the craft. No openings could be found. Engineers sent to check reported that it had a smooth, even surface not unlike the green patina on old

copper.

Cliff Sutherland, a free-lance photographer, was cold and hungry and tired. Although it was still mid-September, the breeze as it came across the Tidal Basin had a chill to it. What bothered him was that he had been sitting, standing, or stomping around since a little after five the afternoon before. That was when the alien ship had come to rest. It was now again late afternoon. Nearly 24 hours he had stuck it out here, bored with the fact that nothing was happening, and yet fearful that if he left, something important would occur.

Sutherland was a tall, lanky man with nondescript blond hair. Somewhat sharp-featured, with long nose and bold chin, he had often been told that he looked the part of an aggressive, nosy news photographer.

He was amused to see General Sanders come with his staff, circle the silent ship, and rap on it with his knuckles. Chief of the powerful Continental Bureau of Investigation, Sanders was an old adversary of Cliff's. He remembered several unpleasant run-ins he had had with the general. Cliff could see that Sanders, as he finally drove off with his fellow officers, was frustrated.

Sutherland had been one of the first on the scene. The early crowds had been tremendous. Then, as the night wore on, as people grew bored and tired, they left to go to their homes. By two in the morning, about all that had remained were other newsmen like himself, a full company of soldiers with a half-dozen half-track tanks, and a few hundred citizens watched over by several dozen police. Morning, however, had brought a return of activity, and all through the day Cliff had watched as officers from various government services, as well as a handful of university scientists, made efforts to find out the secret of the ship.

All Sutherland had eaten during the day were two hot dogs, and he was famished. Just as he was considering leaving for a regular meal, everything changed. The crowd, which had been getting increasingly noisy and restless, suddenly stopped all motion. A feeling of dread and anticipation came over the scene.

A panel in the ship was slowly opening!

Aiming his camera, Sutherland snapped a picture. He watched as a ramp slowly slid out of the opening. He took another picture. For several minutes more there was no further activity.

Then, slowly, with a stately tread, there appeared the most striking being Cliff had ever seen. He was tall and very slender. He wore a tight-fitting garment made of a shining silvery material. As he strode down the ramp, it seemed to Cliff that goodness and good will emanated from him in a godlike aura.

Just as perhaps every other person in the huge crowd felt, so Cliff Sutherland sighed in relief. The alien was no enemy. He brought no sense of menace with him, no threat of danger.

Remembering belatedly why he was here, Cliff snapped several pictures of the stranger as he moved down the ramp.

Then he saw a second figure emerge!

This one was completely different. He was half again as tall as the humanlike being who had preceded him. He seemed to be a mechanical robot. Made apparently of the same green material as the ship, he nevertheless moved surely and smoothly as he took his place beside the other. The ramp behind them slid back into the ship and the panel door closed.

For a long moment the two strange figures stood facing the silent crowd. Then the man spoke up in a loud, clear voice: "I am Klaatu and this is Gnut."

A murmur arose from the people closest, obviously surprised that the alien could speak English.

The alien raised his right arm, palm outward, in the universal symbol of peace.

At that instant there was a sharp report. Turning quickly, Cliff Sutherland saw tendrils of smoke rising from a tree nearby. A wild-eyed man was

descending. Two policemen grappled with him.

Cliff took one picture of the scuffle. When he saw that the gunman was being dragged away, he turned back to look at the fallen figure of the alien. This too he photographed.

Soldiers were surrounding the stranger as he lay on the ground. In a minute or two they had picked him up and carried him to a nearby army car.

Stunned by the sudden turn of events, Sutherland moved toward the ship. The robotlike creature had not changed his position in all the turmoil and excitement. He stood stolidly, his two huge feet firmly placed on the ground. Cliff approached and was startled to see the robot's eyes, like red beads, glaring back at him.

Within minutes, the police and the soldiers had restored order. A rope cordon was hurriedly placed around the ship to keep people away. Inside the area, the robot, Gnut, never moved.

Exhausted by his long, 24 hour stint, Sutherland didn't object when a policeman said he'd have to get back with the others in spite of his press card. He desperately needed a shower, food, and sleep. And he wanted to get back to his two-room apartment where he could develop the pictures he had taken.

He was not too happy with the shots he had obtained. Every news photographer in Washington probably had about the same. But most of all, right now he needed sleep.

Chapter 2.

When the shot rang out, Klaatu felt the lead bullet as it tore into his side. He was not surprised at what had happened. Wasn't it the purpose of his coming to the third planet in this solar system to find out what kind of people they really were? Past explorations had been merely superficial probes. His coming with Gnut was supposed to go much further in getting exact and usable information about these Earthlings. It was why he and Gnut had learned at least one of their languages, English, so they could communicate with them. As he fell, he knew he was hurt badly. Nothing like this had ever happened to him before. Yet he was not alarmed.

Only half-conscious, he sent a quick mental message to his companion, Gnut. "Stay where you are," he said. "Stand. Do not move. Watch and listen. I'll be back."

Although still only partly conscious, he was able to follow the progress of the soldiers who were rushing him to a place where presumably his wound would be treated. The vehicle they drove was pathetically primitive, noisy and ill-smelling. Even though they were accompanied by a screaming blast of sound, which he supposed was meant to clear the way, they moved very slowly.

By the time they reached their destination, Klaatu was fully conscious. He was put on a rolling bed and rushed into a big building that had an antiseptic odor. What a lot of wasteful antlike activity. How inefficient. How crude, how primitive were the ways of these people.

He was taken along corridors to a lifting device. He felt himself going upward, From the lift he was taken to a room. He was transferred to a stationary bed. Two men stripped him of his silver body suit. Several men and two women came in and started to examine him.

"See here," one of the men said. "The bullet wound is at this spot. It's still in there. From the looks of it, very little blood was lost. Oddly enough, already the wound seems to be healing. Amazing! I've never seen anything like it."

One of the other men spoke up. "Don't you think we should go after the bullet? We can't leave it in him."

Klaatu smiled to himself. These poor Earthlings still had not developed their minds to the point where they could control the healing of their own bodies.

"There is no need to take out the bullet," Klaatu said in a soft, calm voice to the startled doctors. "My body will heal itself. Now I would like to be

left alone to rest."

The group of medical men looked at each other, thoroughly mystified. One of them, apparently their chief, nodded to the alien and motioned for the others to leave.

"I want you to know," he said, "that your being shot was a tragic accident. The man was mentally deranged. He is in custody."

"Yes, I know," Klaatu replied.

"If there is anything you want or need," the doctor said, "merely press the button at the edge of your bed."

"I won't need anything."

When all had gone except for one young woman in a white uniform, Klaatu smiled at her. "You may go too. I'll be all right."

The girl scurried out.

As soon as she left, Klaatu closed his eyes. His mind reached out and touched Gnut's.

"I am in what they call a hospital," he said. "People of Earth cannot heal themselves. They need doctors and nurses to tend them."

"You are not in danger?" Gnut asked.

"No, my friend. This may all be for the best. Tomorrow I'll be fully recovered. I hope to learn more about these people."

"I too will watch and listen," Gnut said.

General Sanders had called a meeting of his staff. As soon as all were seated, he plunged immediately into the problem at hand. It was obvious that he considered it a problem of prime magnitude.

"The President," he said, "has put all authority to deal with our visitors in my hands. The police will be used to control the crowds. I intend to use soldiers to guard the ship."

He paused and looked around at the officers seated at the conference table.

"The alien," he went on, "is in his hospital room. I have not yet had a report on his condition. He could be dead by now. Or dying. However, to play safe, I have ordered a squad of my men to guard the hospital: some inside and some in the grounds around the hospital. I want to take no chance."

"What do you fear, General?" one of the colonels spoke up.

"Fear? Only a fool would not be afraid. This is the first alien ship in all human history to land on Earth. We know nothing about it. It could be the forerunner of an invasion force of super-aliens from outer space. They could have weapons beyond anything we have ever known or dreamed of. The President specifically ordered me to use every precaution."

"That man who was shot, the one who called himself Klaatu, didn't seem very warlike."

"Granted. But can we afford to be remiss in our duty to our country's safety? Until we know why they came and whether or not they are a threat to us, we have to use the greatest possible vigilance."

"How about the robot, the one he called Gnut?"

General Sanders passed a hand nervously across his moist forehead. "I've been getting regular reports. He hasn't moved. Possibly with Klaatu gone, he can't move. I have, however, taken care to have the half-tracks taken away and replaced by a dozen heavy tanks with high-powered missiles. All have their guns aimed at the creature and at the ship. I repeat, I am convinced we should use great caution with these mysterious alien visitors."

He paused as he looked around again. "Gentlemen, we are facing an unknown force. If only...if only that madman had not shot the alien. By now we might have the answers to the disturbing questions that must be in all our minds. In the morning... perhaps by then... we may know more. Dismissed."

Cliff Sutherland, in his small apartment, quickly opened a can of beef stew. While it was heating, he stripped and took a fast shower. As soon as he had eaten, he looked yearningly at his bed. Never had he felt more tired.

But no--first he would have to develop the pictures he had taken. It was much too late to try to peddle them to a news syndicate. The area had been swarming with photographers and reporters. In the morning he would have to figure out a

way to get some exclusive shots. He hoped nothing important happened while he slept.

One by one he developed and ran fast prints of the views he had taken. They were good but not spectacular. The only one that really intrigued him was one he had taken of Gnut just before he left for his apartment.

Staring at the picture now, it seemed that the eyes of the giant creature were boring right into him. Gnut--there was the answer! He would concentrate on the alien robot.

Chapter 3.

General Sanders and his two top aides arrived at Klaatu's room in the hospital just as an orderly was bringing him his breakfast tray.

"Go on with your breakfast," the general said. "When you've finished, I have some questions to ask."

Klaatu looked up at the stern visage of the military man and smiled. "Yes, and I have a few myself."

Sanders studied the man on the bed as he ate, which he seemed to do with some hesitation over some of the items on the tray. He certainly didn't seem to be the dangerous type. And yet there was something different about him.

This "difference" disturbed the general. The alien gave off such a feeling of warmth and good will that he had difficulty holding to his attitude of caution and suspicion. As a trained military man, he felt it was his duty to remain emotionally uninvolved. He had to question this being. In fact, early that morning, the President had sent word that he was to interview the stranger and report back. Most of all he was to find out the alien's purpose in coming, whether hostile or friendly.

When the tray was removed, Klaatu was the first to speak. To General Sanders it was almost as though his mind was being read.

"I wish to meet your President," he said.

"You will, I'm sure, be given an audience soon," the general said. "In the meantime he has asked me to visit you here."

Sanders glanced over at one of his aides before turning back to Klaatu. "You are being well treated? Anything you need or want?"

"Only, as I said, I wish to meet your President."

"He too is anxious to meet you. But first I must ask you some questions."

Klaatu glanced up. "My garment has been taken away. If it is returned, I'll be glad to go with you to your President. This morning, if possible."

"Your wound?"

"Completely healed."

General Sanders shook his head. "My orders are to keep you here until we are sure it is safe to move you. At least until we know more about you and where you come from and why you are here."

Klaatu smiled his gentle smile. "These are things I can discuss after I have persuaded your President to call a meeting of your world leaders." His manner grew more grim. "General Sanders, I will be glad to answer all questions at the proper time before a gathering of the ruling heads of state of all Earth's nations."

General Sanders looked startled. He shook his head. "You don't know what you ask. It is impossible."

"Few things are truly impossible, General."

"But you don't know the problems involved."

Sanders stood up, uncertain now what he should do. Half hesitating, he said, "I'll get in touch with the President and see what I can arrange. I can promise nothing. I sincerely doubt he could get many heads of state here for a conference such as you suggest. The world presently has many small wars going on. A truly big one could erupt any minute between major powers. The leaders of all nations are afraid to leave their countries. Many would never consider meeting with each other. Conditions are too tense right now. All I can say is that I'll talk to the President and tell him of your request."

He headed for the door. Before leaving, he turned and looked pensively at the alien. He wondered--what was the secret of his coming?

Cliff Sutherland awoke with a start. He looked at his bedside clock. It was nearly eight.

He shaved quickly and dressed. After a brief breakfast, he put the prints and negatives he had taken the day before into an envelope. He hurried to his regular news syndicate with them. As he expected, the views he had obtained offered no new angles and were promptly rejected.

At the site of the alien ship, he found things about the same as they had been the evening before. What a lot of excitement that had been. Now, even with huge mobs of people trying to get as close as they could to the ship, it was strangely quiet.

Most conspicuously, Gnut still stood mute and motionless in exactly the same spot he had taken at the time Klaatu was shot. In the daylight, the green metal robot seemed even larger, more sinister.

When Cliff showed his press credentials, the police allowed him to enter the roped-off area. He came close to the figure of the alien creature and took several pictures from unusual angles. This, he knew, was not going to get him the kind of pictures he really needed. He suspected that every news photographer in the city had probably obtained about the same views.

There was, however, one strange thing. Although the robot never moved his body or his head, it seemed to Cliff that his eyes followed him as he moved around to get new angles. The eyes were deep-set in the metallic skull and were like live coals, red with fiery intensity.

Cliff watched as scientists tapped on the monster's body. Others were searching along the ship's hull for signs of a break. All agreed that the ramp had come out at this place, but no one yet had found even the tiniest of cracks indicating a panel opening.

Gnut was following the last instructions Klaatu had given him. He had not moved. Yet he had observed all the almost meaningless activity of the people swarming around the ship and around him.

They had merely tapped at him at first. Then they had tried harder blows. Some had tried to chip off pieces from him. One military man had even ordered a workman with an acetylene torch to see if he could burn a hole into his body. Another had applied acid. Still another had brought up heavy equipment apparently designed to penetrate his structure with rays. So useless, so futile.

His mind caught a new contact with Klaatu. He sent back a reply.

"Yes, I am still standing where you left me. From this position I can see all that is happening. I am learning much. All is being recorded."

"That is well, Gnut. I too am learning," Klaatu said. "But we need to learn much more. I am going to try to leave the hospital and go out among the people. I have to do that if our mission is to succeed. I am told that a meeting with this country's President may be difficult to arrange."

"Be careful, my friend," Gnut said. "These people are not mentally or emotionally well balanced. They do many strange, unreasonable things."

Klaatu got out of bed. He took off the brief hospital gown he was wearing and peered down at the mark in his side the bullet had made. It was almost completely gone--healed over with scarcely a trace.

Naked, he strode to the door and listened. He could hear the breathing of the four guards who had been stationed outside his room.

He went to the window. It was sealed shut. Then he found that one narrow side panel had a latch and could be opened. He unfastened it and looked out. He was on the tenth floor. Another wing of the hospital was opposite him. Unless someone was actually looking out of one of the windows facing him, he would not be seen.

With amazing dexterity and strength, he slid his naked slender body through the open section in the window to the narrow ledge outside. The ledge, he could see, extended in both directions to the corners of the building. Carefully, with his long, sensitive fingers, he made his way to the fourth

window on his left. Here too the occupant had opened the side vent in the window to get fresh air. He peered in. The room was empty. The bed was mussed as though only recently occupied.

He climbed in and went at once to the clothes closet. A dark Earthling suit was hanging there. On the closet floor was a small piece of luggage. He opened it. Within were what he recognized as other items of human wearing apparel--underwear, socks, shirts, shoes.

Quickly he dressed. Then, holding the small suitcase, he carefully opened the door and peered out down the corridor. He saw the group of guards. Their backs were to him for the moment.

Quietly he headed in the opposite direction. He came to what was obviously a personnel lifting device. Uncertain how to operate it, he took to a stairway. He went down to the very lowest level. It led to a series of rooms used for hospital services. The few persons he saw paid him little or no attention. Finally he found a stairway leading up to a side door.

Five minutes later he was walking along the busy street in front of the hospital. He was shocked at the vehicles that moved so slowly and so close together. The noise, the roar of the traffic, was highly offensive. And the stench of the city--the fumes, the rank smell of refuse, the odor of the people as they passed him--was all but overpowering to his senses.

He walked until he came to a side street in a comparatively quiet and unobtrusive part of the city. He saw a sign--ROOM and BOARD.

He paused and looked both ways. So far there had been no evidence of pursuit. But it would be best, he felt, if he found a place to hide out for a few hours, a day or so.

In the pocket of the suit he had taken at the hospital he had found a wallet. It identified the owner as Carlos Smallwood. The wallet contained what he assumed was money. The initials on the luggage were CS.

He glanced up again at the plain, ordinary building and the sign on the door. Living for a day or two with a group of Earth people might help him find out what he wanted to learn on this mission of his. He started toward the entrance....

Chapter 4.

Gnut watched the milling crowd with his deep-set eyes. These poor humans, he thought, what a purposeless, primordial lot they were. Yet he knew how potentially dangerous they had become. Already they had uncovered the secrets of nuclear fission and fusion. Next would come the power to be unlocked from the almost limitless quantities of hydrogen in the universe. With the basic hunter-killer instincts inbred in them, they could become a real menace to the peace that had been so painfully established throughout the galaxy. Their evolution from savagery to a technological culture had been too rapid. He was annoyed but not particularly concerned with the efforts made to find out what he was made of. He knew he was invulnerable to anything these Earthlings could do to him. He had defenses against their burnings, their chippings, their blows. Even the laser beams they shot at him were easily bounced off his shields.

One tall man was particularly busy taking pictures of him from all possible viewpoints. Well, let him. After Klaatu and he had finished their mission, all the Earthlings would have left to remind them of the visit would be pictures. All day he kept in contact with Klaatu....

Cliff Sutherland, not realizing he was the object of Gnut's attention, spent the morning with his camera.

He was shocked, as were all the other newsmen he talked to, at the news that Klaatu had escaped from the hospital. Disappeared into thin air. It was even suggested by some that the alien might have the ability to make himself invisible. At any rate, a massive man-hunt had begun.

At noon, Cliff rushed back to his apartment, developed the negatives he had taken, made fast prints and hurried with them to the Beacon-Dispatch building. The Beacon-Dispatch newspaper was one of the most frequent customers for his pictures. He was not surprised when his latest group of views was rejected.

After all, the paper had several of its own photographers on the scene. He had seen them.

As a free-lance photographer, he was well aware that his best bet to make a big sale was to get an "exclusive." Taking what staff men were shooting would get him nowhere.

That's when he decided to go back to his rooms and sleep until dark. This evening, he felt, fewer staff men would likely be there. In fact the whole area would be less crowded.

After a good five-hour sleep, he dressed, had a fairly heavy meal in a nearby cafe, and returned to the site of the alien spaceship.

Showing his press card, he was admitted behind the sturdy wire fence that had been erected that afternoon. It was then seven o'clock. The guard who admitted him warned, "We're sending everybody out at eight."

Cliff nodded that he understood.

Gnut was standing just as he had been from the beginning. Seeing a news reporter he knew, Cliff asked, "Anything happen here this afternoon?"

"Nothing. Where have you been?"

"Sleeping. Any news yet on the missing alien?"

The reporter shrugged. "Vanished! Utterly vanished. General Sanders is ready to chew nails. I hope he breaks his fangs on them. He's issued an order to push everybody out of here after eight."

Cliff patted his camera. "That means I'd better get busy."

He wandered over to look up at Gnut's stoic face. Was he a live creature? Or was he merely a mechanical robot that moved only at Klaatu's commands? This seemed a likely possibility since the monster hadn't moved since Klaatu was carted away.

And yet--those red burning eyes! There was life there. Sentient life. Cliff shivered a bit. Not knowing quite why he did it, he reached out and patted the hard, green metallic surface of the creature's massive thigh. "I'd help you if I could," he said half under his breath.

He glanced around somewhat furtively. Already workmen who had put up the fence were getting their tools together and putting them in a temporary shed that had been put up next to the alien ship and not more than five or six paces from Gnut. The last man was preparing to snap shut the padlock on the flimsy door.

At that instant there was a scream of sirens as General Sanders and his staff arrived. And for just a moment all eyes were on the military officers as they marched in. The man at the shed gave a half-hearted jab at fastening the lock and hurried away.

Cliff immediately saw his chance. The lock had not been completely fastened.

He took another quick look around. It was dusk, but not yet totally dark. No one seemed to be near. In one quick motion he slipped into the shed.

Klaatu had found the renting of a room in the rooming house not at all difficult. Asked to pay a week in advance, he merely held out a bill from the wallet.

The landlady looked up in surprise. "A hundred dollars? But yes, I have change. You can have the room on the floor above at the front. And your name?" Klaatu glanced down at the CS on his luggage. "My name," he said after only a moment's hesitation, "is Charles Stock. Captain Charles Stock."

He spent the afternoon in his room resting. The wound had healed. But he felt a strange, unexplainable lethargy. There was even an unprecedented pain in the area where the bullet was still lodged.

Dinner that evening brought him in contact with the other boarders. There were eight at the table. He ate what was served, watching closely so that he followed the eating customs. The food, he found, was much more highly seasoned than he was accustomed to. It was sharp and biting to his taste. He supposed he could get used to it in time.

He spoke very little. He could see the others were curious about him. When it became embarrassing not to explain his presence, he said he was in "service" on a mission he couldn't talk about. This seemed to satisfy them. As

Washingtonians, they knew this happened often. The big subject of conversation, of course, was the arrival of the spaceship and the disappearance of the alien.

When dinner was over, he was on his way back to his room when he was confronted by a boy of about 12.

"I'm Billie," the lad said. "Are you really a captain?"

The boy's mother, a very attractive woman, came up at this moment. After giving Klaatu a warm, friendly smile, she took the boy away.

In his room, Klaatu sat and concentrated on talking with Gnut. For two hours they exchanged thoughts of what each had seen and heard of these humans they were visiting. Gnut was inclined to be somewhat contemptuous. Klaatu said he felt sorry for them. He said that in spite of their war-filled history, their record of killing and destruction, he believed there was hope for them.

During the afternoon, Gnut said, a wire fence had been erected around the area. Also during the afternoon, an official named Stillwell from the Smithsonian Institution had set up a small platform near him and had given a lecture on an amplifying system. The lecturer, he said, had recounted how the ship had arrived, the shooting of Klaatu, his disappearance, and that he was still missing. He then went on to report that the scientists had not been able so far to break into the ship or to analyze the metallic material used in the ship and the robot.

All Stillwell had been able to tell the people in the park was that it was agreed by the leading men of science that it was truly a ship from outer space. He said the scientists would be making further tests the next day. Gnut chuckled a bit as he told this to Klaatu. He also reported that General Sanders had arrived with his staff for an inspection. Then he added that one of the photographers had managed to hide himself in a nearby tool shed.

"One thing you must do tonight, Gnut," Klaatu said. "You must get into the ship and send off a report on what we have seen and learned so far."

"I have already planned to do exactly that, my friend. Now tell me, Klaatu, I sense a strange weariness in you. Are you all right?"

"I'm not sure. The bullet in my side is causing my pain. I, who have never felt pain before, am baffled. It could be that the bullet is affecting me with a poison that I cannot counteract. I may need your help, Gnut. Do you know what to do to activate and use the life-chamber?"

The robot's answer came back. "I'll try to conduct an experiment tomorrow on what might have to be done. Depend on me."

Chapter 5.

It was the longest night in Cliff Sutherland's life. It was also the most frightening and at the same time the most exciting.

From his cramped position in the tool shed, he could look out between the slats at what was happening. Actually, as the evening wore on, when it appeared obvious that nothing much was going to take place, the crowd gradually drifted away from beyond the fence.

But with a squad of soldiers moving around the area, Cliff realized with some dismay that his smart-aleck stunt was just that. If he left the shed, he'd be in full sight. The soldiers would see him. And that would be the end of any chance to get "exclusive" pictures.

Somehow he had to get pictures that the newspaper and news syndicate staff men wouldn't get. Here was the biggest news event of the century, maybe of all time, and so far he had failed. There had to be a way.

Peeking out through the fairly open boards of the shed, he could see the platform that had been erected for the Smithsonian lecturer. It was only about knee-high above the ground. There was space below it just high enough to crawl under. If he could only figure out how to wiggle his way out from the shed to the platform, he might be able to get some kind of unusual shots. If only Gnut would move. And if by good luck, he could catch the robot in a different position, it would prove he moved. Then he'd really have something.

About two in the morning, a chill wind blew across the area. There were no more of the general public beyond the barrier. The soldiers who had been assigned to watch were standing around a portable heater to keep warm. Their backs were turned.

Now, if ever, was his opportunity. Slipping out of the shed, he wormed his way as fast as he could to the platform. A moment later he was under it, panting heavily from the exertion.

So far no sound of alarm.

One thing favored him. He could now look out in all directions. And he knew that in the darkness, under the platform, he was not likely to be seen by the soldiers.

He waited for several minutes before crawling to the edge nearest the huge figure of the robot. Since there were no soldiers on this side, he felt no hesitancy in sticking his head out to look up.

What he saw sent shivers down his back. Gnut was glaring at him. His ruby red eyes, like jewels, were fastened on him.

Then a strange thing happened....

To make sure no soldiers were watching while he took his pictures, he glanced around. Not a soldier was standing erect. All were lying, apparently unconscious, on the ground!

Cliff peered backed anxiously at Gnut. Had the robot killed them?

Then, from his place half way under the platform, he saw the giant's right foot move! Then the whole leg! Then both legs! And he was coming toward the platform under which Cliff cowered.

Terrified, he tried to squirm back like a cornered animal. For several minutes he tensed all the muscles of his body, expecting any instant to have the ponderous weight of the robot crush the flimsy structure over his head.

When nothing happened, he peered out. The robot was gone! More than that, there was now an opening in the ship out of which a ramp extended. It was clear that Gnut not only had moved, he had gone inside. And Cliff, in his fright, had not obtained a single picture.

His fingers shook as he lifted his camera. At least he could get views of the ramp and the opening. Maybe Gnut would come back and he could get a picture of the monster as he strode down the ramp. Perhaps this was the big break he had been hoping for.

Gnut was more amused than anything else by the efforts of the photographer he had seen hide in the tool shed. He remembered that he was the one who had touched him and said he would "help if he could." It would be something to break the monotony of the long dark night to see what this human would do. As for the soldiers guarding the site, he had no trouble sending a deep-sleep impulse into their minds. He knew he would then be free to enter the ship unobserved, make his report, and return to his place outside. When that was done, he would send an awakening impulse to the sleeping men and they would arise.

Seeing the photographer staring up at him, he made a move in his direction. The man, in a panic, scurried back under the platform.

Gnut said the entry words. The ship's door opened and the ramp slid down. Inside the familiar ship, he set the communication controls and began his report.

"It is a semi-civilized planet," he said. "The people have a fairly advanced development in science, but are sadly short in emotional maturity. In some ways they seem intelligent enough. But they have not used their intelligence wisely or well. They call themselves humans, but they sadly lack a sense of humanity.

"I must report that Klaatu was shot on our arrival here. He was taken to what these people call a hospital. They do not have our ability to heal their bodies with their minds as we do. He tells me that his wound has healed. He also says there is a strange pain in his side where the bullet still lodges. As soon as I can, I'll conduct the experiment needed for me to learn how to correct this problem.

"In the meantime, Klaatu has escaped from the hospital and is living at a rooming house. He is using the name of Captain Charles Stock. It is his intention to move about the city to observe the customs and habits of these people.

"On my part, I am holding a position in front of our ship, watching and listening. By another day or two, Klaatu should be able to put into effect the second part of our mission. That is all."

Cliff Sutherland, seeing the soldiers either dead or unconscious, crawled out from under the platform. Camera in hand, he started to climb the ramp. If he could only get one good shot of the interior of the alien ship--what an exclusive that would be!

His heart pounding, he had almost reached the halfway mark on the ramp when he stopped in horror. Gnut, with all his terrible menace, was standing in the panel opening.

His legs hardly holding him up, Cliff ran in long bounds toward the platform. There, in a frantic frenzy, he burrowed back as far as he could.

He waited for the boards over his head to cave in on him. After a few minutes, when nothing did happen, he peered out.

Gnut was standing in his old position, fixed and stolidly immobile. The ramp was gone and the panel door closed. Over near the heater, the soldiers were walking about as before.

What really had happened? None of it made sense. Had he really seen Gnut move? Had the robot opened the ship's entryway and gone in? Why, in heaven's name, had he panicked and missed getting a picture of Gnut on the ramp?

All he had were the pictures of the opening and the ramp, without the robot. One thing he'd have to do was develop these pictures. But he'd have to wait until morning. When daylight came, he'd have to stay under the platform until there were enough others around for him to get away without being observed and questioned.

For the remaining hours of the night he shivered in the damp coldness beneath the platform. He envied the soldiers their portable heater.

Several times he peered out at Gnut. Always, it seemed, the creature was looking straight at him.

After daylight had come, he waited anxiously for the area to fill up again. He was chagrined at what a poor job he had made of his opportunities. It horrified him to think of enduring another frightening ordeal like this one had been. And yet, in the news-man's obsession for always shooting superior pictures, he knew he would try again.

Pictures of the ramp and the open door were fine. But how much more spectacular would be views of the interior. Especially now that he knew the ship could be entered. Yes, he would try again.

Chapter 6.

General Sanders was awakened early by one of his aides. "One of the guards sent to protect the alien ship is here, sir."

"What does he want?"

The general, normally grumpy, was especially ill-tempered in the morning before he had had a cup or two of coffee.

"He says he has some new information about the robot."

Sanders climbed out of bed stiffly. After slipping on a robe, he followed his aide out into the hallway.

"Well, soldier, what is your information? It's hardly daylight. I was asleep."

"I'm sorry, sir," the man said, "but Major Bertram thought you'd want to know as soon as possible."

"Know what? Come to the point, man."

"We think something happened with the robot last night."

"Well, what did happen?"

"We don't quite know, sir. But we all agree that all of us fell asleep at the same time."

"Fell asleep on duty? You know what that means, don't you?"

"Yes, sir. But there's something strange about it. We all fell asleep at the same instant. And we all woke up at the same instant. It was very weird, sir."

"Falling asleep on duty is a serious offense."

"Maybe we didn't fall asleep."

"What do you mean?"

The soldier made a wry face. "We think the robot put us to sleep."

"Nonsense. It's just a mechanical device. We'll check on that. Is that all?"

"No, sir. We found a free-lance photographer hiding under the platform that was put up yesterday for the Smithsonian lecturer to use."

General Sanders glared at the man. "The orders were that no one, except guards, were to be inside the wire fence after eight. How do you explain his being there, sergeant?"

"I can't, sir."

"Where is he now?"

"He's still with Major Bertram. He says his name is Cliff Sutherland."

Sanders frowned. "Yes, I know the man. A pest. Now go on back and make sure you still have him when I arrive. That will be one hour from now."

Before General Sanders arrived at the site, two things happened:

A detachment of police arrived with a warrant for Cliff Sutherland's arrest. Reluctantly, after a heated argument over jurisdiction, Major Bertram, in charge of the soldiers guarding the site, handed the photographer over to them. Sutherland was led away, put in a patrol car, and taken to a police station.

The other thing that happened was baffling....

Stillwell, the Smithsonian lecturer, had come early to prepare an updated lecture for delivery to the crowds expected that day. While the discussion over Sutherland was being waged, Stillwell moved over to stand directly in front of the massive figure of Gnut.

When all eyes were on the confab between Major Bertram and the police, Stillwell felt the giant robot's hand come down and with a sharp object take a small slice of flesh from his arm. It was hardly more than a pinprick. He looked up in surprise, startled by the suddenness of it.

Already the monster had resumed his normal position. For a moment Stillwell was uncertain just what had happened. It wasn't until he looked down at his arm and saw the tiny cut that he was at all sure it had really taken place. It was no more of a scratch than one might make in shaving. A few drops of blood. No feeling of pain. But there it was. And he was positive that Gnut had done it!

He looked up at the green monster. As far as he could see, the robot had not moved. And yet he must have moved his hand at least. There was no other explanation.

Feeling a bit foolish about it all, he walked over to the officer in charge of the soldiers. Major Bertram was obviously still boiling with anger over having to surrender the photographer to the police.

Stillwell held out his arm. "Major, I've just had a strange thing happen to me."

The officer glanced down at the miniscule injury and started to turn away.

Stillwell continued: "I was standing directly in front of the robot. My back was to him. I'll be frank--I didn't see him do it. But I felt his hand reach down and make this cut in my arm."

Major Bertram grunted in disbelief. Then he glanced over at Gnut. "He hasn't moved that I can see." He turned to a group of soldiers nearby. "Anyone see the robot move?"

The men, by their blank expressions, obviously had seen nothing of the incident.

"Doesn't look like much of a cut," Bertram said. "Want me to have one of the men get something to put on it?"

Stillwell rubbed his hand across the slight wound. The few drops of blood had already dried and were easily brushed off. The cut itself was so minute as to

be almost invisible.

"No," Stillwell replied. "It's really nothing, as you can see. What I am concerned about is that I'm sure the robot moved. He had to move to make this cut. That means he's alive!"

General Sanders, with his two top aides, rode through the checkpoint. He got out of his car and cursorily returned Major Bertram's smart salute.

"Where is that photographer you found here this morning?"

The major shook his head. "He's not here, sir. The police took him away."

"The police? You let him go when I gave strict orders to keep him here until I could question him?"

"They had a warrant, sir."

"Warrant be damned!" He turned toward one of his aides. "Find out where they've taken him and bring him to me. We'll settle this in a hurry."

He glared at the major. "I understand the men fell asleep last night. All of them."

"Yes, sir. I can't explain it. We think the robot had something to do with it." Then before the general could say anything further, he quickly added, "There is one other thing, sir. The Smithsonian lecturer claims the robot moved."

"Moved? Did he see him move? Did anyone else see him move?"

The major gulped. "No, sir. He says the robot reached down and took a small cut in his arm when no one was looking."

The general shook his head in disgust. "Imbecile!"

Major Bertram pointed to a civilian standing next to him. "This is Mr. Stillwell, the Smithsonian man."

Stillwell took a step forward, his eyes blazing. "General Sanders," he said, "I resent being called an imbecile. I shall report this." He held out his arm. "And this is the cut the robot made."

General Sanders peered down at the arm and started to laugh. "You call that a cut? Go back to your lecturing. This is ridiculous."

Cliff Sutherland felt hugely embarrassed over being pulled out from under the platform where he had hidden himself all night. He was not so much embarrassed as amused later when the police came with a warrant and took him from the military after a hot argument.

At the police station he was held for a time in an office and questioned. The questions were routine. What was he doing behind the wire fence barrier? How did he get in? Had he seen anything unusual?

He insisted that he was there to get a story and pictures for the news media. There was no argument on that score. The police knew him. He had the proper press credentials. He was doing no more than any other newsman would do if he had the opportunity. His one offense was that he might have been overzealous in his effort to get pictures.

As for whether or not he had seen anything unusual, he made only vague answers. After an hour of questioning, he was taken down to a bank of cells. On the way, a whole string of newsmen waited for him to pass. All were yelling for information. He merely smiled knowingly.

Seeing a trusted friend of his, a reporter with the Beacon-Dispatch, as he passed him, he quietly slipped him the undeveloped film he had exposed the night before. The reporter, just as adroitly, slipped it into his pocket.

In his cell, Cliff prepared to wait it out. If he knew the publisher-editor of the Beacon-Dispatch, Jackson Grant, he'd be hearing from him soon. They would develop the negatives. They would see that he had pictures no one else had been able to get. He wished he had been able to get better views. But Grant, he suspected, would play up the ones he did get and splash them worldwide to other papers hungry for anything new on the aliens.

Yes, he fully expected any minute to hear the bellowing of the famed publisher-editor of Washington's leading paper. He would come in like a rampaging bull, screaming for freedom of the press. Cliff knew he didn't have to worry. He'd be let off with a reprimand. Freedom of the press--it was a wonderful thing.

Gnut watched the taking of the photographer, the coming of the police, the arrival of General Sanders... and he chuckled inwardly. He had what he wanted--a tiny slice of that lecturer's bodily tissues. Already it was being held inside his bulky framework in a quickly concocted solution to keep it viable. He needed it....

Chapter 7.

At breakfast Klaatu listened to the others talking about the spaceship and the missing alien. One army veteran was all for going in with missiles and lasers and destroying the ship and the robot before they could do any damage. As for the missing humanlike alien, he should be shot on sight.

Billie, the boy who had introduced himself to Klaatu the evening before, sat listening with rapt attention. The lad's mother raised a point of objection. "What if their mission is one of good will? If we destroy the ship and the aliens, we may lose Earth's first chance to communicate with other civilizations,"

The ex-army man turned to Klaatu. "You were introduced as Captain Stock. As a military man, what do you say? Don't you agree we should destroy these invaders before they destroy us?"

Klaatu glanced up from his plate and smiled. "I suppose I am a military man in a way. But I've had very little military experience as such. Frankly, as I see it, until they make a hostile move, I'd give them the benefit of the doubt."

"But that's weaseling, sir. Strike, I say, before they strike. We don't need aliens from outer space to tell us how we should live our lives."

Others at the table took up the discussion. Klaatu stayed quietly observant, a half smile on his face.

After breakfast had been finished, Klaatu stood at the front entrance and looked out at the traffic-filled street. There was a tug at his sleeve. It was Billie.

"Going down to see the spaceship?" the boy asked.

When Klaatu failed to answer immediately, the youngster went on. "Mom won't let me go alone. But if you were going, I think she'd let me go with you."

Klaatu smiled. Here, he realized, was the perfect cover. It was highly unlikely that anyone would suspect him of being the alien if he had the boy with him.

He nodded. "I think that's an excellent idea, Billie. I'll be glad to go with you to see the ship."

"You will? Gee, that's swell. Just stay right there. I'll tell Mom. I'll be right back."

Billie's mother came back with him. She faced Klaatu. "Are you sure you want to do this?"

Klaatu nodded. "You'll trust him with me, won't you?"

For a long moment she looked intently at him. Then she said, "I have never met a man I could feel more worthy of being trusted. I don't know what it is about you, Captain Stock. You have--I hardly know how to say it--the kindest, most trustworthy look I have ever seen in a man. Any man, anywhere."

"Then I can go, Mom?"

"Yes, Billie, you can go."

A few minutes later, after the boy had gone to his room for a jacket, he and Klaatu set out on their walk. It was somewhat over an hour later when they reached the park area where the alien ship had settled down. Billie was all excitement.

As soon as they had reached the barrier holding back the crowd, Klaatu sent a quick message to Gnut telling him where he was in the crowd.

He held the boy up so he could see better. "Well, Billie, I guess I'd have to agree with what they all are saying about it--that it's a spaceship that has come a long way. Almost certainly from far out in outer space."

"Yeah, that's what the TV says. But that big robot, is it alive?"

Klaatu transmitted the question as a joke to Gnut. The green giant merely

grunted his reply back to Klaatu's mind. He let the boy down. "Whether or not he is a real live creature is what those workmen are trying to find out. Although they won't find out that way."

"Why not?" Billie asked.

Klaatu glanced around. Perhaps it would be best, after all, if he didn't stay here too long. He knew that hundreds of pictures had been taken of him on his arrival. Even though he was now wearing different clothes and had the boy with him, someone just might recognize him.

"Billie," he said, "nothing seems to be happening here. How about showing me some of the city? This is all new to me."

Only for an instant did Billie show disappointment. "Sure, mister. I know Washington real well."

For the rest of the morning, the two wandered around some of the more prominent buildings and monuments. In Klaatu's eyes, most of them were architectural monstrosities. All he could see, in the government buildings especially, were block after block of stone structures with no grace, no beauty to them. Probably functional enough. But how inhibiting it must be for the workers who performed their tasks there. Workers? There must be hundreds of thousands of them. What possibly could they do?

By taking buses, the two were able to visit a number of the more spectacular monuments. One, especially, caught Klaatu's interest. It was a statue of a seated man, somber, almost sad. It was located in a colonnaded structure obviously built just for this one piece of finely carved statuary. Klaatu, the boy at his side, stood looking up at the serene, intelligent face.

"Who does this represent?" Klaatu asked Billie.

The lad looked up at him, puzzled. "Don't you know? Everybody knows about Lincoln and how he freed the slaves."

Klaatu nodded. He realized he must be more careful in asking questions that would reveal his lack of Earthly knowledge.

Cliff Sutherland was getting hungry. At noon, just about when he expected lunch to be brought to him, a police officer came and unlocked his cell.

"Out," was all he said.

"No lunch? No apologies?" Cliff asked with a smile.

"You news people give me a pain," the officer declared with some vehemence.

"You and your blasted freedom of the press. One would think you were a special breed of people."

"Oh, that we are." Cliff grinned as he said it.

Waiting outside for him, however, was an army officer, a major.

"You're to come with me," the major said, pointing to a military car at the curb.

"What if I refuse? I haven't had any lunch."

"Don't push me, young man. General Sanders wants to see you."

Cliff glanced around. Standing next to the door of the police station was the newsman to whom he had slipped the film earlier that morning. The man held up his fingers in the V-for-Victory sign. Cliff knew what that meant. The pictures had turned out. He grinned back at his friend.

Then, after taking his time getting into the military car, he turned to the major who climbed in after him. "What's all this about? At least the police had a warrant. You have no right to take me anywhere."

"I'm taking you to General Sanders. On his order. He'll do all the explaining. My job is to get you there. That's all."

After a block or two of silence, Cliff asked, "Anything happen at the ship this morning?"

"I wouldn't know. I've been waiting outside the police station all morning for them to release you."

"What does our jovial general want with me?"

"You'll have to ask him yourself."

Cliff shrugged. "All I did was what any newsman would do. I merely tried to get a story and some pictures."

The major turned slowly and glared at him. "It's the pictures you took last

night that has the 'jovial general,' as you call him, boiling mad. They're splashed all over the front page of the special edition of the Beacon-Dispatch. That much I can tell you. And I'll also tell you that General Sanders is not very happy. You're in deep trouble, Sutherland."

Chapter 8.

Cliff Sutherland didn't much like the idea of being grilled by that tough old termagent, General Sanders. But there was no help for it. No way to avoid it. When he was ushered into the general's private office, he fully expected to be raved at, bellowed at, and in fact assaulted with everything except physical blows. Maybe even that, too. Cliff knew that the press card in his pocket should protect him. But he had to admit, even to himself, that going into this office was a little like entering the cage of a hungry lion.

The general looked up. "Hello, Sutherland. Please take a seat." He motioned to the officer who had brought Cliff in. "You can leave, Major."

Cliff was so surprised by this completely and utterly unexpected behavior of the general that all he could do was slump down into a chair.

The general smiled. "You took some pictures of the alien spaceship last night. One of the local papers reproduced them in the noon edition."

"Yes, General, I took some pictures last night. I haven't seen the paper."

"Here is a copy. Take a look."

Cliff glanced down at the two pictures he had taken. They took up a quarter of the front page. "I'm not particularly proud of these pictures," he said.

"Nitidcam techniques still haven't developed quite far enough to get good clear pictures in the dark."

The general, still smiling, got up from his desk and walked over to the window. He stood there for a moment without speaking. Then he turned. His expression now was quite different--choleric, in fact.

"What the devil did you mean by stealing your way behind the barriers against my orders? And hiding there all night? And taking these ridiculous pictures?" He came up and shook his fist under Cliff's nose. Then he tried to laugh. "But that isn't what happened at all, is it?" he said in a low whisper. "You really didn't spend the night under the lecturer's platform, did you? You came in with the crowd this morning, and just pretended that you had been there all night. Isn't that so? And those pictures--you really didn't take them, did you? You news hounds will do anything to fool the public. Those pictures are fakes, aren't they?"

He glanced down at the young man. He continued his tirade: "How easy it is to fake black and white pictures. I know. My own men have done it many times. You used a picture of the ship at the time the aliens came down the ramp. You had an artist retouch out the aliens. Easy, Sutherland. Too easy for me to swallow."

He paused for breath. "That's it, isn't it? Fakes--both of them? Speak up, man. It isn't the first time you news photographers have faked pictures. It won't be the last. Admit it, Sutherland. Admit it--you faked them, didn't you?"

Cliff slowly got to his feet. "General Sanders, I have never faked a picture in my life. I never shall. I took those pictures last night just as you see them in the paper."

Sanders shook his head. "We're all alone here. The room is not bugged. You can tell me."

Cliff shook his head.

The general pointed a finger at him. "I have ways of getting the truth out of you."

"No doubt you have, General. But the truth is that I took the pictures and they are not faked. But tell me, General, what are you so all-fired upset about?"

"I'll tell you why. If you did as you say, then my orders were disobeyed.

There was a break in discipline on the part of my own men at the site. I don't

like it when my authority is challenged, especially by a news bum like you. I intend to break you, Sutherland. I intend to discredit you, so you'll..." He was interrupted by the entry of an aide. "A phone call for you, General. On the blue line."

General Sanders turned angry eyes on the man. "Unless it's the President, I'm too busy to take any calls."

"I think it's best if you take this call, sir."

Sanders muttered, "Who is it?"

The aide nodded toward Sutherland. "It's about him, sir. Jackson Grant, the publisher-editor of the Beacon-Dispatch, says he knows that this photographer is here with you. He says unless he is released at once, he'll report it on the front page of this evening's edition."

For a moment Cliff thought that General Sanders would literally explode with pent-up frustration. He strode angrily to the window. When he turned around, however, he had regained his composure. "You can go, Sutherland. But I advise you to stay away from that spaceship."

"You've shown me a lot of very interesting sights, Billie," Klaatu said. "But people don't live in these buildings. Where do they live?"

Billie looked up at him with surprise. "Gee, mister, you don't know anything about Washington, do you?"

"No. I have never been here before. Could you show me where the people live?"

"The rich ones... or the poor?"

Klaatu hesitated for a moment. "There is a difference?"

"You bet there's a difference. Mom and I are medium poor. We live in that crummy old rooming house. Not many left. But lots and lots of people are much poorer."

"Show me, Billie. Is it far?"

The boy shook his head. "You really want to go there? Just a lot of old, run-down buildings. Lots of kids on the street. Not very safe, either."

"Safe, Billie?"

"Yeah. But not so bad in daytime. Are you sure you want to go there?"

Klaatu nodded. They started walking. He made no comments as they walked down streets crowded with people, past buildings that may have once been attractive by Earth's ugly standards. And yet this too, however depressing, was what he had to know about if his mission was to be complete.

They had lunch in a snack bar. Klaatu and Billie were the only well-dressed ones in the place. Apparently it was a hangout for a neighborhood gang of tough boys and girls.

At first the youths merely looked over at the two with suspicion and distrust. When one of the young men came over and deliberately plopped down next to Klaatu, the place grew quiet.

"Aren't you out of your territory, mister?" the youth growled. Then he turned and grinned at the others.

Billie tugged at Klaatu's sleeve. "I think we'd better leave."

Klaatu slowly turned on his swivel seat and gazed into the eyes of the young rowdy. For several seconds he stared deep into them.

The young man seemed transfixed. Then, just as suddenly as it all had started, he jumped up laughing. He slapped Klaatu on the back and yelled out, "This place can use your money, mister." There was a puzzled expression on his face, however.

Klaatu and Billie finished their lunch in silence. After Klaatu had paid the bill, Billie steered him outside.

"Gee, I thought we were going to have trouble there. What did you do to that guy to calm him down?,"

"I didn't do anything, Billie. Now, young man, what are chances of seeing where some of the rich live?"

"We'd have to take a cab."

"All right. Then we'll take a cab."

It took a little doing, but they were finally able to hail a taxi. Billie directed the driver. Then, for the next two hours, they drove around through

the Virginia and Maryland areas where Billie remembered he'd heard the "rich" lived.

On the way back to the rooming house in late afternoon, they passed an elaborate complex of buildings. When Klaatu asked what it was, the cab driver spoke up. "That's a university. Big in science. And their scientists are the ones down at the alien spaceship tearing their hair out wondering how to get in."

"Scientists, you say?" Klaatu looked back at the structures. He was thinking. At the rooming house, Klaatu paid the driver. The fare was sizable for the long tour. As he looked at the amount of money he had remaining in the wallet he had taken at the hospital, he realized it was almost gone. Whatever he had to do, he would have to do in the next two or three days.

As they climbed the brownstone steps, he put his hand on Billie's head.

"Thanks, young man, for being such a good guide."

"See you at supper," the boy said as he bounded up the stairs.

Klaatu followed more leisurely and entered his room. At once he realized something was different. He sensed it. Someone had been there.

His only possession was the small piece of luggage he had taken from the hospital. The contents he knew were usual enough. But embossed on the outside were the initials CS. He frowned. It would be no trick at all for a suspicious person to report this to the police. Undoubtedly they were looking for exactly this bit of information.

He sat down on the edge of his bed and concentrated. He needed to find out what news Gnut had.

Chapter 9.

As soon as Cliff Sutherland left General Sanders' office, he had no doubt he was being followed. Which gave him an idea.

After hailing a cab, he told the driver to head for the Beacon-Dispatch building. Jackson Grant was the man he now wanted to see. In all Cliff's dealings with the paper, he had never been able to get in to see its publisher-editor. He made a private bet with himself that Grant's door would be open to him this time.

As he got out of his cab, he glanced back. As he had expected, a car slowed up and stopped in front in a no-parking zone. Another car forced its way into a small space behind the cab. He grinned. Let them waste their time.

The first person he met in the building was an old friend of his, another newsman, a man named Sid Lonergan.

"Ho--the hero returns!" Lonergan called out. Then he sidled up to Cliff. "Make Grant pay you through the nose for those pictures."

"His nose or mine?" Cliff laughed.

He headed for the elevator. Sid Lonergan was a great guy. It would be just like him to grab a phone in the lobby and call Grant's office that he was on his way up. Maybe that would give them enough time to roll out the red carpet. On the way up, he began to reconsider. After all, he had obtained two mediocre pictures. Nothing really to be proud of. On the other hand, all the other photographers hadn't obtained anything near as good. He'd have to milk it as he best he could.

When he reached the top floor where Grant's super-elegant office was, he was met at the elevator by Grant's secretary. Up until then she had never even given him a glance. Now she was all smiles.

"Cliff, my boy," she said sweetly, "Mr. Grant wants to see you right away."

With that she put her hand cozily under his arm and led him down the carpeted corridor. And it was red. Her pert, pixy face was alive with interest.

Just before she opened the door to Grant's private domain, she whispered, "Make him pay you well for those pictures. He calls it the scoop of the century."

The door opened.

Half a dozen men filed out. Obviously Sutherland's arrival had broken up an

important meeting.

Following the group was Jackson Grant himself. Florid, broad-shouldered, handsome, he had the look of an ex-football player, which he was.

"Come in, Cliff," he boomed out. "Come on in."

After they were seated in a corner "conference" area in the baronial room, Grant reached over and patted Cliff's knee. "Great stuff, Cliff. Those pictures were just great. Now, fella, how about trying to get some of the interior of the ship?"

Cliff sat stunned for a moment. Then he remembered Grant's reputation for fast talking and his famed talent for getting more out of his newspeople without paying them extra for it. He knew his best chance of getting anything substantial for himself was to get the discussion back on payment for what he had done, and let the future take care of itself.

"Mr. Grant," he said, "I'm glad you could use my shots. By now I suppose you have syndicated them to every paper in the country."

"In the world, actually."

"Well, Mr. Grant, as you know, I was in jail when I slipped the undeveloped film to your man. There was obviously no chance to make a deal. In other words, Mr. Grant, I am very anxious to know what I'll be getting for my pictures."

Grant leaned back and pursed his lips. "As you say, there was no deal. We are obligated, of course, only to pay the standard rate." He paused and peered at Cliff. "But that would not be very fair to you. I'm willing to go higher than than, say double the standard rate."

Cliff shook his head.

"Three times the standard rate?"

Again Cliff shook his head. "I'll sue you in court."

Grant sighed. "Yes, I suppose you would." He made a wry face. "I admit it's what I would do in your place."

He hesitated. "I tell you what I'll do. Let's go back to my earlier remark about trying to get some interior views of the ship. If you can do that, I'll let you almost set your own price."

"Only 'almost'?"

Grant thumped his right fist into the palm of his left hand and grinned. "I liked the way you used ingenuity to get those pictures last night. All our staff men fell down on the assignment. Of course you had to have a bit of luck on your side too. As I used to say when I was playing football for Yale, it isn't always how good you are, it's often how lucky you are. You seem to be lucky, Sutherland. If anyone can get into that ship, you can. I feel it. A hunch, you might say."

He stood up and faced Cliff. "We'll pay you well for the two pictures you took last night. But that will be peanuts to what you'll get if you obtain some interior shots. Want to try?"

Cliff was an expert at recognizing a con job. This could be one. Almost certainly was. And yet it wasn't exactly what he wanted to do anyway.

"I have a problem," he said.

"Don't we all?" Grant laughed.

"My problem is General Sanders. First, I want to thank you for using your influence to get me out of jail. And then, later, when I was being bullied by the good general, you came to the rescue just at the right moment with that phone call to his office. They were just about to put the bandage over my eyes as I faced the firing squad."

"Glad to do it," Grant said. "Sanders and I are old adversaries. He played tackle on the Army team we played in my sophomore year at Yale. I was the tackle opposite him. What's your problem with him?"

"General Sanders," Cliff stated, "has made it very clear that I am to stay away from the alien spaceship. Completely away. He even had me followed here just now."

Grant grinned. "Persistent devil, isn't he? Always has been. Well, I've an idea that just might knock him on his tail."

Grant reached for a phone. He dialed a number. "I want to speak to General Sanders. Oh, he'll talk to me all right. Tell him this is Jack Grant." After a moment's delay, he spoke again. "Sandy, I've got a proposition for you. I think you'll like it. As you can well guess, every reporter and photographer in the country is itching to get at that spaceship. I think I can swing it to call them all off and let just one man try to get something for all the media."

Grant glanced back at Cliff. "Yeah, Sandy, one man. Of course you'll have to give him clearance past your boys guarding the ship. Sure, Sandy, I thought you'd like it.... Who am I turning this assignment over to?... Now don't get excited, Sandy.... Sutherland is the... "

Cliff watched as Grant half choked in laughter. "Yeah, Sandy, it's Sutherland or you get the combined force of more newspeople than you have guards. Some of my girl reporters are pretty aggressive. Pretty and aggressive.... Take it or leave it, Sandy. One man or five hundred. And Sutherland is the man I want on this job."

After a minute or two, Grant hung up. He turned, his mouth widened in a broad smile. "You're it, Sutherland. Tomorrow night. The guards will let you behind the barriers. Then all you have to do is find a way to get into the ship. I'm depending on you, fella. All the newspapers and news magazines in the world will be relying on you."

"Thanks a lot," Cliff said as he stood up. "I'm glad you didn't make the date for tonight. I haven't had anything to eat since this morning. I'm dead-tired from being up all night and from battling with General Sanders. And wondering what, if anything, I'm going to get for those pictures you used today in the Beacon-Dispatch."

Grant patted him on the back. "Don't worry about that. You'll be handsomely paid."

But Cliff suspected, as he turned to go, that it was still the old con game. Klaatu spent the evening in his room. All day the pain had been increasing in his side. With all his ability to heal himself, he was not able to halt the gnawing, biting hurt that was such a stranger to his normally pain-free body. In his mind-talks with Gnut during the evening, he described the sharp twinges that came and went. Gnut had little to report on things happening at the site. He did say, however, that he had conducted the experiment with the slice of tissue he had taken from the Smithsonian lecturer. He said he had followed carefully all the instructions in the ship's memory records. The cells were growing, but he did not believe the experiment was going right.

Klaatu shut off the telepathic connection with the comment that he thought he had better get rest. The next day, he felt, might be the last one he could operate effectively.

Chapter 10.

Klaatu awoke with the full realization that time was running out for him if he were to accomplish what he wanted to do.

The White House, where the country's President lived, had been pointed out to him by Billie. It had the appearance of a fort. Back at the hospital, General Sanders had made it clear that it would be very difficult to get a private conference with the nation's chief executive. He suspected that his skipping out of the hospital probably made it even less likely he could get the interview he wanted.

The university? Perhaps there were scientists there who would listen to him. Not only listen, but believe.

He knew what he had to tell these Earthlings would be hard for them to understand and believe. But scientists dedicated to the search for truth might be a receptive audience.

On the trip to the university, he felt he should not take Billie along.

Yesterday he had used the boy as a guide. He had grown very fond of the lad.

If all humans were like him, there was hope for them. But today was different.

He'd have to go alone.

Before leaving his room for breakfast, he opened his thought-channels to Gnut. His friend and companion said that the number of soldier guards had been vastly increased. At least a dozen heavy war tanks had been brought up and were lined up in a half circle, with their guns pointed directly at the ship and at him.

Gnut also added that a group of what he assumed were scientists from the university had just arrived. They had brought a vast amount of testing equipment. He said it appeared they were going to try to break into the ship. Klaatu smiled. Of course! He wouldn't have to take the long trip out to the university. The very men he most wanted to contact were already at the ship. He'd meet them there.

He told Gnut he'd resume the talk after breakfast.

A few minutes later at the breakfast table, Billie was missing. His mother explained to Klaatu that it was a school day and the boy would not be available for trips around town. "I hope you haven't counted on him," she said.

He smiled. "A fine boy, Billie. No, I have my own plans for today."

She looked at him pensively. "Billie tells me that you seem not to know things about Washington that everybody else knows."

"That's right," Klaatu replied with a slight shrug. "I've been away a long time. In a far-off country. Really out of touch. Billie has been a big help." "I'm glad," she said.

He watched her as she got up from the breakfast table. He wondered what it would be like to live as a human? Perhaps married to a woman like this. Mating with her. Having children like Billie. The idea was completely alien to his background. But then--to these people he was the alien.

As he glanced around at the other boarders at the table, he shuddered to think what their reaction would be if he were to announce his true identity. Fear, certainly.

That too was a strange thing about these people of Earth. They lived in a world of continuous peril. From what he could see, mankind faced a never-ending threat of deadly wars, disease, pollution, floods, earthquakes, storms, starvation, and violent crimes. And while they feared these disasters, it was in a vague, abstract way. But let an alien ship arrive and the populace shrank back in terror. They could tolerate the daily dangers of murderous street traffic, but were stunned by something they could not understand.

On the way to his room, after breakfast, the army veteran walked up with him.

"Captain," he said rather belligerently, "you said you were a military man in a way, but had no military training. How did you get the rank of captain?"

Klaatu glanced quickly at the man. There was little doubt in his mind. The man was suspicious. Possibly he had been the one to enter his room.

"It's an honorary title," he said with a slight smile.

"Never heard of anyone getting a captain's title that way. Kentucky colonels, yes. But not captains."

"It happened to me," Klaatu replied.

The man stopped, peered at him, and then stalked away to his own room.

The dogs of suspicion and fear would soon be yapping at his heels, Klaatu realized.

Before leaving his room, he spent several minutes communicating with Gnut again.

The robotlike creature reported that the group of scientists were starting to set up their testing equipment and were already hard at work trying to find a crack or seam from which the ramp had emerged. He said they were buzzing around like insects. He also remarked they were showing some degree of ingenuity. He admitted that if Earth had many men with minds like these, humans, aggressively led, could become a strong and quite possibly a menacing force in the galaxy.

Klaatu asked him if there were any one man in the group of scientists that stood out above the others. Gnut said he had observed a not-quite-elderly man

who seemed to have the top respect of all the other men in the group. Before breaking the connection, Klaatu asked his friend if he thought the experiment was going to be successful.

"I did what the instructions told me to do. I put the tissue in the life-chamber. It grew. By tonight it should be full grown. I still am not sure of it. I suspect I may have taken too long getting the tissue into the chamber."

Klaatu said, "Just to make sure, try to get another sample of human tissue tonight. My time is running out here. I have another day or two at most. That bullet in my side is poisoning me in a way I can't seem to counteract. That's why I hope you know how to treat me when I do come in, possibly tomorrow." Klaatu walked leisurely down the street toward the site of the alien ship. As he expected, the crowds were so dense he found it very difficult to work his way through to the barrier.

As Gnut has said, besides the soldiers, there were about half a hundred men clustered around the ship. They were going over the surface with various instruments. Klaatu smiled. They'd never get anywhere with those primitive methods.

He sent a quick thought-message to Gnut telling him where he was in the crowd. The giant didn't move, but his eyes turned to look to where Klaatu was standing.

When asked to indicate which of the scientists Gnut had decided was their leader, he directed Klaatu's gaze toward a squat little man, gray hair sticking out from under a misshapen hat, and the brightest, keenest eyes Klaatu had yet seen in a human.

He waited near the checkpoint. For the rest of the morning he stood there motionless, knowing that sooner or later the group of scientists would leave, if for no other reason than to have lunch. In the crowds of milling people, he felt reasonably safe.

The man Gnut had singled out was the last to leave. As soon as he had passed the guarded area, Klaatu stepped out to stride along with him.

About 20 paces later, the scientist apparently noticed Klaatu for the first time. He looked up. "Is there something you want?"

Klaatu held out his hand. "My name is Stock. Captain Charles Stock. Could I speak to you privately?"

"Stock? I don't believe I know you. What is it you want to see me about?"

"The alien ship."

The man stopped. "What do you know about it?"

"That's what I want to talk to you about. I have some private information."

"Just a minute," the other said. "I have to tell my friends I'll not be having lunch with them."

A moment later he was back. He took Klaatu by the arm. "You know who I am?"

"No. I just know that the others look up to you as their leader."

The scientist shook his head. "If you don't know who I am, why did you ask to speak to me?"

"Because I think I can help you."

The other laughed. "We need help, all right. I've never been so baffled in my life. And you say you don't know who I am?"

"That's right."

"Well, young man, I am Eugene Klemper. I am a professor of astrophysics at the university. You are right in one respect. I am more or less in charge of the scientists and their efforts here to learn the secrets of the alien ship. And it's been very frustrating so far. What do you know?"

"I believe I can answer any question you are likely to ask."

"Oh you can, eh! Well, Stock, we'll see about that. Come, my car is parked near here. I'd like to hear how you're going to answer some of the questions that have been bothering me about that alien spaceship. I warn you, Stock, I'm a born skeptic."

Cliff Sutherland was not without a certain amount of physical courage. Years of working as a free-lance photographer, sticking his nose into people's private affairs, had trained him to act boldly. It was the only way to survive in this highly competitive profession.

Now, however, looking forward to the evening's assignment, he had tremors of fear. He still couldn't believe his good fortune at having Jackson Grant clear the way for him to be the only newsman admitted to the area. How that must have rankled General Sanders. And Cliff was not too sure that somewhere along the line the general wouldn't find a way to obstruct him.

What really bothered him was that he had not a single notion of how to get into the alien spaceship. Just because he had managed to get a couple of exterior shots didn't guarantee he could get interior views.

What had Grant said? "It isn't always how good you are. It's often how lucky you are." So far he had been lucky. Privately he didn't put too much faith in luck. Yet he was glad it seemed, at least for the moment, to be on his side. Early in the afternoon, he went down to take another look at the ship. The crowds were too dense for him to plow through. He did manage to climb some steps and look over the heads of people.

Gnut still stood, sullen and mute, in the exact same spot he had taken just after the humanlike alien had been shot on their arrival. Only he, Cliff Sutherland, had seen any real evidence that the robot creature had moved. Even then his memory was shaky of that terrifying moment when he saw the robot slowly approach the platform under which he had hidden.

But tonight--by hook or by crook or just plain good luck--he would have to try to get into the star-traveled spaceship.

Tired and apprehensive about the night ahead, he went back to his apartment. A few hours of sleep, a good dinner, and he felt he would be better prepared for the ordeal ahead.

Traveling through Washington street traffic with the wildly erratic Professor Klemper at the wheel made Klaatu wonder how the human race had ever survived. After about an hour of dodging and twisting, of one close call after another, they arrive at a modest suburban house set back from the street..

"My humble home," Klemper said as he ushered his guest inside. After they had entered, he turned and faced Klaatu. "I can't understand it. I don't know you. I've never seen you before. And yet, for some reason or other, I felt I had to trust you. I can't explain it. Perhaps you can."

Klaatu smiled. "Possibly it's because we need each other. You need my help. I need yours."

"Help in doing what?"

"I had hoped that the President of your country would hear me and call a meeting of the heads of state of all your world's nations. I have not been able to effect a meeting with him. Also I'm told that the countries are too inimical to each other for their representatives to sit down together."

"Unfortunately that's true enough," Klemper agreed. "But why did you want our President to call such a meeting?"

"Because I have a message for all the people of the planet Earth." Klaatu paused as he looked at the perplexed expression on the professor's face. "I am a messenger. My real name is Klaatu. I am the alien who came on the spaceship."

For a moment Klemper stared, then he burst into laughter. He looked over his guest from head to foot. "You're as human as I am. What's your game? You're no alien."

Klaatu shrugged. "Test me."

Klemper grinned and went to a desk in the corner of the room. After rummaging around for a few minutes, he came up with a rolled-up sheet of paper. He unrolled it and handed it over to the other.

"It has always been my belief," he said, "that if and when we of Earth came in, contact with intelligent life from other worlds, we would likely find them far advanced over us. Especially in mathematics and the physical sciences."

This is an equation on which I have been working for several weeks. I'm stuck. If you are truly the alien, you should be able to tell me how to solve it." Klaatu took the paper over to the window for better light. For several minutes he studied the scribbled hodgepodge of figures. Then, picking up a pencil from the desk, he began to make corrections, additions, and deletions. In 10 minutes he handed the paper back.

For several minutes the professor studied the changes Klaatu had made. He glanced up, his eyes bright with excitement.

"I lied to you," he said. "It's true that I spent several weeks to work out this equation. None of my colleagues could help. Only yesterday I solved it. What you had was the draft I made before I solved it."

Again he peered down at the sheet. "Working out this equation proves you have a high order of knowledge of physics and mathematics. But it still doesn't prove you are the alien. That is just too fantastic to believe."

He put down the paper. He went on, "You still haven't told me why you came to me."

Klaatu's expression grew grim. "My mission to your world is to deliver a message. Actually a warning. I had hoped I could find a way to reach all your people everywhere, in all countries."

He paused, then continued hesitantly. "If I can't talk to the political leaders of the various nations, is it possible, Professor Klemper, to get a representative group of scientists together to hear my message? I would wish them to be responsible, recognized men of science whose word would be believed. I admit my presence here on Earth is somewhat unbelievable. I realize these men would have to be convinced that I am who I say I am."

Professor Klemper shook his head. "I told you I am a born skeptic. Most scientists are. What you are telling me is very intriguing. But I would need proof--real proof--before I'd stick my neck out by calling such a meeting."

"What kind of proof?"

Professor Klemper smiled. "Probably some kind of miracle. We scientists, who are bound by our training and our intellect by the basic laws of nature, are highly skeptical of anything that seems to violate those laws. That's what a miracle would have to do. A true miracle." Slyly he added, "You couldn't perform one for me right now, could you?"

Klaatu smiled. "No, I cannot violate what you call the laws of nature. But I can do things which might seem, in your eyes, to violate them."

Klemper walked over to the front window and looked out. "The traffic," he said, "is especially heavy on this street right now. I see an old lady on the other side of the street waiting for a chance to cross. I know her. She is feeble and walks very slowly." He pointed. "Stock, or Klaatu, or whoever you are, could you stop the traffic so that she can cross safely?"

Klaatu came to the window and looked out. He saw the old lady. He saw the heavy stream of cars giving her no chance to cross. He stepped back.

"Professor, if you will look out now, you'll see the traffic has stopped and the lady crossing safely."

Klemper stood, mouth open, as he gazed at the complete cessation of every car on the street. He rushed to the front door and ran out. As far as he could see in both directions, all traffic had stopped. Not a vehicle of any kind moved. Already people were getting out of their cars, puzzled at what had happened. Even the old lady who had been the cause of it all stood confused on the sidewalk near the professor as she shook her head in wonder.

Half in a daze, he returned to his study. He stared at Klaatu.

"Then you really are the alien?"

Klaatu nodded.

"How did you do that? How could you stop all those cars?"

"As I said, I cannot violate the laws of nature. I merely turned off all electrical power all over the world. Not unnatural for me."

"But that must have included planes and trains and elevators and machine tools and all things run by electricity. The death toll from accidents will be tremendous."

"No one was killed or even hurt. If you'll look outside, you'll see the cars are moving again."

"If that isn't a miracle, I hope never to see a real one," the professor said in awe. "I'm convinced. I'll be glad to call a meeting of the world's scientists. Unlike the political leaders, our men and women of science have no hesitation to meet with each other. It will take at least a week to get them here."

"Not a week, professor. It will have to be tomorrow. In front of the spaceship."

Klemper sank into a chair, rubbing his forehead. "There is a meeting of science leaders going on currently in New York. I know the moderator. I'm sure I can get him to bring all those attending the meetings to Washington. And I'll contact all universities to send their top scientists. I'll have a representative group for you tomorrow."

He stood up, still a bit unsteady on his feet. "Can I take you somewhere?"

"No, professor, you'll be doing your part if you spend the time calling the meeting. I'd like to walk back to my place. Although I admit the traffic frightens me."

Klemper half choked as he laughed. "You shouldn't be frightened of traffic. All you have to do is wave your hand and the way will be open to you."

"Not really," Klaatu said as he opened the front door to leave.

Chapter 12.

Cliff Sutherland awoke from his nap to find that he had not slept four or five hours as he had intended, but only a little more than an hour. It was still mid-afternoon. Worst of all, he knew from the way his mind was churning with thoughts of the evening ahead that it would be useless to try to get any more sleep.

He got up, showered, shaved, and dressed in old sports clothes. His crawling around under the lecturer's platform two nights before had ruined his best suit. No use wrecking another.

He went down the street to a small restaurant he often visited when he got tired of his own cooking. On the way he bought the latest editions of such papers as were handled by the news vendor on the corner. The first pages, he could see, were entirely devoted to the alien ship.

Reading the stories, he realized how puffed-up and empty they were. Actually the newspaper writers were reaching out for any angles they could think of. Cliff knew how little they had to go on and sympathized.

Chief emphasis was given to the failure of the police to locate the missing humanlike alien. A boxed editorial at the top of the front page of the Beacon-Dispatch accused the police of gross inefficiency. After taking the alien to the hospital they had carelessly let him get away. Cliff wondered why the police were being blamed for this when it was his understanding that the military was responsible. At any rate, it had been the police's task to find the alien when he did escape. And for that they were truly negligent.

Each of the papers carried original pictures of the two aliens as they descended the ramp the day after their arrival. Hopes were that by running the pictures, the police would be able to trace the alien. Someone might recognize him.

Cliff thought how unfortunate it had been for that crazy nut with a gun to be able to get off a shot. Only a few minutes more and the alien would have been able to finish what he obviously started to say when he introduced himself and his robot companion.

What a look of good will was on the alien's face. It was the face of a person to be trusted, to be believed, even to be honored. Now he was merely the object of an intensive police search.

One zealous leader of a religious sect said he believed it was the coming of the Messiah. Mostly, however, it was agreed that the alien ship was just that--a spaceship visiting Earth from outer space. Men prominent in the

science field generally decried the military reaction to the coming of the ship. The military leaders, on their part, said it was their duty to protect against what might be an enemy with weapons greater than any known to humankind.

"Well, well, I just thought I might find you here."

Cliff looked up from his reading. It was his friend, Sid Lonergan.

"Some guys have all the luck," Lonergan muttered as he sank down in the seat opposite. When the waitress came, he ordered a cup of coffee.

He pointed at the pile of papers. "Not much real stuff, is there? Those pictures you got of the ramp and the open door are about the only good things that have come out of this whole mess. How did you manage it, Cliff?"

Sutherland laughed. "Nothing to it. I just aimed my little Brownie and pressed that little button on the top--you know the one--and oops, I got me a couple of very lousy shots."

Lonergan sipped at his coffee. "Say, Cliff, how did you come out with Jackson Grant? Did he open the bank vaults to pay you for those two pictures you call lousy?"

"He's a tough one, Sid. I really don't know yet what I'm going to get for them."

Lonergan shook his head. "Don't let him get away with it. He still thinks he's playing tackle for good old Yale. He'll con you if he can." He leaned back.

"Heard the latest?"

"What's the latest? I've been taking a nap. Wanted to be fresh for tonight."

"Then you missed it. All newsmen are to be barred from going anywhere near the ship tonight."

"Oh that! Yes, I guess I did hear something to that effect."

"But what gets me," Lonergan added, "is that there's a rumor that the news syndicates have agreed to let one man represent them all. Everybody else is barred."

Cliff shrugged.

Lonergan peered at him curiously. "Hey, you don't seem to be worried about it. All the rest of us guys are pretty upset. You might even say we're boiling mad. Aren't you mad, too, Cliff?"

When he didn't say anything in reply, Sid Lonergan put down his coffee cup and stared across the table. "Don't tell me--you're the one, Cliff! By the shades of Horace Greeley and our revered Saint Pulitzer, this is beyond belief."

"I didn't say I was," Cliff replied weakly.

"But you don't deny it." Lonergan looked around furtively, then leaned forward and whispered, "You can tell me, old buddy. And afterward, perhaps you can give me a few extra tidbits to put in that ratty column I scribble out every day. How did you ever pull it off?"

"It's a long story, Sid. Keep it under that thatch of curly hair of yours and I'll do what I can for you. No promises though."

Lonergan grinned. "I won't breathe a word of it. But tell me, Cliff, how the devil did you get the dispensation, this special act of providence, this break of a lifetime? More important, how do you plan to carry it off? What is your scheme? Are you going to try to get into the ship? That's what the news people keep yelling for--interior shots."

"Frankly, Sid, I haven't the foggiest idea what I'm going to do tonight. All I know is that I'm supposed to try to get into the ship and take pictures. The only real break I have is that the police are keeping all the rest of you newspaper bums out. I'm to be allowed past the barriers. The police and the military, as I understand it, are to let me wander around at will."

"But you must have some idea of how to get into the ship."

"Not an idea. Just a kind of feeling, a hunch. Our football hero, Jackson Grant, said he thought I was blessed with the magic touch of luck. Let's hope he's right. It's the only thing I've got going for me."

Lonergan stood up and started to make his departure. He stopped. "Say, Cliff, I forgot to tell you the strangest thing of all. An hour or so ago I was barreling along in my old crate and it stopped dead in the middle of the

street."

"What's so strange about that, Sid? That pile of junk of yours should have been scrapped years ago."

"What's strange is that every car in sight was stopped in the same way. And stayed stopped for about three minutes. I got out to look at my engine. By the time I had the hood up, I saw that traffic was starting up again."

"There's nothing in the papers about it."

"As I said, Cliff, it only happened about an hour ago. I turned on my car radio and from what I heard, it happened all over the world. All electrical power stopped at the same instant. Very strange. A plane at National was just taking off. A second or two later and it would have crashed. Pilots of planes in the air said they simply flew along without power for about three minutes." Cliff looked up at his friend. "Are you thinking the same thing I am?" Loneragan nodded. "What else? The demon alien strikes his first blow." Sutherland laughed. "One religious group thinks he's the Messiah come to save humanity."

"Not the Messiah," Loneragan replied. "He's more like the Avenging Angel." Cliff sighed. "Whether he's the Messiah or the Avenging Angel or just plain Joe playing a trick on us, I'm committed to trying to find out tonight. What we lens ounds won't do for an extra buck or two."

Loneragan put both hands on the table and leaned over toward Cliff. "If I were you, I'd see Jack Grant before, not after, you tackle that robot tonight. Get Grant to give you a big advance. You're doing his job for him. He should pay you well. Then on your way out of his office, put the chit in an envelope addressed to me. That way, if the robot wins the bout tonight, all will not be lost."

"A true pal, you are."

"Anything for a friend," Loneragan said as he walked away.

Cliff sat for a moment longer and pondered. Was it going to be that dangerous? Was he really risking his neck? After all, two nights before, Gnut had seen him and yet did not crush him when he scrambled under the platform.

Was it a sign that the robot was friendly? He had to hope so. But could he count on it? Any thought of tangling with that green metal monster in any physical way was horrifying.

And yet what was he to do? He could get a gun. But he had a feeling that if the scientists couldn't penetrate the robot's shell with their probing gadgets, a gun would be of little value in subduing the robot. Did he even want to? His best bet had to be to get Gnut's cooperation. Apparently only the robot knew the secret of how to open the panel door. And somehow he had to get that door open... and enter!

And there was that point Loneragan had raised about getting at least an advance before, not after, the risks were taken. If by chance he was killed--heaven forbid--Grant would be paying nothing. Cliff's mother could use the money.

He pushed himself away from the table, paid his bill, and for the second time in two days headed for the Beacon-Dispatch building.

He found the place in a turmoil. He soon found out why. The three-minute cessation of power that afternoon had created near panic all over the world. A special edition was being hurriedly put together. A reporter friend of Cliff's explained that news flashes were coming in from everywhere on the strange phenomenon. Trains had slowed down for the three minutes. Elevators had stopped between floors. Machine operations in factories had been interrupted. But the strangest part was that not a life had been reported as lost. Not even an injury.

When Cliff tried to get in to see Grant, he was told the publisher-editor was not available to anyone. Turning away, he sighed. He thought, there goes any chance for an advance. He'd have to go ahead with the assignment on speculation.

Speculation? How could he speculate what was going to happen to him in the coming hours?

Chapter 13.

Klaatu was in his room in mid-afternoon when a tap came on his door. It was Billie.

"I'm sorry I couldn't be with you today," the boy said as he entered.

"That's all right, Billie. I had things to do myself today."

"What do you do, mister? I mean Captain Stock?"

"Oh, mostly I'm a traveler."

"Like a traveling salesman?"

"In a way, yes."

"What do you sell?"

"I guess you'd say I sell ideas."

Billie looked puzzled. "How can you sell ideas?"

Klaatu smiled. "It isn't easy. Especially if people are afraid of the ideas you are trying to sell."

Billie grinned up at him. "I guess I know what you mean. My teacher at school is always trying to tell us about ideas. Sometimes it's hard to understand her." He looked around the bare rooming house room. "Say, I've got the rest of the afternoon free. I could go somewhere with you."

Klaatu reached out and touched the boy's unruly mop of hair. "There's nothing I'd like better, Billie. But I'm not feeling too well right now. I thought I'd read these newspapers, have dinner, and go to bed early."

The lad looked disappointed. "Not real sick are you? Want me to ask Mom to call a doctor?"

Klaatu shook his head. "It's nothing that can't be fixed up. In a couple of days I'll be all right again."

"Gee, I hope so." Billie glanced down at the papers which Klaatu had purchased. "Crazy police," he said. "They still haven't found the man from the spaceship. Wonder where he's been hiding?"

Klaatu grinned. "Probably been right under their noses all the time."

Billie looked down at one of the papers. It showed a view of Klaatu and Gnut as they came out of the ship after their arrival. Klaatu was in his argent body suit. The boy glanced up at Klaatu. "You know, mister, you look a little like the alien." He took a second look. "You really do."

Klaatu picked up the paper for a closer look. "Yes," he said, "I suppose there is a resemblance."

The boy turned to go. "Wish we could go somewhere. I like you." At the door he hesitated. "Don't let those crazy cops pick you up because you look a little like the alien. See you at supper."

After the lad had gone, Klaatu looked again at the newspaper picture of himself. Yes, it would be risky to go out on the streets any more than necessary. Someone, even one of Billie's "crazy cops," might get suspicious. It was dangerous enough to face the other boarders at the dinner table. Tomorrow it would be all over, he hoped. He would talk to the scientists Professor Klemper assembled. Then he and Gnut would get back in the ship and be off.

Yes, and once back in the ship, Gnut by then would know how to solve the problem of the lead bullet that was slowly but surely bringing death to his all-but-immortal body.

Gnut was amused at the frantic activity all around him. Klaatu had already "told" him of his meeting with Professor Klemper and the so-called "miracle" he had performed to persuade the professor to call the meeting of the scientists.

The buzzing group of university people were just as busy as ever in mid-afternoon when Professor Klemper returned. After calling his colleagues together, they quietly picked up their various pieces of testing equipment and departed.

All day, Stillwell, the man from the Smithsonian, had been giving his lectures over a loud speaker. Every hour on the hour. Each talk lasted 20 minutes.

Gnut hoped that the lecturer would give him another chance to clip off a bit

of his flesh. The first snip, he was beginning to believe, had been only partially successful. He knew now where the trouble was--too long a time between the actual cutting and getting it safely into the life-chamber in the ship. Perhaps tonight he could get at one of the soldiers who were guarding the area.

Or better yet--that photographer fellow might return. He was a bold one. He'd not hesitate to come close. Even close enough to be made unconscious and be carried into the ship. Then he could snip off a bit of his flesh and place it immediately into the chamber.

Klaatu was somewhat apprehensive about having dinner with the other boarders. He was even tempted to stay in his room and do without the meal. This Earth food was filling enough--but the taste was either too sweet or too sour or too spicy. It had none of the pleasant bland smoothness of the concentrated food he carried on the ship. Gnut was lucky. He never ate. Periodic electric charges kept him going.

On the other hand, it would likely be his last meal with humans. Billie had been a delight. The boy's mother, too, had been very warm and friendly. The others--he had hardly gotten to know them in the short time he had been there. He decided it might seem suspicious if he failed to appear. Billie might tell them of his illness and they'd call in a doctor. That was something he had to avoid.

The others were all seated when he came in. Billie's mother was the first to speak up. "I'm glad you could come. Billie says you're ill."

Klaatu took his place. "It's nothing to worry about. In a couple of days it will be all fixed up, I know what it is and how to correct it."

The old army veteran broke in. "Just before you came in, Billie was saying how much you look like that picture of the alien that's in all the papers. And blamed if you don't."

Klaatu laughed. "Billie told me not to let what he calls those 'crazy cops' pick me up by mistake."

"It is strange," the veteran went on, "that the alien has been able to hide out all this time without getting caught. Wonder what he's up to? Could be out poisoning our water supply. Or planting deadly germs. Or putting bombs in important spots. Or learning military secrets for a possible invasion. That was very peculiar the stopping of all electric power this afternoon. Lights and everything. I just bet it was that alien's doings."

"Oh now, Ralph, don't get started on that again," one of the women boarders stated.

"More likely he's here on a perfectly peaceful mission," Billie's mother declared with some vehemence. "Wouldn't you guess that to be more likely, Captain Stock?"

All eyes turned toward him.

"Only time will tell," he said. "Maybe he'll come out of hiding soon and tell why he came."

Klaatu sat quietly in his room all evening. Mostly he read the several newspapers and magazines he had obtained with almost the last of his stolen money.

He went through the papers from front page to back. From news items to sports events to beauty chats to horoscopes to classified ads, everything. It was, he knew, one way to get a good cross-section view of these people who inhabited Earth.

He read of wars in Africa and Asia, of army maneuvers in Europe, of coups and revolutions in South America. He was shocked to find stories of millions starving to death in India. The waters of the world, he learned, were in sadly polluted condition, as was the atmosphere over congested cities. Inflation, which he assumed meant the continual rise in price of things, seemed to have got out of hand almost everywhere. The stories of crimes, of murders, of vandalizing filled whole pages of the papers. He even read with mounting revulsion how vast numbers of young people were addicted to mind-crushing drugs.

The planet, what he had seen of it in those first few orbits around the globe, had seemed to be a pleasant enough place. He shuddered at what the articles in the papers told him. How stupid these Earthlings must be to despoil their nest--the only nest they would ever have.

Twice during the evening, Klaatu "talked" with Gnut. Each time the robot reported that the area was being cleared of all people. Stillwell, the Smithsonian man, had left. The soldiers had set up a new wire fence back some distance from the original one. All personnel, including the soldiers, had gone back behind the new barrier. More than that, all spotlights had been turned off in the area.

A moment later Gnut reported that one man had just entered the enclosed area and was coming toward him. He said it was the news photographer. Before breaking off the connection, Gnut told Klaatu that he thought this could be the opportunity he had been looking for--to get another, fresher sample of human tissue.

Chapter 14.

To Cliff Sutherland it was a strange feeling to be escorted by a squad of soldiers through the mass of people surrounding the double row of wire fences and then through the checkpoint entry.

Briefly he spied his friend, Sid Lonergan, who waved to him. Somewhere in the group of military men assembled near the line of tanks he suspected would be General Sanders. Probably foaming with rage. Even Jackson Grant might have condescended to come down from his ivory tower in the Beacon-Dispatch building.

But it was he, an obscure free-lance news photographer, who was suddenly the cynosure of all eyes. Actually he felt like a Christian martyr being led into the arena.

He saw Gnut standing in his usual place at the front of the ship. Then, as had been promised, all lights in the area went out. A moan of disappointment went up from the crowd.

Cliff hesitated for a moment, trying mentally to untie the knot that was in his stomach. He felt he needed at least a short breathing spell to restore strength to his shaking, quivering legs.

It took him only two or three minutes more to walk toward the towering figure of the giant robot. Although the floodlights had been turned off, there was still some light coming from street lamps adjacent to the park. He had no trouble seeing where he was going.

Finally, stopping only an arm's length from the green monster, he mumbled fearfully, "I come as a friend, Gnut. I bring you no harm."

Looking up, Cliff could see Gnut's red coals of eyes staring down at him.

There was no warmth in those eyes. Nor coldness either for that matter.

Cliff glanced back. He could see the street lights and the lighted windows in distant buildings. The crowd and the tanks were blended in with the darkness of the trees and bushes in the background.

He felt completely alone....

He was wondering what next he could say or do when, without warning, a metallic arm reached out. A hard but gentle hand seized his arm. He felt himself led the few steps toward the spaceship. Then, amazingly, he heard the robot speak. Just three words or what sounded like three words.

In the darkness he could still see enough to know that the panel door was opening and the ramp was being extended.

A moment later, he felt himself being pushed with unexpected gentleness up the sloping ramp. Clutching both his regular and his Nitidcam cameras close to his chest, he offered no resistance to the giant's steady pressure on his back. At the top of the ramp he tried to take a quick look back at what he could see of the city behind him.

Washington--would he ever see it again?

An instant later, he was inside and he sensed the closing of the door. He

looked around. There was a dim glow to everything. It seemed not to have any single source. Instead, the walls, ceiling, and even the floor emitted the same low-grade illumination.

He was in a curving corridor that apparently led, spiral-fashion, around into the core of the ship. He heard a moan from ahead--the kind of moan a human makes when ill or hurt.

With Gnut's metallic hand still pushing him on, he came at last to the open central area. And there, lying on a low pallet, was Stillwell, the Smithsonian lecturer. He was moaning and struggling to get up.

Too surprised to be frightened, Cliff ran over to the obviously ill man.

"Stillwell," he cried, "what's wrong with you? How did you get in here?"

The sick man peered up at Cliff with pain-filled eyes. "Where am I?" he asked in a faint voice. "What am I doing here? I need a doctor. I'm very ill."

Cliff stood up, facing Gnut. "What have you done to this man? He needs medical attention."

Gnut ignored the questions Cliff had thrown at him. Instead he very carefully and efficiently pulled back the sleeve of Cliff's jacket and took a slight slice of his flesh. This he rushed over and plunged it into the large glasslike chamber located in the center of the area.

Cliff looked down at the cut. It was hardly even that. A few drops of blood were the only evidence of what Gnut had done to him. Indeed, what had Gnut done to him? What was the alien creature up to? A cut so small it could be ignored--what did it mean?

While Gnut's back was turned, he quickly unlimbered his cameras. Whether or not he ever got out of this spot alive, he was determined this time to get pictures.

He peered around. It was clearly the center core of the ship. The walls were made of the same luminescent material as the corridor had been. At one side was what looked like a circular TV screen. It was not lighted and seemed almost like a black hole in the surrounding glow. Next to it were a few flashing lights which Cliff had to assume had something to do with the operation and control of the ship. One thing, the place was not anything like the complex interiors of Earth-designed interplanetary ships.

He took a half-dozen pictures with each of his cameras. Gnut still stood rigidly intent as he manipulated controls on the glass chamber.

Cliff knelt down next to Stillwell. The man had fallen into a comalike condition. He felt his pulse. It was light and feathery.

"Gnut!" Cliff cried out. "This man is dying. Can't you do anything for him?"

The green monster, appearing even more sinister in the faint light, slowly turned and came over to stand next to Cliff.

"Nothing can be done for him," Gnut said in a clicking voice that was clear enough, but strangely unhumanlike.

"But this man is dying," Cliff shouted. He sprang to his feet and ran toward the corridor by which he had entered. A weakness came over him. His limbs refused to carry him forward. He fell, arms outstretched. His last thoughts were that he had to break his fall as best he could.

Gnut peered down at the two human figures at his feet. One was dying as he expected. The other was merely unconscious from the mind-blow he had used to stop him. They could wait. Now he had much to do.

He returned to the glass chamber in the center of the room. He resumed the moving of controls which had been interrupted by the photographer's outburst. He watched intently as the cells in the tissue he had removed from the photographer's arm began to multiply. They looked healthy. The increase in numbers of cells went on at a fantastically rapid pace. This time, he thought, he would be successful in the experiment.

The instructions he had read in the ship's print-out had been explicit enough. Even though he had never performed this experiment in the past, he felt confident that he now knew why he had failed with the tissue from the Smithsonian lecturer and why he would succeed now. The secret was in getting the tissue into the life-chamber quickly enough.

He looked around at the two men on the floor. Stillwell was still alive, but just barely. Gnut had covered him with a sheet of silver cloth. Otherwise he was as nude as when taken from the chamber. He doubted if the human would be alive by morning. No matter. The new test should prove out satisfactorily. As the hours went by, Gnut stared at the growing mass of cells coming into being in the jellylike solution of the chamber. As the cells took form, he saw a new Cliff Sutherland emerging from the churning, boiling fluid.

Gnut had complete confidence this time that he now knew the procedures he would have to use to give new life to Klaatu when he returned.

Klaatu had "told" him he was dying. With this life-chamber and its special fluids, Gnut would give him new life. A new life and a new body. But with the same mind, the same memories, the same high purposes, the same gentleness, the same kindly character he had had before.

Finally the process within the glass chamber slowed to a halt. Gnut unfastened the lid and helped the new Cliff Sutherland out.

The man stood shivering in his nakedness. Then he shook his head as though doubting what he saw. He glared at Gnut.

"What am I doing here without my clothes?"

Gnut handed him one of Klaatu's silvery garments. "Put this on."

Once he was dressed, Cliff glanced around. His eyes came to rest on the figures of the two men near the wall. He strode over to look down at them.

"Why, this one is Stillwell, the lecturer." He leaned over the body. "And he's dead."

"Yes," Gnut said. "He died during the night." He pointed to the second figure.

"The other one is not dead. In fact he is you!"

"Me?" the man whispered. "Yes, now I remember. I came here to get pictures. My cameras--where are they? But who is this other man?" He went over and turned the face toward him. "Me! It is me!" He stared up at Gnut. "What have you done? How can there be two of me?"

He rushed over and shook his other self awake. For a moment the two Cliff Sutherlands stared at each other, unable to comprehend. Then both, with the same impulse, stood up and faced Gnut.

"Why?" they cried out as one. "Why have you done this?"

Not getting any answer out of the robot, they again turned and looked at each other in wonder and awe.

"Well, Cliff Number Two, what do we do now?"

"This is the damnedest thing."

Cliff One reached over and picked up one of his fallen cameras. "I know what I'm going to do--get more pictures."

"Let's set the self-timer and get a picture of the two of us together. I've a feeling that one of us could disappear any second now."

Cliff Two peered over at his twin. "I'm the artificial one, I gather. Anyway I just got out of that glass chamber, and I was naked until the robot gave me this body suit. Just to get it straight, however, I believe I am your exact double up to the moment Gnut took a slice of my flesh. I haven't the slightest idea what you're thinking right now. That should mean we aren't the same being in two bodies. My guess is that, by some impossible technical means, our friend Gnut has literally created me out of that bit of flesh he took from me--no, I mean, from you--last night. I remember coming into the ship. I remember speaking to Stillwell and pleading with Gnut to help him. I remember his taking the knife to me. The next I knew he was helping me out of that big glass chamber over there."

Cliff One: "You don't remember taking any pictures?"

Cliff Two: "No, did I... or did you?"

Cliff One: "If you can't remember that, then your memory doesn't go any further ahead in time than when the tissue was taken. It was after he did that to me, while his back was turned that I took a number of shots. Then I went back to Stillwell and saw he was dying. I tried to run back down the corridor. I went blank. As I reconstruct it, we have the same memories up to the moment of the taking of the tissue. After that we are two distinctly different

persons."

Cliff Two: "Not different. Amazingly alike. I've heard of cloning, but this is way beyond anything like that. I was apparently made overnight." He laughed. "Sort of a one-night miracle."

Cliff One glanced over at Gnut who was standing in front of the black hole in the wall, staring at it. "I think we'd better make some kind of effort to get out of here."

Hearing these words, Gnut turned and faced them. "In a few minutes I'll take you both out."

Cliff Two jerked his thumb toward the life-chamber. "Tell me, Gnut, what is the secret of that device?"

"Secret? It's no secret. You humans know it, but are afraid of it. To duplicate cells rapidly, we use the principle of what you call cancer. In the chamber we accelerate cell growth tremendously. Always under strict control. I heard you use the word 'cloning.' That is part of the process too. With living tissues we clone. Then under greatly speeded-up conditions, we let the cells grow into an exact duplicate of the person from whom the tissue was taken." Cliff One pointed at Stillwell's body next to the wall. "Then that is not really Stillwell, but his cloned duplicate?"

"That is correct. I was too slow in getting his tissue into the life-chamber. The result was imperfect. That's why I used you for the second experiment. I wanted to make sure I knew the experiment could succeed."

"But why?" Cliff One asked.

In his strangely hollow, clicking voice, Gnut replied. "I have just been in contact with Klaatu. It is time now for me to take you outside."

Chapter 15,

General Sanders, stiff and tired from his long night's vigil in the area restricted to the military, grumbled to one of his aides.

"I'll give it one hour more. If nothing happens in that time, I'll give the order to blast our way into the ship. That news photographer, Sutherland, has been there all night. If he hasn't been able to get out by now, it probably means he can't. I have the President's word to do whatever I think best."

He saw Jackson Grant approaching. "Good morning, Jack," he said testily.

"Hello, Sandy. Having trouble deciding what to do next?"

"I suppose you know what we should do."

"Oh no, Sandy. It's your job to do. It's my job to report on what you do and tell the wonderful public what you do or don't do."

Grant glanced around. "Lots of high-powered military equipment here. If my man, Sutherland, doesn't come out soon, what are you planning to do to try to save him?"

For the first time General Sanders' expression lighted up. He actually smiled back at the newspaper executive.

"Jack," he said, "remember that last game we played against each other in New Haven? Yale was supposed to grind us weaklings from Army into mincemeat. What you didn't know was that we had a secret weapon. And, as you'll remember, against all odds, we won."

Grant wrinkled his brow. "I try never to remember anything about the games we lost. But I do sort of remember that you won that game. We never could figure out how you did it. What was your secret weapon?"

For some time Sanders held back his answer. Then, with a wide grin, he said, "Me! I was the secret weapon. I never let you make a single tackle of our runners."

Grant guffawed and slapped the general on the back. "And I suppose now you have another secret weapon to solve the problem of how to get into the alien spaceship? Those tanks don't look very secret to me. What is it this time, Sandy?"

The general smiled broadly. "It's still me."

At that instant, a major came up and whispered in the general's ear.

Sanders grunted and punched Grant lightly in the stomach. "A report has just come in that our missing alien has been posing as a Captain Charles Stock. When the police went to the address where he has been staying, they found he had just left. They think he may be headed this way."

He grinned. "And I'll be waiting for him."

Klaatu awoke with the sound of tapping at his door. Billie's mother was standing there. She was dressed in skirt and sweater.

"May I come in?" she asked as she peered back nervously at the empty corridor behind her.

He held the door open and she slipped into the room.

For a moment she merely stared at him. Then she smiled a wan smile. "Tell me truthfully--are you the alien who came on the spaceship, the one they are searching for?"

When he didn't answer, she went on. "You needn't fear I'll report you. I came to warn you."

When he still didn't speak, she continued. "I just heard that army veteran who was needling you at the table last night make a call on the phone in the hall. When I heard him mention your name, I listened. I very clearly heard him say he thought you were the alien. He gave this address."

Klaatu's eyes never left her face. "Why are you doing this for me?"

"You were good to Billie. I see no evil in you."

"What do you suggest I do?"

"Get dressed at once and leave by the back door. Get away before the police come. They'll be here any minute. Have you any place to go?"

Klaatu, holding his side, shook his head. "Only back to the ship. I had intended to go today anyway. I need Gnut to treat my wound."

Billie's mother looked at him anxiously. "Billie said you were ill. A wound, you say? Perhaps I should take you to a doctor."

"No, only Gnut knows what to do." He paused. "You're doing all this for me, and I don't even know your name."

"It's Ellen. Ellen Hansen, Now hurry."

When she opened the door to leave, Billie was standing there fully dressed. He had obviously been listening.

"Hey, I know a good way to get out," he said.

Klaatu patted his head. "All right, Billie, you can be my guide again. First I'll get dressed."

As he was putting on his clothes, he heard a siren.

Billie let out a cry of dismay. "Hurry, or we'll never make it."

The boy preceded his mother and Klaatu down the back stairs to a small yard that abutted an alley. Already they could hear a car speeding along the alley in their direction.

Billie led them to the board fence at the left. With a kick he pushed in two of the boards. He pointed that they should slip through.

In the neighbor's small yard Billie explained. "There's a tough bunch of kids that hang out in the alley. This is how I get past them--by going through the back yards."

At the rear of the last house on the block, Billie led the way around the building to the street in front and across to the row of buildings on the other side. Down the street in front of the rooming house three police cars were standing crisscross with top lights blinking furiously.

Billie hurried them between two buildings to the next street and then on for three or four more blocks. More sirens could be heard as additional police cars came racing in from all directions.

Slightly out of breath from their hurrying, Billie looked up at Klaatu in awe.

"So you really are the alien? Wait until I tell the kids at school."

"Yes, Billie, I am what they are calling the alien."

"And speaking of school," Billie's mother spoke up, "I think that's where you should be heading now."

Billie's face fell. "Can't I go with you?"

Klaatu shook his head. "Your mother is right. I'm sure I can get to the

spaceship by myself now."

His feet dragging, Billie reluctantly left them.

Klaatu started to say, "A fine boy you have there, Mrs. Hansen, a fine... " He grabbed at his side and would have fallen if she had not held him up.

"I'll be all right if I can rest a moment."

She shook her head. "At least I can stay with you until you reach your ship."

Ellen Hansen gave him a long appraising look. "It's obvious you can't walk far the way you are. I'll see if I can hail a cab."

Klaatu watched her from the sheltered doorway where they had stopped. Ellen was a pleasant name. Leaning on her, he had sensed a strong inner strength. She had a warmth to her that was reassuring to him. Once, at the rooming house, he had wondered what it would be like to live as an Earthling, to live day by day with a woman like Ellen Hansen, sharing her thoughts and her love. It was only a fantasy in his mind, he knew. He had a duty to perform, a mission to complete. That came first.

And yet--Ellen Hansen symbolized for him what was best about these Earthlings. Vaguely he wished he could stay longer on this planet to find how many more were like her....

He turned his thoughts to Gnut. In a quick telepathic message, he told his robot companion that he was on his way back to the ship. He listened to Gnut's warning that the military had surrounded the ship with guns and tanks. He was to use caution.

Chapter 16,

Cliff Sutherland Number One motioned to his counterpart and pointed. "Gnut is leaving. If we ever hope to get out of this trap, we'd better follow." Together the two identical Sutherlands, one dressed in sports attire, the other in Klaatu's silver body suit, hurried after the robot-monster. They were just in time to see the door slide open and the ramp emerge. They watched as Gnut stood in the opening, his gaze on the mass of people assembled beyond the barriers. The robot seemed to be waiting for something.

The two Cliff Sutherlands stood just behind him, peering around his huge metallic body. One minute all was quiet as though the crowd was stunned by the appearance of the robot. The next instant, squads of soldiers were pushing back the people in a kind of frenzied effort to clear the way for their tanks to get closer.

Cliff One shuddered. What did the military hope to accomplish by that? Were they actually thinking to destroy Gnut and the ship? That crazy General Sanders. He knew the general was determined and desperate enough to do anything, even that.

Then an amazing thing happened. Two figures slipped through the checkpoint that was being guarded by a line of armed soldiers. It seemed almost as if the men stood paralyzed. At least no effort was being made to stop the two. Cliff One grabbed at his twin. "That's Klaatu. And a woman is with him. She's holding him up. He's hurt."

Slowly, the tall, thin figure of Klaatu was helped along with the support of the woman. Gnut strode down toward the bottom of the ramp to meet them.

Cliff Two nudged his counterpart. "We'd better jump while we can. I don't want to be around if Sanders suddenly gets the mad idea of shooting off those popguns of his."

The two Cliffs moved down behind Gnut. They glanced around at the slowly advancing pair. At the same instant, they saw General Sanders rush out from the shelter of one of the tanks, yelling for Klaatu to stop.

Struggling to hold Klaatu up, the woman was obviously near the end of her own strength.

Cliff One could see the rage on General Sanders' face. Then he saw something else. The general had pulled out his revolver and leveled it at Klaatu. He yelled once more. Then, with the alien not heeding the warning to stop, he fired.

Klaatu faltered for a moment. Then fell. His body sprawled out awkwardly on the ground just short of the bottom of the ramp. The woman fell on her knees next to him, half throwing her body over his to prevent any more shots hitting him.

Cliff Two had shouted a warning. He pushed past Gnut and bounded down to the fallen figures. General Sanders' revolver sounded again. Cliff Two stumbled as the bullet hit him. Then he too fell.

Cliff One, almost in shock at what he had just seen, hurried to the bottom of the ramp. He reached it at the same moment General Sanders turned and faced him, gun still in hand.

"Murderer!" Cliff cried out.

The general put his gun back into its holster and waved for some soldiers to come up. He looked down at the dead body of Cliff Two and then back at Cliff One.

"It can't be," he said hoarsely. "There can't be two of you. He's dressed as an alien. I thought it was another one like Klaatu that was coming out." Cliff glanced around. Already Gnut had lifted Klaatu's body and was carrying him back up the ramp. The woman who had come with the alien was following. On a sudden impulse, partly motivated by an intense desire to obstruct any further effort by Sanders to stop Gnut, Cliff moved up directly behind the robot. He even half turned to look down at Sanders as though defying him to fire again.

He followed the robot inside. He heard the door close behind him. Only then did he realize with horror that he was now truly trapped within the alien spaceship.

General Sanders groped his way almost blindly back to where his aides waited for him. He seemed in a state of shock.

Jackson Grant chortled. "Sandy, old boy, my photographers got some excellent pictures of you using your 'secret weapon.' Only to me it looked more like an ordinary government issue thirty-eight."

Sanders rubbed his hand across his forehead.

Grant went on. "I've already told my people what headline to put on the extra we're getting out. It's GENERAL SANDERS WAGES WAR SINGLE-HANDED AGAINST ALIEN INVADERS."

The general looked up, a sick expression on his face. "The President said I should do what I thought best. The alien was trying to get back to the ship. Another twenty seconds and he would have made it... with the help of that woman. There was no time to order anyone else to do what had to be done." He looked around. "Something happened to the checkpoint guards. I was the only one with authority to act. There's no telling what deviltry the alien has been up to in the past few days. Apparently he had human help. In another few seconds he would have got away. As I understand my duty, it was to stop him. I called out. I yelled. He didn't stop. That's when I did the only thing left for me to do."

"And the news photographer?" Jackson Grant asked. "How do you justify shooting him?"

"I thought he was another alien. When he came out of the ship with the robot, he was wearing one of those silvery suits like Klaatu wore when he arrived."

"You did a good job of shooting, Sandy. Two shots. Two dead bodies."

"Are you sure the photographer is dead? I remember seeing Sutherland going back with the robot after he had picked up Klaatu's body."

"Yes, he's dead, Sandy. You definitely killed my man, Cliff Sutherland. I have already identified him. He's dead all right. Very dead. Oddly enough I also admit I saw someone else who looked like Sutherland shield the retreat of the robot. Whoever it was went into the ship with Gnut and the woman who came with Klaatu."

"How do you explain that, Jack? More aliens, do you think, masquerading as humans? Is that possible, Jack?"

"I don't know, Sandy. But I'm sure going to try to find out. Almost my whole staff of reporters is here. They'll get to the bottom of this."

Cliff Sutherland felt for the door that had just closed behind him. In the dim light he could see no breaks, no handle, no possible way to get out. Still in a half daze from all that had happened, he made his way slowly to the central core area. There he saw a strange tableau. The woman who had come with Klaatu was bending over the alien's motionless body. Gnut was taking a slice of flesh from Klaatu's arm.

He watched as the green monster unfastened the lid of the life-chamber and delicately inserted the tiny piece of tissue.

"Is he dead?" he asked the robot.

Gnut apparently noticed him for the first time. "No. He is not dead. Not yet. But he is dying."

Cliff watched as the metal creature fastened what looked like electrodes to various parts of Klaatu's body. For the next half hour Gnut took turns manipulating dials on the life-chamber and watching Klaatu's reactions to what Cliff believed were electrical jolts to his system.

When Klaatu finally opened his eyes and looked up at Gnut, he said something in a language Cliff did not understand. Then he noticed Ellen Hansen and smiled. He started to get up. Both Cliff and Ellen helped support him.

"I'll be all right in a few minutes," he said in English. He peered over at the life-chamber and then quizzically at Gnut.

The robot nodded. "It's going well this time."

For several minutes Klaatu walked up and down. With each step he seemed to be stronger.

Cliff Sutherland held out his hands beseechingly. "I don't know who are. Or where you come from. Or why you are here. All I can say is that we humans have certainly bungled your visit. Not all of us are as evil as it must seem to you."

Klaatu smiled as he put his arm around Ellen's shoulders. "I know that. If all Earthlings were like Ellen Hansen, you'd have a wonderful world. Actually what happened had to happen. Possibly even for the best."

"How can murder and violence ever be for the best?" Ellen broke in.

"Violence there has been. The very intensity of the violence might serve to give greater meaning to the message I still hope to deliver."

"And the murders?"

"Stop and think. There have been no murders. I was shot and the body you see here will die. But already Gnut is preparing a new body for me in the life-chamber. I will be just as before. No real death there."

"How about that other one like me?" Cliff spoke up.

"His body was created by Gnut merely to test out the procedures he would have to follow to recreate me. But did he ever really exist as a true human? As in the case of the recreated Smithsonian lecturer, the real Stillwell is alive. Just as you are alive, Cliff Sutherland, the real Sutherland."

"And now what happens?" Cliff asked. "Will I be permitted to leave the ship? And your friend, Ellen, will she be allowed to leave?"

"Of course. In a few minutes I'll be strong enough to carry out the final act of our mission here, the last act of this old body of mine."

General Sanders, still trying to regain his composure, looked up at the fuzzy-haired man facing him.

"I am Professor Klemper. You'll have been told that the President has put me in charge of the scientific investigation of the alien ship. I talked personally with Klaatu, the alien, yesterday. He told me to get together as many of the world's leading scientists as I could and to be here this morning. All I could contact are here with me--several hundred of them. I would like your permission to have them go through the checkpoint and approach the ship."

"No use, professor," Sanders replied gruffly. "Klaatu is dead. The ship is closed. We have no way of getting in, short of blasting it open."

Jackson Grant interrupted. "Sandy, admit it. You've goofed. Perhaps these people have a secret weapon that is more powerful than your thirty-eight or even your tanks. Something stronger--like empathy. If I were you, I'd let them see what they can do." Then he added dryly, "It couldn't be worse than what

you've done."

Sanders sighed and motioned to one of his aides to admit the crowd of scientists. The men and women, obviously nervous, moved forward until they stood in a group before the spaceship.

Professor Klemper, his face white with anxiety, took a place at the very front. For several minutes nothing happened. Then a sigh went up from the group. Klemper looked up and gaped.

The panel door of the ship was opening. The ramp was slowly being extended. The first to appear was Cliff Sutherland. He lifted his arms over his head and shouted, "Klaatu has a message! He suggests that the barrier be let down so that all the people can hear what he has to say."

By the time Cliff had descended to the bottom of the ramp and had joined Professor Klemper, the people had literally pushed over the barriers and were crowding up in the open space in front of the alien spaceship.

Only after a semblance of quiet had been restored did the figure of Klaatu appear. Never had he looked more godlike as he moved part way down the ramp. The silver body suit he had just put on shone with reflected light from the morning sun. His face seemed to be illuminated as by an inner glow.

Ellen Hansen followed and stood a scant half step behind Klaatu. Her hand reached out to touch him as though to give him strength by her presence. Gnut, following, handed Klaatu a small round object which Cliff assumed to be a voice amplifier. He lifted it to his lips. The words came out clearly and strongly, rolling to the outermost limits of the park.

And a deep hush fell on the people assembled....

Chapter 17,

Klaatu began slowly and carefully, letting his amplified voice carry to the very limits of the huge crowd....

"Gnut and I have been sent here to Earth to bring you a message. We represent the thousands upon thousands of completely different types of sentient beings to be found in our galaxy. To be able to communicate with you, we have made a point of studying recordings of your broadcasts. That is why I can speak to you in your own language."

He paused and looked down at the crowd of scientists just below him. He went on:

"Professor Klemper and his fellow scientists will be interested to know that we have located and investigated five hundred and eighty seven thousand habitable planets in our galaxy which you call the Milky Way. In other words, there are over half a million planets where we have found life in some form or other.

"On many of these planets life has advanced far beyond anything you on Earth have ever dreamed of. Still other planets are at various stages of development, as you are here on Earth. Some planets have reached no further than primordial slime.

"The civilizations that Gnut and I belong to are called the 'Watchers.' It has been the task of the Watchers through the eons of time to monitor the development of life on the various worlds. You might say that we are the guardians of peace and order throughout our vast galaxy.

"We do not either aid or hinder the development of thinking life on any planet. That is not our purpose. Only when it appears that a culture has developed its destructive powers to the point where they threaten others, do we act.

"First, we warn, as I am doing now with you. Then if the warning is not heeded, we simply eliminate the offending world. Elimination means total and utter destruction. Nothing is left but ashes. Our sole aim is to keep the various cultures of the galaxy free to evolve in their own way without fear of being overrun and enslaved by aggressive predators.

"Through the ages, we the Watchers have visited your planet many times. But only as observers. We were pleased at first with your evolvement from a

hunter-forager people to an agricultural culture. Unfortunately you did not give up your strong hunting-killing instincts. As you grouped yourselves into tribes, and later into what you call nations, your more ambitious leaders became more powerful. Wars happened more and more often. And they became more deadly.

"In our visits here to watch your development, we have been appalled by this strong human characteristic--this lust for killing.

"Even then, we the Watchers would hesitate to recommend that a world be eliminated simply because it is committing communal suicide. If you want to kill each other off, we merely watch in disgust and horror. But we do nothing.

"It's not only by wars that you are running your deadly course to self-destruction. In our visits we have been shocked to see how thoroughly you are despoiling your beautiful world. And beautiful it is. Or was until only a century or so ago. Thousands of other civilizations in the galaxy would gladly exchange their home planets for yours. Many of those worlds are bitter cold. Or they swelter under stifling heat. Or they suffer raging storms. Or they are plagued with noxious fumes. Yours, indeed, is a well-favored, bountiful, beautiful world.

"What's wrong is that you are ruining it. At the rate you are going, within another two or three generations; wars will be an unimportant factor in your mad rush to kill yourselves off. Polluted water, polluted air, over-population, loss of moral standards, starvation, crime--all these things will combine to bring disaster to the planet. Only the strongest, the most greedy, the most ruthless will survive to breed a new race of predators--a race that could truly become a menace to other worlds in the galaxy.

"You might ask--why do we bother to warn you if you are dooming yourselves? Why? Because in the last century you have made greater advances in the art of destruction than in all your millions of years before. You have learned to control and use nuclear power. Properly employed, it leads to general welfare. Used for aggression, it becomes a dangerous weapon. Nuclear fission leads to nuclear fusion, then to the use of hydrogen, then on to developments you still have not yet imagined.

"When these scientific developments are used for peaceful purposes, we do not interfere. But when we the Watchers find them becoming a potential threat to the peace of other worlds, we warn.

"You, the people of Earth, have reached the danger point in your development. We can no longer merely watch. That is why I am here, to bring you my message of warning.

"Your hunting-killing instincts must be controlled. If not, your next step inevitably will be to travel out beyond your own solar system and try to conquer those peaceable worlds which have no defenses against you.

"Is my warning made up of empty words? Is it an idle threat? Are we the Watchers really able to eliminate all life on Earth in one mighty blow?"

"All I can say is that early yesterday afternoon I visited Professor Klemper who stands there below me now. He challenged me to prove to him that I was truly an alien being with unusual powers. I said I could easily prove this by stopping electric power all over your planet for three minutes. I also said that in spite of the hazards involved in such a test, no one would be harmed, not a life lost. What happened yesterday is merely a small demonstration of what we the Watchers are capable of doing."

Klaatu stopped as though weakened by his long speech. Both Ellen and Gnut stepped closer to hold him up. Then he went on, his voice noticeably weaker.

"As I said at the beginning, this is merely a warning. For the past several days I have lived among you. I have eaten of your food. I have walked your streets. I have seen where your poor live and your rich. I have met people who are good and kind. You have many good people among you. If you are to correct your ways, you must use them as examples."

He paused and smiled down at Ellen. Then he turned back to face the crowd.

"So here, my friends, is my warning and my advice. You have only a generation or two to change direction. Just as we the Watchers eliminate worlds that will

not heed our warnings, so you too must learn to eliminate those among you who are the killers and the despoilers. That is your task."

Klaatu took a step backward. He motioned for Ellen to go on down the ramp to where the others were waiting.

At the door of the spaceship, he turned slowly and looked down at those below him--at Professor Klemper and Cliff Sutherland and Ellen Hansen and the whole multitude of silent people. He said one more thing:

"We will continue to watch. In the time you have left, you will go either one way or .. the other. It is up to you. But this I will say--we will be watching...and waiting...."

THE END,