

Chapter 11 The Green Palace

I found the Green Palace, when we came to it at about midday, to be empty and falling into ruin. The glass in its windows was broken and large pieces of green material had fallen off the walls onto the ground. It stood high on a grassy hill and, looking towards the north-east before I entered it, I was surprised to see a large river where I thought Wandsworth and Battersea had been in the past. I thought then of what had happened or might be happening to the living things in the sea.

'Along the front of the palace I saw writing in an unknown language. I thought, rather foolishly, that Weena might help to understand this, but I only learned that the idea of writing had never entered her head. She always seemed to me, I imagine, more human than she was, perhaps because her love was so human.'

Inside the large door – which was open and broken – we found, instead of the usual hall, a long room lit by many side windows. At first look I was reminded of a museum. The floor was thick with dust, and an interesting collection of strange objects was covered in grey dust too. Then I noticed, in the centre of the room, the bones of a large animal. They lay on the floor in the thick dust, and in one place, where the rainwater had come through the roof, some had almost been destroyed.

'This made me feel sure that I was in a museum. Going towards the side I found shelves and on them I found the old familiar glass cases of our time. They had kept the air out; the objects inside were still in good condition.'

'I continued walking and found another short room running across the end of the first. This appeared to be full of rocks, in which I had little interest, so we didn't stop. The next room appeared to be about natural history, but everything had changed so much that it was unrecognisable. A few blackened things which had been animals many years before, a brown dust of dead

plants, that was all! I was sorry about that, because I wanted to know how people had learned to control nature.'

'Then we came to an enormous room, which was very badly-lit. Every few metres, white glass balls hung from the ceiling – many of them broken – which suggested that the place had had electric lighting. On either side of me were large machines, all in bad condition and many broken down, but some still quite complete. I wanted to stay among these because I could only make guesses at what they were for. I thought that if I could learn to understand them, I would have powers that might be useful against the Morlocks.'

'Suddenly Weena came very close to my side, so suddenly that she surprised me. I woke out of my dream and then noticed that the floor of the room went downhill. I had come in at an end that was above ground, and had a few tall thin windows. As you went down the room, the ground came up against these windows, until finally there was only a narrow line of daylight at the top.'

'I had moved slowly, thinking about the machines, and had been too interested in them to notice that it was getting dark. Then Weena's increasing nervousness made me realise that the room ran down into thick darkness. I stopped and, as I looked around me, I saw that the dust was thinner there. Further away towards the darkness, it appeared to be broken by a number of small, narrow footprints.'

'I felt that I was wasting my time looking at this machinery. I remembered that it was already late in the afternoon and that I still had no weapon, no safe place and no way of making a fire. And then down at the far end of the room I heard the sound of footsteps and the same strange noises I had heard down the well.'

'I took Weena's hand. Then, getting a sudden idea, I left her and turned to a machine on which there was a long metal bar. Climbing up, and taking this in my hands, I put all my weight on