

'I think I went a little mad. I remember running violently in and out of the moonlit bushes all round the sphinx and frightening a small white animal that I didn't recognise. Then, crying and shouting, I went down to the great building of stone. The big hall was dark, silent and empty. I lit a match and continued past the dusty curtains.

'There I found a second great hall, where about twenty of the little people were sleeping. I have no doubt they found my second appearance strange, as I came suddenly out of the quiet darkness with mad noises and the sudden light of a match. Perhaps they had forgotten about matches. "Where is my Time Machine?" I began, shaking them with my hands.

'This behaviour was very strange to them. Some laughed, but most looked very frightened. When I saw them standing round me, I realised that it was foolish to try and frighten them. Judging by their daylight behaviour, I thought that fear must be forgotten.

'I threw down the match and, knocking one of the people over as I went, I ran across the big dining-hall again, out under the moonlight. I heard cries of terror and their little feet running this way and that. I don't remember everything I did as the moon moved slowly up the sky. I know that I ran here and there screaming, then lay on the ground near the sphinx and cried. After that I slept, and when I woke up again it was light.

'I sat up in the freshness of the morning, trying to remember how I had got there. Then things became clear in my mind. I understood the wild stupidity of my madness overnight and I could reason with myself. "Suppose the worst," I said. "Suppose the machine is really lost – perhaps destroyed? I should be calm and patient, learn the ways of the people, learn what has happened and how to get materials and tools – then, in the end, perhaps, I can make another machine." That would be my only hope, perhaps, but better than giving up. And it was a beautiful and interesting world.

'But probably the machine had only been taken away. I must be calm, find its hiding-place and get it back by force and cleverness. I stood up and looked around me, wondering where I could wash. I felt tired and dirty and rather surprised by my emotional state the night before.

'I made a careful examination of the ground around the little lawn. I wasted some time in useless questions, asked, as well as I could, to the little people that passed. They all failed to understand what I meant. Some simply said nothing; others thought it was a joke and laughed at me.

'The grass told me more. I found a line in it. There were other signs around, with strange narrow footprints. This made me look again at the pedestal. It was made, as I think I have said, of metal. It was highly decorated with metal panels on either side.

'I went and knocked at these. The pedestal was hollow. There was no way to pull to open the panels, but perhaps if they were doors they opened from inside. One thing was clear enough to my mind: it wasn't difficult to work out that the Time Machine was inside that pedestal. But how had it got there?

'I saw the heads of two people dressed in orange coming through the bushes towards me. They came and, pointing to the pedestal, I tried to make them understand my wish to open it. But at my first move to do this they behaved very oddly. I don't know how to describe their faces to you. They looked insulted.

'I tried a sweet-looking man in white next, with exactly the same result. He made me feel ashamed of myself. But as you know, I wanted the Time Machine and I tried him again. As he turned away, like the others, I lost my temper. In three steps I was after him, took him by the loose part of his robe round the neck and began pulling him towards the pedestal. Then I saw the fear on his face and I let him go.

'But I wasn't beaten yet. I hit the metal panels with my hands. I thought I heard something move inside – to be exact, I thought