

When, at last, I took my eyes from it for a moment, I saw that the rain was stopping and the sky was growing lighter.

'Then I suddenly realised the full danger of my journey. What might appear when the rain stopped? What might people be like? Had they perhaps changed into something inhuman and very strong? I might seem like an old-world wild animal, but more frightening because I looked like them – a horrible creature to be speedily killed.'

'Already I saw the shapes of enormous buildings, and a wooded hillside growing clearer through the dying storm. I turned quickly to the Time Machine and tried hard to turn it the right way up. As I did so, the grey rain suddenly stopped and the sun shone through the clouds. My fear grew stronger and I fought hard with the machine. It moved under my attack and turned over. It hit my chin violently. One hand on the seat, the other on the lever, I stood breathing heavily, ready to climb inside it again.'

'But now I had a way of escaping, my confidence recovered. I looked with more interest and less fear at this world of the future. In a round opening, high up in the wall of the nearest building, I saw a group of figures wearing soft robes. They had seen me, and their faces were turned towards me.'

'Then I heard voices coming nearer. Through the bushes I saw the heads and shoulders of running men. One of these appeared on a path leading straight to the lawn where I stood. He was quite thin, just over a metre high, wearing only a long purple shirt tied at the waist with a leather belt. Noticing that, I realised for the first time how warm the air was.'

'He seemed to be very beautiful, but also very weak. At the sight of him, my confidence returned. I took my hands from the machine.'

Chapter 4 The People of the Future

'In another moment we were standing face to face, I and this weak creature from the future. He came straight up to me and laughed into my eyes. I noticed immediately that he had no fear in him. Then he turned to the two others who were following him. He spoke to them in a strange and very sweet-sounding language.'

'There were more coming, and soon a little group of perhaps eight or ten of these beautiful people were around me. One of them spoke to me. I don't know why, but I thought that my voice was too strong and deep for them. So I shook my head and, pointing to my ears, shook it again. He came a step forwards, stopped and then touched my hand. Then I felt other soft little hands on my back and shoulders. They wanted to make sure that I was real.'

'There was nothing at all frightening in this. In fact, these pretty little people had a relaxed and childlike gentleness that made me confident. And also, they looked so weak that I could imagine myself throwing the whole group of them to the ground.'

'But I made a sudden movement to warn them when I saw their little pink hands touching the Time Machine. Fortunately then, when it wasn't too late, I thought of the danger that I had forgotten. Reaching over the bars of the machine, I took out the little levers that would make it move. I put these in my pocket. Then I turned again to the little people to see how I could communicate.'

'Looking closer at their faces, I saw some strange differences in their sweet prettiness. They all had the same wavy hair, and this came to a sharp end at the neck and below the ears. There was none growing on their faces, and their ears were very small. Their mouths were small, too, with bright red, rather thin lips. Their