

BBC Television for Schools

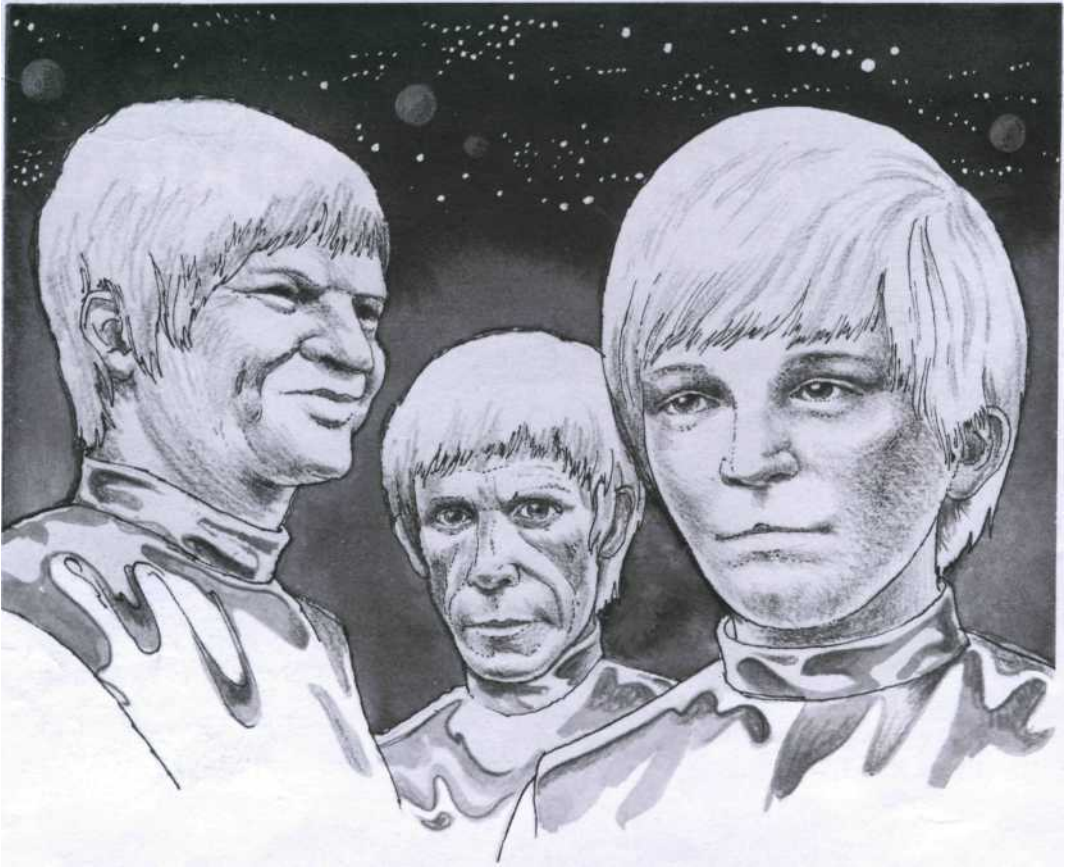
The Boy from Space

by Richard Carpenter

Drawings by Alan Burton



A Look and Read Book
New edition



Helen



Tom

Mr
Bunting

Dan

Chapter one **The meteorite**

This is a story about something that happened when Dan and I were children. Dan is my brother. One day we decided to make a telescope because we wanted to look at the stars at night. Our friend Tom had told us how to make it. We made the telescope in our old hut in the fields.

When we had finished it, I looked at the trees through the telescope. It made the trees look so big that I could see a bird clearly in one of them.



'We can look at the stars tonight,' I said.

'We can't see them now because the sun is too bright.'

'Let's look at the sun then,' said Dan. I was shocked.

'No, Dan, you must never look at the sun with a telescope.

Don't you remember what Tom told us?'

'He said the light would be very bad for our eyes,' said Dan.

Tom was a friend who worked for a man called Mr Bunting at the observatory. They had very big telescopes there for looking at the stars. Tom had told us that some stars were millions of miles away so their telescopes had to be very strong.

'Let's take our telescope up to the observatory, so Tom can see it,' said Dan.

When we got to the observatory, Torn had just put a tyre on his car. Dan wrote down the number of the car in a note-book. He collected car numbers.

The number was OND 884B.

'Look, Tom,' I said. 'We've finished the telescope.'

Tom took the telescope and held it up to his eye.

'That's very good,' he said.

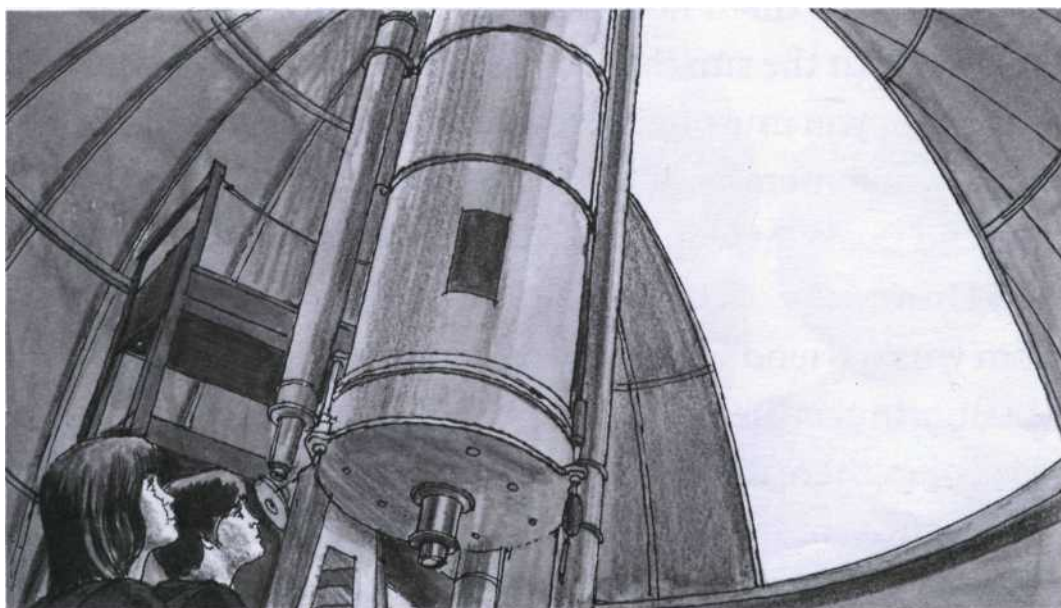
Just then Mr Bunting came out of the observatory.

'What are you doing here?' he asked.

'We came to show Tom our telescope,' I said.

'They want to find out about the stars,' said Tom.

'Splendid, splendid!' said Mr Bunting. 'Would you like to look around the observatory?' We were very pleased.



The first telescope he showed us was huge. It was in a huge round room. When Mr Bunting pressed a switch, the roof opened and the telescope turned right round to look at the sky outside.

'This telescope is different from yours,' said Mr Bunting. 'There's a mirror inside it. The mirror reflects the light from the stars and makes them look bigger. We call it a reflecting telescope.'

There was a bigger telescope in another room.

'This one is like your telescope but much bigger,' said Mr Bunting.

He pressed a switch and the roof opened up. The light was so bright, it made us blink. The telescope turned round and looked at the sky.

'We can take pictures of what we see through the telescope,' said Mr Bunting. He showed us a big photograph of hundreds of stars.

'There are lots more stars in space,' said Mr Bunting.

'How big is space?' asked Dan.

'Space keeps going for ever,' said Tom.

For ever! I could not imagine that. Then Mr Bunting picked up a strange-looking stone and said,

'This came from space. Stones like this shine in the sky as they fall. We call them meteorites.'

'They get so hot that they shine like stars,' said Tom.
'I wish I could find a stone from space,' said Dan.
'A meteorite,' said Mr Bunting.

That night, I was looking at the stars through our telescope. I badly wanted to see a meteorite falling, but I did not imagine I would. Suddenly, I *did* see something.

'Dan!' I cried. 'Look!'

We did not need the telescope to see the bright light coming down over the trees. I could not believe it.

What could it be?



Did you know this about telescopes?

*The biggest telescopes are *reflecting telescopes*. They have a curved mirror to catch the light coming from a planet or star, and to make an image big enough to see. The mirror of the biggest telescope of all is 6 metres (19 feet 8 inches) across.

*Another kind of telescope has a lens like a magnifying glass to catch the light and make a bigger image. These telescopes are called *refracting telescopes*.

*A *radio telescope* catches radio signals coming from space and not light. A radio telescope works like a huge television aerial. It looks like a giant saucer.

Chapter two **The spinning compass**

Dan and I looked at the bright light.

'Is it a meteorite?' asked Dan.

'It's very big,' I said.

'It's going down over the trees!' said Dan. We watched it disappear.

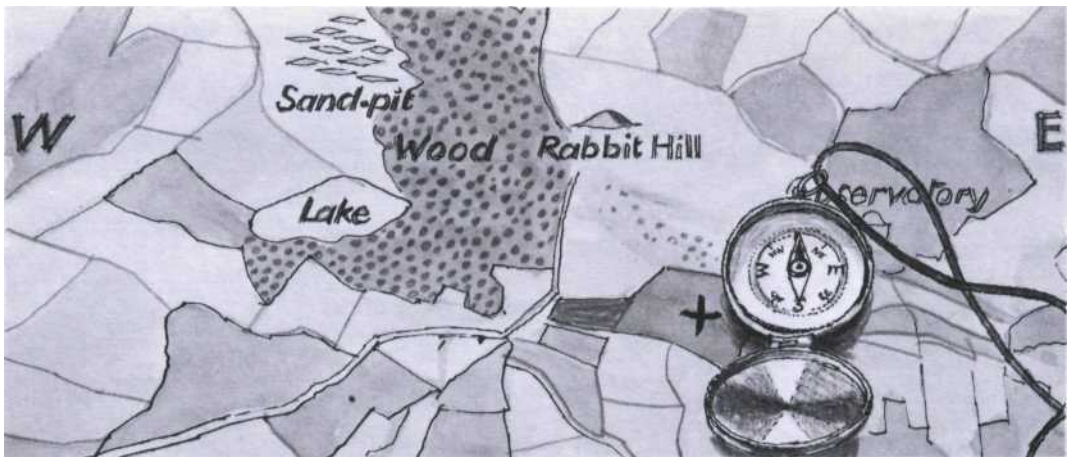
'Let's go and find it!' cried Dan. But I knew we should not look for it at night.

'Then let's look in the morning,' replied Dan.

'Keep the telescope as it is.'

So we left the telescope pointing towards the trees. In the morning we went back to the hut. We had a map with us and Dan had his compass. We knew the light had disappeared behind the trees. Dan looked at the map.

'This is what we can see through the telescope,' he said. He made a cross on the map. 'This is where we are now.'



He put his compass on the cross. 'The trees are north-west from here. That must be where the meteorite fell.' He pointed to the map. There was a wood marked on it. 'We just keep going north-west.' It sounded easy, but we found that it was a long way to the trees. We had to keep looking at the compass to make sure we were going the right way.

At last, we got to the wood and started looking for the meteorite.

'That's strange,' I said. 'I can't hear any birds.'

It was as if everything in the wood had been switched off.

Then Dan looked at his compass. The needle was spinning round and round.

'Why is it spinning round?' I asked.

Suddenly I wanted to get out of that wood. I thought something frightening would happen at any minute.

We both ran out of the wood as fast as we could.



We came out near an old sand-pit. We could hear sounds again and Dan's compass was all right.

The needle pointed to north.

'Look!' said Dan. 'The sand-pit is north-west.

Perhaps this is where the meteorite fell.'

We went over to the sand-pit. People had dug huge holes there and taken away the sand for building.

I thought it looked like the moon.



Dan started looking around for the meteorite.

Suddenly, we heard a very strange sound. We looked round but the sound stopped. We were just going to walk on when the sound began again. Dan looked all around, but there was no-one there. I had the same feeling as I had in the wood: as if someone was watching us. I still wanted to find out what the strange sound was, but Dan wanted to get out of the sand-pit. We were just going when the sound began again.

'Over there!' cried Dan. It was coming from the other side of the sand-pit. Just then, we saw a car come up to the sand-pit and stop. I thought I had seen the car before but I could not remember where. A man got out. He was tall and thin and he had a mac and a hat on. He looked very pale and strange. He came towards us.

He stopped and pointed at us with his right arm stretched out. He did not say anything, but we could see that he was angry and wanted us to go away. We began to run and the man ran after us. Suddenly, Dan fell.



Did you know this about finding your way with a compass?

*A compass needle always points to the north. This is because the Earth has a magnetic field that comes from the north, and it turns the compass needle towards it.

*You can find your way anywhere with a compass and a map. First, hold the compass steady and wait for the needle to stop spinning. It is now pointing north. Turn your map until the north sign is pointing in the same direction as the compass needle. Now find the place you want on the map. It will be in the same direction as it looks on the map.

Chapter three

The man in the sand-pit

The thin man ran towards us. Suddenly, he stopped and put his hands to his eyes. He looked even paler and it seemed to be difficult for him to breathe.

Dan got up and we ran off and hid. We were very scared.

'Why did he go for us like that?' asked Dan.

'He didn't want us there,' I said. 'Did you see how he looked at us?'

'Yes,' replied Dan, 'and did you see the strange way he ran?'

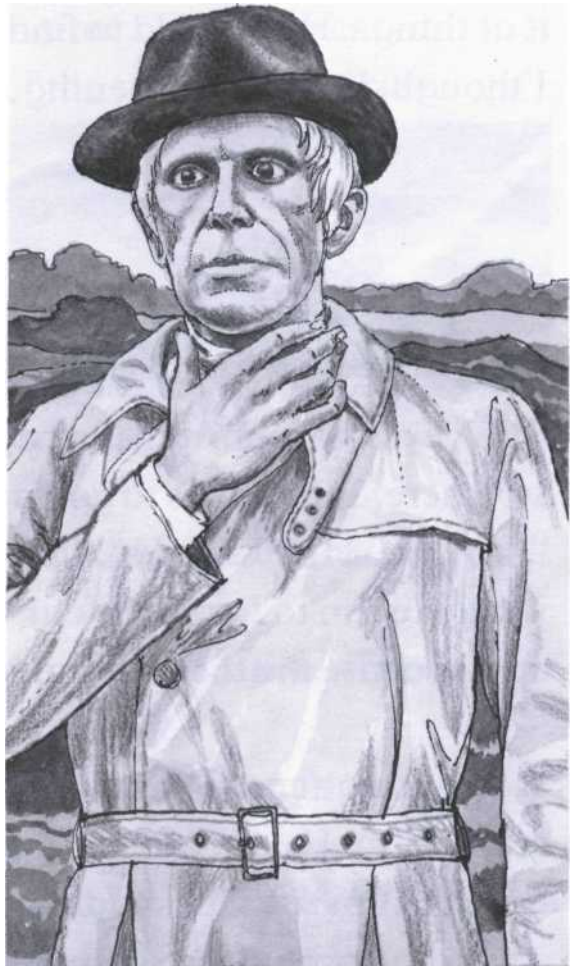
Dan wanted to look at the thin man's car.

'What if he sees us?'

I said.

'He thinks we've run off,' said Dan.

We went back to the sand-pit. We did not want the thin man to see us, so we hid behind a heap of sand. The man was looking round the sand-pit.



I felt as if I had seen his clothes somewhere before, but I had never seen *him* before. It was very strange. He got something out of his car, but we could not see what it was.

'I wish we had our telescope,' I said.

'He's looking for something,' said Dan. 'Do you think it's to do with that sound?'

The man had something in his hand and he was walking about with his right arm stretched out, pointing it at things. He seemed to find it difficult to walk. I thought he was frightening.



'We've got to look at his car again,' said Dan. 'You stop here. If he starts to go back to it, shout!'

'No, Dan. He'll see you!' I cried, but Dan would not wait. He ran towards the car. I could not call out, because the thin man might hear.

Dan got right up to the car without the thin man seeing him. He got out his note-book to take down the car number. But suddenly the thin man saw him and came running up. I shouted: 'Dan!'

Dan saw him and ran off. The thin man got into the car and drove after him. Dan was running hard, but I thought the man was going to run him down.



Dan got out of the way just in time. The car went by him and drove away out of the sand-pit. I ran to my brother and said very crossly: 'I told you to stop with me! He was going to kill you!' 'I don't think so,' replied Dan. 'He just wanted to get away. I got what I wanted. The car number is OND 884B.'

What a time to collect car numbers, I thought!

Dan gave me his note-book.

'Look at the last number,' he said. He had written it down at the observatory.

'The numbers are the same,' said Dan. 'It *was* Tom's car. The thin man must have taken it.'

'Yes,' I said, 'and his hat and his mac! That's why I thought I had seen them before!'

'Shall we go to the police?' asked Dan. I thought we should tell Tom first. 'He'll know what to do.'

Suddenly we heard the sound again. It was almost like a peep-peep-peep, but much more strange than that. We ran back to the sand-pit. At first we could not see anything, but then Dan cried, 'Look!' He pointed to a heap of sand. There was something behind it. Very slowly, a boy came out.



He walked as if it was difficult. His hair was white. He wore silver clothes that shone in the sun. He looked very scared. We were scared, too, because the sound we could hear was coming from him!

Did you know this about the solar system?

*The solar system is the group of nine planets that go round the Sun. The solar system is huge. If the Earth were the size of an orange, the Sun would be as big as a house and nearly a kilometre (over half a mile) away. The most distant planet, Pluto, would be about 40 kilometres (25 miles) away!

*The Moon is a dusty place. The dust was formed by tiny meteorites. Astronauts brought dust and rock from the Moon back to Earth. It showed that the Moon is the same age as the Earth—about 4,500 million years old.

Chapter four !ᠠᠷᠢᠨᠠᠨᠠᠨᠠᠨᠠᠨ

The boy came up to us. He held up his hand, as if he wanted to keep the sun out of his eyes.

'He's from space!' cried Dan. 'He must be! Look at his silver clothes!' I thought he was imagining things.

'That light we saw last night . . . that was his space-ship!' cried Dan. He went closer to the boy.

'Keep back!' I cried. I thought it could be dangerous.

The boy made more sounds.

'Who ... are ... you?' I asked, very slowly, but the boy did not understand.



'Listen!' said my brother. 'My name is Dan.'
He pointed at himself. Then he pointed at me.
'This is my sister, Helen. Got that? Dan . . . Helen.'
The boy pointed at himself. 'Peep-peep!'
he seemed to say.
'Is that his name?' I asked Dan.
'It must be,' said Dan. 'Hello, Peep-peep,'
he said, and held out his hand. The boy jumped back
and looked very upset.
'We want to help you,' said Dan, and he smiled.
Peep-peep looked at us. He smiled and held out
his hands. Dan went up to him and very slowly
held out his hands, too. Then we all held out our hands.
It was a bit like shaking hands, but it seemed to mean
more than that. I felt he wanted to be friends with us.



'Let's take him to Tom,' said Dan. 'We can tell
him about the car, too.'

When we got to the observatory, Tom was not there. Peep-peep seemed to find it difficult to breathe, and he was very pale.

'I think the light is too bright for his eyes,' said Dan. I ran up to Mr Bunting's room, and said, 'We have a boy outside . . . from space!'

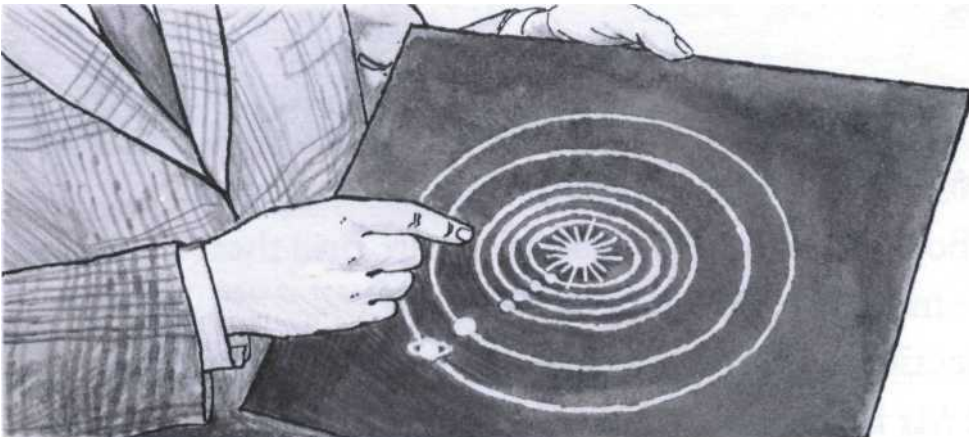
'What was that?' he asked. 'From space?'

I told him a bit about it, but I could see he did not believe me, so I ran to get Dan and Peep-peep.

When Mr Bunting saw the boy and listened to the sounds he made, he said, 'This is fantastic. Fantastic!' He could see then I had not been making it up.

'Is he from space?' I asked.

'I don't know,' said Mr Bunting. 'Let's try to find out.' He picked up a map of the planets that go round the Sun.



When we showed the map to Peep-peep he seemed to know what it was. He pointed to one of the planets, number three from the Sun, and held up his hand. It was almost as if he was saying, 'That's here.' 'Yes,' said Mr Bunting. 'That's *this* planet, the Earth. He knows where he is!'

The boy saw Mr Bunting's meteorite and picked it up. He looked very interested. Then he pointed to the planet Mars, number four from the Sun. Suddenly, he bent down and seemed to be picking something up and putting it on the table. It was like acting, but without words.

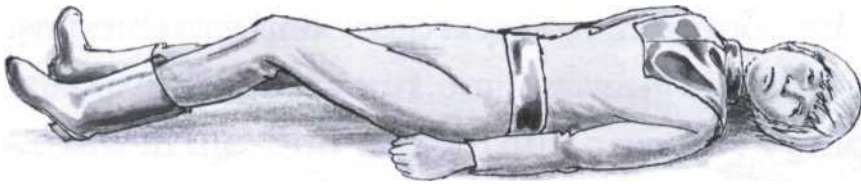


'I know! He's collecting something!' cried Dan. The boy pointed to Mars on the map, and then at the meteorite. He was very excited. 'Collecting . . . meteorites . . . from the planet Mars!' cried Mr Bunting.

'So his space-ship went to Mars to collect meteorites,' said Dan, 'and then it came here.'
'Then where is it?' asked Mr Bunting.

Suddenly, Peep-peep picked up Mr Bunting's pen. When Mr Bunting showed him what it was for, the boy looked pleased. He wrote something and showed us what he had written.

'We can't read it,' said Mr Bunting, sadly. Peep-peep looked very upset. Suddenly, he fell to the floor and lay very still.



Did you know this about Mars?

*The nearest that the planet Mars comes to Earth is 56 million kilometres (35 million miles). However, space-craft have to fly in a curved path. So the two American Viking space-probes that landed on Mars in 1976 travelled nearly 750 million kilometres (nearly 500 million miles) to get there.

*The Viking space-probes did not take any people to Mars. They carried instruments to test the red sand and rocks for any sign of living things, but there was nothing. It is very, very unlikely that there are living things on any other planet in the solar system except for Earth.

Chapter five **The hold-up**

Mr Bunting knelt down by Peep-peep, and looked at him. The boy seemed even paler and he lay very still.

'What is it?' asked Dan.

'I don't know,' said Mr Bunting. 'I wish I did know.'

He looked upset. Peep-peep opened his eyes.

We picked him up and took him outside to see if he felt better there. But he still looked pale and ill.

'I'm going to take him to hospital,' said Mr Bunting.

'I'll get my car.'

All this time the thin man from the sand-pit was hiding outside the observatory and watching us. None of us knew he was there, but he must have seen us helping Peep-peep into the car.



'I'm going over Rabbit Hill,' said Mr Bunting.
'It's a bad road, but if I go that way I'll get to the hospital sooner.'

'What shall we do?' I asked.

'I want you to stop here,' Mr Bunting said. 'When Tom comes back, tell him all about it.'

I tried to tell him that we had seen Tom's car but Mr Bunting was in a hurry and he did not listen.

'If anybody telephones,' he said, 'tell them I'll be back as soon as I can.'

'Good-bye,' we said. 'Good-bye, Peep-peep.'

The car drove off down the road.

When we got back inside the telescope room, I said, 'I wanted to tell him about Tom's car and about the man we saw in the sand-pit.'

'Maybe that man has got Tom!' said Dan. I thought he was imagining things. Then I remembered that the thin man had Tom's mac on, and his hat.

The telephone began to ring so I picked it up.

'This is Dratton Observatory,' I said. 'Mr Bunting is out and he'll be back soon. What's your name?'

I looked for the pen to write the man's name down, but it had dropped on the floor. When Dan picked it up, he saw the paper with Peep-peep's writing on it.

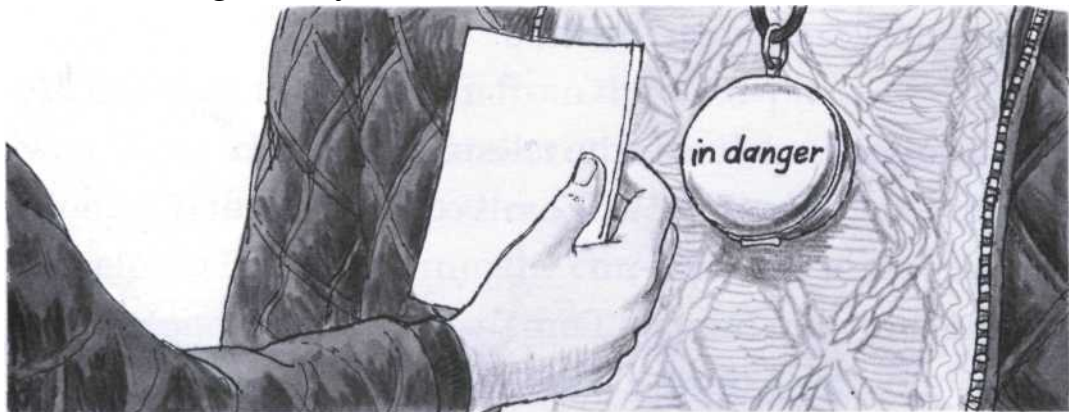
'I wish we could read it,' he said.

Then I happened to look at Dan's compass. The back of it was shiny metal, and it was reflecting the words that Peep-peep had written. But I could read them now because the letters were the right way round!

'In danger!' I read.

'What?' cried Dan.

'The back of your compass is reflecting Peep-peep's writing. Look, I'll show you.' I held the compass so that it reflected Peep-peep's writing. The words were the right way round so he could read them now.



'In danger!' he cried. 'What danger?'

'And who's in danger? Is Peep-peep in danger?' I asked.

'We must tell Mr Bunting. Can we telephone the hospital?' said Dan.

'We'll ring up when Mr Bunting gets there,' I replied.

'We must tell him he can read Peep-peep's writing in a mirror,' said Dan.

But we had to wait until he got to the hospital.

I did not know what was happening to Mr Bunting. He told me about it later. When he drove away, he did not see the thin man following him in Tom's car. By the time Mr Bunting got up on to Rabbit Hill, the thin man had somehow got in front. I think he hid in the wood on top of Rabbit Hill. Mr Bunting told us later that he was driving along, and suddenly the car stopped. Just like that!



Did you know this about reflections?

*We see things because light rays hit them and then bounce off them and into our eyes. If an object has a smooth surface, it looks shiny and you can see a reflection in the surface, like a mirror. This is because the surface reflects or bounces all the light rays in the same direction. A surface that is not shiny reflects light rays in all directions.

*The moon and planets do not make their own light. They shine because they are lit up by light coming from the Sun. The Sun and stars make their own light.

Chapter six **Where is Tom?**

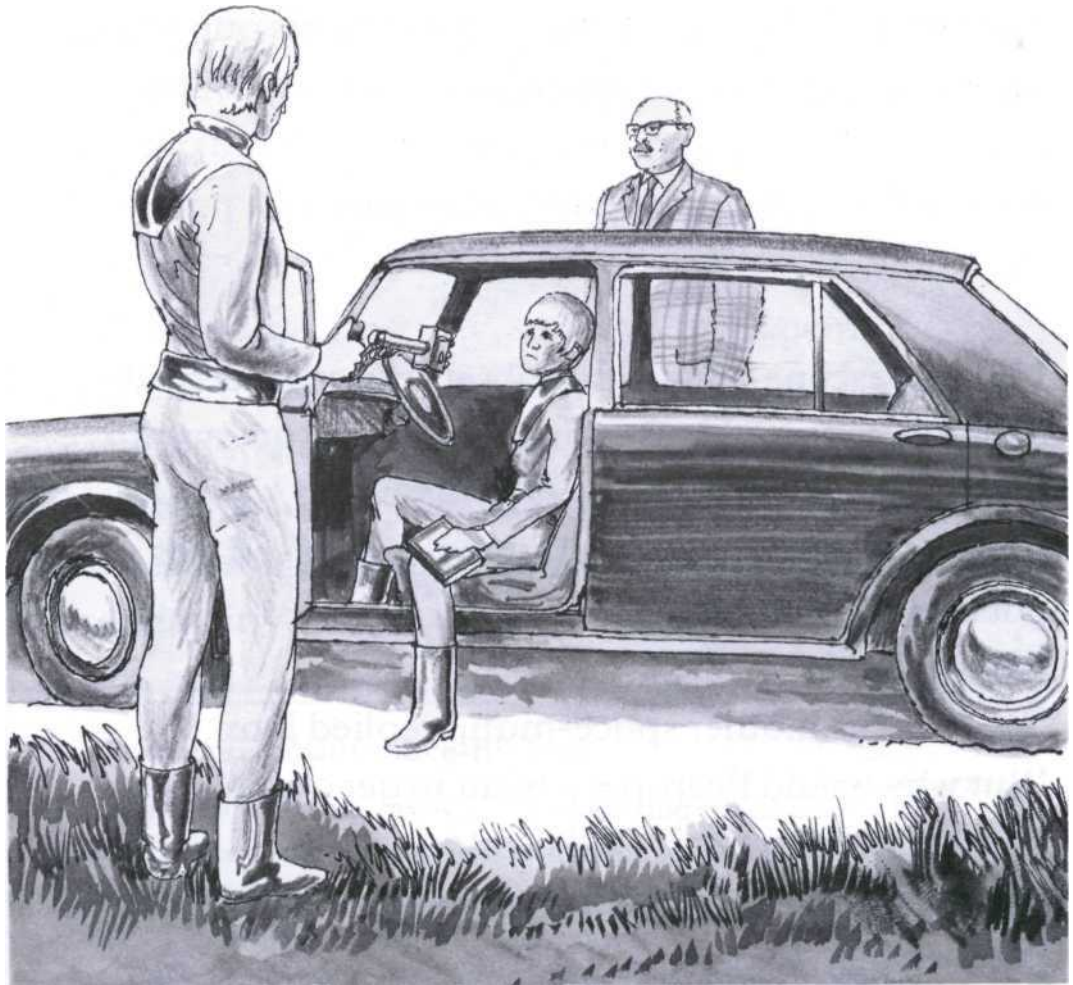
When the car stopped, Peep-peep looked round as if he felt someone was following it. He looked very unhappy. Mr Bunting and Peep-peep did not see the thin man. He was hiding in the trees by the side of the road, and he had a space-gun in his hand.

At the observatory, I telephoned the hospital but Mr Bunting was not there. I talked to a man about Peep-peep, but he would not believe me when I said that Peep-peep was from space.

On Rabbit Hill, Mr Bunting could not make the car start. Peep-peep kept trying to tell him something, but Mr Bunting could not understand. Suddenly, he saw Tom's car coming along the road. 'Splendid!' he said. 'We shall be all right now.' Peep-peep did not seem to think so.

Tom's car stopped and the thin man got out. He had taken off Tom's mac and hat. He wore silver clothes that shone in the sun. His hair was white and he looked very pale. He walked very slowly, and he held something that looked like a gun. Mr Bunting was getting more and more puzzled.

'What on earth is going on?' he asked. He could see that the man's clothes were like Peep-peep's clothes. 'He must have come for you. Peep-peep,' he said. But Peep-peep did not look as if he wanted to go with the man.



The thin man came up to them and made Peep-peep get out of the car. Mr Bunting could not understand why he seemed so unfriendly. The thin man snatched the book Peep-peep was holding and dropped it on the road.

'That's my book!' cried Mr Bunting, but the thin man did not seem to listen to him. He pointed the gun at them and they had to walk away from the cars. Then the thin man turned and pointed his gun at Tom's car. There was a strange humming sound and it slowly melted away. Then he pointed his gun at Mr Bunting's car and made that melt, too. One minute it was there and the next minute it had gone. Mr Bunting could not believe his eyes.

In the telescope room at the observatory, it seemed a long time since Mr Bunting had driven away with Peep-peep.

'Do you think the thin man from the sand-pit has got them?' Dan asked.

'Why?' I said.

'He may be another space-man,' replied Dan.

'But why would Peep-peep want to get away from another space-man?' I asked Dan.

'Maybe he's a bad space-man and he wants to kill Peep-peep. Maybe lots of space-ships came down last night! Maybe they want to take over the Earth!'

'Maybe you read too many space-books!' I replied.

'You read them, too!' said Dan.

We were really getting scared. Where was Tom?



Where were Peep-peep and Mr Bunting?

'I'm going to look for them,' I said.

'No!' cried Dan. 'There may be space-men outside.

If they have Tom, Peep-peep and Mr Bunting, they'll want us, too.'

I thought he was being silly, so I said I was going to telephone the police. When I picked up the telephone, there was no sound.

'We've been cut off,' I said. As I was putting the telephone down, Dan said: 'There's somebody outside. He's coming in!'

Did you know this about space-flights?

*The first animal to fly in space was a Russian dog called Laika. She was launched into orbit around the Earth in the space-ship, Sputnik 2, on 3 November 1957. Instruments in the space-ship tested Laika to find out if space-flight would harm human beings.

*The first man in space was the Russian astronaut, Yuri Gagarin. He flew once around the Earth on 12 April 1961 in the space-ship, Vostok 1. He returned safely to Earth after 11 hours in space.

*The first woman in space was the Russian astronaut, Valentina Tereshkova. She made a space-flight lasting nearly three days in June, 1963.

Chapter seven **The hunt for the car**



Somebody was climbing the stairs, I watched the shadow move up the wall, getting closer and closer. Then we saw it was Tom!

'What are you doing here?' he asked.

We were so pleased to see him!

'They didn't get you after all!' cried Dan.

'What *are* you talking about?' Tom asked. 'Where's Mr Bunting?'

'He went off to hospital,' I replied.

Tom looked even more puzzled.

'Is Mr Bunting ill?' he asked.

'No, Peep-peep is ill,' replied Dan.

Tom could not understand anything we were saying.

'Start again, please,' he said.

So we started by telling him about the light in the sky and the hunt for the meteorite. We told him how we had seen his car in the sand-pit.



'You saw my car?' asked Tom.

He had been looking everywhere for it.

Then we told him all about Peep-peep.

'He has white hair and silver clothes, and he talks in a very strange way,' said Dan.

Tom looked even more puzzled, so we showed him the boy's strange writing which you could read in a mirror. Then we told him the telephone had been cut off, and he looked more worried.

'Which way did Mr Bunting go?' he asked.

'Over Rabbit Hill,' I replied.

'I'm going to look for him,' said Tom.

We did not want to be left alone in the observatory, so Tom let us go with him.

What had been happening to Mr Bunting and Peep-peep? While we were talking to Tom, the thin man had taken them into the space-ship. He made them go to one end of it and suddenly a big window shut them in. It did not seem to be there until the thin man turned a switch, then there was a humming sound and the window appeared, suddenly. There was another space-man in the room. He seemed more friendly than the thin space-man, and Mr Bunting thought that he could be Peep-peep's father.

There were hundreds of meteorites everywhere. Mr Bunting thought it was very strange that they should collect so many. He could see that Peep-peep's father thought they were like gold. Mr Bunting wondered if the thin man thought so, too. He watched him on the other side of the window. The thin space-man was trying to make the space-ship start, but it looked as if something had gone wrong.

Peep-peep's father pointed at the thin man and then at all the meteorites.

'I think I understand,' said Mr Bunting. 'That man wants all the meteorites. Is that it?'



Peep-peep's father put a strange ring on his finger. When he had made sure that the other space-man could not see them, he began writing with it. It was quicker than the way we write.

'I can't read it,' said Mr Bunting. 'Why do you think I can?'

When we got to the top of Rabbit Hill with Tom, we found the tracks made by two cars on the muddy road. Tom looked very carefully at one of the tracks. 'I think my car made these,' he said.

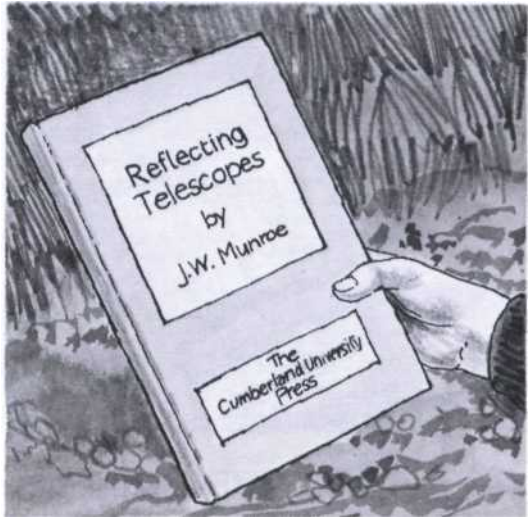
'These tracks just stop!' cried Dan. We looked round for the cars.



'Cars don't just melt,' said Tom. Then I saw a book on the ground and picked it up. It was called *Reflecting Telescopes*.

'That's Mr Bunting's book,' said Tom. 'Why should one of Mr Bunting's books be up here on the hill?'

There was some writing in the front of the book, just like Peep-peep's writing. 'It may tell us where they are,' I said, so I got the mirror out of my bag quickly. Tom saw the reflected writing in the mirror and read it aloud. 'Captured!'



Did you know this about meteors, meteoroids and meteorites?

*Pieces of stone or metal move through space at high speed. They are called meteoroids. Some fall from space so fast that they burn up. These meteoroids look like falling stars, and are called shooting stars or meteors.

*Meteorites are meteoroids that do not burn up completely. They strike the ground making a hole or crater. The largest meteorite crater is in Arizona in the United States. It is more than a kilometre (nearly a mile) across and nearly 200 metres (nearly 600 feet) deep. However, most meteorites are very small and do not cause any damage. As far as we know, no-one has ever been killed by a meteorite.

Chapter eight **The lake**

Captured! I thought of all the frightening things that could be happening.

'They've been captured by space-men,' Dan cried.

'They may be on their way to Mars by now!'

'We'll never see Mr Bunting again,' I said.

'We're going to get him back,' said Tom.

'We'll go to the police.'

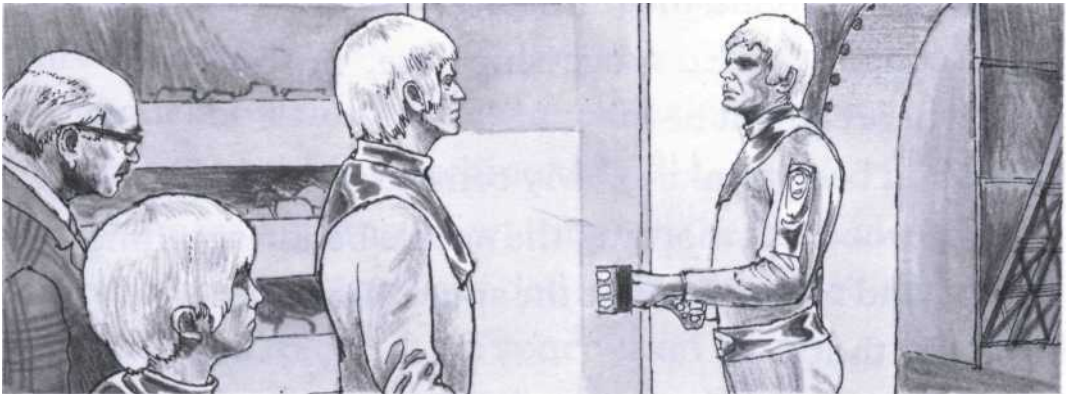
'They'll think we made it up,' said Dan.

'If we could show them the space-ship, then they'd help us,' I said.

'Where could you hide a space-ship?' asked Dan.

'Let's start at the sand-pit,' Tom replied.

Mr Bunting told us later that the thin man could not start the space-ship. Peep-peep's father would not help so the thin space-man pointed his gun at him.



'No!' cried Mr Bunting. 'Don't kill him!'
Peep-peep's father just looked at the thin space-man. He did not have a space-gun, but somehow he was the stronger of the two. At last the thin space-man gave up and went out again.
'He can't start the space-ship without you, can he?' said Mr Bunting.
But Peep-peep's father did not understand him.

When we got to the sand-pit, Dan and I showed Tom where we had seen the thin space-man getting out of Tom's car.

'He had your mac and hat on,' I said. Tom wanted to know why.

'He put them on over his space-clothes,' said Dan, 'so that nobody could see them. He's a space-man, I keep telling you!' He was cross because we were still not sure that Tom believed us.

Tom looked round the sand-pit.

'You couldn't hide a space-ship here,' he said.

But where could it be?

Dan had been thinking. 'My compass!' he cried.

'In the wood this morning the needle began spinning round and round. Maybe the space-ship made it spin like that!'

'Let's look in the wood then,' said Tom.

In the wood we looked at the compass again. The needle *was*, spinning round, very fast. When it stopped spinning it was pointing away from north. 'The space-ship must be that way,' cried Dan. We went on a little way through the trees. Suddenly something stopped us, but we could not see what it was. When we tried to walk forwards it was as if we were being pushed back. It was like walking into the wind, but much stronger.



At last it seemed to give way and we all fell over. It was just as if we had all pushed through an invisible wall. We did not know that all this time the thin space-man had been watching us. When we were pushing to get through the invisible wall, an alarm bell had sounded inside the space-ship. The alarm bell told the thin space-man that somebody was coming near the space-ship.



He looked at a television screen, which showed him what was happening outside. Behind the window, Mr Bunting and the others looked at the screen, too.

Tom, Dan and I came out from the trees and saw a big lake. There was no sign of the space-ship, but the compass needle kept pointing towards the water. Suddenly, Tom cried, 'Don't you see! That's why no-one could find the space-ship!' He pointed at the lake. 'It's out there! Under the water!'

Did you know this about astronauts?

*Astronauts wear space-suits if they have to work outside their space-ships. The space-suit gives them air or oxygen to breathe and protects them from the intense heat or cold of space.

*Astronauts can stay and work for months on space-stations like Skylab. It was 36 metres (119 feet) long and inside it was as large as a house.

*In space, people are weightless for most of the time. They do not have any weight, and they float in mid air unless they are tied to a chair or the wall of the space-ship. When they return to Earth, their weight is normal again.

Chapter nine **Captured!**



'How can a space-ship be under water?' I said.

'Won't the water get in?'

'There's no air in space,' said Tom. 'You take air with you and keep it inside the space-ship. So if air can't get out, water can't get in.'

'Can we get in?' I asked.

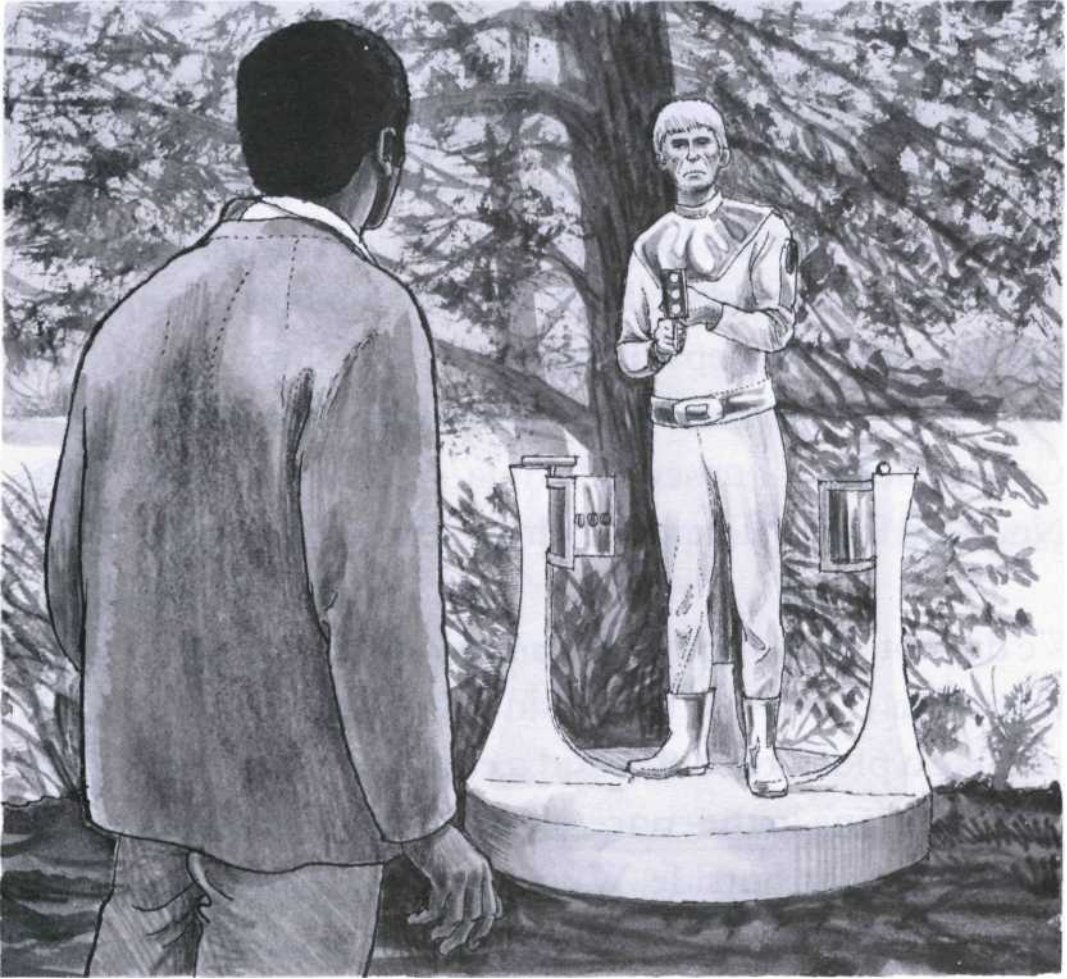
'No,' said Tom. 'There's nothing we can do.'

We did not know that we were being watched. There was a look-out by the side of the lake. It was like a platform but it had a camera on top of it. Everyone in the space-ship could see what was happening outside. When we saw the look-out we ran away and hid. I felt that the camera had been watching us.

'The people in the space-ship must know we are here,' I said.

'I'm going to find out,' said Tom. 'You stop here.' We did not want him to go, but he walked towards the look-out.

There was a strange humming sound.
Suddenly, the thin space-man appeared on the platform.



One minute there was nothing, and the next minute he was standing there. He pointed his space-gun at Tom and made him get on to the look-out. He turned a switch on the look-out. There was another humming sound and they both disappeared!

Tom told me afterwards that the humming sound seemed to get very loud, and then suddenly he found himself inside the space-ship. There were Mr Bunting and Peep-peep and his father looking at him. The thin space-man shut Tom in with them, behind the big window.

'Hello, Mr Bunting!' said Tom. 'I just dropped in to see you!'

'Tom! I didn't think you'd find us,' said Mr Bunting. He told Tom what had been happening. Peep-peep and his father were watching them.

'I wish we could talk to them,' said Mr Bunting.

'We can!' cried Tom. 'All we need is a mirror.'

After Tom had disappeared we decided to get help. We hoped the thin space-man would not see us running back into the wood. But he saw us on the screen and came out after us. Suddenly, something stopped Dan as he was running through the wood. It was the invisible wall again.



He kept going and in the end it seemed to give way. But there in front of him was the thin space-man! He was pointing the space-gun at him, so Dan had to go back towards the lake with him.

I was hiding and I saw what had happened. Dan had said the light was too bright for Peep-peep's eyes. Perhaps it was also too bright for the thin space-man's eyes. So I took out my mirror and made the sunlight reflect on to his face. The reflected sunlight dazzled him and Dan ran away.



Dan ran towards the lake, and came to the look-out. He was scared, but he knew he had to go on. He got on to the platform and turned the switch and there was a humming sound. Suddenly, he found himself inside the space-ship. Everybody in the meteorite room was very excited to see him.

After Dan had got away from the space-man, I ran through the trees until I thought he was a long way behind me. But suddenly he was standing right in front of me. I knew there was nothing I could do. I had to go with him to the space-ship.

Inside the space-ship they could see everything on the television screen. They knew it was all up to Dan now. Could he open the big window and let everyone out before the thin space-man came back?



Did you know this about space-craft?

*Space-craft have rocket engines because no other kind of engine works in space. A rocket engine has a fuel that burns and produces hot gases. The hot gases rush out of the engine, and push the space-craft forward.

*To go into orbit around the Earth, a space-craft must fly at a speed of 28,000 kilometres an hour (17,500 miles an hour). If it goes any slower, it will fall back to Earth. To fly to the Moon or planets, a space-craft must go even faster. It must reach a speed of 40,000 kilometres an hour (25,000 miles an hour).

Chapter ten **In the space-ship**

Dan came up to the big window.

'He's got to get us out,' said Mr Bunting.

They were all worried that the thin space-man would be coming back soon. Dan could not hear what they were saying. Peep-peep pointed to the control switches, but Dan did not know which switch would open the window. Suddenly, they all saw the thin space-man on the television screen. He was bringing me back to the space-ship.

Dan cried, 'He's captured all of us now.'

Was there nothing he could do? Then he saw that Peep-peep had put a strange ring on his finger. It was the writing ring. Peep-peep made sure that Dan was watching him and then he wrote on the big window:



On the other side of the window, Dan suddenly saw that he could read it. It said:

Three Down

The writing was the right way round for him. He counted down to the third row of switches on the controls. But there was more than one switch on the third row. He saw that Peep-peep was writing again.

Two Left

Dan could read:

Two Left

On the screen, they could all see that the thin space-man was making me get on to the look-out platform.

'Hurry, Dan! Hurry!' cried Tom. Dan pulled at the switch. Nothing happened. Peep-peep wrote again:

Turn

Dan could read:

Turn

He turned the switch and the big window melted away. Then everything happened very quickly. Just as we appeared inside the space-ship, Peep-peep's father, Tom and Mr Bunting ran and caught hold of the thin space-man. He was taken by surprise.

He tried to point the space-gun at them, but Peep-peep's father was stronger than him. He was captured and shut up behind the big window in the meteorite room. It served him right! I was so happy that everything was going to be all right now. 'Thanks to Peep-peep!' said Dan.

I found that Peep-peep's father had been writing for Tom and Mr Bunting. They could read the writing by looking at the reflection in a mirror. Peep-peep's father had told them that the thin space-man wanted all the meteorites for himself. One night he had taken Peep-peep's father by surprise.



There was a fight and he tried to take over the space-ship. But it went out of control and came down on Earth. Peep-peep had run away and hidden in the sand-pit. 'Why did the space-men want the meteorites?' I asked.

'Meteorites are like gold where they come from,' said Mr Bunting. That made me wonder what they did with the meteorites.

'How did they learn to write?' I asked.

Peep-peep's father had been showing Mr Bunting something. When Mr Bunting came back to us he was laughing. He held up a big plastic bag.



'They've been on Earth before,' he said. 'They must have found this bag with writing on it.'

'That's mirror-writing,' said Dan. 'We don't write like that.'

'No, Dan,' said Mr Bunting. 'The bag is inside out.' He turned it the right way round. 'You see?'

Now we could read the writing on the bag.

'Danger. Keep away from children.' There was a lot more writing on the bag.

'That's how they learned to write,' said Mr Bunting. He turned the bag inside out again. 'But they wrote like this, back to front.'

We all laughed. Peep-peep and his father laughed, too. They understood. They could see how funny it was. I was glad because it felt as if we were all friends.

When it was time to leave the space-ship, Peep-peep went with us as far as the look-out by the lake.

There were so many things I wanted to know about Peep-peep and his father, but there was no time to ask. I was very sad that they were leaving, because I knew we might never see them again.

By the lake Dan gave Peep-peep his compass. We said goodbye.



There was a humming sound and then Peep-peep disappeared. There was another sound and the look-out had disappeared, too.

That night Mr Bunting,
Tom, Dan and I went to the hut.
We looked through the telescope
we had made and saw the
space-ship going up to the stars.
'Fantastic! Fantastic!'
said Mr Bunting.



'But we can't tell anybody about it,'
said Tom.

'Why not?' asked Dan.

'They'd think we made it all up,' I replied.

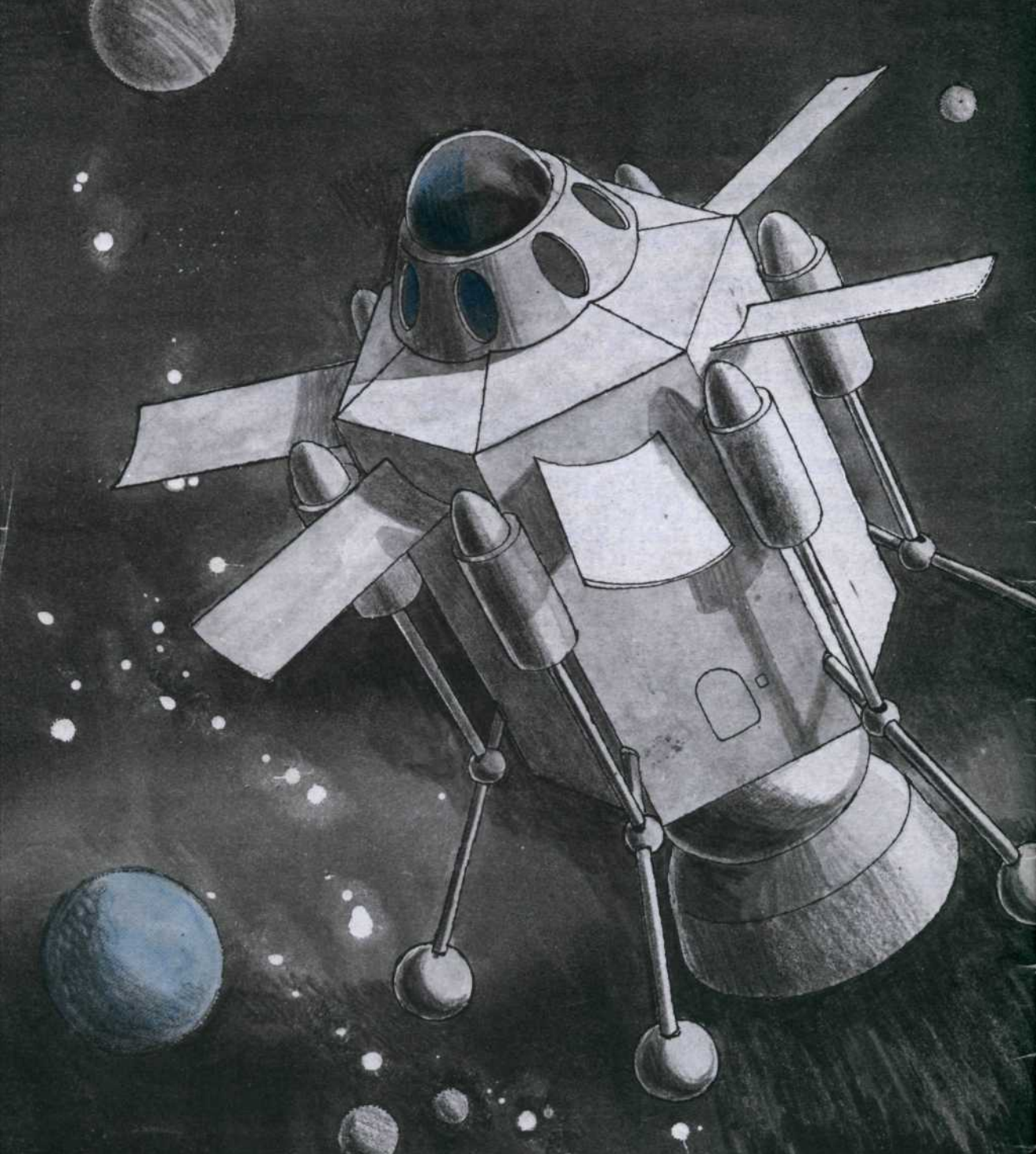
All that happened when Dan and I were children.
We are grown up now. I suppose Peep-peep is, too.
Sometimes we talk about him and wonder if we shall
ever see him again. What do you think?

Did you know this about space?

*Without binoculars or a telescope, you can see about 2,000 stars.
With a powerful telescope, astronomers can see millions of stars.
They can also see nebulae, which are bright clouds of glowing
gas far away in space. Stars are born in nebulae.

*The Sun is a star. It is one of the stars in a huge group of stars called
the Galaxy. There are 100,000 million stars in the Galaxy. All the
stars you can see in the sky belong to the Galaxy, but there are millions
of other galaxies in the universe.

The sections on space and other science topics are written by Neil Ardley.



LOOK AND READ

101P

Spring

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