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FEATURING  
**SECRET OF ANTON YORK**  
A Novel of the Last World  
By EANDO BINDER

A THRILLING  
PUBLICATION

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*Title:* No Man's World

*Date of first publication:* 1940

*Author:* Henry Kuttner (1914-1958)

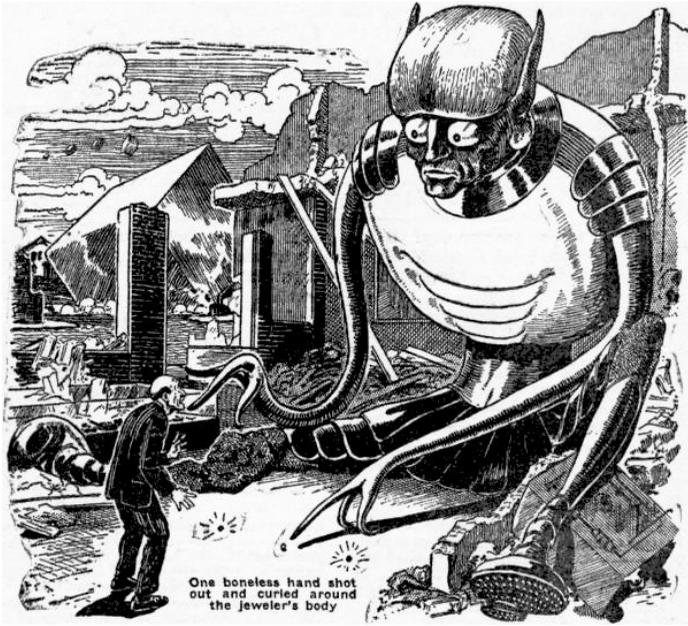
*Date first posted:* Feb. 17, 2022

*Date last updated:* Feb. 17, 2022

Faded Page eBook #20220240

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# NO MAN'S WORLD

By  
HENRY KUTTNER

*Author of "Beauty and the Beast," "When New York Vanished," etc.*

First published *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, August 1940.

*Earth Was Merely the Board for the Deadly Chess Game Between Two  
Mighty Civilizations!*

*A Chapter from HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, a chronicle of the  
notable events of the past one hundred years, by F. Charlton Potter, leading journalist-  
historian of the early Twenty-first Century.*

It is difficult, even now, to set down with unprejudiced accuracy the history of the Invasion. To begin with, the word itself is a misnomer. The Aliens whose iron feet trampled upon a prostrate and bleeding Earth held no animosity toward us. That we know. But the result was no less cataclysmic.

Had it happened a few centuries ago, men would have thought that the comet that blazed whitely in the skies was a portent of the forces that were to come. Instead, scientists worked busily in their observatories, peering into their telescopes, making spectroscopic analyses, taking photographs of Mander's Comet.

It was Dr. Jules Mander who first saw the comet, from his station at Mount Palomar. Later, newspapers ran brief columns about the celestial visitant, and there were articles, luridly illustrated, in the Sunday supplements.

The comet was a newcomer to our Solar System, deflected from its original course, probably, by some massive body perhaps beyond Andromeda. But its new orbit indicated that it would be a periodic visitor, returning to circle our Sun once every seventy-five years. Mander's Comet—remember it. For it was the herald of the approaching doom.

At the time we in America saw doom elsewhere. All over the world the war-god shouted and swung his red sword. The Second World War had become a blind juggernaut. A haze of battle hung over Europe and the Orient. Every power in the Eastern Hemisphere had been drawn into conflict, and the cannon thundered day and night.

The soil drank blood thirstily. It was a war of bitterness and hatred, of extermination. The Western Front flamed into a holocaust. Between the Siegfried Line and the Maginot Line lay a stretch of land on which men could not live, but died, very horribly.

The guns bellowed. In America we heard them distantly. Life went on for us much as usual. Youngsters skated in Central Park, parades marched down Fifth Avenue on holidays, sleek-shouldered women danced with impeccably-clad men in the Rainbow Room, the Ritz-Plaza, the Astor. New stage-plays opened. And a film called *Men of Tomorrow* had its world première at the Metropolitan Theatre in New York.

That picture was shown only once, and it was stopped almost before it had begun. Summit Studios, of course, lost a great deal of money on the film. They had advertised it for months as

an entirely new technique in movie-making, superior to magnafilm, multiplane, or any of the attempts to make the screen three-dimensional.

The actual method Summit's technicians employed was never revealed, but it is obvious that both the screen itself and the method of projection were unusual. The screen was composed of innumerable layers of fine mesh, made of a rubbery plastic.

The light-beam, too, was notable, combining as it did the unseen ultra-violet and infra-red with visible light of normal vibration. Summit Studios spent millions on a wide-spread advertising campaign and admission to the première was by invitation only.

Socialites and critics were given the preference. Special airplanes had flown from Hollywood, loaded with stars, producers, directors, and the elite of the cinema metropolis. Television trucks waited outside the theatre. Broadway blazed with searchlights. The marquee carried the legend:

WORLD PREMIÈRE  
MEN OF TOMORROW  
ALSO LATEST NEWSREELS OF  
EUROPEAN WAR

Movie stars gulped happily into microphones and signed autograph books. Directors and producers told how happy they were to attend the première. A mob filled Times Square, so that traffic had to be re-routed via Sixth and Eighth Avenues. On the Times Building a strip of electric bulbs flashed the latest news.

"Thousands flock to witness new Summit film . . . General predicts victory soon . . . Twenty planes shot down above English Channel . . . Scientist declares Mander's Comet emits radiation similar to cosmic rays. . ."

In the sky, unseen amid the glare, hung a ball of fire, its tail stretching away from the Sun.

At the microphone, a sleek announcer was introducing notables: "Miss Janice Arden, glamour star of Hollywood, and her escort is Dan Darrow . . . General Orney, folks. He flew from Washington just to attend this première. And here's little Betsy Fenwick, five years old, but every inch a star. And . . ."

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General Horace Orney went to his box inside the theatre and sat down in lone dignity. He was a handsome, elderly man who looked remarkably impressive in his uniform. Now he lit a cigarette and stared down at the audience, nodding occasionally as he saw someone he knew.

There was Jack Hannibal, another Army man, with a luscious blonde. Jack always had good taste, the general thought, and shifted in his seat. The auditorium was darkening. The curtains rolled aside from the screen.

The audience remained quiet until, suddenly, the figure of a man was flashed on view. He was the star of the picture, and a storm of applause greeted his appearance. His image, everyone noticed, was three-dimensional, apparently real. The flat, planar surface of usual film projections was entirely absent. Summit Studios had actually achieved their aim—three dimensional motion pictures!

The star made a speech, bowed, and faded from view. *Men of Tomorrow* began. The picture itself was impressive—based on a popular fantastic novel that had recently appeared, and filmed with all the technical tricks at Hollywood's command. The time was in the distant future—and, incredibly, it was like looking through a window into reality.

General Orney settled back into his seat and lit another cigarette. He did not put the white cylinder between his lips. Instead, he leaned forward, frowning.

Something was wrong. The picture blurred and went out of focus. The sound-track failed, and then went on again as a high-pitched, shrill humming.

A chuckle went up from the audience. The projectionist was having trouble, of course. In a moment the picture would resume its course. . . .

It didn't. The screen went a curious, indescribable hue. The shrilling rose to an ear-piercing wail. People moved uneasily, vaguely disturbed by the high pitch of the tone.

Then the screen—was gone! In its place glowed a misty square of fog—an inexplicable wall of dim light. And against that extraordinary background two gigantic figures stood.

The two weird figures, each one nearly twenty feet high, stood still, apparently gazing directly at the audience. Critics glanced at their programs and then back to the "screen." Still the giants stood unmoving.

Monsters they were, with grotesquely gigantic, bulbous skulls and huge luminous eyes. Their long, three-fingered hands and arms seemed boneless. Their stiltlike legs supported lean hips and vast barrels of chests, clad in some odd sort of armor.

Someone in the audience was making frantic gestures back at the projection booth. In his box General Horace Orney's eyes narrowed as he noticed Jack Hannibal, after a brief whispered word with his companion, the blonde, suddenly rise and walk down the aisle.

The giants moved. The tentacular arms swung purposefully. A man in the front row stood up and tugged nervously at his companion's hand.

Then it happened.

*The monsters stepped out of the screen!*

It was so utterly unexpected, so fantastic, that it partook grotesquely of humor. By some strange psychological quirk, a ripple of startled laughter ran through the audience. A clever new film-shock had been created by Summit, they thought. . . .

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The laughter stopped when the man in the front row yelled in fear and started to run. He didn't get very far. The larger of the two beings reached down and picked up the human in boneless fingers. Jack Hannibal, in the aisle, hesitated and shouted, "Stop the film! Quick!"

The cry attracted the attention of the other monster. A long-tubed gun appeared in its hand. It strode from the screen and sent a beam of light lancing toward Hannibal. The Army man clutched at his heart, moaned, and fell.

General Horace Orney found himself cursing in a low monotone as he pumped bullet after bullet from his heavy automatic at the nearer of the creatures. The being ignored him completely. It was fingering its captive curiously. The audience yelled and stamped.

The light from the projection booth flicked off, but the giants did not disappear. The one who carried the man turned and stepped back a few paces. Its body seemed to melt into the screen and vanish. The other began methodically to ray down every living being in the theatre. General Orney crouched below the rail and fired ineffectually until his ammunition was exhausted. The monster was invulnerable, or seemed so. It was striding here and there, crushing rows of chairs under its heavy-shod feet, the huge eyes searching for new victims.

Finally there were no others. The giant turned, just as Orney rose from a crouching position and took careful aim. He waited as the being came slowly toward him.

There was one bullet left.

Orney fired it at his opponent's eye. He did not miss, but the missile did not the slightest harm. The general hurled the automatic at the monstrous, alien face.

Still the creature stood regarding him. It made no move. There was a cold, dispassionate curiosity in the great eyes, and a touch of something else—a hint of horror, a breath that blew coldly out of the Unknown and chilled Orney. He realized, suddenly, that he was no more to this creature than an ant. . . .

Cautiously, the general drew back. He moved slowly to the drapes, hesitated, and sprang into the passage. The monster did not try to stop him. There was silence in the auditorium as General Horace Orney raced for safety, the cold sweat drying on his cheeks.

“Washington!” he was thinking. “I must phone Washington—”

A frightful grinding shock rasped through Orney. He was blinded and deafened with shattering light and sound. He felt the floor give beneath his feet, and a sharp agony constricted his lungs. In that last moment of dissolution, before death claimed him, he tried to shout warning. . . .

Times Square vanished at that moment. For a distance of half a mile ruin shook Manhattan. A dome of light, with the Metropolitan Theatre as its center, sprang suddenly into being. A hundred feet high, like an inverted bowl of shimmering whiteness, it appeared. Everything within that bowl was destroyed instantly, shaken into atomic nothingness. Skyscrapers, cut in half, crashed down and vanished into the dome. Then silence, broken by terrified screams and the wailing of police sirens.

Thus the Terror came to Earth.

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Inevitably, men put forth theories. The Titans came from another dimension, science speculated. They came from a plane interlocking with ours, but vibrating at a different intensity. They were bent on conquest of the Earth, extermination of all mankind. So the wild theories ran, while New York was frantically evacuated and bombers circled to drop high explosives on the dome of light.

Huge guns shelled the thing. But the Titans paid not the slightest attention. And, exactly thirty-four hours after their advent, a fleet of strange aircraft emerged from the shining hemisphere they had erected in Manhattan.

One by one their ships came, shooting up through the glowing veil and racing off eastward across the Atlantic. They were cigar-shaped and featureless. They fled over the British Isles and war-torn Europe and came to rest in Siberia.

Anti-aircraft shelled them. But the Titans were impregnable. In Siberia they created another light-dome, into which their ships vanished one by one. That was all.

Puzzled, fearful, the world waited. Now there were two inexplicable hemispheres of shining brightness—both meaningless! Almost thirty hours we waited before the ship reappeared.

Not all of them—scarcely a third of the original fleet emerged from the Siberian dome, racing desperately westward back to Manhattan. They never reached it. From that cryptic, impossible hemisphere came hundreds of ships entirely different in construction from the Titan vessels. These were great cubes, hundreds of feet square, that shot after the escaping craft and destroyed them in a great battle over the Atlantic.

Ships saw the conflict and radioed back reports. They got startling news in return. From Jersey came the word that literally thousands of the cigar-shaped ships were plunging up from the Manhattan dome and rocketing into the west.

Russia declared that more and more of the square aircraft were emerging from the Siberian light-hemisphere. The sky was black with them. Cubes and spindles battled each other in a fearful holocaust that shook the Earth. They fought with rays and with vibrations. Man was forgotten.

Presently both fleets withdrew. It was guerilla warfare now, and it spread out over the world. Cubes and spindles were shattered and sent plunging to destruction below. In the broken ruins we found bodies. The Titans we already knew—great-headed, barrel-chested beings with flesh hard and icy as metal. All we found were dead.

In the smashed cube-ships were other creatures, utterly inhuman. They were merely globes, ten feet in diameter, with a dozen limber tentacles sprouting from their bodies in no regular arrangement. Of other visible organs they had none. Their flesh glowed with pearly luster. They were silicate life, instead of carbon. Living crystals—a strangely evolved form of existence!

Naturally, during this war between the spindles and the cubes, the European conflict stopped. Governments forget imperialism and trade to fight the common enemy. Siegfried Line and Maginot Line were deserted. The guns were aimed skyward. But, paying no attention to humanity, the Titans and the Silicates waged their war, and cut a swath of destruction wherever they passed.

Rays from the ships crumbled buildings to powder. Cleveland, Paris, San Francisco, Constantinople, Tokyo, and other cities were partially or completely destroyed. There was no malice toward Earth in the gesture on the part of the aliens.

The cities just happened to be in the way.

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To a man named Curtis Grover, a jeweler in a small Mid-western town, we are indebted for what little we know of the Invaders' motives. An air battle took place above his village. Buildings were shattered into nothingness. Grover saw ships falling from the sky and fled into the cellar beneath his jewelry shop.

It was sheer luck that Grover was an educated man—a bibliophile, a linguist, and a scholar. He was fifty-three at the time, a lean, gaunt, bald-headed fellow whose face was a network of wrinkles in sallow skin. He hid in his cellar, listening to the war-thunder fade and die, and presently he heard a thumping noise from above. Someone had entered the shop—wounded, Grover thought. He climbed the stairs to investigate.

It was one of the Titans. One of his legs had been smashed into pulp, and he was looking over his shoulder toward the doors and the smashed windows. Grover, at the top of the stairs, made a choked sound of fear, and the Titan turned and saw him. One boneless hand shot out and curled around the jeweler's body. He felt himself dragged forward, and incontinently fainted.

Grover awoke to find himself lying on the floor, with the Titan squatting beside him, a bizarre, terrifying figure in the growing twilight. What thoughts entered Grover's mind then we shall never know. He sprang up and fled; the great hand shot out, drew him back, and released him. Again Grover ran—again he was pulled back.

This occurred several times. Then the Titan, still clutching his victim, paused and cocked his great head as though listening. The lidless eyes were focused again on Grover, and, eerily, the jeweler felt a curious sense of motion within his head. A finger of ice seemed to be probing into his brain. His thoughts went off at random.

He felt, he says, as if he were looking through the wrong end of a telescope, or going under an anaesthetic. The feeling passed. And a voice spoke *inside Grover's mind*.

It was telepathy, we know now. The jeweler, an educated man, guessed that after a minute. Yet the development was no less nerve-racking for a logical explanation. There was a flurry of confused thoughts in Grover's brain, and he sensed incongruous emotions—fear, wariness, and a sort of ironic amusement. He knew, or sensed, what the Titan was thinking.

The creature had survived the wreck of his ship. His squadron had been destroyed by the Silicates. One of the cube-shaped vessels was still patrolling the sky overhead, looking for traces of life. Until it left, the Titan was trapped. He could not send for aid, since his message would be detected by his enemy.

But, after a time, the cube-ship would leave, and then the Titan could ask for help, and his own race would come to rescue him. In the meantime, the giant was bored, and this anthropoid, oddly-shaped creature amused him. It was intelligent, after a fashion. It was full of fear and curiosity.

Grover had been in the First World War, and remembered, rather shockingly, a day when he had cowered in a shell-hole, in the company of several corpses and a small rat. He had caught the rat and passed the time by playing with it—feeding it crumbs of biscuit and chuckling at its antics. Grover sensed a feeling of ironic amusement. The Titan had caught and appreciated his thought.

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Blind resentment surged up in the jeweler. He struck futilely at the hard arm. The Titan bent his bulbous head; his shining eyes contemplated the Earthman.

Sanity returned to Grover. He forced himself to calm. This was a golden opportunity. If he could manage to communicate with the Titan—make friends with him, or even secure information—the Army might be able to make use of whatever he found out.

Amused, the giant seemed to applaud mentally.

“Who are you?” Grover said, aloud. “Where do you come from?”

Then he screamed in sheer agony at the pain inside his head. A flood of monstrously alien thoughts poured into his brain. The Titan was quite willing to explain—but Grover could not possibly comprehend the abnormal, un-Earthly thought-pattern of his captor. An Australian bushman would get a headache trying to understand Euclid, even though Euclidean laws are based on familiar principles of this world.

The throbbing in Grover's head passed. He became aware that the Titan had reached into a showcase nearby, breaking the glass, and had brought out a handful of gems. The Titan selected three of the gems, tossed the others carelessly aside. Then the alien did a strange thing. On the floor, directly before the jeweler, he laid in a row a ruby, a pearl, and a diamond.

Blood ruby—rose-pearl—sparkling diamond. In a straight row they lay. As a man might set out wooden blocks to explain the alphabet to a child.

The pearl was in the middle. The Titan pointed to it.

“This is your world,” his telepathic message told Grover. “Do you understand? Your world lies in the middle.”

Fantastic nightmare! The shadows darkened within the little shop. The grotesque form of the giant was unreal. He touched the diamond.

“This diamond represents my world. My world touches yours, interlocks with it. But only in hyper-space, in a different dimension. My world and yours are normal three-dimensional space, however.”

Grover had read of such theories. He nodded his understanding.

The Titan indicated the ruby. “This—this gem is still another world. Those you call the Silicates come from it. Now we have three worlds, touching only in a fourth dimension, lying in a row. Silicates—the ruby. You Earth people—the pearl. And us—the diamond.

“Now,” the explanation went on, “suppose you lived on the diamond and wished to reach the ruby, and you could only travel in a straight line. How could you do it?”

Grover understood. “By passing across the pearl,” he answered.

“Exactly. That is why we Titans must pass through your world to reach the planet of the Silicates. We cannot enter directly the vibration-plane of the Silicates. We must first cross your world.”

“But why?” Grover burst out. “I don’t understand! This senseless war—”

“You know nothing about it. We did not start the battle. We are fighting for our lives. We must kill the Silicates, or they will kill us.”

The jeweler shook his head.

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“You invaded them,” he said stubbornly.

“Wait. I have said that three-dimension objects cannot pass directly from the Silicate world to ours, or the opposite. But certain radiations *can* go from one plane to the other, without detouring through your planet. Lately the Silicates have made use of a new form of energy to power their machines and cities. This energy is not harmful to them, but its radiations destroy us. And those rays, in some strange manner, are transmitted from the world of the Silicates to ours, and kill us. We have asked them to stop using this power, and they will not.

“So,” the Titan finished, “we must kill them before their deadly radiations kill us. Our invasion of the Silicates was quite justified.”

Grover tried to comprehend.

“But won’t they make some concession?”

“They say that they need the power. If they stop using it, there is no substitute, and without power they will die. So, of course, we are fighting for our lives.”

The Titan paused for a moment, seemed to listen.

“The enemy ship has gone now,” he told Grover. “I must send a message for help.” He was briefly silent, and then relaxed. “Good. A ship will be here shortly to pick me up.”

“What about me?” Grover ask fearfully. “What do you—”

“You?” There was faint surprise in the Titan’s transmitted thought. “I see you expect me to kill you or capture you. But why? What are you to me? You amused me in an hour of boredom; now you may go.” The giant turned his head toward the front of the shop.

The jeweler bit his lip. “But you’re destroying the Earth!”

“We mean you no harm. It is better that the Silicates fight us here, rather than we permit them to invade our own world, destroy *our* cities. We must drive them back to their world, and then annihilate them.”

A random thought came to Grover. The Titan caught it and nodded.

“You are wondering about our first advent—through a moving picture screen. For many years the Silicates and ourselves have been trying to break into Earth’s dimension. But there was no door—the gateway was locked from your side. However, when your picture people exhibited their show, new vibrations in the light thrown upon the theatre screen, together with

other rays that came from a comet that recently entered your Solar System, helped pierce the barrier separating our worlds.

“We cannot enter your world unless you open the door for us—at the right time. Perhaps, later, we may be able to break into your continuum without your inadvertent cooperation, but the radiation of the comet—you call it Mander’s Comet—is vitally necessary.”

Grover went off at a tangent.

“Suppose you could supply the Silicates with some other source of power? Like electricity? Do they have that?”

“They use an atomic force that liberates quanta . . . Electricity? What is that?”

The jeweler tried in vain to explain.

“There’s a powerhouse at the dam nine miles to the south,” he said finally. “Perhaps—” He gave explicit directions for reaching it.

The Titan nodded. “We shall investigate. This electricity is something new to us. It may not be able to operate in the world of the Silicates. But if it does, and if they consent to use it —”

He rose and went out of the store. His thought floated back to Grover. “My ship has come for me. Good-by.”

The jeweler sat for a time in silence. Then he went into the street and stood looking at the sky, where a spindle-shaped ship was disappearing toward the south.

“Electricity,” he said aloud, musingly. “Perhaps—”

He walked toward a parked car that had miraculously escaped destruction. He had to reach the right authorities. They’d know what to do. In Washington, men would understand. . . .

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But meanwhile death rained from the sky. The Silicates and the Titans fought with terrific weapons. Mander’s Comet crept toward the Sun. And from Washington radio messages went forth carrying the news that Grover had brought, and suggesting moves.

We were an ant-hill in No Man’s Land. Opposing forces trampled us and ignored us. We were negligible, unimportant. This was—No Man’s World! Earth was the bridge between two dimensional civilizations—and they fought their battles on that bridge!

All the scientific and military forces swung into action, but the results were less than nothing. We managed to salvage a few weapons from the wrecked Titan and Silicate ships, but, on strict orders, we kept these secret and hidden. The watchword from the governments was—“Wait!”

Wait—for what?

We did not know. The comet crept Sunward. The Titans slowly drove back the Silicates. One day the cube-ships broke and fled in an avalanche toward Siberia. One by one they dropped toward the dome of light and vanished through it into their own world. The spindle-ships followed. What did it mean? A decisive triumph? We were never to know.

Grover, of course, wondered whether the Titans had offered the secret of electricity to the Silicates, and what the response had been. Meanwhile there was respite. Two spindle-ships remained on Earth, one in Siberia, one hovering over New York.

And then—the globes vanished. The bowls of light winked out one night and disappeared completely.

In their place remained curious, weird structures of crystal and metal, standing alone on circles of barren ground. The two ships hovered watchfully over them.

General Robert Hall sat beside Curtis Grover in a bombing plane and watched the sun rise over the Alleghenies. A dozen aircraft circled up into the sky. Hall nodded toward one of the pilots, who spoke briefly into his radio transmitter.

“Ready for the attack?” Grover asked.

“Yes. I shouldn’t have let you come, you know. You’re a civilian. But you’ve earned this. Your information—”

The co-pilot left his seat and came back to the others. He was a thin-faced, lean young man who did not look like the renowned physicist he actually was. He sat down facing Grover and the general and lit a cigarette.

“We’ll know soon,” he said.

“Think so, Stanton?” Hall’s voice was dubious.

“It all works out.” Stanton sucked smoke into his lungs. “All our experiments point to one conclusion. The gateway into these other worlds is open only when the direct radiations from the comet hit the Earth. Last night Mander’s Comet vanished behind the Sun. The solar body blanketed its rays, kept them from reaching us. Till it reappears, the gateways—the shining domes—are gone. That, I’m sure, is why two Titan ships were left on Earth.

“When the comet returns, as it will in a day or so, the Titans will turn on their projectors and open the gateways again. Of course”—he smiled wryly—“when the comet gets past Pluto, its rays will be too weak to matter, but that’ll take time. If we can destroy the two Titan ships and the projectors, we’re safe.”

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Grover patted his bald head with a handkerchief.

“That’s right. The gateways can be opened only from this world. By this time the Titan must know how to reproduce the vibrations released by the movie films. But they still need the help of Mander’s Comet.”

“I’m leaving the science to you,” General Hall announced, frowning at Stanton. “My business is the military. Those weapons we salvaged from the wrecked Silicate ships have been mounted in planes, and they may work where explosives have failed. But ray-guns—” His tone expressed volumes.

“The Silicates destroyed Titan ships with those ray-guns,” Stanton said. He looked at his watch. “The Siberian squadron is flying to the attack now, eh?”

“Yes. And here—” The general peered out through the window. Below lay New York. A devastated, bare circle existed where Times Square had once been. Small in its center was a framework of metal and crystal. A cigar-shaped Titan ship hovered there.

“When the comet reappears from behind the Sun, they’ll turn on their projector and open the gateways again,” Stanton said somberly.

For answer General Hall picked up a microphone beside him and spoke into it. There was a roar of motors. Four planes dived toward the ground.

The spindle-shaped craft hung protectingly over the framework of the projector. It ignored the menacing airships. Explosives would not harm it. Nothing Earthly could.

But the weapons menacing the Titans were not Earthly.

From the first plane a red ray speared out. It wavered, swept in a circle, and wherever it touched the ground, dust clouds billowed up. The Titan vessel did not move from its place, but suddenly a beam of green light lanced up from its hull.

Then another—and yet more.

A plane exploded in mid-air. The general's ship lurched into an air-pocket. When it was again on even keel, the number of attackers had been reduced to four. Red light darted down from them. But it is difficult to aim from a moving plane.

Suicidally one pilot dived. The others followed. They raced down at the torpedo-ship, into the hell of green light.

The red rays probed out. Two ships exploded. Two were left.

And then the Titan vessel seemed to bulge outward. Its hull was ripped into fragments. With a deafening, ear-splitting thunder it was blown apart.

One of the planes managed to come out of its power dive. The other crashed amid the wreckage of its victim.

General Hall looked down, thin-lipped, at the destruction below.

"That's done," he said quietly. "The Titan ship—and the projector. Gone."

The pilot turned, patting his earphones.

"Siberia reporting, sir," he called out excitedly. "We've achieved our objective there."

"All right," the general said. "Back to the airport. Immediately."

Grover glanced at Stanton. "What now?"

The scientist shrugged. "Lord knows. We must wait. All our theories are based on the premise that neither the Silicates nor the Titans can enter our world until Mander's Comet returns to open the gateway. We must wait. . . ."

And so we waited. Mander's Comet emerged from behind the Sun. Planes circled endlessly over Siberia and Manhattan. Fearfully we waited for news, while keen eyes searched for a reappearance of the shining domes.

The comet passed the orbits of Venus, Earth, Jupiter. Outward it went. It passed Pluto, and we breathed again. We were safe. . . .

Safe? Well, we rebuilt. Devastated cities rose again. And, sometimes, men wondered. What had been the result of the Titans' entry into the world of the Silicates? Who had conquered?

"They may have made peace," Stanton said to Grover as they sat at lunch in the rebuilt Rockefeller Plaza. "After all, the Silicates could use electricity instead of atomic power. They would prefer peace, I think. Both Silicates and Titans were intelligent races. And they were fairly equally matched. In the end, war between them would have meant the destruction of both worlds, both civilizations."

Grover nodded and lit a cigarette as he listened to the scientist.

"The danger isn't over. Mander's Comet has a seventy-five year cycle. During that time the science of the Silicates and the Titans may advance a good deal. Will they find something new to quarrel about? Will they break into our world again? I do not know. I know only one thing—that Mander's Comet returns in seventy-five years. . . ."

[The end of *No Man's World* by Henry Kuttner]