



BLACKOUT

by

Debbie Kuhn

“Jesus, what’s that smell?” Leon grimaced in the dark.

“It’s not me,” Marco said. “What did you eat, Gunther?”

“Nothing...yet.” Gunther’s stomach growled ominously. He was supposed to be in Central Park by now – not trapped in an elevator with two co-workers.

“Laverne Finkelstein’s gonna be pissed,” Leon said. “This’ll make the third time I’ve stood her up for dinner.”

“Ain’t your fault, man.” Marco sighed. “How long do you think we’ll be stuck in here? It’s gettin’ kinda warm – and the air ain’t too fresh either.”

Gunther wiped the sweat off his bald head with a trembling hand. The power would be out for several more hours. What was he going to do about this latest screw up?

“Hold on, I think I’m gettin’ a Jersey station on this thing,” said Leon.

The men heard static coming from the pocket transistor radio and then the mellow tones of an announcer. He was talking about Eisenhower's trip to the hospital.

"This just in, folks – history in the making. Nearly the entire northeastern seaboard has suffered a blackout. The FBI and Department of Defense are investigating the possibility of widespread sabotage as a prelude to an enemy attack. Some sources fear that UFO's may be responsible for disrupting the earth's magnetic fields, as there have been numerous sightings across the nation this year..."

Leon made a rude noise and switched off the radio. "Crap, the Russians are to blame for this if anybody is. Those jealous bastards just wanna make us Yanks miserable – and they hate New Yorkers the most."

"I don't care who caused it, I just want it to be over," Marco said, his voice strained. "I'm gonna go nuts in here pretty soon. Claustrophobia, remember?"

Leon laughed. "Don't worry, if you get too crazy, Gunther will sit on ya, right pal?"

Silence.

"Right, Gunther?"

The elevator filled with a mysterious greenish-yellow light.

I couldn't help it, Gunther thought. My watch must be slow – stupid, inferior technology.

"What the hell...?" Leon backed into a corner. "Gunther, man, you're freakin' glowin'."

"That's not the worst part," Gunther said, as his head began to spin. This wouldn't be happening if he'd been allowed to have a decent meal every week.

Marco screamed like a girl. "We're being attacked by aliens! Gunther's a Martian!"

The two men jumped over to the elevator door and tried to claw it open.

Gunther grabbed his head and stopped it from spinning. He felt sorry for his "friends," but he couldn't possibly hold off any longer.

His body swelled to twice its normal human size, tearing his cheap business suit to shreds. Then the top of his head opened up and two long, wart-covered tentacles snaked out onto the floor.

Leon and Marco gave up on their escape attempt and tried frantically to stomp on Gunther's hollow, gray appendages.

Marco was crying.

The tentacles danced around, easily avoiding injury. The men were grabbed quickly around the ankles and lifted high into the air.

Gunther stared into their terrified, upside-down faces. “Listen, guys, I’m terribly sorry about all this. It’s embarrassing, really, but the thing is, I can’t look human again if I don’t eat something right away – understand? I wish there was another solution.”

The alien slung the men against the walls of the elevator until their heads cracked open. Brains made for a messy meal, but they were the only edible part of an Earthling’s body.

Gunther sucked their skulls dry and then pried the doors of the elevator open with his powerful, multi-purpose tentacles. He had stopped glowing already.

The hall looked pitch-black to everyone but him. By the time he reached the empty offices of the Worthmore Insurance Company, he had once again assumed his human shape – albeit bloody and naked – without anyone being the wiser.

Gunther rinsed off in the bathroom and donned the spare suit that hung in his office closet. Afterwards, he rummaged through the drawers of his mammoth desk until he found PATTI, hidden in a leather eyeglass case.

In English, the device was referred to as a Portable Automatic Time Travel Instigator. It looked like a miniscule cell phone from Earth’s not too distant future. The one drawback was that it could only be used to travel forward – not back. That meant he would have to meet up with the Mother Ship at some point.

Gunther didn’t want to think about that yet.

It was a shame he had to use the gadget again so soon, but he’d broken too many rules in 1965 to continue his studies.

The next full-scale invasions were due in 1977 and 2003. He’d heard all about the New York City riots of the ’77 “blackout,” and figured it would be the perfect time and place to go. No one would notice his solo arrival. He could get lost in the chaos.

Okay, what was that new password? He needed it to activate PATTI.

Ah, now he remembered.

Gunther punched in the letters: R-O-S-W-E-L-L.

Roswell.

THE END