

Chapter Two: The Falling Star

Then came the night of the first 'falling star'. It was seen early in the morning, rushing over Winchester eastward, a line of flame high in the atmosphere. Hundreds must have seen it, and taken it for an ordinary falling star.

I was at home and saw nothing of it. Some of those who saw its flight say it travelled with a hissing sound. I myself heard nothing of that.

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But very early in the morning poor Ogilvy, who had seen the 'shooting star', rose early with the idea of finding it. Find it he did, soon after dawn, and not far from the sand pits. An enormous hole had been made by the impact of the thing, and the sand and gravel had been flung violently in every direction over the heath, forming heaps visible a mile and a half away. The heather was on fire eastward, and a thin blue smoke rose against the dawn.

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The Thing itself lay almost entirely buried in sand, amidst the scattered splinters of a fir tree it had shook to fragments in its descent. The uncovered part had the appearance of a huge cylinder, caked over by a thick scaly muddy-coloured incrustation. It had a diameter of about thirty yards. Ogilvy tentatively approached the mass, flabbergasted at the size and more so at the shape, since most meteorites are round. It was, however, still extremely hot from its flight through the air and this prevented Ogilvy from getting too close. There was a stirring noise within its cylinder he assumed to be the cooling of its surface; for at that time it had not occurred to him that it might be hollow.

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He remained standing at the edge of the pit that the Thing had made for itself, transfixed by its strange appearance, astonished chiefly at its unusual shape and colour. The early morning was wonderfully still and he did not remember hearing any birds that morning, there was certainly no breeze stirring, and the only sounds were the faint movements from within the cindery cylinder. He was all alone on the common.

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Then suddenly he noticed with a start that some of the ashy incrustation that covered the 'meteorite', was falling off! It was dropping off in flakes and raining down upon the sand. A large piece suddenly came off and fell with a sharp noise that brought his heart into his mouth.

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For a minute he scarcely realised what this meant, and, although the heat was excessive, he clambered down into the pit close to the bulk to see the Thing more clearly. And then he perceived that, very slowly, the circular top of the cylinder was rotating and he heard a muffled grating. Suddenly, it came upon him in a flash. The cylinder was hollow - with an end that screwed out! Something within the cylinder was unscrewing the top!

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The thought of the confined creature was so dreadful to Ogilvy that he momentarily forgot the heat and went forward to the cylinder to help turn. But luckily the heat stopped him before he could burn his hands on the still-glowing metal. At that he stood irresolute for a moment, then turned, scrambled out of the pit, and set off running wildly into Woking.

35

Question 1

Read again the first part of the source, lines 1 to 11.

List **four** things from this part of the text about the 'falling star'/Thing.

- A
- B
- C
- D

[4 marks]

Question 2

Summarise the text in **no more** than 50 words.