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Secretary-General closed the session. I met my fellow translator Grigori as we were leaving the U.N. chamber. His face was red with excitement. "Who dreamed up that circus?" he asked. "The tests looked real to me," I said. "A circus!" he said. "A joke! If they were real, Peter, why was there no debate?" "There will be time for debate tomorrow, surely." "Tomorrow the doctor and his machine will be back in Paris. Lots can happen before tomorrow. Man, how can anybody trust a thing that looks as if it ate the baby?" I was a little angry. "Are you sure you're not more worried about their politics than the way they look?" I said. He said, "Bah," and went away.

The next day, reports came in from laboratories all over the world. The Kanamit's power source had been tested. Those little metal boxes would give more power than atomic energy. They would cost next to nothing and last nearly forever. They were so cheap to make that everybody in the world could have one of his own. By afternoon, 17 countries had begun to set up factories to turn them out.

The next day, the Kanamit turned up with a machine that would increase the amount of food that could grow in any land by 60 to 100 percent. The day after that, they dropped their bombshell.

"You now have a future with unlimited power and food," said one of them. He pointed with his three-fingered hand to a box on the table before him. It had a reflector on the front of it. "We offer you today a third gift."

He waved to the TV men to roll their cameras over. Then he picked up a large sheet of cardboard. It was covered with drawings and English words. We saw it on the large screen. "This broadcast is going all over your world," said the Kanama. "I hope that everyone who can take pictures from TV screens will use their cameras now. This machine creates"

a field in which nothing, of any kind, can explode." There was silence.

The Kanama said, "It cannot be kept from anyone now. If one nation has it, all must have it." When nobody seemed to understand, he said, "There will be no more war."

That was the biggest news in 1,000 years. It turned out that the explosions included the ones in gasoline and diesel engines. They had made it impossible for anybody to equip a modern army.

We could have gone back to bows and arrows, of course, but that wouldn't have satisfied the military. Besides, there wouldn't be any reason to make war. Every nation would soon have everything.

Nobody ever gave another thought to those lie-detector tests. Grigori was annoyed; he had nothing to prove his suspicions were right.

I quit my job with the U.N. a few months later, because I saw there was going to be nothing for the U.N. to do. Every nation on Earth was well on the way to being self-supporting.

I took a job as translator with the Kanamit Embassy, and it was there that I ran into Grigori again. I was glad to see him, but I couldn't imagine what he was doing there.

"I thought you were on the other side," I said. "Don't tell me you think the Kanamit are all right now."

"I still hate the looks of them," he said. "You were right, of course — they mean us nothing but good. But do you know — the question of the Soviet delegate was never answered. They told us what they wanted to do — 'to bring you the peace and plenty that we enjoy.' But they didn't say why." Why are the aliens being so helpful?

"Why do missionaries —" "Missionaries do it for religious reasons. If these creatures have a religion, they've never said anything about it. Now, what will the Kanamit people gain from helping us?"

Grigori & the Kanamit aliens

appearances can be deceiving

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