

UNIT 6**City in Darkness**

Millions of lights twinkled and shone from the shops, offices and the giant, towering skyscrapers. It was the evening rush hour in New York. It had been a cold, dismal, damp November day. Now darkness had fallen and the streets were filled with people making their way home from work.

Suddenly all the lights in the city faded and went out. The city's electricity supply had failed. Blackness enveloped the city. For a few seconds people stood like statues shocked into silence. Then the panic and fear began.



Deep beneath the city's streets the underground trains had stopped running. Hundreds of passengers were trapped in the trains and could not get out. The passageways and staircases of the underground were plunged into an inky darkness. Women and children screamed in fear as a dangerous scramble for the exits began.

Later a New York newspaper reported that about a quarter of a million people had been trapped in the awful blackness underground. After what must have seemed like days for the passengers, gangs of rescuers were sent to break open the trains' doors and the shocked and dazed travellers were guided to safety.



Many passengers in the lifts of the skyscrapers were not so lucky. All the lifts had stopped dead, many between floors. Inside the lifts people screamed with fear and some fainted in the heat.

Outside, the streets soon filled with long lines of stationary traffic. There were many accidents at traffic-lights as the blackness was filled with the noise of car horns being punched by angry drivers.

New York was not the only place to suffer the blackout. In the city of Boston the lights had also failed and the prisoners in the local jail began to fight and riot, breaking furniture and attacking their guards. Suddenly one part of the prison erupted into flames. Police were rushed to the prison and used tear gas to control the prisoners and prevent them from escaping into the dark streets.



High above the cities aircraft were waiting to land. Many had to change direction and fly on to other cities. In New York two lines of cars were lined up facing each other with their headlights blazing across the runway to guide some of the planes down to earth.

In millions of homes families felt lost and isolated from the rest of the world. Outside in the streets they could hear gangs shouting and fighting and breaking the windows of local shops. Without electricity no burglar alarms were working and so many things were stolen.

The blackness covered the cities for over five hours before the fault was finally rectified and the lights came on again.

