

THE MARTIAN DIARIES

BY

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A sequel to The War Of The Worlds

VOLUME 2. LAKE ON THE MOON

The Martian Diaries: Vol. 2 Lake On The Moon
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This is a work of fiction. Any similarities to real people, places or events are entirely coincidental.

Author's Note

The first part of *Lake On The Moon* is set at the time of the original Martian invasion in H.G. Wells' *The War Of The Worlds*—circa 1906. It is my idea of what could have happened to the astronomer Ogilvy, as he survives a heat ray attack on Horsell Common. The second part of the book continues the story in 1919, six years after the Great Comet and the Martian invasion detailed in *The Day Of The Martians*. It was always my intention to closely follow H.G. Wells' style in my continuation of the storyline and I hope you feel I have succeeded.

Perhaps you might like to check out the award-winning audio versions of this series, featuring original music and sound effects. Described as 'a movie for your ears' by some, they will enhance your immersive experience and take you to another level of enjoyment. Entered together, volumes one and two won five awards in the Los Angeles Science Fiction Film Festival 2020—Audio Drama category. You can purchase them at good audiobook retailers or direct from me via my website: <https://www.martiandiaries.com>

H.E. Wilburson

PART 1 - 1906

There is no future except the past....

Chapter 1

A Perfect Day

“Are your dreams your own?”

Stent's wife asked her question timidly from beneath her floppy straw hat. It was a curious enquiry from the young mother whose usually happy face was frowned in a worry. She let go her wriggling child, and looked up from the picnic things with her striking blue eyes, to see which of the seated friends would answer her. No one said anything. In the heat of the day, she waved an irritating insect away from her face. Embarrassed by the silence, she followed everyone's gaze back to her child, who had managed to stand shakily on his own. She was in time to see his hand let go the side of the hamper and, without encouragement, the boy took a step for the first time. The gasp and applause from everyone present coincided with an even louder cheer, a victory for her husband, who held his cricket bat aloft in acknowledgement of winning the match for his team. The child sat down with a plump onto the rug, unsure what the excitement was all about. Then, grinning back at the adoring faces, he applauded too.

“We are all full of wondrous dreams and possibilities,” Ogilvy answered. “May I ask, when was your son born?”

Mrs. Stent replied, “On the 15th of May, 1905. He is already one and a bit years old.”

It was in that moment that Laura realised that a baby was what she wanted and dreamed of most of all. With the return of their triumphant husbands, both women served drinks and sandwiches from the hamper. Mrs. Stent kissed her husband quickly as he sat down close to her on the grass, and with a beaming smile she blinked back happy tears, never more content and proud of her little family.

That evening, the first ever Martian cylinder hissed through the summer sky, marking the end of a perfect day.

Chapter 2

The Doctor

Ogilvy first encountered the Martians face to face in the pit on Horsell Common. The unexpected blast of a heat ray scorched him severely, to within an inch of his life. Stent, the Astronomer Royal, and a journalist named Henderson, took the brunt of the invisible beam, which killed both men instantly. Now all Ogilvy could do was lie helpless in a hospital bed, wrapped heavily in bandages, constantly afraid that the pain relief would wear off before any fresh medication could be administered.

With every passing hour he loathed the Martians more, and planned for a day when the savage aliens would pay for the unwarranted injury they had inflicted upon him. After much thought and in order to achieve his goal, he concluded the need for three things: first, the help of someone with a clear mind and ability; secondly, to learn all there was to know about the Martian enemy; thirdly, most difficult and important of all, was to keep himself from wallowing in self pity.

Days later, with some of the bandages removed, Ogilvy obtained the help of Dr. David Willett, a bright and determined individual, sympathetic to the astronomer's cause. The junior doctor, fascinated that Ogilvy had seen and witnessed creatures from another planet, was more than happy to help in any way that he could. Ogilvy insisted that the daily progress of the Martian invasion should be mapped and recorded whenever possible. With Willett's help, all the information collected was inserted into a leather-bound diary. Willett wrote 'Martian' across the front of it.

A nurse came and removed more of Ogilvy's bandages. Now able to turn his head enough, he stared out of the window, relieved there was more to see than the familiar cracks in the ceiling. For the longest while he gazed at the clouds and their simple beauty. That night, large fires could be seen blazing on the horizon and the air reverberated with the sound of heavy guns pounding.

It was the first time Ogilvy had seen a Martian tripod even though it was in silhouette. He thought for sure that it would be consumed by the leaping flames, but the alien menace

which stood higher than the surrounding trees and buildings, moved out of sight. Its new purpose or destination was unclear.

There was a sudden commotion in the hospital an hour or so later. A company of soldiers had engaged a tripod, and the survivors that were brought in were almost unrecognisable as human. They were burned and charred, one still screaming for help. Ogilvy did not see them but knew exactly how they suffered. He had been the same.

Later, a senior doctor came to examine Ogilvy and explained that there was an overwhelming number of casualties and the hospital was struggling to cope. Medical supplies were running low and a procedure to ration all medication was being temporarily introduced.

The change in medication, together with thunder and torrential rain, kept Ogilvy from sleeping most of that night. Far from rested the following morning, he wondered why the ward was still in semi-darkness considering the time of day. Something was obscuring the windows. Matron told him abruptly that she was unsure what was happening when he questioned the lack of light, and explained that most of her hospital staff had not reported for work.

Dr. Willett later appeared, weary and anxious. "You have no idea what is happening out there, it certainly is a nightmare. Everything is covered in hellish Red Weed. It has to be something to do with the Martians. I'm sure that the huge amount of rain from last night's storm has caused it to grow so vigorously."

"Jack and the beanstalk perhaps?" Ogilvy joked.

The doctor suddenly became serious. "Except that the Red Weed hasn't only grown upwards, it has spread outwards in all directions. And in this story the terrible giant has three metal legs. It's going to take more than an axe to sort this out. If I didn't know better, I would say it is more creature than plant, the way it smothers everything it touches. The roads and railway lines are completely blocked by it. Only those on horseback or on foot can get anywhere. I have no idea what the Red Weed is doing to our land, crops and animals, but it can't be anything good."

Concerned, Ogilvy asked Willett to find suitable containers to store pure samples of the Red Weed. The junior doctor quickly returned with five, sealed vacuum jars.

“What are these?” Ogilvy said. “I can hardly see what’s in them.”

“The Red Weed. The thick glass and the lack of air or moisture should restrict any growth and these samples should last forever.”

“Good thinking. Now, we must get these jars to some friends of mine. They are top scientists all meeting at a conference in Paris next week. I was preparing to go along with Stent, before the Martians intervened. The astronomer Percival Lowell should be there too. He is studying Mars at the moment and luckily for us, visiting from America. We must get these samples out of England. Who knows what else the Martians have in store for us? I want you to contact Admiral Collins at the Admiralty, and tell him I am calling in a favour. These samples must be transported across the channel, and to safety, by the fastest means possible. Here, empty my case, and use some bed linen to wrap the jars. Where these go, you must go too.”

There was an odd creaking above their heads and the sound of tiles giving way on the roof. Both men looked up. Ogilvy said in a lowered voice, “Be sure to sort out travel documents before you set foot on any boat. My friend Admiral Collins will help you all that he can. Once in France, make your way quickly to Paris. You must deliver the case personally and never let it out of your sight. The conference is being held at this address....

Find Lowell and the others and tell them you have samples of the extra-terrestrial organism, but under no circumstances allow anyone to open the jars. It must only be done under quarantine conditions. The last thing we want to do is start an outbreak of Red Weed on mainland Europe. This separate letter must be delivered to number 10 Downing Street. They need to know exactly what we are doing and why. If there is any way to save London and England from Red Weed and Martian occupation, it must be found soon. Our Martian Diaries need to be here with me and I will find someone to keep them updated. If at all possible, I wouldn’t mind being rescued from this place. I have a feeling things are about to get difficult. Goodbye and good luck to you.”

Dr. Willett hurriedly disappeared into the corridor taking Ogilvy’s small brown suitcase, his

footsteps growing fainter. Ogilvy never saw Willett again.

Chapter 3

HMS Thunder Child

Taking Dr. Willett on board and ignoring cries for help from countless refugees on the dock, the crew of HMS Thunder Child weighed anchor and she glided back out to sea. The Captain was furious that his ship was being used as a taxi service for a single civilian, someone with the distinct air of going on a holiday. All along the shoreline, jetties and beaches were crowded with waiting people and littered with cumbersome goods and belongings that many would find impossible to take with them. Rowing boats and dinghies ferried the weary escapees out to larger boats and ships which clogged the estuary with their sheer numbers.

The frailty of humanity was never more clear, as young men struggled to carry the old through thick mud; women wept with their mothers, and children too tired to cry watched with wide eyes the unfolding scenes of mass exodus.

Despite the new official orders to head directly for Calais at all possible speed, Thunder Child slowed to a halt in the middle of the Blackwater Estuary. For three hours or more, the smaller ships and boats, all packed to overcrowding with frightened people, streamed slowly past the iron-clad, en route to the safety of mainland Europe. Willett's frustration with the situation grew and he insisted that it was now time to make for France.

From Coalhouse Fort at Tilbury came a low thump of heavy artillery, signalling a fresh engagement with the Martians. Picking up his binoculars, the Captain continued to monitor plumes of black smoke from raging fires on the landward horizon in the direction of Tillingham. Suddenly, a group of Martian tripods loomed into view. HMS Thunder Child was the only warship in the immediate vicinity and the Captain knew that the other iron-clads of the Channel Fleet were too distant to provide assistance to the vulnerable makeshift convoy.

At his vantage point, the Captain observed how the tripods worked together. An old paddle steamer, low in the water with her decks crowded with refugees, moved painfully slowly, churning water frantically behind her. One of the towering tripods strode into the water,

obviously keen to prevent 'The Duchess', or any other rescue ship from escaping. Much to Dr. Willett's surprise, the Captain suddenly shouted orders to prepare for action.

The iron-clad stirred, just as two more metal tripods stalked menacingly into the sea from the mudflats. The height and scale of the Martian machines dwarfed the largest of the boats leaving the estuary. With the preservation of human life uppermost in his mind, the Captain ordered Thunder Child to attack the nearest tripod. Turning sharply, moving easily through the water, she coursed past the smaller boats which bobbed wildly in her wake, while amber sparks and smoke jetted furiously from her two funnels. Making way through the flotilla at high speed, she accelerated past 'The Duchess' to charge headlong towards the unsuspecting metal monster.

With its long, flexible tentacles writhing, the towering menace aimed a canister of black gas in the direction of the iron-clad, hitting her hard on the starboard side. Thunder Child, steering away from the poisonous smoke, was suddenly caught in the searing beam of a heat ray which cut across the ship's bows. The Captain finally barked his order to open fire. A deafening blast erupted from the ship's guns and the tripod was immediately pulverised, its wreckage toppling and crashing into the sea. The damaged warship, with her steering gear still intact, now veered sharply to intercept another tripod which instinctively raised its heat ray.

Those who watched, either from the dock or from the crowded rescue boats, now looked on in horror as another invisible beam surged through the dissipating smoke and sliced into the iron-clad's bows. This time it ignited her munitions and Thunder Child rose up out of the water in a ball of orange flame. Her unstoppable forward momentum rammed the tripod, instantly cutting it down and the impact smashed it to smithereens.

Then, abruptly and without warning, all turmoil ceased. On the glassy surface of the sea, a shroud of black smoke thinned and drifted away silently from a circle of foam and the place where the iron-clad sank.

Years later in 1918, a German warship, deterred by the guns of coastal defence at Coalhouse Fort, hit sunken wreckage as it sailed northwards at low tide. Three sealed jars, one of them newly cracked, bobbed unseen to the surface and were carried by the new tide towards London. Only one man had a possible explanation for the sudden and

inexplicable reappearance of the Red Weed near Canvey Island in 1919.

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<https://books2read.com/lakeonthemoon>

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