The War o the Warlds

*bi*

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*Picturs bi*

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2016

The Intimmers

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*Bit fa’ll bide in these warlds gin they be lived in? …*

*Are we or they Lairds o the Warld? …*

*An foo are aa ferlies vrocht fur man?*

—Kepler (quoted in *The Anatomy o Dowieness*)

Buik Ane

The Camin o the Martians

Chapter 1: The War o the Warlds: h.g.wells

The Eve o the FECHTIN

Naebody wid hae believed in the hinmaist years o the nineteenth century that this warld wis bein watched keen an close bi harns greater than man’s an yet as mortal as his ain; that as cheils wir eident aboot their various consarns they wir scrutineezed an studied, gey near as nerra as a cheil wi a microscope micht scrutineeze the flichterin craiturs that heeze an multiplee in a drap o watter. Wi unca smugness cheils gaed back an fore ower this warld aboot their smaa maitters, calm in their certainty o their rule ower maitter. It’s like that the ferlies unner the microscope dae the same. Naebody gaed a thocht tae the aulder warlds o space as sources o human risk, or thocht o them anely tae set aside the notion o life upon them as impossible or nae likely. It’s fey tae recaa some o the mental weys o thon depairted days. At maist, yirdly cheils fancied there micht be ither cheils upon Mars, mebbe lesser than thirsels an ready tae walcam a messenger venture. Yet ben the gap o space, harns that are tae oor harns as oors are tae thon o the breets that dee, intellects muckle an cweel an cauld, regairded thon yird wi jealous een, an slaw an siccar drew their plans agin us. An early in the twentieth century cam the gran dooncam.

The planet Mars, I scarce nott tae mynd the reader, cercles aboot the sun at a mean distance o 140,000,000 miles, an the licht an heat it wins frae the sun is bare hauf o thon gotten bi this warld. It maun be, gin this dweeble jelousin his ony truith, aulder than oor warld; an lang afore this yird stoppit bein liquifeed, life on its surface maun hae sterted its coorse. The fack that it’s scarce ae seeventh o the makk o the yird maun hae hashed on its cweelin tae the temperature at which life could stert. It his air an watter an aa that’s nott fur the support o life.

Yet sae prood is man, an sae blinned bi his proodness, that nae screiver, up tae the verra eyn o the nineteenth century, pit forrit ony idea that intelligent life micht hae grown thonner far, or forbye at aa, ayont its yirdly level. Nur wis it in the ordnar wey unnerstude that since Mars is aulder than oor yird, wi scarce a quarter o the surface area an hyner frae the sun, it necessar follaes that it’s nae anely mair hyne frae time’s stert bit nearer its eyn.

The yirdly cweelin that maun someday owertakk oor planet his already gaen unca far wi oor neighboor. Its pheesical condition is still maistly a winnerment, bit we ken noo that even in its equatorial airt the noon temperature bare cams near thon o oor cauldest yuletide. Its air is far skimpier than oors, its oceans hae dwined till they hap anely a third o its ootside, an as its slaw sizzons cheenge muckle sna taps gaither an thaw aboot ikie pole an whyles droons its mild zones. Thon hinmaist stage o foonerment, that tae us is still unca hyne aff, his becam a present-day hinner fur the fowk o Mars. The direck wecht o need his brichtened their harns, braidened their pouers, an hardened their hairts. An luikin ben space wi tools, an harns sic as we hae scarce dwaumed o, they see, at its nearhaun distance anely 35,000,000 o miles sunwird o them, a mornin starnie o hope, oor ain hetter planet, green wi veggies an grey wi watter, wi a cloudy air spikkin o growth, wi glisks ben its wauchtin cloud swatches o braid dauds o populous kintra an nerra, navy-crooded seas.

An we cheils, the craiturs fa bide on this yird, maun be tae them at least as fremmit an laigh as are the puggies an lemurs tae us. The clivver side o man already kens that life is an ongyaun warssle fur bein, an it wid seem that this as weel is the belief o the harns upon Mars. Their warld is far gaen in its cweelin an this warld is still croodit wi life, bit croodit anely wi fit they regaird as puirer breets. Tae cairry warfare sunwird is, mairower, their anely flicht frae the doonfaa that, generation efter generation, creeps on them.

An afore we judge o them ower hard we maun mynd fit coorse an ootricht connachin oor ain ficherin his vrocht, nae anely on breets, siclike the vanished bison an the dodo, bit on its laigher races. The Tasmanians, in spite o their human likeness, wir aathegither swypit oot o existence in a war o killin vrocht bi European incamers, in the space o fifty year. Are we sic devotees o mercy as tae girn gin the Martians focht in the same speerit?

The Martians seem tae hae planned their drap wi unca subtlety—their mathematic larnin is clearly far better than oors—an tae hae cairried oot their meisurs wi a near perfeck harmony. Hid oor tools lat it, we micht hae seen the gaitherin tribble hyne back in the nineteenth century. Cheils like Schiaparelli watched the reid planet—it’s fey, by-the-bye, that fur coontless centuries Mars his bin the starnie o fechtin—bit didnae wirk oot the cheengin makk o the merkins they mappit sae weel. Aa thon time the Martians maun hae bin gettin ready.

Durin the fecht o 1894 a muckle licht wis seen on the lichtit pairt o the orb, first at the Lick Observatory, syne bi Perrotin o Nice, an syne bi ither watchers. Sassenach readers heard o it first in the issue o *Natur* datit August 2. I’m like tae think that this bleeze micht hae bin the castin o the muckle gun, in the braid pit sunk inno their planet, frae which their shots wir fired at us. Fey merkins, as yet mysteerious, wir seen nearhaun the airt o thon ootbrakk during the neist twa conflicts.

The storm brakk upon us sax year syne. As Mars drew near conflict, Lavelle o Java set the weers o the astronomical excheenge stounin wi the bumbazin intelligence o a muckle ootbrakk o sheenin gas on the planet. It hid happened near midnicht o the twalfth; an the spectroscope, tae which he’d at aince checkit, shawed a heeze o bleezin gas, maistly hydrogen, meevin wi a great speed tae this Eirde. This splairge o a lowe hid becam inveesible aboot a quarter by twalve. He compeered it tae a muckle pluffert o flame o a suddenty an forcey like spootit oot o the planet, “as bleezin gases fleered oot o a gun.”

A richt correck phrase it pruved. Yet the neist day there wis naethin o this in the papers bar a wee screivin in the *Daily Telegraph*, an the warld gaed unkennin o ane o the wechtiest risks that iver threatened the human clan. I michtnae hae heard o the flare-up at aa hid I nae met Ogilvy, the weel-kent astronomer, at Ottershaw. He wis unca vrocht up at the news, an in the ootpoorin o his feelins socht me up tae takk a turn wi him thon nicht in a keek at the reid planet.

Fur aa that his happened since, I still mynd thon wyte verra clear: the blaik an seelent observatory, the shaddaed licht makkin a dweeble glimmer on the fleer in the neuk, the steidy tick o the clockwirk o the telescope, the wee slit in the reef—an oblong depth wi the starnie stoor straikit ben it. Ogilvy meeved aboot, inveesible bit clear tae hear. Teetin ben the telescope, ane saw a cercle o deep blue an the wee roon planet sweemin in thon airt. It seemed sic a wee ferlie, sae bricht an sma an still, dweebly merked wi crosswyse strips, an slichtly flattened frae the perfeck roon. Bit sae wee it wis, sae siller-like warm—a preen’s-heid o licht! It wis as if it wummled, bit really this wis the telescope wummlin wi the virr o the clockwirk that keepit the planet in view.

As I watched, the planet seemed tae growe braider an smaaer an tae gae forrit an back, bit thon wis jist that ma ee wis trauchelt. Forty million o miles it wis frae us—mair than forty million o miles o teemness. Fyew fowk ken the amoont o teemness in which the stoor o the meisurable universe sweems.

Nearhaun it in thon airt, I mynd, wir three dweeble pynts o licht, three telescopic starnies markedly hyne awa, an aa aroon it wis the unfaddomable derkness o teem space. Ye ken foo thon blaikness luiks on a cranreuch starnie lichtit nicht. In a telescope it seems far derker. An inveesible tae me as it wis sae hyne awa an smaa, fleein faist an steidy tae me ben thon unca distance, drawin nearer ilkie meenit bi sae mony thoosans o miles, cam the Ferlie they wir sennin us, the Ferlie that wis tae bring sae muckle tyauve an mishanters an daith tae the Eirde. I niver jealoused it syne as I watched; naebody on the Eirde earth dreamed o thon siccar warheid.

Thon nicht, as weel, there wis anither jettin oot o gas frae the hyne aff planet. I saw it. A reiddish fleerich at the edge, the slichtest ootjut o the ootline jist as the chronometer struck midnicht; an at that I telt Ogilvy an he tuik ma place. The nicht wis hett an I wis droothy, an I gaed streetchin ma shanks clumsy-like an finnin ma wey in the derkness, tae the wee brod far the siphon stude, whyle Ogilvy gaspit at the fleerich o gas that cam oot taewards us.

Thon nicht anither inveesible ferlie sterted on its wey tae the Eirde frae Mars, jist a secunt or sae unner twinty-fower oors efter the first ane. I myne foo I sat on the brod thonner in the pitmirk, wi swatches o green an crammosie sweemmin afore ma een. I wished I’d a licht tae smoke bi, little jelousin the meanin o the meenit glimmer I’d seen an aa that it wid sune bring me. Ogilvy watched till ane, an syne gaed it up; an we lichtit the lantern an waukit ower tae his hoose. Doon aneth in the derkness wir Ottershaw an Chertsey an aa their hunners o fowk, sleepin in peace.

He wis fu o sklaik thon nicht aboot the state o Mars, an jeered at the crude notion o its haein fowk fa wir signallin us. His notion wis that meteorites micht be faain in a wechty shooer upon the planet, or that a muckle volcanic ootbrakk wisongaun. He pyntit oot tae me foo dootfu it wis that organic cheenge hid taen the same wey in the twa neurhaun planets.

“The chaunces agin onythin cheil-like on Mars are a million tae ane,” quo he.

Hunners o onluikers saw the lowe thon nicht an the nicht efter aboot midnicht, an again the nicht efter; an sae fur ten nichts, a flame ilkie nicht. Foo the shots feenished efter the tenth naebody on the Eirde his managed tae explain. It micht be the gases o the firin misfittit the Martians. Wechty cloods o rikk or stoor, veesible ben a pouerfu telescope on the Eirde as wee grey, flichterin patches, spreid ben the clearness o the planet’s air an happit its mair kent merkins.

Even the daily papers waukened up tae the tribbles at the hinnereyn, an popular records raise up here, there, an aawye consarnin the volcanoes on Mars. The seriocomic journal *Punch*, I mynd, vrocht a blythe eese o it in the political cartoon. An, aa unjeloused, thon missiles the Martians hid aimed at us meeved eirde-ward, breengin noo at a speed o mony miles a secunt ben the teem abyss o space, oor bi oor an day bi day, nearer an nearer. It seems tae me noo aamaist byordnar winnerfu that, wi thon faist weird hingin ower us, cheils could gae aboot their wee consarns as they did. I mynd foo gled Markham wis at winnin a new photie o the planet fur the illustratit paper he edited in thon days. Fowk in thon latter times scarce kent the rowth an enterprise o oor nineteenth-century papers. Fur ma ain pairt, I wis aa taen up in larnin tae ride the bike, an eident wi a wheen o papers discussin the likely cheenges o moral notions as ceevilisation gaed forrit.

Ae nicht (the first missile syne could scarce hae bin 10,000,000 miles awa) I gaed fur a wauk wi ma wife. It wis starnie licht an I clarifeed the Signs o the Zodiac tae her, an pynted oot Mars, a bricht skirp o licht creepin tapwird, tae far sae mony telescopes wir pyntit. It wis a warm nicht. Camin hame, a pairty o traivellers frae Chertsey or Isleworth gaed by us singin an playin music. There wir lichts in the upper windaes o the hooses as the fowk gaed tae bed. Frae the railway station hyne aff cam the soun o shuntin trains, ringin an rummlin, saftened near intae melody bi the distance. Ma wife pyntit oot tae me the brichtness o the reid, green, an yalla signal lichts hingin in a framewirk agin the lift. It luikit sae safe an peacefu.

Chapter 2

The Faain Starnie

Syne cam the nicht o the first faain starnie. It wis spied early in the mornin, breengin ower Winchester eastwird, a line o flame heich in the lift. Hunners maun hae seen it, an taen it fur an ordnar faain starnie. Albin spakk o’t as leavin a greenish straik ahin it that glimmered fura wheen secunts. Denning, oor greatest kenner on meteorites, quo that the heicht o its first sicht wis aboot ninety or a hunner miles. It seemed tae him that it drappit tae the grun aboot a hunner miles east o him.

I wis at hame at thon oor an screivin in ma study; an tho ma French windaes face tae Ottershaw an the blin wis up (fur I lued in thon days tae luik up at the nicht lift), I saw naethin o it. Yet this maist oorie o aa ferlies that iver cam tae the eirde frae ooter space maun hae drappit fin I wis dowpin thonner, veesible tae me hid I anely luikit up as it gaed bye. Puckles o fowk fa saw its flicht say it traivelled wi a hissin soun. I masel heard naethin o thon. Mony fowk in Berkshire, Surrey, an Middlesex maun hae seen the faa o it, an, at maist, hae thocht that anither meteorite hid drappit. Naebody seems tae hae tribbled tae luik fur the faaen ferlie thon nicht.

Bit verra early in the mornin puir Ogilvy, fa hid seen the sheetin starnie an fa wis perswaddit that a meteorite lay somewye on the lea atween Horsell, Ottershaw, an Wokin, raise early wi the notion o finnin it. Finn it he did, sune efter dawn, an nae far frae the san pits. A muckle hole hid bin vrocht bi the knell o the missile, an the san an graivel hid bin flang wudly in ilkie airt ower the heath, biggin howps veesible a mile an a hauf awa. The heath wis in a lowe eastwird, an a thin blue rikk raise agin daybrakk.

The Ferlie itsel lay near aathegither beeried in san, amids the skittered skirps o a fir tree it hid rived tae bittickies in its doondrap. The unhappit pairt hid the luik o a muckle cylinder, clartit ower an its ootline saftened bi a thick scaly broonish incrustation. It hid a diameter o aboot thirty yairds. He gaed near the mass, dumfounert at the size an mair sae at the makk, since maist meteorites are roondit mair or less aathegither. It wis, hoosaeiver, still sae hett frae its flicht ben the air as tae forbad his gaun nearhaun. A steerin soun inbye its cylinder he to tuik tae be the unequal cweelin o its surface; fur at thon time it hidnae occurred tae him that it micht be teem inbye.

He bedd staunin at the edge o the pit that the Ferlie hid vrocht fur itsel, glowerin at its fey luik, bumbazed maistly at its byordnar makk an colour, an dimly notin even syne some pruif o design in its camin. The early mornin wis winnerfu still, an the sun, jist clearin the pine trees near Weybridge, wis already warm. He didnae mynd lippenin tae ony birdies thon mornin, there wis certain nae breeze steerin, an the anely souns wir the dweeble meevements frae inbye the stoory cylinder. He wis aa alane on the lea.

Then o a suddenty he noticed wi a stert that some o the grey clort, the aisse glaur that happit the meteorite, wis faain aff the circular edge o the eyn. It wis drappin aff in bitticks an rainin doon on the san. A muckle daud o a suddenty cam aff an drapt wi a sherp soun that brocht his hairt intae his moo.

Fur a meenit he scarce unnerstude fit this meant, an, tho the heat wis byordnar, he sclimmed doon intae the pit nearhaun tae the bulk tae see the Ferlie mair clearly. He jeloused even then that the cweelin o the body micht accoont fur this, bit fit connached thon notion wis the fack that the aisse wis faain anely frae the eyn o the cylinder.

An syne he saw that, unca slaw, the circular tap o the cylinder wis birlin on its body. It wis sic a smaa meevement that he spied it anely wi notin that a blaik merk that hid bin near him five meenits syne wis noo at the ither side o the circumference. Even then he scarce unnerstude fit thismeant, till he heard a smored gratin soun an saw the blaik merk yark forrit an inch or twa. Syne the maitter cam on him in a glisk. The cylinder wis artificial—teem—wi an eyn that screwed oot! Somethin inbye the cylinder wis unscrewin the tap!

“Gweedsake!” quo Ogilvy. “There’s a cheil inbye it—cheils inbye it! Hauf birssled tae daith! Ettlin tae brakk oot!”

At aince, wi a faist lowp o thocht, he jyned the Ferlie wi the flash upon Mars.

The thocht o the trappit craiturs wis sae dreidfu tae him that he forgot the heat an gaed forrit tae the cylinder tae help turn. Bit bi gweed chaunce the dull radiation stoppit him afore he could burn his hauns on the still-glimmerin metal. At thon he stude unsteidy fur a meenit, syne turned, scrammlit ooto the pit, an set aff rinnin wud intae Woking. The time syne maun hae bin somewey aboot sax o’clock. He met a waggoner an ettled tae makk him unnerstaun, bit the tale he telt an his luiks wir sae wud—his hat hid faaen aff inno the pit—that the cheil jist drave on. He wis equally unsuccessfu wi the potman fa wis eidently unsteekin the yetts o the howff bi Horsell Brig. The cheil thocht he wis a daftie on the lowse an made an unsuccessfu tyauve tae jyle him intae the taproom. Thon sobered him a thochtie; an fin he saw Henderson, the Lunnon journalist, in his gairden, he cried ower the palins tae gar him understaun.

“Henderson,” he cried, “ye saw thon sheetin starnie last nicht?”

“Weel?” speired Henderson.

“It’s oot on Horsell Lea noo.”

“Gweedsakes!” quo Henderson. “Faaen meteorite! Thon’s gweed.”

“Bit it’s somethin mair than a meteorite. It’s a cylinder—an artificial cylinder, min! An there’s somethin inbye.”

Henderson stude up wi his spaad in his haun.

“Fit’s thon?” he speired. He wis deef in ae lug.

Ogilvy telt him aa that he’d seen. Henderson wis a meenit or twa takkin it in. Syne he drappit his spaad, wheeched up his jaiket, an cam oot intae the road. The twa cheils hashed back at aince tae the lea, an fand the cylinder aye lyin in the same wey. Bit noo the souns inbye hid stoppit, an a thin cercle o bricht metal shawed atween the tap an the body o the cylinder. Air wis either gaun in or gaun oot at the rim wi a dweeble, birsslin soun.

They lippened, chappit on the scaly brunt metal wi a stick, an, winnin nae respon, they baith jeloused the cheil or cheils inbye maun be fooshunless or deid.

Of coorse the twa wirnae able tae dae onythin. They skreiched comfort an promises, an gaed aff back tae the toon again tae win help. A body can pictur them, happit wi san, vrocht up an jummlit, rinnin up the wee street in the bricht sunlicht jist as the shop fowk wir takkin doon their shutters an fowk wir unsteekin their bed chaumer windaes. Henderson gaed intae the railway station at aince, tae telegraph the news tae Lunnon. The newspaper screivins hid prepared cheil’s harns fur takkin in the notion.

Bi echt o’clock a nummer o loons an ooto wirk cheils hid already stertit fur the lea tae see the “deid cheils frae Mars.” Thon wis the form the story tuik. I heard o it first frae ma newspaper loon aboot a quarter tae nine fin I gaed oot tae get ma *Daily Chronicle*. I wis naturally stertled, an tint nae time in gaun oot an ower the Ottershaw brig tae the san pits.

Chapter 3

On Horsell Lea

I fand a wee boorach o mebbe twenty fowk aroon the muckle hole in which the cylinder bedd. I hae already telt o the luik o thon muckle wecht, sunken inno the grun. The girse an graivel aboot it luikit brunt as gin bi a sudden ootburst. Nae doot its cloor hid caused a bleeze o lowe. Henderson an Ogilvy wirnae thonner. I think they thocht that naethin wis tae be dane fur the present, an hid gaen awa tae brakkfaist at Henderson’s hoose.

There wir fower or five loons cockin on the edge o the Pit, wi their feet hingin, an amusin thirsels—until I stoppit them—bi haivin stanes at the muckle mass. Efter I’d spukken tae them aboot it, they stertit playin at “tag” in an oot o the group o bystauners.

Amang thon wir twa cyclists, a jobbin gairdener I hired whyles, a quine cairryin a babby, Gregg the butcher an his wee loon, an twa or three hingers on an gowf caddies fa wir eesed tae hingin aboot the railway station. There wisnae muckle spikkin. Fyew o the ordnar fowk in England hid onythin bit the feintest astronomical notions in thon days. Maist o them wir glowerin quaet at the muckle brod like eyn of the cylinder, that wis still as Ogilvy an Henderson hid left it. I jelouse the general prospeck o a heeze o birssled corpses wis disappynted at this deid wecht. Puckles gaed awa fin I wis thonner, an ither fowk cam. I sclimmed inno the pit an thocht I heard a dweeble meevement aneth ma feet. The tap hid fairly stoppit birlin.

It wis anely fin I won sae close tae it that the feyness o this objeck wis at aa plain tae me. At the first keek it wis really nae mair excitin than a cowpit cairriage or a tree blawn ower the road. Nae sae muckle sae, indeed. It luikit like a roosty gas float. It nott a certain amoont o scientific lear tae ken that the grey scale o the Ferlie wis nae ordnar oxide, that the yalla-like-fite metal that glimmered in the crack atween the lid an the cylinder hid a fey hue. “Alien” hid nae meanin fur maist o the onluikers.

At thon time it wis richt clear in ma ain harns tha the Ferlie hid cam frae the planet Mars, bit I judged it nae likely that it held ony leevin craitur. I thocht the unscrewin micht be automatic. In spite o Ogilvy, I still thocht that there wir cheils in Mars. Ma thochts ran fancifu on the chaunces o it haudin screivins, on the tribbles in owersettin that micht arise, whether we’d finn coins an models in it, an sae furth. Yet it wis a bittie ower muckle fur assurance on this notion. I felt in a hash tae see it opened. Aboot eleyven, as naethin seemed happenin, I wauked back, fu o sic thocht, tae ma hame in Maybury. Bit I fand it a tyauve tae get tae wirk upon ma abstrack probes.

In the efterneen the luik o the lea hid cheenged verra muckle. The early copies o the evenin papers hid bumbazed Lunnon wi massive heidlines:

“A MESSAGE GOTTEN MARS.”

“BYORDNAR TALE FRAE WOKING,”

an sae furth. Mairower, Ogilvy’s wire tae the Astronomical Excheenge hid steered up ilkie observatory in the three kingdoms.

There wir hauf a dizzen flees or mair frae the Woking station staunin in the road bi the san pits, a basket-chaise frae Chobham, an a raither lairdly cairriage. Forbye thon, there wis a fair howpie o bikes. As weel, a rowth o fowk maun hae wauked, in spite o the heat o the day, frae Woking an Chertsey, sae that there wis aathegither a fair heeze o fowk—ane or twa brawly rigged oot leddies amang the lave.

It wis unca hett, nae a cloud in the lift nur a braith o win, an the anely shadda wis thon o the fyew skittered pine trees. The burnin heath hid bin dowsed, bit the flat grun tae Ottershaw wis blaikened as far as a body could see, an still giein aff upricht ribbons o rikk. A bauld swete-gear vender in the Chobham Road hid sent up his loon wi a barra-load o green aipples an ginger beer.

Gaun tae the edge o the pit, I fand it occupeed bi a bourich o aboot hauf a dizzen cheils—Henderson, Ogilvy, an a heich, fair-haired cheil that I efterhin larned wai Stent, the Astronomer Royal, wi puckles o wirk cheils wi spaads an pickaixes. Stent wis giein directions in a clear, heich-pitched voyce. He wis staunin on the cylinder, that wis noo markedly far cweeler; his physog wis reid an reamin wi swyte, an some ferlie luikit tae hae roozed him.

A muckle daud o the cylinder hid bin unhappit, tho its laigher eyn wis still stuck faist. As sune as Ogilvy saw me amang the glowerin fowk on the edge o the pit he cried tae me tae cam doon, an socht me gin I’d mind gaun ower tae see Lord Hilton, the laird o the manor.

The growin boorich, quo he, wis becamin a richt hinner tae their howkin, speecially the loons. They wintit a licht palin pit up, an help tae keep the fowk back. He telt me that a feint steerin wis whyles still sounin inbye the case, bit that the wirk cheils hid failed tae unscrew the tap, as it gied nae grip tae them. The case seemed tae be unca thick, an it wis likely that the feint souns we heard signifeed a gey steer in the intimmers.

I wis verra gled tae dae as he socht, an sae becam ane o the preevileged onluikers inbye the thocht upon airt. I dinna finn Laird Hilton at his hoose, bit I wis telt he wis expeckit frae Lunnon bi the sax o’clock train frae Waterloo; an as it wis syne aboot a quarter bye five, I gaed hame, hid some tea, an wauked up tae the station tae gie him a begeck.

Chapter 4

The Cylinder Unsteeks

Fin I gaed on tae the lea the sun wis settin. Skittered boorachs wir hashin frae the airt o Woking, an ane or twa bodies wir gaun back. The fowk aboot the pit hid grown, an stude oot blaik agin the lemon yalla o the lift—a twa hunner fowk, mebbe. There wir heichtened voyces, an some kinno warssle luikit tae be gaun on aboot the pit. Fey imaginins gaed throwe ma thochts. As I cam nearhaun I heard Stent’s voyce:

“Bide back! Bide back!”

A loon cam rinnin tae me.

“It’s meevin’,” quo he tae me as he gaed bye; “a-screwin’ an a-screwin’ oot. I dinna like it. I’m a-gaun’ hame, I am.”

I gaed on tae the boorich. There wir really, I should think, twa or three hunner fowk powkin an shooglin ane anither, the ane or twa leddies there bein bi nae means the least fu o virr.

“He’s faaen in the pit!” skreiched somebody.

“Bide back!” quo puckles.

The boorich sweyed a bittie, an I jinkit ma wey throwe. Ilkie ane luikit greatly vrocht up. I heard a fey hummin soun frae the pit.

“Takk tent!” quoi Ogilvy; “help haud thon gypes back. We dinna ken fit’s in the scunnerin ferlie, yer awaur!”

I saw a young cheil, a shop wirker in Woking I think he wis, staunin on the cylinder an ettlin tae sclimm ooto the hole again. The boorich hid haived him in.

The eyn o the cylinder wis bein screwed oot frae inbye. Near twa feet o sheenin screw powked oot. Somebody stottit agin me, an I nerra missed bein cowped ontae the tap o the screw. I roondit, an as I did sae the screw maun hae cam oot, fur the lid o the cylinder drappit on the graivel wi a ringin cloor. I pit ma elbuck intae the body ahin me, an turned ma heid tae the Ferlie again. Fur a meenit thon roon hole luikit aathegither blaik. I’d the gloamin in ma een.

I think aabody expeckit tae see a cheil cam oot—mebbe somethin a bittie unlike us cheils o the Eirde, bit in aa basics a cheil. I ken I did. Bit, keekin, I sune saw a ferlie steerin inbye the derk: blae swallin meevements, ane abune anither, an syne twa sheenin disks—like een. Syne somethin like a wee grey snake, aboot the braidth o a waukin stick, wippit up ooto the warsslin mids, an wummlit in the air tae me—an syne anither.

O a suddenty a jeel cam ower me. There wis a lood skreich frae a wumman ahin. I hauf roodit, keepin ma een steekit on the cylinder yet, frae far ither airms wir noo prowkin, an stertit shovin ma wey back frae the edge o the pit. I saw begeck gae wey tae grue on the physogs o the fowk aboot me. I heard mummlit ootcries on aa sides. There wis a oweraa meevement backweys. I saw the shop cheil still warsslin on the edge o the pit. I fand masel alane, an saw the fowk on the ither side o the pit rinnin aff, Stent amang them. I luikit again at the cylinder, an doonricht terror grippit me. I stude petrifeed an glowerin.

A muckle blae roondit wecht, the makk, mebbe, o a bear, wis risin slaw an painfu ooto the cylinder. As it breenged up an catched the licht, it glimmered like weet leather.

Twa muckle derk-coloured een wir regairdin me steidfaist. The mass that framed them, the heid o the ferlie, wis roondit, an hid, ye micht say, a physog. There wis a moo aneth the een, the lipless brim o thon shuke an peched, an drapped slivvers. The hale breet stooned an throbbit convulsive-like. A dweeble airmlike feeler grippit the edge o the cylinder, anither sweyed in the air.

Fowk fa hae niver seen a leevin Martian can scarce pictur the oorie grue o its luiks. The unca V-shaped moo wi its pyntit upper lip, nae broo ridges, nae chin aneth the wedge-like boddom lip, the ongaun trimmlin o this moo, the Gorgon boorichs o airms, the michty breathin o the lungs in a fremmit air the merked wecht an pain o meevement due tae the greater gravitational pull o the Eirde—abune aa, the byordnar force o the muckle een—wir at aince speerited, strang, inhuman, bladdit an ugsome. There wis somethin fungoid in the iley broon skin, somethin in the hyterin forethocht o the weariet meevements unspikkable nesty. Even at this first encoonter, this first glisk, I wis owercam wi scunner an dreid.

O a suddenty the monster wis gaen. It hid cowpit ower the brim o the cylinder an faaen intae the pit, wi a dunt like the faa o a muckle mass o leather. I heard it gie an oorie thick skreich, an straicht aff anither o thon craiturs shawed up derkly in the deep shadda o the hole.

I turned an, rinnin wudly, made fur the first heeze o trees, mebbe a hunner yairds awa; bit I ran sideie-weys an styterin, fur I couldnae turn ma physog frae thon ferlies.

Thonner, amang some young pine trees an furze busses, I devauled, pechin, an wyted farrer cheenges. The lea roon the san pits wis spirkit wi fowk, staunin like masel in a hauf-chermed terror, glowerin at thon craiturs, or raither at the biggit up graivel at the edge o the pit far they lay. An syne, wi a renewed grue, I saw a roon, blaik objeck stottin up an doon on the edge o the pit. It wis the heid o the shop cheil fa hid faaen in, bit shawin as a wee blaik objeck agin the hett wastern sun. Noo he got his showder an knee up, an again he luikit tae slidder back till anely his heid wis veesible. O a suddenty he wis gaen, an I could hae thocht a dweeble skreich hid reached me. I’d a passin notion tae gae back an help him that ma fleg ower-ruled.

Aathin wis syne rale inveesible, happit bi the deep pit an the howpie o san that the faa o the cylinder hid vrocht. Onybody camin alang the road frae Chobham or Woking wid hae bin bumbazed at the sicht—a dwinin heeze o mebbe a hunner fowk or mair staunin in a muckle roch cercle, in sheuchs, ahin busses, ahin yetts an hedges, nae sayin muckle tae ane anither an that in sma, excited skirls, an staring, staring hard at a few heaps of sand. The barra of ginger beer stude, a fey ruin, blaik agin the burnin lift, an in the san pits wis a raw of teem cairraiges wi their shelts ettin ooto snoot bags or pawin the grun.

Chapter 5

The Heat-Glimmer

Efter the glisk I’d hid o the Martians camin ooto the cylinder in which they’d cam tae the eirde frae their planet, a kinno thralldom paraleesed ma meevements. I bedd staunin knee-deep in the heath, glowerin at the hillock that happit them. I wis a battlegrun o fleg an ill-faschence.

I didnae daur tae gae back tae the pit, bit I felt a strang langin tae keek intae it. I stertit waukin, syne, in a muckle curve, sikkin some pynt tae luik an aywis lukin at the san howpies that hid thon in-comers tae oor eirde. Aince a towe o thin blaik wheeps, like the airms o an octopus, wheeched ben the gloamin an wis straicht aff yarked back, an efterwirds a thin pole raise up, jynt bi jynt, haudin at its tap a roon disk that birled wi a stounin meevement. Fit could be gaun on thonner?

Maist o the luikers on hid gaithered in ane or twa boorichss—ane a wee boorich nearhaun Woking, the ither a snorrel o fowk in the airt o Chobham. It wis clear they shared ma mental switherin. There wir a fyew near me. Ae cheil I gaed up tae—he wis, I jeloused, a neebor o mine, tho I didnae ken his name—an I spakk tae him. Bit it wis scarce a time fur clear spikk.

“Fit ugsome *breets*!” quo he. “Gweedsakes! Fit ugsome breets!” He repeatit this ower an ower again.

“Did ye see a cheil in the pit?” quo I; bit he made nae repon tae thon. We becam seelent, an stude watchin fur a time side bi side, takkin, I fancy, a kinno comfort in ane anither’s company. Syne I meeved ma poseetion tae a wee howe that gaed me the gain o a yaird or mair o heicht an fin I luiked fur him eftir he wis waukin tae Woking.

The sunset dwined tae gloamin afore onythin farrer happened. The boorich far awa on the left, tae Woking, seemed tae growe, an I heard noo a dweeble mummle frae it. The wee snorrel o fow nearhaun Chobham gaed awa. There wis scarce ony merk o meevement frae the pit.

It wis thon, as muckle as onythin, that gaed fowk smeddum, an I jelouse the newcamers frae Woking as weel helped tae rebigg virr. At ony rate, as the gloam cam on a slaw, brukken meevement upon the san pits stertit, a meevement that seemed tae gaither force as the quaet o the evenin aboot the cylinder bedd seelent. Upricht blaik figures in twas an threes wid gyang forrit, devaul, watch, an gyang forrit again, spreidin oot as they did sae in a thin cruikit arc that luikit tae encercle the pit in its raxxin horns. Masel, as weel, on my side stertit tae meeve tae the pit.

Syne I saw some cab cheils an ithers hid wauked bauldly intae the san pits, an lippened tae the clash o hoofs an the birl o wheels. I saw a loon hurlin aff the barra o aipples. An syne, inbye thirty yairds o the pit, camin frae the airt o Horsell, I spied a wee blaik snorrel o cheils, the foremaist o fa wis wyvin a fite flag.

Thon wis the Deputation. There’d bin a faist confabulation, an since the Martians wir plainly, in spite o their ugsome makk, clivver craiturs, it hid bin settled tae shaw them, bi nearin them wi signs, that we wir clivver as weel.

Flichter, flichter, gaed the flag, first tae the richt, syne tae the left. It wis ower hyne aff fur me tae makk oot onybody thonner, bit efterwirds I larned that Ogilvy, Stent, an Henderson wir wi ithers in this ettlin at a tryst. Thon wee boorich hid in its advaunce drawn in, sae tae spikk, the circumference o the noo near jyned cercle o fowk, an a nummer o feint blaik figures follaed it at cannie distances.

O a suddenty there wis a flash o licht, an a suppie o sheeny greenish rikk cam ooto the pit in three distinck wheechs, that drave up, ane efter the ither, straicht intae the quaet air.

Thon rikk (or lowe, mebbe, wid be the better wird fur it) wis sae bricht that the deep blue lift owerheid an the blurry streetches o broon lea nearhaun Chertsey, set wi blaik pine trees, luiked tae derken as faist as thon wheechs raise up, an tae bide the derker efter their crinin. At the same time a feint hissin soun becam heard.

Ayont the pit stude the wee boorich o fowk wi the fite flag at its tap, devauled at thon mervels, a wee snorrel o smaa blaik shapes upon the blaik grun. As the green rikk raise, their physogs wheeched oot pale green, an dwined again as it vanished. Syne slawly the hissin gaed bye intae a thummin, intae a lang, lood, birrin soun. Slawly a humphy makk raise ooto the pit, an the ghaist o a shaft o licht luikit tae flichter oot frae it.

Furthwith fleers o actual lowe, a bricht ray lowpin frae ae tae anither, lowpit frae the skittered boorich o cheils. It wis as gin some unseen jet affectit them an fleered intae fite lowe. It wis as gin ilkie cheils wir o a suddenty an in a meenit turned tae lowe.

Syne, bi the licht o their ain ruin, I saw them hyter an faa, an their fiers turnin tae rin.

I stude glowerin, nae as yet kennin that this wis daih lowpin frae cheil tae cheil in thon wee hyne aff boorich. Aa I felt wis that it wis somethin verra fey. Ae near sounless an blinnin fleer o licht, an a cheil drapt heidlang an lay quaet; an as the unseen shaft o heat gaed ower them, pine trees burst intae lowe, an ilkie dry breem buss becam wi ae deadly dunt a heeze o flames. An far awa tae Knaphill I saw the fleers o trees an hedges an widden biggins a a suddenty set alicht. It wis swypin roon faist an steidy this fleerin daith, this unseen, unstoppable sword o heat. I saw it camin tae me bi the fleerin buss it touched, an wis tae dumfounert an stupefeed tae steer. I heard the birssle o lowe in the san pits an o a suddenty the skreich o a shelt that wis o a suddenty seelenced. Syne it wis as gin an unseen yet pouerfu heated finger wir drawn ben the heather atween me an the Martians, an aa alang a curvin line ayont the san pits the derk grun rikked an birssled. A ferlie drappt wi a crash hyne awa tae the left far the road frae Woking station opens oot on the lea. Syne the hissin an thrummin stopppit, an the blaik, dome-like objeck sank slawly ooto sicht intae the pit.

Aa this hid happened sae faist that I’d stude still, dumbfounert an blinned bi the fleers o licht. Hid thon daith swypt ben a full cercle, it maun certain hae killt me in ma begeck. Bit it wis gaen an spared me, an left the nicht aboot me o a suddenty derk an unkent.

The humphy lea luikit noo derk near tae blaikness, except far its roadweys lay blae an pale aneth the deep blue lift o the early nicht. It wis derk, an o a suddenty teem o cheils. Owerheid the starnies wir gaitherin, an in the wast the lift wis still a pale, bricht, near greenish blue. The taps o the pine trees an the reefs o Horsell cam oot sherp an blaik agin the western efterglow. The Martians an their gear wir aathegither unseen, apairt frae thon thin mast far their meevin keekin glaiss wummlit. Swatches o buss an lane trees here an thonner rikked an glimmered yet, an the hooses nearhaun Woking station wir sennin up fleers o lowe intae the quaet o the evenin air.

Naethin wis cheenged save fur thon an an awfu bumbazement. The wee boorich o blaik skirps wi the flag o fite hid bin swypit ooto aa kennin, an the quaet o the evenin, sae it luikit tae me, hid scarce bin brukken.

It cam tae me that I wis on this derk lea, helpless, unproteckit, an alane. O a suddenty, like a ferlie faain on me frae ootbye, cam—fleg.

Wi an tyauve I turned an stertit a hyterin rin ben the heather.

The fleg I felt wis nae sane fleg, bit a panic fricht nae anely o the Martians, bit o the gloam an quaet aa aboot me. Sic an unca effect in fleggin me it hid that I ran greetin seelent as a bairn micht dae. Aince I’d turned, I didnae daur tae luik back.

I mynd I felt a byordnar notion that I wis bein played wi, that sune, fin I wis upon the verra edge o safety, this fey daith—as faist as the ongaun o licht—wid lowp efter me frae the pit aboot the cylinder an strikk me doon.

Chapter 6

The Heat-Glimmer in the Cobham Road

It’s still a maitter o dumfounerment foo the Martians can slay cheil sae faist an sae seelent. Mony think that in some wey they’re able tae makk a pouerfu heat in a chaumer o near aathegither non-conductivity. This pouerfu heat they projeck in a parallel glimmer agin ony objeck they chuse, makkin eese o a polished parabolic keekin glaiss o unkent makk, somelike as the parabolic keekin glaiss o a lichthoose projecks a glimmer o licht. Bit naebody his aathegither pruved thon details. Hoosaeiver it is dane, it’s certain that a glimmer o heat is the mids o the maitter. Heat, an unseen, insteid o seen, licht. Fitiver can burn fleers intae a lowe at its touch, lead rins like watter, it saftens iron, brakks an melts glaiss, an fin it faas on watter, it blaws up inno rikk.

Thon nicht near forty fowk lay unner the starlicht aboot the pit, brunt an malagaroozed ayont aa kennin, an aa nicht lang the lea frae Horsell tae Maybury wis teem an brichtly ableeze.

The news o the killin likely reached Chobham, Woking, an Ottershaw aboot the same time. In Woking the shops hid teemed fin the tragedy happened, an a nummer o fowk, shop fowk an sae furth, sooked in bi the tales they’d heard, wir waukin ower the Horsell Brig an alang the road atween the busses that rins oot at the hinnereyn upon the lea. Ye micht pictur the young fowk redd up efter the darg o the day, an makkin this ferlie, as they wid makk ony ferlie, the excuse fur waukin thegether an enjoyin a slicht romaunce. Ye micht pictur tae yersel the thrum o voyces alang the road in the gloamin.…

Up tae noo, of course, fyew fowk in Woking even kent that the cylinder hid unsteekit, tho puir Henderson hid sent a messenger on a bike tae the post office wi a speecial wire tae an evenin paper.

As thon fowk cam oot bi twas an threes in the open, they fand wee snorrels o fowk spikkin excited an keekin at the birlin keekin glaiss ower the san pits, an the newcamers wir, nae doot, sune smittit bi the thrill o the happenin.

Bi hauf bye echt, fin the Deputation wis blootered, there micht hae bin a boorich o three hunner fowk or mair at this time, asides thon fa hid left the road tae win nearer the Martians. There wir three polis as weel, ane o fa wis mountit, daein their best, unner orders frae Stent, tae haud the fowk back an pit them aff frae gaun near the cylinder. There wis some booin frae thon mair thochtless an excitable cheils tae fa a boorich o fowk is aywis a time fur soun an pliskies.

Stent an Ogilvy, foreseein the chaunce o a stooshie, hid telegraphed frae Horsell tae the barracks as sune as the Martians cam oot, fur the help o a squaad o sodjers tae proteck thon fey craiturs frae coorseness. Efter that they gaed tae lead thon onchauncy advaunce. The tellin o their daith, as it wis seen bi the fowk, hauds verra close wi ma ain pictur: the three wheechs o green rikk, the deep thrummin note, an the fleerrs o a lowe.

Bit thon boorich o fowk hid a far mair nerra escape than mine. Anely the fack that a hillock o heathery san blockit the laigher pairt o the Heat-Glimmer saved them. Hid the heicht o the parabolic keekin glaiss bin a fyew yairds heicher, nane could hae lived tae tell the tale. They saw the fleers an the cheils faain an an unseen haun, as it wir, kinnlit the busses as it hashed tae them throwe the gloamin. Syne, wi a fusslin note that raise abune the birrin o the pit, the glimmer breenged close ower their heids, lichtin the taps o the beech trees that line the road, an splittin the bricks, brakkin the windaes, kinnlin the windae frames, an bringin doon in crummlin ruin a pairt o the gable o the hoose nearest the neuk.

In the sudden cloor, hiss, an fleer o the kinnlin trees, the fleg-strukken fowk seemed tae hae swayed, devaulin fur some meenits. Spirks an kinnlit twigs stertit tae faa intae the road, an single leaves like wheechs o lowe. Bunnets an frocks catched flame. Syne cam a skreichin frae the lea. There wir skirls an skreichin, an o a suddenty a moonted polis cam gallopin ben the melee wi his hauns grippit ower his heid, skirlin.

“They’re camin!” a wumman skreiched, an o a suddenty aabody wis turnin an pushin at thon ahin, in order tae clear their wey tae Woking again. They maun hae fled as blin as a flock o yowes. Far the road growes nerra an blaik atween the heich banks the fowk jammed, an a wud tcyauve gaed on. Aa thon fowk didnae escape; three at least, twa weemen an a wee loon, wir flattened an tramplit thonner, an left tae dee amids the fleg an the derkness.

Chapter 7

Foo I Won Hame

Fur ma ain pairt, I mynd naethin o ma flicht barrin the wirry o hyterin agin trees an styterin ben the heather. Aa aboot me gaithered the unseen terror o the Martians; thon peetiless sword o heat seemed birlin back an fore, fleerishin owerheid afore it drapped doon an strukk me ooto life. I cam intae the road atween the crossroads an Horsell, an ran alang this tae the crossroads.

At the hinnereyn I could gae nae farrer; I wis foonert wi the virr o ma emotion an o ma flicht, an I hytered an fell bi the wey. Thon wis nearhaun the brig that crosses the canal bi the gaswirks. I drappit an lay quaet.

I maun hae bedd there a fair whylie.

I sat up, fair dumfounert. Fur a meenit, mebbe, I couldnae richt unnerstaun foo I cam thonner. Ma fleg hid faaen frae me like a cloot. Ma bunnet hid gane, an ma collar hid brukken awa frae its faistener. A fyew meenits afore, there hid anely bin three rael ferlies afore me—the braidness o the nicht an space an natur, ma ain dweebleness an wae, an the nearhaun camin o daith. Noo it wis as gin somethin cowped ower, an the pynt o view cheenged faist. There wis nae sensible cheenge frae ae state o mind tae the ither. I wis richt aff the self o ordnar day again—a stinch, ordnar body. The seelent lea, the instinck o ma flicht, the stertin flames, wir as gin they’d bin in a dwaum. I speired masel hid thon latter ferlies raelly happened? I couldnae takk it in.

I raise an wauked unsteidily up the steep brae o the brig. Ma mind wis teem bumbazement. Ma intimmers seemed drained o their strength. I daursay I hytered like a drooth. A heid raise ower the arch, an the corp o a wirker cairryin a creel cam by. Aside him ran a wee loon. He passed me, wish me gweed nicht. I wis mindit tae spikk tae him, bit didnae. I made repon wi a mensless mummle an gaed on ower the brig.

Ower the Maybury arch a train, a wheechin heeze o fite, firelichtit rikk, an a lang caterpillar o lichtit windaes, gaed fleein sooth—knell, knell, knap, knap, an it hid gaen. A blearie boorich o fowk spakk in the yett o ane o the hooses in the bonnie wee raw o gables that wis caaed Oriental Terrace. It wis aa sae rael an sae ordnar. An thon ahin me! It wis, wud, oorie! Sic ferlies, I telt masel, couldnae be.

Mebbe I’m a cheil o unca moods. I dinna ken foo far ma kennin is ordnar. Whyles I thole the feyest sense o detachment frae masel an the warld aboot me; I seem tae watch it aa frae the ootbye, frae somewey unbelievable hyne aff, ooto time, ooto space, ooto the worry an wae o it aa. Thon feelin wis verra strang upon me thon nicht. Here wis anither side tae ma dwaum.

Bit the tribble wis the teem feyness o thon quaetness an the faist daith fleein thonner, nae twa miles awa. Syne wis a soun o darg frae the gaswirks, an the electric lichts wir aa alicht. I stoppit at the bourich o fowk.

“Fit news frae the common?” speired I.

There wir twa cheils an a wumman at the yett.

“Fit?” quo ane o the cheils, turnin.

“Fit news frae the lea?” I socht tae ken.

“‘Hae ye nae jist *bin* thonner?” speired the cheils.

“Fowk seem clean gyte aboot the lea,” quo the wumman ower the yett. “Fit’s it aa aboot?”

“Hae ye heard o the cheils frae Mars?” quo I; “the craiturs frae Mars?”

“Mair than eneuch,” quo the wumman ower the yett. “Thanks”; an aa three o them leuch.

I felt daft an roosed. I ettled an fand I couldnae tell them fit I’d seen. They leuch again at ma brukken sentences.

“Ye’ll hear mair yet,” I telt them, an gaed on tae ma hame.

I stertled ma wife at the yett, sae foonert wis I. I gaed intae the dinin chaumer, dowpit doon, suppit some wine, an sae sune as I could sattle masel eneuch I telt her the ferlies I’d seen. The denner, that wis a cauld ane, hid already bin pit oot, an bedd negleckit on the brod while I telt ma story.

“There is ae thing,” quo I, tae quaeten the flegs I’d steered up; “they’re the maist slothful ferlies I iver saw creep. They micht keep the pit an kill fowk fa cam nearhaun them, bit they canna get oot o it.… Bit the grue o them!”

“Dinna, ma dearie!” quo ma wife, knittin her broos an pittin her haun on mine.

“Puir Ogilvy!” quo I. “Tae think he micht be lyin deid thonner!”

Ma wife at least didnae finn ma experience fey. Fin I saw foo deidly fite her physog wis, I stoppit richt aff.

“They micht cam here,” quo she ower an ower.

I gart her takk wine, an ettled tae cheer her.

“They can scarce meeve,” quo I.

I stertit tae comfort her an masel bi repeatin aa that Ogilvy hid telt me o the impossibility o the Martians sattlin thirsels on the eirde. In partic’lar I pit stress on the gravitational deefficulty. On the face o the eirde the pu o gravity is three times fit it is on the face o Mars. A Martian, sae, wid wye three times mair than on Mars, tho his muscular virr wid be the same. His ain corp wid be a wecht o leid tae him. Thon, mairower, wis the ongaun notion. Baith *The Times* an the *Daily Telegraph*, fur instance, claimed this neist mornin, an baith owerluikit, jist as I did, twa clear modifeein effecks.

The air o the eirde, we noo ken, hauds far mair oxygen or far less argon (fitiver wey ane likes tae pit it) than dis Mars. The revivin effecks o this glut o oxygen on the Martians o a suddenty did muckle tae coonterbalance the extra wecht o their corpses. An, in the secunt place, we aa owerluiked the fack that sic mechanical harns as the Martian ained wis quite able tae haun oot wi muscular color gin nott .

Bit I didnae conseeder thon pynts at the time, an sae ma notion wis deid agin the chaunces o the incamers. Wi wine an maet, the confidence o ma ain brod, an the need o sattlin ma wife, I grew bi wee bitties mair brave an siccar.

“They hae dane a gypit thing,” quo I, ficherin wi ma wineglass. “They’re unchauncy because, nae doot, they’re wud wi terror. Mebbe they expeckit tae finn nae leevin bodies—o a suddenty nae clivver leevin things.”

“A shell in the pit” quo I, “gin the wirst cams tae the wirst it’ll kill them aa.”

The strang excitement o the ongauns hid nae doot left ma insichtfu pouers in a state o erethism. I mynd thon denner brod wi byordnar brichtness even noo. Ma weel-lued wife’s douce fleggit physog teetin at me frae unner the pink licht shade, the fite claith wi its siller an glaiss brod furniture—fur in thon days even pheelosophical screivers hid mony wee treats—the crammosie-poorple wine in ma glaiss, are photographically clear. At the eyn o it I sat, saftenin nuts wi a fag, lamentin Ogilvy’s haste, an condemnin the shortsichtit fear o the Martians.

Sae some respeckable dodo in the Mauritius micht hae lorded it in his reest, an spukken o the incam o thon shipfu o peetiless sailors sikkin breets tae ett. “We’ll pyke them tae daith the morn, ma dearie.”

I didnae ken it, bit thon wis the hinmaist ceevilised denner I wis tae ett fur verra mony fey an unca days.

Chapter 8

Friday Nicht

The maist byordnar thing tae ma mind, o aa the fey an winnerfu ferlies that happened on thon Friday, wis the jynin thegither o the ordnar weys o oor social order wi the first beginnins o the when happenins that wis tae cowp thon social order heidlang. Gin on Friday nicht ye’d taen a pair o compasses an drawn a cercle wi a radius o five miles roon the Woking san pits, I doot gin ye’d hae hid ae human corp ootside it, unless it wir some kin o Stent or o the three or fower cyclists or Lunnon fowk lyin deid on the lea, fas emotions or weys wir at aa affeckit bi the new-camers. Mony fowk hid heard o the cylinder, of coorse, an spukken aboot it in their leisur, but it certain didnae makk the stooshie that a challenge tae Germany wid hae dane.

In Lunnon thon nicht puir Henderson’s telegram picturin the slaw unscrewin o the shot wis judged tae be a lee, an his evenin paper, efter wirin fur authentication frae him an winnin nae repon—the cheil wis killed—decidit nae tae prent a speecial edition.

Even inbye the five-mile cercle maist fowk wir latchy. I hae already telt o the behaviour o the cheils an weemen tae fa I spakk. Aa ower the airt fowk wir ettin an suppin; wirkin cheils wir gairdenin efter the darg o the day, bairns wir bein pit tae bed, young fowk wir daunderin ben the lanes coortin, students sat ower their buiks.

Mebbe there wis a murmmle in the clachan streets, a fey an ongaun spikk in the howfs, an here an thonner a messenger, or even an ee-witness o the later happenins, caused a steer o excitement, a skirlin, an a rinnin back an fore; bit fur the maist pairt the daily routine o wirkin, eating, ettin, sleepin, gaed on as it hid dane fur coontless years—as tho nae planet Mars bedd in the sky. Even at Woking station an Horsell an Chobham thon wis the wey o’t.

In Woking junction, til a late oor, trains wir stoppin an gaun on, ithers wir choochin on the sidins, passengers wir alichtin an wytin, an aathin wis proceedin in the maist ordnar wey. A loon frae the toon, trenchin on Smith’s monopoly, wis sellin papers wi the efterneen’s news. The ringin impack o trucks, the sherp fussle o the engines frae the junction, mirled wi their skirls o “Cheils frae Mars!” Vrocht up cheils cam intae the station aboot nine o’clock wi unca news, an caused nae mair stooshie than drooths micht hae dane. Fowk rattlin tae Lunnon glowered intae the derkness ootbye the cairriage windaes, an saw anely a rare, flichtering, vanishin spirk daunce up frae the airt o Horsell, a reid glisk an a thin smoor o rikk drivin ben the starnies, an thocht that naethin mair serious than a heath lowe wis happenin. It wis anely roon the edge o the lea that ony stooshie wis seen. There wir hauf a dizzen hooses burnin on the Woking border. There wir lichts in aa the hames on the lea side o the three clachans, an the fowk thonner keepit waukened till daybrak.

An ill faschent boorich dauchled restless, fowk camin an gaun bit the boorich bidin, baith on the Chobham an Horsell brigs. Ane or twa bauld sowels, it wis efterwirds fand, gaed intae the derkness an creepit rael nearhaun the Martians; bit they niver cam back, fur noo an again a licht-ray, like the beam o a warship’s searchlicht swypit the lea, an the Heat-Ray wis ready tae follae. Apairt frae thon, that muckle swatch o lea wis seelent an wud, an the birssled bodies lay aboot on it aa nicht unner the starnies, an aa the neist day. A soun o haimmerin frae the pit wis heard bi mony fowk.

Sae ye hae the state o maitters on Friday nicht. In the mids, stukken intae the skin o oor auld planet Eirde like a pysoned arra, wis thon cylinder. Bit the pyson wis scarce wirkin yet. Aroon it wis a swatch o seelent lea, smuchterin in bitties, an wi a fyew derk, dimly seen objecks lyin in knottit weys here an thonner. Here an thonner wis a birsslin buss or tree. Ayont wis a ootlyin airt o excitement, an farrer than thon airt the smitt hidnae creepit as yet. In the lave o the warld the watter o life still ran as it hid ran fur countless years. The fever o war that wid sune smore vein an artery, deiden nerve an connach harns, hid still tae growe.

Aa nicht lang the Martians wir haimmerin an steerin, sleepless, thrawn, at wirk on the machines they wir makkin ready, an iver an aye a pluffert o greenish-fite rikk birled up tae the starnie lichtit lift.

Aboot eleyven a boorich o sodjers cam throwe Horsell, an merched alang the edge o the lea to makk a cordon. Efter, a secunt boorich merched ben Chobham tae sattle on the nor side o the lea. A wheen o officers frae the Inkerman barracks hid bin on the lea earlier in the day, an ane, Major Eden, wis reportit tae be tint. The colonel o the regiment cam tae the Chobham brig an wis eident speirin at the fowk at midnicht. The military heidbummers wir o a certainty alive tae the seriousness o the business. Aboot eleyven, the neist mornin’s papers wir able tae say, a squatter o hussars, twa Maxims, an aboot fower hunner cheils o the Cardigan regiment stertit frae Aldershot.

A fyew secunts efter midnicht the boorich in the Chertsey road, Woking, saw a starnie faa frae heiven intae the pine wids tae the nor wast. It hid a greenish colour, an caused a seelent brichtness like simmer lightnin. Thon wis the secunt cylinder.

Chapter 9

The Fechtin sterts

Setturday bides in ma harns as a day o wirry. It wis a day o bein ferfochan as weel hett an close, wi, I’m telt, a faist cheengin barometer. I’d hardly sleepit, tho ma wife hid managed tae sleep, an I raise early. I gaed intae ma gairden afore brakkfaist an stude lippenin, bit tae the lea there wis naethin steerin bit a leverock.

The milkie cam as ordnar. I heard the dirdin o his cairt an I gaed roon tae the side yett tae speir the latest news. He telt me that durin the nicht the Martians hid bin encercled bi troops, an that guns wir expeckit. Syne—a kent, calmin note—I heard a train rinnin tae Woking.

“They arenae tae be killed,” quo the milkie, “gin thon can possibly be avydit.”

I saw ma neebor gairdenin, blethered wi him fur a whyle, an syne stravaiged in tae brakkfaist. It wis a maist byordnar mornin. Ma neebor wis o opinion that the sodjers wid be able tae takk or tae kill the Martians durin the day.

“It’s a peety they makk thirsels sae unfrienly,” quo he. “It wid be gweed tae ken foo they bide on anither planet; we micht larn a ferlie or twa.”

He cam up tae the fence an haudin oot a haunfu o straaberries, fur his gairdenin wis as big-hairtit as it wis eident. At the same while he telt me o the burnin o the pine wids aboot the Byfleet Gowf Links.

“Fowk say,” quo he, “that there’s anither o thon unca objecks faaen thonner—nummer twa. Bit ane’s eneuch, surely. This mishanter’ll cost the insurance fowk a bonnie bawbee afore aathin’s sattled.” He leuch wi an air o the greatest gweed humour as he spakk. The wids, he gaed on, wir still burnin, an pyntit oot a heeze o rikk tae me. “They’ll be hett unner fit fur days, on accoont o the thick yird o pine needles an girse,” quo he, an syne grew serious ower “puir Ogilvy.”

Efter brakkfaist, insteid o wirkin, I decidit tae wauk doon tae the lea. Unner the railway brig I fand a heeze o sodjers—sappers, I jelouse, cheils in smaa roon bunnets, fyled reid jaikets unbuttoned, an shawin their blue sarks, derk troosers, an buits near hauf up the shanks. They telt me naebody wis lat ower the canal, an, luikin alang the road tae the brig, I saw ane o the Cardigan cheils staunin guaird thonner. I blethered wi thon sodjers fur a time; I telt them o ma sicht o the Martians on the previous nicht. Nane o them hid seen the Martians, an they hid bit the vaguest pictur o them, sae that they plied me wi speirins. They telt me they didnae ken fa’d ordered the meevements o the sodjers; their notion wis that an argy-bargy hid stertit at the Shelt Guairds. The ordnar sapper is far better larned than the ordnar sodjer, an they spakk aboot the fey conditions o the likely fecht wi muckle mense. I telt gthem aa aboot the Heat-Ray, an they stertit tae argy amang thirsels.

“Creep up unner cover an breenge at them,” quo ane.

“Awa min!” anither reponed. “Fit eese is cover agin thon heat? Timmer tae cuik ye! Fit we got tae dae is tae gae as near as the grun’ll lat us, an syne pit in a sheuch.”

“Tae the deil wi yer sheuchs! Ye aywis wint sheuchs; ye should hae bin born a mappy Snippy.”

“An they hinna got ony necks, syne?” quo a third, faist—a wee, thochtfu, derk cheil, smokin a pipe.

I repeatit ma pictur.

“Octopuses,” quo he, “that’s fit I caa them. Spikk aboot fishers o cheils—fechters o fish is it noo!”

“It isnae murder killin breets like thon,” quo the first spikker.

“Foo nae shell the fooshty things straicht aff an feenish them?” speired the wee derk cheil. “Ye canna tell fit they micht dae.”

“Far’s yer shells?” socht the first spikker. “There’s nae time. Dae it faist, thon’s ma notion, an dae it at aince.”

Sae they spakk aboot it. Efter a whilie I left them, an gaed on tae the railway station tae get as mony mornin papers as I cwid.

Bit I winna trauchle the reader wi a langamachie o thon lang foreneen an o the langer efterneen. I didnae manage tae win a glisk o the lea, fur even Horsell an Chobham kirk touers wir in the hauns o the military heidbummers. The sodjers I newsed wi didna ken onythin; the officers wir sleekit as weel as thrang. I fand fowk in the toon rael siccar again in the presence o the sodjers, an I heard fur the first time frae Marshall, the tobacconist, that his loon wis amang the deid on the lea. The sodjers hid gart the fowk on the ootskirts o Horsell steek aathin up an flit frae their hooses.

I won back tae denner aboot twa, unca weariet fur, as I hae said, the day wis byordnar hett an blae; an tae refresh masel I tuik a cauld bath in the efterneen. Aboot hauf past fower I gaed up tae the railwey station tae win an evenin paper, fur the mornin papers hid gien anely a verra mistakkfu tellin o the killin o Stent, Henderson, Ogilvy, an the lave. Bit there wisnae muckle I didnae ken. The Martians did nae shaw an inch o thirsels. They seemed eident in their pit, an there wis a soun o haimmerin an a near aywis furl o rikk. It wis as tho they wir thrang gettin ready fur a fecht. “New shotties hae bin made tae signal, bit wioot success,” wis the fixed message frae the papers. A sapper telt me it wis dane bi a cheil in a sheuch wi a flag on a lang pole. The Martians tuik as muckle tent o sic advaunces as we wid o the lowin o a coo.

I maun tell ye the sicht o aa thon armament, aa thon grunwirk, greatly steered me up. Ma thochts becam war-like, an defeatit the incamers in a dizzen merked weys; somethin o ma skweel-loon dwaums o fechtin an heroism cam back. It didnae seem tae be a fair fecht tae me at thon time. They luikit verra dweeble in thon pit o theirs.

Aboot three o’clock there stertit the dunt o a gun at meisured whylies frae Chertsey or Addlestone. I larned that the rikkin pine wid intae which the secunt cylinder hid drappit wis bein shelled, in the hope o connachin thon objeck afore it unsteekit. It wis anely aboot five, hoosaeiver, that a field gun reached Chobham fur eese agin the first boorich o Martians.

Aboot sax in the evenin, as I sat at tea wi ma wife in the simmerhoose spikkin wi virr aboot the fecht that wis due tae faa upon us, I heard a smored blast frae the lea, an straicht efter a heeze o firin. Near richt eftir thon cam a forcie rattlin cloor, rael close tae us, that shuik the grun; an, stertin oot on the lawn, I saw the taps o the trees aboot the Oriental College birssle intae rikkin reid flame, an the touer o the wee kirk aside it slidder doon intae wrack. The tap o the mosque hid gaen, an the reef line o the college itsel luikit as gin a hunner-ton gun hid bin at wirk on it. Ane o oor lums crackit as gin a shot hid strukk it, flew, an a daud o it cam clatterin doon the tiles an vrocht a howpie o brukken reid smush on the flooer bed bi ma study windaw.

Masel an ma wife stude bumbazed. Syne I jeloused that the broo o Maybury Knowe maun be inbye reenge o the Martians’ Heat-Ray noo that the college wis dichtit ooto the wey.

At thon I grippit ma wife’s airm, an wioot devaul ran her oot intae the road. Syne I led oot the maidie, tellin her I’d gae upstairs masel fur the kist she wis maenin fur.

“We canna possibly bide here,”quo I; an as I spakk the firin restertit fur a meenit on the lea.

“Bit far’ll we ging tae?” speired ma wife in terror.

I thocht, dumfounert. Syne I myndit her kin at Leatherheid.

“Leatherheid!” I skirled abune the sudden stooshie.

She luikit awa frae me doonbye. The fowk wir camin ooto their hooses, bumbazed.

“Foo are we tae win tae Leatherheid?” she speired.

Doon the knowe I saw a boorich o hussars ride unner the railwey brig; three galloped ben the unsteekit yetts o the Oriental College; twa ithers dismountit an stertit rinnin frae hoose tae hoose. The sun, sheenin throwe the rikk that drave up frae the taps o the trees, luikit bluid reid, an flang an oorie skyrie licht on aathin.

“Bide here,” quo I; “ye’re aa richt here”; an I sterted aff at aince fur the Spottit Dug, for I kent the lanlord hid a shelt an dug cairt. I ran, fur I saw that in a meenit aabody on this side o the knowe wid be meevin. I fand him in his bar, unkennin o fit wis gaun on ahin his hoose. A cheil stude wi his back tae me, spikkin tae him.

“I maun hae a pun,” quo the lanlord, “an I’ve naebody tae drive it.”

“I’ll gie ye twa,” I telt him, ower the fremmit cheil’s shouder.

“Fit fur?”

“An I’ll bring it back bi midnicht,” quo I.

“Michty!” cried the lanlord; “fit’s the hash? I’m sellin ma bittie o a grumphie. Twa puns, an ye bring it back? Fit’s gaun on noo?”

I telt him quick that I’d tae leave ma hame, an sae won the dug cairt. At the time it didnae seem tae me near sae necessar that the lanlord should leave his. I wis cannie tae hae the cairt richt aff an syne, drave it aff doon the road, an, leavin it in chairge o ma wife an maidie, breenged intae ma hoose an packit a puckle gear, sic ashets as we hid, an sae furth. The beech trees ablow the hoose wir burnin while I did thon, an the palins up the road glimmered reid. Fin I wis eident in this wey, ane o the dismoontit hussars cam rinnin up. He wis gaun frae hoose tae hoose, warnin fowk tae leave. He wis gaun on as I cam oot o ma front yett, humphin ma treisurs, rowed up in a tablecloot. I skreiched efter him:

“Fit news?”

He turned, glowered, skirled somethin aboot “crawlin oot in a thing like a dish cover,” an ran on tae the yett o the hoose at the tap. O an suddenty a furl o blaik rikk drivin ben the road hid him fur a meenit. I ran tae ma neebor’s yett an chappit tae satisfee masel o fit I already kent, that his wife hid gane tae Lunnon wi him an hid steekit up their hoose. I gaed in again, accordin tae ma promise, tae get ma maidie’s kist, rugged it oot, stappit it aside her on the boddom o the dug cairt, an syne catched the reyns an lowpit up inno the driver’s seat aside ma wife. In anither meenit we wir awaa frae the rikk an stramash, an skelpin doon the opposite brae o Maybury Hill tae Auld Woking.

In front wis a quaet sunny lanscape, a cornpark field aheid on baith sides o the road, an the Maybury Howf wi its sweengin sign. I saw the sawbeens’s cairt aheid o me. At the boddom o the knowe I turned ma heid tae luik at the knoweside I wis leavin. Thick furls o blaik rikk mirled wi threids o a reid lowe wir drivin up intae the unmeevin air, an haivin derk shaddas on the green treetaps eastwird. The rikk already raxxed far awa tae the east an wast—tae the Byfleet pine wids eastwird, an tae Woking on the wast. The road wis spirkit wi fowk rinnin tae us. An verra feint noo, bit verra clear throwe the hett, quaet air, ye heard the birr o a machine-gun that wis sune seelent, an a brukken crackin o rifles. It wis clear the Martians wir kinnlin aathin inbye the reenge o their Heat-Ray.

I’m nae a skeelie driver, an I’d straicht aff tae takk tent o the shelt. Fin I luikit back again the secunt knowe hid happit the blaik rikk. I threwsh the shelt wi the wheep, an gaed him a lowse reign till Wokin an Send lay atween us an thon wummlin stooshie. I owertuik an passed the sawbeens atween Wokin an Send.

Chapter 10

In the Storm

Leatherheid is aboot twal mile frae Maybury Knowe. The guff o hey wis in the air ben the growthy lea ayont Pyrford, an the busses on ilkie side wir swete an blythe wi a rowth o dug-roses. The wechty firin that hid brukken oot fin we wir drivin doon Maybury Knowe stoppit as sune as it stertit, leavin the evenin unca peacefu an quaet. We won tae Leatherheid wioot mishanter aboot nine o’clock, an the shelt hid an oor’s devaul while I ett supper wi ma kin an gied ower ma wife tae their care.

Ma wife wis doonhairtit aa ben the hurl, an seemed weyed doon wi forebodins o coorseness. I spakk tae her reassurin-like, pyntin oot that the Martians wir tied tae the Pit bi sheer wecht, an at the maist could anely creep a wee bittie oot o it; bit she reponed jist in grumphs. Hid it nae bin fur ma promise tae the keeper o the howf, she wid, I jelouse, hae bad me tae bide in Leatherheid thon nicht. Wid that I hid! Her physog, I mynd, wis unca fite as we pairtit.

Fur ma ain pairt, I’d bin verra vrocht up aa day. Somethin rale like the war fever ben a ceevilised community hid gotten intae ma bluid, an in ma hairt I wisnae sae verra pit oot that I’d tae gyang back tae Maybury thon nicht. I wis even feart that thon hinmaist fusillade I’d heard micht mean the killin o oor incamers frae Mars. I can best lat ye ken ma thochts bi sayin that I wintit tae be in at the daith.

It wis near eleyven fin I stertit tae gyang back. The nicht wis unexpeckit derk; tae me, waukin oot o the lichtit passage o ma kinsfowks’ hoose, it seemed unca blaik, an it wis as hett an close as the day. Owerheid the clouds wir drivin faist, tho nae a braith steered the busses aboot us. Makinsfowks’ servant lichtit baith lamps. Bi gweed chaunce, I kent the wye weel. Ma wife stude in the licht o the yett, an watched me till I lowped up intae the dug cairt. Syne smertly she roondit an gaed in, leavin ma kinsfowk side bi side wishin me fareweel.

I wis a thochtie dowie at first wi the smitt o ma wife’s flegs, bit verra sune ma thochts gaed back tae the Martians. At thon time I wis aathegither unkennin as tae the ongauns o the evenin’s fechtin. I didnae even ken fit hid strertit the stramash. As I cam ben Ockham (fur thon wis the wey I gaed back, an nae throwe Send an Auld Wokin) I saw alang the wastern horizon a bluid-reid glimmer, that as I won nearer, creepit slawly up the lift. The drivin clouds o the gaitherin thunnerplump melled thonner wi a muckle heeze o blaik an reid rikk.

Ripley Street wis teem, an barrin a lichtit windae or twa the clachan shawed nae a pikk o life; bit I nerra escapit a mishanter at the neuk o the road tae Pyrford, far a boorich o fowk stude wi their backs tae me. They spakk naethin tae me as I gaed by. I dinna ken fit they jeloused o the things happenin ayont the knowe, nur dae I ken gin the seelent hooses I passed on ma wey wir sleepin safe, or desertit an teem, or worriet an watchin agin the terror o the nicht.

Frae Ripley till I cam ben Pyrford I wis in the howe o the Wey, an the reid lowe wis happit frae me. As I gaed up the wee knowe ayont Pyrford Kirk the glare cam intae sicht again, an the trees aboot me chittered wi the first sign o the storm that wis upon me. Syne I heard midnicht pealin oot frae Pyrford Kirk ahin me, an syne cam the ootline o Maybury Knowe, wi its tree-taps an reefs blaik an sherp agin the reid.

Even as I saw thon a skyrie green glare lichtit the road aboot me an shawed the hyne aff wids tae Addlestane. I felt a ruggin at the reins. I saw that the drivin clouds hid bin stabbit bi a thread o a green lowe, o a suddenty lichtin their mixter-maxterin an drappin intae the park tae ma left. It wis the third faain starnie!

Nearhaun its appearin, an blinnin violet bi contrast, daunced oot the first lichtnin o the gaitherin storm, an the thunner burst like a rocket owerheid. The shelt tuik the bit atween his teeth an breenged forrit.

A sma brae rins tae the fit o Maybury Knowe, an doon this we jinglit. Aince the lichtnin hid stertit, it gaed on in as faist a string o flashes as I hae iver seen. The thunnerclaps, treidin ane on the heels o anither an wi a fey cracklin soun, soundit mair like the wirkin o a muckle electric machine than the ordnar detonatin birrin. The flichtering licht wis blinned an bumbazin, an a thin sleet struck hard at ma physog as I drave doon the brae.

At first I regairdit little bit the road afore me, an syne sherply ma attention wis drawn bi somethin that wis meevin faist doon the opposite brae o Maybury Knowe. At first I tuik it for the weet reef o a hoose, bit ae flash follaein anither shawed it tae be in faist rowin meevement. It wis an fey sicht—a meenit o bumbazin derkness, an syne, in a flash like daylicht, the reid makk o the Orphanage near the tap o the knowe, the green taps o the pine trees, an this unca objeck cam oot clear an sherp an bricht.

An this Ferlie I saw! Foo can I pictur it? A muckle tripod, heicher than mony hooses, widin ower the young pine trees, an rivin them aside in its oncam; a wauking engine o sheeny metal, widin noo ower the heather; clear towes o steel hingin frae it, an the duntin steer o its traivellin mellin wi the stramash o the thunner. A flash, an it cam oot skyrie, heelin ower ae wey wi twa feet in the air, tae vanish an reappear near at aince as it seemed, wi the neist flash, a hunner yairds nearer. Can ye imagine a milkin steel cowped an rowed forcie ben the grun? Thon wis the pictur thon instant flashes gaed. Bit insteid o a milkin steel imagine it a muckle heeze o machinery on a tripod stan.

Syne o a suddenty the trees in the pine wid aheid o me wir pairtit, as easy brukken seggs are pairtit bi a cheil breengin ben them; they wir snappit aff an driven heidlang, an a secunt muckle tripod appeared, hashin, as it seemed, heidlang tae me. An I wis gallopin hard tae tryst wi’t it! At the sicht o the secunt monster ma virr gaed aathegither. Nae devaulin tae luik again, I yarked the shelt’s heid hard roon tae the richt an in anither meenit the dug cairt hid heeled ower on the shelt; the shafts brukk wi a clatter, an I wis flang sidieweys an drappit wechtily intae a shalla puil o watter.

I creepit oot near straicht aff, an cooriet, ma feet still in the watter, unner a heeze o furze. The shelt lay still (his thrapple wis brukken, puir breet!) an bi the lichtnin flashes I saw the blaik makk o the cowpit dug cairt an the ootlinn o the wheel aye furlin slaw. In anither meenit the muckle mechanism gaed widin by me, an gaed up the knowe tae Pyrford.

Seen nearhaun, the Ferlie wis byordnar fey, fur it wis nae mere unkennin machine stravaigin on its wey. Machine it wis, wi a ringin metallic speed, an lang, swack, glitterin tentacles (ane o which grippit a young pine tree) sweengin an dirdin aboot its fey corp. It wyled its road as it gaed stravaigin alang, an the bauld hood that tappit it meeved back an fore wi the certain hint o a heid teetin aboot. Ahin the main corp wis a muckle heeze o fite metal like a monster fisher cheil’s creel, an plufferts o green rikk skooshed oot frae the jynts o the limbs as the monster swypit by me. An o a suddenty it wis gane.

Sae muckle I saw syne, aa unclear fur the flichterin o the lichtnin, in blinnin highlichts an derk blaik shaddas.

As it gaed by it gaed oot a boastfu deefenin skreich that drooned the thunner—“Aloo! Aloo!”—an in anither meenit it wis wi its fier, hauf a mile awa, booin ower a ferlie in the park. I hae nae doot this Ferlie in the park wis the third o the ten cylinders they’d fired at us frae Mars.

Fur a puckle meenits I lay thonner in the rain an derkness watchin, bi the brukken licht, thon ugsome ferlies o metal meevin aboot hyne aff ower the buss taps. A thin sleet wis noo stertin, an as it cam it gart their makk growe misty an syne flash intae clearness again. Noo an then cam a gap in the lichtnin, an the nicht swallaed them up.

I wis sypit wi sleet abune an dubby watter aneth. It wis a whylie afore ma dumfounerment wid lat me warssle up the brae tae a drier airt, or think at aa o ma nearhaun danger.

Nae far frae me wis a wee ae-chaumered squatter’s sheilin o timmer, cercled bi a swatch o tattie gairden. I warssled tae staun at the hinnereyn, an, hunkerin an makkin eese o ilkie chaunce o cover, I ran tae thon. I haimmered at the yett, bit I couldnae makk the fowk hear (gin there wir ony fowk inbye), an efter a whyle I stoppit, an, makkin eese o a sheuch fur maist o the wey, succeeded in creepin, unseen bi thon unca machines, inno the pine wids tae Maybury.

Happit bi thon I cairriet on, weet an chitterin noo, tae ma ain hoose. I wauked amang the trees ettlin tae fin the fitpath. It wis verra derk indeed in the wid, fur the lichtnin wis noo becamin fyew, an the sleet, which wis poorin doon in a plumps, drappit in columns ben the gaps in the wechty foliage.

If I’d fully jeloused the meanin o aa the things I’d seen I should hae straicht aff wirkit ma wey roon throwe Byfleet tae Street Cobham, an sae gane back tae jyne ma wife at Leatherheid. Bit that nicht the feyness o things aboot me, an ma pheesical dweebleness, stoppit me, fur I wis bruised, trauchled, weet throwe, deefened an blinned bi the storm.

I’d a fey notion o gaun on tae ma ain hoose, an thon wis as muckle fooshiun as I hid. I hytered throwe the trees, drappit intae a sheuch an bruised ma knees agin a plank, an at the hinnereyn splytered oot intae the lane that ran doon frae the College Airms. I say splytered, fur the storm watter wis swypin the san doon the knowe in a dubby torrent. Thonner in the derkness a cheil duntit intae me an gart me stotter back.

He gaed a skreich o grue, lowpit sidieweys, an breenged on afore I could gaither ma wits eneuch tae spikk tae him. Sae wechty was the onding o the storm jist at thon airt that I hid the hardest tcyauve tae win ma wey up the knowe. I gaed teetle the fence on the left an wirked ma wey alang its palins.

Near the tap I hytered upon somethin saft, an, bi a flash o lightnin, saw atween ma feet a howpie o blaik braidclaith an a pair o buits. Afore I could makk oot clear foo the cheil lay, the flichter o licht hid gaen by. I stude ower him wytin fur the neist glimmer. Fin it cam, I saw that he wis a sonsie cheil, chaip bit nae scruffy rigged oot; his heid wis booed unner his corp, an he lay crushed up teetle the fence, as tho he’d bin flang forcie agin it.

Owercamin the scunner natural tae ane fa’d niver afore touched a deid corp, I booed doon an turned him ower tae feel fur his hairt. He wis stane deid. Apparently his thrapple hid bin brukken. The lichtnin glimmered fur a third time, an his physog lowpit oot on me. I sprang tae ma feet. It wis the ainer o the Spottit Dug, fas convoyance I’d taen.

I steppit ower him cannily and caiiriet on up the knowe. I made ma wey bi the polis station an the College Airms tae ma ain hoose. Naethin wis burnin on the brae, tho frae the lea there still cam a reid glare an a rowin steer o reid rikk beatin up agin the drookin sleet. Sae far as I could makk oot bi the flashes, the hooses aboot me wir maistly unskaithed. Bi the College Airms a derk howpie lay in the road.

Doon the road tae Maybury Brig there wir voyces an the soun o feet, bit I hidnae the smeddum tae skirl or tae gae tae them. I lat masel in wi ma key, steekit, lockit an snibbit the yett, hytered tae the fit o the staircase, an dowpit doon. Ma thochts wir fu o thon stridin metallic breets, an o the deid corp brukken agin the fence.

I cooried at the fit o the staircase wi ma back tae the waa, chitterin hard.

Chapter 11

At the Windae

I hae already said that ma steers o emotion hae a wey o weirin thirsels oot. Efter a whyle I fand that I wis cauld an weet, an wi wee puils o watter aboot me on the stair carpet. I raise up rael mechanical-like, gaed intae the dinin chaumer an drank some fuskey, an syne I wis meeved tae cheenge ma claes.

Efter I’d dane thon I gaed upstairs tae ma study, bit foo I did sae I dinna ken. The windae o ma study luiks ower the trees an the railwey tae Horsell Lea. In the hash o oor leavin this windae’d bin left ajee. The lobby wis derk, an, bi contrast wi the pictur the windae frame vrocht, the side o the chaumer seemed pitmerk derk. I stoppit short in the doorwey.

The thunnerstorm hid passed. The touers o the Oriental Skweel an the pine trees aboot it hid gaen, an verra hyne aff, lichtit bi a skyrie reid glare, the lea aboot the san pits wis veesible. Ben the licht muckle blaik shapes, ugsome an oorie, meeved eidently back an fore.

It luikit mairower as gin the hale kintra in thon airt wis in a lowe —a braid knowe side set wi wee tongues o flame, sweyin an warsslin wi the blufferts o the deein storm, an haivin a reid reflection on the cloud-scud abune. Ilkie noo an syne a heeze o rikk frae some nearer lowe drave ower the windae an hid the Martian shapes. I couldnae see fit they wir daein, nur the clear makk o them, nur ken the blaik objecks they wir eident wi. Neither could I see the nearhaun lowe, tho the reflections o it daunced on the waa an reef o the study. A sherp, resinous guff o burnin wis in the air.

I steekit the yett sounlessly an creepit tae the windae. As I did sae, the view opened oot until, on the ae haun, it raxxed tae the hooses aboot Wokin station, an on the ither tae the birssled, blaikened pine wids o Byfleet. There wis a licht doon ablow the knowe, on the railwey, near the arch, an puckles o the hooses alang the Maybury road an the streets nearhaun the station wir glowin wracks. The licht upon the railwey dumfounert me at first; there wis a blaik howpie an a skyrie glare, an tae the richt o thon a raw o yalla oblongs. Syne I jeloused this wis a wracked train, the fore pairt connached an in a lowe, the hinnereyn cairriages still on the rails.

Atween thon three main cores o licht—the hooses, the train, an the burnin kintra tae Chobham—streetched irregular swatches o derk kintra, brukken here an there bi dauds o dimly glimmerin an rikkin grun. It wis the ferest sicht, thon blaik airt lichtit in a lowe. It myndit me, mair than onythin else, o the Potteries at nicht. At first I could makk oot nae fowk at aa, tho I luikit cannily fur them. Efter I saw agin the licht o Woking station a nummer o blaik figures hashin ane efter the ither ower the line.

An thon wis the wee warld far I’d bin bidin secure fur years, this fiery kirn! Fit hid happened in the hinmaist sivven oors I still didnae ken; nur did I ken, tho I wis stertin tae jelouse, the link atween thon muckle colossi an the latchy lumps I’d seen cowped frae the cylinder. Wi a fey feelin o impersonal interest I furled ma desk cheer tae the windae, dowpit doon, an glowered at the blaikened kintra, an in particular at the three muckle blaik ferlies that wir gaun back an fore in the glower aboot the san pits.

They seemed unca eident. I stertit tae winner fit they could be. Were they clivver robots? Sic a thing I thocht wisnae possible. Or did a Martian sit inbye ilkie ane, rulin, directing, usin, jist as a cheil’s harns sits an rules in his corp? I stertit tae compare the ferlies tae human machines, tae winner fur the first time in ma life foo an ironclaithed or a steam engine wid seem tae a clivver laigher breet.

The storm hid left the lift clear, an ower the rikk o the burnin lan the wee dwinin pinpynt o Mars wis drappin inno the wast, fin a sodjer cam intae ma gairden. I heard a slicht scrattin at the fence, an steerin masel frae the dwaum that hid faaen on me, I luikit doon an saw him dimly, sclimmin ower the palins. At the sicht o anither human body ma dwaum passed, an I raxxed ooto the windae eager like.

“Hist!” quo I, in a fusper.

He stoppit astride the fence in doot. Syne he cam ower an ben the girse tae the neuk o the hoose. He booed doon an steppit saftly.

“Fa’s thonner?” he speired, fusperin as weel, staunin unner the windae an glowerin up.

“Far are ye gaun?” I speired.

“Gweed kens.”

“Are ye ettlin tae hide?”

“Thon’s it.”

“Cam intae the hoose,” quo I.

I gaed doon, lowsed the yett, an lat him in, an steekit the yett again. I couldnae see his physog. He wis bare heidit, an his jaiket wis unsteekit.

“Ma Certes!” he cried, as I tuik him in.

“Fit’s gaen on?” I speired.

“Fit hisnae?” In the derkness I could see he made a meevement o wae. “They blootered us—jist blootered us,” quo he repeated ower an ower.

He follaed me, like a robot, intae the ben chaumer.

“Takk a dram,” I telt him, poorin oot a muckle jeelip.

He suppit it. Syne o a suddenty he dowpit doon afore the brod, pit his heid on his airms, an sterit tae sab an greet like a wee loon, in a perfeck fizz o feelin, whilst masel, wi a fey unmyndin o ma ain recent dowieness, stude afore him, winnerin.

It wis a lang time afore he could steidy his harns tae answer ma speirins, an syne he reponed in a queer an brukken wye. He wis a driver in the artillery, an hid anely cam intae the fecht aboot sivven. At thon time firin wis gaun on ower the ley, an it wis said the first pairty o Martians wir crawlin slawly tae their secunt cylinder unner the bield o a metal shield.

Eftir, this shield hytered up on tripod shanks an becam the first o the fechtin-machines I’d seen. The gun he drave hid bin brukken up nearhaun Horsell, in order tae command the san pits, an it wis its arrival that hid brocht on the steer. As the limber gunners gaed ahin, his shelt trod in a mappie hole an cowpit, haivin him intae a howe in the grun. At the same meenit the gun explodit aside him, the ammunition blew up, there wis lowes aa aboot him, an he fand hisel lyin aneth a boorich o brunt deid fiers an deid shelts.

“I lay quaet,” quo he, “fleggit witless, wi the fore quarter o a shelt atap o me. We’d bin clean blootered. An the guff—ma certes! Like brunt maet! I wis hurtit ben ma back bi the faa o the shelt, an thonner I’d tae bide till I felt better. Jist like parade it hid bin a meenit afore—syne hyter, bang, sweesh!”

“Clean connached!” quo he.

He’d bidden aneth the deid shelt fur a lang time, teetin oot cannily ower the ley. The Cardigan cheils hid ettled tae breenge forrit, in fechtin order, at the pit, jist tae be swypit ooto life. Syne the monster hid risen tae its feet an hid stertit tae wauk easy-like back an fore ower the ley amang the fyew rinnin awa wi its heidlike hood birlin aboot jist like the heid o a hoodit cheil. A kinno o airm cairriet a fyky metallic case, aboot which green spirks straikit, an ooto the funnel o this there rikkit the Heat-Ray.

In a fyew meenits there wis, sae far as the sodjer could see, nae a leevin craitur left on the ley, an ilkie busse an tree on it that wisnae already a blaikened skeleton wis burnin. The hussars hid bin on the road ayont the bend o the grun, an he saw naethin o them. He heard the Martians dunt aboot fur a whylie an syne becam quaet. The giant saved Wokin station an its boorich o hooses till the hinmiast; syne in a meenit the Heat-Ray wis brocht doon, an the toon becam a howpie o birsslin wracks. Syne the Thing shut aff the Heat-Ray, an turnin its back on the sodjer stertit tae hyter awa tae the smuchterin pine wids that wis a bield fur the secunt cylinder. As it did sae a secunt glimmrin Titan biggit itsel up ooto the pit.

The secunt monster follaed the first, an at thon the sodjer stertit tae crawl unca cannily ower the hett heather aisse tae Horsell. He managed tae win alive intae the sheuch bi the side o the road, an sae escaped tae Wokin. Thonner his story becam ejaculatory. The airt wis blockit. It seems there wir a fyew fowk leevin thonner, wud fur the maist pairt and many burned and scalded. He was turned aside by the fire, an hid amang some near scorchin howpies o brukken waa as ane o the Martian giants cam back. He saw this ane chase a cheil, swype him up in ane o its steely airms, an chap his heid agin the trunk o a pine tree. At the hinnereyn, efter nichtfaa, the sodjer made a breenge fur freedom an won ower the railwye bank.

Sinsyne he’d bin creepin alang tae Maybury, in the hope o winnin ooto danger Lunnon-wards. Fowk wir cooryin in sheuchs an cellars, an mony o the survivors hid set aff tae Wokin clachan an Send. He’d bin sair made wi drooth till he fand ane o the watter mains nearhaun the railwye arch brukken, an the watter bibblin oot like a spring on the road. Thon wis the story I got frae him, bittie bi bittie. He grew quaeter tellin me an ettlin tae makk me see the things he’d seen. He’d etten nae maet since noon, he telt me early in his tale, an I fand some mutton an breid in the press an brocht it intae the chaumer. We lichtit nae lamp fur fear o drawin in the Martians, an ower an ower oor hauns wid touch the breid or maet. As he spakk, ferlies aboot us cam derkly ooto the derkness, an the dinged doon busses an brukken rose trees ootbye the windae grew distinck. It wid seem that a nummer o cheils or breets hid breenged ower the gairden. I stertit tae see his physog, blaikened an trauchelt, as nae doot mine wis as weel.

Fin we’d feenished ettin we gaed saftly upstairs tae ma study, an I luiked again ooto the open windae. In ae nicht the glen hid becam a glen o aisse. The lowes hid dwined noo. Far lowes hid bin there wir noo ribbons o rikk; bit the coontless wracks o smushed an brukken hooses an brnt an blaikened trees that the nicht hid happit stude oot noo sterk an terrible in the peetiless licht o day brakk. Yet hereaboots some objecks bi chaunce hid escapit—a fite railwye signal here, the eyn o a greenhoose thonner, fite an new amids the wrackage. Niver afore in the history o fechtin hid wrack bin sae random an sae complete. An sheenin wi the growin licht o the east, three o the metallic giants stude aboot the pit, their hoods rotatin as tho they wir owerluikin the wrack they’d vrocht.

It seemed tae me that the pit hid bin braidened, an ever an again plufferts o skyrie green rikk birled up an oot o it tae the brichtenin day-brakk—birled up, furled, brukk, an vanished.

Ayont wir the pillars o lowe aboot Chobham. They becam pillars o bluidshot rikk at the first hint o daybrakk.

Chapter 12

Fit I Saw o the wrack

o Weybrig an Shepperton

As the day grew brichter we stude back frae the windae frae far we’d watched the Martians, an gaed unca quaetly doonstairs.

The sodjer agreed wi me that the hoose wis nae airt tae bide in. He wis gaun, he telt me, tae makk his wye Lunnon-wards, an thonner rejyne his battery—No. 12, o the Shelt Artillery. Ma ploy wis tae gae back at aince tae Leatherheid; an sae strang hid the virr o the Martians owercam me that I wis set on takkin ma wife tae Newhaven, an traivel wi her oot o the kintra straicht aff. Fur I already jeloused clearly that the kintra aboot Lunnon maun o a certainty be the scene o a dreidfu warssle afore sic crsiturs as thon could be connached.

Atween us an Leatherheid, hoosaeiver, wis the third cylinder, wi its guairdian giants. Hid I bin alane, I think I’d hae taen ma chaunce an traivelled ower the kintra. Bit the sodjer pit me aff : “It’s nae kindness tae the richt kinno wife,” quo he, “tae makk her a widdae”; an in the eyn I agreed tae gae wi him, unner the bield o the wids, northwards as far as Street Cobham afore I pairted wi him. Syne I’d makk a muckle by-pass bi Epsom tae reach Leatherheid.

I should hae sterted at aince, bit ma fier hid bin in active service an he kent better than thon. He gart me rype the hoose fur a flask, that he fulled wi whiskey; an we stappit ilkie teem pooch wi pyokies o biscuits an dauds o maet. Syne we creepit ooto the hoose, an ran as faist as we could doon the ill-vrocht road that I’d traivelled owernicht. The hooses luikit teem. In the road lay a boorich o three brunt corpses close thegither, strukken deid bi the Heat-Ray; an here an thonner wir ferlies that fowk hid drappit—a clock, a baffie, a siller speen, an sic like puir treisurs. At the neuk turnin up tae the post office a wee cairtie, stappit wi kists an trock, an shelt-less, cowped ower on a brukken wheel. A boxie fur siller hid bin faist brukken ajee an haived unner the wrack.

Apairt frae the ludge at the Orphanage, that wis still in a lowe, nane o the hooses hid tholed ower muckle here. The Heat-Ray’d skiffed the lum taps an gaed by. Hoosaeiver, barrin oorsels, there didnae seem tae be a leevin sowel on Maybury Knowe. Maist o the fowk hid escaped, I jelouse, bi wye o the Auld Wokin road—the road I’d taen fin I drave tae Leatherheid—or they’d fand a bield.

We gaed doon the lane, bi the corp o the cheil in blaik, sypin noo frae the owernicht hail, an brukk intae the wids at the fit o the knowe. We gaed throwe thon tae the railwye withoot meetin a sowel. The wids ower the line wir jist the scoored an blaikened wracks o wids; fur the maist pairt the trees hid drappit, bit a certain swatch still stude, dowie grey trunks, wi derk broon leaves insteid o green.

On oor side the lowe hid dane nae mair than scorch the nearhaun trees; it hidnae gotten a grup. In ae airt the wid cheil hid bin at wirk on Setturday; trees, hackit doon an fresh clippit, lay in a clearin, wi howpies o widstoor bi the sawin-machine an its ingine. Teetle it wis a short term sheilin, teem. There wisnae a braith o win this mornin, an aathin wis fey an quaet. Even the birdies wir wheeshtit, an as we hashed alang masel an the sodjer spakk in fuspers an luikit noo an again ower oor shouders. Aince or twice we devauled tae lippen.

Efter a whyle we neared the road, an as we did we heard the duntin o hoofs an saw throwe the tree branches three shelt sodjers ridin slaw tae Wokin. We wyved tae them, an they dauchled while we hashed tae them. It wis a lieutenant an a pair o privates o the 8th Hussars, wi a staun like a theodolite, that the sodjer telt me wis a heliograph.

“Ye’re the first cheil I’ve seen camin this wye this mornin,” quo the lieutenant. “Fit’s on the go?”

His voyce an physog wir keen. The cheils ahin him glowered ill-faschent. The sodjer lowped doon the brae intae the road an saluted.

“Gun connached last nicht, sir. Hae bin hidin. Ettlin tae rejyne battery, sir. Ye’ll cam in sicht o the Martians, I jelouse, aboot hauf a mile alang this road.”

“Fit the sorra are they like?” speired the lieutenant.

“Giants in armour, sir. Hunner feet heich. Three legs an a corp like aluminium, wi a muckle great heid in a hood, sir.”

“Awa wi ye!” quo the lieutenant. “Fit a blether o styte!”

“Ye’ll see, sir. They cairry a kinno kist, sir, that sheets flames an strikks ye deid.”

“Fit d’ye mean—a gun?”

“Na, sir,” an the sodjer stertit a skyrie accoont o the Heat-Ray. Haufwye ben, the lieutenant brukk in an luikit up at me. I wis still staunin on the brae bi the side o the road.

“It’s perfeckly true,” quo I.

“Weel,” the lieutenant reponed, “I jelouse it’s ma pairt tae see it as weel. Luik here”—tae the sodjer—we’re pit here clearin fowk oot o their hooses. Ye’d better gae alang an report yersel tae Brigadier-General Marvin, an tell him aa ye ken. He’s at Weybrig. Ken the wye?”

“I dae,” I telt him; an he turned his shelt soothward again.

“Hauf a mile, ye say?” he speired.

“At maist,” I reponed, an pynted ower the treetaps soothward. He thankit me an rade on, an we saw them nae mair.

Farrer alang we cam upon a boorich o three weemen an twa bairns in the road, eidently clearin oot a labourer’s hoose. They’d gotten haud o a wee haun hurly, an wir biggin it up wi orra-luikin bunnles an puir furniture. They wir aa ower eident tae spikk tae us as we gaed by.

Aside Byfleet station we cam ooto the pine trees, an fand the kintra quaet an peacefu unner the mornin sunlicht. We wir far ayont the reenge o the Heat-Ray thonner, an hid it nae bin fur the seelent teemness o puckles o the hooses, the steerin meevement o flittin in ithers, an the snorrel o sodjers staunin on the brig ower the railwye an glowerin doon the line tae Wokin, the day wid hae bin verra like ony ither Sabbath.

A fyew fairm trucks an cairts wir meevin skraikily alang the road tae Addlestane, an o a suddenty throwe the yet o a park we saw, ower a streetch o flat ley, sax twal-pounders staunin neat at equal distances pyntin tae Wokin. The gunners stude bi the guns wytin, an the amunition hurlies wir at a professional-like distance. The sodjers stude as gin they wir unner inspection.

“Thon’s gweed!” thocht I. “They’ll get ae fair shot, onywye.”

The sodjer dauchled at the yett.

“I’ll gae on,” quo he.

Farrer on tae Weybrig, jist ower the brig, there wir a nummer o cheils in fite fatigue jaikets biggin up a lang waa, an mair guns ahin.

“It’s bows an arras agin the lichtnin, onywye,” quo the sodjer. “They hinna seen thon lowe-beam yet.”

The officers fa warnae thrang stude an glowered ower the treetaps soothwastward, an te cheils howkin wid devaul ilkie noo an again tae glower in the same airt.

Byfleet wis in a steer; fowk packin, an a twinty hussars, puckles o them dismoontit, puckles on their shelts, wir hicklin them aboot. Three or fower blaik government cairts, wi crosses in fite cercles, an an auld bus, amang ither hurlies, wir bein loadit in the clachan street. There wis a heeze o fowk, maist o them releegious eneuch tae hae riggit in their best claes. The sodjers wir haein a hard tcyauve tae makk them unnerstaun the grimness o their weird. We saw ae wrunkled auld bodach wi a muckle kist an twinty or mair flooer pots haudin orchids, ill naturet argy bargyin wi the corporal fa wad leave them ahin. I dauchled an grippit his airm.

“D’ye ken fit’s ower thonner?” I speired pyntin at the pine taps that happit the Martians.

“Fit?” quo he, turnin. “I wis explainin thon are dear.”

“Daith!” I skirled. “Daith is camin! Daith!” an leavin him tae takk thon in gin he could, I hashed on efter the sodjer. At the neuk I luikit back. The sodjer hid left him, an he wis still staunin bi his kistie, wi the potties o orchids on the lid o’t, glowerin dumfounert ower the trees.

Naebody in Weybrig could tell us far the HQ wis at; the hale airt wis in sic a kerfuffle as I’d niver seen in ony toon fore. Cairts, cairriages aawye, the maist bumbazin kirn o hurlies an shelts. The genteel toonsfowk, cheils in gowf an boatin rigoots, wives brawly dressed, wir packin, watters-side idlers eidently helpin, bairns in a steer, an, fur the maist pairt, richt delichtit at this dumfounerin cheenge o their Sabbath wyes. In the mids o’t aa the weel meanin meenister wis unca bravely haudin an early jamboree, an his bell wis jinglin oot abune the tirrivee.

Masel an the sodjer, dowpit on the step o the drinkin troch, ett a gran meal wi fit we’d brocht wi us. Patrols o sodjers—here nae langer hussars, bit grenadiers in fite—wir warnin fowk tae meeve noo or tae sic a bield in their cellars as sune as the firin stertit. We saw as we crossed the railwye brig that a growin squatter o fowk hid gaithered in an aboot the railwye station, an the heezin platform wis stappit wi kists an pyokes. The ordnar traffic hid bin stoppit, I jelouse, in order tae lat onwird troops an guns tae Chertsey, an I hae heard sinsyne that a coorse tulzie gaen on fur places in the speecial trains that wir pit on at a later oor.

We bedd at Weybrig till noon, an at thon oor we fand oorsels at the airt nearhaun Shepperton Lock far the Wey an Thames jyne. Pairt o the time we spent helpin twa auld weemen tae pack a wee cairt. The Wey his a treble mooth, an at thon pynt boats can be hired, an there wis a ferry ower the watter. On the Shepperton side wis a howf wi a lawn, an ayont thon the touer o Shepperton Kirk—it’s bin cheenged since fur a spire—raise abune the trees.

Here we fand a vrocht up an din makkin boorich o fugitives. As yet the flicht hidnae grown tae dreid, bit there wir already far mair fowk than aa the boats gaun back an fore could haud. Fowk cam pechin alang unner wechty burdens; ae cheil an his wife wir even cairryin a wee oothoose yett atween them, wi a rowth o their hoose gear biggit on it. Ae cheil telt us he ettled tae gin awa frae Shepperton station.

There wis muckle skirlin an ae cheil wis even jokin. The thocht fowk held here wis that the Martians wir jist byordnar human beins, fa micht fecht an spulzie the toon, tae be certain connached in the eyn. Ilkie noo an then fowk wid keek fearie-like ower the Wey, at the leys tae the airt o Chertsey, bit aathin ower thonner wis quaet.

Ower the Thames, except far the boats landit, aathin wis quiet, in unca contrast wi the Surrey side. The fowk fa landit thonner frae the boats gaed stravaigin aff down the lane. The muckle ferryboat hid jist feenished a trip. Three or fower sodjers stude on the lawn o the howf, gloerin an lauchin at the fugitives, wioot offerin tae help. The howf wis steekit, as it wis noo ootwith legal oors.

“Fit’s thon?” skreiched a boatman, an “Be quate, ye gype!” quo a cheil near me tae a bowfin tyke. Syne the soun cam again, this time frae the airt o Chertsey, a smored dunt—the soun o a gun.

The fechtin wis stertin. Near richt aff unseen batteries ower the watter tae oor richt, happit bi the trees, tuik up the chorus, firin faist ane efter the tither. A wumman skirled. Aabody stude reeted bi the sudden steer o fechtin, nearhaun us an yet inveesible tae us. Naethin wis tae be seen forbye flat leys, coos chawin unheeding fur the maist pairt, an sillar pollard sauchs unmeevin in the hett sunlicht.

“The sodjers’ll stop them,” quo a wumman aside me, dootfu like. A mist raise ower the treetaps.

Syne o a suddenty we saw a heeze o rikk hyne awa up the watter, a pluffert o rikk that yarked up intae the air an hung; an straichtaff the grun raise unner fit an a michty blast shuik the air, brakkin twa or three windaes in the hooses nearhaun, an leavin us bumbazed.

“Here they are!” skirled a cheil in a blae ganzy. “Thonner! D’ye see them? Thonner!”

Faist, ane efter the ither, ane, twa, three, fower o the armoured Martians wir seen, hyne awa ower the wee trees, ben the flat leys that streetched tae Chertsey, an stavaigin faist tae the watter. Wee cowled craiturs they seemed at first, gaun wi a rowin meevement an as faist as fleein birdies.

Syne, camin sidiewyes tae us, cam a fifth. Their armoured corpses glimmered in the sun as they breenged faist forrit on the guns, growin bigger as they won nearer. Ane on the hard left, the hynest awa that is, fleerished a muckle case heich in the air, an the ghaistly, awfa Heat-Ray I’d already seen on Friday nicht fired at Chertsey, an strukk the toon.

At the sicht o thon fremmit, faist, an fearfu craiturs the fowk nearhaun the watter’s edge seemed tae me tae be fur a meenit dumfounert. There wis nae skirlin or skreichin, jist a seelence. Syne a hairse mummlin an a meevement o feet—a splooterin frae the watter. A cheil, ower frichtit tae drap the kist he cairriet on his shouder, birled roon an gart me hyter wi a cloor frae the neuk o it. A wumman shoved at me wi her haun an breenged by me. I furled wi the breenge o the fowk, bit I wisnae ower terrifeed fur thocht. The terrible Heat-Ray wis in ma thochts. Tae win unner the watter! Thon wis it!

“Get aneth watter!” I skirled, unheedit.

I birled aboot again, an hashed tae the oncamin Martian, breenged richt doon the graivelly san an heidlang intae the watter. Ithers did the same. A boatfu o fowk camin back lowped oot as I hashed by. The stanes aneth ma feet wir dubby an skyty, an the watter wis sae laigh that I ran mebbe twinty feet scarce wyme-deep. Syne, as the Martian touered owerheid scarce a couple o hunner yairds awa, I flang masel forrit aneth the surface. The splyters o the fowk in the boaties lowpin intae the watter soundit like thunnercloors in ma lugs. Fowk wir landin faist on baith sides o the watter. Bit the Martian machine tuik nae mair tent fur the meenit o the fowk rinnin this wey an thon than a cheil wid o the melee o emmicks in a nest agin which his fit his kickit. Fin, hauf smored, I heistit ma heid abune watter, the Martian’s hood pyntit at the batteries that wir still firin ower the watter, an as it gaed forrit it sprang lowse fit maun hae bin the generator o the Heat-Ray.

In anither meenit it wis on the brae, an in a stride wydin haufwye ower. The knees o its foremaist shanks booed at the farrer brae, an in anither meevement it hid heistit itsel tae its full heicht again, nearhaun the clachan o Shepperton. Straicht aff the sax guns that, unkent tae onybody on the richt brae, hid bin happit ahin the ootskirts o thon clachan, fired thegither. The sudden nearhaun concussion, the hinmaist close on the first, gart ma hairt lowp. The monster wis already heistin the case that vrocht the Heat-Ray as the first shell brakk sax yairds abune the hood.

I gaed a skirl o bumbazement. I saw an thocht naething o the ither fower Martian monsters; ma een wir reeted on the nearer happenin. At the same time twa ither shells brakk in the air nearhaun the corp as the hood furled roon in time tae takk, bit nae in time tae jink, the fowerth shell.

The shell brakk fair in the physog o the Ferlie. The hood swalled, flashed, wis furled aff in a dizzen tatterwallops o reid flesh an glimmerin metal.

“Knell!” I skirled wi somethin atween a skirl an a hulloo.

I lippent tae skirls frae the fowk in the watter aboot me. I could hae lowped ooto the watter wi thon meenit’s delicht.

The beheidit colossus hytered like a boozy giant; bit it didnae cowp ower. It recovered its balance bi a mervel, an, nae langer takkin tent o its steps an wi the camera that fired the Heat-Ray noo tichtly upheld, it stytered faist on Shepperton. The leevin harns, the Martian inbye the hood, wis killt an skittered tae the fower wins o heiven, an the Ferlie wis noo jist a footery tool o metal furlin tae wrack. It drave alang in a straicht line, haein tint aa guidance. It cloored the tooer o Shepperton Kirk, duntin it doon as the impack o a batterin ram micht hae dane, jinked aside, teetered on an drappt doon wi a muckle knell intae the watter ooto ma sicht.

An unca knell shuik the air, an a spoot o watter, rikk, dubs, an connached metal flew far up inno the lift. As the camera o the Heat-Ray duntit intae the watter, the latter hid straicht aff cheenged intae rikk. In anither meenit a muckle wave, like a dubby tide near scaldin hett, cam swypin roon the neuk upstream. I saw fowk warsslin shore-wards, an lippened tae their skirlin an skreichin dweebly abune the seethin an roar o the Martian’s fooner.

Fur a meenit I thocht naethin o the heat, forgot the oot an oot need fur self-preservation. I splytered throwe the wud watter, strikkin aside a cheil in blaik tae dae sae, till I could see roon the neuk. Hauf a dizzen teem boaties rowed eeseless on the melee o the waves. The drappit Martian cam intae sicht doonstream, lyin ower the watter, an fur the maist pairt sunken.

Muckle clouds o rikk wir poorin aff the wrack, an throw the wud furlin skirps I could see, noo an again an lowsely, the muckle limbs kirnin the watter an haivin a splooter an skitter o dubs an faem intae the air. The limbs sweyed an threwsh like leevin airms, an, apairt frae the eeselessness o thon meevements, it wis as gin some hurtit craitur wis warsslin fur its life amid the waves. Muckle jeelips o a reid-broon fluid wis splooterin up in deefenin jets ooto the machine.

Ma een wis taen frae this daith fleerish bi a full-throatit skirlin, like thon o the ferlie caaed a siren in oor manufacturin toons. A cheil, knee-deep nearhaun the towe path, skreiched saftly tae me an pyntit. Luikin back, I saw the ither Martians gain forrit wi muckle strides doon the watter bank frae the airt o Chertsey. The Shepperton guns spakk this time eeselessly.

At thon I duckit at aince unner watter, an, haudin ma braith til meevement wis agony, hytered painfull aheid unner the surface as lang as I could. The watter wis in a kirn aboot me, an faist growin hetter.

Fin for a meenit I heistit ma heid tae takk braith an haive the hair an watter frae ma een, the rikk wis risin in a furlin fite fog that at first happit the Martians aathegither. The soun wis deefenin. Syne I saw them dweebly, colossal bodies o grey, magnifeed bi the haar. They’d passed by me, an twa wir booin ower the frothin, wud wrack o their fier.

The third an fowerth stude aside him in the watter, ane mebbe twa hunner yairds frae me, the tither tae Laleham. The generators o the Heat-Rays wyved heich, an the hissin beams duntit doon this wye an thon.

The air wis fu o soun, a deefenin an dumfounerin tulzie o noises—the unca din o the Martians, the knell o faain hooses, the dunt o trees, fences, sheilins kinnlin intae flame, an the cracklin an roar o the lowe. Thick blaik rikk wis lowpin up tae mell wi the rikk frae the watter, an as the Heat-Ray gaed back an fore ower Weybrig its impack wis merked bi flichters o fleerin fite, that gaed wye at aince tae a rikky daunce o skyrie flames. The nearhaun hooses still stude hale, wytin their weird, shaddawed, blae an peely wally in the rikk, wi the lowe ahin them gaun back an fore.

Fur a meenit mebbe I stude thonner, breist-heich in the near bylin watter, dumfounert at ma poseetion, wi nae escape. Ben the rikk I could see the fowk fa’d bin wi me in the watter warssslin oot o the watter ben the seggs, like wee puddocks hashin ben the girse frae the oncam o a cheil, or rinnin back an fore in oot an oot wae on the towe path.

Syne o a suddenty the fite fleerish o the Heat-Ray cam lowpin tae me. The hooses fell doon as they drappit at its touch, an skytit oot flames; the trees cheenged tae a lowe wi a roar. The Ray flichtered up an doon the towe path, lickin aff the fowk fa ran this wye an thon, an cam doon tae the watter’s edge nae fifty yairds frae far I stude. It swypit ower the watter tae Shepperton, an the watter in its track raise in a bylin swallin tappit wi rikk. I furled shore-ward.

In anither meenit the muckle wave, near at the bylin-pynt hid breenged on me. I skirled lood, an birssled, hauf blinnt, in agony, I hytered throwe the lowpin, hissin watter tae the shore. Hid my foot hytered, it wid hae bin the eyn. I drappt helpless, in full sicht o the Martians, uon the braid, bare graivelly spit that rins doon tae merk the angle o the Wey an Thames. I expeckit naethin bit daith.

I hae a dweeble myndin o the fit o a Martian camin doon inbye twinty yairds o ma heid, drivin straicht intae the lowse graivel, furlin it this wye an thon an heistin again; o a lang devaul, an syne o the fower cairryin the wrack o their fier atween them, noo clear an syne faint throwe a heeze o rikk, dwinin perpetual, as it seemed tae me, ower a muckle airt o watter an ley. An syne, unca slawly, I jeloused that bi a mervel I’d escapit.

Chapter 13

Foo I met the Meenister

Efter gettin this sudden lesson in the pouer o terrestrial airms, the Martians gaed back tae their first hame on Horsell Common; an in their hash, an wechtit wi the wrack o their connached fier, they nae doot owerluikit mony sic a gangrel an nochtie victim as masel. Hid they left their fier an gaed on straicht aff, there wis naethin at thon time atween them an Lunnon bit batteries o twal-punner guns, an they wid o a certainty hae reached the capital afore wird o their oncam; as faist, dreidfu, an connachin their arrival wid hae bin as the yirdquake that wracked Lisbon a hunner year syne.

Bit they wir in nae hash. Cylinder follaed cylinder on its inter-planetary flicht; ilkie twinty-fower oors brocht them mair help. An betimes the military an naval heid bummers, noo fully kennin o the muckle pouer o their faes, vrocht wi forcie virr. Ilkie meenit a fresh gun cam intae poseetion until, afore gloamin, ilkie wid, ilkie raw o ootlyin hooses on the humphy braes aboot Kingston an Richmond, happit a wytin blaik muzzle. An ben the birssled an connached airt-mebbe twinty squar miles aathegither—that encercled the Martian camp on Horsell Lea, ben brunt an wracked clachans amang the green trees, throwe the blaikened an rikkin arcades that hid bin bit a day syne pine wids, creepit the leal scouts wi the heliographs that wir sune tae warn the gunners o the Martian oncam. Bit the Martians noo unnerstaun oor command o guns an the danger o human nearness, an nae a cheil gaed inbye a mile o either cylinder, wioot deein.

It wid seem that thon giants spent the earlier pairt o the efterneen in gaun back an fore, flittin aathin frae the secunt an third cylinders—the secunt in Addlestone Gowf Links an the third at Pyrford—tae their first pit on Horsell Lea. Ower thon, abune the blaikened heather an wracked biggins that raxxed hyne an awaa, stude ane as watchie, while the lave left their muckle fechtin-machines an gaed doon inno the pit. They wir hard at wirk thonner far inno the nicht, an the touerin pillar o thick green rikk that raise frae thonner could be seen frae the knowes aboot Merrow, an even, it is said, frae Banstead an Epsom Doons.

An fin the Martians ahin me wir sae makkin ready fur their neist fecht, an afore me Humanity gaithered fur the warssle, I made ma wey wi unca skaiths an tcyauve frae the lowe an rikk o birsslin Weybridge tae Lunnon.

I saw an affcast boatie, verra smaa an hynie aff, driftin doon-burn; an haivin aff the maist o ma sypin claes, I gaed efter it, catched it, an sae won ooto thon wrack. There wir nae oars in the boatie, bit I ettled tae paiddle, as weel as ma haufbyled hauns wid lat me, doon the river tae Halliford an Walton, gaun verra cannily an aywis lukin ahin me, as ye micht weel unnerstaun. I follaeed the river, because I jeloused that the watter gaed me ma best chaunce o fleein should thon giants cam back.

The hett watter frae the Martian’s owerthrow wauchtit doonburn wi me, sae that fur the best pairt o a mile I could see anely bittickies o either bank. Aince, hoosaeiver, I made oot a wheen blaik figures hashin ben the lea frae the airt o Weybrig. Halliford, it seemed, wis teem, an puckles o the hooses facin the river wir in a lowe. It wis fey tae see the airt sae quaet, rael wracked unner the hett blue lift, wi the rikk an wee threids o flame gaun straicht up intae the heat o the efterneen. Niver afore hid I seen hooses burnin wioot the presence o an unhelpfuheeze o fowk. A bittie farrer on the dry seggs up the bank wir rikkin an glimmerin, an a line o fire inlan wis merchin steidily ower a latchy park o hey.

Fur a lang time I wauchtit, sae painfu an trauchelt wis I efter the violence I’d bin throwe, an sae strang the heat on the watter. Syne ma flegs owercam me again, an I resterted ma paiddlin. The sun brunt ma nyaakit back. At the hinnereyn, as the brig at Walton wis camin intae sicht roon the neuk, ma fever an feintness owercam ma flegs, an I landit on the Middlesex brae an lay doon, deidly seek, amid the lang girse. I jelouse the time wis syne aboot fower or five o’clock. I won up sune, wauked mebbe hauf a mile wioot meetin a sowel, an syne lay doon again in the shadda o a buss. I seem tae mynd spikkin, wannerinly, tae masel durin thon hinmaist breenge. I wis likewyse verra droothy, an fu o grue that I’d drunk nae mair watter. It’s a fey maitter that I felt roozed wi ma wife; I canna accoont fur it, bit ma eeseless desire tae reach Leatherheid worriet me unca.

I dinna richt mynd the camin o the meenister, sae that likely I noddit aff. I becam kennin o him as a dowpit body in seet-fyled sark sleeves, an wi his upturned, clean-shaven physog glowerin at a feint flichterin that daunced ower the lift. The lift wis fit’s caad a mackerel lift—raws an raws o feint doon-plumes o cloud, jist tinted wi the midsimmer gloamin.

I sat up, an at the reeshle o ma meevement he luikit at me faist.

“Hae ye ony watter?” I speired sherply.

He shuik his heid.

“Ye hae bin speirin fur watter fur the hinmaist oor,” quo he.

Fur a meenit we wir seelent, takkin tent o each ither. I daursay he fand me a fey eneuch body, nyaakit, save fur ma watter-syped troosers an hose, brunt, an ma physog an shouders blaikened bi the rikk. His physog wis a richt weakness, his chin retreatit, an his hair lay in crisp, near blin-fite curls on his laigh broo; his een wir raither large, peely wally blue, an teemly glowerin. He spakk sherply, luikin teemly awa frae me.

“Fit dis it mean?” he speired. “Fit dae thon ferlies mean?”

I glowered at him an made nae repon.

He rxxed a thin fite haun an spakk in near girnin voyce.

“Foo are thon things alloued? Fit sins hae we dane? The mornin service wis ower, I wis waukin ben the roads tae clear ma harns fur the efterneen, an syne—lowe, earthquake, daith! As gin it wis Sodom an Gomorrah! Aa oor wirk undane, aa the wirk—Fit are thon Martians?”

“Fit are we?” I reponed, clearin ma thrapple.

He grippit his knees an turned tae luik at me again. Fur hauf a meenit, mebbe, he glowered seelent.

“I wis waukin ben the roads tae clear ma harns,” quo he. “An o a suddenty—lowe, earthquake, daith!”

He drappit again intae seelence, wi his chin noo sunken near tae his knees.

Sune he stertit wyvin his haun.

“Aa the wirk—aa the Sabbath skweels—Fit hae we dane—fit his Weybridge dane? Aathin gane—aathin connached. The kirk! We rebiggit it anely three years syne. Gane! Swypit ooto kennin! Foo?”

Anither wyte, an he brukk oot again like ane gyte.

“The rikk o her burnin gaeth up fur iver an iver!” he skirled.

His een fleered, an he pyntit a thin finger in the airt o Weybrig.

Bi this time I wis stertin tae takk his meisur. The byordnar wae in which he’d bin catched up in—it wis easy seen he wis a rinawa frae Weybridge—hid driven him tae the verra border o his rizzon.

“Are we hyne frae Sunbury?” quo I, in a maitter-o-fact tone.

“Fit are we tae dae?” he speired. “Are thon craiturs aawye? His the eirde bin gien ower tae them?”

“Are we hyne frae Sunbury?”

“Anely this mornin I owersaw an early celebration——”

“Maitters hae changed,” quo I, quaet. “Ye maun keep yer heid. There’s still hope.”

“Hope!”

“Aye. Plentifu hope—fur aa this wrack!”

I stertit tae explain ma view o maitters. He lippened at first, bit as I gaed on the interest dawnin in his een gaed wye tae their former glower, an his regaird wannered frae me.

“This maun be the stert o the eyn,” quo he, interruptin me. “The eyn! The great an awfu day o the Lord! Fin cheils shall cry on the Bens an the stanes tae faa on them an hide them—hide them frae the physog o Him that dowpeth on the throne!”

I stertit tae unnerstaun the poseetion. I stoppit ma hard vrocht rizzonin, warssled tae ma feet, an, staunin ower him, pit ma haun on his shouder.

“Be a cheil!” quo I. “Ye’re fleggit ooto yer heid! Fit gweed is religion gin it crines unner mishanter? Think o fit yirdquakes an floods, wars an volcanoes, hae dane afore tae cheils! Did ye think God hid owerluikit Weybridge? He’s nae an insurance agent.”

Fur a whyle he sat in seelence.

“Bit foo can we jink it?” quo he, o a suddenty. “They’re aa powerfu, they’re peetiless.”

“Neither the ane nur, mebbe, the ither,” I reponed. “An the michtier they are the mair sane an cannie we should be. Ane o them wis killt thonner nae three oors syne.”

“Killt!” quo he, glowerin aboot him. “Foo can God’s meenisters be killt?”

“I saw it happen.” I gaed on tae tell him. “We hae chaunced tae cam in fur the wirst o it,” quo I, “an thon is aa.”

“Fit is thon flichter in the lift?” he speired o a suddenty.

I telt him it wis the heliograph signallin—that it wis the sign o human help an warssle in the lift.

“We’re in the mids o it,” quo I, “quaet as it is. Thon flichter in the lift tells o the gaitherin storm. Thonner, I takk it are the Martians, an Lunnonwird, far thon bens rise aboot Richmond an Kingston an the trees gie cover, yirdwirks are bein haived up an guns are bein pit. Sune the Martians’ll be camin this wey again.”

An even as I spakk he lowped tae his feet an stoppit me bi a wyve. “Lippen!” quo he.

Frae ayont the laigh knowes ower the watter cam the smored dirl o hyne aff guns an a hyne aff oorie greetin. Syne aathin wis quaet. A cockchafer cam dronin ower the buss an by us. Heich in the wast the crescent meen hung dweeble an peelywally abune the rikk o Weybridge an Shepperton an the hett, still glamorie o the gloamin.

“We’d better follae this path,” I telt him, “northwird.”

Chapter 14

In Lunnon

Ma younger brither wis in Lunnon fin the Martians drappit at Wokin. He wis a medical student tcyauvin fur an up-camin examination, an he heard naethin o the arrival till Setterday foreneen. The mornin papers o Setterday hid, forbye langamachies on the planet Mars, on life in the planets, an sic like, a wee an dweeble wirdit telegram, aa the mair strikkin fur its smaaness.

The Martians, bumbazed bi the oncam o a heeze o fowk, hid killt a puckle o people wi a faist-firin gun, sae the story gaed. The telegram eyndit wi the wirds: “Michty as they seem tae be, the Martians hinna meeved frae the pit intae which they’d faaen, an, mairower, seem pouerless o daein sae. Mebbe this is doon tae the virr o the eird’s gravitational pu.” On thon hinmaist screivin their heid-screiver raxxed oot the theme verra cantie-like.

Of coorse aa the students in the stapper’s biology class, far ma brither gaed thon day, wir affa interestit, bit there wir nae signs o ony byordnar steer in the streets. The efterneen papers pit nippicks o news unner muckle heidlines. They’d naethin tae tell ayont the meevements o sodjers aboot the ley, an the burnin o the pine wids atween Wokin an Weybrig, until echt. Syne the *St. James’s Gazette*, in an unca-speecial edeetion, screived o the sterk fack o the brakk in the telegraphic jynin. This wis thocht tae be due tae the faain o burnin pine trees ower the line. Naethin mair o the fechtin wis kent thon nicht, the nicht o ma hurl tae Leatherheid an back.

Ma brither felt nae wirry aboot us, as he kent frae the picture screived in the papers that the cylinder wis a gweed twa miles frae ma hoose. He decidit tae rin doon thon nicht tae me, in order, as he sez, tae see the Ferlies afore they wir killt. He sent aff a telegram, that I niver got aboot fower o’clock, an spent the evenin at a music haa.

In Lunnon, as weel, on Setterday nicht there wis a thunnerstorm, an ma brither reached Waterloo in a cab. On the platform frae far the midnicht train near aye sterts he larned, efter some wytin, that a mishanter stoppit trains frae reachin Woking thon nicht. The natur o the mishanter he couldnae fin oot; forbye, the railway heid bummers didnae clearly kenn at thon time. There wis verra little steer in the station, as the heid bummers, failin tae jelouse that onythin farrer than a brakkdoon atween Byfleet an Wokin junction hid happened, wir rinnin the theatre trains that usually gaed throwe Wokin roon bi Virginia Watter or Guildford. They wir eident makkin the necessar arreengements tae cheenge the route o the Soothampton an Portsmooth Sabbath League jaunts. A nicht-time newspaper reporter, mistakkin ma brither fur the traffic manager, tae fa he bears a slicht luik, weylaid an ettled tae interview him. Fyew fowk, apairt frae the railwey heidbummers, conneckit the brakkdoon wi the Martians.

I hae read, in anither accoont o thon maitteers, that on the Sabbath foreneen “aa Lunnon wis electrifeed bi the news frae Wokin.” As a maitter o fack, there wis naethin tae justifee that verra extravagant phrase. A rowth o Lunnon fowk didnae hear o the Martians till the flegs o Monday foreneen. Fowk fa did tuik a whylie tae jelouse aa that the faist wirdit telegrams in the Sabbath papers convoyed. The maist o fowk in Lunnon dinna read the Sabbath papers.

The habit o self safety, mairower, is sae deep reeted in the Lunnon cheil’s harns, an stertlin news sae muckle a maitter o coorse in the papers, that they could read wioot ony personal terrors: “Aboot sivven o’clock last nicht the Martians cam oot o the cylinder, an, meevin aboot unner a bield o metallic shields, hae aathegither wracked Wokin station wi the nearhaun hooses, an dichtit oot a hale battalion o the Cardigan Regiment. Nae particlars are kent. Maxims hae bin aathegither eeseless agin their armour; the field guns hae bin connached bi them. Fleein hussars hae bin gallopin intae Chertsey. The Martians luik tae be meevin slawly tae Chertsey or Windsor. Muckle fleg abouns in Wast Surrey, an eirde wirks are bein haived up tae devaul the advaunce tae Lunnon.” Thon wis foo the Sabbath *Sun* pit it, an a cliver an unca faist “haunbuik” article in the *Referee* likened the maitter tae a menagerie o a suddenty lat lowse in a clachan.

Naebody in Lunnon kent fur siccar o the natur o the armoured Martians, an there wis still a set notion that thon monsters maun be latchy: “crawlin,” “creepin sairly”—sic wirds wis screived in near aa the earlier reports. Nane o the telegrams cud hae bin screived bi an eewitness o their advaunce. The Sabbath papers prentit their ain editions as mair news wis heard, some even instead o it. Bit there wis near naethin mair tae tell fowk till late in the efternoeen, fin the heid bummers gaed the press the news they’d gotten. It wis pit oot that the fowk of Walton an Weybrig, an aa thon airt wir poorin alang the weys tae Lunnon, an thon wis aa.

Ma brither gaed tae kirk at the Foundlin Hospital in the foreneen, still nae kenning fit hid happened the nicht afore. Thonner he lippened tae hints aboot the invasion, an a speecial prayer fur peace. Camin oot, he bocht a *Referee*. He grew fleggit at the news in thon, an gaed again tae Watterloo station tae finn oot gin links wis sortit. The buses, cairriages, cyclists, an heeze o fowk waukin in their best claes seemed scarce affeckit bi the fey tales that the news sellers wir gaein oot. Fowk wir interestit, or, gin fleggit, fleggit anely on accoont o the local residents. At the station he heard fur the first time that the Windsor an Chertsey lines wir noo brukken. The porters telt him that puckles o byordnar telegrams hid bin gotten in the foreneen frae Byfleet an Chertsey stations, bit that thon hid smertly stoppit. Ma brither cud get verra wee exack details ooto them.

“There’s fechtin gaun on aboot Weybrig” wis the extent o their kennin.

The train service wis noo unca raivelled. A fair pucklie fowk fa’d bin expeckin friens frae airts on the Sooth-Wastern netwirk wir staunin aboot the station. Ae grey-heidit auld cheil cam an miscaad the Sooth-Wastern Company wershly tae ma brither. “It wints shawin up,” quo he.

Ane or twa trains cam in frae Richmond, Putney, an Kingston, haudin fowk fa’d gane oot fur a day’s boatin an fand the locks steekit an a feelin o fleg in the air. A cheil in a blae an fite jaiket spakk tae ma brither, fu o fremmit news.

“There’s a heeze o fowk hurlin intae Kingston in hurlies an cairts an ferlies, wi kists o treisurs an aa thon,” quo he. “They cam frae Molesey an Weybrig an Walton, an they say there’s bin guns heard at Chertsey, wechty firin, an that sodjers on shelts hae telt them tae gae aff at aince because the Martians are camin. We heard guns firin at Hampton Coort station, bit we thocht it wis thunner. Fit the deil dis it aa mean? The Martians canna win ooto their pit, can they?”

Ma brither couldnae tell him.

Efterwirds he fand that the dweeble feelin o fleg hid spreid tae the clients o the unnergrun railwey, an that the Sabbath day traivellers stertit tae return frae aa ower the Sooth-Wastern “lung”—Barnes, Wimbledon, Richmond Park, Kew, an sae furth—at byordnar early oors; bit nae a sowel hid onythin mair than skimpit sklaik tae spikk o . Aabody conneckit wi the terminus wis crabbit an contermaschious.

Aboot five o’clock the gaitherin boorich in the station wis verra steered up bi the openin o the line o traivel, which is near aye steekit, atween the Sooth-Eastern an the Sooth-Wastern stations, an the oncam o cairriage trucks wi muckle guns an cairriages stappit wi sodjers. Thon wir the guns that wir brocht up frae Woolwich an Chatham tae guaird Kingston. There wis an excheenge o sklaik: “Ye’ll get etten!” “We’re the breet-tamers!” an sae furth. A wee whyle efter thon a heeze o polis cam intae the station an stertit tae sen the fowk aff the platforms, an ma brither gaed oot intae the street again.

The kirk bells wir ringin fur evensang, an a boorich o Salvation Army lassies cam singin doon Watterloo Road. On the brig a nummer o ne’r dae weels wir watchin a fey broon faem that cam wauchtin doon the burns in swatches. The sun wis jist settin, an the Clock Touer an the Hooses o Parliament raise agin ane o the maist peacefu lifts it’s possible tae pictur, a lift o gowd, barred wi lang crosswise strips o reiddish-poorple cloud. There wis spikk o a floatin corp. Ane o the cheils thonner, a reservist he telt fowk he wis, telt ma brither he’d seen the heliograph flichterin in the wast.

In Wellington Street ma brither fell in towe wi a pair o brosie bruisers fa’d jist bin hashed ooto Fleet Street wi still-weet newspapers an unca posters. “Dreidfu mishanter!” they skirled ane tae the tither doon Wellington Street. “Fechtin at Weybrig! Fu report! Haudin back the Martians! Lunnon in Danger!” He’d tae gie thrippence fur a copy o thon paper.

Sae it wis, an syne anely, that he jeloused a skirp o the full pouer an terror o thon monsters. He larned that they wirnae jist a haunfu o wee slaw craiturs, bit that they wir harns sweyin muckle mechanical frames; an that they cud meeve faist an strikk wi sic pouer that even the michtiest guns couldnae staun agin them.

They wir pictured as “muckle wyverlike machines, near a hunner feet heich, capable o the speed o an express train, an able tae sheet oot a ray o strang heat.” Happit batteries, moistly o field guns, hid bin plunked in the kintra aboot Horsell Lea, an speecially atween the Wokin airt an Lunnon. Five o the machines hid bin seen meevin tae the Thames, an ane, bi a blythe chaunce, hid bin connached. In the ither cases the shells hid missed, an the batteries hid bin at aince blootered bi the Heat-Rays. Michty losses o sodjers wir spukken o, bit the tone o the report wis hopefu.

The Martians hid bin drave back; they wirnae aa pouerfu. They’d retreatit tae their triangle o cylinders again, in the cercle aboot Wokin. Signallers wi heliographs wir drivin forrit on them frae aa sirts. Guns wir in faist transit frae Windsor, Portsmouth, Aldershot, Woolwich—even frae the north; amang ithers, lang wire-guns o ninety-five tons frae Woolwich. Aathegither a hunner an sxxteen wir set oot or bein faist set oot, moistly defendin Lunnon. Niver afore in England hid there bin sic a rowth or faist ingaitherin o military gear.

Ony mair cylinders that drappit, it wis hoped, cud be blootered at aince bi heich explosives, that wir bein faist vrocht an gaen oot. Nae doot, quo the report, the situation wis o the maist unca an gravest makk, bit the fowk wir coonselled tae jink an doonpit panic. Nae doot the Martians wir verra fey an terrible, bit at the maist there couldnae be mair than twinty o them agin oor millions.

The heid bummers hid rizzon tae jelouse, frae the makk o the cylinders, that at the ootside there couldnae be mair than five in ilkie cylinder—fifteen aathegither. An ane at least wis connached—mebbe mair. The fowk wid be fairly warned o the oncam o danger, an mony meisurs wir bein taen fur the safety o the fowk in the threatened soothwastern bouns. An sae, wi repeatit aiths o the safety o Lunnon an the pouer o the heid bummers tae haunle the warssle, this wid-be annooncement steekit.

This wis prentit in muckle type on paper sae fresh that it wis still weet, an there’d bin nae time tae add anither wird. It wis fey, ma brither quo, tae see foo peetilessly the ordnar intimmers o the paper hid bin hackit an taen oot tae gie thon space.

Aa doon Wellington Street fowk cud be seen flichterin oot the pink sheets an readin, an the Stran wis o a suddenty lood wi the vyces o an airmy o sellers follaein thon forerunners. Cheils cam tummlin aff buses tae makk siccar o copies. O a certainty this news steered fowk up strang, fitever their aforegaun unconsarn. The blinds o a map shop in the Stran wir bein taen doon, ma brither quo, an a cheil in his Sabbath claes, lemon-yalla gloves even, wis veesible inbye the windae faist steekin maps o Surrey tae the glaiss.

Gaun on alang the Stran tae Trafalgar Squar, the paper in his haun, ma brither saw puckles o the rinawaas frae Wast Surrey. There wis a cheil wi his wife an twa loons an a puckle bitticks o gear in a cairt sic as greengrocers makk eese o. He wis drivin frae the airt o Wastminster Brig; an near teetle him cam a hey waggon wi five or sax genteel-luikin fowk in it, an a puckle kists an pyokes. The physogs o thon fowk wir wersh, an their hale luik wis eackt quanter tae the Sabbath-best makk o the fowk on the buses. Fowk in smert claes teeted at them ooto cabs. They devauled at the Squar as gin winnerin fit wey tae takk, an syne turned eastward alang the Stran. A bittie ahin them cam a cheil in wirkday claes, ridin ane o thon auld-farrant tricycles wi a wee front wheel. He wis clarty an fite in the physog.

Ma brither turned doon tae Victoria, an trystit wi a nummer o sic fowk. He’d a dweeble notion that he micht see somethin o masel. He saw a byordnar nummer o polis controllin the traffic. Puckles o the refugees wir newsin wi the fowk on the buses. Ane wis claimin tae hae seen the Martians. “Bylers on stilts, I tell ye, stravaigin alang like cheils.” Maist o them wir steered up an roosed bi their fey mishanter.

Ayont Victoria the howfs wir daein a gweed trade wi thon incamers. At aa the street neuks boorichs o fowk wir readin papers, spikkin wi virr, or glowerin at thon byordnar Sabbath veesitors. They seemed tae growe mair as nicht cam on, till at the hinnereyn the roads, ma brither quo, wir like Epsom Heich Street on a Derby Day. Ma brither spakk wi puckles o thon rinawaas an got puir repons frae maist.

Nane o them cud tell him ony news o Wokin barr ae cheil, fa telt him that Wokin hid bin aathegither connached on the nicht afore.

“I cam frae Byfleet,”quo he; “cheil on a bicycle cam ben the airt in the early foreneen, an ran frae yett tae yett warnin us tae cam awa. Syne cam sodjers. We gaed oot tae luik, an there wir clouds o rikk tae the sooth—naethin bit rikk, an nae a sowel camin thon wey. Syne we heard the guns at Chertsey, an fowk camin frae Weybrig. Sae I’ve snibbed up ma hoose an cam on.”

At thon time there wis a strang feelin in the streets that the heidbummers wir at faut fur their eeselessness in defeatin the incamers wioot aa this cairryone.

Aboot echt o’clock a soun o heavy firin wis clear tae aa ower the sooth o Lunnon. Ma brither cudnae hear it fur the traffic in the mainroads, bit bi gaun ben the quet back streets tae the river he cud lippen tae it nae bother.

He wauked frae Wastminster tae his chaumers nearhaun Regent’s Park, aboot twa. He wis noo verra an consarned aboot me, an unsettled at the clear size o the tribble. His harns ran, as did mine on Setterday, on sodjerly facks. He thocht o aa thon seelent, wytin guns, o the suddenty o a gangrel kintraside; he ettled tae pictur “bylers on stilts” a hunner feet heich.

There wir ane or twa cairtfus o rinawaas passin alang Oxford Street, an puckles in the Marylebane Road, bit sae slawly wis the news spreidin that Regent Street an Portland Place wir fu o their ordnar Sabbath-nicht waukers, tho they spakk in boorichs, an alang the edge o Regent’s Park there wir as mony seelent couples “waukin oot” thegether unner the skittered gas lichts as iver there hid bin. The nicht wis hett an still, an a thochtie owercamin; the soun o guns cairriednoo an then, an efter midnicht there seemed tae be sheet lichtnin in the sooth.

He read an re-read the paper, fearin the warst hid happened tae me. He wis restless, an efter supper steppit oot again aimless-like. He cam back an ettled eeselessly in vain tae rug his thochts tae his examination notes. He gaed tae bed a bittie efter midnicht, an wis waukened frae skyrie dwaums in the wee oors o Monday bi the soun o yet chappers, sheen rinnin in the street, hyne aff duntin, an a clattervengeance o bells. Reid picturs daunced on the reef. Fur a meenit he lay bumbazed, winnerin gin day hid cam or the warld gane gyte. Syne he lowped oot o bed an ran tae the windae.

His chaumer wis a left an as he powked his heid oot, up an doon the street there wir a dizzen echoes tae the soun o his windae sash, an heids in ilkie kind o nicht jurmummle appeared. Speirins wir bein skreiched. “They’re camin!” skirled a bobby, haimmerin at the yett; “the Martians are camin!” an hashed tae the neist yett.

The soun o duntin an trumpetin cam frae the Albany Street Barracks, an ilkie kirk inbye lippenin tae wis hard at wirk killin sleep wi a stramash o bell ringin nae cannie. There wis a soun o yetts lowsin, an windae efter windae in the hooses opposite flamed frae derkness intae yalla licht.

Up the street cam gallopin a steekit cairriage, burstin sherp intae soun at the neuk, risin tae a duntin heicht aneth the windae, an deein awa slawly fin hyne awa. Near ahin thon cam a pair o cabs, the forerinners o a lang heeze o fleein hurlies, gaun fur the maist pairt tae Chalk Fairm station, far the Nor-Wastern speecial trains wir loadin up, insteid o camin doon the brae intae Euston.

Fur a lang time ma brither glowered ooto the windae in unca begeck, watchin the polis haimmerin at yett efter yett, an giein their unfaddomable message. Syne the yett ahin him unsteekit, an the cheil fa ludged ben the lobby cam in, riggit anely in sark, breeks, an safties, his galluses lowse aboot his wyme, his hair huddrie frae his bowster.

“Fit the deil is it?” he speired. “A lowe? Fit a deil o a stramash!”

They baith raxxed their heids ooto the windae, warsslin tae lippen tae fit the polis wir skirlin. Fowk wir camin ooto the side streets, an staunin in boorichies at the neuks spikkin.

“Fit the deil is it aa aboot?” speired ma brither’s fellae ludger.

Ma brither gied him a dweeble repon an stertit tae rig, rinnin wi ilkie bit o claes tae the windae in order tae miss naethin o the growin steer. An sune cheils sellin byordnar early newspapers cam skreichin intae the street:

“Lunnon in danger o bein smored! The Kingston an Richmond defences brukken! Fearfu killins in the Thames Howe!”

An aa aboot him—in the chaumers aneth, in the hooses on ilkie side an ower the road, an ahin in the Park Terraces an in the hunner ither streets o thon pairt o Marylebane, an the Wastbourne Park airt an St. Pancras, an wastward an northward in Kilburn an St. John’s Wid an Hampsteid, an eastward in Shoresheugh an Highbury an Haggerston an Hoxton, an, forbye, throwe aa the muckle airt o Lunnon frae Ealin tae East Ham—fowk wir dichtin their een, an unsteekin windaes tae glower oot an speir pyntless questions, riggin faist as the first braith o the camin storm o Fleg blew ben the streets. It wis the daybrakk o the muckle fleg. Lunnon, that hid gaen tae bed on the Sabbath nicht unkennin an slaw, wis waukened, in the wee oors o Monday foreneen, tae a strang feelin o menace.

Nae able frae his windae tae larn fit wis happenin, ma brither gaed doon an oot intae the street, jist as the lift atween the waas o the hooses grew pink wi the early daybrakk. The fleein fown on shank’s mere an in hurlies grew mair an mair ilkie meenit. “Blaik Rikk!” he heard fowk skreichin, an again “Blaik Rikk!” The smitt o sic a common fleg wis siccar. As ma brither dauchled on the yett-step, he saw anither news seller camin, an got a paper straicht aff. The cheil wis rinnin awa wi the lave, an sellin his ilkie paper fur a shullin as he ran—a monstrous mellin o profit an fleg.

An frae this paper ma brither read thon unca report o the Heid bummer-in-Chief:

“The Martians can gie aff muckle clouds o a blaik an pysonous rikk bi means o rockets. They hae smored oor batteries, wracked Richmond, Kingston, an Wimbledon, an are camin slaw tae Lunnon, connachin aathin on the wey. It’s nae possible tae stop them. There’s nae safety frae the Blaik Rikk bit in straicht aff flicht.”

Thon wis aa, bit it wis eneuch. The hale o the fowk o the muckle sax-million toon wir steerin, skytin, rinnin; sune it wid be poorin *en masse* norwards.

“Blaik Rikk!” the voyces skirled. “Lowe!”

The bells o the nearhaun kirk vrocht a jinglin soun, a cairt careless driven wis brukken, amid skreichs an banns, agin the watter troch up the street. Peely wally yalla lichts gaed back an fore in the hooses, an some o the by-gaun cabs boastit undowsed lichts. An owerheid the daybrakk wis growin brichter, clear an steidy an quaet.

He heard fitsteps rinnin back an fore in the chaumers, an up an doon stairs ahin him. His lanleddy cam tae the yett, lowsely rowed in dressin goon an shawl; her man follaed skirlin.

As ma brither stertit tae jelouse the impack o aa thon ferlies, he birled faist tae his ain chaumer, pit aa his existin siller— ten puns aathegither—intae his pooches, an gaed oot again intae the streets.

Chapter 15

Fit Hid Happened in Surrey

It wis whyle the meenister hid sat an spakk sae wudly tae me unner the buss in the flat leys near Halliford, an whyle ma brither wis watchin the escapers poor ower Westminster Brig, that the Martians hid restertit the fecht. Sae far as a body can ken frae the cwanter accoonts that hae bin pit furth, the maist o them bedd eident wi ongauns in the Horsell pit till nine thon nicht, hashin on some darg that vrocht muckle boorichs o green rikk.

Bit three o a certainty cam oot aboot echt o’clock an, advauncin slawly an cannily, made their wey ben Byfleet an Pyrford tae Ripley an Weybrig, an sae cam in sicht o the wytin batteries agin the settin sun. Thon Martians didnae advaunce in a boorich, bit in a line, ilkie ane mebbe a mile an a hauf frae his nearhaun fier. They spakk wi ane anither bi means o sirenlike skirls, rinnin up an doon the scale frae ae note tae anither.

It wis this skirlin an firin o the guns at Ripley an St. George’s Knowe that we’d heard at Upper Halliford. The Ripley gunners, unsizzoned artillery volunteers fa ocht niver tae hae bin placed in sic a poseetion, fired ae wud, early, eeseless volley, an breenged on shelt an fit ben the teem clachan, while the Martian, wioot makkin eese o his Heat-Ray, wauked calm ower their guns, steppit cannie amang them, passed afore them, an sae cam unexpeckit on the guns in Painshill Park, that he connached.

The St. George’s Kowe chiels, hoosaeiver, wir better led an wi mair smeddum. Happit bi a pine wid as they wir, they seem tae hae bin rael unsuspeckit bi the Martian nearhaun tae them. They set their guns as cannie as gin they’d bin on parade, an fired at aboot a thoosan yairds’ reenge.

The shells glimmered aa roon him, an he wis seen tae advaunce a fyew paces, hyter, an gae doon. Aabody skirled thegether, an the guns wir reloadit in fearie hash. The owerthrown Martian set up a lang maen, an straicht aff a secunt glimmerin giant, in repon tae him, appeared ower the trees tae the sooth. It wid seem that a shank o the tripod hid bin brukken bi ane o the shells. The hale o the secunt volley gaed wide o the Martian on the grun, an, simultaneously, baith his fiers brocht their Heat-Rays tae fire on the battery. The ammunition blew up, the pine trees aa aboot the guns fleered intae a lowe, an anely ane or twa o the chiels fa wir already rinnin ower the tap o the knowe escapit.

Efter this it wid seem that the three tuik coonsel thegether an devauled, an the scouts fa wir watchin them reportit that they bedd aathegither still fur the neist hauf oor. The Martian fa’d bin owerthrown creepit slaw ooto his hood, a wee broon body, oorily like, frae thon distance, a skirp o blicht, an seemin eident in the mendin o his support. Aboot nine he’d feenished, fur his cowl wis syne seen abune the trees again.

It wis a fyew meenits by nine thon nicht fin thon three guairds wir jyned bi fower ither Martians, ilkie ane cairryin a thick blaik tube. A simil’r tube wis haundit tae ilkie ane o the three, an the seeven gaed on tae pit thirsels at equal airts alang a curved line atween St. George’s Hill, Weybrig, an the clachan o Send, soothwest o Ripley.

A dizzen rockets lowped ooto the knowes afore them sae sune as they stertit tae meeve, an warned the wytin batteries aboot Ditton an Esher. At the same time fower o their fechtin machines, similar airmed wi tubes, gaed ower the river, an twa o them, blaik agin the wastern lift, cam intae sicht o masel an the meenister as we hashed weariet an painfu alang the road that rins northwird ooto Halliford. They meeved, as it luikit tae us, upon a cloud, fur a milky haar happit the parks an raise tae a third o their hecht.

At this sicht the meenister skreiched feintly in his thrapple, an stertit rinnin; bit I kent it wis nae gweed rinnin frae a Martian, an I turned aside an creepit ben dyewy nettles an brummils intae the braid sheugh bi the side o the road. He luikit back, saw fit I wis daein, an turned tae jyne me.

The twa devauled, the nearer tae us staunin an facin Sunbury, the ane hyner awa bein a grey blur tae the evenin starnie, awa tae Staines. The antrin skirlin o the Martians hid stoppit; they tuik up their places in the muckle crescent aboot their cylinders in muckle seelence. It wis a crescent wi twal miles atween its horns. Niver since the discovery o gunpooder wis the stert o a fecht sae still. Tae us an tae an onluiker aboot Ripley it wid hae hid jist the same effeck—the Martians luikit tae be in lane ainership o the derklin nicht, lichtit anely as it wis bi the slim meen, the starnies, the efterglow o the daylicht, an the reid glower frae St. George’s Knowe an the wids o Painsknowe.

Bit facin thon crescent aawye—at Staines, Hounslow, Ditton, Esher, Ockham, ahin knowes an wids sooth o the river, an ben the flat girse leys tae the north o it, fariver a boorich o trees or clachan hooses gaed eneuch cover—the guns wir wytin. The signal rockets burst an poored their spirks throwe the nicht an vanished, an the speerit o aa thon watchin batteries raise tae a fearie hope. The Martians hid bit tae advaunce intae the line o fire, an straicht aff thon still blaik makks o chiels, thon guns glimmrin sae derkly in the early nicht, wid explode intae a thunnerin forcieness o fecht.

Nae doot the thocht that wis uppermaist in a thoosan o thon cannie harns, even as it wis uppermaist in mine, wis the puzzle—foo muckle they unnerstood o us. Did they ken that we in oor millions wir organized, disciplined, wirkin thegether? Or did they see oor sproots o fire, the sudden stingin o oor shells, oor steidy investment o their encampment, as we wid the ragie thegitherness o the onslaucht in a powkit hive o bees? Did they dream they micht kill us aa? (At thon time naebody kent fit maet they nott.) A hunner sic speirins warssled thegither in ma harns as I watched thon muckle guairdian mak. And in the back o ma harns wis the sense o aa the muckle unkent an happit forces Lunnonwird. Hid they vrocht pitfaas? Wir the pooder mills at Hounslow ready as a snare? Wid the Lunnoners hae the hairt an virr tae makk a greater Moscow o their michty province o hooses?

Syne, efter an unca time, as it luikit tae us, hunkerin an teetin throwe the buss, cam a soun like the hyne aff dunt o a gun. Anither nearer, an syne anither. An syne the Martian aside us raised his tube on heich an fired it, gunwise, wi a wechty soun that gart the grun meeve. The ane taewards Staines reponed. There wis nae glimmer, nae rikk, jist thon loadit soun.

I wis that vrocht-up bi thon wechty meenit-guns follaein ane anither that I sae far forgot ma ain safety an ma brunt hauns as tae sclimm up inno the buss an glower tae Sunbury. As I did sae a secunt report follaed, an a muckle projectile flew owerheid toae Hounslow. I expeckit at least tae see tikk or a lowe, or some sic evidence o its wirk. Bit aa I saw wis the deep blue lift abune, wi ane lane starnie, an the fite haar spreidin braid an laigh aneth. An there hid bin nae crash, nae answerin bang. The seelence wis back; the meenit raxxed tae three.

“Fit’s on the go?” speired the meenister, staunin up aside me.

“Gweed kens” quo I.

A bat flichtered by an vanished. A hyne aff stooshie o skirlin startit an stoppit. I luikit again at the Martian, an saw he wis noo meevin eastwird alang the riverbank, wi a faist, rowin meevement.

Ilkie meenit I expeckit the fire o some happit battery tae lowp upon him; bit the evenin calm wis unbrukken. The corp o the Martian grew smaaer as he gaed awa, an sune the haar an the gaitherin nicht hid swallaed him up. Bi a common impulse we sclimmed heicher. Taewirds Sunbury wis a derk makk, as tho a conical knowe hid o a suddenty cam intae bein thonner, happin oor view o the farrer kintra; an syne, hyne ower the river, ower Walton, we saw anither sic tap. Thon knowe-like makks grew laigher an braider even as we glowered.

Meeved bi a sudden thocht, I luikit northwird, an thonner I saw a third o thon cloudy blaik kopjes hid risen. Aathin hid o a suddenty becam verra still. Hyne awa tae the sootheast, merkin the quaet, we heard the Martians hootin tae ane anither, an syne the air chittered again wi the hyne aff dunt o their guns. Bit the yirdly artillery vrocht nae repon.

Noo at the time we couldnae unnerstaun thon ferlies, bit later I wis tae larn the meanin o thon oorie kopjes that gaithered in the gloamin. Ilkie ane o the Martians, staunin in the muckle crescent I hae pictured, hidset aff, bi means o the gunlike tube he cairriet, a muckle canister ower fitever knowe wid, boorich o hooses, or ither likely hap fur guns, chaunced tae be afore him. Puckles fired anely ane o thon, puckles twa—as in the case o the ane we’d seen; the ane at Ripley is said tae hae dischairged nae fyewer than five at thon time. Thon canisters brukk on strikkin the grun—they didnae blaw up—an at random lat aff a muckle swatch o wechty, inky rikk, furlin an poorin upwird in a muckle blaik cumulus cloud, a gassy knowe that drappit an spreid itsel slawly ower the surroondin kintra. An the touch o thon rikk, the breathin o its pysonous skirps, wis daith tae aa that breathes.

It wis wechty, this rikk, wechter than the ordnar thickest rikk, sae that, efter the first muckle upsproot an ootrin o its impack, it sank doon ben the air an poored ower the grun in a mainner rather liquid than gassy, leavin the knowes, an poorin intae the glens an sheughs an wattercoorses even as I hae heard the carbonic-acid gas that poors frae volcanic clefts is like tae dae. An far it cam upon watter some chemical action stertit, an the surface wid be straicht aff happit wi a poodery scum that drappit slaw an made wey fur mair. The scum wis aathegither insoluble, an it’s a fey ferlie, seein the straicht aff effeck o the gas, that a body could drink wioot skaith the watter frae which it hid bin strained. The rikk didnae weaken as a true gas wid dae. It hung thegether in banks, run latchy doon the brae o the lan an drivin reluctant afore the win, an verra slawly it melled wi the haar an weetiness o the air, an drappit tae the yird in the makk o stoor. Save that an unkent element giein a group o fower lines in the blae o the spectrum is consarned, we’re still aathegither in the derk aboot the natur o this substance.

Aince the muckle steer o its spreid wis ower, the blaik rikk hung sae near tae the grun, even afore its settin forrit, that fifty fit up in the air, on the reefs an upper pairts o heich hooses an on heich trees, there wis a chaunce o jinkin its pyson aathgether, as wis pruved even thon nicht at Street Cobham an Ditton.

The chiel fa escaped at the former airt tells a winnerfu tale o the feyness o its furlin flow, an foo he luikit doon frae the kirk spire an saw the hooses o the clachan risin like ghaists ooto its inky naethin-ness. Fur a day an a hauf he bedd there, weariet, stervin an sun-brunt, the yird unner the blae lift an agin the prospeck o the hyne aff knowes a velvet-blaik swatch, wi reid reefs, green trees, an, eftir, blaik-veiled busses an yetts, barns, oothooses, an waas, risin here an thonner intae the sunlicht.

Bit thon wis at Street Cobham, far the blaik rikk wis alloued tae bide til it drappit o its ain accord intae the grun. As a rule the Martians, fin it hid served its need, cleared the air o it again bi wydin intae it an direckin a skoosh o rikk on it. This they did wi the rikk banks nearhaun us, as we saw in the starnie licht frae the windae o a teem hoose at Upper Halliford, far we’d gaed back. Frae thonner we could see the searchlichts on Richmond Knowe an Kingston Knowe gaun back an fore, an aboot eleyven the windaes chittered, an we heard the soun o the muckle siege guns that hid bin pit in place thonner. These cairriet on the antrin whyle fur the space o a quarter o an oor, sennin chaunce shots at the inveesible Martians at Hampton an Ditton, an syne the pale beams o the electric licht vanished, an wir taen ower bi a bricht reid glimmer

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Syne the fowerth cylinder drappit—a daizzlin green meteor—as I larned efterhin, in Bushey Park. Afore the guns on the Richmond an Kingston line o knowes stertit, there wis a fitfu cannonade hyne awa in the soothwast, due, I believe, tae guns bein fired hit or miss afore the blaik rikk could owercam the gunners.

Sae, settin aboot it as cannily as men micht rikk oot a wasps’ nest, the Martians spreid this fey smorin rikk ower the Lunnonwird kintra. The horns o the crescent slawly meeved apairt, till at the hinnereyn they vrocht a line frae Hanwell tae Coombe an Malden. Aa nicht lang their wrackin tubes gaed forrit. Niver aince, efter the Martian at St. George’s Knowe wis brocht doon, did they gie the artillery the ghaist o a chaunce aint them. Finiver there wis the chaunce o guns bein pit fur them unseen, a new canister o the blaik rikk wis dischairged, an far the guns wir openly shawed the Heat-Ray wis brocht tae the fecht.

Bi midnicht the bleezin trees alang the braes o Richmond Park an the glower o Kingston Knowe haived their licht on a netwirk o blaik rikk, blottin oot the hale glen o the Thames an raxxin as hyne as the ee could raxx. An throwe this twa Martians slawly wydit, an turned their hissin rikk jets this wey an thon.

They wir skimpy o the Heat-Ray thon nicht, either because they’d bit a leemited soorce o material fur its makkin or because they didnae wint tae blooter the kintra bit anely tae caa tae smush an owerawe the opposition they’d steered up. In the hinmaist aim they o a certainty succeeded. The Sabbath nicht wis the eyn o the organised opposition tae their meevements. Efter thon nae heeze o chiels wid staun agin them, sae eeseless wis the enterprise. Even the crews o the torpedo-boats an destroyers that hid brocht their faist-firers up the Thames widnae devaul, mutineed, an gaed doon again. The anely fechtin wirk chiels startit on efter thon nicht wis the makkin o mines an pitfaas, an even in thon their smeddum gaed bi stots an bangs.

A body his tae pictur, as weel as ane micht, the weird o thon batteries tae Esher, wytin sae worriet in the gloamin. Survivors there wir nane. Ane micht pictur the orderly wyte, the officers on guaird an watchfu, the gunners ready, the ammunition gaithered tae hand, the limber gunners wit their shelts an cairts, the boorichs o civilian onluikers staunin as near as they wir alloued, the evenin quaet, the ambulances an hospital tents wi the brunt an skaithed frae Weybrig; syne the smored dunt o the shots the Martians fired, an the fey projectile furlin ower the trees an hooses an brakkin amid the nearhaun parks.

A body micht pictur, as weel, the sudden shiftin o the attention, the faist spreidin coils an bellyins o thon blaikness gaun forrit heidlang, touerin heivenwird, turnin the gloamin tae a profun derkness, a fremmit an awfu fae o rikk stridin on its victims, chiels an shelts near it seen feint like, rinnin, skirlin, faain heidlang, skreichs o wae, the guns o a suddenty left, chiels smorin an warsslin on the grun, an the faist braidenin-oot o the thin cone o rikk. An syne nicht an daith—naethin bit a seelent heeze o thick rikk happin its deid.

Afore daybrakk the blaik rikk wis poorin ben the streets o Richmond, an the brakkin organism o government wis, wi a hinmaist deein tcyauve, steerin the fowk o Lunnon tae the need tae flee.

CHAPTER 16

THE OOTGAUN FRAE LUNNON

Sae ye understaun the roarin wyve o fleg that swypit throwe the greatest toun in the warld jist as Monday wis dawnin—the flood o flicht risin faist tae a tsunami, lashin in a faemin stooshie roon the railwey stations, banked up intae a awfu warssle aboot the shippin in the Thames, an hashin bi ilkie available wey norwird an eastwird. Bi ten o’clock the polis organisation, an bi noon even the railwey organisations, wir lossin their grip, lossin makk an eese, dwinin, saftenin, rinnin at the hinnereyn in thon faist brakk doon o the social corp.

Aa the railwey lines nor o the Thames an the Sooth-Eastern fowk at Cannon Street hid bin warned bi midnicht on the Sabbath, an trains wir bein stappit. Fowk wir fechtin sair fur staunin-room in the cairriages even at twa o’clock. Bi three, fowk wir bein trampit an crushed even in Bishopsgate Street, twa hunner yairds or mair frae Liverpool Street station; guns wir fired, fowk dirkit, an the polis fa’d bin sent tae direct the traffic, foonert an roosed, wir brakkin the heids o the fowk they wir cried oot tae takk tent o.

An as the day advaunced an the ingine drivers an stokers refused tae gae back tae Lunnon, the forcieness o the flicht drave the fowk in an iver-growin heeze awa frae the stations an alang the norwird-rinnin roads. Bi noon a Martian hid bin seen at Barnes, an a cloud o slawly drappin blaik rikk drave alang the Thames an ower the flats o Lambeth, cuttin aff aa escape ower the brigs in its slaw advaunce. Aiother bank drave ower Ealing, an surroundit a wee island o survivors on Castle Knowe, leevin, bit nae able tae escape.

Efter an eeseless warssle tae win aboord a Nor-Western train at Chalk Ferm—the ingines o the trains that hid loaded in the goods yaird there plooed throwe skirlin fowk, an a dizzen hefty chiels focht tae haud the crowd frae crushin the driver agin his furnace—ma brither cam oot on the Chalk Ferm road, jinkit ower throwe a hashin heeze o vehicles, an hid the luck tae be foremaist in the reivin o a bike shoppie. The front tyre o the machine he won wis burst in ruggin it ben the windae, bit he won up an aff, hoosaeiver, wi nae farrer skaith than a cuttit wrist. The steep fit o Haverstock Knowe wis blockit due tae puckles o cowpit shelts, an ma brither set aff intae Belsize Road.

Sae he won ooto the steer o the panic, an, jinkin the Edgware Road, cam tae Edgware aboot sivven, fastin an trauchelt, bit weel aheid o the fowk. Alang the road fowk wir staunin in the roadwey, ill faschent, winnerin. He wis owertaen bi a nummer o cyclists, a wheen shelts an riders, an twa motor cars. A mile frae Edgware the rim o the wheel brukk, an the machine becam eeseless. He left it bi the roadwey an traivelled ben the clachan. There wir shoppies hauf opened in the main street o the placie, an fowk croodit on the cassies an in the doorweys an windaes, glowerin bumbazed at thon byordnar steer o fugitives that wis stertin. He managed tae win some maet at a howf.

Fur a whyle he bedd in Edgware nae kennin it neist tae dae. The fleein fowk swalled in nummer. Mony o them, like ma brither, seemed tae wint tae dauchle in the placie. There wis nae fresh news o the incamers frae Mars. At thon time the road wis steerie, bit as yet far frae stappit. Maist o the fugitives at thon oor wir on bikes, bit there wir sune motor cars, hansom cabs, an cairriages hashin alang, an the stoor hung in wechty clouds alang the road tae St. Albans.

It wis mebbe a feint thocht o makkin his wey tae Chelmsford, far a puckle friens o his bedd, that at the hinnereyn gart ma brither tae strikk intae a quaet lane rinnin eastwird. Sune he cam on a stile, an, gaun ower it, follaeed a fitpath noreastwird. He gaed near a wheen fermhooses an a puckle wee placies fas nemmes he didnae larrn. He saw fyew fugitives till, in a girse lane tae High Barnet, he fell in towe wi twa weemen fa becam his fellow traivellers. He cam upon them jist in time tae save them.

He heard their skirls, an, hashin roon the neuk, saw awa chiels warsslin tae yark them ooto the wee shelt-chaise in which they’d bin drivin, whyle a third wi a tcyauve held the frichtit shelt’s heid. Ane o the leddies, a smaa wuman riggit in fite, wis jist skirlin; the ither, a derk, slicht body, strukk at the chiel fa grippit her airm wi a wheep she held in her free haun.

Ma brither straicht aff jeloused the situation, skreiched, an hashed tae the warssle. Ane o the chiels stoppit an turned tae him, an ma brither, kennnin frae his wae’s face that a fecht wis unavoydable, an beig an expert boxer, set on him richt awa an caad him doon agin the wheel o the chaise. It wis nae time fur boxin rules an ma brither laid him oot wi a kick, an grippit the collar o the chiel fa rugged at the slicht ledddy’s airm. He heard the dirl o hoofs, the wheep stung ower his face, a third fae strukk him atween the een, an the chiel he grippit yarkit hissel lowse an made aff doon the lane in the airt frae far he’d cam.

Pairtly fooshunless, he fand himsel facin the chiel fa hid held the shelt’s heid, an becam awaur o the chaise gaun awa frae him doon the lane, sweying frae side tae side, an wi the weemen in it luikin back. The chiel afore him, a roch tyke, ettled tae grip him, an he stoppit him wi a cloor in the face. Syne, jelousin that he wis alane, he jinkit roon an ran aff doon the lane efter the chaise, wi the wechty chiel close ahin him, an the fugitive, fa’d turned noo, follaein hyne aff.

O a suddenty he hytered an fell; his first chaser gaed heidlang, an he raise tae his feet tae finn himsel wi twa faes again. He wid hae hid smaa chaunce agin them hidnae the slicht leddy verra bauldly pulled up an gaed back tae his help. It seems she’d hid a gun aa thon time, bit it hid bin unner the seat fin she and her frien wir attackit. She fired frae sax yairds’ awa, nerra missin ma brither. The less bauld o the reivers made aff, an his fier follaed him, bannin his fearieness. They baith stoppit in sicht doon the lane, far the third chiel lay streekit oot.

“Takk thon!” quo the slicht leddy, an she gaed ma brither her gun.

“Gae back tae the chaise,” ma brither telt her, dichtin the bluid frae his cuttit lip.

She turned wioot a wird—they wir baith pechin—an they gaed back tae far the leddy in fite warssled tae haud back the frichtened shelt. The reivers hid clearly hid eneuch o it. Fin ma brither luikit again they wir rinnin awa.

“I’ll sit thonner,” quo ma brither, “gin ye lat me”; an he sclimmed up on the teem front seat. The leddy luikit ower her shouder.

“Gie me the reins,” she telt him, an crackit the wheep alang the shelt’s side. In anither meenit a neuk in the road happit the three chiels frae ma brither’s een.

Sae, wi a begeck, ma brither fand himsel, pechin, wi a cuttit mou, a skaithed jaa, an bluid clartit neives, drivin alang an unkent lane wi thon twa weemen. He larned they wir the wife an the younger sister o a saabanes bidin at Stanmore, fa’d cam in the smaa oors frae a dangerous case at Pinner, an heard at some railwey station on his wey o the Martian advaunce. He’d hashed hame, waukened the weemen—their skiffy hid left them twa days afore—packit a wheen needfus, pit his gun unner the seat—lucky fur ma brither—an telt them tae drive on tae Edgware, wi the thocht o gettin a train thonner. He stoppit ahin tae tell the neebors. He wid owertakk them, he telt them, at aboot hauf by fower in the foreneen, an noo it wis near nine an they’d seen naethin o him. They couldnae devaul in Edgware because o the growin traffic ben the placie, an sae they’d cam intae this side lane.

Thon wis the tale they telt ma brither in bitties fin sune they stoppit again, nearhaun tae New Barnet. He vowed tae bide wi them, at least till they could think o fit tae dae, or until the tint chiel cam, an telt them he wis an expert shot wi the gur—a weapon fremmit tae him—in order tae gie them virr.

They made a kinno camp be the weyside, an the shelt becam blythe in the buss. He telt them o his ain escape ooto Lunnon, an aa that he kent o thon Martians an their weys. The sun creepit heicher in the lift, an efter a whyle their spikk deed oot an gaed wey tae an fey state o wytin. A wheen traivellers cam alang the lane, an o thon ma brither gaithered sic news as he could. Ilkie brukken repon he heard deepened his kennin o the muckle disaster that hid cam

on humanity, deepened his kennin o the strang need tae flee. He urged the maitter on them.

“We hae siller,” quo the slicht wumman, an devauled.

Her een met ma brither’s, an her dauchlin eyndit.

“Sae hae I,” ma brither reponed.

She telt him that they’d as muckle as thirty puns in gowd, an a five-pun note, an suggestit that wi thon they micht win on a train at St. Albans or New Barnet. Ma brither thocht thon wis eeseless, seein the roose o the Lunnoners tae stap the trains, an pit oot his ain thocht o strikkin ower Essex tae Harwich an sae fleein frae the kintra aathegether. Mrs. Elphinstone—thon wis the nemme o the wumman in fite—wid lippen tae nae rizzonin, an keepit cryin on “George”; bit her sister-in-law wis unca quaet an mensefu, an at the hinnereyn agreed tae ma brither’s notion. Sae, plannin tae cross the Great Nor Road, they gaed on tae Barnet, ma brither leadin the shelt tae save it as muckle as possible. As the sun creepit up the lift the day becam unca hett, an unner fit a thick, fitish san grew birsslin an blinnin, sae that they traivelled anely verra slawly. The busses wir grey wi stoor. An as they advaunced tae Barnet a muckle mummlin grew straanger.

They stertit tae meet mair fowk. Fur the maist pairt they wir glowerin afore them, hubberin indistinck speirins, dwined, shilpit, yirdy. Ae chiel in evenin dress passed them on fit, his een on the grun. They heard his voyce, an, luikin back at him, saw ae haun cleukit in his hair an the ither threwshin inveesible ferlies. His fit o roose ower, he gaed on his wey wioot aince luikin back.

As ma brither’s pairty gaed on tae the crossroads tae the sooth o Barnet they saw a wumman crossin the road ben some parks on their left, cairryin a bairn an wi twa ither bairns; an syne gaed by a chiel in orra blaik, wi a thick stick in ae haun an a wee pyoke in the ither. Syne roon the neuk o the lane, frae atween the hooses that guairdit it far it jyned wi the heich road, cam a wee cairt drawn bi a swytin blaik shelt an driven bi a peely wally chiel in a bowler hat, grey wi stoor. There wir three quines, East Eyn factory quines, an twa wee bairns stappit in the cairt.

“This’ll takk us roon Edgware?” speired the driver, wud-eed, fite-faced; an fin ma brither telt him it wid gin he turned tae the left, he wheepit up at aince wioot the nicety o thanks.

Ma brither tuik tent o a pale grey rikk or haar risin amng the hooses in front o them, an happin the fite front o a terrace ayont the road that shawed atween the backs of the hooses. Mrs. Elphinstone o a suddenty skreiched oot at a nummer o tongues o rikky reid lowe lowpin up abune the hooses afore them agin the hett, blae lift. The muckle soun sattled itsel noo intae the mirled mellin o mony voyces, the gratin o mony wheels, the skraikin o cairts, an the dunt o hoofs. The lane cam roon sherp nae fifty yairds frae the crossroads.

“Gweed heivens!” skirled Mrs. Elphinstone. “Fit’s this ye’re drivin us intae?”

Ma brither devauled.

Fur the main road wis a bylin flood o fowk, a flood o human beins hashed nortwird, ane shooglin teetle anither. A muckle heeze o stoor, fite an glimmrin the bleeze o the sun, vrocht aathin inbye twinty feet o the grun grey an indistinck an wis aywis renewed bi the hashin feet o a thick boorich o shelts an o chiels an weemen on fit, an bi the wheels o vehicles o ilkie makk.

“Wey!” ma brither heard voyces skreichin. “Makk wey!”

It wis like ridin intae the rikk o a lowe tae cam tae the meetin poynt o the lane an road; the fowk roared like a lowe, an the stoor wis hett an straang. An, forbye, a wee wey up the road a hoose wis birsslin an sennin rowin swatches o blaik rikk ben the road tae add tae the steer.

Twa chiels cam by them. Syne an orra wumman, cairryin a wechty bunnle an greetin. A tint retriever dug, wi hingin tongue, cercled sleekit roon them, feart an peetifu, an fled at ma brither’s threat. Sae far as they could see o the road Lunnonwird aween the hooses tae the richt wis a muckle flood o yirdy, hashin fowk, hickled in atween the hooses on either side; the blaik heids, the croodit forms, grew clearer as they hashed tae the neuk, hashed bye, an melled theirsels again in a gaun forrit steer that wis swallaed up at the hinnereyn in a cloud o stoor.

“Gae on! Gae on!” skirled the voyces. “Wey! Wey!”

Ae chiel’s hauns pressed on the back o anither. Ma brither stude at the shelt’s heid. Unca drawn in, he advaunced slawly, step bi step, doon the lane. Edgware hid bin a scene o kerfuffle, Chalk Ferm a steerie stooshie, bit this wis a hale heeze o fowk in meevement. It’s hard tae pictur thon muckle flood o fowk. It hid nae makk o its ain. Fowk poored oot bye the neuk, an set aff wi their backs tae the boorich in the lane. Alang the sides cam fowk fa wir on fit threatened bi the wheels, hyterin in the sheuchs, styterin intae ane anither.

The cairts an cairriages stappit nearhaun ane anither, makkin smaa wey fur thon faister an mair forcie vehicles that nippit forrit ilkie noo an then fin a chaunce shawed itsel o daein sae, sennin the fowk skitterin agin the palins an yetts o the hooses.

“Meeve on!” wis the skirl. “Meeve on! They’re camin!”

In ae cairt stude a blin chiel in the uniform o the Salvation Airmy, wyvin wi his creukit fingers an skellochin, “Aybydan! Aybydan!” His voyce wis hairse an verra lood sae that ma brither could hear him lang efter he wis tint tae sicht in the stoor. A wheen o the fowk fa wir stappit in the cairts wheeped glekit at their shelts an argyed wi ither drivers; puckles sat still, glowerin at naethin wi disjaskit een; puckles chaaed their hauns wi drooth, or lay sprauchlit in the boddoms o their conveyances. The shelts’ bits wir happit wi faem, their een bluidshot.

There wir cabs, cairriages, shop cars, cairts, ayont coontin; a mail cairt, a road-swyper’s cairt merked “Vestry o St. Pancras,” a muckle timmer waggon stappit wi ne’er dae weels. A brewer’s dray rummlit bi wi its twa near wheels splytered wi fresh bluid.

“Clear the wey!” skreiched the voyces. “Clear the wey!”

“Aybydan! Aybydin!” cam echoin doon the road.

There wir wae, shargeret weemen trampin by, weel riggit oot, wi bairns that grat an hytered, their deinty claes smored in stoor, their wabbit faces straikit wi greets. Wi mony o thon cam chiels, whyles helpfu, whyles lowerin an breetish. Fechtin side bi side wi them haived some wabbit street ootlin in dwined blaik cloots, wide-eed, lood-voyced, an orra-moued. There wir stoot wirkmen haivin their wey alang, puir, bumshayvelt chiels, claithed like clerks or shop chiels, warsslin the antrin whyle; a hurtit sodjer ma brither tuik tent, chiels riggit in the claes o railwey porters, ae peetifu craitur in a nicht sark wi a coat pued ower it.

Bit mixter maxter as its makk wis, certain ferlies aa thon steer hid in common. There wis fleg an pain on their faces, an fleg ahin them. A stooshie up the road, an argy-bargy fur a placie in a waggon, sent the hale heeze o them quickenin their pace; ilkie chiel sae feart an brukken that his knees booed unner him wis steered fur a meenit intae renewed virr. The heat an stoor hid already bin at wirk on this steer. Their skins wir dry, their lips blaik an crackit. They wir aa droothy, wabbit, an fit sair. An amid the umpteen skirls he heard argyments, maens, grumphs o trauchle an fooner; the voyces o maist o them wir hairse an dweeble. Throwe it aa ran the spikk:

“Wey! Wey! The Martians are camin!”

Fyew stoppit an came awa frae thon flood. The lane opened at a slant intae the main road wi a nerra openin, an hid a misleadin luik o camin frae the airt o Lunnon. Yet a kinno furl o fowk drave intae its mooth; dweeble fowk powkit ooto the steer, fa fur the maist pairt reestit bit a meenit afore breengin intae it again. A wee wey doon the lane, wi twa friens booin ower him, lay a chiel wi a nyaakit shank, wrippit aboot wi bluidy cloots. He wis a lucky chiel tae hae friens.

A wee auld chiel, wi a grey sodjer like mowser an a clarty blaik frock coat, hirplit oot an sat doon aside the trap, tuik aff his buit—his hose wis bluid-merked—cowpit oot a pebble, an hytered on again; an syne a wee quine o echt or nine, aa alane, haived hersel unner the busse nearhaun ma brither, greetin.

“I canna gae on! I canna gae on!”

Ma brither waukened frae his listlessness o bumbazement an heistit her up, spikkin doucely tae her, an cairried her tae Miss Elphinstone. Sae sune as ma brither touched her she becam richt still, as if frichtened.

“Ellen!” skirled a wumman in the steer, wi greets in her voyce—”Ellen!” An the bairno a suddenty jinkit awa frae ma brither, skirlin “Mither!”

“They’re camin,” quo a chiel on a shelt, ridin bye alang the lane.

“Ooto the wey, thonner!” skelloched a coach chiel, touerin heich; an ma brither saw a steeked cairriage turnin intae the lane.

The fowk raxxed back on ane anither tae jink the shelt. Ma brither tuik the shelt an chaise back intae the busse, an the chiel drave by an stoppit at the turn o the wey. It wis a cairriage, wi a pole fur twa shelts, bit anely ane wis in the traces. Ma brither saw feint throwe the stoor that twa chiels heistit oot a ferlie on a fite streetcher an pit it saftly on the girse aneth the privet busses.

Ane o the chiels cam rinnin tae ma brither.

“Far is there ony watter?” he speired. “He’s deein faist, an verra droothy. It’s Lord Garrick.”

“Lord Garrick!” quo ma brither; “the Chief Justice?”

“The watter?” he telt me.

“There micht be a tap,” ma brither reponed, “in puckles o the hooses. We hae nae watter. I daurna leave ma friens.”

The chiel shoved agin the fowk tae the yett o the hoose in the neuk.

“Gae on!” skirled the fowk, breengin at him. “They’re camin! Gae on!”

Syne ma brither’s thochts wir taen up bi a beardit, erne-faced chiel humphin a wee haun pyoke, that skailed even as ma brither’s een reestit on it an cowpit a heeze o sovereigns that seemed tae brakk up intae separate coins as it strukk the grun. They rowed back an fore amang the warsslin feet o chiels an shelts. The chiel devauled an luikit glekit at the howp, an the shaft o a cab strukk his shouder an gart him birl. He gaed a skreich an jinkit back, an a cairtwheel clippit him nerra.

“Wey!” skelloched the chiels aa aboot him. “Makk wey!”

Sae sune as the cab hid gaen bye, he flang himsel, wi baith hauns wide, on the howp o coins, an stertit haivin haunfus in his pooch. A shelt raise near on him, an in anither meenit, hauf risin, he’d bin borne doon unner the shelt’s hoofs.

“Devaul!” skirled ma brither, an shovin a wumman ooto his wey, ettled tae cleuk the bit o the shelt.

Afore he could win tae it, he heard a skirl unner the wheels, an saw throwe the stoor the rim gaun ower the puir breet’s back. The driver o the cairt wyved his wheep at ma brither, fa ran roon ahin the cairt. The tirravee o skirlin dirled in his lugs. The chiel wis warsslin in the stoor amang his skittered siller, unable tae rise, fur the wheel hid brukken his back, an his laigher shanks lay fooshunless an deid. Ma brither stude up an skreiched at the neist driver, an a chiel on a blaik shelt cam tae his help.

“Rug him ooto the road,” quo he; an, cleukin the chiel’s collar wi his free haun, ma brither humphed him sideweys. Bit he still cleukit efter his siller, an regairded ma brither fierce, haimmerin at his airm wi a haunfu o gowd.

 “Gae on! Gae on!” skreich angeret voyces ahin.

“Wey! Wey!”

There wis a cloor as the pole o a cairriage crashed intae the cairt that the chiel on the shelt stoppit. Ma brither luikit up, an the chiel wi the gowd yarked his heid roon an bit the wrist that held his collar. There wis a dunt, an the blaik shelt cam hyterin sideweys, an the cairt shelt shoved aside it. A hoof missed ma brither’s fit bi a hair’s braidth. He lowsed his grip on the drappit chiel an lowpit back. He saw roose cheenge tae terror on the face o the puir vratch on the grun, an in a meenit he wis happit an ma brither wis cairriet backweys an cairried bye the mou o the lane, an hid tae fecht hard in the flood tae recover it.

He saw Miss Elphinstone happin her een, an a wee bairn, wi aa a bairn’s wint o sympathetic imagination, glowerin wi gappin een at a stoory ferlie that lay blaik an still, grund an smushed unner the rowin wheels. “Lat us gae back!” he skirled, an stertit turnin the shelt roon. “We canna cross this—hell,” quo he an they gaed back a hunner yairds the wey they’d cam, till the fechtin steer wis happit. As they passed the neuk in the lane ma brither saw the face o the deein chiel in the sheugh unner the busse, deidly fite an drawn, an sheenin wi swyte. The twa weemen sat seelent, hunkerin in their seat an chitterin.

Syne ayont the weuk ma brither stoppit again. Miss Elphinstone wis fite an peely wally, an her sister-in-law sat greetin, ower dowie even tae cry upon “George.” Ma brither wis horrifeed an bumbazed. Sae soon as they’d drawn back he jeloused foo needfu an unavoydable it wis tae try this crossin. He turned tae Miss Elphinstone, o a suddenty sure.

“We maun gyang thon wey,” quo he, an led the shelt roon again.

Fur the secunt time thon day this quine pruved her virr. Tae force their wey intae the heeze o fowk, ma brither breenged intae the traffic an held back a cab shelt, while she drave the shelt across its heid. A cairt lockit wheels fur a meenit an rippit a lang teir frae the cairraige. In anither meenit they wir catched an swypit forrit bi the flood. Ma brither, wi the cabbie’s wheep merks reid ower his face an hauns, sclimmed intae the cairrage an tuik the reins frae her.

“Pynt the gun at the man ahin,” quo he, haundin it tae her, “gin he presses us ower hard. Na!—pynt it at his shelt.”

Syne he stertit tae luik oot fur a chaunce o edgin tae the richt ower the road. Bit aince in the flood he seemed tae loss pouer, tae becam a pairt o thon stoory rout. They swypit ben Chipping Barnet wi the heeze; they wir near a mile ayont the mids o the toon afore they’d focht ben tae the ither side o the wey. It wis din an kerfuffle ayont aa tellin; bit in an ayont the toon the road forks aften, an thon in some wey lessened the steer.

They strukk eastwird throwe Hadley, an thonner on ilkie side o the road, an at anither placie farrer on they cam upon a muckle heeze o fowk suppin at the burn, puckles fechtin tae cam at the watter. An farrer on, frae a lull near East Barnet, they saw twa trains rinnin slaw ane efter the ither wioot signal or order—trains heezin wi fowk, wi chiels even amang the coals ahin the ingines—gaun norwird alang the Great Norlan Railwey. Ma brither jelouses they maun hae bin stappit ootside Lunnon, fur at thon time the forcie terror o the fowk hid vrocht the central termini eeseless.

Nearhaun this placie they devauled fur the lave o the efterneen, fur the mishanters o the day hid already aathegither wabbit aa three o them. They stertit tae thole the stert o hunger; the nicht wis cauld, an nane o them daured tae sleep. An in the evenin mony fowk cam hashin alang the road nearhaun their stoppin placie, fleein frae unkent dangers afore them, an gaun in the airt frae far ma brither hid cam.

CHAPTER 17

THE THUNNER BAIRN

Hid the Martians aimed anely at wrack, they micht on Monday hae connached aa the fowk in Lunnon, as it spreid itsel slawly ben the hame shires. Nae anely alang the road throwe Barnet, bit as weel ben Edgware an Waltham Abbey, an alang the roads eastwird tae Sootheyn an Shoeburyness, an sooth o the Thames tae Deal an Broadstairs, poored the same thrang rout. Gin a body could hae hung thon June foreneen in a balloon in the bleezin blae abune Lunnon ilkie norwird an eastwird road rinnin ooto the taigled heeze of streets wid hae seemed stipplit blaik wi the rinnin fugitives, ilkie skirp a human baa o terror an wae. I hae set furth at length in the hinmaist chapter ma brither’s accoont o the road ben Chipping Barnet, sae that ma readers micht ken foo thon heeze o blaik dots luikit tae ane o thon consarned. Niver afore in the history o the warld hid sic a heeze o human beins meeved an tholed thegether. The legendary heeze o Goths an Huns, the greatest armies Asia his iver seen, wid hae bin bit a drap in thon flood. An this wis nae ordered merch; it wis a stampede—a stampede muckle an awfu—wioot order an wioot an aim, sax million fowk unairmed anwioot maet, drivin heidlang. It wis the stert o the rout o ceevilisation, o the massacre o mankind.

Direck ablow him the balloonist wid hae seen the netwirk o streets hyne an awa, hooses, kirks, squars, crescents, gairdens—already teem—spreid oot like a muckle map, an in the soothwird blotted. Ower Ealing, Richmond, Wimbledon, it wid hae seemed as gin some unca pen hid flung ink on the chart. Steidily, ongaun, ilkie blaik splooter grew an spreid, sheetin oot ootcraps this wey an thon, no bankin itsel agin risin grun, noo poorin faist ower a tap intae a new-fand glen, exack as a treelip o ink wid spreid itsel on blottin paper.

An ayont, ower the blaee knowes that rise soothwird o the river, the glimmerin Martians gaed back an fore, calm an in gweed order, spreidin their pyson cloud ower this swatch o kintra an syne ower thon, layin it again wi their rikk skooshers fin it hid served its eese, an takkin ower the conquered kintra. They didnae seem tae hae aimed at aa oot daith sae muckle as at hale demoralisation an the wrack o ony opposition. They blew up ony stores o pooder they cam on, cuttit ilkie telegraph, an wracked the railweys here an thonner. They wir constrictin mankind. They seemed in nae hash tae raxx oot the reenge o their on gauns, an didnae cam ayont the mids o Lunnon aa thon day. It’s likely that a verra conseederable nummer o fowk in Lunnon stuck tae their hooses throwe Monday foreneen. O a certainty it is that mony deed at hame smored bi the Blaik Rikk.

Until aboot midday the Puil o Lunnon wis a dumfounerin scene. Steamboats an shippin o aa kinds lay thonner, temptit bi the muckle sums o siller offered bi fugitives, an it’s said that mony fa swam oot tae thon vessels wir haived aff wi boatheuks an drooned. Aboot ane o’clock in the efterneen the thinnin lave o a cloud o the blaik rikk appeared atween the arches o Blaikfriars Brig. At thon the Puil becam a scene o wud steer, fechtin, an clash, an fur a whyle a heeze o boats an barges stukk in the nor arch o the Touer Brig, an the sailors an lichtermen hid tae fecht sair agin the fowk fa heezed on them frae the riverfront. Fowk wir actually sclimmin doon the piers o the brig frae abune.

Fin, an oor eftir, a Martian appeared ayont the Clock Touer an wydit doon the river, naethin bit wrack floatit abune Limehoose. O the faain o the fifth cylinder I hae sune tae tell. The saxth starnie drappit at Wimbledon. Ma brither, keepin watch aside the weemen in the cairraige in a ley, saw the green flash o it hyne ayont the knowes. On Tuesday the wee pairty, still set on winnin ower the sea, vrocht its wey throwe the heezin kintra tae Colchester. The news that the Martians wir noo in chairge o the hale o Lunnon wis confirmed. They’d bin seen at Highgate, an even, it wis said, at Neasden. Bit they didnae cam intae ma brither’s view till the morn.

Thon day the skittered boorichs stertit tae jelouse the forcie need o maet. As they grew hungeret the richts o property stoppit bein regairded. Fermers wir oot tae defend their byres, granaries, an ripenin reet craps wi airms in their hauns. A nummer o fowk noo, like ma brither, hid their faces eastwird, an there wir a puckle terrifeed sowels even gaun back tae Lunnon tae get maet. Thon wir maistly fowk frae the norlan suburbs, faas kenning o the Blaik Rikk cam bi sklaik. He heard that aboot hauf the memmers o the government hid gaithered at Birmingham, an that muckle stores o heich explosives wir bein riggit ae be made eese o in automatic mines ben the Midlan shires.

He wis likewyse telt that the Midlan Railwey Company hid replaced the desertions o the first day’s fleg, hid restertit traffic, an wis rinnin norwird trains frae St. Albans tae ease the steer o the hame shires. There wis as weel a placard in Chipping Ongar annooncin that muckle stores o floor wir held in the norlan toons an that wi’in twinty-fower oors breid wid be shared amang the stervin fowk in the neeborhood. Bit this kennin didnae pit him aff frae the plan o escape he’d set on, an the three hashed eastwird aa day, an heard nae mair o the breid share oot than this promise. Nur, as a maitter o fack, did onybody else hear mair o it. Thon nicht drappit the seeventh starnie, faain on Primrose Knowe. It drappit while Miss Elphinstone wis watchin, fur she tuik thon darg eaksy-peaksy wi ma brither. She saw it.

On Wednesday the three fugitives—they’d spent the nicht in a park o unripe wheat—won tae Chelmsford, an thonner a puckle fowk, caain thirsel the Committee o Public Supply, reived the shelt as maet, an wid gie nethin in excheenge fur it bit the promise o a pairt o it the neist day. Here there wis sklaik o Martians at Epping, an wird o the wrack o Waltham Abbey Pooder Mills in an eeseless tcyauve tae blaw up ane o the incamers.

Fowk wir watchin fur Martians here frae the kirk touers. Ma brither, verra lucky fur him as it chaunced, preferred tae hash on at aince tae the coast raither than wyte fur maet, altho aa three o them wir verra hungeret. Bi midday they gaed throwe Tillingham, that, fey eneuch, luikit tae be rael seelent an teem, apairt fur a fyew sleekit reivers scraunin fur maet. Nearhaun Tillingham they o a suddenty cam in sicht o the sea, an the maist dumfounerin heeze o shippin o aa sorts that it’s possible tae pictur.

Fur efter the sailors could nae langer cam up the Thames, they cam on tae the Essex coast, tae Harwich an Walton an Clacton, an efterwirds tae Foulness an Shoebury, tae cairry aff the fowk. They lay in a muckle sickle-shaped curve that vanished inno haar at the hinnereyn tae the Naze. Close inbye wis a heeze o fishin smacks—English, Scots, French, Dutch, an Swedish; steam launches frae the Thames, yachts, electric boaties; an ayont wir ships o mair wecht, a heeze o yirdy colliers, snod merchantmen, breet ships, passenger boaties, petroleum tanks, ocean tramps, an auld fite transport even, snod fite an grey liners frae Soothampton and Hamburg; an aa alang the blue coast ben the Blackwatter ma brither could makk oot dim a thick heeze o boaties chafferin wi the fowk on the beach, a heeze that as weel raxxed up the Blackwatter near tae Maldon.

Aboot a twa miles oot lay an ironclad, verra laigh in the watter, near, tae ma brither’s sicht, like a watter-wechtit ship. This was the ram Thunner Bairn. It wis the anely warship in sicht, bit hyne awa tae the richt ower the smeeth tap o the sea—fur thon day there wis a deid calm—lay a furl o blaik rikk tae merk the neist ironclads o the Channel Fleet, that in an ootraxxed line, steam up an ready fur darg, ben the Thames estuary durin the coorse o the Martian conquest, watchin oot an yet pouerless tae stop it.

At the sicht o the sea, Mrs. Elphinstone, in spite o the promises o her sister-in-law, gaed wey tae fleg. She’d niver bin ooto England afore, she wid raither dee than trust hersel frienless in a fremmit kintra, an sae furth. She seemed, puir wumman, tae think that the French an the Martians micht pruve verra sim’lar. She’d bin growin mair an mair hysterical, fearfu, an dowie durin the twa days’ traivel. Her great notion wis tae gae back tae Stanmore. Maitters hid bin aywis weel an safe at Stanmore. They’d finn George at Stanmore.

It wis wi the maist deefficulty they could get her doon tae the beach, far sune ma brither succeeded in winnin the attention o a when chiels on a paiddle steamer frae the Thames. They sent a boatie an drave a bargain fur thirty-sax puns fur the three. The steamer wis gaun thon chiels telt him, tae Ostend.

It wis aboot twa o’clock fin ma brither, haein pyed their fares at the gangwey, fand himsel safe on the steamboatie wi his chairges. There wis maet thonner, tho at unca heich prices, an the three o them ettled tae ett a meal on ane o the seats forrit. There wir already a twa score o passengers aboord, a wheen o fa hid spent the last o their siller in winnin a passage, bit the captain lay aff the Blackwatter till five in the efterneen, pykin up passengers till the seated decks wir even dangerousls thrang. He wid nae doot hae bedd langer hid it nae bin fur the soun o guns that stertit aboot thon oor in the sooth. As gin in repon, the ironclad seawird fired a smaa gun an heistit a string o flags. A skoosh o rikk breenged ooto her funnels.

A puckle o the passengers wir o the thocht that this firin cam frae Shoeburyness, till it wis seen that it wis growin looder. At the same time, hyne awa in the sootheast the masts an upperwirks o three ironclads raise ane efter the ither ooto the sea, aneth clouds o blaik rikk. Bit ma brither’s attention faist gaed back tae the hyne aff firin in the sooth. He thocht he saw a column o rikk risin ooto the hyne aff grey haze.

The wee steamer wis already flappin her wey eastwird o the muckle crescent o shipping an the laigh Essex coast wis growin blae and hazy, fin a Martian appeared, wee an feint in the hyne awa, advauncin alang the dubby coast frae the airt o Foulness. At thon the captain on the brig banned at the tap o his voyce wi fleg an roose at his ain devaul, an the paiddles seemed smittit wi his fleg. Ilkie sowel aboord stude at the bulwarks or on the seats o the steamer an glowered at thon hyne aff makk, heicher than the trees or kirk touers inlan, an advauncin wi a leisurely parody o a human stride.

It wis the first Martian ma brither hid seen, an he stude, mair bumbazed than terrifeed, watchin this Titan advauncin deliberate tae the shippin, wydin farrer an farrer intae the watter as the coast drappit awa. Syne, hyne awa ayont the Crouch, cam anither, stridin ower a wheen crined trees, an syne yet anither, still farther off, wading deeply through a shiny mudflat that seemed to hang halfway up atween sea an lift. They wir aa stravaigin seawird, as gin tae cut aff the escape o the heeze o vessels that wir croodit atween Foulness an the Naze. In spite o the stoonin warssle o the ingines o the wee paiddle-boatie, an the poorin faem that her wheels flang ahin her, she drew awa wi terrifeein slawness frae thon threatenin advaunce.

Keekin norwastwird, ma brither saw the muckle crescent o shippin already warsslin wi the oncamin terror; ae ship passin ahin anither, anither camin roon frae braidside tae eyn on, steamships fussles an giein aff a rowth o rikk, sails bein lat oot, boaties hashin back an fore. He wis sae taen up bi thon an bi the creepin danger awa tae the left that he’d nae een fur onythin seawird. An syne a faist meevement o the steamboat (she’d o a suddenty cam roon tae jouk bein run doon) flang him heidlang frae the seat on which he wis staunin. There wis a skirlin aa aboot him, a tramplin o feet, an a cheer that seemed tae be in feint repon. The steamboat cowpit an rowed him ower on his hauns.

He lowpit tae his feet an saw tae starboord, an nae a hunner yairds frae their heelin, showdin boatie, a muckle iron bulk like the blade o a ploo teirin throwe the watter, haivin it on either side in muckle wyves o faem that lowpit tae the steamer, haivin her paiddles eeselessly in the air, an syne sookin her deck doon near tae the watterline.

A skoosh o watter blinned ma brither fur a meenit. Fin his een wir clear again he saw the monster hid gaen by an wis hashin lanwird. Muckle iron upperwirks raise ooto thon heidlang ferlie, an frae thon twin funnels projeckit an spat a rikkin blast shot wi fire. It wis the torpedo ram, Thunder Child, hashin heidlang, camin tae the rescue o the threatened shippin.

Haudin his fittin on the showdin deck bi grippin the bulwarks, ma brither luikit bye this breengin leviathan at the Martians again, an he saw the three o them noo close thegether, an staunin sae hyne oot tae sea that their tripod supports wir near aathegither unnerwatter. Thus sunken, an seen in hyne aff view, they luikit far less unca than the muckle iron bulk in fas wake the steamer wis showdin sae eeselessly. It wid seem they wir regairdin this new fae wi bumbazement. Tae their harns, it micht be, the giant wis even sic anither as thirsels. The Thunner Bairn fired nae gun, bit jist drave full speed at them. It wis likely her nae firin that lat her win sae near the fae as she did. They didnae ken fit tae makk o her. Ae shell, an they wId hae sent her tae the boddom straicht aff wi the Heat-Ray.

She wis steamin at sic speed that in a meenit she seemed haufwey atween the steamboatie an the Martians—a blaik bulk growin smaaer agin the recedin flat braidth o the Essex coast. O a suddenty the foremaist Martian laighered his tube an dischairged a canister o the blaik gas at the ironclad. It strukk her larboord side an skytit aff in an inky skoosh that rowed awa tae seawird, an unfauldin flood o Blaik Rikk, frae far the ironclad drave clear. Tae the watchers frae the steamer, laigh in the watter an wi the sun in their een, it seemed as tho she wir already amang the Martians.

They saw the gaunt ferlies separatin an risin ooto the watter as they drew back shorewird, an ane o them heistit the camera-like generator o the Heat-Ray. He held it pyntin obliquely doonwird, an a heeze o rikk lowped frae the watter at its touch. It maun hae driven throwe the iron o the ship’s side like a fite-hett iron rod ben paper.

A flichter o flame gaed up throwe the risin rikk, an syne the Martian birled an hytered. In anither meenit he wis cuttit doon, an a muckle skelp o watter an rikk shot heich in the air. The guns o the Thunner Bairn soundit ben the rikk, gaun aff ane efter the ither, an ae shot splootered the watter heich nearhaun the steamer, ricocheted tae the ither fleein ships tae the north, an brukk a smack tae kinnlin.

Bit naebody tuik muckle tent o thon. At the sicht o the Martian’s dooncam the captain on the brig skelloched wirdlessly, an aa the steer o passengers on the steamer’s stern skirled thegether. An syne they skirled again. Fur, breengin oot ayont the fite stramash, drave somethin lang an blaik, the flames poorin frae its middle pairts, its ventilators an funnels spootin lowes .

She wis leevin yet; the steerin gear, it seems, wis intack an her ingines wirkin. She heidit straicht fur a secunt Martian, an wis inbye a hunner yairds o him fin the Heat-Ray cam tae bear. Syne wi a forcie dunt, a blinnin flash, her decks, her funnels, lowpit upwird. The Martian hytered wi the forecieness o her explosion, an in anither meenit the bleezin wrack, still drivin forrit wi the virr o its pace, hid strukk him an wrunkled him up like a ferlie o cardboord. Ma brither skirled involuntary. A bylin stooshie o rikk hid aathin again.

“Twa!” skelloched the captain.

Aabody wis skirlin. The hale steamer frae eyn tae eyn rang wi muckle cheerin that wis taen up first bi ane an syne bi aa in the muckle heeze o ships an boaties that wir drivin oot tae sea. The rikk hung on the watter fur mony meenits, hidin the third Martian an the coast aathegither. An aa thon time the boat wis paiddlin steidy oot tae sea an awa frae the fecht; an fin at the hinnereyn the steer cleared, the driftin bank o blaik rikk hung doon, an naethin o the Thunner Bairn could be made oot, nur could the third Martian be seen. Bit the ironclads tae seawird wir noo rael near an staunin in tae shore bye the steamboat.

The wee boatie gaed on tae makk its wey seawird, an the ironclads drew back slaw tae the coast, that wis happit still bi a merbled bank o rikk pairt rikk, pairt blaik gas, furlin an jynin in the maist fey wey. The fleet o refugees wis skitterin tae the nor east; a wheen smacks wir sailin atween the ironclads an the steamboat. Efter a whyle, an afore they reached the drappin cloud bank, the warships turned norwird, an syne sherpish turned aboot an passed inno the thickenin mist o evenin soothwird. The coast grew feint, an at the hinnereyn unseen amid the laigh boorich o clouds that wir gaitherin aboot the sinkin sun.

Syne o a suddenty ooto the gowden haze o the sunset cam the dirl o guns, an a glisk o blaik shaddas meevin. Aabody warssled tae the rail o the steamer an teetit intae the blinnin lowe o the wast, bit naethin wis tae be seen clear. A heeze o rikk raise slantie-wyse an happit the face o the sun. The steamboat stooned on its wey ben, in an ongaun suspense.

The sun sank inno grey clouds, the lift reiddened an derkened, the evenin starnie trimmlit inno sicht. It wis deep gloamin fin the captain skreiched oot an pyntit. Ma brither strained his een. A ferlie breenged up inno the lift ooto the greyness—breenged slant-wyse up an verra faist intae the lichtit clearness abune the clouds in the wastern lift; a ferlie flat an braid, an verra large, that swypit roon in a braid curve, grew smaaer, drappit slaw, an vanished again inno the grey oorieness o the nicht. An as it flew it drappit doon derkness on the lan.

Buik Twa

The yird unner the Martian

Chapter 1

Unner Fit

In the first buik I hae wanneret sae muckle frae ma ain adventures tae tell o the ongauns o ma brither that aa ben the hinmaist twa chapters masel an the meenister hae bin cooried in the teem hoose at Halliford far we fled tae jink the Blaik Rikk. Thonner I’ll restert. We stoppit thonner aa the Sabbath nicht an aa the neist day—the day o the fleg—in a wee isle o daylicht, cut aff bi the Blaik Rikk frae the lave o the warld. We could dae naethin bit wyte in a worriesome fooshunless state ben thon twa trauchelsome days.

Ma thochts wir taen up wi worry fur ma wife. I picturet her at Leatherheid, terrifeed, in danger, murnin me already as a deid chiel. I stravaiged the chaumers an grat oot lood fin I thocht o the wye I wis cuttit aff frae her, o aa that micht befaa her in ma absence. Ma cousin I kent wis brave eneuch fur ony mishanter, bit he wisnae the kinno chiel tae ken o danger faist, tae steer himsel faist. Fit wis nott noo wisnae bauldness, bit wyceness. Ma anely solace wis tae think that the Martians wir meevin Lunnon-ward an awa frae here. Sic feint worries keepit ma harns sensitive an painfu. I grew verra weariet an ill naturet wi the meenister’s ongaun ootspikks; I weariet o the sicht o his selfish wae. Efter some eeseless argyments I keepit awa frae him, bidin in ae chaumer—easy kennt as a bairn’s schule chaumer—haudin globes, forms, an copybuiks. Fin he follaed me thonner, I gaed to a laft at the tap o the hoose an, tae be alane wi ma sair waes, steekit masel in.

We wir aathegether held in bi the Blaik Rikk aa thon day an the mornin o the neist. There wir signs o fowk in the neist hoose on the Sabbath evenin—a face at a windae an meevin lichts, an later the yarkin tee o a yett. Bit I dinna ken fa thon fowk wir, nur fit becam o them. We saw naethin o them neist day. The Blaik Rikk wauchtit slaw riverwird aa ben Monday foreneen, creepin nearer an nearer tae us, drivin at last alang the roadwey ootbye the hoose that hid us.

A Martian cam ben the parks aboot midday, layin the rikk wi a skoosh o bylin steam that hissed agin the waas, brukk aa the windaes it touched, an brunt the meenister’s haun as he ran ooto the front chaumer. Fin at the hinnereyn we creepit ben the weet chaumers an luikit oot again, the kintra northwird wis as tho a blaik snaastorm hid blawn ower it. Luikin tae the river, we wir bumbazed tae see an unaccoontable reidness mellin wi the blaik o the brunt leys.

Fur a whyle we didnae see foo this cheenge affeckit oor set oot, apairt frae that we wir relieved o oor fleg o the Blaik Rikk. Bit eftir I saw that we wir nae langer held in, that noo we micht win awa. Sae sune as I jeloused that the wey o escape wis open, ma thocht o a ploy cam back. Bit the meenister wis fooshunless, unrizzonable.

“We’re safe here,” quo he; “safe here.”

I wintit tae leave him—I wish that I hid! Wycer noo fur the sodjer’s larnin, I socht oot maet an drink. I’d fand ile an cloots fur ma burns, an I likewise tuik a bunnet an a flannel sark I fand in ane o the bed chaumers. Fin it wis clear tae him that I meant tae gae alane—hid settled wi masel tae gyang alane—he o a suddenty steered himself tae cam. An aa bein quaet ben the efterneen, we sterted aboot five o’clock, as I wid jelouse, alang the blaikened road tae Sunbury. In Sunbury, an at placies alang the road, wir deid corpses lyin in twistit weys, shelts as weel as chiels, cowpit cairts an belangins, aa happit thick wi blaik stoor. Thon pall o cinnery pooder gart me think o fit I’d read o the wrack o Pompeii. We won tae Hampton Coort wioot mishanter oor harns fu o fey an unkent sichts, an at Hampton Coort oor een wir gled tae fin a swatch o green that hid jinkit the smorin rikk. We gaed throwe Bushey Park, wi its deer gaun back an fore unner the chestnuts, an a wheen chiels an wummen hashin in the hynie-aff tae Hampton, an sae we cam tae Twickenham. Thon wir the first fowk we saw.

Awa ower the road the wids ayont Ham an Petersham wir still in a lowe. Twickenham wisnae skaithed bi either Heat-Ray or Blaik Rikk, an there wir mair fowk aboot here, tho nane could gie us news. Fur the maist pairt they wir like oorsels, takkin eese o a lull tae flit. I hae a thocht that mony o the hooses here wir still occupeed bi feart fowk, ower fleggit even fur flicht. Here as weel the merks o a faist rout wis clear alang the road. I mynd maist clear three brukken bikes in a howp, haimmered intae the road bi the wheels o oncamin cairts. We gaed ower Richmond Brig aboot hauf past echt. We hashed ben the exposed brig, of coorse, bit I saw floatin doon the burn a nummer o reid boorachs, some mony feet across. I didnae ken fit these wir—there wis nae time fur luikin intae it—an I pit a mair horrible thocht on them than they deserved. Here again on the Surrey side wis blaik stoor that hid aince bin rikk, an deid corpses—a howp near the incam tae the station; bit we’d nae glisk o the Martians til we wir some wey tae Barnes.

We saw in the blaikened hynie-aff a boorach of three fowk rinnin oa side street tae the river, bit itherwise it seemed teem. Up the knowe Richmond toon wis burnin faist; ootside the toon o Richmond there wis nae merk o the Blaik Rikk.

Syne o a suddenty, as we cam near Kew, cam a nummer o fowk rinnin, an the upperwirks o a Martian fechtin-machine raise up in sicht ower the hoosetaps, nae a hunner yairds awa frae us. We stude dumfounert bi oor danger, an hid the Martian luikit doon we maun straicht aff hae deed. We wir sae terrifeed that we daured nae gae on, bit turned aside an hid in a sheddie in a gairden. There the meenister hunkered, greetin seelently, an widnae steer again.

Bit ma set thocht o reachin Leatherheid widnae lat me reist, an in the gloamin I gaed oot again. I gaed ben busses, an alang a path aside a muckle hoose staunin in its ain gruns, an sae emerged on the road tae Kew. I left the meenister left the sheddie, bit he cam hashin efter me.

Thon secunt stert wis the maist gypit thing I iver did. Fur it wis plain the Martians wir aboot us. Nae suner hid the meenister owertaen me than we saw either the fechtin-machine we’d seen afore or anither, hyne awa ben the leys in the airt o Kew Ludge. Fower or five wee blaik bodies hashed afore it ben the green-grey o the park, an in a meenit it wis clear this Martian gaed efter them. In three strides he wis amang them, an they ran streetchin frae his feet in aa airts. He made eese o nae Heat-Ray tae connach them, bit pykit them up ane bi ane. It luikit like he haived them inno the muckle metallic cairrier that stuck oot ahin him, like as a wirker’s creel hings ower his shouder.

It wis the first time I jeloused that the Martians micht hae ony ither rizzon than wrack o defeated fowk. We stude fur a meenit petrifeed, syne birled an fled ben a yett ahin us intae a waad gairden, fell intae, raither than fand, a nearhaun sheugh, an lay thonner, scarce daurin tae fusper tae each ither till the starnies wir oot.

I jelouse it wis near eleyven o’clock afore we gaithered smeddum tae stert again, nae langer gaun intae the road, bit creepin alang hedgeraws an ben parks, an keekin sherply throwe the derkness, himsel on the richt an masel on the left, fur the Martians, fa seemed tae be aa aboot us. In ae airt we hytered on a birssled an blaikened pairt, noo jeelin an happit in aisse, an a nummer o skittered deid bodies o chiels, brunt affa aboot the heids an trunks bit wi their shanks an buits maistly intack; an o deid shelts, fifty feet, mebbe, ahin a line o fower rivven guns an brukken gun cairriages.

Sheen, it luikit like, hid jinked bein wracked, bit the airt wis seelent an teem. Here we fand nae deid, tho the nicht wis ower derk fur us tae see inno the side roads o the airt. In Sheen ma fier o a suddenty girned aboot feintness an drooth, an we set oot tae try ane o the hooses.

The first hoose we gaed intae, efter a bittie fecht wi the windae, wis a wee semi-detached hame, an I fand naethin ettable left in the placie bit some fooshty cheese. There wis, hooseaiver, watter tae drink; an I tuik an aixe, that promised tae be eesefu in oor neist hoose-brakkin.

We syne gaed tae a placie far the road turns tae Mortlake. Here there stude a fite hoose inbye a waaed gairden, an in the press o thon hame we fand a store o maet—twa loaves o breid in a pan, a raa steak, an the hauf o a ham. I gie this list sae exack because, as it turned oot, it wis oor weird tae live on this store fur the neist fortnicht. Bottled beer stude unner a shelf, an there wir twa pyokes o haricot beans an a wheen dweeble lettuces. This press opened inno a kinno wash-up kitchie, an in this wis kinnlin; there wis as weel a press, far we fand near a dizzen o burgundy, tinned soups an salmon, an twa tinnies o biscuits.

We sat in the nearhaun kitchie in the derk—fur we daured nae strikk a licht—an ett breid an ham, an drank beer ooto the same bottlie. The meenister, fa wis still feart an hodgin, wis noo, feyly eneuch, fur hashin on, an I wis urgin him tae keep up his virr bi ettin fin the mishanter happened that wis tae jyle us.

“It canna be midnicht yet,”quo I, an syne cam a blinnin bleeze o skyrie green licht. Aathin in the kitchie lowped oot, clearly veesible in green an blaik, an vanished again. An syne follaed sic a cloor as I hae niver heard afore or since. Sae close on the heels o thon as tae seem instant cam a dunt ahin me, a knell o glaiss, a smash an trimmle o drappin masonry aa aboot us, an the plaister o the ceilin cam doon on us, smashin intae a heeze o smush on oor heids. I wis caaed heidlang ower the fleer agin the oven haunle an stunned. I wis insensible fur a lang time, the meenister telt me, an fin I cam tae we wir in derkness again, an he, wi a face weet, as I fand efterwirds, wi bluid frae a cuttit broo, wis pattin watter ower me.

Fur a whylie I couldnae think fit hid happened. Syne maitters cam tae me slawly. A cloor on ma broo shawed itsel.

“Are ye better?” speired the meenister in a fusper.

At the hinnereyn I reponed. I sat up.

“Dinna meeve,” quo he. “The fleer is happit wi brukken crockery frae the press. Ye canna possibly meeve wioot makkin a soun, an I think *they* are ootbye.”

We baith sat richt seelent, sae that we could scarce hear ither breathin. Aathin seemed deidly still, bit aince somethin near us, some plaister or brukken brickwirk, sliddered doon wi a rummlin soun. Ootbye an verra near wis an aff/on, metallic chitter.

“Thon!” quo the meenister, fin sune it happened again.

“Aye,” I reponed. “Bit fit is it?”

“A Martian!” the meenister telt me.

I lippened again.

“It wisnae like the Heat-Ray,” I repond, an fur a time I thocht ane o the muckle fechtin-machines hid hytered agin the hoose, as I’d seen ane hyter agin the touer o Shepperton Kirk.

Oor set oot wis sae fey an fremmit that fur three or fower oors, til the daybrak cam, we scarce meeved. An syne the licht treetled in, nae throwe the windae, that bedd blaik, bit ben a triangular hole atween a beam an a howp o brukken bricks in the waa ahin us. Inbye the kitchie we noo saw greyly fur the first time.

The windae hid bin brukken in bi a heeze o gairden foosht, that ran ower the brod on which we’d bin sittin an lay aboot oor feet. Ootbye the yird wis stackit heich agin the hoose. At the tap o the windae frame we could see an upreetit drainpipe. The fleer wis skittered wi brukken hardware; the eyn o the kitchie tae the hoose wis brukken intae, an since the daylicht shone in thonner, it wiscleart the greater pairt o the hoose wis a wrack. Contrasting sterk wi this sottar wis the neat press, peintit in the fashion, pale green, an wi a nummer o copper an tin gear ablow it, the waapaper imitatin blae an fite tiles, an a pair o coloured supplements flchterin frae the waas abune the kitchie reenge.

As the daybrakk grew clearer, we saw ben the keekhole in the waa the body o a Martian, staunin guaird, I jelouse, ower the still hett cylinder. At the sicht o thon we creepit as cannie as possible ooto the gloamin o the kitchie intae the derkness o the scullery.

Straicht aff the richt unnerstaunnin cam intae ma harns.

“The fifth cylinder,” I whispered, “the fifth shot from Mars, his struck this hoose an beeriet us unner the wrack!”

Fur a whyle the meenister wis seelent, an syne he fuspered:

“God hae mercy on us!”

Sune I heard him greetin tae himsel.

Apairt frae thon soun we lay aathegether quaet in the scullery; I fur ma pairt scarce daured breathe, an dowpit wi ma een fixed on the feint licht o the kitchie yett. I could jist see the meenister’s face, a blae, oval makk, an his collar an cuffs. Ootbye there stertit a metallic haimmerin, syne a strang hootin, an syne again, efter a quaet whylie, a hissin like the hissing o an ingine. Thon souns, fur the maist pairt fey, cairriet on in stots an bangs, an it soundit if onything tae grow in nummer as time gaed by. Sune a meisured duntin an a shakkin that gart aathin aboot us chitter an the ashets in the pantry ring an meeve, stertit an gaed on. Aince the licht wis dwined, an the ghaistly kitchie yett wey becam aathegether derk. Fur mony oors we maun hae hunkered thonner, seelent an chitterin, til oor trauchelt watchin foonered.…

At the hinnereyn I fand masel awauk an verra hungeret. I think we maun hae spent the maist pairt o a day afore thon awaukenin. Ma hunger wis syne sae strang that it meeved me tae action. I telt the meenister I wis gaun tae sikk maet, an felt ma wye tae the pantry. He made me nae repon, bit sae sune as I stertit ettin the feint soun I vrocht steered him up an I heard him creepin efter me.

Chapter 2

Fit We Saw frae the connached Hoose

Efter ettin we creepit back tae the kitchie, an thonner I maun hae dovvered again, fur fin sune I luikit roon I wis alane. The duntin stoon cairried on wi trauchlesome thrawnness. I fuspered fur the meenister puckles o times, an at the hinnereyn felt ma wye tae the yett o the kitchie. It wis still daylicht, an I saw him ben the chaumer, lyin agin the triangular hole that luikit oot on the Martians. His shouders wir humfy, sae that his heid wis happit frae me.

I could hear a numer o souns rael like thon in an ingine sheddie; an the airt showdit wi thon duntin dirl. Throwe the teethole in the waa I could see the tap o a tree sheenin wi gowd an the hett blue o a peaceful evenin lift. Fur a meenit or twa I bedd watchin the meenister, an syne I gaed forrit, hunkerin an steppin unca cannie amids the brukken crockery that wis skittered ower the fleer.

I touched the meenister’s shank, an he jinkit sae forcie that a heeze o plaister gaed skytin doon ootbye an drappit wi a lood knell. I grippit his airm, feart he micht skreich oot, an fur a lang time we cooried wioot meevin. Syne I turned tae see foo muckle o oor biggin bedd. The brakk o the plaister hid left an upricht slit ajee in the sottar, an bi heistin masel cannnie ower a beam I could see ooto thon gap intae fit hid bin owernicht a quaet ootlyin roadwey. Muckle, indeed, wis the cheenge that we saw.

The fifth cylinder maun hae drappit richt inno the mids o the hoose we’d first veesited. The biggin hid gaen, aathegither brukken, wracked, an blootered bi the cloor. The cylinder bedd noo far aneth the original founs—deep in a hole, already far bigger than the pit I’d luikit intae at Woking. The yird aa roon it hid splootered unner thon muckle impack—”splootered” is the anely wird—an lay ina heeze o howpies that hid the wrack o the nearhaun hooses. It hid behaved jist like dubs unner the forcie dunt o a haimmer. Oor hoose hid cowpit backweys; the front pairt, even on the grun fleer, hid bin connached aathegither; bi a chaunce the kitchie an scullery hid escapit, an stude beeriet noo aneth yird an soss, steekit in bi tons o yird on ilkie side barrin tae the cylinder. Ower thon aspeck we hung noo on the verra edge o the muckle roon pit the Martians wir eidently makkin. The wechty duntin soun wis jist ahin us, an aye an again a bricht green rikk drave up like a veil been oor teethole.

The cylinder wis already ajee in the mids o the pit, an on the farrer edge o the pit, amid the brukken an graivel-howped busses ane o the muckle fechtin-machines, teem o fowk, stude stiff an heich agin the evenin lift. At first I scarce tuik tent o the pit an the cylinder, tho it his bin easier tae pictur them first, on accoont o the byordnar glimmerin mechanism I saw eident in the howkin, an on accoont o the fremmit craiturs that wir creepin slaw an painfu ben the howped foosht near it.

The mechanism o a certainty held ma een first. It wis ane o thon fichery ferlies that hae since bin caaed haunlin-machines, an the study o which his already gien sic a muckle heist tae terrestrial invention. As it dawned on me first, it wis a kinno metallic wyver wi five jyntit, swack shanks legs, an wi a byordnar nummer o jyntit levers, bars, an raxxin an grippin tentacles aboot its body. Maist o its airms wir drawn back, bit wi three lang tentacles it wis rypin oot a nummer o rods, plates, an bars that lined the coverin an a seemed tae strengthent the waas o the cylinder. Thon, as it drew them oot, wir heistit oot an plunkit on a level surface o yird ahin it.

Its meevement wis sae faist, fyky, an perfeck that at first I didnae see it as a machine, in spite o its metallic glimmer. The fechtin-machines wir set an gaen virr tae sic a byordnar heicht, bit naethin tae compar wi thon. Fowk fa hae niver seen thon makks, an hae anely the ill-picturt ettles o artists or the imperfeck picturs o sic ee-witnesses as masel tae gae on, scarce ken thon leevin quality.

I recaa in particular the picturs o ane o the first pamphlets tae gie an ongaun accoont o the war. The artist hid evident vrocht a hashed study o ane o the fechtin-machines, an thonner his kennin eyndit. He shawed them as skweejee, stiff tripods, wioot either swackness or subtlety, an wi an aathegither misleadin boredom o effeck. The pamphlet haudin thon efforts wis byordnar popular, an I spikk o them here jist tae warn the reader agin the effeck they micht hae vrocht. They wir nae mair like the Martians I saw in a meevement than a Dutch dall is like a human bein. Tae ma thocht, the pamphlet wid hae bin far better wioot them.

At first, I tell ye, the haunlin-machine didnae impress me as a machine, bit as a parten like craitur wi a glimmrin integument, the controllin Martian fas pernickity tentacles wirked its meevements seemin tae be like the parten’s cerebral airt. Bit syne I saw the luik o its grey-broon, sheeny, leathery integument wis like thon o the ither sprauchlin bodies ayont, an the rael natur o thon swack wirkman dawned on me. Wi thon kennin ma interest shiftit tae thon ither craiturs, the rael Martians. Already I’d hid a fleetin impression o thon, an the first dose o cowkin nae langer bladdit ma sicht. Mairower, I wis happit an still, an unner nae faist need o action.

They wir, I noo saw, the maist unyirdly craiturs it’s possible tae think o. They wir muckle roon corps—or, ratiher, heids—aboot fower feet in diameter, ilkie corp haein afore it a face. Thon face hid nae snoot—forebye, the Martians dinna seem tae hae hid ony sense o smell, bit it hid a pair o verra big derk-coloured een, an jist aneth this a kinno fleshy beak. In the back o this heid or corp—I scarce ken foo tae spikk o it—wis the single ticht tympanic surface, since kent tae be anatomically a lug, tho it maun hae bin near eeseless in oor dense air. In a boorich roon the moo wir saxteen thin, near wheeplike tentacles, arreenged in twa boorichs o eicht each. Thon boorichs hae since bin nemmed raither weel, bi thon braw anatomist, Professor Howes, the *hauns*.

Even as I saw thon Martians fur the first time they seemed tae be ettlin tae heist thirsels on thon hauns, bit of coorse, wi the greater wecht o yirdly conditions, thon wis impossible. There’s rizzon tae jelouse that on Mars they micht hae progressed on them wi some skeeliness.The intimmers, I micht remairk here, as dissection his syne shawn, wis near as simple. The maist pairt o the structure wis the harns, sennin muckle nerves tae the een, lug, an finnin tentacles. Apairt frae thon wir the muckle lungs, intae which the moo opened, an the hairt an its vessels. The braithin wae caused bi the denser air an wechtier gravitational rug wis maist evident in the yarkin meevements o the ooter skin. An this wis aa o the Martian organs. Fremmit as it micht seem tae a human bein, aa the fyky intimmers o digestion, that makks up the maist o oor bodies, didnae exist in the Martians. They wir heids—jist heids. Intimmers they’d nane. They didnae ett, far less digest. Insteid, they tuik the fresh, leevin bluid o ither craiturs, an *injected* it inno their ain veins. I hae masel seen this bein dane, as I’ll mention in time. Bit, squeamish as I micht seem, I canna bring masel tae spikk o fit I couldnae thole even tae cairry on watchin. Lat it be eneuch tae say, bluid taen frae a still leevin breet, in maist cases frae a human bein, wis run direck bi means o a wee pipette intae the receivin canal.…

The verra notion o this is nae doot unca scunnerin tae us, bit at the same time I think that we should mynd foo scunnersome oor maet ettin weys wid seem tae a clivver mappie.

The physiological gweed o this wey o injection are easy seen, gin a body thinks o the rowth o waste o human time an virr caused bi ettin an the digestive ongauns. Oor corps is hauf made up o glands an tubes an organs, occupeed in turnin various foods intae bluid. The digestive ongauns an their reaction on the nervous system sap oor virr an colour oor harns. Chiels gae blythe or dowie as they hae weel or unweel livers, or weel gastric glands. Bit the Martians wir liftit abune aa thon organic ups an doons o mood an emotion.

Their kent likin fur men as their soorce o maet is pairtly explained bi the natur o the remains o the kills they’d brocht wi them as maet frae Mars. Thon craiturs, tae joodge frae the crined leavins that hae fallen intae human hauns, wir bipeds wi dweeble, silicious skeletons (near like thon o the silicious sponges) an dweeble musculature, staunin aboot sax fit heich an haein roon, upricht heids, an muckle een in staney sockets. Twa or three o thon seem tae hae bin brocht in ilkie cylinder, an aa wir killt afore the yird wis reached. It wis jist as weel fur them, fur the mere tcyauve tae staun upricht on oor planet wid hae brukken ilkie bane in their corps.

An fin I’m eident in makkin this description, I micht add in this pairt certain farrer details that, tho they werena aa shawn tae us at the time, will help the reader fa is unacquant wi them tae win a clearer pictur o thon orra craiturs.

In three ither pynts their physiology differ in a fey swey frae oors. Their organisms didnae sleep, ony mair than the hairt o man sleeps. Since they’d nae braid muscular mechanism tae recuperate, thon antrin extinction wis unkent tae them. They’d little or nae sense o bein trauchelt, it wid seem. On the yird they could niver hae meeved wioot a tcyauve, yet even tae the eyn they keepit in action. In twinty-fower oors they did twinty-fower oors o wirk, as even on the yird is mebbe the case wi the eemmocks.

In the neist maitter, winnerfu as it seems in a sexual warld, the Martians wir aathegither wioot sex, an sae wioot ony o the wud emotions that are steered frae thon difference amang men. A young Martian, there can noo be nae argyment, wis raely born on the yird durin the war, an it wis fand stukken tae its parent, pairtly *budded* aff, jist as young daffie bulbs bud aff, or like the young breets in the fresh-watter polyp.

In man, in aa the heicher yirdly breets, sic a wey o groweth his gaen; bit even on this yird it wis o a certainty the basic wey. Amang the laigher breets, up even tae thon first cousins o the vertebrated breets, the Tunicates, the twa processes happen side bi side, bit at the hinnereyn the sexual wey owercam its competitor aathegither. On Mars, hoosaeiver, jist the reverse his bin the case.

It’s wirthy o remairk that a certain chauncy screiver o quasi-scientific fame, screivin lang afore the Martian invasion, did forecast fur man a hinmaist makk nae unlike the rael Martian makk. His prophecy, I mynd, wis in Novemmer or Yule, 1893, in a lang-gaen publication, the *Pall Mall Budget*, an I mynd a caricature o it in a pre-Martian buiklet caaed *Punch*. He pyntit oot— screivin in a gypit, sarcastic tone—that the perfection o mechanical ferlies maun at the hinnereyn stakk ower frae limbs; the perfection o chemical ferlies, digestion; that sic organs as hair, snoot, teeth, lugs, an chin wir nae langer necessary pairts o the human bein, an that the tendency o nat’ral wylin wid lie in the airt o their steidy shrinkin ben the camin ages. The harns alane bedd as aywis nott. Anely ae ither pairt o the corp hid a strang case fur survival, an thon wis the haun, “dominie an wirker fur the harns.” While the lave o the corp dwined, the hauns wid growe bigger.

There’s mony a true wird screived in joke, an here in the Martians we hae ayont argyment the rael winnin o sic a haud doon o the breet side o the organism bi the harns. Tae me it’s easy kent that the Martians micht be descendit frae beins nae unlike oorsels, bi a slaw cheenge o harns an hauns (the latter giein rise tae the twa boorichs o fyky tentacles at last) at the expense o the lave o the body. Wioot the corp the harns wid, of coorse, becam a mere selfish kennin, wioot ony o the emotional intimmers o the human bein.

The hinmaist ootstaunin pynt in which the systems o thon craiturs differed frae oors wis in fit ye micht hae thocht a verra slicht partic’lar. Micro-organisms, that cause sae muckle ills an pain on the yird, hae either niver appeared on Mars or Martian health science connached them ages syne. A hunner ills, aa the fevers an smits o human life, TB, cancers, tumours an sic killers, niver enter the scheme o their life. An spikkin o the differences atween the life on Mars an life on the yird, I micht spikk here aboot the fey maitters o the reid seggs.

It seemed the veggie kingdom in Mars, insteid o haein green fur a main colour, is o a skyrie bluid-reid tint. At ony rate, the seeds that the Martians (meanin tae or bi accident) brocht wi them gaed rise in aa cases tae reid-coloured growthes. Anely thon kent aawey as the reid seggs, hoosaeiver, gained ony fittin in competition wi yirdly plants. The reid creeper wis a rael fleetin growthe, an fyew fowk hae seen it growin. Fur a time, hoosaever, the reid seggs grew wi bumbazin virr an ootraxx. It spreid up the sides o the pit bi the third or fowerth day o oor jylin, an its cactus-like branches vrocht a crammosie fringe tae the edges o oor triangular windae. An efterwirds I fand it broadcast ben the kintra, an speecially far there wis rinnin watter.

The Martians hid fit seems tae hae bin a hearin organ, a single roon drum at the back o the heid-corp, an een wi a visual reenge nae verra different frae oors bar that, accordin tae Philips, blae an violet wir as blaik tae them. It is jeloused that they communicated bi souns an tentacular wyvin; this is statit, fur instance, in the eesefu bit faist pit thegither pamphlet (screived evidently bi somebody nae an ee-witness o Martian meevements) o which I hae already spukken, an that, sae far, his bin the chief soorce o information consarnin them. Noo nae survivin human bein saw sae muckle o the Martians at wirk as I did. I takk nae credit tae masel fur an accident, bit the fack is sae. An I state that I watched them close time efter time, an that I hae seen fower, five, an (aince) sax o them slawly makkin the maist fyky wirkin thegether wioot either soun or meevement. Their fey hootin aye gaed afore feedin; it hid nae modulation, an wis, I believe, in nae mainner a signal, bit jist the ootgaun o air afore sookin. I hae a bit o aa claim tae an basic kennin o psychology, an in this maitter I’m sure—as firm as I am sure o onythin—that the Martians intercheenged thochts wioot ony pheesical passin on. An I hae bin sure o this in spite o strang preconceptions. Afore the Martian incam as an antrin reader here or thonner micht mynd, I hid screived wi some wee virr agin the telepathic notion.

The Martians wore nae claes. Their notions o ornament an modesty wir necessar different fae oors; an nae anely wir they evident less kennin o cheenges o temperature than we are, bit cheenges o pressure dinna seem tae hae affeckit their health at aa serious-like. Yet tho they wore nae claes, it ws in the ither artificial add-ons tae their bodily sels that their muckle superiority ower man lay. We chiels wi oor bikes an road-skates, oor Lilienthal fleein-machines, oor guns an sticks an sae furth, are jist at the stert o the evolution that the Martians hae wirked oot. They hae becam near eneuch mere harns, weirin different corps accordin tae their wints jist as chiels weir suits o claes an takk a bike in a hash or an umbrelly in the weet. An o their gear, mebbe naethin is mair winnerfu tae a chiel than the fey fack that fit is the main feature o near aa human gear in mechanism is tint—the *wheel* is tint; amang aa the ferlies they brocht tae the yird there is nae merk or suggestion o their eese o wheels. Ane wid hav at least expeckit in meevement. An in this case it’s unca tae remairk that even on this yird Natur his niver thocht on the wheel, or his preferred ither weys in its development.

An nae anely did the Martians either nae ken o (this is dumfounerin), or nae makk eese o the wheel, bit in their gear little eese is vrocht o the fixed pivot or near fixed pivot, wi cercular meevement thereaboot bidin in ane plane. Near aa the jynts o the gear present a fyky system o slidderin pairts meevin ower smaa bit bonnie curved friction bearins. An fin on this maitter o detail, it’s remairkable that the lang leverages o their machines are in maist cases wirked bi a kinno sham musculature o the disks in a streetchy sheath; thon disks becam polarised an drawn close an pouerfu thegether fin crossed bi a current o electricity. In thon wey the fey parallelism tae the meevements o breets, that wis sae strikkin an misfittin tae the human watcher, wis won. Sic quasi-muscles aboondit in the parten like haunlin-machine that, on ma first teetin ooto the teethole, I watched unpackin the cylinder. It seemed far mair alive than the rael Martians lyin ayont it in the gloaming licht, pechin, steerin eeseless tentacles, an meevin dweebly efter their hyne traivel ben space.

Fin I wis still watchin their slaw meevements in the sunlicht, an notin ilkie fremmit detail o their makk, the meenister myndit me o his presence bi ruggin forcie at ma airm. I turned tae a glowerin face, an seelent, eloquent lips. He wintit the teetinhole, that lat anely ane o us tae peep throwe; an sae I hid tae foregae watchin them fur a whylie while he enjoyed thon peeivilege.

Fin I luikit again, the eident haunlin-machine hid already pit thegether puckles o the dauds o gear it hid taen ooto the cylinder inno a makk haein an unmistakkable likeness tae itsel; an doon on the left an eident wee howkin mechanism hid cam intae sicht, giein aff skooshes o green rikk an wirkin its wye roon the pit, howkin an embankin in a regular an cannie mainner. Thon it wis that hid caused the ongaun duntin soun, an the rhythmic knells that hid keepit oor wracked bield chitterin. It pypit an fussled as it wrocht. Sae far as I could see, the ferlie wis wioot an owerseein Martian at aa.

**Chapter 3: The Days o bein jyled**

The camin o a secunt fechtin-machine drave us frae oor teethole intae the kitchie, fur we wir feart that frae his heicht the Martian micht see doon upon us ahin oor barrier. A whylie efter we stertit tae feel less in danger o their een, fur tae an ee in the daizzle o the sunlicht ootbye oor bield maun hae bin teem blaikness, bit at first the slichtest suggestion o incam drave us intae the kitchie in hairt-stoonin retreat. Yet awfu as wis the danger we kent, the need tae be teetin wis fur baith o us wis owerpouerin. An I recaa noo wi a kinno winner that, in spite o the byordnar danger in which we wir atween stervation an a still mair terrible daith, we could yet tyauve wershly fur thon awfu preevilige o sicht. We wid race ben the kitchie in a weird wey atween eidentness an the dreid o makkin a soun, an strikk each ither, an skelp an kick, inbye a fyew inches o bein seen.

The fack is that we’d aathegither quwanter wyes an habits o thocht an daein, an oor danger an alaneness anely made waur the differences. At Halliford I’d already cam tae hate the meenister’s wye o eeseless ootspikkin, his gypit rigidity o harns. His eynless mummlin monologue dinged doon ilkie ettle I vrocht tae think oot a wye o daein, an drave me whyles, sae hickelt in an intensifeed, near tae gaun gyte. He wis as wintin in restraint as a daft wumman. He wid greet fur oors thegether, an I really thocht that tae the hinnrereyn this spyled vratch o life thocht his dweeble greetin in some wye eesefu. An I wid sit in the derkness nae able tae haud ma thochts aff him bi rizzon o his girnin. He ett mair than I did, an it wis eeseless tae pynt oot that oor anely chaunce o life wis tae bide in the hoose till the Martians hid feenished wi their pit, that in thon lang wyte a time micht sune cam fin we’d nott maet. He ett an drank thochtlessly in wechty meals at lang whyles. He scarce sleepit.

As the days gaed by, his hale carelessness o ony conseederation sae intensifeed oor wae an danger that I hid, much as I hatit tae dae it, tae threaten, an at the hinnereyn, tae skelp him. Thon brocht him tae rizzon fur a whylie. Bit he wis ane o thon dweeble craiturs, teem o pride, fearty, fooshunless, hatefu sowels, fu o sleekit cantrips, fa face neither God nur man, fa dinna even face thirsels.

It isnae fine fur me tae recaa an screive thon ferlies, bit I set them doon sae ma story micht wint naethin. Thon fa hae escapit the derk an awfu aspecks o life will finn ma coorseness, ma flash o roose in oor hinmaist tragedy, easy eneuch tae bann; fur they ken fit’s wrang as weel as ony, bit nae fit’s possible tae tortured chiels. Bit fowk fa hae bin unner the shadda, fa hae gane doon at last tae the bare banes o maitters, will hae a braider charity.

An whyle inbye we focht oot oor derk, dim war o fuspers, rypit maet an drink, an grippit hauns an cloors, ootbye, in the peetiless sunlicht o thon awfu June, wis the fey winner, the fremmit ongauns o the Martians in the pit. Lat me gae back tae thon first new experiences o mine. Efter a lang whyle I chaunced back tae the teethole, tae finn that the new-comers hid bin jyned bi the occupants o nae fyewer than three o the fechtin-machines. Thon himaist hid brocht wi them a puckle fresh gear that stude in an orderly mainner aboot the cylinder. The secunt haunlin-machine wis noo riggit, an wis eident in servin ane o the new ferlies the muckle machine hid brocht. Thon wis a corp luikit like a milk cannie in its general makk, abune which wummlit a pear-shapit hauder, an frae which a ream o fite pooder pooder intae a roon basin ablow.

The wummlin meevement wis impairtit tae thon bi ane tentacle o the haunlin-machine. Wi twa spaad like hauns the haunlin-machine wis howkin oot an haivin heezes o yird intae the pear-shapit hauder abune, while wi anither arim it whyles opened a yett an meeved roosty an blaikened cinners frae the mid pairt o the machine. Anither steely airm direckit the pooder frae the basin alang a ribbed channel tae some hauder that wis hidden frae me bi the heeze o bluish stoor. Frae this unseen hauder a wee threid o green rikk raise straicht up intae the quaet air. As I luikit, the haunlin-machine, wi a feint an musical clinkin, raxxed, telescopic mainner, a tentacle that hid bin a meenit afore a jist a blunt ootcrap , till its eyn wis hidden ahin the howp o clay. In anither secunt it hid heistit a bar o fite aluminium inno sicht, unbladdit as yet, an sheenin daizzlin like, an pit it in a growin howp o bars that stude at the side o the pit. Atween sunset an starlicht thon swack machine maun hae vrocht mair than a hunner sic bars ooto the roch yird, an the howp o bluish stoor raise steidily til it tapped the side o the pit.

The differ atween the faist an fichery meevements o thon ferlies an the inert pechin clumsiness o their maisters wis unca, an fur days I’d tae tell masel aften that the hinmaist wir really the leevin o the twa things.

The meenister hid chairge o the keekin-hole fin the first chiels wir brocht tae the pit. I wis dowpit ablow, cooried doon, lippenin wi ma lugs. He made a faist meevement backwird, an I, feart that we wir owerluikit, squattit in a spasm o grue. He cam skytin doon the sottar an creepit aside me in the derkness, spikkless, wyvin, an fur a meenit I shared his fleg. His meevement suggested he wis giein up the keekin-holie, an efter a whylie while ma ill faschence gaed me virr, an I raise up, steppit ower him, an sclimmed up tae it. At first I could see nae rizzon fur his unca behaviour. The gloamin hid noo cam, the starnies wir wee an feint, bit the pit wis lichtit up bi the flichterin green lowe that cama frae the aluminium-makkin. The hale pictur wis a flichterin sicht o green glisks an shiftin roosty blaik shaddas, unca sair on the een. Ower an throw it aa gaed the bats, nae takkin tent o it at aa. The sprachlin Martians wir nae langer tae be seen, the howp o blue-green pooder hid raised tae hap them frae sicht, an a fechtin-machine, wi its shanks contrackit, wrunkkled, an shortent, stude ower the neuk o the pit. An syne, amid the din o the machinery, cam a wauchtin suspicion o human voyces, sae I thocht at first, anely tae set aside.

I hunkered, watchin this fechtin-machine close, satisfeein masel noo fur the first time that the hood did raelly haud a Martian. As the green flames raise up I could see the ily glisko his integument an the brichtness o his een. An o a suddenty I heard a skirl, an saw a lang tentacle raxxin ower the shouder o the machine tae the wee cage that humphed on its back. Syne somethin—somethin warsslin hard—wis heistit heuch agin the lift, a blaik, feint, ferlie agin the starnie licht; an as this blaik objeck cam doon again, I saw bi the green brichtness that it wis achiel. Fur a whyle he wis clearly veesible. He wis a stoot, reid faced, middle-aged chiel, weel riggit; three days afore, he maun hae bin waukin the warld, a chiel o muckle import. I could see his glowerin een an glisks o licht on his studs an watch chyne. He vanished ahin the howp, an fur a meenit there wis seelence. An syne stertit a skirlin an ongaun an blythe hootin frae the Martians.

I skytit doon the sottar, warssled tae ma feet, clappit ma hauns ower ma lugs, an breenged inno the scullery. The meenister, fa’d bin hunkerin seelent wi his airms ower his heid, luikit up as I gaed bye, skreiched oot rael lood at ma leavin him, an cam rinnin efter me.

Thon nicht, as we hid in the scullery, wyed atween oor grue an the awfu thrall this teetin hid, tho I felt a strang need o action I tyaucved eeselessly tae think o some plan o escape; biteftir, durin the secunt day, I wis able tae conseeder oor set-oot wi mair clearness. The meenister, I fand, wis aathegither ayont mensefu spikk; thon new an unca coorseness hid rypit him o aa bitties o rizzon or forethocht. In fack he’d already drappit tae the level o a breet. Bit as the spikk rins, I grippit masel wi baith hauns. It grew in ma harns, aince I could face the facks, that awfu as oor set oot wis, there wis as yet nae need fur ootricht wae. Oor chief chaunce lay in the chaunce o the Martians makkin the pit naethin mair than a temporary base. Or even gin they keepit it foraye, they michtnae conseeder it necessar tae guaird it, an a chaunce o escape micht be gaen us. As weel, I weyed verra cannie the possibility o oor howkin a wey oot in an airt awa frae the pit, bit the chaunces o oor camin oot in sicht o some guairdin fechtin-machine seemed at first ower great. An I should hae hid tae dae aa the howkin masel. The meenister wid o a certainty bin nae eese.

It wis on the third day, gin I mynd richt, that I saw the chiel killt. It wis the anely time I saw the Martians ett. Efter thon experience I jinkit the hole in the waa fur maist o a day. I gaed intae the scullery, taen aff the yett, an spent a puckle oors howkin wi ma hatchet as quate’s I could; bit fin I’d vrocht a hole aboot twa feet deep the lowse yird tummlit loodly, an I didnae daar gae on . I tint ma fooshun, an straikit doon on the scullery fleer fur a lang time, haein nae speerit even tae meeve. An efter thon I gaed up aathgether the notion o escapin bi howkin.

It sez muckle fur the kennin o the Martians hid vrocht on me that at first I held scarce ony hope o oor escape bein brocht aboot bi their owercam throwe ony human warssles. Bit on the fowerth or fifth nicht I heard a soun like wechty guns.

It wis verra late in the nicht, an the meen wis sheenin brichtly. The Martians hid taen awa the howkin-machine, an, apairt frae a fechtin-machine that stude in the farrer bank o the pit an a haunlin-machine that wis beeriet oot o ma sicht in a neuk o the pit richt aneth ma teethole, the airt wis teemed o them. Barrin the dweeble licht frae the haunlin-machine an the bars an swatches o fite meenlicht the pit wis in derkness, an, apairt frae the clinkin o the haunlin-machine, rale still. Thon nicht wis a bonnie quateness; bar ae planet, the meen seemed tae hae the lift tae hersel. I lippent tae a tyke bowfin, an thon kent soun gart me listen. Syne I heard clear a boomin exack like the soun o muckle guns. Sax clear souns I coontit, an efter a lang wyte, sax again. An thon wis aa.

**Chapter 4 The daith o the meenister**

It wis on the saxth day o oor jylin that I keeked fur the hinmaist time, an syne fand masel alane. Insteid o bidin teetle me an ettlin tae oust me frae the slit, the meenister hid gaen back intae the kitchie. I wis strukk bi a sudden thocht. I gaed back faist an quaet intae the kitchie. In the derkness I heard the meenister drinkin. I raxxed in the derkness, an ma fingers catched a bottlie o burgundy.

Fur a fyew meenits there wis a tulzie. The bottle strukk the fleer an brukk, an I stoppit an raise. We stude pechin an threatenin ane anither. In the eyn I plunkit masel atween him an the maet, an telt him o ma need tae strertr a discipline. I split the maet in the press, intae rations tae dae us ten days. I widnae lat him ett ony mair thon day. In the efterneen he vrocht a dweeble tsyauve tae win at the maet. I’d bin dwaumin, bit in a meenit I wis waukened. Aa day an aa nicht we sat face tae face, I wis foonert bit thrawn, an he wis greetin an girnin o his strang hunger. It wis, I ken, a nicht an a day, bit tae me it seemed—it seems noo—an unca lang time.

An sae oor braid incompatibility eyndit at last in open fechtin. Fur twa lang days we warssled in unnertones an tulzies. There wir whyles fin I threwsh an kickit him wudly, whyles fin I priggit an perswadit him, an aince I ettled tae bribe him wi the last bottle o burgundy, fur there wis a rain-watter pump frae far I could get watter. Bit neither virr nur kindness wirked; he wis indeed ayont rizzon. He wid neither stop frae his attacks on the maet nur frae his din raisin mummlin tae himsel. The ordnar precautions tae keep oor jylin tholeable he widnae takk. Slawly I stertit tae ken o the hale dooncam o his harns, tae ken that ma lane fier in this close an seek derkness wis a chiel gyte.

Frae a puckle vague myndins I’m inclined tae think ma ain harns wanneret whyles. I’d fey an ugsome dreams finiver I sleepit. It souns unca, bit I’m inclined tae think that the dweebleness an wudness o the meenister warned me, sattled me, an keepit me a sane chiel.

On the echth day he stertit tae spikk lood insteid o fusperin, an naethin I could dae wid moderate his wirds.

“It’s just, O God!” he wid say, ower an ower again. “It’s just. On me an mine be the punishment pit doon. We hae sinned, we hae drawn up short. There wis puirtith, sorra; the puir wir trampit in the stoor, an I held ma wheesht. I preached ordnar gyteness—ma God, fit gyteness!—fin I should hae stude up, tho I deed fur it, an caad upon them tae repent—repent! … Doonpitters o the puir an needy … ! The wine press o God!”

Syne he wid o a suddenty gae back tae the maitter o the maet I held awa frae him, priggin, beggin, greetin, at last threatenin. He stertit tae raise his voyce—I prayed him nae tae. He hid a haud on me—he threatened he’d skreich an bring the Martians doon on us. Fur a whyle thon fleggit me; bit ony concession wid hae shortened oor chaunce o escape ayont kennin. I defied him, tho I felt nae certainty that he michtnae dae this thing. Bit thon day, at ony rate, he didnae. He spak wi his voyce risin slaw, throwe the greater pairt o the echth an ninth days—threats, priggins, melled wi a heeze o hauf-sane an aywis shalla repentance fur his teem pretence o God’s service, sic as made me peety him. Syne he sleepit awhile, an stertit again wi renewed virr, sae lood that I maun makk him stop.

“Be quaet!” I priggit.

He raise tae his knees, fur he’d bin sittin in the derkness near the copper.

“I hae bin quaet ower lang,” quo he, in a tone that maun hae reached the pit, “an noo I maun gie witness. Wae tae this unfaithfu toun! Wae! Wae! Wae! Wae! Wae! Tae the fowk o the eirde bi rizzon o the ither voyces o the trumpet——”

“Steek yer mou!” I telt him, risin tae ma feet, an terrified the Martians should hear us. “Fur God’s sake——”

“Na,” skreiched the meenister, at the tap o his voyce, staunin likewise an raxxin oot his airms. “Spikk! The wird o the Lord is on me!”

In three strides he wis at the yett leadin intae the kitchie.

“I maun gie witness! I gae! It’s already bin ower lang seelenced.”

I pit oot ma haun an felt the meat chopper hingin tae the waa. In a glisk I wis efter him. I wis wud wi fleg. Afore he wis haufwey ower the kitchie I’d owertaen him. Wi ae last thochtie o humanity I turned the blade back an cloored him wi the butt. He gaed heidlang forrit an lay streekit on the grun. I hytered ower him an stude pechin. He lay quaet.

O a suddenty I heard a stooshie wioot, the run an smash o skytin plaister, an the triangular gapin the waa wis derkened. I luikit up an saw the laigher surface o a haunlin-machine camin slawly ower the hole. Ane o its grippin limbs furled amang the soss; anither limb appeared, finnin its wey ower the drappit beams. I stude petrifeed, glowerin. Syne I saw ben a kinno o glaiss plate near the edge o the body the face, as we micht caa it, an the muckle derk een o a Martian, glowerin, an syne a lang metallic snake o tentacle cam finnin slawly ben the hole.

I furled wi a tcyauve, hytered ower the meenister, an stoppit at the kitchie yett. The tentacle wis noo some wey, twa yairds or mair, in the chaumer, an birlin an furlin, wi fey faist meevements, this wey an thon. Fur a whylie I stude enthralled bi thon slaw, fitfu advaunce. Syne, wi a feint, hairse myowt, I forced masel ben the kitchie. I trimmlit forcie like; I could scarce staun upricht. I lowsed the yett o the coal cellar, an stude thonner in the derkness glowerin at the feintly lichtit yett intae the kitchie, an lippenin. Hid the Martian seen me? Fit wis it daein noo?

Somethin wis meevin back an fore thonner, unca quaet; ilkie noo an then it chappit again the waa, or sterted on its meevements wi a feint metallic ringin, like the meevements o keys on a split-ring. Syne a wechty corp—I kent ower weel fit—wis ruggit ower the fleer o the kitchie tae the openin. Pouerfu attrackit, I creepit tae the yett an keekit intae the kitchie. In the triangle o bricht ooter sunlicht I saw the Martian, in its Briareus o a haunlin-machine, luikin ower the meenister’s heid. I thocht at aince that it wid jelouse ma presence frae the merk o the cloor I’d gien him.

I creepit back tae the coal cellar, steekit the yett, an stertit tae hap masel up as muckle’s I could, an as sounless as possible in the derkness, amang the kinnlin an coal thonner. Ilkie noo an then I devauled, stiff, tae hear gin the Martian hid powked its tentacles ben the openin again.

Syne the feint metallic ching cam back. I traced it slawly finnin ower the kitchie. Sune I heard it nearer—in the scullery, as I jeloused. I thocht that its length micht be ower short tae reach me. I prayed hard. It passed, scrattin feintly ower the cellar yett. An age o near untholeable suspense tuik ower; Syne I heard it ficherin at the snib! It hid fand the yett! The Martians unnerstude yetts!

It worritit at the snib fur a meenit mebbe, an syne the yet wis ajee. In the derkness I could jist see the thing—like an jumbo’s trunk mair than onythin else—wyvin tae me an touchin an owerluikin the waa, coals, wid an reef. It wis like a black wirm sweyin its blin heid back an fore.

Aince, even, it touched the heel o ma buit. I wis on the verge o skirlin; I bit ma haun. Fur a time the tentacle wis seelent. I could hae thocht it hid bin withdrawn. Syne, wi a sherp click, it grippit somethin—I thocht it hid me!—an seemed tae gae ooto the cellar again. Fur a meenit I wisnae sure. It seemed it hid taen a daud o coal tae owerluik.

I tuik the chaunce o slichtly meevin ma poseetion, which hid becan cramped, an syne lippened. I fuspered fiery prayers fur safety.

Syne I heard the slaw, cannie soun creepin tae me again. Slawly, slawly it drew nearhaun scrattin agin the waas an tappin the furniture.

While I wis still dootfu, it chappit smertly agin the cellar yett an steekit it. I heard it gae intae the press, an the biscuit-tinnies chittered an a bottle smashed, an syne cam a wechty dunt agin the cellar yett. Syne seelence that passed intae an infinity o suspense.

Had it gane?

At last I decided that it hid. It cam intae the kitchie nae mair; bit I lay `e tenth day in the close derkness, beeriet amang coals an kinnlin, nae dau rin even tae creep oot fur the drink that I socht. It wis the eleyventh day afore I creepit sae far frae ma hidie-hole.

**Chapter 5 The quaetness**

Ma first darg afore I gaed inno the pantry wis tae faisten the yett atween the kitchie an the scullery. Bit the pantry wis teem; ilkie daud o maet hid gane. Wioot a doot, the Martian hid taen it aa yestreen. At thon discovery I grew dowie fur the first time. I tuik nae maet, or nae drink either, on the eleyventh or the twalfth day.

At the stert ma mou an thrapple wir drouthy, an ma virr ebbed veesibly. I sat aboot in the derkness o the scullery, in a state o disjaskit waeness. Ma harns ran on ettin. I thocht I’d becam deef, fur the souns o meevement I’d bin eesed tae hear frae the pit hid stoppit aathegither. I didnae feel strang eneuch tae creep sounlessly tae the teethole, or I’d hae gane thonner.

On the twalfth day ma thrapple wis sae painfu that, takkin the chaunce o bumbazin the Martians, I attackit the skreichy rain-watter pump that stude bi the sink, an got a pair o glaissfus o blaikened an spyled rain watter. I wis byordnar refreshed bi thon, an embauldened bi the fack that nae incamin tentacle follaed the soun o ma pumpin.

Durin thon days, in a pyntless, unfoundit wye, I thocht aften o the meenister an o the mainner o his daith.On the thirteenth day I drank a puckle mair watter, an dwaumed an thocht disjyntedly o ettin an o dweeble eeseless plans o escape. Finiver I dwaumed I’d widdendremes o awfy ghaists, o the daith o the meenister, or o reamin denners; bit, asleep or waukened, I felt a snell pain that gart me drink ower an ower. The licht that cam intae the scullery wis nae langer grey, bit reid. Tae ma kerfuffled harns it seemed the colour o bluid.

On the fowerteenth day I gaed intae the kitchie, an I wis dumfounert tae finn that the fronds o the reid weed hid grown richt ower the hole in the waa, cheengin the hauf-licht o the place intae a crammosie-coloured obscurity.

It wis early on the fifteenth day that I heard a fey, kent sequence o souns in the kitchie, an, lippenin, identifeed it as the snuffin an scrattin o a tyke. Gaun intae the kitchie, I saw a tyke’s snoot teetin in throwe a brakk amang the reid fronds. This gaed me an unca begeck. At the scent o me he gaed a wee bowf.

I thocht gin I could gar him cam intae the place quaetly I should be able, mebbe, tae kill an ett him; an in ony case, it wid be best tae kill him, fur fear his actions attrackit the thochts o the Martians.

I creepit forrit, sayin “Gweed tyke!” verra saftly; bit he o a suddenty drew back his heid an vanished.

I lippened—I wisnae deef—bit o a certainty the pit wis still. I heard a soun like the flichter o a birdie’s wings, an a hairse skreichin, bit thon wis aa. Fur a lang whylie I lay nearhaun the teethole, bit nae darin tae meeve aside the reid plants that happit it. Aince or twice I heard a feint pammer-pammer like the feet o the tyke gaun back an fore on the san hyne aneth me, an there wir mair birdlike souns, bit thon wis aa. At the hinnereyn, cheered bi the seelence, I luikit oot.

Except in the neuk, far a heeze o craas stottit an focht ower the skeletons o the deid the Martians hid etten, there wisnae a leevin thing in the pit. I glowered aboot me, scarce believin ma een. Aa the machinery hid gane. Apairt frae the muckle howpie o greyish-blae pooder in ae neuk, certain bars o aluminium in anither, the blaik birdies, an the skeletons o the killt, the airt wis jist a teem roon pit in the san.

Slawly I breenged oot throwe the reid weed, an stude on the howpie o rubble. I could see in ony airt save ahin me, tae the north, an neither Martians nur sign o Martians wir tae be seen. The pit drappit straicht frae ma feet, bit a wee wye alang the wrack gaed a practicable brae tae the tap o the sottar. Ma chaunce o escape hid cam. I stertit tae trimmle.

I dauchled fur a whylie, an syne, in a wheech o unca resolve, an wi a hairt that stooned forcey, I scimmed tae the tap o the knowe far I’d bin beeried sae lang. I luikit aboot again. Tae the northwird, tae, nae Martian wis veesible.

Fin I’d last seen thon pairt o Sheen in the daylicht it hid bin a sprauchlin street o comfy fite an reid hooses, wi a rowth o shady trees atween. Noo I stude on a hillock o brukken brickwirk, clay, an graivel, ower which spreid a heeze o reid cactus-shapit plants, knee-heich, wioot ae eirdly growth tae block their fittin. The trees nearhaun me wir deid an broon, bit farrer a netwirk o reid threid sclimmed the still leevin stems.

The neearhaun hooses hid aa bin wracked, bit nane hid bin brunt; their waas stude, whyles tae the secunt story, wi blootert windaes an brukken yetts. The reid weed grew wudly in their reefless chaumers. Ablow me wis the muckle pit, wi the craas warsslin fur its midden. A nummer o ither birdies stottit aboot amang the wrack. Hyne awa I saw a shilpit cattie slink hunkerin alang a waa, bit merks o cheils there wir nane. The day seemed, bi contrast wi ma recent jylin, daizzlin bricht, the lift a glowin blae. A saft win keepit the reid weed that happit ilkie skirp o unoccupeed grun doucely sweyin. An och! the sweteness o the air!

**Chapter 6: The Wirk o Fifteen Days**

Fur a whylie I stude shooglin on the knowe regairdless o ma safety. Inbye thon noisome airt frae far I’d cam I’d thocht wi a nerra virr anely o oor ain security. I hidnae kent fit hid bin happenin tae the warld, hidnae conseedered this bumbazin veesion o unkent ferlies. I’d expeckit tae see Sheen in wrack—I fand aboot me the lanscape, oorie an skyrie, o anither planet.

Fur thon meenit I touched a feelin ayont the ordnar reenge o chiels, yet ane that the puir breets we dominate ken anely ower weel. I felt as a mappie micht feel gaun tae his hame an o a suddenty faced bi the wirk o a dizzen eident navvies howkin the founs o a hoose. I felt the first hint o a ferlie that sune grew fell clear in ma heid, that weyed me doon fur mony days, a feelin o bein dinged doon, a jelousin that I wis nae langer a maister, bit an breet amang the breets, unner the Martian fit. Wi us it wid be as wi them, tae coorie an watch, tae rin an hide; the fleg an empire o chiels hid passed awa.

Bit as sune as this feyness hid bin felt it dwined, an ma first need becam the hunger o ma lang an dowie fast. In the airt awa frae the pit I saw, ayont a reid-happit waa, a swatch o gairden grun unbeeried. Thon gaed me a hint, an I gaed knee-deep, an whyles thrapple-deep, in the reid weed. The thickness o the weed gaed me a reassurin feelin o hidin. The waa wis some sax feet heich, an fin I ettled tae sclimm it I fand I cudnae lift ma feet tae the tap. Sae I gaed alang bi the side o’t, an cam tae a neuk an a rockwirk that helpit me tae win tae the tap, an tummle intae the gairden I socht. Here I fand some young ingins, twa gladioli bulbs, an a puckle o wee carrots, aa o thon I tuik, an, sclimmin ower a wracked waa, gaed on ma wey ben reid an crammosie trees tae Kew—it wis like waukin ben an avenue o muckle bluid draps—driven bi twa thochts: tae win mair maet, an tae hirple, as sune an as muckle as ma virr alloued, ooto thon banned uneirdly air o the pit.

Some wey farrer, in a girssy airt, wis a heeze o mushies that I ett as weel, an syne I cam on a broon sheet o rinnin shalla watter, far leys eesed tae be. Thon bittickies o scran anely swallt ma hunger. At first I wis bumbazed at thon flood in a hett, dry simmer, bit efter I fand that it wis caused bi the tropical virr o the reid weed. Finiver this byordnar growth met watter it straicht aff becam muckle an o byordnar fecundity. Its seeds wir jist poored doon intae the watter o the Wey an Thames, an its faist growin an Titanic watter fronds faist smored baith thon rivers.

At Putney, as I efterwirds saw, the brig wis near tint in a taigle o thon weed, an at Richmond, as weel, the Thames watter poored in a braid an shalla burn ben the leys o Hampton an Twickenham. As the watter spreid the weed follaed them, till the wracked hames o the Thames howe wir fur a whyle tint in this reid bog, fas ootlinn I explored, an a rowth o the wrack the Martians hid vrocht wis happit.

In the eyn the reid weed dwined near as faist as it hid spreid. A connachin disease, due, it’s thocht, tae the wirk o certain bacteria, sune grippit it. Noo bi the wirk o nat’ral selection, aa eirdly plants hae got a resistin pouer agin bacterial ills—they niver gie up wioot a wersh tyauve, bit the reid weed dwined like a ferlie already deid. The fronds becam fite, an syne shunken an easy brukken. They brakk aff at ony touch, an the watters that hid helpit their early growth cairried their hinmaist bitties oot tae sea.

Ma first act on camin tae this watter wis, of coorse, tae slaik ma drouth. I drank a rowth o it an, meeved bi an impulse, chaaed a pucklie fronds o reid weed; bit they wir wattery, an hid a seek, metallic taste. I fand the watter wis shalla eneuch fur me tae paiddle siccar, tho the reid weed grippit ma feet a bittie; bit the flood sune got deeper tae the river, an I turned back tae Mortlake. I managed tae makk oot the road bi means o the antrin wracks o its hooses an palins an lichts, an sae sune I won ooto this spate an made ma wye tae the knowe gaun up tae Roehampton an cam oot on Putney Ley.

Here the sicht cheenged frae the oorie an unkent tae the wrack o the kent: swatches o grun shawed the color o a cyclone, an in a fyew score yairds I wid cam upon perfeck unspylt airts, hooses wi their blinds snodly drawn an yetts steekit, as gin they’d bin left fur a day bi the ainers, or as gin their ainers sleepit inbye. The reid seggs wir less growthy; the heich trees alang the lane wir free frae the reid creeper. I hunted fur maet amang the trees, finnin naethin, an as weel I brukk intae a when seelent hooses, bit they’d already bin brukken intae an rypit. I reistit fur the lave o the daylicht in a busse, bein, in ma dweebleness, ower ferfochan tae gyang on.

Aa this whyle I saw nae human bodies, an nae merks o the Martians. I met twa hungeret-luikin tykes, bit baith hashed sidiewyes awa frae the advaunces I made them. Nearhaun Roehampton I’d seen twa human skeletons—nae bodies, bit skeletons, pyked clean—an in the wid bi me I fand the brukken an haivered banes o puckles o kittlins an mappies an the skull o a yowe. Bit tho I chaaed pairts o thon in ma moo, there wis naethin tae be gotten frae them.

Efter derk I warssled on alang the road tae Putney, far I think the Heat-Ray maun hae bin made eese o fur some rizzon. An in the gairden ayont Roehampton I fand a puckle o hauf ripe tatties, enneuch tae satisfee ma hunger. Frae this gairden I luikit doon on Putney an the river. The makk o the airt in the gloamin wis unca waesome: blaikened trees, blaikened, teem wracks, an doon the knowe the sheets o the floodit river, reid-skirpit wi the sggs. An ower aa—seelence. It fulled me wi unca terror tae think foo faist thon connachin cheenge hid cam.

Fur a whylie I thocht that mankind hid bin swypit ooto kennin, an that I stude thonner alane, the hinmaist chiel left leevin. Hard bi the tap o Putney Knowe I cam upon anither skeleton, wi the airms rugged aff an meeved a wheen yairds frae the lave o the corp. As I gaed on I becam mair an mair convinced that the eyn o mankind wis, apairt frae the antrin bodies sic as masel, already feenished in this pairt o the warld. The Martians, I thocht, hid gane on an left the kintra wracked, sikkin maet some ither airt. mebbe even noo they wir wrackin Berlin or Paris, or it micht be they’d gane northwird.

**Chapter 7: The cheil on Putney knowe**

I spent thon nicht in the howf that stauns at the tap o Putney Knowe, sleepin in a made bed fur the first time since ma flicht tae Leatherheid. I winna tell the needless tribble I hid brakkin intae thon hoose—efterwirds I fand the front yett wis on the snib—nur foo I raikit ilkie chaumer fur maet, until jist on the verge o wae, in fit seemed tae me tae be a skiffie’s’s bed chaumer, I fand a ratten-chaaed crust an twa tins o pineapple. The airt hid bin already raiked an teemed. In the bar I efterwirds fand a wheen biscuits an sannies that hid bin owerluikit. The lave I couldnae ett, they wir ower fozie, bit the former nae anely stoppit ma hunger, bit fulled ma pooches. I lichtit nae lamps, feart some Martian micht cam raikin thon pairt o Lunnon fur maet in the nicht. Afore I gaed tae bed I’d a whylie o restlessness, an stravaiged frae windae tae windae, teetin oot fur ony sign o thon monsters. I didnae sleep muckle. As I lay in bed I fand masel thinkin logical—a thing I dinna mynd daein since ma hinmaist argy-bargy wi the meenister. Durin aa the time atween ma mental state hid bin a hashin succession o blearie feelin states or a kinno gypit interest. Bit in the nicht ma harns, helpit, I jelouse, bi the maet I’d etten, grew clear again, an I thocht.

Three maitters warssled fur aa ma thochts: the killin o the meenister, the airts o the Martians, an the likely weird o ma wife. The former gaed me nae feelin o grue or guilt tae recaa; I saw it jist as a thing dane, a myndin unca unpleisunt bit aathegither wioot the sense o guilt. I saw masel syne as I see masel noo, hashed on step bi step tae thon hasty cloor, the craitur o a sequence o happenins heidin wioot devaul tae thon. I felt nae condemnation; bit the myndin, fixed, unmeevin, hauntit me. In the seelence o the nicht, wi thon sense o the nearness o God that whyles cams intae the quaetness an the derkness, I stude ma trial, ma anely trial, fur thon meenit o roose an fleg. I retraced ilkie step o oor spikk frae the meenit fin I’d fand him hunkerin aside me, heedless o ma drooth, an pyntin tae the lowe an rikk that raise up frae the wrack o Weybrig. We’d bin eeseless at wirkin thegither—grim chaunce hae taen nae heed o thon. Hid I jeloused, I’d hae left him at Halliford. Bit I didnae jelouse; an crime is tae foresee an dae. An I pit thon doon as I hae pit aa this story doon, as it wis. There wir nae witnesses—aa thon maitters I micht hae happit. Bit I pit it doon, an the reader maun makk his judgment as he likes.

An fin, bi a tcyauve, I’d pit aside thon pictur o a straikit corp, I faced the worry o the Martians an the weird o ma wife. Fur the former I’d nae data; I could pictur a hunner ferlies, an sae, tae ma sorra, I could fur the latter. An o a suddenty thon nicht becam awfu. I fand masel cockin up in bed, glowerin at the derk. I fand masel prayin that the Heat-Ray micht hae o a suddenty an wioot pain strukk her ooto o being. Since the nicht o ma return frae Leatherheid I hidnae prayed. I’d spukken prayers, fetish prayers, I’d prayed as heathens mummle cherms fin I wis in unca danger; bit noo I prayed hard, priggin steidfaist an wycely, face tae face wi the derkness o God. Fey nicht! Feyest in this, that sae sune as daybrakk hid cam, I, fa’d spukken wi God, creepit ooto the hoose like a ratten leavin its hidey-hole—a craitur scarce bigger, an inferior breet, a craitur that fur ony passin wint o oor maisters maun be huntit an killt. Mebbe they prayed wi smeddum as weel tae God. O a certainty, gin we hae larned naethin else, thon war his gien us peety—peety fur thon harnless sowels that thole oor domination.

The mornin wis bricht an fine, an the eastern lift sheened pink, an wis skirpit wi wee gowden clouds. In the road that rins frae the tap o Putney Knowe tae Wimbledon wis a nummer o puir harrigals o the fearie flood that maun hae poored Lunnonwird on the Sabbath nicht efter the fechtin stertit. There wis a wee twa-wheeled cairt screived wi the nemme o Thomas Lobb, Green­grocer, New Malden, wi a brukken wheel an a cast aff tin trunk; there wis a strae bunnet trampit intae the noo hardened dubs, an at the tap o Wast Knowe a heeze o bluid-merked glaiss aboot the cowpit watter troch. Ma meevements wir latchy, ma plans o the feintest. I hid a notion o gaun tae Leatherheid, tho I kent that there I’d the puirest chaunce o finnin ma wife. O a certainty, unless daith hid owertaen them faist, ma kin an she wid hae fled thonner; bit it seemed tae me I micht finn or larn thonner far the Surrey fowk hid fled. I kent I wintit tae finn ma wife, that ma hairt stooned fur her an the warld o men, bit I’d nae clear kenning o foo the finnin micht be dane. I wis likewise sherply awaur noo o ma strang alaneness. Frae the neuk I gaed, unner the hap o a wee wid an bushes, tae the edge o Wimbledon Ley streetchin braid an far.

Thon derk swatch wis lichtit in airts bi yalla whin an breem; there wis nae reid weed tae be seen, an as I creepit, cannie, on the side o the open, the sun raise, floodin it aa wi licht an virr. I cam upon an eident heeze o wee puddocks in a boggy neuk amang the trees. I stoppit tae keek at them, drawin a lesson frae their stoot will tae live. An neist, furlin o a suddenty, wi a fey feelin o bein owerluikit, I saw somethin hunkerin mids a boorach o busses. I stude regairdin thon. I steppit tae it, an it raise up an becam a cheil airmed wi a cutlass. I gaed up tae him slaw. He stude seelent an still, regairdin me.

As I drew nearhaun I saw he wis riggit oot in claes as fooshty an orra as ma ain; he luikit, forbye, as tho he’d bin rugged ben a sheugh. Closer, I tuik note o the green slime o sheughs melled wi the fite drab o dried dubs an sheeny, pit mirk swatches. His blaik hair drap ower his een, an his face wis derk an clorty an sunk, sae that at first I didnae ken him. There wis a reid cut ben the laigher pairt o his face.

“Stop!” he skreiched, fin I wis inbye ten yairds o him, an I stoppit. His voyce wis hairse. “Far dae ye cam frae?” he speired.

I thocht, luikin him ower.

“I cam frae Mortlake,” quo I. “I wis beeriet near the pit the Martians vrocht aboot their cylinder. I hae wirked ma wey oot an escaped.”

He raxxed oot a pyntin finger.

“There’s nae maet aboot here,” he reponed. “This is ma kintra. Aa this knowe doon tae the watter, an back tae Clapham, an up tae the side o the ley. There’s anely maet fur ane. Fit wey are ye gaun?”

I telt him slaw.

“I dinna ken,” quo I. “I hae bin beeriet in the wrack o a hoose thirteen or fowerteen days. I dinna ken fit his happened.”

He luikit at me dootfu, syne stertit, an luikit wi a cheenged expression.

“I’ve nae wint tae bide aboot here,” I gaed on. “I think I’ll gae tae Leatherheid, fur ma wife wis thonner.”

He raxxed oot a pyntin finger.

“It’s yersel,” quo he; “the cheil frae Woking. An ye wirnae killt at Weybrig?”

I kent him at the same meenit.

“Ye’re the sodjer fa cam intae ma gairden.”

“Gweed luck!” he reponed. “We’re lucky anes! Fancy *ye*!” He pit oot a haun, an I tuik it. “I creepit up a drain,” he telt me. “Bit they didnnae kill aabody. An efter they gaed awa I gaed aff tae Walton ower the parks. Bt—It’s nae saxteen days aethegether—an yer hair’s grey.” He luikit ower his shouder o a suddenty. “Anely a corbie,” quo he. “A body gets tae ken that birdies hae shaddas these days. This is a bittie open. Lat’s creep unner thon busses an spikk.”

“Hae ye seen ony Martians?” I speired. “Since I creepit oot——”

“They’ve gaen awa ower Lunnon,” quo he. “I jelouse they’ve got a bigger camp thonn. O a nicht, aa ower there, Hampsteid wey, the lift is hoatchin wi their lichts. It’s like a muckle toun, an in the sheen ye can jist see them meevin. Bi daylicht ye canna. Bit nearer—I hinna seen them—” (he coontit on his fingers) “five days. Syne I saw twa ower Haimmersmith wey cairryin a muckle ferlie. An the nicht afore last”—he stoppit an spakk impressive-like—”it wis jist a maitter o lichts, bit it wis somethin up in the lift. I think they’ve biggit a fleein-machine, an are larnin tae flee.”

I stoppit, on aa fowers, fur we’d cam tae the busses.

“Flee!”

“Aye,” quo he, “flee.”

I gaed on intae a wee booer, an dowpit doon.

“It’s aa ower wi humanity,” I telt him. “Gin they can dae thon they’ll jist gae roon the warld.”

He noddit.

“They will. Bit—It’ll ease maitters ower here a bittie. An mairower——” He luikit at me. “Are ye nae satisfeed it *is* ower wi humanity? I am. We’re doon; we’re threwshed.”

I glowered. Fey as it micht seem, I hidnae cam at this fack—a fack perfeck obvious sae sune as he spakk. I’d still held a dweeble hope; raither, I’d keepit a lifelang wey o thinkin. He repeatit his wirds, “We’re threwshed.” They cairriet siccar conviction.

“It’s aa ower,” quo he. “They’ve tint *ane*—jist a*ne*. An they’ve made their grip gweed an skaithed the greatest pouer in the warld. They’ve wauked ower us. The daith o thon ane at Weybrig wis a mishanter. An these are anely forerinners. They keepit on camin. Thon green starnies—I’ve seen nane these five or six days, bit I’ve nae doot they’re faain somewey ilkie nicht. Naethin’s tae be dane. We’re feenished! We’re threwshed!”

I gaed him nae repon. I sat glowerin afore me, ettlin eeselessly tae makk up some quanter thocht.

“This isnae a war,” quo the sodjer. “It niver wis a war, ony mair than there’s war atween man an emerteens.”

O a suddenty I recaaed the nicht in the observatory.

“Efter the tenth shot they fired nae mair—at least, until the first cylinder cam.”

“Foo dae ye ken?” speired the sodjer. I telt him. He thocht.

“Somethin wrang wi the gun,” quo he. “Bit fit gin there is? They’ll get it richt again. An even gin there’s a wyte, foo can it cheenge the eyn? It’s jist chiels an emerteens. There’s the emerteens biggin their touns, livin their lives, hae wars, revolutions, till the chiels wint them ooto the wey, an syne they gae ooto the wey. That’s fit we are noo—jist emerteens. Anely——”

“Aye,” I reponed.

“We’re ettable emmerteens.”

We sat luikin at ane anither.

“An fit will they dae wi us?” I speired.

“Thon’s fit I’ve bin thinkin,” quo he; “thon’s fit I’ve bin thinkin. Efter Weybrig I gaed sooth—thinkin. I saw fit wis up. Maist o the fowk wir hard at it skreichin an worritin thirsels. Bit I’m nae sae fond o skreichin. I’ve bin in sicht o daith aince or twice; I’m nae an ornamental sodjer, an at the best an wirst, daith—it’s jist daith. An it’s the chiel that keeps on thinkin cams throwe. I saw aabody hashin awa sooth. I thocht, ‘Maet winna last thon wey,’ an I turned richt back. I gaed fur the Martians like a spurgie gaes fur a chiel. Aa roon”—he wyved a haun tae the hyne aff—”they’re stervin in howpies, rinnin, trampin on each ither.…”

He saw ma face, an devauled awkward like.

“Nae doot mony fa hid siller hae gane awa tae France,” quo he. He seemed tae dauchle, mebbe tae apologise, met ma een, an gaed on: “There’s maet aa aboot here. Canned in shoppies; wines, speerits, mineral watters; an the watter mains an drains are teem. Weel, I wis tellin ye fit I wis thinkin. ‘Here’s intelligent bodies,’ I thocht, ‘an it seems they wint us fur maet. First, they’ll brakk us up—ships, machines, guns, toons, aa the order an organisation. Aa thon’ll gae. Gin we wir the size o emerteens we micht pu throwe. Bit we’re nae. It’s aa ower wechty tae stop. Thon’s the first certainty.’ Eh?”

I noddit.

“It is; I’ve thocht it oot. Verra weel, syne—neist; eenoo we’re catched as we’re socht. A Martian his anely tae gae a fyew miles tae finn a boorich on the run. An I saw ane, ane day, oot bi Wandswirth, pykin hooses tae bitties an raikin amang the wrack. Bit they winna keep on daein thon. Sae sune as they’ve sattled aa oor guns an ships, an blootered oor railweys, an dane aa the things they’re daein ower thonner, they’ll stert catchin us systematic, wylin the best an haudin us in cages an sic like. Thon’s fit they’ll stert daein in a whylie. Loshtie! They hinna stertit on us yet. Dae ye nae see thon?”

“Nae stertit!” quo I.

“Nae stertit. Aa that’s happened sae far is throwe oor nae haein the mense tae keep quaet—worryin thirsels wi guns an sic gyteness. An lossin oor heids, an hashin aff in boorichs tae far there wisnae ony mair safety than far we wir. They dinna wint tae bother us yet. They’re makkin their ferlies—makkin aa the ferlies they couldnae bring wi them, gettin maitters ready fur the lave o their fowk. Verra likely thon’s foo the cylinders hae stoppit fur a bittie, fur fear o cloorin thon fowk fa are here. An insteid o oor hashin aboot blin, terrifeed, or gettin steered up on the chaunce o brakkin them up, we’ve got tae redd oorsels up accordin tae the new state o maitters. Thon’s foo I wirk it oot. It isnae jist accordin tae fit a chiel wints fur his species, bit it’s aboot fit the facks pynt tae. An thon’s the notion I actit on. Toons, nations, ceevilisation, progress—it’s aa ower. Thon gemme’s ower. We’re threwshed.”

“Bit gin thon’s sae, fit is there tae live fur?”

The sodjer luikit at me fur a meenit.

“There winna be ony mair dashed concerts fur a million years or mair; there winna be ony Royal Academy o Arts, an nae fine wee feeds at rest’rants. Gin it’s leisure ploys ye’re efter, I jelouse the gemme is up. Gin ye’ve got ony genteel mainners or a dislike tae ettin peas wi a knife or drappin aitches, ye’d better haive them awa. They’ll be nae farrer eese.”

“Ye mean——”

“I mean that chiels like me are gaun on leevin—fur the sake o the breed. I tell ye, I’m deid set on leevin. An gin I’m nae wrang, ye’ll shaw fit intimmers *ye’ve* got, as weel, afore lang. We arenae gaun tae be exterminatit. An I dinna mean tae be catched either, an tamed an fattent an bred like a muckle coo. Fyauch! Fancy thon broon creepers!”

“Ye dinna mean tae say——”

“I dae. I’m gaun on, unner their feet. I’ve got it planned; I’ve thocht it oot. We chiels are threwshed. We dinna ken eneuch. We’ve got tae larn afore we’ve got a chaunce. An we’ve got tae live an bide free whyle we larn. See! Thon’s fit’s tae be dane.”

I glowered, bumbazed, an steered profunly bi the chiel’s virr.

“Ma Certes!” quo I. “Bit ye’re some chiel!” An o a suddenty I grippit his haun.

“Ach!” he reponed, wi his een sheenin. “I’ve thocht it oot, eh?”

“Gae on,” I priggit.

 “Weel, they fa mean tae escape bein catched maun get ready. I’m gettin ready. Mynd ye, it isnae aa o us that are vrocht fur wud breets; an thon’s fit it’s got tae be. Thon’s foo I watched ye. I hid ma doots. Yer shargeret. I didnae ken that it wis yersel, ye see, or jist foo ye’d bin beeriet. Aa thon—the kinno fowk that bedd in thon hooses, an aa thon dashed wee clerks that eesed tae bide doon thon wey—they’d be nae gweed. They hinna ony speerit in them—nae prood dreams an nae prood lusts; an a chiel fa hisnae ane or the ither—Loshtie! Fit is he bit flimflam an cannnieness? They jist eesed tae skoosh aff tae wirk—I’ve seen hunners o them, bittie o brakkfaist in haun, rinnin wud an sheenin tae catch their wee sizzon-ticket train, fur fear they’d get their jotters gin they didnae; wirkin at businesses they wir feart tae takk the tribble tae unnerstaun; fleein back fur fear they widnae be in time fur denner; bidin inbye efter denner fur fear o the back streets, an sleepin wi the wives they mairriet, nae because they wintit them, bit because they’d a bittie o siller that wid makk fur safety in their ae wee scunnersome traivel ben the warld. Lives insured an a bittie invested fur fear o mishanters. An on Sabbaths—fear o the hereaifter. As gin hell wis biggit fur mappies! Weel, the Martians will jist be a godsend tae them. Fine roomy cages, fattenin maet, cannie breedin, nae wirry. Efter a wikk or sae hashin aboot the parks an lans on teem stammacks, they’ll cam an be catched cheerie. They’ll be rael gled efter a bittie. They’ll winner fit fowk did afore there wir Martians tae takk tent o them. An the bar ne’er dae weels, an posers, an singers—I can pictur them. I can pictur them,” quo he, wi a kinno o dowie pleisur. “There’ll be ony amoont o feelin an religion lowse amang them. There’s hunners o ferlies I saw wi ma een that I’ve anely stertit tae see clear these hinmaist fyew days. There’s mony will takk maitters as they are—creashie an gypit; an mony will be wirriet bi a kinno feelin that it’s aa wrang, an that they oucht tae be daein somethin. Noo finiver maitters are sae that a heeze o fowk feel they oucht tae be daein somethin, the dweeble, an thon fa gae dweeble wi a heeze o complex thinkin, aywis makk fur a kinno dae-naethin religion, unca pious an uppity, an boo tae persecution an the will o the Lord. Verra likely ye’ve seen the same thing. It’s virr in a gale o fleg, an turned fair inside oot. Thon cages will be stappit wi psalms an hymns an Haley Willies. An thon o a less simple kind will wirk in a bittie o—fit is it?—eroticism.”

He dauchled.

“Verra likely thon Martians will makk pets o some o them; train them tae dae pliskies—fa kens?—growe sentimental ower the pet loon fa grew up an hid tae be killt. An puckles, mebbe, they’ll train tae hunt us.”

“Na,” I cried, “thon’s impossible! Nae human body——”

“Fit’s the gweed o gaun on wi sic lees?” quo the sodjer. “There’s chiels fa’d dae it cheerfu. Fit styte tae makk on there isnae!”

An I gaed in tae his certainty.

“Gin they cam efter me,” quo he; “Loshty, gin they cam efter me!” an drapped intae grim thochts.

I sat gaun ower thon maitters. I could finn naethin tae bring agin thon chiel’s rizzonin. In the days afore the invasion naebody wid hae queried ma harns superiority tae his—I, a kent an gweed screiver on philosophical maitters, an he, an ordnar sodjer; an yet he’d already set oot a situation that I’d scarce jeloused.

“Fit are ye daein?” I reponed sune. “Fit plans hae ye made?”

He dauchled.

“Weel, it’s like this,” quo he. “Fit hae we tae dae? We hae tae makk up a kinno life far chiels can bide an breed, an be secure eneuch tae bring the bairns up. Aye—wyte a bittie, an I’ll makk it clearer fit I think oucht tae be dane. The tame anes will gae like aa tame breets; in a fyew generations they’ll be big, bonnie, rich-bluidit, glekit—styte! The risk is that we fa bide wud will gae savage—dwine intae a kinno muckle, savage ratten.… Ye see, foo I mean tae bide is unner grun. I’ve bin thinkin aboot the drains. Of coorse those fa dinna ken drains think ugsome things; bit aneth this Lunnnon are miles an miles—hunners o miles—an a fyew days rain an Lunnon teem will leave them swete an clean. The main drains are big eneuch an airy eneuch fur onybody. Syne there’s cellars, vaults, stores, frae far bolt holes micht be vrocht tae the drains. An the railwey tunnels an subweys. Weel? Ye stert tae see? An we makk a clan—hairty, clean-thochtit chiels. We’re nae gaun tae wyle oot ony dirt that wauchts in. Shargers gae oot again.”

“As ye meant me tae gae?”

“Weel—I spakk, did I nae?”

“We winna argy aboot thon. Gae on.”

“Thon fa bide obey orders. Hairty, clean-thochtit weemen we wint as weel—mithers an dominies. Nae lazy quines—nae dashed rowin een. We canna hae ony dweebleness or gyteness. Life is real again, an the eeseless an fyauchy an ill trickit hae tae dee. They oucht tae dee. They oucht tae be willin tae dee. It’s a kinno disloyalty, efter aa, tae bide an blaad the race. An they canna be blythe. Maireower, deein’s nae sae dreidfu; it’s the fleg makks it coorse. An in aa thon airts we’ll gaither. Oor airt will be Lunnon. An we micht even ettle tae keep a watch, an rin aboot in the open fin the Martians are awa. Play cricket, mebbe. Thon’s foo we’ll save the race. Eh? It’s likely? Bit savin the race is naethin in itsel. As I say, that’s anely bein rattens. It’s savin oor lear an addin tae it is the aim. There chiels like ye cam in. There’s buiks, there’s models. We maun makk swatches o safe airts doon deep, an win aa the buiks we can; nae novels an poetry buiks, bit ideas, science buiks. Thon’s far chiels like ye cam in. We maun gae tae the British Museum an pyke aa thon books throwe. Speecially we maun keep up oor science—larn mair. We maun watch thon Martians. Some o us maun gae as spies. Fin it’s aa wirkin, mebbe I will. Get catched, I mean. An the main thing is, we maun leave the Martians alane. We maunna even reive. Gin we get in their wey, we clear oot. We maun shaw them we mean nae hairm. Aye, I ken. Bit they’re clivver bodies, an they winna hunt us doon gin they hae aa they wint, an think we’re jist hermless as rattens.”

The sodjer dauchled an laid a broon haun on ma arim.

“Efter aa, it michtnae be sae much we micht hae tae larn afore—Jist pictur this: fower or five o their fechtin machines o a suddenty stertin aff—Heat-Rays richt an left, an nae a Martian in them. Nae a Martian in them, bit chiels—chiels fa hae larned the wey foo. It micht be in ma time, even—thon chiels. Pictur haein ane o them bonnie things, wi its Heat-Ray braid an free! Pictur haein it in control! Fit wid it maitter gin ye brukk tae smush at the eyn o the run, efter a fecht like thon? I jelouse the Martians’ll open their bonnie een! Can ye nae pictur them, min? Can ye pictur them hashin, hashin—pechin an blawin an hootin tae their ither mechanical maitters? Somethin ooto gear in ilkie case. An sweesh, cloor, shoogle, sweesh! Jist as they are ficherin ower it, *sweesh* cams the Heat-Ray, an, loshty! Man’s cam back tae his ain.”

Fur a whylie the clivver virr o the sodjer, an the tone o promise an courage he tuik on, aathegither owerpouered ma thochts. I believed wioot devaul baith in his forethocht o the human weird an in the wirkability o his bumbazin ploy, an the reader fa thinks me glekit an gypit maun contrast his life, readin steidily wi aa his thochts aboot his subjeck, an mine, hunkerin feart in the busses an lippenin, divertit bi wirry. We spakk in this mainner throwe the early mornin time, an eftir creepit ooto the busses, an, efter luikin up at the lift fur Martians, hashed heidlang tae the hoose on Putney Knowe far he’d vrocht his lair. It wis the coal cellar o the placie, an fin I saw the wirk he’d spent a wikk on—it wis a burra scarce ten yairds lang, that he planned tae raxx tae the main drain on Putney Knowe—I’d ma first hint o the gulf atween his dwaums an his pouers. Sic a holie I could hae howked in a day. Bit I believed in him eneuch tae wirk wi him aa thon mornin til by noon at his howkin. We’d a gairden barra an shot the yird we hid agin the kitchie reenge. We fed oorsels wi a tinnie o mock-turtle soup an wine frae the neeborin press. I fand a fey relief frae the oorie oddness o the warld in this steidy darg. As we wirked, I turned his projeck ower in ma harns, an sune consarns an doots stertit tae rise; bit I wirked thonner aa the mornin, sae gled wis I tae finn masel wi a purpose again. Eftir wirkin an oor I stertit tae think on foo far a body hid tae gae afore the cloaca wis reached, the chaunces we hid o missin it aathegether. Ma first tribble wis foo we should howk this lang tunnel, fin it wis possible tae win intae the drain at aince doon ane o the manholes, an wirk back tae the hoose. It luikit tae me, as weel, that the hoose wis ill chusen, an nott a needless length o tunnel. An jist as I wis stertin tae face thon maitters, the sodjer stoppit howkin, an luikit at me.

“We’re wirkin weel,” quo he. He pit doon his spad. “Lat us stop a whylie” quo. “I think it’s time we gaed up tae the reef o the hoose.”

I wis fur gaun on, an efter a wee dauchle he tuik up his spad again; an syne o a suddenty I wis strukk bi a thocht. I stoppit, an sae did he at aince.

“Foo wir ye waukin aboot the ley,” I speired, “insteid o bein here?”

“Takkin the air,” quo he. “I wis camin back. It’s safer bi nicht.”

“Bit the wirk?”

“Och, a body canna aywis wirk,” he telt me, an straicht aff I saw the chiel plain. He dauchled, haudin his spad. “We should stop noo ,” quo he, “because gin ony cam nearhaun they micht hear the spads an drap on us unawaur.”

I wis nae langer in the mood tae objeck. We gaed thegether tae the reef an stude on a laidder teetin ooto the reef yett. Nae Martians wir tae be seen, an we wannert oot on the tiles, an sliddered doon unner the bield o the parapet.

Frae this airt busses happit the greater swatch o Putney, bit we could see the river aneth, a bibbly soss o reid weed, an the laigh pairts o Lambeth floodit an reid. The reid creeper sclimmed up the trees aboot the auld palace, an their branches streetched thin an deid, an haudin wizzened leaves, frae mids its boorichs. It wis fey foo aathegither dependent baith thon things wir upon rinnin watter fur their growth. Aboot us neither hid won a fittin; laburnums, pink meys, snaabaas, an trees o arbor-vitae, raise ooto laurels an hydrangeas, green an daizzlin intae the sunlicht. Ayont Kensington thick rikk wis risin, an thon an a blae haze happit the norlan knowes.

The sodjer stertit tae tell me o the kinno o fowk fa still bedd in Lunnon.

“Ae nicht last wikk,” quo he, “a puckle gypes got the electric licht wirkin, an there wis aa Regent Street an the Circus ableeze, stappit wi peintit an ragged drooths, chiels an weemen, dauncin an skirlin till daybrakk. A chiel fa wis thonner telt me. An as the day cam they becam awaur o a fechtin-machine staunin nearhaun the Langham an luikin doon at them. Heiven kens foo lang he’d binn thonner. It maun hae gien some o them a nesty turn. He cam doon the road tae them, an heistit up near a hunner ower fu or frichtened tae rin awa.”

Ugsome glisk o a time nae history will iver fully pictur! Frae thon, in repon tae ma speirin, he cam roon tae his grandiose plans again. He wis unca enthusiastic. He spakk sae brawly o the possibility o catchin a fechtin-machine that I mair than hauf believed in him again. Bit noo that I wis stertin tae unnerstaun somethin o his quality, I could jelouse the stress he pit on daein naethin ower faist. An I saw that noo there wis nae doot that he personally wis tae catch an fecht the muckle machine.

Efter a time we gaed doon tae the cellar. Neither o us wir keen tae restert howkin, an fin he suggestit a meal, I wis naethin laith. He becam o a suddenty verra generous, an fin we’d etten he gaed awa an cam back wi some braw cigars. We lichtit thon, an his cheerieness kinnlit. He wis fairly regairdin ma camin as a great happenin.

“There’s a wheen champagne in the cellar,” he telt me.

“We can howk better on this Thames-side burgundy,” quo I.

“Na,” quo he; “I’m host the day. Champagne! Ma Certes! We’ve a wechty eneuch darg afore us! Lat us takk a rest an gaither smeddum while we can. Luik at thon blistered hauns!”

An eftir this notion o a holiday, he insisted on playin cairds efter we’d etten. He larned me euchre, an efter pairtin Lunnon atween us, masel takkin the norlan side an he the sooth, we played fur pairish pynts. Ugsome an gypit as this will seem tae the serious reader, it’s aathegither true, an fit is mair bumbazin, I fand the caird gemme an puckle o the ithers we played verra interestin.

Fey harns o man! thon, wi oor species on the edge o daith or awfu doon-pitten, wi nae clear prospeck afore us bit the chaunce o an awfu eyn, we could sit follaein the chaunce o this peintit pasteboord, an playin the “gype” wi muckle delicht. Efterwirds he larned me poker, an I beat him at three tyeuch chess gemmes. Fin derk cam we decidit tae takk the chaunce, an lichtit a lamp.

Efter an eynless heeze o gemmes, we suppit, an the sodjer feenished the champagne. We gaed on smokin the cigars. He wis nae langer the eident regenerator o his species I’d met in the mornin. He wis still cheerie, bit it wis less fu o virr, a mair thochtfu cheerieness. I myndit he wun up wi ma health, gaed in a speech o smaa variety an mony dauchles. I tuik a cigar, an gaed upstairs tae keek at the lichts aboot which he’d spukken that bleezed sae greenly alang the Highgate knowes.

At first I glowered gypit ben the Lunnon glen. The norlan knowes wir happit in derkness; the lowes near Kensington sheened reidly, an noo an then an orange-reid lick o flame fleered up an vanished in the deep blae nicht. Aa the lave o Lunnnon wis blaik. Then, nearer, I perceived a strange light, a pale, violet-purple fluorescent glow, quivering under the night breeze. For a space I could not understand it, and then I knew that it must be the red weed from which this faint irradiation proceeded. With that realisation my dormant sense of wonder, my sense of the proportion of things, awoke again. I glanced from that to Mars, red and clear, glowing high in the west, and then gazed long and earnestly at the darkness of Hampstead and Highgate.

I bedd a verra lang time on the reef, winnerin at the ugsome cheenges o the day. I myndit ma feelins frae the midnicht prayer tae the gyte caird-playin. I’d a muckle revulsion o feeling. I myned I flang awa the cigar wi a kinno wastefu symbolism. Ma daftness cam tae me wi sair exaggeration. I seemed a traitor tae ma wife an tae ma kin; I wis fulled wi sorra. I decidit tae leave this fey untamed dreamer o great ferlies tae his booze an overettin, an tae gae on tae Lunnon. Thonner, it seemed tae me, I’d the best chaunce o larnin fit the Martians an ma kintramen wir daein. I wis aye on the reef fin the latchy meen raise.

**Chapter 8 Deid Lunnon**

Efter I’d pairtit frae the artillery cheil, I gaed doon the knowe, an bi the High Street ower the brig tae Fulham. The reid weed wis thrang at thon time, an near smored the brig roadwey; bit its fronds wir already fitened in swatches bi the spreidin disease that sune connached it sae faist.

At the neuk o the lane that rins tae Putney Brig station I fand a chiel lyin. He wis as blaik as a sweep wi the blaik stoor, leevin, bit eeselessly an spikklessly bleezin. I could win naethin frae him bit bans an angere breenges at my heid. I think I’d hae bedd bi him bit fur the breet-like luik o his face.

There wis blaik stoor alang the roadwey frae the brig onwey, an it grew thicker in Fulham. The streets wir awfu quaet. I fand maet—soor, hard, an fooshty, bit quite ettable—in a baker’s shoppie thonner. Some wey tae Walham Green the streets becam clear o pooder, an I gaed by a fite raw o hooses in a lowe; the soun o the burnin wis an unca relief. Gaun on tae Brompton, the streets wir quet again.

Here I cam aince mair on the blaik pooder in the streets an on deid corpses. I saw aathgether aboot a dizzen in the length o the Fulham Road. They’d bin deid mony days, sae that I hashed faist by them. The blaik pooder happit them ower, an saftened their ootlines. Ane or twa hid bin worriet bi tykes.

Far there wis nae blaik pooder, it wis unca like a Sabbath in the Toon, wi the snibbit shoppies, the hooses steekit an the blins drawn, the teemness, an the quaet. In puckles o airts reivers hid bin at wirk, bit rarely at ither than the maet an wine shoppies. A jeweller’s windae hid bin brukken lowse in ae airt, bit it luikit like the reiver hid bin flegged, an a nummer o gowd chynes an a watch lay skittered on the cassies. I didnae tribble tae touch them. Farrer on wis a bumshayvelt wumman in a howpie on a yett step; the haun that hung ower her knee wis cuttit an bled doon her roosty broon dress, an a brukken magnum o champagne vrocht a puil ben the cassies. She luikit tae be asleep, bit she wis deid.

The farrer I gaed intae Lunnon, the mair profun grew the quaet. Bit it wisnae sae mukle the quaet o daith—it wis the quaet o fearieness, o wytin. At ony time the wrack that hid already brunt the northwast borders o the toon, an hid connached Ealing an Kilburn, micht strikk amang thon hooses an leave them rikkin wracks. It wis a toon banned an teemed.…

In Sooth Kensington the streets wir clear o deid an o blaik pooder. It wis near Sooth Kensington that I first heard the skirlin. It creepit near unnoticed on ma kennin. It wis a sabbin cheengin atween tao notes, “Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla,” keepin on aa the time. Fin I passed streets that ran northwird it grew looder an hooses an biggins seemed tae deiden an cut it aff again. It cam in a full tide doon Exhibition Road. I devauled, glowerin tae Kensington Gairdens, winnerin at this oorie, hyne aff murnin. It wis as gin thon michty desert o hooses hid fand a voyce fur its fleg an alaneness.

“Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla,” maened thon superhuman note—muckle waves o soun swypin doon the braid, sunlichtit roadwey, atween the heich biggins on ilkie side. I turned northwirds, mervellin, tae the iron yetts o Hyde Park. I’d hauf hochtit tae brakk inno the Natural History Museum an finn ma wey up tae the taps o the touers, in order tae see ben the park. Bit I decidit tae haud tae the grun, far faist hidin wis easier, an sae gaed on up the Exhibition Road. Aa the muckle hooses on ilkie side o the road wir teem an quaet, an ma fitsteps echoed agin the sides o the hooses. At the tap, near the park yett, I cam on a fey sicht—a bus cowpit, an the skeleton o a shelt pykit clean. I worriet ower thon fur a whyle, an syne gaed ontae the brig ower the Serpentine. The voyce grew straanger an straanger, tho I could see nocht abune the hoosetaps on the north side o the park, barrin a heeze o rikk tae the nor wast.

“Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla,” maened the voyce, camin, as it luikit tae me, frae the apairt aboot Regent’s Park. The dowie greet wirked on ma thochts. The mood that hid cheered me passed. The maenin tuik a haud o me. I fand I wis verra trauchelt, fitsair, an noo again hungeret an thirsty.

It wis already bye noon. Foo wis I wannerin alane in this toon o the deid? Foo wis I alane fin aa Lunnon wis lyin in state, an in its blaik shroud? I felt unca lanely. Ma thochts ran on auld friens that I’d forgotten fur years. I thocht o the pysons in the chemists’ shoppies, o the liquors the wine sellers keepit ; I myndit on the twa drookit craiturs o wae, fa sae far as I kent, shared the toon wi masel.…

I cam inno Oxford Street bi the Merble Arch, an here again wis blaik pooder an puckles o corpses, an a coorse, gruesome guff frae the railins o the cellars o a wheen o the hooses. I grew verra droothy efter the heat o ma lang wauk. Wi unca tribble I brukk intae a public-hoose an get maet an drink. I wis ferfochan efter ettin, an gaed intae the parlour ahin the howf, an sleepit on a blaik shelt hair sofa I fand there.

I waukened tae finn thon dowie maenin still in ma lugs, “Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla.” It wis noo stoor, an efter I’d howkit oot a puckle biscuits an a cheese in the bar—there wis a maet safe, bit it held naethin bit wirms—I wannert on throwe the seelent hoosin squars tae Baker Street—Portman Squar is the anely ane I can nemme—an sae cam oot at the hinnereyn on Regent’s Park. An as I cam oot frae the tap o Baker Street, I saw hyne awa ower the trees in the clearness o the sunset the hood o the Martian giant frae which this skirlin cam. I wisnae terrifeed. I cam on him as if it wir a maitter of coorse. I watched him fur a whylie, bit he didnae meeve. He luikit tae be staunin an skirlin, fur nae rizzon that I could fand.

I ettled tae pit thegither a plan o daein. Thon ongaun soun o “Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla,” bamboozled ma thochts. Mebbe I wis ower weariet tae be verra feart. O a certainty I wis mair ill-faschent tae ken the rizzon o this scunnersome girnin than feart. I turned back awa from the park an struck intae Park Road, intendin tae gae roon the park, gaed alang unner the bield o the hooses, an won a sicht o this staunin, murnin Martian frae the airt o St. John’s Wid. Twa hunner yairds ooto Baker Street I heard a bowfin chorus, an saw, first a tyke wi a daud o fooshty reid maet in his jaas camin heidlang tae me, an syne a heeze o stervin tykes eftir him. He vrocht a braid curve tae jink me, as tho wis he feart I micht pruve anither competitor. As the bowfin deed awa doon the seelent road, the maenin soun o “Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla,” wis heard again.

I cam on the wracked haunlin-machine haufwey tae St. John’s Wid station. At first I thocht a hoose hid drappit ower the road. It wis anely as I sclimmed amang the wracks that I saw, wi a begeck, this mechanical Samson lyin, wi its tentacles bood an wracked an twistit, amang the wracks it hid vrocht. The forepairt wis skittered. It luikit as if it hid driven blin straicht at the hoose, an hid bin owercam in its owerpouerin. It luikit tae me syne that this micht hae happened bi a haunlin-machine escapin frae the keppin o its Martian. I couldnae sclimm amang the wracks tae see it, an the gloamin wis noo sae far on that the bluid wi which its cheer wis straikit, an the gnaaed girstle o the Martian that the tykes hid left, wir inveesible tae me.

Winnerin still mair at aa that I’d seen, I cairriet on tae Primrose Knowe. Hyne awa, ben a gap in the trees, I spied a secunt Martian, as quaet as the first, staunin in the park nearhaun the Zoological Gairdens, an seelent. A bittie ayont the wrack aboot the brukken haunlin-machine I cam upon the reid seggs again, an fand the Regent’s Canal, a squashy heeze o derk-reid plant.

As I gaed ower the brig, the soun o “Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla,” stoppit. It wis, as it wir, cuttit aff. The seelence cam like a thunnerclap. The derkenin hooses aboot me stude feint an heich an blearie; the trees tae the park wir growin blaik. Aa aboot me the reid seggs sclimmed amang the wracks, warsslin tae win abune me in the blaeness. Nicht, the mither o fleg an oorieness, wis camin on me. Bit whyle thon voyce soundit the alaneness, the teemness, hid bin tholeable; bi vertue o it Lunnon hid still seemed leevin, an the sense o life aboot me hid upheld me. Syne o a suddenty a cheenge, the passin o somethin—I didna ken fit —an syne a quaetness that could be felt. Naethin bit thon sterk quaet.

Lunnon aboot me luikit at me ghaistly. The windaes in the fite hooses wir like the ee sockets o skulls. Aboot me ma thochts fand a thoosan sounless faes meevin. Terror grippit me, a horror o ma bauldness. Afore me the road becam pit mirk as tho it wis tarred, an I saw a twistit makk lyin ben the pathwey. I couldnae bring masel tae gae on. I turned doon St. John’s Wid Road, an ran heidlang frae this untholeable quaetess tae Kilburn. I hid frae the nicht an the seelence, until lang after midnicht, in a cab chiel’s bield in Harrow Road. Bit afore the daybrak ma smeddum cam back, an whyle the starnies wir aye in the lift I turned aince mair tae Regent’s Park. I tint ma wey amang the streets, an sune saw doon a lang avenue, in the hauf-licht o the early daybrak, the curve o Primrose Knowe. On the tap, touerin up tae the dwinin starnies, wis a third Martian, straicht an still like the ithers.

A wud decision tuik haud o me. I wid dee an eyn it. An I wid save masel even the tribble o killin masel. I merched on reckless tae thon Titan, an syne, as I drew nearhaun an the licht grew, I saw that a heeze o blaik birds wir cerclin an gaitherin aboot the hood. At thon ma hairt gaed a lowp, an I stertit rinnin alang the road.

I hashed ben the reid seggs that smored St. Edmund’s Terrace (I wydit breist-heich ower a breenge o watter that wis racin doon frae the watterwirks tae the Albert Road), an cam oot on the gise afore the risin o the sun. Great mounds had been heaped about the crest of the hill, making a huge redoubt of it—it was the final and largest place the Martians had made—and from behind these heaps there rose a thin smoke against the sky. Against the sky line an eager dog ran and disappeared. The thought that had flashed into my mind grew real, grew credible. I felt no fear, only a wild, trembling exultation, as I ran up the hill towards the motionless monster. Ooto the hood hung strinngly skirps o broon, at which the hungeret birdies ruggit an rived.

In anither meenit I’d sclimmed up the yird rampart an stude on its tap, an the inside o the redoubt wis ablow me. A michty airt it wis, wi muckle machines here an thonner inbye it, muckle howps o gear an fey bields. An skittered aboot it, puckles in their cowpit war-machines, puckles in the noo rigid haunlin-machines, an a dizzen o them sterk an seelent an laid in a raa, wir the Martians—*deid*!—killt bi the foosht an disease bacteria agin which their systems wir eeseless; killt as the reid seggs wir bein killt; killt, efter aa man’s gears hidnae wirked, bi the humblest ferlies that God, in his wyceness, his pit on this yird.

Fur sae it hid cam aboot, as forbye masel an mony chiels micht hae foreseen hidnae fleg an mishanter blinnt oor harns. Thon germs o disease hae taen toll o fowk sin the stert o maitters—taen toll o oor prehuman forebears sin life stertit here. Bit bi vertue o this natura wylin o oorr kind we hae gotten resistin pouer; tae nae germs dae we gie up wioot a tcyauve, an tae mony—them fa cause fooshtiness in deid maitter, fur instance—oor leevin sels are aathegither immune. Bit there are nae bacteria in Mars, an finiver thon invaders cam, finiver they suppit an ett, oor microscopic friens stertit tae wirk their owercam. Already fin I watched them they wir eeselessly doomed, deein an rottin even as they gaed back an fore. It wis tae be expeckit. Bi the toll o a billion daiths man his bocht his birthricht o the yird, an it is his agin aa camers; it wid still be his wir the Martians ten times as michty as they are. Fur neither dae men live nur dee eeselessly.

Here an thonner they wir skittered, near fifty aathegether, in thon muckle gulf they’d vrocht, owertaen bi a daith that maun hae seemed tae them as hard tae unnerstaun as ony daith could be. Tae me as weel at thon time this daith wis unca fey. Aa I kent wis that thon things that hid bin leevin an sae coorse tae men wir deid. Fur a meenit I thocht that the wrack o Sennacherib hid bin repeated, that God hid repented, that the Angel o Daith hid killt them in the nicht.

I stude glowerin intae the pit, an ma hairt lichtened brawly, even as the risin sun strukk the warld like a low aboot me wi his rays. The pit wis still in derkness; the michty ingines, sae muckle an winnerfu in their pouer an complexity, sae unyirdly in their twistit makk, raise oorie an blae an fremmit ooto the shaddas tae the licht. A heeze o tykes, I could hear, focht ower the bodies that ley derkly in the foun o the pit, hyne ablow me. Ben the pit on its farrer tap, flat an muckle an fremmit, lay the muckle fleein-machine wi which they’d bin experi­mentin on oor denser air fin blicht an daih tuik them ower. Daith hid cam nae a day ower sune. At the soun o a skreichin owerheid I luikit up at the muckle fechtin-machine that wid ficht nae mair foraye, at the riven reid skirps o flesh that dreepit doon on the cowpit cheers on the tap o Primrose Knowe.

I turned an luikit doon the brae o the knowe tae far, cercled noo in birdies, stude thon ither twa Martians that I’d seen owernicht, jist as daith hid owertaen them. The ane hid deed, even as it hid bin greetin tae its friens; mebbe it wis the hinmaist tae dee, an its voyce hid gaen on perpetual til the force of its machinery wis foonert. They glentit noo, hermless tripod tooers o sheenin metal, in the brichtness o the risin sun.

Aa aboot the pit, an saved as bi a winner frae everlaisting wrack, streekit the muckle Mither o Toons. Thon fa’ve anely seen Lunnon happit in her dreich claes o rikk can scarce pictur the nyaakit clearness an brawness o the seelent desert o hooses.

Eastwird, ower the blaikened wrack o Albert Terrace an the riven spire o the kirk, the sun bleezed daizzlin in a clear lift, an here an thonner some bittie in the muckle heeze o reefs catched the licht an glisked wi a fite sherpness.

Northwird wir Kilburn an Hampsted, blae an stappit wi hooses; westwird the muckle toun wis dimmed; an soothwird, ayont the Martians, the green wyves o Regent’s Park, the Langham Hotel, the dome o the Albert Haa, the Imperial Institute, an the muckle hooses o the Brompton Road cam oot clear an wee in the daybrakk, the jaggy wracks o Westminster risin blae ayont. Hyne awa an blue wir the Surrey knowes, an the toors o the Crystal Palace glimmered like twa siller rods. The dome o St. Paul’s wis derk agin the daybrakk, an skaithed, I saw fur the first time, bi a muckle gappin hole on its wastern side.

An as I luikit at this braid swatch o hooses an factories an kirks, seelent an teem; as I thocht o the mony hopes an tyauves, the mony ghaists o lives that hid gane tae bigg this human reef, an o the faist an coorse wrack that hid hung ower it aa; fin I jeloused that the shadda hid bin rowed back, an that chiels micht still bide in the streets, an this dear muckle deid toon o mine be aince mair leevin an pouerfu, I felt a wyve o emotion that wis near tae greetin.

The torment wis ower. Even thon day the healin wid stert. The survivors o the fowk skittered ower the kintra—nae leader, nae law, nae maet, like yowes wioot a herd—the thoosans fa’d fled bi sea, wid stert tae cam back ..the pulse o life, growin straanger an straanger, wid stoon again in the teem streets an poor ben the teem squars. Fariver wrack wis dane, the haun o the killer wis stoppit. Aa the shargaret wracks, the blaikened skeletons o houses that glowered sae dowie at the sunlichtit girse o the knowe, wid sune be echoin wi the haimmers o the restorers an ringin wi the chappin o their trowels. At the thocht I raxxed ma hauns tae the lift an stertit thankin God. In a year, thocht I—in a year…

Wi owercamin force cam the thocht o masel, o ma wife, an the auld life o hope an douce helpfulness that hid stoppit foraye.

**Chapter 9: WRACK**

An noo cams the maist fey in ma tale. Yet, mebbe, it’s nae aathegether fey. I mynd, clear an cauld an vivid, aa that I did thon day till the time that I stude greetin an praisin God on the heid o Primrose Knowe. An syne I forget.

O the neist three days I ken naethin. I hae larned since that, sae far frae ma bein the first discoverer o the Martian dooncam, a wheen o sic gangrels as masel hid already fand this on the nicht afore. Ae chiel—the first—hid gane tae St. Martin’s-le-Grand, an, fin I bedd in the cab chiel’s hut, hid ettled tae telegraph tae Paris. Syne the blythe news hid sped aa ower the warld; a thoosan touns, jeeled bi awfu flegs, o a suddenty hashed intae frantic lichts; they kent o it in Dublin, Embro, Manchester, Birmingham, at the time fin I stude on the verge o the pit. Already chiels, greetin wi blytheness, as I hae heard, skirlin an stoppin their wark tae shakk hauns an skirl, wir makkin up trains, even as near as Crewe, tae gae intae Lunnon. The kirk bells that hid stoppit a fortnicht syne o a suddenty catched the news, till aa England wis bell-ringin. Chiels on bikes, thin-faced, bumshayvelt, birssled alang ilkie kintra lane skirlin o unhoped deliverance, skirlin tae thin, glowerin bodies o wae. An fur the maet!

Ower the Channel, ower the Irish Sea, ower the Atlantic, corn, breid, an maet wir teirin tae oor relief. Aa the shippin in the warld seemed tae be gaun Lunnonwird in thon days. Bit o aa thon I hae nae myndin. I driftit—a gyye chiel. I fand masel in a hoose o couthie fowk, fa’d fand me on the third day stravaigin, greetin, an spikkin styte ben the streets o St. John’s Wid. They hae telt me since that I wis singin some daft doggerel aboot “The Hinmaist Chiel Left Leevin! Hurrah! The Hinmaist Chiel Left Leevin!” Tribbled as they wir wi their ain maitters, thon fowk, fas nemme, much as I wid like tae gie ma thanks tae them, I may nae even gie here, nevertheless, they gied me a bield, an proteckit me frae masel. Apparently they’d larned somethin o ma story frae masel throwe the days o ma lapse.

Verra doucely, fin ma harns wir sattled again, did they brakk tae me fit they’d larned o the weird o Leatherheid. Twa days efter I wis jyled it hid bin wracked, wi ilkie sowel in it, bi a Martian. He’d swypit it oot o bein, as it seemed, wioot ony rizzon, as a loon micht connach an emmock knowe, in the mere miseese o pouer.

I wis a lanely chiel, an they wir verra guid tae me. I wis a lanely chiel an a dowie ane, an they tholed me. I bedd wi them fower days efter ma recovery. Aa thon time I felt a vague, a growin wint tae keek aince mair on fit wis left o the wee life that seemed sae blythe an bricht in ma past. It wis jist an eeseless langin tae feast on ma wae. They pit me aff. They did aa they could tae shakk me frae this morbidity. Bit at the hinnereyn I could haud aff the need nae langer, an, promisin faithfu tae gae back tae them, an pairtin, as I will confess, frae thon fower-day friens wi greets, I gaed oot again intae the streets that hid lately bin sae derk an oorie an teem.

Already they wir thrang wi returnin fowk; in airts even there wir shoppies ajee, an I saw a drinkin fountain rinnin watter. I mynd foo mockinly bricht the day seemed as I gaed back on ma dowie wey tae the wee hoose at Woking, foo thrang the streets an bricht the meevin life aboot me. Sae mony fowk wir aboot aawey, eident in a thoosan ploys, that it seemed unca that ony great pairt o the fowk could hae bin killt. Bit syne I tuik tent o foo yalla wir the skins o the fowk I met, foo hudderie the powes o the chiels, foo muckle an bricht their een, an that ilkie ither cheil still wore his fule claes. Their faces seemed aa wi ane o twa luiks—a lowpin gledness an vurr or a grim smeddum. Apairt frae the luik on the faces, Lunnon seemed a toon o gangrels. The kirks wir random giein oot breid sent bi the French government. The ribs o the fyew cuddies shawed dowie. Shargert speecial polis wi fite badges stude at the neuks o ilkie street. I saw nae muckle o the deevilment vrocht bi the Martians til I reached Wellington Street, an syne I saw the reid seggs sclimmmin ower the buttresses o Waterloo Brig.

At the neuk o the brig, as weel, I saw ane o the ordnar contrasts o thon unca time—a sheet o paper flichterin agin a heeze o the reid seggs, preened bi a stick that keepit it in place. It wis the poster o the first newspaper tae restart prentin—the *Daily Mail*. I bocht a copy fur a blaikened shillin I fand in ma pooch. Maist o it wis in blank, bit the lane compositor fa did the thing hid amused himsel bi makkin an ugsome scheme o advertisement stereo on the hinmaist page.

The maitter he prentit wis emotional; the news heid bummers hidnae as yet fand their wey back. I larned naethin new bar that already in ae wikk the owerluikin o the Martian mechanisms hid gaen up bumbazin results. Amang ither things, the screivin lat me ken fit I didnae believe at the time, that the “Secret o Fleein,” wis fand. At Waterloo I saw the free trains that wir takkin fowk tae their hames. The first breenge wis noo ower. There wir fyew fowk in the train, an I wis in nae mood fur ordnar claik. I tuik a compairtment tae masel, an sat wi fauldit airms, luikin disjaskit at the sunlichtit wrack rinnin by the windaes. An jist ootbye the terminus the train jinkit ower temporary rails, an on either side o the railwey the hooses wir blaikened wracks. Tae Clapham Junction the face o London wis clartit wi pooder o the Blaik Rikk, in spite o twa days o thunnerstorms an rain, an at Clapham Junction the line hid bin wracked again; there wir hunners o oot-o-wirk clerks an shop wirkers tcyauvin side bi side wi the ordnar navvies, an we wir duntit ower a hashed relayin.

Aa doon the line frae thonner the aspeck o the kintra wis wersh an fremmit; Wimbledon in partic’lar wis blichtit. Walton, bi vertue o its unbrunt pine wids, luikit tae be the least hurtit o ony airt alang the line. The Wandle, the Mowdie, ilkie wee burn, wis a muckle soss o reid seggs, in luik atween butcher’s maet an sowsed kale. The Surrey pine wids wir ower dry, hoosaeiver, fur the treelips o the reid climmer. Ayont Wimbledon, inbye sicht o the line, in puckles o nursery gruns, wir the heapit swatches o yird aboot the saxth cylinder. A nummer o fowk wir staunin aboot it, an a puckle o sodjers wir eident in the mids o it. Ower it flichteret a Union Jack, wyvin blythely in the mornin win. The nursery gruns wir aawey crammosie wi the seggs, a braid swatch o skyrie colour cuttit wi poorpie shaddas, an unca sair tae the ee. A body’s luik gaed wi unca pleisur frae the brunt greys an gurly reids o the foregrun tae the blae-green saftness o the eastward knowes.

The line on the Lunnon side o Woking station wis still unner­gaun sortin, sae I gaed doon at Byfleet station an tuik the wey tae Maybury, by the airt far masel an the sodjer hid spukken tae the hussars, an on by the airt far the Martian hid appeared tae me in the thunnerstorm. Here, meeved bi ill faschence, I turned aside tae finn, amang a taigle o reid leaves, the twistit an brukken dug cairt wi the fitened banes o the shelt skittered an chawed. Fur a whyle I stude regairdin thon leftowers.…

Syne I gaed back throwe the pine wid, thrapple-heich wi reid seggs here an thonner, tae find the landlord o the Spottit Tyke hid already fand beerial, an sae cam hame by the College Airms. A chiel staunin at an open hoose yett greetit me bi nemme as I gaed by.

I luikit at ma hoose wi a faist flash o hope that dwined richt aff. The yett hid bin brukken; it wis unsteekit an wis openin slaw as I cam. It yarked tee again. The curtains o ma study flichtered ooto the ajee windae frae far masel an the sodjer hid watched the daybrakk. Nsebody’d steekit it since. The brukken busses wir jist as I’d left them near fower wikks back. I hytered intae the haa, an the hoose felt teem. The stair carpet wis kerfuffled an stained far I’d hunkered, drookit tae the skin frae the thunnerstorm the nicht o the catastrophe. Oor dubby fitsteps I saw still gaed up the stairs

I follaed them tae ma study, an fand lyin on ma screivin-brod still, wi the selenite paper wecht on it, the sheet o work I’d left on the efterneen o the lowsin o the cylinder. Fur a whylie I stude reading ower ma set aside argyments. It wis a paper on the likely growth o Moral Notions wi the growth o the ceevilisin wey; an the hinmaist sentence wis the openin o a prophecy: “In aboot twa hunner years,” I’d screived, “we micht expeck——” The sentence eyndit abrupt. I myndit ma eeselessness tae sattle ma thochts thon mornin, scarce a month back, an foo I’d brukken aff tae get ma *Daily Chronicle* frae the paper loon. I myndit foo I gaed doon tae the gairden yett as he cam alang, an foo I’d lippened tae his fey tale o “Chiels frae Mars.”

I cam doon an gaed inno the ettin chaumer. Thonner wis the mutton an the breid, baith far gaen noo in rot, an a beer bottlie cowpit, jist as masel an the sodjer hid left them. Ma hame wis dowie. I saw the daftness o the feint hope I’d keepit sae lang. An syne a fey ferlie happent. “It’s nae eese,” quo a voyce. “The hoose is teem. Naebody’s bin here these ten days. Dinna bide here tae torment yersel. Naebody escaped bit ye.”

I wis bumbazed. Hid I spukken ma thocht alood? I turned, an the French windae wis ajee ahin me. I steppit tae it, an stude luikin oot. An thonner, dumfounert an feart, even as I stude dumfounert an feart, wir ma cousin an ma wife—ma wife fite an greetless. She gaed a feint skreich.

“I cam,” quo she. “I kent—kent——”

She pit her haun tae her thrapple—sweyed. I steppit forrit, an catched her in ma airms.

**Chapter 10: The Hinnereyn**

I canna bit maen, noo that I’m feenishin ma story, foo eeseless I’m able tae add tae the spikk o the mony speirins that are still unsattled. In ae respeck I’ll o a certainty win criticism. Ma ain lear is speculative philosophy. Ma kennin o comparative physiology is keepit tae a buik or twa, bit it seems tae me that Carver’s jelousin as tae the rizzen fur the faist daith o the Martians is sae likely as tae be regairded near as a pruven conclusion. I hae assumed thon in the body o ma tellin.

At ony rate, in aa the bodies o the Martians that wir luikit at efter the war, nae bacteria barrin thon already kent as terrestrial species wir fand. That they didnae beery ony o their deid, an the needless killin they vrocht, pynt as weel tae a hale ignorance o the process o rot. Bit likely as this seems, it’s bi nae means pruven.

Neither is the intimmers o the Blaik Rikk kent, that the Martians made eese o wi sic deidly effeck, an the generator o the Heat-Rays bides a bumbazement. The awfu mishanters at the Ealing an Sooth Kensington labs hae pit aff analysts fur farrer investigations on thon. Spectrum analysis o the blaik pooder pynts unmistakkable tae the presence o an unkent element wi a brilliant group o three lines in the green, an it’s likely that it jynes wi argon tae makk a compound that wirks at aince wi deidly effeck on some ferly in the bluid. Bit sic unpruven jelousins will scarce be o interest tae the ordnar reader, fur fa this story is screived. Nane o the broon scum that wauchtit doon the Thames efter the wrack o Shepperton wis owerluikit at the time, an noo nane is furthcomin.

The results o an anatomical owerluikin o the Martians, sae far as the prowlin tykes hid left sic an examination possible, I hae aathegither gien. Bit aabody kens the near hale specimen in speerits at the Natural History Museum, an the coontless drawins that hae bin vrocht frae it; an ayont that the interest o their physiology an makk is jist scientific.

A maitter o graver an warld wide interest is the chaunce o anither attack frae the Martians. I dinna think that near eneuch attention is bein gien tae this aspeck o the case. Eenoo the planet Mars is in conjunction, bit wi ilkie return tae opposition I, fur ane, expeck a renewal o their unnertakkin. In ony case, we should be ready. It seems tae me that it should be possible tae define the poseetion o the gun frae far the shots are dischairged, tae haud an ongaun watch on this pairt o the planet, an tae expeck the camin o the neist attack.

In thon case the cylinder micht be connached wi dynamite or artillery afore it wis cauld eneuch fur the Martians tae win oot, or they micht be killt bi the eese o guns sae sune as the screw lowse. It seems tae me that they hae tint a muckle gain in the failure o their first begeck. Mebbe they see it in the same licht.

Lessing his advaunced braw rizzons fur jelousin that the Martians hae actually succeeded in makkin a landin on the planet Venus. Sivven months syne noo, Venus an Mars wir in alignment wi the sun; that is tae say, Mars wis in opposition frae the pynt o view o an observer on Venus. Eftir a fey glimmrin an swippert merkin appeared on the unlichtit hauf o the inner planet, an near simultaneous a feint derk merk o a sim’lar swippert makk wis detected on a photo o the Martian disk. A body needs tae see the drawins o thon merks in order tae see fully their remairkable resemblance in makk.

At ony rate, whether we expeck anither incam or nae, oor views o the human future maun be greatly modifeed bi thon events. We hae larned noo that we canna regaird this planet as bein fenced in an a safe abidin airt fur Man; we can niver foresee the unseen gweed or coorseness that micht cam on us o a suddenty ooto space. It micht be that in the greater design o the universe this incam frae Mars isnae wioot its ultimate eese fur chiels; it’s rypit us o thon serene confidence in the future that is the maist fruitfu soorce o decadence, the gifts tae human science it his brocht are enormous, an it his dane muckle tae gie a heeze tae the notion o the commonweal o mankind. It micht be that ben the immensity o space the Martians hae watched the weird o thon pioneers o theirs an larned their lesson, an that on the planet Venus they hae fand a mair secure sattlement. Be that as it micht be, fur mony years yet there will o a certainty be nae relaxation o the eident scrutiny o the Martian disk, an thon fiery arras o the lift, the sheetin starnies, will bring wi them as they faa an unjinkable worry tae aa the sons o cheils.

The braidenin o chiel’s views that his resultit can scarce be exaggerated. Afore the cylinder drappit there wis a general thocht that throwe aa the deep o space nae life existed ayont the wee surface o oor teenie sphere. Noo we see farrer. Gin the Martians can reach Venus, there’s nae rizzon tae jelouse that the thing is impossible fur chiels, an fin the slaw cweelin o the sun makks this eirde a wrack, as at last it maun dae, it micht be that the threid o life that his begun here will hae streamed oot an catched oor sister planet in its toils.

Dim an winnerfu is the veesion I hae vrocht up in ma thochts o life spreidin slaw frae this wee seed bed o the solar system throwe the inanimate vastness o sidereal space. Bit thon is a hyne aff dream. It micht be, on the ither haun, that the wrack o the Martians is anly a reprieve. Tae them, an nae tae us, mebbe, is the future decreed.

I maun confess the worry an danger o the time hae left an ongaun sense o doot an insecurity in ma thochts. I sit in ma study screivin bi lamplicht, an o a suddenty I see again the healin glen ablow set wi lowpin flames, an feel the hoose ahin an aboot me teem an dowie. I gae oot intae the Byfleet Road, an vehicles pass me, a butcher loon in a cairt, a cabfu o veesitors, a wirker on a bike, bairns gaun tae schule, an o a suddenty they becam vague an oorie, an I hash again wi the sodjer ben the het, broodin seelence. O a nicht I see the blaik pooder derkenin the seelent streets, an the twistit corpses happit in thon layer; they rise up on me chittered an dug-bitten. They hunner an grow wudder, paler, mair ugsome, gyte distortions o humanity at last, an I wauken, cauld an wae, in the derkness o the nicht.

I gae tae Lunnon an see the eident thrang in Fleet Street an the Strand, an it cams ower ma harns that they’re bit the ghaists o the past, hauntin the streets that I hae seen seelent an waesome, gaun back an fore, speerits in a deid toun, the mockery o life in an electrifeed corp. An fey, as weel, it is tae staun on Primrose Knowe, as I did bit a day afore screivin this hinmaist chapter, tae see the muckle airt o hooses, blae an blearie ben the heeze o the rikk an mist, dwinin at last intae the vague laigher lift, tae see the fowk waukin back an fore amang the flooer beds on the knowe, tae see the sicht-seers aboot the Martian machine that stauns thinner yet, tae hear the stooshie o playin bairns, an tae recaa the time fin I saw it aa bricht an clear-cut, hard an seelent, unner the daybrakk o thon hinmaist great day.…

An maist fey o aa is tae haud ma wife’s haun again, an tae think that I hae coontit her, an that she his coontit me, amang the deid.