

WORLD WARS-PILOT (1ST 14 PAGES)

Written by

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Based on

H. G. Wells War of the Worlds 1897

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FADE IN:

Earth rotates slowly. A woman's voice, that of KATHERINE DARCY (27), distinctive Australian accent, goes on as the view narrows in on Europe. The words are from the beginning of WOTW.

KATHERINE (V.O.)

It is curious to recall some of the
mental habits of those departed
days. Yet across the gulf of space,
minds that are to our minds as ours
are to those of the beasts that
perish, intellects vast and cool
and unsympathetic, regarded this
earth with envious eyes...

EXT. 1898 LONDON, ENGLAND - EVENING

PIER ALONG THE THAMES. A mass of humanity clamors next to a steamship along the pier. Those well dress jostle with those who look like beggars. Smoke rises here and there from the city in the background.

KATHERINE (V.O.)

It was the beginning of the route
of civilization, of the massacre of
mankind.

JAMES CHRISTIAN (25) followed by PERCIVAL LONGFELLOW (25) fight their way through the crowd towards the edge of the pier. Each well-dressed but disheveled and haggard. They reach the edge, jostled around by the crowd.

Both look over the steamer as it moves away. Some people jump into the river in hopes of reaching her.

PERCIVAL

Can you see her?

James and Percival strain to find a person among the crowd upon the deck of the steamer.

JAMES

No! I pray God she got aboard
before this mob reach the pier.

Each fight to remain standing as the crowd heaves to and fro.

Struggling to stay erect, James' eyes go wide. Points.

JAMES (CONT'D)

There!

Aboard the steamer is Katherine, waves a purple bonnet as the steamer moves farther away. She too well dressed but her outfit is frumpy, torn here and there.

INTERCUT BETWEEN STEAMER AND PIER.

KATHERINE
(yelling)
James! James!

PERCIVAL
Thank God!

JAMES
Katy! Katy! Are you okay?

KATHERINE
Yes! You need to get out of London!

JAMES
Don't worry about us--

PERCIVAL
You get to my parents in
Lancashire. That's all that
matters!

Katherine looks frightened.

JAMES
Yes. Get there. When this is over
we'll...

Turns to Percival.

JAMES (CONT'D)
The ring?

Percival digs around his various pockets. Produces a small box. Hands it to James.

He takes it. Back to Katherine.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Here! Take this!

Percival pushes away people to let James hurl the small box towards Katherine.

She drops her bonnet into the Thames. Reaches for the box and catches it. Pulls it to her chest.

SMALL BROWN BOX. Thereon GARRARD & CO LTD. It opens, revealing a wedding ring.

She looks up and smiles back at James.

He smiles and waves.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Good... stay safe, my love!

She waves back. People around her look off in the distance. Fear appears on their faces. A woman next to Katherine points.

WOMAN
(screaming)
The machines!

Everyone on the pier turns. SCREAMS and GASPS rise from the crowd.

UNKNOWN MAN
We're doomed!

Along the river in the distance, three Martian tripods tower over the buildings of London. One enters the river.

James and Percival look back at the steamer. The water behind it churns with force as it speeds away.

More people jump into the Thames swimming after the steamer. Others flee from the pier.

JAMES
Dear God. They'll never make it!

INTERCUT BETWEEN STEAMER AND PIER.

The steamer heads away. From behind emerges the ironclad warship THUNDER CHILD. She heads towards the tripods.

PERCIVAL
A warship!

VOICE IN THE CROWD (O.S.)
It's the Thunder Child!

PERCIVAL
She can buy Katy and the others
some time.

Percival turns to leave, but James remains fixed on the steamer. Percival turns back.

PERCIVAL (CONT'D)
Come on, Jimmy boy. She's in good
hands. We need to get to the
regiment and join the fight.

James concedes and both leave the pier with others fleeing.

Katherine watches the two for a moment, then turns her
attention to the Thunder Child. The closest tripod hurls a
canister at the ship. It lands near and expels black smoke.

People around Katherine gasp. She clutches the ring box.

The Thunder Child emerges from the black smoke unharmed.

INT. BRIDGE OF THE THUNDER CHILD - CONTINUOUS

ENGINE ORDER TELEGRAPH. Hands move the two arms forward,
then back to FULL SPEED.

The Captain speaks into a large voice tube.

CAPTAIN
Give us all you have and keep it
stoked!

INT. BOILER ROOM, THUNDER CHILD - CONTINUOUS

Sweating, soot covered men heave shovels full of coal into
the boilers.

INT. BRIDGE OF THE THUNDER CHILD

The tripods loom closer dead ahead, all three now in the
water. The Captain moves to another tube.

CAPTAIN
Commence firing and keep firing
until you run out of shells!

He turns to the helmsman.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Steer strait between them. Will
bring all guns to bear.

INT. FORWARD GUN TURRET, THUNDER CHILD - CONTINUOUS

Men ram an 8 inch projectile into the breach of a large gun.
After this they ram in powder filled bags, then close the
breach.

EXT. THUNDER CHILD - CONTINUOUS

The large barrels of the forward turret elevate and fire.

MARTIAN TRIPOD. The head burst into pieces, lumbers forward and sinks.

Another behind it lifts one of its tentacle-like arms with a box at the end.

An intense FLASH OF LIGHT radiates from it. LOUD LASER HUMMING. The light cuts across the screen.

BLACK SCREEN. DEAD SILENCE.

EXT. LONDON - DAY

Amid the wrecked buildings and rubble-filled streets lay a fallen tripod.

Katherine's voice returns and goes on as scenes of destruction pass by. The words are those from WOTW, Epilogue.

KATHERINE (V.O.)
The broadening of men's views that
has resulted can scarcely be
exaggerated.

A small boy wanders through the devastation.

DEAD MARTIANS -large, brown humps with long, slender tentacles sprawled beside each- lay near the tripod. Carts, wagons, dead horses share the streets.

KATHERINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Before the cylinder fell there was
a general persuasion that through
all the deep of space no life
existed beyond the petty surface of
our minute sphere. Now we see
further.

The boy passes by the CORPSES OF MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN. Exposed flesh blackened. He hardly casts them a glance.

A SMALL TOY ROCKING HORSE lay amongst the rubble. The boy approaches it and picks it up.

KATHERINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 If the Martians can reach Venus,
 there is no reason to suppose that
 the thing is impossible for men,
 and when the slow cooling of the
 sun makes this earth uninhabitable,
 as at last it must do...

The boy holds the toy to his chest. He then looks up.

What remains of BIG BEN stands, half destroyed, looking as though the rest could fall at any moment.

KATHERINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...it may be that the thread of
 life that has begun here will have
 streamed out and caught our sister
 planet within its toils.

The boy sits and starts playing with the toy horse.

KATHERINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Should we conquer?

NOTE: Oddly, the last sentence -Should we conquer?- does not appear in modern editions of WOTW. Only in the original 1898 and subsequent ones through the mid 20th Century.

INT. MARS - DAY

VIEW OF MARTIAN LANDSCAPE FROM A WINDOW: In the distance, an approaching windstorm covers low mountains. The rising dust hid the dim, setting sun. Small pillars of dust rise from the level plain. Each kicked up by vehicles moving before them in the distance. Lights sprouted up along the avenues and buildings within the city beneath the window.

View drifts towards a holographic image of the Earth, slowly rotating above a table. Points of light dot the surface.

Around the table sit six Martians: Reddish-brown bodies, beak like mouths below large yellow eyes. Some use two of their tentacle like arms to hold what looks like a computer tablet. A third limb taps away on the small screen.

They speak with no emotion.

MARTIAN VOICE WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES.

OMA ER
 Still nothing. After five full
 astral revolutions- no contact.

SECHU AN

We must inform the Lugal of our opinion.

MARTIAN #3

Their genetic superiority made up for their primitive weapons.

MARTIAN #4

Total losses come to eight hundred fighters, twenty cylinders. Sixty fighting machines, fifty utility vehicles and five flyers.

SECHU AN

Much time to replenish. The *erinbala* are still strong.

MARTIAN #5

The decision not to initiate wave two was valid.

SECHU AN

The additional loss of force would have weakened our home forces. They will take advantage.

Their eyes share glances with one another.

ROTATING EARTH.

OMA ER (O.S.)

We will assume Earthers are now looking back at us with equal intensity and as far as their technology permits.

View of the ROTATING EARTH narrows in on a dot of light along the Yangtze River.

OMA ER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And now drawing their own plans against us.

ACT 1**INT. LARGE BARN - DAY**

A dozen or so men work crating up various items between the stables. VICTOR ENDICOTT (30) paces around, small pipe in mouth, overseeing the work. HAMMERING and SHUFFLING fill the air.

INT. LOFT ABOVE STABLES - CONTINUOUS

A HALF BOARDED WINDOW. A hand grasps one of the boards from the outside. Then another. A man wearing a tan toggle coat and bowler hat lifts themselves up into and through the gap in the boards.

The coat catches one of the splinters as the man moves forward. A LOW KRACK from breaking wood.

INT. LARGE BARN - CONTINUOUS

A MIDDLE AGED MAN stops his hammer mid swing. Looks up at the loft.

VICTOR (O.S.)
(loud, angry)
You there!

The man turns. Victor approaches.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Who said to stop?

MIDDLE AGED MAN
Thought I heard a noise, Gov.

VICTOR
The only noise I want to hear is
you hammering!

The man goes back to work.

LOUD CRASH.

Victor and everyone else looks over. A large CRATE has fallen and part of the contents exposed under packing straw: A cylinder with thick, cut wires sprouting from it here and there; a open funnel at one end.

Victor storms towards them.

INT. LOFT ABOVE STABLES - CONTINUOUS

At the edge of the loft, the man lifts his bowler covered head just enough to peek over: it's Percival, a few years older now. He watches the action below.

INTERCUT BETWEEN BARN AND LOFT.

VICTOR
Careful there!

Shamefaced worker go about correcting their mistake.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
None of you blokes want to get
paid... DO YOU!

Percival eyes the CRATE and CYLINDER.

PERCIVAL
(to himself)
Good Lord. Where'd they get that.

He slides back, then crawls away on fours.

VICTOR
All this is goin' to get to where
it's going in one piece! If the
squidies didn't kill you, dropping
some of these things will.

Percival continues his cautions crawl as hammering resumes.

A few moments later, he crashes through the loft to the stable below.

INT. LARGE BARN - CONTINUOUS

He tries breaking his fall but a LOUD CRASH AND THUD alerts everyone to his presence.

Everyone freezes and stares. Percival gets up hatless.

Awkward stares and silence.

VICTOR
What are you waiting for! Get him!

Percival bolts, reaching down to get his bowler. SHOUTING and RUNNING erupt.

He fights off one burly assailant. Then another. Eyes a door near the back. Makes a run at it.

BLOW TO HIS BACK. He falls sprawled on the floor. His bowler hat comes off again.

Two men manhandle him up. Victor approaches.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
And who might you be, eh?

Percival cocks a small smile. Victor punches him in the gut.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Maybe that'll get an answer out of you!

One of the other men steps up.

MAN #1
Oi! I remember him. The bloke I was going on about. Asking all those questions at the dock last week.

Victor turns back to Percival.

VICTOR
And you forgot to leave your calling card.

He belts Percival across the chin.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
That's mine.

Percival spits out some blood.

PERCIVAL
Forgive me, Mr. Endicott. I was told you were indisposed.

VICTOR
Right smart one you are. Sorry we wont be getting acquainted.

PERCIVAL
Pity. I was looking forward to some tea. It is about that time--

One of the men holding him jabs him in the ribs.

MAN #2
Parents taught you no manners.

PERCIVAL
Father's a vicar, if your curious.

VICTOR

A vicar, eh? Well then. He can say
a few words for you after they fish
you out the nearest river.

Victor reaches inside his coat. Produces a small revolver.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

We'll dump him once we get--

LARGE DOORS at the other end of the stable burst open. A
dozen police officers run in.

MAN #3

Bobbies!

Everyone scatters. Victor bolts towards the other end. Those
holding Percival let him go. He goes after Victor.

SHOUTING and FIGHTING fill the air. Victor weaves between
the crates as he runs. See Percival following.

Victor stops and fires two rounds at him. Percival dodges
behind some crates as both miss. Victor keeps going as does
Percival.

EXT. OUTSIDE BARN - CONTINUOUS

A set of doors open. A group of Victor's men start out, then
freeze.

A dozen soldiers stand with rifles raised, pointing at the
men.

Each man slowly lift their arms in surrender.

INT. LARGE BARN - CONTINUOUS

Victor nears a back door. Percival races up behind him.

He stops. Produces a funny looking pistol from under his
coat.

PERCIVAL

Victor Endicott!

Victor stops, turns and raises his pistol.

Percival pulls back on the trigger. The weapon lets out a
loud THUMP.

A wave of air hits Victor. His hat and pistol fall away as
he's thrown backwards. He hits the wall then falls limp.

Two officers race by Percival. The weapon in his hand smolders from the barrel. He moves a small lever on the side with his thumb. A CO2 looking cartridge falls from the handle onto the floor.

MR. THOMAS, a plain-clothes detective, walks up behind him as the officers drag Victor away.

MR THOMAS

I see you couldn't wait for the rest of us.

PERCIVAL

That was the plan. But some loose boards announced my presence prematurely.

He holsters his weapon.

MR THOMAS

Quite the pistol you have there.

PERCIVAL

We may not have figured out those heat rays, but we did learn a thing or two from the Martians. Of course, these little cylinders don't shoot out that black smoke they used. Not sure how they handle brigands. We prefer ours alive and talking. Save them for the rope.

He begins walking towards the center of the barn. He winces a bit as he walks, beginning to feel the pain of his fall.

MR THOMAS

And I believe this is yours.

Hands Percival his bowler hat.

PERCIVAL

Thank you. Tis my favorite.

Victor's men are headed or handcuff around the barn as Percival walks up to the crate that had fallen.

Both eye the contents.

MR THOMAS

What is it?

PERCIVAL

A Martian heat ray.

Mr. Thomas is shocked as Percival climbs up onto a nearby crate. Once atop...

PERCIVAL (CONT'D)

Your attention, please! In the name of his Majesty King Edward the Seventh, you are all under arrest for violation of the Martian Machine and Material Act of Nineteen Hundred. For those of you ignorant of the law, One, it forbids the possession, transportation and use of any Martian device. Two, ignorance of the law is no excuse.

He climbs off.

PERCIVAL (CONT'D)

(to Mr. Thomas)

We'll have our hands full cataloging and taking all this back to London.

MR THOMAS

We will. But your presence is requested elsewhere.

Mr. Thomas pulls out a telegraph and hands it to Percival.

MR THOMAS (CONT'D)

Forthwith.

EXT. LONDON - DAY

As Percival proceeds through the streets of London in a chamfered motorcar...

PERCIVAL (V.O.)

13 January 1907

My Dear Sister Beth,

I arrived in London this morning, summoned here by His Majesty the King himself for what I was told a matter of no small consequence. As I made my way by motor coach to Buckingham Palace, I was greatly impressed by what I saw. Having not been to London in some years, I was able to see the rebuilding efforts that have taken place since my last visit.

(MORE)

PERCIVAL (CONT'D)

A goodly number of the building brought down by the invaders have been renovated, and many other structures are in the midst of repair or being rebuilt with vigor. I even chanced to see several buildings constructed with steel beams, allowing them to reach greater height than previously. In the afternoon I was admitted into the King's presence, whereupon His Majesty and myself, along with Home Secretary Lord Salisbury and Lord Kitchner had the most delightful tea and cakes. The subject of our parley, I dare say, was quiet in opposition to the laxity of afternoon tea! Once again I find myself in special service to King and Country. As in the past, I must refrain from any particulars. But I can assure you, and I feel this with all my being, that the endeavor upon which I am to embark will go far to avenge the great wrong wrought onto our civilization. Please extend my love to Ma Ma and Pa Pa. I do pray that her garden is and shall remain as colorful as I oft remember it, due in no small part to her tireless efforts! And let Father know to add me to the prayers he renders each night before retiring. I will write again as soon as time permits.

Your Loving Brother,
Percival