

WORLD WARS

Pilot

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 growing larger as it approaches. A woman's voice, that of KATHERINE DARCY (27), a strong-willed Aussie with an ax to grind. Her 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. At most, terrestrial men fancied there might be other men upon Mars, perhaps inferior to themselves and ready to welcome a missionary enterprise. 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. The posh jostle with beggars. Smoke rises here and there from the city in the background.

KATHERINE (V.O.)

It was the beginning of the rout of civilization, of the massacre of humanity.

PERCIVAL LONGFELLOW (26), a proper, quick-witted man who has the habit of saying the right thing or keeping his mouth shut, follows JAMES CHRISTIAN (25) and fight their way through the crowd towards the edge of the pier. Each well-dressed but disheveled. 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?

Both 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

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 spring onto their faces. A woman next to Katherine points and screams.

WOMAN

The machines!

Everyone on the pier turns. SCREAMS and GASPS rise from the crowd. James and Percival look that way.

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

UNKNOWN MAN

We're doomed!

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.

JAMES (CONT'D)

A warship!

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!

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

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
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.

EXT. FORWARD GUN TURRET, THUNDER CHILD - CONTINUOUS

The large barrels of the forward turret elevate and fire.

EXT. THAMES RIVER - CONTINUOUS

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 BEAM radiates from it. LOUD LASER HUMMING. The light cuts across the water then 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 (with words added/omitted for clarity's sake).

KATHERINE (V.O.)
The broadening of our views that
resulted from the Martian invasion
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 other
planets, there is no reason to
suppose that such is impossible for
us, and when 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 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, rotating slowly 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 tentacles 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.
 (MORE)

MARTIAN #4 (CONT'D)
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 in
the southwestern part of the UK.

OMA ER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And now drawing their own plans
against us.

ACT 1

CAPTION: Nine years later.

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. He's a stout, mercurial man with loud voice and constitution to use it. 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. 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 cautious 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.