

Wayne Hancock

"Artilleryman And The Fighting Machine"

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The Artillery Man And The Fighting Machine

Journalist: The hammering from the pit and the pounding of guns grew louder. My fear rose at the sound of someone creeping into the house. Then I saw it was a young artilleryman, weary, streaked with blood and dirt.

Artilleryman: Anyone here?

Journalist: Come in. Here ? drink this.

Artilleryman: Thank you.

Journalist: What?s happened?

Artilleryman: They wiped us out. Hundreds dead ? maybe thousands.

Journalist: The heat ray?

Artilleryman: The Martians! They were inside the hoods of machines they?d made ? massive metal things on legs! Giant machines that walked ? they attacked us! They wiped us out!

Journalist: Machines?

Artilleryman: Fighting machines! Picking up men and bashing ?em against trees. Just hunks of metal, but they knew exactly what they were doing.

Journalist: Mmm. There was another cylinder came last night.

Artilleryman: Yes. It looked bound for London.

Journalist: London! Carrie! I hadn?t dreamed there could be danger to Carrie and her father, so many miles away. I must go to London at once.

Artilleryman: And me. Got to report to headquarters ? if there?s anything left of it.

Journalist: At Byfleet we came upon an inn, but it was deserted.

Artilleryman: Is everybody dead?

Journalist: Not everybody. Look! Six cannons with gunners standing by.

Artilleryman: It?s bows and arrows against the lightning. They haven?t seen the heat ray yet.

Journalist: We hurried along the road to Weybridge. Suddenly, there was a heavy explosion. The ground heaved, windows shattered and gusts of smoke erupted into the air.

Artilleryman: Look! There they are! What did I tell you?
Journalist: Quickly, one after the other, four of the fighting machines appeared. Monstrous tripods, higher than the tallest steeple, striding over pine trees and smashing them. Walking engines of glistening metal. Each carried a huge funnel and I realised with horror that I'd seen this awful thing before.
A fifth machine appeared on the far bank. It raised itself to full height, flourished the funnel high in the air ? and the ghostly terrible heat ray struck the town. As it struck, all five fighting machines exulted, emitting deafening howls that roared like thunder.

Ulla! Ulla!

Journalist: The six guns we had seen now fired simultaneously, decapitating a fighting machine. The Martian inside the hood was slain, splashed to the four winds, and the body, nothing now but an intricate device of metal, went whirling to destruction. As the other monsters advanced, people ran away blindly, the artillery man among them, but I jumped into the water and hid until forced up to breathe. Now the guns spoke again, but this time the heat ray sent them to oblivion

Ulla!

Journalist: With a white flash, the heat ray swept across the river. Scalded, half-blinded and agonized, I staggered through leaping, hissing water towards the shore, I fell helplessly, in full view of the Martians, expecting nothing but death. The foot of a Martian came down close to my head, then lifted again, as the four Martians carried away the debris of their fallen comrade?.and I realized that by a miracle I had escaped.

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