

Wayne Hancock

"Dead London"

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Dead London

Journalist: There were a dozen dead bodies in the Euston road, their bodies softened by the black dust. All was still, houses locked and empty, shops closed ? but looters had helped themselves to wine and food, and outside a jewellers some gold chains and a watch were scattered on the pavement.

Ulla!

I stopped, staring toward to sound. It seemed as if that mighty desert of house had found a voice for it's fear and solitude.

Ulla!

The desolating cry worked upon my mind. The wailing took possession of me. I was intensely weary, footsore, hungry and thirsty. Why was I wandering alone in this city of the dead? Why was I alive, when London in state in it's black shroud? I felt intolerably lonely, drifting from street to empty street, drawn inexorably towards that cry.

Ulla!

I saw, over the trees on Primrose hill, the Fighting Machine from which the howling came. I crossed Regents canal. There stood a second machine, upright, but a still as the first.

Ulla! UI-!

Abruptly, the sound ceased. Suddenly, the desolation, the solitude, became unendurable. While that voice sounded, London had still seemed alive. Now, suddenly, there was a change, the passing of something ? and all that remained was this gaunt quite.

I looked up and saw a third machine. It was erect and

motionless, like the others. An inane resolve possessed me. I would give my life to the Martians, here and now. I marched recklessly towards the titan and saw a multitude of black birds was circling and clustering about the hood. I began running along the road, I felt no fear, only a wild trembling exultation, as I ran up the hill towards the motionless monster. Out of the hood hung red shreds, at which the hungry birds now pecked and tore. I scrambled up to the crest of Primrose Hill, and the Martians camp was below me. A mighty space it was, and scattered about it, in their overturned machines, were the Martians ? Dead!.... Slain after all mans devices had failed, by the humblest things on Earth, Bacteria, Minute, invisible bacteria!
Directly the invaders arrived and drank and fed, our microscopic allies attacked them. From that moment ? they were doomed!

The torment was ended. The people scattered over the country, desperate, leaderless, starved?.. The thousands who had fled by sea ? including the one most dear to me ? all would return. The pulse of life, growing stronger and stronger, would beat again. As life returns to normal, the question of another attack from Mars causes universal concern. Is our planet safe, or is this time of peace merely a reprieve? It may be that, across the immensity of space, they have learned their lessons and ever now await the opportunity. Perhaps the future belongs not to us ? but to the Martians?

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