

WAR OF THE WORLDS: ABSOLUTE WAR

Guidelines

An 18thWall Productions Anthology
Curated by James Bojaciuk

No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's 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, and slowly and surely drew their plans against us.

General Carl von Clausewitz devised Absolute War. A war single-mindedly focused on the destruction of the enemy and attainment of a political victory (or conquest) by pure force.

Von Clausewitz rejected the theory.

But intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic have higher regard for Absolute War, and wage it in their devastation of the Earth...

War of the Worlds: Absolute War is a collection of short stories expanding on H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*. Generally, we're seeking to show the entire world's response to the Invasion.

What We Want

It's possible to read *The War of the Worlds* and assign it to any number of dates within a nearly 30 year period. **We'll be working from the assumption that the Martian Invasion occurred in June, 1896.** So far as fitting the novel into a real-world context, consider the narrator of *The War of the Worlds* to have been H.G. Wells himself, the narrator's wife to be Amy Wells, and the narrator's brother to be Frank Wells. The book detailing Wells' perspective of events was subsequently released in 1898.

Please don't rehash H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*. We have had countless adaptations, sequels, and "stories behind the story," which have copied Wells beat for beat. While we are treating Wells' account of the invasion as "canon" for every story, find new things to do within the context of *The War of the Worlds*.

For example, **do not consider yourself bound to the invaders' total domination of earth militaries.** History brims with technologically-disadvantaged cultures surviving invaders, and making them pay for every mile in blood. The British military, so far as the battles Wells was aware of, lost by trying to wage an expected and conventional war. Other countries may have fared better. This is well worth exploring.

Preference will be shown to stories set outside the United Kingdom. *We want to see the world at war, and a truly international invasion.*

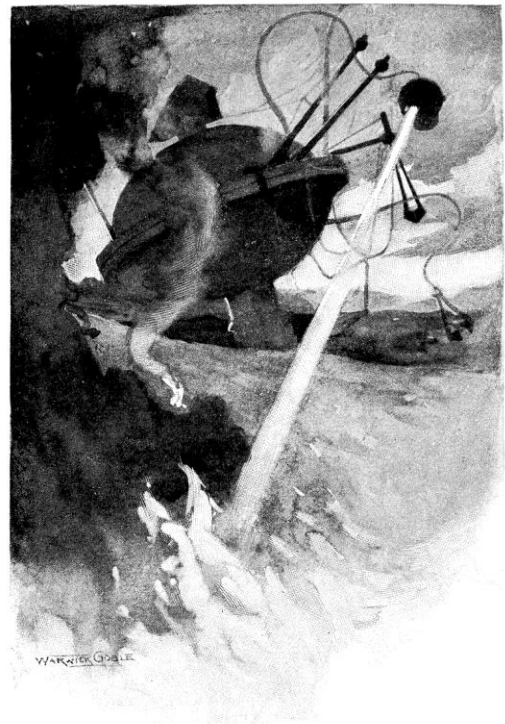
May I use Public Domain Characters? Yes.

Am I strictly bound to science fiction, or can I use magic, etc.? You may use magic and other historical fantasy/urban fantasy tropes, but please be creative. We're more likely to take something along the lines of *The Royal Occultist* or Manly Wade Wellman—with gentle, background, hidden, sublimated, or possibly false magic—than *Lord Darcy* or *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*.

May I use the Cthulhu Mythos? Yes, but I strongly encourage, and prefer, fresh takes. Show us something new. The more it feels like a copy/paste of Lovecraft (or previous stories mixing *The War of the Worlds* and Mythos fiction), the less interested I'll be.

Do you take reprints? Yes. Just let us know in the submission (this will not count against you).

What genre are you looking for? Surprise us. While you're bound to the outline of history and the canon of Wells' text, *you're free to explore historical fiction, military science fiction, fantasy, occult horror or*



detection, mystery, adventure, pulp, or literary. We're more concerned with receiving good, creative stories working from these guidelines than their specific genre. Variety makes a great collection.

Stories I Especially Want

(Doing one of these, and doing it well, is an all but guaranteed acceptance. Please query with a full pitch and the first 500-1k words. This list will be updated as authors reserve concepts.

Please have your pitch provided by December 1st, 2018.)

- Theodore Roosevelt, police commissioner, preparing New York City for the Invasion.
- Dinuzulu kaCetshwayo must try to manage a war from his exile on the island of Saint Helena, trying to bind the divided Zulu people together to defend the remains of their land from Invaders (this could also neatly set up that, later, he would be blamed—seemingly falsely—for commanding the Bambatha Rebellion from exile).
- Nellie Bly getting into the thick of the invasion to report on it, possibly while doing a piece on the recently-defeated Warriors of Dahomey.
- Bass Reeves, late in his career, trying to pursue a murderer across suddenly Martian-infested land (or, truthfully, anything featuring Bass Reeves).
- ~~Raffles the Amateur Cracksman having the heist of his life, as guards are gone and all he has to dodge are war machines, black smoke, and heat rays. Comparatively easy, surely!~~ **[Claimed.]**
- Moses Angel and his Jewish Free School doing relief work in London (possibly alongside Charles Spurgeon).
- Stories set in Tibet.
- Stories set in Japan. **[One accepted.]**
- Stories set in Mongolia.
- A story set in the Arctic Circle or northern Canada with Inuit (and other) peoples dealing with this invasion. How well do the Invaders adapt to the cold?

What We're Looking for in Submissions

- A complete, well-structured story.
- Competent characters acting in competent ways. Challenge the characters by putting them in situations where their competency doesn't necessarily apply (easy to do in a Martian invasion), forcing them to work out a creative solution. *Don't let anyone act the fool for convenience.*
- Creative uses of the Martian war-machines, as well as stories featuring their less-explored technology.
- Set during the Martian invasion of June, 1896 (as described in H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*).

What We Don't Want

Historical Inaccuracy

That's the big one. Nothing will make us pass on a story faster than historical inaccuracy. *We're willing to work with authors on such things as culture, clothing, food, and general language.* The background history of a story is easiest to fix, and we'll love talking about it with you.

But inaccurate attitudes are a sort of historical inaccuracy that will make us immediately pass on a story. This often leaves stories unfixable.

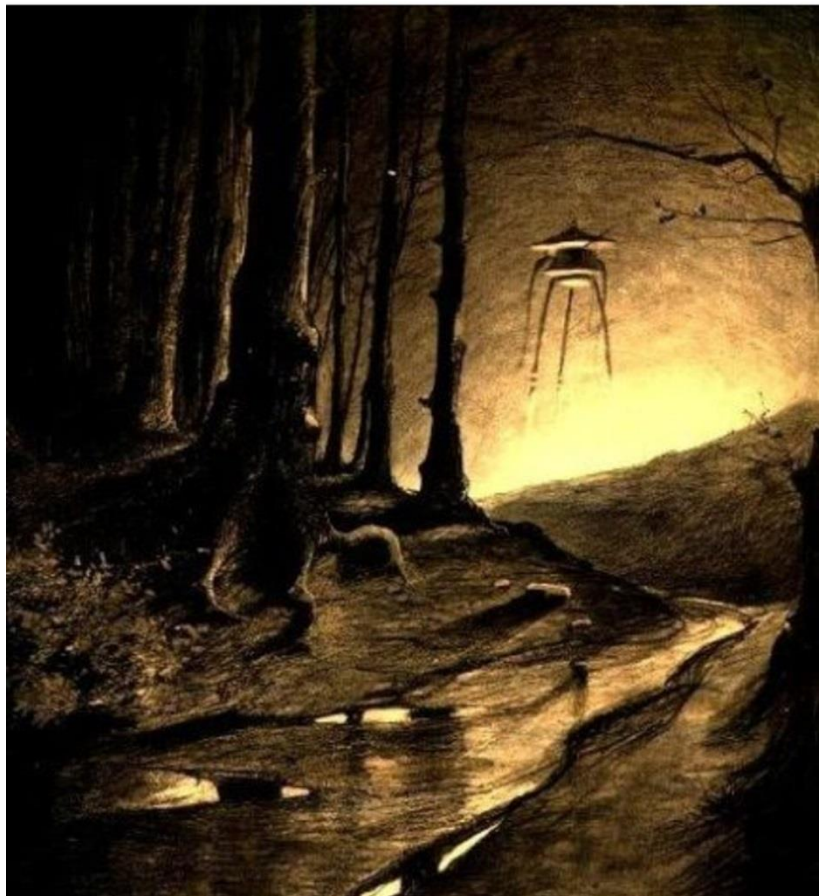
Bigotry is not the default of history. While you are welcome to explore such things, keep in mind, this should be *treated meaningfully* rather than as extraneous, exploitative, or a given. Presenting all—or the majority of—your characters as racist, sexist, or the like is one of the fastest ways to the reject pile. We're far more interested in nuanced portrayals of *people* than stock types.

People in the 1890s held a wide variety of opinions. **Reflecting this, instead of repeating the same stock figures, massively increases your chance of acceptance.**

Unacceptable Approaches

The following will be immediately rejected:

- Jack the Ripper.
- Victorian governments or scientists developing a nuclear bomb or WMDs.
- Warfare waged against Mars itself.
- The Martian invasion leading into an alternate history scenario—or alternate history scenarios themselves.
- Killing or significantly altering the lives of historical figures.
- H.G. Wells-focused stories (unless requested).
- Parody.
- A murder covered-up by the Invasion's chaos.



Common Historical Errors to Avoid

- Corsets were not uncomfortable, or dangerously binding.
- The Victorian English were not deeply repressed, and most “Victorian sexuality” commentary has no basis in reality (what does, only applied to upper-class Americans in New England). Most jokes about “Victorian sexuality”—such as skirts on piano legs and the insistence on the word “limbs”—were started by the English, about Americans.

Payment: 5% of the gross profit will be paid for each accepted story. These payments will be issued to you at quarterly intervals. Stories under 1,500 words will only receive 4% of the gross profit.

Rights: First World Digital and Print.

Deadline: January 20th, 2019

Word Count: 4,000-20,000

How to Submit your Story:

- All stories should be sent, as an attachment, to **waroftheworlds@18thwall.com**.
- The file must be formatted in .doc or .docx.
- The interior of the document must be in double spaced Times New Roman (12 point font).
- Indents must be placed through your system's Paragraph function; do not set indents by pressing tab or space. If you already have tabbed or spaced indents, please remove them first. Please use full em dashes (—).
- At the top of your document, please include William Shunn's submission header.
- Tell us a bit about yourself in the body of your email. Don't stress this, it won't make or break your submission. Please include your word count and bio.
- Place the collection you're submitting to, your name, and your story title in the subject line of your email. For example, "*War of the Worlds: Absolute War* / H.G. Wells / The Crystal Egg"

Special Thanks to Sophie Iles for the Banner Art
(<http://www.sophieiles.co.uk/>)

The Established World

Consider the following to be an at-hand guide rather than exhaustive, or containing all relevant information.

The Martians

“The Martians had what appears to have been an auditory organ, a single round drum at the back of the head-body, and eyes with a visual range not very different from ours except that, according to Philips, blue and violet were as black to them. It is commonly supposed that they communicated by sounds and tentacular gesticulations; this is asserted, for instance, in the able but hastily compiled pamphlet (written evidently by someone not an eye-witness of Martian actions) to which I have already alluded, and which, so far, has been the chief source of information concerning them. Now no surviving human being saw so much of the Martians in action as I did. I take no credit to myself for an accident, but the fact is so. And I assert that I watched them closely time after time, and that I have seen four, five, and (once) six of them sluggishly performing the most elaborately complicated operations together without either sound or gesture. Their peculiar hooting invariably preceded feeding; it had no modulation, and was, I

believe, in no sense a signal, but merely the expiration of air preparatory to the suctional operation. I have a certain claim to at least an elementary knowledge of psychology, and in this matter I am convinced—as firmly as I am convinced of anything—that the Martians interchanged thoughts without any physical intermediation. And I have been convinced of this in spite of strong preconceptions. Before the Martian invasion, as an occasional reader here or there may remember, I had written with some little vehemence against the telepathic theory.

“The Martians wore no clothing. Their conceptions of ornament and decorum were necessarily different from ours; and not only were they evidently much less



sensible of changes of temperature than we are, but changes of pressure do not seem to have affected their health at all seriously. Yet though they wore no clothing, it was in the other artificial additions to their bodily resources that their great superiority over man lay. We men, with our bicycles and road-skates, our Lilienthal soaring-machines, our guns and sticks and so forth, are just in the beginning of the evolution that the Martians have worked out. They have become practically mere brains, wearing different bodies according to their needs just as men wear suits of clothes and take a bicycle in a hurry or an umbrella in the wet. And of their appliances, perhaps nothing is more wonderful to a man than the curious fact that what is the dominant feature of almost all human devices in mechanism is absent—the wheel is absent; among all the things they brought to earth there is no trace or suggestion of their use of wheels. One would have at least expected it in locomotion. And in this connection it is curious to remark that even on this earth Nature has never hit upon the wheel, or has preferred other expedients to its development. And not only did the Martians either not know of (which is incredible), or abstain from, the wheel, but in their apparatus singularly little use is made of the fixed pivot or relatively fixed pivot, with circular motions thereabout confined to one plane. Almost all the joints of the machinery present a complicated system of sliding parts moving over small but beautifully curved friction bearings. And while upon this matter of detail, it is remarkable that the long leverages of their machines are in most cases actuated by a sort of sham musculature of the disks in an elastic sheath; these disks become polarised and drawn closely and powerfully together when traversed by a current of electricity. In this way the curious parallelism to animal motions, which was so striking and disturbing to the human beholder, was attained. Such quasi-muscles abounded in the crablike handling-machine which, on my first peeping out of the slit, I watched unpacking the cylinder. It seemed infinitely more alive than the actual Martians lying beyond it in the sunset light, panting, stirring ineffectual tentacles, and moving feebly after their vast journey across space.

“While I was still watching their sluggish motions in the sunlight, and noting each strange detail of their form, the curate reminded me of his presence by pulling violently at my arm. I turned to a scowling face, and silent, eloquent lips. He wanted the slit, which permitted only one of us to peep through; and so I had to forego watching them for a time while he enjoyed that privilege.”

“I crouched, watching this fighting-machine closely, satisfying myself now for the first time that the hood did indeed contain a Martian. As the green flames lifted I could see the oily gleam of his integument and the brightness of his eyes. And suddenly I heard a yell, and saw a long tentacle reaching over the shoulder of the machine to the little cage that hunched upon its back. Then something—something struggling violently—was lifted high against the sky, a black, vague enigma against the starlight; and as this black object came down again, I saw by the green brightness that it was a man. For an instant he was clearly visible. He was a stout, ruddy, middle-aged man, well dressed; three days before, he must have been walking the world, a man of considerable consequence. I could see his staring eyes and gleams of light on his studs and watch chain. He vanished behind the mound, and for a moment there was silence. And then began a shrieking and a sustained and cheerful hooting from the Martians.”

“It was on the third day, if my memory serves me right, that I saw the lad killed. It was the only occasion on which I actually saw the Martians feed.”

The Tripods

“And this Thing I saw! How can I describe it? A monstrous tripod, higher than many houses, striding over the young pine trees, and smashing them aside in its career; a walking engine of glittering metal, striding now across the heather; articulate ropes of steel dangling from it, and the clattering tumult of its passage mingling with the riot of the thunder. A flash, and it came out vividly, heeling over one way with two feet in the air, to vanish and reappear almost instantly as it seemed, with the next flash, a hundred yards nearer. Can you imagine a milking stool tilted and bowled violently along the ground? That was the impression those instant flashes gave. But instead of a milking stool imagine it a great body of machinery on a tripod stand... Seen nearer, the Thing was incredibly strange, for it was no mere insensate machine driving on its way. Machine it was, with a ringing metallic pace, and long, flexible, glittering tentacles (one of which gripped a young pine tree) swinging and rattling about its strange body. It picked its road as it went striding along, and the brazen hood that surmounted it moved to and fro with the inevitable suggestion of a head looking about. Behind the main body was a huge mass of white metal like a gigantic fisherman’s basket, and puffs of green smoke squirted out from the joints of the limbs as the monster swept by me.”

“The sprawling Martians were no longer to be seen, the mound of blue-green powder had risen to cover them from sight, and a fighting-machine, with its legs contracted, crumpled, and abbreviated, stood across the corner of the pit. And then, amid the clangour of the machinery, came a drifting suspicion of human voices, that I entertained at first only to dismiss.”

The Heat-Ray

“Then it was as if an invisible yet intensely heated finger were drawn through the heather between me and the Martians, and all along a curving line beyond the sand pits the dark ground smoked and crackled.”

“A generator of intense heat in a chamber of practically absolute non-conductivity. This intense heat they project in a parallel beam against any object they choose, by means of a polished parabolic mirror of unknown composition, much as the parabolic mirror of a lighthouse projects a beam of light.”



The Black Smoke

“Thick streamers of black smoke shot with threads of red fire were driving up into the still air, and throwing dark shadows upon the green treetops eastward. The smoke already extended far away to the east and west—to the Byfleet pine woods eastward, and to Woking on the west.”

“Once the tumultuous upheaval of its dispersion was over, the black smoke clung so closely to the ground, even before its precipitation, that fifty feet up in the air, on the roofs and upper stories of high houses and on great trees, there was a chance of escaping its poison altogether, as was proved even that night at Street Cobham and Ditton.”

“And beyond, over the blue hills that rise southward of the river, the glittering Martians went to and fro, calmly and methodically spreading their poison cloud over this patch of country and then over that, laying it again with their steam jets when it had served its purpose, and taking possession of the conquered country.”

“Now at the time we could not understand these things, but later I was to learn the meaning of these ominous kopjes that gathered in the twilight. Each of the Martians, standing in the great crescent I have described, had discharged, by means of the gunlike tube he carried, a huge canister over whatever hill, copse, cluster of houses, or other possible cover for guns, chanced to be in front of him. Some fired only one of these, some two—as in the case of the one we had seen; the one at Ripley is said to have discharged no fewer than five at that time. These canisters smashed on striking the ground—they did not explode—and incontinently disengaged an enormous volume of heavy, inky vapour, coiling and pouring upward in a huge and ebony cumulus cloud, a gaseous hill that sank and spread itself slowly over the surrounding country. And the touch of that vapour, the inhaling of its pungent wisps, was death to all that breathes.

“It was heavy, this vapour, heavier than the densest smoke, so that, after the first tumultuous uprush and outflow of its impact, it sank down through the air and poured over the ground in a manner rather liquid than gaseous, abandoning the hills, and streaming into the valleys and ditches and watercourses even as I have heard the carbonic-acid gas that pours from volcanic clefts is wont to do. And where it came upon water some chemical action occurred, and the surface would be instantly covered with a powdery scum that sank slowly and made way for more. The scum was absolutely insoluble, and it is a strange thing, seeing the instant effect of the gas, that one could drink without hurt the water from which it had been strained. The vapour did not diffuse as a true gas would do. It hung together in banks, flowing sluggishly down the slope of the land and driving reluctantly before the wind, and very slowly it combined with the mist and moisture of the air, and sank to the earth in the form of dust. Save that an unknown element giving a group of four lines in the blue of the spectrum is concerned, we are still entirely ignorant of the nature of this substance.”

The Flying-Machine

“‘And the night before last’—he stopped and spoke impressively—‘it was just a matter of lights, but it was something up in the air. I believe they’ve built a flying-machine, and are learning to fly.’”

“Across the pit on its farther lip, flat and vast and strange, lay the great flying-machine with which they had been experimenting upon our denser atmosphere when decay and death arrested them.”

The Handling Machine

“After a long time I ventured back to the peephole, to find that the new-comers had been reinforced by the occupants of no fewer than three of the fighting-machines. These last had brought with them certain fresh appliances that stood in an orderly manner about the cylinder. The second handling-machine was now completed, and was busied in serving one of the novel contrivances the big machine had brought. This was a body resembling a milk can in its general form, above which oscillated a pear-shaped receptacle, and from which a stream of white powder flowed into a circular basin below.

“The oscillatory motion was imparted to this by one tentacle of the handling-machine. With two spatulate hands the handling-machine was digging out and flinging masses of clay into the pear-shaped receptacle above, while with another arm it periodically opened a door and removed rusty and blackened clinkers from the middle part of the machine. Another steely tentacle directed the powder from the basin along a ribbed channel towards some receiver that was hidden from me by the mound of bluish dust. From this unseen receiver a little thread of green smoke rose vertically into the quiet air. As I looked, the handling-machine, with a faint and musical clinking, extended, telescopic fashion, a tentacle that had been a moment before a mere blunt projection, until its end was hidden behind the mound of clay. In another second it had lifted a bar of white aluminium into sight, untarnished as yet, and shining dazzlingly, and deposited it in a growing stack of bars that stood at the side of the pit. Between sunset and starlight this dexterous machine must have made more than a hundred such bars out of the crude clay, and the mound of bluish dust rose steadily until it topped the side of the pit.

“The contrast between the swift and complex movements of these contrivances and the inert panting clumsiness of their masters was acute, and for days I had to tell myself repeatedly that these latter were indeed the living of the two things.”

Red Weed

“And speaking of the differences between the life on Mars and terrestrial life, I may allude here to the curious suggestions of the red weed. Apparently the vegetable kingdom in Mars, instead of having green for a dominant colour, is of a vivid blood-red tint. At any rate, the seeds which the Martians (intentionally or accidentally) brought with them gave rise in all cases to red-coloured growths. Only that known popularly as the red weed, however, gained any footing in competition with terrestrial forms. The red creeper was quite a transitory growth, and few people have seen it growing. For a time, however, the red weed grew with astonishing vigour and luxuriance. It spread up the sides of the pit by the third or fourth day of our imprisonment, and its cactus-like branches formed a carmine fringe to the edges of our triangular window. And afterwards I found it broadcast throughout the country, and especially wherever there was a stream of water.”

The Crystal Egg

“There was also...a mass of crystal, worked into the shape of an egg and brilliantly polished.”

The crystal egg exists outside of *The War of the Worlds*, but generations of speculation have made it all but the unofficial prologue. Beings like Wells’ Martians watch the earth through the lenses of (at least) twenty crystal eggs. Feel free to explore these as a prelude to the invasion, or what value seeing Mars might have post-Invasion. However, if you use a crystal egg, please use one or more of the other nineteen on earth instead of the specific one seen in “The Crystal Egg.”