

*Humanity's dream of reaching the stars denied
by our greatest enemy...the monster within.*



THE MARTIAN ONES

Tales of Human Folly
GABRIEL HUGO

Promotional Sample



Mission, Texas

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#ZombieApocalypse

“Bring me the Martian ones back home,” the President stated emphatically as he took his seat in the Oval Office. “No matter the cost. The people demand a feel-good story. They want to feel like they are wining again! By bringing back the Martian colonists we will boost our nation's morale, which will get us a step closer out of this recession.”

His audience of one was a NASA official who was in charge of briefing the President on anything involving the Mars Four Corporation's colonization efforts (in partnership with NASA) on Mars.

“Mr. President,” said the NASA official. “There is just one thing to consider before bringing back the crew, sir.”

“What's that?”

“That it may not be at all possible to accommodate them anywhere in the public sphere other than at one of our maximum-security facilities...uh, to contain any possible contagion, sir.”

“Well that won't work. I need them to be accessible to the American people. Americans need to be able to not only see them but touch them and stand next to them taking selfies and all. You get me?”

“Yes, sir, Mr. President. Absolutely I understand. But there is,” the NASA official hesitated briefly, “...a very critical issue at hand that we just cannot be certain how to handle.”

“What exactly are you talking about?”

“Well, we have discovered a certain kind of...what seems like...a bug.”

“A bug? How's that possible? I thought you nerdy scientist-types agreed there was no life on that planet.”

“Technically there isn’t, sir,” the official said coyly as he adjusted his undersized sports jacket and straightened his bifocals.

“...You see, what we have discovered is what you could essentially call a fossil. It could present a problem when exposed to Earth atmosphere.”

“Ok, let me get this straight. You are worried that a *fossil* will present a problem here on Earth. But who the hell asked you to bring back any fossils from Mars? I specifically told you to bring back the Martian colonists only.”

“Oh, of course, sir. My apologies for not explaining myself thoroughly. See, these fossils are essentially microscopic and, what’s worse, they are ubiquitous.”

“What the hell does that mean? Speak to me in plain English, damnit! What exactly is the problem!”

“Well, sir, it means they are microscopic and there are so many that they are practically everywhere on the Martian atmosphere. The fact that they are so tiny is what presents a problem, since they can literally penetrate any suit or equipment our astronauts use on Mars. We are almost certain that these microscopic ‘fossils’ will also be present on or even inside the colonists themselves. And the problem with that, sir, is that these critters might not be fossils altogether...They might be a kind of living dead organism.”

The President had so-far exercised some restraint, allowing the NASA official to voice their concerns. But the last statement made the President's blood boil. He lashed out at the official saying,

“What kind of sci-fi bullshit have you brought to me today? You expect me to scrap these plans based on your weak evidence about some goddamn microscopic fossil from Mars? Get the fuck out of here!”

“Forgive me, Mr. President but I feel that I must give you a full accounting of exactly what it is that we are worried about, sir. See, as I mentioned, they appear as fossils to us only because it seems they have been inactive for who knows how long. But there is another theory floating around among our scientists...”

The official paused as he noticed the President quite visibly losing all remaining patience. He began to breath loudly, spreading his nostrils wide and tightening his lips. This produced what would have appeared to the gullible as a smile, but in actuality, it was the President's way of inadvertently announcing that he was about to rise to his feet and charge on them, like a demon bull. The official had seen that reaction before so he knew he didn't have much more time with the President.

He sped up his report saying, "In closing, some scientists have noted that there is reason to believe those microbes to be in a hibernation-state. There is no telling if they went into hibernation after the end of life-bearing conditions on Mars, or if they are recent arrivals who would be totally revived here on Earth, since they are--or were at one point--carbon-based beings dependent on oxygen, water, and other conditions that give life it's impetus."

"Look here, you two-bit scientist nerd. There is no way this mission is going to be stopped by some pansy-ass, pencil neck like yourself. You listen to me carefully, and listen good. You will say nothing to anyone else about what we discussed here today, you got it? Because if you do...", the President threatened as he rose to his feet and reached across, grabbing the official by the neck tie pulling him closer until he had him splayed across the Presidential desk, "I will make sure that you and everyone you love are thrown into the darkest, ugliest hole in the ground where no one will ever hear your screams and nobody will know of you again. And I will personally come pay you a visit every birthday and major holiday you got left in your miserable nerd life just to ram my foot all the way up your ass. You got that!!!"

"Yes, sir. Y-yes, Mr. President, sir," responded the official, the fright having caused the blood from his skin to retreat, leaving him looking pale, shuddering, and unable to breath properly.

What was most horrifying to the official was the graveness in the severity of the President's threat. He believed every word of it. He knew the President had meant what he said in the most literal sense. He was certain inasmuch as he had seen it in the abyss of the President's eyes, where there was nothing, not even a soul, but only darkness. The wide-eyed official trembled as he slowly stepped backwards towards the door waiting for the President to dismiss him with the usual wave of his hand.

The rest of the tragic tale about the first outbreak of the unknown virus played out like a series on television. The first stage of the outbreak started with the President on a public news conference welcoming the Martian colonists. For television viewers, it may have appeared quite normal with the exception of the awkward, lethargic movements of the Martian colonists. They all seemed dumbstruck...static; as if they had trouble hearing the President as he welcomed them

home, trying to shake their hands. They hardly smiled. The reporters vied against each other fervently trying to get the exclusive, but the Martians ones simply stood there, completely disinterested, looking past them.

News correspondents on-site stood stiff, bewildered at what was unfolding. Some looked at the cameramen shooting live and at their producers for direction. They soon realized that there was no option but to turn it back to anchorwomen or men at their corresponding studios. The anchors quickly had to bring in so-called experts, specialists, and doctors--anyone whom they might have standing-by to comment as to why the Martians seemed to be acting so strangely. The doctors and specialists had similar diagnoses: the Martians were quite possibly experiencing a certain kind of space lag, and some mild version of PTSD after having been on Mars for two years and suddenly being brought back to Earth.

The second stage of the outbreak followed with TV camera crews capturing images of the Martians being paraded through Fifth Avenue in New York. Then a scene of chaos erupted after the astronauts collapsed in the middle of the procession, seemingly affected simultaneously by something in the air. Emergency personnel attended them immediately. They seemed to recover but something about them didn't look right. They began to attack the emergency responders, then the public at large. Everyone started running for their lives, trampling each other and the camera crews who were still filming the unfolding panic in the streets. Police officers pulled their guns and unloaded them on the Martian crew at will, but they seemed immune to bullets and, therefore, unstoppable. They overwhelmed the police. The people they attacked fell dead but then got back up after some moments and joined the Martians in attacking all living humans.

Back at the White House in Washington, an aide to the President came urgently running down the hall toward the oval office. He knocked rapidly and entered before getting the go ahead. The aide had a message of national security importance, therefore, the President would understand him taking the liberty to let himself in... or so he hoped. He found the President sitting on his chair seemingly looking out the window as if in deep contemplation.

“Mr. President. I have urgent news,” said the aide at the back of the chair which completely concealed the President's head. All he could see was the Commander in Chief's bare knees, which protruded through the bathrobe he was wearing.

“There has been an incident on Fifth Avenue, sir. There is chaos spreading everywhere. What should we do? The generals have asked us to get your approval to enact martial law so they can go in and quell the mayhem.”

The aide moved closer. As he did this, he noticed the President holding his phone in his hand, and on

the screen the aide spotted the President's Twitter profile. He apparently was in the middle of a tweet. But his thumb seemed to hesitate to finish the message and post it.

"Sir...", the aide said, slowly inching toward his boss. "Mr. President?"

The President remained silent. The aide reached the chair, and noticed the leader of the free world seemingly frozen in his seat. He delicately touched the backrest to swivel the chair around to face him. As he did, he noticed that the President looked strange. A festering, orange slime oozed down most of his face and his eyes had a greenish hue. Those eyes seemed to be looking past the aide and off into space. Dead. But suddenly they readjusted and stared straight at the official.

Without warning, the President (or the thing that used to be the Commander in Chief of the United States) leapt from the chair tackling the aide to the floor and devouring his face. Soon the aide, too, had turned into a deformed--beyond dead, but not quite living--creature bearing all his teeth as the flesh from his face, including his nose, were gone. White House staff and cabinet members found themselves under attack by the aide and the now Zombie-in-Chief, as he walked down the halls, bathrobe wide open, exposing his naked body in search of the living. On the screen of his phone, which was still gripped in one hand, was the Twitter feed trending:

#ZombieApocalypse

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