

SPACE 1889

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RED SANDS

Hear me, my people! Gather round and listen! From beyond the skies the invaders came, a world full of rapacious beings who called themselves "Earthmen," but we call red devils.

The red devils have returned, spreading like a dirty plague among the planets, carrying their prejudice and belligerence with them.

Too late our leaders discovered the Earthmen would not be satisfied with simple trade but desired conquest, tyranny, and enslavement in the guise of "civilizing the heathen."

Too late they realized the violent power the Earthmen had—advanced rifles, cannons capable of ranges far beyond our own, and rapid-firing guns that could tear apart our massed legions from long distance.

They stole our flying technology and placed it in ships clad in metal, powered by foul-smelling fuels from resources squandered as cavalierly as our long-lost ancestors. Now, they maneuver around us, ignoring us like we ignore the durge fly, confident in their might and fearing only each other.

But in the hills and back streets one can feel the resentment building. The Ground Cleansers' ranks are swelling and the Cult of the Worm is laboring toward the surface. I hear a messiah is arising who will rally our people and splash our sands with the Earthmen's blood!

Listen, my people, and harken to my words—look for the Red Sands!

—Overheard ranting of the street prophet Yurias, by Sergeant Major Ian McSweeny, 1st Syrtis Major Native Infantry Battalion A, Syrtis Major Colonial Brigade

SPACE 1889: RED SANDS

India may be the jewel of Queen Victoria's English Empire on Earth, but other precious stones shine brighter. The finest of these is Mars. First visited by Thomas Edison and Jack Armstrong in 1870, Mars inflamed the imaginations of Earthmen and lit the torch of exploration to the other planets.

Two decades have only touched the shell of the various worlds. Dry Mars, while smaller than Earth, has almost equal surface land to probe. Moreover, Mars has wonders galore! Its canals make the Suez Canal of Earth seem a city sewer drain. The pumps, locks, and water movers are so far advanced that after almost twenty years the finest engineers of Earth have yet to decipher their mechanisms.

But they will. After all, Earthmen have invented machines that record and play voices, light without a flame, engines that consume liquid fuel rather than wood or coal, even

Barely getting out with our lives, we returned from the Belt in secret, by routes I'll not divulge to ink and paper. Suffice to say the Captain and Helmsman were amenable to a far longer journey and the crossing of a few additional ether waves to ensure no further intervention by our enigmatic nemeses. The mysterious assassins already murdered our Trimman by poison, poor devil, and Captain Cooper would brook no further delay.

The translation of these glyphs remains foremost in my mind, for if the writings of the Egyptians and Vulcans point to a common source, the very implications could be so staggering as to unseat all prior assumptions.

Only the most effete among our readership will find Ms. Mathieu's performance acceptable. There can be no denying that she makes the role her own—sadly, she does so at the expense of the libretto. Can there be any doubt her many non-sequiturs and numerical asides are an attempt to inject her nouveau leanings into a production whose *Could this be Leone?* don't offend her?

Perhaps a few, or even one, in the audience made sense of her ramblings. Perhaps he could contact this reviewer who has no time for the assembling of secret messages. Aside from this minor concern, Ms. Mathieu was as charming as ever in the role of the Chamelcon's Handmaiden.

ORIENTAL JOURNEY.

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Our journey was halted near the Libyan border, where officers of the French Foreign Legion—quite agitated and hostile—ordered us at gunpoint to turn back. We could hardly blame our hosts for doing as they were told and asking no questions, but our porters were able to piece together from overheard conversation the cause of consternation. The Legionnaires had lost contact with at least one fort in the remote Libyan Desert, and from what the porters could gather the malady was something far worse than Bedouin raiders. The word they used was "plague."

vehicles that transport people and goods between planets. This is the last decade before a new century and everyone wants a place in history.

Widespread commercial electricity is just being adopted on Earth. Almost without exception, industry is powered by coal-fired steam boilers. Transportation of the era is notable for its general lack of single-person conveyances, in favor of trains and horse-drawn carriages. Sailing and steam vessels ply the worlds' oceans. Aerial flyers coast upon the skies of Mars. Alexander Graham Bell's telephone is in use in urban centers, and British orbital heliograph stations transmit flashes of light—much like Morse Code—almost instantaneously between Earth and Mars.

By 1889, the waning 19th century is popularly acknowledged as an age of wonder. Earth's nations have expanded among the planets, planting colonies, guiding people they see as savage heathens on the path toward what they consider to be true civilization, and introducing European justice and security to all lands.

FIN DE SIÈCLE

Yet not all is well in the twilight of the Nineteenth century. The European powers teeter on diplomatic brinkmanship, edging ever closer to war. The scientific exploits of vanguard inventors lead to advents in destructive technology whose impact can scarcely be grasped by the Victorian mind.

Natives of all the planets show signs of revolt, listening to the whispers of entities that do not always appear as they truly are. Anarchists and revolutionaries work to bring about the eradication of official establishments, while doomsayers warn of the end of days.

Worst of all, speculations abound regarding a new, rising power, a far-flung and secretive cult of deadly assassins some have dubbed the Brotherhood of Luxor. Headed by an inner circle of secretive masterminds named after the Titans of Greek myth, only the Brotherhood knows what it wishes to achieve with its acts of atrocity.

SPACE TRAVEL

Since the existence of ether was proven as scientific fact, numerous inventions have been built to function from its use, none more prominent than Thomas Edison's ether propeller, first demonstrated in 1870. This is the crucial device that allows vessels to soar between the worlds, carrying passengers from Earth to Mars, Venus, and even more exotic destinations. While interplanetary travel is hardly commonplace, it is an accepted facet of life in 1889.

Space voyages tend to be lengthy, sometimes lasting a month or longer. Ether flyers—as they are typically known—make use of solar boilers. A reflecting lens focuses the sun's rays onto a boiler, thus producing steam to power the ether propeller and the rest of the ship's systems, without the need for combustion or smoke (both of which tend to be lethal to spacefarers).



LIFTWOOD

Liftwood trees grow in a certain region of the Martian highlands, and nowhere else. Attempts to grow the trees in greenhouses have all failed to date, as have laboratory attempts to synthesize the specific protein that concentrates in its sap. This complex organic compound has been found to produce so-called “contragravitational effects”—in layman’s terms, anti-gravity. In practice, ships constructed from liftwood soar through the skies as lightly as balloons or zeppelins.

This has led to a renaissance of flight, brought on by Edison’s discovery of liftwood in 1870 (yet another development of his and Jack Armstrong’s fateful expedition). Since then, aeronautical research has resulted in countless advances. Zeppelin-Daimler airships, held aloft by hydrogen and utilizing highly safe and efficient internal combustion engines, are in widespread use in Europe, on Earth. On Mars, the kites of the Martians ply the orange skies much as sailing ships did on Earth’s sea of old. With liftwood so scarce, piracy is common among the Martian flyers, and conflicts over liftwood supplies are constant.

CLASH OF NATIONS

In 1889 Britain is a constitutional monarchy, with Queen Victoria presiding alongside Parliament. As far as republics go, America’s is relatively stable, while France’s is

SYRTIS MAJOR, Feb. 5—The gunship I
 With portions of Her Majesty’s
 colony on Mars racked by fiery
 revolt, and the becalmed
 Oenotrian War flaring up
 the implications of the situ-
 ation at Shastapsh cannot be
 overstated.

Cairo
Munitions
New
Torrey
U.S.A.
possible
supplies

While the Colonial Office
 persists in its issuance of state-
 ments to the contrary, the fact
 remains that Shastapsh is not
 secure now, if it ever was secure
 in the first place. Moreover,
 the mutiny plaguing Shastapsh
 is not isolated to that city—it is
 endemic to the region, and spread-
 ing like sickness through every
 corner of Victoria’s fair empire.
 Someone must take action.

Troubling whispers and such.

Clattering at the keyhole too clumsy for burglars.

And that Martian who bumped into me at the canal
and paused for a moment, as if he knew me.

Again my thoughts turn to the dig east of
Karkarham—those corpses that were gone the next
day, and the tattered black robes marked with a
most curious silver Ψ .

Signs point to the Brotherhood of Luxor, about
which I have received dire warnings.

We must persist.

The past holds the key to the future, and it takes
Explorers to unlock the past.

We're unsure as to whether it's mineral or
vegetable, and the ultimate source could be
Zina or Venus. All we know for certain
is that it's lothal. We're quite lacking
on reliable information, old chaps, so
contact that Society of yours before we go
risking our necks again! Cheers!

not. Germany and Russia remain hereditary monarchies, with traditions deeply rooted in bloodlines that stretch back for centuries. Japan is a society in transition, whose feudal beliefs are blending quickly into those more proper for an age of machines.

What all these nations have in common is their aspiration to be a "great power." In 1889 a nation is not called a great power unless it can command interplanetary colonies, robust trade among nations and worlds, and liftwood.

More than any other aggressor state in the 1880s, Belgium's actions have consistently thrown international relations into chaos and disarray. Driven by their King Leopold's overriding obsession with establishing a new empire safe from French and German meddling, the Belgians have pursued aggressive imperialistic agendas in the Congo and on Mars. Resentment of the Belgians on Mars has led to the generally poor reception of anyone whose complexion is ruddy enough to earn him the epithet, "red devil."

A SOCIETY OF EXPLORERS

Operating under the aegis of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BA), the Explorer's Society has been gaining traction in recent years as the primary source of information on the various exotic locales of our Solar System.

With a recent influx of new adventurers, scientists, and aeronauts, the Society is poised to cultivate nothing less than a latter-day scientific and cultural renaissance. Still, much of the Explorer's Society remains wedded to the concept of the Society as a brotherhood and Old Boys' Club first and foremost, and a scientific clearinghouse second. Clashes between aristocrat Explorers and those of lower status—increasingly admitted to the Society on the basis of their talents rather than their blood—occur with greater and greater frequency. Some see this as necessary progress, other view it as an aberration from the established social order and buck the trend any chance they get.

Called "Section X" by those who are in the know, the Explorer's Society keeps a low profile despite its recent recruitment campaign. This is necessary to protect the Society's members from scrutiny. For the most part, the concern is mere privacy. With the rise of revolutionary cults and subversive organizations on Mars, a modicum of secrecy is crucial to protect the very lives of the Society's operatives. Several Explorers have been lost in the Asteroid Belt, the steppes and highlands of Mars, and even in remote locations on Earth, such as the Libyan Desert.

After years of inaction, the Explorer's Society has revised its policies extensively. It is no longer just a society of researchers; instead its members are resolved to stand against the forces of ignorance, superstition, and violence. Faced with such would-be despots, they hold aloft the torch—the light of Knowledge—yet stand ready with the sword.