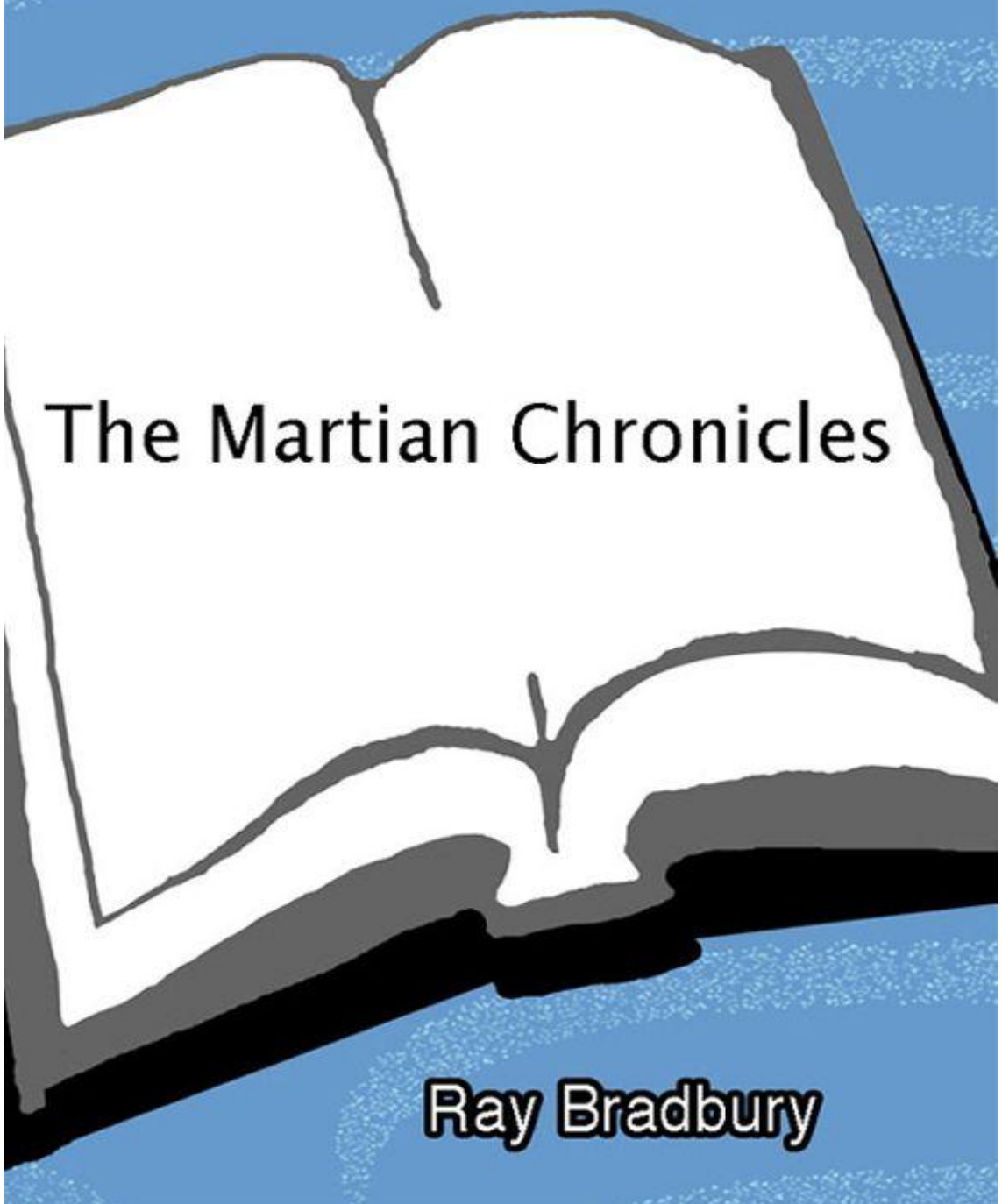


 HarperCollins e-books



The Martian Chronicles

Ray Bradbury

*The Martian Chronicles*

*Ray Bradbury*



## **Dedication**

*With love and gratitude,  
to Maggie/Marguerite,  
who typed this manuscript  
way back in 1949.*

*And to*

*Norman Corwin*

*and*

*WALTER I. BRADBURY,  
fine friends and midwives!*

## **CHRONOLOGY**

### Dedication

Green Town, Somewhere on Mars; Mars, Somewhere in Egypt

January 2030: Rocket Summer

February 2030: Ylla

August 2030: The Summer Night

August 2030: The Earth Men

March 2031: The Taxpayer

April 2031: The Third Expedition

June 2032:—And The Moon Be Still As Bright

August 2032: The Settlers

December 2032: The Green Morning

February 2033: The Locusts

August 2033: Night Meeting

October 2033: The Shore

November 2033: The Fire Balloons

February 2034: Interim

April 2034: The Musicians

May 2034: The Wilderness

2035–2036: The Naming of Names

April 2036: Usher II

August 2036: The Old Ones

September 2036: The Martian

November 2036: The Luggage Store

[November 2036: The Off Season](#)

[November 2036: The Watchers](#)

[December 2036: The Silent Towns](#)

[April 2057: The Long Years](#)

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## **Green Town, Somewhere on Mars; Mars, Somewhere in Egypt**

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### ***An Introduction by Ray Bradbury***

“Don’t tell me what I’m doing; I don’t want to know!”

Those are not my words. They were spoken by my friend, the Italian film director, Federico Fellini. As he shot his screenplays scene by scene, he refused seeing the new footage trapped in the camera and printed in the laboratory at the end of each day. He wanted his scenes to remain mysterious *provocateurs* to lure him on.

So it has been with my stories, plays, and poems over most of my lifetime. So it was with *The Martian Chronicles* in the years just before my marriage in 1947, culminating in the rapid surprises of the final work in the summer of 1949. What began as an occasional story or “aside” concerning the Red Planet became a pomegranate explosion in July and August of that year when I jumped to my typewriter each morning to find what rare new thing my Muse was willing to deliver.

Did I have such a Muse? And did I always believe in that mythical beast? No. Early on, in and out of high school, and standing on a street corner selling newspapers, I did what most writers do at their beginnings: emulated my elders, imitated my peers, thus turning away from any possibility of discovering truths beneath my skin and behind my eyes.

Even though I wrote a series of very good weird/fantasy stories which were published in my midtwenties, I learned nothing from them. I refused to see that I was disturbing a lot of good stuff in my head and trapping it on paper. My peculiar stories were vivid and real. My future tales were lifeless robots, mechanical and motionless.

It was Sherwood Anderson’s *Winesburg, Ohio* that set me free. Sometime in my twentieth-fourth year, I was stunned by its dozen characters living their lives on half-lit porches and in sunless attics of that always autumn town. “Oh, Lord,” I cried. “If I

could write a book half as fine as this, but set it on Mars, how incredible that would be!”

I scribbled down a list of possible sites and folks on that distant world, imagined titles, started and stopped a dozen tales, then filed it away and forgot it. Or *imagined* that I had forgotten it.

Because the Muse persists. It goes on living, though neglected, waiting for you to give it air or die without giving it utterance. My job was to convince myself that the myth was more than ghost, an intuitive substance to be aroused to speak in tongues and move out the ends of my fingers.

During the next few years I wrote a series of Martian *pensées*, Shakespearian “asides,” wandering thoughts, long night visions, predawn half-dreams. The French, like St. John Perse, practice this to perfection. It is the half-poem, half-prose paragraph that runs as little as one hundred words or as long as a full page on any subject, summoned by weather, time, architectural facade, fine wine, good victuals, a view of the sea, quick sunsets, or a long sunrise. From these elements one upchucks rare hairballs or a maundering Hamlet-like soliloquy.

In any event, I laid out my *pensées* in no special order or plan and entombed them with two dozen other tales.

Then a happy thing occurred. Norman Corwin, radio’s greatest writer/director, insisted that I visit New York to be “discovered.” Obedient to his insistence I bussed to Manhattan, languished in the YMCA, and met Walter Bradbury, no relation, the fine Doubleday editor who suggested that I might have woven an unseen tapestry. All those Martian tales, he suggested, can’t you needle-and-thread them, stitch them up into *The Martian Chronicles*?

“Ohmigod,” I whispered. “*Winesburg, Ohio!*”

“What?” said Walter Bradbury.

The next day I delivered *The Chronicles* outline to Walter Bradbury, plus a concept for *The Illustrated Man*. I trained home with a fifteen-hundred-dollar check in my wallet, which paid the rent (thirty dollars a month) for two years and delivered our first baby daughter.

*The Martian Chronicles* was published in the late spring of 1950 to a few reviews. Only Christopher Isherwood placed a laurel wreath on my head as he introduced me to Aldous Huxley, who, at tea, leaned forward and said, “Do you know what you *are?*”

*Don’t tell me what I’m doing*, I thought. *I don’t want to know.*

“You,” said Huxley, “are a poet.”

“I’ll be damned,” I said.

“No, blessed,” said Huxley.

Truly, genetically blessed.

And the blessing lies in this book.

Will you find blood traces of Sherwood Anderson here? No. His stunning influence had long since dissolved into my ganglion. You might see a few apparitions of *Winesburg, Ohio* in my other book-of-stories-pretending-to-be-a-novel, *Dandelion Wine*. But there are no mirror images. Anderson's grotesques were gargoyles off the town roofs; mine are mostly collie dogs, old maids lost in soda fountains, and a boy supersensitive to dead trolley cars, lost chums, and Civil War Colonels drowned in time or drunk on remembrance. The only gargoyles on Mars are Martians disguised as my Green Town relatives, hiding out until comeuppance.

Sherwood Anderson would not have known the proper handling of Independence night fire balloons. I lit and flew them on Mars and in Green Town, resident and quietly burning in both books. They burn there still, with just enough light to help in the reading.

Some eighteen years ago I produced *The Martian Chronicles* onstage in a Wilshire Boulevard theater. Six blocks to the west in the Los Angeles Art Museum the Egyptian Tutankhamen traveling exhibit lay revealed. Moving back and forth from Tut to theater, theater to Tut, my jaw dropped.

"My God," I said, gazing at Tutankhamen's golden mask, "that's Mars."

"My God," I said, watching my Martians onstage, "that's Egypt with Tutankhamen's ghosts."

So, before my eyes and mixed in my mind, old myths were renewed, new myths were bandaged in papyrus and lidded with bright masks.

Without knowing, I had been Tut's child all the while, writing the Red World's hieroglyphics, thinking I thrived futures even in dust-rinsed pasts.

All that being true, how come *The Martian Chronicles* is often described as Science Fiction? It misfits that description. There is only one story in the entire book that obeys the laws of technological physics: "There Will Come Soft Rains." It was among the first Virtual Reality houses that positioned themselves in our midst these last few years. In 1950 that house would have cost a bankrupt sum. With the advent of today's computers, Internets, faxes, audio tapes, Walkmen earplugs, and wide-screen TV, its rooms could be hot-wired on the cheap at Circuit City.

All right, then, what *is* *Chronicles*? It is King Tut out of the tomb when I was three, Norse Eddas when I was six, and Roman/Greek gods that romanced me when I was ten: pure myth. If it had been practical technologically efficient science fiction, it would have long since fallen to rust by the road. But since it is a self-separating fable, even the most deeply rooted physicists at Cal-Tech accept breathing the fraudulent oxygen atmosphere I have loosed on Mars. Science and machines can kill each other off or be replaced. Myth, seen in mirrors, incapable of being touched, stays on. If it is not immortal, it almost seems such.

Finally:

*Don't tell me what I am doing; I don't want to know!*

What a way to live. The only way. For by pretending at ignorance, the intuition, curious at seeming neglect, rears its invisible head and snakes out through your palmprints in mythological forms. And because I wrote myths, perhaps my Mars has a few more years of impossible life. One thing half-assures me: I am still being invited back to the California Institute of Technology.

*“It is good to renew one’s wonder,” said the philosopher. “Space travel has again made children of us all.”*

[January 2030](#)

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## [Rocket Summer](#)

One minute it was Ohio winter, with doors closed, windows locked, the panes blind with frost, icicles fringing every roof, children skiing on slopes, housewives lumbering like great black bears in their furs along the icy streets.

And then a long wave of warmth crossed the small town. A flooding sea of hot air; it seemed as if someone had left a bakery door open. The heat pulsed among the cottages and bushes and children. The icicles dropped, shattering, to melt. The doors flew open. The windows flew up. The children worked off their wool clothes. The housewives shed their bear disguises. The snow dissolved and showed last summer’s ancient green lawns.

*Rocket summer.* The words passed among the people in the open, airing houses. *Rocket summer.* The warm desert air changing the frost patterns on the windows, erasing the art work. The skis and sleds suddenly useless. The snow, falling from the cold sky upon the town, turned to a hot rain before it touched the ground.

*Rocket summer.* People leaned from their dripping porches and watched the reddening sky.

The rocket lay on the launching field, blowing out pink clouds of fire and oven heat. The rocket stood in the cold winter morning, making summer with every breath of its mighty exhausts. The rocket made climates, and summer lay for a brief moment upon the land....

[February 2030](#)

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## [Ylla](#)

They had a house of crystal pillars on the planet Mars by the edge of an empty sea, and every morning you could see Mrs. K eating the golden fruits that grew from the

crystal walls, or cleaning the house with handfuls of magnetic dust which, taking all dirt with it, blew away on the hot wind. Afternoons, when the fossil sea was warm and motionless, and the wine trees stood stiff in the yard, and the little distant Martian bone town was all enclosed, and no one drifted out their doors, you could see Mr. K himself in his room, reading from a metal book with raised hieroglyphs over which he brushed his hand, as one might play a harp. And from the book, as his fingers stroked, a voice sang, a soft ancient voice, which told tales of when the sea was red steam on the shore and ancient men had carried clouds of metal insects and electric spiders into battle.

Mr. and Mrs. K had lived by the dead sea for twenty years, and their ancestors had lived in the same house, which turned and followed the sun, flower-like, for ten centuries.

Mr. and Mrs. K were not old. They had the fair, brownish skin of the true Martian, the yellow coin eyes, the soft musical voices. Once they had liked painting pictures with chemical fire, swimming in the canals in the seasons when the wine trees filled them with green liquors, and talking into the dawn together by the blue phosphorous portraits in the speaking room.

They were not happy now.

This morning Mrs. K stood between the pillars, listening to the desert sands heat, melt into yellow wax, and seemingly run on the horizon.

Something was going to happen.

She waited.

She watched the blue sky of Mars as if it might at any moment grip in on itself, contract, and expel a shining miracle down upon the sand.

Nothing happened.

Tired of waiting, she walked through the misting pillars. A gentle rain sprang from the fluted pillar tops, cooling the scorched air, falling gently on her. On hot days it was like walking in a creek. The floors of the house glittered with cool streams. In the distance she heard her husband playing his book steadily, his fingers never tired of the old songs. Quietly she wished he might one day again spend as much time holding and touching her like a little harp as he did his incredible books.

But no. She shook her head, an imperceptible, forgiving shrug. Her eyelids closed softly down upon her golden eyes. Marriage made people old and familiar, while still young.

She lay back in a chair that moved to take her shape even as she moved. She closed her eyes tightly and nervously.

The dream occurred.

Her brown fingers trembled, came up, grasped at the air. A moment later she sat up, startled, gasping.

She glanced about swiftly, as if expecting someone there before her. She seemed disappointed; the space between the pillars was empty.

Her husband appeared in a triangular door. "Did you call?" he asked irritably.

"No!" she cried.

"I thought I heard you cry out."

"Did I? I was almost asleep and had a dream!"

"In the daytime? You don't often do that."

She sat as if struck in the face by the dream. "How strange, how very strange," she murmured. "The dream."

"Oh?" He evidently wished to return to his book.

"I dreamed about a man."

"A man?"

"A tall man, six feet one inch tall."

"How absurd; a giant, a misshapen giant."

"Somehow"—she tried the words—"he looked all right. In spite of being tall. And he had—oh, I know you'll think it silly—he had *blue* eyes!"

"Blue eyes! Gods!" cried Mr. K. "What'll you dream next? I suppose he had *black* hair?"

"How did you *guess*?" She was excited.

"I picked the most unlikely color," he replied coldly.

"Well, black it was!" she cried. "And he had a very white skin; oh, he was *most* unusual! He was dressed in a strange uniform and he came down out of the sky and spoke pleasantly to me." She smiled.

"Out of the sky; what nonsense!"

"He came in a metal thing that glittered in the sun," she remembered. She closed her eyes to shape it again. "I dreamed there was the sky and something sparkled like a coin thrown into the air, and suddenly it grew large and fell down softly to land, a long silver craft, round and alien. And a door opened in the side of the silver object and this tall man stepped out."

"If you worked harder you wouldn't have these silly dreams."

"I rather enjoyed it," she replied, lying back. "I never suspected myself of such an imagination. Black hair, blue eyes, and white skin! What a strange man, and yet—quite handsome."

"Wishful thinking."

"You're unkind. I didn't think him up on purpose; he just came in my mind while I drowsed. It wasn't like a dream. It was so unexpected and different. He looked at me and he said, 'I've come from the third planet in my ship. My name is Nathaniel York—'"

"A stupid name; it's no name at all," objected the husband.

"Of course it's stupid, because it's a dream," she explained softly. "And he said, 'This is the first trip across space. There are only two of us in our ship, myself and my friend Bert.'"

"*Another* stupid name."



“And he said, ‘We’re from a city on *Earth*; that’s the name of our planet,’” continued Mrs. K. “That’s what he said. ‘Earth’ was the name he spoke. And he used another language. Somehow I understood him. With my mind. Telepathy, I suppose.”

Mr. K turned away. She stopped him with a word. “Yll?” she called quietly. “Do you ever wonder if—well, if there *are* people living on the third planet?”

“The third planet is incapable of supporting life,” stated the husband patiently. “Our scientists have said there’s far too much oxygen in their atmosphere.”

“But wouldn’t it be fascinating if there *were* people? And they traveled through space in some sort of ship?”

“Really, Ylla, you know how I hate this emotional wailing. Let’s get on with our work.”

It was late in the day when she began singing the song as she moved among the whispering pillars of rain. She sang it over and over again.

“What’s that song?” snapped her husband at last, walking in to sit at the fire table.

“I don’t know.” She looked up, surprised at herself. She put her hand to her mouth, unbelieving. The sun was setting. The house was closing itself in, like a giant flower, with the passing of light. A wind blew among the pillars; the fire table bubbled its fierce pool of silver lava. The wind stirred her russet hair, crooning softly in her ears. She stood silently looking out into the great sallow distances of sea bottom, as if recalling something, her yellow eyes soft and moist. ““Drink to me only with thine eyes, and I will pledge with mine,”” she sang, softly, quietly, slowly. ““Or leave a kiss within the cup, and I’ll not ask for wine.”” She hummed now, moving her hands in the wind ever so lightly, her eyes shut. She finished the song.

It was very beautiful.

“Never heard that song before. Did you compose it?” he inquired, his eyes sharp.

“No. Yes. No, I don’t know, really!” She hesitated wildly. “I don’t even know what the words are; they’re another language!”

“What language?”

She dropped portions of meat numbly into the simmering lava. “I don’t know.” She drew the meat forth a moment later, cooked, served on a plate for him. “It’s just a crazy thing I made up, I guess. I don’t know why.”

He said nothing. He watched her drown meats in the hissing fire pool. The sun was gone. Slowly, slowly the night came in to fill the room, swallowing the pillars and both of them, like a dark wine poured to the ceiling. Only the silver lava’s glow lit their faces.

She hummed the strange song again.

Instantly he leaped from his chair and stalked angrily from the room.

Later, in isolation, he finished supper.

When he arose he stretched, glanced at her, and suggested, yawning, “Let’s take the flame birds to town tonight to see an entertainment.”

“You don’t *mean* it?” she said. “Are you feeling well?”

“What’s so strange about that?”

“But we haven’t gone for an entertainment in six months!”

“I think it’s a good idea.”

“Suddenly you’re so solicitous,” she said.

“Don’t talk that way,” he replied peevishly. “Do you or do you not want to go?”

She looked out at the pale desert. The twin white moons were rising. Cool water ran softly about her toes. She began to tremble just the least bit. She wanted very much to sit quietly here, soundless, not moving until this thing occurred, this thing expected all day, this thing that could not occur but might. A drift of song brushed through her mind.

“I—”

“Do you good,” he urged. “Come along now.”

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End of this sample Kindle book.

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