

**MARS ATTACKS MEMOIRS SAMPLE**

MP: Hahaha. Yeah.

JG: And then you've got your characters. You have to know who your characters are. The easiest way to do this is to base them on people you know. But, sometimes, you can't do that, so you might base them on people you've read about, or seen on TV. I had a big problem with the U.S. president. I didn't know who he was, and I didn't fancy any of the recent presidents because they'd be too recognizable and there was no value in satirizing them because they'd all been done on *Saturday Night Live*. And we were bored with them. Although I did, for a while, think he might be a bit like Ronald Reagan. I remember sketching out a scene where the President and First Lady see an astrologer.

MP: An astrologer?

JG: Yeah. About the Martians.

MP: Did Ronald Reagan consult astrologers?

JG: Sure. Him and Nancy were really into it. They never made a move without consulting an astrologer first.

MP: That's smart! I didn't know that. Hahahaha!

JG: Yeah, but I wasn't excited by doing a version of Ronald Reagan, so I was stuck. I was really stuck! You know: who is the president? *Who is he?*

MP: Did you want a likable character, or what?

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JG: I didn't know! I was really stuck and he was an important character, so I was getting desperate. I couldn't get anything from freewheeling my mind, so I approached the problem logically.

MP: Logically?

JG: Yeah, from the ground up. You start with: "What is a leader?" Well, a leader is someone who leads. What are the chief characteristics of a leader? And that made me think of a book I'd read by a man called Michael Chance. In the book, his idea was that there are two kinds of leaders. He called them *agonic* and *hedonic*. Agonic – that is tough, aggressive. He got this from studying monkeys. Monkeys and apes. Some monkeys, like baboons, are agonic. They're aggressive. If a leopard threatens the troop, the baboon will fight the leopard, and probably get killed. But while he's fighting, the rest of the troop gets away. He saves the other baboons at the cost of his own life. That's agonic. Agonic leadership. That's like the warrior kings of old, and dictators such as Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot. They use force and aggression. Then you have the hedonic type, and they rule through display. The chimpanzee is an example. When the leopard threatens the chimp troop, the leader will dance, or make funny noises. It will entertain and distract the leopard, so the other chimps can run away.

MP: What about the leader chimp? Does he get eaten?

**WE COME IN PEACE!**

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JG: Sometimes he can be, yes. But usually he confuses the leopard so much, he's able to escape. So, in countries that are democratic, or semi-democratic, the leaders are nearly always hedonic. The American presidents are. The last one who wasn't was General Eisenhower. Because presidential candidates need to entertain the public to get votes. So, that was my first step. The president had to be hedonic. An entertainer. But I couldn't find a model. I didn't like Clinton. Reagan was quite good. And I thought about Ross Perot, which might have been funny. And there were some colorful politicians in the past, like Teddy Roosevelt and Huey Long. I looked into Huey Long, whose slogan was "Every man a king." And I kind of shuffled elements of these guys to concoct the president. He had to be someone you'd believe the people would have voted for. A charismatic guy who was a bit of an actor, but also an alpha male.

MP: That sounds like Jack Nicholson.

JG: Yes, it does. But here's the thing, I still needed more than that because, when you create a character you have to get inside his skin. Otherwise, you don't know how he's going to feel, or how he's going to think. And then there's the dialogue. You have to know how he talks. And I didn't have a lot of time to do this. So, I used Tim Burton.

MP: What do you mean?

JG: Well, Tim's an alpha male and an entertainer, and I knew

**CANT WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?**

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how he talked, so I based it on him.

MP: Wow! He's the president?

JG: Yeah. That might surprise some people because the president doesn't seem like Tim, but actually, yes, it was largely based on him.

MP: Does Tim know?

JG: No. I never told him. You see, Tim can be, especially when he's directing, quite presidential. And when you're directing a movie like *Batman* or *Batman Returns*, big movies like that, you're in that kind of position. You're like the president of this big team of people who are making the movie. It's a similar role.

MP: Right.

JG: When Tim directs, his body language changes. He stands up very straight. He looks taller. His neck gets longer and he kind of swivels his head around, and he marches about. And he's alert – looking at everything and listening to everybody. And he's warm. So, that's how I wrote the president. Like that. And then Jack added things. He added a quite a lot. He invented lots of nice details.

MP: And it was just absolutely brilliant. Hahaha! I'm just remembering that scene, when he's just about to shake the hand of the Martian. Hahaha! That's just crazy! The uncomfortable way he's looking down at the Martian. Hahaha!

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JG: Hahahaha! MP: It just catches you! You can't stop watching him!

JG: Yeah. No, it's true. He's very inventive. You know, it's a cliché, but they say the poet or the artist is close to madness. And it's true. I've seen it in Tim. I've seen him teeter on the edge of madness sometimes. And Jack's the same way.

MP: What about you? Hahahaha! JG: Not me. I'm totally sane. MP: Hahahaha!

JG: I've... I have done though. A few times. You go a bit nuts. If you're working a lot and you're in this imaginative realm, you're in another world, and you start to go a bit crazy.

MP: Hahaha! Yes.

JG: But wonderful things come out of it. You sort of let the demons out. You let the angels out. Um, you become a channel for the forces.

MP: It's almost like downloads.

JG: It can be like that, yes. Like you're a sort of medium. And I think actors have that particularly because they're doing it with their whole body, mind, and spirit, you see? So, they really do become possessed.

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