



PRESS RELEASE

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War veteran's latest novel addresses the trauma, aftermath and ethics of a terrible war

Author Mark Iles' own experience with PTSD, and in helping other sufferers, informs the character and behaviour of the protagonist in his latest novel Gardens of Earth.

DARTFORD, KENT – 27 July 2021 – Elsewhen Press is a publishing house that is becoming known for high quality, entertaining yet insightful speculative fiction, addressing real-world issues through a fictional prism. Their latest title, *Gardens of Earth* by author **Mark Iles**, is set on a future Earth but tackles issues that are very real today, as well as others that our society should be preparing to address.

Gardens of Earth is military science-fiction, with additional aspects of both horror and fantasy – making this a truly cross-genre epic. Mark explains, “Imagine an alien life force that knows your deepest fear, and can use that against you.” In the book, Mark’s main character (Seethan Bodell) suffers from PTSD. In the story we can see the effects it has on him and the coping strategies he uses to mitigate them. Mark says, “Apart from a damned good read, I hope that readers will gain an insight and understanding of PTSD itself.”

Here in the UK, the NHS estimates that 1 in every 3 people who have a traumatic experience develop PTSD, sometimes immediately, sometimes months or even years later. Symptoms may remain unaddressed for a long time but, once diagnosed, sufferers can be successfully treated, even long after the traumatic event(s) occurred. Of course, one widely recognised cause of trauma is warfare and conflict. Mark Iles fought in both The Falklands War and the First Gulf War. He has friends suffering from PTSD.

Surprisingly, one relatively unknown effect is that many of those suffering from PTSD manage to channel it through creative outlets. There are those who do so through carpentry, leatherwork, painting, and also writing. Mark started writing science fiction and, now a well-published author, he also supports other veterans through the ‘The Scribe’, a creative writing site that he helped set up specifically to support veterans seeking to develop their own writing ability (<https://thescribe.space>).

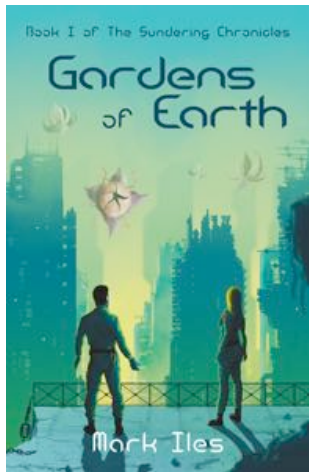
Peter Buck, editorial director of Elsewhen Press said, “Mark’s latest book not only presents the horrors of war, albeit against an alien race, but also the implications and aftermath – both societal and personal. But it is much more than that. The protagonist’s co-pilot and lover is an android, but they have to keep their relationship a secret because of widespread bigotry and discrimination. Social justice, human rights and android rights are all themes explored by Mark in this book. In many senses this is classic science fiction, but the abilities of the aliens provide an environment, and archetypal creatures within it, that are also reminiscent of myth and magic fantasy. Truly cross-genre, *Gardens of Earth* is an exciting adventure, a heart-rending quest, and an eye-opening insight into the coping strategies of a war veteran.”

Gardens of Earth is now available to pre-order in eBook format on most platforms for release on the 6th August, and will be out in paperback in October.

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Notes for Editors About Gardens of Earth



Corporate greed supported by incompetent surveyors leads to the colonisation of a distant world, ominously dubbed ‘Halloween’, that turns out not to be uninhabited after all. The aliens, soon called Spooks by military units deployed to protect the colonists, can adopt the physical form of an opponent’s deepest fear and then use it to kill them. The colony is massacred and as retaliation the orbiting human navy nuke the planet. In revenge, the Spooks invade Earth.

In a last-minute attempt to avert the war, Seethan Bodell, a marine combat pilot sent home from the front with PTSD, is given a top-secret research spacecraft, and a mission to travel into the past along with his co-pilot and secret lover Rose, to prevent the original landing on Halloween and stop the war from ever happening. But the mission goes wrong, causing a tragedy later known as The Sundering, decimating the world and tearing reality, while Seethan’s ship is flung into the future. The Spooks win the war and claim ownership of Earth. He wakes, alone, in his ejector seat with no sign of either

Rose or his vessel. When he realises that his technology no longer works, his desperation to find Rose becomes all the more urgent – her android body won’t survive long in this new Earth.

Gardens of Earth is the first book of *The Sundering Chronicles*. The story tackles alien war, a future that may be considered either dystopian or utopian, depending on who you ask, and a protagonist coping with his demons in an unfamiliar and stressful environment – not to mention immediate threats from a pathological serial killer, the remnants of Earth’s inhabitants now living in a sparse pre-industrial society under the watchful eye of the Spooks, and returning human colonists intent on reclaiming Earth.

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Cover artwork by Alex Storer

About Mark Iles



Born and raised in Slough, Mark Iles began studying the martial arts when he was 14 and joined the Royal Navy at the age of 17. A voracious reader he used to devour up to three paperbacks a day – primarily science fiction, fantasy, and horror – by the likes of John Wyndham, Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clark, Ray Bradbury, Brian Lumley, Frank Herbert, Stephen King, and a plethora of others. After The Falklands War Mark was drafted to Hong Kong, where he began writing features, for a variety of martial arts magazines, and short stories for a wide range of markets.

In 2012 he decided to challenge himself and undertook an MA in Professional Writing, followed by Diplomas in Copywriting and Proofreading. With over 200 short stories and articles under his belt the book he wrote for his MA Project, *A Pride of Lions* was published by Solstice – followed by two other novels, a short story collection, and four novellas. His latest novel, *Gardens of Earth*, book 1 of *The Sundering Chronicles*, will be published by Elsewhen Press in August. Currently Mark is working on the second in the series, as well as another short story collection. Now a 9th Degree Black Belt in Taekwondo, Mark is still involved in martial arts and has also written both a book and an app on the subject.

About Elsewhen Press

Elsewhen Press is an independent publisher of Speculative Fiction. Based in the UK, in the South East of England, Elsewhen Press publishes titles in English, in digital and print editions, adopting a digital-first policy for most titles. Established in 2011, Elsewhen Press is an imprint of Alnpete Limited.

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