

SciFi, SciFacts

Alien intelligences and climate change

An episode of Re-Imagined Radio

17 April 2019

Season 07, Episode 02

Written by

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Re-Imagined Radio  
Season 07, Episode 02

Final draft

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Alien intelligence and climate change

An episode of Re-Imagined Radio

17 April 2019

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Live performance at Kiggins Theatre, Vancouver, WA

A collaboration between  
WSUV Office of Research  
WSUV Neuroscience Program  
WSUV School of the Environment  
WSUV Creative Media & Digital Culture Program  
Metropolitan Performing Arts  
Kiggins Theatre  
KXRW FM  
to provide scientific education and community outreach.

### **Overview**

Two acts, each sampled from the radio drama "The Junkyard," by Clifford D. Simak, performed live by voice actors from Metropolitan Performing Arts. Each act serves to introduce a WSUV scientist who talks about the scientific facts surrounding a specific topic.

Sample #1 = memory loss, Dr. John Harkness

Sample #2 = dramatic weather, Dr. Marc Kramer

Both Dr. Harkness and Dr. Kramer will participate in a question and answer session at the end of the program.

"The Junkyard" written by Clifford D. Simak

Adapted for X Minus One radio program by George Lefferts

Originally broadcast on Feb. 22, 1956

### **Color Code**

**Yellow highlighted text** = sound effect(s), either pre-recorded or created for episode. Pre-recorded audio is used as content in this episode.

~~text example~~ = text that could be deleted as needed.

~~Magenta highlighted text with strike through~~ = text deleted for episode timing

**MUSIC** = pre-recorded

**MUSIC** = bespoke, created for this episode

ACT #1: MEMORY TRAP

Background

This act samples from "The Junkyard," an episode of X Minus One, a top-rated science fiction series from the golden age of radio, 1930s-1950s.

This act introduces the idea of memory loss. While the scenario is science fiction, suggesting that human memories might be stolen from our minds, making us forget things, Dr. Harkness talks, as a scientist, about how we think memories are formed, stored, altered/updated, and forgotten.

Synopsis

An outer planetary survey space ship, *Havisupi Sunlight*, travels eighteen years from Earth to Eires, a dwarf planet beyond Pluto, and discovers a "junkyard" of engine parts left by previous visitors. Soon after, the crew lose their memories. What causes this memory loss? And how to retrieve the lost memories so the space ship can leave the planet?

Cast

Barbara Richardson as Commander Irene WARREN  
Sebastian Hauskins as Engineer Mac MCIVER  
Ian Hanley as Captain BRADY  
John Barber, Producer and Host

HOST

Good evening everyone, and welcome to Re-Imagined Radio. This is John Barber, producer of the series, and it is my pleasure to welcome you to tonight's performance of "Science Fiction, Science Facts."

Those who have followed Re-Imagined Radio know that in the past we have provided live performances for your eyes and ears of full-length radio dramas, with voice actors, Foley and digital sound effects, music, and more.

Tonight we will take a different approach and sample from a classic science fiction radio drama, "The

Junkyard," by noted author Clifford D. Simak. This drama was an episode of X Minus One, a top-rated science fiction series from the golden age of radio, 1930s-1950s. When I say "sample," I mean that we will portray only parts of this radio drama, and we will do so to introduce our featured speakers who will overlay the science fiction provided by our voice actors with science facts drawn from their research and that of other scientists around the world.

Science Fiction has a long tradition of exploring Earth-bound topics in different spaces and places, times and dimensions, real and imagined. Science fiction has often inspired science, technology, and the humanities to re-think, re-imagine, and re-understand the role of humanity in the natural world here on Earth. Science, rather than imagination, is based on facts—quantifiable, verifiable, observable, repeatable facts.

Our guests tonight are both scientists associated with Washington State University Vancouver. Dr. John Harkness convenes with the Neuroscience program, and Dr. Marc Kramer is associated with the School of the Environment. As I said, they will overlay our science fiction story with science facts. The result, we hope, will be an entertaining and insightful evening.

Our voice actors are all volunteers from Metropolitan Performing Arts, here in Vancouver. KXRW FM, Vancouver's radio station, is graciously streaming our performance tonight all around the world and up to the International Space Station via the Internet. For those of you listening at home tonight, we are broadcasting live and direct, without benefit of commercial interruption, from the beautiful and historic Kiggins Theatre, situated in the heart of the Art's District, in downtown Vancouver, WA, USA.

Our story tonight involves a journey through new dimensions of time and space, from Earth to the far reaches of our solar system, and back to Earth, which has changed dramatically in our absence. Thank you for joining us. Now, please sit back, relax, and make sure your seat belt is securely fastened as we prepare for our journey.

SFX: LAUNCH SEQUENCE FROM X MINUS ONE.

SFX: SPACE SHIP ENGINE DRIVE, UNDER WARREN'S NARRATIVE

COMMANDER  
WARREN

(CONVERSATIONAL) Captain's Log, 17 July 2003. This is Irene Warren, Commander of the survey ship, Havisupi Sunlight. My crew and I were dispatched to survey Eris. Faint signals were detected coming from this very large dwarf planet. We were sent to investigate.

Discovered earlier this year and formally known as UB313, Eris is about three times further from Earth than Pluto. The trip out, a distance of 873 million, 784 thousand, 589 miles, even powered with solar sails, took 18 years.

We spent most of that time in suspended animation. When we arrived at Eris, in 2021, the onboard computer woke us all. We set the ship into orbit, ran tests, didn't see any sign of life. We did find the source of the signals we were sent to investigate. They seemed to originate from "The Junkyard," that's what my Executive Officer, Captain Brady, called it, a load of alien machine parts discarded by another space ship.

We landed. Captain Brady led an away team to investigate. They did not find the source of the signals. There was nothing more we could do and we did not have the resources to remain long term on Eris. We prepared to return to Earth.

**SFX: FADE OUT**

**SFX: INTERCOM STATIC**

MAC MCIVER (FILTERED) Engine Room, McIver.

WARREN This is Commander Warren. All secure?

MCIVER (FILTERED) Yes, Ma'am.

WARREN Very well. Countdown to blast-off.

MCIVER (FILTERED) Engine Room ready, Ma'am.

WARREN X minus 5 ... minus 4 ... minus 3 ...  
minus 2 ... minus 1 ... Fire!

(SILENCE)

SFX: ALARM

SFX: INTERCOM STATIC

WARREN McIver, what's wrong down there?

MCIVER (FILTERED) Well, . . . I, I . . . don't  
know, Ma'am.

WARREN What's happening down there?

MCIVER (FILTERED) Ma'am? I . . . I don't know  
quite what to say.

WARREN Well, say something, or I'll have you  
busted.

MCIVER (FILTERED) We can't start the engines,  
Commander. At least I can't.

WARREN Well, why not? Is there something wrong  
with the engines?

MCIVER (FILTERED) No, Ma'am. I've double-  
checked them.

WARREN Well, then, let's get 'em heated up or  
we'll be on this god-forsaken planet for  
the rest of our lives.

MCIVER (FILTERED) We can't do it, Ma'am.

WARREN McIver, suppose you tell me exactly what  
is the problem. Do you expect me to

believe that you and your intergalactic engineers with years of hyperfission experience, have forgotten how to start the engines of this ship?

MCIVER (FILTERED) Yes, Ma'am, we've forgotten how to start the engines.

WARREN (All right, McIver, now you listen to me! You have manuals down there, right? Engineering manuals?)

MCIVER Yes, Ma'am.

WARREN Good! I want you to study those manuals. They will tell you and your crew how to start this ship, won't they?

MCIVER Yes, Ma'am. We have the manuals here. And they tell all about the engines, how they operate, how to locate trouble, how to fix them, how to start them . . .

WARREN Well, what is it then? What is the problem?

MCIVER I can't remember the symbols, Ma'am. I've forgotten how to read.

**MUSIC: OMINOUS TRANSITION**

WARREN Captain Brady, what do you think?

BRADY Search me, Commander. I've seen 'em with space blues, alien psychoses, the works, but I've never seen a disease that could make a crew forget how to start the engines.

WARREN Okay, what then?

BRADY Well, humans experience incidents, gather knowledge, know emotions. Then as they grow older, they begin to forget those experiences, forget that knowledge. That's what life is, a long series of forgettings. Here, on Eires in some impossible way, the forgetting is speeded up. It happens overnight.

WARREN No, there's more to it than that. There are lots of theories for the cause of memory loss . . . kinks in the brain, neuroses, data processing, but suppose they are wrong. Those skills, that important knowledge WENT somewhere. Now suppose an advanced life form wanted to learn about other intelligence in the galaxy. One way of doing that would be to build machines that gathered information, like memories, from the minds of other life forms. Such devices for gathering knowledge might take in and store the memories of anyone within range.

BRADY Flaming asteroids, Ma'am! These devices would be memory traps.

WARREN That's right!

BRADY But why put a memory trap on an out-of-the way melon like Eires? There's nothing here.

WARREN Think about it. Who says memory has to be gathered at the location of a memory trap? Where WOULD you put a memory trap?

On a planet swarming with intelligent beings where it would be found and destroyed or its secrets snatched away, or would you put it on a remote planet like Eires where nobody would ever bother it?

BRADY

Why, Commander, that's right! I'd put it right here where it would be safe and undisturbed. If the range was sufficient, a memory trap on Eires might steal memories as far as away as Earth. Yeah, then every time someone on Earth forgets something it's because that memory has been drained away by a memory trap.

WARREN

Yes. Now follow that thought for a moment. We know from our surveys that intelligent life thrives throughout the galaxy. And we know that in every galactic culture there is forgetfulness. Might forgetfulness be caused by thousands upon thousands of memory traps planted throughout the galaxy, nibbling away at the conscious memory of all the sentient beings that live among the stars? On Earth, we forget slowly because the traps are far away. But here, on Eires, in the very shadow of a memory trap, forgetfulness might come more quickly, overnight.

BRADY

Ma'am! Maybe there's a memory trap here on Eires! Perhaps that signal we heard .  
.

**SFX: RECORD SCRATCH AND STATIC**

WSUV SCIENTIST This science fiction portrayal suggests  
JOHN HARKNESS that human memories might be stolen from  
our minds, making us forget things. Is  
this possible?

SFX: RECORD STATIC FADES OUT UNDER

HOST That's Dr. John Harkness, Founder and  
CEO of Rewire Neuroscience and  
PostDoctoral Research Fellow in the  
Neuroscience program at Washington State  
University Vancouver.

HARKNESS I am John Harkness. I am conducting  
post-doctoral research at Washington  
State University Vancouver. I can't say  
much about how memories would be stored  
remotely (or put back into a brain), but  
I can talk about how we think memories  
are formed, stored, altered/updated, and  
forgotten. . . .

(HARKNESS DELIVERS HIS TALK)

HOST Thank you Dr. Harkness. We will visit  
with you once again, during the question  
and answer period, but right now, let's  
return to our performance.

ACT #2: RETURN TO EARTH

Background

This act continues the adventure of the survey space  
ship, *Havisupi Sunlight*, focusing on its arrival back at  
Earth, in 2039, where the crew finds their home planet  
altered by dramatic changes in the climate system and the  
Earth's surface during their nearly forty year absence.

Synopsis

After traveling eighteen years back from its mission to Eires, the outer planetary survey ship Havisupi Sunlight finds Earth's climate has substantially changed during its thirty-six year absence. These changes in climate, and some of their effects, are briefly reported by the crew, and voiced by actors. Although these events may sound like science fiction, they are in fact drawn from recorded scientific record observations of Earth's climate during the past three years. They serve as an introduction of Dr. Marc Kramer, who will talk about the impact of climate change, and suggest that our future may be imperiled by catastrophic changes to the Earth's climate system.

#### Resources

[https://post-apocalyptic.fandom.com/wiki/Post-Apocalyptic\\_Radio\\_Shows\\_and\\_Audio\\_Dramas](https://post-apocalyptic.fandom.com/wiki/Post-Apocalyptic_Radio_Shows_and_Audio_Dramas)

#### Frequency 2156 Broadcasts

<https://frequency2156.com/>

#### Cast

Barbara Richardson as Commander Irene WARREN

Sebastian Hauskins as Engineer Mac MCIVER

Ian Hanley as Captain BRADY

John Barber, Producer and Host

#### HOST

In the first part of tonight's performance, Commander Warren and her crew aboard a survey ship visited the dwarf planet Eires, after traveling eighteen years through space from Earth. They were sent to this distant planet to investigate strange signals thought to be originating there. Commander Warren and her crew identified the source of these signals as "The Junkyard," a collection of engine parts strewn across the rocky surface of Eires, left there by an earlier space ship. This of course was a significant scientific discovery, but as Commander Warren told us, her space ship did not provide the necessary resources for a long term stay on the planet. Any investigation would have to await another mission. Attempting to

leave Eires, Warren realized that the engine room crew had forgotten how to start the space ship's engines. That problem was addressed, and the Havisupi Sunlight, with Warren and crew aboard, blasted off from Eires and pointed its silver nose toward Earth, and home.

**SFX: LAUNCH SEQUENCE FROM X MINUS ONE.**

**SFX: SPACE SHIP ENGINE DRIVE, UNDER**

WARREN

(CONVERSATIONAL) Commander's Log, April 2021. A careful and thorough investigation of "The Junkyard" with infrared cameras and ground penetrating scanners revealed the existence of a memory trap on Eires. It was found in a tower, about nine feet in height, constructed from the rocks on the planet's surface. The memory trap itself was the size and shape of a watermelon standing on end and covered with tiny hairs, each moving so to suggest vibrations, such as an antenna of an insect. Underneath, wires led to a terminal. It was a cyborg, a combination of living organism and machine, working together to capture and communicate memories.

BRADY

Ma'am, we're safe here in the ship, but if we approach that memory trap and try to recover our memories from the terminal, we'll end up like McIver, forgetting everything.

WARREN                    You were pretty close to it when your away team first explored The Junkyard. Did you forget anything?

BRADY                    (Sheepishly) Well, Ma'am, to tell the truth, I was too pleasantly lit up on grain spirits to know the difference.

WARREN                    That's it! Captain Brady, when was the last time you really hung one on? I mean, got just pie-eyed drunk?

BRADY                    Well, let's see . . . There was once on Mars . . .

WARREN                    Was that the worst?

BRADY                    It was beautiful, Ma'am. Took me three days to sober up. They say I fought off the whole galactic patrol for hours.

WARREN                    Well, I know you keep supplies in your locker. Do you think you have enough to get that drunk again?

BRADY                    I've got a pretty good supply, Ma'am.

WARREN                    Well, that's good, because I'm going to ask you to volunteer to hang on the biggest, the most monstrous drunk in the entire history of the universe.

BRADY                    (QUICKLY) I volunteer.

WARREN                    No, not so fast. Not until I explain why I'm doing this.

BRADY                    Ma'am, this sort of project needs no reasons . . . it's a pleasure!

WARREN Let me finish. We know that the minute you get near that memory trap, it grabs your mind. Wipes it clean. Right?

BRADY Yes Ma'am.

WARREN And a lead space helmet doesn't shield you, as we saw with McIver.

BRADY Right.

WARREN Now, as a communications specialist, what would you do if you wanted to shield your communications?

BRADY Well, that's easy. I'd scramble them.

WARREN Exactly! Now, how might we scramble our memories?

BRADY (Excitedly) Jumping Jupiter Commander, do you think it will work?

WARREN It has to or we're stranded here. Are you still game?

BRADY YES MA'AM! When do I start?

WARREN Right now.

**SFX: MUSIC TRANSITION**

WARREN (CONVERSATIONAL) Let the record show that Captain Brady heroically volunteered for this highly unusual and very dangerous mission. Let the record also show that Captain Brady completed this mission with courage and valor becoming an officer. At great risk to

his own safety, Captain Brady consumed copious amounts of grain spirits, substantially altering his motor-muscular and neuro-psychological abilities. In this state of impairment he scaled the rock tower housing the memory trap and attached electrical leads to its terminal. Scientists onboard were able to download the captured memories. They are studying them now, hoping to find a way to re-introduce them to the minds from which they were taken. Captain Brady suffered major discomfort during his five-day recovery from this mission.

BRADY Ohhhhhh (sigh)

WARREN Well, Brady, how do you feel?

BRADY Like I've been cycled through the air lock and spent a week floating in space!

WARREN You turned the trick, Captain!  
Congratulations!

BRADY Trick?

WARREN You hooked into the memory trap. Memories are flowing out now. We've got a recording hooked up. The stuff we're listening to is enough to set your teeth on edge.

BRADY What stuff?

WARREN Memories collected over hundreds of years. Disassociated from any sense of

the minds from which they were stolen.  
It will take maybe as many years to sort  
it out, but we are getting some of it  
straight already.

BRADY Any of our own stuff?

WARREN Plenty!

BRADY Pretty handy little gadget, that memory  
trap. Only one thing . . .

WARREN What's that?

BRADY (IN AGONY) Let me know if you come  
across a good hang-over remedy. Ohhhhhh  
. . .

WARREN (CONVERSATIONAL) Once we settled into  
the return trip to Earth, most of the  
crew went into suspended animation. The  
ship was on automatic control. Eighteen  
years later, in 2039, braking for Earth  
orbit, the ship's computers woke us. We  
were looking forward to landing on Earth  
after nearly forty years in space.

But Earth's surface and climate system  
had dramatically changed in our absence.  
Even the most trusted scientific  
predictions for the impacts of global  
warming at the time of our departure to  
Eires did not prepare us for what we  
witnessed from space while orbiting our  
home planet.

BRADY Commander, the volumes of both polar ice  
caps, north and south, as well as the

ice covering Greenland and glaciers around the world are massively reduced. They have melted while we were away! Many coastal cities are permanently under water. In others, city streets have turned into canals. Sea water has significantly flooded many low-lying areas around the world.

MCIVER

And we have more observations, Ma'am. Hurricanes and typhoons and intense, heavy rains, which were once seasonal, are now continuous around the world. Captain Brady mentioned the flooding, but there are also fires. What isn't under water is burning as large fires are unchecked and out of control, fueled by hot winds and dry conditions.

WARREN

(CONVERSATIONAL) Our scanning instruments told us Earth was in the grip of a sustained heat wave. Each day, one after the next, was a long hot summer day. There was no cooling at night. No relief from the heat. Always hot. Strangely though, even with all the hot weather, heavy, intense rains produced runoff, landslides, and massive erosion. Landscapes everywhere were changing, or no longer recognizable.

MCIVER

There is no sign of commerce, Commander, nothing to indicate people going about their lives. If people are down there, they are hiding from the water and the weather. These are extraordinary events.

BRADY All our radio broadcasts to mission control are unanswered. There are no apparent radio or television broadcasts available where we might learn what happened. But, I have found Frequency 406, an international search and rescue information detection and distribution system.

WARREN And this system is still operating?

BRADY Yes, beacons are still transmitting their distress signals and the satellites are still picking them up. I can hear them on their down links. But there's something else, Commander.

WARREN What is that?

BRADY Voices.

WARREN Voices, what do you mean "voices"?

BRADY Human voices, Ma'am. Reporting record-setting extreme climate occurring around the planet. Changes were predicted before we left, but nothing on this scale or to this degree.

WARREN I recall Frequency 406. It was developed to help locate avalanche victims, stranded ships, disabled hikers. It broadcasted an emergency signal, a beep. How is it that voices are now part of the broadcast?

BRADY Not sure, Ma'am, but it seems that people down there have figured out how to hack the radio beacons to broadcast

voice. They are uploading reports of events in their areas, and listening to reports from others. It's an ingenious solution for staying in touch when all the other communication systems are down.

WARREN What have you heard so far?

BRADY (I'll play some samples, Ma'am.)

**SFX: TUNING RADIO, STATIC, SQUELCH,  
WHITE NOISE, THEN . . .**

FIRE CONTROL This is Fire Control, Redding, California . . . a firenado, a churning funnel of smoke and flames, the size of three football fields, has formed as part of a wildfire here. The fire is potentially uncontrollable, and could destroy large swathes of forests and urban areas. Lord help you if you have one of these!

**SFX: TAPE MACHINE . . .**

MCIVER Day after day the hot temperatures continue. No break. No relief. Even with heavy rains, forests and vegetation have dried out. Fires burn year round. From the Midwest, we've received unprecedented reports of back to back bomb cyclones piling up late season snow, followed by warm weather that brought epic flooding to vast regions. Livestock are dead, crops abandoned, fields underwater. There is nothing left. All gone.

**SFX: TAPE MACHINE . . .**

BRADY . . . a virus swept through the region, destroying most crops . . . thousands died of starvation. We have no food, and no way to get any. No way to go anywhere else to look for food. Those of us who remain will surely die.

**SFX: TAPE MACHINE . . .**

MCIVER Droughts extend throughout the year. So much hotter than we expected. More heat waves. The rains are heavy, and hot. Mountainsides are washed away. Roads and transportation blocked or destroyed . . .

**SFX: TAPE MACHINE . . .**

BRADY . . . Global economic collapse. Replaced by feudal societies, some run by the remains of large corporations . . .

WARREN (CONVERSATIONAL) These climate changes and their effects were unprecedented. We had never seen anything like them. Dramatic, bizarre ecosystem changes . . . tropical fish in Arctic waters . . . bird migration patterns changed . . . species of plant and animal life disappeared . . . bees and spiders, once thought about to disappear, were everywhere . . . polar bears had left the ice . . . Science fiction had become science fact.

**SFX: FADE OUT**

SFX: RECORD STATIC FADES OUT UNDER

WSUV SCIENTIST      This science fiction portrayal suggests  
MARC KRAMER            that our future may be imperiled by  
                              extreme changes to the Earth's climate  
                              system. Is this indeed our future? Can  
                              it be prevented?

HOST                    That's Dr. Marc Kramer, of the School of  
                              the Environment at Washington State  
                              University Vancouver.

KRAMER                I am Marc Kramer. My research focuses on  
                              studying the cause and consequence of  
                              climate change. It's already happening.  
                              Is there anything we can do?

(KRAMER DELIVERS HIS TALK)

QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD

HOST                    Thank you Dr. Kramer. Ladies and  
                              gentlemen, we have presented you with  
                              two scenarios tonight, one about memory  
                              loss, the other about extreme changes in  
                              Earth's climate. For each, you have  
                              heard science fiction and science fact.  
                              You may have questions for our guests  
                              tonight, Dr. John Harkness, of the  
                              Neuroscience program at Washington State  
                              University Vancouver, and Dr. Marc  
                              Kramer, of the School of the Environment  
                              at Washington State University  
                              Vancouver. I will ask both to join me at  
                              the microphones where they can address  
                              your questions and concerns.

Let me start this part of our program  
with a question for Dr. Harkness . . .

Dr. Harkness, it has been revealed that smart speaker devices in our homes today record our requests for information, even sometimes our conversations. Do these devices represent a kind of memory trap? Or, might they be used by individuals to preserve and protect memories?

### CONCLUSION

HOST

That is our program for tonight everyone. Thank you so much for your time and attention. Our guests tonight were Dr. John Harkness, of the Neuroscience program at Washington State University Vancouver, and Dr. Marc Kramer, of the School of the Environment at Washington State University Vancouver. Barbara Richardson voiced the part of Commander Irene Warren, Sebastian Hauskins was Engineer Mac McIver, and Ian Hanley was Captain Brady. All have volunteered their time and voices for tonight's performance.

My name is John Barber. I am also from Washington State University. Re-Imagined Radio is a project of mine undertaken for the purpose of providing entertaining and educational live performances for the community. On behalf of the Office of Research at Washington State University Vancouver, who was the main sponsor of tonight's performance, the Creative Media & Digital Culture Program at Washington State University Vancouver, which

provides me a platform from which to pursue this practice-based community art project, KXRW FM, Vancouver's community radio station, which provided tonight's live Internet streaming of our performance, and the historic Kiggins Theatre where our broadcast originates, we thank you for your time and interest, and we hope that you will join us again in the future.

Good night everyone, and thank you.