

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

2023 performance using 1938 script

Performed by

Willamette Radio Workshop

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)

Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-NoDerivs 4.0
International

Re-Imagined Radio
Season 11, Episode 11

Final draft

The War of the Worlds

1938 Mercury Theatre script

Re-Imagined Radio
Season 10, Episode 11
Final Draft

Premier broadcast: October 30, 2023

Synopsis

A live performance by Willamette Radio Workshop. Directed by Sam A. Mowry. Kiggins Theatre, Vancouver, WA, October 30, 2023.

Credits

Directed by Sam A. Mowry

Performed by Willamette Radio Workshop

Live sound reinforcement by Martin John Gallagher and
Gilberto Silva

Sound Design, Post-production by Martin John Gallagher

Original music composition by Marc Rose

Graphics by Holly Slocum

Produced and Hosted by John F. Barber

HOST OPENING REMARKS

MUSIC: RIR OPENING THEME

HOST Hello everyone. Welcome. We're coming to you over the airwaves tonight from the historic Kiggins Theatre, in the heart of the Arts District, in beautiful downtown Vancouver, Washington, USA.

It's October 30th, and we're celebrating a combination of important and interesting events.

First, it's World Audio Drama day. A special day once a year when around the world listening parties and performances like our own celebrate storytelling in the radio medium. We plan to do our part tonight and I appreciate you being here.

Second, 85 years ago tonight, October 30, 1938, at just this time, Orson Welles and The Mercury Theatre on the Air began performing their radio adaptation of The War of the Worlds by H.G. Wells. Their live performance was broadcast on a Portland radio station. Newspaper accounts tell us that many folks there were . . . concerned. In the little town of Concrete, Washington, folks ran for the mountains, hoping to escape the invaders from Mars. Whether considered a panic broadcast or the greatest audio drama ever broadcast, The War of the Worlds still resonates.

Third, 10 years ago tonight, 2013, again at this time, and in this same theatre,

Re-Imagined Radio offered its first performance. It was a collaboration with Willamette Radio Workshop. Together, we presented a performance of The War of the Worlds.

We've kept collaborating over the past decade and now tonight, the 10th anniversary of our partnership, for World Audio Drama Day, on the occasion of its 85th anniversary, it brings me great pride and honor to say . . . "Re-Imagined Radio presents Willamette Radio Workshop, directed by Sam A. Mowry, and their performance of "The War of Worlds."

MUSIC: MERCURY THEATRE MUSICAL
THEME

MERCURY
ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen: the director of the Mercury Theatre and star of these broadcasts, Orson Welles . . .

ORSON WELLES

We know now that in the early years of the twentieth century this world was being watched closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own. We know now that as human beings busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinized and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinize the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. With infinite complacence people went to and fro over the earth about their little affairs, serene in the assurance

of their dominion over this small spinning fragment of solar driftwood which by chance or design man has inherited out of the dark mystery of Time and Space. Yet across an immense ethereal gulf, minds that to our minds as ours are to the beasts in the jungle, intellects vast, cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes and slowly and surely drew their plans against us. In the thirty-ninth year of the twentieth century came the great disillusionment.

It was near the end of October. Business was better. The war scare was over. More men were back at work. Sales were picking up. On this particular evening, October 30, the Crosley service estimated that thirty-two million people were listening in on radios.

ANNOUNCER 1

. . .for the next twenty-four hours not much change in temperature. A slight atmospheric disturbance of undetermined origin is reported over Nova Scotia, causing a low pressure area to move down rather rapidly over the northeastern states, bringing a forecast of rain, accompanied by winds of light gale force.

Maximum temperature 66; minimum 48. This weather report comes to you from the Government Weather Bureau. . . . We now take you to the Meridian Room in the Hotel Park Plaza in downtown New York, where you will be entertained by the

music of Ramón Raquello and his orchestra.

MUSIC: RAQUELLO ORCHESTRA TANGO
UNTIL FADE.

ANNOUNCER 2 Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. From the Meridian Room in the Park Plaza in New York City, we bring you the music of Ramón Raquello and his orchestra. With a touch of the Spanish. Ramón Raquello leads off with "La Cumparsita."

MUSIC: RAQUELLO ORCHESTRA LA
CUMPASITA.

ANNOUNCER 3 Ladies and gentlemen, we interrupt our program of dance music to bring you a special bulletin from the Intercontinental Radio News. At twenty minutes before eight, central time, Professor Farrell of the Mount Jennings Observatory, Chicago, Illinois, reports observing several explosions of incandescent gas, occurring at regular intervals on the planet Mars. The spectroscope indicates the gas to be hydrogen and moving towards the earth with enormous velocity.

Professor Pierson of the Observatory at Princeton confirms Farrell's observation, and describes the phenomenon as (quote) like a jet of blue flame shot from a gun (unquote). We now return you to the music of Ramón Raquello, playing for you in the

famous astronomer. We take you now to Princeton, New Jersey.

PHILLIPS

(ECHO CHAMBER) Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. This is Carl Phillips, speaking to you from the observatory at Princeton. I am standing in a large semi-circular room, pitch black except for an oblong split in the ceiling. Through this opening I can see a sprinkling of stars that cast a kind of frosty glow over the intricate mechanism of the huge telescope. The ticking sound you hear is the vibration of the clockwork.

Professor Pierson stands directly above me on a small platform, peering through a giant lens. I ask you to be patient, ladies and gentlemen, during any delay that may arise during our interview. Besides his ceaseless watch of the heavens, Professor Pierson may be interrupted by telephone or other communications.

During this period he is in constant touch with the astronomical centers of the world . . . Professor, may I begin our questions?

PIERSON

At any time, Mr. Phillips.

PHILLIPS

Professor, would you please tell our radio audience exactly what you see as you observe the planet Mars through your telescope?

PIERSON Nothing unusual at the moment, Mr. Phillips. A red disk swimming in a blue sea. Transverse stripes across the disk. Quite distinct now because Mars happens to be the point nearest the earth . . . in opposition, as we call it.

PHILLIPS In your opinion, what do these transverse stripes signify, Professor Pierson?

PIERSON Not canals, I can assure you, Mr. Phillips, although that's the popular conjecture of those who imagine Mars to be inhabited. From a scientific viewpoint the stripes are merely the result of atmospheric conditions peculiar to the planet.

PHILLIPS Then you're quite convinced as a scientist that living intelligence as we know it does not exist on Mars?

PIERSON I'd say the chances against it are a thousand to one.

PHILLIPS And yet how do you account for those gas eruptions occurring on the surface of the planet at regular intervals?

PIERSON Mr. Phillips, I cannot account for it.

PHILLIPS By the way, Professor, for the benefit of our listeners, how far is Mars from earth?

PIERSON Approximately forty million miles.

PHILLIPS Well, that seems a safe enough distance.
(OFF MIKE) Thank you.

(PAUSE)

PHILLIPS Just a moment, ladies and gentlemen,
someone has just handed Professor
Pierson a message. While he reads it,
let me remind you that we are speaking
to you from the observatory in
Princeton, New Jersey, where we are
interviewing the world- famous
astronomer, Professor Pierson . . . One
moment, please.

Professor Pierson has passed me a
message which he has just received . . .
Professor, may I read the message to the
listening audience?

PIERSON Certainly, Mr. Phillips

PHILLIPS Ladies and gentlemen, I shall read you a
wire addressed to Professor Pierson from
Dr. Gray of the National History Museum,
New York. "9:15 P. M. eastern standard
time. Seismograph registered shock of
almost earthquake intensity occurring
within a radius of twenty miles of
Princeton. Please investigate. Signed,
Lloyd Gray, Chief of Astronomical
Division" . . .

Professor Pierson, could this occurrence
possibly have something to do with the
disturbances observed on the planet
Mars?

PIERSON Hardly, Mr. Phillips. This is probably a meteorite of unusual size and its arrival at this particular time is merely a coincidence. However, we shall conduct a search, as soon as daylight permits.

PHILLIPS Thank you, Professor. Ladies and gentlemen, for the past ten minutes we've been speaking to you from the observatory at Princeton, bringing you a special interview with Professor Pierson, noted astronomer. This is Carl Phillips speaking. We are returning you now to our New York studio.

MUSIC: FADE IN PIANO PLAYING

ANNOUNCER 2 Ladies and gentlemen, here is the latest bulletin from the Intercontinental Radio News. Toronto, Canada: Professor Morse of McGill University reports observing a total of three explosions on the planet Mars, between the hours of 7:45 P. M. and 9:20 P. M., eastern standard time. This confirms earlier reports received from American observatories.

Now, nearer home, comes a special announcement from Trenton, New Jersey. It is reported that at 8:50 P. M. a huge, flaming object, believed to be a meteorite, fell on a farm in the neighborhood of Grovers Mill, New Jersey, twenty-two miles from Trenton.

The flash in the sky was visible within a radius of several hundred miles and

the noise of the impact was heard as far north as Elizabeth.

We have dispatched a special mobile unit to the scene, and will have our commentator, Carl Phillips, give you a word description as soon as he can reach there from Princeton. In the meantime, we take you to the Hotel Martinet in Brooklyn, where Bobby Millette and his orchestra are offering a program of dance music.

MUSIC: SWING BAND FOR TWENTY SECONDS . . . THEN CUT

ANNOUNCER 2 We take you now to Grovers Mill, New Jersey.

SFX: WALLAH- CROWD NOISES

SFX: POLICE SIRENS

PHILLIPS Ladies and gentlemen, this is Carl Phillips again, at the Wilmuth farm, Grovers Mill, New Jersey. Professor Pierson and myself made the eleven miles from Princeton in ten minutes.

Well, I . . . I hardly know where to begin, to paint for you a word picture of the strange scene before my eyes, like something out of a modern "Arabian Nights."

Well, I just got here. I haven't had a chance to look around yet. I guess that's it. Yes, I guess that's the . . .

thing, directly in front of me, half buried in a vast pit. Must have struck with terrific force. The ground is covered with splinters of a tree it must have struck on its way down.

What I can see of the . . . object itself doesn't look very much like a meteor, at least not the meteors I've seen. It looks more like a huge cylinder. It has a diameter of . . . what would you say, Professor Pierson?

PIERSON (OFF-MIKE) What's that?

PHILLIPS What would you say . . . what is the diameter?

PIERSON About thirty yards.

PHILLIPS About thirty yards . . . The metal on the sheath is . . . well, I've never seen anything like it. The color is sort of yellowish-white. Curious spectators now are pressing close to the object in spite of the efforts of the police to keep them back. They're getting in front of my line of vision. Would you mind standing to 1 side, please?

POLICEMAN One side, there, One side.

PHILLIPS While the policemen are pushing the crowd back, here's Mr. Wilmuth, owner of the farm here. He may have some interesting facts to add . . . Mr. Wilmuth, would you please tell the radio audience as much as you remember of this

rather unusual visitor that dropped in
your backyard? Step closer, please.
Ladies and gentlemen, this is Mr.
Wilmuth.

WILMUTH Well, I was listenin' to the radio.

PHILLIPS Closer and louder please.

WILMUTH Pardon me!

PHILLIPS Louder, please, and closer.

WILMUTH Yes, sir . . . while I was listening to
the radio and kinda drowsin', that
Professor fellow was talkin' about Mars,
so I was half dozin' and half . . .

PHILLIPS Yes, yes, Mr. Wilmuth. Then what
happened?

WILMUTH As I was sayin', I was listenin' to the
radio kinda halfways . . .

PHILLIPS Yes, Mr. Wilmuth, and then you saw
something?

WILMUTH Not first off. I heard something.

PHILLIPS And what did you hear?

WILMUTH A hissing sound. Like this: ssssss . .
. kinda like a fourth o' July rocket.

PHILLIPS Then what?

WILMUTH Turned my head out the window and would
have swore I was to sleep and dreamin.'

PHILLIPS Yes?

WILMUTH I seen a kinda greenish streak and then zingo! Somethin' smacked the ground. Knocked me clear out of my chair!

PHILLIPS Well, were you frightened, Mr. Wilmuth?

WILMUTH Well, I . . . I ain't quite sure. I reckon I . . . I was kinda riled.

PHILLIPS Thank you, Mr. Wilmuth. Thank you.

WILMUTH Want me to tell you some more?

PHILLIPS No . . . That's quite all right, that's plenty.

PHILLIPS Ladies and gentlemen, you've just heard Mr. Wilmuth, owner of the farm where this thing has fallen. I wish I could convey the atmosphere . . . the background of this . . . fantastic scene. Hundreds of cars are parked in a field in back of us.

Police are trying to rope off the roadway leading to the farm. But it's no use. They're breaking right through. Cars' headlights throw an enormous spot on the pit where the object's half buried. Some of the more daring souls are now venturing near the edge. Their silhouettes stand out against the metal sheen.

SFX: FAINT HUMMING SOUND

rotate like a screw! The thing must be hollow!

VOICES

She's movin'! Look, the darn thing's unscrewing! Keep back, there! Keep back, I tell you! Maybe there's men in it trying to escape! It's red hot, they'll burn to a cinder! Keep back there. Keep those idiots back!

SFX: SUDDENLY THE CLANKING SOUND OF A HUGE PIECE OF FALLING METAL.

VOICES

She's off! The top's loose! Look out there! Stand back!

PHILLIPS

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the most terrifying thing I have ever witnessed . . . Wait a minute! Someone's crawling out of the hollow top. Someone or . . . something. I can see peering out of that black hole two luminous disks . . . are they eyes? It might be a face. It might be . . .

SFX: SHOUT OF AWE FROM THE CROWD.

PHILLIPS

Good heavens, something's wriggling out of the shadow like a gray snake. Now it's another one, and another. They look like tentacles to me. There, I can see the thing's body.

It's large, large as a bear and it glistens like wet leather. But that face, it . . .

Ladies and gentlemen, it's indescribable. I can hardly force myself to keep looking at it. The eyes are black and gleam like a serpent. The mouth is V-shaped with saliva dripping from its rimless lips that seem to quiver and pulsate.

The monster or whatever it is can hardly move. It seems weighed down by . . . possibly gravity or something. The thing's raising up. The crowd falls back now. They've seen plenty.

This is the most extraordinary experience. I can't find words . . . I'll pull this microphone with me as I talk. I'll have to stop the description until I can take a new position. Hold on, will you please, I'll be right back in a minute.

MUSIC: FADE INTO PIANO.

ANNOUNCER We are bringing you an eyewitness account of what's happening on the Wilmuth farm, Grovers Mill, New Jersey.

MUSIC: MORE PIANO.

ANNOUNCER We now return you to Carl Phillips at Grovers Mill.

PHILLIPS Ladies and gentlemen (Am I on?). Ladies and gentlemen, here I am, back of a stone wall that adjoins Mr. Wilmuth's garden. From here I get a sweep of the whole scene. I'll give you every detail

as long as I can talk. As long as I can see.

More state police have arrived They're drawing up a cordon in front of the pit, about thirty of them. No need to push the crowd back now. They're willing to keep their distance. The captain is conferring with someone. We can't quite see who. Oh yes, I believe it's Professor Pierson. Yes, it is.

Now they've parted. The Professor moves around one side, studying the object, while the captain and two policemen advance with something in their hands. I can see it now. It's a white handkerchief tied to a pole . . . a flag of truce. If those creatures know what that means . . . what anything means! . . . Wait! Something's happening!

SFX: HISSING SOUND FOLLOWED BY A HUMMING THAT INCREASES IN INTENSITY.

PHILLIPS

A humped shape is rising out of the pit. I can make out a small beam of light against a mirror. What's that? There's a jet of flame springing from the mirror, and it leaps right at the advancing men. It strikes them head on! Good Lord, they're turning into flame!

SFX: SCREAMS AND UNEARTHLY SHRIEKS.

PHILLIPS

Now the whole field's caught fire.

recover the bodies and extinguish the fire.

Combined fire departments of Mercer County are fighting the flames which menace the entire countryside. We have been unable to establish any contact with our mobile unit at Grovers Mill, but we hope to be able to return you there at the earliest possible moment. In the meantime we take you . . . just one moment please.

(LONG PAUSE)

(WHISPER)

Ladies and gentlemen, I have just been informed that we have finally established communication with an eyewitness of the tragedy. Professor Pierson has been located at a farmhouse near Grovers Mill where he has established an emergency observation post. As a scientist, he will give you his explanation of the calamity. The next voice you hear will be that of Professor Pierson, brought to you by direct wire. Professor Pierson.

SFX: FEEDBACK. THEN FILTERED VOICE.

PIERSON

Of the creatures in the rocket cylinder at Grover's Mill, I can give you no authoritative information . . . either as to their nature, their origin, or their purposes here on earth Of their destructive instrument I might venture

some conjectural explanation. For want of a better term, I shall refer to the mysterious weapon as a heat ray. It's all too evident that these creatures have scientific knowledge far in advance of our own. It is my guess that in some way they are able to generate an intense heat in a chamber of practically absolute non-conductivity. This intense heat they project in a parallel beam against any object they choose, by means of a polished parabolic mirror of unknown composition, much as the mirror of a lighthouse projects a beam of light. That is my conjecture of the origin of the heat ray . . .

ANNOUNCER 2

Thank you, Professor Pierson. Ladies and gentlemen, here is a bulletin from Trenton. It is a brief statement informing us that the charred body of Carl Phillips has been identified in a Trenton hospital.

Now here's another bulletin from Washington, D.C. Office of the director of the National Red Cross reports ten units of Red Cross emergency workers have been assigned to the headquarters of the state militia stationed outside Grover's Mill, New Jersey.

Here's a bulletin from state police, Princeton Junction: The fires at Grover's Mill and vicinity are now under control. Scouts report all quiet in the pit, and no sign of life appearing from the mouth of the cylinder.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, we have a special statement from Mr. Harry McDonald, Vice-President in charge of operations.

MCDONALD

We have received a request from the militia at Trenton to place at their disposal our entire broadcasting facilities. In view of the gravity of the situation, and believing that radio has a responsibility to serve in the public interest at all times, we are turning over our facilities to the state militia at Trenton.

ANNOUNCER 2

We take you now to the field headquarters of the state militia near Grover's Mill, New Jersey.

CAPTAIN LANSING

This is Captain Lansing of the signal corps, attached to the state militia now engaged in military operations in the vicinity of Grover's Mill. The cylindrical object which lies in a pit directly below our position is surrounded on all sides by eight battalions of infantry. Without heavy field pieces, but adequately armed with rifles and machine guns. All cause for alarm, if such cause ever existed, is now entirely unjustified. With all their reported resources, these creatures can scarcely stand up against heavy machine-gun fire. Anyway, it's an interesting outing for the troops. I can make out their khaki uniforms, crossing back and forth in front of the lights. It looks almost like a real war. There appears to be some slight smoke in the woods

bordering the Millstone River. Probably fire started by campers. Well, we ought to see some action soon. One of the companies is deploying on the left flank. A quick thrust and it will all be over. Seven thousand armed men closing in on an old metal tube.

Wait, there's something moving . . . solid metal . . . kind of shield-like affair rising up out of the cylinder . . . It's going higher and higher. Why, it's standing on legs . . . actually rearing up on a sort of metal framework. Now it's reaching above the trees and the searchlights are on it. Hold on!

SFX: RADIO STATIC. DEAD AIR.

ANNOUNCER 2

Ladies and gentlemen, I have a grave announcement to make. Incredible as it may seem, both the observations of science and the evidence of our eyes lead to the inescapable assumption that those strange beings who landed in the Jersey farmlands tonight are the vanguard of an invading army from the planet Mars.

The battle which took place tonight at Grover's Mill has ended in one of the most startling defeats ever suffered by any army in modern times; seven thousand men armed with rifles and machine guns pitted against a single fighting machine of the invaders from Mars. one hundred and twenty known survivors. The rest strewn over the battle area from

Grover's Mill to Plainsboro, crushed and trampled to death under the metal feet of the monster, or burned to cinders by its heat ray.

The monster is now in control of the middle section of New Jersey and has effectively cut the state through its center. We take you now to Washington for a special broadcast on the National Emergency . . . the Secretary of the Interior . . .

SECRETARY

Citizens of the nation: I shall not try to conceal the gravity of the situation that confronts the country, nor the concern of your government in protecting the lives and property of its people. However, I wish to impress upon you . . . private citizens and public officials, all of you . . . the urgent need of calm and resourceful action. Fortunately, this formidable enemy is still confined to a comparatively small area, and we may place our faith in the military forces to keep them there. In the meantime placing our faith in God we must continue the performance of our duties each and every one of us, so that we may confront this destructive adversary with a nation united, courageous, and consecrated to the preservation of human supremacy this earth. I thank you.

ANNOUNCER 3

You have just heard the secretary of the Interior speaking from Washington. Bulletins too numerous to read are

piling up in the studio here. We are informed the central portion of New Jersey is blacked out from radio communication due to the effect of the heat ray upon power lines and electrical equipment.

Here is a special bulletin from New York. Cables received from English, French, German scientific bodies offering assistance. Astronomers report continued gas outbursts at regular intervals on planet Mars. Majority voice opinion that enemy will be reinforced by additional rocket machines.

Attempts made to locate Professor Pierson of Princeton, who has observed Martians at close range. It is feared he was lost in recent battle.

Langham Field, Virginia: Scouting planes report three Martian machines visible above treetops, moving north towards Somerville with population fleeing ahead of them. Heat ray not in use; although advancing at express-train speed, invaders pick their way carefully. They seem to be making conscious effort to avoid destruction of cities and countryside. However, they stop to uproot power lines, bridges, and railroad tracks. Their apparent objective is to crush resistance, paralyze communication, and disorganize human society.

Just a moment please.

Ladies and gentlemen, we've run special wires to the artillery line in adjacent villages to give you direct reports in the zone of the advancing enemy.

First we take you to the battery of the 22nd Field Artillery, located in the Watchtung Mountains.

OFFICER Range, thirty-two meters.

GUNNER Thirty-two meters.

OFFICER Projection, thirty-nine degrees.

GUNNER Thirty-nine degrees.

OFFICER Fire!

SFX: BOOM OF HEAVY GUN . . . PAUSE.

OBSERVER One hundred and forty yards to the right, sir.

OFFICER Shift range . . . thirty-one meters.

GUNNER Thirty-one meters

OFFICER Projection . . . thirty-seven degrees.

GUNNER Thirty-seven degrees.

OFFICER Fire!

SFX: BOOM OF HEAVY GUN . . . PAUSE.

OBSERVER A hit, sir! We got the tripod of one of them. They've stopped. The others are trying to repair it.

OFFICER Quick, get the range! Shift thirty meters.

GUNNER Thirty meters.

OFFICER Projection . . . twenty-seven degrees.

GUNNER Twenty-seven degrees.

OFFICER Fire!

SFX: BOOM OF HEAVY GUN . . . PAUSE.

OBSERVER Can't see the shell land, sir. They're letting off a smoke.

OFFICER What is it?

OBSERVER A black smoke, sir. Moving this way. Lying close to the ground. It's moving fast.

OFFICER Put on gas masks.

SFX: (VOICES NOW MUFFLED)

OFFICER Get ready to fire. Shift twenty-four meters.

GUNNER Twenty-four meters.

OFFICER Projection, twenty-four degrees.

GUNNER Twenty-four degrees.

OFFICER Fire!

SFX: BOOM.

OBSERVER Still can't see, sir. The smoke's coming nearer.

OFFICER Get the range. (COUGHS)

OBSERVER Twenty-three meters. (COUGHS)

OFFICER Twenty-three meters. (COUGHS)

GUNNER Twenty-three meters (COUGHS)

OBSERVER Projection, twenty-two degrees.
(COUGHING)

OFFICER Twenty-two degrees (FADE-OUT COUGHING)

SFX: CUT TO SOUND OF AIRPLANE
MOTOR.

COMMANDER Army bombing plane, V-8-43, off Bayonne, New Jersey, Lieutenant Voight, commanding eight bombers. Reporting to Commander Fairfax, Langham Field . . . This is Voight, reporting to Commander Fairfax, Langham Field . . . Enemy tripod machines now in sight. Reinforced by three machines from the Morristown cylinder . . . Six altogether. One machine already crippled. Believed hit by a shell in Watchung Mountains. Guns now appear silent. A heavy black fog hanging close to the earth . . . of extreme density, nature unknown. No sign of heat ray.

Enemy now turns east, crossing Passaic River into the Jersey marshes. Another straddles the Pulaski Skyway. Evident objective is New York City. They're

pushing down a high tension power station. The machines are close together now, and we're ready to attack. Planes circling, ready to strike. A thousand yards and we'll be over the first . . . eight hundred yards . . . six hundred . . . four hundred . . . two hundred . . . There they go! The giant arm raised . . .

SFX: SOUND OF HEAT RAY.

COMMANDER
Green flash! They're spraying us with flame! Ttwo thousand feet. Engines are giving out. No chance to release bombs. Only one thing left . . . drop on them, plane and all. We're diving on the first one. Now the engine's gone! Eight . . .

SFX: PLANE GOES DOWN.

OPERATOR 1
This is Bayonne, New Jersey, calling Langham Field . . . This is Bayonne, New Jersey, calling Langham Field . . . Come in, please . . .

OPERATOR 2
This is Langham Field . . . Go ahead . . .

OPERATOR 1
Eight army bombers in engagement with enemy tripod machines over Jersey flats. Engines incapacitated by heat ray. All crashed. one enemy machine destroyed. Enemy now discharging heavy black smoke in direction of . . .

OPERATOR 3
This is Newark, New Jersey . . . This is Newark, New Jersey . . . Warning!

Poisonous black smoke pouring in from Jersey marshes. Reaches South street. Gas masks useless. Urge population to move into open spaces . . . automobiles use Routes 7, 23, 24 . . . Avoid congested areas. Smoke now spreading over Raymond Boulevard . . .

OPERATOR 4 2X2L . . . calling CQ . . . 2X2L . . . calling CQ . . . 2X2L . . . calling 8X3R . . . Come in, please . . .

OPERATOR 5 This is 8X3R . . . coming back at 2X2L.

OPERATOR 4 How's reception? How's reception? K, please.

(PAUSE)

Where are you, 8X3R? What's the matter? Where are you?

SFX: BELLS RINGING OVER CITY
GRADUALLY DIMINISHING.

ANNOUNCER 4 I'm speaking from the roof of the Broadcasting Building, New York City. The bells you hear are ringing to warn the people to evacuate the city as the Martians approach. Estimated in last two hours three million people have moved out along the roads to the north, Hutchison River Parkway still kept open for motor traffic.

Avoid bridges to Long Island . . . hopelessly jammed. All communication with Jersey shore closed ten minutes

ago. No more defenses. Our army wiped out . . . artillery, air force, everything wiped out. This may be the last broadcast. We'll stay here to the end . . . People are holding service below us . . . in the cathedral.

SFX: WALLAH- VOICES SINGING HYMN.

ANNOUNCER 4 Now I look down the harbor. All manner of boats, overloaded with fleeing population, pulling out from docks.

SFX: SOUND OF BOAT WHISTLES.

ANNOUNCER 4 Streets are all jammed. Noise in crowds like New Year's Eve in city. Wait a minute . . . Enemy now in sight above the Palisades. Five . . . five great machines.

First one is crossing river. I can see it from here, wading the Hudson like a man wading through a brook . . . A bulletin's handed me . . . Martian cylinders are falling all over the country. one outside Buffalo, one in Chicago, St. Louis . . . seem to be timed and spaced . . . Now the first machine reaches the shore. He stands watching, looking over the city. His steel, cowlsh head is even with the skyscrapers. He waits for the others. They rise like a line of new towers on the city's west side . . . Now they're lifting their metal hands.

This is the end now. Smoke comes out . .
. . black smoke, drifting over the city.
People in the streets see it now.
They're running towards the East River .
. . thousands of them, dropping in like
rats. Now the smoke's spreading faster.
It's reached Times Square. People trying
to run away from it, but it's no use.
They're falling like flies.

Now the smoke's crossing Sixth Avenue .
. . Fifth Avenue . . . one hundred yards
away . . . it's fifty feet . . .

SFX: BODY FALLS.

OPERATOR 4 2X2L calling CQ . . . 2X2L calling CQ .
. . 2X2L calling CQ . . . New York.
Isn't there anyone on the air? Isn't
there anyone on the air? Isn't there
anyone . . . 2X2L . . .

MERCURY
ANNOUNCER You are listening to a CBS presentation
of Orson Welles and the Mercury Theatre
on the Air in an original dramatization
of The War of the Worlds by H. G. Wells.
The performance will continue after a
brief intermission. This is the Columbia
. . . Broadcasting System.

MUSIC: PIANO/ORGAN

PIERSON As I set down these notes on paper, I'm
obsessed by the thought that I may be
the last living man on earth. I have
been hiding in this empty house near
Grover's Mill . . . a small island of
daylight cut off by the black smoke from
the rest of the world. All that happened

before the arrival of these monstrous creatures in the world now seems part of another life . . . a life that has no continuity with the present, furtive existence of the lonely derelict who pencils these words on the back of some astronomical notes bearing the signature of Richard Pierson.

I find moldy bread in the kitchen, and an orange not too spoiled to swallow. I keep watch at the window. From time to time I catch sight of a Martian above the black smoke. The smoke still holds the house in its black coil. . . but at length there is a hissing sound and suddenly I see a Martian mounted on his machine, spraying the air with a jet of steam, as if to dissipate the smoke. I watch in a corner as his huge metal legs nearly brush against the house.

Exhausted by terror, I fall asleep. . . it's morning . . . (QUIETLY) Morning! I push on north. For some reason I feel safer trailing these monsters than running away from them. And I keep a careful watch. I have seen the Martians. . . feed.

Two days I wander in a vague northerly direction through a desolate world.

Finally I notice a living creature . . . a small red squirrel in a beech tree. I stare at him, and wonder. He stares back at me. I believe at that moment the animal and I shared the same emotion . .

. the joy of finding another living being.

Presently, with an odd feeling of being watched, I caught sight of something crouching in a doorway. I made a step towards it, and it rose up and became a man! ... a man, armed with a large knife.

STRANGER (OFF MIKE) Stop. . . (CLOSER) where did you come from?

PIERSON A long time ago from Princeton.

STRANGER Princeton, huh? That's near Grover's Mill!

PIERSON Yes.

STRANGER Grover's Mill . . . (LAUGHS AS AT A GREAT JOKE) There's no food here. This is my country. . . all this end of town down to the river. There's only food for one. . . Which way are you going?

PIERSON I don't know. I guess I'm looking for . . . for people.

STRANGER What was that? Did you hear something just then?

PIERSON Only a bird . . . (AMAZED) A live bird!

STRANGER You get to know that birds have shadows these days. . . Say, we're in the open here. Let's crawl into this doorway and talk.

PIERSON Have you seen any . . . Martians?

STRANGER Naah. They've gone over to New York. At night the sky is alive with their lights. Just as if people were still livin' in it. By daylight you can't see them. Five days ago a couple of them carried somethin' big across the flats from the airport. I believe they're learning how to fly.

PIERSON Fly!

STRANGER Yeah, fly.

PIERSON Then it's all over with humanity. Stranger, there's still you and I. Two of us left.

STRANGER They got themselves in solid; they wrecked the greatest country in the world. Those green stars, they're probably falling somewhere every night. They've only lost one machine. There isn't anything to do. We're done. We're licked.

PIERSON Where were you? You're in a uniform.

STRANGER Yeah, what's left of it. I was in the militia . . . national guard. . . That's good! Wasn't any war any more than there's war between men and ants.

PIERSON And we're eatable ants. I found that out . . . What will they do with us?

STRANGER I've thought it all out. Right now we're caught as we're wanted. The Martian only

has to go a few miles to get a crowd on the run. But they won't keep doing that. They'll begin catching us systematic-like . . . keeping the best and storing us in cages and things. They haven't begun on us yet!

PIERSON Not begun!

STRANGER Not begun! All that's happened so far is because we don't have sense enough to keep quiet. . . botherin' them with guns and such stuff and losing our heads and rushing off in crowds. Now instead of our rushing around blind we've got to fix ourselves up . . . fix ourselves up according to the way things are NOW. Cities, nations, civilization, progress. . . done.

PIERSON But if that's so, what is there to live for?

STRANGER Well, there won't be any more concerts for a million years or so, and no nice little dinners at restaurants. If it's amusement you're after, I guess the game's up.

PIERSON And what is there left?

STRANGER Life . . . that's what! I want to live. Yeah, and so do you. We're not going to be exterminated. And I don't mean to be caught, either, and tamed, and fattened, and bred, like an ox.

PIERSON What are you going to do?

STRANGER I'm going on. . . right under their feet. I got a plan. We men as men are finished. We don't know enough. We gotta learn plenty before we've got a chance. And we've got to live and keep free while we learn, see? I've thought it all out, see.

PIERSON Tell me the rest.

STRANGER Well, it isn't all of us that were made for wild beasts, and that's what it's got to be. That's why I watched YOU. All these little office workers that used to live in these houses . . . they'd be no good. They haven't any stuff to 'em. They just used to run off to work. I've seen hundreds of 'em, running wild to catch their commuter train in the morning for fear they'd get canned if they didn't; running back at night afraid they won't be in time for dinner. Lives insured and a little invested in case of accidents. And on Sundays, worried about the hereafter.

The Martians will be a godsend for those guys. Nice roomy cages, good food, careful breeding, no worries. After a week or so chasing about the fields on empty stomachs they'll come and be glad to be caught.

PIERSON You've thought it all out, haven't you?

STRANGER You bet I have! And that isn't all. These Martians will make pets of some of 'em, train 'em to do tricks. Who knows? Get sentimental over the pet boy who

grew up and had to be killed . . . And some, maybe, they'll train to hunt us.

PIERSON No, that's impossible. No human being. . .

STRANGER Yes they will. There's men who'll do it gladly. If one of them ever comes after me, why. . .

PIERSON In the meantime, you and I and others like us . . . where are we to live when the Martians own the earth?

STRANGER I've got it all figured out. We'll live underground. I've been thinking about the sewers. Under New York are miles and miles of 'em. The main ls are big enough for anybody. Then there's cellars, vaults, underground storerooms, railway tunnels, subways. You begin to see, eh? And we'll get a bunch of strong men together. No weak ones; that rubbish . . . out.

PIERSON And you meant me to go?

STRANGER Well, I gave you a chance, didn't I?

PIERSON We won't quarrel about that. Go on.

STRANGER And we've got to make safe places for us to stay in, see, and get all the books we can . . . science books. That's where men like you come in, see? We'll raid the museums, we'll even spy on the Martians. It may not be so much we have to learn before . . . just imagine this:

Four or five of their own fighting machines suddenly start off . . . heat rays right and left and not a Martian in 'em. Not a Martian in 'em! But MEN . . . men who have learned the way how. It may even be in our time. Gee! Imagine having one of them lovely things with its heat ray wide and free! We'd turn it on Martians, we'd turn it on men. We'd bring everybody down to their knees.

PIERSON

That's your plan?

STRANGER

You, and me, and a few more of us we'd own the world.

PIERSON

I see. . .

STRANGER

(FADING OUT) Say, what's the matter? . . . Where are you going?

PIERSON

Not to your world. . . Goodbye, stranger . . .

PIERSON

After parting with the artilleryman, I came at last to the Holland Tunnel. I entered that silent tube anxious to know the fate of the great city on the other side of the

Hudson. Cautiously I came out of the tunnel and made my way up Canal Street. I stood all on Times Square. I caught sight of a lean dog running down Seventh Avenue with a piece of dark brown meat in his jaws, and a pack of starving mongrels at his heels.

Suddenly I caught sight of the hood of a Martian machine, standing somewhere in Central Park, gleaming in the late afternoon sun. An insane idea! I rushed recklessly across Columbus Circle and into the Park. I climbed a small hill above the pond at Sixtieth Street. From there I could see, standing in a silent row along the mall, nineteen of those great metal Titans, their cowls empty, their great steel arms hanging listlessly by their sides.

My eyes were attracted to the immense flock of black birds that hovered directly below me. They circled to the ground, and there before my eyes, stark and silent, lay the Martians, with the hungry birds pecking and tearing brown shreds of flesh from their dead bodies. Later it was found that they were killed by the putrefactive and disease bacteria against which their systems were unprepared . . . slain, after all man's defenses had failed, by the humblest thing that God in His wisdom put upon this earth.

Before the cylinder fell there was a general persuasion that through all the deep of space no life existed beyond the petty surface of our minute sphere. Now we see further. Dim and wonderful is the vision I have conjured up in my mind of life spreading slowly from this little seedbed of the solar system throughout the inanimate vastness of sidereal space. But that is a remote dream. It

may be that the destruction of the Martians is only a reprieve. To them, and not to us, is the future ordained perhaps.

Strange it now seems to sit in my peaceful study at Princeton writing down this last chapter of the record begun at a deserted farm in Grover's Mill. Strange to watch the sightseers enter the museum where the dissembled parts of a Martian machine are kept on public view. Strange when I recall the time when I first saw it, bright and clean-cut, hard, and silent, under the dawn of that last great day.

MUSIC: MUSIC SWELLS UP AND OUT.

ORSON WELLES

This is Orson Welles, ladies and gentlemen, out of character to assure you that The War of The Worlds has no further significance than as the holiday offering it was intended to be. The Mercury Theatre's own radio version of dressing up in a sheet and jumping out of a bush and saying Boo! Starting now, we couldn't soap all your windows and steal all your garden gates by tomorrow night. . . so we did the best next thing. We annihilated the world before your very ears, and utterly destroyed the C. B. S. You will be relieved, I hope, to learn that we didn't mean it, and that both institutions are still open for business.

So goodbye everybody, and remember the terrible lesson you learned tonight. That grinning, glowing, globular invader of your living room is an inhabitant of the pumpkin patch, and if your doorbell rings and nobody's there, that was no Martian. . .it's Halloween.

MUSIC: MERCURY THEATRE THEME UP
FULL, THEN DOWN.

ANNOUNCER

Tonight the Columbia Broadcasting System and its affiliated stations coast-to-coast have brought you The War of the Worlds, by H. G. Wells, the seventeenth in its weekly series of dramatic broadcasts featuring Orson Welles and the Mercury Theatre on the Air. This is the Columbia Broadcasting System.

HOST CLOSING REMARKS

HOST

Well, that's it. You've listened to The War of the Worlds, performed by Willamette Radio Workshop, directed by Sam A. Mowry.

If you'd like to hear more from Willamette Radio workshop, visit their website: radiowork.com

Episodes of Re-Imagined Radio are achieved at our website: reimaginedradio.net, that's reimagined radio, all one word, no punctuation, dot net. While there, subscribe to our podcast, or download from the major distribution platforms.

Re-Imagined Radio is produced with support from KXRW-FM and KXRY-FM, community radio stations for Vancouver, Washington, and Portland, Oregon. We thank them for their support and encourage everyone listening to help these two radio stations however you can.

Thanks also to Kiggins Theatre, and Dan Wyatt, who generously provided us this wonderful space in which to perform and record this story. I encourage your continued support of both Dan and Kiggins Theatre by attending the movies, and other events presented here. For example, coming in December we plan another live performance of "A Radio Christmas Carol," featuring Willamette Radio Workshop. Please join us for this community holiday event. Ticket information is available at the Kiggins website.

And thanks to the Electronic Literature Lab at Washington State University Vancouver, directed by Dr. Dene Grigar. She and her lab-mates are with us tonight. One, Holly Slocum is our graphic designer. Another, Ben Peterson coordinated social media efforts for this performance. Thanks for being here and your support.

It takes a village to produce an episode of Re-Imagined Radio. Thanks to Martin John Gallagher and Gilberto Silva for their attention to sound reinforcement and recording. Marty will work his magic

with additional music, sound design, and post production.

Marc Rose composed and voiced our opening and closing musical themes, and the digital sound effects heard during our performance.

I'm John Barber, producer and host.
Thank you for listening.

MUSIC: RIR CLOSING THEME