

WAR OF THE WORLDS: THE PANIC BROADCAST

ADAPTED BY
Joe Landry

INSPIRED BY AND INCLUDING THE MERCURY THEATRE
ON THE AIR'S INFAMOUS 1938 RADIO PLAY



Cast of Characters

WBFR Playhouse of the Air Actors:

FREDDIE FILMORE, 40s-50s

JAKE LAURENTS, 20s

HARRY HAYWOOD, 30s

LANA SHERWOOD, 30s

The play is performed by an ensemble of as few as four WBFR Playhouse of the Air actors who create all of the characters and create the live sound effects.

Below is a list of all the characters who appear in the play in order of speaking. The breakdown of these roles is occasionally suggested, but should be tailored to suit the ensemble of actors in each production.

* indicates characters within WBFR's recreation of the 1938 Mercury Theatre on the Air broadcast and surrounding events.

** indicates characters within the Mercury Theatre on the Air adaptation of *The War of the Worlds*.

Additional Characters (in order of appearance):

WBFR STAGE MANAGER (*voiceover*)

*HOWARD KOCH, Mercury Theatre on the Air writer (*played by Jake Laurents*)

ALL-AMERICAN BRANDS JINGLE SINGERS

*MERCURY STAGE MANAGER, Mercury Theatre on the Air stage manager

*JOHN HOUSEMAN, Mercury Theatre on the Air co-producer (*played by Harry Haywood*)

*ORA NICHOLS, Mercury Theatre on the Air head sound engineer (*played by Lana Sherwood*)

*ORSON WELLES, Mercury Theatre on the Air director, co-producer, actor (*played by Freddie Filmore*)

*DAN SEYMOUR, Mercury Theatre on the Air announcer and actor

**NARRATOR (*played by Orson Welles*)

**STUDIO ANNOUNCER

**MERIDIAN ROOM ANNOUNCER

**CARL PHILLIPS, commentator/reporter

**PROFESSOR RICHARD PIERSON, famous astronomer (*played by Orson Welles*)

**POLICEMAN AT WILMUTH FARM

**MR. WILMUTH, farmer

**VOICES AT WILMUTH FARM, a crowd of people

**BRIGADIER GENERAL MONTGOMERY SMITH, commander of the state militia

**HARRY MCDONALD, vice president in charge of radio operations

**CAPTAIN LANSING, of the signal corps

**SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR, sounding not unlike President Franklin D. Roosevelt (*played by Dan Seymour*)

**22nd FIELD ARTILLERY OFFICER

**GUNNER, 22nd Field Artillery

**OBSERVER, 22nd Field Artillery

**LIEUTENANT VOGHT, bomber commander

**BAYONNE RADIO OPERATOR

**LANGHAM FIELD RADIO OPERATOR

**NEWARK RADIO OPERATOR

**2X2L RADIO OPERATOR

**8X3R RADIO OPERATOR

HUSBAND, in All-American Brands Commercial #2 (*played by Jake Laurents*)

WIFE, in All-American Brands Commercial #2 (*played by Lana Sherwood*)

**STRANGER

FATHER, in All-American Brands Commercial #3

DAUGHTER, in All-American Brands Commercial #3

SON, in All-American Brands Commercial #3

MOTHER, in All-American Brands Commercial #3

*CBS EMPLOYEE

*POLICE AND REPORTERS AT CBS

*POLICE OFFICER AT CBS

*REPORTERS 1-3 AT CBS

*WALTER WINCHELL, newspaper columnist and broadcaster

*CBS ANNOUNCER

*THE DAILY NEWS NEWSBOY

*THE NEW YORK TIMES NEWSBOY

*THE BOSTON GLOBE NEWSBOY

*WOMAN IN CHURCH

*WOMAN WITH POISON

*COLUMNISTS 1-2

*LISTENERS 1-3

*DOROTHY THOMPSON, journalist

*CAMPBELL PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCER

*SYLVIA HOLMES, a listener

HERBERT MORRISON, WLS radio reporter (*archival audio*)

1940s REPORTER/ANNOUNCER (*pre-recorded*)

1950s REPORTER/ANNOUNCER (*pre-recorded*)

1960s REPORTER/ANNOUNCER (*pre-recorded*)

1970s REPORTER/ANNOUNCER (*pre-recorded*)

1980s REPORTER/ANNOUNCER (*pre-recorded*)

1990s REPORTER/ANNOUNCER (*pre-recorded*)

2000s REPORTER/ANNOUNCER (*pre-recorded*)

2010s REPORTER/ANNOUNCER (*pre-recorded*)

PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (*archival audio*)

Time

Sunday, October 31, 1948. With some action suggesting Sunday, October 30, 1938 and other periods.

Place

A studio at WBFR, a metropolitan radio station. With some action suggesting Studio One at CBS in Manhattan and other locations.

Production Notes

Scenes have been numbered for reference/rehearsal purposes, à la chapter stops. The action should be continuous unless otherwise noted.

The play is performed without an intermission.

Definitions of Radio Terms Used in Stage Directions

SFX: sound effects, live (or, if absolutely necessary, recorded)

MUSIC: live or recorded

BIZ: business, usually ad-libs in the background

APPROACHES: character entering scene and moving toward microphone

MOVING OFF: character exiting scene and moving away from microphone

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THEATRE ON THE AIR'S INFAMOUS 1938 RADIO PLAY

1. Pre-Show

(We're in a suggestion of a radio studio at WBFR, a metropolitan radio station. There are microphones, a sound effects station, signage for "WBFR" and/or "WBFR Playhouse of the Air," "ON AIR" and "APPLAUSE" signs which can be illuminated on cue, etc. The date is Sunday, October 31, 1948, so there are some Halloween decorations as well.)

(As the audience enters, the ACTORS mingle about as they would prior to broadcast, reviewing scripts, checking sound effects and such. [Being Halloween, perhaps a mask or two are donned and/or a spook-inducing gag is played.] At five minutes before the performance is scheduled to begin, an announcement by the WBFR STAGE MANAGER is made:)

WBFR STAGE MANAGER. *(Voiceover:)* Five minutes to air. Mr. Filmore, Mr. Laurents *(Pronounced "Law-rents")*, Mr. Haywood, Miss Sherwood. This is your five-minute call.

(The ACTORS continue about their business for the next three minutes.)

(Then comes another announcement from the WBFR STAGE MANAGER:)

WBFR STAGE MANAGER. *(Voiceover:)* Two minutes to air. Mr. Filmore, Mr. Laurents, Mr. Haywood, Miss Sherwood. This is your two-minute call. Mr. Filmore to places for audience warm-up.

(FREDDIE approaches us [possibly at the microphone].)

FREDDIE. *(To us:)* Good evening, ladies and gentlemen! Welcome to a live broadcast of WBFR Playhouse of the Air. We are less than two minutes away from going live over the airwaves, which gives me just enough time to introduce the fine acting ensemble who will be presenting this evening's play. *(Beat.)* You know him from *Dicky Dixon*, *Private Dick* and *Cowpoke Romance*, playing Howard Koch and others in tonight's play, I give you Mr. Jake Laurents . . .

(The "APPLAUSE" sign flashes as JAKE LAURENTS greets us.)

JAKE. *(To us:)* Good evening, everyone. It's a pleasure. *(Smiles and gives a salute to a cute young thing in the audience.)* You know our next little lady from Broadway's *The Ugly Woman in the Cheap Fur Coat* and coming to you each week as Countess Blueblitchki *(Pronounced "Blue-blitch-key")* in *Mutton Chop Manor* on another network, playing sound effects wizardess Ora Nichols and others in this evening's play, it is my thrill to bring you the always charming Miss Lana Sherwood . . .

(LANA SHERWOOD, at the sound effects station, performs the following without missing a beat:)

(SFX: Gong / siren whistle / gunshots.)

(She then hits the "APPLAUSE" sign button and greets us.)

LANA. *(To us, singling out an individual for each "you":)* Why, I'm just wild about you and you and every last one of you! *(To one of us:)* Especially you! *(Beat.)* It's always my pleasure to share the stage with one of the classiest actors money can buy. He's just returned from Los Angeles *(Pronounced "Loss Angle-eeze")* where he completed filming the Technicolor spectacle *A Day at Pimlico, A Night at the Glue Factory*, playing John Houseman and others in tonight's play, here's the man of a hundred and one voices, Mr. Harry Haywood . . .

(The "APPLAUSE" sign flashes as HARRY HAYWOOD greets us—performing one of his signature physical slapstick moves on his way.)

HARRY. *(To us:)* Hello, America! *(To his mother, in the audience:)* And hello, Mother! *(Smiles, composes himself, back to business:)* It's nothing less than my absolute pleasure to give you one of your favorites and mine, host of the beloved daytime quiz program *Females are Fabulous*, host of WBFR Playhouse of the Air and playing none other than Mr. Orson Welles himself and others in this evening's program, I give you—and please do be so kind as to give him back—Mr. Freddie Filmore . . .

(The "APPLAUSE" sign flashes as FREDDIE greets us again.)

FREDDIE. *(To us:)* Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. You're too kind. *(Receiving a visual cue from the WBFR STAGE MANAGER:)* I'm getting the signal from our stage manager that we'll be on the air in ten seconds. Thank you for coming and enjoy the broadcast!

(The ACTORS take their places as . . .)

WBFR STAGE MANAGER. *(Voiceover:)* We're on the air in five . . . four . . . three . . .

2. WBFR Playhouse of the Air Opening

(The "ON AIR" sign illuminates. FREDDIE at the microphone, script in hand.)

(MUSIC/SFX: Tympani, up and under.)

FREDDIE. WBFR Playhouse of the Air!

(MUSIC/SFX: Cymbal crash.)

(The "APPLAUSE" sign flashes.)

(MUSIC: WBFR Playhouse of the Air theme, up and under.)

FREDDIE. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, this is WBFR Playhouse of the Air. I'm your host, Freddie Filmore, here with you each and every week to present, by radio, the classics of literature, stage, and screen, as well as those headline-making true-life stories. Tonight, we present you with the latter—the reenactment of memorable scenes from one of the most fascinating events in recent history. For it was ten years ago, during the final days of October, nineteen hundred and thirty-eight, that the Martians landed. *(Quick beat.)* Yes, you did indeed hear me correctly, ladies and gentlemen. Ten years ago, Mr. Orson Welles and the Mercury Theatre on the Air brought listeners their unique adaptation of H. G. Wells's science fiction classic *The War of the Worlds*—and with it, history was made. To say the broadcast in question caused a bit of a stir would be a gross understatement. For in the passing decade, the program and its aftermath have been duly noted as one of the most infamous broadcasts of all time, and will no doubt go down in the annals of radio history. Many of you dear listeners no doubt remember hearing the broadcast on that fateful evening. And it is our sincere pleasure to bring to you tonight a recreation of the radio play itself, as well as the events which made it one of the most captivating affairs of the twentieth century— A radio play within a radio play, if you will.

3. An Interview with Howard Koch

FREDDIE. Before we present *The War of the Worlds* itself, we have a special treat for you, dear listeners. Live, via telephone, we bring you the writer who adapted H. G. Wells's novella for the radio—Mr. Howard Koch, who has generously agreed to share with us the story behind the broadcast itself. Ladies and gentlemen, the next voice you hear is that of Mr. Koch . . . *(Beat.)* Hello? Mr. Koch?

(BIZ: Telephone voice for HOWARD KOCH. Perhaps with the actor talking partially into a drinking glass placed between his mouth and the microphone.)

HOWARD KOCH. Good evening, Mr. Filmore. Hello, everyone.

FREDDIE. Good evening, Mr. Koch. And thank you ever so for joining us, it is indeed a thrill. (*Beat.*) Now, as I understand it, you were present at the creation of this history-making broadcast. Might you, perhaps, share with our listeners a word or two about how this particular program came to be?

HOWARD KOCH. I'd be happy to. Writing radio plays for the Mercury Theatre on the Air was my first professional job. The program was built around the name and talents of Orson Welles, the "boy genius" who had taken the New York theatre scene by storm. Each week, I was responsible for sixty pages of script, dramatizing a literary work assigned to me by Orson or his co-producer, John Houseman, both of whom had pretty exacting standards. It was Houseman who handed me a copy of H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds*.

FREDDIE. I see. And how was the structure of the play decided?

HOWARD KOCH. Houseman's only instructions to me were to dramatize the 1898 novella in the form of news bulletins. But, in reading the story, which was laid in England and written in narrative style, I realized I could use practically nothing but the author's idea of a Martian invasion and his description of their appearance and their machines. In short, I was being asked to create an almost entirely original hour-length play in six days.

FREDDIE. That sounds quite a task, indeed.

HOWARD KOCH. It certainly was. And as a way of breaking through my monstrous case of writer's block, I decided to establish the location of the first Martian arrivals. In my office, I had a map of the state of New Jersey; which I spread across my desk, closed my eyes, and put down the pencil point. It happened to fall on a town by the name of Grover's Mill. And I liked the sound of it, and felt it had an authentic ring. Also it was near Princeton, where I could logically bring in the observatory and the astronomer, Professor Pierson, who became a leading character in the drama.

FREDDIE. Can you share with our listeners a bit about the days leading up to the broadcast? What was the atmosphere behind the scenes?

HOWARD KOCH. The six days before the broadcast were one long nightmare of scenes written and rewritten between frantic telephone calls; with pages speeding back and forth to the studio. All the while, that Sunday deadline staring me in the face.

FREDDIE. How many drafts of the script were there?

HOWARD KOCH. So many that I'm sure we'd lost count. On Wednesday, a recording was made for Orson and played for him at his suite at the Regis Hotel. And on Thursday morning, Orson's notes would arrive and another draft would be crafted just in time to be delivered to the CBS lawyers who would in turn offer their own set of changes.

FREDDIE. Do you recall some of the changes from the lawyers?

HOWARD KOCH. They gave approval on the stipulation that several names of actual people and locations be changed. Hence, the Hotel Biltmore became the Park Plaza; the Trans-America became the International; President Roosevelt became the "Secretary of the Interior;" and Bernard Herrmann and the CBS Orchestra became "Ramón Raquello and his orchestra."

FREDDIE. I see. Now, Mr. Orson Welles was rehearsing a play for Broadway at the same time, was he not?

HOWARD KOCH. That he was. A play by the name of *Danton's Death*. Just hours before the scheduled broadcast, Orson tore himself away from his Broadway rehearsal and arrived at the studio by ambulance.

FREDDIE. By ambulance?!

HOWARD KOCH. That's correct. Orson learned that there was no law in New York that you have to be sick to ride in an ambulance. Not only was it quicker than a taxi, it provided an arrival which played nicely into that Wellesian dramatic flair for which he is famous. As the hands of the clock moved relentlessly toward airtime the crisis grew more extreme, the peril more desperate. Often violence broke out. Scripts flew through the air, doors were slammed, batons smashed. After that, with only a few minutes to go, there was a final frenzy of correction and reparation, of utter confusion and absolute horror, aggravated by the gobbling of sandwiches and the bolting of oversized milkshakes. By now it was less than a minute to airtime . . . At that instant, quite regularly week after week—with not one second to spare . . . the titanic buffoonery stopped. Suddenly, out of chaos, much like magic, the show emerged: meticulously executed and precise as clockwork.

FREDDIE. Where were you during the broadcast itself?

HOWARD KOCH. I was rarely present at the broadcasts, as my work was done. I listened to the broadcast in my apartment. After which, I went to sleep, blissfully unaware of what was happening outside. In a sense I myself was one of the victims of the "Halloween prank" as Orson later called it in a masterly understatement.

FREDDIE. A "masterly understatement" indeed! (*Beat.*) Thank you ever so for joining us this evening, Mr. Koch!

HOWARD KOCH. My pleasure.

(SFX: Telephone disconnected.)

FREDDIE. Ladies and gentlemen, you have just been listening to Mr. Howard Koch, who adapted H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* for the radio. In a moment, we bring you a reenactment of that broadcast itself. But first, we invite you to listen to a word from our sponsor . . .

4. All-American Brands Commercial #1: "Mother Nature"

(HARRY at the microphone. SALLY [and perhaps others] perform the sound effects.)

HARRY. Torrential rains! Deafening thunderclaps!

(SFX: Rain, thunder.)

HARRY. The howling winds of a hurricane!

(SFX: Wind.)

HARRY. Brutal blizzards of blinding snow!

(SFX: Snow.)

HARRY. Devastating earthquakes weaving a canyon of death and destruction!

(SFX: Earthquake.)

HARRY. Yessiree, Mother Nature's quite the busy gal! And whether she's planning to strike you down with a bolt of lightning or bury you alive under an avalanche of snow—not to worry, for All-American Brand products have got you covered! Why, All-American Brands have it all: From umbrellas in every fashionable color of the rainbow to flare guns and chainsaws, All-American Brand products will get you through whatever surprises Mother Nature has got up her sleeve.

(SFX: Wind, thunder, lightning, snow, and earthquake—rise then suddenly out.)

HARRY. Not so fast! You've got nothing to fear—thanks to All-American Brands! Write away for your complimentary six-hundred-page All-American Brands catalog today! You'll be glad you did.

(MUSIC: "All-American Brands" jingle.)

JINGLE SINGERS. (*Sing:*) BE A PROUD AMERICAN WITH ALL-AMERICAN BRANDS!

(The "APPLAUSE" light flashes.)

5. Introduction to Mercury Theatre on the Air's *The War of the Worlds* (Part 1)

(MUSIC: WBFR Playhouse of the Air theme, up and under.)

FREDDIE. Welcome back, ladies and gentlemen. This is Freddie Filmore and WBFR Playhouse of the Air. As tonight's story begins, we now take you one decade back in time . . .

(MUSIC: Harp up and under [Transition in time: WBFR to Mercury].)

FREDDIE. It is the evening of October 30, 1938 at 7:58 PM, eastern standard time. We're in Studio One of the Columbia Broadcasting Building in Manhattan, where coffee cartons and sandwich paper from the chaos of the day's final dress rehearsal are littered about. There's an excitement in the air—a special thrill reserved for those final moments before the curtain rises. In the control room, producer John Houseman is running over last-minute notes with a myriad of technicians . . .

JOHN HOUSEMAN. Now, gentlemen, are we certain the cue line on page twelve will come in precisely at the time we discussed?

MERCURY STAGE MANAGER. Yes, Mr. Houseman. Twelve minutes in to the second.

JOHN HOUSEMAN. Excellent. Orson and I are counting on you. (*Moving off:*) Now, let's review that handful of last-minute changes . . .

FREDDIE. On the floor of the studio, as the cast prepares to go on the air, we hear composer and conductor Bernard Herrmann tuning up the Mercury's orchestra . . .

(SFX/MUSIC: Orchestra tuning up.)

FREDDIE. Over the studio's speakers comes the stage manager's call . . .

MERCURY STAGE MANAGER. Two minutes to air, this is your two-minute call. Mr. Welles, Mr. Seymour, Mr. Stewart, Mr. Readick, Mr. Collins, Miss Nichols, and company. Two minutes to air . . .

FREDDIE. Mr. Welles is giving some final instructions to Miss Ora Nichols, the head sound engineer . . .

ORSON WELLES. Now, Ora, dear, let's hear cue A15, if you will . . .

ORA NICHOLS. Right away, Mr. Welles . . .

(SFX: Hissing sound followed by a humming that increases in intensity.)

ORSON WELLES. That's fine. A bit more intensity to the end, if you please. And remember to cut cue A34 like that (*Snaps fingers*).

ORA NICHOLS. Will do, Mr. Welles . . .

ORSON WELLES. Very good.

MERCURY STAGE MANAGER. One minute to air. Mr. Welles to the podium, please . . .

ORSON WELLES. Dan!

DAN SEYMOUR. Yes, Orson.

ORSON WELLES. The lawyers don't want you to sound like President Roosevelt. They got all clever about it and changed the character to the Secretary of the Interior. But we cannot help it if the Secretary of the Interior just so happens to sound like President Roosevelt, now can we?

DAN SEYMOUR. We cannot help that.

ORSON WELLES. Attaboy.

MERCURY STAGE MANAGER. Thirty seconds. Places and stand by, please . . .

FREDDIE. Mr. Welles took the podium, and tapped his baton, ready to throw the cue for the Mercury theme . . .

(SFX: Baton tapping on podium.)

FREDDIE. And there was silence as the stage manager gave the final countdown . . .

MERCURY STAGE MANAGER. We're on the air in five . . . four . . . three . . .

6. Mercury Theatre on the Air's *The War of the Worlds* (Part 1)

MERCURY ANNOUNCER (DAN SEYMOUR). The Columbia Broadcasting System and its affiliated stations present Orson Welles and the Mercury Theatre on the Air in *The War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells.

(MUSIC: Mercury Theatre musical theme [Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto in B Flat Minor No. 1].)

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

NARRATOR (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 complacency 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 are 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 Crossley service estimated that thirty-two million people were listening in on radios.

STUDIO ANNOUNCER. . . . 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: Spanish theme song [a tango] . . . fades in.)

MERIDIAN ROOM ANNOUNCER. 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: "La Cumparsita" starts playing.)

STUDIO ANNOUNCER. 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 Meridian Room of the Park Plaza Hotel, situated in downtown New York.

(MUSIC: Music plays for a few moments until piece ends . . .)

(SFX: Applause.)

MERIDIAN ROOM ANNOUNCER. Now a tune that never loses favor, the ever-popular "Stardust." Ramón Raquello and his orchestra . . .

(MUSIC: "Stardust.")

STUDIO ANNOUNCER. Ladies and gentlemen, following on the news given in our bulletin a moment ago, the Government Meteorological Bureau has requested the large observatories of the country to keep an astronomical watch on any further disturbances occurring on the planet Mars. Due to the unusual nature of this occurrence, we have arranged an interview with noted astronomer, Professor Pierson, who will give us his views on the event. In a few moments we will take you to the Princeton Observatory at Princeton, New Jersey. We return you until then to the music of Ramón Raquello and his orchestra.

(MUSIC: "Stardust.")

STUDIO ANNOUNCER. We are now ready to take you to the Princeton Observatory at Princeton where Carl Phillips, our commentator, will interview Professor Richard Pierson, famous astronomer. We take you now to Princeton, New Jersey.

(SFX: Echo chamber.)

CARL PHILLIPS. 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?

PROFESSOR RICHARD PIERSON. (Played by ORSON WELLES:) At any time, Mr. Phillips.

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

PROFESSOR RICHARD 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.

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

PROFESSOR RICHARD 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.

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

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

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

PROFESSOR RICHARD PIERSON. Mr. Phillips, I cannot account for it.

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

PROFESSOR RICHARD PIERSON. Approximately forty million miles.

CARL PHILLIPS. Well, that seems a safe enough distance. (Off mike:) Thank you. (Pause.) 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?

PROFESSOR RICHARD PIERSON. Certainly, Mr. Phillips

CARL 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 PM 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?

PROFESSOR RICHARD 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.

CARL 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.)

STUDIO ANNOUNCER. 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 PM and 9:20 PM, 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 PM a huge, flaming object, believed to be a meteorite, fell on a farm in the neighborhood of Grover's 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.)

STUDIO ANNOUNCER. We take you now to Grover's Mill, New Jersey.

(BIZ: Crowd noises . . .)

(SFX: Police sirens.)

CARL PHILLIPS. Ladies and gentlemen, this is Carl Phillips again, at the Wilmuth farm, Grover's 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?

PROFESSOR RICHARD PIERSON. *(Off mike:)* What's that?

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

PROFESSOR RICHARD PIERSON. About thirty yards.

CARL 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 one side, please?

POLICEMAN AT WILMUTH FARM. One side, there, one side.

CARL 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.

MR. WILMUTH. Well, I was listenin' to the radio.

CARL PHILLIPS. Closer and louder please.

MR. WILMUTH. Pardon me!

CARL PHILLIPS. Louder, please, and closer.

MR. 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 . . .

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

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

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

MR. WILMUTH. Not first off. I heard something.

CARL PHILLIPS. And what did you hear?

MR. WILMUTH. A hissing sound. Like this: sssssss . . . kinda like a Fourt' of July rocket.

CARL PHILLIPS. Then what?

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

CARL PHILLIPS. Yes?

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

CARL PHILLIPS. Well, were you frightened, Mr. Wilmuth?

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

CARL PHILLIPS. Thank you, Mr. Wilmuth. Thank you.

MR. WILMUTH. Want me to tell you some more?

CARL PHILLIPS. No . . . That's quite all right, that's plenty. *(Beat.)* 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.)

CARL PHILLIPS. One man wants to touch the thing . . . he's having an argument with a policeman. The policeman wins . . . Now, ladies and gentlemen, there's something I haven't mentioned in all this excitement, but now it's becoming more distinct. Perhaps you've

caught it already on your radio. Listen: *(Long pause)* Do you hear it? It's a curious humming sound that seems to come from inside the object. I'll move the microphone nearer. *(Pause.)* Now we're not more than twenty-five feet away. Can you hear it now? Oh, Professor Pierson!

PROFESSOR RICHARD PIERSON. Yes, Mr. Phillips?

CARL PHILLIPS. Can you tell us the meaning of that scraping noise inside the thing?

PROFESSOR RICHARD PIERSON. Possibly the unequal cooling of its surface.

CARL PHILLIPS. I see, do you still think it's a meteor, Professor?

PROFESSOR RICHARD PIERSON. I don't know what to think. The metal casing is definitely extraterrestrial . . . not found on this earth. Friction with the earth's atmosphere usually tears holes in a meteorite. This thing is smooth and, as you can see, of cylindrical shape.

CARL PHILLIPS. Just a minute! Something's happening! Ladies and gentlemen, this is terrific! This end of the thing is beginning to flake off! The top is beginning to rotate like a screw! The thing must be hollow!

VOICES AT WILMUTH FARM. 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 AT WILMUTH FARM. She's off! The top's loose! Look out there! Stand back!

CARL 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 . . .

(BIZ: Shout of awe from the crowd.)

CARL 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.)

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

(MUSIC: Fade into piano [continued].)

STUDIO ANNOUNCER. We now return you to Carl Phillips at Grover's Mill.

CARL PHILLIPS. Ladies and gentlemen— Am I on? Ladies and gentlemen, here I am, in 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.)

CARL 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!

(BIZ: Screams and unearthly shrieks.)

CARL PHILLIPS. Now the whole field's caught fire.

(SFX: Explosion.)

CARL PHILLIPS. The woods . . . the barns . . . the gas tanks of automobiles . . . it's spreading everywhere. It's coming this way. About twenty yards to my right . . .

(SFX: Crash of microphone . . . then dead silence.)

STUDIO ANNOUNCER. Ladies and gentlemen, due to circumstances beyond our control, we are unable to continue the broadcast from Grover's Mill. Evidently there's some difficulty with our field transmission. However, we will return to that point at the earliest opportunity. In the meantime, we have a late bulletin from San Diego, California. Professor Indellkoffer, speaking at a dinner of the California Astronomical Society, expressed the opinion that the explosions on Mars are undoubtedly nothing more than severe volcanic disturbances on the surface of the planet. We now continue with our piano interlude.

(MUSIC: Piano . . . then cut.)

STUDIO ANNOUNCER. Ladies and gentlemen, I have just been handed a message that came in from Grover's Mill by telephone. Just a moment. At least forty people, including six state troopers, lie dead in a field east of the village of Grover's Mill, their bodies burned and distorted beyond all possible recognition. The next voice you hear will be that of Brigadier General Montgomery Smith, commander of the state militia at Trenton, New Jersey.

BRIGADIER GENERAL MONTGOMERY SMITH. I have been requested by the governor of New Jersey to place the counties of Mercer and Middlesex as far west as Princeton, and east to Jamesburg, under martial law. No one will be permitted to enter this area except by special pass issued by state or military authorities. Four companies of state militia are proceeding from Trenton to Grover's Mill, and will aid in the evacuation of homes within the range of military operations. Thank you.

STUDIO ANNOUNCER. You have just been listening to General Montgomery Smith commanding the state militia at Trenton. In the meantime, further details of the catastrophe at Grover's Mill are coming in. The strange creatures, after unleashing their deadly assault, crawled back into their pit and made no attempt to prevent the efforts of the firemen to 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 Grover's 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. Then, in a 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 Grover's 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:)

PROFESSOR RICHARD 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 . . .

STUDIO ANNOUNCER. 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.: The 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.

HARRY 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.

STUDIO ANNOUNCER. 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. Situation arising from the reported presence of certain individuals of unidentified nature is now under complete control. 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. The things, whatever they are, do not even venture to poke their heads above the pit. I can see their hiding place plainly in the glare of the searchlights here. 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. Now wait a minute! I see something on top of the cylinder. No, it's nothing but a shadow. Now the troops are on the edge of the Wilmoth farm. Seven thousand armed men closing in on an old metal tube. Wait, that wasn't a shadow! It'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!

STUDIO ANNOUNCER. 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. Communication lines are down from Pennsylvania to the Atlantic Ocean. Railroad tracks are torn and service from New York to Philadelphia discontinued except routing some of the trains through Allentown and Phoenixville. Highways to the north, south, and west are clogged with frantic human traffic. Police and army reserves are unable to control the mad flight. By morning the fugitives will have swelled Philadelphia, Camden, and Trenton, it is estimated, to twice their normal population. At this time martial law prevails throughout New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania. We

take you now to Washington for a special broadcast on the National Emergency . . . the Secretary of the Interior . . .

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR. 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 on this earth. I thank you.

STUDIO ANNOUNCER. 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. Here is a bulletin from Basking Ridge, New Jersey: Coon hunters have stumbled on a second cylinder similar to the first embedded in the great swamp twenty miles south of Morristown. Army fieldpieces are proceeding from Newark to blow up second invading unit before cylinder can be opened and the fighting machine rigged. They are taking up position in the foothills of Watchung Mountains. Another bulletin from Langham Field, Virginia: Scouting planes report enemy machines, now three in number, increasing speed northward, kicking over houses and trees in their evident haste to form a conjunction with their allies south of Morristown. Machines also sighted by telephone operator

east of Middlesex within ten miles of Plainfield. Here's a bulletin from Winston Field, Long Island: Fleet of army bombers carrying heavy explosives flying north in pursuit of enemy. Scouting planes act as guides. They keep speeding enemy in sight. 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 Watchung Mountains.

22nd FIELD ARTILLERY OFFICER. Range, thirty-two meters.

GUNNER. Thirty-two meters.

22nd FIELD ARTILLERY OFFICER. Projection, thirty-nine degrees.

GUNNER. Thirty-nine degrees.

22nd FIELD ARTILLERY OFFICER. Fire!

(SFX: Boom of heavy gun . . . Pause.)

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

22nd FIELD ARTILLERY OFFICER. Shift range . . . thirty-one meters.

GUNNER. Thirty-one meters.

22nd FIELD ARTILLERY OFFICER. Projection . . . thirty-seven degrees.

GUNNER. Thirty-seven degrees.

22nd FIELD ARTILLERY 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.

22nd FIELD ARTILLERY OFFICER. Quick, get the range! Shift thirty meters.

GUNNER. Thirty meters.

22nd FIELD ARTILLERY OFFICER. Projection . . . twenty-seven degrees.

GUNNER. Twenty-seven degrees.

22nd FIELD ARTILLERY OFFICER. Fire!

(SFX: Boom of heavy gun . . . Pause.)

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

22nd FIELD ARTILLERY OFFICER. What is it?

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

22nd FIELD ARTILLERY OFFICER. Put on gas masks.

(SFX: Pause. Voices now muffled.)

22nd FIELD ARTILLERY OFFICER. Get ready to fire. Shift twenty-four meters.

GUNNER. Twenty-four meters.

22nd FIELD ARTILLERY OFFICER. Projection, twenty-four degrees.

GUNNER. Twenty-four degrees.

22nd FIELD ARTILLERY OFFICER. Fire!

(SFX: Boom.)

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

22nd FIELD ARTILLERY OFFICER. Get the range.

(SFX: Coughs.)

OBSERVER. Twenty-three meters.

(SFX: Coughs.)

22nd FIELD ARTILLERY OFFICER. Twenty-three meters.

(SFX: Coughs.)

GUNNER. Twenty-three meters.

(SFX: Coughs.)

OBSERVER. Projection, twenty-two degrees.

(SFX: Coughing.)

22nd FIELD ARTILLERY OFFICER. Twenty-two degrees.

(SFX: Fade in—coughing.)

(SFX: Cut to sound of airplane motor.)

LIEUTENANT VOGHT. Army bombing plane, V-8-43, off Bayonne, New Jersey, Lieutenant Voght, commanding eight bombers. Reporting to Commander Fairfax, Langham Field . . . This is Voght, 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 shell from army gun 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: Heat ray.)

LIEUTENANT VOGHT. Green flash! They're spraying us with flame! Two 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.)

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

LANGHAM FIELD RADIO OPERATOR. This is Langham Field . . . Go ahead . . .

BAYONNE RADIO OPERATOR. 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—

NEWARK RADIO OPERATOR. 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 . . .

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

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

2X2L RADIO OPERATOR. 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.)

STUDIO ANNOUNCER. 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, Hutchinson 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/BIZ: *Voices singing hymn.*)

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

(SFX: *Boat whistles.*)

STUDIO ANNOUNCER. 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 to 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, cowlish 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.*)

2X2L RADIO OPERATOR. 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 (DAN SEYMOUR). 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: *Mercury Theatre musical theme [Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto in B Flat Minor No. 1] up and into . . .*)

7. Transition: Mercury Theatre on the Air's *The War of the Worlds* (Part 1) / Commercial #2

(MUSIC: *Harp [Transition in time: WBFR to Mercury].*)

FREDDIE. Ladies and gentlemen, this is Freddie Filmore once again, returning you, briefly, to the WBFR Broadcast Building and the WBFR Playhouse of the Air. If you're just tuning in, you have been listening to a special program this evening—a reenactment of the infamous 1938 broadcast of *The War of the Worlds*. Now, here's a fact of which you may not be aware, but one which will figure greatly as tonight's program continues: The Mercury Theatre on the Air, produced by Orson Welles and John Houseman some ten years ago, did not have a sponsor. They were a relatively new program and had not yet gained the backing of a sponsor who would require regular interruptions at regular intervals for their commercial advertisements (*Perhaps pronounced "add-vert-is-mints*). You may have noticed the lengthy stretch of our program tonight which has gone by without commercial interruption. And we are performing it as such to recreate the experience as the listeners heard the broadcast on that fateful evening a decade back. It's small wonder that a great number of listeners who tuned in after the announcement was made when program began, but tuned out before next announcement at the station break we're taking now, may well have thought what they were hearing was absolutely real. Just how many of them thought that we were being invaded by Martians? How many of them thought their time on our dear planet was coming to its very end? And what of Orson Welles and his company of actors in the studio—did they have any idea of the cavalcade of panic their little radio play was causing its listeners? Stay tuned and find out! (*Beat.*) Now, the Mercury Theatre on the Air may not have had a sponsor, but the WBFR Playhouse of the Air does—and a fine one at that—the wonderful folks at All-American Brands. And we will return to our broadcast after a word from them now . . .

8. All-American Brands Commercial #2: "Happy Anniversary"

(JAKE and LANA approach the microphones as HUSBAND and WIFE.)

(MUSIC: *Romantic.*)

HUSBAND. Happy anniversary, darling!

WIFE. Why, honey—you remembered!

HUSBAND. Well, I must confess, I did have a little help.

WIFE. Oh, did you circle the date on the calendar?

HUSBAND. Better than that. I received a reminder telephone call from All-American Brands two weeks ago. And they helped me plan an anniversary you'll never forget. If you'll be so kind as to close your eyes and step out in the backyard with me, my dear . . .

(SFX: Door opening.)

(SFX: Outdoor noises—birds, etc.)

WIFE. Why, whatever on earth?!

HUSBAND. Just a few more steps. Here we are . . . Open your eyes, and . . . Surprise!

(SFX: Hot air balloon, up and under.)

WIFE. Darling! A hot air balloon! Just what I've always wanted! However did you know?

HUSBAND. It was simple: You had it on your All-American Brands List of Dreams.

WIFE. Why, I did. But it was only a dream.

HUSBAND. Well, now it's a dream come true! Shall we take it for a spin?

WIFE. Oh, yes, please!

(MUSIC: Transition.)

(SFX: Wind, up and under.)

HUSBAND. Look at that view!

WIFE. It's thrilling, my darling!

HUSBAND. How about some All-American Champagne, my pet?

(SFX: Champagne cork pops, pouring in glasses, clinking glasses, drinking.)

WIFE. Mmm . . . Delicious!

HUSBAND. And here's a little something else for you, my love.

(SFX: Opening wrapped gift.)

WIFE. Oh, darling! It's an All-American Brand Ladies' Pistol with a monogrammed powder-pink grip! Now I'll feel safe when you have to stay all those late nights at the office with your secretary. *(Beat.)* And here's a gift for you, darling . . .

HUSBAND. Oh, it's so huge!

(SFX: Opening wrapped gift.)

WIFE. Only the best for you, dear . . .

HUSBAND. Is this what I think it is?! Is this an All-American Brand Man's Machine Gun?

WIFE. You betcha! Now you'll have all the power you need when you go away for those long hunting weekends with your handsome man friends.

HUSBAND. I can't wait to try it out!

WIFE. No time like the present! I loaded it this morning!

HUSBAND. And I loaded yours!

WIFE. Shall we?

HUSBAND. Be my guest . . .

(SFX: Pistol shooting.)

WIFE. Oh, darling, it's wonderful! Did you see how I hit that bald eagle with only one shot? Not bad for a lady!

HUSBAND. I'll say. Why, darling, you're wonderful!

WIFE. And now it's your turn, dear.

HUSBAND. Stand back!

(SFX: Machine gun.)

WIFE. Honey! I dare say you took out that entire herd of American buffalo!

HUSBAND. It was a cinch, thanks to you and All-American Brand products! Happy anniversary, dear.

WIFE. Happy anniversary, darling.

(BIZ/SFX: Kiss.)

(SFX: Champagne glasses clink.)

HUSBAND. Shall we do it together?

WIFE. Nothing would give me a greater thrill!

(SFX: Pistol and machine gun.)

(MUSIC: Romantic build, up and under.)

HARRY. Make every day as wonderful as your anniversary with All-American Brands! Write away for your complimentary six-hundred-page All-American Brands catalog today! You'll be glad you did.

(MUSIC: "All-American Brands" jingle.)

JINGLE SINGERS. (*Sing:*) BE A PROUD AMERICAN WITH ALL-AMERICAN BRANDS!

(*The "APPLAUSE" light flashes.*)

9. Transition: Commerical #2 / Mercury Theatre on the Air Station Break

(*MUSIC: WBFR Playhouse of the Air theme, up and under.*)

FREDDIE. Welcome back, ladies and gentlemen. This is Freddie Filmore and WBFR Playhouse of the Air. As tonight's story continues, we return you now to Studio One of the Columbia Broadcasting Building in Manhattan. They're standing by during the station break...

(*MUSIC: Harp [Transition in time: WBFR to Mercury].*)

10. Mercury Theatre on the Air Station Break

MERCURY STAGE MANAGER. Two minutes until we're back on the air...

FREDDIE. As the actors prepare for the second act of their play, producer John Houseman rushes out of the control room and to Mr. Welles...

JOHN HOUSEMAN. (*Rushed, panicked:*) Orson!

ORSON WELLES. Why, John, you're as white as a sheet. What the devil's going on?

JOHN HOUSEMAN. You're not going to believe this...

ORSON WELLES. Try me.

JOHN HOUSEMAN. Listeners have been calling into the switchboard. They're in a panic.

ORSON WELLES. Panic? Why?

JOHN HOUSEMAN. They think it's real.

ORSON WELLES. (*After a moment, then with a laugh, to the actors, et al.:*) Did you hear that, folks?

JOHN HOUSEMAN. Laugh all you want, Orson, but the CBS bigwigs aren't laughing, believe me. They've been in the control room for the past ten minutes demanding a station break.

ORSON WELLES. And we're giving them one now, aren't we?

JOHN HOUSEMAN. I had to do everything within my power to stop them from taking us off the air.

ORSON WELLES. And you did a fine job at such, my boy. But I don't see the call for such hullabaloo, John. After all, it's only a play.

JOHN HOUSEMAN. But the listeners, Orson. They don't think it's a play. They think it's really happening.

ORSON WELLES. That's the point, isn't it? Why do we do this, John? To be convincing, to further the suspension of disbelief.

JOHN HOUSEMAN. Well, you're succeeding, so congratulations. But just how far would you like the listeners to suspend their disbelief?

ORSON WELLES. So far as the traffic will allow, of course.

JOHN HOUSEMAN. Even if that includes inciting a riot?

ORSON WELLES. Oh, so now it's a riot. A minute ago it was a panic. Exactly how many telephone calls have come through the CBS switchboard?

JOHN HOUSEMAN. A sufficient enough number that we're engaging in this conversation.

ORSON WELLES. Get me a number, John. How many calls? Find out, and keep a tally in the control booth. Then you can let me know how many calls have come in once we're off the air. I don't need you running in here like the sky is falling.

MERCURY STAGE MANAGER. One minute to air...

JOHN HOUSEMAN. We have a responsibility to the listening public, Orson.

ORSON WELLES. And I, for one, believe that responsibility is to entertain them. Is that not what we're doing?

JOHN HOUSEMAN. Yes, Orson.

ORSON WELLES. Relax, John. And, who knows, perhaps a bit of attention will land this program a sponsor. "Any press is good press."

JOHN HOUSEMAN. You're not experiencing this little play the same way I am, from the control room.

ORSON WELLES. I'd dare say there's more panic emanating from you at the moment than our dear listeners. Panicky calls aside, how's the play sound?

JOHN HOUSEMAN. "Other than that, Mrs. Lincoln, how's the show?"

ORSON WELLES. (*With a smile:*) That's the spirit.

JOHN HOUSEMAN. It's coming off fine, Orson. Just fine.

ORSON WELLES. Attaboy.

MERCURY STAGE MANAGER. Thirty seconds to air . . .

ORSON WELLES. Get me those numbers, John. Just how many scaredy-cats and little old ladies are telephoning the switchboard? And are they indeed panicked or simply bored and want somebody to talk to? Back to the control booth, John. (*To the actors:*) On with the show, shall we, folks?

MERCURY STAGE MANAGER. Back on the air in five . . . four . . . three . . .

11. Mercury Theatre on the Air's *The War of the Worlds* (Part 2)

MERCURY ANNOUNCER (DAN SEYMOUR). 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 . . .

(*MUSIC: Theme.*)

PROFESSOR RICHARD 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 look down at my blackened hands, my torn shoes, my tattered clothes, and I try to connect them with a professor who lives at Princeton, and who on the night of October 30, glimpsed through his telescope an orange splash of light on a distant planet. My wife, my colleagues, my students, my books, my observatory, my . . . my world . . . where are they? Did they ever exist? Am I Richard Pierson? What day is it? Do days exist without calendars? Does time pass when there are no human hands left to wind the clocks? . . . In writing down my daily life I tell myself I shall preserve human history between the dark covers of this little book that was meant to record the movements

of the stars . . . But to write I must live, and to live, I must eat . . . 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! Sun streams in the window. The black cloud of gas has lifted, and the scorched meadows to the north look as though a black snowstorm has passed over them. I venture from the house. I make my way to a road. No traffic. Here and there a wrecked car, baggage overturned, a blackened skeleton. 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. Should one of their machines appear over the top of trees, I am ready to fling myself flat on the earth. I come to a chestnut tree. October chestnuts are ripe. I fill my pockets. I must keep alive. 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. I push on north. I find dead cows in a brackish field. Beyond, the charred ruins of a dairy. The silo remains standing guard over the wasteland like a lighthouse deserted by the sea. Astride the silo perches a weathercock. The arrow points north. Next day I came to a city vaguely familiar in its contours, yet its buildings strangely dwarfed and leveled off, as if a giant hand sliced off its highest towers with a capricious sweep of his hand. I reached the outskirts. I found Newark, undemolished, but humbled by some whim of the advancing Martians. 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?

PROFESSOR RICHARD PIERSON. I come from . . . many places. A long time ago from Princeton.

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

PROFESSOR RICHARD 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?

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

STRANGER. (*Nervously:*) What was that? Did you hear something just then?

PROFESSOR RICHARD 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.

PROFESSOR RICHARD PIERSON. Have you seen any . . . Martians?

STRANGER. Nah. 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.

PROFESSOR RICHARD PIERSON. Fly!

STRANGER. Yeah, fly.

PROFESSOR RICHARD 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.

PROFESSOR RICHARD 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.

PROFESSOR RICHARD PIERSON. And we're eat-able 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!

PROFESSOR RICHARD 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.

PROFESSOR RICHARD 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.

PROFESSOR RICHARD 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.

PROFESSOR RICHARD 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.

PROFESSOR RICHARD 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.

PROFESSOR RICHARD 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.

PROFESSOR RICHARD 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 . . .

PROFESSOR RICHARD 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 ones 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.

PROFESSOR RICHARD PIERSON. And you meant me to go?

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

PROFESSOR RICHARD 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.

PROFESSOR RICHARD PIERSON. That's your plan?

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

PROFESSOR RICHARD PIERSON. I see . . .

STRANGER. (*Fading out:*) Say, what's the matter? . . . Where are you going?

PROFESSOR RICHARD PIERSON. Not to your world . . . Goodbye, stranger . . . (*Beat.*) 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 reached 14th Street, and there again were black powder and several bodies, and an evil ominous smell from the gratings of the cellars of some of the houses. I wandered up through the 30s and 40s; I stood alone 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. He made a wide circle around me, as though he feared I might prove a fresh competitor. I walked up Broadway in the direction of that strange powder—past silent shop windows, displaying their mute wares to empty sidewalks—past the Capitol Theatre, silent, dark—past a shooting gallery, where a row of empty guns faced an arrested line of wooden ducks. Near Columbus Circle I noticed models of 1939 motorcars in the showrooms facing empty streets. From over the top of the General Motors Building, I watched a flock of black birds circling in the sky. I hurried on. 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 60th 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. I looked in vain for the monsters that inhabit those machines. (*Beat.*) Suddenly, 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 when their bodies were examined in the laboratories, 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. (*Beat.*) 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. (*Beat.*) 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 see from my window the university spires dim and blue through an April haze. Strange to watch children playing in the streets. Strange to see young people strolling on the green, where the new spring grass heals the last black scars of a bruised earth. 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: 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 CBS. 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.)

MERCURY ANNOUNCER (DAN SEYMOUR). 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. Next week we present a dramatization of three famous short stories. This is the Columbia Broadcasting System.

12. Transition: Mercury Theatre on the Air's *The War of the Worlds* (Part 2) / Commercial #3

(MUSIC: Harp [Transition in time: Mercury to WBFR].)

FREDDIE. And with that, ladies and gentlemen, the Mercury's play came to an end. By this time, the control room at CBS was full of police and reporters who producer John Houseman was trying to hold off from barging into the studio. But now that the broadcast had concluded, just how long could he hold them at bay? And what of the listeners who had been frantically calling into the switchboard? How would the public—swept up in waves of hysteria caused by this Halloween prank—come to change the lives of Orson Welles, Howard Koch, and even the future of broadcasting itself? Stay tuned and find out after a word from our sponsor . . .

13. All-American Brands Commercial #3: "Christmas in the Bomb Shelter"

(MUSIC: Christmas, cheery, upbeat.)

FATHER. Merry Christmas, everyone!

DAUGHTER. Christmas?! Already?!

SON. Wow! Time sure flies when you're spending quality time with your family in your All-American Brands Deluxe Backyard Bomb Shelter.

MOTHER. Oh, you two!

SON. Merry Christmas, Mother!

MOTHER. Merry Christmas, one and all! And you couldn't ask for a finer Christmas than one brought down the chimney by All-American Brands!

SON. Oh, boy! Can we look through our stockings now?

FATHER. You sure can look through your All-American Brand Stocking hung on the mantle of our All-American Fireplace with care, son!

(SFX: Robot/fire.)

SON. Wow! A robot that shoots real fire!

MOTHER. Do you like it, son?

SON. It's swell! (Robot voice:) "Take me to your leader! Take me to your leader!"

(BIZ: ALL laugh.)

FATHER. And look what All-American Brands has put in your stocking, dearest daughter . . .

(SFX: Horse neighs.)

DAUGHTER. A pony! Oh, joy! I'm going to name him "Uncle Sam"!

(BIZ: Laughing, celebrating, ad-libs à la "Merry Christmas.")

FATHER. Whether you're celebrating in an All-American Brands Deluxe Backyard Bomb Shelter or in one of the new All-American Brands Suburban Communities that are popping up all over this wonderful country of ours; you can make Christmas every day with the fine line of All-American Brand products. Write away for your complimentary six-hundred-page All-American Brands catalog today! You'll be glad you did.

(MUSIC: "All-American Brands" jingle.)

JINGLE SINGERS. (*Sing:*) BE A PROUD AMERICAN WITH ALL-AMERICAN BRANDS!

(*The "APPLAUSE" light flashes.*)

14. Transition: Commercial #3 / After The Mercury Theatre on the Air's *The War of the Worlds*

(*MUSIC: Harp [Transition in time: WBFR to Mercury].*)

FREDDIE. You are listening to WBFR Playhouse of the Air. This is your host, Freddie Filmore. We return now to the evening of October 30, nineteen-hundred thirty-eight. We're still in Studio One at CBS, and the Mercury Theatre on the Air has just finished broadcasting their adaptation of H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds*. The control room was packed like sardines with police and reporters. Producer John Houseman and other CBS employees made their way into the studio and all hell broke loose . . .

15. After The Mercury Theatre on the Air's *The War of the Worlds*

(*BIZ: Commotion/confusion [ad-libs in background, etc.].*)

ORSON WELLES. John! What the devil is this?!

CBS EMPLOYEE. Get the scripts! All of them!

JOHN HOUSEMAN. We need the scripts. Every last one of them.

ORSON WELLES. Whatever for?

JOHN HOUSEMAN. We need to dispose of them immediately. We're destroying the recordings, too. As far as we're concerned, the last hour did not happen.

ORSON WELLES. John! You're hysterical!

JOHN HOUSEMAN. Orson: The police are here.

ORSON WELLES. The police?! Why?

JOHN HOUSEMAN. When the listeners couldn't get through to the CBS switchboard, they started telephoning the police. And when the police couldn't get through to our switchboard, they decided to come here in person.

ORSON WELLES. Now, John, this is lunatic.

JOHN HOUSEMAN. Call it what you will, Orson. There are police—and reporters, too, all of them most eager to speak with you.

ORSON WELLES. Send them away.

JOHN HOUSEMAN. I tried that, Orson. But they refuse to leave.

ORSON WELLES. And why are they oh-so-patiently waiting in the control room?

JOHN HOUSEMAN. I would not say patiently. I told them we were still on the air. But it won't be long before they realize I wasn't telling them the truth.

ORSON WELLES. Over a hundred telephone calls to the switchboard?! Has the world gone mad?!

JOHN HOUSEMAN. In a word: yes. Look, you duck out the back door and go to your rehearsal. You've got actors waiting at the theater. I'll handle the police and press.

ORSON WELLES. No. I'll handle them. Send them in.

JOHN HOUSEMAN. Are you certain?

ORSON WELLES. Let's at least see what this is all about. (*Louder, to the control room:*) Let them in!

(*SFX: Door opens / flashbulbs under.*)

(*BIZ: POLICE and REPORTERS rush into the room.*)

POLICE AND REPORTERS AT CBS. (*Ad-libs, à la:*) Mr. Welles, have you any idea the panic you have caused? / What have you got to say for yourself? / We want answers!

ORSON WELLES. (*Shouting over the POLICE and REPORTERS:*) Gentlemen! Gentlemen—and ladies—please! I can grant you but a few minutes of my time at present, as I'm late for another rehearsal.

POLICE AND REPORTERS AT CBS. (*Ad-libs, à la:*) A rehearsal?! / Have you any idea what's going on out there?!

ORSON WELLES. (*Shouting over the POLICE and REPORTERS:*) One at a time, please—if there's any possibility in holding these proceedings to a civil manner. First things first: (*To a POLICE OFFICER:*) Officer, have you come to arrest me? Am I to be dragged off in handcuffs?

POLICE OFFICER AT CBS. (*Softly:*) Well, sir, the thing of it is . . .

ORSON WELLES. Speak up, will you?!

POLICE OFFICER AT CBS. (*Louder:*) Well, sir, the thing of it is that I should arrest you for your own safekeeping.

ORSON WELLES. My safekeeping? Isn't that thoughtful. Safekeeping from what, pray tell?

POLICE OFFICER AT CBS. You've caused quite a stir out there, Mr. Welles.

ORSON WELLES. Have I broken any law?

POLICE OFFICER AT CBS. Well, no sir. There's no law I know of for what you've done.

ORSON WELLES. And you can't very well place a radio program under arrest, now can you?

POLICE OFFICER AT CBS. No, sir.

ORSON WELLES. I may ask your kind assistance in safekeeping from these gentlemen and ladies of the press. But let's hear what they have to say for themselves first, shall we?

REPORTERS AT CBS. (*Ad-libs, à la:*) Do you have any idea what kind of harm you have caused? / There ought to be a law!

ORSON WELLES. (*Over the reporters:*) One at a time, please!

REPORTER 1 AT CBS. How many deaths have you heard of?

ORSON WELLES. Deaths? Plural? As if one wouldn't be enough. Have there been deaths?

REPORTERS AT CBS. (*Ad-libs, à la:*) He hasn't heard about the deaths? / How many deaths have there been so far?

REPORTER 1 AT CBS. There have been rumors of a number of deaths reported.

ORSON WELLES. The deaths of whom?

REPORTER 1 AT CBS. Your listeners, the audience. A lot of them believed your damned play was real and it set them off running into the streets for their lives.

ORSON WELLES. And some of them perished? How so?

REPORTER 1 AT CBS. Mobs can get pretty ugly sometimes.

ORSON WELLES. There are no Martians. There was no attack. Are you speaking from fact? Do you have any actual evidence beyond rumor that harm has come to anyone at all?

REPORTERS AT CBS. (*Ad-libs, à la:*) We trust our sources! / We're on deadline!

REPORTER 2 AT CBS. What do you know about the fatal stampede in New Jersey?

REPORTER 3 AT CBS. What about the traffic deaths?

REPORTER 1 AT CBS. And the suicides?

ORSON WELLES. Suicides?! How on earth in one hour's time could such sordid events already be reported as fact? Did any of you listen to the broadcast this evening? Not only is it a work of fiction, as clearly stated at least three times over the course of the past hour—but how could anyone possibly believe the content of the program could play out in real time? Martians land, the militia is deployed and carry out a full-scale air battle and the world as we know it is on the brink of collapse all in the first thirty minutes. Come now.

(*BIZ: General hubbub from reporters.*)

REPORTER 2 AT CBS. Certainly, your intention was for the show to put terror in listeners throughout the nation, was it not?

ORSON WELLES. Oh, no. Of course not. We did *Dracula*, and it seemed to me that during *Dracula* I had high hopes that people would react as they do in a movie of that kind, and I don't know that they did, particularly. And, so I'd given up. One doesn't believe in the radio, you have no idea how many people are listening or what they're thinking. I had every hope that the people would be as excited as they would be at a melodrama, and you don't play down the melodramatic effects of a melodrama.

REPORTER 3 AT CBS. Mr. Welles, why did you use the names of local towns in your broadcast?

ORSON WELLES. Well, H. G. Wells uses local towns addressing an English audience. I was addressing an American audience, so the transplantation is really quite logical. He doesn't use mythical towns.

REPORTER 3 AT CBS. Why didn't you use the name of a mythical town?

ORSON WELLES. H. G. Wells didn't use the names of mythical towns in the original. His names are quite real, the names of real English towns. And when the decision was made to set our adaptation in the United States, it only made sense to substitute the names of American towns.

REPORTER 3 AT CBS. But why Grover's Mill?

ORSON WELLES. That was, to my understanding, a completely random decision by the writer of tonight's play, Mr. Howard Koch.

REPORTER 1 AT CBS. Do you think, Mr. Welles, that you might have taken unfair advantage of the public by using the conveyance of authentic news?

ORSON WELLES. My safekeeping? Isn't that thoughtful. Safekeeping from what, pray tell?

POLICE OFFICER AT CBS. You've caused quite a stir out there, Mr. Welles.

ORSON WELLES. Have I broken any law?

POLICE OFFICER AT CBS. Well, no sir. There's no law I know of for what you've done.

ORSON WELLES. And you can't very well place a radio program under arrest, now can you?

POLICE OFFICER AT CBS. No, sir.

ORSON WELLES. I may ask your kind assistance in safekeeping from these gentlemen and ladies of the press. But let's hear what they have to say for themselves first, shall we?

REPORTERS AT CBS. (*Ad-libs, à la:*) Do you have any idea what kind of harm you have caused? / There ought to be a law!

ORSON WELLES. (*Over the reporters:*) One at a time, please!

REPORTER 1 AT CBS. How many deaths have you heard of?

ORSON WELLES. Deaths? Plural? As if one wouldn't be enough. Have there been deaths?

REPORTERS AT CBS. (*Ad-libs, à la:*) He hasn't heard about the deaths? / How many deaths have there been so far?

REPORTER 1 AT CBS. There have been rumors of a number of deaths reported.

ORSON WELLES. The deaths of whom?

REPORTER 1 AT CBS. Your listeners, the audience. A lot of them believed your damned play was real and it set them off running into the streets for their lives.

ORSON WELLES. And some of them perished? How so?

REPORTER 1 AT CBS. Mobs can get pretty ugly sometimes.

ORSON WELLES. There are no Martians. There was no attack. Are you speaking from fact? Do you have any actual evidence beyond rumor that harm has come to anyone at all?

REPORTERS AT CBS. (*Ad-libs, à la:*) We trust our sources! / We're on deadline!

REPORTER 2 AT CBS. What do you know about the fatal stampede in New Jersey?

REPORTER 3 AT CBS. What about the traffic deaths?

REPORTER 1 AT CBS. And the suicides?

ORSON WELLES. Suicides?! How on earth in one hour's time could such sordid events already be reported as fact? Did any of you listen to the broadcast this evening? Not only is it a work of fiction, as clearly stated at least three times over the course of the past hour—but how could anyone possibly believe the content of the program could play out in real time? Martians land, the militia is deployed and carry out a full-scale air battle and the world as we know it is on the brink of collapse all in the first thirty minutes. Come now.

(*BIZ: General hubbub from reporters.*)

REPORTER 2 AT CBS. Certainly, your intention was for the show to put terror in listeners throughout the nation, was it not?

ORSON WELLES. Oh, no. Of course not. We did *Dracula*, and it seemed to me that during *Dracula* I had high hopes that people would react as they do in a movie of that kind, and I don't know that they did, particularly. And, so I'd given up. One doesn't believe in the radio, you have no idea how many people are listening or what they're thinking. I had every hope that the people would be as excited as they would be at a melodrama, and you don't play down the melodramatic effects of a melodrama.

REPORTER 3 AT CBS. Mr. Welles, why did you use the names of local towns in your broadcast?

ORSON WELLES. Well, H. G. Wells uses local towns addressing an English audience. I was addressing an American audience, so the transplantation is really quite logical. He doesn't use mythical towns.

REPORTER 3 AT CBS. Why didn't you use the name of a mythical town?

ORSON WELLES. H. G. Wells didn't use the names of mythical towns in the original. His names are quite real, the names of real English towns. And when the decision was made to set our adaptation in the United States, it only made sense to substitute the names of American towns.

REPORTER 3 AT CBS. But why Grover's Mill?

ORSON WELLES. That was, to my understanding, a completely random decision by the writer of tonight's play, Mr. Howard Koch.

REPORTER 1 AT CBS. Do you think, Mr. Welles, that you might have taken unfair advantage of the public by using the conveyance of authentic news?

down 72nd Street on my way to the barbershop. There was an air of excitement among the passersby. Catching ominous snatches of conversation with words like "invasion" and "panic," I jumped to the conclusion that Hitler had invaded some new territory and that the war we all dreaded had finally broken out. When I anxiously questioned the barber, he broke into a broad grin, "Haven't you heard?" and he held up the front page of a morning newspaper with the headline "Nation in Panic from Martian Broadcast." I stared at the paper while the confused barber stared at me. Center page was a picture of Orson, his arms outstretched in a gesture of helpless innocence, and underneath was the opening scene of my play.

19. Newspaper Deadlines

FREDDIE. The newspapers had a field day . . . *The Daily News:*

THE DAILY NEWS NEWSBOY. Extra! Extra! "Fake Radio War Stirs Terror Through U.S."

FREDDIE. *The New York Times:*

THE NEW YORK TIMES NEWSBOY. "Radio Listeners in Panic, Taking War Drama as Fact!"

FREDDIE. *The Boston Globe:*

THE BOSTON GLOBE NEWSBOY. "Radio Play Terrifies Nation! Mars Invasion Thought Real! Hysteria Grips Folk Listening in Late! Many Fear World Coming to End!" Read all about it!

(BIZ: Under the following, the NEWSBOYS repeat their headlines in the background, overlapping and perhaps changing the words to make them sound more sensational.)

FREDDIE. From coast to coast, there were reports of families rushing out of their homes, piling into cars and heading off for parts unknown. Incidents of people weeping and fainting in public were reported in almost every major city. The program was dubbed and known forever after as the "Panic Broadcast." More than twelve thousand articles would appear in newspapers over the following weeks. *(Beat.)* Here's Mr. Houseman on what has been called "The Press-Radio War" . . .

JOHN HOUSEMAN. The newspaper game was, shall we say, not radio's greatest fan. This new wireless competitor had stolen some of their finest journalists, and had taken many of their print advertisers as well. Newspapers had an ax to grind. And our broadcast gave them a chance to sell their papers with sensationalistic stories of

panic, but also provided an opportunity to drive the message home that radio should not be trusted.

20. Panic (Woman in Church, Woman with Poison)

FREDDIE. It was estimated at the time that twelve million people listened to the broadcast at the time it aired. Further research showed that one in twelve listeners believed the program to be real . . .

(SFX: Organ and churchgoers singing hymn.)

FREDDIE. In Indianapolis, Indiana, a distraught woman ran into a crowded church . . .

WOMAN IN CHURCH. New York's destroyed! It's the end of the world! You might as well go home to die! I just heard it on the radio . . .

(SFX: Pounding on organ.)

(BIZ: Churchgoers panic.)

FREDDIE. Services were dismissed. *(Beat.)* In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a woman, after listening to the broadcast, grabbed a bottle of poison and screamed to her husband . . .

WOMAN WITH POISON. I'd rather die this way than like that!

FREDDIE. Her husband stopped her just in time.

(BIZ: Husband and wife fight over bottle of poison.)

FREDDIE. The small town of Concrete, Washington was dealt a double blow. At the height of the show, as the Martians were about to unleash their death ray, a transformer blew at the local power station and the town's lights went out, causing a mass panic.

21. Press Conference / Listener Letters / Dorothy Thompson

(SFX: Radio dial tuning.)

FREDDIE. On the following morning, Halloween, a press conference was held at CBS . . .

(BIZ: Crowd at press conference.)

(SFX: Flashbulbs pop, newsreel cameras roll.)

ORSON WELLES. Do you want me to speak now? I'm sorry . . . It came as a great surprise to us that a story, a fine H. G. Wells classic

ORSON WELLES. I don't believe that I have, since it is not a method original with me. It's used by many radio programs. I am terribly shocked by the effect it's had. But I do not believe the method is original with me or particular to the Mercury Theatre's presentation.

REPORTER 2 AT CBS. Do you believe that there ought to be a law against the events of this evening?

ORSON WELLES. I don't know what the legislation would be. I know that almost everybody in radio would do almost anything to avert the type of thing that has happened. Myself, included. But I don't know what the legislation would be. Radio is new and we are learning about the effect it has on people. We've learned a terrible lesson.

REPORTER 3 AT CBS. Do you think that this will cause the curbing of radio bulletins on the air today?

ORSON WELLES. I simply can't imagine. It seems to me that the effects of this may cause much legislation . . . I simply don't know. It is the wisdom of radio executives and of an organized public that will decide these things for us. It is not up to me to speak. I'm the accused.

(BIZ: General hubbub from REPORTERS.)

JOHN HOUSEMAN. Ladies and gentlemen, please! My name is John Houseman, and I am a producer of this program. And Mr. Welles has no further comments at this time. A formal press conference will be arranged as soon as possible.

(BIZ: General hubbub from REPORTERS.)

ORSON WELLES. I'd like to make one final comment, if I may. *(Beat.)* Every radio program tries to be more dramatic than life. Every play tries to be more dramatic than life. And every movie. Not less so. I would have been surprised and as hurt as anybody would if they were told that a presentation was less effective than life. *(Beat.)* If you will now kindly excuse me.

(BIZ: General hubbub from REPORTERS.)

(SFX: Flashbulbs pop.)

16. Walter Winchell

(SFX: Radio dial tuning.)

FREDDIE. Immediately following the broadcast, newspaper columnist and commentator Walter Winchell began his weekly broadcast on rival network NBC as follows . . .

WALTER WINCHELL. Mr. and Mrs. America, there is no cause for alarm. America has not fallen. I repeat: America has not fallen . . .

FREDDIE. Winchell contributed to a lot of the confusion over at NBC because no sooner were we off the air than he was saying "There's no cause for alarm" to a whole different set of people—those who had been tuned into NBC all evening and had not heard our tale of the Martians landing . . .

17. CBS Announcement

(SFX: Radio dial tuning.)

FREDDIE. The following announcement was broadcast over the Columbia Broadcasting System on the same evening at 10:30, 11:30, and 12 midnight . . .

CBS ANNOUNCER. For those listeners who tuned in to Orson Welles's Mercury Theater on the Air broadcast from 8 to 9 PM, eastern standard time tonight and did not realize that the program was merely a modernized adaptation of H. G. Wells's famous novel, *The War of the Worlds*, we are repeating the fact which was made clear four times on the program that, while the names of some American cities were used, as in all novels and dramatizations, the entire story and all of its incidents were fictitious.

(SFX: Radio dial tuning.)

18. Howard Koch the Morning After

FREDDIE. Here's Mr. Howard Koch on how he came to learn of the play's aftermath . . .

HOWARD KOCH. After listening to the broadcast in my apartment, I went to sleep, blissfully unaware of what was happening outside. Houseman called later that night to break the news but I was too exhausted to hear the telephone ring. The next morning—blessed Monday, when I could afford the time for a haircut—I walked

fantasy, the original for so many succeeding comic strips and adventure stories and novels about a mythical invasion by monsters from the planet Mars should have had so profound effect upon radio listeners. (*Beat.*) The date of the broadcast was clearly stated as being 1939 and the invasion of mythical monsters from the planet Mars seemed to be clearly to us in the realm of a fairy tale. Of course, we are shocked and deeply regretful about the results of last night's broadcast.

(SFX: Flashbulbs pop.)

(SFX: Radio dial tuning.)

FREDDIE. Most newspaper columnists bitterly condemned the broadcast as a horrible prank on innocent, unsuspecting people . . .

COLUMNIST 1. I believe a suit should be filed against Orson Welles and the Columbia Broadcasting System for their wrongdoing. Welles's performance on the radio Sunday evening was a clear demonstration of his inhuman instincts and his fiendish joy in causing distress and suffering all over the country. He is a carbuncle on the rump of degenerate theatrical performers and he should make amends for his consummate act of asininity.

COLUMNIST 2. Now I appreciate what CBS and radio have done for the world. But why not respect that appreciation and not destroy all the faith and confidence we have in the greatest means of getting information about the world—radio.

FREDDIE. Still, hundreds of listeners praised the broadcast as a public service, writing letters to CBS and Orson . . .

LISTENER 1. Gentlemen, An orchid to you, and to all the cast of *War of the Worlds*! Also, shame on you for giving me the scare of my life!

LISTENER 2. Let me congratulate you on your broadcast. Thanks for a wow of a thrill!

LISTENER 3. More power to you . . . the Martians' visitation upon this earth was a masterpiece of realism.

FREDDIE. Journalist Dorothy Thompson applauded Orson in her widely-read column . . .

DOROTHY THOMPSON. Hitler managed to scare all of Europe to its knees a month ago, but at least he had an army and an air force to back up his shrieking words . . . Mr. Welles scared thousands into demoralization with nothing at all . . .

(SFX: Radio dial tuning.)

22. Danton's Death Opening

FREDDIE. After five postponements, *Danton's Death* opened on Broadway on the evening of November the second. Here's Mr. Welles on that play's opening . . .

ORSON WELLES. On the day of the opening, my life was threatened. There was somebody who kept telephoning about every quarter of an hour saying, "You will die on the opening night of your play." At the end of the play I had to stand in front of the curtain and deliver a speech in the character of Saint-Just, on the subject of the French Revolution. I stood alone, in front of the curtain, in a blazing white spotlight, and I promise you I've never been so terrified in my life. I was waiting to hear the sound of a pistol being cocked, convinced some angry victim of our broadcast would soon be shooting at me as I delivered this speech. But what actually happened was, as I stood in front of the curtain, there was a little spill from the spotlight and I could see the front row in the audience, there was a man sitting in the front row, who looked up at me as I opened my mouth to speak, raised his hand, looked at his wristwatch, looked at me, folded his arms and yawned mightily. Well, I assure you, I would rather have been shot.

FREDDIE. But even the fantastic publicity from the Panic Broadcast was unable to offset its generally unfavorable notices.

(SFX: Radio dial tuning.)

23. Lawsuits / H. G. Wells

FREDDIE. Lawsuits piled up and legal actions were filed against CBS and Orson, totaling more than a million dollars in claimed damages, injuries, miscarriages, and distresses of various kinds as a result of the presentation. They all failed in court while many didn't even make it to trial. (*Beat.*) H. G. Wells, the author of the novel, was unhappy about not being paid for rights to broadcast an adaptation of his novel. Wells felt he had been duped, but an exchange of letters between his New York agents and CBS led to payment as well as an apology. (*Beat.*) Then gradually, after about two weeks, the excitement subsided. By then it had been discovered that the casualties were not as numerous or as serious as had at first been supposed. Later the Federal Communications Commission held some hearings and passed some regulations. CBS made a public apology. With that the official aspects of the incident were closed.

(SFX: Radio dial tuning.)

24. The Campbell Playhouse

FREDDIE. Despite *The War of the Worlds'* dismal Crossley rating of 5.4, the fury it created proved to the Campbell's Soup Company that people were listening and signed on as a sponsor at a most lavish figure. Beginning December 9, The Mercury Theatre became The Campbell Playhouse . . .

(MUSIC: *fanfare.*)

CAMPBELL PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCER. The makers of Campbell's Soups presents The Campbell Playhouse, Orson Welles, producer. Tonight, Orson Welles takes over the direction of The Campbell Playhouse, and offers you, as his first production, America's best-seller, Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*. Exciting news, indeed, as I am here to welcome the white hope of the American stage as the director and star of The Campbell Playhouse . . .

(SFX: *Radio dial tuning.*)

25. Hadley Cantril / Sylvia Holmes

FREDDIE. In late 1938, Princeton University social psychologist Hadley Cantril conducted an in-depth study of the public reaction to the broadcast. Poring over the radio-listening statistics, he sent out thousands of surveys and conducted more than a hundred interviews of listeners, which Cantril published as a book the following year. Cantril found that a number of listeners replaced the word "Martians" with the word "Germans." As in the testimony of a woman Cantril called "Sylvia Holmes" . . .

SYLVIA HOLMES. We listened getting more and more excited. We all felt the world was coming to an end. Then we heard, "Get gas masks!" That was the part that got me. I thought I was going crazy. It's a wonder my heart didn't fail me because I'm nervous anyway. I felt if the gas was on, I wanted to be together with my husband and nephew so we could all die together. So I ran out of the house. I guess I didn't know what I was doing. I stood on the corner waiting for a bus and I thought every car that came along was a bus and I ran out to get it. People saw how excited I was and tried to quiet me, but I kept saying over and over again to everybody I met: "Don't you know New Jersey is destroyed by the Germans—it's on the radio." I was all excited and I knew that Hitler didn't appreciate President Roosevelt's telegram a couple of weeks ago. While the U.S. thought everything was settled, they came down unexpected. The Germans are so wise they were in something like a balloon and when the

balloon landed—that's when they announced the explosion—the Germans landed. When I got home my husband wasn't there so I rushed in next door and warned the neighbors that the world was coming to an end. My aunt was there and she tried to quiet me and said, "If God is coming that way, we just have to wait—go home and be quiet—don't be excited," and went home. My knees were shaking so, I could hardly walk up the stairs. I found my nephew had come home and gone to bed. I woke him up. I looked in the icebox and saw some chicken left from Sunday dinner that I was saving for Monday night dinner. I said to my nephew, "We may as well eat this chicken—we won't be here in the morning."

(SFX: *Radio dial tuning.*)

26. Orson Welles and Howard Koch Go to Hollywood

FREDDIE. In 1939, the year following *The War of the Worlds*, Orson Welles went to Hollywood, where he went on to make pictures for RKO, including *Citizen Kane* and *The Magnificent Ambersons*. Mr. Howard Koch went to Hollywood as well, where he was screenwriter of the Warner Brothers Pictures' *Sergeant York* and *Casablanca*. Both gentlemen are reminded of and asked frequently about their *War of the Worlds* broadcast. Here's a word from Mr. Welles . . .

ORSON WELLES. I still meet people, all over the place, everywhere in the world, who've had experiences, bitter or otherwise, as a result of our little . . . experiment in broadcasting. (*Chuckles.*) Just the other day I was on the ferry, and some people said to me, (*Imitating man:*) "Eh heh, there you are, Orson, well, you sure scared us, we were on our honeymoon, my wife and I." I'm sorry to say they looked a very ancient couple, but there they were, "We were on our honeymoon, and had a little portable radio, we were out there by the lake, and heard what you said, we come right back home. Spoiled the honeymoon, but glad to see you, Orson." That kind of thing has followed me all over the world since then. (*Beat.*) I suppose we had it coming to us, because in fact we weren't as innocent as we meant to be, when we did the Martian broadcast. We were fed up with the way in which everything that came over this new magic box, the radio, was being swallowed. (*Beat.*) People, you know, do suspect what they read in the newspapers and what people tell them, but when the radio came, and I suppose now television, anything that came through that new machine was believed. So in a way our broadcast was an assault on the credibility of that machine; we wanted people to understand that they shouldn't take any opinion pre-digested, and they shouldn't swallow everything that came

through the tap, whether it was radio or not, but as I say, it was only a partial experiment, we had no idea the extent of the thing, and I certainly personally had no idea what it would mean to me.

FREDDIE. The broadcast would become, in the end, the most famous radio program in history. Or, as producer John Houseman called it . . .

JOHN HOUSEMAN. *The War of the Worlds* was a magic act, one of the world's greatest, and Orson was just the man to bring it off.

27. Epilogue / The Culture of Fear Montage

(SFX: Radio dial tuning.)

(MUSIC: Harp [Transition in time: Mercury to WBFR].)

FREDDIE. Ladies and gentlemen, you have been listening to the WBFR Playhouse of the Air. This is your host, Freddie Filmore, brought to you this and every week by All-American Brands . . .

(SFX: Radio dial tuning, building under.)

(Suddenly, the lights flicker and there is audio feedback and/or static. The following dialogue overlaps and builds. As each of the actors approach their microphone, they bring with them a period radio. Audio from the REPORTERS and other archival clips which follow are played from these radios into the microphone, adding additional audio feedback and gradually building into chaos.)

MERCURY ANNOUNCER. The Columbia Broadcasting System and its affiliated stations present Orson Welles and the Mercury Theatre on the Air in *The War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells . . .

HERBERT MORRISON. (Archival audio from May 6, 1937:) The back motors of the ship are just holding it just enough to keep it from . . . It's burst into flames! It's crashing terrible! It's burning and bursting into flames and the . . . and it's falling on the mooring mast. And all the folks agree that this is terrible; this is the worst of the worst catastrophes in the world . . . It's smoke, and it's in flames now; and the frame is crashing to the ground, not quite to the mooring mast. Oh, the humanity! I . . . I can't talk, ladies and gentlemen. And everybody can hardly breathe and talk and the screaming. This is the worst thing I've ever witnessed.

CARL PHILLIPS. 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!

1940s REPORTER/ANNOUNCER. (Pre-recorded:) Ever since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, many Americans find themselves living in constant fear of another surprise attack. The president has authorized the deportation and incarceration of Japanese-Americans—for their own safety, and ours . . .

MERIDIAN ROOM ANNOUNCER. 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 . . .

1950s REPORTER/ANNOUNCER. (Pre-recorded:) The Red Menace is a real threat to all Americans. Senator McCarthy is doing all he can to stamp out the scourge upon us, and urges you to report any suspected Communist activity to your local authorities. For the only hope in overcoming the fear that is crippling out great nation is vigilance . . .

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR. 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 . . .

1960s REPORTER/ANNOUNCER. (Pre-recorded:) In the midst of what's being called the Cuban Missile Crisis, President Kennedy has raised the U.S. alert level to DEFCON 2. Americans live in fear of nuclear war, and Russian leader Nikita Khrushchev went so far as to say that, quote, "The survivors of a nuclear war would envy the dead," unquote . . .

CARL PHILLIPS. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. This is Carl Phillips, speaking to you from Grover's Mill, New Jersey . . .

(SFX: Emergency Broadcast System alert tone.)

1970s REPORTER/ANNOUNCER. (Pre-recorded:) This is a test of the Emergency Broadcast System. The broadcasters of your area in voluntary cooperation with the FCC and other authorities have developed this system to keep you informed in the event of an emergency . . .

(SFX: Emergency Broadcast System alert tone.)

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

1980s REPORTER/ANNOUNCER. (Pre-recorded:) The nation's first 24-hour cable news network has launched. And will be bringing viewers breaking news all day and all night. Politics, weather, and the joys and fears of our daily life will be broadcast non-stop around the clock . . .

STUDIO ANNOUNCER. We now return you to Carl Phillips at Grover's Mill.

1990s REPORTER/ANNOUNCER. *(Pre-recorded:)* At the moment, local police and the sheriff's office, the district attorney, fire officials and school officials are giving the latest details into the deadliest school massacre in U.S. history . . .

CARL PHILLIPS. Ladies and gentlemen— Am I on?

2000s REPORTER/ANNOUNCER. *(Pre-recorded:)* President George W. Bush said Sunday he is confident the nation will rebound from the week's terrorist attacks, and he urged Americans to go back to work on Monday knowing that their government is determined to "rid the world of the evil-doers" . . .

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

22nd FIELD ARTILLERY OFFICER. Put on gas masks . . .

2010s REPORTER/ANNOUNCER. *(Pre-recorded:)* Just days after the execution murder of American journalist James Foley, the Obama administration acknowledged that the Islamic state militant group is more dangerous than it was just six months ago . . .

2X2L RADIO OPERATOR. 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 . . .

PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT. *(Archival audio from March 4, 1933:)* The only thing we have to fear is . . . fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes . . .

(All of the radios play at once, repeating their audio clips, which grow louder and louder, echoing and warping. The sound becomes deafening.)

(Then, suddenly, the ACTORS turn off their radios in unison.)

(Silence.)

(Hold for at least ten or twenty seconds. You can hear a pin drop.)

FREDDIE. *(To us:)* Good night.

(The lights, including the "ON AIR" sign, pop off.)

("It's Only a Paper Moon" as performed by Paul Whiteman and his Orchestra with vocals by Peggy Healy, serves as exit music.)

End of Play