

# War of the Worlds, 2017

Adapted by Joe Hilsee  
from the 1938 Orson Welles' adaptation  
of the 1898 H. G. Wells novel

Jake: From the National Weather Bureau I have the following: the next 24 hours not much change in temperature in the North Valley. Tuesday will see a low pressure system settling in one the Sierra Nevada's bringing slightly colder temperatures and 25% chance of rain Chico and the surrounding vicinity. Current temperature at the KZFR news room is 68 degrees and the overnight low will be 39 degrees with a high tomorrow of 77 degrees. Sounds like a perfect day to walk Bidwell park and view the spectacular autumn colors on display (*rumble and the clanking of coffee mugs*)... hang on ... that's ... Okay! Well that happened!- Definitely a small earth quake - heard the windows rattling and my coffee mug danced half way across the control board. Let's hopes that is the extent of the excitement for tonight. As promised, we are going to be giving you some live music this evening - we are going to a live remote to the Harvest Ball taking place at the Chico Women's Center where Nat Hanson is taking in the festivities. How's it going there Nate?

Nate: Hey Jake. Well it is actually kind of crazy here, we had a really nice crowd here listening to some Lisa Valentine until just a minute ago when the place literally started shaking and the power went out.

Jake: I felt that. Not really what I want to feel up here on the fourth floor of one of the oldest buildings in Chico.

Nate: I can imagine! Well I was hoping we could bring you some tasty live music on this Harvest weekend, but everyone kind of scattered and they are just now starting to come back in. I'm going to see if we can get some acoustic stuff going on if the power doesn't kick back in. You want to try this again in about ten minutes?

Jake: Okay - well sorry to hear about that Nate - I'll get back to you in a few. Enjoy the harvest!

Nate: You know it.

Jake: Alright - well Nate is having some technical difficulties out at the Women's Center and we will get back to him later. We have Carl Phillips coming in a little later as well with another fascinating interview. And if he is actually talking with who he says he is talking to this is going to be a very special night. Okay - well let's play some music - Oh yes. I wanted to get to this song sometime tonight - might as well kick this set off some Neil Young. Harvest Moon.

*(Harvest Moon plays for about 20 seconds)*

Jake: Pardon my interruption over the song folks but I have a few things for you: multiple sources are confirming that there was a "seismic disturbance" - which to me sounds like an earth quake - but they are saying there was a seismic disturbance centered just south of Chico and felt as far south as Gridley and as far north as Corning. Multiple power outages have been associated with the event and city officials want everyone to know that they are working getting that power back up to you as soon as possible. Things getting just

little bit crazy out there. I've got something that should bring us all back down to earth - Carl Phillips has been blowing your minds with his series of interviews from noted folks in the Chico community and tonight he has absolutely outdone himself and brought a broadcasting legend with him into the studio. I can't tell you how excited I am to hear this conversation. So here is Carl with another installment of "Nor Cal Voices"

Phillips: Thanks Jake - you got that right, I have sitting across the table from me in the KZFR studio without a doubt the most famous individuals alive today

Pierson: Well, I wouldn't go that far.

Phillips: One of the most famous scientists?

Pierson: I'll allow that.

Phillips: He is head of the department of astronomy and physics at Stanford University, Lead Consultant to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and, the most exciting thing to me and probably where most of my audience knows him, the host of the most popular podcast in the country, Space Between my Ears. It is my absolute pleasure to introduce to you Professor Neil Pierson.

Pierson: Well it is a pleasure for me to be here in the studio, Carl. This reminds me of my undergraduate days back at Columbia when I was DJ for the midnight show. Before I made the commitment to pursue astronomy and physics I considered a life in radio.

Phillips: well you do have the voice for it.

Pierson: Funny, my father was always telling me a had a face for radio. At any rate, I'm sure that is the primary reason I started the podcast - I've always had an interest in sharing my thoughts with a large audience.

Phillips: It was your podcast, Space Between My Ears, that first got me into radio as well. One of the recurring themes is to always ask questions - that people who do not ask questions remain clueless their entire lives - so I started to ask questions about science and soon found out that I really suck at science, but I enjoyed asking questions and here I am interviewing people and asking questions for a living.

Pierson: Glad I could help you out.

Phillips: Speaking of questions I have few for you: so what brings someone with your stature to our little town of Chico?

Pierson: I'm here as part of a tour funded by NASA to heighten awareness of space in smaller communities, and since Chico has its own community observatory and open air planetarium in Bidwell Park - which is absolutely stunning but he way - this is the perfect place to kick off the entire venture with a live version of my podcast broadcast from the observatory.

Phillips. Which is fantastic - I am definitely going to be there as I know many of our listeners will be as well. I want to move onto Saturn; it really has been in the news quite a bit recently with the end of the Cassini space probe mission, which I know you were instrumental in advising and then the subsequent explosions which have been noted on the planet for the past few weeks. Anything you can tell us about these events being close together?

Pierson: Well, until there is evidence to the contrary, I am inclined to call them coincidental.

Phillips: So no link between explosions on Saturn happening so soon after the Cassini probe plummeted to the surface of the planet in July of this year? No living beings could have caused this to happen?

Pierson: I certainly understand the desire to make the leap to the possibility that the explosions on Saturn are some kind of sign of intelligence - but without scientific data to back it up I am certainly not willing to buy into that theory.

Phillips: So how do you account for the explosions then?

Pierson: Well, that's the thing, I cannot account for it. I am honestly baffled. But these are the kinds of moments that scientists live for - the unfolding of the unknown.

Phillips: By the way, how far is Saturn from earth.

Pierson: That fluctuates of course, depending on the planets relative path around the sun - but right now about 1.5 billion miles - which is actually about as close as it gets.

Phillips: Well, that seems a safe enough distance. Let's just speculate for minute though, that if those gas plumes on /Saturn were

Pierson: /I'm sorry, hold that thought, I do have to read this text real quick, this is from the big office at NASA.

Phillips: Absolutely, as you can imagine folks out there listening, Professor Pierson is in continual contact with many government authorities since Saturn explosions which started six weeks ago and continue today. Anything you can share with the listeners, Professor?

Pierson: It seems a large meteorite has landed right outside of Chico. That must have been the earthquake we thought we felt a few minutes ago. I got to find way to get there. Orchards right by vacated Diamond Match facility.

Phillips: Any chance this has anything to do with Saturn /and those

Pierson: No no. Just a coincidence until we investigate and harvest the applicable data. Sorry everyone, I'm going to have to cut this short and find way to get there as soon as possible.

Phillips: If you do not mind sitting not the back of my motorcycle I can get you there quick.

Pierson: That would be fantastic - again, just like my college days.

Phillips: Okay, so we are going - can you go ahead and take this, Jake?

Jake: No problem Carl. Well this is turning into quite the night. So it appears the earthquake was actually a meteor, which explains the power outage over at the Women's Center. I'm sure we are going to be hearing more about this as the night progresses. Uhmhhh ... I'm going to go to another song real quick and - I'm not entirely sure what this is - but I'll have some more news about this when we come back.

*(song Harvest Moon by Bedlam for about 20 seconds)*

Jake: Sorry - I do not usually don't come in on top of a song but our station news director John Hobart has something about that meteor situation for you.

John: Authorities from the City of Chico and Butte County report there have been series of fires that have erupted from an explosion south of Chico. All South and North bound traffic on the Midway and Durham/Dayton road as well as highway 99 has been halted to all but emergency vehicles. All motorists and onlookers are asked to steer clear of that area.

Jake: Nothing about a meteor?

John: No, Jake - that might be information that isn't actually made public yet, we were just lucky enough to have Neil Pierson in the studio with us when he receive the message from NASA.. I've got few calls to make and I'll have more information for everyone as soon as I find out. But this sounds like a big deal and I was looking out of the window here on the fourth floor right by the Plaza downtown and I can definitely see an orange glow of the fire to the south. It looks big.

Jake: Alright thank you John. But yes, folks, please do not head towards the meteor - if it is a meteor - it appears to be causing some a safety concerns and let's let our police and fire fighters take care of the situation.

John: *(in the back ground)* ... yeah - I can put you on now. *(Interrupting Jake)* Hey Jake, Carl is at the scene right now and I have him on the line so let's put him on the air. Okay Carl your on the air. Carl you there?

Carl: *(Sirens and crowd in the background)* Hi John, am I on?

John: Yes Carl, you're live. Go ahead. What's it like there?

Carl: Oh man, it is crazy. All of the streets are blocked off with emergency vehicles, bit Professor Pierson and myself came down the railroad tracks by Diamond Match on my motorcycle and then I cut through the orchards until I came upon it. I'm not exactly sure where I am but it looks like half of this orchard has been flattened and much of it is on fire. This is crazy like some wild movie set.

John: So do you see the metro or whatever caused all of this - maybe it was just a gas line exploding.

Carl: I haven't had much of a chance to look around but I want to find this before we get chased off by the police. Pierson just took off running towards something ... wow. Yes I think that must be the ... thing, right in front of me. It looks like it is half buried in a huge pit. God, that must have hit hard! This thing is monster. It's smooth - not rough at all - more of a cylinder - a smooth cylinder - about the shape and size of a submarine. This does not look like a meteor - this looks like some kind of metal -but it is strange color - kind of a yellowish-white. Okay, cops are coming over to this side to push people back. I'm going to get out of their way and relocate. Give me a minute.

John: Wow, this is pretty spectacular. I'm looking at the news feed now and the officials are now saying that it IS a meteor that struck just south of Chico in the almond orchards between here and Durham. They are saying that there have been some people injured and there is a possibility that there have been some casualties as well, however that has not been confirmed. So this looks to be a lot more serious than we all first thought.

Jake: I'll say. Look, everyone stay at home and do not head towards the area to see for yourself, we got to keep the streets open for emergency vehicles which are coming in from the north and south of town. Carl, are you still there?

Carl: Yes, I'm still here. I'm not sure where the Professor is but I found some locals that witnessed the explosion. This is Nick and Daisy. So you own this orchard here?

Nick: What? No no. Me and Daisy we live right next to it and we have our own, you know, backyard garden and we just harvested.

Daisy: My little babies did great this season. Best harvest ever.

Nick: oh it sure was. I wasn't sure because / that mold was

Carl: / So what did you see?

Nick: So we were on the front porch

Daisy: Just trimming

Nick: Yeh - just trimming and listening to the radio and we were waiting for Neil Pierson to come on

Daisy: God I love him

Nick: He's our favorite - we always listen to his / podcast when we

Carl: / And did you see the meteor?

Nick: What? Oh no, first there was this freaky sound kinda like a hiss.

Daisy: Like sssssSSSSSsssSSSSsSss

Nick: Then there was just this huge flash of green light that lit everything up.

Daisy: It was rad.

Nick: And then this explosion that knocked me and the Dais over. You still okay, Dais?

Daisy: Just a bruise poopee - as long a my babies are okay / I'll be alright

Carl: / Were either of you scared?

Nick: Scared? No I just thought, you know ...

Daisy: He just thought he was trippin'.

Carl: Nick, Daisy, thank / you

Nick: So did I see you with Neil Pierson, because seriously, Space Between My Ears changed my life - we think he is the greatest person in the world.

Daisy: Next to Beyonce.

Carl: Okay - that was a n eye witness account of the this thing actually falling. I'm telling you right now -this - this is not a meteor. I don't know what it is but it is not a space rock - that thing is metal! I'm going a little closer see if I can make out what is happening a little clearer. Police are fencing off the area around the meteor and having hard time keeping people back and some are getting through to the crater. Can you hear this? I did not mention it earlier but it is growing louder - there is a strange humming sound coming from the object. Can you hear that?

Jake: I think I can, Carl, yes.

John: Excuse me Jake Hold on - this just came into the studio on our emergency wire: Governor Brown has just activated the California National Guard. Highways 1-5 and 99 North of Sacramento and South of Redding is closed to all non military or emergency vehicles until further notice. I'm also getting a lot of messages from other parts of the country, so it did not take along at all for this to make some national attention. Looks like there are more announcements coming in over the Emergency Broadcast System line ... I'll be back in a few minutes with more. Carl you still there? Anything happening?

Carl: I saw Professor Pierson a minute ago and just as I was talking with him he was called over close to the crater and I came with him so I am actually within the gated off area. Lots of police and sheriff and fire but this is starting to fill in with mostly military personnel. I tried to get a few comments but no one seems to go on record about any of this. They've got a to of lights up around it now so I can see it a lot better. Whatever this thing is, it is definitely intact. It does not appear to have broken up and crashed. And that noise is getting more intense. Whoa - there is some kind of uuuuhh ... crack. It seems to be cracking uhm ...

open its uh uhh there is something coming out of it - like a cable or a snake or a ... now there are two of them coming out of the crack. There is something coming out of it! Something is crawling out of the top of this thing! I see two discs - they might be eyes - I don't know. Those aren't cables, they're tentacles. This thing is alive! It is crawling out of the ... my god this is incredible ... this .. I can see the body - it's about the size of a bear but it looks wet - like wet leather. Holy ...! The face ... the eyes are black and the mouth is v-shaped with saliva dripping and it looks like it is shaking or quivering. Everyone is moving back and ... I've got to get out of here! It it it is rising up and ... I gotta get out of here.

John: Carl? So calm down. That didn't make much sense. What's going on now? You say something is coming out of the meteor? Is Carl still on Jake?

Jake: I believe he is. Carl? Carl? We still have the connection but he is not answering.

John: We'll get back to Carl as soon as we can. I just wanted to note - now there is no way to confirm if this is at all connected but there is a report out of Canada of a large meteor hitting ground just outside of Ottawa this evening right about the same time as we experienced the strike south of Chico. Again there is a report out of /

Carl: / John. Am I still on? John? Jake? Am / I on

John: / You are on Carl go ahead.

Carl: I made it out of the fenced in area but I have a clear view of the crash site - I'm about 75 or 80 yards away. Police are having no problem keeping people back now. That thing, is still standing on top of the meteor it is not moving but it looks like it is scanning the crowd, moving its head. It looks like Pierson did not leave the site and he is conferring with some military officers. Pierson is walking around one side of the object talking into his phone and the two officers are heading the other way and they are putting their hands up over their heads and walking towards the thing. There is ... WHOA!! HOLY ...! It's some sort of beam - a red beam. They burst into flames!! They just burst into flames!! Now the monster is starting to turn the beam on others close to the meteor - it is just picking them off and they are all bursting into flames!! I've got to get out of here! The entire orchard is in flames! Everyone is running and the

*Silence*

Jake: Carl you still there? Carl? Can you tell me what is going on there? Okay. I don't think we have contact with Carl. It sounds like umm.

John: Jake I have to stop your right there - we have a mandatory break to the Emergency Broadcast System right now for a live announcement from Sacramento.

Press Secretary: The Governor of California has placed the counties of Butte, Glenn, Tehama, Colusa, Sutter and Yuba under martial law. No one will be allowed to enter the area without special pass issued by state military authorities. Four battalions of the California National Guard will assist in the evacuation of homes immediately in the area of the meteor landing and in range of impending military operations. That is all for now. Thank you.

John: Okay folks we've got some evacuations going on and I have a quite few announcements coming in over the EBS wire - not sure which of these are confirmed just yet. The State Department has issued a statement confirming that the incident here in Chico is being considered an extraterrestrial landing. Again - state and government agencies are confirming this event as a landing of an alien spacecraft and all actions going forward will be in the interest of protecting those living in the immediate area. There are now several reports of more capsules - though unconfirmed in Medford Oregon, Logan Utah, Lewiston Montana, Alamos Colorado, Regina Canada and Hermosillo Mexico. Both Enloe and Feather Falls Hospitals are reporting multiple casualties from the incident South of Chico - so far over 40 fatalities and 150 wounded but this number is expected to grow. Fighter squadrons from Beale airfare base have been / activated

Jake: /Hey John - I've got someone here who is still at the crash site - she saw the whole thing.

John: May we put you on the air? Okay? So we are live with a witness from this massacre in the Chico orchards. Can you tell us what you saw?

Witness: It was madness/ It was crazy.

John: Tell us what you saw, please.

Witness: There were three of these things came out of the ship. And the first one just started firing this red beam - I'm not sure where it was coming from and people just burst into flames and then the other two would run to the people that had fallen - my god they moved so fast - and these other two would stick something out of their mouths - like a tongue but really long and sharp into their temples and - oh god it was...

John: Are you in a safe place now? Are they still attacking?

Witness: I was behind a car when this was happening and then all of a sudden they just stopped and all three of them ran back into their ship. They all just moved at the same time like they were synced up. They didn't seem to communicate at all —they just moved at the same time in the same way. And then the fireman and policeman went and collected all of the dead but the creatures didn't come out again - they just stayed in and let it happen. Then more army came in with bigger guns and surrounded the ship so I ran out of there. I'm about a mile up the road, back by Diamond Match but I heard that lazer again when I was running and then I didn't hear anything from the Army - no guns or anything. It is all just silent there. There are some planes coming over pretty low. Can you hear them? And some helicopters.

John: I hear them - listen I think you should just get out of there as soon/

Witness: Wait - It's up in the air! The whole ship is above the trees!

John: What is up in the air?

Witness: The space ship/meteor thing that was in the ground. It has long legs under it and I can see it above the trees! It's got to be 50 feet high and it is walking right over all of the trees. There are two of them! I'm not sure where the second one came from - maybe it was under



the first one but there are definitely two of them. The planes just fired at it but nothing happened. There was an explosion and it didn't seem to scratch it. (jet flies over head) It just got the plane. With the laser. I don't know where it came from but it just cut the plane in half. And now it is attacking the helicopters. It's moving this way! I've got to go.

John: Hello? Hello?

Jake: Okay. That's it - I'm out.

John: Jake...?

Jake: (*leaving - away form mic*) Screw this! I've got family out there, man! (Jake is gone)

John: I've got a few more messages here - they just keep coming in. Too many capsule landings to count. They are coming in all over the country and all over the world but here in Northern California there are reports in Arcata, Crescent City, Manton, Weed, Susanville, Grass Valley and Clear Lake. Three capsules in Sacramento. Also we have confirmation from Washington that these alien ships are linked to the explosions on Saturn a few weeks ago. There is a definite link that these ship have come from Saturn. Okay, it looks like I ahead etc cut away once again the EBS. This is live from Sacramento - Press briefing at the capitol, Sarah Hansen, Press Secretary for Governor Brown.

Press Secretary: As you are all aware, this evening we have had contact with what appears to be the beginning of and invading force from outside of this planet. The first craft landed just south of Chico California at 8:02 pm. The 2nd Light Artillery Regiment of the California National Guard was called to engage. The battle which took place has ended in one of the most stunning defeats ever suffered by the American Military on domestic soil. Of the 3000 troops deployed to the area, there are 120 known survivors. The pair of Saturnian invaders have left the immediate area and appear to be on the move. I aha time for just a few quick questions.

*Reporters yelling over each other*

Press Secretary: You.

Reporter 1: Has there been any contact with the aliens - do we know what they want?

Press Secretary: There has been no successful contact with the aliens. Right now we are just trying to kill them.

*Reporters yelling over each other*

Press Secretary: Yes?

Reporter 2: Do they seem to have plan that anyone can discern?

Press Secretary: Like I said, no contact has been made and we are still harvesting the data. Of the new ships that have landed the only pattern that we have established is that they seem to work in pairs and they are currently attacking communications systems and tearing up road ways.

Reporter 2: What about the reports that they seem to be feeding on those they kill? That they are injecting something into the temple area and appear to be sucking out the contents?

Press Secretary: I'm afraid I cannot comment on that. One more question. You.

Reporter 1: Professor Neil Pierson has been drawing quite a bit of attention lately to the explosions on Saturn following the Cassini probe landing there. Why was he in Chico, at the very spot the first contact was made? Was this coincidence or was he aware that something would be happening there?

Press Secretary: That seems media-driven wild speculation; I do not have time for that right now. Thank you very much.

Reporters: One more question! One More question!

John: Okay we are back. I've got too many bulletins to read. It seems the main interest of the invaders right now is to knock out communications and infrastructure. Lots of reports of roads being torn up as well as cell towers being toppled and forms of major communications - corporate internet services seem to be dropping pretty quickly wherever these things appear. Being a small community radio station seems to be in our favor at the moment as our tower is still up and we will continue to broadcast as long as that is the case. I do have memo here chi has come over the news wire - which seems fairly secure at the moment - it says that any existing radio frequencies may be taken over for military use at any time without warning. I've heard about this - in an emergency military can take whatever communications it deems necessary. So as things continue to deteriorate we /

*cut to sound of plane interior and muffled voices on com*

Commander 1: AF bombing plane V-8-43, off Marysville California, Lieutenant Vaughn, commanding squadron of eight bombers to Commander Fairfax Beale Air Force Base ... this is Vaughn, reporting to Commander Fairfax, Beale Air Force Base. Over.

Commander 2: This is Beale. Go ahead V-8-43. Over.

Commander 1: Enemy tripod machines now in site. Looks like they are being reinforced by a second pair - this is probably the pair from the Clear Lake cylinder. Four altogether. They seem to be releasing heavy black fog that hugs the ground as they pass through Yuba City... extreme density, nature unknown. No sign of the red fire ray. Enemy is now crossing Feather River and heading North into the rice fields. Destination seems to be due north to connect with the Chico pair. They are pushing one electrical and telephone wires as they travel at fantastic speed. Squadron is ready to attack. Over.

Commander 2: Go ahead V-8-43. Fire at will - take them out. Over.

Commander 1: One thousand yards and closing. 600 yards. Targets locked. 400 yards. That arm is raised its fir ... (*We hear the space ship hum, the red bem and explosion. silence*)

Commander 2: V-8-43. Come in V-8-43. V-8-43. Come in V-8-43. This is Beale. Come in V-8-43.

*Cut back to radio station*

John: Am I on? Yes. It looks like we are back on. I'm not sure how long. I don't even know if anyone is still listening.

Pierson: (*from off mic*) You're still here.

John: What? Professor Pierson?

Pierson: Do you mind? I had no place else to go.

John: Sit down. Sit down. This is ...What can you tell us? Why are you here?

Pierson: I didn't know where to go. I've always liked radio stations and uh ... I use to DJ the midnight show when I was in undergrad at Columbia and it ... I always felt like I was talking to no one - just talking into the vacuum space. I felt at home.

John: Did Phillips ...?

Pierson: No. No. He went early. Before the smoke.

John: Smoke?

Pierson: They are releasing some black smoke - it appears to be extremely toxic and it hugs the ground - so I came up here to the fourth floor. I need to talk. Out into space.

John: Listen. I'm not sure if there is anyone out there and we are going to get cut any minute - either the towers or the military. And uh. There lots of the now you know. They are teaming up.

Pierson: I know.

John: There is not even much coming over the feed - it's call crashing down. I've got to go. Let's get out of here.

Pierson: No. You go. I'm fine. I need talk. One more show.

John: (*off mic*) Alright - yeh - I've got - what a night. (*door*)

Pierson: Let me fidn some music. Oh, yes, this will do Hello.

*Background music plays throughout the podcast - something spacey and triphoppy - Nightmares on Wax perhaps.*

Oh yes. This is Neil Pierson. At least - I think this is Neil Pierson. Welcome to the Space Between My Ears. The 235th episode of...my mind. My thoughts on space and stars and planets and time and motion and exploration and thinking and consciousness. Thank you for listening. Open your mind. May I come in? Like a vampire I need your permission to enter. But my aim is not to take - my aim is to give a gift. The gift of thought. The gift of questioning. Hmm. That is how I always began my podcast. 234 times that is how I introduced myself. But that all seems another world. Another life. A life that has no continuity with the furtive existence of the lonely derelict that speaks these words to no one. No one at all. I am trying to connect myself with who I was just yesterday. Just yesterday I knew myself as a professor of astrophysics at Stanford University - a consultant to NASA - an author - a speaker - a celebrity. I am none of those now. My colleagues, my students, my books, my steadfast listeners - where are they now. Did they ever exist? Did I ever exist? These data which made up my life - which I thought was so solid - so absolute - proved to be as insubstantial and as flimsy as the whim of a school-child - "when I grow up I'm going be a fireman!" "Yesterday I was a celebrated astrophysicist!" Equal statements - based on my own idea of myself. It was this idea of self - this notion, based on nothing that could be measured or recorded or touched or tested - based on no scientific fact at all - "I am". "I am" is the seed that has lead us to the harvest of every achievement in our collected human history. A purely subjective sense of self. Newton elucidated the fundamental theorem of calculus for no other reason than one day he fancied himself a mathematician. What if he had woke up that day and fancied himself a cobbler instead? We would all be wearing some pretty fantastic shoes, I'm sure. Yesterday i was a celebrated astrophysicist - today I am the midnight DJ on KZFR, sitting all alone on the fourth floor of the radio station surrounded by a sea of black smoke suffocating the world sharing the Space Between my Ears. I need too make a confession. There is something that is weighing on me. (*phone ring*) A caller? Really? Absolutely. Hello Stranger. What's on your mind?

Stranger: You knew.

Pierson: Excuse me?

Stranger: You knew. You knew about all of it. Cassini. Saturn. The explosions. The invasion. (*pause*) The Harvest. You knew they were coming. That is why you were here in Chico.

Pierson: My friend I've listened to conspiracies my entire adult / life and this

Stranger: / Conspiracy? I know about conspiracies too. I listen to your show. I know what you say about conspiracies - we have incomplete data and so we as humans have a tendency to fill the holes in with our fears and create conspiracies.

Pierson: You do listen.

Stranger: I listen - and I watch. I'm very good at watching, actually. And this is not a conspiracy because all of this is fact. Yesterday it was conspiracy and today it is the way of life and tomorrow it will be our history. You are on the radio right now because you know even though cellular is down and internet is down and television is down radio is not going down. You knew that - because that is how they commune with each other - through radio waves.

How did Cassini transmit to Earth? How do all traveling satellites communicate back to Earth? This is rhetorical but I want to hear you answer it.

Pierson: Radio waves.

Stranger: That's right. Radio waves travel through space at the speed of light. By today's standards it is old technology but hey, it is solid technology. And what are the rings around Saturn? Well I've never been there myself - but Cassini has. Why don't you tell us the answer to that one Professor?

Pierson: The rings around Saturn are ... radio antenna.

Stranger: Radio antenna that is used for their species to communicate instantly with each other over their entire planet - a broadband network bigger than anything we could conceive of. And when Cassini confirmed - you crashed it.

Pierson: This knowledge had to be unveiled deliberately and carefully. We were laying the platform to reveal it. But it needed careful planning - My whole tour was introducing the idea to the world - with the facts in hand - not just speculation. How did you come by this? Who are you?

Stranger: You're not the only person that fancies himself an astrophysicist. You just fancy yourself a "celebrity" astrophysicist. Some of us play it a little closer to the vest. Some of us also knew this was coming. And when a people of greater force stumbles upon a people with lesser force - nature shows us that the results are never good for the lesser force. They came for a reason. And I have watched them and seen close up what they do and now I know why they are here. They came because it was time. Time to harvest what they had planted. They are gorging themselves on us. Not on our bodies but on our minds. They stick there damn sharp tongues into the space between our ears and throw the rest away. I think they planted something in us thousands and thousands of years ago. Something that triggered our brains to grow. Bigger and bigger asking more and more questions and each discovery asked another question and the brain had to grow in order to answer that question which only discovered deeper question - on and on through the eons. Like you said - the sense of "I am." It was planted. It was the apple in the garden. And how would they know it was time to harvest? When our brains had asked enough questions and grew so big that it could create a space craft that we could send back to tell them that we were ready. Cassini was the turkey pop up timer that told them, "time to eat."

Pierson: That is a provocative theory you have there; but I see no hope in this.

Stranger: No hope? Have you not been listening? It is all over - life as we knew it is over. And this is great. It is the big reset. We are going underground and we are going to watch and survive. Listen, I don;t know if you have caught on yet, but I am pretty smart. And I know you are smart. And we will figure out where they go ad how they work and eventually they will reveal a weakness that we can exploit. It will not take long with me and yo and a few other right thinking people overtake just one of their machines and turn it against them and we will eventually prevail. And then we get another one. And another. And we have all of the power and the world bows down before us and we build it up again in the image of our own design.

Pierson: That is your plan?

Stranger: You and me and few more for muscle would own this world. You see, I fancy myself a great leader.

Pierson: Okay. Goodbye.

Stranger: Where are you going?

Pierson: Not to your world. Yesterday, I was a celebrated astrophysicist - today I am the midnight DJ on a community radio station. As I look out the window of the fourth floor overlooking the Chico plaza, I can see the machines heading towards the downtown. They move stride for stride in lockstep past the Senator Tower. Another pair passing the Diamond Hotel. A third pair walking past the water towers. They converge in the place. Six great machines, 50 feet tall right across from my window. I look up at my end. And they stop and quiver. In an instant they tear into each other with such power and force that the ground shakes beneath them. They fall and roll. Lasers ripping through legs and melting the metal casement that was impervious to our bombs, like butter. As quickly as it started it finished. All six, lifeless on the ground.

It's over. The War of the Worlds is over. But we end our story not like H. G. Wells ended his story or even how Orson Welles ended his interpretation. In both, the invaders conquered humanity and disrupted our civilization but in the end fell victim to the microscopic bacteria for which they had no defense. Where humans could not succeed - the humblest creature stood victorious. But we end in a different way. 109 years after the novel was written the view of humanities strengths are much different. But the views of our supposed weaknesses are much more insidious. What was it that killed the Saturnian? This same sense of self-awareness - "I am" - that has grown the brain to develop sophisticated technology has also developed subtler and more invasive forms of awareness that has caused multiple rifts in the thought processes of humans - drawing distinctions where distinctions do not exist and causing a deep sense of hatred, jealousy and prejudice based on fabricated dividers such as geography or skin color or metaphysical beliefs - basically anything that is different we have grown more and more intolerant of. Yet side by side with this, Nature has planted, either by accident or design, a sense of empathy towards others that has built up a moral obligation to respect and do no harm. This barrier is thin and often tears - but it is the only thing that keeps us in relative peace with our fellows. The Saturnian, being a hive mind mentality - much like bees or ants that view the collective far above the individual, have no comprehension of this and when they harvest and devoured the brains of the earthling, they ingested the senses of division and otherness self-awareness that has been maturing and growing for thousands of years, without the benefit of empathy which acts as a defense against our baser natures. That mysterious fine balance was tipped and the poor Saturnians, confronted with a concept of self that they could never even imagine, turned on one another and fought until none was left. Basically a very bad trip. My hope now is the we as a species use this story of the War of the Worlds as a lesson to tear down the borders of hatred of race and religion and see our planet united in the knowledge that there are other planets with other species out there. Watching. Waiting. Let us link our arms and sing our world anthem of togetherness with our eyes up towards the vault of space - ever-vigilant of the unknown threat that lies beyond.

The End.