

### The Dangers of Pursuing a False Narrative

Cory Doctorow in his short story “Masque of the Red Death” explores the idea that the continual belief in a false narrative reduces altruistic tendencies. A prime example of this is Martin Mars, a man so sure of himself that he believed it was impossible for him to be wrong. Martin’s prediction of the apocalypse was that of utter “mayhem and murder” (265), and despite the plethora of evidence to the contrary, he refused to change his beliefs. For example, when Martin and his associates travelled to a nearby town for supplies, they found themselves shocked to find friendly and non combatant civilians thriving. When talking to a local shopkeeper, Martin was “disgusted” (287) at how “naive” (287) the local people were to the idea of them getting raided. Martin even considered “shoot[ing] the guy himself” (287) which shows his complete separation from the situation at hand. Because Martin could not see that his idea of the apocalypse was wrong, he developed a severe lack of empathy for anyone who believed the contrary. This idea compounds when Martin’s group decides to loot a nearby gun store. In this raid, they ended up becoming the dreaded marauder type they were so afraid of - directly causing the deaths of three people. However the last death was preventable, as Martin scolded the failure of a traumatized man who witnessed the gruesome death of his friends, telling him “you fucked up... Asshole” (281) instead of consoling him. Because Martin was so scared that people would attack his residence, he simply dismissed the feelings of his companions which contributed to the suicide of one man. In the end, Martin was so caught up in trying to prevent an attack on his home, that he hid in a panic bunker rather than potentially saving his life. This is an attempt by Doctorow to showcase the absurd lengths people will go to in justifying their opinion over others, which in the case of Martin Mars, is treating anyone opposite to him as worthless.