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## “MLA Works Cited: Electronic Sources (Web Publications).” Owl at Perdue. Perdue University. 2017. <owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/08/>. Accessed 15 March 2017.

***The Veldt* by Ray Bradbury**

“George, I wish you’d look at the nursery.

“What’s wrong with it?”

“I don’t know.”

“Well, then.”

“I just want you to look at it, is all, or call a psychologist in to look at it.”

“What would a psychologist want with a nursery?”

“You know very well what he’d want.” His wife was standing in the middle of the kitchen watching

the stove busy humming to itself, making supper for four.

“It’s just that it is different now than it was.”

“All right, let’s have a look.”

They walked down the hall of their HappyLife Home, which had cost them thirty thousand dollars

with everything included. This house which clothed and fed and rocked them to sleep and played

and sang and was good to them. Their approach was sensed by a hidden switch and the nursery light

turned on when they came within ten feet of it. Similarly, behind them, in the halls, lights went on

and off automatically as they left them behind.

“Well,” said George Hadley. They stood on the grass-like floor of the nursery. It was forty feet

across by forty feet long and thirty feet high; it had cost half again as much as the rest of the house.

“But nothing’s too good for our children,” George had said.

The room was silent and empty. The walls were white and two dimensional. Now, as George and

Lydia Hadley stood in the center of the room, the walls made a quiet noise and seemed to fall away

into the distance. Soon an African veldt appeared, in three dimensions, on all sides, in color. It

looked real to the smallest stone and bit of yellow summer grass. The ceiling above them became a

deep sky with a hot yellow sun.

George Hadley started to sweat from the heat. “Let’s get out of this sun,” he said. “This is a little

too real. But I don’t see anything wrong.”

“Wait a moment, you’ll see,” said his wife.

Now hidden machines were beginning to blow a wind containing prepared smells toward the two

people in the middle of the baked veldt. The hot straw smell of lion grass, the cool green smell of

the hidden water hole, the strong dried blood smell of the animals, the smell of dust like red pepper

in the hot air. And now the sounds: the thump of distant antelope feet on soft grassy ground, the

papery rustle of vultures. A shadow passed through the sky. George Hadley looked up, and as he

watched the shadow moved across his sweating face. “Horrible creatures,” he heard his wife say.

“The vultures.”

“You see, there are the lions, far over, that way. Now they’re on their way to the water hole.

They’ve just been eating,” said Lydia. “I don’t know what.”

“Some animal.” George Hadley put his hand above his eyes to block off the burning light and

looked carefully. “A zebra or a baby giraffe, maybe.”

“Are you sure?” His wife sounded strangely nervous.

“No, it’s a little late to be sure,” he said, with a laugh. “Nothing over there I can see but cleaned

bone, and the vultures dropping for what’s left.”

“Did you hear that scream?” she asked.

“No.”

“About a minute ago?”

“Sorry, no.”

The lions were coming. And again George Hadley was filled with respect for the brilliant mind that

had come up with the idea for this room. A wonder of efficiency selling for an unbelievably low

price. Every home should have one. Oh, occasionally they frightened you with their realism, they

made you jump, gave you a scare. But most of the time they were fun for everyone. Not only your

own son and daughter, but for yourself when you felt like a quick trip to a foreign land, a quick

change of scenery. Well, here it was!

And here were the lions now, fifteen feet away. They looked so real, so powerful and shockingly

real, that you could feel the hairs stand up on the back of your neck. Your mouth was filled with the

dusty smell of their heated fur. The yellow of the lions and the summer grass was in your eyes like a

picture in an expensive French wall hanging. And there was the sound of the lions quick, heavy

breaths in the silent mid-day sun, and the smell of meat from their dripping mouths.

The lions stood looking at George and Lydia Hadley with terrible green-yellow eyes. “Watch out!”

screamed Lydia.

The lions came running at them. Lydia turned suddenly and ran. Without thinking, George ran after

her. Outside in the hall, after they had closed the door quickly and noisily behind them, he was

laughing and she was crying. And they both stood shocked at the other’s reaction.

“George!”

“Lydia! Oh, my dear poor sweet Lydia!”

“They almost got us!”

“Walls, Lydia, remember; glass walls, that’s all they are. Oh, they look real, I must admit – Africa in

your living room. But it’s all created from three dimensional color film behind glass screens. And

the machines that deliver the smells and sounds to go with the scenery. Here’s my handkerchief.”

“I’m afraid.” She came to him and put her body against him and cried as he held her. “Did you see?

Did you feel? It’s too real.”

“Now, Lydia…”

“You’ve got to tell Wendy and Peter not to read any more on Africa.”

“Of course – of course.” He patted her.

“Promise?”

“Sure.”

“And lock the nursery for a few days until I can get over this.”

“You know how difficult Peter is about that. When I punished him a month ago by locking it for

even a few hours – the way he lost his temper! And Wendy too. They live for the nursery.”

“It’s got to be locked, that’s all there is to it.”

“All right.” Although he wasn’t happy about it, he locked the huge door. “You’ve been working too

hard. You need a rest.”

“I don’t know – I don’t know,” she said, blowing her nose, sitting down in a chair that immediately

began to rock and comfort her. “Maybe I don’t have enough to do. Maybe I have time to think too

much. Why don’t we shut the whole house off for a few days and take a vacation?”

“You mean you want to fry my eggs for me?”

“Yes.” She nodded.

“And mend my socks?”

“Yes.” She nodded again excitedly, with tears in her eyes.

“And clean the house?”

“Yes, yes – oh, yes!”

“But I thought that’s why we bought this house, so we wouldn’t have to do anything?”

“That’s just it. I feel like I don’t belong here. The house is wife and mother now, and nurse for the

children. Can I compete with an African veldt? Can I give a bath and clean the children as

efficiently or quickly as the automatic body wash can? I cannot. And it isn’t just me. It’s you.

You’ve been awfully nervous lately.”

“I suppose I have been smoking too much.”

“You look as if you didn’t know what to do with yourself in this house, either. You smoke a little

more every morning and drink a little more every afternoon, and you are taking more pills to help

you sleep at night. You’re beginning to feel unnecessary too.”

“Am I?” He thought for a moment as he and tried to feel into himself to see what was really there.

“Oh, George!” She looked past him, at the nursery door. “Those lions can’t get out of there, can

they?”

He looked at the door and saw it shake as if something had jumped against it from the other side.

“Of course not,” he said.

At dinner they ate alone, for Wendy and Peter were at a special plastic fair across town. They had

called home earlier to say they’d be late. So George Hadley, deep in thought, sat watching the

dining-room table produce warm dishes of food from the machines inside.

“We forgot the tomato sauce,” he said.

“Sorry,” said a small voice within the table, and tomato sauce appeared.

As for the nursery, thought George Hadley, it won’t hurt for the children to be locked out of it a

while. Too much of anything isn’t good for anyone. And it was clearly indicated that the children

had been spending a little too much time on Africa. That sun. He could still feel it on his neck, like a

hot paw. And the lions. And the smell of blood. Remarkable how the nursery read the thoughts in

the children’s minds and created life to fill their every desire. The children thought lions, and there

were lions. The children thought zebras, and there were zebras. Sun – sun. Giraffes – giraffes. Death

and death.

That last. He ate the meat that the table had cut for him without tasting it. Death thoughts. They

were awfully young, Wendy and Peter, for death thoughts. Or, no, you were never too young, really.

Long before you knew what death was you were wishing it on someone else. When you were two

years old you were shooting people with toy guns.

But this – the long, hot African veldt. The awful death in the jaws of a lion. And repeated again and

again.

“Where are you going?”

George didn’t answer Lydia… he was too busy thinking of something else. He let the lights shine

softly on ahead of him, turn off behind him as he walked quietly to the nursery door. He listened

against it. Far away, a lion roared. He unlocked the door and opened it. Just before he stepped

inside, he heard a faraway scream. And then another roar from the lions, which died down quickly.

He stepped into Africa.

How many times in the last year had he opened this door and found Wonderland with Alice and the

Mock Turtle, or Aladdin and his Magical Lamp, or Jack Pumpkinhead of Oz, or Dr. Doolittle, or the

cow jumping over a very real-looking moon. All the most enjoyable creations of an imaginary

world. How often had he seen Pegasus the winged horse flying in the sky ceiling, or seen

explosions of red fireworks, or heard beautiful singing.

But now, is yellow hot Africa, this bake oven with murder in the heat. Perhaps Lydia was right.

Perhaps they needed a little vacation from the fantasy which was growing a bit too real for ten-yearold children. It was all right to exercise one’s mind with unusual fantasies, but when the lively child

mind settled on one pattern..?

It seemed that, at a distance, for the past month, he had heard lions roaring, and noticed their strong

smell which carried as far away as his study door. But, being busy, he had paid it no attention.

George Hadley stood on the African veldt alone. The lions looked up from their feeding, watching

him. The only thing wrong with the image was the open door. Through it he could see his wife, far

down the dark hall, like a framed picture. She was still eating her dinner, but her mind was clearly

on other things.

“Go away,” he said to the lions.

They did not go. He knew exactly how the room should work. You sent out your thoughts.

Whatever you thought would appear. “Let’s have Aladdin and his lamp,” he said angrily. The veldt

remained; the lions remained.

“Come on, room! I demand Aladdin!” he said.

Nothing happened. The lions made soft low noises in the hot sun.

“Aladdin!”

He went back to dinner. “The fool room’s out of order,” he said. “It won’t change.”

“Or…”

“Or what?”

“Or it can’t change,” said Lydia, “because the children have thought about Africa and lions and

killing so many days that the room’s stuck in a pattern it can’t get out of.”

“Could be.”

“Or Peter’s set it to remain that way.”

“Set it?”

“He may have got into the machinery and fixed something.”

“Peter doesn’t know machinery.”

“He’s a wise one for ten. That I.Q. of his…”

“But…”

“Hello, Mom. Hello, Dad.”

The Hadleys turned. Wendy and Peter were coming happily in the front door, with bright blue eyes

and a smell of fresh air on their clothes from their trip in the helicopter.

“You’re just in time for supper,” said both parents.

“We’re full of strawberry ice-cream and hot dogs,” said the children, holding hands. “But we’ll sit

and watch.”

“Yes, come tell us about the nursery,” said George Hadley.

The brother and sister looked at him and then at each other. “Nursery?”

“All about Africa and everything,” said the father with a false smile.

“I don’t understand,” said Peter.

“Your mother and I were just traveling through Africa.

“There’s no Africa in the nursery,” said Peter simply.

“Oh, come now, Peter. We know better.”

“I don’t remember any Africa,” said Peter to Wendy. “Do you?”

“No.”

“Run see and come tell.”

She did as he told her.

“Wendy, come back here!” said George Hadley, but she was gone. The house lights followed her

like fireflies. Too late, he realized he had forgotten to lock the nursery door after his last visit.

“Wendy’ll look and come tell us,” said Peter.

“She doesn’t have to tell me. I’ve seen it.”

“I’m sure you’re mistaken, Father.”

“I’m not, Peter. Come along now.”

But Wendy was back. “It’s not Africa,” she said breathlessly.

“We’ll see about this,” said George Hadley, and they all walked down the hall together and opened

the door.

There was a green, lovely forest, a lovely river, a purple mountain, high voices singing. And there

was Rima the bird girl, lovely and mysterious. She was hiding in the trees with colorful butterflies,

like flowers coming to life, flying about her long hair. The African veldt was gone. The lions were

gone. Only Rima was here now, singing a song so beautiful that it brought tears to your eyes.

George Hadley looked in at the changed scene. “Go to bed,” he said to the children.

They opened their mouths.

“You heard me,” he said.

They went off to the air tube, where a wind blew them like brown leaves up to their sleeping rooms.

George Hadley walked through the forest scene and picked up something that lay in the corner near

where the lions had been. He walked slowly back to his wife.

“What is that?” she asked.

“An old wallet of mine,” he said. He showed it to her. The smell of hot grass was on it… and the

smell of a lion. It was wet from being in the lion’s mouth, there were tooth marks on it, and there

was dried blood on both sides. He closed the door and locked it, tight.

They went to up to bed but couldn’t sleep. “Do you think Wendy changed it?” she said at last, in the

dark room.

“Of course.”

“Made it from a veldt into a forest and put Rima there instead of lions?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know. But it’s staying locked until I find out.”

“How did your wallet get there?”

“I don’t know anything,” he said, “except that I’m beginning to be sorry we bought that room for

the children. If children are suffering from any kind of emotional problem, a room like that…”

“It’s supposed to help them work off their emotional problems in a healthy way.”

“I’m starting to wonder.” His eyes were wide open, looking up at the ceiling.

“We’ve given the children everything they ever wanted. Is this our reward – secrecy, not doing what

we tell them?”

“Who was it said, ‘Children are carpets, they should be stepped on occasionally’? We’ve never

lifted a hand. They’re unbearable – let’s admit it. They come and go when they like; they treat us as

if we were the children in the family. They’re spoiled and we’re spoiled.”

“They’ve been acting funny ever since you wouldn’t let them go to New York a few months ago.”

“They’re not old enough to do that alone, I explained.”

“I know, but I’ve noticed they’ve been decidedly cool toward us since.”

“I think I’ll have David McClean come tomorrow morning to have a look at Africa.”

“But it’s not Africa now, it’s South America and Rima.”

“I have a feeling it’ll be Africa again before then.”

A moment later they heard the screams. Two screams. Two people screaming from downstairs. And

then a roar of lions.

“Wendy and Peter aren’t in their rooms,” said his wife.

He lay in his bed with his beating heart. “No,” he said. “They’ve broken into the nursery.”

“Those screams – they sound familiar.”

“Do they?”

“Yes, awfully.”

And although their beds tried very hard, the two adults couldn’t be rocked to sleep for another hour.

A smell of cats was in the night air.

\* \* \*

“Father?” asked Peter the next morning.

“Yes.”

Peter looked at his shoes. He never looked at his father any more, nor at his mother. “You aren’t

going to lock up the nursery for good, are you?”

“That all depends.”

“On what?” said Peter sharply.

“On you and your sister. If you break up this Africa with a little variety – oh, Sweden perhaps, or

Denmark or China…”

“I thought we were free to play as we wished.”

“You are, within reasonable limits.”

“What’s wrong with Africa, Father?”

“Oh, so now you admit you have been thinking up Africa, do you?”

“I wouldn’t want the nursery locked up,” said Peter coldly. “Ever.”

“Matter of fact, we’re thinking of turning the whole house off for about a month. Live sort of a

happy family existence.”

“That sounds terrible! Would I have to tie my own shoes instead of letting the machine do it? And

brush my own teeth and comb my hair and give myself a bath?”

“It would be fun for a change, don’t you think?”

No, it would be horrible. I didn’t like it when you took out the picture painter last month.”

“That’s because I wanted you to learn to paint all by yourself, son.”

“I don’t want to do anything but look and listen and smell; what else is there to do?”

“All right, go play in Africa.”

“Will you shut off the house sometime soon?”

“We’re considering it.”

“I don’t think you’d better consider it any more, Father.”

“I won’t have any threats from my son!”

“Very well.” And Peter walked off to the nursery.

\* \* \*

“Am I on time?” said David McClean.

“Breakfast?” asked George Hadley.

“Thanks, had some. What’s the trouble?”

“David, you’re a psychologist.”

“I should hope so.”

“Well, then, have a look at our nursery. You saw it a year ago when you dropped by; did you notice

anything unusual about it then?”

“Can’t say I did; the usual violences, a tendency toward a slight paranoia here or there. But this is

usual in children because they feel their parents are always doing things to make them suffer in one

way or another. But, oh, really nothing.”

They walked down the hall. “I locked it up,” explained the father, “and the children broke back into

it during the night. I let them stay so they could form the patterns for you to see.”

There was a terrible screaming from the nursery.

“There it is,” said George Hadley. “See what you make of it.”

They walked in on the children without knocking. The screams had stopped. The lions were

feeding.

“Run outside a moment, children,” said George Hadley. “No, don’t change the mental picture.

Leave the walls as they are. Get!”

With the children gone, the two men stood studying the lions sitting together in the distance, eating

with great enjoyment whatever it was they had caught.

“I wish I knew what it was,” said George Hadley. “Sometimes I can almost see. Do you think if I

brought high-powered binoculars here and…”

David McClean laughed dryly. “Hardly.” He turned to study all four walls. “How long has this been

going on?”

“A little over a month.”

“It certainly doesn’t feel good.”

“I want facts, not feelings.”

“My dear George, a psychologist never saw a fact in his life. He only hears about feelings; things

that aren’t always clearly expressed. This doesn’t feel good, I tell you. Trust me. I have a nose for

something bad. This is very bad. My advice to you is to have the whole damn room torn down and

your children brought to me every day during the next year for treatment.”

“Is it that bad?”

“I’m afraid so. One of the original uses of these rooms was so that we could study the patterns left

on the walls by the child’s mind. We could study them whenever we wanted to, and help the child.

In this case, however, the room has become a means of creating destructive thoughts, instead of

helping to make them go away.”

“Didn’t you sense this before?”

“I sensed only that you had spoiled your children more than most. And now you’re letting them

down in some way. What way?”

“I wouldn’t let them go to New York.”

“What else?”

“I’ve taken a few machines from the house and threatened them, a month ago, with closing up the

nursery unless they did their homework. I did close it for a few days to show I meant business.”

“Ah, ha!”

“Does that mean anything?”

“Everything. Where before they had a Santa Claus now they have a Scrooge. Children prefer Santa.

You’ve let this room and this house replace you and your wife in your children’s feelings. This

room is their mother and father, far more important in their lives than their real parents. And now

you come along and want to shut it off. No wonder there’s hatred here. You can feel it coming out

of the sky. Feel that sun. George, you’ll have to change your life. Like too many others, you’ve built

it around creature comforts. Why, you’d go hungry tomorrow if something went wrong in your

kitchen. You wouldn’t know how to cook an egg. All the same, turn everything off. Start new. It’ll

take time. But we’ll make good children out of bad in a year, wait and see.”

“But won’t the shock be too much for the children, shutting the room up without notice, for good?”

“I don’t want them going any deeper into this, that’s all.”

The lions were finished with their bloody meat. They were standing on the edge of the clearing

watching the two men.

“Now I’m feeling worried,” said McClean. “Let’s get out of here. I never have cared for these

damned rooms. Make me nervous.”

“The lions look real, don’t they?” said George Hadley. I don’t suppose there’s any way…”

“What?”

“…that they could become real?”

“Not that I know.”

“Some problem with the machinery, someone changing something inside?”

“No.”

They went to the door.

“I don’t imagine the room will like being turned off,” said the father.

“Nothing ever likes to die – even a room.”

“I wonder if it hates me for wanting to switch it off?”

“Paranoia is thick around here today,” said David McClean. “You can see it everywhere. Hello.” He

bent and picked up a bloody scarf. “This yours?”

“No.” George Hadley’s face set like stone. “It belongs to Lydia.”

They went to the control box together and threw the switch that killed the nursery.

The two children were so upset that they couldn’t control themselves. They screamed and danced

around and threw things. They shouted and cried and called them rude names and jumped on the

furniture.

“You can’t do that to the nursery, you can’t!”

“Now, children.”

The children threw themselves onto a sofa, crying.

“George,” said Lydia Hadley, “turn it on again, just for a few moments. You need to give them some

more time.”

“No.”

“You can’t be so cruel…”

“Lydia, it’s off, and it stays off. And the whole damn house dies as of here and now. The more I see

of the mess we’ve put ourselves in, the more it sickens me. We’ve been thinking of our machine

assisted selves for too long. My God, how we need a breath of honest air!”

And he marched about the house turning off the voice clocks, the stoves, the heaters, the shoe

cleaners, the body washer, the massager, and every other machine he could put his hand to.

The house was full of dead bodies, it seemed. It felt like a mechanical cemetery. So silent. None of

the humming hidden energy of machines waiting to function at the tap of a button.

“Don’t let them do it!” cried Peter to the ceiling, as if he was talking to the house, the nursery.

“Don’t let Father kill everything.” He turned to his father. “Oh, I hate you!”

“Saying things like that won’t get you anywhere.”

“I wish you were dead!”

“We were, for a long while. Now we’re going to really start living. Instead of being handled and

massaged, we’re going to live.”

Wendy was still crying and Peter joined her again. “Just a moment, just one moment, just another

moment of nursery,” they cried.

“Oh, George,” said the wife, “it can’t hurt.”

“All right – all right, if they’ll just shut up. One minute, mind you, and then off forever.”

“Daddy, Daddy, Daddy!” sang the children, smiling with wet faces.

“And then we’re going on a vacation. David McClean is coming back in half an hour to help us

move out and get to the airport. I’m going to dress. You turn the nursery on for a minute, Lydia, just

a minute, mind you.”

And the three of them went off talking excitedly while he let himself be transported upstairs through

the air tube and set about dressing himself. A minute later Lydia appeared.

“I’ll be glad when we get away,” she said thankfully.

“Did you leave them in the nursery?”

“I wanted to dress too. Oh, that horrible Africa. What can they see in it?”

“Well, in five minutes we’ll be on our way to Iowa. Lord, how did we ever get in this house? What

made us buy a nightmare?”

“Pride, money, foolishness.”

“I think we’d better get downstairs before those kids spend too much time with those damned beasts

again.”

Just then they heard the children calling, “Daddy, Mommy, come quick – quick!”

They went downstairs in the air tube and ran down the hall. The

children were nowhere in sight. “Wendy? Peter!”

They ran into the nursery. The veldt was empty save for the lions waiting, looking at them. “Peter,

Wendy?”

The door closed loudly.

“Wendy, Peter!”

George Hadley and his wife turned quickly and ran back to the door.

“Open the door!” cried George Hadley, trying the handle. “Why, they’ve locked it from the outside!

Peter!” He beat at the door. “Open up!”

He heard Peter’s voice outside, against the door.

“Don’t let them switch off the nursery and the house,” he was saying.

Mr. and Mrs. George Hadley beat at the door. “Now, don’t be silly, children. It’s time to go. Mr.

McClean’ll be here in a minute and…”

And then they heard the sounds.

The lions were on three sides of them in the yellow veldt grass. They walked quietly through the

dry grass, making long, deep rolling sounds in their throats. The lions!

Mr. Hadley looked at his wife and they turned and looked back at the beasts edging slowly forward,

knees bent, tails in the air.

Mr. and Mrs. Hadley screamed.

And suddenly they realized why those other screams had sounded familiar.

\* \* \*

“Well, here I am,” said David McClean from the nursery door. “Oh, hello.” He looked carefully at

the two children seated in the center of the room eating a little picnic lunch. On the far them he

could see the water hole and the yellow veldt. Above was the hot sun. He began to sweat. “Where

are your father and mother?”

The children looked up and smiled. “Oh, they’ll be here directly.”

“Good, we must get going.”

At a distance Mr. McClean saw the lions fighting over something and then quietening down to feed

in silence under the shady trees. He put his hand to his eyes to block out the sun and looked at them.

Now the lions were done feeding. They moved to the water hole to drink. A shadow moved over

Mr. McClean’s hot face. Many shadows moved. The vultures were dropping down from the burning

sky.

“A cup of tea?” asked Wendy in the silence.

Bradbury, Ray. *The Veldt.* Jefferson Union High School District, 2016, <https://www.juhsd.net/cms/lib/CA01902464/Centricity/Domain/256/2016_The%20Veldt.pdf>. Accessed April 6, 2020.

***There Will Come Soft Rains* by Ray Bradbury**

In the living room the voice-clock sang, Tick-tock, seven o'clock, time to get up, time to get up,

seven o 'clock! as if it were afraid that nobody would. The morning house lay empty. The clock

ticked on, repeating and repeating its sounds into the emptiness. Seven-nine, breakfast time,

seven-nine!

In the kitchen the breakfast stove gave a hissing sigh and ejected from its warm interior eight pieces

of perfectly browned toast, eight eggs sunny side up, sixteen slices of bacon, two coffees, and two

cool glasses of milk.

"Today is August 4, 2026," said a second voice from the kitchen ceiling, "in the city of

Allendale, California." It repeated the date three times for memory's sake. "Today is Mr.

Featherstone's birthday. Today is the anniversary of Tilita's marriage. Insurance is payable,

as are the water, gas, and light bills."

Somewhere in the walls, relays clicked, memory tapes glided under electric eyes.

Eight-one, tick-tock, eight-one o'clock, off to school, off to work, run, run, eight-one! But no

doors slammed, no carpets took the soft tread of rubber heels. It was raining outside. The weather

box on the front door sang quietly: "Rain, rain, go away; umbrellas, raincoats for today…" And

the rain tapped on the empty house, echoing.

Outside, the garage chimed and lifted its door to reveal the waiting car. After a long wait the door

swung down again.

At eight-thirty the eggs were shriveled, and the toast was like stone. An aluminium wedge scraped

them into the sink, where hot water whirled them down a metal throat which digested and flushed

them away to the distant sea. The dirty dishes were dropped into a hot washer and emerged

twinkling dry.

Nine-fifteen, sang the clock, time to clean.

Out of warrens in the wall, tiny robot mice darted. The rooms were a crawl with the small cleaning

animals, all rubber and metal. They thudded against chairs, whirling their mustached runners,

kneading the rug nap, sucking gently at hidden dust. Then, like mysterious invaders, they popped

into their burrows. Their pink electric eyes faded. The house was clean.

Ten o'clock. The sun came out from behind the rain. The house stood alone in a city of rubble and

ashes. This was the one house left standing. At night the ruined city gave off a radioactive glow

which could be seen for miles.

Ten-fifteen. The garden sprinklers whirled up in golden founts, filling the soft morning air with

scatterings of brightness. The water pelted windowpanes, running down the charred west side

where the house had been burned, evenly free of its white paint. The entire west face of the house

was black, save for five places. Here the silhouette in paint of a man mowing a lawn. Here, as in a

photograph, a woman bent to pick flowers. Still farther over, their images burned on wood in one

titanic instant, a small boy, hands flung into the air; higher up, the image of a thrown ball, and

opposite him a girl, hands raised to catch a ball which never came down.

The five spots of paint - the man, the woman, the children, the ball- remained. The rest was a thin

charcoaled layer.

The gentle sprinkler rain filled the garden with falling light.

Until this day, how well the house had kept its peace. How carefully it had inquired, "Who goes

there? What's the password?" and, getting no answer from lonely foxes and whining cats, it had

shut up its windows and drawn shades in an old-maidenly preoccupation with self-protection which

bordered on a mechanical paranoia.

It quivered at each sound, the house did. If a sparrow brushed a window, the shade snapped up.

The bird, startled, flew off! No, not even a bird must touch the house!

Twelve noon.

A dog whined, shivering, on the front porch.

The front door recognized the dog voice and opened. The dog, once huge and fleshy, but now

gone to bone and covered with sores, moved in and through the house, tracking mud. Behind it

whirred angry mice, angry at having to pick up mud, angry at inconvenience.

For not a leaf fragment blew under the door but what the wall panels flipped open and the copper

scrap rats flashed swiftly out. The offending dust, hair, or paper, seized in miniature steel jaws, was

raced back to the burrows. There, down tubes which fed into the cellar, it was dropped into the

sighing vent of an incinerator which sat like evil Baal in a dark corner.

The dog ran upstairs, hysterically yelping to each door, at last realizing, as the house realized, that

only silence was here.

It sniffed the air and scratched the kitchen door. Behind the door, the stove was making pancakes

which filled the house with a rich baked odor and the scent of maple syrup.

The dog frothed at the mouth, lying at the door, sniffing, its eyes turned to fire. It ran wildly in

circles, biting at its tail, spun in a frenzy, and died. It lay in the parlor for an hour.

Two o'clock, sang a voice.

Delicately sensing decay at last, the regiments of mice hummed out as softly as blown gray leaves in

an electrical wind.

Two-fifteen.

The dog was gone.

In the cellar, the incinerator glowed suddenly and a whirl of sparks leaped up the chimney.

Two thirty-five.

Bridge tables sprouted from patio walls. Playing cards fluttered onto pads in a shower of pips.

Martinis manifested on an oaken bench with egg-salad sandwiches. Music played.

But the tables were silent and the cards untouched.

At four o'clock the tables folded like great butterflies back through the paneled walls .

Four-thirty.

The nursery walls glowed.

Animals took shape: yellow giraffes, blue lions, pink antelopes, lilac panthers cavorting in crystal

substance. The walls were glass. They looked out upon color and fantasy. Hidden films clocked

through well-oiled sprockets, and the walls lived. The nursery floor was woven to resemble a crisp,

cereal meadow. Over this ran aluminum roaches and iron crickets, and in the hot still air butterflies

of delicate red tissue wavered among the sharp aroma of animal spoors! There was the sound like a

great matted yellow hive of bees within a dark bellows, the lazy bumble of a purring lion. And there

was the patter of okapi feet and the murmur of a fresh jungle rain, like other hoofs, falling upon the

summer-starched grass. Now the walls dissolved into distances of parched grass, mile on mile, and

warm endless sky. The animals drew away into thorn brakes and water holes. It was the children's

hour.

Five o'clock. The bath filled with clear hot water.

Six, seven, eight o'clock. The dinner dishes manipulated like magic tricks, and in the study a click.

In the metal stand opposite the hearth where a fire now blazed up warmly, a cigar popped out, half

an inch of soft gray ash on it, smoking, waiting.

Nine o'clock. The beds warmed their hidden circuits, for nights were cool here.

Nine-five. A voice spoke from the study ceiling: "Mrs. McClellan, which poem would you like

this evening?" The house was silent.

The voice said at last, "Since you express no preference, I shall select a poem at random."

Quiet music rose to back the voice. "Sara Teasdale. As I recall, your favorite...

*There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground,*

*And swallows circling with their shimmering sound;*

*And frogs in the pools singing at night,*

*And wild plum trees in tremulous white;*

*Robins will wear their feathery fire,*

*Whistling their whims on a low fence-wire;*

*And not one will know of the war, not one*

*Will care at last when it is done.*

*Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree,*

*If mankind perished utterly;*

*And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn*

*Would scarcely know that we were gone."*

The fire burned on the stone hearth and the cigar fell away into a mound of quiet ash on its tray. The

empty chairs faced each other between the silent walls, and the music played.

At ten o'clock the house began to die.

The wind blew. A falling tree bough crashed through the kitchen window. Cleaning solvent, bottled,

shattered over the stove. The room was ablaze in an instant!

"Fire!" screamed a voice. The house lights flashed, water pumps shot water from the ceilings. But

the solvent spread on the linoleum, licking, eating, under the kitchen door, while the voices took it

up in chorus: "Fire, fire, fire!"

The house tried to save itself. Doors sprang tightly shut, but the windows were broken by the heat

and the wind blew and sucked upon the fire.

The house gave ground as the fire in ten billion angry sparks moved with flaming ease from room to

room and then up the stairs. While scurrying water rats squeaked from the walls, pistoled their

water, and ran for more. And the wall sprays let down showers of mechanical rain.

But too late. Somewhere, sighing, a pump shrugged to a stop. The quenching rain ceased. The

reserve water supply which had filled baths and washed dishes for many quiet days was gone.

The fire crackled up the stairs. It fed upon Picassos and Matisses in the upper halls, like delicacies,

baking off the oily flesh, tenderly crisping the canvases into black shavings.

Now the fire lay in beds, stood in windows, changed the colors of drapes!

And then, reinforcements. From attic trapdoors, blind robot faces peered down with faucet mouths

gushing green chemical.

The fire backed off, as even an elephant must at the sight of a dead snake.

Now there were twenty snakes whipping over the floor, killing the fire with a clear cold venom of

green froth.

But the fire was clever. It had sent flame outside the house, up through the attic to the pumps there.

An explosion! The attic brain which directed the pumps was shattered into bronze shrapnel on the

beams.

The fire rushed back into every closet and felt of the clothes hung there.

The house shuddered, oak bone on bone, its bared skeleton cringing from the heat, its wire, its

nerves revealed as if a surgeon had torn the skin off to let the red veins and capillaries quiver in the

scalded air. Help, help! Fire! Run, run! Heat snapped mirrors like the first brittle winter ice. And

the voices wailed. Fire, fire, run, run, like a tragic nursery rhyme, a dozen voices, high, low, like

children dying in a forest, alone, alone. And the voices fading as the wires popped their sheathings

like hot chestnuts. One, two, three, four, five voices died.

In the nursery the jungle burned. Blue lions roared, purple giraffes bounded off. The panthers ran in

circles, changing color, and ten million animals, running before the fire, vanished off toward a distant

steaming river.... Ten more voices died.

In the last instant under the fire avalanche, other choruses, oblivious, could be heard announcing the

time, cutting the lawn by remote-control mower, or setting an umbrella frantically out and in, the

slamming and opening front door, a thousand things happening, like a clock shop when each clock

strikes the hour insanely before or after the other, a scene of maniac confusion, yet unity; singing,

screaming, a few last cleaning mice darting bravely out to carry the horrid ashes away! And one

voice, with sublime disregard for the situation, read poetry aloud in the fiery study, until all the film

spools burned, until all the wires withered and the circuits cracked.

The fire burst the house and let it slam flat down, puffing out skirts of spark and smoke.

In the kitchen, an instant before the rain of fire and timber, the stove could be seen making

breakfasts at a psychopathic rate, ten dozen eggs, six loaves of toast, twenty dozen bacon strips,

which, eaten by fire, started the stove working again, hysterically hissing!

The crash. The attic smashing into kitchen and parlor. The parlor into cellar, cellar into sub-cellar.

Deep freeze, armchair, film tapes, circuits, beds, and all like skeletons thrown in a cluttered mound

deep under.

Smoke and silence. A great quantity of smoke.

Dawn showed faintly in the east. Among the ruins, one wall stood alone. Within the wall, a last

voice said, over and over again and again, even as the sun rose to shine upon the heaped rubble

and steam:

"Today is August 5, 2026, today is August 5, 2026, today is..."

Bradbury, Ray. *There Will Come Soft Rains.* Broom-Tioga Board of Cooperative Educational Services, Jan 25, 2013, <https://www.btboces.org/Downloads/7_There%20Will%20Come%20Soft%20Rains%20by%20Ray%20Bradbury.pdf>. Accessed April 6, 2020.

***A Sound of Thunder* by Ray Bradbury**

The sign on the wall seemed to quaver under a film of sliding warm water. Eckels felt his eyelids blink over his stare, and the sign burned in this momentary darkness: TIME SAFARI, INC. SAFARIS TO ANY YEAR IN THE PAST. YOU NAME THE ANIMAL. WE TAKE YOU THERE. YOU SHOOT IT. Warm phlegm gathered in Eckels' throat; he swallowed and pushed it down. The muscles around his mouth formed a smile as he put his hand slowly out upon the air, and in that hand waved a check for ten thousand dollars to the man behind the desk. "Does this safari guarantee I come back alive?" "We guarantee nothing," said the official, "except the dinosaurs." He turned. "This is Mr. Travis, your Safari Guide in the Past. He'll tell you what and where to shoot. If he says no shooting, no shooting. If you disobey instructions, there's a stiff penalty of another ten thousand dollars, plus possible government action, on your return." Eckels glanced across the vast office at a mass and tangle, a snaking and humming of wires and steel boxes, at an aurora that flickered now orange, now silver, now blue. There was a sound like a gigantic bonfire burning all of Time, all the years and all the parchment calendars, all the hours piled high and set aflame. A touch of the hand and this burning would, on the instant, beautifully reverse itself. Eckels remembered the wording in the advertisements to the letter. Out of chars and ashes, out of dust and coals, like golden salamanders, the old years, the green years, might leap; roses sweeten the air, white hair turn Irish black, wrinkles vanish; all, everything fly back to seed, flee death, rush down to their beginnings, suns rise in western skies and set in glorious easts, moons eat themselves opposite to the custom, all and everything cupping one in another like Chinese boxes, rabbits into hats, all and everything returning to the fresh death, the seed death, the green death, to the time before the beginning. A touch of a hand might do it, the merest touch of a hand. "Unbelievable." Eckels breathed, the light of the Machine on his thin face. "A real Time Machine." He shook his head. "Makes you think, If the election had gone badly yesterday, I might be here now running away from the results. Thank God Keith won. He'll make a fine President of the United States." "Yes," said the man behind the desk. "We're lucky. If Deutscher had gotten in, we'd have the worst kind of dictatorship. There's an anti-everything man for you, a militarist, antichrist, anti­human, anti-intellectual. People called us up, you know, joking but not joking. Said if Deutscher became President they wanted to go live in 1492. Of course, it's not our business to conduct Escapes, but to form Safaris. Anyway, Keith's President now. All you got to worry about is­" "Shooting my dinosaur," Eckels finished it for him. "A Tyrannosaurus Rex. The Tyrant Lizard, the most incredible monster in history. Sign this release. Anything happens to you, we're not responsible. Those dinosaurs are hungry." Eckels flushed angrily. "Trying to scare me!" "Frankly, yes. We don't want anyone going who'll panic at the first shot. Six Safari leaders were killed last year, and a dozen hunters. We're here to give you the severest thrill a real hunter ever asked for. Traveling you back sixty million years to bag the biggest game in all of Time. Your personal check's still there. Tear it up."Mr. Eckels looked at the check. His fingers twitched. "Good luck," said the man behind the desk. "Mr. Travis, he's all yours." They moved silently across the room, taking their guns with them, toward the Machine, toward the silver metal and the roaring light. First a day and then a night and then a day and then a night, then it was day­ night­ day night. A week, a month, a year, a decade! A.D. 2055. A.D. 2019. 1999! 1957! Gone! The Machine roared. They put on their oxygen helmets and tested the intercoms. Eckels swayed on the padded seat, his face pale, his jaw stiff. He felt the trembling in his arms, and he looked down and found his hands tight on the new rifle. There were four other men in the Machine. Travis, the Safari Leader, his assistant, Lesperance, and two other hunters, Billings and Kramer. They sat looking at each other, and the years blazed around them. "Can these guns get a dinosaur cold?" Eckels felt his mouth saying. "If you hit them right," said Travis on the helmet radio. "Some dinosaurs have two brains, one in the head, another far down the spinal column. We stay away from those. That's stretching luck. Put your first two shots into the eyes, if you can, blind them, and go back into the brain." The Machine howled. Time was a film run backward. Suns fled and ten million moons fled after them. "Think," said Eckels. "Every hunter that ever lived would envy us today. This makes Africa seem like Illinois." The Machine slowed; its scream fell to a murmur. The Machine stopped. The sun stopped in the sky. The fog that had enveloped the Machine blew away and they were in an old time, a very old time indeed, three hunters and two Safari Heads with their blue metal guns across their knees. "Christ isn't born yet," said Travis, "Moses has not gone to the mountains to talk with God. The Pyramids are still in the earth, waiting to be cut out and put up. Remember that. Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, Hitler­ none of them exists." The man nodded. "That" ­ Mr. Travis pointed ­ "is the jungle of sixty million two thousand and fifty-five years before President Keith." He indicated a metal path that struck off into green wilderness, over streaming swamp, among giant ferns and palms. "And that," he said, "is the Path, laid by Time Safari for your use, it floats six inches above the earth. Doesn't touch so much as one grass blade, flower, or tree. It's an anti­gravity metal. Its purpose is to keep you from touching this world of the past in any way. Stay on the Path. Don't go off it. I repeat. Don't go off. For any reason! If you fall off, there's a penalty. And don't shoot any animal we don't okay." "Why?" asked Eckels. They sat in the ancient wilderness. Far birds' cries blew on a wind, and the smell of tar and an old salt sea, moist grasses, and flowers the color of blood. "We don't want to change the Future. We don't belong here in the Past. The government doesn't like us here. We have to pay big graft to keep our franchise. A Time Machine is finicky business. Not knowing it, we might kill an important animal, a small bird, a roach, a flower even, thus destroying an important link in a growing species." "That's not clear," said Eckels. "All right," Travis continued, "say we accidentally kill one mouse here. That means all the future families of this one particular mouse are destroyed, right?" "Right" "And all the families of the families of the families of that one mouse! With a stamp of your foot, you annihilate first one, then a dozen, then a thousand, a million, a billion possible mice!" "So, they're dead," said Eckels. "So what?" "So what?" Travis snorted quietly. "Well, what about the foxes that'll need those mice to survive? For want of ten mice, a fox dies. For want of ten foxes a lion starves. For want of a lion, all manner of insects, vultures, infinite billions of life forms are thrown into chaos and destruction. Eventually it all boils down to this: fifty-nine million years later, a caveman, one of a dozen on the entire world, goes hunting wild boar or saber-toothed tiger for food. But you, friend, have stepped on all the tigers in that region. By stepping on one single mouse. So, the caveman starves. And the caveman, please note, is not just any expendable man, no! He is an entire future nation. From his loins would have sprung ten sons. From their loins one hundred sons, and thus onward to a civilization. Destroy this one man, and you destroy a race, a people, an entire history of life. It is comparable to slaying some of Adam's grandchildren. The stomp of your foot, on one mouse, could start an earthquake, the effects of which could shake our earth and destinies down through Time, to their very foundations. With the death of that one caveman, a billion others yet unborn are throttled in the womb. Perhaps Rome never rises on its seven hills. Perhaps Europe is forever a dark forest, and only Asia waxes healthy and teeming. Step on a mouse and you crush the Pyramids. Step on a mouse and you leave your print, like a Grand Canyon, across Eternity. Queen Elizabeth might never be born, Washington might not cross the Delaware, there might never be a United States at all. So be careful. Stay on the Path. Never step off!" "I see," said Eckels. "Then it wouldn't pay for us even to touch the grass?" "Correct. Crushing certain plants could add up infinitesimally. A little error here would multiply in sixty million years, all out of proportion. Of course, maybe our theory is wrong. Maybe Time can't be changed by us. Or maybe it can be changed only in little subtle ways. A dead mouse here makes an insect imbalance there, a population disproportion later, a bad harvest further on, a depression, mass starvation, and finally, a change in social temperament in far-flung countries. Something much more subtle, like that. Perhaps only a soft breath, a whisper, a hair, pollen on the air, such a slight, slight change that unless you looked close you wouldn't see it. Who knows? Who really can say he knows? We don't know. We're guessing. But until we do know for certain whether our messing around in Time can make a big roar or a little rustle in history, we're being careful. This Machine, this Path, your clothing and bodies, were sterilized, as you know, before the journey. We wear these oxygen helmets so we can't introduce our bacteria into an ancient atmosphere." "How do we know which animals to shoot?" "They're marked with red paint," said Travis. "Today, before our journey, we sent Lesperance here back with the Machine. He came to this particular era and followed certain animals." "Studying them?" "Right," said Lesperance. "I track them through their entire existence, noting which of them lives longest. Very few. How many times they mate? Not often. Life's short, When I find one that's going to die when a tree falls on him, or one that drowns in a tar pit, I note the exact hour, minute, and second. I shoot a paint bomb. It leaves a red patch on his side. We can't miss it. Then I correlate our arrival in the Past so that we meet the Monster not more than two minutes before he would have died anyway. This way, we kill only animals with no future, that are never going to mate again. You see how careful we are?" "But if you come back this morning in Time," said Eckels eagerly, you must've bumped into us, our Safari! How did it turn out? Was it successful? Did all of us get through alive?" Travis and Lesperance gave each other a look. "That'd be a paradox," said the latter. "Time doesn't permit that sort of mess­a man meeting himself. When such occasions threaten, Time steps aside. Like an airplane hitting an air pocket. You felt the Machine jump just before we stopped? That was us passing ourselves on the way back to the Future. We saw nothing. There's no way of telling if this expedition was a success, if we got our monster, or whether all of us ­ meaning you, Mr. Eckels ­ got out alive." Eckels smiled palely. "Cut that," said Travis sharply. "Everyone on his feet!" They were ready to leave the Machine. The jungle was high, and the jungle was broad, and the jungle was the entire world forever and forever. Sounds like music and sounds like flying tents filled the sky, and those were pterodactyls soaring with cavernous gray wings, gigantic bats of delirium and night fever. Eckels, balanced on the narrow Path, aimed his rifle playfully. "Stop that!" said Travis. "Don't even aim for fun, blast you! If your guns should go off ­ ­ " Eckels flushed. "Where's our Tyrannosaurus?" Lesperance checked his wristwatch. "Up ahead, we’ll bisect his trail in sixty seconds. Look for the red paint! Don't shoot till we give the word. Stay on the Path. Stay on the Path!" They moved forward in the wind of morning. "Strange," murmured Eckels. "Up ahead, sixty million years, Election Day over. Keith made President. Everyone celebrating. And here we are, a million years lost, and they don't exist. The things we worried about for months, a lifetime, not even born or thought of yet." "Safety catches off, everyone!" ordered Travis. "You, first shot, Eckels. Second, Billings, Third, Kramer." "I've hunted tiger, wild boar, buffalo, elephant, but now, this is it," said Eckels. "I'm shaking like a kid." "Ah," said Travis. Everyone stopped. Travis raised his hand. "Ahead," he whispered. "In the mist. There he is. There's His Royal Majesty now." The jungle was wide and full of twitterings, rustlings, murmurs, and sighs. Suddenly it all ceased, as if someone had shut a door. Silence. A sound of thunder. Out of the mist, one hundred yards away, came Tyrannosaurus Rex. "It," whispered Eckels. "It..... "Sh!" It came on great oiled, resilient, striding legs. It towered thirty feet above half of the trees, a great evil god, folding its delicate watchmaker's claws close to its oily reptilian chest. Each lower leg was a piston, a thousand pounds of white bone, sunk in thick ropes of muscle, sheathed over in a gleam of pebbled skin like the mail of a terrible warrior. Each thigh was a ton of meat, ivory, and steel mesh. And from the great breathing cage of the upper body those two delicate arms dangled out front, arms with hands which might pick up and examine men like toys, while the snake neck coiled. And the head itself, a ton of sculptured stone, lifted easily upon the sky. Its mouth gaped, exposing a fence of teeth like daggers. Its eyes rolled, ostrich eggs, empty of all expression save hunger. It closed its mouth in a death grin. It ran, its pelvic bones crushing aside trees and bushes, its taloned feet clawing damp earth, leaving prints six inches deep wherever it settled its weight. It ran with a gliding ballet step, far too poised and balanced for its ten tons. It moved into a sunlit area warily, its beautifully reptilian hands feeling the air. "Why, why," Eckels twitched his mouth. "It could reach up and grab the moon." "Sh!" Travis jerked angrily. "He hasn't seen us yet." "It can't be killed," Eckels pronounced this verdict quietly, as if there could be no argument. He had weighed the evidence and this was his considered opinion. The rifle in his hands seemed a cap gun. "We were fools to come. This is impossible." "Shut up!" hissed Travis. "Nightmare." "Turn around," commanded Travis. "Walk quietly to the Machine. We'll remit half your fee." "I didn't realize it would be this big," said Eckels. "I miscalculated, that's all. And now I want out." "It sees us!" "There's the red paint on its chest!" The Tyrant Lizard raised itself. Its armored flesh glittered like a thousand green coins. The coins, crusted with slime, steamed. In the slime, tiny insects wriggled, so that the entire body seemed to twitch and undulate, even while the monster itself did not move. It exhaled. The stink of raw flesh blew down the wilderness. "Get me out of here," said Eckels. "It was never like this before. I was always sure I'd come through alive. I had good guides, good safaris, and safety. This time, I figured wrong. I've met my match and admit it. This is too much for me to get hold of." "Don't run," said Lesperance. "Turn around. Hide in the Machine." "Yes." Eckels seemed to be numb. He looked at his feet as if trying to make them move. He gave a grunt of helplessness. "Eckels!" He took a few steps, blinking, shuffling. "Not that way!" The Monster, at the first motion, lunged forward with a terrible scream. It covered one hundred yards in six seconds. The rifles jerked up and blazed fire. A windstorm from the beast's mouth engulfed them in the stench of slime and old blood. The Monster roared, teeth glittering with sun. The rifles cracked again, Their sound was lost in shriek and lizard thunder. The great level of the reptile's tail swung up, lashed sideways. Trees exploded in clouds of leaf and branch. The Monster twitched its jeweler's hands down to fondle at the men, to twist them in half, to crush them like berries, to cram them into its teeth and its screaming throat. Its boulder stone eyes leveled with the men. They saw themselves mirrored. They fired at the metallic eyelids and the blazing black iris, like a stone idol, like a mountain avalanche, Tyrannosaurus fell. Thundering, it clutched trees, pulled them with it. It wrenched and tore the metal Path. The men flung themselves back and away. The body hit, ten tons of cold flesh and stone. The guns fired. The Monster lashed its armored tail, twitched its snake jaws, and lay still. A fount of blood spurted from its throat. Somewhere inside, a sac of fluids burst. Sickening gushes drenched the hunters. They stood, red and glistening. The thunder faded. The jungle was silent. After the avalanche, a green peace. After the nightmare, morning. Billings and Kramer sat on the pathway and threw up. Travis and Lesperance stood with smoking rifles, cursing steadily. In the Time Machine, on his face, Eckels lay shivering. He had found his way back to the Path, climbed into the Machine. Travis came walking, glanced at Eckels, took cotton gauze from a metal box, and returned to the others, who were sitting on the Path. "Clean up." They wiped the blood from their helmets. They began to curse too. The Monster lay, a hill of solid flesh. Within, you could hear the sighs and murmurs as the furthest chambers of it died, the organs malfunctioning, liquids running a final instant from pocket to sac to spleen, everything shutting off, closing up forever. It was like standing by a wrecked locomotive or a steam shovel at quitting time, all valves being released or levered tight. Bones cracked; the tonnage of its own flesh, off balance, dead weight, snapped the delicate forearms, caught underneath. The meat settled, quivering. Another cracking sound. Overhead, a gigantic tree branch broke from its heavy mooring, fell. It crashed upon the dead beast with finality. "There." Lesperance checked his watch. "Right on time. That's the giant tree that was scheduled to fall and kill this animal originally." He glanced at the two hunters. "You want the trophy picture?" "What?" "We can't take a trophy back to the Future. The body has to stay right here where it would have died originally, so the insects, birds, and bacteria can get at it, as they were intended to. Everything in balance. The body stays. But we can take a picture of you standing near it." The two men tried to think, but gave up, shaking their heads. They let themselves be led along the metal Path. They sank wearily into the Machine cushions. They gazed back at the ruined Monster, the stagnating mound, where already strange reptilian birds and golden insects were busy at the steaming armor. A sound on the floor of the Time Machine stiffened them. Eckels sat there, shivering. "I'm sorry," he said at last. "Get up!" cried Travis. Eckels got up. "Go out on that Path alone," said Travis. He had his rifle pointed, "You're not coming back in the Machine. We're leaving you here!" Lesperance seized Travis's arm. "Wait­" "Stay out of this!" Travis shook his hand away. "This fool nearly killed us. But it isn't that so much, no. It's his shoes! Look at them! He ran off the Path. That ruins us! We'll forfeit! Thousands of dollars of insurance! We guarantee no one leaves the Path. He left it. Oh, the fool! I'll have to report to the government. They might revoke our license to travel. Who knows what he's done to Time, to History!" "Take it easy, all he did was kick up some dirt." "How do we know?" cried Travis. "We don't know anything! It's all a mystery! Get out of here, Eckels!" Eckels fumbled his shirt. "I'll pay anything. A hundred thousand dollars!" Travis glared at Eckels' checkbook and spat. "Go out there. The Monster's next to the Path. Stick your arms up to your elbows in his mouth. Then you can come back with us." "That's unreasonable!" "The Monster's dead, you idiot. The bullets! The bullets can't be left behind. They don't belong in the Past; they might change anything. Here's my knife. Dig them out!" The jungle was alive again, full of the old tremorings and bird cries. Eckels turned slowly to regard the primeval garbage dump, that hill of nightmares and terror. After a long time, like a sleepwalker he shuffled out along the Path. He returned, shuddering, five minutes later, his arms soaked and red to the elbows. He held out his hands. Each held a number of steel bullets. Then he fell. He lay where he fell, not moving. "You didn't have to make him do that," said Lesperance. "Didn't I? It's too early to tell." Travis nudged the still body. "He'll live. Next time he won't go hunting game like this. Okay." He jerked his thumb wearily at Lesperance. "Switch on. Let's go home." 1492. 1776. 1812. They cleaned their hands and faces. They changed their caking shirts and pants. Eckels was up and around again, not speaking. Travis glared at him for a full ten minutes. "Don't look at me," cried Eckels. "I haven't done anything." "Who can tell?" "Just ran off the Path, that's all, a little mud on my shoes what do you want me to do get down and pray?" "We might need it. I'm warning you, Eckels, I might kill you yet. I've got my gun ready." "I'm innocent. I've done nothing!" 1999.2000.2055. The Machine stopped. "Get out," said Travis. The room was there as they had left it. But not the same as they had left it. The same man sat behind the same desk. But the same man did not quite sit behind the same desk. Travis looked around swiftly. "Everything okay here?" he snapped. "Fine. Welcome home!" Travis did not relax. He seemed to be looking through the one high window. "Okay, Eckels, get out. Don't ever come back." Eckels could not move. "You heard me," said Travis. "What're you staring at?" Eckels stood smelling of the air, and there was a thing to the air, a chemical taint so subtle, so slight, that only a faint cry of his subliminal senses warned him it was there. The colors, white, gray, blue, orange, in the wall, in the furniture, in the sky beyond the window, were . . . were . . . . And there was a feel. His flesh twitched. His hands twitched. He stood drinking the oddness with the pores of his body. Somewhere, someone must have been screaming one of those whistles that only a dog can hear. His body screamed silence in return. Beyond this room, beyond this wall, beyond this man who was not quite the same man seated at this desk that was not quite the same desk . . . lay an entire world of streets and people. What sort of world it was now, there was no telling. He could feel them moving there, beyond the walls, almost, like so many chess pieces blown in a dry wind .... But the immediate thing was the sign painted on the office wall, the same sign he had read earlier today on first entering. Somehow, the sign had changed: TYME SEFARI INC. SEFARIS TU ANY YEER EN THE PAST. YU NAIM THE ANIMALL. WEE TAEK YU THAIR. YU SHOOT ITT. Eckels felt himself fall into a chair. He fumbled crazily at the thick slime on his boots. He held up a clod of dirt, trembling, "No, it can't be. Not a little thing like that. No!" Embedded in the mud, glistening green and gold and black, was a butterfly, very beautiful and very dead. "Not a little thing like that! Not a butterfly!" cried Eckels. It fell to the floor, an exquisite thing, a small thing that could upset balances and knock down a line of small dominoes and then big dominoes and then gigantic dominoes, all down the years across Time. Eckels' mind whirled. It couldn't change things. Killing one butterfly couldn't be that important! Could it? His face was cold. His mouth trembled, asking: "Who ­ who won the presidential election yesterday?" The man behind the desk laughed. "You joking? You know very well. Deutscher, of course! Who else? Not that fool weakling Keith. We got an iron man now, a man with guts!" The official stopped. "What's wrong?" Eckels moaned. He dropped to his knees. He scrabbled at the golden butterfly with shaking fingers. "Can't we," he pleaded to the world, to himself, to the officials, to the Machine, "can't we take it back, can't we make it alive again? Can't we start over? Can't we­" He did not move. Eyes shut, he waited, shivering. He heard Travis breathe loud in the room; he heard Travis shift his rifle, click the safety catch, and raise the weapon. There was a sound of thunder.

<http://www.astro.sunysb.edu/fwalter/AST389/ASoundofThunder.pdf>

Bradbury, Ray. *A Sound of Thunder*. Stony Brook University Astronomy, <http://www.astro.sunysb.edu/fwalter/AST389/ASoundofThunder.pdf>. Accessed April 6, 2020.

***The Record* by Ray Bradbury**

For twenty years—for twenty long, horror filled, war laden years the Earth had not known peace.

Hovering over the metropolises of the world came long, lean battle projectiles, glinting silver in the sunlight or coming like gaunt mirages of grey out of the midnight sky to blast man's civilization from its cultural foundations. Man against man, ship against ship—a ceaseless and useless orgy of slaughter. Men, at their battle stations in the ships, pressed buttons, releasing radio bombs that blistered space and lifted whole cities up in shattered pieces and flung them down, grim ruins, reminders of man's ignorant hatreds and suspicions.

And gas—thick black clouds of it—billowing over the cities, seeking every possible egress, pushed forward by colossal Wind machines. But even when Victory came for the one side, often Nature, in one of her vengeful moments, would send the black gas flowing back to annihilate its senders.

Rays cut the air! Power bombs exploded incessantly! Evaporays robbed the Earth of its water—shot it up into the atmosphere and made of it a fog that condensed only after many months. And heat rays made deserts out of fertile terrain.

Rays that hypnotized caused even the strong minded to commit suicide or reveal military secrets. Rays that effected the optical nerves swept cities and left the population groping and blind, unable to find food.

It was a war that destroyed almost all of humanity. And why were they fighting? For pleasure and amusement!

In the middle of the twenty-second century, every nation had a standard defense. The weapons of war of each were equal—not in proportion to size, but actually, since man-power no longer counted high. Pacifism had done its best, but the World was armed to the hilt. And now—though illogically—it felt safe—for every nation meant the same as if all had nothing.

Another thing—there was no work to be done. Robots did it. And there seemed nothing left to discover, invent or enjoy. Art was at its perfection, poetry was mathematically correct and unutterably beautiful—worked out by the Esthetic machines. Sculptoring had been given the effect complete, artists hands guided by wonderful pieces of machinery. Huge museums were crammed with art put out synthetically.

And thus it was with the many Arts and their creators who grew stagnent in their perfection. And it was that way with the many sciences also…

Paleontologists had found, and articulated, and catalogued every fossil. The ancestor of the Eohippus, the little four-toed Dawn Horse, was discovered; the direct line between man and ape established in skeletal remains; the seat of life itself definitely proved Holarctica. And great bio-chemists, skilled in the science of vital processes, had created synthetic tissues and muscles and flesh, built upon the frames that had been recovered bodies with skillful modeling… even supplied them with blood and given them the spark of LIFE… so that Paleobotonists recreated the flora of a prehistoric era. Again the ponderous amphibious brontosaur pushed through marshes. Fish emerged upon the land, and the first bird archaeopteryx tried his imperfect wings for flight. In the regulated climates of long dead ages, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals lived again for the edification of those interested in the very ancient—or who were amused with queer animals.

But that was only paleontologically speaking. There were the heavens to be considered. They had been: the stars and planets weighed and measured, their composition noted, courses plotted with super-accuracy. Every feature had been mapped—every climactic condition recorded. Life had been named and numbered… then photographed. And these were but first considerations. Actually, what wasn't known about the Solar System had not occurred as yet. But that would probably be remedied by a machine to view the future.

There was physics, biology, anthropology, zoology, geology, bacteriology, botany—and 'ologies' and 'otonies' and 'onomies' such as ran into figures which only machines could calculate.

A book could indeed have been written of the accomplishments of super race. But this is of the WAR itself, and how it came about, and how it all ended.

Stated simply, in 2150 the point of DIMINISHING UTILITY had been reached. To the hungry man, the first course of dinner is wonderfully delicious, the second good, the third satisfying. Through the ages people have hungered after luxury and leisure—but when he finds his food, a lot of it, MAN finds suddenly that it no longer appeals to him. In fact, too much is bound to make him sick and often disagreeable. He looks around for something else. So did the people of the 22nd Century. They had all of the pleasurable amusements they wanted, but it was all so intellectual. Everything was culture. They had surfeited with it. And suddenly they wanted to forget it. All play and no work made MAN a discontented citizen. A reaction set in. Man was not completely civilized as yet——THE WAR!

Twenty-one years the war raged. And scarcely a million survived. Bit by bit this million was whittled down by the weapons of destruction to ragged handfuls of things that once had been cultured. Finally only one hundred humans remained alive—and they kept fighting blindly, none of them realizing how close to oblivion they were crowding themselves and the future of humanity—and they went on killing, killing, killing!

It is doubtless but what the entire human race would have vanished, leaving the world to the more competent, though half-ignorant, hands of the beasts, who fought and killed one another for self-preservation and for food—not because of madness… and who did not have books and talk and have culture. The human race would have gone, had it not been for the record.

The fighters of WAR'S END, leaving their machines and countries to congregate for personal combat, were engaging in hand-to-hand attacks in the ruins of what once had been a tall and powerful city in the Twentieth Century, but now lay crumbling, its proud buildings falling to the ground, sticking out iron-rusted skeletons to the sky—and the city was LOS ANGELES!

HEDRIK HUNSON was fighting with phosphorized fists—hand inclosed in chemically treated gloves that burned as they struck the antagonist, insulated on the interior for the wearer—when suddenly the two of them were caught by a spreader. The other man died instantly, but Hedrik got it in the side and was whirled about sickeningly, and survived.

He was lying painfully on something when he came to, but felt too dizzy and sick to move. At last, when his head had cleared a bit, he rolled over into a sitting position and reached out his arms to grasp—a phonograph!

Big things came in small packages in the days of 2171, and a portable phonograph might well be taken for a weapon of some sort—which was exactly what Hedrik thought! And you can hardly blame him, because no one in that generation had ever seen one of the things.

There was a curious story connected with the dying of music, concerning the days of 2050 when there was a movement to stamp out all symphonies and songs and things even slightly sentimental.

—but back to Hedrik!

Hedrik found the crank that wound the portable, turned it, reasoning that perhaps it gave power—and then—holding it away from him—he waited for rays to spurt out or something to explode. Nothing happened! Hedrik was disappointed. After an agony of perspiration and puzzlement he finally accidentally placed the needled arm onto the disk. The disk, he noticed, was black and filled with little undulations. The disk was like a wheel—so Hedrik thought—it should revolve like one, shouldn't it? He pushed the starter thoughtfully and was more than surprised when the disk started spinning.

From the phonograph came music—music and singing! The lost Art had returned! The Art banished under compulsion had made a comeback.

Some man was singing on the record—in a queerly interesting and familiar tongue, the ancient English. The singer seemed sad, almost crying. And Hedrik was thrilled as he played it over and over again, drinking in the new experience like wine on the lips of a connoisseur. The voice rose, fell, lingered. And Hedrik suddenly didn't feel like fighting anymore!

The music floated out over the tumbled ruins, descended to the ears of the other people. AND THE FIGHTING CEASED! They were transformed. They came running to crowd about the machine.

And there in that aged music shop they stood enthralled—music filled their souls. It was exactly what they had needed and wanted for many years. And it had been denied them. Music was the balancing force… the force that would help them struggle ahead rebuilding the world. And next time they would be saner… they knew… the lesson of luxury had been learned and learned well. Never again would they leave all of the work to the machines. Now they would work and sing and play.

It would be work… hard work… for some time to come. But they had found music again, and that would anchor them to sanity.

And thus was mankind saved through a record—SONNY BOY!

<https://americanliterature.com/author/ray-bradbury/short-story/the-record>

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