

## Exploring the conflicts in *Mars in Heaven!*

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As a breathtaking and intriguing science fiction horror story, there are both external and internal conflicts in Ray Bradbury's *Mars is Heaven!*. Ray utilized rich description of the settings as well as multiple literary devices such as simile and foreshadowing to build up the conflicts, while also contributing to the development of the story and the delivery of its theme. This essay mainly focuses on analyzing the conflicts in the story and the way Ray constructed them.

The external conflict of the story is the conflict between Martians and humans. It turned out at the end of the story that Martians used telepathy to kill the travelers from Earth in a smart way. The Martians took advantage of Earth people's nostalgia and emotional connections with their loved ones and successfully lowered their guard. This shows that mind control could be easily done if it's associated with the things that we love and trust. Ray used detailed description of settings in the story to show the way Martians carried out their strategy. They played pieces of music from these Earth people's childhood such as *Beautiful Dreamer* and *Roaming in The Gloaming* to bring up their nostalgic feelings. Natural sounds such as "buzzing of the spring bees" and "tinkle of ice rattling in a lemonade pitcher" eased their nerves and made them feel safe. Observing that the town was "peace and quiet", Captain John felt that "the fresh look of things was a balm to the soul". Gradually lulling Earth people through this peaceful atmosphere and exploiting their emotional weakness, Martians easily controlled their mind in the form of the things they trusted and loved. Therefore, the story reminds us that we should always be attentive of mind control in the forms that are seemingly friendly and harmless, and not let our mind be fooled by the kind disguise of our enemies.

Apart from external conflict, there are also internal conflicts of the protagonist, Captain John Black in the story. There's an internal struggle in his heart between rationality and emotion. At the beginning, John and his crew were all suspicious of what they saw and keenly developed various theories to explain it. However, after seeing the face of their beloved ones, delirium and delight took over them, making them hardly able to remain clear-headed and think of their occurrence skeptically. Simile is used several times in the story to describe the overwhelming power of emotion over people's judgement and actions. Upon hearing that mom and dad were alive, Captain John "almost fell to earth as if hit upon the chest with a mighty weapon". After the long day of reunion with his family, he felt "soaked to the skin with emotions" like "being in a thunder shower without an umbrella". The influence of emotional shock is compared to physical strikes such as being hit or getting soaked in the rain, indicating that it could actually exert enormous impact on the functionality of one's mind to think critically and logically. Emotions made the crews forgot about their military rules, and eventually made them lost all their guard against Martians. This internal conflict indicates the difficulty of maintaining one's rationality in the face of strong emotional impacts.

Another internal conflict is fantasy versus reality. Just as Captain John had suspected, Earth people's reunion with their dead loved ones is just a dream that is too good to be true. It's like beautiful yet fragile foams that are bound to break. If the travelers themselves refuse to break it and embrace the cruel reality, their enemies, the

Martians will break it up for them and use it to destroy them. The Earth people faced the dilemma of whether they should numb themselves in the beautiful fantasy made up by Martians, or they should wake up and face the tough reality.

However, upon seeing the face and holding the hands of their loved ones, the joyfulness and fulfillment of these travelers are undoubtedly immense and also of great significance to them. Although their experiences are made-up, their feelings and emotions are real. This further brings up the question that even if the sweet fantasies are merely traps and dreams, would it still be a good choice to just believe and enjoy it, if the gained emotional values could outweigh the price of the loss of reality and rationality? After all, what is the definition of reality? If all one wishes is to meet his dead family for a second time, and would rather die after it, wouldn't it be worthwhile to have this last experience on Mars? I think perhaps these questions are remained open-ended by Ray for his readers to think and answer by themselves.