

there will come soft rains...

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. THE ENTIRE WEST FACE OF THE HOUSE WAS BLACK, SAVE FOR FIVE PLACES. HERE, THE WHITE SILHOUETTE OF A MAN MOWED A LAWN. THERE, AS IN A PHOTOGRAPH, A WOMAN BENT TO PICK FLOWERS. STILL FARTHER OVER, THEIR IMAGES OUTLINED 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 THE BALL WHICH NEVER CAME DOWN...

ADAPTED FROM A STORY BY
RAY BRADBURY



THE MORNING HOUSE LAY EMPTY. IN THE LIVING ROOM, THE VOICE-CLOCK SANG, REPEATING AND REPEATING ITS SOUNDS INTO THE EMPTINESS...



IN THE KITCHEN, THE BREAKFAST STOVE GAVE A HISSING SIGH AND EJECTED FROM ITS WARM INTERIOR EIGHT PIECES OF PERFECTLY BROWNED TOAST, EIGHT EGGS SUNNYSIDE UP, SIXTEEN SLICES OF BACON, TWO COFFEES, AND TWO COOL GLASSES OF MILK...



SOMEWHERE IN THE WALLS, RELAYS CLICKED... MEMORY TAPES GLIDED UNDER ELECTRIC EYES...

TODAY IS AUGUST 4, 2025! 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...



THE VOICE CLOCK SOUNDED AGAIN. 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 AGAIN OUTSIDE. THE WEATHER-BOX ON THE FRONT DOOR SANG QUIETLY...



OUTSIDE, THE GARAGE CHIMED AND LIFTED ITS DOORS 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 ALUMINUM 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...



OUT OF WARRENS IN THE WALL, TINY ROBOT MICE-LIKE THINGS DARTED. THE ROOMS WERE ACRAWL 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 BACK INTO THEIR NOOKS. THEIR PINK ELECTRIC-EYES FADED. THE HOUSE WAS CLEAN...



TEN-FIFTEEN. THE GARDEN SPRINKLERS CAME UP IN GOLDEN FOUNTAINS. THE WATER PELTED WINDOWPANE, RUNNING DOWN THE CHARRED WEST SIDE WHERE THE HOUSE HAD BEEN BURNED EVENLY FREE OF ITS WHITE PAINT...



TWELVE NOON. A DOG WHINED, SHIVERING, ON THE FRONT PORCH...



THE FRONT DOOR RECOGNIZED THE DOG'S VOICE AND OPENED. THE DOG, ONCE HUGE AND FLESHY, BUT NOW GONE TO BONE AND COVERED WITH SORES, MOVED INSIDE, TRACKING MUD...



BEHIND IT, ANGRY MICE WHIRLED... 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 SCRAP RATS FLASHED SWIFTLY OUT...



THE DOG RAN AROUND, HYSTERICALLY YELPING TO EACH DOOR, AT LAST REALIZING, AS THE HOUSE REALIZED, THAT ONLY SILENCE WAS HERE! IT SNIFFED THE AIR AND SCRATCHED AT THE KITCHEN DOOR...



BEHIND THE DOOR, THE STOVE WAS MAKING LUNCH... PANCAKES WHICH FILLED THE HOUSE WITH A RICH BAKING ODOR AND THE SCENT OF MAPLE SYRUP...



THE DOG FROTHED AT THE MOUTH, LYING AT THE DOOR, SNIFFING. ITS EYES TURNED TO FIRE...



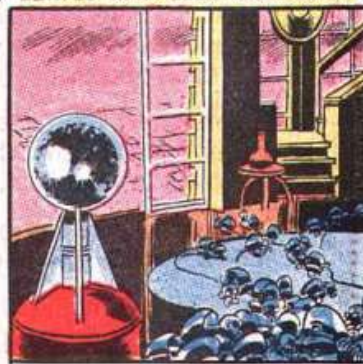
IT RAN WILDLY IN CIRCLES, BITING ITS TAIL, SPUN IN A FRENZY...



...AND DIED! IT LAY IN THE HALLWAY FOR AN HOUR...



DELICATELY SENSING DECAY AT LAST, THE REGIMENTS OF MICE HUMMED OUT AS SOFTLY AS BLOWN LEAVES IN AN ELECTRICAL WIND...



TWO-FIFTEEN. THE DOG WAS GONE! -3

IN THE CELLAR, THE INCINERATOR GLOWED SUDDENLY AND A WHIRL OF SPARKS LEAPED UP THE CHIMNEY...



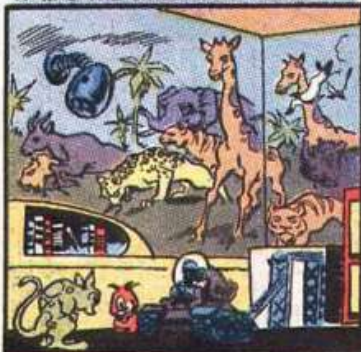
TWO THIRTY-FIVE. BRIDGE TABLES SPROUTED FROM PATIO WALLS. PLAYING CARDS FLUTTERED ONTO PADS IN A SHOWER OF PIPS. MARTINIS AND EGG SALAD SANDWICHES MANIFESTED ON AN OAKEN SERVER. MUSIC PLAYED...



FOUR-O'CLOCK. THE TABLES FOLDED LIKE GREAT BUTTERFLIES BACK THROUGH PANEL WALLS...



FOUR-THIRTY. THE NURSERY WALLS GLOWED! ANIMALS TOOK SHAPE... YELLOW GIRAFFES, BLUE LIONS, PINK ANTELOPES, LILAC PANTHERS... CAVORTING IN CRYSTAL SUBSTANCE! IT WAS THE CHILDREN'S HOUR...



FIVE O'CLOCK. THE BATH FILLED WITH CLEAR HOT WATER...



SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT O'CLOCK. DINNER. IN THE STUDY... A CLICK. A CIGAR POPPED UP IN THE METAL STAND OPPOSITE THE HEARTH... HALF AN INCH OF GREY ASH ON IT, SMOKING, WAITING...



NINE O'CLOCK. HIDDEN CIRCUITS WARMED THE BEDS, FOR NIGHTS WERE COOL HERE...



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 BOUGH CRASHED THROUGH
THE KITCHEN WINDOW...



CLEANING SOLVENT, BOTTLED,
SHATTERED OVER THE STOVE!



THE ROOM WAS ABLAZE IN AN
INSTANT...



THE HOUSE LIGHTS FLASHED ON.
WATER PUMPS SHOT FROM THE
CEILINGS...



BUT THE SOLVENT SPREAD ON
THE LINOLEUM, LICKING, EATING,
UNDER THE KITCHEN DOOR,
WHILE THE VOICES TOOK UP
THE CHORUS...



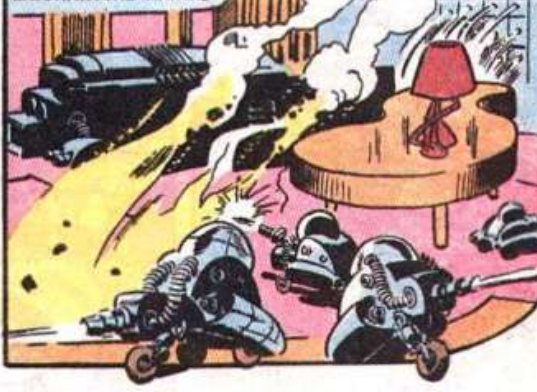
THE HOUSE TRIED TO SAVE
ITSELF. DOORS SPRANG TIGHTLY
SHUT, BUT THE WINDOWS WERE
BROKEN BY THE HEAT, AND THE
WIND BLEW, SUCKING UPON THE
FIRE...



THE HOUSE GAVE GROUND AS THE FIRE IN TEN
BILLION ANGRY SPARKS MOVED WITH FLAMING
EASE FROM ROOM TO ROOM THROUGH THE HOUSE...



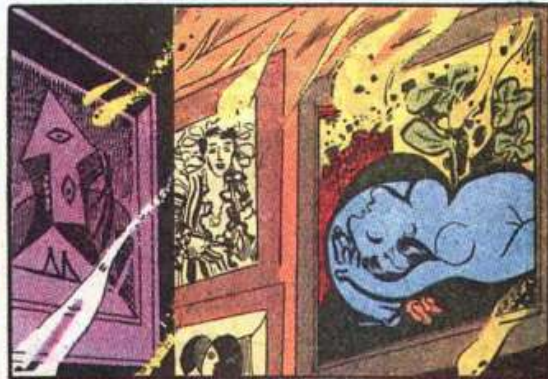
...WHILE SCURRYING WATER RATS SQUEAKED FROM
THE WALLS, PISTOLED THEIR WATER, AND RAN FOR
MORE. THE WALL SPRAYS LET DOWN SHOWERS OF
MECHANICAL RAIN...



BUT IT WAS TOO LATE! SOMEWHERE, SIGHING, A PUMP SHRUGGED TO A STOP. THE QUENCHING RAINS CEASED. THE RESERVE WATER SUPPLY WHICH HAD FILLED BATHS AND WASHED DISHES FOR MANY QUIET DAYS, WAS GONE! THE FIRE CRACKLED ON...



IT FED UPON PICASSOS AND MATISSES IN THE HALLS, LIKE DELICACIES, BAKING OFF THE OILY FLESH, TENDERLY CRISPING THE CANVASES INTO BLACK SHAVINGS...



NOW THE FIRE LAY IN BEDS, STOOD IN WINDOWS, CHANGING THE COLOR OF THE DRAPES...



AND THEN REINFORCEMENTS! FROM ATTIC TRAP-DOORS, 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 FLAMES OUTSIDE THE HOUSE, UP THROUGH THE ATTIC TO THE PUMPS THERE! AN EXPLOSION...



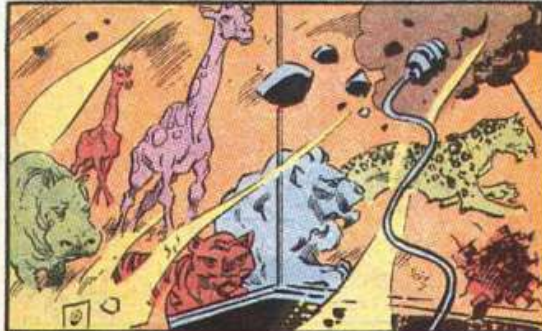
THE ATTIC BRAIN WHICH DIRECTED THE PUMPS WAS SHATTERED INTO BRONZE SHRAPNEL ON THE BEAMS. THE FIRE RUSHED BACK INTO EVERY CLOSET AND FELT OF THE CLOTHES HUNG THERE...



THE HOUSE SHUDDERED, OAK BONE ON BONE, ITS BARED SKELETON CRINGING FROM THE HEAT, ITS WIRES, ITS NERVES REVEALED AS IF A SURGEON HAD TORN THE SKIN OFF TO LET RED VEINS AND CAPILLARIES QUIVER IN THE SCALDING AIR. HEAT SNAPPED MIRRORS. THE VOICES WAILED...



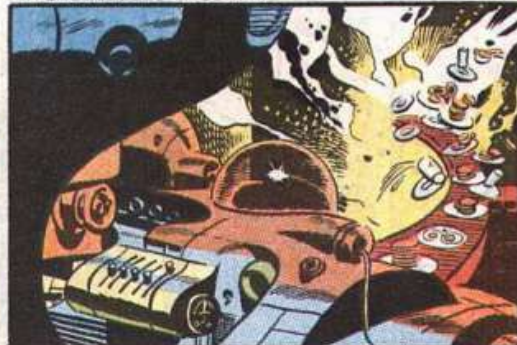
...LIKE A TRAGIC NURSERY RHYME. A DOZEN VOICES, HIGH, LOW, LIKE CHILDREN DYING IN A FOREST, ALONE, ALONE. AND THE VOICES FADED AS THE WIRES POPPED THEIR SHEATHINGS. IN THE NURSERY, THE BLUE LIONS ROARED, PURPLE GIRAFFES BOUNDED OFF, PANTHERS RAN IN CIRCLES, CHANGING COLOR...



VOICES DIED. IN THE LAST INSTANT UNDER THE FIRE AVALANCHE, OTHER CHORUSES, OBLIVIOUS, COULD BE HEARD ANNOUNCING THE TIME, PLAYING MUSIC, REMINDING THE HOT FLAMES OF DUE BILLS. DOORS OPENED AND SLAMMED. A FEW LAST CLEANING MICE DARTED BRAVELY OUT TO CARRY AWAY THE HORRID ASHES...



AND IN THE KITCHEN, AN INSTANT BEFORE THE RAIN OF FIRE AND TIMBER, THE STOVE COULD BE SEEN MAKING BREAKFAST 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 SMASHED INTO THE KITCHEN...THE KITCHEN INTO THE CELLAR...CELLAR INTO SUB-CELLAR. DEEP-FREEZE, ARMCHAIR, FILM TAPES, CIRCUITS, BEDS, ALL LIKE SKELETONS THROWN IN A CLUTTERED MOUND DEEP UNDER...



THEN, SMOKE...AND SILENCE!



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...



-THE
END-