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 five spots of paint... the man, the woman, the children, the ball remained! The rest was a charcoal layer...

The morning house lay empty. In the living room, the voice-clock sang, repeating and repeating its sounds into the emptiness...

Tick-tock! Seven o'clock! Time to get up! Time to get up! Seven o'clock...

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...

Seven-nine! Breakfast time! Seven-nine...
SOMEBEWHERE IN THE WALLS, RELAYS CLICKED... MEMORY TAPES GLIDED UNDER ELECTRIC EYES...

TODAY IS AUGUST 4, 2029! 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...

RAIN, RAIN, GO AWAY! RUBBERS, RAINCOATS FOR TODAY...

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...

OUT OF WARENS 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 MUSTAUGHED 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...

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! TIME TO CLEAN!

TEN-FIFTEEN, THE GARDEN SPRINKLERS CAME UP IN GOLDEN FOUNTS. THE WATER PELTED WINDOWPANES, 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 WHIRRED...
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 HALL-
WAY FOR AN HOUR...

DELIBERATELY SENSING DECAY AT
LAST, THE REGIMENTS OF MICE HUM-
MED OUT AS SOFTLY AS BLOWN
LEAVES IN AN ELECTRICAL WIND...

TWO-O'CLOCK? TWO O'CLOCK?

TWO-FIFTEEN. THE DOG WAS GONE!
In the cellar, the incinerator glowed suddenly and a whirl of sparks leaped up the chimney.


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...

Fire! Fire!

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...

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, 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..."

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

"The end."