



The Veldt by Ray Bradbury

(Summary)

The story opens during a conversation between the Hadley parents, George and Lydia, in their very expensive Happy life Home. The futuristic Happy life Home fulfils their every need: it clothes them, feeds them, and even rocks them to sleep. As the futuristic Home makes dinner for the family, "humming to itself," Lydia asks George to take a look at the Home's "nursery," or to call a psychologist in to examine it. George agrees to look at it himself. As they walk toward the nursery, the lights in the hallway automatically turn on.

The parents reach the nursery, the most expensive and sophisticated feature of the Happy life Home. Before their eyes, the blank walls of the nursery transform into a three-dimensional African veldt. George feels the intense heat of the sun and begins to sweat. He wants to get out of the nursery, saying that everything looks normal but that it is "a little too real," but Lydia tells him to wait. They observe more details in the veldt: the smell of grass, water, animals and dust, and the sound of antelopes and vultures. Lydia points out the lions that have been eating in the distance. They can't tell what the lions are eating, but it makes Lydia nervous. She hears a scream, but George says he didn't.

As the lions approach them, George admires the "genius" of the nursery. To him, the room is a "miracle of efficiency." It is so real that it becomes frightening sometimes; but for the most part, he thinks, "what fun for everyone." The lions stop fifteen feet away from George and Lydia, looking extremely real and then run towards the couple. George and Lydia run out into the hall and slam the door. Lydia is crying with terror, but George is laughing; he reminds Lydia that the nursery's reality isn't real.

Lydia, still afraid, says that the veldt is "too real." She tells George to make sure their children, Wendy and Peter, stop reading about Africa, and instructs him to lock up the nursery for a few days. George suggests that Lydia perhaps has been working too hard and needs to rest, but Lydia argues the opposite—that she has too little to do and is therefore thinking too much. She suggests that they shut off the Happy life Home and take a vacation. She expresses the desire to do routine human tasks that the Happy life Home does for them: cooking eggs, mending socks, cleaning the house. She convinces George that the Home is making them be unnecessary, and that it's having a negative effect on their psychological and physical health.

The Hadley parents eat dinner without their children, who are at a carnival. As George watches the dining table make food, he reflects that it would be good for the children to live without the nursery for some time. "Too much of anything isn't good for anyone," he thinks. The nursery uses the "telepathic emanations" of the children's minds to create scenes that fulfil their desires. They can conjure anything up in the nursery. In George's opinion, Wendy and Peter have been spending too much time in Africa. The animals in the veldt eat their prey and the children have watched this many times. George reflects that it is never too early for a child to think about death; in fact, they wish death on others even before they understand what death is. He walks to the nursery and listens to a lion's roar, which is followed by a scream.



George enters the nursery and thinks about the past imaginary worlds his children created. But this new world is unbearably hot and cruel. The children's fantasy world, he reflects, is becoming "a bit too real." Alone in the veldt, he can look back and see through the open door of the nursery: through the door he sees his wife, eating dinner. In front of him, lions are eating their own dinner and watching him. George tells them to go away, but they don't move. He tries to send out thoughts of Aladdin to get the nursery walls to change, but nothing happens. Frustrated, George goes back to the dinner table and says the nursery is broken; it won't respond to his thoughts. The parents hypothesize that the room is only a veldt because the children have been thinking about Africa so often, or that Peter has set the nursery to remain in veldt mode.

Wendy and Peter return home. George asks them about Africa, and the children pretend not to know about this, insisting they haven't created an African veldt. Wendy runs to the nursery, and when she comes back, announces that there is no Africa. The family walks together to the nursery and see a beautiful forest. George, suspicious, sends the children to bed. He walks through the scenery and picks up something in the corner of the nursery, where he observed the lions earlier. It's one of his old wallets, chewed up and bloody. George closes and locks the nursery door.

George and Lydia can't sleep. They agree that Wendy changed the nursery from a veldt to a forest to try to fool them. They don't know why, but George is determined to keep the nursery locked until they find out. They reflect that the nursery is supposed to help children express themselves and avoid stress, but that perhaps it is not having that effect. They decide to discipline their children, agreeing that Wendy and Peter have become disrespectful and disobedient. They hear two screams from the nursery, and then a roar of lions. Apparently, Wendy and Peter have broken into the nursery. Lydia thinks that the screams sound familiar but isn't sure how. George and Lydia are unable to fall asleep for another hour, when their beds finally succeed in rocking them to sleep.

In the next scene, Peter has a conversation with his father. He never looks at his father or mother anymore; instead, he looks at his feet. He admits that he and Wendy have been creating the veldt in the nursery, and asks George not to turn off the nursery. When George reveals that he and Lydia are considering leaving the Happy life Home for a month, Peter becomes angry at the idea of tying his own shoes and brushing his own teeth. He says that he doesn't want to do anything except "look and listen and smell." He tells his father that he'd better not shut off the Home and returns to the African veldt.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvtNS6hbVy4>