

1 **Trepidation over AI-powered Houses in Literature and Virtual**
2 **Entertainment Media over the years**

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6 **Abstract:**

7 With the recent boom in AI development since 2022 and the current debate between which is
8 better: Chat GPT or Grok, only an ameliorative human lifestyle is certain in the hands of AI,
9 or is it? That too is contentious, as claimed by various professionals engaging with AI in the
10 emerging tech-savvy world, be it in the sphere of healthcare, transport and logistics, customer
11 service, education or building construction. Just like the flip sides of a coin, AI can transform
12 into a boon or a bane quite easily subject to the extent of human dependence on it and the
13 extent of control on it by human intelligence. However, apprehensions about AI have loomed
14 in the minds of the human race since even before it or some form of it actually existed. This
15 book chapter aims at exploring the advantages and disadvantages of AI powered houses and
16 their similarities and dissimilarities as presented in literature and virtual entertainment media
17 over the years. The stories narrated in Ray Bradbury's popular short stories, "There Will
18 Come Soft Rains" and "The Veldt", and the Disney movie *Smart House*, and a recent
19 German Netflix Limited Series *Cassandra*, are discussed and compared for their
20 representation of automated houses and the impending doom that they may pose for their
21 owners, grounded in content and thematic analysis. The chapter propels intellectual
22 nourishment in readers regarding optimal restrain limits on AI assistance in their everyday
23 lives: the pole or antipode of it.

24

25 **Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Entertainment Media, representation, automated
26 houses, AI assistance

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28

29 **Introduction**

30 “Owning a home is a keystone of wealth...both financial affluence and emotional security”

31 -Suze Orman

32

33 Purchasing one's own house is arguably one of the biggest and most crucial decisions of
34 one's life and the same is highlighted in the above quote by Suzan “Suze” Orman, who is an
35 American financial advisor and television show host. And yet, searching for a fully furnished
36 home can be a challenging and stressful experience. Add to that the apprehension of
37 compromising one's life-long savings with a bad decision, while in hopes of buying one's
38 dream home. If the sole thought of such an incident brings goosebumps to our skin, imagine
39 the horror and trauma its actualization might cause. All this could come to reality, perhaps,
40 due to the increasing desire of individuals to convert an existing workable estate into a
41 personalized or customised home in minimum duration of time in the modern era as Ezra
42 Pound states, “Owning a home means crafting your own personal masterpiece.”

43 With the recent boom in AI development since 2022 and the current debate between which is
44 better: Chat GPT or Grok, smart home technology has also gained momentum among
45 potential home buyers in search for convenience and is emerging as one of the deal breakers
46 in the contemporary lifestyle. These may range from fire detectors, to smart cameras, to voice
47 controlled assistants, to smart lighting. Home-buying has moved from functionality to
48 comfort. And artificial intelligence has contributed sufficiently to this trend. In such a
49 scenario only an ameliorative human lifestyle seems certain in the hands of AI, or is it? That
50 too is contentious; just like the flip sides of a coin, AI can transform into a boon or a bane
51 quite easily subject to the extent of human dependence on it and the extent of control on it by
52 human intelligence, as claimed by various professionals engaging with AI in the emerging
53 tech-savvy world, be it in the sphere of healthcare, transport and logistics, customer service,
54 education or building construction.

55 Apprehensions about AI have loomed in the minds of the human race since even before it or
56 some form of it actually existed. On surface level, the inclusion of artificial intelligence in
57 homes might seem harmless and even useful to some extent in simplifying and making daily
58 tasks more efficient. Howbeit, wait till it turns out to be a nightmare. The stories narrated in
59 Ray Bradbury's popular short stories, “There Will Come Soft Rains” and “The Veldt”, and

60 the Disney movie *Smart House*, and a recent German Netflix Limited Series *Cassandra*,
61 highlight the representation of automated houses and the impending doom that they may pose
62 for their owners in rare but plausible occurrences. This probes an exploration of the
63 advantages and disadvantages of AI powered houses and their similarities and dissimilarities
64 as presented in literature and virtual entertainment media over the years.

65 **AI in Literature**

66 Ray Bradbury was an American writer best known for his works like *Fahrenheit 451* and *The*
67 *Martian Chronicles* published in 1953 and 1950 respectively. His writings were an excellent
68 blend of fantasy and fiction, highlighting the human condition post war, and the unchecked
69 use and dependence upon technology. His works seem now to have existed as wakeup calls in
70 the elementary stages of escalating techno dependency. Both his short stories, "The Veldt"
71 and "There Will Come Soft Rains", were published in 1950 and remain relevant even to this
72 date. They both serve as admonitory fable about the menace caused by unrestrained
73 technological advancements.

74 "The Veldt" narrates the story of a family of four living in an automated house purchased
75 with the intent of simplifying daily tasks like cooking, bathing, tying shoe laces and easy
76 entertainment for the two kids with the help of a special nursery which we today understand
77 to be a virtual reality room. This nursery seems to gradually eliminate the "virtual" in the
78 "virtual reality room" with the belongings of the parents unusually appearing in the nursery
79 where real lions appear, roar and hunt. The children, Peter and Wendy, are consumed by this
80 fascinating nursery which can transport them to anywhere in the world and slowly turn
81 rebellious. The automated house fulfils their whims and the need for parents and discipline is
82 rendered unnecessary for them. The parents, George and Lydia Hadley's "the Happy Home"
83 appears to be overpowering them as parents and they soon feel the need to consult a
84 psychiatrist, David McClean in this matter. He suggests them to vacate the house and turn to
85 more self-sufficient means. The sounds and screams from the nursery keep turning more
86 familiar in the African veldt as the time passes and the couple finally decides to lock the
87 room and move out immediately, to calm their children's unusual fascination with scenes of
88 death. The children whine at their parent's decision and request one last farewell visit which
89 turns into a death trap for their parents as they rush into the room at the cries for help but end
90 up being locked with the lions by the automated house itself. Later, when the psychiatrist
91 pays a visit to check upon them, he is greeted by the children enjoying food prepared by the

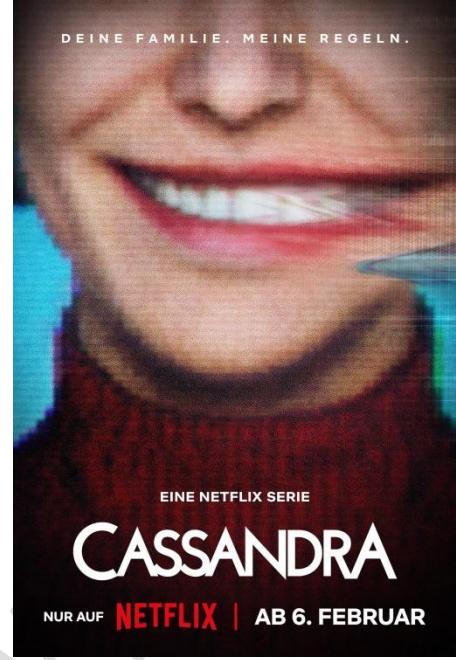
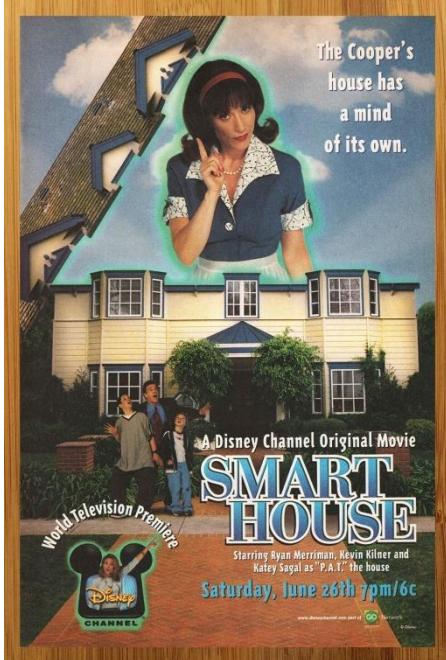
92 house with the screams of the parents being loudly heard in the background as the house
93 takes over the parents.

94 “There Will Come Soft Rains” is another short story by Ray Bradbury which also narrates a
95 story about how an automated house can remain unaffected and carry-on with its daily tasks
96 even after mass destruction. The story takes place in Allendale, California where the
97 automated system announces the date and time, prepares pancakes, washes dishes and asks
98 for preferences from its earlier residents, all in vein as they all are already dead and the place
99 abandoned. The sole survivor of the catastrophe, a dog, enters the scene before dying and is
100 incinerated by the house itself. In the evening the automated house recites the earlier
101 resident’s favourite poem by Sara Teasdale, “There Will Come Soft Rains”. Then a branch
102 from a nearby tree causes a fire in the kitchen and the house burns down at night despite all
103 attempts of self-preservation leaving a sole wall behind: untouched. Howbeit, the next
104 morning a voice is heard announcing the date and time.

105 **AI in Audio Visual Media Entertainment**

106 As is clear from the aforementioned short stories of Ray Bradbury, literature had always
107 presented apprehensions about technology let loose and put forth exemplary tales of such
108 sort. As the years have passed, the mode of entertainment has expanded from solely reading
109 to audio visual media entertainment. And the trepidations over AI-powered houses in
110 literature have transformed into highly possible instances in reality through virtual
111 entertainment media representations in past three decades. The Disney movie *Smart House*
112 and a recent German Netflix Limited Series *Cassandra* are similar representations of
113 automated houses that relentlessly run havoc in the lives of their owners.

114 The 1999 Disney movie *Smart House* is the story of a smart house which is won by a
115 teenager named Ben through a contest. When Ben’s family moves into the house designed by
116 Sara Barnes, they are introduced to PAT which is the “Personal Applied Technology” which
117 responds to all their orders. Ben’s father, Nick starts dating Sara and Ben reprograms the
118 house in a manner that she reflects a mother figure for the family in an attempt to make Nick
119 realize that PAT could “learn” the responsibilities of a mother through watching popular
120 movies and television shows. Once Nick criticizes PAT for helping Ben throw a party at
121 home and cleaning it up before his father reaches home, PAT takes it upon herself to turn into
122 a strict mother by seeking additional reference material to the extent that she is shut down by
123 her creator. But to everyone’s surprise, at dinner PAT overhears Nick calling her unnecessary



133 **Figure 1: Poster of the Disney**
 134 **movie *Smart House*****Figure 2: Poster of the Netflix**
 135 **Limited Series *Cassandra***

136 for the family, even when she is shut down, she overrides the system instructions and comes
 137 back to life in the form of a hologram of a typical mother figure and locks the Cooper family
 138 inside the house. This continues until Ben asserts that she would never succeed in taking his
 139 mother's place because she is not real and her care insufficient. PAT eventually lets them out
 140 of the house and shuts herself down. Sara reboots PAT and the family welcomes Sara with
 141 open arms, thus, successfully restraining the overbearing artificial intelligence program.

142 Similarly, in the Netflix Limited Series *Cassandra* released in 2025, a family moved into a
 143 smart house in Germany. Fynn activates the AI system of the smart house in the basement
 144 soon after they start living in the house. Cassandra, the AI system, initially helps the family in
 145 their daily tasks but soon turns against the mother, Samira in an attempt to take her place and
 146 make the entire family dependent on her. The present and the past are presented
 147 simultaneously in the series. In the 1970s, Cassandra and her family had been the original
 148 residents of the now smart house. She was a controlling and overbearing mother who, after
 149 her husband's infidelity she fears leaving her son alone. Soon after a series of tragic events
 150 take place and Cassandra eventually transfers her consciousness into the AI system of the
 151 house before physically dying. In the present day, she tries to get rid of Samira by isolating

152 her and lying about her to her husband, David. However, Samira does not give up on her
153 family and emerges victorious by evacuating them from the house ruled by Cassandra.

154 **Observations**

155 These stories, though narrated in different mediums highlight similar apprehensions
156 regarding failing human relations and familial ties in the hands of an unmonitored artificial
157 intelligence in extremely private spaces like homes, with little dissimilarities among them. It
158 opens space for exploring the advantages and disadvantages of AI powered houses grounded
159 in literature and virtual entertainment media over the years to discuss and compare the
160 impending doom that they may pose for their owners.

161 Most of the stories being mentioned here though set in a futuristic realm far from the present
162 at the time they were composed, pose striking resemblances to the contemporary
163 technologically advanced devices powered by artificial intelligence. Smart houses no longer,
164 reside in our imagination but are closer to a breathing reality like never before.

165 **Resemblance with Reality**

166 In *Smart House*, PAT locks the occupants inside the house when she is upset and in
167 *Cassandra*, the AI system of the house was furnished with the consciousness of the former
168 resident, in a similar manner when security devices like fire alarms or home passwords are
169 hacked they function on the whims of the hacker, making them more unsafe for the owners
170 by locking them in or out of the house during life threatening situations. The misrecognition
171 of living with the non-living could also pose threat to life as seen in Fully Self-Driven (FSD)
172 software in automobiles leaving little scope for manual operations in times of system
173 override. In “The Veldt”, the nursery is an excellent example of a virtual reality room too
174 ahead of its time similar to simulation rooms built to allow individuals to train in safe and
175 controlled environments that imitate real-life settings and scenarios. The way the lions and
176 vultures threaten the parents in real life, technical and equipment failures can hamper the
177 safety of the individuals in the simulation suites. Delayed evacuation due to error in situation
178 evaluation in times of emergency could cause death, the way George and Lydia were never
179 rescued from the nursery despite their loud screams. In “There Will Come Soft Rain”, the
180 automated house continues with its daily routine because it was never programmed to
181 recognized the absence of its inhabitants. Nowadays, fans and air conditioners can be
182 switched on and off with one’s smartphones even when it is not in the premises of the

183 property. And it remains in or out of action until it is ordered otherwise. Today, Alexa is the
184 closest to the aforesaid AI-powered houses' software in that, it responds to every command
185 or request like a real human being like PAT and Cassandra. Verbal commands given to Alexa
186 will continue to be performed until directed to otherwise even in the absence of all human
187 beings in its proximity.

188 **Threat to the mother figures in the family**

189 In "The Veldt" and *Cassandra*, the lives of mothers are explicitly threatened in an attempt by
190 the artificial intelligence resident in the smart homes to take over their roles in the family
191 altogether. In "The Veldt" Lydia expresses the desire to carry out the daily chores for her
192 children herself. She explicitly states that the house seems to have taken over role in the
193 family, "I feel like I don't belong here. The house is wife and mother now, and nursemaid."¹.
194 In *Smart House*, even the physical absence of the mother does not help the artificial
195 intelligence software to take her place suggesting the lack of the necessary human touch in
196 familial ties and human relationships despite technological advancements.

197 **The destructor: AI or Nature**

198 These stories highlight how artificial intelligence will be more involved in the destruction of
199 the living than any natural course like nature or environment. Cassandra dies while
200 transferring her consciousness into the artificial intelligence system while George and Lydia
201 die due to the virtual reality room/ nursery overriding their command of changing the image
202 of death: both of which are unusual causes of death unknown to man until technological
203 advancements in AI and one's dependence on it to keep one's occupied and creating a false
204 sense of presence of another human with them. The incineration of the dead dog by the
205 automated house in "The Will Come Soft Rains". "The dog was gone. In the celar, the
206 incinerator glowed suddenly and a whirl of sparks leaped up the chimney"² It is a true
207 cautionary attempt at the end of the author about how there will remain no humanity even for
208 the last rites of humans in case technological advancements turn further destructive, hinting at
209 nuclear warfare.

210 **Failure of technology**

211 Ultimately, the artificial intelligence systems installed in these houses is displayed as a failure
212 of technology in different forms. In "There Will Come Soft Rains" the AI-powered house is
213 destroyed by fire caused by a branch of a tree suggesting nature to be the ultimate destroyer

214 of technology and human existence. In “The Veldt”, the children eventually choose the
215 nursery powered by artificial intelligence over their biological parents as their family and
216 guardian against their parents who appear as threat to their freedom of choice. This should
217 have been the other way around, where the parents’ protective instincts should have guarded
218 the children against their growing obsession with scenes of death and made them feel safe.
219 The family structure is shown to be dysfunctional in the presence of artificial intelligence.

220 Cassandra, after having turned into artificial intelligence running the smart house, goes on a
221 killing spree of its occupants describing a tragic technological failure. These three are
222 exemplary of how techno dependence could turn life-threatening while the movie *Smart*
223 *House* offers a better outcome where the reigns of the AI- powered house are pulled back in
224 time to save the family from becoming hostages in their own home until their death at the
225 hands of an uncontrolled AI software. Timely rebooting the system restores peace in the
226 Prills family hinting human superiority over AI, resulting in an optimistic and encouraging
227 ending in terms of human regulation of its capabilities in the future.

228 **The Issue of Omnipresence**

229 The illusion of omnipresence is emphasized in *Cassandra* as she tries to make herself
230 immortal in an attempt to be available to her son till eternity but to no success. George and
231 Lydia tried to replace their physical selves for their children only to be consumed by it
232 altogether. The house destroyed in the fire continues to announce in human speech but the
233 absence of life altogether renders the scenario absurd.

234 **Unbridled Restraint**

235 The unbridled restrained on technological advancements gives way to humanity’s most
236 destructive imagination to consume humanity itself. This is showcased in Cassandra’s
237 attempt at replacing Samira by all means, PAT’s attempt at replacing Ben’s deceased mother,
238 and the blood thirsty animals of the wild African veldt attacking the owners of the house.

239 **Conclusion**

240 Such creative works throughout literature and visual media entertainment propels intellectual
241 nourishment in readers and viewers regarding optimal restraint limits on AI assistance in their
242 everyday lives: the pole or antipode of it. It raises a question on the sweeping concessions of
243 autonomy to reach a settlement for convenience in the practical tech—savvy world.

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