

The background of the top half of the page features several dandelion seed heads in a light pinkish-red color, scattered across the white space. The seeds are depicted as thin, radiating lines, creating a delicate, airy effect. The text is centered over this background.

OCTOBER 2021 | ISSUE 1

DANDELION

ENGLISH LITERARY SOCIETY, IIT KANPUR

IN THIS ISSUE

**PROSE, POETRY
& PEOPLE**

**ALBUM REVIEW:
PUNISHER**

**MOVIE REVIEW:
THE TRUMAN
SHOW**

**WORD GAMES TO
TICKLE YOUR
VOCABULARY**

ADD SOMETHING ABOUT ELS

by **ELS TEAM**

Presenting Dandelion- IITK's bi-monthly literary newsletter Dandelion is an initiative by the ELS team to provide a publishing platform to budding writers of IITK, a creative delight for reading enthusiasts and brain-tickling word games for the puzzle fans. Hope you enjoy our very first edition and become not just active readers, but regular contributors to this space!

We are open to accepting entries in all formats (poems/stories/articles/reviews/anything else) by anyone (any year/branch, no need to be an ELS secretary either). If you wish to get published (anonymously or otherwise) in our next edition, drop us an email at litsoc.iitk@gmail.com!

CULPABILITY OF THE THAUMATURGE

by Parikshit Tomar



Thaumaturge : A worker of wonders and performer of miracle.

The sun slowly crept up the hillside as the last dredges of the night faded away and the smell of early morning dew prevailed the dingy halls of Kaiser Wilhelm Institute.

The Assistant walked briskly through the early morning crowd. His attention focused on arranging the loose sheets of documents in his hands which earned him contemptuous looks from the group of students for disturbing the overall tranquility of a quiet morning. He held in his hands a stack of papers, and peeking out from the middle of the pile was the morning daily with the headline "Werner Heisenberg: The Columbus of quantum mechanics" faintly visible over a circular shaped coffee stain on the photograph of Heisenberg, his boyishly handsome face smiling at the camera and his piercing blue eyes gazing distantly as if thinking about a secret only he knew.

As the Assistant reached the stairs, he stopped for a moment and wiped the sheen of sweat that had formed on his brow. As he climbed the stairs to his intended destination, he prepared what he had to speak beforehand to the Director. Albert Einstein was known to be prone to...outbursts at times. His genius was undeniable, but his temper was also infamous.

"Herr Director, I have been requested by the board...Agh...Nein, Herr Director, I am sure you have heard of Werner Heisenberg..." Mumbling to himself, he walked up to the engraved door, waited for a moment to gather his thoughts and then knocked.

"Enter," said a deep calm voice. Upon entering the room, the Assistant was greeted by the sight of the Director, deep in thought, writing on his chalkboard.

"Sit, Jurgen", Einstein said, and the Assistant sat upon the chair offered. "Herr Director, I have been requested.....". "No". "...sorry, director?" I said no, I will not be endorsing Heisenberg's....principle." "But director..why?" said the assistant flustered.

"Why? I thought it was self-evident, Jurgen because it is wrong," Einstein said and went about writing on the chalkboard.



The Assistant was flummoxed and, for a moment, sat in silence wondering what to say next. The room was silent but for the Director's chalk tapping on the chalkboard. After a few seconds, the Assistant said, "But how Director. Heisenberg's principle is a hallmark achievement in science, its maths is irrefutable, and its implications..are ineffable." For a moment, Einstein said nothing, and the Assistant was going to try again when Einstein stopped writing on the chalkboard, kept the sheets of paper he had in his hands on the table, looked at Jurgen right in the eyes and said very slowly.

"Ineffable, you say."

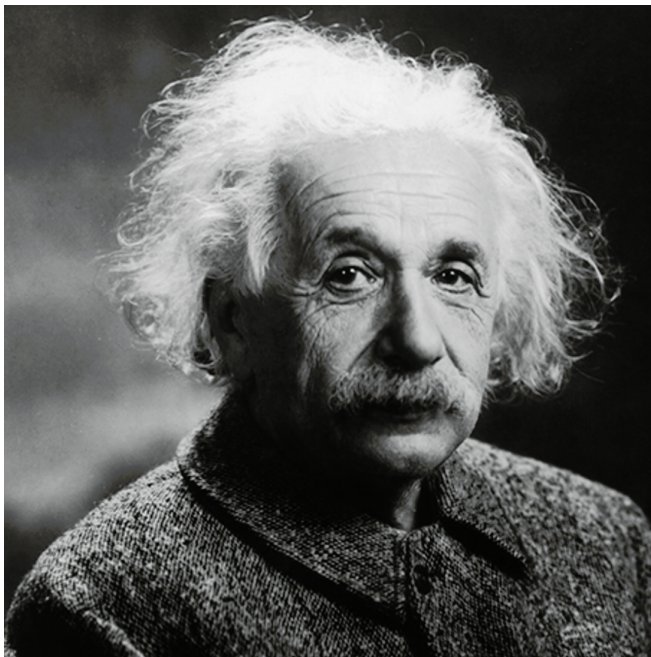
"The only efficacy that principle has is that of a party trick. You can't possibly know the position and the momentum of an electron at the same time. Honestly, Jurgen, don't tell me you have given in to the rhetoric of journalists. A man of science accepting a theory as fallacious as this, it is outrageous really." Jurgen sat silently for a moment, thinking about what he was going to say next. He had to convince the Director, the board had entrusted him with the task, and he could not fail. Succeeding in this might mean an approval of his thesis or maybe even a professorship, and so he tried again.

"Director Heisenberg's theory has successfully disproved the Bohr model of atom, and Bohr himself has accepted the flaws in his model. In fact, Bohr has been defending the principle rather fervently in the Oxford circuit. The proof is sound, and better still, it does not make any assumptions. Surely you don't mean to discredit such a momentous theory as a party trick. Only the other day, Professor Lindengard was telling me how wide the implications are not just scientifically but mathematically as well..."

"THE MATH IS NOTHING, THE PROOF IS JUST A MATHEMATICAL TRICK NOTHING ELSE. This principle of yours goes against the fundamental tenets of science. It is an attack on everything we hold dear in the scientific community. Do you not see, if this monstrosity lasts, we will lose everything we hold dear."

The Assistant looked stunned at the sudden display of emotion. Einstein was standing up to his full height now. Pure emotion showed in his watery eyes, which were beginning to tear up. His hand was quivering, and the chalk he had been holding had fallen to the floor and had been neatly broken in two. The Director paused for a moment, took a deep breath and then said,

"As a kid, I was an inquisitive child. We all were. That's why we are where we are today. I wanted to know everything about the world, everything from my mother's wardrobe to why the sky was blue. Once my father took me to a gipsy carnival where a great Thaumaturge was coming. He was a performer of miracles. It was said he could levitate objects into the air. I remember being in sheer awe of the marvel. Everyone in our town went to see him. As I watched the miracle unfold before my very eyes, I saw a man in the crowd smile at the Conjurer and then, laughing gently to himself, went away. I wondered what could have possibly caused the man to laugh at such a miraculous feat. So I followed him and asked him just that. He started laughing heartily at my question, and then after ruffling my hair, he said, "Oh my child, you do not see, it is a magnet, nothing more, nothing less. Your Thaumaturge is an intelligent man, but he is not the true magician here. The real magic is the science behind his incredible feat. That is the real miracle."



"I did not sleep that night. Naturally, I wanted to be a magician as well. So I embarked on a journey into the scientific world, and I have never stopped since. So you see, why I am a scientist today? Because a scientist is a true Thaumaturge, a performer of wonders. I want to uncover every secret that the universe holds, to know why the world is the way it is. And the only way to do that is through science, the omnipotent, the omnipresent and the omniscient."

Einstein turned away from Jurgen and went up to the window in his room and looked at the bright morning outside.

"My entire life," he said in a low voice. "Has been built around this one idea, that science knows all, that I, given the right tools, can uncover the secrets of the universe, that there is a fundamental clockwork to things and all can be revealed. And now Heisenberg tells me that I cannot know the position and momentum of an electron simultaneously."

This is not meant as an experimental challenge, rather a challenge to all of science, because Heisenberg says that Science does not want you to know. This statement in and of itself is a paradox because how can science not know such a trivial thing. Can it really be that my life has been built around a lie, that our world is indeed random, and there is no way to really know all the secrets of the universe?"

"Is the Thaumaturge's wonder just a fatal trick? Does sciencereally not have all the answers? Tell me that I am wrong, that this principle does not encroach upon the ideals that have shaped our human existence in the past century. That Heisenberg does not attack our very core as a species. Tell me, Jurgen, answer these questions for me, and I will gladly endorse this principle of yours."

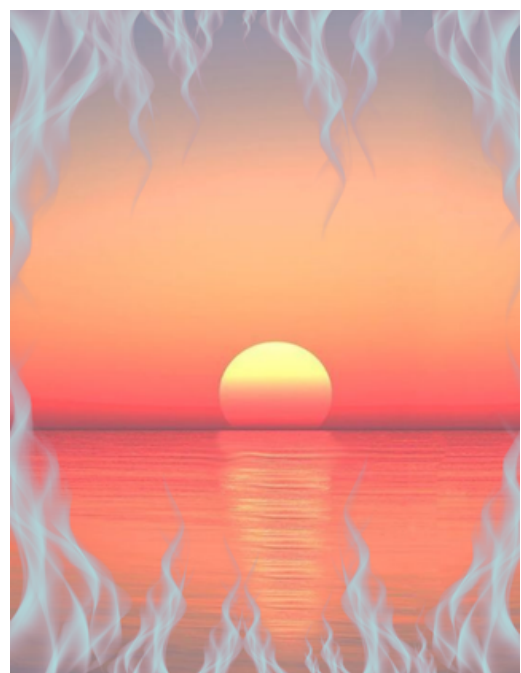
The Assistant sat in stunned silence. He lowered his eyes. He could not answer the Director's questions. He stared at the hard ground and wondered if the Director was right. As the silence stretched out, Jurgen stood up from the chair, "Auf Wiedersehen Herr Director" and stepped out of the room. Einstein took a deep breath and went to work, his chalk lightly tapping away at the board as a cool breeze blew through the room from the open window ruffling his short hair.

- *In December 1927, Heisenberg published his Uncertainty Principle.*
- *In 1955 Albert Einstein would succumb to aortic aneurysm, till his dying day he would not accept the uncertainty principle.*
- *In 1996, 3 German scientists would prove the Heisenberg Uncertainty principle irrefutably...correct*

SILVER DAWN

by Lavanya Ingle

And when the sun came up showering its
golden haze,
I would rise up through the dark with my
silver flames.
And when you think of me as your sweet, my
sire
I will kill you with my burning, hot, white
fire.



MIDNIGHT LEAVES

by *Vaishali Rawat*

The air is soggy, we've smoked all hope
 come evening, come sundown, this cold;
 our hands put out cigarettes against roses,
 and braid them into the few stray locks
 Of moonlight; We revel in shared hostility.
 To every man who looks,
 She is lovely. But my lovely, you and me,
 We avert our gazes discreetly.
 For only the perpetrators bear witness
 to the true doing even as theorists cower
 in their hypothesis and the victims
 in their disbelief.
 Why roses, sweet sultry roses?
 oh, there are enough holes in our jeans.
 We drink solitude to dissolve the yellow
 from our ugly teeth; Outside dew trickles
 in vain to put out ashes.
 We savour the criminal thrill
 of moonlight vandalism, all our figurative
 crimes like smoke rings blown from
 Magritte's Pipe.
 So play the ending notes my arriviste
 as we linger in high society and clink
 to our swindlers' fancy; No penance
 is so snide as that of a criminal made to
 feel unworthy of a crime.
 So play the ending notes my arriviste
 as we linger in high society and clink
 to our swindlers' fancy; No penance
 is so snide as that of a criminal made to
 feel unworthy of a crime.
 If you looked closer, you must think,
 who shot the moon and what a poor shot!
 They got the roses in her hair, those
 imbeciles.



The threat of dawn wails like air raid sirens
 on our intellectual horizons,
 All the debauchery of thoughts suspended
 like enemy bombs every night passes on
 as we confide in sleep, shelter alike
 with enemies and enemies.
 It is not so ridiculous to fear light
 as the inflictor of shadows, we must
 begin to fear ourselves.
 Every morning I walk the path
 of midnight leaves with sallow eyes,
 a waning smile, crunching them under my
 fascist feet and wait to be wanted
 even if only on posters in alleyways.

PUNISHER BY PHOEBE BRIDGERS

Album Review by Mudit Chand Narayan

Car rides are fun. Talking about death is fun as well. Well, at least for a person like me who enjoys being secluded and left alone with my music, thinking about the different ways apocalypse might be approaching us to render us helpless is an idea I take plenty of fun in pondering over. This feeling of inevitability of the pure catastrophe is frightening, yes, but these feelings have been the stimuli for poets and songwriters since the very beginning. And sometimes, that makes me wonder what it would feel like driving a fast car through an apocalyptic dystopia where everything comes falling and crashing to crumbs behind our car and we keep writing songs about them.

By the time Phoebe Bridgers's bewildering sophomore album reaches its climax, and the only sound left inside your head is a gut-wrenching screech and the scary but hypnotizing chants of "The end is near", it has achieved something beautiful already. Once you let the ghost of DVD Menu crawl on your skin, the shivers do not end.



Bridgers writes for something too, and it's the adolescent innocence and nightmares. Punisher is an album for sleepless nights, but it dares to talk about dreams. Recurring dreams, that somehow depict a higher dimension of reality neither she nor have we seen yet, and her obsession is with bringing that higher reality to something understandable, something more objectifiable within her lyrics, and then channeling her pain in the vesselized dreams. Moon Song, Savior Complex, Chinese Satellite, all these songs make sure you once visit the grave of her dead dreams. She crooned in her song Funeral, the highlight of her magnificent debut 'Stranger from the Alps', that "And last night I blacked out in my car, And I woke up in my childhood bed, Wishing I was someone else, feeling sorry for myself, When I remembered kid is dead". Her dreams are her escape from this reality, and that is exactly what this album sounds like. An escapist dream.

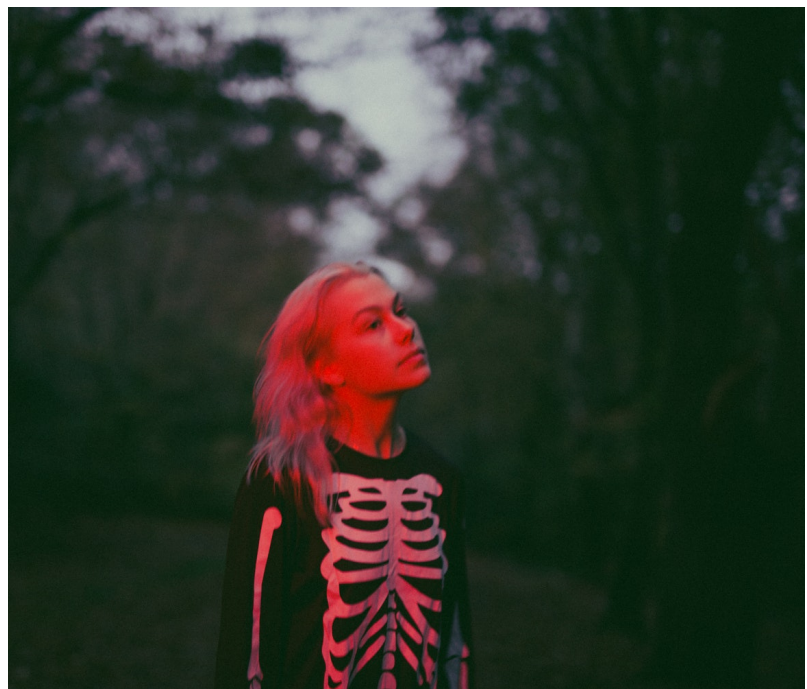
It is funny how every dream Bridgers has ever described through her songs are rather the happy ones. Whatever good has happened to her, or has made her feel that way, has happened in her dreams. But still, she doesn't scare off from whispering "All the bad dreams that you hide, show me yours and I will show you mine." In the melancholic Savior Complex, as a murmur telling you that you can never verbalise whispers.

These songs swell with their childlike innocence, and yet feel like pure, intense, brilliant pain. Garden Song, what opens this storybook, is an ode to the escape a house gives someone when they are tired of everything around them. She talks about killing a neighbour and planting a gorgeous garden on the corpse, yet with such an utmost charm as if a kid cracked one really dark joke and ran away giggling, and you're left questioning yourself what the hell was that about. That innocence carries on the Grammy nominated "Kyoto" where the bittersweetness of the lines "I am going to kill you if you don't beat me to it" testify for a childhood she never could have because of an abusive father, yet the child inside her still shrieks and calls her a liar in the end. These stories are uncomfortably personal, a vulnerability that digs underneath your skin and reside there.

It's hard not to see the title track Punisher, an Elliot Smith tribute, in the light of the song it succeeds. How the singer urges and craves for the affection of a fatherly figure so much that she's ready to threaten to kill him, the song presents the indie songwriter as a fatherly figure Phoebe grew up looking up to. "What if I told you? I feel like I know you, but we never met?", she trembles as she whispers in the most melodious chorus of the album, which might just be a direct reference to the person who inspired her since the childhood but after the cathartic Kyoto, you feel the pain of having someone but never knowing them.

The overreaching ambiance of this album is forlorn, rather melancholic. Even when it's not intended to, even when Phoebe is joking about her having a resting bitch face, there is a certain misery, the sense of an upending apocalypse you cannot escape. And this sense keeps getting stronger, scarier as the album transitions to Moon Song, an ode to misunderstood love and self-loathing. She sympathises with Eric Clapton that his son died in Moon Song, but says that she hates the very song written about the baby's death. Bridgers comes with brutal honesty, and doesn't hesitate from being the one who chuckles in their loved one's funeral. She wails, "And you pushed me in, and now my feet can't touch the bottom of you.", a bottomless pit where the love is so shallow it doesn't have any solid place to stand on. "You are sick, and you are married, and you might be dying" she concludes the song with calling herself the killer of the beautiful bird of love, "But you know the killer doesn't understand."

***"Jesus Christ, I'm so blue all
the times
And that's just how I feel.
Always have and I always
will"***



It's not a perfect collection of songs, nor is this the destined-to-define the-genre kind of work of art. Sometimes it drags, like every other masterful work gets redundant after a while. Sometimes the lyrics like "I will never be your vegetable" are so weird and laughable you want to scream "I wasn't going to eat you either, Phoebe!!!", but maybe laughing about death is its own kind of aesthetic. Within these weird, obscure metaphors and aching penwork to craft melodies, Bridgers has created a soundtrack for the last car ride you might take to get through the world's end. "Who lies? 'cause I'm a liar.", she holds those words till her last breath, pressing them with all her might so they cannot be misunderstood, but music and songwriting has hardly been so true as it is on Punisher.



THE TRUMAN SHOW

Movie Review by Aayush Kumar, Parikshit Tomar and Mudit Chand

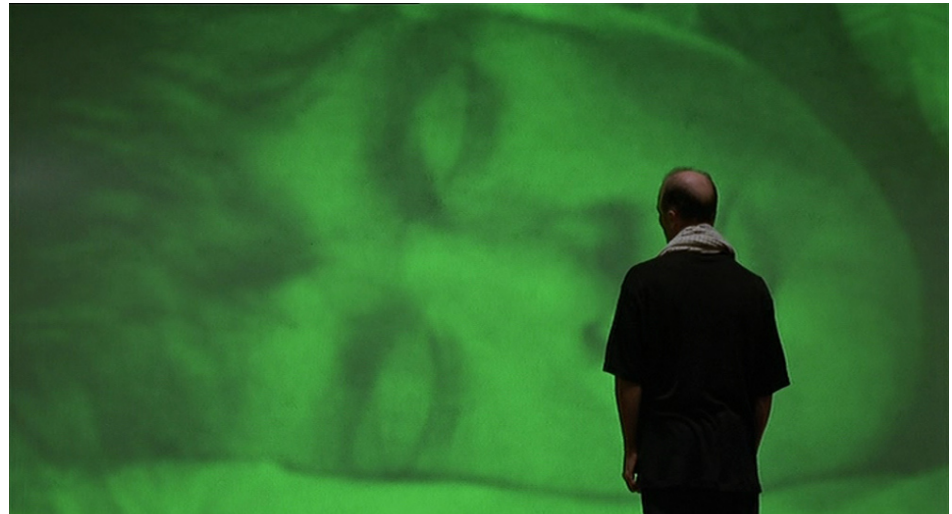
The falling of a star is a beautiful sight. Watching it leave the night-sky and start to descend into the scenic horizon to crash and disappear somewhere in the unknown after granting a careful observer one wistful wish for being kind and patient enough to watch his last fiery fall as a reward, that's what falling stars do. When the lead character Truman in one of the film's earliest scenes, sees Sirius-A, the brightest star in the night sky, fall and break into shards of glass on his front road, his only wish is taken away. What would you do when you realize the stars surrounding you might just be some set lights, fooling you and will never fall? And that the people around you never looked up at the sky to find a meteor shower, they never asked for a wish from a falling star for a better job or a beautiful lover, because pretending is all they have done their whole life. As humans, we accept the world we are gifted with, sometimes so open-heartedly that we do not even question the obvious crooks and oddities.

'The Truman Show' is a film by Peter Weir starring Jim Carrey as an insurance salesman, ironically named Truman, whose whole life has, unbeknownst to him, been the subject of a TV show that runs 24 hours, 7 days a week. Sounds heavy, doesn't it? Perhaps you'd enjoy this review more with some Mococoa drink, made from the finest cocoa beans, grown on the upper slopes of Mount Nicaragua. No artificial sweeteners.

Random product placement is just one of the quirks Truman has to live with in his fake constructed world, every move of which is crafted by the show's creator Christof and his team. Everyone is almost thirsty to know about your personal life. Go on in a group of teenagers talking, and the most redundant things you will hear them saying would be, "Hey, who're you dating right now?", "How about the girl you met last night?", "Are you having sex?", "Damn I'm sorry about your grandma; you never told me she passed away!". It gives them nothing, but at the same time, it brings a sense of being a part of someone's life, and you will do everything to feel that invited and attended. Everyone loves to ask Truman questions. Everybody wants to be a part of Truman's life, because it invites them to enjoy it. It is built that way, more so that it feels programmed.

But do they care? Does the person who's asking you about your dating life care? Hardly. And so doesn't Truman's audience. However, not even the great visionary Christof can keep the act up and force Truman to stay on his 'island' forever, as Truman eventually starts to figure out that his world is fake and searches for an escape.

"Did you ever get the feeling that the world revolved around you?" Truman asks his lifelong friend Marlon, who in reality is just an actor, to which he replies with words that are not his own, but really, the question is would you want that?



Sounds like a narcissist's paradise, but even a narcissist needs some space to breathe. A life where you can not fall for a person who is not a main character as you are, a life where your father might get killed for good ratings. Christof says, "The world, the place you live in, is the heart-to-heart disease sick place. Seahaven is the way the world should be." It is just how "Christ-of" controls and makes fun of "True-Man". But the movie keeps forcing you to ask yourself "Is it really the way the world should be?" Do we want to be watched? Is the world meant to be self-contained, and everything wrong that happens is because someone who has the power to "cue the sun" orders it to be so?

It's very easy for a movie tackling so many intricate themes to get bogged down in its own philosophy and become too congested to develop on any one theme. This can be seen in movies like "Collateral Beauty", "The Circle" and "Spectre", all movies that bit off more than they could chew and hence became bland cinema experiences. A great movie is the one which can make you think, but if you decide to put the philosophy away you can still enjoy it for the entertainment value of the movie. Fortunately, The Truman Show does not suffer from this ailment and shines through in its handling of all of its themes. Props to the director and screenwriters for pulling this off, but this wouldn't have been possible without one essential element, Jim Carrey.

Now to be honest, if someone would have asked who was the perfect actor to play the complex role of a person who has grown up literally on television and whose whole life has been a ruse, Jim Carrey wouldn't have been anyone's first choice. But this is where he shines. Jim Carrey's wildly energetic persona imbibes the film with an electric energy that is essential in driving the film forward.

The innocence in his eyes as he looks with wonder upon the world he lives in and tries to escape to his promised land, Fiji, is masterfully done. Jim Carrey is funny and wild when the film demands him to be, but even in some of its tender moments, when Truman's TV persona is stripped away and deeper aspects of his personality shine through, Jim Carrey does not disappoint. He is a constant presence in the film, he is quite literally the star of the show and seeing how brilliantly he pulls it off, we wouldn't have had it any other way.

Truman's overarching journey throughout the film is one of escape. His realisation that the world around him is not real is directly connected to his desire to run away, represented in the film as a trip to Fiji. This connects with both the fictional audience of the show as well as us; most of us seek to break free from the routine life we're living. While Truman's life is so meticulously controlled that he can determine the exact moment when a particular car will cross a particular street, our lives have more of a mental rigidity that seemingly never ends. Truman tries very hard to escape from where he is and who he is, but it's not until he's brave enough to face the unruly waters of his 'island' in an old boat that he can finally get out. Despite all the trials Truman is put through as he tries to escape, he's determined to find the truth. This physical journey shows us an emotional journey that all of us want to have the courage to undergo. The audience of the Truman show isn't just cheering for Truman to escape his fictional world, they're also cheering for someone to show them that it is possible to get out of the everyday rut that they're stuck in. Escaping our shackles is our own choice, we just need to have the strength to go through with it.



The other facet of the ending is the terrifying realisation that one's whole life has been a lie. This is one of the areas where the movie fails, or at the very least, misses an opportunity, since we never really see the emotional impact of the truth on Truman's mind. All we see is what he shows the audience, which is as always, a performance.

While this may have been intentional on the part of the filmmakers, one wonders if Truman's emotional journey really achieves a satisfying conclusion or any conclusion at all. His quest to find the truth is completed, but what effect does that have on him? This question goes begging as the credits roll. Perhaps the mental consequences would have been too dark for a film that is after all a PG-rated drama but they were perhaps as important to explore as the external ramifications.

One of the most chilling scenes in the film is when a 7-8 year old Truman climbs over the rocks on the beach, and everyone else relaxing there suddenly turns to look as his 'father' drags him down. Not only did Truman not have a private life, he didn't have his own life at all. Every emotional moment he felt was artificial, manufactured. Truman wasn't a person, he was a character. And when you imagine how it would feel knowing that your life was fake and that everybody knows all your deepest darkest secrets; yeah we'd say that's more spine-chilling than most horror movies. To take the edge off, maybe you'd like to watch the movie with a can or two of Penn Pavel's. Now that is a beer.

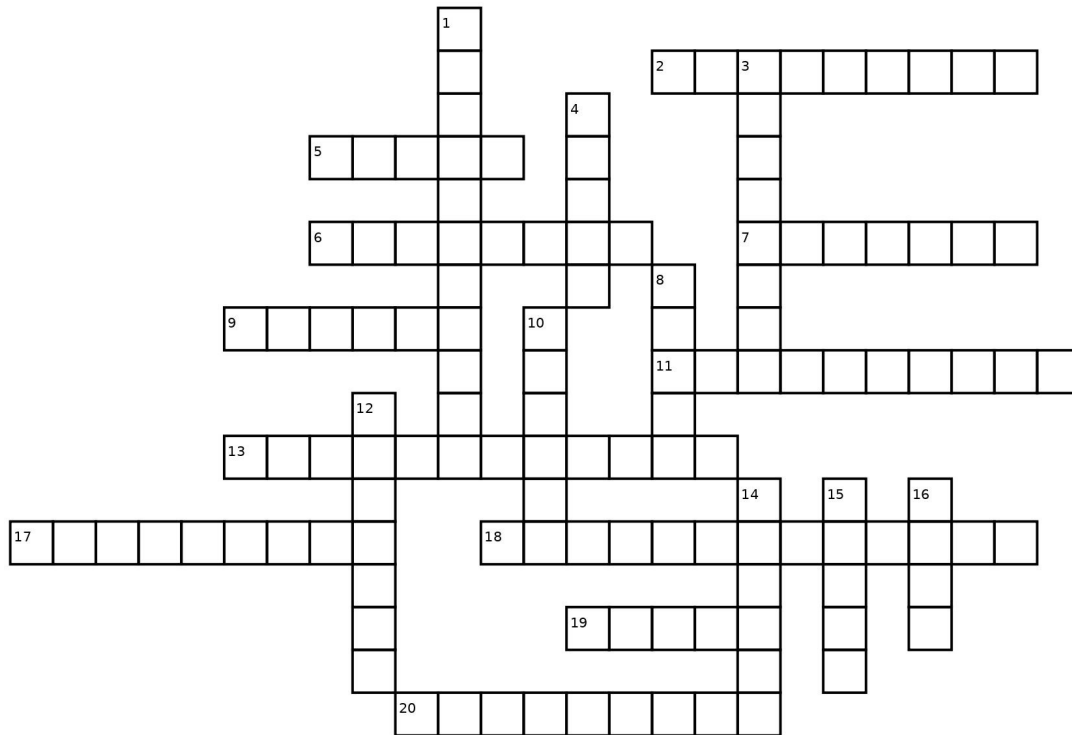


We all are in a boat which is not ours, sailing in a sea which is not controlled by us, through a storm which is trying it's best to keep us away from what might be the reality. We all are Truman, essentially. Playing a hero in our lives for the rest of the world to watch, maybe a villain in someone else's, some lucky people might even play the love interest in someone really pretty life, but pushing ourselves through this world which is tired of pretending and so habitual of doing this that their body just move that way is nothing but a tiresome job. Look ahead of your little lively circle, everyone is just a zombie with their head hung low, braindead, moving in the same direction without any hope of finding something new. If you hold one and shake them, they might shout at you. Punch you, even. Nobody wants to take part in someone else's lives, because we have made ours boring enough to be interested in anyone else's.

In the end, it's just you standing with your back towards a rectangular black door, none is the appeal, dull is everything about it, and you are looking at a vast open ocean. Nothing seems true at this moment, and estranged so remotely within your feeble emotions, even the voice of the demon behind it sounds like a vail from God. For once, the slightest movement of the clouds looks like a magic trick, and it's on you to choose the "reality" you have been trying to escape or to turn around and accept the black clad dream you know nothing about but believe it to be something bigger than yourself. Nothing makes sense, but finding sense in places is what brought humanity so ahead of what could have been a catastrophe. Nothing makes sense, and in case it does to you, Good Afternoon, Good Evening and Good Night.

Anyway, what else is on?

Cryptic Crossword



Down:

1. Archaic human and ant rehandle earth.(11)
3. On quite a reform for a well-balanced state.(8)
4. Country and Western drinks. (5)
8. No remorse for not beginning to code.(5)
10. The endless contest for Northern Greece (6)
12. Picture seashores served with last stingray.(7)
14. Credit is doubled, in a desperate situation (6)
15. Bowl and sink initially named.(5)
16. Announcement made by mixing up directions (4)

Across:

2. Stop protecting Capone, it's very common (9)
5. Old Testament character, New Testament incident (5)
6. Pressurized by flipping desserts (8)
7. Ancient Egyptian city and its leader saved for the last (3,4)
9. Choose religious group around first half of Lent (6)
11. A nervous 'a' and 'zed' get together. (10)
13. Head teacher shuffled the classroom (12)
17. Flawed tense. (9)
18. An advantageous marine trade in a sea. (13)
19. French king giving us oil. (5)
20. Sad secret disturbed philosopher (9)