

Cover Art

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THIS MONTH'S

Guest Correspondents

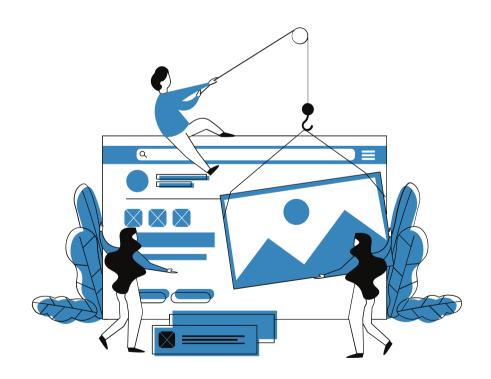
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THE INDUS DISPATCH

An · Academic · Existential · Update

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In the spirit of christmas, we present our Below-Zero edition of Trifling Trivia. Deer, hypothermia, and more. 2

Thinking in extremes?
Find out how your
understanding of the
world would be subject
to a common fallacy.

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Fake news, of the highest quality. Read our decidedly fictional takes on news snippets from around the world.

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Spirits, Sermons, and New Beginnings

The holiday season, and all it has to offer.

I'm sure all five of our readers wil wholeheartedly agree that we've had a rather festive run, these past few months. But after three Indian holidays, it's time we broaden our perspective somewhat, if not only to avoid falling into a routine of sorts. "What holiday do you propose to gas about this month?" you ask, and given the month it's a valid question. We Indians prefer to spread our holidays about, so as to uniformly spread sweetness and light. As David Grayson said, we "...like to take [our] Christmas a little at a time, all through the year." The modern west, however, takes the concept of delayed gratification rather seriously, packing all the really festive stuff into the last month. Christmas, Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, New



positively confused on a non-holiday day during December.

We shall confine our discussion to the two holidays that almost everyone, everywhere, excepting perhaps a few of the stricter middle-eastern countries and the Amish, is accustomed to celebrating - Christmas, and the New Year.

Given Christmas's deeply religious background, it may be surprising to see how widely celebrated the holiday is, but the prospect of receiving freebies in the name of a holiday was always bound to be a popular one. In all seriousness, however, the festival of Christmas as we know it today bases itself rather more heavily on the Dickensonian spirit of Christmas, as we have come to know it - the spirit of giving, in other words. We say Dickensonian, because it happens to be a widespread consensus that his vastly popular work, "A Christmas Carol", actually gave birth to our modern notion for the holiday, and if we're not to go as far as that, it at least rejuvenated it quite a bit.

Christmas lore and symbolism helps to understand the holiday a bit better as well. On one hand, we have Santa Claus - the bearded chauffeur - both a moral watchman, and an embodiment of good cheer. On the other hand, we have string lights and wrapped boxes - symbols of home, and by extension, family and goodwill. The reasons behind these customs are many; for example, the increased lighting and visiting of houses is quite possibly a result of it being the darkest, and coldest time of the year, when people are, or were in most need of social and psychological support. Brighter fireplaces, and gift-giving served to strengthen communities and families through adversity, and maintain that essential sunny outlook on life in general.

Taken all together, however, Christmas works to create a season of collective social sentiment, encouraging kindness and generosity by practising it. This goes far beyond the religious roots of the holiday, and this great focus on society explains why the holiday is spread so widely. When it's enough to wear red and sport a striped cane, most people are ore than willing to do so, and show solidarity with, and feel a part of the community they live in (this possibly also explains the strange popularity of Holi, and its western counterparts abroad).



This aspect of it, however, seems to have gone over a few heads, in recent times, with the old greeting of "merry Christmas" being a point of serious contention with a few special sets of individuals. "Please don't wish me 'Merry Christmas", says an article in the Washington post, going on to explain that "It's impolite and alienating to assume I follow your religion. Largely a result of unnecessary politicizing, it also hints at the idea that perhaps many of those who do indeed celebrate (or rather, refuse to celebrate) Christmas, have lost sight of what it really is. The values that Dickens' Christmas aimed to impart, seem lost on the general populace, and with the physical necessity for these traditions being almost nonexistent today, the social aspect has faded from view as well. The general position of those who oppose the holiday is often to stress how the Christian element offends non-christian sensibilities, and make Christmas out to be a sort of pervasive force that oppresses minor holidays (that are celebrated at different times of the year, funnily enough). Once again, the point is missed. The lack of religious ritual makes it possible for Christmas, unlike many other holidays, to be a holiday for a community of people, and not just a community of a certain religion.

But, be that as it may, even if the Grinch does end up stealing Christmas, we've always got the new year. We highly doubt the existence of such committed individuals, but those who read the previous edition will remember that in our feature on Dussehra, we went into some depth regarding "new beginnings", and for many, that is exactly what the new year is. While we do encourage these things, there is one aspect of it that is often overlooked. More than being encouragement for a new beginning, the new year often serves more to put one off. The division of time, while some may argue with this, is a human construct, and while the date on your calendar may change, in reality, time just goes on by, ignorant of a milestone of any sort. The new year makes not a whit of difference to that which is allconsuming. This may seem bleak but it's actually more along the lines of encouragement. See, waiting for the new year to make a new start is nothing more than procrastination, and while the day does have the ring of a great psychological moment, the withdrawal soon after has been shown to be terrible for committing to getting things done. So if one one wishes to make a new start, one could do better than starting immediately. Do it now, so to speak, and then be free to celebrate the new year for what it is - another step in time - time that may well be marching slowly and inevitably to eternity and oblivion - but at the very least, a step during which you can claim to have existed.

Oh the weather outside is frightful, But the fire is so delightful, And since we've no place to go, Let it snow, let it snow."

Michael Buble - "Let it Snow"

EDITORIAL COLUMN

Come the end of December

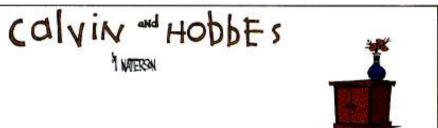
Greetings.



It's been a long holiday, possibly the longest holiday we have had and will have until the summer break. One learns at an early stage to make the distinction between break and holiday in the IB - a goodish bit of confusion is avoided by using the right nomenclature. Winter holidays for sure, but break? Hardly. Still, we persevere, in the hopes of better days, when our toil shall have made us worthy of a stately reward. Or perhaps not, and it's all for nothing. You can never be sure about these things. Still, as stated above, we keep pushing ahead, and soing what we can. Speaking of which, we do hope you'll forgive the sparse number of pages that follow; there are no pages missing, it's simply that newsletters are decidedly deciduous when it comes to content, and winter does us no favours in terms of dry-mass.

We've said this before, but - we now have an archive website at http://theindusdispatch.rf.gd/, so feel free to visit that. And as always, if you've got content, feedback, or just old vegetables, feel free to throw them at us. Forms in website.

- The Editorial Board













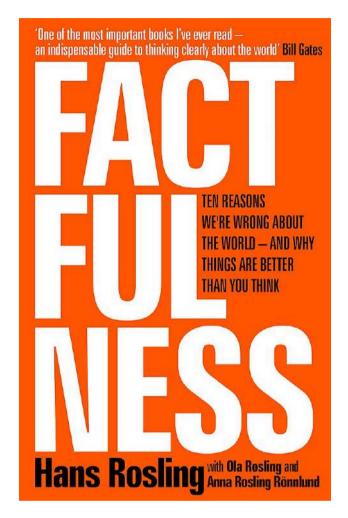






Insights Into FACTFULNESS

A student's review of "Factfulness" by Hans Rosling



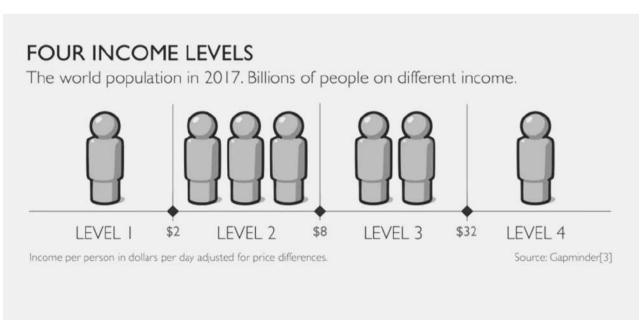
About the author:

Hans Rosling was a medical doctor, professor of International Health and renowned public educator. He cofounded Medecins Sans Frontieres in Sweden and the Gapminder foundation. His TED Talks have been viewed more then 35 million times and he is listed as one of the Time magazine's one hundred most influential people in the world.

There are 11 chapters in the book and this review is about chapter 1.

Chapter 1: The Gap Instinct.

According to the author in chapter 1, It is our ability to split things into distinct and sometimes competing groups with an imagined distance between them is represented by the gap instinct. 85% of humanity is now in the box that was once



considered the developed world. Most of the remaining 15% are between the two boxes. Just 13 countries are still within the developing boxes, representing 6% of the global population.

There is no difference between the west and the rest, between rich and the poor, between established and developing, and we all should stop using the simple pairs of categories that suggest there is. In low-income countries only 9% of the world population lives. Countries with low wages are far more developed than the most believe, and in them less people work. The idea of divided world with a group living in misery and deprivation is an illusion. Simply wrong.

Most people don't live in low-income or high-income countries, but middle-income countries. This category does not exist in a divided mentality but it certainly exists in reality. It no longer makes sense to divide countries into two groups say Rosling. It does not enable us in realistic way to understand the universe nor does it encourage corporations to find possibilities to find the or help money to find the poorest people.

According to Rosling our most significant difficulty in constructing a fact-based worldview is to understand experiences are from level 4, and that our second-hand experience is filtered into the mass media, which loves exceptional non representative incidents and shuns the normality.

- Sreyas Reddy

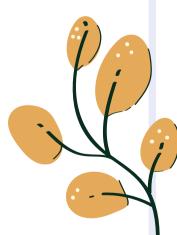
Factfulness is ... recognizing when a story talks about a gap, and remembering that this paints a picture of two separate groups, with a gap in between. The reality is often not polarized at all. Usually the majority is right there in the middle, where the gap is supposed to be.

To control the gap instinct, look for the majority

- Beware comparisons of averages. If you could check the spreads you would probably find they overlap. There is probably no gap at all.
- Beware comparisons of extremes. In all groups, of countries of people, there are some at the top, and some at the bottom. The difference is sometimes extremely unfair. But even then the majority is usually somewhere right in between, right where the gap is supposed to be.

The view from up here. Remember, looking down from above distorts the view. Everything looks equally short, but it's not.

- An excerpt from Factfulness, by Hans rosling



Trifling Trivia

Information that you'll certainly need, one day or another.

Roadkill

If you see a deer on the freeway, and you can't hit the brakes on time, you're better off hitting the deer than swerving to avoid it. If you see a moose, however, you'll fare better by swerving than hitting it.



Bring a Sweater

Don't take mild conditions in the middle of January as an excuse to leave home without a jacket. In the event of a cold front, temperatures can drop by 20°C is just under 15 minutes.

Hypothermia

....is a strange condition. Or rather, it brings out strange symptoms. In severe cases of hypothermia, when a person who has been shivering uncontrollably stops shivering and feels fine, it usually means they are close to death. Giving in to drowsiness when affected could be a fatal mistake. As hypothermia progresses, victims begin to shed clothes to feel warmer. Paradoxical as it may sound, the phenomenon is real, and when in your travels you inevitably feel the big cold, we encourage you to resist the urge. Continued below...

Sleighs, bells, and bobtails

"Jingle Bells" was written for Thanksgiving, not Christmas. The song was written in 1857 by James Lord Pierpont and published under the title "One Horse Open Sleigh".





Wind Chill (V)elocity in Km/h || (T)emperature in °C

 $= 13.12 + 0.6215T - 11.37 (V \cdot 0.16) + 0.3965T (V \cdot 0.16)$

Hypothermia (contd.)

Like many other things that have to do with physiological recovery, steps taken in the case of hypothermia follow the common rule of "no sudden change". Already in a fragile state, trying to heat up too quickly can put the body into shock, as trying to generate heat via friction. Focus efforts on the neck, torso, and core, applying dry warm compresses for heat. Do not attempt to heat up the peripheral limbs (arms, hands, legs, feet) - this leads to stress on the heart, and the lungs. Hot water and anything with sugar are good ideas, while any kind of alcohol is not. Feel free to write to us and share your own hypothermia experiences, for our other readers to learn from.

BORROWING WORDS



Excerpts from the greatest writers of our time.

Nowadays people know the price of everything and the value of nothing.

-Oscar Wilde, The Picture Of Dorian Gray

A "good" tennis player, you say. Well, I feel sure that you will always be a moral tennis player, a virtuous, upright tennis player, but if you wish to know whether I think you will ever be able to make a game of it with a child of six, I reply No.

- P.G Wodehouse, The Golf Omnibus

It was so much easier to blame it on Them. It was bleakly depressing to think that They were Us. If it was Them, then nothing was anyone's fault. If it was Us, what did that make Me? After all, I'm one of Us. I must be. I've certainly never thought of myself as one of Them. No one ever thinks of themselves as one of Them. We're always one of Us. It's Them that do the bad things.

- Terry Pratchett, Jingo

Not everyone understands what a completely rational process this is, this maintenance of a motorcycle. They think it's some kind of "knack" or some kind of "affinity for machines" in operation. They are right, but the knack is almost purely a process of reason, and most of the troubles are caused by what old time radio men called a "short between the earphones," failures to use the head properly. A motorcycle functions entirely in accordance with the laws of reason, and a study of the art of motorcycle maintenance is really a miniature study of the art of rationality itself.

- Robert M. Pirsig, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance

We believe that we can change the things around us in accordance with our desires—we believe it because otherwise we can see no favourable outcome. We do not think of the outcome which generally comes to pass and is also favourable: we do not succeed in changing things in accordance with our desires, but gradually our desires change. The situation that we hoped to change because it was intolerable becomes unimportant to us. We have failed to surmount the obstacle, as we were absolutely determined to do, but life has taken us round it, led us beyond it, and then if we turn round to gaze into the distance of the past, we can barely see it, so imperceptible has it become.

- Marcel Proust, In Search of Lost Time

Our Man in Mumbai

Snippets of factually flexible news from abroad.

Courtesy Jim Carrier

The general trend in the modern cinematic production is to tend towards a lesser amount of the old-fashioned brawls, and instead of the protagonist slugging it out with the villain and putting one over him near the end, or the constabulary remarking "Best say yer prayers, Hank Spivis, 'cos Ah'm a-goin' to drill yer like a dawg", the action tends to take place with a heartfelt sit-down between the opposing parties, where it is then learnt that the reason the aforementioned Hank Spivis sets fire to orphanages is because he had his favourite striped blanket taken from him by his mother as a child of three (Hank Spivis as a child of three, and not his mother).

By Sally Dwight

As body reform continues to be a popular subject amongst the younger set of the population, members of the same group are trying out new, and increasingly innovative ways of slaking the diet-induced hunger-pangs. Having graduated from Tide pods to bleach, the latest addition to the list in vogue has been copious amounts of benadryl, taken as a liquid. One can only imagine the merriment and novelty these innovations have encouraged during the weekend house parties, with a "Spare the boot-polish, Percy!" and a "Pass the ADT, will you?" going around the merry crowds.

By Meredith Dwyer

Touching display of filial affection: the duchess of Norfolk's son - the third earl of Burgundy - only recently in a grand gesture bought her a castle in the north of England. According to a local source, the Duchess was much pleased until it was later discovered that the transaction had been carried out with her bank-account.



LESS IS MORE

CHAPTER I

I reached the island two months ago.

The ship was only half afloat by the time we made shore, and we were filling with water faster than we could bail it. Even the words "made shore" seem an incredible euphemism, in retrospect. "Spilled ourselves onto the shoals" seems an infinitely superior description, partly because of its truth. The boat I was in, was piloted by the most incapable imbecile that has ever had the fortune to call himself a skipper. He started the voyage from Beirut by disemboweling the dock we were anchored to, and leaving half the crew behind. When we managed to untie the mooring rope from the stern, we made some speed, and skipping lightly over the occasional gastronomical accident, we were prey to no further unfortunate occurrences. Until we landed upon the island, that was.

I was the only member of the ship's party who was going to remain on the island; I was a passenger for that very purpose. The others were only present to oversee the export of the island's coconut oil batch. I stepped out onto the beach, my feet devoid of footwear – my slippers had been thrown overboard along with all the water we bailed. The sand was warm, and stuck to my feet, but was easily shaken off, and as I made my way towards the island's center, the turf changed from sand to short grass. The last I saw of my until-recently shipmates, were their frantic attempts to collect the coconut oil that they had remarkably efficiently spilled into the boat, to replace the water it was until recently filled with.

The island was exceedingly pleasant. It was a watercolor of the average person's impression of a tropical island. There were no grass skirts, no crude circular mud huts, though. The people were modern enough. There was no drastic culture change, and if the truth be told, it might even be said that they had no culture, in the way we think of it, at least. I saw no deities, no temples, no rituals, no elders. Their was the culture of life. To live was their tradition, and to exist, their purpose.

But I hadn't been there for long enough to understand any of that. And I had other things on my mind. I had come to the island for one purpose only, and that was to enter the island's center.

A short story.

It was the legend of the people that lived in the center that drew me there. They were supposed demigods, blessed with the gift of immortality, who had created a paradise on earth, in their twelve-mile circle. Outsiders hadn't been let in, ever since they first barred their doors five hundred years ago, fearing that the presence of unblessed beings might somehow rid them of their immortality. The only mortals they



Image Courtesy: Todor Hristov on Artstation

allowed inside, were the island Shamans, the universally respected elders of their people. They had no Shamans of their own. My being there was a singular chance - it was partly because of the favor I conferred upon a Shaman who was visiting the Yellowstone Park a year ago.

CHAPTER II

It had been a bleak December, in every way possible. The only way to alleviate the gloom seemed to me to be to convince myself that the gloom was my own fault, and not of the world I was surrounded by. I made it a habit to walk down the wet streets at night, slowly, not pausing, not slowing. Steady, and purposeless, trying doggedly to keep up with my shadow, cast by the streetlights. Streetlights – exceptional markers of solitude. Reminders that the day has grown dark enough for you to require artificial lighting. Not like lights in the house, where everything is lit, like some artificial daylight. They stand outside where you can see just how dark it actually is. So dark, that everyone has retreated to the comfort of their homes, in a blaze of light and warmth, surrounded by people, and things. And yet here you are, outside, in the dark, standing under a streetlight, looking up, and wondering why it is you're here. And with every streetlight I passed, I'd stop and wonder, and then I'd go on, to the next streetlight.



"That one Fateful Night" | Image Courtesy: TomTC on DeviantArt

I came across the Park quite by accident. It was not that I knew not of its existence no, a monument as large as the Park was nearly impossible to miss, especially if you lived in the same town. Island Village, in Wyoming, bordered the Park, although it was hardly a comfortable distance. It was only weekends that I could afford the six-hour walk to the edges of the park. Yellowstone lake was another hour away. If I'd wanted, I could have driven myself there in just above half an hour, but driving had lost its appeal in the previous months. Vehicles seemed pretentious, frail. I could never answer why I'd rather drive than walk, and always felt too tired to drive. So on the Saturday that I did in fact make my way over to the lake, it took me seven hours. It was well past sundown when I finally got there, and the pines had receded into their silhouettes. But the lake, in the moonlight, seemed as iridescent as it did in the day. Perhaps it was the reflection of the stars, and streams of cosmic brown lining the sky, but the image seemed to come from within the depths of the lake itself, as if it was projecting itself onto the sky, and not the other way around.



"Young Moon" | Image Courtesy: Sephiroth Art on Artstation

I had but a minute of reverie, when I saw a figure flailing in the water, off the adjacent bank. It seemed he was in need of assistance, so I ran around, his way, and dived in to help, after taking off my jacket. He continued to frantically paddle before I reached him, at which point he gave up trying to float. He was a terrible swimmer, but he was thankfully unlike the other kinds of drowning humans I've had the occasion

to rescue, who put me in as much danger of drowning as they were in, with their frantic paddling and flailing during the rescue. He stayed still until we came to shore, at which point he crawled up a few meters, and limply fell to the ground. I was not worried - it was but the exhaustion of trying to stay afloat for so long.

"Why did you not call for help?"

He paused for a few seconds, breathing heavily before he answered. "I found it extremely unlikely there would be anyone else about, and I did not wish to disturb the silence. It is remarkable, yes?" He looked around before going on. "Some would call it beautiful, but I would not. It would be an insult, would it not? To somehow imply that we are capable of even slightly comprehending its true nature, that it is low enough to be grasped by us?"

I didn't answer, and he didn't seem to expect one. We stared at the opposite bank for a while, and I sat down beside his rock after a few minutes. A period of silence passed, before he asked me.

"What draws you here?"

I considered. "I don't know, really. It's not the silence – I could just go to sleep; and it's not the... I don't know. I've done so much, that now everything feels like so little. I'm quite the opposite of the people who have a purpose. I feel like I've passed my purpose long ago. But that's not even what troubles me. Any purpose I can think of having fulfilled seems so... inconsequential. I'd ask, why? Why do any of that? To whom, to when will it matter? What if we were meant to simply exist? And so I started coming out here, because what better way to exist, what better place than here? You get a scope, really, of the vastness we're in. Lie down, and you can see infinity. Look down, and you'll see the infinite. I don't quite know what I'm saying. Do you?"

He laughed, a short exhalation of breath that seemed to contain all the mirth in the world. "If it's not too much of a stretch, I might even say I understand better than you might think." He paused for a moment before saying, "August the next, come to the island of Azathoth. I for one, must get going - I can't have all the time in your world, can I?"

He stood up, and walked away, into the pines behind us. I didn't follow him.



"Strange Fields I" | Image Courtesy: Marat Zakirov on Artstation

CHAPTER III

The heat grew as I neared the center. Through the tops of the trees in the distance, I could make out the faint outline of the upper edge of the wall. The trees were exceptionally leafy for their sort - denser than any I'd ever seen before, and quite a bit taller as well. I had left half my supplies in the Shaman's hut, which had been empty when I had come to it. I started my journey in the late afternoon, and judging by the distance I had yet to cover I suspected It'd be noon by the time I'd reach the center. The sky was already dark at four, and it seemed nightfall at six. I was in the forest, nearing its inner edge by now. I'd seen no animals, save birds and squirrels, and given the Island's geography, I was not surprised. The island was the remnant of a volcano, that had killed the people who lived on its slope, until 700 BC. Underneath the ground I walked upon, were the buried remains of the previous civilization, preserved in the ash that killed them. The ash, however, proved a blessing for the people who would come to live on the island. They were farmers, to start out. They discovered the ash's incredible effects n their produce soon enough, and soon their livelihoods depended almost solely upon it. The ash was a natural resource, and the Thothians a fair people, so there were no squabbles arising from greed, they used as much as they needed, and it was enough for the entire populace. But after the Blessing, the Blessed claimed the source of the ash - the crater of the volcano - for their own, for they were no longer equals with the other Thothians. No, they rose above by an immeasurable distance, for was it not the very father of their gods who had chosen to descend upon their humble lands and bless them? And of course, such a valuable commodity as the ash needs must be preserved for the use of such divine people, and so they built a great wall about the Island's center, and forever disappeared from the outside world.



It had taken the direct command of a Shaman to make them grudgingly acquiesce to having an outsider walk their lands. I knew I was unwelcome as soon as the gate guard set eyes on me. I had to take off my jacket, and I was covered in a rough shawl of nettles, and given a lump of putrid, smoke-emitting embers to hold, to purify the land even as I walked upon it. After half an hour of preparations, I walked through the main walls, taking care to duck below the low arch, and laid my eyes upon the city.

It was absolutely horrible. I had conjured up visions of a spiritually advanced populace of sentient beings, who had brought heaven to earth, and lived in the very dreams we did not dare to dream. And to immediately dispel those visions, the reality of the place rushed out at me - a decrepit collection of old mud huts, in varying states of disrepair. There was not a soul to be seen on the streets, and not a sound to be heard, save for the breeze of the heat. The occasional sign of modern progress showed itself; a neon light on a hut, a shattered fluorescent light on the ground. The demographic of the place was nearly identical to that of the island outside - almost no children, and absolutely no aged members of society. The only glimpses of life I managed to find were the occasional silhouettes of people prostrate in the houses, seemingly asleep. There was simply no movement. There were temples everywhere, scattered like some disregarded cobwebs in an old stairwell. I walked about the city for an hour before deciding I had seen enough. This, then, was a city of the immortal, if such a thing even existed. There was no beauty in the solitude, no solace in the silence. There was no air of vitality, no feeling of the infinite. There was only the unmistakable stench of a purposeless existence. The ground was dry, and unkempt, patches of dying grass marking untrodden paths. Roofing tiles littered the sides of the houses, and the smell of the embers I held in my hand permeated the whole of the city. The sky above was a startling grey, devoid of stars or a heavenly presence of any sort. It seemed almost impossible that these were a blessed people, that they were somehow immortal.

It was with disgust that I handed the cloak of nettles and the embers back to the gatekeeper. He no longer possessed any aura of wondrous mystery - he was simply a product of the barren city I had seen. He was not a being worthy of any more reverence than I would afford a beggar. I was even angry at him, possessing an unreasonable notion that I was the victim of some practical joke of his, that I had somehow been duped into believing, and hoping for wonders. As I passed through the wall, my anger changed to an oddly affecting disappointment. I supposed I had hoped to receive some sort of respite from my own despair, and I had instead been led into a city that personified it. I didn't have to duck when the arch came. My head was bowed enough to allow me an unhindered passage.

I found a small horse awaiting me upon exiting the outer perimeter of the wall, beside it, the Shaman on a larger, black workhorse. He had a strange, calm smile.

"I trusted you would welcome a horse for your journey back."

CHAPTER IV

We sat in his hut, each with a mug of a strangely intoxicating infusion of coconut and Bolat fern. We watched the fireplace for a while. It was never awkward, not talking to the Shaman; he seemed to mirror whatever you happened to be doing, a dialogue in actions. And so when I looked at him, ready to talk, he knew.

"What did you find?"



"It was nothing like I expected. I suppose I shouldn't have. Expected, that is. Are they really?"

He sighed. "Immortal? Yes, they are. I don't suppose you know the full story, however." "Yes, " he sad in response to my entreating glance. "I shall tell you."

"In a time long ago, barely in the grasp of human memory, lived a people on this very island. They were a barbarous people, sinners, and pillagers, ravagers of the land. And Azathoth, being displeased with them, called upon the mountain to release its great flood of fire, and buried the people under the ashes of the fire. The mountain cooled, and in the years after the waters rose about the mountain, came another people, a peaceable, hard-working group of farmers. They settled upon the island, and tilled the lands till they were again green, and flourished. But one day, a native found a cave, in search of water. In this cave, he read the inscriptions of the earlier people, and their sparse talk of Azathoth. The man felt the greatness of the father of the gods, and so created a small temple in his hut, where he would teach anyone who was willing to be taught of Azathoth's greatness. He spoke of life and death, he spoke of living and dying. He spoke of the land and the heavens, and to all who listened, it seemed as though Azathoth himself was speaking through him. He was the first Shaman of the Island of Azathoth, and the knowledge he created is revered even to this day. He meant well by his teachings, but there were young men on the island who saw an opportunity in what he spoke of. The young men were dishonest, and turned their backs upon honest work, and so under the guise of prayer to Azathoth, they created temples, and would spend the day in complete sloth, chanting verses in praise of the Father of the Gods. Following their example, numerous men and women renounced work and did but pray. And so, there were two kinds of people on the island; those who believed in honest work to please Azathoth, and those who believed in futile, lazy prayer to appease their god. After seven generations had passed, Azathoth again descended upon the land, to see

what had become of his creation, and when he saw, he was passing wroth with those, who in the the name of prayer, forsook true labor, and so, he cursed them. He cursed them with immortality. But he gave it in the guise of a blessing, and those who received it were passing glad, and scorned at he others, who Azathoth had cursed with shortened lives, for they had renounced prayer altogether. But when he saw that in their very work was their devotion to the Father of Gods, he gave them the Bolat fern, that they must partake of it but once in their lives, and need no bread or water for evermore. But greatest of all his gifts to them, was the gift of wisdom. And so they understood, without agitation, when the immortals walled themselves in the centre of the island, and when they claimed the ash for their own."

There was a pause for as long as a minute, during which I stared down at my cup, subconsciously trying to discern the separate ingredients in the tea. "How long do you live for?"

"We go through an entire lifetime in five years."

"How do you... do anything? Ho do you get anything done?"

He smiled.

"It is as you said the other day. Why? When you have little enough of anything, you begin to do one thing - prioritize. What is the most important immediately comes to the front, and stays there. Our shortened lives are a blessing, and we accept it with gladness. We are content to live, to be part of this world we share. We feel no need to speed up progress, simply because we have asked all the right questions before we began. We simply are, and we are happy. It is not an aimless life, nor a restrictive one - it is one of the utmost of free will, but informed free will. The immortals have the rest of their lives to do what it is they want. Their lives are an endless cycle of wanting, and doing it later, and seeking stimulation, and doing it later, and finding purpose, and finding it later, simply because it makes no difference whether they do it now, or in forever. They are a cursed people, truly."

I pondered what he had said. "Less is more?"

"Less is more."

- Anonymous

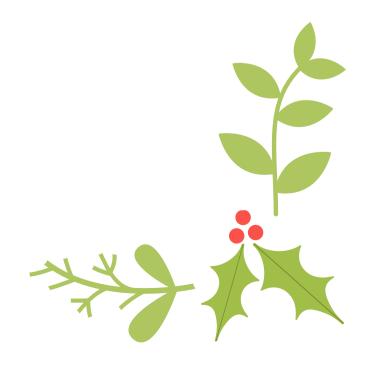
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WISHING YOU A MERRY

CHRISTMAS!

FROM THE INDUS DISPATCH





The Editorial Board Announces:

Know anything about anything? Of course you do. Think it's interesting enough for people to know about? Even better. For our new "information section", to be put into practice from the October edition, we invite you to send us any snippets of useful information you may have gathered over the course of your careers. from a handy way to make pasta sauce, to surviving an eel attack - we welcome everything. As always, reach out to us at: aarush.kumbhakern@indusschoolhyd.com

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