

The monster rises...

It's right there, in front of you!

Or is it?

Monsters of the Mind

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A Note From the Team



Monsters have, for centuries, been symbols of a civilization's nightmares and manifestations of the society's fears and anxieties. "Monster" derives from the Latin word *monstrum*, which in turn derives from the root *monere*, meaning to warn. To be a monster is to be an omen, more than an odious creature of imagination, employed in domains as diverse as religion, medicine, literature, and politics. We humans are accustomed to fearing the mysterious and unknown, but fear is meant to be conquered. This magazine acknowledges the darkness within, for that is what fires the impossible and pushes one out of the obvious into the inevitable, testing all limitations and provoking the dormant hero onto the centre stage.

The Headliner, *Veni Vidi Vici*, is a reflection on the mind's dark playground and how the residing demons wreck havoc in the smallest of decisions in the form of fear, procrastination, anxiety, depression or simply temptation. It highlights the fact that the essence of victory lies not in denial or futile attempts to condemn and kill our weaknesses, but rather in acknowledging them and using it as an impetus to bring out the best for ourselves.

The mind is a peculiar place - while it is the reason why we, humans, are "sane" beings, it often plays with our sanity. The story, *Evanescent*, is an attempt to show how the demons in our mind take over and trick us into believing in them, losing all rationale behind.

How these monsters play out in *The Game of Life* is what the *Impressions* talks about. A man, in his life, grows and goes through several experiences and it is entirely up to him how he responds and what he learns from each moment.

'*Monsters of the Mind*' is an endeavour to celebrate our weaknesses, justifying their existence in our life, because the ultimate winner is not one who has lived all his life in the feigned light, but one who has crossed and conquered the dark.

Veni.

Justi
Viva.



The Dark Playground, a place where we've all been - a place every procrastinator knows well - where leisure plays around when it's not supposed to. The air that you breathe in the Dark Playground is one filled with guilt, dread and anxiety. Staring at the blinking cursor on the blank script editor, desperately wishing you were anywhere else, perhaps at Nescafe chatting with your friends. Just one cup of coffee. And before you know it, the one cup has turned into a stroll around the campus and a movie marathon and a night out and an entire bizarre purgatory of weird activities. The terminal and script editor is still blank.

The closer one is to sources of temptation, the easier it is to convince one out of work. At college, where even the library is filled

with friends and has good internet connection, a "short break" can easily turn into hours wasted.

All-team meetings in SAC-CR are an occasion to mingle and socialise in the preceding months until "real" work and productivity starts, just a couple of weeks before the fest is scheduled.

The way things work with us IITians is that there is a "deadline". And then there is the "real deadline". Some people, brimming with narcissism, focused obsession or boundless self discipline, might catch up with work, but for most of us it is the looming

threat, this panic monster, that gives the push. A student's schedule is mostly lectures in the morning and laboratories/tutorials in the afternoon. One is at liberty to fill the rest of the day with chosen tasks and self imposed deadlines. Yet we value those last few hours before the assignment submission time, the last weekend before minors/majors, the last 5 minutes of an exam much more than any ordinary moment. An eased out plan of action is the rational course, but who said rationality is a human trait? The prevailing monsters of our mind chart out the chaotic life we complain about. So is there an escape? A course to conquer? Or are we doomed to all-nighters powered by nothing but blind panic and coffee?

Procrastination is one of the many monsters which sits inside the head to dictate our actions. Why do we really house these monsters inside the head? Why not kill them once and for all?



Defined as gruesome to behold and a threat to all who cross them, monsters are creatures we run from, beasts we warn children about, creatures that repel and mesmerise us at the same time. Terrible as they might be, we cannot help looking closer and completing the image, parting the fingers that are covering our eyes. They have been embedded in humanity, civilization and our minds since times immemorial.

What it is about monsters that is so alluring is hard to say. The very thought makes the heart pump faster, hairs stand on end, and sweat pour down the face. Nevertheless, children clamor for ghost stories around the campfire and adults lineup to see films featuring vampires, werewolves and psychedelic paranoids. They terrify, yet we cannot get enough of them. Because what would Batman be without the Joker? And it is not green, one eyed slimy monster that runs and ruins, but the dark force that pulls us towards the forbidden fruit and away from constructive labour, the master puppeteer sitting in the mind.

Not only do angels exist because there are demons, but it's the villain who keeps the hero on his toes. Such are the monsters of our mind, the agents of chaos in our head. There's no denying to the fact that if there were no demons, there would be tranquility all around. No hero, no villain, everyone at peace. But who would like to live in a world like that, our scandalous head needs some drama! Quoting Darwin, "Monsters don't live under the bed, they live inside our head." The human mind needs monsters, they upset the order and introduce a little anarchy which manifests into us, analysing and introspecting our actions. It's amidst that darkness which they enkindle that we are forced to light our own lamp. We came across an interesting analogy that distinguishes the mind of a non-procrastinator from that of procrastinator. While the former can be described as a Rational-Decision-Maker, the latter has a pet- the Instant Gratification Monkey coexisting with the rational creature. What's more, the rational one doesn't know the first thing about owning this monkey, that is, to not trust him in decision making! The monkey's thinking is only confined to the present and maximising ease of today by minimising individual effort. Why code on the computer when you youtubing is a lot more fun?



The term monsters manifests not only what we fear, but also what is not acceptable to us. When our mind tricks us into doing something that seems strange to us, we are entrapped in two layers, one that forbids us from doing the unexplored while the monstrous second trying to rebel.

Where would the human society be had there been no rebellions? Like historical rebellions are well known to have brought out different perspectives, the little terrors inside our head shed light on the internal conflicts and resolve the incongruence between what we think and what we do. The biggest monster that comes to our mind when we think of monsters residing in our head is depression. Let's talk about it. Depression is essentially anger turned inwards. One twirl is all that's needed to divert this fire on the right road. It's when we dive deep within that we develop an understanding of ourselves. The very cause of depression is that we are taught to value "things" more than "thoughts", but when things betray us despite all exhaustion, we start contemplating. Undoubtedly depression causes pain, but there's value in that pain. It's not depression that causes suffering, but the unwillingness to see the value in it. Monsters of our mind are forever reproducing, metamorphosing, playing around, messing with rationality, diminishing, enlarging and anything but annihilating. They are mysterious, and while unwinding the threads of a mystery, fearing the unknown is never the right thing to do. It is for us to reign them in and use them to fire our thoughts and actions to emerge as a hero in life.

“ Celebrate your flaws,
Go fearless into the dark
It's worth it because
When you come out, you'll carry the spark.

And there will come a day
When you walk towards the light
That'll be the day
When your shadows fall out of sight. ”

Evanescence

Not everything is Black and White

The first time he held my hand, he caught my breath. I was so excited. We went to this little cafe where people come and share their travel stories. An Irish guitar was playing and coffee was being served. I looked at him. There he was, sitting beside me, laughing without an etch of worry on his face, looking over to me and winking at me with a smirk. The host called all for a dance and he offered me his hand. There wasn't a question. This is where I was meant to be, right here, happy and content with his hands in mine. The dance came to an end but he didn't let go of my hand. That's when I was sure that this man, this charming idiot is the one. But now I am not sure. Not after yesterday.

I am a bit scared too. Not that we haven't had

our fights in the past few months because we have. A lot. Every day. It's always the same, every single day. Every minute he is so enamoured with that yellow suitcase of his. He thinks it will make everything alright. He thinks it will make all his problems melt away if he opens that box which holds all his drugs, the one he calls his sunshine, the yellow suitcase..he thinks I am his problem. Am I? I never thought so. At least, not before yesterday. I thought we were going through a rough patch. That if I put in enough efforts, I will get him back - that guy with the crooked infectious smile, the guy I fell in love with, the one who made it all alright. And he thinks all this effort I put in for his sake is because I am trying to "cure" him. Like he is some diseased man. As if! All I am trying to find is the man who made me laugh when I was down; the man who wasn't always replying in monosyllables; the man who put in efforts to keep "us" alive.

I confronted him last evening. Told him how he was - too deep in the abyss he had created.

Have you ever felt so frustrated, so exasperated, so crushed that all you can do is sit back and laugh hysterically?! That's me. They think I'm insane. They laugh at me because I'm different. Well guess what, I laugh at them because they're all the same. And her? Is it really her? No, it isn't. She isn't the yellow of my life. Not the sunshine, the warmth, the happiness, the support system I thought she could be. No. It's a shapeless, melting, dripping, ugly, terrifying and disgusting entity resembling her. Holding my precious precious small yellow suitcase, my sunshine, handing me out photographs of the evening before. The photographs melting into abyss and as I try to touch them I enter a tunnel of darkness landing on floor lying next to the locked suitcase. She thinks she's good for me? Well I thought that once too. She thinks she can "CURE" me? I am not diseased. She will make me so. I am sure. I haven't been more sure of anything in my life.

I confronted him last evening. Told him how he was far too deep in the abyss he has created for himself. The usual daily drama. But this time I have more to offer because it never occurred to me before. I told him to look at himself. I was crying at how this fight never has an ending. I wanted a closure. So, I showed him his photographs - passed out, wasted in a trash can and said, "I don't know what is trash anymore. You know what? You don't even know what I am talking about. Look at yourself! What have you become?! Your eyes are never sober or sane. All you ever do is say 'hmm' and 'k' and you know what?! It's not a frickin' text conversation. People are supposed to talk. As in face to face, heart to heart talk. All I know is that the suitcase holds your heart and I can't bear to look at your face. You are doing nothing! All you ever do is drugs. And alcohol. Do I mean anything to you at all? I love you. I really do but I don't like you anymore. What have you become? What have we done to each other? What have 'we' become?" And I took the keys and locked his case. That's when he broke. That's when I saw that broken man inside, the man whose mind has been washed away with that white powder. He gave an unearthly cry and tried to take the key from me. He was mad! I still shudder from that expression of his. I was scared. I realised how alone I was. That's when I realised I need to take it all in my hand. But before doing something I had to give it one last chance. So I picked my scrapbook and cut all our photos together and put it all on the desk where he had passed out. I remember feeling a pang of pain after looking at him as I slammed out of the house taking the key of his yellow suitcase with me.

I wish I hadn't locked the door, I feel so trapped, trapped in this room, trapped in this brain, trapped in this life. The walls seems to be closing in on me, getting closer with every step I take. I steal a look at her. A normal person who doesn't feel like this, who has no idea what it is like to be dependent on a few grams of white powder. Normal. Who decides normal? My life has taught me to be careful. I trust my heart and mind. And when I look around myself, I can't help smiling at them. They think drugs are harmful. Well guess what, people do you more harm and here you mock my love for something that gives me everything I ache for. Have I lost to it? No. It has helped me win, find purpose. See through the superficial haze.

Back to where I am. Long back, she was the key. We lost it. Now she has the key, to my sunshine. Refusing to give it back. And they say I am blind to it all. Stupid. Stubborn. Yet all I yearn for is my sunshine.

For the first time, this makes me wonder. She's not good for me alright, is she really any good? For anyone? The blind, insensitive, stupid devil. Devil with the angel's face. A black heart. No, heartless. She doesn't deserve me. She doesn't deserve a single thought spared. She doesn't deserve to live. Yes, that's it. She deserves to die. For the greater good. She. Must. Die.

I raised the broken bottle and heaved myself upon her. Yes. The key. Got the key. Fine, let her cry. I can't hold myself together anymore and I'll just let it all go and yes. Got it. My sunsh...

I take a cab to my office. I feel nostalgic, sick and desperate. I am sure I can't do this anymore. I am so mad at him! I am so mad at myself. I am going out of my mind. This is getting problematic. I can't concentrate on my work anymore. I don't talk to people anymore, least of all those who care about me. I am going down this never ending slope and I don't know how to climb back up. I am lonely. And I am high strung all the time. I lied the other day to my boss and friends. I never lie. Or atleast used to. I hide things from my best friend. She's worried but it just makes me mad. I somehow feel everyone should know what I am going through even if I don't talk about it. I want people to magically help me through whatever I am going through. I use work as an escape. I have created this wall I can't break through. I am so high strung all the time, just waiting for the strings to break. I sigh as I wrap up to go to that hellhole again. This time, for once and all I am going to get a completion to whatever we have become.

The audacity! The nerve! The reckless reckless monster! She locked the "yellow drug case" again. Left the silly scrapbook on the table, does she think I'm thick headed? I haven't forgotten that this was yet another time I misplaced my trust on a person. It's not a collection of memories. It's my bundle of regrets. It's almost time. This time she's not going to live. She hates me and I'll give her enough reason to do so. Reason she's going to pay off with her life. Let her come back. This time, it will be finally over. She is going to return me my sunshine, my suitcase of happiness. This time, for once and all I am going to get a completion to whatever we have become.

I reach home and call out to him lovingly but what meets me shocks me to the core. It is not him. Not a man at all. It is an animal. A nightmare. A monster. He lunges with the bottle in his hand, the broken end sticking out dangerously. This time, he means it. I can see it in his eyes. I grab the first thing that I find, the Irish guitar it is, and I hit and hit and hit and hit with all that is left of me and in me. My vision is blurred with tears of agony and helplessness and I can see him sink to the ground. But this time I know he won't, he can't rise. It's all over. The bloodied guitar mocks all my broken strings and I have lost not just my heart, but a piece of me. The bitter tears gush freely and I let them wash over all illusions I had about him. Or about me. They say you either die a hero or live long enough to see yourself become the villain. Today I earned my freedom, and my soul paid the price.



*The
Game
of Life*



*The Solitary Gambler; the stakes are high,
His mind and heart, true players;
He has his virtues and his monsters,
Muddling with love, happiness, worries and fears.
One man grows through the game of life,
His demons, like him, morphing continuously.*

*Beginning as the impressionable Infant,
On the threshold of a future and no history.
Perceiving thoughts and things in ways yet a mystery.
The "unknown" to him arouses sensation,
He is yet to learn the fear of anticipation.*

*Soon ready to take on the world. The Believer;
Of fairies in the sky and the demons down under.
What he sees with his eyes and mind,
Of tales and fables, and victory and plunder.
The darkest dark and pixie dust, shooting stars and magic burst.*

*And then he grows into the Rebel,
With anxious first steps and emotions overwhelmingly strong.
The fear of disappointment and shattering expectations,
Clouding priorities, dreams, right and wrong.
Then a Soldier. Seeking guts, grit and glory,
Ready to thwart his monsters and pen down his story.*

*Thus he slips into the midlife crisis, the Seasoned Pawn.
Feeding judgements, superstitions, insecurities,
Full of wise saws and modern instances,
Drawing a line on what supposedly are his own possibilities.
And then he lies in retrospect, awaiting the inevitable.
The dawn long gone, darkness to stay.
Once shining eyes and youth and memories fading away.*

*And then the time finally comes.
That ends this strange struggle and speculation;
When he is at solace and sunk in oblivion.
On the threshold of the unknown yet again.*

*The game charts out
Of the king, clergy, knight, spectator, slave, sinner.
And if it were to end tonight,
Would you call yourself a Winner?*

killall

[GAZETTALE_18]