

CHILDHOOD PHOTOS OF OUR TEACHERS



The Cosmopolitan

End-Of-Year 2025

Wednesday

16th July 2025

Edition #4/2025

TIME
FOR
ICE
CREAM!

AND...

THE DANGERS
OF MICROPLASTICS

HELLO
SUMMER
GOODBYE
SCHOOL!

BOOKS FOR
THE
BEACH

BEACH READS



MO XIANG TONG XIU HEAVEN OFFICIAL'S BLESSING

Picked by Alma Schnitger

This is a long book series of 8 books which I would suggest to anyone who liked reading Harry Potter, Percy Jackson or any other fantasy book. It takes place in ancient China and it's about a fallen/banished god joining the ranks of heaven officials again (he goes on lots of missions) and his journey as he builds up his reputation again.

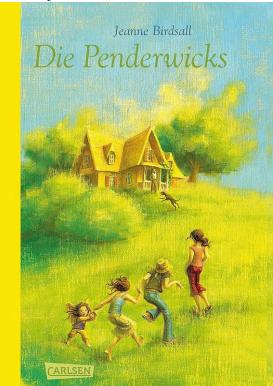
If you like romance, this could also be for you because there is a slight romance between him and his friend, the infamous and stylish ghost king, Hua Cheng!

Wishing you lots of fun if you do decide to read it! It's a bit of a long one, but definitely worth reading! ■

JEANNE BIRDSELL THE PENDERWICKS

Picked by Nike Krückeberg

The book series is available in both English and German (but I prefer it in German). It is a WONDERFUL book about a lovely family summer vacation. The Penderwicks, a family made up of one father (the mother died due to cancer), four sisters and the best dog in the world. This family is about to have the best summer vacation – for everyone. Rosalind (oldest sister) will learn a thing or two about love, Skye (middle sister) meets her best friend for life and Jane (also middle sister) will write the best book yet in her book series. Batty, the animal-loving and understanding little sister, goes on one or two (very grown-up) adventures on her own with Hound (the dog). Most importantly, the sisters meet Jeffrey, son of the woman who rents their vacation house and a musical talent.



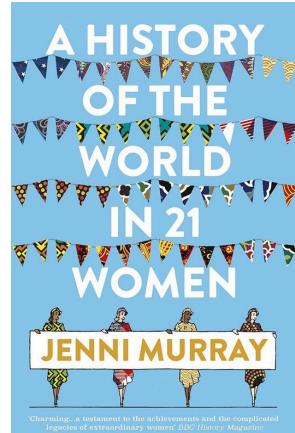
JENNI MURRAY A HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN 21 WOMEN

Picked by Luise Lichtenstein

A History of the World in 21 Women is a compelling collection of biographies by English journalist Jenni Murray, first published in 2018. Spanning centuries and continents, the book highlights 21 extraordinary women whose lives and achievements have shaped the course of history, from Queen Isabella of Castile and Marie Curie to Angela Merkel and many others.

Together, this chaotic family has the best summer vacation – just like you will with this book.

P.S. : Be sure to read the rest of the book series! ■



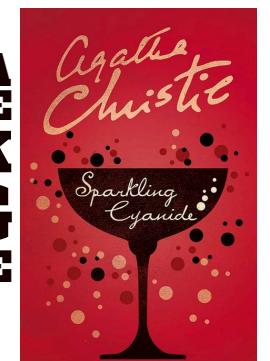
If you grew up reading *Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls*, this book feels like its natural progression, offering a more mature, in-depth look at the lives behind the names you likely encountered as a young child. Murray's work not only celebrates how far society has come in the fight for women's rights, but also serves as a poignant reminder of the challenges that remain on the road to true gender equality. It's an inspiring, thought-provoking read that underscores the message that anything is possible. ■

AGATHA CHRISTIE SPARKLING CYANIDE

Picked by Stella Krückeberg

I think murder mysteries are great beach reads, because they're fast-paced, easy to read and intriguing. Agatha Christie is considered the queen of crime fiction, and this is one of my favorite of her books.

Iris Marle was only 17 when her life was upturned – at a dinner party, her older sister Rosemary died of Cyanide poisoning. The packet was found in her bag,



**Book Picks
from the
Editorial
Team of The
Cosmopolitan**

and the death was determined a suicide. But Iris as well as Rosemary's husband, George, could never truly believe it. And on top of that, every person who was at the dinner table that night had some strange link to Rosemary and a reason to dislike her. When Iris turns 18, George organizes a dinner, at the same restaurant, with the same people, and an empty place where Rosemary had sat the year before. Everyone is uncomfortable at this horrid memory being stirred up again. They toast, the lights go off as a show begins, and when they turn back on, they are brutally confronted with a picture of the past – George is dead... there was cyanide in his champagne glass.

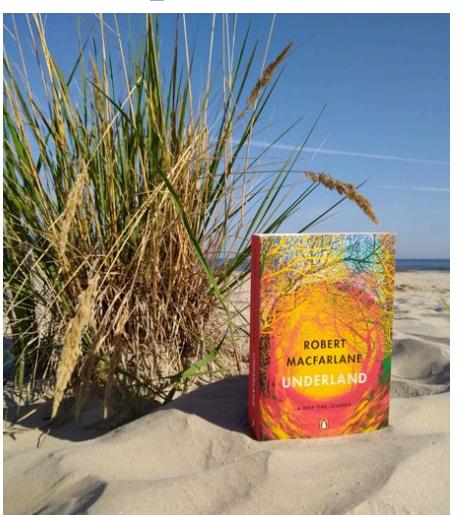
Since it is a murder mystery, I would only recommend this to people who think they can handle death and similar "adult" topics, but since most of the book is about solving the mystery, it's much more logic and thinking than death and poison. If you like detective fiction, give it a go, or try another Agatha Christie book, there are a lot to choose from. ■

ROBERT MACFARLANE UNDERLAND

Picked by Ms Donelan

Not too bulky for your beach bag, this is a fascinating read about the underground spaces of the world that we tend to forget about – "the realm from which dreams arise".

With the help of local experts and unusual guides, MacFarlane explores the traces our ancestors have left underground, and questions what kind of underworld we will leave our 'deep time' descendants. Divided into three 'chambers', each chapter is self-contained, so it's perfect for dipping in and out of. Warning: take a deep breath. If you're claustrophobic, you're going to love the chapter on tunnelling through the Parisian catacombs! ■

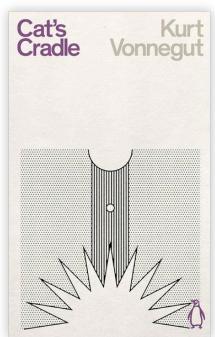


KURT VONNEGUT CAT'S CRADLE

Picked by Aeneas Toschek

What do the father of the atomic bomb, a calypso-singing prophet, a secretive Caribbean dictator, and a substance that can freeze all water on Earth have in common? They form the so-called *karass* of the narrator and protagonist of Kurt Vonnegut's brilliant novel, *Cat's Cradle*. -> cont.





A karass, according to *Bokonism* – a fictional religion built on comforting lies and absurd truths to help people cope with a chaotic, indifferent world – is a group of individuals mysteriously linked together to fulfill a sort of divine purpose – often without their knowledge or consent (this purpose is supposedly revealed after death).

The narrator (who refers to himself as Jonah) initially sets out to write a book about the whereabouts of notable Americans on the day the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. His quest leads him to the three eccentric children of Dr. Felix Hoenikker, the book's fictional "Father of the Atomic bomb", and eventually to the remote island of San Lorenzo – a fictional dictatorship where Bokonism is officially punishable by death, yet secretly practiced by nearly everyone, in a place where deception is a way of life; lies are law – everyone knows it. There, Jonah finally encounters the infamous Ice-Nine, "the last gift Felix Hoenikker created for mankind before going to his just reward" (p. 40), a doomsday substance capable of freezing all life, now in the hands of the naïve and easily manipulated Hoenikker offspring. It doesn't end well.

At just 230 pages, Vonnegut manages to craft an unparalleled panorama of human

existence, offering a rich narrative in which not a single sentence is wasted. *Cat's Cradle* is a bitterly humorous satire on scientific progress and the structures we cling to for meaning, but also a haunting meditation on the fragile and oftentimes absurd human pursuit of knowledge and power. Above all: it is human like few other things I've read – showcasing our deep-rooted desire for meaning, the dangers of human folly and the not far-fetched threat we pose to ourselves just by *being* – all built on a foundation of invented truths that feel disturbingly real. After all, this is what we're left with: "The heartbreaking necessity of lying about reality and the heartbreaking impossibility of lying about it." (p. 238) A comedy that ends the world, and explains it too. ■

SO MANY BOOKS, SO LITTLE Wi-Fi!

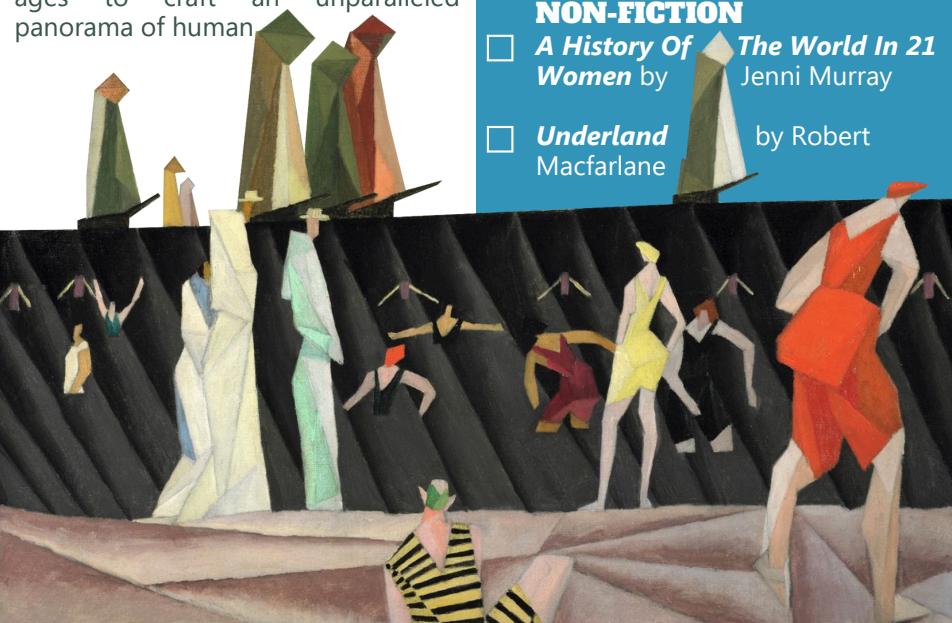
THE COSMOPOLITAN SUMMER READING CHECKLIST 2025

NOVELS

- Heaven Official's Blessing* by Mo Xiang Tong Xiu
- The Penderwicks* by Jeanne Birdsall
- Sparkling Cyanide* by Agatha Christie
- Cat's Cradle* by Kurt Vonnegut

NON-FICTION

- A History Of The World In 21 Women* by Jenni Murray
- Underland* by Robert Macfarlane



If you've ever watched *The Big Bang Theory* or *Young Sheldon*, you'll know that Sheldon Cooper is a genius physicist who knows basically everything. He's also very careful, if not to say paranoid. So when his friend tells him he won't die of a meteor strike, he responds: "You know who else said that? Every cocky T-Rex currently swimming around in the gas tank of your car." The writers probably intended it to be just a joke like any other, but to me, it was an idea I had heard just one time too many – cartoons, movies, even people had told me or mentioned that gasoline or oil was made of dinosaurs. The fact that this simply wrong fact had even made itself into a show that was supposed to represent fictional genius minds of science baffled and annoyed me immensely. How did this myth become so publicly accepted (especially in the USA) that it made it into a science show completely unchallenged?

Crude oil is actually made of the remains of algae, plankton and other marine microorganisms that gathered at the floor of the sea millions of years ago, most of it between 65 and 250 million years ago. These layers, covered by sediment, changed chemically in anaerobic conditions (without oxygen) with millions of years and under extreme pressure and heat.

This theory, termed the Biogenic Theory of Petroleum Origin, has been researched and propagated since the 16th century. Most notably, Russian scientists Mikhail Lomonosov is credited with being the first to postulate that oil was created from ancient marine organisms in the 1750s. Since then, scientists have proven this theory correct and accumulated more and more evidence, down to biomarkers – remnant molecules in oil or sediments that changed only a little from when they were part of a living organism. These biomarkers prove that the very large majority of crude oil is made of algae, zoo-plankton and similar organisms. 70% of the world's oil deposits began in the Mesozoic Era, the time that encompassed the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous Periods.

That means T-Rex and Stegosaurus were around when they did, but the fact that oil deposits began in the ocean makes it basically impossible



By
Stella
Krückeberg

for them to have any influence on the oil or be a part of it. The presence of any large animals – marine dinosaurs or other reptiles – is unlikely since their dead bodies would be decomposed by worms or bacteria quicker than they could be covered by sediment and reach that anaerobic condition that prevents decay. It is, of course, not impossible that minimal parts of our crude oil reserves contain biological material from dinosaurs. However, that fraction is incredibly small and is definitely not big enough to accurately claim that oil is made of dinosaurs.

With all this extensive scientific research, why is the myth that fossil fuels are made of dinosaurs so widespread, especially in the USA? In addition to the unfortunate name – fossil fuels connotes literal fossils, which most associate with dinosaurs immediately – many link this myth back to the Sinclair Oil Corporation.

Sinclair Oil, founded in 1916 by Harry Sinclair, became one of the biggest oil companies in the US. In the 1930s, they began a new advertisement campaign – featuring a series of dinosaurs on their oil cans. The campaign was based on the fact that

most oil was formed when dinosaurs roamed the earth, which is not wrong. Sinclair wanted to impress consumers by reminding them that their oil was formed such a long time ago, which they hoped would make their product feel more mystical and special, but the Apatosaurus on their products began to be equated with the oil itself. Sinclair ran massive advertisements featuring dinosaurs, most famously their dinosaur exhibit at Chicago's World Fair in 1933-34, targeting children especially. The dinosaur stayed as Sinclair's mascot and the connotation "oil = dinosaurs" stayed in the minds of the public. Schools occasionally even taught it or differentiated too little to debunk the myth fully. As a result, it can even be found in relatively recent media – I noticed it in Cars 2 and even *The Big Bang Theory* (despite the character making the claim being a genius scientist who would never make such a mistake).

Can Sinclair Oil be blamed for the misconceptions a huge amount of people have? Not fully, but it has definitely played a role in the association created between oil and dinosaurs.

A CRUDE MISTAKE

No, Your Car Isn't Running on Dinosaurs: The Myth That Just Won't Go Extinct

While this is not in and of itself a dangerous misbelief, it may have side-effects. For one, any common misinformation disrupts the foundation more complex scientific knowledge could be built on. Furthermore, learning that something you learned in school is fundamentally incorrect could in some cases result in people no longer believing other facts they may have learned. This could be a good thing, if they go on to critically research the topics they are interested about, but a bad thing is it leads to a skepticism of science and well-backed research in general. All of these are a little bit of a stretch, and for me, the biggest problem is that this misconception can get in the way of critical debate in the topics of renewable energy and climate change. If every debate has to be stopped and the opposite party convinced that what they believe is true is not, that takes the focus and time away from bigger issues. Only if everyone has a proper education can informed debates and informed decisions happen. And on top of that, I just think it's annoying when people or the media casually repeat what they were taught or what they heard, with little to no critical thinking. To make sure that future generations will at least be aware of what crude oil truly is, we all have to do our part, informing people one by one that what they were taught or what they saw in Cars 2 should not always be believed. ■

"WE'RE EXPOSED!"

RICHARD THOMPSON, MARINE BIOLOGIST AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

BY YVA TOSCHEK

Microplastics have been found to be everywhere. "The air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat — it's in it," said Richard Thompson, a marine biologist at the University of Plymouth. There's no other direction for the microplastic to go but inside the human body — toward the top of the food chain. I for one started to panic when I found out about this and anxiously told my lunch table, expecting comfort, or at least agreement. "Well, if it's micro it doesn't matter, right?", I heard one of them joking around, subsequently being completely disillusioned and overwhelmed by their careless attitudes. Most of the people at my table just started making fun of me, indicating they thought of me as an "environmentalist" with unnecessary concerns.

Eventually, we got caught up in an argument, and somehow, it led to them admitting that they would actually throw a plastic bottle into nature while walking through the countryside or forest without a trash bin in sight. I found this to be the most irresponsible thing one could do; I thought it was obvious that humans must take everything they bring into a space back with them when leaving again, I assumed this to have been obvious since kindergarten! But again, these are only the superfluous thoughts of an over-the-top environmentalist (I, of course, would not refer to myself as an environmentalist).

According to scientists, it may take years before humans are in possession of the full comprehension of how these particles affect human health.



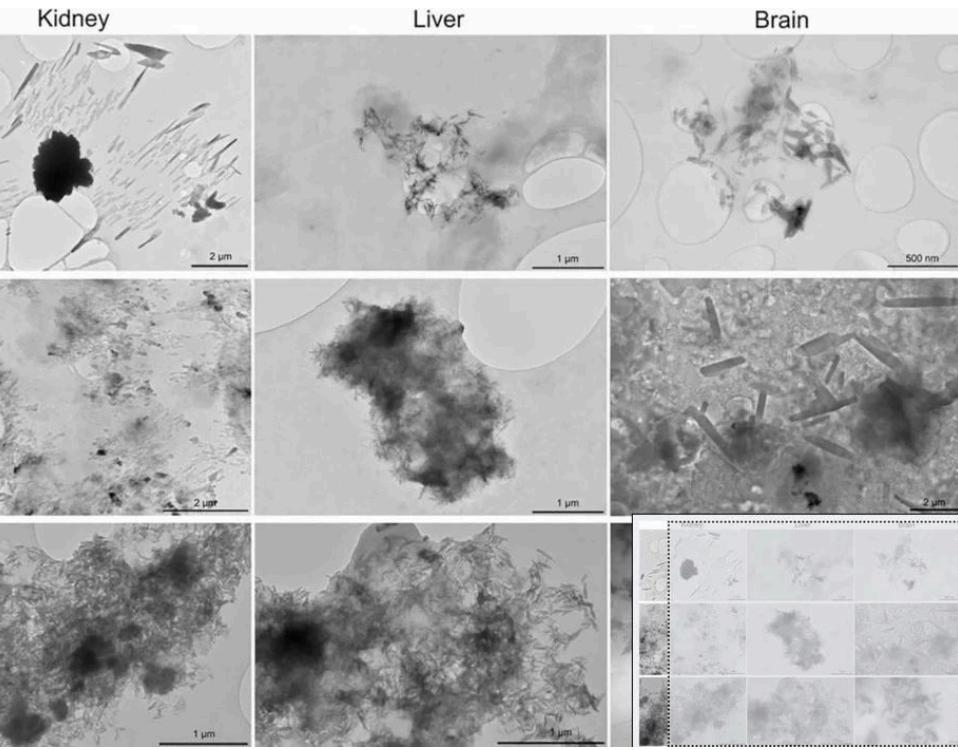
Microplastics often originate from larger plastic items that degrade due to use or when not discarded properly. The problem with plastic is that it doesn't really biodegrade but rather gets smaller and smaller over time. These tiny particles end up in the air, soil, water and food, becoming impossible to avoid. Humans inhale and ingest microplastics, with the consumed particles either settling inside our bodies or ending up in human stool and urine. It is logical too that microplastics can be found inside seafood as well, since marine life is surrounded by highly polluted water at all times — but what about plants and meat? Some research actually suggests the direct absorption of plastic particles by plants through the soil. This incorporates them into their roots, according to Christy Tyler, a professor of environmental science at the Rochester Institute of Technology. Of course, wild animals and plants also receive their share of plastic from polluted water, but the fact that insects

Currently, not only those at my lunch table, but most people in the world don't seem to care about the ubiquitous spread of microplastics, deeply engaged in their own lives. The situation bears shocking similarities to when the Swiss chemist Friedrich Miescher first discovered DNA in 1869: it was of no significance — no more than a substance found in cells — while nowadays it's one of the fundamental biomolecules in Biology. However, what scientists do know is that microplastics can be found everywhere imaginable, from the depths of the Mariana Trench to the heights of Mount Everest (and especially piling up inside our own bodies). A newly published study found the ocean to be even more extensively polluted than previously assumed — in fact, there are estimated to be at least 27 million metric tons in North Atlantic seas, a quantity that is greater than the weight of the total amount of wild animals in the world. But where does this microplastic suddenly come from?

MICROPLASTICS INSIDE THE HUMAN BODY

and animals can become contaminated simply by ingesting plants (including vegetables and fruits) was a connection too deep for me to make before. The amount of microplastics inside an animal likely depends on their position in the food chain, with the concentration increasing the higher up one goes. Some evidence also suggests that the human body absorbs microplastics (including harmful chemicals) from personal care products such as cosmetics, as well as from our clothes, which shed fibres as we move. While our bodies seem to remove major parts of these microplastics through human stool and urine, particles not excreted appear to pass out of the gut into the bloodstream. Traveling with the blood, they can easily migrate to other organs, such as the liver and brain. Jaques Robert, a professor of microbiology, immunology and of environmental medicine at the University of Rochester conducted research on tadpoles to determine what percentage of plastic they excrete and found that about 60 to 70 percent was eliminated.

To lower your exposure to microplastics, experts recommend focusing on your exposure from food, water and air. Here are the most effective steps:



Research on the effects of microplastics exposure to human digestive, reproductive, and refractory health indicate that microplastics can harm reproduction, lung and gut functioning and might increase the risk for lung and colon cancer. Other research also implies a connection between exposure to microplastics and depression. Dr. Robert's research on tadpoles has also revealed a weakening of the immune system to be caused by these particles.

Shockingly, the amount of microplastics found in our brains has increased by 50% over the past eight years, with concentrations continuing to rise. A recent study discovered that the exact amount of the microplastics in our brains is roughly equivalent to the size of a plastic spoon or seven pen caps. Scientist still haven't been able to identify the exact impact of these concerning particles, although some research suggests that there is an increased risk of dementia when there is more plastic in the brain. This could also be a false assumption, since it is based on the fact that the brains of people suffering dementia contain a higher amount of microplastics, which could also be caused by their inability to efficiently metabolise or expel synthetic particles from their system.

1) Avoid drinking bottled water

Research shows that plastic-bottled water might be a major source of microplastics. Although a 2024 study suggests that we have underestimated the concentration of microplastics in tap water, choosing tap water over bottled water can significantly reduce your routine exposure and is always better for the environment. If you are serious about reducing your microplastics intake, using a water filter is very effective. The best method, however, is boiling water and then cooling it, although this routine can be quite inconvenient.

2) Use glass or steel containers for food storage/heating

Experts recommend avoiding heating food in plastic containers and switching to glass or stainless steel containers for food storage.

3) Eat fresh fruits and vegetables

Although fruits and vegetables contain microplastics, packaged and processed foods contain far greater amounts — they can also accumulate in fish and meat.

4) Vacuum and use an air purifier

Vacuuming, using an air purifier and wiping surfaces (with wet cloths) can decrease the amount of microplastics you inhale and may prevent particles from returning to the air.

5) Wash newly bought clothes

After buying new clothes made of synthetic fibers, washing them before wearing can help reduce your personal exposure to microplastics. Choosing clothes made from natural fibers eliminates this concern altogether.

The exact effects of microplastics on the human body may not be clear yet, but its presence is no longer merely a speculation. Microplastic has ceased to be only an environmental issue; it has become a health concern, and the choices we make today will greatly affect future generations. In August, the UN Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee will hold a conference, aiming to finalise a treaty towards an internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution. Major outcomes of this conference will be reported in *The Cosmopolitan* next school year. ■

Left: Microplastics in human tissue (National Library of Medicine).

Have you ever seen a moth in your kitchen and screamed, "EW!" in disgust, then killed it...? I can understand why – because you don't want them laying eggs in your food, eating your clothes and fluttering around in your kitchen, right?

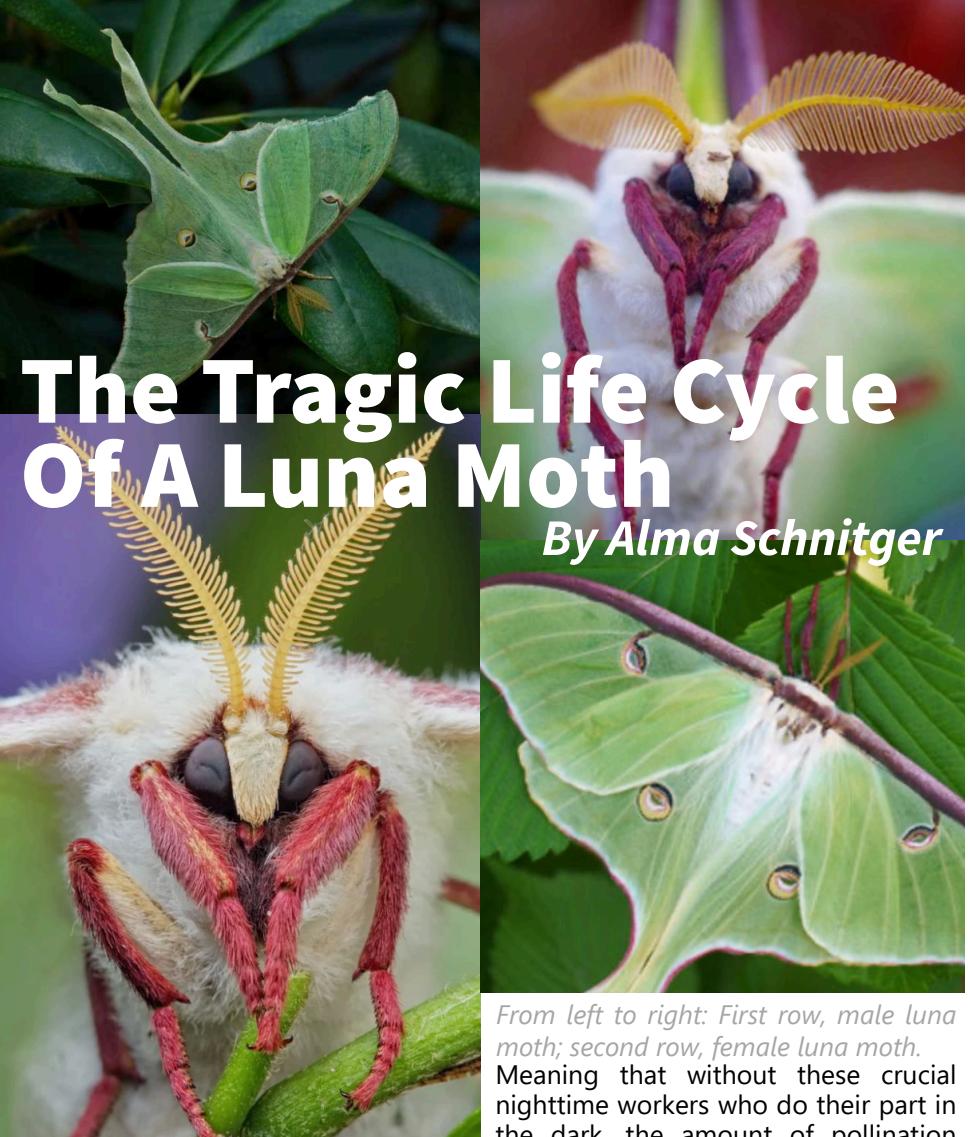
Well, the fact of the matter is that only a select type of moths live in pantries and look like the ones you see there, most are beautiful creatures which decorate the ceilings of forests at nighttime. Although I say butterflies and moths, scientifically speaking they are actually the same things, except moths are also fluffy because they are nocturnal (which means that they are active at night).

But it turns out that most species of butterfly only stay in a form with the ability to fly for about a week (depending on species because there are exceptions). And no, it's not that they only live for one week, it's just how their lifecycle has been organized. Would you like me to explain? I'll tell you!

I'm going to use the amazing and unearthly Luna Moth (scientifically called the *Actias Luna*) from north America and a few parts of Asia as an example to help you understand. A Luna Moth goes through several stages of metamorphosis in its lifespan: egg, larvae, pupa and adult.

The egg stage starts out exactly how you would think, as an egg, simple. A fun thing to know about moths and butterflies is that the mother will lay her eggs on a leaf so that when her babies hatch, they will not have to waste time or energy searching for food but can just eat what they are standing on.

The larva, (which is basically a worm if you're wondering) hatches from the egg about seven to thirteen days after it has been laid and starts eating the leaf it was born on. While in the larvae stage, the *Actias Luna* will go through five instars, or stages, of getting bigger and changing colouring. I'm not going to into detail about each stage specifically because it's just composed of them getting bigger and shedding their skin 5 times to allow themselves space to grow. When the larvae are ready to cocoon, they will wrap a leaf around themselves to camouflage and start forming it. Once they have formed their cocoon they will shed for the last time and then grow into pupa. Luna Moths usually stay in their cocoons and pupa forms for about 4-5 weeks



The Tragic Life Cycle Of A Luna Moth

By Alma Schnitger

until they emerge as beautiful moths to fly into the air, mate and lay eggs!! (Of course, they first need to stretch their wings and what-not).

After hearing about the travesty of their short life could you possibly reconsider killing them recklessly every time you see one? In fact, the ones you see in your kitchen usually live for even less time (25 days, can you imagine?) If you know that they will die a few days anyway, why would you want to shorten their life even more?

However, if you are still not convinced that their lives are worth sparing, consider this: According to an article by Tim Blackburn, a professor of invasion biology at UCL and author of *The Jewel Box*, "recent studies suggest that moths visitas many species by night as honeybees and bumblebees do by day, and the flowers of many of our crop species are included in their rounds."

From left to right: First row, male luna moth; second row, female luna moth.

Meaning that without these crucial nighttime workers who do their part in the dark, the amount of pollination would decrease dramatically!

It could affect the number of crops we can grow, causing price increases or even starvation.

I think I can say for sure that all of us want to avoid these lurking dangers, so it would be very kind of you to not kill every moth you see. Instead, you could try catching and releasing them from your home. It would allow them to complete their vital role in nature and prevent clothes moths from damaging your clothes – which they only ever eat because they are trapped somewhere, where they can't escape to find the usual food they eat in nature.

If you are wondering about some ways in which you could help even more – building a small bug hotel in moth season can be a fun and environmentally positive activity to spend your time on. You don't need to do anything fancy. Just some paper towels stuffed inside any old box laying around will do wonders. ■



Snakes (aren't that bad)

By Nike Krückeberg

I assume 90% of people who read this would scream and run away when they see a snake. The other 5% would be scared, but smart enough to slowly keep calm and back away. 3% would maybe eye the snake for a few moments, then just walk on. The last 2% (I think) would pick up the snake without a hint of fear and examine it in awe. Well, whoever reads this will change their behavior and mind about snakes, trust me. Snakes aren't that bad, especially in Germany. If you would realize the true wonder of nature and evolution found in the snake, you'd think about it differently. And for that to happen, let's start this article!

Common snakes in Germany

Snakes in Germany aren't nearly as dangerous as in other places in the world, like Australia or India. Yes, snakes are found in Germany, even some poisonous ones, but you don't have much to fear. The most common snake in Germany is the Ringelnatter. Thankfully, this snake is harmless, but can be mistaken for a poisonous snake. Some snakes use their resemblance to poisonous snakes as an advantage, when facing enemies. They enact something called mimicry, in other words, they pretend to be a poisonous snake when they aren't. The Ringelnatter uses this tactic. Also commonly found in Germany is the Kreuzotter. This snake IS venomous, and can be recognized with its dark zig zag pattern on its back. Kreuzotter snakes are very shy and scared of rarely bite. If they do, STILL SEE A DOCTOR (but don't worry, their bite isn't deadly).



In Europe, you mainly have to fear..... the dreadful, the horrible, the (just kidding).... The Horned Python. As you may have guessed, this snake is venomous, and can be recognized with its abnormal horn on its head. Here is something that will definitely comfort you: You will never, ever find snakes in cold, north and high spaces, like mountains. When you're hiking... forget about snakes and pay attention to yourself. The next step to feeling comfortable around a snake is also to understand them. How DO they work?

The wonder of nature that is the snake

Snakes are awesome. First of all, you may wonder: Why the slither do they have such weird Y-shaped tongues? Their tongues are their superpower: they can see with them. Your reaction is probably: I'm sorry, what? Yes! Sure, they don't have an extra pair of eyes located on their tongues, but the snake tongue can see in its own way. Snake tongues can take in fragrance cells, which then wander into a mouth organ that can process the cells to know what's around them. This organ can even tell snakes what way an animal went! Snakes also have an inner ear, seeing as they don't have an actual ear. This inner ear comes in handy when snakes are underground. They sense / hear crashing ground and vibrations from steps. If you are in a known snake area, it is advised to walk with hard steps. Other snakes, like the Grubenotter cannot see in the dark, while others have a warmth-camera vision. Also, snakes shed their skin to make room for growth, because their skin doesn't grow with them. If you see a ghost-looking snake outline, don't freak out!

You haven't just met a snake ghost, it's just their skin.

An important thing to know is how snakes hunt. Snakes are carnivores and prey. The snake itself will rarely use its own unique venom, since it only has a limited amount. Some snakes will choke their prey (note to their important long body) while others will SWALLOW IT WHOLE. Snakes can even swallow animals larger than themselves, thanks to their extendable jaw. Some snakes also enjoy to eat eggs from nests. Some snakes have got it wrong though... there have been reports of snakes chocking and swallowing missed gold balls! Poor snakes! Snakes are still prey.

In a case of extreme emergency, when snakes are only threatened in the worst possible way, they will use their venom. Snakes have other tactics to survive prey danger. Some snakes imitate death for non-scavenger animals (who only eat the dead) and stick out their tongue. This causes a moment of confusion, which the snake can seize to escape. Others will hiss, make themselves tall and be intimidating to say: Go away, I'M DANGEROUS..... hisss....

HELP! I'VE BEEN BITTEN! – (unlikely to happen....) As you've (hopefully) read, snakes will rarely bite. In Germany, no snake bites are deadly, but venomous. You should DEFINITELY see a doctor once you've been bitten, who will give you an antidote. Other countries are not so lucky. In India, about 58,000 people die from snake bites per year. This country is not so fortunate to have antidote supplies, and many dangerous snakes roam India. In Australia, surprisingly few snake bites occur. And if they do, antidotes are available, which contain horse blood. Horses and their blood are very resistant and strong. If a horse gets bitten, it might not feel any pain! But back to our country. What should you do during a snake encounter? Stay calm. Walk away. Remember, snakes in Germany are very unlikely to bite and even more unlikely to attack. They are way more scared of us than we are of them. Imagine! You just came slithering from a delicious rabbit and you find a massively tall, flesh-faced giant screaming at you! I wouldn't like that if I were a snake, would you? ■

FAREWELL, MS. CAMARA!

17 Years of Laughter, Leadership, and Sticky Notes

After 17 unforgettable years at BCS, Vice Principal Ms. Camara reflects on her journey, favourite moments, and the lessons she's taking with her. From morning greetings to comic book zines, here's what she shared in a candid Q&A with The Cosmopolitan.

What are you going to do next? My plan is to have no plan. I don't want to rush into anything before figuring out my next move.

Highlights?

There are too many to list, but some would be... Helping students to solve problems big and small; running the digital music and comic book clubs; leading the IBDP program; teaching Theory of Knowledge; working with students and staff on policies and shaping school culture; saying "Gooooooooood morning" to the kitchen staff when getting my morning coffee; playing "keep it up" with students; enforcing the school clothing policy – just kidding.

Favourite cafeteria meal? Sushi à la Carte

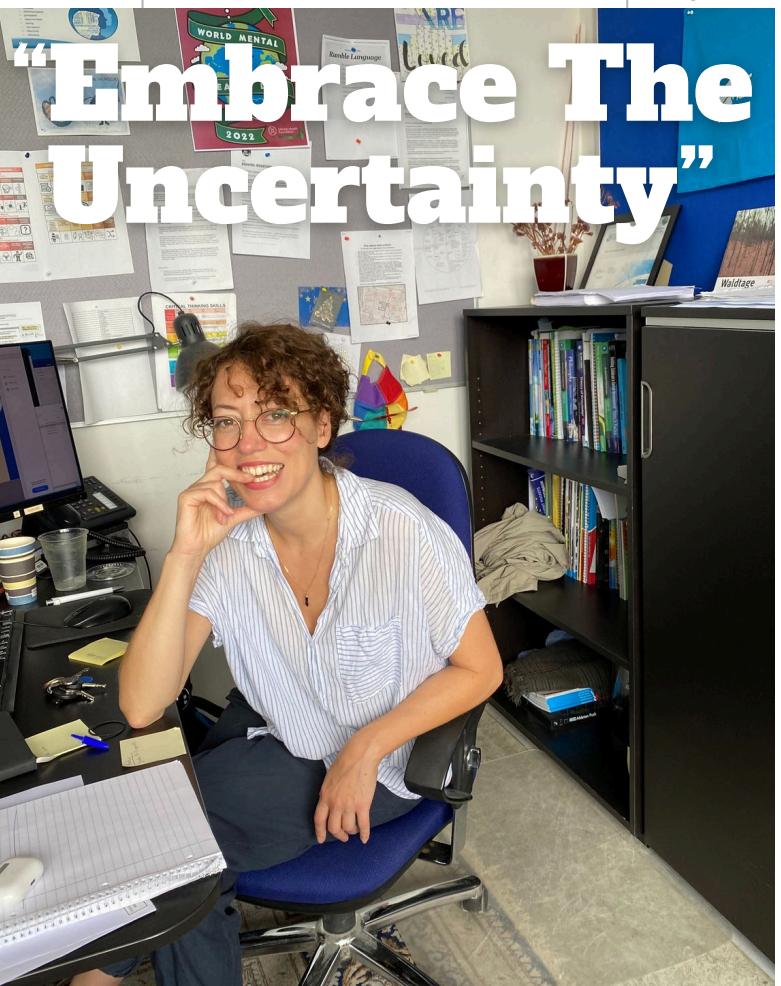
Favourite class trip?

They were all pretty fun. 2015 student exchange trip to London, England (Whitgift School) with Ms. Nehnevajova and a lovely group of students.

What school tradition are you going to miss most? Student music concerts and sports days always get me.

Favourite BCS floor? The chessroom – what a time capsule!

Favourite movie? The Conversation (Francis Ford Coppola). The sound design was ahead of its time. I'll also take absurd comedy any day.



Favourite saying?

Embrace the uncertainty. ;)

Favourite item of clothing?

Blazer with shoulder pads.

How are you going to relax once you get your holidays?

Spend time with my parents.

Funniest moment?

Where to start?...

team and students. There were 37 students in total and a handful of teachers. I remember thinking to myself, "This should be fun."

What advice would you give to your younger self? Don't forget to enjoy the little things in life, and don't take things too personally. Like when a grade one student saw me without my glasses for the first time, responded with a frightened scream and cried, "Ms Camara! Put them back on, you look like a clown!"

What was the most challenging part of your journey at BCS?

Deciding to leave to start a new chapter.

If you could relive a day at BCS, what would it be? There were so many. I was very lucky in that I was able to laugh hard and often with both my students and colleagues.

What achievement are you most proud of?

Leading the IBDP program through accreditation and evaluations was big for me, but creating the comic book club zines with enthusiastic students was also fun too.

What's one skill or lesson you've learned at school that will help you in the future? Perhaps the way I manage "conflict." Being direct (and still kind), while it may be uncomfortable at times, can really prevent conflict from developing later.

If your time at BCS were turned into a movie, who would you want to play you? Tina Fey or Emma Stone, depending on the angle.

What's the one school supply you couldn't have lived without?

Sticky notes. Hands down. No question. I can't live without them. ■

THE COSMOPOLITAN FILM CORNER

TV REVIEW



Above: Sarah Ramos, Jeremy Allen White, Lionel Boyce, Ebon Moss-Bachrach, Ayo Edebiri, and Liza Colón-Zayas in *The Bear*. The fourth season of *The Bear* – like its third – keeps its deliberately disoriented characters in a sort of suspended state, one that leaves them constantly stuck. Trapped in an almost contrived stasis, they are unable to move forward, dwelling, often even obsessing about past mistakes and present disappointments. "I don't move, or I can't, you know, move," a character at one point remarks. At first, this seems like an intentional decision from showrunners Christopher Storer and Joana Calo – *Groundhog Day* (1993, Harold Ramis), the time-loop classic, often recurs as a motif; its central premise of a man reliving the same day endlessly a concept that seems to mirror the feeling of the protagonists in the fourth season well. However, one cannot help but feel they too are running out of ideas.

Already the underwhelming first episode opens with a borrowed line from *Groundhog Day*: "Well, what if there is no tomorrow? There wasn't one today." Carmen Berzatto (played by Jeremy Allen White, who is monotonously bland this time around) – the award-winning chef who, in season one, returned to his hometown of Chicago to run his late brother's struggling Italian beef shop, and in season two, began transforming the dysfunctional kitchen into a fine-dining spot alongside aspiring chef Sydney Adamu (Ayo Edebiri) – wakes up on his couch, presenting us with one of the most unconvincing wake-up scenes in recent memory, as the film conveniently plays on his TV, Bill Murray frantically bellowing "Hello? Hello!" into the void. It's one example of the series' increasingly lazy writing, borrowing banal truths from other films by simply showing scenes from these films (later, Whoopi Goldberg asks Sydney, across the television screen: "Do you want to work here, or do you want to live?") – lines that once felt profound, but here ring hollow.

For nearly two seasons, *The Bear* was among the best that television had to offer. Its rough, frantic style – a seemingly effortless blend of expertly executed tension and humor, orchestrated chaos, precise editing and timing that reflected the intensity of professional kitchens, achieved by handheld camerawork, tight frames and chaotic soundscapes – combined with its memorable soundtrack and unchallenged, ingenious rapid montages of Chicago and food prep, made it feel alive. One 21-minute episode was even shot in one singular take; the most stressful 21 minutes I've ever watched. Add to that the almost uncannily authentic acting on part of most of the ensemble – often erupting in overlapping dialogue that, flowing naturally, brought hilarity and realism, never overplaying emotions – and it became an overall event not to be missed. Few series have managed to draw me into their world as completely as *The Bear* season 1 – I didn't just witness the stress, I felt it myself. The story of a young chef coming to terms with his troubled past and grap-



Above: Ayo Edebiri and Liza Colón-Zayas in *The Bear*.

In its third season, this illusion of near-perfection shatters dramatically. Plot-wise, virtually nothing happens. Carmy continues chasing something unknown to us through daily menu changes and a disregard for costs (or people), creating a toxic environment that the show fails to make believable – Jeremy Allen White's Carmy feels monotonous and unconvincing. The fine-dining restaurant Ever – three-star, run by a dull Olivia Colman – closes its doors in a painfully self-indulgent final episode. Former chefs who once staged there (including Carmy) gather for one last evening, holding an intolerably pretentious, drawn-out conversation about why they endure the stresses of running restaurants and how it supposedly makes them happy. Meanwhile, Sydney is offered the chance of opening her own restaurant but remains uncertain, and the season ends on a frustrating cliffhanger: a Chicago Tribune review of Carmy's and Sydney's restaurant, The Bear, that we only get to see glimpses of.

A review that is in the beginning of the fourth season revealed to be a mixed one: "The BEAR necessities missing" – a wordplay that ironically sums up the state of the series' fourth season almost perfectly. Because of this, Carmy's uncle (supposedly connected to the mob) – who has been actively throwing money into the fire to keep things afloat – threatens to shut down The Bear, installing a three-month countdown in the kitchen for all to see, where it continuously looms over the characters' work. They are thus faced with that ultimate great evil, the uncontrollable force, the only truly inevitable thing: the end.

atographic choice definitely not suited to every face), they speak as fundamentally about life as one can do: "There's always a clock", Tina ironically claims upon hearing that Sydney's dad has suffered a heart attack. "Always", Marcus, who is momentarily in a therapy-confessional with Tina, nods along solemnly. "Why would you keep going?", the series asks at one point. It's not about work – it's about life, it seems. "I'm good. I mean it", Sydney responds when asked how she's doing. She's lying, obviously – haha, amazing joke –, and the cliché of "I'm good" is long overused.

When Claire, a hospital resident, consoles Sydney during her "I'm a failure" spiral by saying: "The one thing I've learned working here is worrying about people and having people worry about us is, like, everything we got," it's both forced and weightless – and Claire's moment to shine as everyday philosopher ends up unrealistically delivered. It all takes itself too seriously while saying not much at all – and saying it in ironically grave tones. Oftentimes characters are simultaneously shown frozen, contemplating, seeming exhausted, ready for the end they know is inevitably approaching, at the same time completely exhausting the viewer in their self-indulgent despair. When giving voice to their discoveries about life randomly during conversations, they appear shocked, as if they have just been granted access to some great revelation, or as if they were living life for the first time.

“THE BEAR” SEASON 4 ATTEMPTS TO BE ABOUT EVERYTHING. IN ATTEMPTING TO BE ABOUT EVERYTHING, IT ENDS UP BEING ABOUT NOTHING.

Left to deal with the incredulity of this fact, *The Bear* does what anyone would: it plunges into the void all the more, until, at least from the surface, it appears as though there's something there beneath it, an illusion, a trap. Season four's frequent one-on-one therapy-confessionals are filled to the brim with banal truths about life, poorly dosed throughout, until viewers risk overdose. As characters' faces fill the entirety of the screen (a cin-

In that way, everyone is merely pretending to know what's going on – a truthful observation, but one lost through *The Bear's* nonexistent methods of storytelling.

"Feeling alive, are you?", it asks. "Hahaha, no, haven't been doing so for a long time now."

While possibly offering viewers a flicker of consolation, *The Bear's* readiness – if not: eagerness – to throw around these bland truths reveals something else entirely, something deeply alarming: a deep-rooted creative exhaustion in the showrunners, really in the entire industry. A certain despair that results in the familiar life-is-hard-but-I-guess-we-have-to-do-it-so-might-as-well-just-joke-about-it-to-make-it-less-heavy-while-it's-neither-funny-nor-profound-but-who-cares-haha irony that, frankly, I'm tired of. Here's the thing: The characters pretend to know what's going on just as much as the showrunners pretend to know what's going on. Behaviourally, these two sides – creator and creation – mirror each other.

What's missing is any sign of subtext. Messages aren't messages if they're blurred out like afterthoughts, tossed around as if they mean nothing. *Groundhog Day* – which *The Bear* insists on referencing – manages to deliver something meaningful about the repetition of life through a structure suited to its message. *The Bear*, in contrast, seems to think that simply naming these messages will somehow transfer their depth by association. It

Below: Molly Gordon, Jeremy Allen White, Ebon Moss-Bachrach, Josh Hartnett and Annabelle Toomey in *The Bear* season four, episode seven.



doesn't – quoting profundity is not the same as creating it.

Subsequently, *The Bear* begins to ironise itself. It attempts to simulate awareness of its shallow nature – and, thus, like everyone else creatively involved at the moment, tries to go one step further by admitting its own banality – to then again appear intellectual, to absolve itself of this banality, to unlock what is known as a "meta level", the most basic characteristic of postmodern storytelling. But this, *The Bear* shows involuntarily, is not the way. In this sense, season four is surprisingly mainstream.

And faced with all this, you quickly forget that this is supposed to be a show about a restaurant. How are you to blame, if Storer and Calo decide to show only glimpses of scenes during service, mostly filled by the kitchen, though not engaged in the stress we know and love from *The Bear*, but surprisingly calm? And of the restaurant's struggles to repay their loan from Carmy's uncle we only ever see a line – literally, a graph (of profit, presumably) that is at choice blended in during the season's lackluster cooking sequences and always swaying dramatically, while someone repeatedly reminds that "every second counts."

And the ensemble this time around?

Disappointing for the most part, the exception being those fleeting moments when it all reminds you of what

The Bear used to be: loud, energetic,

amusing, and relatable. Additionally,

Ayo Edebiri (who, as always, has an in-

credibly vast spectrum of facial exp-

ressions and mimics at her disposal, as

well as impressively precise control over it), Robert Townsend (who plays Sydney's father and whose eyes manage to convey more in a glance than most can in words), Jamie Lee Curtis, and Ebon Moss-Bachrach manage to stand out from a landscape of lacking performances.

While there are times when the old genius shines through; when the characters engage in humorous dialogue, when some sort of montage is shown and you begin to feel almost nostalgic, when an emotion portrayed actually appears to be genuine (Sydney's trip to the hospital to visit her father), when it then finally does start to get interesting (and there are many of these moments), someone happens to bring something in that disrupts it, like a baby, or a heart attack. What all this leads to is, once again, therapeutic talks between characters. The stress and panic may be simmering under the surface, but these episodes feel funereal, like a march toward an inescapable end.

The Bear season four is merely a shadow of its predecessors, a reminder of the dangers of draining ideas to their limit. It may not be over yet, season five has been greenlit already – but here's one thing I know for sure (this is not ironical): It's long gone. ■

Above: Ayo Edebiri in *The Bear*.





CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2025

Controversies, Comebacks & Champions

Recap by Akkshath Chawla

Real Madrid (or should I say, "Vardrid") VS Atlético Madrid

The shocking win for Real Madrid in the Champions League has made everyone's jaws drop. After the first leg, Real were up by 1 goal (2-1), but things got intense in the second leg (matches are decided in two separate games, or legs). In the first minutes of the game, Atlético's Conner Gallagher scored. Real Madrid's number 9, Kylian Mbappe, was fouled in the box and Real awarded with a penalty, but Vini Jr. sent the ball sailing well over the crossbar. With a 1-0 lead, Atlético started attacking confidently, and were denied again in the 70th minute by the brilliant goalkeeping of Courtois. After many missed shots, corners and saves, the match went into extra time because of the tied score (2-2) and eventually into penalties. The French striker Kylian Mbappe easily converts the penalty into a goal! Then Atlético forward Alexander Sørloth scored. Midfielder Jude Bellingham; shoots and scored for Real. Next, the Argentinean forward Julian Alvarez slips while shooting, but scored... But the referee disallows it, saying that it was a double touch. VAR (video assisted referee) checked it out, and it was a controversial decision, but the goal was disallowed, thus becoming the turning point for the game in favo-



ur of Real. This is one of the many reasons people call Real Madrid "Vardrid" (after the Video Assistant Referee, VAR) as they are said to be treated differently than other clubs. Federico Valverde from RMA scored. Atlético's forward Angel Correa scored. Real Madrid's defender Lucas Vasquez missed- Atlético's dream is alive! Defender Marcos Llorente hits the post. Real Madrid's German defender, Antonio Rudiger, scored the final penalty and wins the game for his club!

FC Bayern München VS Bayer Leverkusen: The crushing defeat of the Title defenders



Bayern München beat Bayer Leverkusen by a huge margin (5-0) in the UCL (UEFA Champions league) round of 16. For starters, Kane completed his brace by scoring two goals (9th and 75th minute) in the first leg, and Bayern's brilliant German youngster, Jamal Musiala, scored after the half as well, making it a bruising defeat for Leverkusen. In the second leg, Kane did not disappoint as he scored another goal in the 52nd minute. The Canadian defender and Midfielder Alphonso Davies then scored another to make the lead 2-0, leading Leverkusen to a huge defeat by 0-5.

Barca, the team that has had a whole makeover over this season, is facing one of the top contenders from last

Quarter finals: FC Bayern München vs Inter Milan

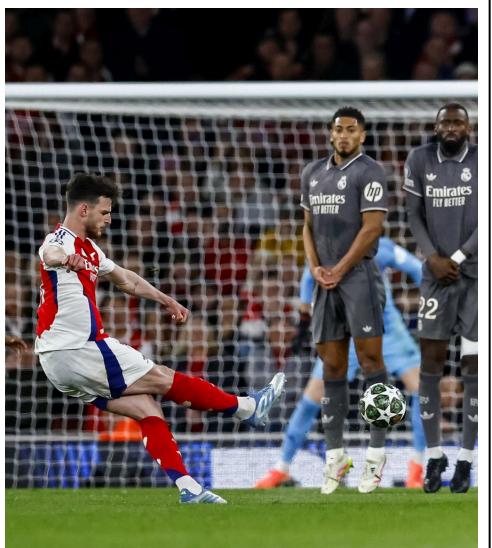
Bayern is off to face Inter. In the first leg, Martinez, the World Cup winner put Inter in the lead. Then Thomas Müller scored the equalizer in the 85th minute. A late goal in the match by Davide Fratassi ended up giving a win to Inter. In the second leg, Bayern fans were expecting a comeback but the game ended in a tie. Harry Kane scored in the 52nd minute bringing the lead to Bayern. But almost immediately after Lautaro Martinez scored the equalizer in the 58th minute, followed by a goal by Benjamin Pavard, former Bayern player, in the 61st minute. The equalizer comes from Eric Dier in the 76th minute, making it a disappointing match for the Bayern fans, and a wonderful win for the Inter Milan fans.

Quarter finals second match: Real Madrid vs Arsenal

The Gunners were on fire in this match. Their star player: Declan Rice, Position: Midfielder. He scored the first goal of the game by a freekick in the 58th minute against Courtois (RMA Goalie), leaving the fans stunned. Another one in the 70th minute, to double their lead (2-0) in favour of Arsenal. Then, another goal comes from their Spanish midfielder in the 75th minute, which gave the RMA fans a disappointing match and a crucial win to Arsenal. The second leg was another upset for the RMA fans as they lost 1-2. A goal scored by Vini Jr. was not enough to put out the fire. The Gunners scored 2 more! Saka, in the 65th minute, and Gabriel Martinelli in extra time (90+3), which knocked out RMA from the UCL.

Quarter finals third match: Dortmund vs Barcelona

Barca, the team that has had a whole makeover over this season, is facing one of the top contenders from last



Above: Rice's Goal in Real vs Arsenal.

year's UCL, Dortmund. The opening goal scored by Raphinha in the 25th minute, followed by a brace from the 38-year-old striker, Robert Lewandowski, in the 48th and 66th minute and then ended by the Spanish youngster; who recently won the Euros, Lamine Yamal in the 77th minute. A crushing defeat for Dortmund in the quarter finals, first leg. The next match was in favour for Dortmund, as they won but lost on aggregate. Even a hat-trick from their striker, Guirassy could not save them. One of their players, Ramy Bensebaini, scored an own goal, to seal the defeat of Dortmund.

Quarter finals: PSG vs Aston Villa

To start things off, Aston Villa's Morgan Rogers scored in the 35th minute, making it 1-0 in favour of Aston Villa. A reply from PSG comes in the 39th minute as the French youngster, Doué, puts the ball in the back of the net. PSG then scored another goal with their Georgian attacker, Kvaratskhelia, in the 49th minute. To finish the game, PSG scored a last minute goal in the 92nd minute with their French defender, Nuno



Mendes. The second leg's start just made the Champions league trophy go further from Aston Villa as PSG scored another goal with their defender, Hakimi, in the 11th minute. Another goal is scored by Nuno Mendes in the 27th minute, making it 2-0 (second leg) in favour of PSG. Aston Villa fans were expecting a reply and it did come as Youri Tielemans scored in the 34 minute. Only a few minutes after halftime break, John McGinn scored for Aston Villa, making it 2-2. Just 2 minutes after, Aston Villa's Ezri Konsa scored in the 57th minute, to make it 3-2 in favour of Aston Villa. This still was not enough as the aggregate score was 4-5 in favour of PSG. Villa's fans were hoping for another goal, but it never happened. The game ended as a win for PSG and a loss for Aston Villa, hence crushing their chances for Champions League glory.



Semi finals: Inter vs Barca

Probably the best match of the UCL. A match many expected to be a final but turned out to be a semi, Inter vs Barcelona. The first leg was a blast, a 3-3 tie. Thuram scored an early goal for Inter in the 1st minute, followed by Dumfries in the 21st minute. But Lamine Yamal stopped Inter in their tracks and scored in the 24th minute. Ferran Torres then scored an equalizer to level things. Dumfries scored another time, completing his brace in the 63rd minute. The last goal of the match was an own goal by goalkeeper, Yann Sommer in the 65th minute. Barcelona had the possession of the ball most, and each team got one yellow card. The second leg was the decider of who is going to the finals. A whole out war was on the football pitch as there were seven total goals scored. The first one was scored by the Inter striker, Martinez, followed by the Turkish midfielder, Calhanoglu; a penalty. Barca did not keep quiet as Eric Garcia scored in the

54th minute, accompanied by the euro winner, Dani Olmo, and Raphinha. Francesco Acerbi then scored in the 90th minute as an equalizer. Fratassi then scored the goal that decided the match, in the 99th minute as a winner (4-3) in favour of Inter.

Semi finals: PSG vs Arsenal

In the first leg, PSG scored an early and significant goal in the 4th minute (Ousmane Dembélé, attacker). Arsenal was off their game as they shot 5 shots on target, but none of them were put into the goal. Arsenal also got 3 corners, which is probably their strongest area. But even after that, the Gunners could not convert the chances into goals. The game ended as a loss in favour of PSG (0-1). Paris Saint-Germain starts things off in the second leg with a goal by Fabian Ruiz in the 27th minute. After many saves, fouls, corners and saves, PSG's defender, Ashraf Hakimi puts the ball back in the net in the 72nd minute. Arsenal's Bukayo Saka finally scored in the 76th minute, but it was still a devastating loss for the Arsenal fans (2-1). Another year without the Champions league and the Premier league.

Final: PSG vs Inter

PSG won their first Champions League. They had possession of the ball (59%), shot many goals on target and managed to put 2 goals in the back of the net. The first goal of the game was by Hakimi. He is a vital midfielder and defender for PSG and has scored 4 goals in the 2024/25 UEFA Champions League. The next goal was scored by Doué. The wonderful French attacker scored a goal in the final. His dribbling is amazing, and he scored a goal in one of the biggest competitions against one of the best teams in the world. The 3rd goal was again scored by Doué. A few minutes later, PSG's new player, Kvaratskhelia scored in the 73rd minute. The last (but definitely not the least) goal was shot by Senny Mayulu, crushing every Inter fan's hope for a comeback. ■

