

EDITORIAL

Winter is here! Sure it's not fully here yet but for people like me who wait around for the earliest signs of the seasons changing, I'm content with managing to catch a whiff of winter air.

And it was just a whiff that made me do a quick analysis of all the sweaters from previous years I'm going to re wear. It made me add all the holiday movies I'm going to re-watch to my playlist. It even made me ambitious enough to save a few *pitha* recipes for when I really feel creative in the kitchen.

But this winter will be different. Most years, outdoor picnics and forays outside of the city seem like just the kind of seasonal thing to do, but this year I'm thinking safety first. The pandemic is far from over and as a somewhat informed youth, I take it on myself to tell people around me that putting off their social plans won't hurt them, but Covid-19 definitely will.

And so I curbed my enthusiasm knowing it will be a winter spent at home. That and I'm not too fond of being chased around by mosquitoes either.

-- Mrittika Anan Rahman, Sub-editor, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH TV SHOW REVIEW



*Move aside agenda pushers,
this is how you convey
a real message*

RABITA SALEH

Any-Taylor Joy stuns as Elizabeth Harmon in Netflix's latest limited series "The Queen's Gambit". Portraying a genius chess player in the Cold War Era who goes on to battle it out on a global stage with grandmasters of the time, Joy steals the show in almost every scene she's in. She is absolutely riveting, her razor-sharp expressions constantly demanding your unwavering attention, so much so that following her through her life as a child protégée turned chess celebrity for roughly seven straight hours suddenly becomes the most natural thing to do.

Admirable appearances are made in the characters of Benny Watts, Harry Beltik (who regardless of how many years pass will always be little Diddykins to me), Harmon's mother Mrs. Alma Wheatley, Harmon's best friend Jolene, and Mr. Shaibel, the janitor who teaches Harmon the game. It is an absolute credit to the writers that they were able to showcase Harmon adopting so many character traits from her relationships with each of these people -- both good and bad. These characters absolutely mould Harmon as a person throughout the series, putting forth a message of constant change and self-improvement.

There are some ridiculously beautiful shots throughout the series. A stand-out for me was the scene when she moves into her first actual house as a teen and makes sure she can see the ceiling from her bed. The visually stunning and heavily symbolic shadow of the chess piece traversing up her body left me awestruck.

Then we also have all the striking sets of her traipsing around all over the world in gorgeous couture, heavily emphasising her femininity, and driving across the point that just because a woman is into fashion it doesn't mean that she can't also haul you up and down a chessboard at will.

What I really loved about this character is that she's a woman written without the intent of being better than all men. Her sole purpose in life is not to be manlier than every man around her, a trap so many shows these days fall into when writing "strong" women (looking at you, Marvel). It's an absolute breath of fresh air. Harmon never tries to "outman" the men around her. She outsmarts them, outplays them, and generally outdoes them in a million big and small ways without ever coming across as an unrealistically written character. And therein lies the beauty of this series. It conveys a very strong, very simple message:

"Girls can be really smart. As smart as any man. Smarter than any man."

And it does so without ever feeling like it's pushing an agenda. It emerges as an empowering show for women through and through, but it steers well clear of the usual frustrating tropes. This woman is brilliant, and brilliantly flawed, and that makes her all the more suited to being a protagonist that you're seriously rooting for every step of the way.

Rabita Saleh is a perfectionist/workaholic. Email feedback to this generally boring person at rabitasaleh13@gmail.com

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