



ECHOES BY
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My first encounter With *Cinema Paradiso*

I
Rafael, my housemate at Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, asked me one day if I had watched *Cinema Paradiso*. When I said no, Rafael looked at me in silence for a moment. "Tomorrow's the last day, they're screening *Cinema Paradiso* at the Arts Theatre. Do watch. You'll like it."

I decided to go for the afternoon screening. Rafael didn't give me any details. I also didn't find out about the cinema before watching. When I reached, there weren't more than ten people in the hall. I chose a seat. Then I silently waited for the lights to go out.

II
Toto, a little boy from a small village in Sicily, is now a big movie director in Rome. After many attempts, his mother managed to convey the message to Toto's girlfriend via phone that Alfredo passed away recently. His funeral will be held the following afternoon. Toto has to attend the funeral.

And thus, the movie starts in flashback. We're transported to a little village in Sicily, just after World War II, and before the advent of television. The life of the villagers centres around the local cinema hall, the *Cinema Paradiso*. The local priest comes frequently and makes Alfredo, the projectionist, censor each explicit scene.

Toto's father had perished in war. *Cinema Paradiso* becomes the centre of Toto's universe. Alfredo, who has



no child of his own, soon takes up the void left by Toto's father. The movie moves from one plot to another, as Toto grows up and enters his teens, where he meets the love of his life, Elena. All the time though, young Toto's eyes remain fixed on Alfredo's basket of all the censored clips.

III
The better cinemas are the ones that center around one or a set of universal themes. When themes are universal, they touch across generations. This makes a cinema timeless. Following Toto's journey as a child and then as an adolescent, reflected universal experiences I went through, and

probably many others did too. The best stories are always those that reflect our own self through the characters and the plot of a film.

The best cinemas have an extra dimension that resonates with people. That, in this case, was the soundtrack. I was watching *Cinema Paradiso* in an almost empty hall. I was spellbound. My full concentration was on the cinema. Whatever silence there could have been was filled up with the mastery of Ennio Morricone's compositions. A recurring 4/4 piece came back at the right moment to send shivers down my spine. That recurring 4/4 piece haunted me throughout the cinema till the last scene where the composition returned to make the romance of cinema rhyme.

IV
Sadly, like all movies, *Cinema Paradiso* ended. The lights slowly came back on. The few people who came to watch, slowly made their way out. I remained seated. I was unmoved. The experience was sinking in. A few minutes after everybody left, I was still seated. A thought went through my mind. I did something for the first time. I went downstairs to the ticket counter. I bought a ticket for the last show.

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satire.

"Money cannot buy happiness."

Says man hoarding generational wealth

NUZHAT HASSAN CHOWDHURY

The world of exorbitant wealth can be confusing to those who are not a part of it. While most people turn to the simple things in life to cheer themselves up and believe in mantras such as "brownies cure frownies," members of the one percent club turn to something a bit more extravagant, such as a small loan of a million dollars from their parents.

Although the lives of the ultra-wealthy can seem seamless, they too have their own struggles because that loan eventually runs out.

Samia, a teenager that grew up surrounded by luxury and privilege, had been feeling down lately. To cheer herself up, she placed another online order this week. The last fifteen times did not do the trick, but she was convinced that the sixteenth time's the charm. The cause of this sudden wave of sadness was still a mystery to her.

Feeling rather confused, she turned to her father for guidance.

After several hours of searching, she finally tracked him down by their mansion's pool. "Dad, I've been feeling really down lately and I don't understand why," Samia admitted to her father.

"I knew this day would come," he said



as he took a deep breath. "Today is the day I teach you an important lesson – money cannot buy happiness," her father continued.

"You see, Samia, with more money comes more responsibilities and these responsibilities take up a lot of time. I need to work every day. I haven't been on a proper vacation in 20 years because I cannot afford to relax," he said as he soaked up sunshine at the poolside and the butler served him coconut water.

"Tell me more," Samia inquired.

"As income increases, so does the difficulty of managing it. You have no idea what a hassle it is to find an accountant that can stomach the mental gymnastics of it all," her father replied.

"Another downside to being born into wealth is that people constantly undermine your accomplishments. I worked incredibly hard to earn an executive position job at the age of 23, but nobody ever gave me the credit I deserve. This often saddened me,

but I persevered," the father complained.

"Wasn't grandma the CEO of the company you worked at?" Samia asked curiously.

"Yes, why do you ask?" Samia's father asked obliviously, prompting the butler to hopelessly look into an imaginary camera as if he were in an episode of *The Office*.

As the father-daughter duo were chatting, they suddenly heard the loud rotating of helicopter blades. Within no time, they were surrounded by half a dozen helicopters that carried men equipped with protective gear. One such man popped his head out of the helicopter and spoke through a megaphone, "WE ARE NOT HERE TO HURT YOU! WE JUST WANT TO TALK ABOUT YOUR DELAYED LOAN REPAYMENTS!"

Upon hearing the message, Samia's father yelled over the noise "SEE? US RICH FOLKS ARE CONSTANTLY ATTACKED!!"

He then quickly grabbed Samia's hand and a pre-packed suitcase and sprinted towards the airport to take a trip to Canada, for completely unrelated reasons.

Nuzhat enjoys baking but simply cannot find the required ingredients. Tell her about your favourite baked goods at nuzhatchowdhury07@gmail.com