

Oz Walled No More



a journey into madness
by Charles Wolfgang Keane Tuomi

$$E = mc^2$$

$$E = m(c \times c)$$

End = means(conception, change)

The End of a well-told story is the output of a function, which takes the state at the very beginning and the author's ideas about how that state might change over time, and uses "story time" to explore that change.

It can be seen that the End in the above formula does not justify the means. The End is produced by, and therefore dependent on, the means. The End is a product, a logical result of the other three variables. *How you do things matters.*

Energy = mass(speed of light²)

Empathy = mass(time spent²)

A reader invests a certain amount of time and effort in a story, which has a specific emotional mass, or payload, or density. These variables dictate, more or less, the impact of the story on the reader.

I interpreted Ursula K. LeGuin's short story, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," to be describing the problem of apathy in a rather genius way, using a mathematical pun ("squared") to describe *trapped light*.¹

"The Ones Who Walk Away" had a big impact on me. It made me sad and angry and confused.

¹ It also, I believe, uses radioactive decay as a metaphor, but that is a metaphor for another day

Imprisoned child = c

musical child = *m*

$$E = mc^2$$

$$E = m \span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px 10px;">c$$

Light remembers.

It strikes an object, captures a snapshot, bounces off, carries that memory somewhere else, and shares it, like a butterfly distributing pollen, alighting on one flower and then another, and another, over and over and over again, indiscriminately.

It does so without judgement. Light never lies. If there is an elephant in a room, light will describe it clearly. If there is a horror there, it will show it.

Light is a message. A song never ends.

THE song that never ends.

One child therefore “never ceases playing” that music and the other is imprisoned in “abominable misery.”

Everything = *musi* c

My short story “you then asia” is an attempt to solve Ursula’s problem and untrap the light. Stories are like functions in computer software engineering: they take input, do something to change it, and return output.

You can sometimes see quite a lot simply by comparing the beginning and ending states of a story.

“you then asia”

Opening Passage	Closing Passage
sitting alone	sitting alone
hearing voices	hearing voices
sitting inside	sitting <i>outside</i>
in a room	open air, while buildings burn
blind mob of faces in a bird’s nest	shadows dancing among trees
cramped kitchen	open woods
cramped	freedom
lukewarm	glow, flames, burning, smoke, embers
lukewarm tea	laughters running like brook water
voices: hunger, pain, fear, need, rant, threaten vengeance	voices: lusty vows, threats, cries for freedom, sirens
lots of babies mentioned	no babies mentioned
disembodied	shadows dancing
Luis	no one else is named specifically
tone: enclosed, confused suffering	tone: confused, defiant rebellion
passive victim	active agent

Hmm.

Was the kitchen in a hospital? Was Luis the trapped light?

“The Ones Who Walk Away” from Omelas creates a utopia based on a horror: the suffering child scapegoat. “you then asia” flips it, creating a dystopia based on a blessing (immortality, the holy grail of medicine for some).

There are two children in “The Ones Who Walk Away,” the prisoner and the musician. In “you then asia,” we meet the unnamed narrator (who it turns out is Lucifer, Light Bearer) and Luis, as a disembodied voice, at the beginning. Luis is described as having a “street” accent. Like a Lane.



Superman and Lois Lane, played by Margot Kidder
a befreckled brunette actress

The name “Margot” means “pearl,” like some other female names. Pearl Harbor, meanwhile, was bombed by the military of an Asian nation during WWII.

The short story “you then asia,” by Charles Tuomi, is about *burnt toast*.

Someone is burning toast, over and over again. A toaster with two slits for bread appears in the title, and at the end of the story, and also inside it.

you		then		asia
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<i>But</i>		<i>the</i>		<i>burning</i>
------------	--	------------	--	----------------

the bodiless whisper

<i>Keep</i>		<i>it</i>		<i>up</i>
-------------	--	-----------	--	-----------

Both the italicized text and the “bodiless whisper” are like smoke, *rising* at the end of the story. Up, up, and out of the toaster.

Like a doughy phoenix, rising from its ashes.

Except in this case, the ashes are bread crumbs.

Bread crumbs on a path feature in the fairy tale Hansel and Gre-tel, in which a brother and sister escape a witch cottage and an an oven, which is a little like the Yellow Brick Road in *The Wizard of Oz*, which in turn is an echo of the Flaming Sword that guards the way to the tree of life in Genesis 3:24.

All of these things point a way back home.

Bread crumbs also look like *freckles*.

Yum.



I had a “friend” who years ago seemed to find it endlessly amusing to “excuse” the food his wife brought to parties because, as he put it, “she can’t burn toast.” Over and over again. “She can’t burn toast.” While complimenting food provided by others.

A repetitious, derogatory remark about a wifely duty² made under the craven guise of a joke, trapping her, because she would look like a “bitch” if she got angry. He was “just kidding. “

I took it to be the tactic of an inferior mate looking to systematically undermine the confidence and self-esteem of a clearly superior one, in order to reduce the likelihood of her posing a flight risk, because enough administrations of this subtle poison over a long period of time would lead her to conclude she didn’t deserve more than what she had. This was likely to be particularly effective in her case, because she struck me during every interaction as a person with a deeply others-focused disposition.

² FWIW, I liked the food his wife made more than the food my wife at the time did. It was much more up my alley.

Aside from the offense I took on his wife's behalf about this pattern of behavior, it also, as Jerry Seinfeld would say, offended me as an amateur comedian.

“Get some new material, dude.”

But I smiled back when he would say this.

And I thought deep down, “*Keep it up, pal.*”

“You want to be an entertainer? OK.”

“Keep trying. Who knows.”

“Maybe some day you'll be in a movie.”

This same fellow also did not approve of his wife farting.

Stifling farts is bad for you. Aside from being uncomfortable, it can also cause health problems. Since everyone has to fart, I imagined she may over time have developed a kind of effortful superpower to keep hers quiet. SBDs, as they say. Silent but Delightful, in her case.

you		then		asia
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a harsh, disembodied male whisper...
...always hungry, gassy...

<i>But</i>		<i>the</i>		<i>burning</i>
------------	--	------------	--	----------------

...air, smoke and embers...freedom, freedom above all...

<i>Keep</i>		<i>it</i>		<i>up</i>
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the bodiless whisper in my ear...hold it in...

Keep

it

up

Constant vigilance.
Always being on guard.

“Can’t let my body do what it *naturally* would do, because *this guy* wouldn’t approve.”

The physical discomfort.

But

the

burning

The emotional distress of not being loved just as you are, of always being under a microscope. Bleeding joy like a slow death.

you

then

asia

always hungry, gassy, lonely, scared;
always something...



I call this, “Euthanasia.”

It literally means, “Well death.”

As in “apt demise.”

Such as being stuffed into a big, stinky well.

Like an asshole.

It’s from Hansel and Gretel.

I call *this* “An Asian youth.”



“Wen.” Meaning “cultured.”

“(Always) Hungry.”

“Mean!!!!”

“Brown.” Like Wen’s jacket.

An alternative.



Ursula thrashing *like*
punching bags



Ursula K...look! Wen!

The **Boxer Rebellion** was an anti-foreign, anti-imperialist, and anti-Christian uprising in North China between 1899 and 1901 by the Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists, known as the "Boxers" in English due to many of its members having practised Chinese martial arts, which at the time were referred to as "Chinese boxing."



Tianmen Square Protests
"Youth In Asia"

"Wen."

Also meaning "literate."

Informed.

MAKE THE CHOICE



**KNOCK
AT THE
CABIN**

fire away

Chekhov's gun is a storytelling principle described by Anton Chekhov, which dictates that if a gun appears in the first act, it must go off by the third. I like rules that make sense, and make for good stories.

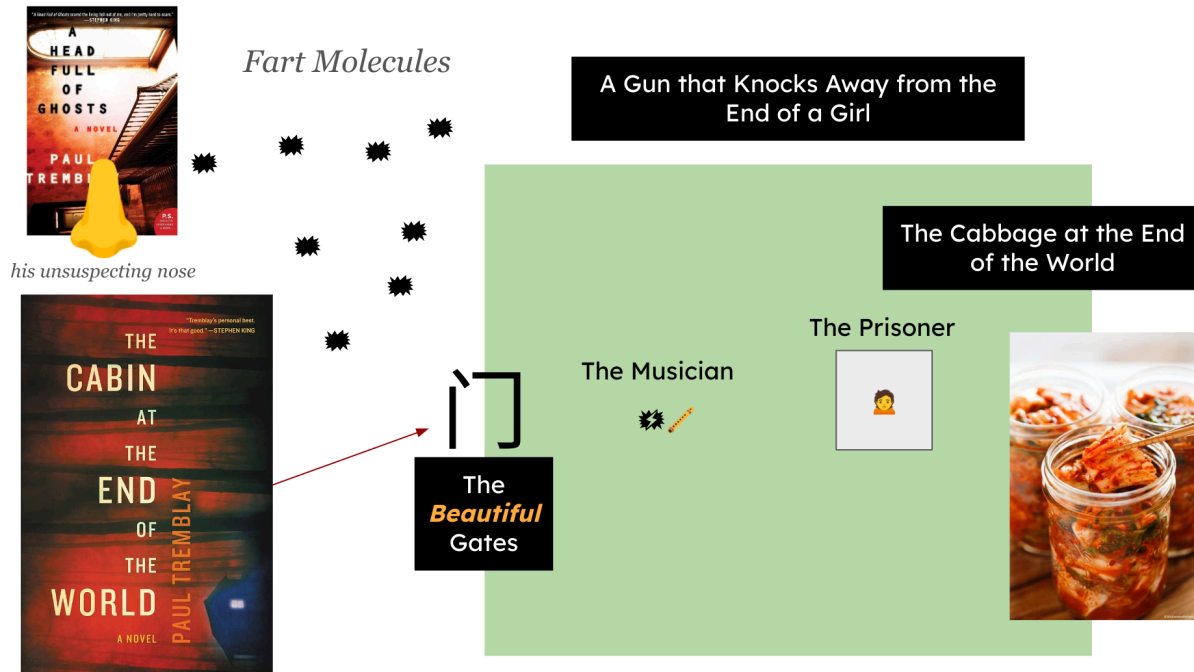
The lady in question farted at me (and him) the night we met. (It was late. Beer and magic was involved, and she was being a good sport about something.) So, now, every time anyone reads “you then asia,” or watches *Knock at the Cabin*, and hears that knocking on that door, *every time*, Dave Bautista, a very large man, lets loose with several very loud ones on her behalf.



Dave Bautista

Leonard

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.



Kimchi is a dish best served cold.

Consider watching the movie.

And reading *The Cabin at the End of the World*.

Pass the gas. Every purchase of the book or rental/purchase of the film can be an up vote for girl farts.

“We don’t *need* a ‘God.’ We can predict almost anything now, and control so much, and we just keep getting more and more powerful.”

Yes. We predict and test. But do we test anything close to everything? How closely *are* we paying attention, really? An example. You take an airplane flight. It departs at some time and arrives at some time. We measure and can “explain” the duration of the flight using fuel usage, engine capabilities, weather conditions, flight pattern. But what counts a “departure” (leaving the ground? starting acceleration on the runway? reaching a certain altitude?) and an arrival? (same questions in reverse) The computer systems that capture this data: how many decimal places can the variables used to capture the times store? Where do we round off, because it “doesn’t matter”? To how many places are they rolled up on reports viewed by humans?

So many places for a god to hide.

So many ways to play.

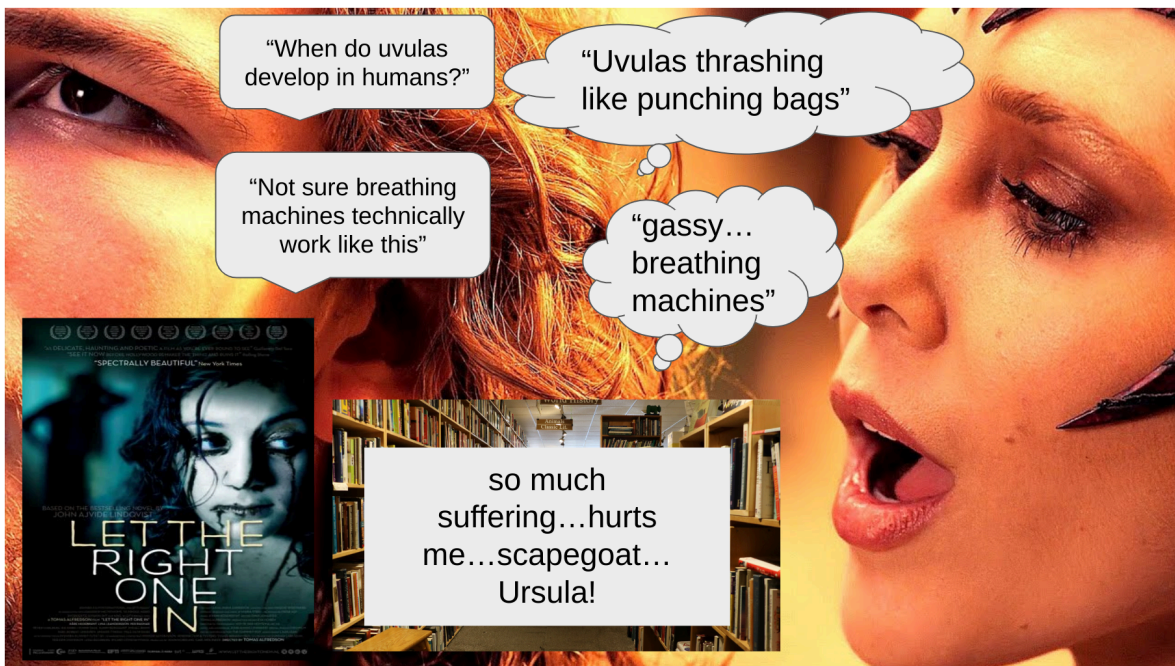
So very many buttons to push.

“you then asia” was the first story I ever submitted for paid publication. I chose the dark fantasy magazine *ChiZine* because it counted as a professional publication for purposes of membership in organizations like The Horror Writers of America, but there were numerous online publications that fit that criteria.

ChiZine became my preferred option among the others because of its content. Most particularly, Paul Tremblay’s short story, “The Laughing Man Meets Little Cat,” which was published in the October 2002 issue. I found Paul’s writing in that story electric. It might have been my favorite contemporary short story that I had discovered on the Internet. I admired it and aspired to write stories like that. That was a big factor in my choosing *ChiZine*.

It would have been hard to find more fertile ground. A talented, empathic, *literate* individual at the start of a distinguished career, who was no doubt familiar with the name Ursula K. LeGuin, was forced to read my meager story numerous times.


The questions he asked and comments he made during the editing stage revealed his innate curiosity and interest.



Light has a dual nature. It changes when it is observed. It's weird but true. If left to its own devices, it seems to travel like a wave and show wave behavior. If something is done to detect where it is or what path it is taking from one place to the next, light seems to collapse and behave more as if it is composed of particles.

The canonical experiment demonstrating this is called the double slit experiment, which shines light onto a board with two slits in it, behind which sits a detection screen.

The board with the two slits in it is like a toaster that can handle two slices of bread. 😊

 -> [| |] -> screen

The experiment is kind of a metaphor for inauthenticity. Adapting ourselves for others.

Traveling like a particle makes a specific type of pattern on the screen. Traveling like a wave makes a different pattern, showing wave interference.

If anything is done experimentally to ascertain which path the light took (the left or the right slit), the pattern on the screen behind the “toaster” will show particle behavior. It collapses into a fixed point. If light is left alone to do its thing, the screen will show wave interference. This is the case even when the experiment is very crafty and indirect about trying to figure out which path light took.

Once the light (photons) register on the detection screen, they are stuck there, like butterflies pinned with thumb tacks to a bulletin board by its wings for the amusement of some sadist engineer.

Who wants that? At some point, I wondered...

What if the *detection screen* had a dual nature, *like light itself*? What if it was a detection screen, *but also another “toaster,”* with holes for light to pass through? A screen with two slim, warming slits for *some* light to escape through, like breadcrumb smoke, or fart molecules?



you		then		asia
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the burning, flickering glow

<i>Keep</i>		<i>it</i>		<i>up</i>
-------------	--	-----------	--	-----------





you		then		asia
-----	--	------	--	------



the burning, flickering glow

<i>Keep</i>		<i>it</i>		<i>up</i>
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Only “somelight” would make it through the second pair of slits. A lot of light would still end up striking the detection plate. But my hypothesis was that, regardless of whether, like Maria, the light had been subjected to observation on its path through its story, the parts of it that escaped through the second pair of slits would be “freed,” because they would become a mystery again. It is

unknown as the story ends which of the final slits
the light escaped through.



The somelight can now go surfing, though.



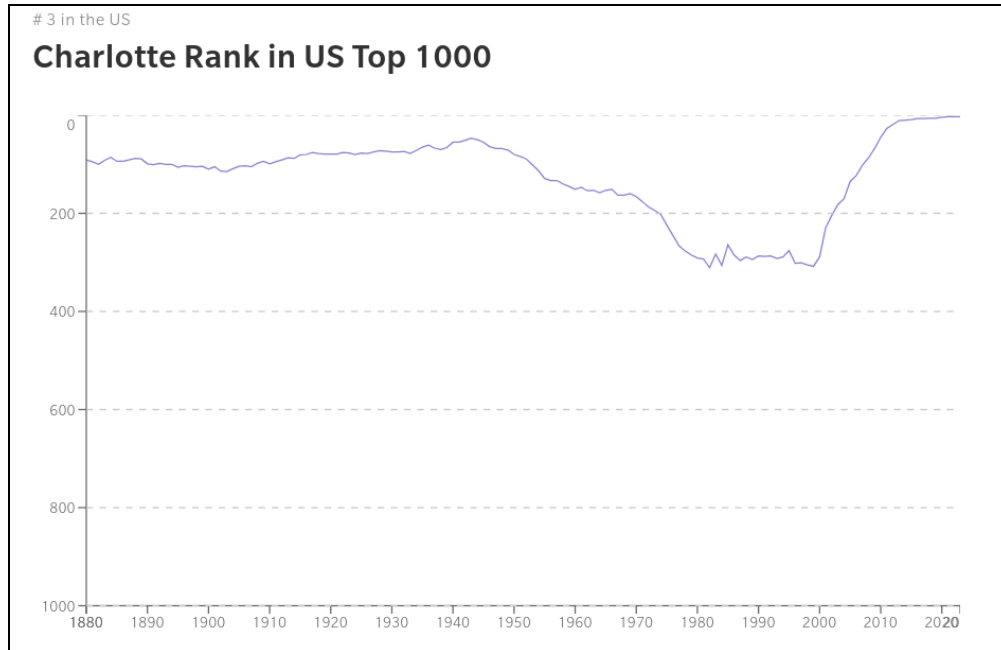
It might seem like there would be “less light” left afterwards, because so much of it would have struck the detection plate. But if you factor in the concept of *Indra’s Net*, the Hindu notion that all of reality is a web of jewels, each of which contains a complete image of the whole, then *any light that escaped at all* would contain the whole thing.

Just as you can see the entirety of “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” in the film *Knock at the Cabin* after it having been passed through the prism of the novel *The Cabin at the End of the World*, which acquired some of that image from moving through “you then asia.”

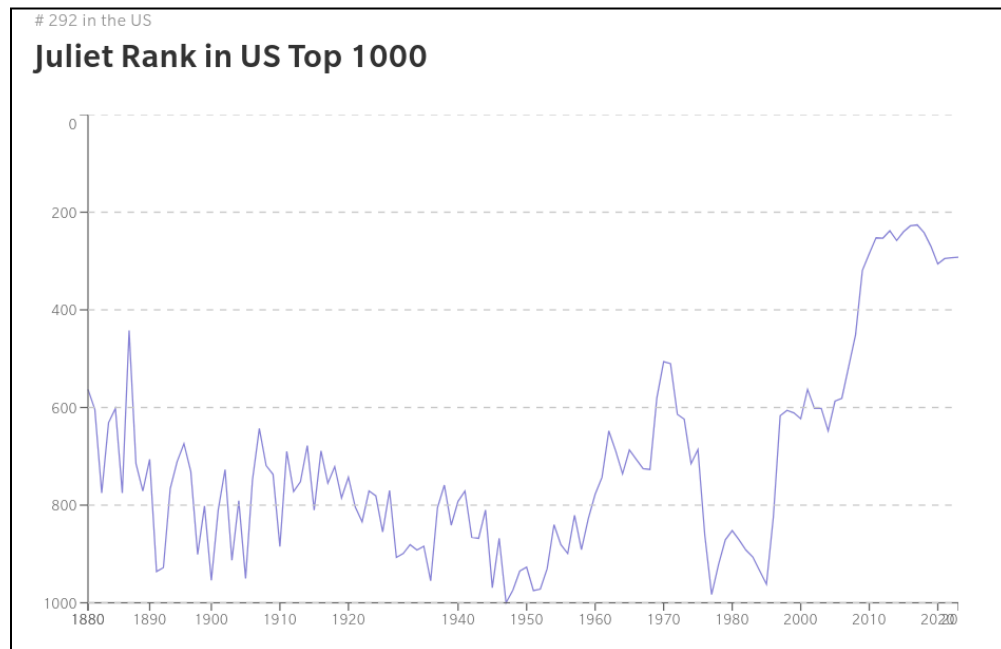
Call it a “Charlatan’s Web.”



“Some Suns
(who knocked away from a Comely Ass).”



As an aside, folks seem to like the name “Charlotte.” Its popularity, like that of the romantic name “Juliet,” has been rising like smoke from a toaster, or gas from an adorable little bum bum, for a while now.





you		then		asia
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<i>But</i>		<i>the</i>		<i>burning</i>
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<i>Keep</i>		<i>it</i>		<i>up</i>
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The burning could be a mid-life crisis.

A “fire being lit” under someone.

Or rekindled.



Or the burning could be a physical sensation.

<i>the</i>		<i>Butt</i>		<i>burning</i>
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I worked with this fellow. I do believe the phrase “anal retentive” is an *apt* description.



irony - a state of affairs or an event that seems deliberately contrary to what one expects and is often amusing as a result

MAKE THE CHOICE



“keep it up.”

**KNOCK
AT THE
CABIN**



birth



you

then

asia



judgement



🍵 lukewarm tea 🍵

But

the

burning

🔥 fire 🔥

insight

sweat



“I sit alone”



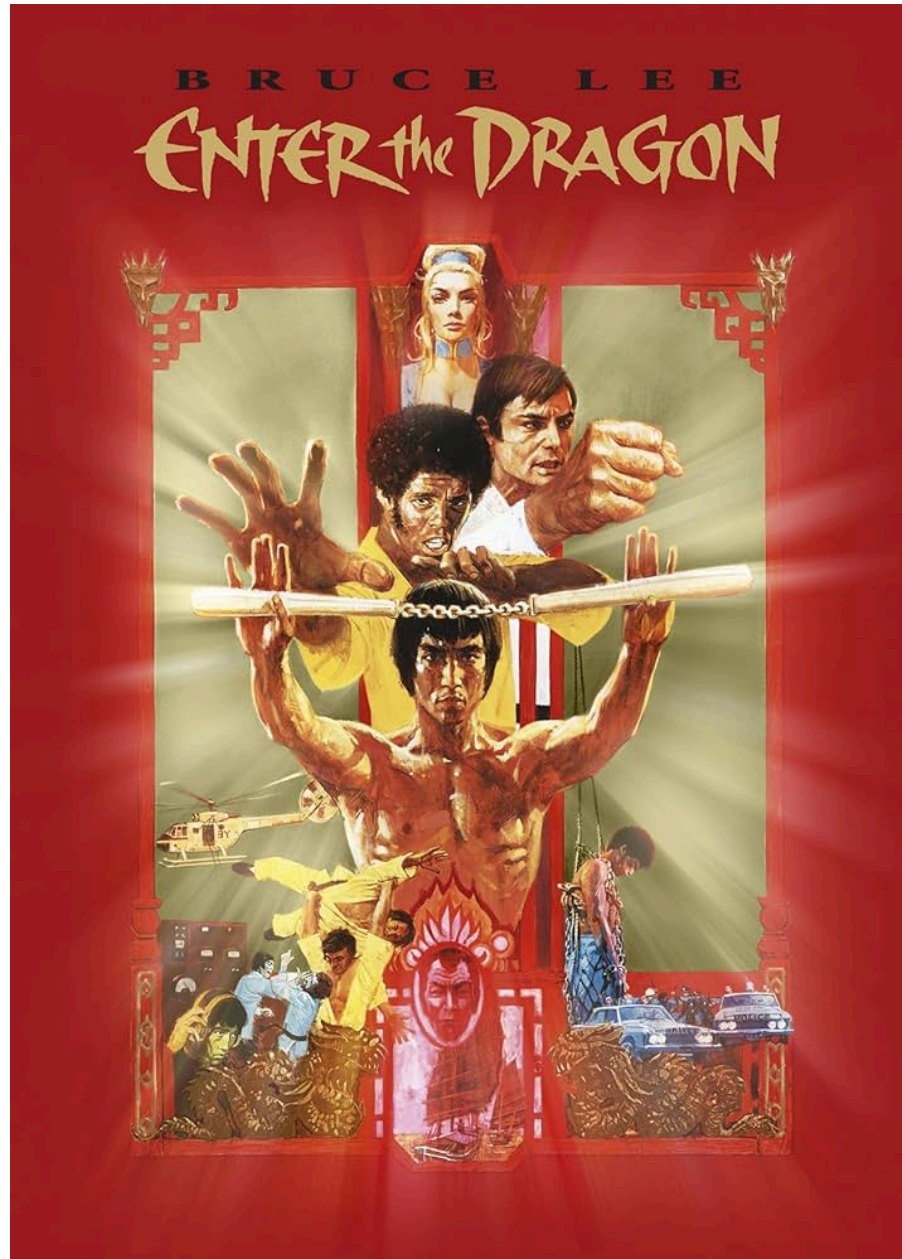
“laughter running like brook water”

Keep

it

up





“Be water, my friend.”

Bruce Lee

REIGN