

My Entertainment Moments

By Francisco Souki

It just happens sometimes. You're there - sitting, watching, listening, living, whatever - and all of a sudden something goes wrong... in an absolutely wonderful way. You lose control of your feelings, if only for some microseconds, and your body does this unexplainable thing where it connects with your senses and suddenly you are overwhelmed, blown away. You seize the moment, try to imprint it on your mind, you want this to last forever. But then it doesn't. Will you ever be this happy again? After it happens you feel pumped and depressed at the same time; the first because you feel you found the secret of life, the second because you just lost it. If you're not alone when it happens you look around, searching for reassurance in other people's faces; but most of the time you don't find it. *That's better*, you think: it makes it feel so much more special. You will hold this experience dear forever, and when someone asks for your life's best moments you'll happily tell them all about it.

Sometimes it becomes hard to identify a moment; in those cases I'd say that it's better to just don't bother. If you're unsure whether you just experienced a powerful moment or not, then chances are you didn't. Moreover, in many cases I find that a moment's power is somewhat preserved through time, meaning that I can revisit them and experience a tiny fraction of the original feeling it evoked in me. I still get chills, smiles, rushes and sometimes even tears when I revisit the moments of my past, especially if it's in their original format. And I mention format because, although moments can come from almost any source, I am focusing on Entertainment Moments which tend to have a specific media attached to them.

My Moments

Moments can be extremely personal or somewhat shared. Most Entertainment Moments are shared to some degree, as most media is made for audiences. This can change if the moment itself is experienced by the performer. I will not analyze this kind of moments, though, as I feel that they will be harder for the reader to relate with (and therefore to explain) since they happen in such a personal level and depend mostly on a deeply personal experience, even more so than every other moment. I will continue, then, with some moments that I feel will be with me forever.

Severus Snape's last words

J.K. Rowling, the author of the Harry Potter series, earned herself a dear spot in my heart. In order to do so, she wrote a spider web of words and shaped them into seven amazing books. These books are full of every kind of moments, masterfully spread out through the series and sometimes aged just long enough to spark a very powerful reaction in the reader. One of such moments, the most powerful as far as I am concerned, is the death of Severus Snape and, most importantly, the last words he utters.

It helps to deconstruct the moment in order to find exactly what makes it so special, which is what I will attempt to do now.

Let's start by saying that this series of books is all about Harry Potter, a boy whose parents were killed by an evil wizard (the most evil of them all, in fact) and that then survived the same killing curse, rebounding it upon its caster. This act seemingly vanquished the evil wizard and gave the boy, not even one year old then, instant worldwide fame in the wizarding community. Harry grows up to be a living copy of his parents: he gets his dark hair from his dad and his green eyes from his mom. During the course of the next sixteen years Voldemort - that's the evil wizard, of course - manages to come back to life and it's Harry Potter who must finish him off for good, for it has been prophesized that they must meet and fight to the death.

During the seven book series, a war between good and evil evolves until it reaches gigantic proportions. This war is as much physical as it is intellectual, full of spies, strategic blows and careful planning. In the middle of it all is Severus Snape, playing the part of the double-agent to a side unknown by the reader. At the end of the sixth book he kills the most beloved of all characters, vanquishing the most reliable source of wisdom and goodness in the wizarding world, and then flees into the arms of Lord Voldemort, ridiculizing Harry Potter in the process.

When we last see Severus in life, he is debating with Voldemort. Harry is safely hidden, overhearing everything, waiting for a chance to play the surprise card. At this point the reader still doesn't know what side Snape's playing for: Snape has given proof that he is one of the bad guys, but in Rowling's writing nothing is as it seems, that much has been learned so far. Voldemort raises his wand, he needs Severus to die, the reason is crooked, weirdly magical, definitely not definitive... but it is Voldemort, and he just does not care. He commands his pet snake to attack Snape and leaves him dying; then he flees. It's only Snape and Potter now.

The Snape-Harry relationship is bumpy, to say the least. Severus is Harry's teacher for six straight years and consistently gives him hell. There is no mentoring behind this, no head fakes, no disguised teachings: it is the reflection of Snape's hate of Harry's father. He hated James, Harry's father, for two reasons. First, James was kind of a jerk, and he consistently messed with Snape; but second, and most importantly, James married the girl of Snape's dreams: his ex-best friend Lily.

Lily holds the key to this moment, something we don't even know by the time the moment happens. That is Rowling at her best: we go through a moment and not even realize it; it is later, when the words take on a whole new meaning that something clicks and we yell out an unintelligible shout of discovery. Rowling's moments have the added value of making one feel satisfied for making said discovery. Back to Lily then, and her relationship with Severus. As Snape dies, he magically transfers some of his most valuable memories to Harry for him to see. Then he says the words, the amazing words, and dies. Harry has not seen the memories yet so he, like us, does not understand what Severus' last request is all about.

When Harry takes a look at Snape's memories he is as shocked as we are. Severus loved his mother Lily very deeply, but he was weak in many ways. When Harry was just a newborn Snape became aware of a prophecy that dictated that a boy matching Harry's description would be the demise of the Dark Lord Voldemort, so he proceeded to tell the Dark Lord about this. *Kill the boy and the father if you want, but spare the mother;* that was his only request. He regrets this instantly, but it is too late. The father dies, the mother dies, but the boy lives. As he visits Albus Dumbledore, the great wizard he will one day vanquish, he is full of regret for Lily's death, although not touched the least by James' death. Dumbledore, being the great man that he is, identifies the love for Lily in Snape and takes him under his wing, telling him that the only way he can make up for her death is by guarding her son: the spitting image of his rival James, but who also has those eyes... his mother's eyes. Snape becomes, at that moment, sworn to protect Harry's life.

Harry also finds out that Snape became with time Dumbledore's most trusted man. Severus' powers evolve greatly under the care of the great wizard, and he ultimately becomes almost as powerful as Albus himself. When he kills Dumbledore it is only under the wizard's request and with the underlying purpose of keeping Harry safe. Snape hates Harry because he is reminded of his involvement in Lily's death every time he sees him, every time he looks into those green eyes, Lily's eyes. Snape is one of the book's most important heroes, he is a vital piece in the battle against evil, he is Dumbledore's General. And he dies the death of a villain, practically alone and with no friends, no one to care for him. He is the book's most courageous character, and every one of his good actions is driven by love. Love of Lily Potter, the only woman he ever loved. The woman he as good as killed.

Something more than blood was leaking from Snape. Silvery blue, neither gas nor liquid, it gushed from his mouth and his ears and his eyes, and Harry knew what it was, but did not know what to do-- A flask, conjured from thin air, was thrust into his shaking hand by Hermione. Harry lifted the silvery substance into it with his wand. When the flask was full to the brim, and Snape looked as though there was no blood left in him, his grip on Harry's robes slackened. "Look...at....me..." he whispered. The green eyes found the black, but after a second, something in the depths of the dark pair seemed to vanish, leaving them fixed, blank, and empty. The hand holding Harry thudded to the floor, and Snape moved no more.

This moment is beautifully crafted through seven books and then, when it happens, it's so easy to overlook. I would even say it is meant to be overlooked, or to create confusion at the very least. The words come at a moment of climax, and stopping to evaluate their meaning means breaking the book's momentum, which one almost always decides not to do. Even if one stops to ponder, chances are the meaning of the words evades us, since we have so little clues still. The moment is therefore planted in our brains, a time bomb waiting to go off.

I believe I will always get chills when reading that passage. I will get chills because I got to care for Severus Snape, because I understood his love for Lily and because I can therefore understand how she is in his mind until the last moment. I love this moment because it is both emotionally powerful and consistent with the story; also, it takes a bit of wit to figure out. It is perfectly set up and does not at any moment feel unnatural. It is a product of Rowling's amazing craft, and through a deep understanding of emotion and timing, combined with an

exquisite ability to write, she has nailed the perfect example of what a moment should be. And it is us, the lucky readers, who get to enjoy it.

Lionel Messi's first goal with the Barcelona professional team

If Rowling's moment is a planning masterpiece, this moment is the complete opposite - whatever that is. Almost all sports moments are unexpected or, at the very least, not planned. And this one is not the exception. The leading actor here is Lionel Messi, playing one of his first matches for the Barcelona professional team in the Spanish Soccer League.

Lionel Messi is, as of today, arguably the world's best professional soccer player. And by *best* I mean most talented, most unbalancing and most unique. He has shown an amazing progression through time and today, at 21 years old, he gives the impression of there being nothing he can't do. As a kid in Argentina, Lionel had a hormonal growth problem which required of a costly medical treatment. No Argentinean soccer club would sign him, because that would imply taking charge of his medical expenses, so his family decided to try their luck in Spain. There, he did tryouts for FC Barcelona, one of Spain's most prestigious teams, and got accepted into their juvenile-category team; they would pay for his treatment.

When he was sixteen, news of Lionel started appearing in some discrete Barcelona papers. They described how an amazing Argentinean player was leading Barcelona's B team (the equivalent of a minor-league team) in performance. There wasn't much fuss about it but for some reason my cousin and I caught on to it. It may have had a lot to do with Barcelona having a string of very unsuccessful seasons in a row. When Messi's name started coming up, though, Barcelona was definitely on the up rise, led by the world's best player at the time: Ronaldinho.

Messi, now seventeen, got the chance to play some minutes in unimportant matches. He was still too young to be considered as a regular for the professional team, but he was definitely beyond his former teammates' level at Barcelona B. Whenever the Coach would give him playing minutes I would pay attention only to him in the field, waiting for his break almost as intently as he must have been. But although he showed some sparks of genius, he had definitely still a long way to go.

Then, one day, it all happened. It felt as if it was the perfect day for it to happen, as if the fact that it hadn't happened yet was all planned. Lio jumped into the field and something changed in the air: I could feel it even through the TV transmission. He was going to do it today. If he scored a goal that day, he would become the youngest player to ever score a goal with Barcelona's professional team. It seemed to fit though, for a player that grew in the Barcelona juvenile teams to hold that honor.

With his 1.69 m of height and his amazing sprint he made his way through the field with unnatural ease. Also, the ball seemed to favor him in every rebound, always going his way, always sticking to his feet. At one point, Ronaldinho received a pass from him and then it all became clear: it would be a creation between geniuses, a masterpiece. The Brazilian superstar

smiled, half for the camera and half for Lio, and served a perfect lobbed pass that hung beautifully in the air, going over the defense and landing on Lio's feet. He didn't kick it, he just touched it - adjusted his foot in the perfect angle and just helped it on, over the goalkeeper and into the bottom of the net. The world paralyzed, everything was just perfect. I managed to dial my cousin's phone number even before realizing that something was wrong. Everybody was looking off, staring at something. Staring at the Referee - the goal was ruled offside. No goal for Messi, no happiness, no nothing. *NOOO!* - My cousin and I echoed each other's cries of despair.

We had learned something the last season, though: with Ronaldinho in the team, happiness is always just around the corner. The Brazilian is every bit as responsible of what happened next as Lio is.

A couple plays later, Lio received a pass in the midfield and launched forward in the quest for a valid goal, Ronaldinho right behind him. I was still on the phone with my cousin, mourning the lost goal, and then we both realized what was about to happen - probably some seconds later than the player themselves. Ronaldinho stopped running in a place that must have seemed oddly familiar and waited, very patiently, for Messi to turn around and hand him the ball. It was exactly as if they had decided that they must repeat the goal, but be more careful this time. Messi made the pass and lost his mark, signaling at Ronaldinho (as if he actually needed the signal) to lob the ball again. And so it happened: lobbed ball above the defense into the waiting foot of the Argentinean. From one genius to another, from current to future best player of the world. And so Messi controlled the ball, told it where to go and sent it there over the keeper's head. An exact repeat of the previous goal, but legal this time around.

It was the birth of a superstar, and everyone everywhere knew it. Just as heroes have a way of attracting the heroic deeds, so Messi attracted a brilliant start to his brilliant professional career. The magic of the moment seemed to be multiplied tenfold by the fact that it was annulled the first time, and then recreated almost exactly in the same manner. It was as if the first time around he demonstrated that he could score goals with the professional team, and then the second time around he just proved he could do it again if he really wanted to. It was Messi's way of saying he would always get his way, of showing how he has some degree of control over one of the most volatile skill games to ever exist. At age seventeen, he proved that the ball was his tool, his ally, his friend. And nobody, ever again, doubted that he was for real.

The Flamenco Nutcracker begins

Tchaikovsky could never have dreamt of something so amazing.

As a personal moment, it's a combination of spectator and participation. My role in the show, though, was not artistic but technical, so I think I can safely analyze what happened in that stage from a fairly objective point of view. The show itself is the Flamenco Nutcracker, an adaptation of Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker into flamenco, stage directed by my brother and

musically adapted by two superb Venezuelan musicians. My role in the production was that of stage manager, and I think it goes a long way if I say that even after knowing every nook and cranny of the play, I can still love it.

Being part of the production biased me in some ways though, mainly in the fact that I knew everybody in the team very well. The whole team was mostly perfect, by the way. The dancers were of all ages, divided into three companies - the kids, the teens, and the professionals - and every man and woman in the crew had an awesome vibe. The team became like a family, and so we worked together to show the world what the family was capable of doing.

I saw the show a fair number of times before opening night. I knew how it went, and every change, however subtle, in light, sound or actors on stage went through me and was coded in my mind and my master script in a combination of letters and numbers. The show was like a big sequential program or a neatly organized spreadsheet, all the variables safely arranged and monitored throughout the play's duration. I could have drawn the show's interest curve coded in light and sound cues if I wanted.

But opening night is always different, and show night is not rehearsals. I never expected such a powerful moment, such a rush of adrenaline and excitement as the one I got when the first music piece changed from classical to flamenco. I am not a musician, so the best way I can describe it is as the flawless integration of classical music and flamenco played by twenty-something musicians, live, with as much energy as it is possible to gather on a stage. The moment was enough to hook anyone from start to finish and through several numbers that emulated and recreated that same flawless integration with every piece of Tchaikovsky's classic.

The whole play, however, is like a huge moment for me. There is something about flamenco that I find irresistibly beautiful, inherently perfect. It must be the integration of the arm and hand movements with the sounds, the fierceness of the shoes stomping the ground, the expressions on the dancers' faces, the percussion-heavy rhythms, the sound of the palms clapping, the chants, the shouts or the attitude. It's all of them, of course; all of them together make for an enthralling dance. And watching that dance sync visually and musically with the classical pieces from the Nutcracker just did it for me, it was the integration of the rough and the stylized, of order and chaos, of classiness and fierceness. It was a treat, from start to finish.

I don't know if a CD or even a DVD could recreate or explain what I experienced. I don't know if anyone in the crowd felt something even comparable to what I felt. I don't know if this year, when the show runs again, I will feel something as good - or maybe even better. I just know that that moment of integration, that magic mixture of genres, of worlds, helped shape what today is my concept of *beautiful*.

Common Ground

All moments are analyzable, but not necessarily comparable. Moments span all media types and then go beyond that, appearing in every aspect of our life, no matter how mundane it might feel at some points. Lots of things can make a moment special; it can be unexpectedness or careful timing, something enthralling or repulsive, even a moment that evokes another moment. No two moments are alike in the sense that each attacks us in a different manner, tackling our sensitive points in very particular ways. But all moments are the same in that they are analyzable, dissectible: we can always analyze why they make us feel the way they do and then try to come up with their taxonomy.

The moments I presented in this document are as similar as they are different. It is possible for me to define how they are all the same, as it is to define how they are so entirely unlike each other. One thing they all share, though, is something no moment should lack: good timing. And not only do they all have good timing, they accomplish this in completely different ways.

By looking carefully into these moments, there is a lot to be learned about timing. The Harry Potter moment is special in this way, since we may not even be aware of the moment as it happens. We are then left to figure it out eventually, which results in an incredible sense of satisfaction. By leaving the realization of the moment to the reader, Rowling creates the illusion of giving us power over the moment. We need to think and reason in order to be moved by the moment. If we do not enjoy the book, we most likely will not be motivated to look for the moment's meaning and so it will never be "wasted" on us, to put it in a way. If however we are eager to understand everything that is going on, we will feel immense joy when we figure everything out. In this sense, Rowling plays beautifully with timing.

The sports moment, even though not planned, is still very dependent on timing. This time around the author (the soccer player, in this case) has very limited control over the situation, which makes the moment all that more special. What makes this moment stand out above other ones I've experienced in sports is that it is a double moment. It happens, gets annulled and then happens all over again; this is empowered even further by the fact that soccer, as most sports, is highly unpredictable and a single player can rarely control the occurrence of a moment. By repeating the same skillful action twice, Messi acquires a supernatural air, especially since the action he repeats is so "unique" and transcendental.

The theatre moment is harder to grasp timing-wise, mainly because it being a theatre play means that it is full of different moments. However, I focus on the start of the show as the most engaging moment, and in a sense also the most important since it has the ability of keeping an audience hooked for the next sixty minutes. The timing of this moment would appear to be impossible to analyze since it is the moment that kicks off the show, and so there is hardly any control over when it happens, or any building up to it for that matter. But in reality it works the other way around: the whole show dangles from that moment, so its timing is in fact crucial. Placing a strong moment in the beginning can go a long way in engaging the audience, but it can also wreck the whole experience by making it seem lame in comparison. This moment is very skillfully managed in that way, since it is strong in meaning though not that much in content. It merely states, musically, that we are about to see two amazing worlds coming

together. There are almost no visuals to it at that point, only a promise of great things to come.

It becomes obvious at this point that moments are things of complexity. We have analyzed them deeply in content and then in timing and so we have found some of the factors that make them special. But even though these two factors are critical, there are an infinite number of things that can make or break a moment, some of which cannot be controlled by the person creating the moment.

It is always the person experiencing the moment who has the bottom line on whether it works or not. We just have to remember that most often than not our moments are personal, and mean something extremely special to us, and only us. One can only go so far trying to craft a moment, but once it is set on the world, it is up to everybody else to see it as something special – or discard it as one more failed attempt.