

**Singapore HeritageFest 2009**  
**“Arte (factually) Speaking” Story-Writing Competition**  
**Shortlisted Entry (Lower Secondary Category)**



Contest ID: 171  
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Artefact: Revere Bell  
Museum: National Museum of Singapore

Late

There is an island that sits near the equator, where robbers and pirates and thieves thrive. At eight o'clock sharp every night without fail, you will hear the tolling of the great bell. Beware, it rings, of crime and theft, turn back or face your doom.

In a flash I am out the door, over the threshold and beyond. There is no time to spare; already I can feel her fading away, slipping through my fingers. With a burst of adrenaline I pick up speed and dash ahead. The familiar route takes me through winding alleys. I can feel the jagged rocks cutting through the thin soles of my shoes.

I skid to a stop before a tiny wooden door. Hurriedly, I knock on the door till a homely looking nurse comes out and tells me off for making such a racket. I do not realize till now that I have been pounding ferociously on the door. Never mind, there is no time for explanations. I demand for the item I need and wait impatiently as she fetches them. The sun slips over the horizon and is gone altogether. In a flash, I am off, speeding through the streets.

When I reach the usual fork in the road, I pause. The main road continues, but it is long and tedious. Then, there is the narrow alley that I have never taken before, not even during the day. Suddenly I notice that the streets are deserted. In the dark every corner feels like a trap, every object a threat. The familiar route home suddenly seems dangerous and menacing. Clutching the parcel to my chest, I hesitate. She needs the medicine, or she'll die. An image of my baby sister appears in my head, pale and deathly, lying still.

With a grim determination, I head down the narrow alley.

There is a flurry of movement. Suddenly I am surrounded by strangers. Armed with *parangs*, they move closer, blocking off all means of escape. "Hand over your valuables!" they demand roughly. "But I don't have anything of value," I garble. Without a word, the one closest to me snatch the medicine my sister needs so much. "Please, no!" I reach out to grab it back but another holds me back while they scrutinize their prize. With all my strength, I am struggling, my body writhing with effort. I can't break free. My arms flailing, I try to scream for help but my captor clamps a hand over my mouth, holding his knife to my throat. I feel its sharp blade cutting into my skin. I close my eyes. It is only a matter of time before they turn their attention to me.

Soon, very soon...

But it never came. I hear a woman cry, "Over here officers!" and suddenly, I am free. A white woman pulls me aside.

My saviour smiles kindly at me. "What are you doing out so late?"

"I...I didn't know it was so late," I stutter.

"Well, try not to forget again. My name is Maria, by the way, Maria Revere."

I leave her standing in apparent deep contemplation.

Finally, I see the familiar building again. The warm glow of home fills me. Somehow, I know I am not too late. With a smile I enter the building.

The next week, a new bell was installed at a church. It rings at eight o'clock everyday. It is called the Revere Bell.

(574 words)