

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



Contest ID: 174  
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Artefact: Revere Bell  
Museum: National Museum of Singapore

After Dark

The tumultuous Revere Bell rang blatantly across the port in its sweet agony, proclaiming for all villagers to return to the safe confines of their homes.

8pm.

It was a routine sound for me; the rusty, gaunt bell I waved hello to every night, warning all sailors and villagers to be careful, for after Eight, Danger caught you when you least expected it.

The bitter stench of bunker fuel intermingled with salty sea water permeated my nostrils. Statuesque figures loomed overhead, reeking of stale sweat after a day's toiling across the immense breadths of the ocean. The glow from the lighthouse illuminated the harbour, against a backdrop of tenebrous dark blue, where huge clouds hung oppressively low. I looked through the crowd of jostling sailors, their tattered clothes clung onto their swarthy skin, soaked in sweat and seawater. My eyes darted, awaiting the emergence of the boat with a colourful sail fluttering in the wind.

9pm.

Sailors dispersed, hand in hand with their loved ones. The jetty cleared, freeing the caged up sea breeze. It caressed my warm cheeks as I peered into the distance, the ringing of the bell still resonating in my eardrums. The boundless pool of water reflected the faint glow of the moon; the warm, molten shine of the lighthouse.

I looked into the horizon, still expecting to see the sail. Hope diminishing.

None came.

10pm.

I fiddled with my hands, sitting on the broken timbers soaked in seawater. Suddenly, a stinging pain shot through my finger. I raised it, only to see a sharp piece of wood pierced deep into my flesh, red liquid seeping out. I winced.

Shops behind me were long closed, shadows creeping from behind the buildings, crawling furtively across the wharf. Against the harsh wind, my arms cradled my knees. The clock in my head preoccupied my mind, as it worked incessantly.

"Hello," a hoarse voice whispered behind me.

I turned around, my eyes wide. Red-rimmed glasses perched on the edge of my nose, I searched the surroundings, my heart throbbing harder than the pain of not seeing the sails.

A quick movement. And then, there was no one.

Silence crept upon me from behind, grazing my shoulder, running down my spine. Waiting seemed futile, but I had to.

11pm.

Footsteps. I heard them faintly, then loud and distinct. They were approaching. Fast. Apprehension. Trepidation.

Suddenly, the footsteps ceased. All was still. The cerulean waves crashed distantly onto the shore, gurgled beneath the timbers of the wharf.

I stared. I waited. I wondered.

Where was he? Still out in the open sea? At such a late hour, so long after the Revere Bell rang?

12pm.

My heart pounded.

All of a sudden, a clammy hand grabbed my shoulder, rattling me out of my bemusement. I froze. I turned around.

A man. His chin unshaven, bristly. His eyes bloodshot, staring straight into mine, penetrating them, slicing through me like a blade. His arms so burly, his muscles protruding out of his clothes, that were matted to his sweaty skin.

Fear gripped my body, shaking me, crushing me.

I let out a high-pitched scream. Desperate. But soon, my screams became muffled.

I looked into his pocket, and a tiny blade peeked out, an evil glint reflected on it... And in the distance, the Revere Bell screamed at me, teasingly, tauntingly. Mockingly. "Told you, you should have listened to me in the first place."

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Yes, I should have listened...

But it's now too late.

(582 words)