

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



Contest ID: 22
Name: Shaun Lim
Gender: Male
Age: 14-year-old
NRIC: SXXXX034I
Nationality: Singaporean
School: Raffles Institution

Artefact: Headless Rider on a Winged Horse Figurine
Museum: National Museum of Singapore

A Good Luck Charm

The old man held aloft a bronze figurine of a man mounting a steed in his calloused hands, his eyes ajar and solemn. He was past the age where one usually finds closure in life, but an unspeakable atrocity had consigned him to a pathetic state of despair and resignation...

Declining business had compelled the old man, a local Javanese merchant, to procure the figurine, which had been recommended as a good luck charm, from a nearby market stall. Usually one who abstained from superstition, such an uncharacteristic move on his part was, partly borne out of desperation. However, within weeks the trader had made millions, and was lauded in his community for his astute judgment and wit.

Unbeknownst to many was the fact that the old man's fortune stemmed from a terrible premise: all his money he earned was a result of the suffering of others. He would profit from organising funerals and manufacturing coffins for the departed; from relocating and building homes for the victims and orphans of disasters, and the list went on. It was not by coincidence or out of the goodness of his heart that he happened to pioneer such charitable efforts. He had identified the cause of his wealth as the figurine which, whenever stroked, would cause something unnatural to occur immediately (after a succession of deaths occurring within minutes of whenever he stroke it, the old man arrived at this conclusion). Misfortune was rampant in the village the old man lived in whenever he decided to call upon the mystique of the figurine.

But then, one would ask, did the old man not feel a tinge of guilt twitching on the borders of his conscience? No, of course not, he would reassure himself. Why should the well-being of others stand in the way of the millions more he stood to earn? Now, that would be utter stupidity.

Before long, horrible things started happening. One by one, his friends and companions started getting involved in fatal accidents, all dying before his eyes. His wife and son passed away from a sudden illness, and in keeping to the spirit of the curse, the compensation he received from the local authorities was exactly the amount he had wished for the previous night. Despite the repeated consolations from those who knew him, he was beyond reprieve. Materialistic desires had transformed the old man into a different person, possibly beyond his own recognition. He had bitten off more than he could chew, and foolishness blinded him from the possibility that one day, he would incur the wrath of the figurine, that he would become a

victim of the conviction and decisiveness with which he had caused pain and suffering to others.

The following morning, the entire estate awoke to the resounding screams of the butler. The lifeless body of their master had been found lying on the bed, a slit mark on his wrist. One of the servants present, a greedy young fellow, found a small figurine concealed deep within one of the drawers while searching for clues to his charge's suicide. Its head had been severed; chillingly ominous to the fate that had just befallen its owner.

This looks like it could fetch a good price at the market, thought the servant. With the money, I shall be able to find a cure for my ailing mother. Surreptitiously, the servant picked up the figurine, and placed it in his pocket.

(573 words)