



L-Università ta' Malta
Faculty for Social Wellbeing

UNITY⁷

Children's Magazine

2023

FREE

ISSN NUMBER 2522-378X



Coming
soon...

It is **NOT** abracadabra!

It is NOT abracadabra! And quite frankly, why should it be? Ok ok... we do know that abracadabra is a magical word as old as time itself. It has a certain je ne sais quoi, rather like that fancy ball gown in my great grandmother's closet that no one really knows what to do with. Abracadabra can also be a bit tricky to pronounce. Just imagine yourself barely awake in the morning and feeling like casting a spell...abracadabra-what?!! Now now...we are not saying that a teeny bit of magic doesn't make a dull day brighter. But you know what? There are other words and stuff that can add shine and sparkle to our life - words like respect, empathy and diversity, to mention just a few. Just ask Benji and his dog Scruffy if you don't believe me! Would you like to meet them? Then get ready to head dive into this book and shoot off to wherever it takes us. Just say the magic word! And no, it is NOT abracadabra!!

“We believe that children should have a ‘voice’. Unfortunately, this is not yet happening well-enough - what are we waiting for?”



PROF. ANDREW AZZOPARDI
Dean



“As children you are our hope. Where we have failed you can do much better. The baton is now in your hands!”

CHARLENE FABRI
Editor

All the content of this magazine was written by Prof. Andrew Azzopardi and Charlene Fabri unless indicated otherwise.

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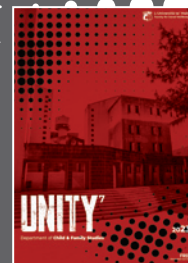
Who are Benji and Scruffy? Well, simply put they are a young boy and his dog. This is where it stops being simple though! These two happen to have a magical notebook given to them by Nanna Mi and just wait to hear all about the adventures that they have! This new book for children was written with the aim of exploring five important societal values which underpin the philosophy of the Faculty for Social Wellbeing namely, respect, solidarity, sustainability, democracy and honesty.

Each of the five adventure stories in the book showcases one of these values against a backdrop of societal issues like homelessness, mental health, climate change, migration and war. As an academic within the Department of Mental Health, I am only too aware of the need to focus on the link between these concepts and the wellbeing of society. Why is this a book for children then? Because childhood is where it should all start from when it comes to these concepts. The first chapter of the book has been included in this magazine - hoping that you enjoy reading it as much as I loved writing it!

Prof. Paulann Grech
Author

This book is suitable for 9-12 year olds

UNITY⁷
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Every story should have a beginning and an ending. Some start with the rather delightful “Once upon a time” and end with the promise of “Happily ever after”. Well, those are the rules and so every story should start from the beginning and finish at the end. Because rules are there to be followed. Always. Right? Mmhhh...or perhaps they can be slightly bent at times?

STORY 1 OF 5

STUCK IN TRAFFIC

Oh well, today there is a soft breeze, and the most delicious smell of freshly made popcorn is wafting through the window. Just the right conditions to allow us to bend the storytelling rules a little bit and just jump straight into the middle of our story!

That takes us to Benji and his dog Scruffy, as they were sitting next to each other on the backseat of the car. Benji was 10 years old and Scruffy was 10 months old. They both looked rather, well, scruffy! Benji’s long wispy blonde hair never stayed in place for long and he always looked as if he had just got out of bed (or out of an adventure in the forest). Scruffy’s light brown coat was as shabby as could be. Oh, the sight of the two of them together! The car was being driven by Benji’s mum, who looked just like Benji would if he were to be tackled by twenty hairdressers. She was actually doing more huffing and puffing than driving because they were completely stuck in traffic.

“Mum, we have not moved at all during the last ten minutes!”, said Benji. “Are we going to be late to school?”

You see, earlier in the morning it had been raining and whenever it rains in Malta, it always causes ginormous queues of cars, rather like wriggly colourful worms all throughout the Maltese streets.

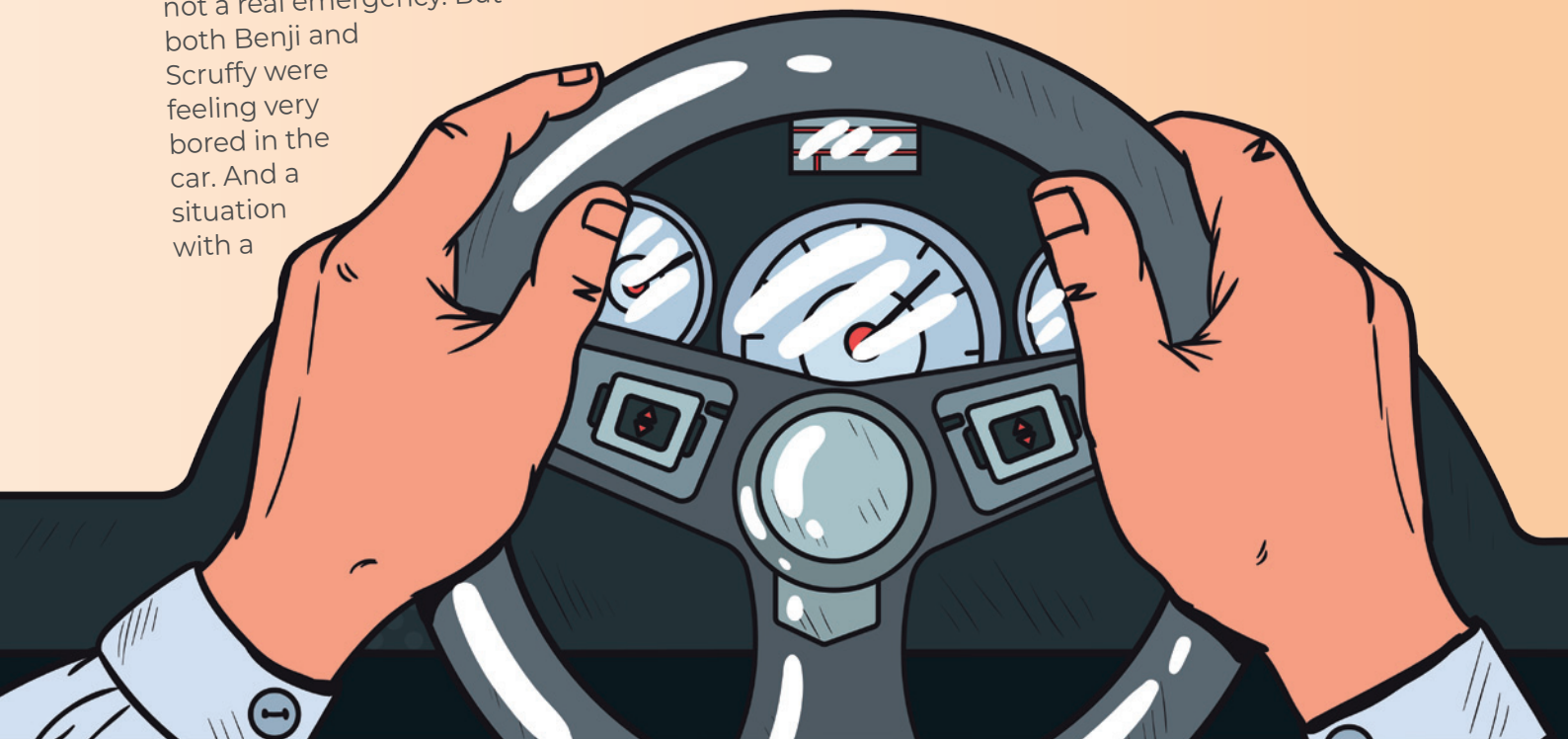
“Yes Benji. Unless something magical or miraculous happens, it looks as if we are going to be terribly late.” replied Benji’s mum. She turned up the volume of the meditation music that she had been listening to as Benji rolled his eyes and Scruffy whimpered. “Mum we need some cool music please”, Benji pleaded. “Benji, sweetheart, I need to relax”, she replied.

Oh well! It was at that very moment that Benji made up his mind to bend the rules...just a little bit, you see. Nanna Mi’s rules. He opened his school bag and reached in its depths until he found what he was looking for - a small black notebook full of weird scribbles. It had been given to him by Grandmother Mirabella, who was fondly (and conveniently) known as Nanna Mi. He still remembered her shrill warning as she handed the book to him during his last visit to her house:

“Benji dear, this magical notebook must only be used for real emergencies. Not for the little aches and the moments of boredom or impatience. Is that clear?”

No one would have ever dared contradict Nanna Mi. She had a towering presence that could be sensed from miles away and always wore long colourful dresses. Her powerful rose-vanilla perfume could knock you over if she were to engulf you in a hug. She claimed that she bought the scent from the finest perfumery in Paris but Benji had once caught her adding vanilla essence to what suspiciously looked like crushed rose petals from her garden. Paris eh?! Nanna Mi adored Benji and Scruffy, and in return they loved her to bits. They just enjoyed spending time in her enormous house with so many hiding places, secret corners, and cupboards full of bits and pieces.

Now, Benji knew that being stuck in traffic on the way to school was not a real emergency. But both Benji and Scruffy were feeling very bored in the car. And a situation with a



bored boy and a dog with a magical notebook is an invitation for big trouble! Benji opened the notebook and started to flip through the pages as he had done so many times before. He found the page that he needed, which had "Get me out of traffic!" written at the top, in Nanna Mi's scrawly handwriting. Benji looked at the words of the spell and felt a little hesitant. Although he had gone through the notebook so many times before, he had never actually used a spell. He almost expected Nanna Mi to come flying through the car window to try to stop him!

Scruffy gave him an encouraging lick and nudged the notebook with his nose. That seemed to be just what Benji needed! "Here we go, Scruff! Hold tight!!!" As Benji's mum swayed to the meditation music while biting her fingernails in frustration, Benji hugged Scruffy tightly and read the spell in a loud bold voice:

"Ful, pastizzi, ross il-forn
Bicća ħobż bit-tonn taż-żejt
Mummy please just honk that horn
Get us all out of this state!"

Now wait..that didn't really sound like a spell, did it? No abracadabra?! Oh, you just wait and see! Because upon hearing Benji's strange words, Benji's mum jerked forward in surprise and her elbow hit the car horn... Hoooot!!! And then....Whooshhhhh!!!!.....Benji yelled as the car started to swirl and swirl faster and faster, as rainbow-coloured sparks flew out of the corners until it all went...BLACK.

"Hello! HELLO!", Benji shouted. He could see his mum right in front of him. She was wearing a long blue dress with white frill all over the top. Benji looked down at his own clothes which seemed to have been picked out of his great great grandpa's wardrobe - a white shirt and rather musty brown pants. Scruffy looked like his usual shabby self as he sniffed around curiously.



They were no longer sitting in the car. Instead, they seemed to be in a crowded old Maltese open air market. There were so many colourful stalls selling all kinds of items like meat, fish, fruit and drapes. The smell of fresh fish from the fish stall mingled with that of the different spices from another stall, as one seller shouted:

"Fresh fish, cockles, crabs for sale!! Caught right now from the blue seas of our island!"

"Spices for you! Straight off the ship!", yelled another.

People gathered in front of each stall as Benji, Scruffy and Benji's mum walked slowly around the place. Benji's mum stopped to look at a stall selling drapes, running her fingers slowly through the different materials. Suddenly Scruffy barked loudly as he dragged Benji by the leg of his trousers.

"What are you doing, Scruffy boy? Stop!", Benji squealed.

But Scruffy did not stop until they arrived at a secluded spot in the market where an old man was sitting on the floor. The man was wrapped in a very dirty and torn blanket. He did not even have any shoes on. He had a hat that covered most of his face and kept asking people to give him food and drink, in a low broken voice. Many passed by the man. A few threw pieces of bread or fruit in his direction. Others just ignored him. Scruffy whined and lay down next to the man, putting his head on his lap. The man seemed surprised and patted the dog's head as Benji also sat down near him.

"Hello there! My dog loves you which means that you are an interesting person! Why are you sitting on the floor asking for food?" Benji said.

The man was silent for a few seconds and then replied, "Oh dear boy, I am old, poor and unable to walk properly. I cannot work and I do not have anyone to take care of me. This is the only thing left for me to do."

"You must have had so many adventures in your long life! And you must see so many things going on everyday in this market," Benji said. "Tell me some of your stories please!"

At first the old man seemed reluctant. You see, for the first time, someone wanted to know more about him and his long life. And then some of the best stories of his youth sprang to his mind as he started to tell Benji about all his fights with pirates during sea voyages and the different lands that he had visited. Benji and Scruff listened in great interest as Benji's mum kept moving slowly from one stall to another. So many great stories came out of the poor man's mouth!





"You had such an amazing life, Jean!", Benji exclaimed. "I am so happy that Scruff brought me to you."

Suddenly the old man removed his hat and the dirty blanket. Scruff and Benji jumped in fright as their new friend stood up proud and tall, dressed in fine clothes. A man carrying a trumpet ran to his side and blew ten blasts. Immediately, the crowd became silent, and the stalls were abandoned.

"I am Grandmaster Jean Parisot de La Vallette and I have tricked you all!" Benji's new friend declared in a booming voice. He looked down at Benji, winked at him and said, "And I am just Grandmaster Jean to you, my dear."

The grandmaster turned to the crowd again as he continued to speak.

"For 30 days, I have been dressing up as a crippled old man to see how you would treat someone like this. I must say, it was rather sad because I was ignored or laughed at though a few threw some food at me. Now look at our great city! I laid the first stone with my own hands! It is going to be a magnificent place and one to be visited by travellers from across the world."

Benji looked at what the grandmaster was pointing at but could only see a few walls and many men dragging heavy pieces of stone. Great, city, right? Oh yeah... maybe in a hundred years! At that moment it just looked like a pile of rubble!

"But a city's beauty is not only defined by its towers and gold but by how the people in it behave," the Grandmaster said. "If we are starting off by making fun of, or ignoring those who need help, then Valletta will be a failed city!" he exclaimed. "Oh wait, did I just say Valletta!? Now that would be a cool name for it, mmh?"

There was complete silence at the marketplace. No one dared to say a word. But Grandmaster Jean had more to add.

"Now Benji and Scruff...you did not mind my stinky old clothes and the fact that I could not walk. You spoke to me and listened patiently to my story, asking me questions and giving me attention. You treated me like a human being.

Now that is RESPECT. You are much more honourable than all these adults around you and for that, I will make you special members of The Secret Order of...errmm...Valletta!"

Everyone started to cheer and clap as the crowd lifted Benji and Scruffy up in the air and carried them around like kings.

Grandmaster Jean then shifted his attention to Benji's mum and whispered: "And you, my fine lady, if I had not taken the vow of chastity, I would ask you to marry me straightaway!"

"Now that is nice of you, Grandmaster" Benji's mum replied. "However, I don't think that Benji's dad would be so thrilled to hear about it!"

"Oh no worries! That could be easily settled with a sword fight!" Grandmaster Jean said.

"Did I hear the word 'swordfight'? Let me tell the crowd about it!" the Grandmaster's Trumpeter exclaimed excitedly.

"Benji, Scruffy! Time to go back! Come on, boys! Benji, can you say those magic words that you had said in the car please?" Benji's mum asked.

Benji, who was slightly dizzy after being bounced up and down so many shoulders tried his hardest to remember the words.

"Errrrrr....let me see, mum!
Ful, pastizzi, ross il-forn
Biċċa ħobż bit-tonn taż-żejt
Someone please just honk some horn
To get us all out of this state!"

At that very moment, the Grandmaster's trumpeter sounded ten toots on his trumpet to get the crowd's attention for the swordfight announcement.

And then...toooottttt...whooshhhhhh!!!! The whole marketplace started to swirl and swirl. Grandmaster Jean, the people and the stalls turned into a palette of colours as Benji closed his eyes.

"RESPECT, remember my boy, RESPECT!!!!", was the very last thing that Benji heard the Grandmaster say.

Benji opened his eyes in surprise as he heard his mother calling his name. She was sitting in the car's driving seat, and he was now once again in the backseat next to Scruff.

"We've arrived to school Benji! And somehow we are just on time!" Benji's mum said.

Benji was confused. Had he just had the most exciting dream, or had it all really happened? There was no time to ask about it because he needed to hop off the car.

"Bye Scruff, goodbye mum" he said as he got out.

"Have a good day Benji. Though I'm sure it will not be as exciting as our drive to school!" **The End**

On to the next adventure...





ECOHIVE MISSIONS

IT WAS A RAINY DAY AT ECOHIVE...

THIS TIME MY PLAN IS FOOLPROOF!

HEHEHE...

THE PLOT OF THE RAIN

WRITTEN BY ELENA

BUT THE GARBAGE MONSTER WASN'T AFRAID TO GET WET!



SINCE THEY LIKE WORKING SO MUCH...I WILL GIVE THOSE BUSY BEES SOMETHING TO DO!

I HAVE COLLECTED SO MUCH PLASTIC, I COULD COVER THE ENTIRE SEA!

I'LL JUST DUMP IT ON THE SHORE AND LET THE RAIN DO THE REST!

OH NO! HE'S DESTROYING OUR HOME!

GENERAL BUZZ! YOU HAVE TO HELP US! IF YOU DON'T, WE'LL HAVE NOWHERE TO LIVE!



AGENT SQUIRTLE?! WARN THE OTHER ANIMALS AND HANG ON TIGHT! WE'RE ON OUR WAY!

WHY WAS THE ALARM BLARING? I WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF A CLASS. DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?



NO TIME TO EXPLAIN! WE HAVE TO GET THE BOAT AND HURRY! IT'S AN ECO EMERGENCY!



LOOK AT ALL THIS PLASTIC! THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN DEAL WITH IT ALONE!

THAT'S WHAT THE BEACON IS FOR! WE ARE NEVER ALONE! LET'S GET ALL HANDS AND FINS, ON BOARD!



CURSE YOU, BEES! WHY CAN'T YOU JUST MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS FOR ONCE?!



BECAUSE CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IS OUR BUSINESS! AND EVERYONE SHOULD MAKE IT THEIRS TOO!

HAHAHA!

YEAH, YEAH... WHATEVER, SUCKERS! WATCH ME RUN!



TOGETHER WE CAN SAVE THE SEA HABITAT AND PREVENT HARM TO MARINE ANIMALS!



IT'S IMPORTANT FOR EVERYONE TO DO THEIR PART. NO MATTER HOW SMALL.



GOOD JOB, EVERYBODY! NOW LET'S TAKE ALL THIS PLASTIC TO ECOHIVE RECYCLING!



ALWAYS DISPOSE OF PLASTIC WASTE PROPERLY USING DEDICATED BINS! AND NEVER THROW PLASTIC IN THE SEA.

ECOHIVE recycling



REMEMBER IT'S HOME TO MANY DIFFERENT ANIMALS, PLANTS AND OTHER ORGANISMS! LET'S PROTECT IT!

VISIT [ECOHIVE.COM.MT/KIDS](http://ecohive.com.mt/kids)

be SMART
ONLINE!

MALTA'S SAFER INTERNET CENTRE HELPLINE AND HOTLINE



We Help

Experiencing online discomfort like cyberbullying, nonconsensual sharing of nude pics, or grooming? Contact us at **179**.

01



We Protect

Child Sexual Abuse Material can be reported at www.childwebalert.gov.mt, ensuring online safety.

02



We Report

Through our Trusted Flagger Program, we communicate directly with major social media app platforms and liaise with the Cyber Crime Unit to report illegal content for investigation.

03



We Inform

Request internet safety sessions for children, parents, and professionals. Contact us today.

04



The Malta Foundation
for the Wellbeing of Society
*Investing in children,
within families & communities*

Right to voice Voice your right

THE MALTA FOUNDATION
FOR THE WELLBEING OF SOCIETY
INVITES YOU TO

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