WORLD BOOK AND COPYRIGHT DAY

23 April
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Dear Readers,

We apologise for our tardiness in publishing this issue of BOOKMark, but as the saying goes, good things come to those who wait!

23rd April is a significant day in literary circles, being associated with Shakespeare, Cervantes and World Book Day. In this issue we explore how all of these are related and why we celebrate World Book and Copyright Day in the first place. Who knew that it originated from Medieval Spain and that it was the result of some really good marketing!

Books are not just an object which looks cool on Instagram or Facebook. Sure they can be fun and whimsical, some are even works of art in themselves – but books offer different things to different people. For some they are a way to remember different stages in life such as closure for many they offer a form of escapism.

For some, books are a source of inspiration as we see in David Aloisio’s article. In his article, he argues that Ebejer was influenced by his time in England, which in turn influenced his writing Menz. Aloisio provides some good parallels between the world of Narnia and the world of Menz.

By choosing different types of literatures, you are also expressing yourself. In this issue’s Getting to Know we reveal that Stieg Larsson was a lifelong leftist and that was reflected in his work and in his reading list.

Being a librarian, does not mean handling just books and the odd overdue fine, it also means handling collections, such as the latest donation to the Library’s Special Collections, which are not only an important source of genealogy but also a slice of Maltese history, not commonly found in traditional books.

For a Medical Laboratory Scientist, our body is a book in itself, which when analysed can provide life-saving information as described to us in the On the Job section.

In this issue we also proudly publish works sent to us by students – both in prose and verse form. All we can say to them is “Keep them coming!”

All this and more in this issue of BOOKMark.

We would also like to take this opportunity to wish the best of luck for JC students sitting for the examinations!

JC Library Opening Hours:
Monday to Friday 7am to 4pm

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Follow us on: www.facebook.com/uom.jclibrary/

Easter Recess: Monday 26th March to Friday 6th April 2018
Saint George and the Book?: Celebrating World Book and Copyright Day
April 23\textsuperscript{rd} means different things to different people around the world. In England and many of the Catalan regions in Spain people celebrate the feast day of Saint George, dragon slayer. It is said that the said died on this day in 303 AD. Moreover, April 23\textsuperscript{rd} is also an important day in the literary world since it is the death anniversary of both William Shakespeare and Spanish literary giant Miguel de Cervantes. But what does Saint George, Shakespeare and Cervantes have to do with World Book Day? Well to make the connection, we have to travel back to Medieval Spain.

After the crusades, many returning soldiers brought with them not just exotic souvenirs, but also stories, such as that of Saint George and the Dragon. Legend has it that Saint George, a Roman soldier, saved a princess from her untimely death by slaying the dragon meant to eat her. After saving her life, Saint George gave a red rose to the princess from the rose bush which supposedly sprang to life from the dragon’s spilled blood.

The gesture of giving a red rose to your sweetheart was a way in which the people of Catalonia, celebrated the day dedicated to Saint George, in Spain known as San Jordi. The day also became known as ‘El día de la Rosa’ or ‘El Día de los Amantes’.

Where do the books come in?

Barcelona, the capital of the Catalonia region, is also the publishing capital. So it is of no surprise that a book seller in the 1920s noticed that April 23\textsuperscript{rd} is also the anniversary of both Shakespeare’s and Cervantes’ death. In a clever marketing ploy, he persuaded people, especially women, that a book would be a perfect gift to give in exchange for a rose. The El Día de Libre was born and it is still going strong. Stalls with books and roses fill the most famous promenade of Las Ramblas, in Barcelona. Around 20 million Euros worth of books are sold in Catalonia each year on San Jordi’s day.
UNESCO took notice of the popularity of the day, and decided to adopt April 23rd as World Book and Copyright Day in 1995. The aim of this day is “to pay a world-wide tribute to books and authors on this date, encouraging everyone, and in particular young people, to discover the pleasure of reading and gain a renewed respect for the irreplaceable contributions of those, who have furthered the social and cultural progress of humanity”.


Coincidentally, there are other days in which World Book Day is celebrated. In the U.K. and Ireland, this day is celebrated on the first Thursday in March, due to the conflict with holidays such as Easter, school terms etc... In the UK it is customary that children are given book tokens and that many children go to school dressed up in their favourite literary character.

2012 marked the first World Book Night in the United States. “The first U.S. World Book Night featured in the form of a special million-book giveaway”. After some years, the event lost its popularity and it was discontinued.

References:
https://www.worldbookday.com/about/
https://www.barcelona-yellow.com/bcn-events-articles/104-sant-jordi-day-barcelona
https://sites.google.com/a/xtec.cat/erod-english/home/sant-jordi-2015-poems

There is no book so bad...
That it does not have
Something good in it

Don Quixote -
Miguel de Cervantes
Recent Accessions

- Leonardo da Vinci: the Biography by Walter Isaacson
- Chemistry (4th Edition) by Rob Lewis and Wynne Evans
- Minn Fomm il-Poplu by Guido Lanfranco
- Min qatel il-patri?: grijja storika by Marlene Mifsud Chircop & Mark Montebello
- The Green Mile by Stephen King
- The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo by Stieg Larsson
In this instalment of ON THE JOB we interview Ian Brincat about his role as a Medical Laboratory Scientist

**How did you become a Medical Laboratory Scientist?**
Since I was a child I always dreamt of working in a lab even if at the time I still did not know what a lab really looked like. My love of science grew with me and with time medicine started to interest me as well. My profession was the perfect blend between these two disciplines and this is how I decided to become a Medical Laboratory Scientist.

**What do you actually do?**
In my job we study anything that comes from the human body. I am mostly focused on the study of the biochemical pathways which occur in every cell, tissue and organ of our body. I do this by analyzing various biological samples which can be collected from the patient. The results obtained from these tests will help the clinician reach a diagnosis for the patient.

**Why do you think your job is important?**
It is estimated that up to 70% of all diagnostic decisions are based on results issued by medical laboratory scientists. Considering the variety of pathological conditions which can affect our body, the input we provide is pivotal in the delivery of adequate patient care.

**What did you study to become a Medical Laboratory Scientist?**
I read for the degree in Medical Laboratory Science within the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Malta. This has now been renamed into Degree in Applied Biomedical Science. The course has both theoretical and practical components. The topics covered help us understand the mechanisms of pathologies and how we can use various diagnostic techniques to investigate these pathologies.

**What is your favourite book?**
“As the Crow Flies” by Jeffrey Archer.
Menz f’Narnia

minn David Aloisio


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<th><strong>Menz jasal bil-ferrovija u jidhol fil-belt</strong></th>
<th><strong>Il-laqgħa mal-ewwel sudditu: il-Kennies</strong></th>
<th><strong>Il-tentazzjoni tal-pasti</strong></th>
<th><strong>Il-waqqha temporanja: Ludilla tikkondizzjona lil Menz</strong></th>
<th><strong>Gorġ bhala l-iprem theddida ghall-ħakma ta’ Ludilla</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Ir-rebħa (ssuġgerita) tal-forzi tat-tajjeb</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Aslan imut minħabba Edmund (qtił-spettaku)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Aslan immortali: iqum u jgib bidla fl-abitant</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lucy tsqi l-antitodu (għat-tradiment) lil Edmund</strong></td>
<td><strong>Il-ġlieda finali bejn il-forzi tat-tajjeb kontra il-forzi tal-ħażen</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ir-rebħa tal-forzi tat-tajjeb</strong></td>
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*Dalwaqt tkun tista’ taqra l-istudju shiħ intitolat Menz f’Narnia: (lil hinn mill) ansjetà tal-influwenza letterarja fil-qari mill-qdid tad-dramm ‘socjali-simboliku’ ta’ Francis Ebejer li se jiġi ppubblikat flimkien ma’ studji oħra ppresentati fl-konferenza multidixxiplinari organizzata mill-Junior College fl-2017.*
JC Library
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EMPIRICAL ARTICLES

Empirical journal articles are scholarly articles that describe research that is based on observations or experiments.

How can I tell an article is empirical?

Empirical articles usually:
- Contain common sections like:
  * Introduction
  * Literature review
  * Methodology
  * Results
  * Discussion
  * Conclusion
  * References
- Are long (10+ pages)
- Have a statistical analysis

Empirical articles are common in the science and social science fields.

Empirical articles can be quantitative or qualitative.

How can I find an empirical article?

Some databases will allow you to limit search results so that only empirical articles will be shown. Try one of these databases:

PsychInfo
PsycARTICLES
ERIC

The Sage Libraries
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FEATURE

Portrait of Judge Vincenzo Bonavita (1752-1829), ca 29 x 19 cm. 
Provenance: Casa Bonavita, Attard, Malta.
© University Malta Library
In January of this year the Special Collections Department of the UM Library received with grateful thanks from Dr Roger Vella Bonavita a donation made up of five items, all of which pertain to the visual arts.

Amongst the works donated are two portraits of notable family members hailing from both the Vella and the Bonavita lines respectively. These are: a fine print with accompanying caption, of Amabile Vella (1777-1831) who was Vice-Chancellor of the Order of St. John. The work is inscribed at the bottom, "Botuini?" and is executed in Ferrara. Following the loss of Malta to the French the Order moved to Messina and Catania and temporarily resided also in Ferrara, where a Convent of the Order was located and where this drawing was executed. In 1834 the Order permanently transferred its headquarters to Rome. But by this time Comm. Amabile Vella had died. He died in Ferrara on 27th May 1831 and is buried in the church of St. John the Baptist in Ferrara (Curmi p.72).

The other family portrait is a contemporary watercolour of the Maltese jurist Vincenzo Bonavita* (1752-1829) whose distinguished career, as notes Ganado, straddled three different historical periods: The Order of St John (appointed Judge and Assessor of the Tribunal of the Consolato del Mare in August 1797), the French (appointed Judge of the Civil Court in June 1798) and, following a period when he was out of grace due to his strong pro-French sympathies, the British (appointed one of his Majesty’s Judges in May 1814) (p. 424). In this anonymous watercolour, a bewigged Judge Vincenzo Bonavita robed in black is portrayed, possibly in the courthouse, seated on a red damask chair at a desk with a quill in hand and is captured in the act of writing. Everything attests to his high social standing including the silver calling bell strategically placed on his desk. The Bonavita coat-of-arms is displayed in the inscription located below which reads: Vincentius Bonavita J.U.D. Judex Regius. In Magna Curia Appellationum et in Supremo Consilio Jistitiae. Another portrait of Judge Vincenzo Bonavita, (recently restored), hangs on the wall of the Malta Chamber of Advocates (Il-Kamra tal-Avukati) located in the Law Courts, Valletta but this portrait is in oils (ToM 2018 p.7).

There is yet another portrait among the items donated, which is remarkable not only for its fine quality but also for its distinguished sitter and for the well known artist who executed it "del naturale" that is from life. This is a small signed circular engraving of Bishop Francesco Saverio Caruana (1759-1847) shown frontally imparting the blessing. The work is executed by the "highly talented engraver" who hailed from Floriana, Giovanni Farrugia (1797-1861) who in his lifetime found it difficult, in spite of his talent, to eke out a decent living from his art (Ganado & Espinosa Rodriguez p.252). An inscription in pencil at the back of the frame reads: Mgr Dun Sav[erio] Caruana ? Ves[cov]o di Malta lavoro del pittore Giov. Farrugia distinto pittore Maltese. Both the sitter and the artist bear a close link to our alma mater.
Canon (later Bishop) F.S. Caruana, who was himself actively involved in the insurrection against the French, was with the re-opening of the University in 1800 appointed University Rector by the first British Civil Commissioner Sir Alexander Ball. In Ball’s letter of appointment signed 28th October 1800 he not only speaks of his abilities and talents when singling him out for this office but also makes reference to the valuable services to his country rendered by Canon F.S. Caruana during the peasant insurrection undertaken at great personal risk (grande pericolo di vostra vita) and sacrifice (AAM p.2). Shortly after his appointment, Canon F.S. Caruana established the University’s School of Design under the tutorship of artist Michele Busuttil (1762-1831) who in 1803 was ably assisted in this endeavour by Giorgio Pullicino (1779-1851) (AAM p.15). It is here at the school established by the sitter that the author of this portrait Giovanni Farrugia received his early artistic education prior to furthering his studies in Rome (Spiteri p.128). It is interesting to compare this engraving with the oil painting of Bishop F.S. Caruana after Pietro Paolo Caruana located at the Rectorate, University of Malta. In both instances the sitter is shown imparting a blessing upon the viewer.

The last two items both happen to be lithographs but are unrelated in subject. One is of the jubilant reception given by the Maltese to the 1836 Royal Commissioners and is entitled at the bottom: Accoglienza dai Maltesi fatta ai R Commissionari il di 26 Ottobre 1836. The scene is set at the beginning of Strade Reale (today Republic Street) with the horse-drawn carriage bearing the Royal Commissioners having just ridden through the entrance to Valletta where they find themselves surrounded by cheering crowds of men, women, (some wearing the traditional Maltese faldetta), and children who line the street as far as the eye can see and who are shown excitedly welcoming their arrival with much cheering, dancing, waving of banners and doffing of hats as the carriage rides past. Some spectators are watching the revelry from their parked carriages. The pair of horses pulling the open carriage is shown bucking perhaps startled by the noisy reception of the welcoming crowd.
Another print of this scene exists but the location of the engraving differs in that the scene is set on the Palace Square Valletta corner with Old Theatre Street with the Grand Hotel, (today the Casino Maltese), as a backdrop. Apart from enquiring into the economic condition and the general administration of Malta, the Royal Commission of 1836 also dealt with education and its suggestions, embodied in the Fundamental Statute of 1838, also impacted on the University (RUM Calendar p.7).

The last item is a print of the heavily armed "capitana" or flagship of the Order of St. John's fleet which bears the words written in Maltese at the bottom: **Il-Captan-Xini ta L'Ordni.** This lithograph is similar to the one by Brocktorff found in the nineteenth century work by Pietru Pawl Castagna entitled, "Malta bil ghzejer tahha u li ghadda min ghalha".

These five items will be added to the small collection of prints, drawings and portraits which the Library has in recent years acquired through donations and bequests and can be viewed in the Archives & Special Collections Department during the Department’s opening hours. All are welcome.

Prior to your visit it is recommended that you contact the Department to book an appointment: Email: archives.lib@um.edu.mt ; tel: (+356) 2340 3057.

*The Bonavita’s family archive, known as the “Bonavita Papers” was deposited by Captain John Bonavita RMA (Rtd.) with the University of Malta Library in 1969 and is currently being rehoused (ToM 1969 p.9).*
Works consulted:


- “History 1048 to the Present Day.” *Sovereign Order of Malta*. 26 Mar 2018. [www.orderofmalta.int/history/1048-to-the-present/](http://www.orderofmalta.int/history/1048-to-the-present/)


- *Royal University of Malta Calendar for the Academic Year 1944-45*. Malta: Govt Printing Pr., 1944.


- Vella Bonavita, Roger. “Pictures Donated to the Library.” E-mail to the author. 7 Apr. 2018.

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Mary Samut-Tagliaferro is Special Collections Manager at the University of Malta Library
Librarian’s Choice
RECOMMENDED READINGS FROM OUR SHELVES

A Thousand Pieces of You by Claudia Gray

Cloud Atlas meets Orphan Black in this epic dimension-bending trilogy by New York Times bestselling author Claudia Gray about a girl who must chase her father’s killer through multiple dimensions. Marguerite Caine’s physicist parents are known for their groundbreaking achievements. Their most astonishing invention, called the Firebird, allows users to jump into multiple universes—and promises to revolutionize science forever. But then Marguerite’s father is murdered, and the killer—her parent’s handsome, enigmatic assistant Paul—escapes into another dimension before the law can touch him. Marguerite refuses to let the man who destroyed her family go free. So she races after Paul through different universes, always leaping into another version of herself. But she also meets alternate versions of the people she knows—including Paul, whose life entangles with hers in increasingly familiar ways. Before long she begins to question Paul’s guilt—as well as her own heart. And soon she discovers the truth behind her father’s death is far more sinister than she expected. A Thousand Pieces of You explores an amazingly intricate multi-universe where fate is unavoidable, the truth elusive, and love the greatest mystery of all.

The Mammoth Book of Street Art: An insider’s view of contemporary street art and graffiti from around the world edited by JAKe

Informed by his love of hip hop and graffiti, editor JAKe has compiled a fresh, diverse collection drawn from Rio, Berlin, London, Philadelphia and other street art hotspots. The emphasis is on humour and the artworks venture beyond graffiti to ‘installations’ such as RONZO’s Credit Crunch Monster, cemented in the centre of London’s financial district. JAKe brings an insider’s awareness of context to this collection which comprises both photographs from his personal archives and a selection of the world’s best street art from the artists themselves.

Assassin’s Quest by Robin Hobb

King Shrewd is dead at the hands of his son Regal. As is Fitz—or so his enemies and friends believe. But with the help of his allies and his beast magic, he emerges from the grave, deeply scarred in body and soul. The kingdom also teeters toward ruin: Regal has plundered and abandoned the capital, while the rightful heir, Prince Verity, is lost to his mad quest—perhaps to death. Only Verity’s return—or the heir his princess carries—can save the Six Duchies. But Fitz will not wait. Driven by loss and bitter memories, he undertakes a quest: to kill Regal. The journey casts him into deep waters, as he discovers wild currents of magic within him—currents that will either drown him or make him something more than he was.
Karl Stig-Erland Larsson was born in Skelleftehamn, a small town in northeaster Sweden on 15th August 1954. He was raised by his maternal grandparents until he was nine years old. He would later state that his grandfather was a big influence and a role model to him, having been a political activist against the Nazis during World War II. When his grandfather passed away, he moved in with his father and brother.

Larsson has always been an avid reader and during his childhood he preferred works by Enid Blyton and Astrid Lindgren, author of The Adventures of Pippi Longstocking. At the age of 12, Larsson wrote his first novel in a notebook. After being read by his father, his parents bought him a typewriter. “It was then that we gave him a typewriter—it was his thirtieth birthday and I remember it was very expensive at that time. It was also very noisy, so we had to make space for him in the cellar. He would write in the cellar and come up for meals, but at least we could sleep at night.”

Larsson was a lifelong leftist and during the Vietnam War, he focused more on political writing and journalism. Together with other young Swedes he would go out and attend rallies against the war in Vietnam.

It was at one of these rallies that 18 year old Larsson met Eva Gabrielsson. Like him, Eva was a political activist. Even though they never married, they remained together for the rest of his life.

In 1975, Larsson joined the Swedish army to fulfil his two years of compulsory military service. Joining the army did not mean leaving behind your political beliefs. In fact, Larsson managed to smuggle in a leftist magazine called Red Soldier. Upon his discharge he travelled to East Africa where he trained female Marxists guerrillas in Eritrea to use grenade launchers.

Upon his return to Sweden, he settled down in Stockholm with Gabrielsson. He started by researching right wing extremism, especially neo-Nazism, racism and sexism in Sweden. In the 1980s Larsson became the Scandinavian correspondent of a British magazine dedicated to anti-fascism and anti-racism, Searchlight. He also worked as an editor for Fjärde Internationalet, the journal of the obscure Swedish branch of Trotskyst Fourth International. In 1995, Expo Foundation was founded in part by Larsson. This organisation’s role was to fight against right wing forces in Sweden. Larsson served as an editor for the Expo magazine – which gave him the inspiration for the fictional Millenium magazine in his novels.

Even though Larsson was very active both politically and through his journalism, he never abandoned his dream of writing fiction. During the 1990s he drafted a trilogy of crime novels. Their Swedish titles translate through Men Who Hate Women, The Witch Who Dreamed of a Can of Petrol and The Exploding Castle in the Air. They had considerable success in Sweden and were subsequently picked up by the British Publishing house Quercus and released under new titles The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (2005), The Girl Who Played with Fire (2006) and The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet’s Nest (2007). These later became known as the Millenium Trilogy.

Sadly, Larsson did not live long enough to enjoy the success his novels had. Stieg Larsson died suddenly at the age of 50, on 9th November 2004. After climbing seven flights of stairs up to his office, Larsson suffered a severe heart attack. He was known to be in poor physical fitness, being both a workaholic and a chain smoker.

Since Larsson never left an official will, and he and Eva never married, there was a dispute as to who inherits his estate. By law his inheritors are his father and brother, whom Gabrielsson claims he was never close with. On the other hand, she has in possession, Larsson’s laptop with an unfinished manuscript for the fourth book of the Millenium Series.

References :
https://www.biography.com/people/stieg-larsson-17181752
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stieg_Larsson
Tgħid Niftakar?

Niftakar ftit l-ewwel sentejn
Niftakar naqra iktar tifla mehdija fil-logħob
Taparsi taqra, imma ma tistax
Tliet snin għandha u mhux ħdax!
Niftakar il-bandla u ż-żurżieqa
U tal-ohra l-ħangra ħannieqa
Il-gdiedem u l-ġlied ta’ bejn l-aħwa.

Niftakar l-iskola, dik l-aqwa
U l-ħabiba tiġri warajja
Sa ma jagħtu saqajja
U t-teptipa fuq dari,
“Trid inkunu pari?”
Niftakar l-ballun iħabbat mal-art
U l-vittorja, iktar tard.

Niftakar il-pinna tħażżez storja
U meta tispicca, is-sens tal-uforja.
It-tbissima wara li jaqraw il-poeżija
Ġewwa l-kartolina sew moħbija.

U niftakar illum filgħodu ktibt ohra
U stennejt il-kliem jiġi bil-ħerqa
Meta ħarist lejha, qalbi ntefħet
U barra żiffa nefħet
Tant bil-gawwa li saret riħ
U ħsiebi tar biħ

Imbagħad reġa gie, tghid nftakar
Din il-gjurnata, nħares lejn il-bahar,
Minn jot-tieqa waqt li nikteb
Meta nixjieħ, u nkun ergajt sibtek
Għażiża poeżija, tghid nftakar!

By Elisa Gauci
(Nov 2017)
The Tree

The wind rustles my wonderful dress,
Greener than grass
Or as red as the sunset
Sometimes gold like brass.

You are practically dependant on me
The air I give out, you breath
You want to bring me down
But I give you the life-giving seed.

You think I’m decoration
That’s a little unfair
Considering that without me
You wouldn’t fare.

I play the music of life
Which you drown with concrete forest.
The sounds that come through your lips
Are clearly the strongest

One day the world will be cold and barren
And the sun will dry up the seas
And the mind that can’t think says..
If only I’d kept the trees!

By Elisa Gauci
(December 2017)
Fear, Hunger, and Exhaustion

by Lei (Tony) Grima

Every waking moment I’m reminded of the unfairness of life. I hate those feelings. They’re so primal and felt by all but the simplest life forms. They remind me that I’m still alive but I still hate them, especially when they’re constantly felt.

I barely survived my last encounter when my right leg was badly wounded. I was dripping wet and starving. A cold wind bit at my bones like a snake’s venom. It attempted to lift me into the air with the strength of an eagle and throw me back into the rushing river of disease ridden water. On any other day I would have probably allowed the wind to do as it pleased but not today. I dug my claws deep into the stone I stood upon and filled my lungs with the putrid scent brought to me by the wind. I drew in breath after breath until the scent I was looking for was stamped firmly into my mind.

The scent of food, shelter, and hope.

I followed this scent with a new haste in my step. I needed to get to where it was coming from, fully aware that the promise of comfort was as reliable as a house cat controlling a mouse infestation. I was being controlled by my instincts, the very same instincts that had kept me alive so far.

It was pitch black but that didn’t bother me as my eyes were perfectly adapted to darkness. My ears picked up every sound and my nose was more sensitive than a bloodhound’s. The darkness was my element and I took comfort in its cosiness as it surrounded me like a veil.

The scent grew stronger and stronger until it was all that I could smell. I don’t know how long I had been following it. Time was irrelevant to me as all that mattered was where the scent was coming from. I started climbing. The slippery, moss covered walls were no match for my dagger-like claws. I scaled the concave room until I was upside down. Directly below me was the ever-present river of despair. I forged ahead without caring about the dangers as hunger, fear, and exhaustion drove me past the point of caring.

A waterfall. Right in front of me was a hole that ejected water filled with the scent of hope. I held my breath and dived into it...
“AHHHH!!!”
I woke up slowly, rubbing the sleep out of my eyes.
The only thing visible in my dark room were red digits: 3:30
That’s strange … my alarm shouldn’t have gone off that early...
“AHHHH!!!”
That was no alarm. That was my mum screaming!
I rushed into the bathroom shivering as it was the middle of winter and my parents could not afford to pay for heating. I had to see what was going on. It was rare to hear my mum scream as she was an incredibly strong and independent woman. She was standing on top of a stool with a broomstick in hand and bearing a terrified look on her face. Then I remembered! When it came to critters, she’s as terrified of them as I am. My guess was that she had seen a roach. The worst case scenario would be seeing a mouse!
“Gillian, honey, go and wake up your dad. Tell him there’s a rat in the toilet.”
I froze and stared in disbelief at the closed lid of the toilet. There couldn’t have been a rat. Surely not in winter! Don’t rats hibernate or something?
Then suddenly the lid moved.
“Hurry!” my mum urged.
I quickly rushed to my dad’s room, jumped onto his bed and made him run to the bathroom where mum was screaming her head off.
While hiding behind a corner, I saw my dad flush the toilet.
Suddenly there was total silence...
Dad cautiously lifted the lid, but before it was even half open a soaking wet rat scrambled out of the bowl and darted past me into the dark hallway.
I was too afraid to scream or even breathe...
I suddenly came face to face with my biggest fear yet again - those that stand on two legs and bare pelts of fur of other creatures, those who speak in many tones and care not about the destruction of their own territories. They kill us in the billions but they do not prey upon us. They simply kill us just as they kill anything else they don’t deem worthy of living.

And yet, we cannot escape them. We need them just as much as we fear them. Their homes are both our feasting grounds and nurturing sites. But food was no longer my biggest concern. I needed to hide and find the shelter of darkness as I remembered the slow and painful deaths my cousins had fallen victim to due to toxins hidden away in would-be meals and of the pools of fluid that clung to my sisters’ lifelines. There was also the time I had met one face to face, and had boulders thrown at me.

I somehow managed to suppress those memories and slept behind a block of steel which hummed but had no life. For the first time since I had left my nest, I felt warm again.

Eventually, hunger seized control of my mind and body once more. My primal instincts drove me to seek the reason for which I had come here. I compressed my ribs, just like I had done earlier to enter into the piping system, and squeezed back out of the hole from where I was hiding.

The scent came from a small tunnel nearby which was surrounded by vines of cold hard steel mesh. My mind yelled “TRAP!”, but my body would not listen. All it wanted was the sustenance it so desperately needed.

I jumped at the sound of a snap.

I laughed at my demise, for it wasn’t fear that killed me. It was the lack of fear. They came to face me soon after. The large figure was holding one of those utensils they use for butchering other animals. I accepted my death. Then my attention was caught by the look on the little person’s face. I quickly looked down to see my reflection in the glossy ground. I saw my wide, dilated pupils which were unable to blink and this was followed by the rising and falling of deep breaths. My reaction matched hers perfectly. It seemed so stupid but she was actually afraid of me!

We stared into each other’s eyes and felt empathy for one another.

The pointed silvery object came closer. Suddenly, she yelled something in her own language. Then darkness enveloped me but I could still feel those primal instincts of fear, hunger, and exhaustion.

After what felt like ages, I was able to see sunlight. I was now in an open field with only a barn in sight. My cage was finally opened and I ran for the shelter of the barn. There was no scent of predators and there was food, loads of it. There was nothing to fear now and this gave rise to a new emotion – Did the little girl ever feel the same kind of happiness?

Lei (Tony) Grima is a 1st Year English Intermediate student at Junior College. He has worked on this short story with the help of Ms Roberta Borg Parnis, a lecturer at the Junior College Department of English.
April
1st April 1816: Jane Austen responds with scorn to a letter from the Prince Regent suggesting she write a historic romance, writing “I could not sit down to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life”
2nd April 1805: Hans Christian Anderson is born
4th April 1895: Oscar Wilde is arrested on charges of indecency
7th April 1770: William Wordsworth is born
12th April 1857: Madame Bovary is published
15th April 1925: Vera and Vladimir Nabokov marry
16th April 1962: Doris Lessing’s “The Golden Notebook” is published
17th April 1397: Chaucer tells the Canterbury Tales for the first time at the court of Richard II
19th April 1824: Lord Byron dies
21st April 1816: Charlotte Brontë is born
23rd April: World Book and Copyright Day
24th April 1800: The Library of Congress is created
26th April 1895: William Shakespeare is baptised
27th April 1667: John Milton sells the copyright to “Paradise Lost” for 10 pounds
28th April 1825: T.S. Eliot accepts a job at Faber and Faber

May
3rd May 1937: “Gone with the Wind” wins the Pulitzer prize
5th May 1816: The first published poem by 20 year old John Keats appears in The Examiner
9th May 1860: Mansfield Park by Jane Austen is published
10th May 1849: Competition between rival performances of Macbeth causes Astor Place riot
11th May 1926: C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien meet for the first time
13th May 1907: Daphne Du Maurier is born
14th May 1925: Mrs. Dalloway is published
15th May 1886: Emily Dickinson dies
19th May 1897: Oscar Wilde released from jail after two years of hard labour
20th May 1799: Honore de Balzac is born
21st May 1688: Alexander Pope is born. He is best known for his satirical verse, as well as for his translation of Homer
22nd May 1859: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is born
28th May 1935: John Steinbeck’s first successful novel “Tortilla Flat” is published
30th May 1593: Christopher Marlowe is killed in a tavern brawl

References:
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