

# TWO ZERO ONE

Issue 7 : March 2017

ONE YEAR  
ANNIVERSARY



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## *Editors' Notes*

One year has passed since we published the first issue of 201. This anniversary - our first of many, I hope - prompted us to consider celebration, and the difference that a year can make. From this came the issue's prompt, written by Ana, asking writers to consider what should be celebrated.

The theme also linked to Holocaust Memorial Day – 27 January - the 72nd anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. I had the privilege of attending and taking part in a local Holocaust Memorial Day service where religious leaders gave speeches and prayers, students from various local schools read stories of genocide sufferers, and Bromsgrove's very own Sarah Chapman played *The Last Post* and *the Reveille*. It may sound trite, but especially in times such as these, it was heartening to see people of different faiths and establishments to come together and reflect on the greatest tragedies of history.

*Alia Derriey*

I have never been a huge fan of anniversaries – sometimes it seems as if they celebrate the mere, unstoppable passage of time. This time, though, as 201 is having its first anniversary, it doesn't feel the same: we aren't celebrating the 365 days since the beginning of this project, but the people that have made it possible, the hard work put into every single issue, the creativity that has accompanied the design of the magazine and the collected pieces of writing. This issue is all about remembering the things that we are supposed to celebrate.

*Anamaria Cuza*

# Same place. Same time. If the one thing together,

**M**y father is a fisherman. Every year at Mayfly time he heads down to Hampshire to his favourite spot by the river. Then he stands facing the current as it swooshes and gloops around him, watching the early summer colours reflected in the flow and the sunshine dapple the silvery surface. Same place, same time - but what is he celebrating?

Samuel Johnson famously described the process of angling as a rod having a fool at one end and a worm at the other. Is my father foolish? Fishing does not appeal to me but maybe I am not seeing what he sees. So I asked him why he did it - and rapidly wished I had not, for he quoted Greek at me! "Panta rhei", he said, then "look it up!". It turns out to be a quotation from a Greek philosopher called Heraclitus who had a few things to say about rivers and life. It means "everything flows" and it was Heraclitus who said that we never step into the same river twice.

At first, I thought that was not very helpful. It seemed little more than a statement that things change - same place, same time but different water. We could celebrate change. It was Heraclitus again who said "change is the only constant". If we shift from the word "change" to "progress", there would indeed be much that we could celebrate. Advances in technology have delivered great things. We can treat disease and injury as never before, new media channels have opened our minds and high speed communication tools have brought the global community closer together. We can move faster, we can fly (to space, if we want) and we can dive deep underwater. Might we not join

together each year at some central point in cyberspace to celebrate what advances are yet to come - a disease free, connected world of infinite possibilities? Except that not all progress is good. It can bring with it problems as significant as the advances it delivers - think climate change, think weapons of mass destruction, think mass unemployment as artificial intelligence supplants humanity. Medicine might make us immortal (the focus of my EPQ) but how does the world cope with infinite population? No, it is not the inevitable march of change that we should celebrate.

So I thought a little harder - why does my Dad fish, truly? Hampshire in May is likely to be beautiful but he also heads out when it is cold, wet or windy. What is it that drags him from a warm, comfortable bed to face the bleakest of elements? In simple terms, it must be to enjoy catching a fish, of course. Except that, even then, that did not seem to be the answer because sometimes (perhaps often) he catches nothing. There must be something more to it. And I then hit upon the idea that it was not the fish that got him out of bed, it was the prospect of catching a fish that did it - regardless of the fact that evidence would suggest that catching one was unlikely. It was hope that made him do it and, as he stood in the river making cast after cast, it was an endless optimism that it would be the next cast that would make a difference, be better than the last, that sustained him. Somewhere, out there, was that fish that would make his day and translate his joy in the appearance of his fly into the joy of its disappearance.

As we all stand facing the current of life as it pushes against us, we

might feel many things - that we are standing still, that life is passing us by, that it is hard to move forward or that one false step might mean we slip and drown. Yet there is something in the common human spirit that keeps us going regardless - in the words of Alexander Pope, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast". When Pandora scatters from her box all the evils of the world, one creature does not fly away, a creature called Hope that arms us with the spirit to face those evils. Modern psychologists do not disagree with the Ancients. They tell us that hope is a motivational and cognitive aspect of our personality that provides us with drive in the pursuit of our goals or with positive supportive choices in the face of uncontrollable forces. Evidence from medical trials show time and again that the presence of hope can enhance outcomes and diminish pain and suffering. Whatever it is, it is an aspect of our humanity that equips us to strive to do difficult things that we have not yet done and to withstand troubles that might break us. In a world of certain disappointment, there is infinite capacity for hope.

So, at that same place and at the same time, let us celebrate the fact that we can all always have hope. Let us hope now, that in the intervening time and whatever life has thrown us, we will still have kept going. Let us hope then that, whether our life has been blessed or cursed, it can still always change for the better. Let us celebrate the fact that, although the flow of life might bring us many things, good and bad, on its current, there is still a future rushing towards us that has at least the prospect of being better than today or yesterday and that

# whole world could celebrate

## what would it be?

we are standing strong in the middle of that flow. For from that common optimism comes the strength to keep going to achieve great things and overcome great difficulties. Without it, our lives spiral down into depression and futility.

And talking of futility, as for fishing, next time my Dad goes fishing, I may not join him, but at least I might understand why he carries on and perhaps, one day, just once, he might return home tired but happy because, this time, the one that usually gets away did not.

By Aled Luckman

### What if I said I don't know what to celebrate?

**W**hen I first came up with this question, I had nothing in mind for an answer.

Questions are supposed to be open-ended, to let you explore the intricate links in your mind, unbiased by expectations, to give you the freedom to dare to look for your own path in finding an answer.

In editing this magazine, filled with creative pieces of writing, we have to take the risk of never quite knowing the shape of our next issue: the questions asked in an interview might be unexpected, the interpretation of an essay might be something we had never planned for. But if we are to give freedom to the voices of our writers, if we are to preserve the raw originality of our pieces, learning to deal with the unknown is necessary.

The Sun will rise tomorrow, classes start at 9 o'clock, the answer is B not C: the world around us teaches us to believe in these imaginary certainties, to cling to them as if otherwise our own reality would disappear. As soon as we enter school, we learn that the answers at the back of the book are correct; throughout high school we absorb the idea that we have to know our career path. We know that English is widely

spoken, so we expect people to understand us. We read about a scientific discovery, or a conflict on the other side of the world and our first instinct is to acknowledge its reality, by probably picking up some of the arguments made by the journalist. Certainty is one of the gods of our society that we learn to venerate without fully understanding its presence.

Similar to many dualist religions with two opposing powers, the good and the evil, certainty has its own villain: the unknown. When facing it, we tend to feel as if we are on shaky grounds: if we are to debate an idea we know that we have to reach common grounds, if we encounter a question we will try to find an answer for it (or make one up), if we aren't certain about the future we either stress out or try to ignore it, absorbed in our known daily routines.

What if we changed the way we approach the unknown? How would the world look if we were to come together and celebrate the uncertain things in our lives? The questions left unexplained by our textbooks, the bits about who we are that we will probably never understand, or the cultures that we don't fully comprehend. Maybe celebrating these will make us more curious, but also more aware that there is no endpoint to the discoveries humanity will make. It will make us see ourselves not as individuals with fixed characteristics, but as

explorers of the human nature. It will hopefully make us more tolerant, more open to the different, less focused on constantly moulding our micro-universe the way we want it to be.

Following the path of Hume's scepticism, which denies the existence of certainty (but acknowledges that humans need its illusion to remain sane, to survive), I want to start a celebration of the unknown. Looking back in history, the Scientific Revolution occurred when people realised that there was no all-knowing God, that as long as they wouldn't start exploring they would remain ignorant to the world surrounding them.

On our way to discovering more and more about ... everything, we arrogantly became enamoured with the word certainty, with the idea that the majority's view on human rights, capitalism, technology development, and human nature, is the truth. Will we be proven wrong? Why not celebrate saying "I don't know...?"

By Anamaria Cuza

# *Same place. Same time. If the whole world could celebrate one thing together, what would it be?*

**T**his issue's prompt is the hardest writing topic I have ever come across. I thought about several different possibilities that people all over the world would celebrate at the same time, but there was always a cynical voice in my head persuading me to give up on each of them.

At first, I thought that it had to be related to something humans have in common, so I found New Year's Day - among 44 main countries in Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Oceania, 42 of them have an annual holiday on January 1<sup>st</sup>. But time zones differ and, what's more, not all people even have this celebration.

When I thought about it more, things like regrets or solutions to regrets popped into my mind. Everyone has something that they want to change from the past. A solution or even a time machine that could change the past would definitely be greatly welcomed,

even though there are scientists and philosophers who argue that alteration of the past would have an unimaginable influence on the present.

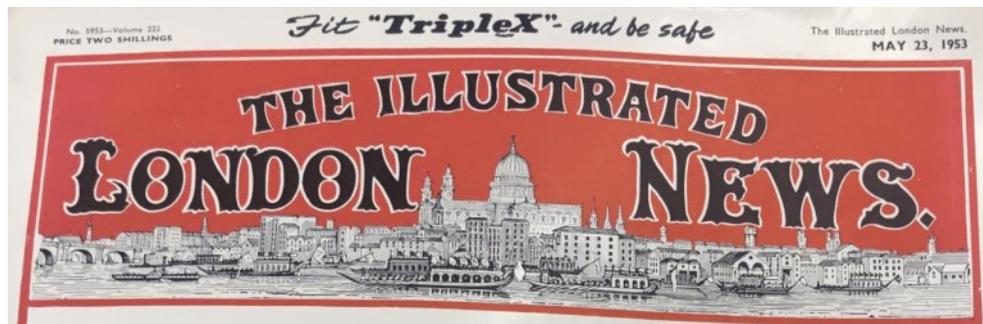
I even considered a suggestion from one of my friends: people all over the world should celebrate Donald Trump because his inauguration has brought the majority together into protest.

Finally, I had to admit: there is nothing that every single person on Earth would celebrate together at the same time. Humans are such a diverse species that it is impossible to find a thing that everyone would compromise on. Similarly, there is no woman that every single man perceives as beautiful, no matter how she looks. There will always be a 'for' and an 'against', regardless of the number of people on either side.

However, perhaps what we should celebrate, paradoxically, is NOTHING. Nothing represents the presence of irreconcilable

ideas of individuals, the huge differences between cultures, the rich possibilities in being human. Differences result in conflict and conflict results in progress. Though differences also result in war, an extreme form of conflict, as shown in history, every war triggers many innovations and cultural exchanges. The diversity of each human being is what distinguishes us from other animals. We should be proud that there is NOTHING that everybody in the world would celebrate at the same time. It means each of us has a unique thinking, which is fundamental to the greatness of humans.

*By Sophia Wang*



## Throwback from the Archives

By Alia Derriey

In keeping with the theme of 201's first anniversary, I wanted to find something in the archives related to commemoration. The school's Archivist, Ms Thorpe, encouraged me to take a look at an article in The Illustrated London News from 1953; in celebration of the school's quarter centenary, this article was written and accompanied by commissioned drawings by Special Artist Bryan de Grineau.

The Illustrated London News was the world's first illustrated weekly news magazine, founded in 1842 by Herbert Ingram. The publication was highly successful and popular, particularly after the abolition of the Stamp Act which taxed newspapers. As it repeatedly bought out its competitors, the ILN became part of the 'Great Eight' publications, all owned by Illustrated News Ltd. The group included the original Tatler (before it was sold in 1968, revived and relaunched in 1977). At the time of this article's publication, Sir Bruce Ingram, the founder's grandson, was the newspaper's editor.



In the article, the author describes the period between 1914 and 1953 as the school's 'greatest period of expansion', citing the construction of the Kyteless block, Routh Hall and the Memorial Chapel (all of which we still use today, almost every day) during the period as landmarks in the school's history. Also included are the 'Eighteen-bedder', Bromsgrove's oldest dormitory, which was located in the topmost storey of the old School House and by 1953 held 23 beds reserved for the sixth form; and the 'Tunnel' underneath Thomas Cookes, which a Victorian headmaster ordered to be built to prevent pupils from walking across his

garden. There are also illustrations of the old swimming pool (the location of which I am unsure of), the quadrangle (now enclosed by administration and Lyttelton/Lupton) and the school bell. Perhaps the most amusing, however, is the illustration with straw-hatted sixth formers (as currently worn at commemoration) and the other, bare-headed students who were called 'douls' (from 'doulos', the Greek word for slave).

# The importance of reading literature

By Libby Guillamon

*'Walk on air against your better judgement'*

Recently, I attended a lecture (admittedly not by choice) on Seamus Heaney. Knowing nothing about this Northern Irish poet prior to the talk, I anticipated a lot of confusion and very little interest to be stirred within me. I could not have been more wrong. One of the most challenging tasks for any bibliophile is to convince people that reading is an experience far from the stereotype associated with it – images of old and fusty libraries where talking and discussion is categorically not permitted. This professor defined the joy of literature: to allow you to 'walk on air', something we know and accept cannot be possible. In the humanities and life in general we are taught to scrupulously examine arguments, identifying positive and negatives and yet, literature is also art. It allows you, even for a short while, to forget the realistic and embrace the fantastical.

Embracing this fantastical, however, can be difficult without a place to start, but have no fear - now there is! A place where talking is not just permitted but encouraged, and fust and dust is replaced with coffee and breakfast. I know that this must all sound too good to be true, but I have seen it for myself.

I joined the Literary Society (Lit Soc) at the beginning of this year, and it is undoubtedly worth the session 1 start time on a Saturday morning. Mr Dinnen (head of the English department) has worked immensely hard to create a space to, as he says, 'enjoy literature as a hobby and enjoy the pleasure of finding out about new things and worlds without having to worry about essays'. The lack of looming deadlines and examinations means Lit Soc allows freedom of discussion. Every genre of literature is welcome – we have looked at texts ranging from Joycean short stories to, most recently, David Mamet's plays, still allowing topics such as Beyoncé's song lyrics and childhood reads to remain at the forefront of discussion.

This versatility stems from the very foundation of literary society: a place for people to 'follow their own interests. There are no set texts so we can be responsive to what's in the news, or what people have read and want to talk about.' Mr Dinnen described an ideal session:

*We read a few pages of something completely new to everyone, which usually links to pivotal moment in literary history, or something with a unique style of writing and then I can offer other ideas or similar authors if people are interested.*

However, there are changes on the horizon for the future of literary society...

*Depending on who joins, hopefully there could be a session for people who just like books and reading and want to explore new things. This would be different to a university preparation session, which would be a little more challenging. Also, currently everyone is welcome but sixth form are the target group; however, in the future hopefully it can be split up into different groups for different ages.*

There is also scope for a separate creative writing society, but for the moment this is included within Lit Soc, and again is led by the students' whims.

Whether you are applying to university to study English and you want to be able to reference texts in your personal statement or even university interviews, or you simply want to expand your reading choices, Lit Soc is well worth a try at least.

If you are interested, please email Mr Dinnen and come along on Saturday mornings, session 1 in the careers office (LRC) so you can too - yes you guessed it - 'walk on air against your better judgement'.

# The Hurt of Anniversaries



By Dr Ruben

Entwined around our DNA, growing there for a lifetime, forming scar tissue, are the very personal anniversaries which may mean nothing to the wider world, or which are perhaps of significance to only a small community. Not the founding of nations nor the eve of battles, not even births, deaths or marriages. Just those moments of realisation, often that the world is a strange and beautiful place, which are triggered every so often by a song on the radio or a smell of cut grass, a date in the future we thought would never arrive, or a familiar face we've never met.

On October 21, 2015, we found ourselves living in the future. That was the date to which Marty McFly travelled in the notional days to come of the *Back to The Future* movies. A day which seemed impossibly distant to me when I was a teenager. Held in those few digits, for an entire generation, was a whole realm of possibility and modernity. We can only wish the predictions about hover boards had been more accurate than those about world leaders.

'Marmite' students held a pop-up *Back To The Future* evening, and another anniversary became part of our collective consciousness. Because each of those narratives which we own in our hearts, which speak for us in the wider world, curate and archive personal and public anniversaries. Sometimes a single face on a screen will hold a whole lifetime of values and experiences in trust. In that face, visible at every age online, we see the scripts of ourselves in both ageing lines and wrinkles and smooth, hopeful young surfaces.

One such face is that of John Hurt. Around a week ago I taught a Marmite seminar on how actors who exist simultaneously in several franchises create a baggage, a short hand, which brings layers of meaning and remembrance to every performance. It is an aspect of the genre which distinguishes it from printed literature, that it is a palimpsest, bearing all the traces of all the people we have been. Seeing the elderly Ollivander at the end of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows II* I found

profoundly moving. That face was an anniversary, joyous and melancholy. In that face I saw *The Naked Civil Servant...* in 1975 still a young face, 'blind with mascara and dumb with lipstick', from a time when there was little representation for LGBTQ+ people. I saw the Nostromo crew member from whose chest *Alien* famously burst – a moment of anti-capitalist dystopia exploding through the mythologies of *Star Wars*. I saw John Merrick, disfigured yet transcendently humane in *The Elephant Man*, and I saw, haggard and emaciated, Winston Smith in *1984*. I now see the War Doctor, somewhere, below the surface, my childhood *Doctor Who*, yet so riven by doubt and guilt and age.

Hurt died last week, at the age of 77. There are many faces like his for those of us who give our hearts to stories ... Carrie Fisher, Samuel L Jackson, Sigourney Weaver, Alan Rickman, Jennifer Lawrence, Morgan Freeman... for each of us there will be a unique canon of faces, at once elegiac and almost new born.

Memories do not last... not beyond a generation or so. We shouldn't care about our legacy, about leaving our names carved on monuments or secured in vaults... Only what we teach can last, and it lasts without our names upon it. But perhaps, in those faces, from the earliest flickering impressions of light rays on celluloid to the millions of pixels streaming digitally today, we entrust and celebrate the anniversaries of ourselves, not as individuals, but as a human race.





# WHAT3WORDS

## THE PROBLEM

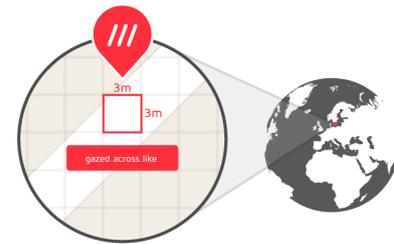
“The world is poorly addressed” is how the story of ‘what3words’ started. Around 75% of the world - 135 countries - suffers from inconsistent, intricate or insufficient addressing systems. People living in the UK are lucky to live in a country with a functioning address system – you probably don’t think twice about the address of your home or those of public places. However, nowadays even in Britain poor addressing is a significant issue. What is the problem? Around 4 billion people worldwide are invisible and unable to report crime, to get deliveries or receive aid; to exercise their rights as citizens because there is simply no way to describe their current location. For instance, distant water facilities can’t be found, checked and repaired if needed, and schools, refugee camps and unofficial settlements remain unaddressed, therefore unable to get help.

You may think that this is all about places far, far away... but as I mentioned before, even in countries with strong and reliable address systems like the UK, USA, and Japan, this is a problem: packages get lost, businesses and tourist attractions are not found, and – even more importantly - people get lost. Poor addressing might seem an insignificant obstacle for some countries, but overall, it stalls the growth and development of nations, eventually costing lives.

Founders of what3words “want to give everyone in the world the ability to talk about a precise location as easily as possible” – because of them, now everyone has an address no matter where they are.

## WHAT DID THEY DO?

Founders of what3words (Chris Sheldrick, Jack Waley-Cohen, Mohan Ganesalingam and Michael Dent) thought that the typical numerical co-ordinate system is suitable for machines, but not for humans. Instead, they divided the whole planet into three meter by three meter squares, covering the Earth with almost 57 trillion such squares. Each of these squares has a pre-located, fixed and unique three-word address. For example, the address of the senior school entrance (near the gatehouse) is ‘panel.prop.menu’. They did this so that non-technical people can find any location accurately, via the app that takes up less than 10MB of storage. Furthermore, studies showed that people remembered the three-word combination much better than 16 numbers, decimal points and N/S/E/W prefixes - the co-ordinate  $51^{\circ}29'53.743''N$   $0^{\circ}13'6.718''W$  refers to the same place as ‘gazed.across.like’.



Each what3words language consists of 25,000 dictionary words - words that have gone through several automated human processes prior to being sorted by an algorithm that considers length, distinctiveness, frequency, and ease of spelling and pronunciation. Offensive words have been removed, of course, along with homophones (words which sound similar). Additionally, simpler and common words are allocated to more popular and populated areas, whilst longer words are used for unpopulated areas. The system also has a built-in error detection - if you enter a three-word address slightly incorrectly and the result happens to be a real what3words result, the false location will be so far away from your location that you will notice it immediately.

Conveniently, three-word addresses can still be converted to longer 16-number ones. The three-word addresses have many other advantages - they work perfectly in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Swahili, Russian, German, Turkish and Swedish, and each month new languages are added. However, the addresses are not translations in different languages - the words used for the same address may mean totally different things in different languages. Nonetheless, this system is fixed and universal, and any form of the system would give you the same 3-word address for the same location. Most importantly, the what3words system works without any data connection, so you can use it when in remote and unaddressed locations or in areas with poor network coverage.

The idea is simple, but effective; it’s not a surprise that what3words has already gained 8.5 million dollars investment from a global delivery and logistics company, Aramex, and is used by many other global organizations.

For any further information, visit [what3words.com](https://www.what3words.com)

*By Andrii Iermolaiev*

# Life after Bromsgrove: An Interview with Anastasia Broder, Co-founder and former Editor of 201

*This Anniversary Edition prompted us to look back to the very beginning of the 201 Magazine, to the people who came up with the idea, and had the courage to start this project.*

*This is an interview taken by **Diana Saakyan**, which looks both into the future and the past. She contacted **Anastasia Broder**, one of the founding editors of the magazine, asking her about both the memories and the plans that we should celebrate.*

## ***What is life after Bromsgrove like?***

It's definitely very different. University is a huge step up from school, and the amount of freedom you get can be at times overwhelming. The amazing thing is that even in a city as busy and big as London, you bump into Old Bromsgrovians all the time. So I guess to sum up, even after you leave Bromsgrove, it remains a massive part of your life (and I am glad it does).

## ***What have you learned in Bromsgrove? Is there any advice you can give to current Bromsgrovians?***

The two years I've spent in Bromsgrove taught me so many invaluable lessons. I am honestly not just saying it; I don't think I would be the person that I am now without the experiences Bromsgrove exposed me to. Apart from academically preparing me for university, Bromsgrove allowed me to really build up my character and shape my priorities. As for the advice I would give to current Bromsgrovians, it would be something like this:

Get involved. No, honestly, don't stand aside and observe, take matters into your own hands. Our school provides so many amazing opportunities to develop skills from debating to dancing to playing instruments. Make the most of it. Also cherish your time here, especially if you're a boarder. Trust me, you will miss it so much.

## ***What was the highlight of the past year for you?***

This is such a hard question because I enjoyed my last year in Bromsgrove so much. If I had to pick one highlight it would have to be the Mary Windsor U6 Monitors dinner, which coincided with two of my friends' (Joanna's and Isa's) birthdays.

## ***What are you looking forward to and what are your plans for the near future, i.e. your next step?***

A lot of plans as always! The main focus is on successfully completing my first year at LSE, but I have a few exciting projects coming up. For instance, I got the leading role in one of LSE's plays, and I am also supporting a charity called *Action Against Hunger* and taking a trip to Machu Pichu to raise awareness.

## ***Anything else that you would like to add?***

I am just really glad that people have continued with *Two Zero One*. I think it's such a massively positive project that allows students to channel their energy into something creative. I wish all the best to everyone in Bromsgrove.

# The Murder Trail – Part 5:

## Typical Days

By Jagveer Uppal

Artwork By

Anya Butler and June Iec

Do you ever find yourself in a bar at four in the morning, in a part of town with an unpronounceable name, sitting across from a psychopath you met a few hours before who is scrutinising you? Do you ever wish you had just stayed in bed?

The Lounge sits snugly between a tobacco shop and a bank, but no-one notices them, blinded instead by a harlequin, neon sign reading LOUNGE ENTRANCE. Underneath in smaller letters (most of which are burnt out) reads: OUR CUSTOMERS RESERVE THE RIGHT TO ENJOY WHATEVER SUBSTANCES THEY DEEM WORTHY OF INHALATION.

Inside, you find a fellow trying to impress a waitress with a skirt smaller than her imagination - quite an accomplishment - and succeeding with the flying colours of multiple booze bottles. Alongside him is a bouncer, who for some reason tries to conceal his bulging biceps behind a layer of tattoos, each reading profanities my editor would chide me for printing. A number of businessmen surround them, getting stoned to the beat of the band, filling their lungs a little more each time the pianist hit a new note. The pianist, a scrawny, experienced gent, who somehow makes his instrument sound like a carnivore, nods each time a passer-by put bread in his jar. On a typical day, no one gave half a damn about them. This was a typical day.

However, on a typical day, there would also be someone unlike the others: a woman in a red floral dress, with a face made smooth by makeup. She wears lipstick to make a rose jealous, has a figure that an hourglass would envy, and has a voice that made the resentment a little more bearable. Everyone would shut-up when her heels walk onstage. Moments later she says: *'Hey all, I'm Ezmé and I'll be your entertainment for tonight.'* With the flick of a loud switch the only light remaining is emitted from the miniature lamps guiding the hostesses to tables, each made meek by the spotlight illuminating Ezmé for the whole room to see. She'd start to sing like she was reciting a slow, sexy sonnet, and you'd forget this was a typical day.

Sadly, typical days only last so long, as Ezmé would later be harshly reminded by the volts of electricity surfing through her blood stream; her eyes would roll in the back of her skull, a mixture of drool and blood dripping down her corpse, soon to be void of a working nervous system. Such was the hope, at least, of Mr Rypitic, the psychopath. And consequently, such was the confusion of John, the man who wished he had stayed in bed.

'Why are we doing this?' he objected.

'Because,' replied the all too energetic Rypitic, nursing a highly concentrated whiskey and trying not to be sick, **'Moody'** has been receiving death threats, which she tried to stop by killing the person sending them. The reason she is not happy is that the death threats are still coming to her, now from beyond the grave. This is inconvenient.' Rypitic spoke in a charismatically obliging voice that he habitually drew out in the hope of schooling the idiots he'd come to call *humans*. The thing that irritated John was that, by Rypitic's standards, the nutcase was absolutely right to view the world the way he did.

'She is convinced that it is impossible to threaten someone when you're dead - if not impossible, then incredibly difficult.'

'What are you talking about?'

'Look. That girl up there is - apparently - the dowager of the man who you supposedly threw out of a window.'

'What, her?' John took a moment to process the fact a few more times to be sure he wasn't losing his mind - Rattigan, the man he'd transposed out of the window, was not the most attractive of men, with crooked teeth exiting his mouth at all angles and the complexion of a gargoyle etched by a drunk stonemason.

'So what?' Rypitic huffed, betraying his exasperation at not being able to follow a plan he hadn't yet been told. 'We ask her if she's seen her husband.' Rypitic was now enunciating and gesticulating, trying to get John to understand.

'How do we get her alone?' For a second, the psychopath's cockiness subsided - just for a second. He looked to the ground and thought for a moment.



‘Idea-’ Rypitic leapt onto the table, withdrew a gun from the back of his trousers and hollered expectantly to the crowd, interrupting Ezmé’s rendition of *All Along the Watchtower*. ‘Free exit wounds for everyone!’ Understandably, most of the folks in The Lounge decided to decline his offer and scrambled out as quickly as they could, clawing their way to the door, climbing over fellow veterans and the bodies of hostesses who had assumed quivering foetal positions behind the bar. Ezmé did her best to snake her way out, but backstage was the last image she saw before a blackness overcame her vision - Rypitic felt that he would better enjoy his drink seeing it lobbed at the lady’s head. Taking a glass to the head is experienced by too few people. In this increasingly civilised world, I find myself among the few who have been through the event, and believe everything you read when I tell you: having a glass sent to splinters around your cranium steals your consciousness in such a way that even the best writers would blunder about their words; they couldn’t hope to accurately depict the event without having experienced it themselves. In short, I can assure you that it hurts like hell.

The main thought that passes through your head when forced to abandon reason is the worry of where you might wake up. Generally, you find yourself beneath a bar, or a bed, or with the taste of fur in your mouth, and even the dimmest of light is offensive. Sadly, Ezmé found bright light embracing her upon awakening; she’d been hung in the centre of the O of The Lounge’s green neon sign. From afar, she would have reminded anyone of some religious symbol. Her wrists were wrapped in wire, which preceded to join the rest of the loop. Fortunately, the electrics were off.

‘Glad you’re up!’ Rypitic’s words hit her like bullets. He used a bull horn, amplifying his voice and somehow also the sarcasm entwined in it. ‘Now then, I’ve got a few questions for you Miss!’ Ezmé, hyperventilating and desperately trying to recover, nodded as clearly as she could with the pressure that strained her suspended joints. ‘Good! Number one: is your husband alive?’ Nodding was difficult enough; this and the thought of answering the questions of a lunatic, about a dangerous man that she knew she should have stayed clear of, pooled together in the shallows of Ezmé’s mind, not yet rationalised by clear thought. So, she did what any sane person would have done: she bawled. But, if there were ever to be one lesson her ghost would wish she’d learnt in life, it’d be that *sanity is really overrated*.

‘All right! We’ll come back to that one! Number two: have you heard from your husband/ex-husband recently?’ Ezmé sobbed louder, overriding the bullhorn. Her blubbing blocked out the screeching tires and bleeding car horns in the distance. Her only prayer, and more importantly, the only answer she could possibly have given, was a stunted whimper. Rypitic had broken her before even getting any answers.

‘It’s all right!’ he lied, ‘Clearly you’re in no state to answer any questions. I’ll stop now!’ He lowered the bull horn and turned to John, who stood by a box on a wall with cables bursting out of it, snaking across the ground and onto the sign’s edge.

‘John!’ Usually at this point, John might have hesitated. Hesitation has a tendency to limit - we avoid certain aspects of life for fear of an unhappy outcome; it’s that last little hurdle at the end of the race, the one you worry about least of all because of its proximity to the finish - the hurdle you usually trip over. But, by this stage, John didn’t care so much about passing the hurdle as finishing the whole race; getting away from Rypitic and the entire situation. That last hurdle of paranoia no longer existed. The finish was so close, welcoming him.

With a flash of light and a spitting noise like when cooking oil in a frying pan, it happened. The sign started to glow more orange than green. The light peeped through, obscured by the blood, and landed over John. He stood, highlighted against the grey backdrop of the street. It was then when he felt concerned, not about the girl, but about himself. Why didn’t he care? Part of him attempted guilt, but it faded away as easily as he had tried to muster it.

Luckily Rypitic began speaking again. ‘That’s one, on to the next then.’

\* **Mistress Moody** is a kingpin in a well-established Mafioso family. She is also John’s current employer.

# Story of Survival: I am David – By Anne Holm

As it was Holocaust Memorial Day last month, I felt drawn to read this book – it has sat on my book shelf for years, and I never got around to reading it.

Set in the Second World War, *I am David* follows the escape of a young boy, David, from a concentration camp. He has lived there for as long as he can remember; suddenly, a suspicious guard makes plans for his escape, directing him towards the free country of Denmark. Although confused, David figures that it's his only chance of getaway; even if he fails, he has nothing to lose. To his disbelief, he makes it over the fence and he's finally free. Resilient and determined, survival is his only occupation – until, gradually, he grows curious about 'normal' people. In a small, picturesque town, he learns more about the world, even aptly teaching himself the local language. A local baker generously gives him bread and David starts to believe in the kindness of others. On his journey, he experiences both goodwill and yet more misfortune, all along keeping his faith in a 'God of green pastures'.

*I am David* was written as a children's book, but it certainly isn't too simple or naive. In fact, David shares thoughts so profound and serious that, if he hadn't grown up in a concentration camp, would seem fantastical, unrealistic. But it's that philosophical, insightful perspective that makes the book so unique – not just another haunting account of events or a naive child's story, but in fact somewhere in between. The book also offers a nuanced view of the people living under Nazi occupation – the kindness that existed alongside unspeakable horrors.

Overall, although a little farfetched at times, *I am David* offers a different take on a topic which has been depicted and discussed so many times before. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in a tale of survival set against a historic backdrop.

By Alia Derriey

