Tiffany Grange carefully massaged the anti wrinkling cream into the shadows under her eyes then took a deep breath. The big day! All the weeks of planning, the rehearsing, all those bitten nails, raging headaches; angst ridden days, sleepless nights all ended today. And if it failed? Humiliation, displeasure from above, and, her reputation; ruined. A bead of moisture magically appeared on Tiffany's forehead, her armpits suddenly felt damp; sweat! Fear was making her sweat! Exhaling slowly, Tiffany fought to calm her racing thoughts. She had prepared well, she had done all she could...getting all hot under the collar wouldn't help, confidence not musty armpits was the key to success.

Gopek Gundawhalla was happy. He had cracked it! It had taken days of hard work, but at last he had cracked it! As he knotted his tie, Gopek just knew it was going to go well. Gran had been right. Right from an early age, she had said that challenges didn't faze him. Gran used to insist, in their native South Asian language (to the intense irritation of her westernized children) that Gopek could never get lost, no matter where or what faced him, Gopek would find his way home. "Gopek is winner" was about the only decipherable English Gran could speak. Gopek was happy, Granma Pritee was right!

Morita Borenski woke with a start. Outside her bedroom window, beguiled by the lights of the nearby tram station, some chaffinches' were deep into their rendition of the dawn chorus. Further down her road, the howl of a disorientated fox cub carried easily on the warm balmy air to where she quietly lay. They were the sounds of a typical midsummer night. Morita kicked away her blanket. She was sweating heavily yet, she knew her perspiration had nothing to do with the sultry night atmosphere or her light sleeping cover. It was the nightmare; again. Third time in the week! Morita lifted her head off her pillow. It stank of sweat; fear induced sweat. She couldn't go on like this, she had to act, even if it was in front of everyone, she couldn't carry on having the nightmares. The fox cub's howl like some portentous herald of doom caused her to shudder. Her demon was active during the day. And yet she knew she had to confront it; unless her present predicament was to become the standard for the sleeping hours. She had no choice, Morita had to act!

Like a prison tower spotlight scouring its facility's perimeter wall for the rumoured midnight jail break, Tiffany Grange's smile subjected anyone unfortunate enough to wander into its path to a pearly white dazzling. Like the spotlight, the smile never dimmed or flickered as it swept the length and breadth of the rapidly filling hall, yet for all its gleam and mint fresh delightfulness, the smile

was disingenuous; Tiffany was seething! She could have worn a shorter skirt after all! Her exasperation rose as she scanned the settling audience from behind her happy face mask. Clearly the protracted heat wave had shortened the length of skirt societal norms deemed respectable. Compared to the acres of flesh on display all around her, the just above the knee mini she had considered too risqué for the occasion, would actually have been thee feminine expression of elegant demureness! There were so many knees on display...so many lumpy knees'! In her pursuit of the perfect Sunday roasting spud she rejected potatoes less knobbly than some of the knees she was looking at. Her knees were soooo much nicer! Thoughts of Sunday lunch caused Tiffany's focus to switch to her major gripe; she was roasting! Tiffany made a desultory attempt to fan herself. To combat the unspeakable lechery Martha insisted was inevitable at such events, best friend Martha had advised a strict Calvinist line in clothing. Tiffany had agreed; hence her ankle length skirt; the only one she possessed. It was woollen...and midnight black! The skirt had become an oven, her legs its slow baking prime cuts! She felt so uncomfortable. A shorter skirt would have been much more practical and of course it would have revealed just how shapely her pins were! Tiffany smiled winsomely at a woman whose hot pants were struggling to contain a pair of very ample thighs. Her internal outrage rose. Those legs belonged on some free roaming East African behemoth, yet here they were clomping around her assembly hall, half the halls male populace glued to their every elephantine stomp! SHE had much more shapely pins! Subconsciously Tiffany ran her hands down the side of her black ankle length skirt. Oh how she wished she had worn the fuchsia pink mini! Elephant thighs had finally found a seat. Freed at last, the numerous male eyes ogling the woman's generously padded femurs returned to their eye sockets. Mr Fitzgerald was signalling. Tiffany closed her eyes and mumbled a quiet prayer. Oh well this was it, all the hours planning, re-planning, the endless practise repeating the same things time and time again; all that hard work, sleepless nights, dinners on the move, the tears, the tantrums...and baked thighs; it all came down to this. As Tiffany rose from her seat, beads of sweat trickled down her par roasted thighs, Great start! Surely things could only get better!

"Hello Parents, teachers and children of St Bedes primary school. On behalf of the children of Butterfly class I would like to welcome you to the special Whitsun assembly of our school. My name is Tiffany Grange and my class have prepared a little piece to show you how much we have learnt since joining the school. It's about saving the planet. So now everybody is sitting nicely, we will start."

The microphone passed down the line of starry eyed kids. It stopped at the end of the line with the little boy with big ears. The boy, who had been glaring at a woman deep in conversation with 'elephant thighs', looked startled. Surprise quickly transformed into anger. "What?" he snarled into the open microphone. The audience's expectant silence ensured the angry retort carried to every part of the packed hall. Frantically Tiffany signalled. Very reluctantly, Charlie Stephens stood up. The audience's anticipation rocketed. A host of doting mothers willed "little Charlie" to remember his lines. Oblivious to the good Karma being cast his way, Charlie Stephens continued to stare dully at his frantically gesticulating class teacher.

"Say Hello and Welcome to our special assembly." Tiffany desperately lip synched. Charlie said nothing. Tiffany tried again; this time her lip synch was mouthed loud enough to ensure all the children, teachers and parents present heard. But Charlie was having none of it. He had more pressing grievances that needed airing. "My Mommy didn't let me have Frosties for breakfast" he whined loudly into the open mic. Then turning to point an accusing finger at the now mortified woman previously chatting to elephant thighs, he screamed "SHE MADE ME EAT WEETABIX SO I CAN'T REMEMBER MY WORDS!" Then, with a finality emphasised by his folded hands, he handed the microphone to the little girl next to him and sat down. Tiffany Grange died! Her first reception class assembly had started like the first chapter of the teachers worst nightmare handbook.

Gopek flashed a confident smile at his family as he jumped up. The other members of 7G had fluffed their parts, he would not. He, Gopek Gundawhalla was determined not to let his family...or teacher down. Gopek smiled fondly at Miss. She smiled back. He liked Miss, but Gopek knew Miss was sad. Grandma Pritee said, it was because 'Miss did not have a husband or children.' Well he Gopek Gundawhalla, son of Gupta Gundawhalla, descended from an ancient lineage of King's, warriors and shrewd Corner shop Proprietors' was determined to do something about it! He wasn't sure how he could help Miss get children. When he had asked his mother where babies came from, she had laughed airily and mumbled something about "birds and bees". A hesitant exploration of what he thought was a beehive, but had actually turned out to be a wasps nest had resulted in a couple of painful stings but no babies and, birds just pooped all over the place. Getting babies for Miss was going to be a real problem, but he could make Miss happy. Happy like Shahrukh Khan

made HIS female co-stars happy in the Bollywood movies his older sister was always watching but first...

"...so everybody must try their best to re...reca..." Gopek's enthusiastically delivered sentence on environmental care shuddered to a halt. The word had been the one thing he had struggled to master all week long. A spark of uncertainty flickered in his mind. Catching on the tinder box dry anxiety of the watching audience, it ignited. A brushfire of panic gusted into Gopek's mind. Everyone was watching him. He could see the concern growing on his families faces. Papa's head was bowed in embarrassment, mama's lips were moving, no doubt she was praying to whatever deity was responsible for children's assemblies; the wrinkled noses of the occupants in the seats in close proximity to brother Anwar suggested he had lost bowel control again; this was pressure! He hadn't realised that rehearsing in front of one's family wasn't the same as facing a packed audience. What was the silly word again "re...rechar...Recycle" Yes That was it!! "Recycle...we must all learn to recycle everyday!...RECYCLE!!" With an exultant shout and gloriously exaggerated bow Gopek finished. The audience broke out in rapturous applause. So far they had seen one child wet himself, another stare at them, then burst into hysterical laughter as if they were a collection of clowns assembled for his personal entertainment. One girl had tearfully insisted she wanted "Dada" and two ginger heads had fought over whose turn it was to speak. At last, the smartly dressed Indian boy had said his words wonderfully, at last a child who had got the 'job done.' And he had finished with such panache.

Or had he? Because just when they had expected the boy to sit down - he had started singing! The audience looked around uncertainly. The boy's song was increasing in both pitch and passion and he was dancing purposely towards his nonplussed teacher. A host of questions leapt from the audience's collective mind. Did St Bedes really teach eight year olds such provocative groin thrusting gyrations? What language was it; it certainly wasn't English, and could that teacher's face possibly go any further red? As he finished his song, Gopek whipped out the flowers he had carefully hidden

under his shirt. Tiffany's face turned a slightly darker red than her magenta tinted cheeks. The hall was deathly silent...then Grandma Pritee leapt to her feet and began to loudly and effusively praise her grandson; in Bengali. The rest of her family picked up the refrain. Their enthusiastic whoops and cheers coaxed the rest of the parents into action. Thunderous applause soon echoed around the hall. It emboldened Gopek. "Miss Grange these beautiful flowers are for you." Gopek handed the bunch of dandelions he had spent the early morning picking to his teacher.

Tiffany nodded weakly, the deep burgundy hue her face had taken somehow deepened. Not even in the darkest, dankest, recesses of her very colourful imagination did receiving a bunch of dandelions, from a lovelorn 7 year old who had just sung her a Bollywood love song in front of a packed school audience exist.

"Miss," Gopek continued as the applause died down "I know you are sad because you haven't got a boyfriend who will marry you and this year the bee's are only stinging not giving children. Don't be sad, I will marry you. You will be my senior wife. We will live on my Grandmothers farm where you will tend our large herd of goats. You will milk them and we will have fresh goat's milk every morning for breakfast, I will pick flowers just like these, only much bigger."

Silence! How did the audience handle what they had just heard? Should they applaud the tot's audacious proposal to his teacher; a woman whose striking feminine physicality's suggested nature had equipped her with the facilities to produce for him, a more germane dairy product than any his matriarch's female nannies might proffer? Or should they call him a little perve? Should they clap politely or would it be politically incorrect to cackle hysterically? What should they do? Tiffany said nothing. She did not need to. The further crimson flush swathing her face spoke volumes. Her brief resurrection from her earlier fluster had abruptly terminated. Once again her face displayed all the symptoms of imminent cardiac failure due to acute public embarrassment.

Rachel Gryce finished speaking then handed the microphone onto the next child on the line. The audience's generous applause became even more benevolent as Rachel nervously curtsied. Tiffany wiped away the tear forming in her right eye as she gave her pupil a big thumbs up. Rachel's return smile, the perfect blend of relief and elation, caused Tiffany's eyes to fill up even more. Somehow, thank God, the assembly had recovered from the early debacle. Apart from chubby Kudlip thinking the microphone was a large liquorice lollipop, progress had been remarkably smooth. The remaining children took their cues, said their lines then sat down. Tiffany's face had resumed its normal Carte D'Or vanilla blossom. The disastrous start had been overcome and the assembly was nearly over. Thank God, she felt hot and sweaty. Now, it wasn't just her entombed legs that had yielded a ton of sweat, her armpits were yucky too. She smelt. Despite an extra couple of seconds spraying, her deodorant had lost the battle to keep her natural body essence on lockdown. Every now and then, Tiffany caught a whiff of the savour that greeted her when she woke up after sleeping under the duvet on a humid summer night. That wasn't the worst of it. Her face was a mess. Her forehead had that sweat induced shine which drew people's attention to just how large and box like it was, her mascara and blush were all mussed and she felt sure her breath smelt, but she had made it!! Little mouse was being handed the microphone. Good, Little mouse hated being the focus of attention but once the shy thing couldn't avoid the spotlight, the little émigré from Lithuania was quite an accomplished speaker, little mouse would be fine. Now where was the hunk that had slipped in, halfway through Kudlip's penultimate attempt to swallow the microphone. Tiffany sighted the figure that had caught her attention despite all the carnage happening around her. Hmmm!! Her mind shivered with pleasure. Athletically built, short cropped hair, slightly stiff posture; mannerisms suggestive of links with the military. Army, possibly Airforce hmmmmm her dream man! And oh sweet Lord he's looking at me! Tiffany felt her heart do a salsa across her ribcage. He was watching her with alert eyes, alert military grey eyes and was that; was that a tiny smile on his face? Tiffany's heart did the salsa back across her ribcage. HE WAS SMILING AT HER! THE HOTTEST MALE THING ST

BEDE'S ASSEMBLY HALL HAD witnessed since it's construction IN THE LATE 1960'S WAS PLAYING VISUAL FOOTSIE WITH HER!

"MISS!" the insistent shrillness of the cry tipped Tiffany out of her romance spiced imaginings.

"Did you hear me Miss?"

Everyone was staring at her, it wasn't only dream date playing visual footsie with her, everybody was! "Well Miss!"

Self consciously Tiffany stood up. Her baked thighs had deposited another pool of moisture in her chair and she could definitely detect that sweaty whiff she associated with duvets' and humid summer nights'. Oh and what had little mouse said?

Little mouse was talking again, this time her words were directed at Thomas Mullcross. "If you pull my ponytails again my daddy will arrest you, take you to Lithuania, beat you, then throw you in jail... forever!!" Having warned the demon who left her crying and dribbling into her pillow at night of the grim fate awaiting him unless he changed his ways, little mouse aka Morita Borenski turned to the figure every child in Butterfly class looked to for authentication, "Isn't it Miss?"

Suddenly finding herself championing actions the United Nations probably deemed outrageous child abuse, Tiffany could only smile weakly; her face however conveyed her deeper emotional turmoil, it went beetroot.

Silence covered the hall as people mulled over Little Mouse's threat. A loud sniffle caused attention to switch from the ponytailed prophetess of doom and her beetroot faced deity, to the figure the evil portent was directed at. Thomas Mullcross's bottom lip quivered. For a second the acknowledged hard nut of the junior kiddie's playground fended off the frightened child's natural defence mechanism towards external threat; inevitably nature won.

Thomas' wails were as dramatically loud as his tear cascade spectacular. In between terrified caterwauling and frantic air gulping, he screamed at the generously 'thighed' woman "Mum I don't wanna go, I won't pull her hair again I promise; I don't wanna go to Lithumaniac!"

Elephant thighs shot to her feet, pointing at Mr Fitzgerald she screamed "I'll sue the school if they try to take my little Tom Tom to Little Narnia he's scared of wardrobes and besides we aint Christians so you can't take him to Little Narnia!!"

Tiffany's head drooped as she sank into her seat. Her mouth felt as dry as papyrus, she definitely smelt, her makeup was a mess and dream date had vanished. Oh and the quietest child in her class had started the first riot in the school's history! Tiffany sighed wearily, who said "never work with kids and animals?

Tiffany waved off the last child and parent then exhaled. Another hectic day over. She stretched luxuriantly "Ahh it's so nice when the school day is over isn't it." Mrs O'Grady smiled, but said nothing. However, she did stare quite pointedly at Tiffany. It was then it tickled Tiffany's nostrils. A smell which reminded her of the disastrous Whitsun assembly. "Oh dear, am I err sweaty?" Mrs O' Grady nodded. Tiffany's arms dropped back to her sides. Two weeks since the assembly debacle, yet the fallout still lingered. The Indian parents just laughed when they saw her, Elephant thighs aka Mrs Mullcross was still giving her the silent treatment and every time the stationary cupboard was opened 'little Tom Tom' screamed he didn't want to go to Little Narnia! Thankfully Mr Fitzgerald had seen the funny side of things; her teaching career wasn't over.

"Don't worry" the school head had chortled, "put the whole thing down to experience... or the lack of it". With hindsight Tiffany reflected, considering what could have happened it had all worked out quite well; all, except that was, for the BO quandary. Now she knew why Fragrant Lady was so cheap! No wonder why men had stared at her that evening. Her crusty duvet smell must have stunk up the hall. And she had thought they were besotted by her smouldering sensuality! How stupidly vain she could be at times!

A man was making his way across the playground to the schools rear entrance, in his slipstream trotted two small boys. As the man passed where she watched from the classroom doorway, he turned. Tiffany waved. The two boys would be in her class next year. The man waved back, then to Tiffany's surprise began to stride purposely towards her. "Err Mrs O'Grady."

Mrs O'Grady who had been busy arranging chairs and tables looked up.

"Who is that?"

Butterfly's classroom assistant looked at the figure resolutely marching towards them. "Oh that's Papa Broadstairs, everybody knows him. First his children and now his children's children have attended this school, he's really nice if somewhat quirky."

"So I am safe."

Mrs O'Grady smiled as she nodded, but there was a mischievous sparkle in her eyes; she added "well usually."

"Best ever assembly, and I know assemblies; been going to them for decades yours was the best; still makes me crack up thinking about it!" As he finished speaking, Mr Broadstairs began to chuckle. Something about the tall, broad shouldered, slightly paunchy, white haired figure standing in front of her; Tiffany couldn't work out what it was but he was..."Anyway as I was saying, loved your assembly to bits, I haven't laughed like that in ages and I wasn't the only one. Most people agreed it was better than anything on telly!"

Tiffany looked uncertainly at Mr Broadstairs. 'Recycling will save the world' wasn't meant to be funny. Her class had put lots of hours into their attempt to alert the community to the dangers of discarded crisps packets...

"In most assemblies you might get a child, maybe two who go off -piste, you know, forget their lines or get stage-struck, but yours was just a stream of little loonie tunes strutting their stuff and cracking me up inside, I nearly wet myself when that little Indian lad tried to swallow the mic ; tell the truth, I did wet myself!"

Despite herself, Tiffany smiled; at the time Kudlip's slobbering, slurping attempt to eat the microphone had reduced the audience to fits of laughter. Even she had to admit to a despairing giggle.

"....yep I have seen kids wet themselves, forget their lines and fight on different occasions, but not all at once; yours did the lot and thanks to the little princess at the end, I only have to say Lithuania, or should I say Little Narnia and those two become choir boys!" Tiffany couldn't help herself; the image of elephant thighs screaming her little Tom Tom wasn't going to be deported to Little Narnia was classic, she burst out laughing.

"Thank you Mr Broadstairs."

"No Fred, Fred, all my friends call me Fred."

"Err okay thank you err Fred, I will let the children know what a great success their assembly was now I must be getting ready to go, it's been nice talking to you."

"There is one other thing if you don't mind, err is it Miss or Mrs?"

Tiffany looked warily at the man standing in front of her. Fred Broadstairs mannerisms had abruptly changed. If she didn't know better, she could have sworn that this man, old enough to be her father two times over; this grandpa suddenly twiddling his thumbs and biting his lip as he shuffled awkwardly from foot to foot was acting like some lovelorn teenager plucking up the courage to... Tiffany stiffened. Oh no, was she about to be asked out on a date by a man who really was old enough to have changed her father's diapers? This could get very, very, awkward; her armpits confirmed the potential for huge embarrassment, they were moist. That was all she needed, not long now and the waft of a not so Fragrant Lady would be stinking up the air. Please Lord no!

"Err I don't normally do things like this but ever since the show, I mean assembly, it's been a constant thing nagging at my mind and you know what they say that you only live once...," Oh sweet Mother Mary, SHE WAS ABOUT TO BE ASKED ON A DATE BY HER GRANDADS MATE! How embarrassing, how utterly totally embarrassing; teacher training had not prepared her for this!

Mr Broadstairs was looking directly at her. There was a desperate, beseeching look in his eyes, how did she say no to those steely grey eyes without accelerating the poor lovesick codger's trip to Vahalla?

"... He's very shy you see, I blame the army, they don't teach them much except fighting. Being able to quietly take out an enemy sentry is fine for combat, but not many lasses would take too kindly to a garrotting as a chat up move!"

Tiffany stared blankly at Mr Broadstairs. What was Pappy Casanova going on about? Was he planning to date her, strangle her or date and then strangle her? "I'm sorry Mr Broadstairs you have lost me... are you asking me out on a date?"

Fred Broadstairs recoiled in horror. "What, me, ask you... no, No, NO! I'm old enough to have changed your mum's diapers and powdered her botty, no...besides you are far too skinny, your head and knockers are too big for the rest of the body, bit like all those models you see on the telly all the

time, remind me of a lollipop, big head, stick body, large—" Mr Broadstairs stopped abruptly suddenly aware that his honest appraisal of the woman standing in front of him might hinder his request "but my first grandson is smitten by you."

Tiffany could see the old man was getting emotional. Instinctively ignoring her teacher training she reached forward and touched his shoulder.

"Sorry, my oldest grandchild is very shy, tough as our local baker's bagels though, you don't get into the Para's cos you won't step on daffodils, but he has always been shy around women."

Tiffany smiled warmly at the old man. Ahh so sweet!

"He would probably die of embarrassment if he knew I was doing this but seeing you waved and you're clearly a lovely lass' if a bit err, lean bodied, I thought I'd ask on his behalf."

Tiffany felt her tear ducts filling. How sweet! How could she say no to such a request? She was going to regret it but... "Yes I will go on a blind date with your grandson."

"Oh good, he really likes you, he watched you from the far left corner of the hall that night,

after that he wouldn't stop talking about you."

Tiffany cast her mind back to the assembly. Far left corner? She didn't remember anyone at the back amongst all that madness...except...suddenly it hit Tiffany like an African dirty slap.

"Mr Broadstairs is... is your grandson tall, very upright in his stance, with your colour eyes?"

Fred Broadstairs big grin returned "That's my Jim, my eyes, his mother's heart, the army's physique."

The African dirty slap reversed direction, and slapped Tiffany's other cheek. THE HOTTEST MALE THING ST BEDE'S SCHOOL ASSEMBLY HALL HAD SEEN, SINCE IT'S CONSTRUCTION IN THE 60'S WANTED TO GO ON A DATE WITH HER!! Now she had gone 'beetroot' all over, and her heart was doing the Salsa again. Stay calm Tiff's, don't forget to breathe. "I'd love to". Oh Lord even to her, her voice had sounded desperate. Pathetic!

"Thank you he will be so happy, now I'll get the boys, they are my niece's kids and be gone, you must be exhausted; your voice sounds very tired," Mr Broadstairs started to turn away, but then stopped. He was nervously twiddling his thumbs again. What was it now? Had he changed his mind, Lord Jesus, don't let it be that he had changed his mind!

"There is just one other thing, but it's quite personal and a bit err embarrassing."

What was it now? A horrific thought floated into Tiffany's mind. The thought wedged itself firmly in the middle of her head. Body Odour; her BO, he had noticed her humid night, crusty duvet smell! Please Lord don't let it be her sweaty body.

"It's not just me, a lot of the other men were commenti..."

IT WAS HER BO!!! Tiffany felt her armpits moisten further. A strong waft of sweat with Happy Drug's Fragrant Lady desperately trailing it escaped her armpits into the classroom air. The cheap deodorant had failed her again. She had vowed to bin it, but since the bottle was almost finished and best friend Martha insisted waste not, want not... Mr Broadstairs was still talking, but all she could think of, was how much she regretted being a cheapskate. For the sake of a pound or two, she would forever be known as 'armpits Grange, Body odour in heels'. Mr Broadstairs had stopped talking and was looking at her quizzically.

"So you don't mind then?"

Wearily Tiffany shook her head. She should really tell him and his grandson to buzz off! Who were they to lecture her about personal hygiene, but at least he had spoken up. Her male colleagues had never said anything, but now that she thought about it, on the really hot days her male colleagues squirmed when she passed by. "Is it very expensive? It's just I really want to get a small bottle for my first son's wife. It's her birthday see, and she is such a lovely girl, but the stuff she wears really gets up my nose. Makes her smell like she's fallen in a vat of tulips not, pardon me, if I dare say it err sensual like yours at all"

Tiffany looked blankly at Mr Broadstairs. What in the world was he going on about? What was expensive? "Sorry Fred I mean Mr Broadstairs it's been a long day, my mind keeps wandering, what is it you wanted again?

"Where can I get your cologne, I've been to most of the shops in the area and they don't seem to have it, so I reckoned it must be really expensive like those ones on the telly, is it really new?"

"My ... my ... cologne?"

"Yes err no I mean your perfume" Suddenly Mr Broadstairs closed his eyes and inhaled deeply "Ahh there it is again excuse me for being rude... sniffing you like that but if I had been a couple of decades younger, not withstanding your skinny butt... sorry I mean your err...err slenderness, I would have been on that stage serenading you like the young lad. Your cologne is the most sensual

thing I have ever smelt, so what's its name, is it really expensive?"