

A tough day

Eddie lay in bed, considering the day ahead of him: School. And the worst thing about school: Mr Tuffman, the new teacher who had arrived at the start of the summer term.

“My name’s Tuffman,” he had said on his first day. “Tuffman by name, and a tough man by nature. Do you get the idea?”

Eddie certainly hadn’t got the idea. Grinning at what he thought was a joke had been a very bad move.

“What’s so funny, young man?” Mr Tuffman had said.

All eyes in the class had swivelled towards Eddie. Within seconds, Eddie’s eyes had filled like toilet cisterns ready to flush. He didn’t know what to say.

“I asked you a question. What do you think is so funny?”

Eddie had remained silent. He tried to answer but actually, now he thought about it, he couldn’t see the funny side of it at all. Then the flush happened and tears gushed down his cheeks.

“Pull yourself together, lad. What’s your name?” Mr Tuffman had barked the question.

“Eddie,” Eddie had replied, wiping his face and his running nose with the sleeve of his school sweatshirt.

“Eddie what?” Mr Tuffman’s voice had risen as he had spoken.

“Eddie Smith.”

“Eddie Smith what?” Mr Tuffman had asked.

“Just Eddie Smith,” Eddie had replied.

“Have you got no manners, Just Eddie Smith? When you answer one of my questions I expect you to say Sir. So, it’s not Just Eddie Smith is it? It’s Just Eddie Smith, SIR. DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?”

“Yes.”

“Yes what, Just Eddie Smith?”

“Yes, Sir,” Eddie had said.

“That’s a bit better. Now do you understand what ‘tough’ means?”