

## Chocolate surprise

Ned Hermann sighed in relief as he found a vacant toilet cubicle, slammed the door, and whipped down his trousers. However, he immediately noticed that this was not just an urgent poo. This was even more serious.

He thought about the younger children he had bullied and the chocolates he had snatched from them that morning. In retrospect, the children weren't as sad this time as compared with previous experience. A foul stench filled the room. He blocked his nose in disgust, but that was not the worst of it. His heart sank when he realised there was only one square of toilet paper left in the cubicle! Ned checked the word counter bolted to his wrist – he had one word remaining of his daily one-hundred word allowance. If only he had not wasted all his words on taunting those kids as he wolfed down their "candy". Ned heard a clattering of shoes outside and tried to attract attention without using words. Shielding his nose, his cry for help was muffled and no one came to his aid.

Ned desperately felt around in his pocket for a pen. Success! His heart skipped a beat - there was a chance of escape. He scrawled, "HELP! Need toilet paper URGENTLY!" on the remaining single square of toilet paper and pushed it under the door, taking care not to flip it over. Not long afterwards, his homeroom teacher, Mr Carl, with his characteristic whistle, approached the bathroom. Was this his chance at salvation? Sure enough, Mr Carl stopped and bent down to read the message. Suddenly, there was a crash outside the cubicle. Ned immediately realised that Mr Carl's famously sensitive nose had encountered the horrendous smell emanating from the cubicle, causing him to faint. As Ned desperately sat trying not to suffer the same fate, he heard the cleaner's trolley trundling in. There was a sharp indrawing of breath but, in the interests of preserving his own word count, the cleaner did not utter a word as he helped Mr Carl stagger away. To Ned's horror, the cleaner returned moments later with a fan. Its powerful blast not only concentrated the odour in Ned's cubicle, but blew away his precious message. Despondent, Ned started to wonder if he would have to spend the night alone perched on his porcelain throne.

Thinking positively, Ned told himself this was better than being exiled by the Verbosity police for exceeding his word count. Only that morning, he had witnessed silly Mrs Johnson being hauled away on the way to school. Suddenly, a familiar squeak of sneakers approached, followed by a characteristic stumble as their owner tripped on his shoelaces. It could only be one person: Oliver Singer, Ned's only friend. Ned tapped their secret code on the door. Tap tap-tap bang baang. Oliver tapped back – they had perfected their own

code to circumvent the unforgiving word counter. An immense gush of relief surged as Oliver slid a complete roll of toilet paper beneath the door.