

## Horace Horrise goes to Church

“...and, I ask you this, ‘What is that one word that I would say to you if I was allowed to say only one more in this lifetime?’ That word is...”

Horace had been shifting restlessly in his comfortable chair. His was a major predicament, and not for the first time and not for the first time he wasn't sure what to do. Actually, he knew exactly *what* he needed to do just not quite so sure *how* to go about it given where he was. The problem that was causing Horace this angst was that his bladder was extremely full and he was almost beyond desperately desperate to go to the toilet. In Horace's experience there were three stages of need when it came to being caught short. The first was a simple need; this was when it wasn't really necessary except that it might be a way of avoiding having to answer an awkward question that looked as though it was going to be heading his way. This, by its very nature, was most often employed at school, or at the breakfast or dinner table, when a sudden exit was expedient and was easily accomplished with a raising of the hand and, “Please Miss” or “Excuse me, mummy.” The second was desperate; this was often not having time to ask - it was simply a matter of just getting up and leaving the desk or table. The third was where Horace had found himself a few seconds ago: desperately desperate was normally too late. But today Horace was even getting past that stage and still he was hanging on. However he wasn't in a place where one could easily stand up and go and find the toilet. He would be scowled at, people would whisper, someone would come and put a hand on his shoulder and push him back down and it was all their fault that he was in this predicament.

He was in church with his scout patrol, the Ravens.

It was such a long time since he had been to a regular Sunday service that he wasn't sure that he could remember if he had ever been. He had certainly never been to the church that he now found himself in. He had been to a couple of weddings and also a baptism many years ago but Horace didn't consider these to be "normal" services. "Everyone's far too neat and tidy and it's just not natural," he would say to anyone who asked, "and, in my opinion, if women wore as much perfume that they do to a wedding to every other church meeting thing then they would be spending most of their free time buying more perfume and then they would run out of money and then they would starve and die and then there would be a funeral, err, service."

"No Horace. Women are more important than that. If they spent all their money on perfume then their husbands would buy it for them," said Charlie who had been listening to Horace's pronouncements. "You can't go out of the house if you're a woman without perfume on. I don't think that it's allowed."

"Unless you're a scout," said Mel, reminding Charlie that scent wasn't for all occasions. "Scout woman don't have to wear perfume. They probably smell of all sorts of other things instead."

"It's still a perfume," said Horace defensively. "Even if you smell of campfire and burnt sausages it's still a smell and that's all scent is."

"Yeah, but then it's a scent for everyone, a sort of unisex smell like a mixture of aftershave and perfume, something that everyone can wear."

“I wonder if you can bottle it?” asked Emily, who was thinking about the attractions of Eau de Camping. “I think perfume people can make very much any smell they like these days. Can you imagine how useful it would be if you had been away for the weekend on a hike or something but you hadn’t done much work in the cooking department ’cos you’d been too busy climbing trees or whittling tent pegs? Then when Skip says, ‘I haven’t seen you helping with dinner,’ you can disappear into your tent, get out the Eau de Camping, give yourself a quick squirt and then go up to Skip and say, ‘I don’t know what you’re talking about. I’m covered in smoke and stuff,’ and Skip’s going to sniff and say, ‘Yes, sorry Emily, I just hadn’t noticed.’”

However much the Ravens would have liked to have continued the conversation they found that standing in a single line and whispering while waiting to go into the church wasn’t working too well - especially as Horace had other things on his mind - and so the conversation fizzled out.

Despite his almost non-existent church attendance Horace had actually watched immaculately dressed “old people” on “Songs of Praise” once or twice on the television with the women singing lustily and the men hiding behind their hymn sheets; the women in gay colours and the men all in grey suits. He had even been known to sit with his mother on Christmas Eve and watch “Carols from King’s” with the attire the same but with the addition of coats. One thing that he was fairly sure of, therefore, was that there was to be plenty of standing and sitting, and occasional kneeling. However, although sitting was his favourite of the three, he hadn’t realised