

## THE SAVIOUR

It was the usual Monday morning commute into London, a warm early spring day that cheered the passengers on the train with the promise of a pleasant sunny day in the city. The train slowed to a halt. The intercom apologised for a ten-minute delay. The engines powered down to silence. There was an occasional ping of cooling metal and the faint susurrations of music leaking from someone's headphones. No one spoke, but it was the companionable quiet of seasoned commuters content to delay their working day with a few stolen minutes of peaceful contemplation. But it was not to be.

A woman leaned over and tapped the knee of the person sitting opposite her.

"I THOUGHT it was you, HIDING behind that NEWSPAPER!"

Her voice was a nasal drone with a piercing quality that carried through the carriage. Her companion looked up in alarm and squirmed in his seat. He mumbled an inaudible response.

"Oh, busy as USUAL! I'm practically RUNNING the place. But do I get any THANKS!" she declaimed, fixing her companion with a determined stare. The man folded his newspaper in resignation.

She worked for the local council in environmental services. The lack of appreciation at work had not dimmed her self-confidence in the least. She shared in monotonous detail her single-handed interventions to implement the rules in the face of opposition from colleagues and members of the public. She had personally prevented planning permission for a loft extension because of a minor omission in the application which her co-workers had been prepared to overlook. But, "Rules are RULES. Whatever NEXT! Houses built out of ASBESTOS!?!"

Her meek companion tried to interrupt her monologue, mumbling about the need for family housing in the area.

She ploughed on regardless, this time with a tally of the countless lives she had saved by insisting on the closure of a local restaurant because of a cracked tile in the kitchen. Lesser colleagues had suggested a bit of re-tiling, but, "Rules are RULES! Whatever NEXT! People in intensive CARE with SALMONELLA!?!"

Two schoolboys behind her feigned suicide, one hanging himself with his own tie, the other shooting his brains out with two fingers to his head. They slumped in their seats pretending to be dead.

Oblivious to signs of irritation from the people around her and barely drawing breath, she launched into another tale about fining a donkey sanctuary because of their failure to secure the proper permission to sell manure to the local allotment holders association. But, "Rules are RULES! Whatever NEXT! ....."

"Let me GUESS!" mimicked a voice from the end of the carriage, "POTATOES with foot and MOUTH disease?!?"

The schoolboys, instantly raised from the dead, hooted with delight. Cheers and laughter filled the carriage. The engines started up and the train pulled into the station.

The woman, tight lipped, stepped onto the platform and stalked off undeterred, ready to save the world from itself.