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He was a large man, quite tall with a shock of black hair and the merest suggestion of grey at the temples. He entered the classroom with an air of authority, his slight limp giving him a lilting gait - the unconfirmed rumour being that it was the result of a nasty war wound.

‘Morning class’, he boomed as he dropped his books and papers on the front desk.

‘Good morning Mr Canehard’ came the well rehearsed sing-song reply.

‘Right you miserable lot. Dictionary homework first’ he said as he turned and savagely screeched a word on the blackboard.

‘Who can tell me what the word *imperious* means?’

Immediately, 23 eager hands shot up.

‘Sir, Sir..’

‘Pick me Sir...’

‘I know that one sir..’ came the chorus of replies.

At the third desk from the rear on the left hand side, young Subbie “accidentally” dropped a pencil on the floor and disappeared under his desk. *Please God, don’t let him pick me* he was thinking.

‘Ah, Master Subbie, just the lad to give me the answer eh?’

‘Er.. sorry Sir, must’ve dropped my pencil. What was the word again Sir?’ Subbie asked, hopefully stalling for time.

‘*Imperious*, lad. What is the meaning of the word *imperious*? Are you deaf and blind lad?’ Canehard replied impatiently.

‘Er .. *imperious* sir?’ Subbie asked, still stalling for time

‘Yes Subbie - *imperious*. You *have* done your homework haven’t you?’ came the exasperated reply.

‘Well actually sir, we had Rugby training yesterday evening - you know, with the School’s First Fifteen and it sort of went on for a while and....’ he said, hoping it would carry some gravitas.
It didn’t.

‘Rugby training? *Rugby training*!? Good grief lad, are you trying to tell me *Rugby* training is more important than learning the meaning of words?’
Canehard thundered

‘Um .. I... I ... well Coach said that playing Rugby was like learning the meaning of life. He said it’s the game they play in Heaven’ Subbie spluttered

‘Rubbish lad! Never heard such complete and utter bollocks! The man’s a boneheaded rugby-playing buffoon. I’ll have a wee talk to the man in the staff room, you mark my words. Now tell me, what is the meaning of *imperious*?’

Subbie looked off into space, thinking hard

‘Well Sir, I think it means *impenetrable*, not letting anything through - a bit like the leather of a Rugby ball, or our rather good front row’

Canehard sighed, stomped up to Subbie’s desk and dropped a large Chamber’s Dictionary onto it.

‘Look it up lad. I assume you can read?’ he said sarcastically

Subbie cautiously flicked through the pages until he came to the word *imperious*.

‘Found it Sir’ he said triumphantly.

‘Well read it out lad, read it out. We haven’t got all day!’

‘Er, yes Sir’. Subbie coughed and in his best voice, read out the meaning in the dictionary

‘ *Imperious. Adjective. Arrogant, haughty and domineering.....* Sir’

‘Saints preserve us, now we’re getting somewhere’ Canehard said as he turned to walk back towards his own desk

‘*Fat imperious git*’ Subbie mumbled under his breath.

Canehard came to a dead stop and slowly turned around as 23 sets of lungs held their breath.

‘Got something to say lad?’ he asked menacingly.

Subbie looked up from the dictionary, eyes wide with fear, thinking furiously for a way out of this mess

‘Er ... ah .. actually Sir, I was just correcting myself. What I said was That’s *impervious*innit’

Canehard stared at Subbie for a good 5 seconds, grinding his teeth, before turning back to the blackboard.

23 sets of lungs exhaled loudly.

As for Subbie, he sat there staring straight ahead with the hint of a smirk on his face....

but down below, his bowels were as loose as goose shit.