

**ONLY 17 SCHOOLCHILDREN ALLOWED IN AT ONE TIME** read the sign in the newsagent's window. The shop was run by a very jolly man called Raj, who laughed even when nothing funny was happening.

Dennis visited Raj's shop most days on his way to or from school, sometimes just to chat to Raj, and after he picked up the copy of *Vogue* he felt a twinge of embarrassment. He knew it was usually women who bought it, so he also picked up a copy of *Shoot* on the way to the counter, hoping to hide the *Vogue* underneath it. But after ringing up the *Shoot* magazine, Raj paused.

He looked at the *Vogue* magazine, then at Dennis.

Dennis gulped.

## The Boy in the Dress

“Are you sure you want this, Dennis?” asked Raj. “*Vogue* is mainly read by ladies, and your drama teacher Mr Howerd.”

“Umm...” Dennis hesitated. “It’s a present for a friend, Raj. It’s her birthday.”

“Oh, I see! Maybe you’d like some wrapping paper to go with it?”

“Um, OK.” Dennis smiled. Raj was a wonderful businessman and very skilled at getting you to buy things you didn’t really want.

“All the wrapping paper is over there by the greetings cards.”

Dennis reluctantly wandered over.

“Oh!” said Raj, excited. “Maybe you need a card to go with it too! Let me help.”

Raj bounded out from behind the counter and

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began to proudly show Dennis his range of cards. “These are very popular with the ladies. Flowers. Ladies love flowers.” He pointed out another. “Kittens! Look at these lovely kittens. And PUPPIES!” Raj was really excited now. “Look at those lovely puppies! They’re so beautiful, Dennis, that they make me want to cry.”



## The Boy in the Dress

“Er...” said Dennis, looking at the card with puppies on it, trying to understand why it might make someone shed actual tears.

“Does this lady friend of yours prefer kittens or puppies?” Raj asked.

“I’m not sure,” said Dennis, unable to think what this “lady friend” of his might like, if she existed. “Puppies, I think, Raj.”

“Puppies it is! These puppies are so beautiful I want to kiss them all over!”

Dennis tried to nod his head in agreement, but his head wouldn’t move.

“Is this wrapping paper OK?” asked Raj, as he pulled out a roll of what looked suspiciously like unsold Christmas wrapping paper.

“It’s got Father Christmas on it, Raj.”

“Yes, Dennis, and he’s wishing you a very

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happy birthday!” said Raj confidently.

“I think I’ll just leave it, thanks.”

“Buy one extra roll, I’ll give you a third free,”  
said Raj.

“No, thanks.”

“Seven rolls for the price of five?”

Dennis only got Ds in maths, so wasn’t sure if that was a better offer or not. But he didn’t want seven rolls of Father Christmas wrapping paper, especially in March, so again he said, “No, thanks.”

“Eleven rolls for the price of eight?”

“No, thanks.”

“You’re a madman, Dennis! That’s three rolls free!”

“But I really don’t need eleven rolls of wrapping paper,” said Dennis.

## The Boy in the Dress

“OK, OK,” said Raj. “Let me just put these through the till for you.”

Dennis followed Raj to the till. He glanced briefly at the sweets on the counter.

“*Vogue* magazine, *Shoot* magazine, card, and now you’re eyeing up my Yorkie bars, aren’t you?” said Raj, laughing.

“Well, I was just...”

“Take one.”

“No, thanks.”

“Take one,” insisted Raj.

“It’s OK.”

“Please, Dennis, I want you to have a Yorkie bar.”

“I don’t really like Yorkie bars...”

“Everyone likes Yorkie bars! Please take one.”

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Dennis smiled and picked up a Yorkie.

“One Yorkie bar, sixty pence,” said Raj.