

THE YOUNG ECOLEADERS AWARD

BY JOHANNA KNOX



Scene: *The stage of Harbourtown Hall. The young ecoleaders, **ARI, TOBY,** and **LIV,** sit on one side of the stage. **MAYOR SMILES-REDDY** sits on the other. **STEVIE SUMMER,** the host, stands at the front of the stage.*

STEVIE SUMMER. Beautiful people! Welcome to Harbourtown's annual Young Ecoleaders Award. I'm your host, Stevie Summer, a local personality. And you'll get to enjoy that personality tonight!

*He flashes a big smile at **ARI, TOBY,** and **LIV.** There is an awkward pause, and they look confused before politely clapping.*

STEVIE SUMMER (smiling broadly). Too much, **too** much! We'll meet our three finalists soon, but first, let's welcome our judge. Look! Is that the mayor of Harbourtown, Pat Smiles-Reddy? Surely not!

MAYOR SMILES-REDDY (nodding). Thank you, Stevie. Delighted to be here. Just delighted. I've been called the mayor who cares, so I can't wait to hear what the young people of Harbourtown have been up to this year.

STEVIE SUMMER. And, of course, I'd like to thank the Harbourtown City Council for tonight's prize money. Five thousand smackeroos! Now, let's meet our first young ecoleader. Please welcome Ari, from Seaview School.

***ARI** comes to the front of the stage.*

STEVIE SUMMER. Ari, talk to me.

ARI. Well, I organised my class to clean up Seaview beach, which is right by our school. We picked up rubbish and then sorted it into what could be recycled, what could be upcycled, and what was real rubbish.

STEVIE SUMMER. Sounds smelly. Then what?

ARI. We took the rubbish to the tip. We took the recycling to the recycling depot. Then we upcycled everything else. We made sculptures, and our school had an art auction. We donated all the money we raised to our local aquarium.

STEVIE SUMMER. Ka pai! And what would you do with five thousand dollars if you won, Ari?

ARI. I'd organise rubbish and recycling bins for Seaview beach, and I'd go there every weekend to teach people how to use them properly.

STEVIE SUMMER. Mayor, any questions for the amazing Ari?

MAYOR SMILES-REDDY (sitting forward with a serious expression).

Yes, I do. Ari, you know that some sea creatures die from eating plastic?

ARI (nodding sadly). Yes. That's why I'm doing this.

MAYOR SMILES-REDDY. But are you doing enough?

ARI (a little taken aback). Well ...

MAYOR SMILES-REDDY. Picking up rubbish is all very well, but why not stop the use of plastic in your community? Has your school banned plastic drink bottles, for example?

ARI. No, but –

MAYOR SMILES-REDDY (interrupting). Or cling wrap? Or straws?

ARI. No, but next year –

MAYOR SMILES-REDDY (sitting back). No more questions. It's a start, Ari ... albeit a very modest one.

ARI'S MUM (calling out from the audience). Give the kid a chance!

STEVIE SUMMER (holding up a hand). I'm sorry, no interjections from the audience please. Hmm ... some tough questions there, Ari. Take a seat.

ARI sits down, upset. **ARI'S MUM** claps loudly.

STEVIE SUMMER. Our next young finalist is Toby from Beachside Primary. Let's hear what he has to say.

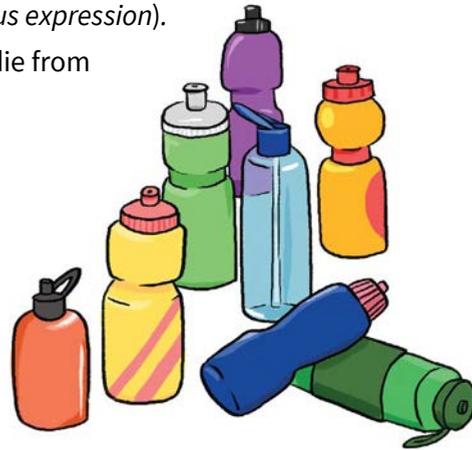
TOBY comes to the front of the stage.

STEVIE SUMMER. Toby, what's up?

TOBY. Well, I want everyone at my school to eat less meat.

STEVIE SUMMER. Seriously! Tell me more.

TOBY. Farm animals produce methane – a greenhouse gas. Being vegetarian is better for the planet. Lentils don't burp! Ten families at our school have already pledged three meatless days a week.



STEVIE SUMMER. Well, good for them.

Mayor, any questions for the terrific Toby?

MAYOR SMILES-REDDY (very eager). Several.

Tell me, Toby, what are your shoes made from?

TOBY (looking at his feet). Umm ... leather, I think.

MAYOR SMILES-REDDY. And you know that leather is cow skin?

TOBY. Yes, but –

MAYOR SMILES-REDDY (interrupting). Do other students at your school wear leather shoes?

TOBY. That's not really what –

MAYOR SMILES-REDDY (interrupting with a dramatic sigh). Never mind. That's all, thank you, Toby.

TOBY'S DAD (calling out from the audience). What's that I see on your feet, Mr Mayor? They don't look like fair-trade sneakers.

STEVIE SUMMER (quickly moving on). Better luck next time, Toby – if there is a next time!

TOBY sits down. **TOBY'S DAD** claps loudly.

STEVIE SUMMER. Our last finalist is Liv from Bay Intermediate. Incidentally, Liv's sister won the award last year, and her brother won the year before. What an incredible family! I'd love to know your secret. Welcome, Liv.

LIV comes to the front of the stage. **MAYOR SMILES-REDDY** claps loudly.

STEVIE SUMMER. Liv, go for it.

LIV. I'm running a campaign to encourage more parents to bike to work instead of drive.

STEVIE SUMMER. Radical! How come?

LIV. Cars burn fossil fuels. This is causing climate change.

MAYOR SMILES-REDDY (leaping out of his seat, clapping). Bravo!

ARI and **TOBY** look confused. **LIV** hides her face in her hands.

MAYOR SMILES-REDDY (sitting down, a little more subdued). Bravo, yes, bravo. He claps twice more, quietly.



STEVIE SUMMER (laughing). Well, I see you've got someone on your side there, Liv. But tell us a little more. Your plan's very ambitious. How are you running the campaign?

MAYOR SMILES-REDDY (jumping up again). No need to bother this girl with any further questions!

STEVIE SUMMER (surprised). None?

MAYOR SMILES-REDDY. None. I'm very impressed. Very impressed.

ARI'S MUM (standing). I'm not. Liv, you want more parents to bike to work, but how are they meant to get home? Have you thought about that part?

LIV (very confused). I assumed they'd just –

TOBY'S DAD (standing). I have a question, too. How did you get here today, Liv? Solar-powered jet pack? (He looks dramatically at **MAYOR SMILES-REDDY**.) Or maybe you caught a lift with your **uncle**!

ARI and **TOBY** (together). Uncle?

STEVIE SUMMER. Whoa! An interesting turn of events here, folks!

LIV (crossly to **MAYOR SMILES-REDDY**). I told you it wasn't fair. You should never have agreed to be the judge.

MAYOR SMILES-REDDY (breezily). Nonsense. I can't help we're related. Besides, I've made my decision. Liv from Bay Intermediate wins! Yay! Here's your cheque for five thousand dollars. You can thank me later.

*He holds out a cheque to **LIV**, who doesn't respond.*

***ARI** and **TOBY** look outraged.*



STEVIE SUMMER. Will she take it, folks?

LIV. I will, actually.

ARI'S MUM. Boo!

TOBY'S DAD. Hiss!

MAYOR SMILES-REDDY. Good girl.

LIV (taking the cheque and smiling).

From now on, I'm boycotting this award.

ARI. You can count me out, too.

TOBY. And me.

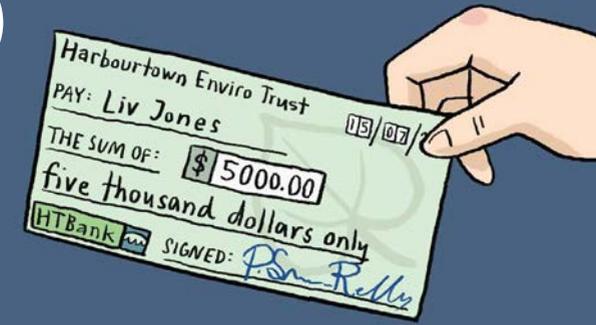
LIV. Great – because I'm going to use this money to set up a young ecoleaders festival. All the schools in Harbourtown can come together to share ideas and help each other. (She looks at **ARI** and **TOBY**.) Are you guys in?

ARI. Of course.

TOBY (glaring at **MAYOR SMILES-REDDY**). Obviously.

STEVIE SUMMER. Marvellous. What an eventful night. That wraps up the last-ever Young Ecoleaders Award! See you next year – at the Young Ecoleaders Festival.

***ALL** cheer. **MAYOR SMILES-REDDY** quietly slips off the stage.*



The Young Ecoleaders Award

by Johanna Knox

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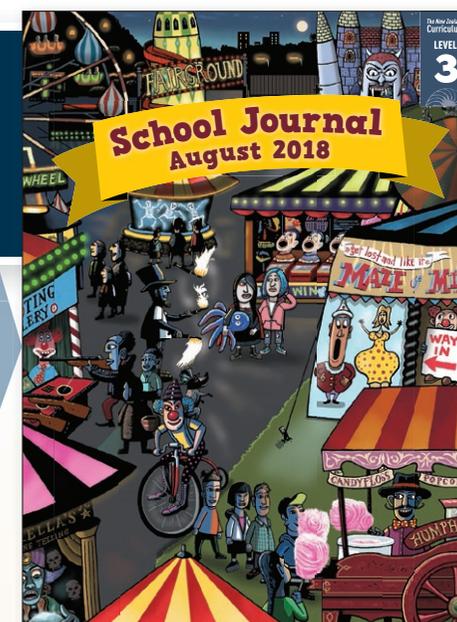
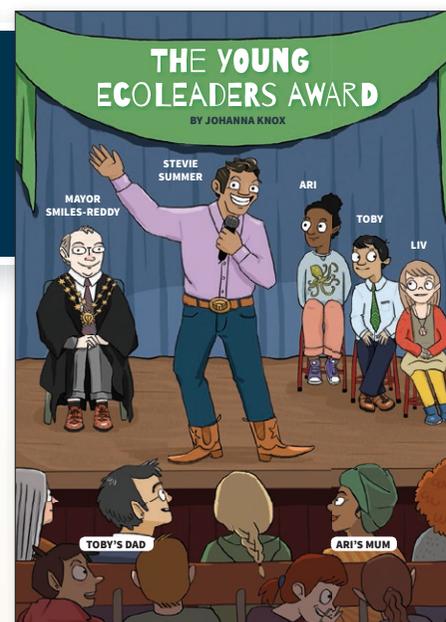
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