**The Whole Truth**

I tell them that I am leaving and there is an audible “No!” that sweeps from one side of the classroom to the other like a wave that reflects off a sea wall.

“We don’t want you to go.”

I tell them that I am afraid that I have too,

“We won’t let you go.”

I tell them that I want to stay but ..

“Why must you go?”

For a moment I pause and then tell them half a truth, I tell them that the school had problems with money last year and that a lot of staff had to leave, I tell them that I was one of those that was meant to go but was lucky enough to be able to stay for one more term.

I cannot tell them the whole truth because they are too young to know that in the adult world cheats and bullies prosper, that in the adult world it is foolhardy to stand up for the weak against the strong and that in the adult world it is wrong to question those that are paid more than you because they are your betters.

Later, I have many of the same children for a cover lesson that I have agreed to do despite my imminent redundancy. One of the girls comes to the front desk, she looks exactly like what she is, which is a primary school child who has just started secondary school.

“Why do you have to leave us Mr Knight?”

As she asks the question her mouth opens to reveal the gaps that she still has in her front teeth.

I look her in the eye and tell her again that I don’t want too but,

“We don’t want you to go, we all really like you.”

I look away from her and back at my computer screen because as an adult, it is my duty to protect her from the whole truth which now is that I am on the verge of tears.