

## **An excerpt from Get a Life by dress wedding**

As my skin tingles in the cold crisp morning air, I see hundreds of demonstrators dressed in bulky layers of clothing to protect against the morning chill. Mostly in flat colors, tans and blues, some greens, black shoes, people of all sizes and shapes, mostly younger, with several have long grey hair as well. The demonstrators fill the street, mostly standing in groups or milling about, with several groups sitting on the street, arms linked together. I hear them chanting and singing loudly, a mix of stern and plaintive looks directed at the drivers that have stopped in the road, smiling brightly at each other when they look to one another.

Suddenly, a tan pickup truck pulls up onto the sidewalk, trying to go around the demonstrators crowding the street. I see a crowd surge back to the sidewalk, surrounding the truck, waving and gesticulating, shouting "Stop!", "How could you?", "What are you doing?" As the truck slows and stops, I sit down on the cold sidewalk, feel its hardness under my butt, while the nylon slip tightens around my shoulders and back, holding me stiffly in place. I feel the heat of the truck engine emanating forward onto me and my comrades, the motor sounding whiny. I smell gasoline and maybe some burnt oil. I feel the crowd's angry energy rising, hear the cacophonous rhythm of their fists pounding loudly on the truck's

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metal hood and door. I feel my breath flow out over my tongue and lips as my voice lifts into chant, Na Mu Myo Ho Renge Kyo, hoping to calm the crowd more than the driver. I can barely see his gaunt face and frightened eyes, his thin lips shouting back at the crowd.

In the chant I lose track of time, no longer aware of the cold of the ground seeping into my butt and feet as I sit there. Then I feel two hands on my arms, pulling me away. I go limp, feel a thumb pressed hard into my neck and my arm twisted behind me. I do not respond to more pain compliance efforts and they roll me onto my stomach. I almost taste the blacktop as my face is pressed into it and my arms are cuffed behind me. I feel the ground rubbing my knees as I am lifted by my arms, cuffed behind me, and dragged to the waiting bus. Two more officers grab my legs and help carry me onto the bus, banging my chest into one of the steps, then dropping me flat onto the ribbed rubber runner between the seats. I am elated that I have stayed calm and centered throughout this experience.