

The Usher or Never Ready

Usher: People tell me I'm a responsible sort of person. That's to say, if anything goes wrong, I'm responsible. Story of my life-messing up. Mind you, some responsibilities are bigger, more important, more onerous. I've had some responsible jobs in my time.

None like **the** big one, though. The biggie as I call it. For the boss. I was well pleased when he asked me to be one of the ushers at his wedding. Once I'd found out what an usher was, that is and that it was nothing to do with keeping quiet.

No, an usher, as you may well know is a general help to the bridegroom. And he-the boss-chose me. For his wedding. I was well chuffed, I tell you. And it wasn't just a case of telling folk where to sit. No-more special than that. Absolutely important.

See the thing was the boss had decided to have the wedding feast at night and he was particularly concerned that that there should be adequate lighting for everyone-especially for him and his new missus. Alright inside, of course, in the banqueting hall itself but my main job with the other usher was to attend to the lighting from the path from the outside to the inside as it were. To prevent any untoward stumbling.

Piece of cake. Well, should have been. Just a question of sufficient torches for both us ushers. So I got a couple of those what d'yer call 'em-Maglights for the big day. Dished them out to Freddy and myself. Big babies they were.

So Freddy and me gets to the hotel place in plenty of time both with our gleaming Maglights. Then we sat back waiting for the big event-ready to light up the path for the happy couple.

I know what you're thinking-I bet he forgot the batteries. That's the kind of guy he is. Well, you're wrong there. We do live in the 21st century, folks. I'd dished out two re-chargeables to Freddy a couple of days before the event and kept two for my own torch.

So we sat back and waited and waited... and waited. I must admit the thought did cross my mind at one point that the boss had given up them idea. Maybe he's thought better of it- although that doesn't sound like the kind of bloke the boss is. We'd been there since about 7 and I have to admit me and Freddy were getting a bit drowsy and starting to nod off.

Then suddenly up goes the shout, "He's on the way! Let's go and meet him!"

Quick as a flashlight Freddy switches on his torch and all of his side of the hotel grand entrance lit up like Blackpool illuminations. Now for my side-I pushes the switch forward and-you've never seen anything like it. A pathetic, paltry excuse for a beam. I was humiliated. There was Freddy with his searchlight and me with a fast disappearing effort.

'Course, I worked out the problem. Bloomin' rechargeable batteries. I'd dished them out all right but in all the excitement I must have forgotten to charge them. What a plonker. But how come Freddy's Maglite was OK?

"Freddy!" I shouted out, "How come your Maglite is OK? It's shining like there's no tomorrow. "I had them on charge all of yesterday," he shouts back.

Blimey, yes, I'd only forgotten to charge the bloomin' things up. Like it says on the pack "Rechargeable Batteries-'cept I hadn't recharged them. And Freddy had, of course. No wonder they call him "Ready Freddy".

Well, maybe there was a way of getting out of this without completely losing face with the boss.

"Hey, Freddy!" I shouted, "Give us one of yours and I'll swop with one of my flat ones. "I don't think so," he replies, "that way neither of us will be pumping out enough light for the job. You'd better pop off home and stick 'em in the charger."

So that's what I did. I shot back home and stuck the charger on for a few minutes just to get them up and running-and I rushed back to the reception with them.

But it was all too late. The boss, the bridegroom, the star of the show had arrived and gone in. What's more the doorman had closed and bolted the entrance door and I was left outside. Couldn't get into the biggest event of the year...the decade... of my lifetime. Just because I'd not been ready.

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