

"Childhood Friend Speech #1"

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I would like to begin by quickly saying a few words of thanks to everyone who's helped make today possible: 1. Anita's parents Chris and Val & David's parents Nigel & Kathy. 2. The ushers Ash and Danny, for turning up sober, I know Dave went through a huge dilemma when trying to think of two guys to select to do the hugely difficult task of telling people roughly where to sit in the church. 3. I just want to say a big thank-you to Dave and Anita for being kind enough to let me play a part in this their big day, and to their bridesmaids, who did such a wonderful job and whom I'm sure you'll all agree look amazing, eclipsed only by Anita, who looks simply stunning. 4. And of course all of you for coming to share in this very special occasion.

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Mark, and for any of you who are still in doubt, I am Dave's best man.

In short, that means it was my duty and responsibility to ensure he got to the church on time this afternoon, looking smart, and handsome.

The first of these was straightforward enough; the second was thankfully pretty much taken care of by the men's outfitters, and the last? Well, the job description was 'best man' not genie...

I've known Dave most of my life, and as you might expect that means he crops up often in my childhood memories, from patrolling the mean streets of Dursley together, pretending to fight crime as Spiderman and the hulk - Dave was the hulk, by the way, I was Spidey - though looking back I think we can all agree that we had it wrong, as I had the better physique, and he would have looked a lot better in a mask... to our teens and those early adventures in pubs and clubs...

This Does mean that I have many stories that I could share with you which made working out where to begin a difficult task;

Dave has asked me not to reveal certain skeletons he has in his closet, which really rather surprised me, as I thought he would be a lot more concerned about me mentioning the monsters he's had in his bed!

There were the lads holidays abroad...(Off line, but loud enough to hear) |Remind me again Dave, what was it we agreed, eighty quid?...About which, strangely, my memory is now rather vague...

I can safely say it's well known that Dave is not very sporty and during his school days when teams were chosen he was always last to be picked, Dave was more what I would describe as a lazy

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academic.

During our 6th form years we had to create business plans and Dave as usual left his till the very last minute and after sitting in front of the telly watching his favourite Arnold Schwarzenegger films, started work on it late one evening. The next day looking rather tired he asked me to have a read through his plan. He had managed to base his entire business plan on a sandwich shop with slogan "Arnie's sarnie's you'll be back". Surprisingly this scrapped Dave a pass, which saw us go our separate ways to uni.

During Dave's placement & my final year at Uni, Dave worked for a company that specialized in pub mystery customer visits, I was of course happy to assist in any way I could, and so was asked on many an occasion for my help in carrying these out so that we could split the money paid on drinking at the weekends.

Most weekends Dave would drive across from Manchester to Leeds so we could go out to pubs and clubs. As the end of my Uni life approached so did the course work deadlines, so it was with great sadness that on one occasion I tried to cancel our regular weekend session.

I had an assignment that I had to hand in by Monday and it certainly wasn't my strongest subject, Dave kept trying to convince me that I could still go out, and get the work done, but writing 5,000 words on social behaviour whilst under the influence was not something I relished. Dave then came up with a plan, he would do the assignment for me, reflecting on it now this was right up Dave's street, and he even managed to blag me a C grade.

This no doubt set him up nicely for a career after Uni in recruitment and then in sales, where thinking on your feet counts. I once witnessed the master in action when he worked for "Phones 4 U". A lady was interested in a particular handset and as she bent down to pick it up she inadvertently let out a little fart, clearly embarrassed and hoping we hadn't heard she asked Dave "How much it was?" Dave replied with a straight face "Madam if you farted just touching it you'll shit yourself when you hear the price"

Hopefully this information might go some way toward explaining to many of you as to why he's had 12 jobs, in the past 11 years.

As one of the key Best Man jobs, I recently organized Dave's stag do, under strict instruction that drinking was the priority and was in no unclear terms informed that valuable drinking time should not be in any way wasted on activities, with this in mind and Dave's love of board games the monopoly pub crawl was organized. Whilst I'm not going to mention details of what happened in London!.. A few quality stories were shared.

For example the story of his trip to V Festival in 2008 when he was so drunk he swapped his brand new camera for a burger as he had lost his money the day before.

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And the legendary works fancy dress party in central Manchester, when at the last minute decided to stay over without a change of clothes (think Del in only fools and horses - Xmas 1996). Batman, as he was fully kitted out then as, got chased down Oxford Road the next morning by a group of young kids screaming the theme tune, the phrase 'what a plonker' seems rather apt!

I do have a memory featuring Dave that's particularly special - when he was the best man at my wedding 11 months ago which was very emotional. I must say it is a real treat for me to be able to return the favour here today.

No one was happier than I was when Dave met Anita; seeing their romance blossom was akin watching a fairytale unfold, and, sure, I know what some of you are thinking, 'what fairytale is that Mark - 'Beauty And The Beast? Shrek?'

Actually, the fairy tale I had in mind was... 'Sleeping Beauty.' It's easy not to see this if you are confused into thinking that it's Anita who takes the part of sleeping beauty in this, but that couldn't be further from the truth.

Shortly before Dave met Anita, we were chatting over a few beers and the topic of relationships came up, so I asked him 'was he still open to the idea of meeting that special someone?'

Nah, he said.

Absolutely fine being single, thanks.

Don't have the time for a relationship.

Too many commitments...

Not interested at all. simple as that!

And though I did not for one moment believe a word of that, I think, maybe, he was starting to. Turned out Dave was simply sleeping, he was just waiting for Anita to come along and wake him up. As unbelievable and incredible as it seems there is behind that tough exterior, slightly above and to the left of a liver that must be pickled half to hell, a heart beating of a true romantic.

I really am pleased we are all gathered here today. Dave is a great bloke and he deserves the wonderful future I know he and Anita are going to share together.

Before I finish I just want to wish Dave and Anita an enjoyable honeymoon to Wales, as I recall Dave telling me last night over a few beers that he was going to Bangor! On that note, can I really should finish by asking you all to raise a glass and join me in a toast to the happy couple.

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* Raise glass *

To David and Anita, the new Mr & Mrs Burton â Wishing you a long and happy marriage.

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