

INTRODUCTION

A locked room full of people and a microphone — how I've dreamed of this moment.

Thankyou. Please rest assured I won't be swearing tonight — James may be after I've finished though. However, I won't be speaking for too long for health reasons — he's threatened to strangle me if I say too much !

Ladies and Gentlemen — for those of you who don't know me, I'm Harry and I used to work with James — used to work at the same company — well — I used to hang around the same office as he did.

I'm obviously the best man — well I hope it's obvious. If anyone wants to know why I'm the best man — please see me afterwards — when I'll be more than happy to give a demonstration. No really — anyone.

Before I undertake my chief responsibility — the ritual assassination of James's character — I should like to thank him on behalf of the bridesmaids Ee-fah, Gemma, Sophie, and Jessica for his kind words about them, and echo them myself.

I'd like to thank James for choosing me to be his best man — I feel profoundly humbled and honoured as a result — and profoundly scared and terrified that he's built anticipation of my speech to a level that I can't possibly sustain. However — it's not my responsibility — this speech contains little or no original matter — so if anyone's offended by that — they should take the matter up with Google Incorporated who have provided most of the material.

I knew James was in love when he changed into a happy, smiling, carefree person — rather than the miserable and bitter man I'd always known.

And as soon as I met Maeve — who looks absolutely stunning today — I knew why James had fallen in love with her. She is a truly beautiful, sweet, loving, caring, and funny woman.

JAMES

It's not often you have an opportunity to stand-up in front of a large crowd, and compliment your best friend, pointing out his many outstanding qualities and achievements, highlighting his successes and praising his many virtues.

Tonight's really not going to be any different !

Of course, having participated in many of James's escapades over the years I'm not going to reveal too much — in a desperate attempt to cling on to any remaining credibility I still have. And some of the incidents are still sub judice.

James was born on Wednesday the fifth of May eighteen seventy — nineteen seventy-one. The chart number one was Joy to the World.

Even from an early age he displayed a keen interest and curiosity about the world. Taken shopping he was left just for a few minutes in his pram — which had all the accoutrements of childhood — blanket, rattle — and with hindsight perhaps unwisely — a tin of white emulsion — the lid of which he quickly managed to prise off — and was soon merrily spreading the paint all over the pram — all over himself — before starting to ladle the stuff down his throat. I am absolutely sure this is why he's such a whiter than white character.

He carried on with this individual approach when he went to the University of Manchester excelling at computation and software engineering — although he was actually studying physics at the time. This did set up him though — and a few years ago he landed a job at a small internet search company — goggle — giggle — something like that. Don't use them myself — but I know exactly where to get my — internet material — from.

He's sometimes a little forgetful — no more than most of us — though I am reminded of the time that we went rock climbing together — and he forgot the rope. Personally I enjoyed the drive through Derbyshire to the crag — the driving round Derbyshire to get another rope — and the drive back to the crag — and then the immediate drive back home through the twilight.

He's a keen photographer — I mean really keen. When I was travelling in South East Asia, James flew over to join me for a while. When he arrived at the airport he came with a large suitcase — and I thought that's James all over — well prepared thinking ahead — I wonder what's packed — mosquito net — no — first aid kit — no — guidebooks — no — full change of clothes — no. In fact the suitcase was full of cameras — seven in all — flash guns, lenses — the only thing that wasn't camera was a teeshirt.

He's a good business man — in Cambodia he displayed formidable negotiation skills — bartering with a guidebook seller he was able to beat them up from five dollars to twenty dollars in a matter of minutes. We were both surprisingly popular with the street merchants afterwards.

He loves music — he loves what he calls music — especially sharing it with his flat mates.

I asked a mutual colleague how he would describe James.

”Vell — always still on feet at end of party. This means either he is cheat, or chronic alcoholic.”

(That’s right — the colleague is Welsh).

So — that’s the character assassination bit over. In fact James does have one or two good things about him. He *is* a very good photographer — and I’d urge you to have a look at some of the stunning pictures he’s taken. He’s great to talk to — a witty and pleasant conversationalist — I really miss sitting in a pub with him and talking. He’s a very loyal and very good friend to a lot of people — he’s sedulous in maintaining his friendships — and always solicitous of his friend’s well being — and he’s something that is increasingly rare these days — an absolute gentleman.

CLOSE

Well — it gives me very great pleasure — and quite a bit of relief — to propose a massive toast to two of the most beautiful, lovely, and wonderful people I’ve ever had the fortune to have in my life.

So if I could invite you all to stand, and raise your glasses to the new Mr and Mrs Youngman — to their future — our good fortune in sharing in it — and everyone having a blast in the celebration of this wonderful day —

To James and Maeve !