

# The Worst day of my life

**This Thursday started off pretty good – the sort of day that promises so well... Woke up and the sun was shining, not a cloud in the sky... but unbeknown to me, clouds were gathering.**

Even though I was going to be spending my day manning the company stand on the last day of one of those long, annual schmoozing fests that are exhibitions, nothing could dampen my enthusiasm. After several weeks of post-work socialising, involving the most cautious and sensitive 'interpersonal skills' I could muster, I'd secured a date with Gill, the hot new arrival at the office – the girl that the other guys in the office had been falling over themselves in undignified gaucherie to get close to.

I'd also been granted the use of the MD's beautiful Mercedes convertible for the weekend. He was going out on a spectacularly alcoholic 'symposium' tonight, would be going out of town immediately after, and didn't want to leave the car in the West End. Life was looking most promising.

## A good start

In the hotel's coffee-shop, I bolted my breakfast and then hurried down to the waiting Merc with my exhibition kit... essentially a capacious black case with all the necessary requisites for an exhibition day; pens, cards, notebook, tools – along with the life-saving additions of a large, half-eaten bar of chocolate and a well-charged hip-flask (old habits die hard).

Roof rolled back, I put my foot down to drive to the exhibition centre – I won't name names, but it was one of those huge, impersonal, remote, characterless mega-sheds quite close to The Thames! When I arrived, on time, the show bore all of the hallmarks of the last day of four with leaden-footed exhibitors fighting hangovers and lurching towards the entrance. I parked up,

breathed an admiring sigh as the roof slid smoothly back into place at the touch of a button, and made for the stand.

## Left in the dark

Minutes later I was greeted by the long, rather vacant face of Simon, our work-experience lad. He'd been drafted in to help at the last minute because Gerry, our so-

called PR and marketing 'genius', had phoned in sick – dodgy seafood allegedly – as had our two rostered sales department stand-manners. So – it looks like it'll just be 'Simon and I'. (This did worry me a little and my thoughts turned to Withnail.). Simon, keen as ever, moved away and started tinkering with the stands, tables, banners and, significantly, the spotlighting and a bank of TV monitors. Meanwhile, I made a few desperate calls to head office for assistance – in vain.

Scarcely had I turned my back when there was a blinding flash, a sharp bang, and an evil smell of burning hit the back of my throat. An hour later, after crawling about on all fours among the wiring behind the stand, we had still failed to restore power – and the on-site sparks were somehow detained elsewhere. We alone among the big name movers and shakers in the industry were noticeable by being plunged into Stygian gloom. As a company offering the latest in home entertainment technology, a shortage

of electricity was a bit of a setback. The MD, who by this time had arrived for his customary look around before departing for his long weekend, expressed the same view only in slightly more strident tones.

## It had to happen

I suppose my chagrin was complete when, dishevelled and grubby, I emerged from among the wiring to confront my ex-wife. Being in the same industry (we'd met through work) she was there representing one of our biggest competitors. Our split had been acrimonious and, having fleeced me legally although somewhat immorally, for most of my worldly goods, her triumph was now complete. I was, it seemed, 'the professional disaster' that she'd dubbed me with one of her more barbed parting shots. She eyed me disdainfully as she stalked away to her own domain, and fumbling in my bag, I emptied out the contents, searching vainly for a pack of fuses.

## A glimmer of light

At last, at about midday, a team of deeply apologetic electricians turned up – apparently there had been multiple fuses blowing and black-outs throughout the exhibition. We were low down on the list for assistance as we were, quote, 'an electronics company and should be able to fix it ourselves!' However, as they said this, they also pointed out that 'mind you, if you do, we'll all go on strike and your insurance will be invalid'. Ah, union power. I sat down behind the monitors and wiped the sweat

from my forehead. Brushing the dust from my trousers I made contact with something squidgy... I'd been sitting on the chocolate.

As the lights on our stand flickered back to life, I became aware of the extent of the damage. The seat of my suit trousers was a chocolate disaster area, beyond immediate remedy – my only hope was to remain seated behind the table while Simon was dispatched to the nearest shops to acquire another pair that might not look a total disaster with my jacket.

## A fresh start

Re-trousered, I set about rescuing the remains of the day – the hip-flask, found near the chocolate on the floor, did much to raise my spirits. And, as with all shows, on the last day senior people bugger off early and leave their poor minions to wait for the 'heavy gang' to dismantle and pack away the stand. I left Simon there to do just that. After all, I was on a promise.

When I got back to my hotel on the Cromwell Road, Gill was already waiting for me in the bar. She looked ravishing and I began to forget about the earlier disasters. We had a couple of drinks while I told Gill of the various mishaps of the day and then we quickly headed to my room.

'I've got to have a shower' I said, 'I'm sweaty, yucky and horrible'. 'I'll join you.' answered Gill. And so we both rushed to the bathroom undressing as we went. Once in the shower I got to see and feel for the first time just how stunning Gill really was.

We started making love, standing up

under a torrent of warm cleansing water. 'This is what makes life almost worthwhile,' I thought. Then, without warning, we slipped. I grabbed the shower curtain and Gill grabbed me. We both fell backwards on to the floor, during which tumble I cracked my head wide open on the tiled floor and Gill head-butted me in the mouth. The result of this episode resembled the scene from *Psycho* as blood poured from my skull and mouth.

The upshot of this encounter was to leave me missing three front teeth, and spurting blood from a head wound at what seemed like a gallon a second, and Gill with a very nasty gash on her forehead and, very sadly, a dislocated break to her, until then, beautifully pretty nose.

## A stitch-up

Dripping and spraying blood around the room we called reception and within just a few minutes a couple of sympathetic, albeit sniggering, paramedics arrived and we were carted off to hospital. Gill and twelve stitches inserted over one eye, but her nose could only be treated with painkillers. Meanwhile, after a total of twenty-one stitches to the back of my head and my mouth, I was kept in overnight with suspected concussion.

I discharged myself next morning to go back to the hotel... too late to see Gill before she departed and too late to stop the Merc from being clamped. This all really happened to me – and I smile about it now through a set of expensively reconstructed teeth.

