

Rufus the Doofus

Had you been walking down Mulburry Lane in London on September sixth in the year eighteen-seventy-three at precisely two-o-nine in the afternoon, you likely would have noticed a particular man under a particular street lamp. And had you noticed such, you would have seen said man jumping futilely in place in an attempt to retrieve a particular hat that a particular gust of wind had carried off his head and deposited atop said street lamp.

That man's name was Rufus. And after jumping and grabbing at his hat for ten minutes, during which he managed to *almost* reach halfway up the lamp post, Rufus stomped his feet and shook his fist at the lamp head.

Suddenly, an idea occurred to Rufus. If he couldn't reach his hat, he'd simply knock it down to himself. So he retrieved his wallet from his coat pocket and took careful aim. Reeling his arm back, he hurled his wallet up at it.

Success! His aim was dead true! Rufus smiled and nodded his head in satisfaction... before realizing his wallet was now stuck up there along with his hat.

"Gyaaahhhhhh!" As you can no doubt imagine, Rufus grew *slightly* frustrated at this. So frustrated, in fact, that he strutted right up to the lamp post, glared reproachfully at it, and proceeded to kick it in what would have been the shin, had the post been a man.

But the lamp post was not a man, only a lamp post. Thus, Rufus's blow to its metaphorical shin hurt his toe very much, causing him to hop on one foot and repeatedly utter very ungentlemanly words to go with his behavior.

Now rendered thoroughly upset and desperate, Rufus grabbed hold of the post and shook it as violently as he could. Being made of metal, it budged not a centimeter. The hat remained atop the post with his wallet, with the lamp rudely sticking its bulb out at him tauntingly.

It is worth some note that Mulburry Lane at that time on that day was not traveled sparsely. There were a good many other ladies and gentlemen out walking while this was taking place. And each and every one of them, so used as they were to Rufus' stupidity, spared only a glance and went on by. This wasn't the first time he'd been making a donkey of himself in public.

Finally, one man in particular decided he'd had enough. "Hey, moron!" he called out to Rufus.

Rufus had learned long ago that when someone exclaimed moron, idiot, stupid, fool, twit, numbskull, imbecile, blockhead, nincompoop, half-wit, dimwit, nitwit, dummy, numb-nuts, ignoramus, or doofus, or used the prefixes incompetent or brainless, they were usually addressing him. Per his habit, he turned towards the man who'd called him out, pausing with his hands still upon the body of the lamp post.

"You're standing right outside the hat store, you brainless twit!" the man said to him in no small tone of exasperation.

Of course! The hat store! His problem was as good as solved!

Thanking the kind man with a tip of his—wait, his hat was still atop the lamp post—he turned on his heel and marched with purpose into the hat store.

"Good afternoon, sir, come on in, make yourself at home," the store clerk called out cheerily. "Anything I might assist you with?"

Rufus walked up to the counter.

“I’d like to buy a ladder, please.” He knew from his previous visits that the store used ladders to retrieve hats from the higher shelves, so they’d certainly have one available.

The clerk, positive he must have misheard this gentleman, stood behind the counter with his friendly smile and blank, confused eyes.

“I beg your pardon, sir?”

Rufus reached into his coat pocket and brought out his—wait, his wallet was still atop the lamp post!

Oops.

But not to worry! Having experienced losing his wallet on multiple prior occasions, Rufus had learned not to keep his money in it. Instead, he kept it in that same pocket, but *outside* his wallet!

It was, debatably, one of the smarter things he typically did. Others protest that it utterly negated the entire purpose of having a wallet at all. But nonetheless, he did indeed have his money with him.

“I’d like to buy a ladder, please.” He repeated for the clerk.

“I—I’m terribly sorry, sir, but we only sell hats here. We only use the ladders to retrieve them from the higher shelves, you see. Do you need me to fetch one for you?”

Rufus nodded enthusiastically and brought the clerk, who brought the ladder, out of the store and took him to the lamp post where his hat was being viciously held prisoner.

The clerk chuckled good-naturedly and set the ladder against the post. With practiced skill he scaled the rungs, plucked Rufus’ hat and wallet gingerly from the lamp head, and climbed easily back down to offer the goods.

With repeated thanks and handshaking Rufus took his effects from the clerk.

A small crowd had gathered to watch the spectacle, and these promptly began their various responses to the show's conclusion, including but not limited to clapping, laughing, rolling their eyes, shaking their heads, calling for an encore, and shrugging and walking away without a sound.

With his heroic quest ended, the clerk nodded once more to Rufus, wished him a "Cheerio," and went back inside the store.

Rufus turned one last time to the lamp post, looked down his nose at it, went "Harumph," and continued on his way down Mulberry Lane.

Not one minute later, another gust of wind blew by, snatched his hat from his head, and deposited it upon the next lamp post.

As you listen to the disbelieving "Gragaaaahhhhh!" emanating from Rufus the Doofus, do take a moment for yourself and reflect upon the moral of this rather frivolous story.

Encores aren't always so wonderful for those who have to perform them.

Cheerio.