

Up

by Todd Maupin

This is not that animated movie that starts with the sad montage then spirals into a ridiculous plot before it one ups that with some uplifting notions about friendship. This is also not that other Shaun send up movie with dogs that can't look up.

Now we're all caught up. Stay tuned for up to the minute updates.

Up, that was not the elevator button that was lit up. Fed up as she was, Rossella did not feel like waiting. She picked up her portfolio and started towards the door to the stairs. Before she could lift up the handle, a chime sounded over her shoulder to announce the elevator's arrival. Suddenly, her infernal day was looking up.

Rossella changed course for the elevator, which was already filling up. Squeezing inside, she took up little space compared to the other passengers. Wishing she had time to bone up on her pitch and reminding herself to read up on the latest trends, she pressed the button for the 86th floor. Someone's phone emitted a "level up" chirp.

The elevator's music was decidedly uptempo. As others entered, Rossella moved over to free up more space. "Make up your mind, would you?" An exacerbated voice piped up in the direction of the elevator door. A pleasant but bewildered older gentleman was standing halfway, hesitantly, in the elevator door holding them all up.

"What's up with this guy?" Someone else with a stuck up demeanor muttered. Just because a childish person is dressed up in adult clothes does not make them a bonafide grown up. Comeuppance, take note. Hook up with karma and see what appropriate fates you can cook up.

Rossella's compassion did not always measure up to her exasperation, but she did have her moments. That particular day, up until now, frustration would have won out, but she had been intending to clean up her act. She was on the verge of just throwing up her hands at yet another setback, but something about the old man made her tear up inside.

She stepped up and announced to all of the other less than upstanding passengers that she and the old man would take the next one. "No need to get wound up," she said in an up yours tone, taking up the old man's arm in her own to lead him away from the elevator. As the doors closed, the upwardly mobile remaining inside looked back to their mobile phones. They were pleased that the crazy had been divvied up apart from them.

Despite being inwardly perturbed by the delay, Rossella forced her lips to curl up into a bland grin. Shorter than her, the old man smiled back up at her as she spoke. "My apologies, if it were up to me, we could have waited a bit longer." No harm in serving up a white lie, she thought, especially to someone whose brain was in need of a check-up. "Do you need to see someone upstairs?"

"Up is where I need to be," the man replied, a twinkle in his eyes. Rossella could feel her blood pressure going up again, and was about to erupt. This was as maddening as a sticky fruit roll up, stuck in a wadded up wrapper. Her eyes rose up in a maneuver often called an eye roll because someone had yet to think up a technical term for it. Look it up or call up the Webster people and ask them.

"Upton! Wake up! Look, you already used up that line. No, you shut up. It's time to pay up. I don't care what the boys in Tennessee dig up or how you doctor it up. Just draw up the contract and send me the amount so we can settle up!" An uptight woman screamed into her cell phone and emphatically pounded on the screen to hang up

as she walked past them. Her make up was applied heavily and her hair was done up in an elaborate coiffe.

That woman was quite keyed up, Rossella thought, sighing. And I still do not know what I am up against with this guy. Nothing has been cleared up yet. "This building is made up of over a hundred floors. Many of the buildings uptown have even more..." She observed but had to clam up suddenly when the man started speaking again.

"Upwards of a hundred stories, you mean, not floors," he clarified, in only relative clarity, as though Rossella were the one who should wise up.

Rossella could not keep up. "You lost me up there somewhere," she smiled, pointing at the old man's probably mushy brain where any reasonable conversation faced an uphill battle.

Apparently, he was not one to build up to a dramatic pause. "Stories are part of our upbringing, give our lives meaning, and all of us become one. If we do not feel our story is what it is cracked up to be, we can up the ante ourselves. Life is what we dream up. It is a trade up, not a trade off. We control how it all ends up," the old man explained.

Rossella tried to be upfront. "Sir, that is very charming and upworthy, but does not help get me or you where we need to go." She was not sure how much more she could put up with from him. Why did she even get up that morning?!

Rossella's moody reminder did not upend the old man's Mr. Rogers and Hammerstein sentimentality. He would probably hum during a bad breakup. He was the personification of eggs sunnyside up. Was he on uppers? Time to sober up then.

“Chin up, miss, what I am saying is that everyone has a story. You, for instance are an up and coming architect,” he said beaming, while sizing her up and down.

“Wait up. How did you come up with that? I mean, I am an architect, but I may have to face up to reality if I don't win this contract,” Rossella remarked, with a mixture of bewilderment and pent up resignation flashing across her face.

The old man's smile indicated that his chipper demeanor was not about to let up. He did not speak, but gestured at the slightly crinkled up copy of Architectural Digest that was protruding from Rossella's upscale model portfolio. There was no need for him to even bring up this observation from his deceptively perceptive rather than mushy mind. Perhaps he was not so mixed up after all.

“What up?” A frat boy surfer type in a UPS uniform greeted no one in particular, seemingly showing up for no reason and quickly continuing past them. He looked like the type who would man up if someone told him to cowboy up, or would drop on a whim to do push-ups and sit-ups to motivate himself. He would probably boast about his vertical leap by saying he had mad ups. He was carrying upholstery from his truck that had just pulled up.

The interlude was broken up by the old man's words. “You feel that you are not living up to your parents' expectations, but you're wrong. No need to talk yourself up. Rossella, your story just needs a little touching up, a tune up, you will switch things up yourself and the upswing will begin with this contract.”

“You're just making that up. Is someone going to ring me up and tell me this is being staged for reality tv, or for some other frame up?” Rossella was starting to feel exposed, like some pin up model. Was this a setup for an elaborate real life Rickroll? Cue the mashup of “Never Gonna Give You Up.” How did this upstart know her name

anyway, or anything about her uppity parents? Would he fess up to those tidbits?

“No, there is no need to be up in arms, to get worked up. This is nothing like that messed up programming, and this is no mock up. I am just trying to upsell you on life. When I saw you, you looked to be upset, like you needed a friend to cheer you up during this little hiccup.” The old man's bubbly smile was still fizzing like a freshly poured 7-Up. Some say that soda is good for nausea, when you feel like throwing up, or upchucking, as some call it. Drink up while it bubbles up.

“My world has been upside down lately. I am actually really glad that you turned up today, sir. You have truly been the pick me up that I needed. However, if I do not hurry up, I will be late for my meeting,” Rossella could only imagine the dust up if they thought she had stood them up. Not even the best stand up comedian would be able to conjure up the laughs for that.

“Yes, of course, there will be no time's up on my account. Who am I to bust up your date with destiny?” Like a matchmaker proud of a fix-up, the old man appeared convinced that Rossella was lined up for greatness. He stepped aside as the elevator doors opened up again.

No one else appeared to liven things up. Rossella gathered herself up and entered. Her mind continued to churn a mantra of “you're up, don't screw this up.” All she needed in her life was more upheaval, and the failure of it all going belly up.

As the elevator doors closed, the old man rolled up his sleeves and looked around for someone else with whom he could strike up a conversation. He was just getting warmed up and surely there were others for whom he could help shore up some happiness and tie up loose ends.

He had a reputation to uphold, after all. Out here, things were on the up and up, better than being holed up with the others. He had had it up to here with those downers...

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