

Sweet Sweet Loving

By

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There wasn't anything special about Ralph, not that he could see. I guess there was that day he ate a whole apple when he was a kid (even the core), and that weekend where he masturbated twenty times. When he was at primary school he made a club where you needed to be able to flare your nostrils in order to get in. He thought that was cool. Overall though, not many achievements.

Ralph thought he would work for a couple years, save some money, maybe travel a bit, then start his life properly. His time as an adult, as a contributor to the world would come. Until then, he would just take in as much as possible. Ralph was a sponge for now I guess you could say.

Girls didn't really show much of an interest in Ralph, and nor him they. Once in awhile he and his friends would hit the clubs, take some shots and hit the D-floor, on which Ralph's name was all over. Despite his considerable talent, his unquestionable shimmy and all the best disco moves he'd picked up at the weddings of his ten aunts, Ralph went unloved. He ended most nights having a quiet poo in the last cubicle at Fitzy's reading the specials on the back of the toilet door and wondering where his life was really going.

There was always that nagging doubt at the back of Ralph's mind. Is this it? Is this what we're supposed to do? What are the rules? Born a white male into a nice family, unless he really screwed up his life, Ralph was probably going to be okay. He'd get to eat every day and sleep in a nice bed and have plenty things and activities to entertain himself. Why am I entitled to have this life when so many are starving, so many are abused? These questions plagued Ralph.

Often late at night Ralph would get into this spiral of hatred, where the little inner monologue he listened blissfully to all day, would suddenly turn on him. Instead of simply commenting on how comforting it is that there are always post office boxes around or remarking about the glorious moustache of the man next to him on the bus, the small voice would pipe up with something more sinister.

Yeah. Yeah you're noticing me now, you idiot. I'm always here. Why do you think so much useless shit? A shark will never grow arms and legs, find an abandoned weapon cache and take over the world. You don't need that contingency plan.

Do something useful, you fat moron.

This would go on for a long time, until Ralph either fell asleep or could distract his mind long enough to go back into autopilot. It wasn't a nice time to be alive.

Once or twice Ralph tried to raise this weird existential dilemma with his friend, Iggy. Iggy was a tradie by trade, and always up for a drink and a laugh. Tradies get the ladies, was his motto, usually said with a sly wink and a nod to no one in particular. I

once asked him what the lady tradies get.

He thought for a while then just smiled at me. I think we both knew.

Ralph breached the topic one night during pre-drinks.

- R: Iggy. You're a thinker.
I: Bloody oath.
R: Do you ever think too much?
I: All the time.
R: What happens when you do?
I: When I what?
R: Think too much?
I: When?
I: Never mind.

Later that night, while lining up at the bar.

- R: Ig. Where are we going to be in twenty years?
I: Probably still in this bloody line.
R: Too right... but really?

- I: I dunno. Married. House probably. Coupke kids maybe. Little something on the side. What else is there?
- R: Is that it? Nothing special by the sounds of it.
- I: Mate, you're getting a bit weird. I think you just need some sweet sweet loving. Excuse me madam, would you please sweetly love my friend?
- R: No one's sweetly loving me tonight!
- I: Not with that attitude they're not.

Ralph partied on, but that night his heart wasn't really in it. Not even his customary bowel movement at Fitzzy's could cheer him up.

Iggy's words were ringing through his ears. What else is there? Ralph didn't know.

Soon enough though, Ralph's mind drifted to other things. A new video game was released, some more blockbuster movies and television shows to. Work was a bitch, but it paid the bills. The girls didn't bite but Ralph had his self-pleasure record to break. It was going to be like this forever.

What else is there? The question remained.

And of course, before too long, Ralph was in a deep depression. He couldn't put a finger on it. His life was okay; he had everything he could want, and more if he tried hard enough. But he didn't want to. He didn't want to get out bed. He saw a doctor who gave him some pills and said it was completely normal but very serious.

Ralph laughed to me about that.

Ralph thought maybe he needed to accomplish more. Happiness is in others he told himself. He volunteered at a homeless shelter, and helped a hospital foundation.

But that just made things worse. He felt bad that helping didn't help him

This is really bumming me out.

Ralph hadn't seen Iggy in a while. He couldn't bear going downtown and that's all Iggy seemed to do, so their friendship was slowly dying.

One day by chance, they ran into each other at the shops.

- I: You're still alive! Where you been?
- R: Oh I've been around. Keeping to myself.
- I: That's the way. Listen, are you still feeling isolated and alone?
- R: What?
- I: Last time we spoke you expressed some strange feelings. I think you've been battling some demons from within, am I right?
- R: Well... yeah. That's right Iggy. Exactly.
- I: I still think you need some sweet sweet loving.

Ralph had been excited for a moment, and then the real Iggy returned. Reliable stupid Iggy. Sweet sweet loving, while fun, wasn't going to help anything.

What an idiot.

But it was still eating at Ralph. What else is there? Nothing it seemed. But Iggy seems fine. What does he have that I don't? Nothing, he's just a silly alcoholic. He hits nails with a hammer for a living. A monkey could do that, and some monkey somewhere probably does and it's probably really cute.

But Iggy does get sweet sweet loving. Not often but more than me.

With more than a little hesitation, Ralph broke. He searched for local brothels and decided on a seemingly pleasant bordello simply named Lovers R Us. He made an appointment for that afternoon and could hardly wait. Is this it?

The lady on the front desk was pleasant but severe. She intimidated Ralph a little, like he should be a little daunted before seeing a sex worker, naughty little boy. Ralph thought maybe he should be a bit scared, not because of he was about to do the nasty with a hooker, but because if things didn't go well, he was probably going to kill himself.

The girl Ralph ended up alone with was nice. Her name was Helen, the least likely prostitute name in the world, and wasn't the prettiest girl, but neither was Ralph.

Helen laughed a lot and Ralph felt quite calm around her, probably the calmest he had in a long time. After a little while of just chatting, she got down to business.

H: So what can I help you with today?

Like it was a bloody doctor's appointment.

R: Well I don't know really. Um. I guess, well. My friend Iggy said I need some sweet sweet loving. I'm not sure if that's what... He's an idiot so...

H: Not a worry. Well jump in the shower and we can get started.

No one ever said anything about a shower. Ralph had worked himself up, got ready for the loving, the mythical sweet sweet loving, but now he had to shower! And how long are you supposed to shower for? Is it a rinse? A real proper scrub? Just the balls?

Ralph had so many questions and now Helen was just staring at his blank expressionless face.

H: It's not a trick question, honey.

R: Oh no. Yes. I was just thinking.

H: Anything I can help you with?

R: Oh no no no, just like... is it more than just the balls?

Talking wasn't Ralph's strong point. Helen just smiled and Ralph quickly ran to the bathroom. He stripped and showered, paying particular attention to the balls because Helen was surely going to check now. Ralph looked at himself in the mirror when he was done. This can't be it.

Ralph put his clothes back on and went into back into the bedroom. It was too much, too red, the curtains too silky smooth. Ralph wanted to tell Helen that it was lovely meeting her and he had a great time, but it was time to go home.

But Ralph couldn't talk when he saw her. Helen was crying, not a sob or a weep, just a gentle trickle of tears down her face, a face that hadn't looked quite as beautiful until now. Ralph sat down on the bed next to Helen. Unsure, he patted her on the shoulder.

R: What's the matter?

H: Oh, nothing.

R: Something isn't it.

H: No. Well. I was just thinking... Everyone I have ever loved, or ever will love, or hate or not even know, they're just going to die one day. And so will I and there's nothing we can do about it.

R: Yeah. And until we finally die, we just busy ourselves, go to parties and listen to songs all the while knowing that pretty soon we'll just be nothing at all.

H: I'm so sorry. This isn't what you wanted is it?

R: But I just had a thought. Think of all the decisions we both had to make in our lives that led exactly to this point. If literally any of those decisions had been different we wouldn't be here. If I hadn't have eaten that newspaper in Year Three, maybe I would be a lawyer now. You just never know. Maybe I'd be here but with a goatee. It's just all so aimless.

H: I guess. What's your point?

R: What else is there? Nothing! And that's the point.

H: You'd look good with a goatee.

R: I know.