

Pat Stanton

Flash Story Wost Life Ever

When Ranulf Rutgers sat down to dinner with his wife, Rasia, he announced that he hated his life and didn't see how anyone could be more miserable than he was.

“I lost the Ramsey case, no raise this year, and I'm up for review tomorrow.” he said through bites of meatloaf. “It's like everything I've been working for this year just went down the shitter. I can't even eat dinner. Seriously, show me someone who has a worse life than me. Anyone.”

He stood up and scraped the remains of his meal into the trashcan.

“I'm going to take a bath and go to bed. Maybe tomorrow when I wake up this will all be a dream.”

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Ranulf's dreams that night were the most realistic he'd ever had. He would describe them in the days to come as not dreams, but scenes of other people's lives he saw through their eyes. His dreams were far from sweet. He undressed and got into bed repeating himself in a whisper.

“Show me just *one* person in a worse position than me. Just one fucking person. There isn't anyone. There can't be anyone worse off than me.”

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Before Ranulf realized he had fallen asleep, he found himself in a young woman's body. She couldn't have been more than 17. On top of him was a strong man holding him down and emitting an overwhelmingly thick stench of Budweiser. He held Ranulf down with one hand over his mouth. Ranulf's heart was pounding. The man's other hand was clumsily unbuckling Ranulf's belt and sliding his hip-hugger pants down to his ankles. After that, the man unbuckled his own belt and let his pants drop to the floor. Next the man grabbed Ranulf's breast so hard he could have popped it as Ranulf felt the man's warm stiffness rip its way into him. A tear trickled silently down Ranulf's cheek to his mouth. He tasted its salt and knew that he would never be happy again.

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Suddenly Ranulf was in a fairly comfortable house reading a book from his rocking chair when the doorbell rang. He set his book down and limped to the door as quickly as his old frame would let him. Standing on the front step was a police officer.

“Mr. Smith?” the officer asked.

Ranulf nodded.

“Sir, I regret to inform you that your son has just been shot dead in a gang altercation.”

Ranulf crumpled to the floor and wailed until he ran out of tears and the scene dissolved.

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Ranulf next found himself in his own body, staring in disbelief from his car in the driveway at his burning house. Through the bay window in the dining room, he caught a glimpse of Rasia running blindly into a wall seconds before the roof collapsed. The fire department showed up a few minutes later. The only thing they could do was tell Ranulf that grease from the bacon for that night's BLT dinner is what started the inferno. He had just gotten home from work.

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Ranulf didn't mind that his review didn't go as well as he hoped, or that his salary would be going down by a few hundred dollars rather than up. In spite of those things, he was happy as he drove home. The sunset he saw from the freeway looked somehow better than it ever had before.