

Boss Ralphie

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 that was a strange dream." Sam came out of his reminiscing. "So how you doing boy? You staying out of trouble?" Sam asked. He had seen Ralphie a few times before when Ralphie had come to visit and tell Sam that he was going to be working for one of the Bosses. Sam had no idea what to make of it but he was thankful for the company, regardless of the topic of conversation.

"I'm doing very well, Sammy. I just wanted to give you some good news," Ralphie said.

"Oh, that's nice Ralphie. They're doing their Christmas party tonight. Want some cake?" Sammy said and raised his plate as a nurse walked by and smiled at him as she passed.

"No thank you, Sammy. I just wanted to let you know you'll be out of here and working for me---very soon," Ralphie said.

"Oh that's good news, Ralphie. Good news." Sam said. He would play along. This Ralphie guy seemed nice, even if he was crazy. "It'll be good to get back to work."

The nurse that passed Sam Miller stood at the nurse's station, filling out a form on a clipboard and shaking her head. Another nurse asked her what was wrong.

"Oh, it's that poor Mr. Miller, he's talking to his imaginary friend Ralph again. Poor thing."

Ralphie arrived back at the Eternal Place with a heart full of gladness. Recruitment was much better work than some of the other assignments he had been on during the time he had worked for Bigz. And he was good at it also. Most of his recruits worked out agreeably in the angelic organizational

realm of the Eternal Place, which was the beginning of all, the ending of all---simply all. Sammy would fit in just fine. He was a man of good heart and conscience and he would be a first-rate angel.

He came into the gathering place where the archangels met and he was ready to regale his fellow bosses with the story when he was cut short without having spoken a word.

"Sorry Ralphie, but Bigz and the suck-ups are waiting for you," said the Archangel Gabriel, "They're in there now. I really do want to hear about Sammy, but---well you know it's my job to tell others what's going on."

"No problem, Gabe. What's up? I haven't had a meeting with Bigz and the cupids in a while. Everything alright?" said Ralpie.

"I don't really know, Ralphie. The cupids have been in there bickering all day about something and one of those little chubbies came out a while ago and told me to send you in as soon as you got back," said Gabe. Ralphie didn't think it seemed promising. He met with Bigz often, but rarely were the Seraphim and Cherubim there also. It had the smell of something official.

Archangel Michael looked up from the reports of battles he was required to fight over the next millennium and said "Don't you sweat the dancing babies, Ralphie, they haven't got a clue about what goes on outside of their own little existence. Just stick to what Bigz has to say and leave it at that."

"Thanks, Mikey, but they are the Cherubim and Seraphim and they do have the big guy's ear," said Ralphie.

"Don't let them push you around, Ralphie. Bigz likes you, those guys don't, but you do good work. If they bring up

the past, you tell them you've already taken a demotion. Don't let 'em hang it over your head," said Mikey.

"Yeah, go get 'em Ralphie!" chimed in Ariel, "don't take any guff from those guys."

Ralphie looked around at all of the other bosses not knowing what was in store. It was not a trivial thing to have to go before God with the Cherubim and Seraphim in attendance. He didn't have a fluffed pillow feeling about it. He smiled at them all and went in.

Ralphie came out from the meeting that did not last long.

"What is it Ralphie, what did they say?" asked Michael.

"Special assignment. Breezy," said Ralphie.

"Oh, no, not her. Ralphie, go back and tell 'em you don't want to do it. It's Breezy, she's a pure spirit. You don't need to be messing around with a pure spirit right now. Tell 'em I'll do it," said Ariel.

Briana "Breezy" Bradley was a young girl who was well known in the Eternal Place. She was one of those people with a special heart, a truly good person who would someday do great things for the world. The thought that Ralphie might screw it up somehow did not sit well with the other Bosses. This girl was simply too important.

"Ralphie, you know you're not good at the special assignments. That's why you're in charge of recruitment. Remember the Hannibal fiasco? You were the one who let him find elephants. You inadvertently showed the Moors to Spain. Then there was the German corporal incident in WW I and you only got him wounded," said Mikey. "And lets not forget the '86 World Series. Bigz was a huge

Red Sox fan that year," chimed in Gabe.

"Hey wait a minute. With the German corporal assignment, I had to use French artillery.

Those people aren't very good shots. It wasn't my fault they couldn't get that guy. And the '86 Red Sox series was the Bambino curse," said Ralphie.

"It doesn't matter. The cupids aren't going to cut you any slack with Bigz if you mess up a job with Breezy. What do you have to do anyway?" asked Gabe.

"I gotta get some thief to help her out tomorrow, on Christmas Eve. And I gotta take the new guy, Finch, with me," Ralphie told them.

"Finch? The new one who got in on a technicality? The one who spends most of his time watching reruns of mob movies? You gotta be kidding me," Mikey said in disbelief, "I think the cupids are out to get you Ralphie, they want to put you down in the minors just like they did with Uriel. Your days as a boss are numbered, my friend."

Uriel had been an Archangel for an eternity until he had the misfortune to mess up too many things too many times to the point where the Seraphim and Cherubim decided enough was enough. He was demoted to the rank of common angel. Bigz had given in on their recommendation and there Uriel was now, responding to prayers for fertile fields. Somebody had to do the job, but most of the bosses thought it had been a set-up and that was what they thought was going on now. Get rid of enough bosses and then the cupids would run everything. Now they were trying to get rid of Ralphie.

"And you gotta use some thief to do it? Who's the guy?"

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Happy Hookah

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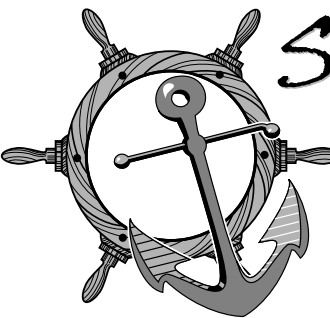
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Holiday Recipe Easy Fudge



Easy Fudge

- 4 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 lg can evaporated milk
- 8 oz miniature marshmallows
- 3 6oz pkgs chocolate chips
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine
- 2 cups broken nutmeats
- 1 tsp vanilla

Put sugar and milk in heavy saucepan and slowly bring to a rolling boil. Let boil for no more than 8 minutes. Remove from heat and add marshmallows, chips and butter. Stir until melted. Add nuts and vanilla. Spread into large ungreased pan. When cool, cut into squares.

Useless Facts You Should Know

Compiled by Rachel R. Peine

- U.S. 1 runs from Key West all the way to Fort Kent, Maine.
- The Keys sit along the Florida Straits, dividing the Atlantic Ocean to the east from the Gulf of Mexico to the west. The Keys define the lower edge of Florida Bay.
- "Key" comes from the Spanish Cayo, meaning small island.
- The Key lime may have originated in Malaysia. It was taken to the Yucatán Peninsula of Mexico by Spanish explorers and arrived here via the Yucatan.
- The brown pelican's pouch holds two or three times more than its stomach can hold -- close to three gallons of fish and water.
- Speaking of birds, the Philadelphia Eagles beat the crap out of the Arizona Cardinals on Thanksgiving, while our beaks were ripping into the turkey.
- Mangroves drop about seven and a half tons of leaf litter per acre per year. The leaves are quickly broken down by bacteria and fungi and released into the water, providing food for marine life.
- Fish fact: The name "grouper" comes from the Portuguese name: garoupa. The origin of this name in Portuguese is thought to be from an indigenous South American language.
- The Islamorada post office opened in 1908.
- The winter solstice is the shortest day of the year. Days will start getting longer by about a minute a day as of December 21 this year. The solstice can occur between December 20th and 23rd each year, depending on the position of the sun in relation to the earth's equator. Druids consider this joyous occasion an ideal time for weddings.