

GETTING THE WRONG MESSAGE.

All of my mates were in relationships, but I'd been left alone at the age of 23. What could I do? I went on some dating apps.. Yeah, I met up with a few babes, but things didn't work out. Then, my mate told me that women like guys who listen, so I went for it. When I met Olivia, I just said, 'Wow! That reminds me of something that happened to me, and told her my story'. But guess what? She told her mates that I was a real nerd.

Then I read this story about a message in a bottle. Some guy in Florida was mad about this woman, but he couldn't bring himself to tell her 'cos he was too shy. 'That's just like me,' I thought. What did he do? He put a message in a bottle in the sea near where they lived and, guess what? She picked it up a couple of days later. Now they're married. My mate told me the story was fake, but I reckoned he was jealous, so I went for it.

I thought of sending something through the post, but the Royal Mail guy told me that they don't send bottles, only letters and parcels – some modern nonsense about 'health and safety'. I ask you. Who gives a ****! But it set me thinking. If I sent Olivia a message in a bottle in the sea, it could get smashed. Anyway, we live in Watford, so that's 'a bit of a no-no'. Then inspiration came to me. Olivia goes down to Woodside Leisure Centre – she's a big fan, so I've been told. So that's the place.

Covid was around at the time and, even though I didn't believe all that nonsense, it gave me the chance to wear a mask when I visited the pool, which meant that the beautiful Olivia wouldn't recognise me if we met at reception. Saturday mornings – that was when she liked to go, so I hatched my plan. Aren't I just the cleverest guy on the planet?

That fateful morning, I got myself all prepared, making sure that I packed some goggles and my new, cool, sporty diver's swimwear, covering most of my body, to help with my disguise. It would be easy to smuggle the bottle underneath – no prizes for guessing where. But it made me look a real man – I can tell you. Then I dived into the pool, ready to plant my message. Surely, Olivia would be there soon.

After a couple of lengths. I saw someone in a yellow bathing suit getting into the far end of the pool. I couldn't see her properly, because I had my goggles on, but I knew it was her. I recognised her hair. Surely, I couldn't be wrong. Now was the time. I placed my hand inside my costume to release the bottle with my message, 'I am your darling. I need you, Nigel.' Leaving the bottle to find its way to Olivia's grasp, and hopefully her heart, I continued my impressive front crawl.

What happened next shocked me, and everyone around me.

Another woman, who I had not spotted in my excitement, had been standing close to me as I have given the bottle its freedom. The stupid woman had completely misinterpreted what I was doing as I removed the bottle from under my costume, and reported me to the lifeguard, who told me to get out of the pool, get changed, and report to the 'Pool Personnel' team. I had to leave behind the beautiful Olivia, with my bottle still floating near her, to sit an office to face false accusations. I was petrified, I can tell you.

'Mr. Ramsbottom, can you tell me what you were up to in the pool?'

'I wanted to give a message to, er, message, to another swimmer.'

'Yes, that's what we are worried about. And what was the nature of this, er, message?'

'It was all about attraction, about love. You must understand I wanted to make a connection.'

'We are aware of that, sir. But how did you propose to achieve this... connection?'

'Through this message, like I say. It was in a bottle, you see.'

'And so you...'

Just at that moment, a woman resembling Olivia walked came into the office, holding a bottle in her hand.

'Excuse me for interrupting, but I found this in the pool. It's a bottle with a message inside. It's for a woman called Olivia.'

'Really? And what does it say?'

'I am daring. I need poo. Nigel.'

The bottle had obviously sprung a leak and the water had altered my message. But what would happen next? The wrong message had gone to the wrong woman. There I sat, an innocent man, wrongly accused.