

Travis Roshto

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Ms. Peterson

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Profile

### Simply, Danny

Women flinch as he enters a room. They refuse to see beyond his less than sociable exterior. Snickering with gossip behind his back, they poke fun at his slovenly demeanor. They go out of their way to avoid interacting with him and turn their heads as they pass him in the hall, careful not to make eye contact in the hope of evading conversation. Never dropping their disgust or talking to him as an equal, or even acknowledging him as human, they make themselves more repulsive than he. Danny possesses a charismatic charm. Always eager to help and genuinely concerned for the welfare of others, he offers his assistance often. To converse with him provides a humorously enjoyable un-wasted passing of time. I find myself envious of his self-confidence.

At first glance, Danny's image catches people off guard. Honestly, the first time we met I thought of him as mentally challenged. Danny's hair always remains uncombed, stray strands reach outward in defiance of gravity. He wears lightly tanned thick-framed glasses of a retro feel that hang low on his nose due to his steady perspiration. His nostrils, overcome with hair, constantly glisten with mucus. Danny's uniform, a solid navy blue ensemble forever wrinkled and sweat stained, contains a peculiar smell to it, not only due to his body odor but the chemicals that he uses throughout the day while working. His pants sag in the seat and his underwear peeks out over his waistline. Slightly overweight and stricken with a sloppy posture, Danny walks with

a shuffling gait. He wobbles about hindered by a limp. Danny speaks with a lisp and stutters regularly. Clearly not his top priority, Danny's appearance misrepresents his gregarious persona and takes people aback.

Danny makes his living as a Housekeeping Technician for the emergency department of a local hospital. Employed there for the better part of ten years, he adheres to a strong work ethic. Never late and always in a chipper mood, he works steadily throughout his shift. From the moment he clocks in until leaving for the day he makes the most of his time. No matter how sickening the task at hand, whether vomit needs mopping up, blood pools require sanitizing or amniotic fluids call for cleaning, Danny neither complains nor protests. Others shy away from such stomach-turning jobs as those, but not Danny. Without a doubt, Danny cheerfully provides a valuable – though unappreciated – contribution to his co-workers.

While I chat with some of the ladies in the emergency room Danny approaches regularly. They pay him no mind and offer no thanks while he empties their trash or sweeps their floors. Danny makes it a point to always shake my hand and every once in a while he accompanies that with a hug. We converse briefly with exchanges such as, "Hello sir, is there anything I can do for you today? I have the time."

"No thanks, Danny, I'm good."

"Is this man bothering you ladies?" Not looking at him, they reply shortly with their displeasure. Playfully, he continues with, "You know sir, these ladies told me that they would much rather talk to me than you."

"Is that so Danny?"

"Yeah, they say that you're too pretty for them; they prefer a real man like me."

“I’m so jealous Danny; let me know which ones you don’t want so I can try to find love as well.”

“I’ll try, sir, but no promises, they all want me.” Danny walks away.

Left with a smile, I wonder “Did I help his self-esteem or did he help mine?” After he takes his leave, the women present show their disgust with their unattractive facial expressions. Because I take up for him whenever they foolishly bombard the conversation with their girlish slander, I draw unjustified banter as they try to imply Danny's unworthiness of a decent impression.

I often ponder while watching him work, “Is he one of God’s favorites? Will he be rushed to the head of the line when his time comes? Is he here to test these women’s sense of beauty? Is beauty truly only skin deep? Or, is he God’s cruel joke? What hope does Danny have for happiness? Is his happiness the same as mine? Does he long for love as I do? Does he desire the warm touch of a woman? Does he possess a yearning to be noticed or to be accepted?” I feel guilty when I allow these thoughts to cloud my mind. I quietly pass judgment on him like others while thinking of him as less than a man. Making myself feel as repulsive as the women that blatantly make fun of him, I feel the need to apologize.

A Casanova trapped in an oafish shell, Danny remains an enigma to me. His unkempt appearance holds him back and unjustly portrays a man to ignore. The man inside finds humor a way of life, he carries on with sarcastic dribble, and always puts a smile on my face. First to help and not one to complain, he compliments his department well. Simply known as Danny, I look forward to talking to him every day and I call him my friend. At times, when alone in the long hours of my shift, I shudder, thinking "Without the Simple Dannys of the world, what kind of place would it be?"

