

**JAMES J CRAFT**

***MALE  
MONDAY,  
GIRL FRIDAY***

**“Hey, Cutie!” by James J. Craft  
A Tales of Transformation Story**



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# HEY, CUTIE!

Daniel James was an average guy. There wasn't much to note about him. He graduated high school smack in the middle with a pleasant 3.0 average, four years of college, masters of business degree, married the girl who seemed to like him well enough and then settled down at 22. He had an inoffensive house in the suburbs, a lawn and a nice beige car. He had a fish for a pet, because he certainly didn't want to seem like a weirdo who didn't have a pet.

The one odd thing about him was his wife, Kat, who was a notch or two better than what he deserved. Slowly, Kat herself had begun to realize that, and she had started to take to staring out windows and wondering what the world had to offer her beyond beige cars and gold fish. It wasn't the end of the road for them, still, Kat began to think about what was... Next.

Daniel really didn't have the qualities needed to know what "next" meant. He lived in a constant state of constancy, worrying only about what was in front of his face. He had taken a comfortable job in accounting in an average sized office for an average sized firm, and life had been... For him... About average. That was just fine. Daniel didn't push too hard, and in return didn't expect to be pushed too hard. He had kept himself below the radar and had moved up the ladder at an average pace after being hired fresh out of college. As one of the younger auditors the firm employed, Daniel's job consisted mostly of making sure that the branch office and adjacent plant were spending money efficiently and effectively. Sometime, Daniel would even forget what his company manufactured, because it was immaterial to his job. It didn't matter. All that mattered was doing his job, and doing it well... Or at least doing it well enough.

One Friday afternoon, however, Daniel's world began to take a turn when a new bundle of a data appeared in his email inbox. It was from an unfamiliar auditor at another office of the company, somewhere out-of-state. He didn't even realize that the company had an office in Oakville... Wherever that was. But that didn't matter, he opened the email and started to read it. The note attached to the file read, "Due to unexpected fluctuations in seasonal employment, our supervisors require the Oakville



workload to be redistributed to other offices. Please refer to the attached spreadsheet and review the numbers, concentrating on any irregularities you may find. Once complete, forward it to your supervisor and delete this message for security purposes. Thank you.”

Although Daniel thought it was a little odd that the file had not come directly from his boss, in the end it didn't matter. Work was work. If he complained, he might be seen as a complainer. All that mattered was finding those irregularities. That was fine. Daniel loved finding irregularities. It was like a treasure hunt! Nothing was more thrilling for him than finding cost over-runs, under-runs, misappropriations and unaccounted expenses. Commissions, omissions and principle. It was such a rush. Not to mention a bit of a power trip, since he was essentially finding other people's mistakes... And/or catching people who were doing things they shouldn't be with company money.

A rush indeed.

Daniel set to work, opening the attached files and starting his examination. There was a lot of data contained in them, more than in the files he usually worked with. It would likely take him all day to do it, taking into account that he still had to fulfill his regular accounting duties. But after a few hours of delving into the ledgers and balancing out the different line items, Daniel realized why someone else had sent this to him to do. It was huge. And not just a little huge... A lot huge. It wasn't going to take him all day... It was going to take him all week! That is, if he didn't take it home to work on.

Daniel resolved to complete his work in record time. Perhaps this would be the opportunity he had been waiting for to show his superiors what he was really capable of. Not that he minded being average... It had served him well for the past twenty-nine years. It's just that being average was starting to feel a little bit routine. He had been thinking that it might be time for a change, and if his boss was impressed by how well he did this task, it might be the right opportunity to break out of his average mold and start to move up the ladder from average to just slightly above average.

So it came as a bit of a surprise to Daniel's wife when she came home that night to find Daniel on the sofa, staring at his laptop, going through pages upon pages of balance sheets and expense account reports.

Kat was the fundraising coordinator for a local hospital. She knew exactly how and where to find millions of dollars for the hospital's different projects – but ask her to look at a balance sheet and her eyes would glaze over. She often wondered what she had seen in the obsessive number-cruncher that was her husband. It seemed all too often that Daniel would much rather spend his time with a calculator and ledger than with her, and seeing him working from home now only affirmed her suspicions.

“What's for dinner?” Kat asked. She watched her husband comb over every line of every page with an animal-like intensity. I wish he would look at me the way he looks at those spreadsheets, she thought to herself.

“Can’t eat,” Daniel replied without looking up, “Must work.”

Kat rolled her eyes again and went into the kitchen. “You remember that we’re supposed to go to the Hospital’s Cardio-Unit Fundraiser tomorrow night... Right?” She called, as she looked through the fridge and cupboards for something to eat. A combined income of two-hundred-thousand dollars... And we’ve got nothing to eat, she muttered to herself.

She waited a moment for Daniel to reply before asking him again, “Daniel?”

Daniel was too busy with his laptop. He was narrowing the problems down to one particular area, a special project, referred to as ‘QT.’ The project was way over budget, and to make matters worse, it was expensing outrageous things, like chewing gum. How could you expense chewing gum? Not to mention an entry for “miscellaneous cosmetic items” and costing the company several tens of thousands of dollars... So far.

Looking further, Daniel also noted a link back to the same account. All of these expenses were all tied to contracts held by the firm’s biggest customer... Meyer Industries.

Daniel could smell blood. He was going to enjoy burying whoever was in charge of this project. All it would take was a few more items traced back to the project’s expense account the whole ‘QT’ project would be toast!

Toast? Daniel thought. “Toast... I... Smell... Toast,” he said aloud.

He looked up to see his wife, staring down at him... Nibbling on a piece of toast, “Earth to Daniel,” she said, “are you even listening to me?” She squared her jaw and squinted her eyes in restrained anger.

Daniel knew he had not been paying attention to his wife again, which was a pet peeve of Kat’s. She did not like being ignored. Daniel’s mind tried to shake off the numbers and cell formulas in his mind for a brief moment, so he could figure out something to say to Kat, and get out of the increasingly stern gaze that she was giving him. “Uh... I... Um,” he stammered. His brain locked up on him. Good job genius! he scolded himself.

“Oh never mind, Daniel!” she scoffed. “Just make sure you’re dressed and ready to go by six tomorrow,” she called out from the kitchen. She made herself another piece of toast from the stale bread she found. At least I’ll eat well tomorrow night, she thought to herself.



Daniel spent the rest of the evening and much of the early morning working on his little project. It was three or four in the morning before he finally closed the lid on his laptop and drifted off into a restful sleep. He dreamt about the person responsible for this ‘QT’ project and the commotion it would cause. There would be gossip. People would whisper to each other: “Did you hear about what they found?” “An accounting irregularity!” another would answer. “I hear they fired a guy,” would be another whispered com-

ment. “Yes, and did you hear who found it?” Daniel would reply – “I did!” He dreamt about getting a promotion. He dreamt of all manner of self-gratifying things before he heard the door slam the next morning.

He jumped up from his place on the couch, still dressed in his office clothes, and walked to the window, just in time to see Kat’s silver BMW pulling out on to the street.

He found a note on the fridge:

Daniel,

Gone shopping.

PLEASE be ready for the fundraising dinner tonight by five-thirty.

K

He tossed the note into the trash and scoffed, What does she think – I’m incompetent or something?

He sat back down on the couch with a cup of coffee and turned his computer back on.

“Daniel?” Kat called from the hallway, “It’s five after six, are you ready yet or what?”

Daniel grumbled and looked up at clock, where had the day gone? He wondered, I can’t go now; he thought to himself, I have to finish this report. It was critical to get it done now.



He heard heels clicking up the hallway to the den.

“Daniel?” she said as she poked her head into the room. Her face turned from disappointment to all out disgust, “Daniel? You’re not even dressed. You’re still wearing your... argh! Daniel I told you to be ready for five-thirty! This is very important Daniel!” She could hear the blood start to rush through the veins in her ears, throbbing like a stormy ocean. She looked up at the ceiling counting backwards to calm herself.

Daniel barely looked up from his laptop... She’ll get over it, he thought to himself.

“That’s it Daniel James. That. Is. It!” her voice was very low and very angry, “I can’t deal with you anymore. When you want to be a productive part of this marriage again, you let

me know!”

With that, Kat turned away and stormed out of the house. Daniel could hear the sound of squealing tires out on the street as she tore off in her beamer.

Women! he thought to himself, always making a big deal about nothing. You’d never catch me getting my panties in a knot like that. He chuckled to himself as he continued to type.

He knew the function didn’t start in earnest until seven-thirty. God knows he had been to enough of these fundraisers of Kat’s to know that much. He could finish up what he was working on here, shower and shave and still make it in time for dinner. Kat would be too caught up in her glad-handing and socializing to stay angry at him for very long.

And it was true, that when Daniel showed up at the banquet center that night, Kat was all smiles as she introduced her husband to the ‘who’s who’ of the city’s philanthropic set. It was pleasantries, handshakes, nodding heads and broad smiles.

When they got home however, things were a different story. Kat didn’t say one word to Daniel and spent the rest of the weekend in their room, with the door shut... While Daniel stayed in the den with his laptop. When Monday morning rolled around, they didn’t even bother to say goodbye to each other as they hurried out the door to work.



Daniel emailed his report to the associate divisional accounting manager first thing that Monday morning. It was no more than a half-hour later, when Daniel’s phone rang.

“Daniel?” the divisional manager asked, “Could you come to my office please. I have some questions about your report.”

Questions? Daniel wondered, About my findings? What could that mean? I was exact and precise in my findings... What could he possibly want to ask? Did I make a mistake? No, I checked those figures three times... I know they are accurate. Maybe he wants to congratulate me. Or promote me!

Daniel hurried through the maze of corridors and elevators to executive wing of the corporate office. The divisional manager’s secretary showed him into the office. Daniel couldn’t help but steal a glance at her tush as she walked ahead of him. What I wouldn’t do for an ass like that, Daniel thought to himself. To have a cute secretary at his beckon call, like all of the executives had, was always been a bit of a pipe dream, but maybe this was going to be his big chance.

All would be revealed as Daniel sat in his boss’s office.

“Daniel...” the divisional manager began, “You’ve done some good work around here over the past few years...” He paused for dramatic effect, know-

ing how anxious Daniel was, “but this time you’ve outdone yourself.” He smiled at Daniel as Daniel’s tense face relaxed.

Score! Daniel thought inside his head.

“You’ve found some pretty substantial irregularities in some expense accounts, and I want you to know that I am going to make sure that someone is held accountable for this. I, for one, am outraged.”

“Thank you Sir... It wasn’t much. I was just doing my job” Daniel was glowing.

“And what a good job you did.” His boss continued, “But I can’t help but wonder...” the Divisional Manager’s voice trailed off. Daniel started to panic. Uh-oh, he thought to himself.

“Uh... Wonder? What do you wonder Sir?” Daniel stammered, not wanting to let his panic show through. It wasn’t working.

“This is a delicate situation, Daniel. This ‘QT’ business could affect our quarterly statement quite badly. In this case, you should have come to me immediately and met with me face-to-face.” The manager folded his hands at his chest. “We work together as a team, Daniel. You need to understand that. Especially if you’re going to get anywhere in this company.”

“I guess they don’t teach that in accounting 101,” Daniel replied.

“I suppose not,” the manager replied. “Perhaps... I can’t help but wonder how much better it could be if only you had a little more executive training.” His boss continued.

Daniel nodded stupidly, not fully understanding what his boss was saying but pretending to follow along anyway.

“You don’t really know what I’m referring to... Do you Daniel?”

“Of course Sir... Training... I... Uh...” Daniel sighed, “Uh... No... I, uh... Not really, Sir”

“That’s all right Daniel. I shouldn’t expect too much of you... I mean... You did attend the local state school, did you not?”

Daniel just stared at his boss with a blank expression. Did he just insult him? That “state” school had cost him a small fortune to attend. He had worked his ass off to get through that “state” school. Just because I don’t come from some stupid rich family, he muttered internally, like some people... His face was starting to show just a hint of the growing anger he was beginning to feel.

“Oh don’t take it like that Daniel. The state run colleges around here are just fine. Its just... Lets be honest... They’re no Harvard or Yale, now are they?” his supervisor smiled.

Daniel blushed, “Well uh...” His boss did have a point there.

“Our firm has recognized that fact and taken appropriate steps to offer ‘supplemental’ training. Learning is a vital part of innovation, Daniel. And we’re committed to continuing that learning process. That’s why we feel we have to



‘augment’ what assets you already possess with ones that will help stream you into a new and exciting career field.”

Daniel smiled, “A promotion?”

“It would be premature to call it that Daniel. Advancement. Call it job advancement. But I can guarantee that if you accept what I am about to offer, it will lead you some very new and unexpected changes in your life, both professional and personal.”



“Well... I am interested,” Daniel tried to play it cool. “If you think it’s worth my time sir.”

“It’s called ‘Corporate Understanding Through Inspired Employees’. We offer it as an after hours course for employees that we feel would best be served by it, and I believe that you are the ideal candidate for being enrolled.”

Daniel’s mind was racing. This must be a management grooming course for specially selected candidates, he thought to himself, and they want me to be in it!

“I’ll do it!” Daniel blurted out, blowing his cool demeanor in seconds flat.

His boss’s eyes grew wide for a moment, “Are you sure Daniel? You haven’t even asked me for any details on the program.”

“I’m sure I know what’s involved. It’s exactly what I’ve been looking for Sir. I’m honored to be given the opportunity.”

His supervisor cracked a smile. A big, honest smile. He even looked like he was trying to fight back some laughter, “Oh I’m sure you think it is Daniel. I’m sure you think it is.” He paused to pull a sheet of paper out of his desk, signed it and handed it to Daniel, “Give this to Rhonda. She’ll make sure you get set up in the course right away. The course runs each Friday for three hours, and it’s a concurrent thing. So try to absorb as much of what we are trying to convey to you as possible – as quickly as possible. Okay?”

Daniel nodded, grinning, “Thank you Sir. You won’t regret this” the said as he turned for the door.

“No, Daniel, I’m sure that I won’t,” his supervisor grinned back.

Daniel headed to Rhonda’s desk. All of the different managers’ offices had their secretaries out front in a common area, as if they were showing them

off. There was no doubting that that his divisional manager was the winner, or at least a runner-up. Rhonda was one of the hottest girls on the floor.

Nervously, he handed the paper to her, and as she glanced at it, she glanced back at the paper.

“Are you serious?” She said. “Well, whatever the boss wants,” she raised her eyebrow in skepticism. Daniel chatted her up for a moment, learning that she had just recently become the divisional managers’ personal assistant. He day-dreamed naughty thoughts as she spoke, watching her red, pillowy lips form shapes.

“I better get your papers,” she smiled as she rose from her chair.

Daniel’s heart raced, as Rhonda went to filing cabinet and bent over to grab something from the bottom drawer. The auburn haired beauty looked up and smiled at him, catching his gaze, and seemingly enjoying it. “Here it is,” she said.

Daniel blushed as she handed him the package. If only he wasn’t married, he thought to himself. Rhonda explained what would be required of him, and he tried his very best to pay attention, but the way she smiled at him with those full shiny lips, the way she played with her glowing hair, the fact that her low-cut top allowed perfect viewing of the inside of her breasts... Not to mention her brief skirt and legs that went on for miles... He was, at best, distracted. At worst, turned on. As she spoke, Daniel dreamt about being an executive himself, and having a hot assistant like Rhonda working for him.

Having a hot secretary might not sit too well with his wife though. Their relationship was already strained, somewhat. Having his very own personal sex-pot assistant might only make it worse. Or maybe it would be better.

Kat was a successful career woman, and enjoyed an enormous social circle that kept her very busy. Daniel never cared much to be going out to all those charity balls and silent auctions. He would rather keep working on his laptop – as was evidenced this past weekend. Daniel knew that taking this executive training program was going to be scheduling issue. It got even worse when he read through the package, and realized it was six months long. It was at night. On Friday of all nights. That was Kat’s big social night. All of her gala, get-togethers, socials, balls and what-not was on Friday nights. This was going to be a pretty big scheduling problem, but if she loved him, she would just have to deal with it. This was, after all, as his boss had emphatically put it, ‘a life changing opportunity.’



When he got home that day, Kat was predictably pissed. She stormed out of the room, shouting, “Just do whatever you want Daniel! You always do anyway!” Daniel heard the bedroom door slam loudly behind her. “I’ve had it!” She shouted from behind the door. “I’ll just go alone!”

All in all, Daniel believed he had really gotten off pretty easy. He expected a lot more drama. He shrugged, popped open a beer, and headed for the den. His laptop was waiting for him with a whole new challenge for him. He wanted to have all his work squared away before his first class.

## ORIENTATION

The week passed slowly, but finally Friday night arrived. Daniel didn't even bother to go home that night. He grabbed a bite to eat in the cafeteria instead, and headed to the classroom in the basement of the corporate office.

The class was a strange mix – to say the least. At the front of the class, sat two very attractive ladies, well, bimbos as Kat might say, in tight fitting outfits cut to display their best assets.

Their hair was big and their makeup heavy. Daniel thought they looked familiar, but he couldn't think where he had seen them. Maybe in the executive offices as secretaries?



Sitting behind the very sexy ladies were three people in semi-casual attire. The problem was that Daniel couldn't discern if they were particularly masculine ladies... Or particularly feminine men. Each was wearing clothing that seemed suitable for either. And each had a particularly androgynous hairdo. They might have possibly been wearing a touch of makeup too. He had heard of so-called “metro-sexuals” before, maybe that's who these people were. Or they were just flamboyantly gay.

How odd.

Fortunately, in the row in front of Daniel, were a couple of guys he could relate to, who immediately turned around and introduced themselves to Daniel as Miles and Eugene. Miles was a slightly overweight dark-haired man, while Eugene was taller, a little older, and slightly balding. He had actually met Eugene once or twice upstairs. They worked on the same floor, and he seemed like a nice enough guy. Both appeared to be just a little older than Daniel, but he couldn't be absolutely sure.

The middle-aged female instructor took attendance with each person raising their hand as their name was called. Daniel learned that the two women at the front were named Candy and Trisha, while the three androgynous members of the class were Chris, Pat, and Carey... Was it "Carey" or was it "Kerry?" Either way, their names were little help in determining their sex.

"Welcome, everybody!" The overly-enthusiastic instructor began. "Good to see our regulars, and since this is the first session of the new term, that means new students, and I'd like to welcome our newest student – Daniel."

He gave the rest of the class a casual wave as they turned to look at him.

"Great!" The instructor said, "Super!" The woman turned a page in her teaching manual, paused for about thirty seconds as she read it, and then continued. "Okay. Since it's Daniel's first class, we have to start out with a little orientation. For the rest of us, this will be a great refresher."

She flicked off the lights and turned on an overhead video projector and shone it brightly on the wall. A piercing sound that threatened to shatter glass came from the speakers, the quickly died out.

"Sorry! Sorry!" The instructor apologized. "I still don't get the hang of this equipment." She fiddled with some controls that Daniel couldn't quite see, but eventually a sort of white-noise sound pervaded the room that seemed to just melt into surprisingly beautiful tones. Daniel wished he had something like this at home to help himself sleep at night.

"Welcome to your first night of training," a voice spoke. Daniel looked at the screen and saw that a woman was on, speaking. "The first thing to cover in your orientation is the very important subject of discrimination. As you know, this company has no tolerance for discrimination. Any preferential, oppressive or abusive treatment of a co-worker or outside party is grounds for dismissal. This means discrimination based on race, age, physical abilities, mental abilities or most importantly gender abilities."

Daniel was trying hard not to nod off. He supposed this was all just for legal reasons, but did they have to make it so boring?

"Let's focus on gender discrimination. The differences between our genders are..." Daniel was losing it. "...fairness in the workplace..." he was just blinking in and out now. "...transgender issues..." With those words, Daniel was down for the count.

He woke up when that high-pitched tone came from the speakers again, snapping him back to attention like his pants were on fire.

"Sorry! Sorry!" The instructor said, again. "Now – just to review, this company has no tolerance for discrimination. You should evaluate people on their ability to comprehend direction, their ability to contribute to a team, and then the functionality of that team."

"Some quick review questions. Daniel," the instructor said, shaking the sleep from Daniel's mind. "If, without your consent, a co-worker touched your breasts, would it be inappropriate?"

“Yes.” Daniel said.

“Good. Say you wore a tight skirt to work and a manager patted you on the butt. Would that be inappropriate conduct?”

“Why would I be wearing a skirt to work?” Daniel chuckled as he glanced at the faces of his fellow co-workers. He had figured that they would all join in his chuckling.

They didn’t.

“It’s just a hypothetical situation Daniel,” the instructor said in a serious tone.

“Oh,” Daniel’s tone changed, becoming much more down to earth, “So it was my manager did this?”

“Yes.”

Daniel tried a second time to get a rise out of the class. “How short is the skirt?” He joked.

The class remained silent. Tough crowd, he thought to himself.

“Ankle length,” the instructor said, checking her notes.

“Oh, okay... Then that would be inappropriate?” He half answered/half asked.

“For sure!” One of the girls up front blurted out. “Who would wear an ankle-length skirt these days?”

The class burst into laughter.

Daniel shook his head. That made them laugh?

“Very good Daniel. Lets move on then to our next topic,” the instructor said. “An introduction to employee obedience.”

Daniel couldn’t believe his ears Obedience? What kind of the hell kind of course was this?

The instructor continued with a new video that lasted for about an hour, and fortunately was a lot more sensible than the title. It mostly focused on the responsibilities of employees and how these responsibilities were structured. Just when Daniel thought that things were settling down, the class was then subjected to a bizarre twenty-five minute video on the “importance of poise and posture in the workplace.”

And Daniel had figured that “obedience” was the most bizarre topic they could teach.

They followed the video with a discussion on what they had seen. Daniel wanted to ask what relevance any of this had in making them better potential executives, but he bit his tongue. The girls in the front seemed to know all of the answers, and giggled loudly whenever they spoke.

The final hour was spent on strategies for improving morale in the office.

What a ridiculous waste of time, Daniel thought to himself. He would spend the weekend thinking about whether or not he should march back into the divisional manager's office and voice his opinion about the relevance – or lack thereof – of the night school course.

Which is exactly what he did.

Daniel did his best to bridle his temper, and remain calm and sensible, but he was sure doing a lousy job of it. Daniel nearly lost it more than once in the short five-minute conversation, which he immediately regretted. He had ranted, working up a good sweat, and had lost his focus completely. It was not a professional display.

His bosses' reaction was to send him to the company nurse, as he didn't think Daniel "looked too good." So, not wanting to stir the pot any more, he agreed. After all, maybe he could get some days off or skip the next class.

He had talked with the company nurse just once before, and although she was as hot as they come, she was bitter and angry most of the time. Still, as long as he didn't open his mouth, he could just sit still and watch her very shapely body.

Once she brought his information up on the computer, her cold, professional demeanor changed from hostile to helpful. She confirmed with Daniel that he was in the Corporate understanding program.

Daniel looked blank.

"Corporate Understanding Through Inspired Employees?" she said.

Daniel nodded, "Oh yeah... Right, of course." he said, "Exactly"

She then asked Daniel a series of questions about his home life, his thoughts on work and other things that didn't seem to make any sense to Daniel – no sense at all. But after a half hour, the nurse informed him that he was suffering from mild depression. They agreed that it might be caused by his wife's bullish behavior and his stress of adjusting to night school. She insisted that she administer a 'mild' antidepressant to him. What she failed to mention was that the antidepressant was in the form of an injection.

On his way to the elevator, Daniel rubbed his sore rump, but within a few minutes, Daniel's mood started to improve. Maybe that stuff could do him some good.

His view on the whole night school issue began to change too. If his boss wanted him to take the course, then he would take the stupid course. After all that's what a good little 'obedient' employee would do, he chuckled to himself.



The following Friday, the class was more of the same, and the same frustrations returned. It just all felt like a grand waste of time.

Daniel was fuming about it over dinner at a small banquet for the children's hospital's emergency room. It was another one of Kat's social-climbing charity dinners. Something about raising money for a new emergency room piece of equipment – some scanning thing or other. Kat was busy hob-knobbing, so he struck up a conversation with whoever would listen.

As he was speaking, it suddenly dawned on him how poor his posture was. He straightened his spine and pulled back his shoulders – like they had suggested at class. It felt good to finally use something from his night-school course in the real world, for once. After he had been doing it for an hour or two, it seemed natural and comfortable.

Funny thing was, the very act of talking to people seemed to wear on him. Coming up with topics and driving a conversation just seemed so draining. For the rest of the night, he simply enjoyed listening and smiling. Even a well-placed nod, looking deeply into the eyes of the person speaking and dropping a laugh after a comment made conversation go so much better.

The following Monday, a lazy morning at the office was interrupted when a fellow coworker asked him to grab him a sandwich. Daniel's first reaction was to tell the jerk to take a flying leap – but something inside his head told him that he should be a team player. That moving up in the world was a team effort. That he should obey the command.

Obey the command? What was he thinking?

“Uh?” Daniel just looked at his cohort, “Are you serious?”

The co-worker just laughed. “Never mind,” the man said as he smiled.

Later that night, when he told Kat the little anecdote, she just said, “I've been trying to teach you to do what I ask for years, maybe this class will be good for you after all.” She chuckled. Daniel just rolled his eyes.

By the time Friday rolled around again, Daniel wasn't feeling much like going to night school. His first two classes had been such disappointments. He hadn't learned a single new business strategy, just stupid things like posture (which reminded Daniel that he was slouching) and so-called obedience, and the newest thing, called “moral strategies.”



At home, he was sitting on the couch, trying to convince himself that he didn't need to go. He sat up straight and took a sip of his coffee.

Kat was working late that night, so Daniel helped himself to a frozen dinner, one of Kat's expensive frozen diet-plan dinners, before heading to night school. He still didn't really want to go, but he knew his boss had recommended him personally for the course, and the last thing he wanted to do is piss his boss off.



Apologizing for being late, Daniel found a seat in the classroom. The instructor quieted the noisy class down and began the night with a long video on the importance of appearance in the workplace. Daniel couldn't help but think that the video was a little outdated, though the actresses seemed to be wearing current clothes and hairstyles. It was odd that all the actors were women.

The class then did an exercise on "coordination." Daniel struggled, as the assignment was to use pictures of different women's clothing as the articles to match. When Daniel asked the instructor why they didn't use men's wear, she replied that women's clothing offered more variety of texture shape and color than men's clothes.

Daniel cursed at himself under his breath. Another wasted night.



Six days later, Daniel was standing in front of his closet, wearing only his boxers, staring at his assortment of clothes. Kat walked by and rolled her eyes, "Forget what you were doing?" she quipped.

Daniel suddenly shook his head, as if awakening from a dream, "Uh... No... I was just, uh, thinking... About what to wear today."

Kat clipped an earring in each ear and gave her husband a strange look, "I've never seen you take more than ten seconds to pick an outfit Daniel."

Daniel nodded, "Yeah... I know... I just..." he went back to staring into the closet, "I just want to be sure that I match, that's all. You know... That everything is coordinated."

Kat burst into laughter, "Yeah... Sure." She checked her hair in the mirror before leaving the room, "I bet you're real concerned about that."

Daniel just ignored her. He actually was feeling quite stressed about picking out the right combination to wear to work. What in the hell is wrong with me? he wondered. He had never fretted so much about what to wear. It was like everything in his closet looked... Wrong.

It went like this every morning for the rest of the week. Endless indecision in front of the closet. Eventually Kat just ignored him, after she had run out of jibes and jabs. She figured if Daniel was actually more concerned about dressing better, than that was probably a good thing. Just as long as he didn't waste money on a new wardrobe of Italian suits.



Friday morning came around again. Daniel got up a half hour earlier, so that he could take extra time to pick something to wear. That was his new routine.

He did, after all have class that night, and didn't want to be singled out as the only one not paying attention.

Kat continued to ignore him, as tempted as she was to say something.

At the office that day, Daniel's boss greeted him as he came in the door, and immediately asked him to get him a cup of coffee.

Daniel gave him an 'are you serious?' look, and wanted to tell him where he could stick it. But instead, just whined, "I just walked in the door, do you mind getting your own? I haven't even taken off my coat."

His boss sighed and headed off to the coffee maker, shaking his head as he walked.

What a weird thing to ask, Daniel thought of his boss's request. It worried him that his boss expected him to get him coffee. What was it with the office lately, anyway? Could no one get their own coffee? Their own sandwiches? Even worse, it worried him more that deep down inside, he really felt he should have done what they asked.

The class that night began with a discussion on coordination. Everyone was evaluated on how well their outfits coordinated.

Predictably, the people sitting at the front of the class fared much better than those sitting at the back – like Daniel. He had worked hard to make sure he would escape any criticism of his clothes, but he just didn't have much to work with. Khakis, white dress shirts, blue dress shirts.

The instructor mused that it might be time for 'some people' to start buying some new clothes, motioning with her eyes to the back of the class as she spoke, which caused Daniel to groan inside. It was the last straw. He was going to have to take care of the problem, and have something to coordinate – an idea that stuck with Daniel the following week as he made his way to the downtown mall to pick up a 'few things'.



At the class the following Friday, things began uneventfully. That was fine for Daniel, as he received no further comment on his clothes. That felt like a small victory. A small coupon book was waiting for him on his desk. The top one was for a 75% discount at a local salon. He picked it up, looked around, and didn't see anyone claiming it or even acknowledging it. He pocketed the coupons and reminded himself to give them to Kat later.

They started with a long exercise on 'vocabulary for success.' The exercise wasn't what Daniel thought it would be. He was expecting to learn all that empty corporate lingo like "empowered" and "pro-active," and his personal favorite "synergies." But instead of learning newer and bigger words, the instructor was teaching the class that 'keeping it simple' was better than using big words. Daniel thought they sounded ridiculous as they practiced saying phrases that ended in terms like 'yeah, sure' or 'I guess so.'

Were these puzzle pieces ever going to make a picture? He had taken some baffling courses in college, but there was always some hope of connecting up all the threads. This class just had him confused. He assumed that it was the product of some committee thinking, where everyone making the course threw in one thing and didn't care if it all made sense or not.

The instructor moved on to a round-table 'coordination' discussion... Again. This week however, Daniel fared much better, getting complements for his new dress shirt, worn with a belt that matched his shoes and snug fitting pants. He chuckled to himself, satisfied.



The class then did a hands-on coordination exercise using a cart filled with clothes. Each student had to choose the proper outfit combination and present why it matched to the rest of the class. Daniel, Miles and Eugene struggled more than other students, as the cart seemed to be loaded heavily with women's clothing, something that the three men didn't seem to be able to get into. They actually didn't even want to touch the stuff until it became clear they really didn't have a choice.

After coordination, the class watched another video on poise and posture.

Before the video began, however, the instructor took a moment to ask who in the class was wearing their 'shape up shoes'. Most of the hands in the class went up, except for Daniel. "Shape up shoes?" He asked.

The instructor would fill him in while the others watched the video. He was taken aside, and in hushed tone the instructor explained herself. 'Shape up shoes' were essentially a pair of loafers with a one-inch lift insert. She told him that the shoes would help him improve his daily posture and that he would be expected to wear them to work from now on.

Daniel wondered how the heck 'posture' was supposed to help him get promoted. Maybe the way you walk and sit can make you appear more like a leader... Or something. Even though the shoes looked a little strange, he realized that he was the only person in the class not wearing them. The exception

being the girls at the front of the class – who were wearing their usual high heels. Daniel decided that he better get on board. With a sigh, he slipped out of his old runners and into the shiny new shoes.

“These aren’t so bad,” he whispered to guys in front of him. Miles and Eugene nodded in agreement.

As it turned out, the instructor was right. The shape up shoes were great! By the end of the night, Daniel’s feet felt like they were walking on a cloud. He was so impressed by the difference they made, that he decided to wear them all weekend long, around the house, shopping for groceries – and even to the charity dinner with his wife on Saturday night.

Kat just rolled her eyes when she saw them. What an idiot. “People can talk you into anything,” she said to him.