

## Confessions of a Penitentiary Death Dealer II

Kyle Hedquist

I seem to remember being cold, no matter where I go I have always been cold in prison. His name was Daniel, but like most of my clients I called him "Danny". I'm not sure of when I decided that all of my clients would be called "Bobby" or "Robby" "Johnny" or any other iteration of their name. But Danny had already been given his "death sentence" Hepatitis C had ravaged his liver, years of drug and alcohol abuse wild women and a crazy life had left it's mark on Danny. He was a quiet sort of man and he didn't have much time left remaining in prison, maybe he would escape death behind the walls of the Oregon State Penitentiary. I didn't realize how tall he was until I helped him to the toilet, there's nothing more embarrassing for most of my clients than having to ask for help to get to the toilet, and trust me I'd rather help them get to the toilet than have to clean up the mess that would be left in their beds. I knew very little about Hepatitis C or Liver cancer. It seemed like so many men had Hep C, some got treatment some did not, for those that did not get treatment death was sure to come. The oddest thing about Hep C was the discoloration of the human body, there was a dingy yellow color that rose to the surface, it can be quite bright and disturbing to see. The smell of a dying man never really leaves me, like going into a mechanic shop and smelling oil and grease, you know where you are at and what to expect, in the same way when I entered the room I knew what to expect. Our prison bakery was located 3 floors down from the infirmary and in the



mornings they bake fresh bread, I would open the window to let the smell of baked goods enter the room, sometimes this would be the only relief from the smells of a dying man.

Danny was a talker and he talked all about his family and brother and sisters it was quite a life. I enjoyed hearing the tales of my clients, some led lives of sin and ruin, some had great families and wealth but behind these walls they were all equal. They lay in beds fighting a losing battle.

Danny was dying, his body could not win, Death was near him, the chill had entered the room and quickly entered me, I couldn't shake it but I remained by his bed, holding his hand, there were no more words to say, no last minute confessions of crimes, just breathing, one breath after another. Danny had become smaller losing weight and shrinking before my eyes, the trips to the toilet were less and less and cleaning Danny had become a daily routine, on a good day we might get a shower. I shaved him, put lotion on his face, arms, feet, and hands.

Danny was dying, the bedside table had cards and pictures of his family, I felt like I knew these people, I knew where they grew up and the sports they played, I knew their hopes and fears from the many cards I read to Danny. They would not see him again, his time on this earth in this body was ending.

There was snow on the ground, a clean blanket of white covered everything, but Danny didn't care. I was excited to get him over to a window to see this wondrous beauty of



nature but Danny was too weak to get up I couldn't get him to the window. Danny was fidgeting and restless, I thought his medication may need to be adjusted but something was different today. There was a fear on his face. What was he scared of? Had I done everything right that morning; he was clean, shaved, and fed. His eyes darted from side to side, what was he looking at? I frantically looked around the room myself, what had I forgot? I didn't want to cause him discomfort. I checked the logbook, I asked the other workers, nothing.

Danny was dying, I had never seen him look so scared I held his hand he pulled away, I put a cool cloth on his forehead and he turned away from me, what had I done wrong? When Death came for Danny I wasn't there. I had left for the day and prayed that tomorrow would be better for both of us. An officer came to my door at 3 in the morning and as soon as I saw his face I knew. All he said was "he's gone". I slumped back on my bed and thought of Danny, I cried for him and his brother and sisters. I didn't like Danny being scared, no one should die alone and scared in prison. Danny was my friend and now he was gone, I still miss him.

Death is always fair because Death doesn't care who you are, what you have done, how rich or poor you are. Death comes on his terms I thought I could fight him but now I realize I work along side him, I am a death dealer.

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