

# Daniel orozco's "orientation"



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The new employee is unimportant in Daniel Orozco's "Orientation" The short story "Orientation" by Daniel Orozco is a unique story. Orozco never introduces the narrator or the audience. The story appears to be, just as the title specifies, an orientation for a person entering a new job. The story, however, delves deep into the lives of several employees throughout the story. The lives of these employees and their interactions become the most important part of Orozco's work and the main character that is being spoken to becomes an unimportant observer in an intricate atmosphere. The story is told in the first person voice.

The narrator is talking to one particular person; He refers to this character in the second person voice. "This is your phone." The narrator is talking directly to the new employee, the main character. The main character never speaks. It is implied that dialogue exists. "That was a good question. Feel free to ask questions." The narrator has acknowledged that the listener has asked a question. The reader never actually sees the question that the listener asks, though. Instead, the narrator rephrases the listener's question and repeats it back to him. By having the narrator do this, Orozco makes the listener less important.

His/her dialogue is not even important enough to include in the text and must be repeated by the narrator in order to be included in the story. However, contradictory to the listener's seemed unimportance, the narrator urges the listener to ask more questions. The specific job that the listener is being oriented to is not important to the story, either. The setting is a generic office atmosphere. "These are the offices and these are the cubicles." By using this stereotypical and conventional setting, Orozco

makes the things that happen to individual employees even more outrageous.

The outrageous events create a contrasting tone. The typical office orientation situation is invaded by shocking situations such as Amanda Pierce's. Pierce's husband " subjects her to an escalating array of painful and humiliating sex games. " Describing very personal aspects of an employee's life creates a very uncomfortable feeling in this situation. This type of information is not supposed to be talked about in an office setting. Adding to the inappropriateness of the information, this could very well be the first meeting between the narrator and the listener.

It is highly unusual to speak of sexual escapades in a business setting alone, and it could be very embarrassing to either party. Because it is possible that this is the first meeting between the narrator and the listener, the narrator does not know how comfortable the listener will be with the information, and is risking embarrassing the listener by divulging it. The narrator keeps a professional air about him, which makes the information that he is giving seem very important. The narrator makes no sexual comments about Pierce's situation; he merely states what her husband does to her.

The narrator also speaks frankly of what the listener can and cannot do " There are no personal phone calls allowed. " The narrator goes on to tell the consequences of doing something that is prohibited. " If you make an emergency phone call without asking, you may be let go. " This straightforward method of speaking also creates a professional feeling, which adds to the contrast in the story between the professional feeling and the uncomfortable, mysterious feeling. The blunt detail used by the narrator

adds to the uncomfortable, painful sense of the workenvironment. " Anika Bloom's left palm began to bleed.

She fell into a trance, stared into her hand, and told Barry Hacker when and how his wife would die. " The details make the employees' lives seem surreal. The reader is told that Anika Bloom's palm begins to bleed, but the reason for the blood is not given. The blood is the only important detail because it signifies pain and suffering. Other words such as " fell" and " stare" create a distanced, unstable feeling. Even more disturbing is the line that signifies when someone will die. Orozco painfully jolts the reader back to reality, the office setting, no matter how disturbing the described experiences of an employee have been.

This is evident in the passage about Kevin Howard, the serial killer. The carnage inflicted is precise: the angle and direction of the incisions; the layering of skin and muscle tissue; the rearrangement of the visceral organs; and so on. Kevin Howard does not let any of this interfere with his work. He is, in fact, our fastest typist. The disturbing description of the serial killer is recited without any waver whatsoever away from the intent only to divulge information. The narrator makes no personal comment and expresses no opinion about Howard.

After the narrator has given the information to the listener, the narrator leads the train of thought right back to the work environment. The idea of a horrible mass murderer is interrupted by his typing ability. This continued contrast now goes past unstable and borders on psychotic. The far-fetched is made believable only because of the narrator's complete professional facade. By itself, speaking of a mass murderer's typing ability does seem

psychotic, but the narrator has so completely described every aspect of the listener's new surroundings that any individual part of the surrounding does not seem overly important.

The characters are merely present and described as they are. This description does not affect any character, so there is no real action to be deemed unusual, unstable, or psychotic. The description is the only important part of the story. Orozco uses both a professional tone and a dark, uncomfortable-feeling description to create a highly contrasting reality between the work setting and each character's personal life.