

Elena [REDACTED]

September 16, 1999

Norman

At the September 1999 meeting of the Friendship club I had the opportunity to meet some very interesting people. My experience with these people was not at all like I had expected it to be. I was very nervous before the luncheon. I had no idea of what to expect. The one thing I did expect was that I was going to feel uncomfortable and would not have any fun. I was very surprised when my experience turned out to be very different than what I had expected. There was one particular person that made my time at the luncheon very enjoyable, if not entirely comfortable. His name was Norman.

When I walked into the Board of Visitor's Lounge, I was very uncomfortable. I was not sure of what I was supposed to do, where I was suppose to be, or who I was supposed to be with. After standing around in a corner for a few minutes, I decided to introduce myself to a man nearby. When I sat down my first dilemma of the hour began. The man introduced himself as Norman, but his nametag said Norma. I began to think that he was really a woman and I had just heard his name incorrectly. I felt very embarrassed because I was unsure of the sex of this person and did not feel comfortable asking "Hey, are you a boy or a girl?" So I decided to do nothing and wait to see what happened. Norman meanwhile, made things even more confusing for me. He made comments like, "I feel like a woman" and "I'm wearing short shorts next time." I finally figured out that he was joking with me about his nametag saying Norma. After I figured out his humor, things went well.

When it was time to eat, I asked Norman if he wanted to go through the line with me. He replied that he could not because he could not keep his balance. I got his food for him. For some reason, I assumed that because Norman could not go through the line, he couldn't do other things either. I started trying to open his drink for him. He just took it out of my hand and opened it himself. After that I held myself back from helping until he really needed it. I had to stop myself from viewing Norman as someone I had to help rather than someone I was having a meal with. I was stereotyping Norman as always needing help because of his disability.

The conversation was never dull with Norman. He told me about a woman that he hated. He told me all of the different ways that he wanted to kill her. He did everything from blow her up to hang her. This was a little disturbing to me because I was not sure if he was kidding or not. I do know that he really did dislike that lady. When I asked him why he disliked her so, he said that she made fun of him. I told him that no one should ever make fun of another person. He looked at me earnestly and said, "No they shouldn't. People don't realize that they'll have to pay for that on Judgment Day." I thought that this was a pretty coherent statement that I would not have expected him to make.

Norman continually surprised me with the things that he said. At one point he said, "I wish I had a billion dollars." I asked him what he would do with it if he had it. He said, "I'd give the Lord fifty cents." I asked him why he wouldn't give the Lord more if he had that much money. He replied, "I would, if he'd change me." This statement pulled at my heartstrings. I did not know what to say. I had to fight back the pity. I did not know if he realized the meaning of what he was saying or not. I also didn't know if

he was trying to make me feel sorry for him. I ended up saying nothing. I wish I had had something to say, but I did not. Here was this person before me telling me that he wished that the Lord would take away his disability. I could not say anything.

The luncheon ended with Norman putting a soda into his jacket and asking me not to tell on him. He seemed very happy that he had a snack for later. I did not know if I should let him take it or not, but I could not see any reason why not. I left the luncheon feeling good about the time that I had spent with Norman. He had made me laugh the entire time. He was more fun than me. I also left feeling a little sad. I was not feeling sorry for Norman, just sad about his situation. Norman seemed like a sweet guy. I felt bad that he had to go home to a place where people make fun of him and he had to steal pops for his snacks. I did realize that the people at the luncheon are not so different from me. We all have our own wants and needs. I do definitely know that I want to attend the other luncheons this semester. I want to know what Norman will say next!