

# The Likes of Danni Lites

By Jim Elliff

"This is so sad, that she died so alone," said one of her friends from years earlier. Danni Lites was well known to the comic book world, writing over 250 stories of comic book characters on three web sites. Over the web she conversed incessantly with fans of her writing. She was considered an expert in her genre. Yet, she never talked IRL, that is, "in real life."

Then she died. Unemployed, sick with diabetes, unclean, 49 years old, 4 feet 9 inches and 153 pounds. Alone.

Oh, she was a talker all right, but only in the nether world of the internet. An online admirer stated: "Although we talk all the time on our computers, we still don't know each other really." The truth is that Danni had checked out of the real world long ago, and life to her was mediated entirely through a 15 inch monitor. This was the only lens through which she related.

The *Kansas City Star* put out her story to see if she had any relatives or friends to bury her. No one called. And no one came to the graveside. Her burial was in a pauper's grave in Elmyra, Missouri. "She was as lonely as they come," reported her apartment manager. Did Danni really live? It depends on your definition. If you mean, did she breathe, have a heartbeat and a brainwave, you would answer "yes." But the real Danni was not known. She projected someone else. Danni as Danni had not existed for years. She was wholly an illusion.

Perhaps it's too painful to admit, but don't most people have some of Danni in them? Isn't it true that Danni was only a little more adept at deceiving than most people are? Don't most people desire to put forward the illusion rather than the plain reality? One of the beauties of Christianity, as it is correctly understood, comes to play right at this point. It is not an illusion of beauty that moves God to accept you. In fact, God knows so much about you that you could never pull that off. You have to deal with God in reality. He has your number and knows even your secret thoughts and your most hidden activities. He knows what others could never know about you. Before God, Danni was always Danni.

So, how are you going to get God's acceptance? Impress Him, change the look, act as if you are somebody better? Forget it. In Christianity you take stock of who you are, and you hate that, but you don't pretend that you will be received by changing your appearance through outward duties or church talk. Rather, you realize that Christ died for people who are sinners, while fully cognizant of every last one of their sins.

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." (Ephesians 2: 4-5 NASB)

Do you get it?

We don't have to live in a pretentious world, projecting a persona other than our own in order to be accepted. In coming to Christ, we realize that we are accepted by the most significant Being of the universe. How? Jesus Christ, His Son, died in our place, substituting as the Sinless for the sinful, in order to make us acceptable before the Father. We are "accepted in the Beloved," according to the apostle Paul (Ephesians 1: 6). And, in addition to this, we are put among a group of people who have the same story to tell—sinful people accepted by God on the basis of Christ alone. Paul reminded the church to "accept one another just as Christ has accepted you." So, who needs the charade?

I know there are "churches" where this is not understood or expressed clearly, groups built on projecting the pretense. Frankly, these are anti-churches, for what I am saying is at the heart of the Bible and is a way of explaining God's central message itself. In other words, being accepted by God as sinners, solely on the basis of Christ and what He has done at the cross, is what it is all about.

As you consider again whether you are an authentic Christian or not, don't rev up the image this time. You won't win His heart. Jesus "came to save sinners," said Paul, "among whom I am foremost." Come to Christ as you are, sinful and filthy. And believe what the Bible says about mercy toward sinful people like you. Trust Christ, not your image, as your means of acceptance before God. And then, in that acceptance, present yourself to the world as a picture of just how loving Christ actually is. I don't think Danni knew this. But now you do.

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