

“Just a Custodian”

Bori Kozek

This poem is for every custodian I know and every custodian I want to get to know.

If she were a family friend,
You would talk to her.
If she were a professor,
You would respect her.
If she were an actress,
You would watch her in awe.
If she were an athlete,
You would say she's amazing.
If she were a chef,
You would praise her for her work.
If she were a musician,
You would listen to her.
And if she were your grandmother
You would love her so much.

But because she is “just a custodian”
You pretend she's not even there.
You treat her like thin air,
You don't care that every day
She works and works and works and works
And works and works with no delay,
With minimal pay,
For **you** to have a standard of living
Way beyond what most people have
In the world,
Which you take for granted.

Now granted, I can't read your mind
And maybe you **do** have kind thoughts towards her,
But here's a question:
Do you express them?
Do you talk to her,
Respect her,
Watch her in awe,
Praise her for her work,
Listen to her,
And love her?
Because she is not “just a custodian”,
What she is in every single moment
Is worthy of respect and love.

You are not above her.
You can not ignore her.
You know exactly what it feels like to get the
Silent treatment
From someone you care about,
You pretend not to care about it
But you do.
It's excruciatingly painful.
Now imagine that silent treatment
From not one but tens, hundreds
Thousands of people every day.

They have **nothing** to say to you.
No thank you or how are you.
Nothing.
No acknowledgement of your existence.

But you have persistence.
You're trying to put on a face..
But on the inside you're crying, because
Day after day after day after day after day,
It can get tiring,
Become overwhelming.
Simply too much.

And that is when
Once in awhile
A genuine smile
Appears on someone's lips,
And they open their mouth,
And they open their heart,
Because they see that nothing sets you apart.
They actually see you--
And treat you--
Like a human being.

Imagine that!
It sounds so simple,
But it's so profound.
You have found a way
To make someone's day
Just a little bit less mundane--
A little bit more humane--
By asking how they are,
And actually meaning it.

So next time you see
Another human being,
Whether you know them or not,
Whether they're your grandma or a custodian,
Next time you see her,
Do not be afraid to ask.
To talk.
To watch her in awe,
To say she's amazing,
To praise her for her work,
To listen to her,
And most importantly, to ask her her name,
So that she can become more than
“Just a custodian,”
So that you remember
That you are one and the same.
You are not above her.
So love her.