

## **The Rosie Project (Graeme Simpson)**

A Romcom with Asperger's

Please pay attention for I have scheduled only one and a half minutes for this presentation. I am told the book is supposed to be a comedy. It baffles me why. The protagonist seems to me to be a man of uncommonly good sense.

His eminently rational approach to the wife acquisition problem appears to be rather mocked in the book. I cannot understand why the usual, essentially random approach to wife acquisition, is generally held to be superior.

Admittedly I did have my doubts at some points. For example, that the questionnaire would be ruthless in filtering out women who were concerned with appearance did strike me as perhaps a little unrealistic.

Also, scoring maximum points on "the best way to settle a marital argument" for the answer "rational discussion" did seem to suffer from lack of practical experience. Personally, I find "total capitulation" to be the only efficacious strategy.

However, on the whole, the questionnaire struck me as extremely well thought out. I was pleased to see, at No.1 position, the matter of ironing - maximum points for which were gained for the response "clothes do not need ironing". Exactly! Similarly, my star sign is...."irrelevant" is the only acceptable answer. Also I was mildly pleased to see, under "the most important person of the twentieth century", that Jackson Brown scored a point, if only one.

Some aspects of Don's pre-Rosie lifestyle seem to me to be worthy of emulation. For example, the Standardised Meal System has some considerable attractions, not least fresh lobster every Tuesday.

The marshal arts expert spin on Asperger's as a result of childhood bullying is a new one. Makes a change from the bespectacled, weedy nerd image of the Aspie which, regrettably, is probably the more typical. But the author seems to have conflated Asperger's with OCD at some points, which is unfair. Pedantic, yes, but not necessarily neurotic. Some deep questions were raised, such as who can tell the difference between mango and peach ice-cream?

I was initially surprised that the author had not made Don a physicist, the obvious choice for a super-nerd. The reason was eventually revealed. It was so Don could have someone to look down on. This person was manifest in Laszlo Hevesi, the Aspie's Aspie, as it were, who even Don could laugh at. I'm considering reporting this to the NSPCP, the national society for the prevention of cruelty to physicists.

So, Rosie v Don - normal versus Aspie. Let's apply the desert island test. Which person would you want to be stranded on a desert island with? Well, there is every chance that Don would come up with a way of making a radio transmitter out of coconut shells and pine sap. On the other hand, with Rosie you might not want to get off the island.

Verdict: Don is cannier than you'd think. After all, he did get the girl.