



I Only Know Who I Am When I Am Somebody Else: My Life on the Street, On the Stage, and in the Movies

Danny Aiello

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Beloved stage and screen actor Danny Aiello's big-hearted memoir reveals a man of passion, integrity, and guts—and lays bare one of the most unlikely success stories ever told.

Danny Aiello admits that he backed into his acting career by mistake. That's easy to see when you begin at the beginning: Raised by his loving and fiercely resilient mother in the tenements of Manhattan and the South Bronx, and forever haunted by the death of his infant brother, Danny struggled early on to define who he was and who he could be. Shoeshine boy, numbers runner, and pool hustler were among the first identities he tried on. After getting into trouble on the streets, he enlisted in the army at seventeen, served in Germany, and was honorably discharged. Later, as an unemployed high school dropout raising a family of his own, Danny was burdened with serious depression by the time he landed a job as a bouncer at a Hell's Kitchen comedy club. Taking to the stage in the wee hours to belt out standards, Danny Aiello found his voice and his purpose: He was born to act. Performing in converted churches and touring companies led to supporting roles in such films as *The Godfather: Part II* and *Moonstruck*, and an Oscar nomination for his role as the embattled Salvatore in Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*. For a guy who had never set foot in an acting class, this was supreme validation for being an outsider who followed his heart.

In a raw and real chronicle of his gritty urban past, Danny Aiello looks back with appreciation, amusement, and frank disbelief at his unconventional road to success. He offers candid observations on working with luminary directors Francis Ford Coppola, Woody Allen, and Robert Altman, among others, and a vast roster of actors, including Robert De Niro, Paul Newman, Madonna, Cher, and Lauren Bacall. He opens up about friends he loved, friends he lost, and the professional relationships that weren't meant to be. Above all, Danny Aiello imparts a life lesson straight out of his own experience to anyone who's ever felt like an outsider: It's never too late to become who you want to be, to find happiness and fulfillment, and to embrace the winding road to get there.

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