

I Wouldn't Put it That Way

by

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CHARACTERS:

QUINN – a trans woman in her twenties, her bluster and wry humor can overshadow her insecurities

PAUL – a cis man in his twenties; refined and polite, his pedigree belies his many blind spots

LOCATION:

A restaurant in a mid-sized U.S. city.

TIME:

Present day.

PUNCTUATION NOTES

A stroke (/) marks the point of interruption in overlapping dialogue.

A dash (-) marks the halting of a thought.

QUINN, a trans woman in her early 20s, and PAUL, a cis man in his 20s, sit in a restaurant.

QUINN

When we messaged you said you work at the museum.

PAUL

I do. I'm an assistant curator.

QUINN

Is it nice being surrounded by "beauty" all day?

PAUL

Sadly, after a while I forget the art is even there. I mean, I don't actually forget, but I just get caught up in whatever crisis is happening like any other / job

QUINN

I wouldn't have guessed the museum was in constant / crisis

PAUL

Well, not "crisis," per se, / but

QUINN

Sorry, I was just being snarky.

PAUL

That's fine.

QUINN

If you want to see an environment in perpetual meltdown, you should visit my work. It's a total shitshow there.

PAUL

You said it's an LGBTQ community center, right?

QUINN

Yep.

PAUL

(cautious)

And . . . what's - or, are there "particular" sources / of

QUINN

Just everything.

PAUL

Oh, right –

QUINN

Houseless youth. Queer BIPOC people saying the community is racist, which it is. Trans people saying it's transphobic, which it / also is

PAUL

Well, you work there, right? So it shouldn't be – I mean, you're not . . .

QUINN

Transphobic?

PAUL

Right.

QUINN

I'm a trans woman. You knew that, right?

PAUL

Huh? Yes, that's why I / said

QUINN

Okay. Good.

PAUL

Why would the, um, trans community / say you

QUINN

They aren't saying – ugh. It's complicated. Let's talk about something more “first date appropriate,” okay?

PAUL

I hope I didn't – did I say something wrong, Quinn?

QUINN

No, you're fine. It's just –

(sighs heavily)

People get mistreated in the world, right? And there's no one for them to tell, because the people they'd tell are the ones who mistreated them. So they turn to the community, who are also pissed off and traumatized, because – could

I possibly be a worse date?

PAUL

What you're saying is interesting to me.

QUINN

Anyway, they don't think "I'm" transphobic. They think, correctly, that transphobia exists, so they find the one TERF in the Lesbians Over 50 group, screenshot her Facebook posts and – it's just / a mess

PAUL

"TERF"?

QUINN

Have you, like, ever met a queer person? . . . Before tonight, I / mean

PAUL

Well . . . yes. My cousin is gay . . . My co-worker / is

QUINN

But you don't know what –
(nostalgic)
I remember when I'd never heard of TERFs.

PAUL

Is it like JK Rowling?

QUINN

It's exactly – I should probably just start saying "JK Rowling" to avoid confusion.

PAUL

I think what she said was awful.

QUINN

Then we're in agreement.

PAUL

There are people who attend the center you work at – why would / they

QUINN

I told you it was a shitshow, didn't / I

PAUL

I'm sorry. That sounds . . . terrible.

QUINN

It's not all protests and TERFs.

PAUL

Have you thought of working somewhere . . . less contentious?

QUINN

All the time.

PAUL

But you haven't left?

QUINN

No.

PAUL

Is there a reason? I mean, not to pry, but – I can't imagine someone coming to where I work who didn't respect my humanity.

QUINN

It's complicated.

(sighs again)

Denise, the older lesbian, wasn't able to get married until eight years ago, and was probably closeted at work, etc., so it's not like she's rolling in privilege herself. Also, I believe I mentioned the houseless youth, so I'm not exactly winning the oppression Olympics.

PAUL

I know, / but

QUINN

And, frankly, if I left I assume it would just be a different kind of bad, Paul.

PAUL

What do you mean?

QUINN

If I fuck up, or if someone complains about me at the center, people say, "That's Quinn," and move on. If I worked at a bank, or a school, though, what do you think they'd say?

PAUL

I don't understand . . . you think they'd / say

QUINN

I think the people who have a gay cousin but have never met a trans person might / say

PAUL

Are you talking about / me

QUINN

Not exactly, because there are apparently no trans people at the museum. What I'm / saying is

PAUL

I don't think I've said anything – are you upset / at

QUINN

You asked why I didn't leave / the center

PAUL

Yes, because it sounded – I'm sorry. We can change the subject / if you

QUINN

Do you think working at the high school where trans girls can't play sports would be easier than –
(pause)
My point is I don't want to be "scrutinized."

PAUL

(hiding frustration)

Well, that's understandable.

QUINN

You're regretting having ever messaged me, aren't you?

PAUL

No, not / at all

QUINN

You're thinking "something," though. I can tell.

PAUL

(pause, cautious, but insulted)

It sounded – when you spoke just now, like if we worked together, you suspect / I'd

QUINN

(rolls eyes)

I take it back. Please / forget I

PAUL

I wouldn't . . . um, scrutinize, or / discriminate

QUINN

No? Okay, forget I said it then.

PAUL

You sounded sarcastic – I mean, not sarcastic, / but

QUINN

No, you're right. I was being / sarcastic

PAUL

Quinn, this is a little –

QUINN

What? You're not trans. You've never even "met" a trans person, but you're telling me to quit working in the queer community, because anywhere else would be better.

PAUL

I apologize. In my defense, though, you've described your job as crisis-ridden, due to houselessness, racism and / transphobia

QUINN

(grudgingly)

That's true.

(pause)

Do you date a lot?

PAUL

Not "a lot."

QUINN

Me either. I dated other trans people for awhile, but it was kind of like working at the center . . . That was a joke, so it was okay to laugh, if / you wanted

PAUL

Oh good . . . I thought it was funny, but I didn't want to be / inappropriate

QUINN

This is what I mean . . . In the community everyone is offended all the time, but at least they know the rules about what it's okay to be offended by. If I worked in insurance, I'm afraid I'd be offended by everyone else, and they'd be / offended at

PAUL

If you like – I'm sorry I asked if you wanted to / leave your

QUINN

I told you TERFs and racists use the center – not that they don't use every other place in the city. My point, though, was that it made sense for you to ask.

PAUL

Have you dated many, um . . . non-trans – is that okay to / say

QUINN

It is.

PAUL

Good . . . Um, have you? I mean, before / tonight

QUINN

Sure, can't you see how at home I am in this situation?

PAUL

Okay, that time I knew it was appropriate to / laugh

QUINN

I'm kind of curious why you wanted to date me. The other guy I met on that app brought up gender studies and Janet Mock in the first two minutes.

PAUL

Oh, I thought your profile was funny, and I –
(slightly bashful)
Liked your picture.

QUINN

That's sweet. I liked yours, too . . . Do you have any idea who Janet Mock is?

PAUL

Um . . . to be honest, no.

QUINN

I feel guilty, but somehow I find that relieving.

PAUL

I'm guessing she's trans.

QUINN

(nods)

I'll buy you one of her books as a penance.

PAUL

I don't want to discount what you said before, but / I

QUINN

That's a dangerous way to start a / sentence

PAUL

I know, / but

QUINN

You'd be on much safer ground "not" discounting /
anything I said

PAUL

Right, but . . . all I'll say is, if you're, um, unhappy
where you are now . . . I wouldn't want you to feel
stuck because of –

QUINN

Because of the documented systemic oppression
of trans people in / our society

PAUL

I get that, really. You seem pretty good at self-
advocacy and boundary-setting, though. Just based
on the five minutes we've / talked

QUINN

You mean I'm an asshole.

PAUL

Not at all. You're funny. And / smart

QUINN

Oh, um . . . those aren't the words I was guessing

you'd use to describe / me

PAUL

I hope it was / okay

QUINN

Yes, those were great . . . so you're, like, actually enjoying this date?

PAUL

Um . . . I mean, I was a little – it's / nothing

QUINN

So you're "not" enjoying –

PAUL

No, it's not a – a few minutes ago – it wasn't important, but / when you

QUINN

I upset / you?

PAUL

You kind of . . . suggested that if we worked together, I, um – because I don't know many LGBTQ / people

QUINN

Oh, sorry. I / shouldn't have

PAUL

It was a heated / moment

QUINN

I take it back. I mean, there are people who would have unconscious / animosities

PAUL

I suppose . . . / I just

QUINN

You "suppose"?

PAUL

I mean, sure. "Denise," if that was her name, / or

QUINN

It's not just Denise and JK / Rowling, Paul

PAUL

I know, it's just, I was surprised you said that to me.

QUINN

I know. Sorry. In the community it's completely appropriate to describe a straight, cis person as transphobic with no evidence.

PAUL

It is? Really?

QUINN

Oh yeah. It's kind of encouraged. But that's because so many people have – we've all been hurt, you know?

PAUL

Oh.

QUINN

I get if it's too much. Who wants to live in a shitshow, / right

PAUL

No, it's – that isn't what I was thinking.

QUINN

Really?

PAUL

No.

QUINN

(surprised)

Oh . . . good.

PAUL

And maybe when I've read the Janet Mock book, I'll get better at knowing when it is and isn't appropriate to / laugh

QUINN

That may be the most unusual line of flirting I've ever heard . . . I'll order it for you tonight.

The two smile and open their menus.