

There's a Word for That

by

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## CHARACTERS

POE – *a trans woman in her 20s, quirky and light-hearted by nature, the difficulties of living and dating as a trans woman have heightened her suspicion and vigilance.*

EDDIE – *a cis man in his 20s, though kind and empathetic, he can be sensitive to critiques that counter his self-image.*

## SETTING

A restaurant in a U.S. city.

## TIME

Present day.

## SYNOPSIS

Poe, a trans woman, and Eddie, a cis man, are on a first date. Complications arise when she begins worrying aloud about all the horrible things that happen to women like her in romantic situations. Can Eddie calm her fears, or is he hiding some skeletons himself?

## PUNCTUATION NOTES

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

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

POE, a trans woman in her 20s and EDDIE, a cis man in his 20s, sit in a restaurant.

POE

Sometimes people ask me, like, "What's your favorite band? Or movie?" and I don't know how to answer, you know?

EDDIE

You don't?

POE

(embarrassed)

No, because – never mind. It's not really / important

EDDIE

Huh? . . . You can / say if you want

POE

What I meant is, before I –

(uncomfortable)

Transitioned . . . I would watch, like, the worst deep cut "Transformers" film over and over, probably as some gender chemotherapy exercise, and then blather on about the / cinematography

EDDIE

(surprised)

Oh right . . . you're / trans

POE

Um . . . yeah. I mean, I totally / messaged you that

EDDIE

Sure . . . I / remember now

POE

You have a weird expression / all the sudden

EDDIE

What? . . . I think this is just / my face

POE

I disclosed within like, five minutes of you / messaging

EDDIE

I know. Sorry, I just forgot . . . Please don't worry

about – I mean, I’m enjoying getting to know / you

POE

(uneasy)

Okay . . . I guess my point was, it’s hard to tell how much of my taste was authentic, and what was just, like, conforming to / expectations

EDDIE

Right . . . well, do you still like Transformers / movies

POE

No . . . they’re like “Triumph of the Will,” but with Mark Wahlberg, you know? So even worse . . . wait – you don’t like those movies, / do you

EDDIE

No, I also prefer “Triumph of the Will.”

Pause.

POE

Um . . . that was a joke, right?

EDDIE

Yes.

POE

Oh good . . . always have to be gauging the “potential threat level,” right?

(quickly, nervous)

Haha.

EDDIE

(laughs, uneasy)

Um, did you say “threat / level”?

POE

Sorry, you can just pretend that / didn’t happen

EDDIE

Did you mean – you weren’t saying / that I’m

POE

No . . . I mean, not more than other, you know, cis, / straight

EDDIE

I didn't do something wrong, did I? We're just talking about, um, Mark / Wahlberg, and

POE

I know. Please, don't mind me –

EDDIE

Okay /

POE

Although, the “just talking” period “is” where one gauges threats, right? Before it's too late?

EDDIE

Technically, I guess – wait, what are we / discussing

POE

Nothing. Ugh, I shouldn't have brought up my transition. Now all / I can think about

EDDIE

(compassionate)

Oh, I don't want you to feel uncomfortable . . . I mean, we're having a good time, / right

POE

Yes, totally . . . Although earlier you were, like –

(imitating Eddie)

“Oh, right. You're / trans”

EDDIE

Um, I don't actually talk like / that

POE

And I thought, oh great. He's going to go home and post a GIF of the stupid Family Guy dog throwing up under a “Tonight's date” caption, or / something

EDDIE

(uncomfortable)

I wouldn't do – um, why would / you think

POE

Or, fuck, maybe he's going to post my profile photo on some gross subreddit, saying –

(imitating, only coarser)

“Watch out for this dude, / guys”

EDDIE

I've never done – I don't really sound like that when I / talk, do I?

POE

Hmm? No – or, I mean, kind of? Let's talk about something / else

EDDIE

Okay . . . on your profile, you said you like rock climbing, right?

POE

Oh, um . . . that was a lie.

EDDIE

Huh?

POE

I, you know, made that up.

EDDIE

Oh . . . why would / you

POE

(sighs, impatient)

In dating profiles, I noticed everyone claims to like athletic, outdoor activities. I assumed they were all lying, so I just decided to lie, / also

EDDIE

You really thought one hundred percent of the people on / those apps were

POE

Basically.

(groans, head in hands)

Look, I wan't saying you personally would post horrible, transphobic shit about me, but the things I described before have happened to girls I know. Also, I saw that you got uncomfortable when I brought up the Family Guy / thing, so

EDDIE

(evasive)

I was probably just surprised at being, um, accused, or / . . .

POE

I wasn't accusing you. I was . . .

(self-conscious)

Um, doom spiraling, which is always a successful first date strategy.

EDDIE

(compassionate)

I didn't really notice the – we're having a good time, right? Remember the "Triumph of the Will" jokes?

Poe forces a weak laugh before collapsing on the table.

EDDIE

Um . . . Poe?

POE

(muffled)

I'm okay.

EDDIE

(hiding concern)

Oh good . . . And did you maybe want to, um, sit / up

Poe groans, then slowly pushes herself up again.

POE

I'm sure this looks kind of suboptimal, but when you consider how hard it is to date as a trans woman, I think my performance here is / not bad

EDDIE

(hiding confusion)

Um, / sure

POE

It's like, "Well, every movie I watched growing up suggested I'll either murder other people, or be murdered myself, because I like wearing dresses, but I'm sure this evening will be / fun"

EDDIE

Are you sure you're feeling / okay

POE

"I hope I don't get doxxed tonight because the person I'm seeing feels upset about my gender identity. Also, did I remember / my keys?"

EDDIE

That sounds really hard.

POE

I don't know. Other girls do it all the time. I should probably just be a nun, or something.

EDDIE

(slightly guilty)

No, I mean it. What you're saying is true, / and

POE

"Trans nun – queering the church from the inside."  
That would actually be pretty awesome . . . except I'd have to live in a convent, I guess, and go to church a lot.

EDDIE

I appreciate you sharing . . . everything.

POE

Right, what better getting to know you chat could there be?

EDDIE

No, I mean it . . . Just to clarify, though: you don't think I would ever be the kind of – I mean, I'm not like those / guys who

POE

What?

EDDIE

I'm saying, it's not like we just met at a party. We messaged for a while, and I'm not all, "I love to doxx / people"

POE

I guess. But I don't think anyone's like, "I love to doxx people." If they were, we could stop them before / they

EDDIE

That's true . . . it sounds like it's hard for you to trust people, though, and I wouldn't want you to feel – I mean, I'm not saying "I'm perfect," or whatever, but I hope you're feeling okay here with me.

POE

Yeah, this is – it's actually kind of nice.



EDDIE

Oh good . . . for a minute there, I was afraid that when you were sharing your worst-case scenarios, they were, like, some coded reference to how you saw me.

POE

(hiding annoyance)

Oh, right.

EDDIE

“Threat level” and all, you / know

POE

What about “threat level”?

EDDIE

Well, it implied that I’m . . . somehow / a threat

POE

You are. Women like me get harassed, assaulted and killed by the men we date.

EDDIE

I know, but – and I’m not sure how this conversation led us here – not every man, and not I, specifically, would do that.

Pause.

POE

Wow . . . if the worst thing that could happen to me on a date was someone accurately noting that I could ruin their life without suffering any consequences myself –

(daydreaming)

I can imagine paying a sex worker just to role play that / scenario

EDDIE

Okay . . . I guess what I meant was -

(vulnerable)

We’re on a date. I was hoping you’d be . . . interested, at least a little, in me as a person.

POE

(embarrassed)

Oh, sorry . . . I got a little fixated on, I guess, being victimized, or – but, no, you’re right. Let’s live in the

moment.

EDDIE  
(uncertain)

So does that mean -?

POE

Yeah, um . . . what are your hobbies?

EDDIE  
Hobbies? I play softball. I'm in a fantasy football league. I / like

POE

Very sports oriented.

EDDIE  
I guess . . . oh, right. You think athletics don't exist.

POE

I remain skeptical.

EDDIE  
And what about you? When you're not enduring dates with cis men, what / do you like

POE  
(playful)

You know the word "cis" . . . I'm impressed.

EDDIE

It's 2022.

POE

Tell that to Dave Chapelle.

Eddie laughs, then pauses, guiltily.

EDDIE  
(embarrassed, with difficulty)

When you said that thing earlier, about the dog from the Family / Guy

POE  
(nervous, suspicious)

Yes?

EDDIE

The reason I looked uncomfortable was . . . I had a friend, and we sometimes shared - it was dumb, like an inside / joke

POE

What are you saying? Did you share it when – was it / about trans women

EDDIE

Not always, but . . . famous ones, / or

Poe stands, upset.

POE

This has been delightful. I'm so glad you wanted / to meet

Eddie stands, nervous.

EDDIE

Please wait, Poe.

POE

(gathering her things)

Don't let me keep you from your "inside / jokes"

EDDIE

The reason I said that just now is because – you may not even care, but . . . you've helped me think a lot about, you know, the ways I've been shitty around this stuff / and

POE

Transphobia.

EDDIE

Right. / That's -

POE

Transmisogyny.

EDDIE

Um . . . / okay

POE

It's the word that describes when people are assholes to trans women –

(quietly)

Like the dog on The Family Guy.

EDDIE

Right, that's what I'm talking – you don't have to stay, but . . . I just wanted to tell you I listened, and I'm sorry I did that before.

Poe, surprised, pauses. Her anger cooling, she warily sits again. Eddie sits, as well.

POE

I accept your apology, I guess.

EDDIE

Thank you.

POE

That sounded weird, like I was accepting it on behalf of all – anyway, I appreciate your honesty.

EDDIE

I'm glad.

(pause)

You didn't share what your hobbies were before.

POE

I go on dating apps to find men to doxx.

EDDIE

Um . . . that was a – you're joking, / right

POE

Yes, I am. I sing in a trans choir.

EDDIE

Really? That sounds nice.

POE

(droll)

Wait till you've heard us before you say that.

EDDIE

(flirty)

I wouldn't mind having the chance.

Poe smiles, a little surprised. The two pick up their menus, intrigued.