

WE'RE JUST TALKING, OKAY?

BY

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CHARACTERS

STEPH – *a trans woman in her early 20s, her aggressive personality and caustic wit mask old wounds that can still sting.*

TODD – *a cis man in his early 20s; beneath his budding finance career and conversational insecurities, there's a more unconventional person lurking*

SETTING

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

TIME

Present day.

SYNOPSIS

Steph, a trans woman, and Todd, a cis man, are on a first date. Tempers flare when she makes assumptions based about him, based on his conventional facade. Soon, though, each is revealing things they generally keep hidden.

PUNCTUATION NOTES:

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

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

STEPH, a trans woman in her early 20s, sits with TODD, a cis man in his early 20s, at a restaurant.

STEPH

So, you're in finance?

TODD

Yes. Just starting out, though. You're in tech, right?

STEPH

Yep, another trans tech girl. Kind of cliché, I guess.

TODD

Is that a cliché? I've never –

STEPH

What? Oh yeah. You've never heard the joke about how staring at a computer screen too long –

TODD

Um –

STEPH

Causes you to grow breasts? I mean, ten or fifteen years ago, it was because –

TODD

No, I –

STEPH

We'd just get fired if we tried to transition, or –

TODD

(loudly)

Oh, that's funny. It reminds me –

STEPH

(annoyed)

What's funny? That trans women had to do high skill tech work from home to earn a living? I don't –

TODD

(frustrated)

That's not what I –

STEPH

How many trans people work at your investment firm?

(pause)

Don't worry. It was a rhetorical –

TODD

You haven't let me say two words since we sat down.

STEPH

We sat down thirty seconds ago. Is your ego really so fragile that –

TODD

You know, most guys I know wouldn't even have dated a – um . . . what I meant was –

Steph stands up and begins clapping theatrically and speaking to the implied restaurant.

STEPH

Everyone, I want you to know you're in the presence of a real ally! This man watched "The Danish Girl" and took it to heart.

TODD

Look, I apologize. Please sit down, Steph.

Steph sits again, smirking.

STEPH

You don't have to apologize. I get it. You're open to demanding that cis *and* trans women listen to you blather on about how much money you make.

TODD

I don't think it's, um, sexist, to expect both people in a conversation to have time to talk.

STEPH

Well, you're talking a lot about not getting to talk. Does that even things out for you?

Todd pushes his chair back in frustration.

TODD

You know what? How about if we –

STEPH

Todd, come on. I was just joking around, really. Don't go.

Todd reluctantly moves his chair forward again.

TODD

Fine . . . Have you lived in the city long?

STEPH

(ironically solicitous)

Why don't you tell me how long you've lived in city, Todd?

TODD

(hiding annoyance)

Okay . . . I've lived here a year, but I –

STEPH

Same here. I went to a liberal arts college in fucking Kansas with, like, fifty students, which was a giant mistake. After graduation, I was like, get me out of –

TODD

Why do you keep talking over me? Every time I –

STEPH

We're just having a conversation, Todd. Do you want an umpire to call fouls or –

TODD

Who do you usually date? Where do you find people who –

STEPH

Who do I date? In college it was people at the Queer Resource Center, which was a nightmare. Everyone was poly, and all they talked about were relationship definitions and consent agreements. Yawn, right? Here, it's just been people I meet on apps, like –

TODD

And none of those people have found it frustrating when –

STEPH

(groans)

Yes, Todd. People think I talk too much. You haven't made a groundbreaking discovery –

TODD

(self conscious)

Oh. Um, well . . .

STEPH

And I'm not always "sensitive," or at least according to guys I date, who were probably the same ones who called me "fag" before I transitioned.

TODD

Look, I'm sorry if I touched a sore spot. I have to say, though, if you're getting consistent feedback about something, don't you think –

STEPH

Seriously? What would you have talked about tonight if I'd let you just monologue, Todd?

TODD

I don't know . . . I –

STEPH

Your quarterly bonus? The immersion school you want to send your future kids to? Your –

TODD

Why did you agree to a date with me? It seems like you hate me without ever having met –

STEPH

I don't hate you. I just don't want to be – Todd, you can't tell me you don't have co-workers who treat women like trophies and –

TODD

Not all –

STEPH

Sex toys. How do you think that starts?

TODD

That's not me, Steph, and if you'd let me finish one –

(grumbling)

God damn sentence . . . maybe you'd -

STEPH

Okay - wow me with your gender enlightened view of relationship dynamics, Todd.

TODD

I feel like I'm on trial, and all I did was show up for a date.

STEPH

That sounds hard. As a trans woman, I can't imagine experiencing scrutiny in the course of my everyday activities.

Pause.

TODD

Do you want to be on this date? . . . Are you enjoying -

STEPH

Sure, it's fun . . . I mean, you seem smart, and -

TODD

What are your friendships like? Is it just making people prove they're -

STEPH

I'm not sure what you're looking for, Todd. You already know I'm not a baby maker. I'm also not the "wear pearls and make small talk at the company party" type, so -

TODD

(frustrated)

Arrgghh! . . . Okay, I admit I was thinking this might be a, you know, hook up, or whatever. And, yes, having a job that impresses people, or, I guess some people, is fun, but now . . . I want -

STEPH

See? I -

TODD

I'm trying to tell -

STEPH

Oh, wait . . . are you –

TODD

You seem interesting, and –

STEPH

Did you say I seem –

TODD

Why won't you let me –

STEPH

I didn't think you –

TODD

I'm saying –

STEPH

Right. Okay, I'll stop –

TODD

I mean, it's hard to –

STEPH

I know.

Pause.

TODD

I just want to . . . have a chance to get to know –

STEPH

That's scary for me – not because you're scary, or –

TODD

Why's it scary, Steph?

STEPH

Why? Because I'm trans and –

TODD

We're on a date, though. It's not an issue to –

STEPH

Ha! I think I'm the authority on –

TODD

That's not fair. I'm -

STEPH

Where did you grow up, Todd?

TODD

Kentucky.

STEPH

Great. I can't imagine there ever being any issues, if we were to get serious and go to -

TODD

I moved here, Steph. I wanted to be somewhere different, because I don't want my choices controlled by people I -

STEPH

I know. I'm being defensive and -

TODD

You're acting like I'm some anthropomorphized Republican Super PAC.

STEPH

I'm sorry. I'm just scared because - look, I'm weird. And -

TODD

I don't think -

STEPH

You're an unconvincing liar, Todd, which is probably a good trait.

TODD

Well . . . weird isn't . . . bad, Steph. It -

STEPH

People made fun of me even before I transitioned, so I learned to talk first and louder, and . . . it's just sort of habit now.

TODD

Well . . . everyone's weird in their own -

STEPH

I brought pet snails to school on tiny leashes.

Pause.

TODD

Okay . . . do you still have -

STEPH

No . . . I have a lizard, though.

TODD

Oh . . . well, that's not so -

STEPH

I have five lizards.

TODD

(shyly)

I had a parrot growing up. I taught her to sing Madonna and Lady Gaga songs. My dad's pastor told him to make me get rid of it.

STEPH

That's awful.

TODD

I tried to teach our dog choreography from Rihanna videos when -

STEPH

You were super queer, Todd. Like, very -

TODD

I know . . . I've never told anyone about the dog thing before.

STEPH

What are you into now?

TODD

(embarrassed)

Nekomimi anime.

STEPH

Huh? What's -

TODD

Cartoons with cat girls in them.

STEPH

Oh, wow. That's, um . . . really cute. How did you –

TODD

You probably want to flee our date like it's a crime scene now, which is okay.

STEPH

Not really. I'm –

TODD

Don't talk about me online, okay? I mean, about –

STEPH

Todd, I'm not –

TODD

My work is really conservative, which I know sucks, but I can't have –

STEPH

Todd, what are you talking about? I would never try to –

TODD

You mean you're not . . . like, freaked out by –

STEPH

No. It's actually kind of endearing.

TODD

Oh. Thanks.

STEPH

Are the cartoons about girls the size of cats, or cats –

TODD

They're girls with cat ears and –

STEPH

Aww.

TODD

Are you –

STEPH

What? No –

TODD

You're not making fun -

STEPH

No. Why would -

TODD

Okay . . . I guess -

STEPH

I get it, Todd, but I wouldn't -

Pause.

TODD

Thanks.

STEPH

Of course. This date is a thousand times more interesting than I was expecting.

TODD

Yeah . . . it is.

STEPH

Do you think I'm . . . too weird to -

TODD

No, Steph . . . I think you're . . . kind of cool.

STEPH

Thanks . . . I actually only have one lizard. I -

TODD

You lied about -

STEPH

I guess I wanted to see if it would scare -

TODD

That's so weird . . . I kind of love it.

STEPH

Thanks.

The two share a romantic look. End of play.