

My Perfectly Valid Objections

by

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CHARACTERS

TERRI – *a trans woman in her mid-20s; her vigilance, argumentativeness and suspicion can obscure her desire for connection*

DOUG – *a cis man in his mid-20s; easygoing and levelheaded, his wry humor can't hide his earnest, caring nature*

SETTING

A restaurant in in mid-size 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.

TERRI, a trans woman in her 20s, and DOUG, a cis man in his 20s, sit at in a restaurant.

DOUG

It was fun messaging / with you

TERRI

Would it make me terrible if I left now?

DOUG

“Left”? . . . I / don’t understand

TERRI

Okay. I’ll stay through the appetizers, so it doesn’t look like I, you know, just saw you in person and / decided to

DOUG

Wait – what’s going on? Isn’t this a / date

TERRI

Yeah. I mean, technically you could / call it

DOUG

Is something wrong? Like, did I offend you?

TERRI

No . . . we literally just got here, so –

DOUG

Why did you want to / leave then

TERRI

It’s not you, Doug. It’s – I feel like every second I sit here, the patriarchy is winning, you know? Like I’m acquiescing to all I hate . . . That makes sense, / right

DOUG

Um, we’re just on a date, / right

TERRI

Yes, but – look, I was socialized male. Briefly and unsuccessfully, but I got the picture, and I understand that even if you’re a super-progressive, “the future is female, “A is / for ally”

DOUG

I don't think I'm / getting what

TERRI

I'm not saying you're not cute, because / you are

DOUG

Oh, um . . . / thanks

TERRI

But politically, opposite-sex coupling is just a losing game / for women

DOUG

We met on a – you did say you wanted to / meet, right

TERRI

I'm trying to explain. Let's say, theoretically, we were raising a child –

DOUG

Oh, I don't / know if

TERRI

I said "theoretically." I'm not trying to incept the idea of – anyway, in this hypothetical situation, which of us would be the primary / caregiver

DOUG

I imagine we'd . . . – why are we talking about / this

TERRI

Don't act like that's a hard question, Doug. It always falls to the woman. Or almost. I'm not saying no man ever – you get my point.

DOUG

I'm not / sure I

TERRI

And the reason we're "talking about this," is because it's the subtext of all the mating-ritual first-date schmoozing heteronormativity prescribes we engage in.

Pause.

DOUG

So do you go on that app just to, like, ambush people when you meet in person?

TERRI

(annoyed, embarrassed)

No . . . Part of me – we all want to fall in love, right? I mean, not aromantic people, / but

DOUG

(surprised)

You want to fall / in love

TERRI

Yes! . . . I'm not arguing against "love."

DOUG

Oh, I / thought

TERRI

Do you know when you're in an elevator in a tall building, and you can't believe how quickly you're going down while you watch the floor numbers fly by? When I transitioned, it was like I was on one of those elevators, only instead of floor numbers, I was watching my privilege and social status plummet. After that, I became very interested the politics of equality, and skeptical / of powerful

DOUG

Okay, but – and I don't want to be one of those guys who say, "I'm different, / because I"

TERRI

That's good.

DOUG

But . . . I mean, all the stuff you're talking about – I take it really seriously, you know?

TERRI

Okay . . . Let's say we'd been married for five years, and your job offered you a promotion if we moved, / but I liked my job

DOUG

"Married for five / years"?

TERRI

I'm not proposing, Doug. / I'm

DOUG

I know, but / still

TERRI

The point is that men assume their careers come /
first

DOUG

Isn't that a generali / zation

TERRI

Is the gender pay gap a / generalization

DOUG

No, but . . . did you want to get to know me, like,
even a little?

TERRI

I guess.

DOUG

Okay . . . I can share / about

TERRI

But, really, that's how it starts, isn't it?

DOUG

How / what starts

TERRI

Systemic misogyny.

DOUG

I'm not sure I . . . huh?

TERRI

Have you ever asked yourself why women haven't
achieved full equality? We outnumber men. We vote
more consistently. If we're being honest, we're smarter.

DOUG

What?!

TERRI

Fine.

(patronizing)

We're of "equal intelligence" . . . What could be inhibiting us then? It's heterosexuality.

DOUG

You're saying – I'm not understanding / your

TERRI

Look at me: I'm fully committed to equality between genders, but I'm at dinner with Mr. I Promise I'm Not Sexist, Let Me Tell You About / My Childhood

DOUG

I'm – we're on a date. People on dates talk about / their

TERRI

I didn't say you were doing something wrong. As a straight, cis man, though, what's to stop you from replicating all the unconscious sexism you were raised around?

DOUG

Well, if you'd asked me one question about myself, you might have learned I was a gender studies major.

TERRI

You majored in / gender studies

DOUG

Yes. My sibling is trans. He was treated really poorly in school, so I / wanted to

TERRI

I'm sorry to hear that.

DOUG

Thanks. He's doing better now.

TERRI

I guess it's possible I started our night off . . . a little defensively.

DOUG

Um . . . we all get anxious on dates?

TERRI

I just don't want . . . whoever I'm with to see me as some woman they can / just treat however

DOUG

(droll)

That fear strikes me as unfounded.

TERRI

My last date was with a Christian. "That's fine," I told myself, wanting to be openminded. Before the entrees arrived he was quoting scripture about the divine role of women as servants / to men

DOUG

Oh. Did he not read your profile?

TERRI

We were set up by a former "friend" of mine.

DOUG

Gotcha . . . Did you grow up around here?

TERRI

Yes.

DOUG

Do your parents still live nearby?

TERRI

(rueful)

Yep. They're my biggest fans.

DOUG

(confused)

Oh, um . . . are they / your biggest

TERRI

They're . . . my mom put everything aside to take care of us. My dad did . . . whatever he wanted and assumed she'd take care of / all our lives

DOUG

Did they support your transition?

TERRI

Wouldn't "biggest fans" / indicate

DOUG

Oh, right.

TERRI

Where did you grow up?

DOUG

Pretty far from here. I moved for school.

TERRI

Do you miss your / family

DOUG

I don't really speak to them. I mean, my brother I do, but my parents - they didn't support / him

TERRI

Oh.

DOUG

Even after he . . . attempted suicide.

TERRI

That's awful.

DOUG

He moved away - he was older, and then I did, too.

TERRI

What's wrong with people?

DOUG

(smiling)

It seems like you have some ideas about that.

TERRI

(laughs, pause)

You seem . . . not objectionable.

DOUG

Was that how you flirt?

TERRI

It's possible you're making everything up in some elaborate pick up artist-esque ruse. If that isn't the case, / though

DOUG

You're very mistrustful. Has anyone ever told / you

TERRI

Yes, all the time. "Why are you always hypervigilant?" Because - what happened to your brother sucks. Guys treating women like conquests or furniture / sucks

DOUG

I was / joking, sorry

TERRI

Trans women getting murdered - why should I be relaxed or / trusting

DOUG

You said you want to fall in / love

TERRI

I do, but . . . people who hate trans women say we "were raised with 'male privilege.'" Well, guess what, if they'd let me be raised as a girl like I wanted to be, they'd have nothing to complain about. Since I was raised that way, though, I can report that "male privilege" basically means learning to see the world as a playground where women clean and throw away the trash. I want to fall in love, but I . . . want to live in a world where people treat each other with respect.

DOUG

Don't you think that's possible?

TERRI

(glum)

I did.

DOUG

“Did”? Was there a bad experience you / had, or

TERRI

No, nothing bad. I just meant I explored being a lesbian and it didn’t work for me.

DOUG

Well, the heart wants what it wants, I guess . . . If only there was someone around you found “cute.”

TERRI

(smiles, pause)

You remembered that.

DOUG

Yes, it helped me not personalize the onslaught of misandry.

TERRI

If by that you mean, “fact-based assessment of gender inequality in / our culture”

DOUG

What I should have said was . . . I was flattered.

TERRI

So, the onslaught didn’t scare you off?

DOUG

It wasn’t exactly what I expected, but it kind of made me nostalgic for my sophomore year in / school

TERRI

It wasn’t unusual, you know? I’m like that when I watch films and shows. At dinner parties. Work / events

DOUG

Is there some reason you’re warning me about / this

TERRI

Okay . . . you’re clever. I see where that could be charming.

DOUG

“Charming” . . . “cute” . . .

Pause. Terri smiles almost despite herself.

TERRI

So now what? We discuss intersectionality over
sushi?

DOUG

Now who's a pick-up artist?

TERRI

(laughs)

That's silly . . . I meant everything I said before,
you know?

DOUG

I / know

TERRI

Alright, because there might be times – even
tonight – when your expectations come up
against . . . what's important to me, and I won't do
what you want to make you happy.

DOUG

Okay –

(thinks)

I wouldn't want you to.

Terri smiles and picks up her menu.

TERRI

I was hoping you'd say that.

End of play.