

MY PERFECTLY VALID OBJECTIONS

by

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CHARACTERS

Parts to be played by two (or more) trans women: CINDY, STEPH, JENNA, EMMA,
TOBI, POE, MANDY

Parts to be played by one (or more) cis men: DOUG, TODD, NIALL, WILL, MARK,
EDDIE, DERRICK

SETTINGS

The play depicts a series of dates in restaurants, bars or cafes, as well as a few friendly conversations between the trans women who go on those dates in similar establishments.

TIME

Present day.

WILL, a cis man, sit at in a restaurant. He's easygoing and levelheaded, his wry humor can't hide his earnest, caring nature. EMMA enters and crosses to him, appearing ambivalent and distracted. He stands to greet her.

WILL

Hi – it's Emma, right?

EMMA

(distracted)

What? . . . Oh, yes.

Emma sits and Will follows.

WILL

I'm Will, but / you probably already

EMMA

Would it make me terrible if I left now?

WILL

"Left"? . . . I / don't understand

EMMA

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

WILL

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

EMMA

Yeah. I mean, technically you could / call it

WILL

Is something wrong? Like, did I offend you?

EMMA

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

WILL

Why did you want to / leave then

EMMA

It's not you, Will. 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

WILL

Um, we're just on a date, / aren't we?

EMMA

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, “bans off our bodies,” “A is / for ally”

WILL

I don't think I'm / getting what

EMMA

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

WILL

Oh, um . . . / thanks

EMMA

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

WILL

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

EMMA

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

WILL

Oh, I don't / know if

EMMA

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

WILL

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

EMMA

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

WILL

I'm not / sure I

EMMA

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.

WILL

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

EMMA

(annoyed, embarrassed)

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

WILL

(surprised)

You want to fall / in love

EMMA

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

WILL

Oh, I / thought

EMMA

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

WILL

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

EMMA

That's good.

WILL

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

EMMA

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

WILL

"Married for five / years"?

EMMA

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

WILL

I know, but / still

EMMA

The point is that men assume their careers come / first

WILL

Isn't that a generali / zation

EMMA

Is the gender pay gap a / generalization

WILL

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

EMMA

I guess.

WILL

Okay . . . I can share / about

EMMA

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

WILL

How / what starts

EMMA

Systemic misogyny.

WILL

I'm not sure I . . . huh?

EMMA

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.

Will shrugs.

EMMA

What could be inhibiting us then? It's heterosexuality.

WILL

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

EMMA

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

WILL

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

EMMA

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?

WILL

Well, if you hadn't been scrupulously prohibiting me from revealing anything about myself, you might have learned I was a gender studies major at school.

EMMA

You majored in / gender studies?

WILL

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

EMMA

I'm sorry to hear that.

WILL

Thanks. He's doing better now.

EMMA

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

WILL

Um . . . we all get anxious on dates?

EMMA

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

WILL

(droll)

That fear strikes me as unfounded.

EMMA

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

WILL

Oh. Did he not read your profile?

EMMA

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

WILL

Gotcha . . . Did you grow up around here?

EMMA

Yes.

WILL

Do your parents still live nearby?

EMMA

(rueful)

Yep. They're my biggest fans.

WILL

(confused)

Oh, um . . . are they / your biggest

EMMA

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

WILL

Did they support your transition?

EMMA

Wouldn't "biggest fans" / indicate

WILL

Oh, right.

EMMA

Where did you grow up?

WILL

Pretty far from here. I moved for school.

EMMA

Do you miss your / family

WILL

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

EMMA

Oh.

WILL

Even after he . . . attempted suicide.

EMMA

That's awful.

WILL

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

EMMA

What's wrong with people?

WILL

(smiling)

It seems like you have some ideas about that.

EMMA

(laughs, pause)

You seem . . . not objectionable.

WILL

Was that how you flirt?

EMMA

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

WILL

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

EMMA

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

WILL

I was / joking, sorry

EMMA

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

WILL

You said you want to fall in / love

EMMA

I do, but I also want to live in a world where people treat each other with respect.

WILL

Don't you think that's possible?

EMMA

(glum)

I did.

WILL

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

EMMA

No, nothing like that . . . I just meant that, well, given my views on heterosexuality, I thought being a lesbian could be a workaround.

WILL

Oh.

EMMA

As much as I liked the idea, though . . . it wasn't for me.

WILL

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

EMMA

(smiles, pause)

You remembered that.

WILL

Yes, it helped me not personalize the barrage of anti-male sentiments.

EMMA

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

WILL

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

EMMA

So, the barrage didn't scare you off?

WILL

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

EMMA

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

WILL

(droll)

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

EMMA

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

WILL

"Charming" . . . "cute" . . .

Pause. Emma smiles almost despite herself.

EMMA

So now what? We discuss intersectionality over sushi?

WILL

And you called me a pick-up artist?

EMMA

(laughs)

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

WILL

I / know

EMMA

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.

WILL

Okay –

(thinks)

I wouldn't want you to.

Emma smiles and picks up her menu.

EMMA

I was hoping you'd say that.

Scene 2