

The Case Against Love

by

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CHARACTERS

DESI - *a nonbinary trans femme person in their early 20s, their humor and playful argumentativeness mask their sorrow and deep-seated sense of mistrust.*

COLIN - *a nonbinary person in their early 20s, they're kind and level-headed, with an optimistic streak.*

SETTING

A restaurant in a 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.

DESI, a trans femme in their 20s, sits with COLIN, a nonbinary person in his early 20s.

COLIN

Have you been on that app long?

DESI

A couple of months. I hardly use it, though. Dating is . . . I don't even – it's weird.

COLIN

Totally.

DESI

How people can go from, "So, I notice you go by 'they' pronouns," to "Can I see your dick, if you have one, that is?" in five seconds is just bananas, you know?

COLIN

Absolutely. I had "He/They" in my bio, and then genderfluid, and then a link to a nonbinary FAQ, and cis women still just asked me if I was gay.

DESI

What even is "gay"? What even is "dating"? I mean, big picture. Like, what are we doing?

COLIN

Oh, right . . . I guess, um –
(confused)
Are you being, like, / serious

DESI

You and I aren't reproducing, right? Unless they perfect a uterus transplant and you want to get one. But even then, how long has the earth got? A decade? Two, maybe? Tech billionaires can live in a mountain, but queer plebes / like us are

COLIN

We're, um, seeing if . . . we enjoy each other's – you were a dating app, / right

DESI

I know. Some part of me wants love, and it wrestles control of my calendar sometimes. You have to admit it's strange, though, don't you?

COLIN

Dating?

DESI

Yeah. It's . . . okay, here's an example: I grew up in this quasi-rural suburb, and my school had an annual "Father-Daughter Dance." These fucking farmers put suits on and the cis girls wore church / dresses

COLIN

This actually / happened

DESI

Yes. Like the 700 Club was our government, and queer people didn't exist. My point is, though, how is this different?

COLIN

You and I . . . going on this / date

DESI

Yeah. How are you not playing the father, and – well, no. That's weird. But how are we not just replicating cis-heteronormative / paradigms

COLIN

Well . . . cishet people don't talk about "cis-heteronormative paradigms" for one / thing

DESI

You know what I mean, though. "We're on a date. And we'll talk about our jobs, / and –"

COLIN

You don't like getting to know . . . other / people

DESI

We'll talk, and, if we get along, we might get frisky, or / whatever

COLIN

I'm not sure I – what about the things you're describing do / you not

DESI

It's not that I "dislike" – okay, when I was young

everybody treated me like I was male, even though I knew I wasn't. Then I convinced the people I was living with to let me transition, / and

COLIN

(confused)

You mean your parents?

DESI

I call them the people I was living with. Anyway, for a year or two, everyone treated me like a freak. Then we moved, and at my new school, they just treated me like I was a girl, even though that wasn't how I felt. After a while, I just thought, "This is stupid."

COLIN

The gender binary, you / mean

DESI

Society as a whole . . . gender, small talk, money. I went from people asking me if I was going to play football, to being invited to the "Father-Daughter / Dance"

COLIN

Right. But we're . . . kind of revolutionary, you know? Trans people were hidden before, / but now

DESI

It's so dumb . . . people were arrested for "impersonating women." I'm sure they still are in a lot of / places

COLIN

I agree. I'm just – how does this relate to you not believing in dating, though?

DESI

(hiding pain)

When I'd be alone at recess, before I moved, I'd think, if everyone was wrong about this, what else are they wrong about?

COLIN

Well . . . sure, I mean, there's racism, and / houselessness

DESI

Those are things we know about, though. When I born, some doctor said, 'It's a boy.' And everyone was like, 'Yay.' People unanimously thought she knew what she was talking about. Who else is getting fucked over in ways we one hundred percent aren't seeing?

COLIN

(confused)

Are you afraid . . . "dating" is fucking / people

DESI

After I moved, and everyone saw me a certain way, all that behavior just stopped. I thought, "What the fuck?" you know? And I felt just as alienated as I had / before

COLIN

I'm really sorry that happened, Desi.

DESI

It didn't have to.

COLIN

It was hard for me, too. I mean, not to compare my experience to / yours

DESI

I don't get what people's problem are.

COLIN

I don't think trying to connect with someone, and seeing if you want to share – I think you can form relationships without being like the people who hurt / you

DESI

What happened when you came out as nonbinary?

COLIN

Everyone thought I was weird. A rumor started that I wanted to remove my genitals, so I could be like a Ken doll, / I

DESI

I'm sorry. That sucks, Colin.

COLIN

Thanks . . . it was kind of, um, hard.

DESI

I understand –

(reluctant)

Sometimes the thought comes to me that if I tried to let go of the contempt I feel toward the world, I might be happier.

COLIN

Do you think that's / true

DESI

When it shows up, I just visualize myself kicking it, like a football, to the surface of the moon.

COLIN

Oh.

DESI

Did you forgive the people who hurt you?

COLIN

“Forgive” them? . . . I guess. Some of them just went away for college. Others started treating me like they used to, and I guess I / just accepted

DESI

What is that, you know?! . . . People say, “Oh, they’ll come around. They just need / time”

COLIN

Um – you mean, we – are you upset / that

DESI

I’m “upset” that queer people get treated like shit, and we’re supposed to be grateful when cishet assholes get the abuse out of their system and decide we’re / human again

COLIN

(cautious)

Did something . . . happen to / you

DESI

I already shared / what “happened”

COLIN

That's true.

Pause.

DESI

I bet you're like, "No wonder you don't believe in dating. You fucking suck at / it"

COLIN

Um . . . I mean, this is a . . . thought provoking conversation.

DESI

Have you ever been in – have you had any long term relationships before?

COLIN

Me? . . . I dated someone for a year in / college

DESI

What were they like?

COLIN

He – it was a guy, he was . . . kind of a jerk.

DESI

I'm sorry.

COLIN

It's okay. It just took a while to see that it wasn't about me. I kind of want to warn whoever might want to date him next, though.

DESI

I have that same impulse, only about life in general.

COLIN

You want to warn . . . everyone about everyone / else?

DESI

Right.

COLIN

Like Paul Revere, but for the / whole world

DESI

I could be a philosopher, or just stand on a street corner screaming.

COLIN

Do you know which you'd prefer?

DESI

Philosophy seems less off-putting to people, and they're probably equally lucrative.

(smiling)

I'm surprised you haven't run screaming from the table yet.

COLIN

Do most of your dates flee in terror?

DESI

No . . . let's just say there aren't many repeat customers, though.

COLIN

Um, you don't have to share about your parents, but if / you want

DESI

You mean, the people I used to / live with

COLIN

Sure . . . I / just

DESI

The same thing that was wrong with them was what was wrong with the world. Actually, it was worse, because they knew . . . - their abuse was conscious, let's say.

COLIN

I'm sorry.

DESI

They were surprisingly fine about gender stuff. In an administrative sense, I mean. They treated me just as horribly about it interpersonally as they did about everything / else

COLIN

They sound awful.

DESI

They . . . did not provide a model for meaningful interaction in the world.

COLIN

Right –

(cautious)

You know that world isn't . . . always the same as what you experienced with them, though.

DESI

It's not always different, either.

COLIN

Of course.

DESI

It sounds like your ex could trade notes with / my

COLIN

He probably could, and I try to make sure not to get involved with people like my ex now.

DESI

(self-deprecating)

Well, one method I've found works is to not get involved with anyone period.

COLIN

I can see how that would be effective . . . I could also get involved with people –

(flirty)

I'm attracted to . . . who are different from him.

DESI

I understand how there might be an upside to that. The downside, though, is it involves trusting another person, which /

COLIN

Which can be scary, I / guess

DESI

I was going to say, "Which would be unprecedented for me."

COLIN

Oh . . . have you had any long-term / relationships

DESI

You mean "relationships that involved me trusting / another -"

COLIN

What usually happens when you go on dates?

DESI

Well, first I talk about how relationships are just cishet propaganda, then / I

COLIN

(remembering)

Oh, right . . .

DESI

Let's just say suitors aren't blowing up my phone . . . which is -

(emotional)

Not exactly what I want.

COLIN

You mean, you wish / they

DESI

I mean, maybe I'm no longer kicking the idea of being with someone up to the / moon

COLIN

I'm glad.

DESI

Really? . . . You've enjoyed spending this entire evening being a therapist slash sparring partner?

COLIN

I've enjoyed getting to / know

DESI

This is a prank, right? You're going to laugh about

this on / the way home

COLIN

What? No . . . why / would you

DESI

Sorry . . . I'm probably just reflexively suspicious
when anyone – forget I / said

COLIN

Okay.

(concerned)

You're not, um, pranking / me, are

DESI

(groans)

This is awful . . . I've, like, infected you with
whatever it is I / have

COLIN

No, don't / say that

DESI

If you don't want to . . . continue this I'll, you know –
it's fine –

(vulnerable)

But if you think you do . . . I might, / also

COLIN

I think – I mean, we're just getting to know each
other, / but

DESI

Right, of / course

COLIN

But so far . . . I . . . think you're nothing like my ex,
if you get what / I'm saying

DESI

I do . . . and I'm glad.

Both smile and pick up their menus.

