

## An Unremarkable Bar on an Unremarkable Night

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Three friends drift down the street and enter a building to attend the weekly anarchofeminist book club, where they peruse early twenty-first-century texts and imagine what life was like then. When all the speeches are over and everyone's milling around in the lobby, talking about the thought-provoking material discussed, the friends run into some acquaintances. The group decides to go out to a restaurant to have some tapas and drinks and continue their conversation. At the end of the night, they thank each other for a great time before making their separate ways home and promising to meet up again soon. It's an entirely unremarkable evening.

In this utopia, it is unremarkable that all the people at the event experience equal pay for equal work, fair treatment, and a world without racism, homophobia, economic disparity, religious intolerance, transphobia, classism, and fat hatred. Of course they do. These

are things that are taken for granted in utopia. Though their ghosts live on in horror novels and the weekly book club reminds them how bad people once had it, they're abstract things.

This evening is also unremarkable because, in this future where our friends live, Friends A and C didn't have to think, or worry, about access issues at any point. Friend A knew that the sidewalks would be wide and clean so she could move down them comfortably in her power chair without being forced into the street or having to jump curbs. She knew the event would be held in a fully accessible building with a ramped front door and accessible bathroom. No one would gawk or stare at her, although she uses a respirator to help her breathe and a communication board to chat with her friends. She knew that they wouldn't have to check ahead to determine if the restaurant was accessible, and that they wouldn't arrive only to discover that despite a promise that it was, there was "just one step" or the bathroom doors were too narrow for her to enter. No one would point or laugh at her because she was trans; instead they would welcome her into society as the woman she is. Her transition had gone smoothly for her. She'd been respected throughout the process, which included the transition services she needed, fully funded through the government's single-payer health-care plan.

Friend C knew that her service dog wouldn't be distracted by people trying to interact with him, and that all the materials at the event would be presented in



audio as well as visual form. And she knew her friends would seamlessly integrate descriptions of the visuals around them into their conversation when these things were relevant. When the menus were passed around she would know which dishes were gluten-free. She knew that the restaurant staff would take her gluten sensitivity seriously, and would consider any possible areas for cross-contamination in the kitchen.

Meanwhile, Friend B breast-fed and dandled her infant on her knee openly and comfortably, knowing that the restaurant would accommodate her. The three were seated in a quiet, comfortable area where it would be easy to sit and talk, and where the baby would be least likely to be disturbed. No one asks Friend B who the father is, or where he is, or why the baby doesn't look much like her. No one would ask why it is that a black woman has a light-skinned baby.

This is a society of free and open accommodation for difference, where a thousand tiny gestures of acceptance and welcome have replaced the thousand tiny cuts that women had to endure before utopia. Our three friends live in a world of complete and open access, of inclusion, not simply tolerance. They are woven into the very fabric of society with a quiet, deft skill as part of the amazing and astounding spectrum of humanity, respected as individual people with tremendous contributions to utopia's past, present, and future.

Their disabled forbearers were there at the incipient

beginnings, when labor organizers fought in the early twentieth century to get children out of factories and cut down on working hours.

They knew, as perhaps no other fighters for utopia quite realized, that disability directly affects some 20 percent of the population, and touches many more. It is part of the fabric of everyone's lives. Anyone can become disabled at any time: a car accident, a sudden illness, the gradual decline of age. In utopia, disability is as much a part of society as breathing (with a respirator or otherwise), and one would as soon open an inaccessible business or make a rude comment to a disabled person as one would sexually harass a coworker. Our friends live in a utopia where the approach to disability is not one of dehumanization, fear, and eliminationism, but of welcome. "Oh, you're deaf?" signs a conference organizer for an academic event on twenty-first-century feminist protest chants, "Our staff interpreters are right over there!" They live in a utopia where disabled people are welcomed into feminist spaces and celebrated as a vital part of the community, where feminism honestly confronts its troubled relationship with disability and, through hard self-examination, has embraced a politics of radical inclusion.

When she was born, Friend A's parents had the full support of their community and a well-paid, well-trained home health assistant funded by the government to help Friend A live independently—and no one had ever sug-



gested they abort her when they got the diagnosis. Friend A's parents never lacked for support and respite care as Friend A grew up. At no point did anyone assume that they should be her primary, unpaid caregivers. Her parents received state assistance for equipment, creating an accessible home, and accessing professional aides for daily living and support in school. When she moved into her own apartment, an ample government grant helped her while she got settled and found work doing what she loves: mapmaking and sociological cartography, using maps to study trends over time and place.

Friend C is thinking about having kids of her own in a few years with her girlfriend, and the two have talked about which one of them will carry the baby. Friend B teases them over their fierce competition. They aren't afraid of losing their children, not in utopia, where county clerks use ungendered forms for birth certificates, with room for two, three, or even more parents, and where the parenting abilities of disabled people are never challenged on prima facie grounds. Throughout her life, Friend C has been surrounded by people who believe in her. No one has told her she can't be a mother because she's blind, and she, like other disabled parents, can access mentoring and parenting classes specifically geared toward her impairments.

Utopia isn't senseless to difference, but it embraces and warmly welcomes it rather than fearing it. Indeed, utopia is a rather unremarkable place. It has become the

shared reality of a million dreamers, the lived experience of generations following from those who fought long and hard for it. Utopia is not something taken for granted—it is warmly and ferociously protected—but it is also the mainstream. It is a dream accomplished not solely through endless legislation, though laws played a key role in realizing utopia, but a dream achieved through the everyday work of millions of ordinary people, all over the world.

Friend A keeps two photographs on her wall: One, the famous image of ADAPT protesters crawling up the steps of Congress, fighting for the Americans with Disabilities Act, a reminder of the indignities and suffering people endured as they struggled for self-determination in a world that largely ignored them. The other, from a trip to London, Friend A grinning in her chair under the sculpture of a defiantly pregnant and disabled Alice Lapper in Trafalgar Square. It's a reminder of a pleasant holiday, but also of the immense controversy over the statue. When it was installed, Lapper's form had been deemed hideous and inappropriate. It offended the nondisabled establishment's ideas of beauty and parenthood in an era ruled by ableism and prejudice. These images are not just history, but a reminder of a bitter past, and a warning of an ominous future should those living in utopia forget it. Friend A remembers, because she never wants utopia to fade away.



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