

CHARACTERS:

Strangers often define others as the first thing they notice about that person. Because of this my characters will not be named, only described by their most obvious feature. This is meant to comment on societies general inability to look past our inherent bias and assumptions that are made about other people. Many people, particularly those with obvious physical disabilities face challenges because of these biases every day. I believe the first step to understanding why these assumptions happen, is admitting that they are there, and working to combat them.

GIRL WITH RED HAIR: An 18 year-old college student who goes to an Ivy League college across the country. She has just gotten home for winter break and finally gets to see her high school friends again. The transition has been rough for her but she has managed just fine.

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR: Also an 18 yea-old college student who goes to a very small liberal arts college on a small campus. Most of the buildings are old and inaccessible which has been a great challenge for her. She thought the smaller campus would make it easier for her to get places but the buildings themselves have proven unaccessible. She thinks of her disability as a gift that allows her to have different thoughts about the world. It has expanded her world view and does not often limit her.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - WINTER DAY

GIRL WITH RED HAIR (18) carries two glass coffee mugs on saucers, one with a vanilla latte and the other with hot chocolate.

She sets the vanilla latte down in front of GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR (18) onto their small marble table with one open brown wicker chair. The coffee shop has a large window that the two girls are looking out of while they speak to each other.

GIRL WITH RED HAIR
Here you go!

GIRL WITH RED HAIR sits in the chair next to GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR.

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR
Thanks so much.

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GIRL WITH RED HAIR

Ok ok! How's college?! Give me all the details.

GIRL WITH RED HAIR talk animatedly putting both her hand on the table and excitedly leaning in to hear the story.

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR

I love love love all of my classes and my friends are all so amazing but it's been quite rough adjusting to school. There are a bunch of places on my campus that I just can't get to because of my chair.

GIRL WITH RED HAIR

WHAT?!? I thought that after that law they had to make every building ADA accessible.

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR

Well that only applies to buildings that are made or renovated after the law was passed. They aren't forced to make any of the older building accessible.

GIRL WITH RED HAIR

That's so crazy, I have never thought about that before.

This realization sends GIRL WITH RED HAIR into a spiral. Daydreaming, this internal monologue begins:

GIRL WITH RED HAIR

I wonder how accessible my school is. If my friend came to visit me would she even be able to get to my dorm? Could she get to all my classes? No I don't think so. Most of the building on campus are really old and I do not think that they have elevators. That must be so difficult for people with disabilities. Even if they had a room that was accessible, not being able to get into their friends dorms would be totally awful. I can't imagine how that would work.

Snapping back to reality, GIRL WITH RED HAIR speaks again.

GIRL WITH RED HAIR

I am so sorry that is happening to you. Has there been any effort by faculty or admin to accommodate your needs.

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR

Not really. They have moved all of my classes to floors that are accessible to me but it just makes me so upset that I can't just get everywhere.

Now while showing a montage of GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR struggling in her college environment, a British man has a VoiceOver describing this experience.

BRITISH VOICEOVER

College's as institutions have always been inaccessible to many groups of people. First, they were only designated for rich white men, then as social shifts occurred rich white women were allowed to enter. Continuing on as the world changed again poorer people were accommodated through scholarships, then ethnic minorities were granted a spot. With the introduction of DEI policies many schools have made major efforts to give everyone a fair shot. Despite these inclusion policies, there has never been a major cultural shift to include people with disabilities. For example, this young woman is unable to enter many buildings at her school because an effort has never been made to make them accessible and they are not forced by the government because the buildings were created before ADA policies were put into place. More than physical disabilities, mental disabilities are rarely adapted for as people are meant to conform to standard ways of thinking.

(MORE)

BRITISH VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

Putting people into these boxes
 whether metaphorically or
 literally keeping people with
 disabilities out of higher
 education, perpetuates
 institutional stereotypes and
 solely produces one type of
 thinker that is seen as coherent
 and productive by society.

The girls have clearly been chatting about GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR'S specific experience. Their coffee's are almost finished now.

GIRL WITH RED HAIR

Wow. You go through a lot every
 day just to pursue your education.

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR

Yeah. *sighs* It's been quite
 draining on my mental health this
 past semester.

GIRL WITH RED HAIR

I am so sorry that's been
 happening to you.

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR

Thanks, I guess. Are you ready to
 go?

GIRL WITH RED HAIR

OMG YES! I am so excited for the
 bookstore!!

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR

Me too!!!

A song that fits the vibe begins and GIRL WITH RED HAIR stands up from her seat and moves towards the door. The table in the coffee shop are very close together so GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR has some difficulty navigating the tight space. It is clearly not built with enough space to be accessible to her chair and the viewer kind of wonders how she got in there. She turns to a couple drinking coffee that was not there when she arrived.

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR

Can you please scoot your chair in
 so I can get by?

LADY PIERCING BLUE EYES

giving a weird glance/glare Umm
 sure...

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LADY PIERCING BLUE EYES scoots her chair in just slightly, not giving GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR enough space to actually get by.

GIRL WITH RED HAIR
Please scoot your chair in more.
My friend needs to get out.

LADY PIERCING BLUE EYES
Oh of course darling. *feigning
innocence*

GIRL WITH RED HAIR
rolling her eyes Yeah thanks.

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR
Thanks girl, people are so weird
about my chair.

Fade black

Cut to girls outside on the street.

INT. SHOPPING STREET - SUNNY WINTER DAY

The girls are moving along the sidewalk and chatting. The sidewalk is lined with plants and it is sunny outside but a little windy and cold.

GIRL WITH RED HAIR
What is the name of the bookstore
again?

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR
Pages!

GIRL WITH RED HAIR
Oh yes that's right, I love
independent book stores. I am so
sick of big chains. You looking
for any specific books?

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR
I would love a book with a
disabled main character but it has
hard to find one that interests
me. It feels like every story with
a disabled main character makes
the story rely on that fact and I
want something that displays
challenges but also highlights the
strengths of disabilities.

GIRL WITH RED HAIR

I guess I never really thought about it like that. People aren't defined by one characteristic so why are characters so often portrayed that way.

Cut to animated drawings appearing on the real screen background.

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR

I want a story where the main character is in a wheel chair, but that doesn't matter. People make the world accessible to her and that means that she can fall in love. I want a story where two characters don't know the other is disabled because they are masking infant of each other and describes the joy they feel as they learn more about each other. I want adorable love stories that would work even if the character wasn't disabled.

Animations disappear suddenly and it cuts to a montage similar to the one before at the college. There is sad music playing and the VoiceOver returns

BRITISH VOICEOVER

For centuries, disabled characters have been used as the defining trait of a villain in a novel and characters disabilities have been used as their reasoning for turning bad. This heavily contributes to why disabled people can be observed by many as such a negative group of people and they don't often think about the joys that they can maintain. People in and around the disabled community want more stories that show disabled joy and people overcoming life challenges with their disability only being a side mention. True representation does not rely on a character being disabled to continue the flow of the story.

Montage ends and the camera immediately cuts back to the girls on the street for the last line of this scene.

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GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR
That is what true representation
looks like.

The girls keep moving quietly thinking while next to each other.

Fade black. And cut to the girls inside the bookstore.

INT. PAGES BOOKSHOP - SUNNY WINTER DAY

The bookshop is an adorable antique looking place. There are books piled everywhere and it seems to be a second hand shop. The aisles however are very wide and easy for GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR to navigate. It is cluttered only on the shelves not on the floor. There is cat sitting in the window looking after the shop and the BOOKSTORE OWNER seems like a friendly old man but he is distracted by a technology issue at the moment. Overall, the place feels very warm and inviting with the dark wood and homey atmosphere.

GIRL WITH RED HAIR
I know this doesn't fix the main
issue but what if we play a game.

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR
Ummmm... okay... what?

GIRL WITH RED HAIR
We can go around and think about
what books in this shop have
disabled characters, even if they
are minor characters. I have never
really thought about it but I
already have a few ideas.

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR
Hmm sounds fun! Give me a second
to think.

GIRL WITH RED HAIR
Maybe we go around and find the
books then come back and talk?

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR
Sounds like a plan.

Cut to short montage of the girls moving about the store and picking books off the shelf and ending up in a back corner with piles beside them. GIRL WITH RED HAIR is now sitting in a little chair and GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR has books piled on her lap.

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR
You ready?

GIRL WITH RED HAIR
Yep!!

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR
Ok go.

As they are saying each book the girls hold up their book to show the other and in turn highlighting it to the camera.

GIRL WITH RED HAIR
Out of my mind, cerebral palsy,
main character.

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR
Hunger games, Avoxes' are mute and
deals with PTSD and other mental
challenges.

GIRL WITH RED HAIR
Six of Crows, various physical
disabilities, 3 of the 6 main
characters

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR
The weight of feathers, concept of
the freak show, main character

GIRL WITH RED HAIR
Tomorrow and tomorrow and
tomorrow, limp from major foot
damage following car crash, main
character. I am not sure how much
I love this depiction but it is
there.

GIRL IN WHEELCHAIR
El defo, deaf, graphic novel

This clearly goes on for minutes more as the girls have massive snacks but the camera fades to black after showing them smiling and laughing about books. Happy music begins playing and the credits roll.