

SPEAK YOUR MIND

a one-act

by DANIEL CURZON

CHARACTERS: (2)

WISHY-WASHY, either sex, any age

OUTSPOKEN, male, over forty

SETTING: Two airplane seats (or chairs)

LIGHTS UP

WW: (coming down the aisle, pointing at seat at window) This must be me.

OUT: (moves aside, to make room, says nothing)

WW: Thank you!

OUT: (nods, says nothing)

WW: I always check all my luggage.

OUT: (nods, says nothing)

WW: I like to be free! (shows hands free) I'm sorry if I'm bothering you.

OUT: (smiles weakly, says nothing)

WW: People ought to talk more, like they used to. Nowadays everybody's on their devices. They don't even pay any attention to live people, even the people right in front of them. I saw two kids in a restaurant the other day. They couldn't have been more than three and four years old. And both of them had iPads! At the table with their parents, this was. They didn't even speak, the four of them! It's not right. People are forgetting how to talk to one another. It's just not right.

OUT: You're too fat.

WW: What?!

OUT: You said you wanted to talk.

WW: I'm not fat!

OUT: It's a start.

WW: You're not supposed to comment on people's appearance.

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OUT: Unless it's a compliment. Like, your hair looks nice.

WW: Thank you.

OUT: I didn't mean your hair. You can say somebody's hair looks nice, but you can't say it looks dirty and disgusting.

WW: I was just looking for chit chat. To pass the time.

OUT: I know that. But you started it. Let's talk about immigration.

WW: Maybe we shouldn't.

OUT: Not every immigrant is here slaving away in a job nobody else wants. I lost my job to an immigrant. I used to be a computer programmer, but I lost mine to some guy from India. I had to train him in my own job and then I was kicked out. By the way, his English was terrible.

WW: Isn't that sort of racist?

OUT: No, it's not! You could barely understand him.

WW: I try not to be . . .

OUT: "Racist" is the most overused word in the language. You can comment on a British accent or a German accent, but god forbid if you should notice one by "a: person of color"! They are beyond comment, except flattery. I am so glad a "person of color" took my job! I'm overjoyed that I have to fucking choose #1 for Spanish! At least it isn't #2 – yet!

WW: Maybe I'll just read.

OUT: No, no, I like this. It's been building up.

WW: I must say I don't even notice what color people are.

OUT: Bullshit! Of course, you notice. You tiptoe around like a total coward even when they mug you on the street. "I am so sorry I was on the street when you were in the mood to mug."

WW: Actually, crime statistics show that –

OUT: Do you ever watch the news? How they try to hide when the culprit is black or Hispanic. But not when they're white! The other day fifteen teenage black girls robbed and trashed a popcorn store – I am not making this up! The sales clerk called them "niggers" and kicked them out. Who got in trouble? The sales clerk! It's worse to call somebody a nigger than it is to rob and trash a popcorn store! But that's where we are in this world today.

WW: Maybe they were poor.

OUT: Yeah, they were popcorn-deprived! And who said poor people are inherently more deserving than rich people? Says who!?

WW: Perhaps . . .

OUT: Perhaps, my ass! We've gone from one extreme to the other. You used not to be able to say anything good about certain groups. Now you can't say anything bad, even when it is totally true and based on your own personal experience!

WW: Well, we do have to make concessions because –

OUT: Oh, Christ! Not that again. I gave up white guilt when I left Detroit, where I grew up. Or should I say when I was driven out of Detroit by the terrible behavior of the citizens of that fair shithole. Don't tell what I am supposed to see. I'll tell you what I saw with my own eyes. Have you seen these latter-day TV shows and movies about Detroit? What a crock! Oh, yeah, the real problem was rich white people and cops. I have no love for cops, but no wonder they are so nervous and shoot anything that moves. They've learned how to survive. Why don't you become a cop for one day in Detroit and see how many "concessions" you still want to make. The best thing I ever did in my life is move out of Detroit.

WW: I'm sorry if you've had bad experience. Still, you shouldn't overgeneralize about –

OUT: Cops are pigs! Nobody's questioning that. They're dumb, badly trained, and trigger happy. It's not either/or. They're all shit bags.

WW: What about that young man of color who grabbed the AR-15 rifle away from that killer in the waffle shop in Tennessee?

OUT: Well, good for him! He got more coverage than the President of the United States.

WW: Oh, you're not one of *his* supporters, are you?

OUT: What do you think I am? Nuts? The President of our United States is a certified douche bag. I wouldn't piss on his hair if I was on fire! He tells more lies than a four-year-old kleptomaniac.

WW: Well, I'm glad to see that you –

OUT: I hate Republicans. All they care about is themselves. I hate the "Progressives" too. So sanctimonious! A plague on both your houses.

WW: I was going to say that I'm glad to see that you're not a white supremacist.

OUT: Don't put me in a box. Whites are hardly saints. But more blacks have been killed by blacks in the last decade than they have been by white supremacists for all time! Give me a break! Do black lives matter? Yeah, and so do black crimes.

WW: Well, it was very nice talking with you.

OUT: I'm not finished yet.

WW: Sorry. I was hoping for more of a conversation.

OUT: Okay, what do you want to get off your chest?

WW: Have you been looking at my chest?

OUT: Oh, for god's sake. Now you're going to accuse me of sexual harassment?! I couldn't care less about your chest. It's just an expression.

WW: Well, there are quite a few "expressions" that are offensive.

OUT: Most of the past is offensive. Get over it. .

WW: What is that supposed to mean?

OUT: Don't be surprised if men stop talking to women altogether. Who wants to be accused of something awful every other minute?!

WW: I doubt that men will stop talking to women.

OUT: Yeah, because they get horny. They'll talk to anybody if they think they can get orgasm out of it.

WW: Whoa! Now who's being hard on men?

OUT: If you think a man says he likes your brooch because he likes your brooch, you're crazy. He wants an orgasm. Unless he's gay – and then he *does* want your brooch!

WW: Not all gays want brooches. I won't sit here and listen to these stereotypes. I won't!

OUT: A stereotype is a truth that has gone out of fashion even when it's still true.

WW: Society advancers because people stop being bigoted and small-minded.

OUT: There's bigoted, and then there's observant. I'm observant! And when you make it so that nobody can voice an honest opinion about pre-selected topics, you don't get "advances." You get . . . me.

WW: My mother taught me not to discuss politics or religion or –

OUT: Now you're talking. Religion is the biggest pile of crap ever visited upon the human race.

WW: Well, some people find great comfort in times of stress when –

OUT: Exactly! They latch on to the most incredible nonsense merely to be “comforted.” “Yeah, I'm dying of a botched dialysis by a terrible nurse, but I'm going to go to Heaven where I will sit on the right hand of God and get free dialysis for all eternity!”

WW: You don't seem to have much sympathy for . . .

OUT: Most people live too long. They work in boring jobs, have annoying children, finally retire, and find themselves bored out of their minds with nothing to do but take stool softener and watch “Jeopardy.”

WW: That's not very nice.

OUT: You didn't say it wasn't true!

WW: That's just your way of looking at it.

OUT: I bet you've donated a ton to St. Jude's Hospital, haven't you? For those adorable cripples!

WW: We don't use that term anymore.

OUT: Adorable?

WW: No, the other one.

OUT: They're not *not* cripples because you change the vocabulary.

WW: There's no need to go out of our way to hurt people's feelings.

OUT: There's no need to shut up everybody just because the truth is nasty.

WW: Most people are just doing their best, trying to –

OUT: To get theirs. I get it.

WW: I bet if you had an attack of some kind right now, those around us would come to your rescue.

OUT: Okay, let's see. (calling out) I have pulmonary embolisms! Help! Help!

(Pause.)

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OUT: See, nobody cares.

WW: They couldn't hear you.

OUT: They couldn't hear you – because of the airplane noise.

OUT: (louder) Help! I need a kidney transplant! Help!

(Pause.)

OUT: See!

WW: Well, I'm not giving you *my* kidney.

OUT: Of course you aren't.

WW: I doubt we're a match.

OUT: We can a double switch. You donate to somebody else . . . or never mind.

WW: How did you become so . . . so . . .?

OUT: Honest?

WW: I guess that's one way of looking at it.

OUT: "Misanthropic" is the word. A lovely word. You know what? I used to hold my tongue, for years. Then one day I decided: this is letting other people telling me what I feel, not what I actually feel.

WW: I believe it's called civilization.

OUT: And it's discontents. I think it started on so-called Celebrate Diversity Day – at work, this was. When I had a job.

WW: Surely, you celebrate diversity.

OUT: Don't call me Shirley! Diversity used to be called the Tower of Babel, and it was a curse. People dislike each other when they all look alike and speak the same language and have the same customs. Add "diversity" and you get people scratching each other's eyes out for jobs, living space, and their ways over your ways. Yippee! Let's celebrate!

WW: I think we're doing just fine.

OUT: History is stomping on your neck right this minute, and you don't even know it. That is the history of the world. Groups invade other groups and everybody does one of three things, or

some combination, and they all start with “f.” Fight, flee, or . . . make love. And the losers don’t get a casino afterwards.

WW: How can you live with such unpleasant thoughts in your head?

OUT: How can you not?!

WW: I suppose I just have more respect and trust for other human beings than you seem to.

OUT: Well, aren’t you precious?!

WW: Most people just need to be understood and loved.

OUT: Most people don’t stand a chance.

WW: Precisely!

OUT: Because they have bad genes, bad luck, and bad buttholes.

WW: Please! I’m going to –

OUT: They can’t help it. They’re made in God’s image: junk food in at the top and crap out at the bottom.

WW: Sir! (or Miss or Madam)

OUT: It’s not true? Oh, I’m so out of line!

WW: If people are treated right and given half a chance –

OUT: They fuck it up and go to Hell?

WW: You believe in Hell?

OUT: Hell’s too good for most people. No, I don’t believe in Hell. People don’t have souls, so why would there be a Hell?

WW: You don’t believe people have souls?

OUT: (skeptically) You believe people have souls?!

WW: Of course they do!

OUT: (waving hand) Oops, there goes a soul right now!

WW: I must say I have never met such a cynical person before in my entire life.

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OUT: Thank you.

WW: It wasn't a compliment.

OUT: I've met lots of people like you before.

WW: I don't think we're ever going to see eye to eye.

OUT: I'm sure you're right about that.

WW: You must be very lonely.

OUT: Yes, I am. All I have is Facebook, and I can't post any of these things I think there. My three friends wouldn't like it.

WW: Maybe you should see a counselor or a priest.

OUT: I am a priest. I made that up – about being a computer programmer.

WW: No!

OUT: Yes!

WW: How do you comfort those who come to you for . . . ?

OUT: I lie.

WW: No!

OUT: Yes!

WW: How do you manage?

OUT: People love bullshit and those who serve it to them. I am very beloved in my parish.

WW: However do you manage to continue in your profession?

OUT: About once every two months I take a plane trip somewhere and talk to somebody like you, and you can't imagine how much better I feel afterwards.

WW: And how do the people you talk to feel afterwards?

OUT: I have no idea. I heard rumors that there have been several suicides.

WW: No!

OUT: Yes!

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WW: And do you feel guilty about that?

OUT: Yes! . . . No! You can't live other people's lives. You can only try to.

WW: Perhaps you should stop doing what you're doing.

OUT: Are you kidding? I am the beginning of a great new social movement. And when the dam finally breaks, *apres moi le deluge!*

WW: I don't speak French. Is that good or bad?

OUT: We shall see. We shall see.

BLACKOUT

(The sound of an airplane taking off.)