

# ambassador of homosexuality

mk zariel

Summer 2024

queers like us ache to carve ourselves starring roles in the pageant  
called gay rights. become picture-perfect  
assimilated gays who've never once had an emotional breakdown  
queers like us can't have problems can we? if we do, you will realize  
your hierarchies spell death for our chosen family

so queers like us create the illusion of the normal  
erase the the way a slur not yet reclaimed  
burns holes in luminous queer skin, our relatives claiming they don't think of us as gay  
and worst of all, we're free: to be complicit in murder, to marry our oppressors  
but in three fifths of the country, not all that free from conversion therapy.  
appeasement is our world—  
you might even feel—heaven forbid—embarrassed by your gay jokes in the chat  
if you realized your trolling was more earth-shattering than annoying

we are the palatable queers in stock photos and wholesome tv shows  
a legion of gay best friends, anti-heroes, ghosts  
drawn in eternal smiles, then struggle that paints our existence  
as a tragedy. we don't talk about activist burnout  
the perpetually stressed lesbians who cry all night to kimya dawson  
wondering if the day after the revolution  
they'll finally get to take a deep breath.

in your so-called representation, we're too stressed  
to recall the days when we were preschoolers  
who stared at the other girls, feeling like an alien being for aching  
to sit next to her at circle time and be her world  
sometimes we still feel like sad gay preschoolers—  
but we shape ourselves on the daily to win begrudging smiles of acceptance  
sometimes softly pitying stares, never the bring-down-heteronormativity-with-me-baby  
kind of love that only queers can have for one another

maybe we can become the queers who declare to straight society  
we are done being perfect humans.

i am not your ambassador of homosexuality  
doomed to keep smiling for your straight opinions  
never discover the liberation i can embrace

not your sob story, not the teenage statistic  
you trot out at fundraisers in your cheesy suit and tie  
to make donors to your “nonprofit”  
feel straight and self-important.

and by the way, i might have even volunteered with you  
if only you had started an affinity group.  
but you didn't, and the last time you checked your privilege was never. so today  
our queerness is everything your heteronormativity stands against—  
both a revolutionary force and the way my heart  
bursts into queer love and mild panic when i see any other woman  
maybe tonight we can do our preschool selves proud:  
our queer struggle is not yours to claim

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