

TO BE QUEER

KAIA MCDERMOTT

I grew up knowing I was different.

Well, I grew up and realised I was different.

If that sounds familiar to you, then hi, welcome to the club.

My name is Kaia, and for the past four years, I've known I was Lesbian, and very recently, I learned I was Gender Queer, too.

When I was younger, I didn't realise how that would make people treat me differently, until, at age 10, I had somewhat of a rude awakening to the world of homophobia.

No matter what kind of discrimination you might've dealt with, we all have that one moment in common, the day when you heard another kid whisper a joke to their friend and realise

'Oh. They're talking about people like me.'

I've spent these last four years with the grim understanding that I will always be other to many people, and yet... strangely, I'm kind of okay with that.

Because any sort of judgement and hatred friends and strangers alike have thrown at me for it pales in comparison to the overwhelming love and support I have been shown.

And over those four years, I've begun to learn that it's the little things that count. In the face of powerlessness and fear, it's the everyday actions that make the most impact.

The pride stickers haphazardly glued to Chromebooks; the 'everyone is welcome' sign hanging above the classroom door; the way some try their very best to use your correct pronouns even if they fumble them sometimes — all of it sends a silent but striking message:

Even if you are different, you still deserve to belong.

And that, my friends, is what it means to be Queer.

Being Queer means seeing the darkness and scorn and standing bold and tall in spite of it all.

It means that amidst the pain and the chaos, we dance badly, and we laugh too loud, we love and we live.

We live.

