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What I wish happened -

C.R Duke

"I'm gay."

Awkwardness thrashes against the silence. A glass of water is retrieved from the kitchen out of sight. Upon returning the awkwardness dies and kindness replaces the silence with a…

"*So…* you're a queer?"

A great word. Rolls off the tongue better than any other variation in our acronym. Reading this no matter in what way - we are all queer. So let us proclaim it, reclaimed.

"-you could drop the 'a' though."

"Right."

On the opposite end of the same couch, a safe person sits and takes a sip from their drink. It's fair they might need a second and as their brain receives some likely needed fuel the safe space spreads before them both.

"That's ace." They exhale, "and what a word – queer." They let it punctuate the space.

The other joins in, "queer. Yeah really rolls off the tongue" Told you.

"Weird"

"Ha! The construct of having to come out or your gayness?"

"No, this is honestly great… no it's just I've thought of myself as queer." Intimacy is when into me you see.

"And…"

"Feels good…"

"As it should." They take a sip and interrupt it with a clarification, "Not to say there is any problem with gay. I'm just not married to the idea of you not being able to change. Or feel that you need to do this again if you discover you're pan or asexual or… not that it's a choice or anything but it just seems unnecessary to limit yourself."

"Thanks."

One friend thinks – *someone once said to love is to set the person free* and the other friend thinks – *I feel lighter.* It was Barbie who said that. Gotta love an ally.

"Weird." The ally says. Maybe not so aligned?
Heart races, breath hitches - "Sorry? Look if you have a problem -"

"No not your queerness! Like literally queer means weird."

Phew – safe they think, "odd."

Distracted, "huh?"

"Doesn't it mean odd?"

"What's the difference?"

"Yeah, different works too."

What a blessing. To march through life to the beat of your heart in your chest, not the metronome of *everyone else.* The pipeline from odd to shameless to living a full life is well-worn by queers through history.

"It's a brave thing to be different."

"It feels impossible to be the *same*." Does that make it less brave to be different? "Doesn't feel brave."

"Oh, but this is the first step to bravery, living in your truth. Now you get to track a path through life making **gut** decisions."

"Like IBS?"

"No! Like when you know it's going to be a good day. Or the right move?" Lost them.

"I don't know her."

"Like Sylvia Rivera, whose gut changed the world. The drag queen who threw the first stone at Stonewall. At gun-toting-police, inciting a full on, fuck off riot. Her gut said that discrimination against queers had to stop for the modern world to become fair," Slay. "By living your life, you will hear your gut clearer." Day by day building your convictions, ready for when your gut says *Go!*

"Now, that's brave."

"I think it helped that she wasn't alone…" crumbs crumble on the couch between them.

"Hmm-" interest piqued.

"Marsha P Johnson stood alongside her friend and together they rioted, organised, protested, to drag modernity kicking and screaming into the 21st century. Where queers are treated with dignity and kindness."

"Solidarity."

"She was a trans woman, so her fight was Sylvia's."

"Why isn't T at the start?"

"Nu-uh – those lesbians have earned the right to the start of the acronym."

"Because they are the true trendsetters? C'mon… every straight guy looks like lesbians did a couple of years ago."
"True. Though…" levity sucks out of the space with the other one's gravity. "I think they're first to remind us that lesbians were the only nurses to provide dignity and companionship to those dying of AIDS." Standing bedside to thousands of brothers and sons, lovers and best friends, that weren't there's - as they died.

"Shit. First place it is."

For the first time they look at each other. The deep night out the window has received everything.

“You know you’re not alone either, right?”

“I’m not dying!”

“All I mean is that I may not be queer, and I still hope to live a brave life, in kindness and honour of my heart. So, I stand alongside the queer agenda.”

“HA! We have an agenda?”

The safe space bleeds back into the rest of the world. They stand and hug tight for a beat while the night watches on and stars wink.

The End.