How We Kiss

It’s not just what you know — it’s what you never have to know. It’s happening every day, at that party or park or potluck, when you can look like what you really are and touch who you really want to touch without feeling like you’re violating others’ expectations. It’s never being forced to examine accepted ideas of gender and sexuality, despite their arbitrary nature. It’s never having to realize that people are seeing you as something you know you are not.

Privilege is about safety and belonging. It lies hidden in identities and desires that don’t need to be justified or defended or even spoken of, because they reaffirm the identities and desires of most of the people around you. Privilege is assuming, before you even get there, that your gender and your sexuality are welcome and expected wherever you might want to go.

Cisgender and heterosexual privilege are written into the social world with bodies. Everywhere we go, we expect that men are men and women are women and that the most basic need of each is to touch the other. These expectations are in the air at every social event and party, and then when a body that has never wondered why it is male and a body that feels female beyond question kiss each other in the middle of the dance floor — lightning strikes.

In one searing flash, we all see living proof of what is normal and breathing proof of what is not. We fall right into their traps when the straight boy bumps us out of the way as we dance, and expected and recognized for what they are, our privilege is assuming, before we even get there, that our gender and sexuality are welcome and expected wherever we might want to go.

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