**Tuck:** Shopping for sex toys can sometimes feel overwhelming or dysphoric, but [shopenby.com](https://shopenby.com/) aims to create a better experience for the queer, trans, and gender nonconforming community. They also have day-to-day trans stuff like packers, and dilators, and hats that say “enby,” and 2% off all profits are donated to organizations focused on improving the lives of queer and trans people of color. Visit [shopenby.com](https://shopenby.com/), that’s S H O P E N B Y dot com, and use the code “genderreveal” at checkout to get 10% off your order, and support the show.

[Gender Revealtheme song begins]

**Tuck**: Welcome to Gender Reveal, a podcast where we hopefully get a little bit closer to understanding what the hell gender is. I’m your host and resident gender detective, Tuck Woodstock.

[Gender Reveal theme song ends]

Hey everyone. I hope you’re all hanging in there. This week on the show I am very excited to share my conversation with sports writer and unofficial Gender Reveal merch model Britni de la Cretaz. Britni is simply one of the best and most prolific reporters currently covering trans athletes, and I’ve been bringing up their work non-stop in workshops and interviews, ever since I did a deep dive for this episode and realized just how many of their articles are just incredible examples of what I want trans reporting to look like. They also just published their first book, it came out last Tuesday. It’s called “Hail Mary,” and it is a history of the National Women’s Football League, so we’ll talk about that.

[excerpt from interview plays]

***Britni:*** *There’s definitely trans folks in this book, even if we’re not identifying them in that way.*

[excerpt from interview ends]

**Tuck:** We also talk about gender maximalism, sobriety, whether sports are gay, trans sports discourse, how to report on trans athletes in an ethical way, and what the future of gender in sports might look like.

[excerpt from interview plays]

***Britni:*** *It requires really getting creative and blowing it up, and I don’t know that we are there yet.*

[excerpt from interview ends]

**Tuck:** But before we get to all that, I just want to tell y’all that I truly thought the merch shop was gone for good, but it has been salvaged for at least another month. So I’m gonna toss some new designs and some old favorites in the shop, just in case anyone is doing some overtly trans holiday shopping. And as always, 100% of proceeds will go to trans artists and trans-led organizations. That’s all at [bit.ly/gendermerch](https://gender-reveal.creator-spring.com/). And now, it’s time for This Week in Gender.

[This Week in Gendertheme plays]

**Tuck:** OK, obviously a lot has happened since the last time we did a This Week in Gender segment. For example, you may have heard that the US finally issued its first ever passport with an “X” gender marker. The passport was issued to Dana Zzyym, who is the Associate Director for the Intersex Campaign for Equality, and who has been working diligently towards getting this passport from the US government since September 2014, which is before non-binary identity was legally recognized anywhere in this country. For more on this, check out our This Week in Gender segment from Episode 98.

But speaking of things you may already know, you have surely heard just too much about the Dave Chappelle Netflix debacle. I did want to spread the word that our friends at the Cancel Me, Daddy podcast have done a great job covering this situation, and recently released an interview with B. Pagels-Minor and Terra Field, who are the two trans employees at the heart of this controversy, and who are, by the way, currently filing unfair labor practice charges with the National Labor Relations Board, so keep an eye on that. Katelyn and Oliver-Ash wrote, “Speaking with B. and Terra, you really get the sense that this was not about Dave Chappelle specifically, but more the last straw in a string of missteps by Netflix in how it claimed to listen to its trans staff.” For more on that, check out the Cancel Me, Daddy podcast. This is not an ad, I just love to point to people who know more about things than I do. Of course, sometimes I don’t have an expert to point to so I just have to do some light googling and go from there, and on that note, have you heard about the Supreme Court Catholic hospital hysterectomy thing?

[Gentle guitar music plays in background]

**Tuck:** Well, apparently back in 2016 a man named Evan Minton tried to get a hysterectomy at Mercy San Juan Medical Center, which is a Catholic hospital near Sacramento. The hospital cancelled the appointment just two days before the surgery, upon learning that Evan was trans. And of course the hospital claimed that it does not discriminate against trans patients, but does refuse to perform certain procedures that would violate its Roman Catholic faith, like sterilization, euthanasia, or abortion. But Evan says that the hospital routinely performed hysterectomies. There was actually going to be one that same day at that hospital. But his appointment was cancelled because he disclosed that he was a man, and in the view of the hospital, Evan getting a hysto for trans reasons meant that it was an elective hysto rather than a medically necessary one. Even though gender dysphoria…. blah blah blah, etc. etc. and obviously it was medically necessary. Anyway, Evan was able to get a hysto three days later at another hospital owned by the same people, so don’t worry about that. But Evan and the ACLU later sued the hospital for discrimination, and here’s where we get to the Supreme Court part.

First, the San Francisco Superior Court dismissed the lawsuit, saying that since Evan was able to get the surgery within a few days from a related hospital, it didn’t count as discrimination - L O L. Evan appealed and in 2019 the California Court of Appeals… undismissed the case? That can’t be the term. Remissed? Nope, that’s something else. Anyway, the court said it could go forward, and the hospital appealed to the Supreme Court, saying that Evan’s lawsuit, quote “poses a profound threat to faith-based healthcare institutions’ ability to advance their healing ministries consistent with the teachings of their faith,” end quote. OK, so last Monday, the Supreme Court declined to hear that appeal, they basically were like “we’re gonna mind our business on that one.” That basically means that Evan can stop having cases about his case, and can go forward with his original suit against the hospital, as he had been trying to do for fully five years.

Other similar lawsuits against hospitals and insurance companies are also working their way through the courts right now, and we will keep you posted if anything interesting or relevant happens with any of them. In the meantime, this has been This Week in Gender.

[Background music ends]

[This Week in Gendertheme plays]

[Electronic music plays in background of interview introduction]

**Tuck:** Britni de la Cretaz is a freelance sports writer whose work focuses on the intersection of sports and gender. They are the co-author of “Hail Mary: The Rise and Fall of the National Women’s Football League.” Their writing has appeared in The New York Times, The Atlantic, Sports Illustrated, The Washington Post, and many, many more.

[Electronic music stops]

**Tuck:** The way we always start the show is by asking, in terms of gender, how do you describe yourself?

**Britni:** I usually just describe myself as trans, but if I have to get specific I will say non-binary.

**Tuck:** You wrote this great essay for Autostraddle about your maximalist aesthetic and how it also extends to your gender, and I love this especially because non-binary typically is defined as something we’re not, instead of a bunch of stuff that we are. Can you talk more about maximalist gender?

**Britni:** Yes. This is a very exciting thing for me. Also I discovered trans maximalism generally as a politic, which is very fun. But for me, gender as maximalism just means my gender is too much, it like can’t be contained by any box, any label. It can look different from day to day. Part of that is really what makes it fun. I think it’s always a surprise, and I think of it as like trying things on and taking them off, and layering them on top of each other, which is also how I decorate my home.

**Tuck:** I love that. You know, you’re a very prolific writer. You’ve written about many different sports, many different leagues. Are there themes that you feel like you return to over and over again? Obviously there’s the theme of gender, sports and culture, but sort of like more specifically are there arcs, or plots, or themes that you feel like come up often in your work?

**Britni:** It’s a good question. Yeah, like I do say sports and gender is the bucket that my work fits in. What’s interesting about that is that I started doing this before I realized I was trans, and so many people who do the work that I do say they write about women’s sports, and it’s like a little flag to me, right, like one of those little things that like after I realized I’m like “oh yeah, this makes sense.” I never categorized my work that way, I always was like so much broader than that, and felt like it was like gender specifically, and not just about women. I think of late my work really looks at trans folks, and trying to center trans people in stories. But I will say that that’s been hard, because right now it’s like a political lightning rod that everybody wants, and so I’m at a point where I’m trying to be really choosy about the stories that I’m telling when it comes to trans inclusion in sports, because I think that the cis media and mainstream media just flattens us to like one story that they want, over and over again, and I’m really bored by that. So I’m kind of taking a break. I have one story in the works that’s about inclusion policies, but other than that – I think the other theme in my work is, I’m a history nerd. So a lot of my stories actually come from me trying to do research to add historical context to something I’m interested in, and then realizing either it doesn’t exist, or it’s not very well known.

**Tuck:** Mm. Yeah, well speaking of which, I want to talk about your book “Hail Mary,” which is the history of the National Women’s Football League, in like the 1970s, and in it y’all write, “No one cared how feminine you were when executing a tackle, so the gender of butch and more masculine women were not policed the way it was on the street.” And I think contrasting with men’s sports where it’s a big deal if one football player comes out as gay ever in the history, or like this one baseball player, why is it that there has been space increasingly, over time, for some women on sports teams to be various levels of queer, whereas that space does not seem to exist within male sports.

**Britni:** Totally. There’s a couple things at play here. One being just that there are more queer women playing sports than there are queer men playing sports. I think that’s a fair thing to say, and so the sheer number of athletes I think has created an openness and an allowance to be openly queer. But I also think there’s something about women’s sports being more progressive and inclusive in general, and it’s something about women who are already having to fight just to play sports, like they’re already sort of the resistance, they’re already going up against authority and status quo and what they’ve been told they should and shouldn’t do. They’re already challenging gender norms often, just by participating. I think it’s why we see them on the frontlines of racial justice work, why they have some of the most progressive collective bargaining agreements. Just in general, I think these are people that have had to challenge authority and the status quo just in order to play the sport they love, and it creates room for them to push on a lot of different boundaries and norms.

**Tuck:** Yeah. That makes sense to me. I do have a lot of questions about trans people in sports. Is it going to be annoying if I ask you on the gender podcast [laughs] about it?

**Britni:** No! OK, first of all I’m expecting it, and second of all I’m really just bored of talking to cis people about this, so yeah, let’s go.

**Tuck:** I mean speaking of talking to cis people I actually have a lot of questions, also, about talking to cis people. And one is that, I mean obviously we’ve all heard a lot of cis people be like “of course I support trans women, but it’s just not fair for them to play sports.” So I have a question which is just, surely there are some people who genuinely can be told “oh actually biological sex is also fake,” and they’d be like “oh OK, that sounds fine,” and a lot of people are just trying to be transphobic. What do you think the breakdown is on that, of like people who can be reasoned with at all ever, like who are reading your articles and are like “oh actually that makes perfect sense,” vs people who are like I actually just needed an excuse to be transphobic?

**Britni:** So I think the people that are gonna be transphobic are just gonna be transphobic, but I think there’s a lot of people who in general aren’t transphobic or aren’t intentionally transphobic, and who believe generally that trans folks and trans women should be included in women’s spaces and they should get to use the bathroom, and then you bring sport into it, and people get real weird, because the thing about sport is that it involves competition and winning. So people get like very up in arms about people’s right to win at sports, and what fair competition means. And particularly cis people, and even trans people who have internalized the cis framing around this, often argue that fairness should be about what’s fair to the cis people who have to compete against trans people and not what’s fair for the trans people who are trying to compete, or reframe it as “how do these cis athletes feel about having to compete against trans women,” and not how do the trans women feel about being excluded from the ability to compete. And also some of this sticky science and biological essentialism that comes in which, to be honest we just don’t have enough research even to know, and the research that we do have is shoddy and bad. It’s easy to buy into things in the name of science, I think, and it just gets really complicated, particularly in the US, around sport culture of like winning, and fairness, and so I think that there’s plenty of people that in general are like totally for trans inclusion in public life and space, who then get really weird when sports come up.

**Tuck:** Yeah. Yeah. I did have a question, because your work is at this really interesting intersection that I’ve heard you talk about, of bodily autonomy and privacy, because we know that it’s not appropriate to scrutinize, pry, objectify the body of women and trans people, but culturally we think that that’s OK to do to athletes because somehow, their bodies are part of their jobs. Which is also interesting to me, because I think arguably our bodies are part of most of our jobs. But how do you walk this line where it’s like, OK the readers want to gawk at the body of this person, your editors might want to gawk at the body of this person, it’s topically relevant, but also you don’t want to contribute to gawking at trans people and women’s bodies. How do you ride that line?

**Britni:** I am constantly grappling with this. So, I’m walking this line of trying to write about trans people through a trans lens, for cis people to be able to access. I don’t write *for* cis people though, and I think that’s a distinction that I want to make. But I’m constantly asking myself, like, where is the line, and I think an example of this, I wrote a story for Sports Illustrated about where non-binary athletes fit in the conversation about trans inclusion and sports, which is such a binary, organized and categorized thing, and one of the main, I don’t want to say characters, people, in this story is Layshia Clarendon, who is a WNBA player, and, you know, when I approached them about this story I actually did not know they were considering top surgery, and I’ll just clarify, Layshia uses all pronouns, so I’ll be using those interchangeably. When I reached out to Layshia he was like, “Oh, the timing on this is really interesting, I’m actually having these conversations with the league about ‘can I have this surgery and still be eligible to compete,’” and looking up anti-discrimination laws in the state where their team plays, and I felt like I needed to open with Layshia thinking about these things, because it was going to set up the questions that the rest of the piece was going to seek to grapple with. But I was so hyper aware of like, not being the person who opens with the trans person talking about medical transition and surgery and bodies. And I ended up breaking the fourth wall, and literally telling the audience, “This is bad form. Don’t do this. I am doing it for this reason.” And that was my way of letting trans readers know, too, like I’m aware that this is a thing that should generally be avoided, and I’m doing it really intentionally and here’s why I’m doing that. And so in that case, that was how I decided to approach it, because I also didn’t want to get dragged on Twitter for being like, “oh another trans story opening with top surgery”!

**Tuck:** Yeah, yeah. You know, it’s so interesting, because when I read that piece and other pieces you’ve written where you’ve used different pronouns interchangeably for the same person, I felt one hundred years old because I was like, wow, I thought it would actually be at some point mildly confusing that you’re using two or three sets of pronouns for this person interchangeably in the same sentence, and it simply wasn’t, and it made me feel like someone’s grandpa [laughs], being like “ohh.” But I imagine that, especially as a freelancer where you’re working with all sorts of different editors, that like a lot of your work is just fighting your editors into letting you write about trans people without treating them like aliens. Especially when you’re doing something like that, which is still actually pretty progressive in the field of writing about trans people, is allowing us to use multiple pronouns for the same person. So like, how much of your job is educating your editors about how they should not introduce errors into your work?

**Britni:** It’s a lot of my job. I have argued with editors about they/them pronouns being confusing, to the point that one time, I finally had to be like, “I want you to know that I use they/them pronouns, and every time that you tell me that this is confusing, you are invalidating me and my identity. I don’t want to pull that card, but at this point we’ve been arguing about this for a while, and here’s the dictionary, and here’s the Word of the Year, and here’s the historical usage, and whatever, you can do with that what you want, but you have to understand that this argument we’re having is not hypothetical.” And it worked, in that case. It sucks that I had to do that. The Sports Illustrated piece, I had a trans editor – Julie Kliegman – and that was intentional. I pitched Julie that story for a reason, and so she can go to mat with me on some of that, and I will say, she’s also the Copy Chief at Sports Illustrated, so the style guide largely, you know, she’s in charge of that. So when we’re thinking about how we use all of Layshia’s pronouns in a way that readers can follow, we played around with that. Do we change within sentence? Do we change by paragraph? Do we change – and what we ended up doing is changing by sentence. So the pronouns stayed consistent through each sentence but they would change on the next sentence, and it seemed to work. People did not get confused. But, I also am someone who, like I recently pulled a piece that I was working on for, oh, four or five months, with an editor, and it landed somewhere better, so actually like, great. It hasn’t come out yet, I’m excited for folks to read it. But when this editor hired me he had said specifically “I want to hire you after reading the Sports Illustrated piece, I don’t want to fall into these same traps that I think a lot of people fall into when they’re writing about trans people, and I trust you to be able to help me navigate when those might happen.” And then he proceeded to try to walk us directly into all of those traps. And one of the big things for me, I personally, and some other trans writers disagree with me on this, and that’s OK, but I personally, at this point in my work, try to stay away from getting too in the weeds on testosterone science. I think it’s really dehumanizing. A sentence or two, maybe a paragraph at most in a long feature, is fine. He put a whole entire section on testosterone science into the piece and then also tried to argue with me about the motives of why kids play sports. We couldn’t generalize, to say that kids don’t play sports to necessarily be Olympians, and this was the point when I say, “I’m going to walk away from this.” Even if it never lands anywhere, I’d rather walk away from it than actually do harm to my community by putting it out, and so, yes, it is not an insignificant amount of my work, to argue with editors about how to write about us.

**Tuck:** Right. And I just want to underline for listeners that if you hadn’t placed it somewhere else, then that meant you worked for four or five months and never got paid for anything, and I just want to underline that the reason why it’s so important to have trans writers and editors – not that people don’t know this, or don’t think this, who listen to the podcast – is because we are willing to take huge hits in order to not harm our community, whereas cis writers will harm our community without even knowing they’re doing it, and then get paid a bunch of money, like much more than we would get, to do it, and it just makes me want to lose my mind like every single day. So [laughs] I just wanted to like really underline the service that you’re doing by covering these things, and also being so thoughtful about the way you cover these things, just because it’s in such contrast to so many cis people, #notallcispeople, but so many cis people who are covering trans topics in this thoughtless or uninformed way. But all that is to say, so often when cis people are doing trans sports discourse, whether they’re writing about it or reading about it, they’re really doing trans women and girls in sports discourse, and whether women and girls should be allowed to compete against other women and girls. I love your piece in InsideHook about trans men and boys, and transmasc folks in sports, and what their options are, and I would love to hear you talk for folks who maybe haven’t read that yet about the way that trans men, transmasc people, trans boys, are approaching competing in sports and like what options they’re given.

**Britni:** Thank you. I love that piece. I was so excited to get to write it, and I actually will shout out InsideHook, because they approached me about it, and recognized that they’re a men’s publication, they’re a men’s culture publication, and often men’s publications don’t include trans men as part of their audience, or they don’t think to. So it was really great to hear not only that they wanted to do this, but once I agreed to do it they also completely trusted me, and let me take the piece in a direction that I felt like it needed to go. And, you know, a lot of the talk does focus on trans women and girls and transfeminine folks, and that’s like understandable as to why, but the hypervisibility of transfeminine people in sports actually, on the flipside you have this invisibility of trans men, trans boys, transmasculine people in sports. And so, their struggles, what they’re going through to try to compete, is really just, it’s not talked about as much, and I really wanted to highlight that. It was also an important piece to me because my partner is transmasculine and, you know, we both love sports, he grew up playing soccer and basketball, and we watch sports together, and so we have a lot of these conversations about what it was like for him to lose team sports, both when they stopped being co-ed and he had to go to a girls’ team, and then when that was a reason enough for him to stop playing, because it didn’t feel right, and he didn’t feel like he could transition and keep playing sports, and, so I also know how deeply personal that was, as well. We just hadn’t really seen it written about. So yeah, there’s like this invisibility that often can lead to a lot of the bills, you know we talk about anti-trans sport bills, they do specify trans girls and girls’ sports, but some, because they’re written by people that don’t know a lot about trans people, they just use these really broad terms, and so often trans boys are getting swept up in these bills without people even realizing it. Not that trans girls should be swept up in them either, but at least people can articulate how they think they should impact people, whereas no one’s really thinking about the impact on trans boys. But also there’s this sexism that comes into play, where they assume that anyone who is – I’ll just say assigned female at birth, I know not everyone likes that terminology, I’ll use it here – they assume they’re just not going to be that good at sports. So often actually there’s less barriers to inclusion, they’re just like allowed to go play boys’ sports because it’s assumed they’re never going to win. And this is really interesting because then we get into those conversations about, oh trans folks can play sports as long as they’re not winning, and we get into the right to win, and fairness, like, we’re circling back, right. This is all really interconnected. But it just felt really important to be able to get to highlight the ways in which it can be really affirming for trans kids – shocking! – to participate in sports that align with their gender, but also the ways that trans boys and transmasculine athletes often, there’s not a lot of people for them to look up to, there’s not a lot of guidance, and they just don’t see themselves represented, so they often don’t even know it’s an option.

**Tuck:** Right, and my understanding is that they can play on women’s teams until they decide to go on testosterone, if they do, and at that point they can no longer be on women’s teams, and can they be on men’s teams? I guess I’m confused, I don’t think there’s an actual answer to this, but I’m confused about at what point it switches, for what they’re allowed to do.

**Britni:** There is actual answers to this, but it depends on the level of sport. And often particularly as trans folks in sport are more visible in mainstream conversation, what’s starting to happen is the level of sport is getting flattened, and we’re starting to make these like apples to oranges comparisons, in which youth sports and Olympic sports are similar, and they’re not. So I think a lot of people don’t realize that at the youth level, I don’t think there’s anywhere currently that has a, like, testosterone-centered policy. There’s people trying to introduce that. But at the elite level, it is based on testosterone, and also, most of the women’s sport leagues that have trans inclusion policies, it’s based on testosterone, so the minute you decide to take T, you are considered to be doping, and you can therefore not play in women’s leagues anymore. In the National Women’s Hockey League – which just changed their name, they took “Women’s” out, they’re trying to be gender-neutral, to acknowledge that there are non-binary and trans folks in their league – but they had a policy in place that was hinged on testosterone, and they had a trans man playing in their league, and he socially transitioned and played a couple of seasons, and he had to retire from hockey in order to start hormones. And so that’s a choice that a lot of non-binary and transmasc athletes are being faced with, and particularly for those that are performing at higher levels where it’s their income, and it’s their job, and it’s their career, there are so many who just can’t even let themselves imagine what possibility they have, what their gender could possibly look like, because even the thought of taking T, even low-dose, like any amount of it, they would have to end their career over that. And so it’s like, you’re boxed in, you can’t even let yourself imagine or envision what that could be like.

**Tuck:** When you say they would have to end their career, is it because they would not be allowed to compete on teams that are not women’s teams, or because they don’t feel like they could make those teams, or why is that?

**Britni:** They’d be allowed. So, here is something fascinating. I learned that the leagues that we typically think of as men’s leagues, like the NFL, the NBA, are not, like in theory, women can be drafted into those leagues. Anyone, actually, of any gender, could be drafted into those leagues. There are no gender requirements. But then you get to a league like the WNBA or something, and in the collective bargaining agreement it says it’s a women’s league, and to qualify you have to be a woman. But there’s a lot of reasons that somebody might not want to transition into a quote unquote “men’s league,” whether it’s because they may not be able to compete in that league as it stands, and they would have to build skill to be at that level, or it doesn’t feel safe or welcoming. Like the locker rooms are not going to feel safe. Does it feel safe for someone to get, like, run over by an NFL linebacker? Probably not, and that’s just physical safety, in terms of size and strength, and has nothing to do with even social safety. So there’s a lot of reasons why people wouldn’t be able to transition over.

**Tuck:** Well, I mean speaking of leagues and teams making, perhaps, people of other genders or other gender experiences feel more welcome, I’m sure you’re tired of this question, but do you feel like sports can be reformed, to an extent that trans people can play comfortably in them?

**Britni:** I don’t know. If it can, we’re nowhere near it. Honestly, I don’t think society is ready to completely blow up the way we think about sports and how they’re organized. Something very fascinating is the reason that sports were sex-segregated in the first place is, it really became codified into law with Title IX. So we have Title IX that’s really celebrated for what it’s done for women’s sports, and it has been expanded and clarified that it includes, you know LGBTQ students, but essentially it’s separate but equal in practice, and still boils down to two sexes, which also is factually, biologically, like wrong, still doesn’t work. It doesn’t work on any level. But it’s so built in and codified at this point that it requires really getting creative and blowing it up, and I don’t know that we are there yet. I think that there are some club leagues and things like that, that are just starting to do cool things around letting players self-ID. They still have men’s and women’s divisions, but you can decide which division you want to play in, no questions asked at all, and I think, and I really hope that that’s the future that more leagues will go in, like working off the assumption that it is not a problem until it’s proven to be, rather than it’s a problem until it’s proven not to be, and that’s my hope for the future. But I do not think we’re anywhere near ready to have the conversations that need to happen to truly make sports gender-inclusive for trans, non-binary and gender nonconforming people.

**Tuck:** Yeah. Well, speaking of that, I have one more sports question for you, and then I’ll give you a break on sports, but, the 2020 Summer Olympics had the most openly trans athletes ever competing. I think a lot of folks wanted to run that as the headline and be like this is objectively good, because we have multiple trans athletes in the Olympics, this is a sign of progress, we’re doing great. Those players were often misgendered, in the case of non-binary competitors, they were viciously harassed, in the case of Laurel Hubbard. We also had black cisgender women being kicked out of events due to naturally high testosterone. I'm curious, seeing the type of, like “inclusion” quote unquote, but then also then discrimination, do you think that that would make trans athletes more or less likely to attempt something like that in the future?

**Britni:** I think that trans athletes who were already competing at that level are going to do what they can to continue competing, because they love the sport, and this is what they’ve worked for their whole life, generally. I think the Olympics are, like, objectively bad, so I don’t know that anybody [laughs] should be competing in the Olympics anyway! But that’s not what you asked me.

**Tuck:** No but please, also that.

**Britni:** [laughs] They’re terrible. The Olympics are just bad. It’s so funny, because I’m trying to cover what this means, like what the athletes’ participation means for trans athletes, for inclusion in sports, while also in the back of my head being like “I hate the Olympics,” like “screw the Olympics.” Before I was a journalist, I was one of the main organizers fighting the Boston 2024 Olympic bid, like [laughs] I’m probably not an objective reporter on this.

**Tuck:** It’s big, like, trans military ban energy, where it’s like “I guess…” but like “mmm.” Anyway [laughs].

**Britni:** Yeah, basically. And so many people dragged me. I did this thing about – there was also the most openly queer athletes that have ever competed, and people dragged me for writing about it, and I’m like, I’m not celebrating the Olympics, but let’s just acknowledge that these are people who are up against a lot of systemic barriers, and whatever, they’re gonna go be gay, in the Olympics, and fine. I’m rooting for gay, and not for the Olympics in any way.

**Tuck:** Yeah. Well, I’ve been having a rough one this week and so much of your work also, directly or indirectly, involves reporting on, witnessing, hearing sexism, transphobia, homophobia, abuse. What keeps you in working as a sport and gender reporter when so much of it involves hearing people say fucked up things about people like you and the people that you love?

**Britni:** I think a) getting to write stories that aren’t always from that lens is helpful. When I can uplift trans folks. When people tell me that my reporting has made a difference, that Sports Illustrated piece, I literally have had leagues reach out to tell me that that piece is being used as they think about their policies going forward. That’s wild, right? But also, I feel really lucky, I have a partner and a community who is pretty much exclusively queer and trans folks, and so when I’m not thinking about my work I can be in a very safe space. Like, my life, I write for cis audiences because I’m writing for mainstream publications, but there are so few cis people in my life on a day-to-day basis, and that is very cleansing, and healing, and gratifying, and it really helps.

**Tuck:** You know what’s so funny is last night I Zoomed into my friend’s college class and someone asked me a similar question to that, and I had the same answer, which is as soon as I’m done with work I don’t have to speak to anyone cis ever again [laughs], and that is how I handle it. But speaking of which, we talked last season to Gaby Dunn and Mal Blum about whether their relationship had changed now that it was officially T4T. Their answer was mostly “no,” and you actually reached out and was like “hey actually it has been different for me in this way that’s been really cool and amazing.” Do you want to talk more about what that has been like for you?

**Britni:** Sure. So, I met my partner, we’ve been together a little over two years, and when we started dating I was identifying as a queer cis woman, and what’s funny is I found out after I came out, that my partner was like “yeah that never made sense to me,” right? Like, of course I think most of us have had this experience of, after we come out as trans and people are like “oh thank god, we’ve been waiting for you to figure that out,” right? And it was even like, I was overly deferential when we would talk about sex and intimacy. I was always like “how do you want to be touched, and where, and what do you want your body parts to be called?” And then he asked me the same question, and I was like “why are you asking me that?” and he was like “you know you also have like –

**Tuck:** – a body –

**Britni:** – agency and autonomy to like, name your parts and self, right?” And I was like “OK, but I just really want to make sure.” And then, I was very into him, we basically did nothing but have sex for the first six months of our relationship and then I’d be like “oh my god am I fetishizing my partner?” and then I’d be like “how does this feel?” And he was like “I don’t know where all of this coming from, like, we’re good.” Ao apparently he was not surprised. I officially, I think it’s been a little over a year since I told the world that I was non-binary, and I told the world before I told him, so I updated my Twitter bio and then I texted him that he should look at Twitter, and we could talk later [laughs], if he wanted to. And he was like “cool.” But what has happened, and that’s really been interesting, as I’ve adjusted language that I use for myself, and I talk about myself as a person during sex, like all of these things, most of the time there are things that he kind of already wanted to say. He saw me in ways that I didn’t even realize. There are some dynamics we have in our relationship that even when I was using female or women gendered language, he’s like “if I thought you were a woman I actually wouldn’t have been OK with it, so the fact that I was OK with it tells me that I already didn’t see you that way,” which was so validating. But what’s been really hot is how fucking gay it is now, like everything is 12 times gayer, in a way that just feels super weird and hot, and I think what’s been very cool is to watch, like, he was not *not* into me as like a cis woman, but to watch as I’ve come into my own gender, how hot is it to him too, and how it’s kind of made both of us freer, which feels, I don’t know, it feels really cool.

**Tuck:** I love that, and it’s also so great to hear because I know so many people write in to this show with questions that are like “how do I tell my partner that I’m trans?” “Will they still like me?” “Will they still want to be with me?” And the answer is, like, “If they don’t, there is someone who will think that you and your transness are incredibly hot and good, and will love that all the more, and not just in a fetishizy way.” And so I think it’s really nice to hear people be like “I came out to my partner and now everything is even better and hotter,” and I love that for you. I also can’t believe that you came out during quarantine, it feels like it’s been one hundred years, I’m like “what do you mean you were sometimes not trans?” [laughs]

**Britni:** I don’t remember not being trans, but also, noone in my life was cis, all my friends were trans. I also noticed a lot of trans folks on Twitter engaged with me in a way, that I remember saying to my partner once “do you think people know that I’m not trans?” [Tuck laughs] “is it because I have trans partner? Why are trans people so nice to me, even when they don’t know me and, you know, it’s like, we tend to see people, and I clearly was not hiding this very well – not that I meant to, But, yeah, it feels just like it’s always been this way, but I will say my book was the catalyst for me finally deciding to name it. I was starting to talk about press and marketing, and I had this vision of going on book tour as a “woman author,” and I had a panic attack, and I don’t have panic attacks. That’s not how my anxiety manifests. I’m going to numb, avoid, disassociate, and go to sleep, like, I don’t do the panic attack thing. I was pumping gas and I started to hyperventilate, and that’s when I was just, I knew immediately, I was like “I’m going to change my pronouns in my Twitter bio, and then I’m going to tweet that they’re changed, but nobody better ask me any questions about it,” and that was it.

**Tuck:** Did it work?

**Britni:** It worked.

**Tuck:** I love that. I was talking to my friend Calvin the other day about the connection between transness and sobriety, where I was like “I don’t know if it’s that a disproportionate number of trans people are sober or whether I only know trans people and everyone’s sober,” but you have talked about sobriety as an important part of your life, and maybe how it helped you embrace your full identity. Can you talk about what that connection looks like for you?

**Britni:** I am still really untangling how much of my addiction was rooted in like, gender stuff. I spent a lot of my childhood and early adulthood in like a semi-disassociated state, and I have ADHD which is part of it, was I dysphoric? Maybe, I think there’s lots of stuff that plays into it. But I don’t think I could have even let myself recognize the possibility that I was trans until I got sober. Now I’ve been sober for, it’ll have been like ten years in two weeks, three weeks? So it’s been a really long time, and think like how long it took me within that space to even get to my gender stuff, and probably some of it was that I was married to a straight cis guy until two and a half years ago, and even though I was openly queer within that relationship, I didn’t have the safety and the container to even be able to consider the possibilities for my gender. I was in a relationship where I was seen as a woman and I had to be seen as a woman, and that was it. But sobriety has given me clarity, and I’m not hiding from myself, and I’m not pushing my feelings down and self-medicating them, and I think there’s so much I couldn’t have figured out about myself if I was still drinking and using. But I know a lot of trans people are sober too, and I will say something else I’m grappling with is I got sober through AA, and AA, even though there are queer meetings that are popping up, the program itself is very cis, and straight, and white, and really upholds a lot of oppressive systems. And that did a lot of damage, and I think it forced me into the marriage that I was in, in a lot of ways. And I’m just now starting to untangle the ways in which, it’s like being sober has allowed me to be trans, if that makes sense, *and* being sober really inhibited me from being who I was for a very long time because of the community that I got sober in.

**Tuck:** Yeah, was it you who wrote about how AA like, did not leave space for anger?

**Britni:** I’m not sure, but it’s true. There’s stuff in the literature about how, as alcoholics we’ve lost the privilege of righteous anger. But the other things that the program said to me, so I met my ex-husband, we were both – he owned a bar – and we were both still actively drinking and using. I went to rehab about a year into that relationship, and we lived apart for almost a year, and then came back together, and we got engaged shortly thereafter. And my gut kept looking for an out. I kept hoping that they would send me to a different city to be in a sober house, I kept hoping he would break up with me, but when you’re early in sobriety you’re told to not trust your gut, and to do the opposite of what you think you should do, because you’re supposed to be doing like God’s will and not self will, and the way you know what God’s will is if it’s the opposite of what you want to do.

And so I can see it now, how I ended up in like, there were no fireworks, there was no passion, there was none of that, and I was told, well, “That was the chaos that you were chasing before, this is stable.” So I’m like “oh, maybe this is just what a long-term relationship is, there’s no passion, and you don’t have sex for three years, and I’m not asexual so like....” [laughs] Red flags, right? But the program was telling me there was a plan for me, and that I should just trust it. So I kind of, it’s like you wake up one day, and I’m looking around and it’s like “how did I get here? Why am I at this preschool meeting with a bunch of straight people? Like I don’t know what they’re talking about ever, how did I end up listening to this man, I never thought that was going to happen,” OK. And I do think the culture of AA really pushed me in that direction.

**Tuck:** So, this is the part of the show where I ask what else do you want to talk about that we haven’t talked about yet. I know I only asked you one question – sort of – about your book, and I want to give you space to talk about that, or anything else you want to talk about.

**Britni:** Something that is not explicitly in the book, because I didn’t know how to talk about it, but that was really interesting is that I was talking to some players. I think we’re at a place where there is language and understanding for gender that there maybe wasn’t in the 70s, and, you know, we hear right wing people saying like “the butch flight – they’re all transitioning!”, right, when the reality is there’s just different possibility and potential and understanding than there might have been at other times, and so something really interesting about talking to a lot of the queer women, and a lot of them are butch women or masculine-of-center women, was when you asked them questions and when they reflect on their identity and their gender it’s like… not all of them are cis. And they don’t necessarily know that, or maybe they suspect that, and so I think even though it’s not officially recognized in the book, I want to nod that it’s not just my queer elders who are in this book but there are absolutely trans and nonconforming folks represented by that league and in the book even if it’s, you know, subtext. I think that trans folks in sports are so often erased from history, and the last thing I want to do is erase somebody, but I also don’t want to insert a narrative that they’re not giving me, but I just want to nod to the fact that like, we know that we’ve always been here, and it’s not always that easy to see, and it’s often erased or not mentioned or explained away. But there’s definitely trans folks in this book, even if we’re not identifying them that way.

**Tuck:** You’re right. I mean I will vouch – I know I’m a professional gender detective, but – before you had DM’d me about that there was already at least one person where I was like “ah that person is trans” [laughs] so, you know [Britni laughs], people can read it and find it. It’s there. Also there’s pictures and everyone is extremely hot, so I just wanted to thank you for giving us little archival football thirst traps in the book. I really appreciated that.

**Britni:** We could only do so many. If you follow my Instagram, I do post more, and some of them are extremely gay. Also I did get lots of fifty year old dyke drama, which was a lot of fun. I know who dated who. Some of it is in the book, so you’ll get some if you read the book, but yes, I got all kinds of lesbian drama, which was fun.

**Tuck:** Yeah. And the book also gets to talk about old school lesbian bars, which was also cool to read about. You know, there’s a lot of stuff in there even if you are not a big football person. There is a lot of good gay content.

**Britni:** The funniest thing to me is I have now befriended all of these like 65 year old lesbians, who text me all the time. And it’s football season so I’m getting their NFL takes, and I don’t have the heart to tell them that I don’t watch football. [laughs] And I just let them do it. It’s real cute. But I wrote a book about women’s football and I don’t even watch football.

**Tuck:** It almost reminds me of the “but the Olympics are bad” energy, where it’s like “I love that these women got to play football, and also, they got a lot of traumatic brain injuries from that, and that feels bad,” you know?

**Britni:** It’s in the book. I could not in good conscience write about football and not – even though none of the women said they have any, you know, neurological issues – there’s no way to not talk about that. Yeah, I mean I have a co-author, which I will mention as well, because I did not write this book alone. Lyndsey D’Arcangelo, who is also gay, so, very gay book, but yeah, we did not feel like we could in good conscience write about football and not criticize the sport, or at least address the really harmful aspects of it.

**Tuck:** Well, the way that we always end this show is by asking, in your ideal world, what would the future of gender look like?

**Britni:** [groans] I think about this a lot because I have small people in my life, and so, I kind of get to create that, at least in my bubble. And I think, yeah I just want to blow it all up, but I don’t know if we can really get there. But I guess I just want it to be normalized to explore, and try on, and take off. And, you know how kids are in preschool and they show up to school and they’re Spider-Man one day and everyone calls them Spider-Man, and they just run with it? I would love to see gender allowed that level of, like, this kid showed up one day, and these are their pronouns, and the next day it’s something different, and everyone’s just like “cool, OK,” and we run with it in the same way we let kids imagine occupations for themselves, and they pretend to be a hero. This is what that is, right, it’s imagining possibility, and trying things on and seeing what feels good. And I just want all of us to be like that free, to do the same thing with gender.

[*Gender Reveal* theme song begins, then continues to play in background]

**Tuck:** That’s gonna do it for this week’s show. If you had a good time, or learned something, or think someone else will learn something, please share this episode with folks in your community.

Britni’s book is called “Hail Mary,” it is out now, and we’ll put a link to buy the book in the show notes, along with links to some of the articles that we discussed in the interview, all of which I’d highly recommend. You can find Britni at [britnidlc.com](http://www.britnidlc.com) and @britnidlc on Twitter and Instagram. We are on Twitter and Instagram @gendereveal and at [genderpodcast.com](https://www.genderpodcast.com/), where you can find transcripts and an FAQ page and other useful resources.

Our merch shop is at [bit.ly/gendermerch](https://teespring.com/stores/gender-reveal). There may or may not be stuff in there when you’re hearing this. And if you like the work we do here, please consider joining us at [patreon.com/gender](https://www.patreon.com/gender), where just $1 a month gets you access to our weekly newsletter.

This episode was produced and edited by Julia Llinas Goodman and by me, Tuck Woodstock. Our logo is by Ira M. Leigh. Our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. Additional music this week by Blue Dot Sessions. We’ll be back next week with more feelings about gender.

[theme song ends]

**Britni:** I love that someone who is openly trans is being recognized as being hot and attractive. I think that’s great, and I think it’s not that simple. I think it’s still upholding a lot of cis-normative standards in the way that it is happening. You know, I tried to counter with a tweet about how hot other trans folks with different body types are because… yeah.

**Tuck:** Because we’re all hot.

**Britni:** We are. Trans people are really hot.