[Gender Reveal theme music plays and stops]

Some people say that you shouldn’t give a sex toy as a gift to someone you’re not currently sleeping with. In my opinion, those people are wrong and cowards. But even if everyone’s onboard, shopping for sex toys can sometimes feel overwhelming or dysphoric, which is why shopenby.com aims to create a better experience for the queer, trans and gender non-conforming community. 2% of all profits are donated to organizations focused on improving the lives of queer and trans people of color. So visit shopenby.com, that’s shopenby.com, and use the code gender reveal at checkout to get 10% off and support the show.

[Gender Reveal theme music plays]

**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 music stops]

**Tuck**: Hey everyone, hope you’re all hanging in there. This week on the show, it was an absolute delight to chat with my friend Calvin Kasulke, the author of *Several People Are Typing*, which you may have heard of as the book that’s set entirely in Slack for some reason. In our chat, Calvin and I talk about our friendship origin story, about writing a book with no explicitly trans characters but huge cracked egg energy, and about all the important service journalism that Calvin has been doing.

**Calvin:** Service journalism like if you take a gas station dick pill, if you go to your bodega and buy one of those knockoff Viagra pills, will you die, as a trans man?

**Tuck:** There’s two things I want to note about this interview before we get started. The first is that this interview has occasional references to drinking, and then like 31 or 32 minutes in we talked more about drinking and there’s a short bit about suicidality. Nothing explicit, but skip ahead like four or five minutes if you want to avoid that. The other thing is that the interview audio is kind of weird, mostly because Calvin was sitting in what seems to be the world’s loudest chair. He wants me to tell you that he has since replaced the chair, but I think it just makes it worse to know that. Anyway, it will be fine; I just wanted you to know you’re not like imagining anything. Before we get to all that, it’s time for This Week in Gender.

[Chime music]

**Tuck**: Okay, we’ve got an international gender news roundup for you this week. And the important thing to remember about international news roundups is that I have virtually zero context for any of this. And some of the context I do have, I am intentionally leaving out for time, so I highly encourage you to check the links in the show notes and do your own research if any of these spark your interest.

[Low bell sound]

**Tuck:** First up, I saw headlines that a town in Bangladesh had elected the country’s first openly transgender mayor, which is very exciting. Not to be picky, but those headlines seem heavily Westernized, both in that this person is not a mayor per se, sort of a regionally specific mayoral equivalent, but more importantly, this person being called transgender is specifically *hijra,* which is a transfeminine quote unquote “third gender” that is legally recognized in Bangladesh and several other nearby countries. Maybe this person is fine being called transgender as well, I just hesitate to assign Western gender labels onto someone who uses other words for themselves. Regardless, this elected official got twice as many votes as her closest opponent, even though the opponent was endorsed by one of the country’s major parties. So that kicks ass.

[Low bell sound]

**Tuck:** Last month, the Swiss government declared that trans people will be able to change their gender marker and first name simply by telling the civil registry to do it. That’s eliminating a lot of time-consuming bureaucratic hurdles. This takes effect on January 1 of next year, and only includes the genders male and female. Two separate parliamentary motions are pending to introduce a third gender or to eliminate gender entries altogether. Me knowing nothing just suspects that seems like a longer shot, but crossing my fingers for those.

[Low bell sound]

**Tuck:** Canada’s House of Commons voted unanimously on Wednesday to comprehensively ban LGBTQ conversion therapy. The legislation, which now must be approved by the Senate, but seems likely to do so, would amend the criminal code to outlaw promoting or profiting from conversion therapy, as well as causing any child or adult to undergo conversion therapy regardless of whether the child or adult had consented. We can all have our own opinions over whether making something punishable by incarceration is ultimately helpful to anyone, but everyone I’ve heard talk about this seems very excited, so I’m going to try to just let people enjoy things.

[Low bell sound]

**Tuck:** The Dutch government recently made a formal public apology for a law that was in place from 1985 until 2014, which required trans and intersex people to undergo surgery and sterilization before they could change the gender marker on their birth certificates. Which I’m pretty sure is the actual definition of eugenics. The apology was announced last year; I guess they didn’t do this formal apology ceremony until now because of the pandemic, so it’s back in the news again. People deemed impacted by the law will allegedly receive 5,000 Euros in compensation, a little more than $5,000 dollars US. I guess that’s literally better than nothing, but like, come on you guys.

[Low bell sound]

**Tuck:** You may have heard that the authoritative French dictionary, *le Robert—*I don’t speak French at all, sorry about the pronunciation; tempted to say like, “the Robert.” Anyway, this important dictionary created an entry for the French gender-neutral pronoun spelled *iel*, which I’m told is vaguely pronounced like “yell.” Again, I don’t speak French, bad at making French sounds with my mouth. What I’m trying to say is that this important French dictionary added a French neopronoun for nonbinary people and whoever else wants to use it, which is good. Instead of the US papers of record focusing on how this is good for nonbinary people, they’re mostly focusing on how some fancy cis French politicians… hate this? The French minister of education literally tweeted that schoolchildren should not use the entry in the dictionary as a valid reference, saying, “Inclusive writing is not the future of the French language,” which is an absolutely wild sentence to just say. Unfortunately, it is backed up by the fact that in 2017, France’s prime minister banned the use of gender-neutral French in all official government documents. Meanwhile, a spokesperson for *L’Academie Francaise*, the official governing body of the French language, has said that gender-inclusive French is not only somehow counterproductive to the cause of gender discrimination, but harmful to the practice and intelligibility of the French language. So, solidarity to any nonbinary French speakers out there who are just trying to literally exist. The *New York Times* article about this is mostly annoying, but they did interview one nonbinary person and they did quote that person doing a funny drag on the first lady. So enjoy that. This has been This Week in Gender.

[Chime music]

**Tuck:** We’ve got a Theymail message for you this week. This one is from Abby at Cake Society Co, and it says: “Cake Society Co is a new nonprofit in the Washington, DC area dedicated to BIPOC trans and gender-expansive health and wellness. Check out their mental health groups, community-focused events, or free weekly fitness classes. Classes are intended to lift and empower people in all bodies of all types. Find out more at cakesocietyco.org.”

[Gender Reveal theme music plays]

**Tuck:** Calvin Kasulke is a writer living in Brooklyn, New York. He’s the author of the novel *Several People are Typing* and the recipient of a Lambda Literary Fellowship in playwriting. Calvin’s writing and reporting have been published by Vice, MEL Magazine, and DC Comics, among others.

[Gender Reveal theme music stops]

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

**Calvin:** Out-group, I describe myself as a trans guy or a trans man. In-group, I refer to myself as a transsexual or some fucking guy.

**Tuck:** You know, it’s interesting that you say in-group, because I have actually, until a few weeks ago, almost only engaged with you in your public-facing persona, and I’ve only *ever* seen you describe yourself as a transsexual. [Calvin laughs] In like every bio you’ve written for any publication, it’s always transexual, sooo…

**Calvin:** That’s true, but I think the key to me being able to post is to pretend everyone on my Twitter feed is in-group, and just to be like, nope, if you roll up on my little shitpost factory, that’s your problem. [Both laugh] No, that’s a good point. I do have, I’ve had transsexual on my shit since I was on tumblr.com. But I was also sort of, you know, right when I was coming out, I was adopted by an older trans man and his partner, as it were, sort of brought into the fold. So I’ve been hanging around with transsexuals who are a generation or two ahead of me for a hot minute and been exposed to, I think, a little bit more of that round one descriptions of how folks were identifying, and sort of when my “Am I a transsexual or am I a transgender person?” was sort of happening. I don’t know, I like the word trans just fine. Transgender always feels a little like I’m filling out a form somewhere. It feels differently political. I can try to rationalize it all I want, but I just think transsexual is more fun. I think it weirds people out a little bit more. I think it wrong-foots cis people sometimes in a way that feels appropriate. I think it implies all of the sticky medical stuff that transgender as a word elides, for better and for worse. I think sometimes people, you know, particularly of the transsexual ilk do, they want the word sex in there. They want you to think of the viscera and the *change* that happened. And despite us being in the news all the time, I think cis people still have no idea what that entails. I just sort of like evoking this weird, ominous, like, man, you don’t know anything more than anybody knew when like, the Christine Jorgensen headline hit it, and it has been 50 years, and it is your fault that you have no idea what I have done to myself. [Laughs] That is your failure of googling.

**Tuck:** You said that you were adopted by a trans man of an *older transsexual generation* than you, and I think maybe this is a hard question because it’s not like there’s a version of you that that didn’t happen to. But there are certainly a lot of trans people for whom that didn’t happen, and they were just winging it, either alone or with other trans babies. So I’m just curious how you feel like that affected your… life? I don’t want to say transition, but just like, you know, like, what, what’s that been like?

**Calvin:** [Laughs] Well, it affected my life inasmuch as I’m not dead.

**Tuck:** I love that for you.

**Calvin:** So that’s a big starting place. No, I mean like, you know, like every single facet of my life, everything that is good and stable and beautiful, is by dint of that adoption, which is a word I’m using to describe 22-year-old me, but who very much still needed adopting. So, you know, I mean, everything from some fundamental parts of my transition to… his name is Luca Maurer, it’s not like a shadowy figure. He was actually the LGBT director at Ithaca College, where I went. So we became close after I graduated and he walked me through, you know, here’s how you change your name and your gender marker and all that stuff. But in sort of the broader question that you were speaking to, Morgan Page recently wrote an essay about like, not aiming to be the first trans person to do X. I think I had that ingrained in me much, much earlier, that trans people have been doing this for a long time, that there were trans guys in the 90s going to True Spirit Conferences and mimeographing newsletters and mailing them to each other. We talked about this, it’s, you know, “Oh, trans people aren’t new,” and then we go and talk about like the Emperor Elagabalus of Rome. And I’m like, right, yes. I believe Elagabalus was a trans person, inasmuch as we can apply modern labels to ancient peoples, but you know, trans people were doing this in the 90s. Like people you are in line with, in the grocery store with, have been doing this in ways that feel more accessible than maybe ancient Roman emperor sun gods? Um, so yeah, I think there was a massive sense that I’m not the first to do anything. I’m not breaking any new ground here.

**Tuck:** So your first book came out in August. I have read it twice; I will read it again. It is a quick read; a great read. Been recommending it to people. It is a pretty high concept book; I figure you have the logline down pat. So before I ask you questions about the book, can you like, briefly explain the premise?

**Calvin:** I don’t have the logline down pat, you’d think I did! It’s, the book is called *Several People are Typing*; it is written entirely in Slack chats. Even if you’ve never used Slack or Discord or anything, it’s very readable. If you’ve ever been in a group chat or sent a DM, you get it. It is about Gerald, who is a mid-level employee at a PR firm whose consciousness is torn from his body and trapped in his office’s workplace Slack platform. Then hilarity ensues. I always find myself describing it and saying it’s funnier than that sounds.

**Tuck:** It is very funny, as you know that I know, because the first time I read it, I just indignantly sent you DMs at two in the morning—and we weren’t close—and I was like, “How fucking dare you write such a good book in *Slack*? That’s disgusting. Why is it *good*?”

**Calvin:** This is how our friendship kicks off.

**Tuck:** It is. I think right after I was texting you that at two in the morning, you said to me that the book had a lot of newly cracked egg energy despite no one in the book being explicitly trans. Tell me about that.

**Calvin:** Sure, yeah. I will say that people’s reactions to it… cis people tend to be like, “Ah, I love this. It’s such a fun and interesting office comedy!” And, you know, trans people who I haven’t sort of given the deal to yet, are just like, “This is the most *transexual* book I have ever read. What the fuck!” You know, and I’m just like, “Yeeeeeeah.” So the main thrust of the book, the guy who is stuck in Slack, Gerald, he convinces one of his coworkers Pradeep to help take care of his body, so he does not die while his consciousness is floating around in Slack. His body’s just, you know, sort of comatose in his apartment. The conversations between the two of them which form the really, like, the sort of the core of the book, the A plot, it’s all based on stuff I was writing right after I came out. And coming out is wrong, right after I was starting testosterone, which I think is actually a key difference. Because I’d socially been out for several months by that point. I had sort of had a new name, and all my friends were calling me that, and that is a different energy than I have started testosterone; I have been disinvited into my biological family’s home; I’m just realizing now that I have a body and that parts of it might be good; and also oh my god, I’m *so* *hungry*.

You know, it’s not a coming out book, but a lot of the energy was about, “Oh man, I have a body and I have to start taking care of it differently. I have to sort of think about taking care of it at all,” which was a sort of novel concept in my life at that point. A little bit mourning the terrible superpower that, you know, sort of constant moderate dysphoria gives you, where if you don’t care about your body, it is way easier to pull all-nighters and to choose to not engage with your body to get done whatever you want to get done. Whether that’s productive or binge drinking, you know, whatever your poison was. There is something to that. I don’t advise it; I don’t believe it is sustainable. I think transition rules and is one of the best things I’ve ever done. You know, but it was me contending with, “Ah, man, I gotta like, eat and sleep.” Sort of contending with the pleasures of the flesh for the first time. Which is wild, which is a lot of, you know, the character Slackbot.

**Tuck:** Mhm. And we know that Slackbot is canonically bisexual because he can never sit in a chair properly, which I appreciate about him.

**Calvin:** Oh no, he hasn’t figured it out. He hasn’t figured it out.

**Tuck:** All right, I have more trans questions for you, but I have some, two, Slack questions for you. The first is that you started working on this before Slack existed, so at what point did it get into Slack?

**Calvin:** It got into Slack in 2019, when I started writing this as it is. The earlier version was like, some weird blogging experiments, like blogging and also essays. It was very, it was too clever by half. But the original conceit was this guy being stuck in the internet writ large, and restricting it to Slack gave it a specificity and a home. I didn’t have to deal with the bigness of the whole internet, which I cannot and do not wish to speak to.

**Tuck:** Yeah, so my other Slack-based question is at what point did you have to go to Slack and be like this is happening?

**Calvin:** *Have* to is a big word. No. Um.

**Tuck:** Did you feel like it would be perhaps for your benefit if you checked in before you made Slackbot a bisexual terrorist?

**Calvin:** Well, it’s not… terrorism. Technically. Slackbot is amoral in the denotative sense of that word. He is an AI; he does not have morals or ethics. I will say that I was worried that they were going to C&D me into oblivion, but the things that happen in the book—spoiler alert, I guess if you haven’t read the book skip forward in your little podcast player 45 seconds. It is not possible, to the best of my knowledge, for Slack to disembody someone’s consciousness from their body. And it is, to the best of my knowledge, Slackbot has never—

**Tuck**: —fucked.

**Calvin:** —jorped out of the program and taken control of someone’s uninhabited body, and then tried to cruise his coworkers. So, I think parody law… [Tuck laughs] would have kept me sort of safe from that, like that’s a hell of a libel case to prove. But also, everyone at Slack has been very cool. There’s actually like a giveaway this, the week that we’re recording this, like Slack gave my, my publisher teamed up and they’re doing like a giveaway with a bunch of Slack swag and a copy of the book. Um, a bunch of Slack employees caught wind of it before I think even like I had handed in a final version of it to my publisher, and they were all super excited about it. So it just seemed… then somebody from Slack reached out to me very informally over DMs and was like, “Hey, a lot of us are excited about this. Let us know if we can help.” So everybody has been very cool and enthusiastic. You know, it was never like, “Hey! Our program doesn’t steal people’s souls!” You know, if anybody reads this book and becomes convinced that Slack is going to actually send them to the shadow realm, I’m sorry, but perhaps there are other issues at play here.

**Tuck:** Well, you mentioned that this book started as just someone trapped in the internet, which I think we all are, to an extent now. And you mentioned being on Tumblr.

**Calvin:** Oh, no.

**Tuck:** Not going anywhere in particular. I’m just interested, were you one of the people that got transed by Tumblr? Or the early aughts internet, YouTube? Or just livin’?

**Calvin:** I’m a man of Tumblr experience, as so many of us are. I’ve certainly done my fair share of, I worked for Planned Parenthood for a while where I did a queer sex ed blog, like, much of which was on Tumblr, so if anything I probably transed some people via some of that work.

**Tuck:** Congratulations.

**Calvin:** Yeah, I hope so. I mean, I, you know, no concrete proof, but it’s possible. No, a friend of mine in college transitioned, and that was sort of my first in-person, like, “Oh, you can do this?” I felt like a nerd. It’s like, you come out like a year and a half after one of your good college friends. I was like, “Hey, me, too, actually. I think maybe this.”

**Tuck:** As I mentioned, your book does not have any explicitly trans characters, although it does have trans subtext, which contrasts I would say sharply with your online service journalism, which is often about like, dick pills, orgasms, packing, trans health care. I’m curious if you purposefully separated these two things? I’m curious if you’ll think you’ll write an overtly trans book? I’m curious if you’re enjoying that because this book isn’t overtly transsexual you get to be like, just a guy on *Good Morning America*? Just in general, I’m curious what your relationship is with explicitly trans writing and not explicitly trans writing?

**Calvin:** It wasn’t intentional. It wasn’t, I’m frankly shocked that a lot of the press around *Several People are Typing,* that nobody has sort of been like, “By the way, you’re trans as hell; tell me about that.” But I do just think that it’s because the book isn’t explicitly trans, like people just can’t find a way in, because there’s not much of a public record of me existing prior to being Calvin and, you know. But that was not the grand plan. Again, the first word, as you pointed out before, the first word of all of my bios online is like, “transexual!” [Both laugh] So I’m not *hiding* it. No, it’s unintentional. You know, fiction is so based on like, an idea that appears in my head and then yells and yells until I contend with it, until I can exorcise it into a final form. Just sometimes it has explicitly trans themes or trans characters. The next thing that, the current thing I’m working on, which I believe will be my next book, or a book-shaped thing, there’s not any out trans characters or explicitly trans characters, so to speak, as I’m writing it. But lord almighty, there’s some gender and body stuff in there. You know, I think when you’re dealing with like, robots hopping into people’s bodies and being displaced onto the internet and all the other mess I’m writing in this new book, it’s already there in many ways. So I don’t have a separation of church and state or like, an intentional firewall between you know, fiction and nonfiction. The journalism stuff…. the journalism, for me, it’s just that I don’t know anything about anything. The great thing about journalism is when you don’t know anything about anything, or if you know just enough about something that you know, you don’t know anything…

**Tuck:** Yeeeesss.

**Calvin:** I know enough to sound smart at a party. But if somebody follows up with me about this, I am going to just [laughs] expel all of the liquids in my body at once. I will be able to offer no follow up to this. That’s a great place for a journalist to be, because then you just get to roll up in a bunch of people’s inboxes and phone calls and DMs and be like, “Hey, I’m dumb as hell! Can you tell me about this? I have a bunch of questions.” [Laughs] People are very nice, and people who know stuff about stuff tend to be very nice, and tend to be very willing to answer all of my questions about things. I think one of the benefits of having been out for this long, and having a little bit of that Planned Parenthood background, which puts me in a great place to know *just* enough about stuff to know I don’t know anything, means that I feel like I’m in a position to go ask those questions. Or to just, you know, sometimes it’s service journalism stuff. Like, if you take a…. [Laughs] Service journalism like, if you take a gas station dick pill, if you go to your bodega and buy one of those knockoff Viagra pills, will you die, as a trans man? And the answer is like, “Oh my God, please don’t take that,” but more for like, lead reasons. It’s also just a lot of fun to be able to be like, “Hey, everybody on Twitter! Why’d you change your name to what you changed your name to?”

**Tuck:** Yeah. Do you have a favorite transmasc service piece that you’ve done? It doesn’t have to be like, “I thought I wrote this beautifully,” but more like, “I really enjoyed exploring this question,” or like, “That was fucking hilarious that they let me do this.”

**Calvin:** I think my favorite process one was the name one, just because it felt so universal. It was one of those things where I couldn’t believe it hadn’t been done. Well, that’s the one that always springs to mind. I haven’t like, checked my clips recently. You’ve read my clips; which ones do you like?

**Tuck:** Well, I like the lead on the name one, because it’s just you being indignant that no like Aiden, Braden, Caden, or Jaden spoke to you for the piece and you’re like, “What the fuck? Am I even doing it right?”

**Calvin:** I was so mad! [Laughs]

**Tuck:** That was fun. I remember really liking the packers one. It was a good explainer. It also reminded me that someone recently on Twitter pulled reviews that cis straight couples had left for packers that they had ordered without understanding what packers were. It was actually beautiful because it was like straight couples inventing new ways to have sex with soft packers.

**Calvin:** Oh my god….

**Tuck:** And as someone who thinks that straight people only have sex the one and a half way, it was actually kind of like tear inspiring, to be like, “Y’all are getting freaky with this! It’s not for you, but like, it can be!”

**Calvin:** Oh my god, that’s so beautiful. That’s whatever the like, the het couple equivalent of like “Dudes rock” is. This is just a moment of like, “Ah, you ding-dongs. You guys don’t know the difference between like a strap and a packer, and that’s really cute.”

**Tuck:** It was nice. It was nice. So I just went to an event yesterday. It was called like, “Beyond the Year of Trans Creativity,” and it was a bunch of trans writers talking about what trans lit is going to look like in the future. Spoiler alert, there isn’t one answer, and I don’t expect there to be. But I am broadly curious in hearing what you’re excited about coming down the pipeline in terms of trans lit, either specific titles, or just conceptually, what are you excited to see more of?

**Calvin:** Yeah, I mean, in terms of specific titles, my dear friend Isaac Fellman has a book called *Dead Collections* that’s coming out in February 2022. I’ve read it and it’s all I’m going to be yelling about for the next several months because it’s so, so good. It is a trans, vampire, archivist novel. It is horny and it is funny. Isaac took like four different genres and wove them together into the most beautiful friendship bracelet, and the friendship bracelet is for everyone, and it’s not a bracelet, it’s a book, and you should read it. Julian Jarboe, I know, is also working on a new thing that they, I only have oblique details on, but I am excited about whatever Julian puts out. In terms of trans lit more broadly, I think I said in a different interview, I’ve got season tickets to everything Jackie Ess writes from now until forever. Man, *Darryl* is so good.

**Tuck:** I think about *Darryl* and *Several People are Typing* as two books in the same club of like, I think that both of you are doing work that is hard to explain in a single sentence, and is made by trans people but isn’t necessarily about transness, but also is not *not* about transness. It’s like sneak attack. Just trans people being like, “I’m gonna do some weird shit, and it is for anyone who is into my weird shit.” That’s like my *favorite genre*. So I’m really excited to see more of that. Someone in this panel I was referencing, I think it was Jackie Ess who said this, was talking about how she was worried that maybe in the future, there would be less opportunity for weird shit. Because maybe we’re just in a little time where publishers know they’re supposed to be publishing trans people… [Both laugh] but they haven’t figured out what the rules are yet?

**Calvin:** I think people are always gonna sneak weird shit in, cis or trans. I think the way that in a story, a tangent serves to highlight the main thrust of the story, I think the aberrations serve to highlight the more standard book-shaped books. I think trans people are very good at, I don’t know, I think there’s kind of a *fuck-it* attitude—not to generalize it to everyone—I think there’s a certain element of like, “Well, might as well go for it.” Trans people certainly have a corner on body horror in a very particular way, and an interest in it, and maybe a different kind of understanding of it. I also think… A of all, I think when we talk about the specifics, and we are not doing it for cis people, it does provide something for cis people to see their way into, because cis people also have trouble with their bodies, right? We do not have the corner on having a hard time with our bodies. And so there’s that element of it, that the more specific you are and the less you care about an outside audience, you actually provide an on-ramp for them through that specificity. I think cis people appreciate when there is a sense of like, “There is some in-group stuff, and you’re not going to be privy to all of it, and I respect you enough to… get with it.”

**Tuck:** Yeah, that’s the *Detransition, Baby* energy, I feel. Where cis people came out with like, a list of things to google. Like, someone’s uncle was like, “What’s Truvada? And what’s HRT? And what’s…” [Calvin laughs] You know, and you’re like, “Okay….”

**Calvin:** Right! But you know, people… [Sighs] people know how stories go, you know, people can deal with context. So, I think there’s room for weird shit, and I hope that publishers keep publishing trans people just out of a sense of like, “I guess we should do, just, more of this. We should just let them cook.”

**Tuck:** I don’t know if a lot of trans people are sober, or if a lot of people in their 30s are sober and I only know trans people, but I feel like a lot of trans people are sober. I’m curious if exploring your gender and transitioning and realizing that you wanted to stop drinking were in any way connected to you?

**Calvin:** I mean, trans people are statistically more likely to suffer from substance use disorders. Obviously, this is true of most marginalized populations. It is staggeringly true for trans people and, as with so many things, the more intersecting marginalized identities people have, the more likely they are to also deal with substance abuse issues. So, look, I know you only know trans people, but I think a lot of trans people do have substance abuse disorders and fortunately, some of us have enough resources to deal with those. Okay, taking off my little public health hat. Transition and sobriety are the same in as much as transitioning and getting sober only solve the problem of not transitioning and not being sober. [Laughs] Putting all of your hopes and aspirations that you will be the person you wish yourself to be on them is not something I recommend, because they only solve the problem that having not done them creates. Now in both cases, that’s a *big* problem and knocking it out is *not* nothing, but also in both cases, you have to do more stuff afterwards. You have to build a personality, and you know, reconcile the person you are with the gender that you are inhabiting, you have to reconcile the person you are with the person who does not use whatever it is you’ve been using to what you’ve decided is your detriment. So there’s, there’s a lot of work to do afterwards, for both.

I do not think for me sobriety would have been possible had I not transitioned. I know, though, that I also have friends who got into recovery first, and then transitioned and for them transition would not have been possible without recovery. So transition and sobriety are both for me quality of life things. I’m not a big destiny guy. I’m not a big, you know, this had to happen a certain way, right? Life is about choices. But I do think that transition and sobriety are two things that if you’ve ever thought about it for collectively more than 10 minutes, they’re worth giving a shot, because they will most likely improve your quality of life. Maybe in bigger ways than you anticipate. I don’t see a big connection beyond that. I don’t necessarily see them as intrinsically connected. You know, one did not magically lead to the other, but certainly transition allowed me to see a future for myself that would not only be possible, but could actually be enjoyable in a way that it eventually made my drinking… when the penny dropped for me that my drinking was sort of a slow-moving suicide attempt. That maybe I should not do that, because I actually wanted to be alive and wanted to stick around. I did not want to destroy myself from drinking, and I also did not want to continue to use my drinking as a crutch to sort of play-act the person who I wanted to be. I could actually, you know—again because of transition—work towards being the person I wanted to be. Part of that foundation is being a transsexual with this haircut, and I’m much better at being a transsexual with this haircut as a person who does not drink. So.

**Tuck:** Do you want to describe the haircut for our listeners?

**Calvin:** Oh god, I have a silly little mohawk, and I have, right now, a pretty short beard and the worst little mustache. I look like a sort of cyberpunk Rodney Dangerfield, or like a gritty reboot of Marty Feldman…. Yeah, you know, GLAAD Awards Travis Bickle. I could go on.

**Tuck:** It’s like you have a list prepared.

**Calvin:** I, look, when you look like me, you got to know what people are gonna sling at you. Also it’s fun to refer to myself as like, nu metal Big Bird. [Tuck laughs]

**Tuck:** So here’s the part of the show where I say, “Hey, Calvin, what do you want to talk about?”

**Calvin:** Well, okay, hang on. So I had a long rambling answer before about that sort of separation of my journalism, which is largely trans, and my fiction, which is not explicitly trans, but is deeply informed by my transness. You’ve done the reverse, because your journalism is based on you getting your ass kicked by cops out in the field, and your non-journalism is you talking to cool transsexuals and one time Justin McElroy.

**Tuck:** This is also journalism, how fucking dare you…

**Calvin:** It is a different kind of…. [Tuck laughs] It is, it is different than going into the streets of Portland and anarchist communes and getting your ass kicked by cops.

**Tuck:** I would say that I do a lot more preparation and thought for *this podcast* than I did for going out into the street and getting shot at by cops. So I, you know, what is journalism really? Is it tweeting? Or is it making a podcast with your friends? Both? Neither? Neither? Both? It’s definitely not one or the other.

**Calvin:** No, I feel, I mean, I feel the same way. I also have accidentally…. Look, journalism is also seeping into more and more of my fiction, which I slightly resent. I’ve already done one interview for this *novel* I am writing. I don’t know, how do you do the separation? Why do you…

**Tuck:** I don’t! I was tweeting like, “There are cops here and I’m gay!” [Calvin laughs] Like there was no separation whatsoever.

**Calvin: “**There are cops here and I’m gay” is a t-shirt I would wear with your face on it. [Tuck laughs]

**Tuck:** The magazine I used to work for was doing a feature on a bunch of tacos last summer. My friend was like, “You want to write about some tacos?” and I was like, “I want to write about the gay ones.” And they let me write about just the gay ones. I had a whole conversation with my other friend, who was editor in chief at the time, to allow me to put “faggot” in the magazine, because one of the taco places was called Los Puñales, which means faggot. I was like, “We got to say that it means faggot.” He was like, “That’s inappropriate.” I was like, “It’s absolutely not.” [Calvin laughs] And I won *eventually*. But I mean, like, there’s no separation. I’m writing 250 words about tacos and I won’t do it unless they let me say a slur. You know, like, there’s no separation there whatsoever.

**Calvin:** Yeah, I think that’s a more concise version of the point I was trying to make before, is that there’s no separation. Just sometimes the levels are dialed up or down, right?

**Tuck:** Sure. Absolutely.

**Calvin:** God please, please for this season’s merch, please. “There are cops here and I’m gay.” The person who was serving lookout for “Be gay do crimes.” [Tuck laughs)

**Tuck:** Well, the way we always end the show—and I almost don’t want to ask this, because you’re fucking ready and I hate that! What if I just made a different one? [Sighs]—by asking, in your ideal world, what would the future of gender look like?

**Calvin:** Do you want to tell people why you’re so mad? Or do you want me to tell people why you’re so mad about it?

**Tuck:** Just, I am truly only mad because I know that you’re prepared, and one of my great joys is hearing people sound shocked and appalled by this question, and the fact that you did your homework…

**Calvin:** That I listened to your podcast, Tuck??

**Tuck:** No! People who listen to my podcast are like still like, “Oh my god, I forgot you asked this,” and I’m like, “You’re not a true fan.” So really, you’re the only true fan, and I don’t know why I’m so aggressively angry about it.

**Calvin:** No, because wrong-footing people is fun. No, I told you earlier, I dropped the quote, which is a Leslie Feinberg quote, which is, “Gender is the poetry each of us makes out of the language we are taught.”

**Tuck:** That’s not the future. That’s the current.

**Calvin:** Well, I do I think it is both, because I think as people have more tools for describing their gender, and for experiencing it and for actualizing it now than they did 10 years ago, and they did more 10 years ago than they did 10 years before that. I think the key part of that is the language we are taught, and I think that can be as circumscribed or as expansive as what our knowledge base is. I think it is only going to get more expansive the more of us there are, and the more of us come out; the more ways we can see ourselves into being in the world. Also, you know, more recent medical technology and public health allows us to be, frankly, right? I mean, let’s loop back to the transsexual part, you know, there’s some *there* there for some of us, and so I think as the language expands and as there are more of us, the poetry is going to get weirder and weirder. I mean, you know, Yeats is a poet, but so is e.e. cummings. So I think we can get as weird with it as we want. I think it’s gonna get bigger and weirder. The universe moves towards entropy and so do all of our genders.

[Theme music plays]

**Tuck:** That’s gonna do it for this week’s show. If you had a good time, please share this episode with whomstever, and consider supporting the work we do here at patreon.com/gender where just $1 gets you access to our weekly newsletter. You can grab a copy of *Several People are Typing* wherever books are sold, honestly, this is a great one to give to people as a gift if you’re still looking to give something to someone for the giving times. Find Calvin at calvinkasulke.com and @CJKasulke on various platforms. You can find us at @gendereveal on social media and genderpodcast.com We also have a gender reveal community Slack, if you want to figuratively or literally live there. It’s at bit.ly/genderslack2. This episode was produced and edited by Julia Llinas Goodman and by me, Tuck Woodstock. Our logo is by the talented Ira M. Leigh. Our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. We’ll be back next week with more feelings about gender.

[Theme music stops]

**Calvin:** When it is day job, if I’m W2, I’m a transgender person. Thank you. I’m only a transsexual for 1099’s and other freelance work.