**Transcript -- Gender Reveal**

**Season 10 -- Episode 143: maia arson crimew**

**Tuck**: I was talking with a friend recently about whether I should say a spicy trans thing publicly. And they asked me, well, how are you feeling about your personal security these days? And my reply was, and I quote, “I am a DeleteMe spokesperson.” And what I mean of course is that I feel good about my personal security and my relative dox risk because I have taken steps to keep myself safer. And that includes paying DeleteMe to scrub my addresses and other information off the internet. You can join me at [joindeleteme.com](https://joindeleteme.com/?utm_source=influencer&utm_campaign=tuck20&coupon=tuck20) and use the promo code, Tuck20 for 20% off your first year.

*[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 ends]*

**Tuck:** Hey, everyone. Hope you all are hanging in there. This week on the show, we've got a very special episode with maia arson crimew.You may know maia as the Swiss hacker who recently made headlines for leaking the no-fly list. In this episode, maia and Ozzy and I talk about why there are so many cat girl hackers and why maia is so public about hacking exploits.

**maia:** I absolutely do not recommend anyone else do this. It's fucking stupid and it will get you in trouble.

**Tuck:** We also talk about it/its pronouns and it/she pronouns and how maia accidentally started Twitter discourse by simply identifying as a bi lesbian.

**maia:** Like the fact that they were fine with me being an it/she kitten furry and hacking the US government, but they aren't fine with me calling myself a bi lesbian.

**Tuck:** As you can imagine, this is not an episode that we had on our original production calendar. About a week ago, I tweeted at maia “Come on Gender Reveal imo,” and now here we are! Because we had to make this episode very quickly, we are skipping our “this week and gender” segment this week and going more or less straight to the interview. But just real real quick before that, last reminder, our live show is this Wednesday, February 1st. It's at the Bell House in Brooklyn. It is going to be me, Ozzy, Mattie Lubchansky, AC Dumlao, Sabrina Imbler, and like 300 hot queer people. We will have a podcast version available in a few weeks, but of course, that will be missing some fun IRL elements. So, we do hope to see you at the Bell House in two days. Don't miss it.

*[music plays]*

**Tuck**: maia arson crimew is a 23-year-old hacktivist kitten previously indicted by the Department of Justice who loves doing silly shenanigans. It is openly and loudly queer and anarchist and tries to fight for a better future while having fun with it, or as it likes to say, get a little silly with it. Colon three emoticon. *[:3]*

*[music ends]*

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

**maia:** That's a difficult question. I feel like that changes a lot. I, I feel like it/its is like a big part of my gender and like being a girl but in like a kitten way and not in a woman way if that makes sense? I feel like the answer to any question about gender is just a gender in itself.

**Tuck:** Mhm. Well, my understanding is that you were previously at some point, a they/them and are now an it/she and I understand if this is not a thing that you can articulate, but I am really curious the they to it change.

**maia:** I'm not sure. I feel like there were some like bits in between that happened, but I don't remember them. I am very bad at remembering my own life. [laughter] I have ADHD and depression and PTSD. I, I don't know. I'm literally at a point where sometimes when I give interviews, I have like my Wikipedia article open to answer questions about myself. I don't know what's going on in my life and even less so now than ever before. But I feel like part of why I went by dating for a long while is because I wasn't sure I was allowed to be a girl. Like just those questions you start to ask yourself when you start to realize that there's like gender happening. I feel like that's probably a common experience. I feel like I had a brief like just she/her phase and then I had like a neopronouns phase, which neopronouns are based. I just, it isn't my vibe anymore. I'm just like very, it/its brained at this point and the she/it is just there as like spice to make it more girly *[laughter]* if that makes sense.

**Tuck:** Yeah. So, I promise we will get to your work in just a second. But I realized you live in Switzerland, and I have no idea what the social, political climate is for trans people in Switzerland.

**maia:** It's interesting. I'm not very informed with local things. I'm going to be real with you. I live on the internet. But we have the funny thing that we somehow actually have self ID laws and that passed last year and like that's why I am legally called maia arson which is cool as hell. It's not the worst, it's currently still better than Germany which already has like a growing TERF problem. Switzerland is still somewhat ok, but it's definitely like the climate is getting worse everywhere. It's just more of a debate and I don't know, the thing I'm just scared about is I am like, definitely the most public trans person in Switzerland at this point.

**Tuck:** Really?

**maia:** I am pretty sure. Yeah. So that's gonna be interesting if this becomes more of a debate. The media is already weird about me and like non gender wise just because of how edgy I am.

**Tuck:** Yeah, there's something really beautiful about the most famous trans person in the country being named maia arson. So, you know, incredible representation.

**maia:** That's the thing. Like a lot of Swiss media is refusing to use my new chosen name. They just use my old chosen name, which I'm not going to bring up for obvious reasons. Not that I have a problem with it being mentioned. It's fine. It's mentioned in a lot of English media as well as like used to go by this name and was popular under this name before. But like Swiss media is just doing it the other way around. They're just using my old name and being like “uses maia arson crimew as a pseudonym,” which is just not how this works. That is literally my legal name at this point. But we are fighting like there are some Swiss journalists who are like on my side, and we are kind of fighting together for me to be properly addressed by media. But it's so annoying that I even have to fight this fight. And I only have this in Switzerland. Like that's the funny thing. Even fucking the Daily Mail. Like, they completely fucked up their article on me, but they at least get my name right.

**Tuck:** Yeah. It's so wild when people choose being transphobic over getting facts correct. *[laughter]*

**maia:** Yeah, I really don't get it. The thing is, with the Swiss media, it’s transphobia slash ignorance. But another part of it is also just that like, somehow Swiss media is 10 years behind on everything. And I feel like part of it isn't even on purpose. It's just that they don't know better or don't know how to do journalism in the year of the lord 2023 where everything is on the internet. But yeah, it's, it's weird. It's fucked up like everywhere else.

**Tuck:** Yeah, so you're famously a hacktivist. We see media depictions of hackers. It's usually like beep boop, beep boop I'm in. But I feel like every time that you do an interview about any big hack you've done, you're always like, this took no technical skill or effort, which is like very wild if it is true. So, I just wanted to ask when we say hacking, like, literally, what do we mean by that? What does that look like for you?

**maia:** That's a very controversial question in a way I feel like people define hacking very differently depending on how gatekeep-y they want to be. It's just like with everything else, but basically hacking to me is just like any kind of like circumvention of technical things or finding creative ways to solve technical problems is hacking. The word life hack explains really well what hacking is. Not that, like half the life hacks currently are really life hacks anymore. But like, just the idea of finding an unusual solution to a problem that might be easier than, like, the conventional way or faster than in the technical sense. Yeah, it can be kind of anything. Specifically what I mean by hacking is obviously, yeah, like accessing things I shouldn't, getting into company networks and I just mostly do low hanging fruit stuff that is technically easy, at least relatively, because I, I'm just lazy. I'm like, if I can get the big effects I do this way, why, why should I do anything else? And no one else seems to be doing what I'm doing. So, I don't see why I should do anything more complicated.

**Tuck:** Yeah, absolutely. If it's just going to be there, why not? You were most recently in the news for leaking the no-fly list. But that is not the first time you have been in the news for a major hack. And I was wondering if you could talk to us for people who haven't been following you, reading your Wikipedia page. Can you talk us through your history and what your goals or philosophy is generally?

**maia:** I can't really talk about a lot of the history.

**Tuck:** That’s fine.

**maia:** I can mention specifically Verkada which is where I hacked a surveillance camera company in the US, like a cloud-based surveillance company that is used by a lot of corporations and prisons and psychiatry. And I had access to 150,000 surveillance cameras. The news broke via Bloomberg and that was like a week before I got indicted by the US government and got raided by Swiss police, not directly related to Verkada. But that probably did speed things up because I was suddenly the big news and yeah, now I'm the big news again.

**Tuck:** Is there a uniting goal or philosophy for what you choose to do?

**maia:** I mean, I'm an anarchist. So, like at the end of the day, my goal is to topple the system and to overthrow capitalism. But like, obviously that's not a realistic goal for like one hack or something or for me alone. Like anyways, I'm not going to do anarchism alone. *[laughter]* That is like the most, that would be the biggest misunderstanding of anarchism anyone has ever done. And there are a lot of those. But like, yeah, I mostly focus more on like freedom of information and with all the like really big things I've done also like surveillance, surveillance capitalism or state surveillance in the case of the TSA watch list and with freedom of information, I mean, kind of anything just like information should be free. I am against intellectual property basically as a whole concept and I could spend hours talking about that. I'm kind of tired of talking about it because people always misunderstand me as hating artists. But when I say that I am like, fundamentally against the idea of copyright law, which then I always get the weirdest defenses of, “Yeah, Disney uses this against artists, but also, I want the copyright law to protect my art.” But like that, that's not really how that works. Your art gets stolen under the current copyright law.

**Tuck:** Yeah, exactly.

**maia:** Like, like that's the thing. Like you do not actually have a recourse under any copyright or unless you're a big corporation. And if you're a big corporation, it doesn't really matter if you actually have the copyright for something, you just need lawyers.

**Tuck:** Yes.

**maia:** It already doesn't work. And every defense of like intellectual property as a concept hinge on the current system working, which it doesn't. Especially if you consider that like a lot of the arguments kind of hinge on the fact that outside of the US not exists, which is, is my favorite thing about online political discourse is first of all, people assume everything is always American and then if you bring up that you're not American people tell you to shut up because like, you're not involved in this. Like, no, this is just the general political debate, especially considering most US law affects the whole world because world police…. I, I don't know, we don't need more copyright laws that's not gonna solve any problem.

**Ozzy:** Totally. Well, thinking about information access. I wanted to ask about what you wrote this blog post a while ago about the difference between black hat hackers and white hat hackers and how the distinction is kind of like not as binary as people make it out to be. And I know you've also said previously that you're not a white hat hacker. So, I just wanted to ask if you could talk more about that distinction and what it means to you?

**maia:** Right. It always starts with a problem that we're trying to define something that it's like, access based on a thing of good or bad like that already fundamentally doesn't work because depending on which side of a conflict you're on, the words are going to be like swapped out for you. If you work for the Russian government hacking the US, you are from your point of view, a white hat, you are doing the good thing for the system. But from the US side, that is obviously a black hat because like, they're trying to do bad stuff to us. That doesn't make sense. And then when you consider like where all the researchers are, that like decide who is like a black hat or a white hat or who gets accused of being one, there is this interesting thing, like there is a categorization of like any big enough cyber threat as an advanced persistent threat. Which sounds really fucking cool! Being called an advanced persistent threat. Like, there is nothing cooler than that and there's like, lists of them and they all have numbers and like code names and the code names are, I feel like it's, there's something vaguely xenophobic about the fact that depending on which country you're from, you're assigned a different animal and there's like the, the bears for Russia and pandas for China, it, it, it's giving like weird vibes. [*Tuck laughs*]

But the funny thing is there are no USA APTs, officially. They are not like, according to all known public research, the US doesn't do any cyber things, actually. The cyber world is so extremely Western. It's so incredible that like this whole value system around who's bad or good is entirely dependent on like what the US government thinks and what US defense contractors think. And I find it incredible how an entire industry worldwide is just taking up that framing. And then there's also the fake idea of some sort of common morality. You can be a white hat and work for the Pentagon and in my eyes, you're like the worst person ever, but like you are doing good, and you are protecting things. So, you're a white hat, right? So, I if I have to give myself a name on this, like black hat, white hat scale. I'm somewhere, I'm like a gray hat, which is a word that exists. And it's just like, yeah, the kind of thing I do where you'd have a strong moral compass and act based on that and not whether or not corporations think what you're doing is good. And I know that’s the only classification that really makes sense. Anything else is kind of the coward’s way out.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I mean, I think that, I guess, I don't actually know this to be true, but I thought the black hat and white hat came from like Western films, like where the words come from.

**maia:** Like, it's already like, I don't know why we still use those terms now, even within the spaces where it's used, then it does not make sense.

**Tuck:** Right.

**maia:** Other than like to make a value judgment from a Western standpoint.

**Tuck:** Right, exactly. Well, ok, so you have the no-fly list. I'm not sure how much time you spent, like, personally combing through. But I know there have been some interesting analysis of the data. Can you talk about what the most interesting takeaways have been for you or what you hope that people get from it?

**maia:** Yeah, I haven't really dived in that much myself, but I have found that like, analysis from Papers, Please extremely interesting, especially and I feel like it's just interesting, like what I saw at first glance is just the very strong bias of like almost entirely Middle Eastern names on that list also, like surprisingly high representation of like Irish nationals. It's interesting how you can kind of start to guess what kind of intelligence partnerships the US has internationally based simply on this list because like the US doesn't have time to investigate a fucking boxing cartel in Ireland, *[laughter]* but they're all on the list. So, like, they just definitely have like intelligence partners in the UK and that directly results in people getting added to no fly.

And then the other wild thing I think is that like the selectee list, which is the list of people that always get like additional screening and questioning, like the funny TSA thing that you, people sometimes randomly get subjected to. But if you're on selectee you're always selected for that treatment. Like that's why it's called selectee, it took me like three days to realize that that, that's why it has that name. Yeah, that list is significantly shorter than the no-fly list. So, the US is so sure about their like protective antiterrorism measures that they are willing to ban more people from flying than they are willing to put people on a list that will just get them checked for like weapons at the airport, which already that is stupid. But, but, but they put fucking four-year-olds on the no-fly list. I don't get it. It does not compute.

**Tuck:** I mean, I just have to assume nobody's thinking very hard about it because it doesn't affect them. They're just like, put them on, put the baby on. I don't care.

**maia:** Yeah, I don't know. I like the fact is that, like, it is a subset of, like, the terrorism screening database which is even bigger. Like, that's, that's the wild thing. And, like, basically any US agency including the US Postal Service can nominate people to be added to the, like terrorism screening database and from there to the no-fly list. And I don't know, like the fact that it is the subset of the general terrorism database just reveals so much about us intelligence that you probably don't want revealed.

**Tuck:** Yeah. Ok. So, I would argue that the no-fly leak obviously would have been news no matter what. But the reason it went viral is because of your specific identities, aesthetic, and personality. People love your website, which looks like it was built in GeoCities in 2005. Despite the fact that you were five years old in 2005. I am curious if you feel like that attention to your identity distracts from the message of your work, whether you feel like that's an important part. Like how do those two things play into each other?

**maia:** You're definitely right that it's mostly because of that, that I blew up because like I was definitely getting attention like kind of slowly and at some point, Tumblr discovered my website and that's like when I suddenly started like on Twitter, getting over 1000 followers per hour. It was insane. I feel like it has brought my message and my work to so many more people than it otherwise would have. And I feel like while like there's a lot of focus on just who I am as a person and a lot of jokes about me being poly and about things like that on my TikTok for you page. It's weird opening every single social media app and seeing posts about yourself. But I feel like it doesn't really distract too much. Like I don't think as many people would have ever heard about what I have done and what I'm doing if it weren't for this. So, in a way, it's kind of lucky for like my mission if, if, if I can call it that.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I mean, obviously my bubble on Twitter is very specifically trans people, but everyone's looking at this website in this post and being like this is the most like beautifully cat girl, trans girl hacker thing I've ever seen. And I just feel like this needs to be asked somewhere. So, what is the deal with so many hackers being cat girls and vice versa? And which came first for you, the hacker, or the cat girl?

**maia:** I like the answer to that question. This can be summed up in one word and that word being autism. *[laughter from Tuck and maia]* But, and that answers, I feel like both halves of that question. But what came first, I feel like they both came kind of around the same time, which is really weird.

**Tuck:** You do have your legal name, location, your face out there in the world. And I was like, wow, so brave. And then I saw you sell a shirt that says “OPSEC: oversharing private stuff everywhere constantly” which I am obsessed with. Like, that's so funny. But can you talk about the choice to not only take these risks but like be named for them?

**maia:** OK. So, I'm just going to be real here for a second. Part of that, it's just that I have a really hard time like shutting up. I want to talk about the cool shit I'm doing like, as you can tell, I, I just love talking about the stuff I do. I that that's why I'm on every single podcast ever currently. I feel like for me, that's just an important part of the process. I absolutely do not recommend anyone else do this. It's fucking stupid and it will get you in trouble. But like, it is kind of like what I have been built to do. This sounds really stupid, but like, yeah, it is just kind of what I enjoy doing and how I enjoy doing things. And I'm, I'm glad that with the platform this has brought me, I get to like, inspire people, and bring my message to the world and bring my politics to the world. It's kind of wild at the end of the day, how like in 2021 I managed to start like, especially US-wide discussion about like surveillance capitalism. And now I'm kind of doing the same thing with bringing awareness to the fact that a no-fly list is like, there are so many us people who have asked me, hey, what the fuck even is a no-fly list.

**Tuck:** Wait, really?

**maia:** Yeah, there have been people asking that and I feel like just the fact that this is being discussed again, it's great even though that means that in some ways the Republicans are on my side.

**Tuck:** Wait, why would that make the Republicans on your side? Didn't they invent the no-fly list?

**maia:** Because after January 6th.

**Tuck:** Ooohhh.

**maia:** A lot of Republicans ended up on the no-fly list. So, they hate the no-fly list now. Like the most far,-right Republicans hate the no-fly list now as well as like the most left Democrats. So finally horseshoe theary proved. It's gonna be interesting to see what happens when the congressional inquiry happens, which is apparently happening, which that's wild.But like, I'm very curious whether they will ask me to make a statement or testify in front of Congress because that would be so silly. *[laughter]* I'm very, very curious about the congressional inquiry. I'm also kind of scared about what that's going to bring to me in terms of attention. I don't know if I'm ready for the fact that it's not impossible that Tucker Carson is going to have to talk about me at one point. If Congress is talking about me, that's kind of inevitable at that point. I feel like I'm ready to take whatever comes. But it's just, yeah, there, this has gotten a lot bigger than I expected. Like I expected big things, but I didn't expect it to take like a day for a Republican congressman to tweet out about the thing I just did with an article linking to my website.

**Tuck:** So, has there been any other like component to the response that you've been surprised by?

**maia:** I feel like the fact that like half of the response on Twitter has been fucking queer discourse, it's just tiring like that we are still at this point where we are discussing this and like if it matters, whether someone's identity makes sense to you or not. There's literally posts on Twitter now of like if you follow maia or like maia, DNI. It's so incredibly childish and the fact that whenever someone uses the word bi lesbian, they come and say, “Oh, this harms real-world lesbians. This is getting us physically harmed.” And then I say that this discourse is stupid and it's going to get us killed. And then I get quote tweeted “haha this person thinks discourse affects real life.” Like what? So, what exactly is your point now? Does it or does it not affect real life. I don't know, it's stupid. I'm very tired of this. I shouldn't have brought this up.

**Tuck:** No I feel like that was why I actually really enjoyed the tweet that said, “What if this is just a psyop?” And I was like, that would make me feel better.

**maia:** Yeah same, I would like, the fact that I know that it probably isn't hurts so much.

**Tuck:** Yeah, people pick truly incredible hills to die on, I gotta say.

**maia:** It's so stupid. Like, like the fact that they were fine with me being an it/she kitten furry and hacking the US government but they aren't fine with me calling myself a bi lesbian. It's so stupid. And then I was like, yeah, I just deleted it because I don't have the energy to deal with people getting mad at me for using some simple words to describe my identity. I just truly don't get it. Like, like that's the thing I don't get like I am not that invested in anything I care about, and I care about things that matter. Like if I'm allowed to just say that, right?

**Tuck:** Yeah. I asked a few friends if they had any questions for you. My good friend Io is actually the person who coined and popularized “Be gay do crime.”

**maia:** Hell yeah!

**Tuck:** Which I know that you love to say “be gay, do crime” to reporters. And it's also like on your banner image. So, they said to tell you quote, “Nice.” And they also asked you a question, I was supposed to ask you what you think the holy grail of hacking would be.

**maia:** I keep being asked this question. And the fact is I literally do not have an answer to this. My answer is just everything to this question. I feel like there isn't anything specific. I feel like it’s impossible to do. My problem is just that I see everything as like a matter of it's just gonna take me a matter of time to eventually stumble into it because so far that has just worked.

**Ozzy:** Well, this is maybe related to the holy grail of hacking, maybe not. But I read in one interview that you said it would not be that hard to shut down the whole internet. And I was just wondering if you could talk more about that.

**maia:** Yeah, this is kind of about like, yeah, Amazon and Google and Cloudflare and like, I mean, we've had that before, but like Cloudflare just fucking died because they fucked up like one line of code and they took down like half of the internet, in the West at least. And I don't know, like that's the thing. All you have to take down is like Cloudflare or like Amazon and, and you just take down the Western internet. It's that easy. It's just thanks to the wonders of capitalism, there is like two single points of failure and that's it. And like, they're all owned by, like Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk and that's kind of it at this point.

**Ozzy:** Yeah, I mean, I guess that's part of what I found interesting about what you were saying is just the idea that they've kind of like, done a lot of the work for us, of consolidating everything. So then, like, taking it out would be very easy.

**maia:** Yeah, that's just a classic capitalism moment. I don't know, I know this is like a much-contested theory, but I feel like capitalism will definitely aid its own downfall. I don't think it will bring about its own downfall, but it's definitely helping a lot with making it easier.

**Tuck:** Well, because we have time, we were talking earlier about how this whole thing has kind of become a meme. And I think the biggest meme is people probably saying holy fucking bingle, what? which is from your original post about hacking the no-fly list? And I saw that so many people were like, OK, what does bingle mean? And you and your friends were like, well, it's basically an inside joke. So, I was wondering what it feels like to have an inside joke with you and your friends suddenly like a meme that everyone is like yelling and drawing and it's trending on Twitter.

**maia:** Yeah. So, our Discord server like the Discord server this is from has been freaking out for the past week and it's just been about how this is like a whole thing now and it's, it's wild and we have been making bingle music and it's a whole thing. People were like, how did you already make this so fast? And the answer is that this was a meme before. It was a meme like, but, yeah, it's just a nonsense word. It doesn't really mean anything, like some of the original uses of it were just, “oh my bingle,” and like, it's just a silly word to say and it's just fun to say. I don't know, I have had, I've now received like hundreds of DMs of people telling me that they've made bingle their vocal stim and I'm just like, hell, yeah, I have, I have positively impacted the neurodivergent space. *[laughter]*

**Tuck:** Oh, I love that, actually, it's really good. Well, then the way we always end the show is by asking in your ideal world, what would the future of gender look like?

**maia:** I have thought about that a lot and I'm not sure I have an answer because like, while gender is a fuck, it's also kind of fun. You can get kind of silly with it. So, like while, while in an ideal world like, we wouldn't need gender, but I feel like we could still like, *want* gender to like have fun with it. Because I feel like it's such a funny aspect of identity to like, be able to play around with. It's kind of fun doing gender in a nonsense way.

*[Gender Revel Theme music plays]*

**Tuck:** That's going to do it for this week's show. You can find maia on Twitter [@\_Nyancrimew](https://twitter.com/_nyancrimew) and at [maia.crimew.gay](https://maia.crimew.gay/). You can find us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/gendereveal) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/gendereveal/) and at [genderpodcast.com](http://genderpodcast.com/). You can also find us on Patreon where we've got a new bonus episode about the word -ussy and many, many, many other fun perks, that's at [patreon.com/gender](https://www.patreon.com/gender). And you can also find us at the Bell House in Brooklyn this Wednesday, February 1st. See you there.

Today's episode was produced and edited by Ozzy Llinas Goodman and by me, Tuck Woodstock. Our logo is by Ira M. Leigh. Our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. There will most likely not be a new episode next week because we are working on an extra-long live show for you. But we will be back in two weeks with more feelings about gender.

*[Gender Reveal theme music ends]*