[theme music starts]

**Molly:** 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, Molly Woodstock.

[theme music ends]

**Molly:** Hi friends. I hope you’re all recovering from our good gay month. I’ve been sick all week and that’s why I sound this way. Enjoy. This week on the podcast, I am delighted to share my chat with Maia Kobabe, author of the graphic memoir Genderqueer. Maia and I talk about Spivak pronouns, orgasms, Harry Potter, TERF-adjacent relatives, coming out to your first Girl Scout troop, and top surgery.

[Exercpt] **Maia:** It feels like giving myself something, like too big of a present, like I don’t deserve something this big that I want this much that is not gonna benefit anyone but myself. [Excerpt ends]

**Molly:** But before we get to that, a real quick big hello, big welcome, big thank you to everyone who found us through Spotify or Pocketcasts or Queer Public or some other cool gay thing. Thanks for being here, subscribe, and stick around for the end of the show to find out all the ways you can join our cute trans community. There’s a lot and I don’t want you to miss out.

Also, a huge, huge thank you to everyone who joined the Patreon last week or upped their pledges. I am all cut up on sending Patreon rewards, so if you haven’t received yours by like the end of this week please reach out to me and I’ll send it again. If you haven’t yet, please consider supporting trans media at patreon.com/gender so that you get a cool newsletter and maybe some stickers or a glittery pen, and I get to be a full time gender detective.

And with that, it’s time for this week in gender.

[This Week in Gender Intro Music]

[Marimba and clarinet background music]

**Molly:** This week in gender, I just wanted to note that just in the last few months since our last season, several more states have moved towards adopting gender neutral X gender markers on driver’s licenses and other state IDs. In March, NBC News reported that Utah had begun issuing X markers on licenses back in 2018, however the state has only issued like 2 nonbinary licenses since then because in order to get an X on your drivers license, you have to get an X on your birth certificate. And in order to get an X on your birth certificate, you have to hire a lawyer and find a judge who’s sympathetic to granting your request, which is apparently hard to do because, you know, Utah. So, while you can theoretically get a nonbinary gender marker in Utah, it requires a lot of resources, a lot of money, a lot of legal battles. It’s not really an accessible thing.

Meanwhile in Nevada, things are going better. Starting April, nonbinary folks have been allowed to self identify as nonbinary on their drivers license — no physicians note or other documentation required, as it should be.

Last week, the governor of Hawaii signed three bills affecting trans folks. The first allows an X marker on drivers licenses starting in July of 2020. The second law, which is effective immediately, makes it illegal to use gay and trans panic defenses in court. And the third law, which is also currently in effect, clarifies that it is illegal to use conversion therapy on minors - of course, thank god.

And a few days ago, the Illinois state legislator sent a bill to the governor that would require all state forms and documents requiring someone to identify their gender to include as an option “nonbinary.” This would, if I’m reading the bill correctly, mean that folks can self identify as nonbinary on their licenses. The governor is expected to sign the bill into law, so keep an eye out for that.

If I’m counting correctly, this brings us to 12 states that have issued at least a couple gender neutral X licenses. Arkansas, California, Colorado, Indiana, Illinois, Hawaii, Maine, Minnesota, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Vermont, as well as Washington DC. However, some of those states, specifically Indiana, Arkansas, and Utah, lack adequate protections for trans and nonbinary residents. In fact, Arkansas state law specifically bans cities and counties in Arkansas from passing non discrimination laws that protect trans people. So sure, you can try to get your gender marker changed in those states, but that doesn’t mean you’ll be treated fairly when people see the gender marker on your license.

And speaking of which, remember when we mentioned that Hawaii banned panic defenses? Currently, only 6 states (California, Hawaii, Nevada, Illinois, Rhode Island, and Connecticut) prohibit the use of legal defenses claiming that the victims sexual orientation or and/or gender identity contributed to the defendants actions. So in other words, in 44 states someone can harm you and say “whoops so sorry I realized they were trans or gay and I panicked!” But you know, The Atlantic put an article out on Friday titled “The struggle for gay rights is over” and subtitled [Molly in a mocking voice] “for those born into a form of adversity, sometimes the hardest thing to do is admitting that they’ve won.” So, I guess everything’s fine.

This has been This Week In Gender.

[This Week in Gender outro music]

[Transition music]

**Molly:** Maia Kobabe is a nonbinary, queer author and illustrator with an MFA in comics from California College of the Arts. Eir first full length book, *Genderqueer, a memoir*, was published by Lionforge in May 2019. Eir work focuses on themes of identity, sexuality, anti-fascism, fairy tales, and homesickness. Maia’s work can be found on tumblr and instagram at redgoldsparks and patreon.com/maiakobabe.

Also, just a programming note, Maia’s audio does some really weird thing near the beginning and then it chills out for the rest of the show. So let’s just get through that moment together, it’ll be fine. Also, my audio sounds terrible because I recorded this, and several other episodes, before I learned how to use my new equipment - I am so sorry.

[transition music ends]

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

**Maia:** I identify as nonbinary or genderqueer. I use those 2 words interchangeably, I know not everyone does. And I use the pronouns e/em/eir, which are Spivak pronouns and grammatically used the same as they/them/their but with the T H knocked off.

**Molly:** Can you tell folks a little bit about Spivak pronouns and the history of them, where they come from.

**Maia:** They’ve actually been individually invented, or like slight variations, 5 times since the 1880’s, which you can read about on wikipedia.com. There’s another version called Elverson, which is very close. Instead of E it’s A spelled EY. So ey, em, eir. The first time they were invented, I believe it was by someone who was a lawyer or who was writing about legal trials and wanted a gender neutral pronoun set in cases where it might not be best to disclose the gender of a person involved in a crime or some sort of legal case, and wanted something to protect the identity of people. Michael Spivak, who came up with Spivak, wanted to make a coding textbook and he wanted to refer to the coder, the person writing the code, not using either the binary gender pronoun sets (which I think is pretty cool). Part of what popularized the Spivak pronouns is that they were then used in a very early online multiplayer role playing game called Lambda Mu that actually input them as a pronoun option for players to use. Partly to test their code, to see “can our code can handle another unfamiliar pronoun set,” and they became very popular within the game. Possibly the most popular pronoun set. This is back when people were still trying to keep their identities secret on the internet, so it might have been partly, again, a privacy concern. But I also think people liked them in the context of the game. And those pronouns have also spread into other online gaming spaces because of that.

**Molly:** I’m curious what your experience has been like just being a human in the world who uses those pronouns. Because I think as someone who uses they/them pronouns I am always trying to gauge whether someone I’m speaking to might have a concept already of they/them pronouns, and if they do, I'll let them know my pronouns and if they don’t, I probably won’t bother to let them know my pronouns cus I don’t want to explain the whole thing. But you, sort of by nature of your pronouns, have to explain the whole thing to almost every single person that you meet. So I’m curious what that’s been like for you.

**Maia: It’s m**ostly good, but also I choose my battles. So, the person who introduced me to these pronouns is a good friend of mine, Jana B. who is also an artist. And when E first told me about these pronouns, it was an immediate moment of like a spark of excitement. I had been considering they/them for a while before I adopted these ones, and for some reason that didn’t feel quite perfect. I like them and I love using they/them for friends, but it wasn’t the coat that immediately fit if that makes any sense.

And as soon as I heard the e/em/eir pronouns it was like a tingle up my spine moment of I love that. And I really did have to sit down and be like this is going to be difficult. This is going to require a lot of conversations. Everyone that you talk to will be unfamiliar with this set of words. Spell check’s gonna try to correct them to other words. It’s gonna be a bit of an uphill battle. But, I still really like them. And I’d say that most people, when I introduce them at least in like a queer friendly or open-to-queer and gender stuff spaces, people are like “oh that’s cool, tell me more about that.” People seem to be interested, and the most common response is “I’ve never heard that before,” but that can be kind of exciting. It means you’re having a new learning moment.

My family is, I would say medium good at using them for me. I’ve been using them in my immediate family for about 2 years and they hit it more than half of the time, or half of the time. Something like that. But I do consciously choose. There are times where I do not choose to introduce my pronouns and this is usually in an instance where I’m talking to someone who I’ll never talk to again. If I’m in a restaurant, I do not do pronouns with my server. And I don’t correct being called miss or ma’am or whatever by someone who’s working at a restaurant. Or in a DMV, or in the post office. That is not the place where I choose to have an educational moment — especially if there’s a long line behind me.

**Molly:** You have this book called *Genderqueer*, and in the very beginning of the book you talk about how you were in a class with MariNaomi who was talking about autobio and your gut reaction was “I’m never ever doing autobio, no one ever needs to do anything about me.” And now you have this entire book about your gender journey. You also have a companion series of comics on your instagram about your gender journey. And I’m wondering what changed for you?

**Maia:** I took this class in 2013, it was my first year in grad school, I went to California College of the Arts and I had this class with Mari and she is known for her autobio work. And she was using exercises from Linda Berry that involved writing about your secrets, writing about what some might call your demons, the things that plague you when you’re lying in bed at night. Your darkest, innermost, most private core things, what are those and then write a comic with them and then share it with 12 classmates you literally met last week. And at the time of this exercise I was lie ”oh god absolutely not no, no, no way.”

And that came from two places. I am by nature a fairly introverted and I would say private, quiet person, so I didn’t want to share. But also, I didn’t really feel like I had anything to share. I remember telling her “my life is too boring for autobio. All I do is read and draw. No one wants to read about someone who just reads all the time. So I felt both like anything deep I didn’t want to say, and also like who would possibly care. And I think what changed was, I mean gender was what changed. I got to the point where I was like, I keep trying to explain this stuff in conversations to people and I just keep hitting this wall where I am unable to fully communicate what I need to say. Part of it is that we get distracted, sometimes we get interrupted, they’ll ask a question and I lose my train of thought.

And I was like I need to write comics about this because comics are my medium. It’s what I’ve been trained in, it’s what I went to school for. It’s the media I feel the most comfortable and eloquent in and I need to get out everything I’m trying to say so I can finally say it and hopefully people will understand. It was very difficult. I wrote like 60 of those instagram comics and sat on them for several months before I even let anyone see them.

**Molly:** Yeah what’s that been like to have these really, really personal feelings about gender and sexuality and your body out in the world where anyone can look at them?

**Maia:** Terrifying at the moment of posting, and then usually amazing afterwards. I still occasionally, if I write one that feels really vulnerable, will post it at 2 in the morning like ‘hopefully no one actually sees this,’ which is silly because that’s not how the internet works. But it’s been really good. I’ve had so many people read my comics and then reach out to me to either just say “thank you, this helps me understand” or “thank you, I feel this way too and I thought I was alone in the entire world, I didn’t know anyone else felt this way,” or “I didn’t know there was a word for this,” or “I understand myself better because of this.” Or people who, in my life who I knew casually maybe, like school acquaintances, actually come out to me about their gender struggles, or thoughts, or confusions. And people that I would never have maybe guessed by looking at them were having nonbinary feels, admitting those to me, which has been really quite amazing.

I feel like I write comics so much just for me and honestly, for my parents and my aunts and uncles, because those are the people I’m trying to, this is what I’m trying to say, this is what I mean. But the most common feedback or response that I get is “I feel this way too” which is incredible.

**Molly:** You say in your book that in highschool your sister told you that she thought you were a genderless person. At the time is that a thought that you had before? Did it change the way you thought about yourself or how you could be or other people could see you?

**Maia:** I’m not sure. I should give a tiny bit of background info that I have a sister who is two years younger than me who’s also queer who also has some gender stuff going on. We are, I’d say best friends. And we always have been really close and shared a bedroom literally till both of us moved out for college. And when I was around 15ish and my sister was 13, I had been cast as a gender neutral part in a play because I was just a background chorus member. And she was like “oh that’s good, because I’ve always seen you as a genderless person.” And I remember being like “huh, interesting.” I actually wrote about it in my diary, I wrote those whole interaction down. And I remember just being like “Phoebe’s really smart” and then kind of completely forgot about it actually, until I was writing my book and I reread my journals and was like “oh yeah that happened.”

**Molly:** You also wrote in a comic that, in regards to gender and sexuality and transness, you said “I really didn’t know anything for a surprisingly long time” and that felt really resonant with me. But I was wondering what you meant by that.

**Maia:** I’ve always been a really late bloomer. I would say I hit almost every single life milestone several years later than the majority of my peers. This includes the fact that I didn’t learn to read until I was 11, I didn't learn to drive until I was 21, I didn’t get a cellphone until I was 21, I didn’t kiss anyone romantically until I was 25, I didn’t have sex till I was 25. I move slowly! I’m a slow moving person.

(Molly laughing)

I just read Jacob Tobia’s fantastic memoir *Sissy —* I didn’t know if you’ve read it, highly recommend, all your listeners would love it — anyway, Jacob talks about how they were a very emotionally intelligent and sharp and perceptive child and as I read that I was like “oh, I was the opposite.” I feel like there’s a long time in my life where I just like, didn’t know what was going on. I don’t feel like I fully understand my own emotions, or my own emotional process, or I’m just beginning to now at age 30. So I feel like there's been a lot of my life where I’m like “yeah, I have no idea.” [Both laugh]

**Molly:** Yeah so speaking of trying to just figure things out I guess [laughs], In your book you talk about not only your gender exploration but your sexuality exploration and identifying as bisexual or asexual or I think earlier on thinking “maybe I’m a gay man” or “maybe I’m a lesbian” so can you talk about how you identify now in terms of sexuality, like the full tumblr words version [laughs].

**Maia:** The full tumblr words version I would love to. So, full tumblr words is: I identify as bisexual, nonbinary, asexual, and aromantic. Yeah, all four of them. And I don’t find any conflict between those, I think they can all coexist quite happily together.

**Molly:** In your book, there’s a panel that really stood out to me that I immediately sent a screenshot of to friend-of-the-show Z Griffler. When you had sex and you say “everything we did today was a good experience, but now that I’ve had sex a few times I’m not really sure I need anymore. Trying to get off in front of someone is kind of weird.” After that, you said “I think when I do orgasm it’s not because of my body but in spite of it,” and I was wondering if you could explain what you meant by that.

**Maia:** Oh for sure, so I have a super low sex drive — like lower than any of my close friends that I’ve ever talked to about this. I just do not get turned on very much. I go into my masturbation habits in the book so you can read more there, but the short version of it is I would say that I masturbate like around once a month and sometimes not even once every month. And that’s about as much as my body can do. And my brain is interested in sex, like my brain will think wouldn’t it be cool if I could have sex with someone and it would feel amazing, both physically great and emotionally bring me really close to someone? My brain’s like yep that would be great, and my body just like it doesn’t matter what kind of physical sensations you attempt, you will never cum, sorry.

[Molly laughing]

I almost included joke strip in the comic like a parody, do you know the online comic called *Webcomic Name* by Alex Noris? It’s three panels, it’s a little pink gingerbread-shaped person, and they always end in “oh no.” I wanted to include one that was me trying to go to the orgasm store and be like “can I have an orgasm please” and the person at the store being like “the shelves are empty” and me being like “oh no!” [Laughing] I don’t know! So, I have had orgasms in my life, but if I were to say like how many have I had, I don't know like 10, maybe? And like, they’re good, and I enjoy them, and frankly, I would like to have more, but they’re not big. It’s not a big flashy thing, it’s not like fireworks, not life changing. It’s almost like a quiet, private moment, if that makes sense.

So when I said that, for me a sexual experience is happening almost entirely in my brain, it’s not happening in my body, if that makes sense.

**Molly:** So, my experience as someone who’s also queer and ace-spectrum is that sometimes it feels hard to be included in the queer community because the queer community is sometimes very sex-focused, like the whole identity sort of becomes about who you’re dating or who you’re having sex with or who you’re partnered with. And if you’re not having sex or partnered with someone, then like what does it mean to be queer. So I guess I was just wondering if that’s something you’ve ever grappled with.

**Maia:** Ooo, how do I answer this? The short answer is yes. The longer answer is: I think I never doubted that I was queer. From when I first started thinking about this stuff, so 11, 12, I was like, *I am some kind of queer I just can’t figure out what kind.* And that’s when I ran through “am I a lesbian,” “am I a bisexual man,” “am I a bisexual women,” “am I a gay man?” I was like, I know I’m in here somewhere, I just don’t know where yet. It was the “where” that took a long time to find.

And I think, actually I’m like, like, this is cheesy and I feel like people say this, I’m really grateful that I am gender nonbinary and it has been a really rich aspect of my life. And part of that is because it makes me feel really connected to the queer community despite the fact that I don’t date and I’m completely uninterested in the dating scene. Because, as a person who has questioned my gender and struggled with gender, and ultimately come to the beautiful conclusion that I am sort of in this middley place on the gender spectrum, that I feel like is my forever ticket to being like, yes I am queer, yes I belong and feel welcome in queer spaces, yes I can happily incredibly and joyfully march in a trans march or a dyke march or a pride march, you know what I mean?

And it doesn’t have to be about who I’m having sex with, it doesn’t gave to be about wanting to kiss someone or touch genitals or whatever. It’s just about who I am on the inside of myself.

**Molly:** Yeah. You mention in the book that you have, I believe it’s an older lesbian aunt, who said she felt like the trend of a lot of trans and genderqueer young people come from this internalized misogyny. And, I’m not trying to drag your aunt I think that’s something that a lot of people think, and obviously it’s not true but I know that you thought a lot about it because your family member said this to you. So I was wondering how you responded or how you would respond to that now?

**Maia:** Yeah, one of the beautiful things about my family is that there were already two out queer people in my family before I came out, both on my mom side, so that made it very easy. I actually had a great uncle who came out in I think the 50s and lived with his partner and everyone in the family knew. He was welcomed at christmas and thanksgiving, completely involved in the family which is wonderful. And then I have my aunt, who came out as a lesbian feminist in the 70s I believe. She and I are very close, we’ve always been very close, she’s also a big sci fi fantasy book nerd so we really connect about needing out about Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings, Star Trek, Star Wars, etcetera.

So when I first started coming out about gender I assumed that she was gonna be the first one in my corner because I was like, she’s probably met more trans people or gender nonconforming people than anyone else in my family, so surely she’s got this, it’ll be easy. And that was actually not the case. I came out to her and she was definitely like, “I love you and I support you, but I have to tell you I’m struggling with this.” And that was hurtful at the beginning. It was hard because I just had made this assumption that she would back me immediately. She did but she was also like “I’m gonna keep asking you to explain this, because I don’t understand.” And she definitely had some of those type of thoughts that, if pushed to the farthest extreme, become kinda like TERF ideas. But, the way she would express them, like “this is a thing that I have thought or is a conclusion I have reached based off some of my experience, but I am aware that I am not super well read up on these issues, that this is kind of outdated, and I’m sure I could learn more. Are you willing to have conversations about this?” And I was like “yes.”

So the two of us were both coming from this point of view of love and respect and passion, and mutual willingness to learn and grow. So sometimes we’d have conversations where she’d say things like “I’m really struggling with the idea of someone, either you or just an in general person, not wanting to be female because being female is the greatest joy of my life, and I love the feminine aspects of my body and I love the female community and I love being a lesbian and all-women spaces, so can you explain to me why those things aren’t working for you?” And I would do the best I could and I would hand her books, I would hand her Kate Bornstein, I would hand her the all-trans anthology *We’re Still Here* edited by Tara Madison Avery. And she would take them, and she would read them, and she would tell me which parts that she jived with and which parts didn’t quite work for her. So it’s been an ongoing process.

Not all people who have TERFy beliefs can be reasoned with, because many of them are not coming from this place of openness and love and mutual respect. But. fortunately for me, my aunt is. And I think there are some people who have an unformed version of these kinds of thoughts that are willing to learn and grow, and I really want to give those people a chance because I would hope that all of us in the queer community can be allies and support each other. But I know that that’s not always the case.

**Molly:** But sometimes it is.

**Maia:** And when it is I want to take the opportunity to try to reach out, you know.

**Molly:** Yeah, of course, of course.

**Maia:** I feel very lucky. I didn’t write my book because my life has been hard, I wrote my book because my life has been beautifully easy,

**Molly:** Mmm, tell me more about that.

**Maia:** Well it goes back to what I said earlier about how I initially didn’t want to write autobio because I thought my life was too boring. And I think I thought that because I haven’t had a lot of external conflict in my life. I was raised by two loving, supportive parents who were very invested in my education, who encouraged me to pursue art, who never tried to enforce gender roles or heteronormativity or even just business-sense upon me. And I went to mostly really artsy private schools in the Bay Area, I lived in a very safe, middle class, white bubble most of my entire life. Who I am has never threatened my job, my physical safety, my housing situation, my healthcare. I’ve been so, so lucky and privileged my whole life.

That’s not a bad thing, it’s wonderful, that’s what I hope for every person — especially every vulnerable queer person. But, it means that that’s why I thought people wouldn’t be interested in hearing about my life because it’s been too easy, right? But it’s because all my struggles have been mostly internal, which is a whole other journey that everyone else is going on.

**Molly:** Yeah, of course. Speaking of that, this is a question that I just want to clarify is very inappropriate to ask anyone who isn’t on a gender podcast, but I am curious because you talk a lot about having top dysphoria and really intense bottom dysphoria, and I was wondering if you ever thought about doing a physical transition and why or why not?

**Maia:** Oh I think about it all the time. I think about top surgery everyday, sometimes every hour of every day, and I am, I’m a slow mover, a late bloomer. It’s something that I think that I want, but also have so far not felt like I was ready for. I actually reached out to a therapist in the early part of this year, and I’m hoping to start some gender related therapy very soon, but it’s the kind of thing where I constantly think about how I would like to have top surgery.

But then, I also think about how I would be able to live my whole life without it too, and not suffer a great amount of psychological distress. So I get caught in this whirl of being like, I *want* this, but do I *need* it, is it worth my time and my resources and my money and dealing with doctors and having to go through the whole healthcare system and recovery and all of the sort of stresses involved in that. Maybe it’d be better to just ignore these feelings forever — which is probably not true.

Yah, so I think about it all the time, I think my main hang up is that it feels selfish. It feels like giving myself something, like too big of a present, like I don’t deserve something this big that I want this much that is not gonna benefit anyone but myself. Which, there are faulty logics in there because I think that becoming your own true self actually benefits your whole community not just your self, but I fall into that sort of type of thinking, and that’s why I want to do therapy.

**Molly:** Yeah! I’m really glad because my instinct is to insert myself as your proto-therapist and be like “No!” [laughing]

**Maia:** I’ll take some free, unlicensed therapy from you anytime.

**Molly:** Well I just, the thing that your comments made me think of is that you said you think about it everyday and possibly every hour of every day, and think about all the other things you could be thinking about with all of that time everyday. There’s also just feeling good in your body probably makes you a more pleasant — you seem like a very pleasant person to be around at all times — but I just know that in general when someone is more comfortable in their body and is not thinking about the way that a person's body is feeling and whether or not that person is uncomfortable in the body, it makes it easier to just be a human who thinks about other people and thinks about helping other people.

So that’s the way that I have to think about a lot of things in order to let myself do them, like if I go on a vacation, it's not “I deserve this vacation,” it’s “I need to reset my brain so that I can focus better on the work that I’m trying to do.” So I think this could be similar if you need a reason to trick your brain into letting you do this. I also think you just deserve to feel good in your body and have access to medical care that you want.

**Maia:** Yeah. I know. Because I believe that for everyone else! For some reason it’s harder to believe it for me. Every other trans person who wants to transition, 100% I support you, I will be donating to your GoFundMe, etcetera. But me, why do I deserve it? It’s a thing that I am aware of is a non-good thinking pattern that I need to try to process out of my brain, and I’m working on it, but I am just not finished with it yet.

**Molly:** Yeah, well, you’ll get there and then we’ll all celebrate and hopefully it’s really great. Yeah I had a lot of friends have top surgery all at exactly the same time and I was watching all of their recoveries and was like “why don’t we have the technology where you can pop boobs in and out like Mr. Potato Head style?” [Laughing] It would really make this a lot easier.

**Maia:** Well that’s the thing is I really wish I could donate my boobs to someone else! [Both laughing] I feel bad throwing them away even though I don’t want them. I’m such a saver, like I try to by all my clothes from the goodwill. I really want to recycle and reuse and stuff. So I’m like, it seems like such a bummer that there are people that would like boobs and I have them and don’t want them. I wish I could just hand them off like maybe to a trans woman, maybe to someone who is a breast cancer survivor, whatever, someone who wants a third one, just anyone who wants more boobs than they currently have.

**Molly:** That is like half of trans twitter is just trans women being like “I want boobs” and then a trans man being like “Take them I don’t want them please take them from me!” And then that with every body part, everyone’s just trying to swap.

**Maia:** If only. God, when is the magic body switching pill going to be invented? I'm so ready.

**Molly:** I know, we would be so ready. You mentioned on Instagram recently that you were pitching a children’s book, is that something you’re gonna do?

**Maia:** Yeah, I would love to do children’s books. Before I wanted to do comics I wanted to do children’s books, that was my OG art goal. I actually have an illustration agent, her name is Elaine Mitchell of Warneken Pratt(?) and I have two pitches that are with her that are ready to be seen by publishers whenever. They’re both about trans children, one was written by a different author that I would illustrate, and one would be written and illustrated both by me. And then I actually have a third one in development which is also about trans and nonbinary children. So, hit me up whenever, publishers. I am ready to start indoctrinating the youth.

**Molly:** Wow that’s so exciting! I know there’s so much bullshit around how kids shouldn’t hear about queer and trans people as children because for some reason…

**Maia:** Utter nonsense

**Molly:** Yeah, straight, cis people think that being a queer, trans person is inherently adult content and so we definitely need those books for trans kids!

**Maia:** I know, I know

**Molly:** Speaking of indoctrinating the youth, at the very end of your book you talk about how you teach, I believe it’s Girl Scout troops, about comics? And how you’re always wrestling with whether or not to come out to them because you’re only with them for a very short period of time so it maybe doesn’t seem worth it, but then again having representation of trans and nonbinary people is very important. So I’m wondering where you’re at now with that.

**Maia:** Yeah, hopefully by the time this episode airs I’ll have come out to my first Girl Scout troop.

**Molly:** Awww!

**Maia:** Yeah so I teach comics in general here and there, I do workshops at libraries and at museums and different places that are local to my area. My main age range that I teach is usually 10 to 15 or so. And I had so far been really hesitant about coming out, mainly because I teach these workshops that range from one to, the most three hours, and then I never see these kids again.

And so, I think I felt for a long time, is it a good use of classroom time to have this whole pronoun conversation at the beginning when I’m here is to actually teach comics? I really had to wrestle with that for awhile and then eventually I was like, wait a minute, of course it’s important. Think about how much it would’ve meant to me between the ages of 10 and 15 to have an out trans or nonbinary teacher. It would’ve been amazing. I would’ve cared about comics so much more! So I’m hoping to, the next time I teach, to just throw my pronouns up on the bored and be like “if you have any questions just ask me, if not, moving on to comics.”

**Molly:** That’s so exciting, I’m so excited. Let us know how it goes. This is the part in the show where I ask you what you want to talk about that we haven’t talked about yet.

**Maia:** Mostly, I’d like to repeat the message that I sort of already said before, which is: if you are a person that has maybe thought about sharing some of your story, in whatever media — maybe that’s song writing maybe it’s comics maybe it’s poetry maybe it’s prose, filmmaking, interpretive dance, whatever it is — and you are hesitating for some reason, and that reason is because you think people maybe won’t listen or won’t care or that your message is not important, I would like to encourage you to share your story, whatever it is, because I think it *is* important. And I think the very people who are most likely to have doubts about whether they should speak up are the people who should speak up. Because all the people who feel confident to charge ahead, many of them are white, straight, cis men, and we don’t need to hear anymore from them, thank you.

If you thought about sharing some of the intimate deep stuff about your life but been hesitant, I would want to give you a vote of encouragement that I think you can do it, I think it’ll be really great, I think that people relate to whatever you have to say, and that it will bring friendship and joy and community and career possibilities and just good stuff to you if you do that.

It’s hard, but I think if you’ve been waiting for a sign to say be brave and do it, this is it.

**Molly:** Wow, that’s so nice. Thank you for saying that. I also think, I was talking to a friend who listens to the show and we were thinking about how there is, sort of accidentally, a stratification between people who are trans for pay, which is great, and everyone else. And actually, we’re the same [laughing], like I go through all of the same struggles of being trans as the people who aren’t professionally trans, and you don’t need to hold yourself up to anyone else’s standard of what it means to be trans and move through the world, or the level of out you are. Because the people who you’re looking up to also actually might be going through the same problems that you’re going through. I get misgendered constantly [Laughing]

**Maia**: Yeah. Another thing, I initially worried my story was less interesting because I had an accepting family, for example. And I was like, wait a minute, the world needs more stories about queer people whose families love them and accept them. Please, we need that because it exists in the world, and if people are doubting that exists in the world, I want to show some proof.

I also did a panel at a small press expo last year, and it was me and a whole bunch of queer cartoonists, including Carta Monir whose been on your podcast, anyway we all sort of talked about our work and what we’re doing and stuff, and we had a little question period at the end. Someone stood up and asked the question, who said “I’ve recently come out as trans, and it’s been frankly really really tough.” And I think he said “mostly I see trans stories where a trans person comes out and immediately they feel better and life seems full of joy and roses and rainbows et cetera,” and he’s like, “that’s not been my experience. I’d say that my life has gotten harder and, almost, you could say worse immediately post coming out.” And he’s like “I’m afraid of sharing this story because I don’t want to scare other people off from transitioning.”

And what I had to say to him was because your story is not the one you are primarily seeing makes it even more valuable, because I am *positive* there are other people who have had your experience and are feeling really alone about it. And even if that is your reality, please share that. Also I think it will get better, but I also don’t want to negate the fact that your reality has been really hard.

**Molly:** I was gonna wrap up but I remember that on your Instagram I saw a lot of Harry Potter references and costumes and journeys, and I was a kid who loved Harry Potter so much and it was so important to me for like 15 years, almost 20 years, and now that JK Rowling is sort of TERFy, it’s been a lot harder for me to love it in the way that I loved it. I was just wondering how you have, it seems like you still really love Harry Potter. I’m wondering if you’ve been able to keep that separate and how that’s been for you.

**Maia:** I’m so glad you asked this question! I am an enormous Harry Potter fan, and I have been since 1998. Here’s how I have maintained my Harry Potter fandom in face of JK Rowling's increasing shittiness: I have become more and more critical of Harry Potter, and that has made me a bigger fan. There’s a podcast I would love to recommend to every single person who likes Harry Potter, it’s called *Witch Please*. It is 2 Canadian feminist literary professors reading Harry Potter and discussion it at the level you would in a college class. What listening to that podcast did was made me realize that the Harry Potter books are *not* the progressive, forward-thinking stories that I thought they were as a young person. If you read back through them, they are full of fatphobia, queerphobia, classism, a lot of weird, kinda of not really great stuff about race, um-

**Molly:** Anti-semitism, yeah

**Maia:** Yes! There’s a lot of actually really problematic stuff in there that deserves to be called out and, basically, if you read them, you will realize that actually JK Rowling has actually always been this way. It’s us that we’re not, our eyes were not as open to this in the 90s.

**Molly:** We were children also [laughs]

**Maia:** Also we were children! But here’s the thing, you can love a flawed book, because every book is flawed. Every human is flawed. And for me, having these joyfully deep conversations about the problematicness of Harry Potter is just so fun that it actually, I would say I am a bigger fan of Harry Potter in the last 2 to 3 years than I was the five years before that where I was just like “oh I like Harry Potter.” Now I’m like, “Harry Potter is full of problems, let's talk about it!”

So yeah I would recommend that podcast and yeah, be open to flawed things. And just be like yeah it’s got problems and let’s shout about that.

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

**Maia:** In my ideal world, all children would be raised gender nonbinary and would use a gender nonbinary pronoun, either e/em/eir, ey/em/eir, or they/them, or whatever until puberty. And at puberty, every child would get to decide what gender they wanted to present as in adulthood. And this could be male, this could be female, this could be nonbinary, this could be a whole other slew of any other options that they come up with. And they would have grown up since youth seeing all adults around them having whatever gender they wanted that was completely unconnected to the types of body parts that they had. So in this beautiful ideal world, it’s total gender freedom. Everyone’s happy, there’s no no more patriarchy, probably world peace, and we can really start working on those other issues like the global energy crisis and sustainable farming and all that sort of things because we don’t have to worry about gender anymore.

**Molly:** Yes! Do you get to switch later if you get it wrong a youth?

**Maia:** Oh yeah, totally, and it’s totally chill. And everyone gets your pronouns right immediately.

**Molly: [**laughs]That’s a good future of gender I like that one.

**Maia:** I think it’s coming, I think it’s right around the corner.

**Molly:** [Laughs] Yeah tomorrow there’s going to be no patriarchy.

**Maia:** Can’t wait.

[Outro music begins]

**Molly:** That's gonna do it for this week's show. If you had a good time or learned anything, please share the episode with friends or family or your crushes or whoever. Find Maia tumblr or instagram @redgoldsparks and at patreon.com/maiakobabe. Found us on Twitter and Instagram @gendereveal, that’s gender reveal with one R, as well as genderpodcast.com. Please feel welcome to join our very sweet and supportive community space on Slack. I have a new easy link for that, it’s bit.ly/genderslack.

Please help us pay our grant winners and our transcriptionists and our bills and me I guess someday by joining us on Patreon! Donate $5 to get stickers to be gay and do crimes with, donate $10 and you’ll get a sparkly button, donate any amount and you get our newsletter type product.

This show is edited by me, Molly Woodstock. Our logo is by the talented Michelle Leigh. Our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. Additional music this week by Blue Dot Sessions.

I’m out of town most of next week, so I’m honestly not sure if I’ll be able to squeeze in a full episode or not, but I promise you I’ll be back very very soon with more feelings about gender.

Throw a milkshake at a cop.

[music ends]