Tuck: The BiStitchual Podcast is brought to you by John and Kelsi, two crafty queer Canadians. Tune in biweekly for real-life ramblings, zodiac quizzes, work in progress check-ins, and tips, tricks, and other fiber tidbits, along with the occasional crafty guest to discuss all things yarn-related. Hang out in the BiStitchual Discord server to make new queer fiber friends, show off your work, and pop into the bimonthly stitch night. Find them on Instagram @bistitchualpodcast or at bistitchualpodcast.ca.

[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.

[Music ends]

Tuck: Hey everyone, hope you’re all hanging in there. This week on the show, I am thrilled to share my chat with my dear friend Io, who in addition to being someone I strong-armed into being friends with me, is a cofounder of ABO Comix, the printmaker at Bum Lung, and the goblin who brought the world the phrase “be gay, do crime.” And if you’re like, “I didn’t realize that someone bestowed that phrase upon us, I thought it had always been floating around in the atmosphere like carbon or Danny DeVito, or whatever,” well, that’s what we’re going to talk about today. We get into the origin story of the phrase “be gay, do crime,” and what we think the phrase means.

Io [interview excerpt]: It absolutely means crime as a means of survival, joy, and revolt. And I’m not negotiating that with people who give a hoot about respectability.

Tuck: We also talk about supporting incarcerated artists and hopping trains to outrun your gender feelings. And a surprise guest appears at one point to explain why *Dune* is, in fact, trans. But before we get to all that, it’s time for This Week in Gender.

[This Week in Gender music plays]

This week in gender, we’ve got another news roundup for you. They’re gonna start short and get a little bit longer, maybe a little bit less hinged as we go along. So here we go.

[Interlude tone]

Amy Schneider has won more than 22 consecutive games of *Jeopardy!*, becoming the first woman in the show’s history to do so. And if that gendered record leads to any kind of biological essentialism argument, I am going to lose my mind.

[Interlude tone]

Starting next month, Lithuanians will be allowed to change their legal name without getting any kind of gender-related surgery, which was previously required for some reason. However, they will need a medical certificate of quote unquote, “diagnosed transgenderism.” And also, just for context, same-sex marriage is still illegal in Lithuania, and the president of the country is vocally opposed to both gay marriage and quote unquote, “genderist propaganda.” So, still not great.

[Interlude tone]

Model, activist, and trans history icon April Ashley passed away on December 27 at the age of 86. She was born in Liverpool in 1935, and when she was 25, she traveled to Casablanca to get surgery therefore becoming allegedly the second English woman to receive a vaginoplasty. She did a lot of other really rad trailblazing stuff too, like modeling in Vogue and having an affair with Omar Sharif, so I encourage you to read more about her at the link in the show notes.

[Interlude tone]

The U.S. Quidditch League and Major League Quidditch are teaming up to pick a new name for the sport that they both play, both to distance themselves generally from J.K. Rowling, and to allow themselves to pursue sponsorships and TV broadcasting and other things that aren’t possible when the sport you’re playing is trademarked by Warner Brothers. A fun fact: The sport currently known as Quidditch is co-ed and has one of the most trans-inclusive gender policies of any sport in the world.

[Interlude tone]

Finally, I have a confession, which is that I have never seen *Sex and the City*. So of course, I am also not watching the reboot — it’s called *And Just Like That* — but I am reading and hearing so many recaps of this show, including some truly excellent work from Maddy Court in the Xena Worrier Princess newsletter, that I feel like I’m watching the show. And if you’re not watching or listening or hearing, I just need you to know that Carrie now co-hosts a podcast called XY and Me with a nonbinary character played by Sara Ramirez, who later goes on, as I understand it, to gay-ify Miranda and do terrible stand-up comedy. And by gay-ify Miranda, I mean they fuck. But in an apparent effort to not tokenize just one trans character, the writers also made Charlotte’s child come out as trans. And in an episode written by Samantha Irby, the child announces via TikTok that their new name is Rock.

Rock [rapping in show excerpt]: Yo, my name is Rock, the new kid on the block. Not trying to shock, or joining the flock. R-O-C-K, Rock! R-O-C-K, Rock!!

Charlotte [interrupting Rock in show excerpt]: R-O-C-K, Rock, we get it.

Tuck: And if Sam Irby wasn’t a friend of this show, who had given us a not insignificant amount of mutual aid money, I would call this transphobia. But she is and she has, so I’m going to call it a reference to that one Tumblr joke and a good dunk on us that we probably deserve. This has been This Week in Gender.

[This Week in Gender music plays]

Tuck: We’ve got a super short Theymail message for you this week. This message is from Panaphonica, and it says, “Panaphonica is lo-fi photography by a trans artist. You can buy prints from the site or just enjoy the photos. That is panaphonica.com, P-A-N-A-P-H-O-N-I-C-A dot com.”

Also, one more thing before we get started. This is generally a very lighthearted interview, but there is one part where we talk about the concept of rape and the way that it is handled or mishandled in our legal system. That is from minute 22-and-a-half to minute 24. So just skip that 90 seconds if you don’t want to hear that part. All right, here we go.

[Gender Reveal theme music plays]

Tuck: Io is a genderless printmaker and comic doer. They cofounded the abolitionist LGBTQ prisoner support network ABO, they own a sword, and they are the progenitor of the whole “be gay, do crime” thing. It also says here that they died 100 years ago today on a night much like tonight.

[Music fades]

Tuck: The way we always start the show, sometimes twice, [Io laughs] is by asking, in terms of gender, how do you describe yourself?

Io: Gender? I never touch the stuff.

Tuck: Classic.

Io: Yeah, classic, gets better every time I tell it. Um, not! I’m not it. Ungendered, gender secession....

Tuck: You have called yourself a gender nihilist as opposed to nonbinary, although you’re also nonbinary, but talk to me about gender nihilism. I don’t know that I even know what nihilism really means.

Io [whispering]: Nobody does!

Tuck: It’s like, thinking everything is bad? Is there a meaning of it? Or is gender nihilism just like, “Gender, no, ty”?

Io: Oh, lots of questions made for postgrads that I can’t answer. I think, one, the term “gender nihilism” sounds rad as hell, and I’ve been looking for an identity in my queerness, and for a long time now, and at a certain point, I was trying to do it for the benefit of others, and not necessarily the queers in my life, or even my cis friends who get it. It was an attempt to be intelligible for the benefit of straight civilization, and their entitlement to definitions and stuff. And gender’s already so transient, nonexistent for some and a big source of strength for others, and I feel like it’s just another… as transness gets far more accepting, and they are more interested in taking our money, it’s just a big cudgel that straight society uses, to codify and define, and I don’t want to define myself in relation to it, or even in opposition to it. So this is a long, bloviating way of saying, I guess, nonbinary.

Tuck: [laughs] I mean, I think it’s getting harder, because it went from cis people being like, “Nonbinary, what is that?” which many people are still at, to the almost more dangerous “Nonbinary? I know what that is!”

Io: “I know what that is,” they say sinisterly.

Tuck: [laughs] Exactly, because it’s like, you can’t, because it is just saying, “I’m not these two things. Although I actually could be one of those two things, but there’s something else going on in addition, if so, or maybe none of that, and there’s no possible way to know, and so the fact that you’re confident that you know actually makes me nervous.”

Io: Nonbinary, you know, the third option.

Tuck: Exactly, the third one. [sighs] Good. Well, we’ve solved gender.

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Io: We’ve done it. Take the rest of the day off, bud. Oh, we gotta do a podcast.

Tuck: I mean, I will say as either a warning or a brag, depending on how this goes, that I probably prepared for this interview the least out of all of them, so we’re just kind of skating on. I felt like that was good for your energy.

Io: Yeah, we’re just two bros hanging out. I think I — not prepared, but I fretted over it because I’m like, “I have to talk into a microphone and other people besides Tuck are gonna hear it?” So, whatever. We’re just a couple of guys shooting the shit here.

Tuck: [laughs] So I know you’re thinking about re-re-re-changing your name? Are you like me where you’re doing that because all previous versions of yourself become intolerable after a few years, or are you doing it for more normal reasons? Or are you just trying to stay off the grid and un-Googleable, or what’s up?

Io: The third one, mostly. I also like the idea of just being like, you know, a Cher or a Shakira. I don’t need the other name. It’s just me and the moon who called dibs on Io, and everybody else can fucking come claim it if they want.

Tuck: So, I have brought you here today because I love you, and also to talk about “be gay, do crime.” People pitch us merch that says “be gay, do crime” all the time, and I’m always like, I don’t sell “be gay, do crime” merch because my friend Io invented the concept of “be gay, do crime” merch and also “be gay, do crime,” and it just feels weird to me, so I just don’t do it. And they’re always shocked that it came from a person, they think it came from a stone tablet on a mountain in 5 BC. Or I’ll point them to the original skeleton design, and they’re like, “Oh, I’ve never seen this graphic before,” which is wild. So do you want to just start by just kind of giving us the backstory on how you’re connected to this now ubiquitous phrase?

Io: Yeah, let’s go back to how I cast a long shadow upon this fallen age. [Tuck laughs] [Io sighs] Okay, when I was just a critter, it was just something that I and some other queer anarchists would tag around when we couldn’t think of anything better. It was like ACAB or a circle A, just good to have in your back pocket when you couldn’t think of anything funny enough and you just really wanted to ruin a wall. Because a lot of queers tend towards chaotic energy, and I think most of them siphon it towards drama, nothing against that. But I think a smaller subset who hate cops more than they like drama, just channel it into mindless mischief. So “be gay, do crime” was just a tag. Then I got a copy of Photoshop and there’s this old Thomas Nast piece of propaganda around this time that I was really obsessed with, this hundred-year-old propaganda, especially anti-anarchist type stuff, it always made us look so cool. I just chopped and screwed that thing, and it was around when I was learning to screen print, so I was making the screen and I put the image on the internet, and then I went to bed, and then I woke up, and the world had changed. [Tuck laughs] It was upsetting.

Tuck: When was this roughly in time?

Io: This was... 2017? This could be wildly off. It was around when we were making ABO Number 1, because I was learning to screen print so we could make shirts to fundraise for it. So, match that up with the time.

Tuck: So the point is, not very long ago. This thing that feels inextricable from our human life was at most four or five years ago, probably fewer.

Io: When it got — I definitely don’t feel comfortable saying it’s mine — but when I popularized it, when I gave it as a gift to the world and then they massacred my boy, it was around that time. We were tagging it for years and years and years before that, so it happened to get around, but not like that.

Tuck: There’s not any sign that this existed before y’all started tagging it, right? I have not seen any proof that it was out in the world.

Io: Not that I know of. It didn’t spring fully-formed from my head, or anyone’s head that I know of, we fished it out of the ether.

Tuck: Yeah. Well now it is fully part of the ether. You know, I remember walking to meet you for Pride in June and I saw this super cutesy pink Pinterest-y sign for a bakery that said like, “Be Gay, Eat Cookies.” And I was just like, “This is fucking wild.” And then I got to Pride and was like, “Excuse me. I just saw this thing.”

Io: Yes! And you had to punish me with another one. At least nobody’s sending me Pete Buttigieg “be gay, do war crimes” memes anymore. [Tuck laughs] You see it once and it’s enough, folks.

Tuck: I mean, I have a question sort of about that. [Io laughs] But I mean, I’m curious what it has been like to watch this happen and see versions of it everywhere.

Io: Weird! I don’t know what to do. I’m trying very hard to not care. And it’s a really cool thing to feel that connected to it, and in a very small way have a little hand in queer counterculture of this time. That feels really weird in the best way. But the thing that I try not to pay attention to is that it’s intentionally vague and stupid and goofy, but it’s an explicitly anti-assimilationist thing, and now it’s grown beyond me, and it’s gonna outlive me, so whatever. But it kind of breaks my heart to see it cashed in on by these shitty queer lifestyle brands, and corporations, and fucking political campaigns, and opportunistic liberal hacks, who probably, or openly, don’t support sex workers, rioters, drug users, prisoners. Like, what the fuck did you think this means? Some people are very nice and will be like, “Hey, you should credit Io with this.” And they’re like, “Oh, actually, it belongs to everyone, if you look, you can see there’s this picture of a graffiti here” — which we can get into later — and try and assimilate this phrase in real time saying like, “Oh, no, no, it just harkens back to a time when sodomy was illegal in the nation.” Like, fuck you, no, it comes from a place of joyful queer militancy. I made it when I was living in abandoned houses and eating trash and going out and fighting Nazis and being very, very depressed! And so these fuckers can sell it alongside Notorious RBG shirts. It absolutely means crime as a means of survival, joy, and revolt. And I’m not negotiating that with people who give a hoot about respectability and shout, “Oh boy, crumbs!” whenever some new piece of queer media representation comes out. So, all right, here on Gender Reveal I’ll set the record straight: The crime in “be gay, do crime” means arson, and stealing pies off of windowsills, and tearing off your dick and throwing it at a cop. And that’s that.

Tuck: [laughs] That was literally my question, when I was like, “I have something about Pete Buttigieg.” It’s just that we see that whenever a slogan hits the mainstream, it gets watered down. We saw it with “Defund the Police” when people were like, “When people say defund the police, do they literally mean defund the police?” And like, landback, there’s a really good bit on an episode of *Reservation Dogs* of this white guy being like, “When they say ‘landback,’ do they mean give the whole thing back? Do you think they just mean give part of it back? I could see giving *part* of it back.” And I feel like that’s happened where we’ve literally seen people, just random people on Twitter, being like “Oh, ‘be gay, do crime’ is about shoplifting from Walmart, it’s not about throwing a brick through a Starbucks or fistfighting a cop or whatever.” I think Io needs to be really clear. And obviously, there’s death of the author, but to some extent I’m like, “No, I don’t want there to be death of the author on this. I want to be really clear.”

Io: No, I’m still technically alive.

Tuck: [laughs] Please stay that way.

Io: And it’s fine, I can’t do anything about it. But as a prison abolitionist, it really does kind of steam me to see people try and qualify this shit. Crime is a legal definition, not a moral one, and they’re trying to attach their own morals to this thing they have no real business using unless they’re gonna come into it with a goofy sort of, this obviously isn’t gonna match up completely with my political beliefs. Crime is the tactic of survival for many marginalized people, especially if you’re a clockable sort of deviant or sex worker or POC. And almost all of it is a result of, and a symptom of, this fucking ghoulish superstructure that we’re all forced to live under. So in this world, seemingly made to be miserable on purpose, it’s such a joy to find ways to break that spell and find and support each other in the whirlwind, and find these brief moments of catharsis. It’s, the same people who want to qualify it as only stealing from, you know, bad corporations, or whatever they’re doing — I don’t pay attention anymore because I’m tired — are the same people who probably want to invoke Stonewall, but there’s a long history, a continuing history of queers who aren’t concerned with begging for inclusion, but attacking the forces that exclude in the first place. And whether they’re doing that through, big quotes, crime, which I’ve never done — [Tuck laughs] let’s put a disclaimer right here, I’ve never done a crime, and any crime that me or anyone I know allegedly may or may not have done is definitely beyond the statute of limitations in whatever state I was in at the time. Anyway, whether you’re doing it through whatever you want to consider crime, or weird sex or weird art, or tenderness or screaming “Yabba-dabba-doo!” and doing the jerk-off motion when you steal a shopping cart full of electronics, like, cool. It’s just the method of catharsis and attacking this thing we all can agree is a pretty bad deal we live under.

Tuck: Yeah, I was thinking about the difference between crime and harm the other day, and I was thinking about it for maybe the worst possible reason. It’s so silly that this is how it came up. But you know how Chris Cuomo got kicked off of CNN for helping his brother, disgraced New York politician Andrew Cuomo? Someone tweeted, “Well, wouldn’t you help your brother, no matter what he did?” and someone else was like, “No, I would never support my brother if he did a *crime*.” [laughs] And this was a left-wing person, if I’m remembering correctly, and I was just like, “We really need to be clear on what’s harm and what’s a crime and how rarely those two things touch.” There is overlap, sort of by luck. But there’s so much difference. So yeah, I just was curious if you had thoughts on that, that you haven’t already said.

Io: Yeah, so people have tried to engage that conversation, and a lot of people that I respect, and we’ve had good conversations about it. Because, yeah, they overlap through luck a lot of the time. There’s many things that are defined as “crime” that we all, by our own moral beliefs, even the most wingnut commie leftist or whoever is going to not be down with: rape, murder, in some senses — in most senses, let’s say — and some people have been like, “Haha, gotcha! This is also a crime!” And it’s like, yeah, but come on, we’re gonna agree with the police that air is good to breathe, and water is good to drink, for now. It’s not a gotcha. It’s a legal definition, not a moral one, and we’re all smart enough to — we’re not five, we can base our morality not around the Constitution, or the Ten Commandments, or wherever people are getting this.

Tuck: Right. And the thing about being like, “Well rape’s a crime, gotcha” — and I’ll put a content warning on this — but it’s just that we don’t treat rape as a crime. It is technically a crime, but it is so rarely prosecuted that it’s like, yeah, on paper that’s like, “Don’t do that.” But is anyone held accountable for doing that in any meaningful way? Almost never.

Io: Yeah, it’s not even that particular — I was dancing around it, because I was like, let’s not bring the house down that much. But yeah, it’s not even, rape is not even a crime that you have to be a person in a powerful position to get away with. It’s not prosecuted. People who are violated are not valued by this legal system, by this entire system. We’re doing our own thing here where we’re going to provide support for those people, and because we are supporting crime, it also means to have solidarity amongst each other against this thing that we all hate.

Tuck: Well, I feel like this brings us pretty neatly to prison and prison abolition. So you’re one of the founding members of ABO Comix. We did talk to Casper, another founding member, a little over a year ago now, but maybe not everyone listened to that episode yet, maybe they forgot. Also, you have other things to add. Do you want to just tell us about ABO Comix and also your involvement with it?

Io: Yeah, Casper, I, and our friend Woof started it a couple of years ago. We were all prison abolitionists, had people in prison that we wrote with, and were always trying to think of ways that we could bring that into the work that we’re already doing or start something else. I’ve been really active in the comics community for over 10 years now, and there’s so many artists locked up right now whose art isn’t getting out there. And we, as people who are outside of prison walls, have an opportunity to facilitate helping these people get their art out into the world. And when you go into prison and nobody’s reading your stuff, it’s hard to keep a drive to keep making it, not to mention you can’t get supplies without — anyone who knows anyone in prison, or has been to prison themselves, knows how expensive shit at the commissary is, and how little it has to offer. So we started fundraising. I may or may not have gotten a bunch of stuff for free to get it started, and we just tried to raise money to send people paper, colored pencils, pens, the shitty little pens so you can’t make a weapon that they give you in prison, and help some queers who were artists get their stuff back out into the world and connect them to the outside because that’s — short of busting somebody out of jail — the best you can do is give them that window into the outdoors so they don’t feel forgotten. It went so much better than I think any of us expected. I think we were expecting to make one and make some friends and help some folks out and maybe keep it going. But Casper has a bonkers work ethic and really deserves all the credit for building it into this thing that serves so many people behind bars who, now, some of them are getting out who are actually helping us more with it. And yeah, I guess that’s the answer to how it started. And how I started making “be gay, do crime” shirts, at the very least, was to fundraise for ABO. And I still try and do at least one fundraiser a year with it to get some money to raise some bail or something — if we’re going to be making money off of crime’s good name.

Tuck: [laughs] Yeah, that actually reminds me I did want to ask this just while we have you here. Like I said, a bunch of other queers have made designs that have “be gay, do crime” on them that they are selling. Again, you don’t own the intellectual property, but personally, if they’re now panicking, that they feel weird about it, what would you say to the other queers making “be gay, do crime” stuff?

Io: Donate some money to someone’s commissary, get a prisoner pen pal. I think some of that money should go to a prisoner if you’re feeling a little bit guilty about it. ABO is great, if I’m going to toot my own horn, but Black and Pink is a specifically queer prisoner support network. Whatever city you’re in, there’s probably a bail fund that could probably use your help. People who take the skeleton design, I get kind of salty with. One time I messaged somebody, and I may sound like a big anarchist asshole on this, but I’m a big sweetie, I was so nice to this person being like, “Hey, this is my design, I’m doing a fundraiser, could you not sell this anymore?” And they were like, “Mm, this has been around for years, you didn’t invent it,” et cetera, et cetera. And I’m like, “I’m not gonna....” But they sent me a picture that I hadn’t seen before, and then it opened me up to all the fucking thinkpieces out there that’s like, “What does ‘be gay, do crime’ mean and why we need it right now,” of these people who’ve done deep dives into the meme that I made. And then the first instance of it on the internet is this graffiti that’s up, they sent me this picture of the graffiti and like, “As you can see, this was a year before your thing.” And I was like, why does that look — oh, oh shit. And I remembered I was in Marseille, France, and I was going home hanging out with these squatters. We all went to a Miyazaki movie fest. And they were just tagging shit drunkenly on the walk home, and I was like, “Hold on, I got something funny,” and put it up. And then I was like, “Is that graffiti in Marseille, France? Go ahead and guess how I know.” And then they were like, “Okay, I’ll take it down.” And I was like, “Swish, got ’em! Ra-pa-pa-pa-pa-pa-pow!”

Tuck: I love that and I’m so happy that you told that because I just kind of carry that in my heart as a secret joy that we now get to share with everyone. [both laugh] I love that. Also, I scrolled back and found when “be gay, do crime” went big and it was May, June 2018. So three and a half years ago is when it really went viral, so pretty recently, and now it’s everywhere.

Io: Oh my god, time flies, especially when your life is taken over by a picture of a skeleton.

Tuck: [laughs] Well, we’re talking about “be gay, do crime,” but also, I want to heavily plug your Etsy, etsy.com/shop/bumlung — B-U-M, L-U-N-G. In that store, we have “be gay, do crime” merch. We also have some *Dune* fan merch. You’ve had this for years, like way before the Timothée Chalamet moo-vay. Here’s my question. What do you love about *Dune*, and is *Dune* trans?

Io: No, not trans. I would love to hear somebody who can make an argument for it.

Jules: Okay, producer Jules hopping in here for a second just to say that I do think *Dune* is trans. Disclaimer that I have only read the first book, but the plot focuses on this character Paul, who is a boy, but he was *supposed* to be a girl, and everyone is really mad at his mom for *letting* him be a boy? Also, he has these powers that only women in this universe ever have except for him. And it’s discussed a lot that he has the abilities of both men and women in some ways. Also, maybe most importantly, there’s a part where the people on this new planet he’s on want to give him a name in their language, and they’re like, “Oh, let’s name him after this stone pillar. It’s really strong and manly and sturdy.” And he’s like, “Oh, actually, I want to be named after this cute little mouse that I saw running around the desert.” And that is just huge transmasc energy to me. Please do not ask me to explain further. Anyway, back to the interview.

Io: I like that — spoiler for the far future books — but later on Paul Atreides’ son becomes the God Emperor of Dune by burying himself in what is essentially worm cum and becoming a big sandworm, and he won’t stop talking about how he no longer has genitals.

Tuck: So that’s trans.

Io: Yeah, that’s the trans representation I’ve been waiting for. So I take it all back. Yeah, *Dune* is extremely trans. [Tuck laughs] The God Emperor of Dune is extremely trans and never did anything wrong.

Tuck: While I’m just throwing sort of random questions at you, I famously interviewed Justin McElroy on this podcast for some reason, which annoyed a few people but also delighted a few people including you specifically, which I enjoyed. Who is just a random cis person that you’d want to interview? Or just kick it with, I guess you don’t have to do a formal interview.

Io: Living or dead? Or living?

Tuck: Sure, they can be dead. Why not? There’s no rules, baby.

Io: Yeah, no rules, just right. I would love to go back — there was an era where a lot of theorists kind of danced around gender with the idea of free love before the language was there for transness. I would love to blow the people who [Tuck laughs] — I know how I set this up, and I’m not correcting it.

Tuck: Yeah, I was waiting. And I’m glad that you committed to it. You would love to blow the people who...?

Io: I would love to blow the people who blew up Czar Alexander. [both laugh]

Tuck: This is a perfect answer to this question.

Io: And I want to be like, “Hey, so what’s the deal with gender? It’s not entirely dudes here, and you guys seem down, the same stuff that I think is bad, i.e. czars....”

Tuck: I love this. You’re like, “My impact has not been great enough. I need to bring gender to these people.”

Io: I need to time travel and just make a mess. I want to find the historical bomb-throwing eggs.

Tuck: [laughs] I was rereading your autobio zine last night, pretending that I was prepping for this interview, and you wrote, “Courting a forever crisis by LARPing a traveling adventure wherever I could get for free didn’t leave a lot of time to put name to the dysphoria I carried in my brain all those dumb years.” So how much of your train-hopping ragamuffin days were about outrunning gender, do you think?

Io: I think a decent deal. I think I was outrunning a lot of things, gender being one of them. I stopped trainhopping and tried to be settled for a little bit, and after about a year on HRT, I was both like, “Eh, this doesn’t really — I’m not pursuing femininity, I’m trying to flee masculinity. And this maybe is making some changes in me that I find far more comfortable. But it doesn’t feel like the thing that I was looking for. Not only in that I am an irresponsible little shit, and I want to go hop in a stranger’s car again and just go across the country, and they don’t fill my prescription in Alabama or wherever.” So that’s when I stopped pursuing it in that place, but I met a lot of people, I got a lot of good thinking done about it. But I think it’s all because I’ve got brain problems. [both laugh] And not just that I can’t sit still with a gender identity either. So a little bit of that, a lot of some other stuff that I’ll probably go to my grave without knowing. And that’s fine.

Tuck: Who needs it?

Io: Who needs closure? Yuck!

Tuck: I mean, closure is kind of famously impossible. So I think it’s fine. Speaking of your zines, you made a zine several years ago about anarchism and D&D. That I got my hands on, because my friend sent it to me not knowing that you wrote it, and that we were friends, which is fair. But I love this, I was like, “This is the perfect zine for me.” And then I looked at who wrote it, and I’m like, “This is *actually* the perfect zine for me.” Of course, it’s under a different name, because you’re always under a different name, but I got it. I figured it out.

Io: Guess who!

Tuck: So that zine’s old, that zine’s from 2014 or something — ancient times — and predates “be gay, do crime,” but it seems like your thesis in that zine is that anarchism and D&D worlds didn’t overlap much, which feels so wild to me. Just to prove a point for myself, I was trying to look up that *Hard Times* headline that’s like, “Anarchist surprisingly strict about board game rules,” and I found three pages of *Hard Times* headlines about D&D, and I’m like, this seems wrong. So do you feel like that divide has lessened over the past few years? Or am I hallucinating? Who’s wrong here? Someone has to be wrong.

Io: We’re all wrong in different ways.

Tuck: All right! That’s fair.

Io: No, you’re right. It has lessened a lot in the last few years. I think D&D got into the mainstream again, whether you want to blame that on *The Adventure Zone*, or *Critical Role*, or my personal favorite, *Rude Tales of Magic*.

Tuck: Hell yeah. I was like, how are we going to work in *Rude Tales of Magic* onto this podcast? And we did.

Io: I found a way. [Tuck laughs] Yeah, I think that a lot more radicals are getting into it because it’s not something you need money to play, it’s something that helps you bond with a group and takes down a lot of self-serious walls that a lot of us in more radical circles do tend to put up. And it’s just fun to pretend to be goblins with your friends. I think that growing up, I was more often the only one who would maybe do some fantasy fulfillment of just like, “All right, where’s the king? Well, you guys know what I got to go do to the king, right?”

Tuck: So obviously, I didn’t prepare for this interview because your goblinishness wore off on me and I was like, fucking winging it. But my producer Jules wrote a question that’s like a real question, and why don’t I —

Io: Oh no!

Tuck: No, it’s fine. Or not! Who knows? It says: “It seems like humor and creativity are a really important part of the way you approach your activist and ongoing work. Why is it important for you to bring, for lack of a better word, fun into political movements?”

Io: I think that, if you’re looking... I can’t imagine somebody looking at the world and being happy with it. [Tuck laughs] And that goes for people with or without depression. There’s a tendency to get into political work, or radical work, or even just radical art — whatever you want to call it, if you feel like you take it seriously, and maybe do whatever you consider “the work” for it, it really kind of burns you down, because you keep butting up against a wall. And the tendency is towards working towards a future that you can’t entirely define, whether you have a big, lofty goal of global revolution, and you have an idea of how you’re going to get there, and everyone has just got to get on board with you, and then it’ll work. Or whether you’re just trying to help out the needle exchange in town or something, people are gonna keep dying, and it’s gonna be a fucking bummer, and it’s going to be an uphill slog the entire time, that you can feel a victory in, even if it’s just a gallows humor, about all of it, you can feel a small sense of that victory. Especially as queers, we don’t necessarily think about the future in the same way as everyone else, and that a lot of us probably aren’t gonna have kids — no disrespect to people who are going to have kids or anything like that. That means you can believe in, and I do very strongly believe in, fighting for a liberated future, but there’s a liberation to be had here right now, and it’s worth not sacrificing your good humor.

Tuck: No, I agree.

Io: My brain just ran out of gas.

Tuck: No, I got it. I think you have to make it tolerable. I make jokes sometimes about being trans to cis people, where I’m just sort of laughing at how bad everything is, and they look appalled, and I’m like, “You gotta laugh!”

Io: You gotta laugh!

Tuck: You gotta laugh. What else are you gonna do? You gotta laugh. You know, what else? This is the part of the show where I go, “Hey, what else?”

Io: What else, indeed? To bring it back to “be gay, do crime,” the proudest I’ve ever been was, this hacker, Phineas Fisher, robbed a bank, and then used the money from robbing the bank to encourage other people to rob more banks and pay them a bounty for robbing banks, just because, and made a little manifesto that had ASCII art of the “be gay, do crime” skeleton saying it in Spanish, and I don’t know if I’ve ever been prouder of it.

Tuck: I would love to propose — and you shouldn’t cosign on this — but I would love to propose that in order to do any kind of “be gay, do crime” apparel or sloganing, you have to do a crime first. [laughs]

Io: You have to do a crime first. Unlike me, who has never done a crime, but I invented it, I get a pass. Yeah, you have to do a crime. But don’t post about it. Don’t post about crimes on the internet, is my big advice to any crime-doers out there.

Tuck: Bigger advice, just don’t post on the internet, just in general. It’s a bad choice.

Io: Better advice. That’s a good punch up to that. Yeah, you do a crime for your own mental wellbeing. You’ll be proud of yourself and you’ll wake up bright-eyed and bushy-tailed the next day. Trust me, it’s great.

Tuck: [laughs] Just thinking about the once or twice when I’ve signed off, “We’ll be back next week with more feelings about gender, throw a brick at a cop,” for Pride, and people have been like, “Ugh! This was a respectable educational podcast until you said that. Unsubscribe!” and I’m like, “This has never been a respectable, educational podcast!”

Io: I don’t know where you’re getting that idea. I’ve heard this podcast, I know you.

Tuck: Well, I can’t possibly leave a mark to the level that you have left on society. But here’s what I’ve been thinking about, and I tweeted it and then deleted it because I did a typo, so I’m just going to soft launch it on this podcast. I feel like I’ve been leaning on the word transsexual a lot because it can be a noun, and transgender is just an adjective unless you say “transes,” which is fine, or “a trans,” but it’s more easily a noun. But I was looking at this 1995 directory of professional dominatrixes that we keep at our house — dominatrices? — that we keep just to look at and think about the good old days, and somebody said “transgenderist.” Should we bring back “transgenderist”? This is my question for you.

Io: The transgenderist agenda — the transgenderists’ war on America’s children. The transgenderist revolution. I like it.

Tuck: Yes. All right. Thank you. I do think that that is the best example. The transgenderists say, “You can’t say woman anymore. You have to say Happy Holidays.” That’s a Niko Stratis joke that I just stole. Anyway. [sighs] All right. The way we always end the show is by asking, in your ideal world, what would the future of gender look like?

Io: Chrome.

Tuck: Did you say chrome?

Io: Yeah.

Tuck: Like Google Chrome, or? [laughs]

Io: No, like, everything’s chrome, and there’s a lot of neon lights and it’s raining all the time. You know, the future.

Tuck: *Blade Runner*.

Io: Yeah. No, that’s a bad future. I’d even take a *Mad Max* over a *Blade Runner*. [Tuck laughs] I guess just a future where gender is withered away, like the science of humors and phrenology.

Tuck: Mmhmm. [laughs] So sorry, I have to tell you this. I was at a bike shop talking to a trans person who worked there who listens to this podcast, allegedly — or did at least one time, so hello to that person. And there is a universal helmet, and then there was a universal women’s helmet that was too small for me. And I was like, “Is there any difference in this other than the universal women’s helmet is too small?” And they were like, “No, the women’s helmet is just the youth size.” [Io laughs] And I was like, “Okay, one, it’s very gender affirming that the universal women’s helmet that fits all women doesn’t fit me, but also isn’t that just phrenology?

Io: Wait, the women and youth are interchangeable?

Tuck: Yes. Women are babies. They have tiny heads. They can’t fit any thoughts in. So you have to give them the tiny helmet.

Io: Women are babies, I’ve been saying it for years.

Tuck: Anyway, did we get an actual future of gender from you? I wasn’t paying attention.

Io: I just said chrome. [Tuck laughs] I could have done better.

Tuck: I heard chrome and phrenology and I was like, did we get anything else in there, or was that mostly it?

Io: We could take it again.

Tuck: A third pass, a third future of gender.

Io: A third future of gender? Can I say the same thing again?

Tuck: You gotta come up with — you gotta keep going.

Io: Oh, for somebody who said “no future” a lot, this is a lot to ask.

Tuck: I mean, you can say “no future,” that can be the future.

Io: No future for gender, no dawn for men.

Tuck: Yep. Perfect. Thank you. That was perfect.

Io: Slam dunk!

[Gender Reveal theme music plays]

Tuck: That’s gonna do it for this week’s show. If you had a good time or learned something, please share this episode with your friends and community. Visit Io’s Etsy store, please, at etsy.com/shop/bumlung — link in the show notes — to find the original “be gay, do crime” design, plus comics, zines, books, D&D jokes, a beautiful poster with the litany of fear on it, and more. Io is also on Twitter at @bum\_lung, and on Instagram at @bum.lung.press. We are on Twitter and Instagram at @gendereveal and genderpodcast.com, where we have transcripts of the show and other useful resources. You can also find us at patreon.com/gender, where just $1 a month gets you access to our weekly newsletter full of sneak peeks and memes and pictures of my cat. This episode was produced and edited by Julia Llinas Goodman and by me, Tuck Woodstock. Special thanks this week to Miranda for pulling Rock’s TikTok audio for us. Our logo is by Ira M. Leigh. Our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. We’ll be back next week with more feelings about gender.

[Music fades]

Tuck: My friend one time just tweeted, “Coming out of my cage and I’ve been doing not great!” and I think about it every day of my life. [Io laughs, notification tone]

Io: Messaging?

Tuck: Yeah. [cat meows] Oh, baby. [cat meows]

Io: Whoa, how’d you get in here? [cat meows, notification tone] Oh shit, are they — Okay, this is one of those gossiping parts.