**Tuck:** Queer Candle Co is a trans-owned business that makes small-batch, hand-poured soy wax candles topped with a variety of botanicals. Right now, they’ve got some special summer seasonal scents, like desert bloom, apricot nectar, and tomato leaf, which sounds amazing. My favorite thing about Queer Candle Co is that 10% of profits get donated to the Sylvia Rivera Law Project. You can get 10% off your first order with the promo code GENDER10. That’s all at queercandleco.com.

[Gender Reveal theme music starts]

**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’re all hanging in there. This week on the show, I am delighted to share my conversation with Amy Schneider, who you may know as Amy from Jeopardy! In this episode, we ask the questions on everyone’s mind, like how did Amy’s cat’s birthday party go? And what categories would exist in trans Jeopardy? We also discussed becoming a beloved trans celebrity at such a fraught political moment, and what Amy’s activism might look like going forward.

**Amy [voice clip]:** I am finding myself a little uncomfortable with being America’s relatable trans friend that’s nonthreatening.

**Tuck:** But first, just wanted to let you know we’ve got the merch store fully restocked for all of your pride needs. We’ve got some fun new designs, we’ve got some old favorites, and there’s one design in particular I think you’re really going to love. I’ll tell you about it in another episode, but for now, you can go take a peek for yourself at bit.ly/gendermerch. And now, it’s time for This Week in Gender.

[Transition sound effect, with low metallic chimes and hi-hats plays briefly]

This week in gender, Mattel made a Laverne Cox trans Barbie doll, Power Rangers made a they/them death ranger villain, Kendrick Lamar made a Macklemorian song about his trans family members on his new album, and various state legislatures continued to make bad decisions to pass bad bills. This has been This Week in Gender.

[Transition sound effect, with low metallic chimes and hi-hats plays briefly]

[Record scratch]

No, I’m just kidding. I’ve got something else for you today. As you know, there wasn’t a new episode of Gender Reveal last week, but we did put out a new episode of our new bonus podcast, which is available exclusively for patrons on patreon.com. And possibly, if you just ask me very nicely, I’ll send you the file. But it is mostly for patrons on patreon.com. In the most recent episode, I spoke to honorary Gender Reveal producer and PhD in somethin’ somethin’ somethin’ Cassius Adair about the history of Trans Studies Quarterly, and also the history of trans studies as a field. If that sounds boring, honestly, I get it. But because Cass and I are good friends, we have a lot of digressions and bits and goofs to spice things up. Also, someone does a shot. Not *that* kind of shot… or maybe that kind of shot. Anyway, you can find the full hour-long episode at patreon.com/gender. But for this segment, we thought we’d share a little clip of Cass and my conversation. I want to be clear, this is not a clip I chose because it is the most compelling part of the interview; I actually was trying to find the least spicy bit of the conversation because Cass and I recorded with the understanding that we could be fun and chaotic and would only be heard by a select audience of transsexuals and devoted allies willing to give us five to ten dollars. But I decided that this clip is appropriate for all audiences. So here is Cass explaining why it is useful for trans scholarship to exist. And again, you can find the rest of the conversation at patreon.com/gender.

**Tuck:** If we’re just trans people minding our business, do you feel like the field of trans studies existing and publishing will impact in some way just the lives of trans people? Like, I guess, what’s the point? But like, not in a rude way.

**Cass:** It’s okay if you want to ask that question in a rude way because…

**Tuck:** It’s like this thing where it’s like, I don’t feel rude about it. I just can’t figure out a way to phrase this.

**Cass:** Yeah, that’s really real. I think that scholars should be asking themselves that every day anyway, like it is okay to have that question. The most immediate thing that trans people who are in the academies say around that question is that it’s incredibly hard to be a trans student at an institution of higher learning, anyway. And it is historically rare for there to be faculty who are trans. So if you are in college and you’re going through college, and there are zero trans adults around, it’s pretty confusing when all of your peers are like, “Cool, I got this dope internship at [organization] because my professors hooked me up with it,” whereas that professor might see you as an incredibly strange gender freak and not understand that you have stuff to offer because of your unique experiences. So I think that part of it is #representation in higher education for the purposes of keeping undergraduates alive and in college, which I mean, alive and in college, incredibly different stakes. I don’t really care if people go to college, but if you are in college, and you want to suffer less, I think it is good if there are trans faculty around you.

The other thing is, I think that trans studies does some interesting work to push back on publicly available transphobic knowledge. So trans studies scholars are not the only people who are pushing back on like, you know, rapid onset gender dysphoria stuff, but trans scholars are part of the group who’s really good at mobilizing when stuff like that gets published. So like, if there’s transphobic psychology articles or transphobic sociology articles, or transphobic public health articles, like, if it’s just a bunch of people yelling, then the journal or the faculty who are producing that knowledge can be like, “Yeah, okay, cool, but I have a PhD and you don’t. So like, what do you know?” And if there’s enough of us with PhDs, then we can be like, “No, we also have that credential, and we also have spent a lot of our lives looking at the aggregate set of information about us. And we as scholars know that it’s garbage. It’s not just garbage because it makes us sad. It doesn’t just hurt our feelings. It’s methodologically ridiculous, like, we can tell you why it’s bad. We can tell you why the presumptions you’re making are bad.”

And because in academia, everything is about status and power and it’s not really about who has the better argument, academics get to ignore the opinions of people who don’t have the same credential as them. So having the same credential as them is a way to push back. I don’t think this is good; it is fundamentally anti-democratic. But if you think about who is allowed to be an expert in this country, spending a lot of years studying a thing should give you some qualification to talk on that thing. And trans people, we can spend a lot of years studying stuff too, and we can make arguments that are just as valid as other people’s arguments.

[Funky electronic transition sound plays]

**Tuck:** This has been This Week in Gender.

[Transition sound effect, with low metallic chimes and hi-hats plays briefly]

**Tuck:** We’ve got a Theymail message for you this week. Theymails are tiny messages from listeners, and this one says, “*Four Wheels and the Truth* is the new album from guitar pop band Diners. It’s a rock-and-roll record, a sing-along record, a plea for loving community, an inner-outer dream cruise, and a testament to the nonbinary realities that abound. The new Diners album *Four Wheels and the Truth* is available for preorder now, and streaming everywhere on June 10.”

[Gender Reveal theme music starts]

**Tuck:** Amy Schneider is a trans woman living in Oakland, California. She recently completed a 40-game winning streak on Jeopardy—the second-longest streak of all time—and became the first out trans person to qualify for the show’s Tournament of Champions. Since then, she has quit her day job to focus on writing, speaking, and supporting the LGBTQ community.

[Gender Reveal theme music ends]

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

**Amy:** I’m a trans woman. Yeah.

**Tuck:** Amazing. And you, before you quit your job recently, were a software engineer?

**Amy:** Yep.

**Tuck:** One of the most classic trans woman jobs, right? Why do you think so many trans girls are coders, or coder-adjacent?

**Amy:** I think, you know, it could be a few things. I think one of them is that you don’t have to deal with people that much. And so if you found dealing with people uncomfortable, it’s nice to deal with computers. I also kind of think that there’s this thing where being trans—especially like, if you’re from a time or place where you didn’t grow up with the knowledge of trans people existing, and you didn’t have it as something that you were considering for much of your life—just knowing that something’s wrong, but that there’s no words for it and nobody can explain it makes you want to kind of try to understand everything deeply, because you don’t trust your instincts. Because your instincts are so clearly wrong from what everyone’s telling you. And you know, programming is the art of understanding things deeply. It is, you know, I always say it’s translating between human and computer. And you have to really assess, this person gives you these requirements, and you have to go through and be like, “Okay, what are all the unstated assumptions here? What are they assuming that a computer won’t assume?” And all those sorts of things. So those are my theories. I don’t really know. But that’s my guess.

**Tuck:** Hmm. Interesting. Well, speaking of your job, when you were still a software engineer, and you were taping Jeopardy, you kept having to go down to LA to tape more episodes. And I know that you weren’t allowed to tell that many people that you were like, on a Jeopardy hot streak. But you also clearly were missing so much work, you had to take a demotion. How did you explain away all of that time away to the people in your life and your coworkers?

**Amy:** Yeah, I mean, they didn’t ask that much! I think that the world of remote work is terrible in a lot of ways, but that certainly was helpful in that scenario. So that, you know, most people in the office that didn’t work directly with me would have no particular knowledge of whether I was working or not. And beyond that, the few relevant people, my manager and the VP of our department didn’t seem to really know much or care about Jeopardy. So for one thing, maybe they just thought I was going down there for like, one episode at a time instead of ten, or something like that, you know, I don’t know. But they weren’t particularly curious about it. So I didn’t have to conceal too much.

**Tuck:** Interesting. Well, I wouldn’t say I’m one of those people that’s not interested in Jeopardy, but I definitely don’t *know* a lot about Jeopardy. And what was so funny is when you were on your games, I actually had such a hard time trying to figure out how to watch it as someone that doesn’t own a TV, and I was like, “Why is it that I can watch like anything in human history, except for the hit television show Jeopardy?”

**Amy:** Yeah, I was just going to comment on that, which is that, you know, like, yeah, most of my friends were in the same position. And I was like, “I don’t know, Jeopardy has been very good to me. I’m not gonna go out and publicly say how to get around whatever they’re doing!” And you know, so I was like, “I bet you can find it. But like, I’m not going to give you hints.”

**Tuck:** Absolutely. Yeah. So I got to see a few episodes. But mostly, I was just reading your Twitter recaps, right? And you mentioned several times on Twitter that you were having a hard time coming up with these interesting opening anecdotes night after night. And at one point, you tweeted: “32 games, and I was really struggling to find anecdotes at this point. I heard that Ken eventually started making stuff up during his run; I was starting to wonder if it was time for me to do the same.” So then I was dying to know, did you make anything up at any point?

**Amy:** I did not, no. Had I come back for the next day of taping, I had nothing. But that had been true before, and I’d managed to always come up with something. So I don’t know. But I was starting to think about, what would I make up? And I don’t know, I didn’t really come up with anything. It was like, that turned out to be almost just as hard anyway.

**Tuck:** Right. As someone who didn’t get to watch that much, what kind of anecdotes were you sharing? Like, what level of interest are they?

**Amy:** Yeah, I mean, you know, it’s got to be something that you can say in like, 20 to 30 seconds that’s suitable for all audiences. So that’s pretty limiting. You know, I couldn’t talk about like orgies I’ve been to or anything [Tuck laughs], which those will, those will bring up some anecdotes. But anyway. Yeah. So it was just like stuff about, you know, times that I was traveling, like, just talked about, I went to Tokyo and did karaoke in Tokyo and that was fun, and little things like that. You know, they’ve got a guy there who’s basically on taping days, it’s basically his whole job is wrangling all the contestants’ anecdotes. So he’s got a lot of experience in helping people dig for them that way. And he would always have good prompts about, they actually send you over a whole like, two-page sheet with a bunch of leading questions on it before you’re on, to kind of help you brainstorm. So, yeah.

**Tuck:** Yeah. I was talking to a friend about how I was doing this, and they were like, “Oh, our friend was just on Jeopardy, and they said there was like, so much drama about the anecdotes and what questions to do,” and I was like, “Oh, there’s anecdote drama. I had no idea.”

**Amy:** Yeah, there *was* a little bit. One person had to go back and re-record theirs, because they had run too long. I hadn’t noticed it running long because it was one of the good anecdotes. A lot of them are not great.

**Tuck:** Right. Well, it’s a difficult prompt, right?

**Amy:** Oh, it is, for sure. But it’s like, “Wow, that was your first go-to anecdote!?”

**Tuck: “**You didn’t even have to do 40! You just did the one!” Yeah, absolutely. On another podcast, you were saying that when you went on Jeopardy, the producers were like, “Oh, we’ve definitely had trans people before, but we don’t know how many.” And you were like, “Well, *I* know how many because I’ve been watching the show.” I was curious, since we’re on the trans podcast, I feel like I should ask for sort of, as far as you know, what the trans history of Jeopardy—how many folks you’ve been able to talk to since your streak.

**Amy:** Well, I haven’t really talked to anyone. You know, I am in a few Facebook groups, but I’ve just been overwhelmed by everything else since I was on and so, you know, that’s always kind of like, a guilty thing in the back of my mind, is I want to engage with that community more because it’s where all this came from. And Jeopardy fans are generally people that I enjoy interacting with. But you know, it just hasn’t been happening. But yeah, before I was on, I knew two that I had seen. And then there was like, during the whole guest host thing, I wasn’t really watching. And you know, it’s not like I’ve seen every episode, but I knew there was one that had won during a time when I wasn’t watching. So I knew there were three. And I was pretty sure from the research I had done at one point that it was just those three, at least that were out at the time. But there could be four or five, I may have overstated that I knew for sure. [Tuck laughs] But it was in that range, like three to five.

**Tuck:** Totally. I wasn’t actually trying to position you as the ultimate trans Jeopardy historian, but.

**Amy:** Yeah.

**Tuck:** Well, you have talked in the past a little bit about vocal dysphoria and how you had planned to use a different vocal affect, perhaps, while on Jeopardy, and then you decided against it at the last minute, which makes sense, because how would you win, when you had to think about one more thing? But I’m curious how you feel about your voice now, and whether that sort of magically cured the vocal dysphoria, or if that’s still something you’re thinking about.

**Amy:** You know, I wouldn’t say it, like, cured it entirely, but it helped a lot. Just being on TV and seeing, you know, not seeing a lot of people talking shit about it, you know, which is what I was kind of expecting. And people just thinking nothing of it! I saw evidence of people not particularly noticing that I was trans, which is, you know, always kind of a nice feeling in a weird way. It’s something like I still, when I get called “sir” on the phone, it’s still kind of like, can send me a little bit into that dysphoria. But it’s a lot better than it was before Jeopardy. And so I’m pretty grateful for that.

**Tuck:** Mmm. Yeah, it seems like you were received so much better than you thought—than I think most of us would have expected. But I was thinking about how your winning streak, as it was happening, rather than like as it was being aired, before you knew how it was going to be received—it was happening between Laurel Hubbard getting her life kind of ruined by being a trans woman at the Olympics, and now, Lia Thomas having her life kind of ruined by being a trans woman who wins swim meets. And so when you started winning, I said something like, “If people start going after her because she is winning specifically, I’m going to lose my mind.”

**Amy:** Yeah.

**Tuck:** Did you ever have that fear that people were gonna come after you? Because like trans women are allowed to play, but they’re not allowed to win things?

**Amy:** Yeah, I did have that fear. And I did, you know, see it manifest to an extent, I think. You know, in particular, when I passed Julia Collins to have the longest winning streak by a woman, that was when I saw a lot of comments about it, you know. And it’s a difficult thing that, you know, only in a good venue like this one do I want to talk about it, because it’s kind of a subtle thing, which is that I *do* think that there is an argument that I had an advantage over cis women on Jeopardy. I don’t think there’s any *biological* reason that women haven’t had the success on Jeopardy that men have had. And I think that, you know, when you look at women in STEM fields, in general, it’s that filter effect at every level, that they’re just kind of being driven out of it. And because I was presenting male until well into adulthood, I didn’t have the same pressures. I mean, I still, you know, it still affected me, but there wasn’t that sort of explicit dismissal and assumption that I didn’t belong in those places. So it’s like, it’s a thing that I’m hesitant to say, because it sounds like I’m agreeing with people that I strongly disagree with in general about trans people and that sort of thing. But I feel like saying that I don’t have any advantage from being trans or by having presented male through my education and early career, I think, then implies that there’s something biological about women. That if I had been on hormones, I wouldn’t be as smart, and that just isn’t true.

**Tuck:** Right. I was talking to a friend of the show, Mattie Lubchansky, a few weeks ago, because they were saying that ever since they went on hormones they had “become stupider.” And I was like, “You know, it’s so funny, because when we go on T, a lot of us also say we become stupider.” So we’re like, all hormones just, it makes our brains shut down a little bit. [Both laugh]

**Amy:** I think it’s, you know, it’s just puberty, like puberty makes you stupid.

**Tuck:** Yeah, absolutely. So you know, as we alluded to, for the most part, you were received well for a trans person in public. And you know, a lot of people’s parents and grandparents who never gender trans people correctly, they were treating you with respect, and some of it was because they weren’t clocking you; some of it was because they were just like, “I figured this out, I understand it.” And I struggled to figure out how to ask this question, but I am curious how you make sense of this thing happening that was largely good, in the context of what’s happening politically, and the fact that there are like, US states taking steps to eradicate trans people at the same time.

**Amy:** Yeah, I mean, I think… I think a few things. I think one is that it made me a lot less concerned in the sort of medium- to long-term view about all that legislation and that sort of thing. It made me feel like, “Okay, you know, this is a backlash from a movement that’s already lost a lot of—” you know, like, I think back to the 2004 election when all these states passed constitutional amendments banning gay marriage and this sort of thing. And it was just a few years later that all that got thrown out. I think it was, it’s the same thing. Like they’re passing this legislation now because we exist and we’re visible and people know about us; they didn’t feel the need to before, and now they do. And it’s going to cause a lot of pain in the near term, and it’s horrible, and I hate to think about it, but I do think that it doesn’t give me concern about the broader direction of where things are going, because there’s no going back. Once you accept that trans people are people, you’re not going to go back and change your mind later—very, very rarely.

**Tuck:** Yeah, yeah. Well, you were saying “I hate to think about it”—that’s kind of gonna be part of your job now, right? You like, quit your job to do advocacy as part of your work?

**Amy:** Right. And that’s something that really like, just this week, I’ve really been thinking about and struggling with. You know, I got a batch of fan mail that had been sent to Jeopardy, you know, headquarters or whatever. And, you know, it was mostly like, good and sweet. And they open it all beforehand to make sure there’s nothing, you know, threatening or something like that in there.

**Tuck:** That’s nice.

**Amy:** Yeah, yeah, for sure. But it still made me very uncomfortable. And I think that, now that I’m sort of in this, and I’ve gotten a chance to sort of realize where I am in the world, I am finding myself a little uncomfortable with being America’s relatable trans friend that’s nonthreatening, and I’m very angry about a lot of things. And I think that I have kind of been not saying things I feel about the way our society is structured in general, or what I feel about organized religion, or other things like that, because I’m trying to make a career out of this. And I am conscious of the fact that I don’t want to turn too many people off for me, because, you know, I’ve got 20 years before retirement age, and I want to keep this going and not have to go back to a day job. But at the same time, it’s just not going to be sustainable for me to stay silent about everything. And I need to start figuring out how I can say what I think and be a bit more political while still, you know, it’s not, it’s still not necessarily what I want to be *about*. I’m more interested in being about the like, learning and curiosity and education and those sorts of things. But I can’t just pretend that I’m not aware of what’s going on. And so, you know, I know when I’ve made some relatively mild political comments in the past that, you know, a lot of people get very upset. And I don’t look forward to that. But I’ve got to figure it out somehow.

**Tuck:** Yeah, it does seem tough, because I think that was part of the success of your sort of Jeopardy persona is, of course, you came across as super happy all the time because you’re living your dream, you’re in this thing that you’ve imagined your whole life, you’re winning a ton of money—why wouldn’t you be just beaming all the time? And you’re in this nonthreatening environment that people understand. And then it turns out you’re a real person! And I think you said in *Allure*, you said, “People know such a limited part of who I am, and it feels like as I reveal more of myself, there’s so much more at stake now that people are so into me. Having an apparently positive image out in the world makes me feel like there’s a lot more to lose if I take a misstep.” So yeah, I was thinking about how you’ve been grappling with sort of the constant threat of milkshake-duck-ing, and if you feel like there’s demographics that you’re willing to lose, or it’s like, “Maybe I’m not going to be palatable to everyone forever, and that’s okay, because I’m not doing respectability politics,” or whether you’re sort of trying to keep all of the Jeopardy grandparents on board with you as you go along.

**Amy:** Yeah, and I mean, that’s—I think I’ve been leaning too much on keeping the grandparents on board. You know, I said from the beginning, and it’s true: I don’t want my Twitter feed to be a place where people yell at each other. And so that’s also been something holding me back. But I think that there are a lot of people who were fans of me on the show that also, you know, are happy to support politicians who are trying to, you know, kill people like us, essentially. And so I’m gonna have to tell them that at some point, and people are very attached to their political parties, and that’s going to cause people to start tuning me out, but it’s not my intention to demonize anyone. You know, I grew up a Republican. I grew up with a lot of the sort of faux libertarian stuff about like, “Why should we have affirmative action? That’s still just singling them out for different treatment!” Or just, you know, a lot of those other things, and I had to learn why a lot of what I believed is wrong. And I’ve got no problem with somebody who is on the wrong, you know, the quote-unquote “wrong” side of an issue, if they’re willing to hear me out and have a discussion about it. You know, I’m sure I’m still wrong about many things, and I look forward to someday learning what they are, and trying to get better. But like I say, people get so tied up in their, you know, their identity as a Republican—or a Democrat for that matter—that it can be hard to be nuanced with them, because they’ll just stop listening.

**Tuck:** Yeah, yeah. There’s all that data that shows that when someone believes something and they’re confronted with information that opposes it, it just makes them more entrenched in their beliefs. And it’s like, and I mean, we’re all like that, not just other people, I’m also like that. But it’s just like, “Well, what do you what do you do?” You know? It’s tough.

**Amy:** Yeah. And that’s where I think that, you know, when I talk about wanting to be more about curiosity, and learning, that’s where I think that can be a kind of backdoor to advocacy. Because that’s what I want to talk about, is how to take in new information without just getting defensive, which we, like you say, we all have that instinct. And so just sort of promoting that, while not stating, but being like, “Yeah, and then like, stop being mean to trans people because of it,” but yeah.

**Tuck:** Yeah. So what do you think that work looks like? How does it look like to be an advocate for learning and inquiry in the world?

**Amy:** Yeah, for the moment, it’s writing a book. That’s my focus of that, which was also, you know, just helping me figure out what do I actually want to say and clarify it. You know, like, there’s these things I have thought about and that I know, and like, you know, I can get really into when I’m stoned of an evening and get to thinking about life, but like, I hadn’t really gotten it all organized in my head. And so this is kind of forcing me to do that. And I think that, you know, what is it beyond that, is again, that’s my task in the coming months is to figure that out. And to also figure out how I can, apart from that type of advocacy, actually be more of a voice for trans people and trans rights in general. That’s what I need to figure out, and that’s my goal.

**Tuck:** Yeah. Well, I don’t want to be like, “Tell me everything about this book right now.” But I am curious, in that, I mean, you’re obviously—you’re asked so much about Jeopardy and about transness; we’re also talking about those things; those are your big personal brand *things*. But my favorite piece of media that you’ve done, that I made Ozzy listen to also, is that podcast about *The Hunger Games* that you made with your friends, because it was just fun to hear you have fun and talk about something that I hadn’t heard you talk about before! And it’s hard to create questions around that, because I’m basically asking you, “What else is up?” But yeah, I don’t know. I am curious, like, kind of those other things that you don’t get to talk about as much.

**Amy:** Well, *I* want to say everything about my book, but my agent and publisher *don’t* want me to. But I mean, what I can say is that I structured it intentionally to give me the chance to talk about different stuff, like, you know, some of the trans stuff, some of the Jeopardy stuff. But like, just whatever else interests me. There’s going to be a whole section about why *Daria* is the greatest animated show of all time, and what makes it work and that sort of thing. So you know, there’s some things like that in there as well. Like, you know, I definitely enjoy pop culture in general. I had, my biggest claim to fame before this was a podcast about *Downton Abbey*. What I really like is finding things that I get more excited about than most people, like, you know, *Daria*, or the book *Moby Dick*, or other things, and then really just trying to get across what excites me so much about them. That’s what I enjoy.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I was actually wondering if there were any trans-specific wormholes you’ve gotten down or something you got really interested in researching during your transition or any sort of other trans-specific interests?

**Amy:** Yeah, I don’t know. I know one thing that, you know, sort of shocked me when I transitioned was that my sexual orientation changed. And that’s apparently a common thing that nobody had told me that, you know, all of a sudden I found men interesting and attractive, whereas before, I had not wanted to spend any time with them in any capacity. So you know, that’s something I think about is something that was like, “Oh, huh,” sort of thing. Yeah, nothing else comes to mind at the moment that is niche or whatever. Maybe figuring out why it is that every trans woman buys a motorcycle, because that’s something I could see. [Tuck laughs]

**Tuck:** I was working on a presentation yesterday, and was just trying to put together some examples for cis people of anecdotal trans knowledge. So like, your sexual orientation changing would be one of them. But the things that I thought of were like, trans guys’ feet growing, transfemmes’ feet shrinking, and then trans women being obsessed with pickles. And then I was like, “That’s a thing, right?” And I just Googled “trans women pickles,” and there’s a whole page of like, “Why trans women love pickles!” And I was like, “I love—I love us. I love our community.” [Laughs]

**Amy:** Yeah, no—it was recently, and this is about being a lesbian, but it was on *Autostraddle*. And it was like, “I got the gay green couch.” And it was describing this couch, and I was like, “That’s exactly the couch I wanted!” It took me months of trying to find it, and it was never right, and I finally gave up and got some other nice couches, but like, it was shocking to me. I was like, “I didn’t know that I was being gay when I wanted that couch!”

**Tuck:** It’s so funny to be like, “Oh, I thought this was part of my personality, but it was actually part of homosexuality,” which I love. Yeah, well, speaking of your podcasts, you also had a tarot podcast for a bit. And tarot is sort of this common thread in different anecdotes, like you did a tarot reading for your fiancée the night you met; I also saw you were offering a tarot card reading as part of a GLAAD sweepstakes. But you’ve also said that you don’t really believe in the supernatural, that tarot is just cards. I would love to hear you talk about what you appreciate about it and take away from it despite not believing in it. And I will say, I am someone who also comes from, “Tarot rules, and also it’s like all projection and narrative.” So I’m not like, “How fucking dare you.”

**Amy:** Yeah, yeah, no, I think that for one thing, it is that that is another of those trans woman things is tarot, for sure. I think that it is a way of having a conversation with someone about relatively deep things in a kind of safe way. You know, when I’m giving someone a reading, I’m kind of telling them some things about where they are in their life, what their underlying motivations are, what are they seeking and is it good for them or not. And it always seems to, for whatever reason, resonate with whoever I’m talking to, you know, who I may or may not know anything about. And it gets them thinking about those things and gives them insight into themselves. But it doesn’t force them to reveal anything that they don’t want to, to me, it doesn’t force them to get outside their comfort zone. Because they can just be like, “Oh, yeah, I really hear that, it really resonates.” And I’m talking about these sort of, like, deep topics that I wouldn’t necessarily talk about with a stranger, but because there’s this kind of game we’re playing, it’s okay in this context, I think that’s one of the things I really like about it as a way to connect with people. You know, it’s a safe way to connect with people because like, I’m always, whenever I meet someone, I’m like, “Oh, what’s your name? And what do you do? Okay, great. So what are all your childhood traumas? What’s your relationship with your mother?” You know, that’s how I want to be. And so tarot allows me to kind of satisfy that need without upsetting people.

**Tuck:** That’s so funny, because I was actually going to ask you about you being on the receiving end of that, because you’ve done so much press around all of this, Jeopardy, et cetera. And part of my job is to help people be less weird to trans people in media. So I’m very familiar with how weird they can be. And I know that, you know, people were asking, like, “What was your childhood like? What is your trauma? What is your transition story?” You know, like, blah, blah, blah. “Tell me about being in Shakespeare and learning you wanted to be a woman.” I’m just curious how that’s been for you. And like, those boundaries. Yeah.

**Amy:** Yeah. I mean, I think that, you know, one of the key things was that Jeopardy put me in touch with GLAAD before any of my episodes started airing, and they kind of gave me some training around that a bit. And what, both on the Jeopardy side, and they were saying is like, “Just always remember that you don’t ever have to answer a question. It’s completely up to you, you know, you might feel like you’re sort of like, you’re being impolite or whatever. But you’re not! Like, it’s totally fine to do that.” And so I knew that I had that. And I definitely utilized it a couple of times. And what GLAAD specifically also did was steer me away from a couple media outlets that they had known to be weird about trans people. So that was helpful. And so I didn’t get anything where I was upset by them asking the question. There were some things I didn’t want to talk about, but I didn’t get anything too intrusive and weird, which is nice.

**Tuck:** That is good, yeah. I was doing an interview like a month ago, and someone asked me about my childhood. And I just laughed, and I was like, “Oh, I don’t talk about that in interviews, that’s not what we’re here to talk about.” And later, one of the producers were like, “We all learned a lot about boundaries from you.” It’s like, it shouldn’t be unusual that if someone’s asking you an intrusive question about like, your relationship to your parents or something that you’re just like, “No, I’m here to talk about my work,” or whatever.

**Amy:** Yeah, no. And I definitely—I had sat and thought and planned about what my story would be about my relationship with my parents. And I was like, “There’s good and bad to it, and here’s a few good things I’ll emphasize, and I’m not going to go beyond that.” And so, you know, I definitely had a bit of a script to be able to respond to those questions and not…. You know, just declining to talk about it entirely kind of makes people think that there’s dark secrets potentially. And so I had a, you know, smooth answer ready to go that was true, but was very minimal. And so that was part of my strategy for dealing with that, for sure.

**Tuck:** That’s smart; that makes a lot of sense. I mean, your relationship with your fiancée has also been in press a lot. I noticed—that’s something that really hit me with like, “Oh, this is how big Amy Schneider has gotten,” is when your engagement was trending on Twitter, like separately from Jeopardy, and I was like, “What’s happening?” And you know, I’m so glad that you’ve gotten to share that, because it is *so* great to hear about, but I also just wonder what that’s been like, sort of navigating how much to share there? And like, if that’s ever scary to like, have her be sort of thrust in the spotlight as well.

**Amy:** Yeah, absolutely. You know, she’s not somebody that ever aspired to fame, and it’s certainly not something either of us expected when we started dating. And so that’s been a challenge. I mean, you know, and it’s not like she hates it, you know, she enjoys using my name to get restaurant reservations and things like that, you know, like she takes advantage of the good stuff. But there’s definite downsides too, and even beyond that, it’s tough for a relationship to have one person be this celebrity and the other person not. And, you know, we have had to work on managing how do we keep in touch with each other? How do we stop… you know, because there were times, especially with me being so busy, where it was almost like, is she my girlfriend, or is she my assistant, you know? And having to really check in with each other a lot about that, and be very conscious of that. It’s been a huge life change, and that’s always going to be a challenge for relationships. But that’s part of why we got together in the first place, is that she’s really good at having those conversations, and I’m getting better from learning from her. And she’s somebody that I can trust that is not going to be sitting and stewing on something without saying anything. And because that’s, you know, for me, that’s what I’m always obsessed with, is that anybody I interact with or have a relationship with, is secretly resenting me for something and not saying so. And so that’s one of the great things about Genevieve, is that I can trust that that’s not happening, which is really important.

**Tuck:** Mmm. Yeah, I love that. Ozzy, you got anything?

**Ozzy:** Yeah. Well, speaking of being a lesbian, I read in one interview that you said pop music is one of your worst categories in Jeopardy because you only listen to, quote, “sad lesbians.” And as someone who also listens to a lot of sad lesbians, I just wanted to know if you could tell us more about which sad lesbians you listen to?

**Amy:** [Laughs] Yeah, I mean, at the time, it was like we went through a really intense Girl in Red phase. Actually, somebody that Genevieve went to high school with, we’ve just started listening to whose name is Caitlin Cobb-Vialet—I’m not sure how to pronounce her last name, if I’m getting that right. There’s also, there’s a lot of sad women that I think ought to be lesbians on that list. Like Fiona Apple is a good example of that.

**Ozzy:** So true.

**Amy:** Like girl, based on your songs, every relationship you’ve ever had with a man has been awful. Like, come on over. Like, yeah.

**Tuck:** Absolutely.

**Ozzy:** I want to ask more about that also, because one of my favorite parts of the *Hunger Games* podcast that you did was how you were all like, “This love triangle in this plot just doesn’t make sense because Katniss is just clearly a lesbian! Like, it’s just confusing that these two men are here.” And I just wanted to know if you have other, either secretly gay media, or just other gay stories that you really like that you want to recommend to people.

**Amy:** Yeah, my mind started going in different ways. Like, other people—you know, because I do have a tendency to think that everyone’s you know, trans and gay.

**Ozzy and Tuck:** Same. Yes.

**Amy:** But like, so for example, and I do actually believe this one—I read this really long biography of Franz Kafka, and came away with it thinking that I feel like, you know, that Kafka was a trans woman, and you know, didn’t know it.

**Ozzy:** I love that.

**Tuck:** Well, while we’re just talking about things that are gay…. My house has two cats. One of them is a black cat with gay moms named Beepy, which my roommate pointed out is so similar to your black cat with gay moms named Meep. And I was like, “Okay, we got to ask a question about Meep, see how they’re doing.” And then I realized you had an adoptive birthday party for your cat last month, so please tell me how your cat’s party went. I’m really invested now.

**Amy:** You know, the four of us humans that attended had a perfectly fun time. Meep did not enjoy it, or care. But yeah, we got her a bunch of toys and then also shortly after that found the bag of toys that we bought her for Christmas. So like, she’s definitely been living it up with her abundance of toys to play with us. That’s been fun. And we’re actually—when I started this, Genevieve was in the process of filling out the form to adopt a kitten. [Tuck gasps] Because, you know, I’m traveling so much now and Genevieve is often accompanying me, and so we’re leaving Meep alone a lot more than we used to, and we feel so guilty all the time. And we have somebody come over and check on her, but you know, she is very sociable. And you know, she’s a purely indoor cat so she doesn’t have—when we’re gone, it’s just her in this empty apartment. So we’re gonna get her a friend.

**Tuck:** This is so exciting. Lil Meepy Junior. Great. Amazing. [Amy laughs] This is the breaking news that I strive for on this podcast. Which it won’t be, because I don’t know when this is coming out, but it’s breaking to me.

**Amy:** [Laughs] Yeah.

**Tuck:** Okay. Here’s a question; interpret it absolutely any way that you want. What would trans Jeopardy look like?

**Amy:** You know, I think a category of just like, “Who do you think was secretly trans somehow?” I don’t know how to make that work. But like, yeah.

**Tuck:** Well, it would just be like, the answer would be Kurt Cobain, and you would have to figure out how to go backwards.

**Amy:** Yeah. So I think I think that would be fun. And you know, things about specific hormones. And, you know, surgeons, like, you know, “This surgeon is, uh, terrible.” [Tuck laughs] So, yeah, I guess, I guess stuff like that.

**Tuck:** I love that. Is there anything else that we haven’t talked about yet that you want to talk about?

**Amy:** Yeah, I’m not sure. Like I say, the stuff we talked about, about advocacy, is sort of the main thing that’s on my mind right now. You know, and I’ll just reiterate that lives are on the line. And the people who support this are killing trans children, and they don’t think they are, but they are, and they need to know that and accept those consequences of that. I guess the other thing I’d talk about is just the weirdness of being famous a bit. It’s been a lot of fun; I am kind of a diva, and I enjoy people, you know, paying attention to me, but it is definitely a strange thing. You know, I had somebody at a speaking event give me a bunch of rocks that had like, you know, my name painted on it, and things like that. And I was like, you know, I really appreciate the thought, but am I gonna fly with these rocks home? And then what do I do with them? You know?

And I think the other thing about it is that, like, all the sort of, like, clichés you hear about sort of the perils of fame, I think, are really true. You know, I can feel the tension of this public persona kind of like invading my actual persona. You know, I can feel that happening, I can feel myself be overly concerned about, “What if all this goes away?” And you know, you see how people will do anything to try and keep that fame and attention. All those things that you see, those tropes, it’s like, oh, yeah, no, this is all true! I can, I can feel the like, the perils of Hollywood sucking my soul and all this sort of thing. That’s been an interesting thing to deal with. Anytime I’m out of my house, I might get stopped and recognized. And that is mostly a thing that I enjoy, like I say, but it just means that anytime I’m out, I have to be aware that that might happen. And anyone who’s had a bad experience with a celebrity is *so* excited to tell you about it if it comes up in conversation, you know, and so it’s like, every time it’s like, if this person comes away with a negative impression, they’ll *definitely* tell everyone about it. And you know, it’s not like that big a deal. It’s not like *that* present in my mind, but it’s just that little extra thing every time I’m out in public. And that’s been—it’s been an adjustment, I guess I’d say. And 80% of the time when somebody comes up and recognizes me, it’s just like, a little flattering feeling. But you know, sometimes it’s just weird, and it’s, you feel like you can’t get out of it. So, yeah.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I mean, it is challenging, I feel, because it’s almost impossible to not have some of those interactions be unsatisfying for the person because that person doesn’t necessarily know what they want, but you’re just a concept in their mind, and then all of a sudden, you’re a real person, and they want something from you, but they don’t know what they want, and you don’t know what they want, and you’re just kind of looking at each other. And you’re like, “Hmm. Okay, well, hmm, yes, here I am, here you are.”

**Amy:** Yeah. You know, what I will say, like, one of the things I was saying about being famous is that a lot of people want to tell me that, you know, I was inspirational and things like that, which I’ve heard it so many times it stops feeling meaningful. Like I want to have it still feel meaningful to me and touch me the way it did at the beginning, but it just doesn’t. *But* the thing that hasn’t stopped feeling just as good and, you know, fulfilling has been when I’ve heard from trans people themselves, that you know, what my being on the show meant for them. You know, that’s the thing that is always the most—when I have my doubts about the whole thing and when it feels, you know, kind of, you know, pointless, what am I really doing? Like that’s the thing I can always go back to that makes me feel like this is all worth it.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I mean, because “inspirational” is so often such a loaded word, like I feel like the context I feel comfortable using it is that show *Old Enough* where there’s like three-year-old children running errands at the store, and I’m like, “They are inspiring to me. They can go to the store and sometimes they cry and they get through it anyway, just like me.” [Amy laughs] But I think more of what I’m hearing, especially from trans people, is just like, “We’re all having such a bad time, and it’s so nice to have something that feels good,” right? And like, you can—being inspirational, I feel like, feels so high stakes, like, how do I not let anyone down? And just like, it created an instance in which trans people felt good for a little while, and maybe they watched it with their parents and that also felt good, you know, like, that’s cool. And you know, and no one can take that away. So.

**Amy:** Yeah, absolutely.

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

**Amy:** Yeah, it’s a harder question for me, I think, you know, as someone that’s very, kind of very binary, in myself, you know, my identity as a woman specifically is really important to me. And so, to *have* that identity, the binary does kind of need to exist for me to have that place in it. But at the same time, obviously, it’s artificial and constructed, and all these things, and it’s—the binary is bad for a lot of people, you know. It needs to be less salient, I guess, and it needs to be, you know, expanded and understood as a spectrum. And you know, that “woman” can mean some specific things, but that it doesn’t mean, you know, “not man,” that it means just what it means to you, and then everyone else is free to define what their gender means to them. You know, I think that the way that trans people can be liberating for cis people, is by letting them know that you’re allowed to have whatever traits and characteristics and interests that you have regardless of your gender. That, you know, if you’re—especially I think for men, there’s this—such a societal pressure to not sort of lose caste and do something unmanly. You know, I really would love to see a world where that stops happening, because it’s so toxic, and that’s the root of so much of the problems in the world. It’s, you know, that’s the sort of thing that leads to, you know, people invading other countries to feel strong because that’s what manly people do. Like, that’s the thing I would most love to see disappear, is that idea of manliness being a certain thing that everyone is required to follow.

[Gender Reveal theme music starts]

**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 folks in your community. You can find Amy on Twitter and Instagram @jeopardamy. That’s J-E-O-P-A-R-D-A-M-Y. We are on those platforms @gendereveal and at genderpodcast.com, where you can find transcripts of every episode and all sorts of other resources. We’ve got a bunch of good merch in the store right now; it’ll be available through the end of June. So take a look at all of those designs before they’re gone at bit.ly/gendermerch. If you like what we do here at Gender Reveal, please consider supporting the show at patreon.com/gender. By signing up, you’ll automatically get access to our weekly newsletter and our monthly bonus podcast, among all sorts of other perks.

This 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. We’ll be back next week with more feelings about gender. And as we say every June, throw a brick at a cop.

[Gender Reveal theme music ends]

**Tuck:** I accidentally tried to do like a transgender trans Jeopardy portmanteau; I was like transgender put-putorty. And it got me stuck a little bit, but is there a good one there? Transgender—No. Shit. No. Okay. All right. Thought I’d try it.

**Ozzy:** Transgenderpardy?

**Tuck:** Yeah, transgender party!

**Ozzy:** That’s all I got.