Tuck: Shopping for sex toys can sometimes feel overwhelming or dysphoric, but shopenby.com aims to create a better experience for the queer, trans, and gender nonconforming community. Whether you’re shopping for wands or clamps or gags or even menstrual cups, this trans-owned shop has you covered. Best of all, 2% of all profits are donated to organizations focused on improving the lives of queer and trans people of color. Visit shopenby.com, that’s s-h-o-p-e-n-b-y.com, and use the code Gender Reveal at checkout to get 10% off your order and support the show.

[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’m excited to share my chat with professional wrestler, Edith Surreal. In this episode, Edith talks about the growing queer and trans pro wrestling movement, how wrestling helped her transition, and what it means to be good trans wrestling representation.

Edith: There are times when I want to be a heel wrestler. I want to be bad. I want to do bad things.

Tuck: But first, just wanted to let you know we’ve got our merch shop fully restocked for July, including three new designs that all have very powerful energy. You’ve really just got to go look at it. Also, in honor of Niko’s fantastic bonus podcast episode from last week, we’ve brought back her two most iconic merch designs, which of course are the Surf Don’t TERF tank tops and the Trains Flag shirt and mug. These will disappear back out of the shop at the end of this month, so grab them while you can at bit.ly/gendermerch. And now, it’s time for This Week in Gender.

[Music plays]

Tuck: This week we’re going to do a good old-fashioned news roundup, and it is quick, because most of the news is bad. Here we go.

As you may have heard, the Carolina Panthers have hired 29-year-old Justine Lindsay as a cheerleader, making her the first openly transgender cheerleader in the NFL.

New data from the Pew Research Center indicates that 1.5% of the US population is trans and/or nonbinary, including more than 5% of people ages 18-29. Although to be honest, people do these types of surveys all the time, the numbers always vary. I did think it was funny that this one said that only 37% of participants aged 18-29, so like only a third-ish, said that they knew even one nonbinary person. Like, no offense, but literally how is that possible?

Speaking of nonbinary people aged 18-29, in #representation news, Emma Corrin has become the first nonbinary person to appear on the cover of Vogue. They’re best known for playing Princess Diana in the fourth season of *The Crown*, and are also set to star in the upcoming film *My Policeman*, in which they marry a gay cop played by Harry Styles.

Finally, we’ve got a bunch of positive news from Germany. This was all compiled for us by a listener named Kai, and I’m just going to straight up read what they wrote. So: “Next steps have been made to pass a new law that will allow changing gender marker and name by self-identification. For the first time, nonbinary people will be legally recognized, and the use of gender-neutral names will be allowed. Compensation for those who suffered under the previous law will be paid. Also, the German football association made clear that trans and nonbinary footballers can continue to choose to play on men’s or women’s teams in amateur and youth leagues. Also, the German train company lost in court and has to offer a gender-neutral salutation by the end of 2022. And finally, Germany made a step in providing safe abortions, in that doctors are now allowed to talk about abortions. It is... a step.”

This has been This Week in Gender.

[Music plays]

Tuck: We’ve got two Theymail messages for you this week. Theymails are tiny messages from listeners, and our first message says: “Check out Trans Book Box, a quarterly book and art subscription service. Trans Book Box sends subscribers recently released trans books, art by trans artists, and merch by trans creators. Sign up at transbookbox.com today to join. Memberships include newsletters, author interviews, and access to a book club.”

Our second Theymail message says: “Jordan is a queer speech language pathologist and gender-affirming voice coach. He’s offering a free 60-minute workshop via Zoom for Gender Reveal listeners on Wednesday, July 20. Topics covered include anatomy, breath support, alignment, vocal health, pitch, resonance, intonation, laughing and sneezing, best voice apps for at-home practice, and the effects of T on voice. Learn more and sign up at jordanrosscommunication.com/events.”

[Music plays]

Tuck: The ephemeral queen, Edith Surreal, is a professional wrestler from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She’s the inaugural winner of the Cassandro Cup, and was ranked 192 of the top 500 singles wrestlers in the PWI 500 in 2021.

[Music ends]

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

Edith: I am a transgender woman.

Tuck: So, my disclaimer for the listening audience, which you’ve also heard, is that I don’t know anything about pro wrestling, so these are baby questions for babies. And I’m very aware of the conceit of Gender Reveal often being, like: “Every time a trans person is interviewed they’re asked baby questions for babies, but here on Gender Reveal, we get to ask the real questions beyond, like, what is a nonbinary person?” But I feel like I’m doing the, like, what is a nonbinary person, but for wrestling?

Edith: No, no, I love it. It’s going to be fun.

Tuck: Yeah, I just wanted to start so basic, because this is something you’ve devoted your whole life to, you obviously care about it so much. And I would just love to hear what you love about wrestling, and especially because I’ve seen you talk about it being, like, a performing art form rather than a sport. And I would love to hear any thoughts about that to just sort of set the scene.

Edith: Okay, yeah. I mean, I can talk the whole episode about why I love professional wrestling.

Tuck: [Laughs] I think that you could.

Edith: It is, yeah, I mean a lot of people talk about, like, is it a real sport? And they can’t get into it because, you know, they’re able to see where it’s quote-unquote fake. But, you know, I think we’re well beyond that. Professional wrestling has existed for over 100 years, and the first expose about it being fake was written in the thirties, so, you know, it’s nothing new. And you know, I think at this point, wrestling.... Everyone’s in on it. And that’s fine. It’s about kind of that suspension of disbelief, and just enjoying this performance that you’re seeing in the ring. I think of it as like a real-life comic book. Or, like, this combination of like Mortal Kombat and Super Smash Brothers, but live and in person.

And it’s a combination of every performing art, you know. It’s this blend of improv and scripted, choreographed performance, because sometimes you’ll have a match and you’ll discuss everything that you’re going to do and you’ll practice it and you’ll rehearse it and all of that stuff. And sometimes you don’t. You show up late and you just have to get in the ring and wrestle. And some matches are a combination of the two. And that’s really cool. There are very few things out there that are like that. What else is really cool about professional wrestling is it’s a lot like a soap opera, where there’s this open loop narrative. Meaning like the storyline involving a character often lasts their entire life. Like, the Undertaker was a wrestler on TV and he’s wrestled for 30 to 40 years, and his storyline is his entire life, you know. The beginning of his in-ring debut in, I think it was 1990, until he retired just a few years ago, like, that’s his whole storyline. It’s not just, you know, an actor in a movie and each movie is a different story. It’s one continuitive... continuitive? Is that a word? I’m not...

Tuck: Sure.

Edith: Continual narrative. [Laughs]

Tuck: Speaking of, like, narrative arcs and stories lasting lifetimes, you said on another podcast that wrestlers are often advised to keep their wrestling persona, like, really separate from their real-life self, but that you didn’t necessarily like follow that advice. And I would love to hear how much of a distinction there is at this point between Edith Surreal and whomstever you are the rest of the time, and like why you chose that approach.

Edith: Yeah, I think that comes from where I started where our characters were just supposed to be something very separate from ourselves. But most wrestlers really are just an extension of their personality. And that’s... I think that’s the right way to do it, because it is so much more authentic if you’re able to bring in your real-life experiences to this character that you’re portraying. Because it’s... again, it’s not just like you’re practicing for a role. Your character is everything. It’s how you interact with your fans at the merch table, it’s how you cut a promo, it’s how you act in the ring, it’s all of these things, and it’s so all-encompassing. And it would be so hard to do that if it wasn’t this real-life extension of yourself. So yeah, I definitely view Edith Surreal as an extension of myself. And it helped with my transition, really, because I got to kind of exaggerate who I was and kind of really emphasize that, and it really helped me on my journey and my transition, so.

Tuck: Yeah, I was curious if you came out and changed your name and pronouns and gender language in your non-wrestling life at the same time as your transition in the wrestling world? And like, which transition was more challenging, or significant, or exciting, or just sort of how those two interacted with each other?

Edith: Yeah, it... they pretty much happened, like, they coincided with each other. When I decided to come out and decided to transition, I just always had the intent of, you know, fully transitioning and living as a woman, but in the meantime I really took my time with it. I was in no hurry to just change all in one day or however it was. I wanted to take a very, very slow approach to it, so I was able to kind of really adopt a nonbinary gender identity for that process for me. And with my character at the time, I was wrestling under the name Still Life with Apricots and Pears, which was a whole story we can get into, but I came out as nonbinary as Still Life, and that was just kind of part of, you know, my process. And then eventually once I started feeling comfortable with using she/her pronouns, like, I just started using that, and just slowly started tweaking my gear and my look and my presentation. And, you know, now I’m fully out as a trans woman.

Tuck: Yeah, well when you started as Still Life, you were wearing a full mask that covered your entire face and head, and then roughly around the time you moved into being Edith, I don’t know the exact timing, you switched into this half mask where we can see your eyes, and it just makes such a difference in getting to see you, and like, your expression, and your feelings, and your personality. And I realize that Lucha Libre masks have a long tradition, it’s not like you’re the only person who’s ever wrestled fully masked, but I was wondering if that mask shift was also, like, about gender for you?

Edith: Yeah, absolutely. I mean part of it is the performance, I mean, being able to emote with your eyes definitely helps. And even, like, not having that, even when my eyes were covered up, I had to learn how to tell a story and how to emote without any facial expressions. I had to learn to do it with my whole body. I don’t know if you’ve ever watched *The Mandalorian*, the Star Wars show on Disney. What’s so cool about his character is he’s wearing all this steel, but he’s still able to emote from time to time how he’s feeling just by his body language. So being a masked wrestler is a lot like that, where we’re able to tell stories just with our body language. But yeah, I think once I decided to kind of reveal my eyes a little bit, it was partially about gender, to be able to wear makeup and to kind of emphasize features of myself that I like. I got to start playing with makeup and stuff like that. And also it was just to enhance the performance and to allow people to connect with me more. That was part of the reason I changed my name from Still Life to Edith Surreal, because Still Life was an object. Still Life was a painting. That was the character. Still Life was a work of art, but, you know, as Edith Surreal I have a more human-like name, and having facial expressions that kind of go along with that make it easier for people to relate to me as a person.

Tuck: Yeah, I was thinking about that, how when you were Still Life, your conceit was that you were this piece of art that was created by another wrestler. And then you evolved as this painting, and eventually, when the painting was complete, you come out as not only a trans woman, but also as Edith Surreal, a person, where you are in control of yourself. And I was like, I don’t know if this dynamic was actually significant to you, but it feels, like, weirdly emotional to me to just think about that evolution, where you’re like, “No, I’m in control now, here I am.” [Both laugh]

Edith: Well yeah, it’s definitely part of that. And also, like, kind of the real-life situation I was in, like working for a company that was a little bit more controlling of what I could do and very controlled storylines, to eventually that company shut down and I was able to be fully independent and started to be able to make my own decisions about my character and my presentation. And then yeah, that ties into being trans and ties into being, you know... growing my reputation and my status as a wrestler. So all those things definitely went hand in hand.

Tuck: Hmm. Well, I want to talk more about your actual wrestling, but I do have one more, like, silly face question. Which is, I heard you talk about getting FFS potentially, which like, of course makes *so* much sense. But also like made me laugh a little bit, because you are in a mask all of the time. [Edith laughs] So do you think if you got FFS, you would do ever a face reveal, or would this be a personal, private face, do you think?

Edith: I don’t know. I think, like... I guess just on itself, like, removing the mask, like, if there’s ever a really good story that I could tell where I’d do it, I’m open to it, but I don’t know. I still want to hold onto it, because it does make me unique within American professional wrestling and within women’s wrestling to be a masked wrestler. So I still very much like it. And then when I consulted with a surgeon I was definitely concerned. Well, he was really concerned about me being a wrestler and having the surgery where, you know, if I was to get like.... For example, if they were going to reduce my jawline, that would make it more fragile, and then he didn’t want to like, do the surgery and then I wrestle and break my jaw and then he has to redo this. And then if I want to have my nose done, like, it’s already been broken twice. So, you know, it would be silly to pay for, like, a nose job just to get it broken again, because I know it’s going to happen. So, I don’t know, I go back and forth with it, too, because it’s still my face, you know. And I think as I kind of get further into my transition, the more I kind of appreciate myself and find beauty in what I have.

Tuck: Yeah, I... I had not thought about that at all. That makes so much sense that someone’s like, “Oh, you’re going to get hit in the face a bunch and you want to get face surgery” But I’m sure, you know, whatever you choose, it’ll work out, but that’s really interesting. So, we were supposed to talk a couple of weeks ago and we ended up not, and I’m so glad that we didn’t, although I’m sorry that you had to cancel, because it wasn’t for a fun reason, but I’m really glad we didn’t, because you had such an exciting event between then and now. This like, all-trans-women main event. Can you tell us as much as you want about that?

Edith: Yeah, absolutely. So, the event was called Paris Is Bumping. [Tuck laughs] And it’s this event that kind of combines ballroom culture with professional wrestling. Which is something that definitely has never been done before. And this is the third edition of it, and yeah, it’s just really incredible to have, you know, an all-LGBTQ show that is combining all of these different cultures and different things. Yeah, so the main event was the first time that there was an all-trans-women main event for a wrestling show. It was me, Candy Lee, Dark Sheik, and the referee was a trans woman, Ref Crystal, so it was just like a really, really special experience.

Tuck: Yeah, I love that. Thinking about this all trans women event, I was thinking about how this is happening in a moment where trans women athletes are facing unprecedented backlash, and I know that we talked about like, is this a sport, is it performance art, what is it? But I was curious if that dynamic has affected your work at all, or just your feelings about your work?

Edith: Yeah, it’s definitely something that’s been on my mind. But one of the really cool things about independent wrestling is inter-gender wrestling has been a large part of the American wrestling scene for the last 20 or so years. So, you know, most places don’t have gender divisions at all, so it’s not as prevalent here as it would be in real life sports. But you know, there’s still critics of it, people who don’t like inter-gender wrestling because they don’t think it’s believable, or.... Which is right, like I said, we’re comic book characters. Like, you’re missing the point already. It hasn’t really affected us as much as it has other sports. But you know, the people who want to be transphobic, they absolutely use it as a thing, especially talking about people like Sonny Kiss or Nyla Rose who are on TV. They wrestle for AEW, which is the second biggest wrestling company in the country. There’s still some criticism there, but it’s just your general transphobia.

Tuck: Yeah, totally. Well, I was thinking about that because I’ve heard you say in multiple interviews that you don’t have friends that aren’t wrestlers, because non-wrestlers don’t understand the lifestyle, which is so funny because that’s what I would say to avoid hanging out with, like, straight people. [Edith laughs] But it seems like, you know, that could potentially, like, cut you off from trans community other than other trans wrestlers, of which I don’t know how many there are. You can tell me! But I was just curious if you feel like you have a robust trans community within wrestling, or if you felt like you’ve had to kind of choose between the two at all?

Edith: Um, yes. It absolutely is a robust community within professional wrestling. Which is another reason why I love it so much. You know, I’m able to kind of meet other trans people and, like, Dark Sheik started transitioning really shortly before I did, so I was able to kind of follow in her footsteps and ask her for advice and just kind of be able to support each other, so, yeah. There’s definitely a huge community, and especially with the wrestling fans who come out to shows. I mean, I think every single show I’m on, there’s a fan that comes up to the merch table and comes out to me and shares their story with me, and shares how I was able to help them with their gender journey. And that’s huge, like, that’s incredible, like that’s.... Yeah, I’m always speechless when that happens. But yeah, the community’s huge, and even non-queer wrestlers are so supportive, and the majority of people within wrestling are great allies and either know what to say or what to do, or they’re going to ask the right questions. There’s just something really special about the pro wrestling community. I think it has a lot to do with how much trust you have to have with your fellow wrestlers. I mean, we’re taking each other’s lives into our hands when we wrestle. You know, we’re picking each other up and throwing each other off a turnbuckle or out of the ring or dropping someone on their head and we have to protect them. So there’s this trust we have with each other that doesn’t really exist anywhere else. And I think that helps create these bonds that are bigger than anything else.

Tuck: Yeah, I’m so glad to hear that. That’s awesome. I was going to ask you about more of the history of wrestling, again, as a baby who knows nothing, because we know that wrestling’s like, famously a homoerotic sport but then also... sometimes the most homoerotic sports are also the most homophobic sports? And I have to believe that pro wrestling, despite hearing how amazing it has been to you, which I love, is like, perhaps has not always been that way? So I just, yeah.... Would you be able to tell us how pro wrestling has approached gender and queerness in the past and maybe how that’s changed?

Edith: It’s been awful. It has a really terrible reputation with that. You know, when I was growing up in the nineties watching wrestling, there were so many homophobic tropes or transphobic tropes and blatant racism, too. Like, it was just.... It has a really rough history with that kind of thing. And wrestling always seems to be about ten to fifteen years behind the times. You know, that was really hard, being a young person watching wrestling, because on one hand it’s these.... You know, I’ve been watching since as long as I can remember, since I was, you know, in first grade or whatever. So there’s these wrestlers that I look up to, these larger-than-life personalities, but then at the same time, that same show, there’s something that’s very frightening or very offensive to a young queer person. So that’s been a struggle we’ve all had, all the queer wrestlers growing up watching this thing that we love that doesn’t always support us. And I think that’s what makes this current LGBTQ wrestling movement all the more special, is we’re able to be those characters that we didn’t have growing up. And we’re able to pull in different influences into our wrestling performance, like Paris Is Bumping, that’s never existed before. We’re able to pull in ballroom culture into professional wrestling. That’s never been done and that’s really, really special that we can do that and make this something for us who grew up watching, you know, *Paris Is Burning* and relating to that, but then also sharing it with people who have no experience with that and getting them to be involved. I think it’s really cool.

Tuck: That’s so cool. Yeah, how... in what way was ballroom culture brought into that event? Because that sounds like such a cool mashup of these two different worlds.

Edith: [Laughs] Well, it was put on by Billy Dixon, who is a now retired professional wrestler, but his promotion is called Pro Wrestling Vibe, and you know, he has experience walking in balls as a teenager and stuff like that, so he wanted to bring that in. And you know, just the general atmosphere really fit that ballroom feel, with the lights and the presentation and all of that. But what made it different is for our entrance we did a walk. So usually, all professional matches you have your entrance. You come out to your music and you do your thing, whatever. But this, like, we had a special presentation for our walk to the ring, and there were judges there who were able to score based on your entrance. And that got to be fun to play with, like, previously the heel wrestlers, who are like the bad guy wrestlers, they wouldn’t do a walk, so they all got negative numbers or whatever. And the babyface wrestlers, who are the good guy wrestlers, they would do cute little walks and then get, you know, tens across the board or whatever.

Tuck: Aw, that’s so cute. I love that.

Edith: Yeah, it was so fun.

Tuck: That’s so good. Okay, so, there.... You’ve already mentioned a few wrestlers that are queer and trans, including yourself, but if someone has never watched pro wrestling but they’re listening to this interview and they’re like, actually this sounds rad and I really want to get into it, who should they check out, particularly in this LGBTQ realm?

Edith: I mean, we’re kind of all spread all over the place. I mean, if you want to watch wrestling on TV you can watch AEW and you have Sonny Kiss, who’s a genderfluid wrestler. And you also have Nyla Rose, who was the first trans woman to hold a major wrestling title. She was the AEW women’s champion, and you know, she has an action figure that I bought in Target. Like, I’m trying think if there’s ever been another trans woman who’s had an action figure or a doll in, like, a major retailer like that. I don’t know if that’s existed.

Tuck: Yeah, I think they just made like, a Laverne Cox Barbie, and it was, like, a huge deal. So yeah, knowing that this was also happening at the same time is awesome.

Edith: Yeah, I mean, it’s so cool. And then, you know, as far as trans people in the independents, there’s me, there’s Edith Surreal. There’s Candy Lee who’s over in New Zealand. There’s Dark Sheik, and she runs a company called Hoodslam over in Oakland, California. There’s Max the Impaler, who’s a transmasculine wrestler, and they wrestle on NWA. They’ve done some work at Ring of Honor. There is Gisele Shaw, she’s a recently out trans woman who wrestles for Impact Wrestling. So we’re kind of sprinkled in all over.

Tuck: We were talking earlier about how whenever you would do some kind of event, there would at least be one trans person who came up and told you that they were trans and that you meant a lot to them. And I was curious how knowing that you are #representation, but also this role model for people, if that’s changed the way that you have sort of crafted who Edith Surreal is, or how she... I don’t know any of the wrestling words, but like, you know, who your character is and... [Laughs] how she is in the world?

Edith: Yeah it absolutely has, and it’s tough sometimes. I mean at first it felt like a lot of pressure, because I’m still exploring this. And I’m still learning and it’s all very new to me. But you know, eventually I came to terms with it and view it as, like, an honor, or a privilege to be this positive representation for people, and I don’t have to say anything. They just want someone to tell their story to. They just want to have someone to listen to them. And that’s all I need to do. But as far as my character’s concerned, I don’t know, because there are times when I want to be a heel wrestler. I want to be bad. I want to do bad things. [Laughs] And for some reason I worry that that won’t be... I don’t know, I feel like it’s a responsibility to be, like, I don’t know, a good representative and always play the babyface, but there’s just something I’m drawn to about playing a heel, playing the antagonist. I worry about pulling too many, like, queer-coded tropes like Scar from *The Lion King* or Vicious from *Cowboy Bebop* or something like that, which are characters that I really liked, but also, like, it’s a bit.... You know, there’s a lot of baggage with them too, so, you know. It gives me some thought to how I represent myself. But at the same time, like, there’s now a lot of us. There’s now a lot of LGBTQ talent and they all can’t be babyfaces. That’s been a problem on all the shows we do, is, like, no one wants to be the bad guy, because you know, a lot of people feel uncomfortable booing a queer wrestler. So, you know, you kind of have to go in a little deeper and be a little extra to get them to want to boo you.

Tuck: That’s actually so funny. I mean, but that’s the thing, right, when you’re talking about tropes, is there is a long history of queer villains. And so you can see being a trans heel as maybe playing into those tropes, but you can also, like, knowingly play into those tropes, and you can be part of a long lineage of queer villains. And I think it’s... I’m not trying to talk you into this, but I think it’s so cool that there are so many trans wrestlers now that if one or two of you are like, “Okay, I’m a heel now,” like that’s okay. There’s still also babyfaces. You know? Like there’s space for all of you to, like, be your own people. You don’t have to be like, the one trans wrestler, because there’s so many of you. And that’s really exciting I feel.

Edith: It is really exciting, yeah, I agree.

Tuck: Well, you starred in this documentary episode about your life. And in this you intentionally filmed, included things like taking your shot, going to laser appointments. And I feel like that is not only a really vulnerable thing to do because you’re showing, like, really personal intimate parts of your life, but I think it’s also vulnerable because so often trans people are distilled into being only a medical transition story, right? Like, as me, someone who gives journalists feedback on their trans writing, so often I’m like, “Stop talking about their medical transition and let them live.” But you were like, “No, actually, I am going to show people this as part of the context of my full life.” And I was just interested in what that experience was like for you and why that felt important for you to share.

Edith: Yeah, so how the documentary worked was I pretty much was handed a GoPro and I would just film my life for 30 days. And I was... I’m prone to overthinking, so if I let myself do that I’d start editing before I did anything. So I just kind of told myself that, like, I have to record all the details of my life because that’s how I’m going to connect with people. It has to be real, and I have to show these real moments because that’s who I am and that is my experience. And, you know, maybe part of that is something that the editor chose to focus on, but other parts were like, that was something that was real. And that is part of my life, is doing these shots, because you know, at that time I was very new at it.

Tuck: [Laughs] Sorry, I was laughing that I just remembered hearing you talk about this on other interviews and you were like, “Yeah, I’m new on shots and they, like, hurt really bad.” And I was like, “Babe, they’re not supposed to hurt, are you okay?” Like while I was listening.

Edith: Yeah, I got better at it, and now I’m not on shots anymore, but yeah. It was just, like... I think I get so nervous, because one time it would hurt and then next time my hands would be shaking.

Tuck: Totally.

Edith: That’s not the way to do it, but yeah. Eventually it got better.

Tuck: No, and sometimes it does hurt. And then you’re just like, “Oh my gosh, what’s going on?” So I totally understand. I was just laughing at it. Yeah, so what was the feedback like from having that episode out?

Edith: It was incredible, I mean, it was.... You know, I’ve just... when I was filming it I just thought of that, like, this was just my diary, I have to film everything, I can’t think about it. And then I handed the camera off, and I was just like, “Oh my god, what did I do? Why did I share all that stuff?” But I’m still a little, like, red-faced if I was to watch it back, but you know, the feedback has really been incredible. It’s won awards. It’s been a really, really positive experience. And there’s a majority of the wrestling audience who has no experience with this, who doesn’t know personally anyone who is trans. So to be able to share that and give them this little introduction into a small slice of what my life was like, that’s really positive and so, yeah. I mean, all in all, it’s really special, but it definitely was.... It’s hard to be so revealing of yourself.

Tuck: So I was watching some of your matches, and I know we’ve already talked about this, but I just really want to stress, like, how rad it was to see you and have it not be about you being trans. And also the fact that everyone is wrestling with different people of different genders as you mentioned, and that just being normal, and so it not being like, “Oh my gosh, what are we going to do with trans people?” Because just everyone is like wrestling everyone else. And I was just thinking about how queer and trans people are so often like boundary pushers and innovators, and I was wondering if you’ve felt like there’s anything that queer and trans wrestlers have brought to wrestling that is new or innovative?

Edith: Yeah, I think a lot of it has to do with what I was talking about before, where just, like, when we’re young and watching wrestling, we’re able to enjoy wrestling but we’re not able to find characters who we can really relate to, who look like us, who are like us. So you know, once those of us who became wrestlers did, we’re able to pull influences from different places, so, you know, Paris Is Bumping is a great example, because that wasn’t a typical influence, but there are queer wrestlers who have theater backgrounds, so they’re able to pull in more of that experience. You know, I’m, my background is in visual arts so I’m able to pull in a little bit of that experience. So I think that has really helped us stand out because our influences are so different. I think it’s also, you know, like five years ago there really wasn’t a queer wrestling scene. There’s a few promotions and there’s fifteen people at the show. And you know now, every time we do an all-queer wrestling showcase we’re selling out and we’re getting top ratings on TV. So, yeah, it’s just an exciting time.

Tuck: Yeah, it’s so exciting. Well, I don’t know where I heard this but I heard you describe your process of getting dressed for matches as, “There’s tape and tucking and like eight pairs of pantyhose.” And I was like, oh, that’s drag babyyy.

Edith: Yes!

Tuck: Yeah, do you feel like there’s a parallel between pro wrestling and drag?

Edith: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, pro wrestling is very campy if you look at it. It’s very silly at times, but yeah, there’s definitely huge parallels.

Tuck: Well, my friend Calvin Kasulke interviewed you back in 2019, and I was like, “Oh you must actually know about wrestling.” So I was like, “Okay, what questions do you have?” And he said, “Ask if she has an all-time favorite spot, even if it’s not in her all-time favorite match.” So that is the question.

Edith: Ohh... all-time favorite spot.... Okay, so I don’t know, this is just the first thing that comes to mind. But in, I think it was ’96, there was this match between Shawn Michaels and Mankind. And they did a botch. So a botch in wrestling is a mistake, when you either forget what the move is supposed to be or you make a mistake and you slip, or whatever, that’s called a botch. Those are always accidental. You never plan for those. But in this match, they did a planned botch where they, like, had... I think Shawn Michaels was on the top rope, gonna do a thing, and then Mick Foley walked the other way, and then Shawn Michaels got mad and started punching Mankind in the head. So if you’re an insider you knew that, like, oh my gosh, Mankind made a mistake, and Shawn Michaels, like, whatever. I just thought that was really, really cool, because, like I said, wrestling’s been around for over 100 years. There’s very few new things you can do. To see them do something new, I thought that was really, really cool. So that’s the first thing that comes to mind.

Tuck: Yeah, they’re playing, like, 4D chess.

Edith: Yeah. [Laughs]

Tuck: Do you have a moment from any of your matches that stands out in particular?

Edith: I think when I wrestled Blank, who was my creator, he was the wrestler who created Still Life. We had our big blow off, like our big fight. I was covered in paint because I was a painting, and then at the end of the match he wanted to destroy me, destroy his work of art, because I’d become bigger than he was, you know, I was a more popular wrestler than him so he wanted to destroy me. So he ripped my mask apart and, you know, punched me in the face. For me that was the coolest moment, because it was so symbolic and it was able to tie into the story that we’d been telling for the last two years. So to kind of end with this big moment, it was really, really cool. And that’s something I really enjoy is, you know, there’s a lot of wrestling that’s just one single match. It’s just going out there and doing cool moves and stuff like that. But I really enjoy telling stories and having long-term storylines that lead to this one pivotal moment within the final match.

Tuck: Yeah, that’s something that I didn’t realize until I was doing research for this episode is how much of what y’all are doing are these narrative arcs that carry from match to match to match, and yeah. That’s so cool. Well, the way we always end the show is by asking, in your ideal world, what would the future of gender look like?

Edith: Umm... I mean, it wouldn’t be a big deal. It’s um, I love hearing stories about like, I was talking to my niece about this, and like, you know, she’s 11, or no, she’s 12 or 13. I don’t know. But I think they, like, don’t even come out to each other anymore. Like it’s just, it is what it is. Whatever their sexuality or gender expression is, it’s, yeah. I think just, you just do whatever. No one judges you. No one cares. And there’s no expectations for your presentation or your pronouns or whatever. It’s just... yeah, just go with it and it’s all good.

[Music plays]

Tuck: That’s gonna do it for this week’s show. You can find Edith @edithsurreal on Twitter and Instagram, and at edithsurreal.com. You can find us at Gender Reveal on those platforms and at genderpodcast.com, where we have transcripts of every episode and all sorts of other resources. 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, which includes June’s very fun conversation with Niko Stratis. And speaking of Niko, we’ve got merch designs by her and a bunch of other rad trans artists available in our merch shop for a limited time. That’s all at bit.ly/gendermerch. And as always, all proceeds are split between trans artists and trans-led organizations. If you’re looking to join our online community for Gender Reveal listeners, it is now at bit.ly/gender-slack.

This episode was produced and edited by Ozzy Llinas Goodman, and by me, Tuck Woodstock. Special thanks this week to Calvin Kasulke, and to our friend Lilith of Trans Day of Snack fame for suggesting Edith as a guest in the first place. Our logo is by Ira M. Leigh. Our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. Additional music this week by Blue Dot Sessions. We are working on other projects next week, but we will be back in *two* weeks with more feelings about gender.

[Music stops]

Tuck: Earlier this season we had Edgar Gomez on the show, and when I asked them the future of gender they wanted, they were like, “I want more queer villains.” And I’m like, “We already have so many.” And they’re like, “I want more!” So. [Both laugh]

Edith: Yes, okay, okay.

Tuck: But, uh, yeah, whatever you want. I just thought of that when you were saying that because I thought it was so funny when they said that.

Edith: Yeah I love that. No, I want *more*!