**Gender Reveal Season 11, Episode 147: A. (Gus) Andrews**

**Tuck:** Whether you’re trans or queer or a woman or a person of color, or really anyone on the internet, you’ve probably had a moment where you worried about getting doxed or having your personal information leaked online. One good way to lower your risk of doxing is to sign up for a site like DeleteMe, which will take all the time and effort out of scrubbing your personal information from the internet. I use DeleteMe and you can join me at joindeleteme.com/genderreveal to get 20% off your first year. That’s joindeleteme.com/genderreveal.

[Gender Reveal theme music plays]

**Tuck:** Welcome to Gender Reveal, a podcast where we hopefully get a little bit closer to understanding what the hell gender is. I’m your host, and resident gender detective, Tuck Woodstock.

[Gender Reveal theme music ends]

**Tuck:** Hey everyone, hope you’re all hanging in there. Welcome to Season 11 of the Gender Reveal podcast. Fun fact–– eleven was my favorite number growing up, thanks to Seattle Mariners designated hitter Edgar Martínez. That’s not really something you needed to know. In fact it does sound like something you could use to hack into my bank account because it does sound like a security question. Who needs DeleteMe now? Anyway….

Today on the show, for our season premiere, I am very excited to share my chat with A. Andrews. A. also goes by Gus. You’ll hear me refer to them as Gus mostly, because that’s how I know them — we’ll talk about this more in the interview. And speaking of which, Gus and I also talk about why trans and disabled experiences are interconnected, why Gus learned to unicycle instead of going to sex ed, what it’s like to date someone with your old name, and how a couple of illustrations in Gus’s book, *A Quick and Easy Guide to Sex and Disability,* ran afoul of certain state laws…

**Gus:** Sex toys are a very important piece of disability sex, and that was a very big problem.

**Tuck:** But before we get to that, well first, this is famously Pride Month. Happy Pride. I hope you’re all feeling proud and ready to tear some shit down with your bare hands. I’ve got a few quick announcements for you. Some of these you may have heard. This first one you definitely have not heard, and it goes a little something like this: we’re gonna put episodes out through Pride Month, and then we’re gonna take a couple weeks off to make more episodes. Normally, I would not start a season before we were fully ready to commit to the whole thing, but I cannot stress enough, June is like the one month a year where we are perceived, so we’re just gonna go for it and then we’re gonna regroup, and then we’ll do the rest of the season. If you are curious what the hold up is, I will put a little explainer in the Patreon at patreon.com/gender. I’m not paywalling it for any reason, I just think that most of you don’t care. But in the meantime, I have some more announcements! If you live in the New York City area and have fifty dollars, which I realize, it’s too many dollars for a podcast, but regardless, please come hang out with me at Town Hall on June 16th. I will be the guest for a special live episode for the podcast Normal Gossip. I’m sure you already know and love Normal Gossip –– if not, I recommend starting with the season two finale in which Kelsey McKinney tells me a story that, spoiler alert, is gay. Anyway, I'm told that this will be a very fun and very chaotic live show. I mean, I’m the guest, it's gonna be chaotic. I’m told it will break the podcast format to include interactive elements, maybe even games, I think. And there are still a lot of tickets available, because it’s a huge venue, so please come hang out. Those tickets are at normalgossiplive.com. That is the June 16th tour date. normalgossiplive.com.

Also, you may have heard this already, we’re putting a book out! Is it a zine? Is it a book? Impossible to know. But I do know it is called *2 Trans 2 Furious: An extremely serious journal of Transgender Street Racing Studies.* And it is available for pre-order right now at 2trans2furious.bigcartel.com. This book includes contributions by more than 40 trans people, including, I counted, like eight or nine former Gender Reveal and Gender Conceal guests. You don’t really need to know the Fast and Furious movies to enjoy this book, I think. I do think you probably do need to be queer… but maybe not! I don't know, some people are giving copies to their straight friends, and I’m like, “Godspeed, I hope you enjoy the erotica one.” Anyway, we are currently only offering shipping to the U.S. and Canada. Working on the rest of it, we’ll keep you posted. And by the way, if you join our Patreon, you can get 10% off your entire order with a special code only for patrons. That Patreon by the way, is patreon.com/gender. And now, it’s time for This Week in Gender.

[This Week in Gender segment chime theme music plays]

**Tuck:** This week in gender, you’ll be shocked to hear, the news just continues to be outrageously bad for trans people. So, instead of news, I’m once again gonna do something else. This week, I’m gonna tell you about a few other trans podcasts that you might be interested in. Here on Gender Reveal, we talk to a lot of trans people in their twenties, thirites, forties; we don’t do a great job of booking people in their fifties, sixties, seventies, and beyond. And part of that, to be *so* honest, is that I often get overwhelmed trying to research someone who has been putting out work for 40 or 50 years. That is just a lot of stuff to catch up on, and I always want to feel prepared, and sometimes I’m like: you’ve written 12 books, and I simply will not read 12 books! Anyway, other trans podcasts are braver than me because their guests skew a little bit older, maybe even a little bit wiser, maybe. So I’m gonna tell you about three podcasts today. The first one I want to tell you about is Stealth: A Transmasculine Podcast*,* which cleverly acronyms to STP. We actually have Jackal here to tell you a little more about the podcast, so here’s Jackal.

**Jackal**: Hey, this is Jackal from Stealth: A Transmasculine Podcast*.* Check out our show, which focuses on the stories of trans men who transitioned before or around the year 2000. Come listen to Jason, who transitioned in 1968, or Jude, who’s turning 83 this year. Listen to men of color share their experiences of transitioning into their authentic selves. You can find us on iHeartRadio, Apple Podcasts, and other streaming platforms, or on our website, www.transmasculinepodcast.com.

**Tuck:** The second podcast I wanted to mention today is called Call Me Mother*.* It’s hosted by Shon Faye, author of *The Transgender Issue,* and across two seasons, Shon has interviewed queer elders in their fifties, sixties, seventies, and whatever age Cecilia Gentili is –– accounts really range on that one. Guests include Kate Bornstein, Sarah Schulman, Rupert Raj, and of course, Cecilia, who truly is Mother.

And speaking of people who are truly Mother, this last podcast does not skew nearly as old as the other two shows, but it is still full of wise, hot, radiant trans people –– mostly women –– who have been around long enough to know a thing or two, and that’s what I’ll say about that. This podcast is called T4T*.* It is hosted by author Hazel Jane Plante, and it features other brilliant trans authors like Casey Plett, Jeanne Thornton, Morgan M. Page, and several Gender Reveal alumni like Torrey Peters, Vivek Shraya, and Kai Cheng Thom. So, if you are looking for more chats with queer and trans elders, check out Stealth, Call Me Mother, and T4T*.* And if you are not looking for chats with queer and trans elders, then definitely check out these podcasts, because how are we supposed to avoid making the same mistakes, and having the same silly discourse cycles over and over and over again, if we are not listening to people who have been here longer than we have and who know more than we do? All three shows will be linked in the show notes. This has been, This Week in Gender.

[This Week in Gender theme music plays]

**Tuck:** We’ve got a Theymail message for you this week! Theymails are tiny messages from listeners. You can sign up for Theymail via the link in the show notes. Today’s message is from our friend Rynn, and it says: “Zoned Out is a podcast about the capitalist city, and how the socialist city could replace it. Hosted by Rynn, this podcast covers everything from urban economy theory to weird op-eds to the most recent series on queer geography. If you like niche geographical knowledge, scheming against capitalism, and gay shit, check out Zoned Out wherever you listen to podcasts. It’s the one with the pink and yellow logo, not the one about competitive scootering, unfortunately.

[Gender Reveal theme music plays]

**Tuck:** A. Andrews is a queer and disabled cartoonist and writer currently based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. They’re the creator of *A Quick and Easy Guide to Sex and Disability,* and various other projects scattered about the web.

[Gender Reveal theme music plays]

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

**Gus:** Ooof. Neutral, at best. [Tuck laughs] I’m definitely a they/them, in terms of pronouns, and generally I just think about gender both too much, and not at all, if that makes any sense at all.

**Tuck:** Yeah, everybody relates to that, I feel.

**Gus:** Yeah.

**Tuck:** I have seen you sort of they/he around, but you said you’re firmly a they/them? Is it ‘he’ for ease? Is it something you’re trying out? What’s going on?

**Gus:** He’s mostly, like, ease. Being a person who was assigned female at birth, I don't really have super negative feelings around assigned female at birth, but I get that little tingle of excitement when somebody confuses me for anything but, so ‘he’ is never entirely wrong, but it's probably not super accurate to how I actually feel about myself.

**Tuck:** Sure, yeah. Makes sense. So, your forward-facing name is A. Andrews, but then also your name is sometimes Gus.

**Gus:** Yup.

**Tuck:** So is this a case by case basis? Is this interchangeable? Tell us about this.

**Gus:** So, my full name is Angus Andrews. I had a letter ‘A’ name before I transitioned, and I stuck to the letter ‘A’ for publishing purposes, and it kind of made that transition a little smoother for me, kind of business-wise. But, yeah, friends, acquaintances, people around town, everyone kind of calls me Gus for short and it’s just kind of cute and quirky. So yeah, anybody can call me either. A. is just kind of more formal I guess, very distinguished.

**Tuck:** Yes, yes. A noble name. [Both laugh] Well, you wrote this book a few years ago, or made this book I guess. You did all the things for it. You made this book, *A Quick and Easy Guide to Sex and Disability* a few years ago, and I was re-reading it yesterday to get ready for this and I was thinking about how queer and trans people tend to define sex so differently than straight, cis people .

**Gus:** Yeah.

**Tuck:** You know that thing where straight people will be like “I’ve only ever had sex with four people,” and I’m like “Wow.” And then I remember that according to them, I haven’t had sex with four people because sex is like, one specific thing you do with two specific body parts [laughs], and I’m like, “Oh my god, I guess I’m a virgin.”

**Gus:** Yes. Yes.

**Tuck:** Do you feel like disabled folks also define sex differently than able-bodied people on average, or do you think it’s the same?

**Gus:** I think it’s a little bit of a toss-up. I think disabled people are really under a lot of pressure to perform and behave the way that able-bodied people do. I don’t necessarily want to presume anything about heterosexual people, as I am not one…

**Tuck:** That’s fair.

**Gus:** But I do see by and large that heterosexual disabled people kind of fall in line with your average heterosexual person in terms of like, what sex is, what a relationship is, what’s real, what’s not real. And as much as I want to say that disability itself evolves us into this whole new playing field of thinking, at the end of the day, we’re all people, so we fall into those same lines of whatever social norms are, we’re very tied to them, and stuck in them. So, that was actually something really important to me at the time of writing the book, was to really debunk that first. I do think it’s important for disabled people to kind of redefine what sex is, but I dont think it’s quite there in the general public’s initial thoughts about it.

**Tuck:** That makes sense. I kind of forget that there are straight disabled people, just because I forget that there are straight people in general. [Gus laughs] But this makes sense to me. You wrote the book a few years ago now, how was the reception –– and also, didn't it come out in early pandemic, perhaps?

**Gus:** Oh my gosh! [Tuck laughs] You know, looking back on it now, I feel so lucky that it’s had any kind of reception. It came out –– the original date for it was like June 1st, or something like that, of 2020.

**Tuck:** Cool, nothing else going on then at all. [laughs]

**Gus:** Nothing at all, and the book itself didn’t formally come out until like, six months later, there was no real launch. It was kind of all over the place, there was no formal thing to it, and I was really worried about that, but people really rallied around it.

**Tuck:** Good.

**Gus:** And you know, I think just with the last three years of everything that’s gone on with book bans, with LGBTQ politics, and just the state of the world, it kind of ebbs and flows somewhere in the bubble of that surge of information and it’s played out really weird.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I didn't think about that. Is your book being banned because it has sex in it?

**Gus:** It has been banned in a few places. When it first came out, there was a huge campaign that actually got quite a bit of traction in some of the southern states that were starting to see some weird laws and some of the states that are very weird about like, sex toy laws.

**Tuck:** I forgot about sex toy laws, oh my god! [laughs]

**Gus:** Uh, yeah, there was a lot of problems with the book, because sex toys are a very important piece of disability sex…

**Tuck:** Right.

**Gus:** And I drew them, and that was a very big problem –– both for my publishers and also just for different state laws and things like that.

**Tuck:** Wow.

**Gus:** And it was only two pages, but there’s a couple of pages that talk about them, and I drew them. I was like, no, this is a tool, this is an access issue. I realize that looking at a dildo sounds like a very funny kind of conversation, but for disabled people, it might be the only way that they can access sex is to use different toys and tools, and I was not going to put any kind of connotation that that was overtly dirty or pornographic in talking about sexual health. And ultimately the publishers agreed with me, but it did get a little bit of pushback in the beginning with like, sex education laws, and different things pertaining to like, who can even access sex education throughout the states. And since the book has come out, I’ve actually worked with a lot of Planned Parenthoods and things like that in different states to talk about like Sex Education as it pertains to disabled people, because a lot of states don’t — the state, you know, they deny disabled people access to sex ed.

**Tuck:** Oh yeah, I think I heard you talk on another podcast about how sometimes, disabled folks will get removed from the room during sex ed? Is that correct? That’s unhinged.

**Gus:** Yeah, I’m working on a project about that right now, kind of in the backdrop of all the random things that I’m doing.

**Tuck:** Oh really?

**Gus:** Yeah, when I was in highschool and sex ed came around, they removed me from the class, and I just sat in an auxiliary gym, and you know those weird ominous P.E. closets … like, the haunted dolls of P.E. closet materials?

**Tuck:** Absolutely.

**Gus:** I found a unicycle in the back of [Tuck laughs] the P.E. closet and I spent like weeks just learning how to unicycle in the auxiliary gym instead of doing sex education. [Tuck laughs]

**Tuck:** Ok, also useful and iconic. [Tuck laughs] I’m imagining you now in like, a sexy situation where they’re like, “It’s time to talk,” and you’re like, “I’m ready baby,” and then you get on your unicycle.

**Gus:** I bust out a unicycle! [Tuck laughs] I couldn’t do it to save my life now, I have a lot more paralysis, but…

**Tuck:** No, that makes sense.

**Gus:** Of course my piece is like a lot more dark about it, and it’s like, learning how to unicycle did not save me from sexual assault [Gus laughs]

**Tuck:** Yeah, objectively very bad that they did this, but it is an incredible mental image. But anyway....

**Gus:** Yes. Yeah, it’s very common. It's very common.

**Tuck:** Well it was so wild, and I know we talked about this, but you just put this comic out with the Washington Post, and you’ve done a few of these now, which was about how you didn’t like getting stared at, which is a very normal thing to feel. And I'm simplifying it; it was also about disability and voyeurism and all of this stuff, but at the end of the day, it was about: don’t stare at people. And you said something about the comments being wild, so I went and looked at them, and every single upvoted comment was like, “Well, I don’t mind being stared at.” It’s like… who is this for? It’s just such a weird pick-me attitude of being like, “Really? Because I think it’s fine to be stared at.” And then of course, the comments that were like, “I think they’re actually staring at you because of your tattoos or your nose rings.”

**Gus:** “Because you’re ugly.” [laughs]

**Tuck:** And I’m just like… why? Like I don’t know. I guess this isn't really a question. But, is that typical for when you’re sharing something, that there’s everyone coming out of the woodwork to be like, “No, actually, it’s fine.”

**Gus:** Oh gosh, yeah, and it’s like how much or how little I'm willing to expose and explain my personal self and identity in any piece of work is absorbed in this very voyeuristic way that feels like so many more hoops than I see in average creators. You know if I create something that’s about disability, it doesn’t really matter what the focus is, the focus will always wind up being, like: what kind of disability do you have? Who are you? Don’t you think that you’re unreasonable for x, y, and z? There’s like a lot of concern over who I might be dishing out this kind of information. They’re not questioning TERFs on their credentials for saying this, when they’re saying just downright false things out in media, the backlash isn’t like, “Well, who are you to be saying this?” It’s like, “Ah, yes. I agree.”

**Tuck:** Right.

**Gus:** Yeah, it’s a really weird thing to put something out that feels very natural to you in your life, and very simple. You know when I was writing the book, I would constantly be like, “Am I saying anything in this book? Like, is this actually giving anything –– doesn’t everyone know this?” All the time. And the answer was like, not at all. And that actually surprised me a lot.

**Tuck:** Yeah, that’s really relatable to me teaching like a gender workshop, where I’m like “Surely we all know these basic concepts about gender.” And everyone’s like “I learned so much.” And I’m glad, but also like, “Oh no!” [laughs]

**Gus:** Yeah, I figured out very quickly that it’s like by and large, the number one thing was like, “What do I say to somebody when I want to be with them?” And I’m like, “Well, do you have a conversation with them? Like, are we talking about like, you had difficulty with socially starting a conversation?” And it’s not even that. It’s just like, “But how do you talk to a disabled person?” And it’s like, “How do you look at them?” And it kind of shocked me a lot.

**Tuck:** Yeah, and again –– not to keep drawing this parallel, but a lot of times when I’m teaching, a point that I’ll try to make is like, “Can you please be normal? Please just be normal , I’m begging you to just be normal.” For that reason, where it’s like, people –– with trans people and with disabled people, they’re like, “Well, I’m scared I’m gonna say the wrong thing, and so I’m gonna cope by just not talking to you.”

**Gus:** Yup.

**Tuck:** And that doesn’t work socially, it really doesn’t work if you’re like at your job, or if you’re not getting hired because people are like, “Well, if I hire you, I’ll have to talk to you, and what if I say something wrong?” And that happens all the time, which is why I’m always begging people to just be normal, and they simply will not listen to me. [laughs]

**Gus:** Yeah. You know, you keep saying you know, like that you don't wanna conflate. But I am very spicy, in that, probably my spiciest take is that the trans community and the disability community are like *wildly* intertwined. And a lot of the time, my biggest gripe about either community is any desire to fully dismantle from any kind of intersectioning thing. I always get hurt by a lot of trans dialogue around the medicalization of trans people or like, all of this stuff being akin to like, “treating us like we’re disabled and something’s wrong with us.” Where I’m just like, I hate medical language, I hate our system in the United States, where all of our medicine is tied to the “what” of our body and to the diagnostic proof of something being incorrect. But at the end of the day as a disabled person, I’m like, I need care. And I think at the end of the day, trans people need care. We need access to take care of ourselves and to be ourselves. And my trans self and my disabled self feel so intertwined, where the language about my body from others is usually wrong, and also I need care around those things and I need to do whatever I can to access that care. So I deal with these shitty, bad systems and I take a lot of pride in myself and in people like me and we all uphold and support each other and I don’t care to detach either from the other. It’s incorrect to say that like, my transness alone is like, is a disability. That’s just factually inaccurate. It’s not offensive, it’s just wrong. It’s just not true. So I don’t really desire that craving to be super sure that we’re not calling it anything. I’m just like, “Call it whatever you want, just give me my T.” And so like, I actually think the two are really really intertwined. And the needs, you know like, the way our bodies are talked about , the way that our care is gatekept, the way that everybody around us would honestly prefer to not understand as opposed to like, listening, gaining information. The way that our opinions are silenced, versus others’ opinions about us being more valid for some reason. All of those things are very directly in line with one another.

**Tuck:** We’ve talked to so many people who’ve talked about how some part of their identity, fatness, Blackness, disability, whatever, some sort of non-normative identity informs their gender. And you were saying that your transness and disability are intertwined and I’m wondering if you could say more about how disability informs your gender?

**Gus:** Yeah, I think for one, that my disability and just being so accustomed to feeling very detached from my body, it made gender very…. I don't wanna say that it's not important, because that’s not true, but it made it very secondary to me. I can recognize my gender as a part of me and not as like, the root of me, the way that I can recognize that disability is not the sole thing driving my machine. And I think that disability for sure, everything about me feels less precious. My body can be cut open, rearranged, I can change in both physical appearance and in functionality, in everything, and I’m still 100% here, if not more present in my everyday living than I was yesterday, you know. And I think realizing that your body is not this precious thing that is in danger of changing, but is a thing that can kind of change over time, and still retain its inherent self. There’s just nothing about my body being labeled anything that changes anything about my life experience in the world. What my body is called is very inconsequential to me. And I think where transness has come in and changed my life, is that I really settled for a lot of discomfort in my life, and I think that my idea of disability was that I was a person who was built to just navigate the life I had uncomfortably. And I think in acknowledging and embracing transess, I was allowing myself to seek out ways to find comfort inside of my body without disregarding it all the time. I think disability kind of got me so far, you know, to where I shed that idea of preciousness around myself, but transness reminded me that I do still have a body that I’m living in and that I have choices that I can make inside of my body to feel better about myself. I was really scared of that. I was really scared of the potential for disappointment. Like, what if I don’t feel good? And I’ve had a lot of disappointment and I do think I avoid that as a general feeling. And so, I had a lot of anxiety around like, what if I thought it would make me happy and it wouldn’t. But in asking myself questions and considering what I wanted in my own life, and “What would you be if you didn't feel like everything in the world was holding you back?” and just doing that thing. Just doing it. I feel a lot more in control of my body, my self, my person. Having both of those things in my life informs me of not only who I am, but what kind of control I have in driving that machine.

**Tuck:** Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Not to immediately take it to a bleaker angle on this, but I was curious because famously, our healthcare system is bad. But it’s particularly bad if you’re for example disabled or trans, and I was wondering how those have interacted for you and if there was any kind of gatekeeping around transition, or whether being trans has –– you were worried, or in actuality, has changed the way that you receive healthcare, because I just think that going to the doctor is …

**Gus:** It’s horrible.

**Tuck:** …is so terrifying as a trans person, and it seems like it couldn’t be doing anything good for you.

**Gus:** It’s horrible. [Tuck laughs] Look, a lot of the reality is that if we wanna take care of ourselves, we’ve just got to go to the doctor. We do, and that access will be hard, it will. And we still have to put on whatever, our magic shoes, our special hat, or whatever we got to get us through the day and go to the doctor and crowdfund or crawl or whatever we have to do to get to the doctor. And we gotta yell at them and cry at them or do it 500 times before we get the care, and we still have to do it that 500th time, you know? I don’t think it's hypocritical to like, hide when you need to to feel safe. I think like, pride in ourselves is really important, and I love to be an out loud trans person, disabled person, mad person, happy person, all over. You know, but if I'm in a hospital room, and I’m needing life saving care, and my doctor is a dick... [laughs], he can call me whatever he wants, um, save my life, right?

**Tuck:** Totally. Yeah, yeah. Totally.

**Gus:** And sometimes that makes me feel really bad, about like, my politics, like who I am in the world. I think it’s really important for us to fight for like every right that we can possibly fight for, and at the end of the day I think that we also have to be gentle enough with ourselves to be prioritizing our safety in spaces, and I have a really hard time with that. I wanna be that out loud guy, that like, somebody calls me a name on the street, and I’m like, “What the fuck are you talking about?”, but I also don’t wanna get my ass kicked, you know?

**Tuck:** Right.

**Gus:** And I’m not really a person who can really handle getting my ass kicked.

**Tuck:** No.

**Gus:** And you know, I think at the end of the day, we really have to prioritize safety. I was really scared doing anything medical, trans-related at all, you know? Like, telling a doctor that I was considering it, going on T was like.... My poor friends, like two years of me talking about it, never doin’ it. And you know, I do think there kind of came a day where it was like the Anaïs Nin thing where it hurts worse to just hold yourself in than to do anything else, and so I approached it. And I started T and my doctor –– I was fortunate enough to find somebody that was really great. My trans care is some of the best healthcare that I’ve found. She got me into like, disability clinics that are pertaining to my disorder that other doctors have not listened to get me into. Predominantly because she was concerned about the way that the medical complex might put up incessant barriers for no reason for me accessing trans care in the name of like, “Well, you have a disease, we don’t know what will happen.” And so she really listened to me, and was like, “You’re in charge of your body and if you wanna do this, we’re gonna get healthcare that is right and nobody’s gonna tell us that we didn’t do everything very thorough about your trans care.” And so, whilst I can’t just advise that people get a good doctor, because you never know who they’re gonna be, they do exist, and I think that’s really important to know.

**Tuck:** Yeah.

**Gus:** But also, I think it sheds a light on how serious trans care is. Like, it is medical, and she had the same concerns that.... Any doctor that would have been prohibiting me from any kind of trans care would have had the same concerns. She just wasn’t looking for a no, she was actually seeking out if a yes was appropriate. There’s been disappointment, I think, in navigating the two. Like, surgically, I’m a person who’s had a lot of surgery, I can’t access any surgical care that is advised for me. A lot of the surgeries would require like, a number of authorizations and various doctors either being a part of that surgery or signing off on it.

**Tuck:** Yeah.

**Gus:** Also, I think that there would be like, emotional barriers for me in making a decision like that. But, while I thought that that would be a thing that would make me feel really hesitant about going forward with things, I don’t. I feel like I’m as much myself as I can be kind of thing, you know? And nothing will ever be fully off of the table, it’s kind of like something that I can always bring to the table. We put a lot of pressure on ourselves that our transition has to look a certain way, or our care is too scary to approach, and the reality is like, doctors have never treated me well. Like, going to the doctor is terrible, doctors talk about my body in the grossest ways, they make me really uncomfortable. They don’t listen to you, they talk over you, they make weird jokes. There’s just laundry lists of things, and honestly, in a lot of ways, my transness makes people a little bit nervous to say things to me. [Tuck laughs] So there’s been ups and downs and I don’t think that anything has gotten worse, but yeah, it can definitely be uncomfortable.

**Tuck:** Yeah. You mentioned that you have had a lot of surgeries, I’ve heard you say somewhere, more than 60. And something I’ve thought about a lot, is wondering what it would be like to be someone who has had to have so many surgeries or who has been forced to have so many surgeries whether you wanted them or not, and then watch as your trans friends and loved ones get to choose to have one surgery, and it’s baby’s first surgery and they’re so excited about it.

**Gus:** Yeah.

**Tuck:** I was just wondering what feelings come up in that situation?

**Gus:** Oh my god, so many. It’s a great question for right now, because I’m literally one and half weeks into taking care of my partner who just had top surgery. With that experience, I will say, I’ve been really excited. Because it’s also my first experience being the caretaker of somebody who has had surgery. I’m always the person who needs someone else’s help and I've been able to be the person that is providing help. I think any disabled person will tell you that it’s like a beautiful feeling to be able to care for someone, and to be the one that they can count on. I don’t take that lightly and I don’t get it a lot to be like, “Oh, Gus will fix this. Gus will help with this.” I’m a tiny little guy, people don’t really look to Gus to help them with moving or any of those sorts of things. [Tuck laughs] So, that feeling has been really good. I think overall, watching it kind of on repeat throughout the community, you know, I go through an array of emotions. I, for one, absolutely get jealous. It happens. All the time. From my perspective, like the ease of that process, especially when tied to like, how complicated that process might be for the other, watching another person who’s really struggling with having a surgery, and I'm like “That’s easy!” [Tuck laughs] That can feel really messy. It can feel really gross.

**Tuck:** Totally.

**Gus:** And you know, I’m 35, I was born in 1987 and I had those rugged, sit on your hands parents, and I do think that I have a little tiny bit of bootstrap that I do try to get rid of.

**Tuck:** Totally, yeah.

**Gus:** But I absolutely do feel myself sometimes, being like, “Dude, just do it. This is three days, come on.” So I do have to check those kinds of things a lot. And I think that people who don’t have a lot of experience of like surgery after surgery after surgery, you know like, my surgical experience and my experience of being in the hospital or sick, is really mundane to people at this point. When you’re like a sick kid, everybody’s like, “Oh my god, they’re like a little kid, look at ’em,” and they feel so sad, and people wanna help you know, and they wanna support you. And then you get older, and you're still in the hospital all the time, you’re still having surgery all the time, it’s just like, “Oh, it’s just Gus, they’re always in the hospital, it’s fine.” And then, you see a friend that breaks their foot or something, you know and everybody’s like, “Oh my god, did you hear? They broke their foot!” and there’s like twelve people in the hospital with them, and they’re like, “Oh my god, what can we do?” And it’s like, there’s absolutely jealousy that comes with watching people receive all this copious amount of care, for things that you’ve had to struggle through alone time and time again. You know, on my worst days I absolutely have that. Where I’m just like, “Guys, come on.” Fortunately, I don't think I have it a lot, because I love the joy of people feeling at home in themselves, like I love it. I love seeing everybody’s pictures. I love seeing everybody with their titties out. I love seeing people so relieved in themselves and to feel at peace with decisions that they’ve made and to feel loved by their communities, I love watching and feeling that. I love being a part of that. And so it’s like any level of like jealous feelings or left out feelings, they do pale in comparison. I think it got hard for me initially, in realizing that like I probably wanted access to surgeries and I sort of was telling myself I didn't want them because I knew that I couldn't have them.

**Tuck:** Yes.

**Gus:** And I think that the peak of my jealously, or my weird unease around top surgery conversations, I think I felt really left out for a minute. I also think there’s a thing when you start hormones and you are getting excited about change and seeing yourself, that all of a sudden, you’re like, “What if this isn’t enough change?”

**Tuck:** Yeah, no. Absolutely, it’s true.

**Gus:** And so I did have that. It kind of came and went. But I had a solid like six-month period of being like, (joking mad voice) “Everybody's getting top surgery.” It’s weird, it’s very surreal. I think it took me a long time to recognize, like even before I was coming to grips with being a trans person, I think it took me a long time to understand a want for surgery.

**Tuck:** Totally.

**Gus:** Which sounds so gross if I think about it from where I’m at now. But I’ve always believed that like, trans care is healthcare, I've always believed that when people are having surgery, they need it.

**Tuck:** Yeah, but when you have medical trauma, it makes sense to be like, “Why do you wanna do this thing that gave me trauma?”

**Gus:** Tons! [laughs] Tons!

**Tuck:** You know, even if that doesn’t make sense logically, of course, in your gut, you’re gonna be like that is a horrible thing, why do you want that?

**Gus:** I’m also fully not a “born this way” gay…

**Tuck:** [laughs] Totally, totally!

**Gus:** WhileI do believe that some people are like, “No, I need this, I will die without this thing,” I also believe that some people just fully want it.

**Tuck:** Yes, totally.

**Gus:** Which is like, you’re choosing that. You want it. And I support both. You don’t need to prove to me that you have wanted this surgery since you were two years old, that’s inconsequential to me. And so, I’ve both had to embrace the whole like, “surgery is necessary” while also embracing that like, people can choose it. And it was that weird back and forth, and it was so counterintuitive to everything I know about anything medical. And I think, not to sound corny, but I think going right back to that joy, I think the joy is the difference. It’s the thing that I've seen that really shifts that perspective for me.

**Tuck:** Yeah.

**Gus:** But yeah, it’s messy. It’s a very messy feeling.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I mean I do think that regardless of my own situation, and I’m very much on the other side of this of being like, “baby’s first surgery, hell ya,” I do relate to this feeling of watching someone appear to have something easy that did not come to me, and just being like, “Wait, what? That’s not allowed. Why don’t I get to have the thing that you have?”

**Gus:** Yes, yeah.

**Tuck:** And just like having those feelings, like, complicate everything that comes up. And especially when you’re talking about like, sort of being like, “Well that’s not a big deal. That surgery’s not a big deal,” like that is very much a part of me where I’m just like, “Oh well, I did that, and I did it by myself and it was fine, so stop being,” you know like in my head... [laughs]

**Gus:** Yes, “Don’t be a baby!”

**Tuck:** Which is like, not a good tendency on my part, but I do very much relate to being like, “Well I had to do it by myself and it was fine, so you’ll be OK,” but everyone’s gotta come to it….

**Gus:** Yeah, I put on my own therapist’s voice and go like…

**Tuck:** Yeah, exactly! [laughs]

**Gus: “**Do you think it’s unfair because they have support, or because you didn’t have it?” And then I’m like, “Well, I don’t wanna talk about that right now, ok?” [Gus laughs]

**Tuck:** Me being like, “Do you think that it’s fair, Tuck Woodstock, that nobody should have supportive parents, because it would be unfair to you?” [laughs]

**Gus:** Because your parents were rude? [Tuck laughs] I’m like, frankly….

**Tuck:** Maybe…. [laughs]

**Gus:** I don’t think anybody should have parents, OK? If I don’t get parents, you don’t get parents. [Tuck laughs]

**Tuck:** Good, I’m glad we’ve agreed on this, perfect.

**Gus:** Yes.

**Tuck:** Well, we were talking about voyeurism a while ago, and this was a question that frankly, I have for everyone –– or, everyone on the show, but I guess particularly for you. You’ve done a lot in the autobio space, and everytime someone does like autobio or memoir, I’m like, “You’re so brave,” and I couldn’t relate less to wanting to put myself out on a public record. So, I was just wondering how you sort of negotiate that line of sharing your own experiences without giving voyeurs with bad intentions more munition, or if there’s anything that you’ve shared or done a project on in the past that looking back on, you're like, “Hmm, well…oops.” [laughs]

**Gus:** Oh boy. Yes. So, I think I was drawn to doing autobio stuff because I started my career in art therapy. So I was working as an art therapist in New York and I got really bogged down by like, the rules around who you can help, who you can’t help, how you can help, like all that. And I started really thinking a lot about how I had spent so much of my life asking people to be vulnerable with me, and I was not a very openly vulnerable person. And so when I started writing comics, it was sort of a way of like –– you know, I have a lot of trauma, a lot of like, familial abuse, I’m no contact with my family, I’m queer, I’m disabled, I definitely struggle financially –– I started writing comics sort of to feel real. I wanted to write about true things, things that really happened, and allow myself to put it out and say that it really happened. So at first, it was like really cathartic and it was all about you know, just like being myself publicly and out loud. And everybody, you know –– like the stare piece, you go outside and everybody’s staring at me and thinking things anyway. So it felt like this way to say something for myself. So I was really drawn to autobio work in general, and I don’t even know if I have any brain for anything else. But there has been like a shift to where I do think editors, like even well-intentioned, like really wanna push, and like bleed more out of you.

**Tuck:** Absolutely.

**Gus:** I started realizing that if I’m writing like a slice of life comic, it would still be about, like, “OK, but like, what does your body look like on that day? You drew dominoes, you didn’t draw your body.” Or like, “OK, but what was your diagnosis?” or “Can you write more about what you feel? What do you feel about that?” And I’m like, “Well, the person in the picture is frowning. [Tuck laughs] It didn’t feel good!”

**Tuck:** [laughing] Context clues, baby!

**Gus:** You know, like this is not an emotion*less* comic, but I don’t know that we need to drag that on for four panels, that’s ok. And there has been an element of constantly asking me to like explain myself more, explain this thing more of like… and also not only to explain it, but to prove it.

**Tuck:** I mean, I feel like that’s the difference between an editor who also has some kind of lived experience and one who doesn’t.

**Gus:** Absolutely.

**Tuck:** If they don’t they’re always just like, “Hey, can you just provide a quick context and also, just like, three to five sources for your own experience?” [laughs] It’s like, “No, you can just trust me and my judgment.”

**Gus:** Yeah, your mention of the staring piece is like a primo example. My editors for that piece –– they started assigning more editors to my editors in the middle of the piece.

**Tuck:** [sighing] Jesus.

**Gus:** And my ten-panel comic turned into 19 separate revisions, and I needed multiple historical sources to like, prove that disabled people were mistreated throughout history. To like, explain why that was bad.

**Tuck:** Mm-hmm.

**Gus:** They didn’t want me to use words like “exploitation” or “harm.”

 **Tuck:** [gasps] What?!

**Gus:** They didn’t want me to mention that it was like a thing that able-bodied people are doing. They wanted me to say that it was like something they “succumb to accidentally performing.” Like, to the degree where I’m pretty sure that I won’t be hired by this publisher anymore, because I wrote an email.

**Tuck:** Of course.

**Gus:** And I’m notoriously non-confrontational. I’m wildly uncomfortable and like, I wrote an email and I just said, like, “I will make a couple of these edits and probably not many of them. And I just need you to know this was really inappropriate. I feel really uncomfortable. The whole experience has been ableist as a practice, and also in the nature of the questions I’m being asked.” It was really hurtful. It was probably the most egregious example I could think of. But I get that a lot, of like, people just asking more and more questions and needing to have more and more information on me. The *Quick and Easy* book came out, and it very quickly turned into like, what is my sex life like? My personal sex life, like. Which is really just another way of asking the question that in the book, it directly says: “Don’t ask people how they fuck.” [laughs] So it was just like a prettier packaged way of asking me the same question. And so, between my transness, my queerness, my disability, and just like, my willingness to offer up stories about myself that are true, people think that that gives access to like, any and all of me. Which is, I think a thing for actually any artist. Like, putting out public work, you know, we live in a very voyeuristic kind of space, and I think that when you’re disabled, and I’m noticing more and more now, in being trans, that people really think that if you are showing your face in public, you are doing it for them.

**Tuck:** Mm-hmm. I mean, I don’t have this experience, but I’ve definitely heard from a lot of trans people that they’ll just be like, in a restaurant, in a cafe, in a store, and someone will just walk up to them and just be like, “Do you have a penis?” [laughs] So it’s just like, I understand that for disability as well…

**Gus:** Bitch, I’m drinking coffee. [laughs]

**Tuck:** Oh, that’s not your business. Yeah! Even the pronouns of it all have, I think has turned into a thing where people think they can ask that and learn something about you, even when they can’t. So that’s turned into the way of just like, a stranger walking up and being like, “What are your pronouns?” And it’s like, “You don’t need to be talking about me.”

**Gus:** Yeah.

**Tuck:** [laughing] I don’t know you!

**Gus:** You don’t need that right now.

**Tuck:** Get outta here.

**Gus:** Yeah, it’s very weird. And now with social media, you’re in the public from your home.

**Tuck:** Totally.

**Gus:** You know, I’m on Twitter and I’m tweetin’ basketball tweets to like, you and maybe one other person on my friends list, and some random guy named Randy is on there, like, “Your face is ugly! How could you say LeBron’s good!” [Tuck laughs] and it’s like, “You’re disabled, you can’t even play basketball!” [Tuck laughs] It’s like, “You’re right, my guy.”

**Tuck:** Neither can you, Randy! [laughs]

**Gus:** You know, and it’s become this thing where you’re asking for it if anyone can see you.

**Tuck:** Yes, totally.

**Gus:** It’s like if my blinds are open and they see me on crutches going down the hallways, I was asking for them to stare at me.

**Tuck:** Totally. One hundred percent.

**Gus:** That is hard and becomes really complex when you’re writing and telling people, like sharing yourself in any way, shape, or form. And I’ve learned that over time. It’s taken a lot of time to learn that.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I think it is a sort of over time thing generally. OK, this question is very important. You said something about being conflict avoidant, but my understanding is that you’re a triple Leo.

**Gus:** I am a triple Leo, yup.

**Tuck:** Can you tell me what that’s like? Being a triple Leo? For you?

**Gus:** It is hell. [Both laughing] No, I think my conflict avoidance comes from the fact that like, my only other signs are a Venus in Cancer, and a Mercury in Cancer.

**Tuck:** Mmmm, OK, so I do know we have listeners who don’t know much about astrology. So, Cancer is like a soft….

**Gus:** Yeah, a soft little baby, kind of defensive, Leos I think are also categorically pretty defensive.

**Tuck:** Mm-hmm.

**Gus:** I’m actually a quadruple Leo. [Tuck gasps] Because my Mars is in Leo. Which is like your aggression sign. So I do have it, but I think that my like, little, soft, “don’t wanna hurt anybody’s feelings, technically” kind of thing kicks in. And the two just seem to be constantly at odds, I swear. I learned about houses, like you know, the houses of your signs.

**Tuck:** Yup, mm-hmm. I don’t know anything about them, I know they exist but I never learned what they mean.

**Gus:** They do exist. Well, I was fighting an astrology friend [Tuck laughs] about being a triple Leo. I was very confused about being a triple Leo because I don’t feel like super… I don’t actually love most kinds of attention. Like, I’m very particular about the kinds of attention that feel comfortable for me to receive.

**Tuck:** And for good reason, I think as we’ve explained on the last hour of this podcast. [laughs]

**Gus:** Sure! [Tuck laughs] And I also learned that my Leos are all in the like 9th house. It was described to me as being kind of like a broody house. Where you’re like quieter and you still like the attention in the way that a Leo would, but it has to be very specific and like in your wheelhouse. Like it can’t just be blind. Like, I don’t wanna be like, the prom queen on the stage, like that makes me very uncomfortable, but if I tell a joke, I want everyone to laugh at my joke. And then that re-convinced me that maybe astrology was real and that I was a like, so many Leos. [Tuck laughs]

**Tuck:** One more question before we wrap up, because you and I share a very unusual experience, which is that we have a partner who has our name assigned at birth.

**Gus:** Yes.

**Tuck:** And, I know a lot of trans people who are like, “I would never date someone with my old name”, and I completely respect and honor that they think that’s their truth –– but there is something beautiful to me about getting to assign that name to a different person in your brain. Being like, “Oh! When someone says that, it actually isn’t about me, it’s about this other person who I really like.” And I get to be like, “Hooray!” instead of like, “eeugh!” And sometimes I'm a little bit like “eeugh!” I have this weird fear sometimes that I’m gonna get clocked because I’m gonna turn my head when they say her name. And I’m like, no one would clock me for that. They would just think that I was looking at them. [laughs]

**Gus:** Yes, that has totally happened to me, where someone just yells out my partner’s name and I’m like, “What? Why are you yelling?” [laughs]

**Tuck:** Yeah. **“**Why are you being rude to me?!” Exactly. [laughs]

**Gus:** Yeah, I've never really thought about it. I have actually really liked it and never clocked why and I think you hit on such a good point. That’s true, like the othering of the name.

**Tuck:** Mm-hmm. It’s yours now.

**Gus:** Go with God. [Tuck laughs] Yeah, it’s really cool, I think the only time it gets really weird for me is whenever I’m doing something like very official, where my name –– ’cause it’s still my legal name.

**Tuck:** Gotcha, yeah.

**Gus:** When my name has to be used, my partner’s very confused. Which is very cute and funny. I do from time to time, I’ll hear a friend that’s sitting with both of us like, shout their name or something, and I’ll react like they have misgendered me.

**Tuck:** Right, exactly!

**Gus:** That has happened a few times. Where I’m like, “Why would you call me that?” and they’re like, “I’m not talking to you.”. [laughs] And I’m like, “Right.”

**Tuck:** Exactly.

**Gus:** “Yeah, it’s cool. I knew that. Definitely.” But yeah, it’s weird enough when you date someone who has the same name as a significant ex. Where like, you’ve had two exes, meaningful exes with the same name.

**Tuck:** Totally, yeah.

**Gus:** But, it was kind of one of those sort of silly things. The worst part about it is that it kind of did give some people this like, feeling like they could deadname me out loud for the joke.

**Tuck:** Mmm, yeah, totally.

**Gus:** And by some people, I mean the parasocial relationships on the internet. But that’s sort of faded. Everybody’s sort of used to us dating now, so.

**Tuck:** Do you know that Diet Cig song, I think it’s called “Sixteen”?

**“Sixteen” by Diet Cig**: When I was sixteen, I dated a boy with my own name. / It was weird, in the back of his truck, / moaning my own name while trying to fuck...” [song fades out]

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

**Gus:** Boring. [Tuck laughs] Honestly, in my ideal world, I just want it to be boring. I just want it to be so mundane that like, no one asks, and nothing is something that you’ve never seen or heard of before, and “I have to know more about that.” I just want it to be very… I want it to be as boring as having brown hair. Something that people know about you, that is just a meaningless descriptor.

**Tuck:** So it’s not so much that the expression of gender is boring, but just that the fact of your gender will be boring.

**Gus:** The fact of your gender, yeah.

**Tuck:** You can have fun hair.

**Gus:** Yeah, you can have fun hair. I want everyone to use their pronouns, their names, I want everybody to be excited about it, wear a cute fit. I want all the things. But I want that to just be a thing people do. In an ideal future, I would love for people in the world to just be less investigated, and I think the only way that really happens is to kind of be a little bit boring in the eyes of other people, you know. Like that wave of curiosity that we all have over figuring people out, I would like for that to be old.

[Gender Reveal theme music plays]

**Tuck:** That’s gonna do it for this week’s show. You can find Gus at heyandrews.com or on Instagram and Twitter @\_anghost. That is underscore, A-N-G-H-O-S-T. We are, of course, on Twitter and Instagram @gendereveal. I’m also on Twitter, Instagram, and Bluesky if you wanna find me there, come hang out. We’re also on Patreon at patreon.com/gender, where you can sign up for our weekly newsletter, our monthly bonus podcast Gender Conceal, and a little discount code for our zine. And speaking of the zine, you can still preorder *2 Trans 2 Furious* at 2trans2furious.bigcartel.com. Pre-orders are closing sometime, I don’t know when, just order it now, why not? You can also find us at genderpodcast.com, where we have transcripts of every episode, an FAQ page, starter packs for new listeners, and more.

Today’s episode was produced and edited by Ozzy Llinas Goodman and by me, Tuck Woodstock. Our logo is by Ira M. Leigh. Our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. Additional music this week by Blue Dot Sessions. 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:** This has nothing to do with anything, but I found out today that Jeff Bezos’s biological father was a unicycle hockey player, and I just felt like I should put that into the conversation, but we can keep going now. [laughs]

**Gus:** I will never unlearn that. I love that and I really hope you don’t get rid of it in the editing process.

**Tuck:** [laughing] That’s the main thing that I keep in this episode.

**Gus:** I think everybody needs to know this. [Tuck laughs]