**Tuck Woodstock:** This episode is once again sponsored by The Bistitchual Yarn Shop, who says, “Our shop offers a wide range of beautiful queer and/or Canadian indie-dyed yarn and handmade accessories. Looking to learn but don’t know where to start? We offer beginner and not-so beginner knitting and crochet Zoom classes. So you can join from anywhere in the world. Visit us in person at 708 Annette Street in Toronto or online at bistitchual.ca. We ship internationally and offer free shipping on orders over $100.”

Ok. Here’s the show.

[*Gender Reveal* theme music begins]

**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! I hope you’re hanging in there. It’s fun to be back in your feeds after only a few days. And by “fun,” I mean, “Why did I decide that we should make two podcasts in one week? Why do I do this to us?”

Anyway, this is the second part of our two-part queer advice spectacular. On Monday, we talked with Maddy Court, a.k.a. Xena Worrier Princess, of The Ex-Girlfriend of My Ex-Girlfriend Is My Girlfriend zines. Got it! And today, we are chatting with John Paul Brammer, who you may know from the ¡Hola Papi! advice column or from iconic tweets like, “Good morning yeet me through the fish tube.” We do, perhaps, talk too much about Twitter.com.

**John Paul Brammer:** If you see a tweet from me, it does mean I have lost a battle.

**Tuck:** We also talk about things like the tyranny of authenticity and about how many advice questions are rooted in imposter syndrome.

**JP:** It seems like there are a lot of questions about people seeking permission from some authority figure to let them know that it’s ok to be someone or something.

**Tuck:** A important content warning. We do talk about suicidality for a few minutes in this episode. I will mark the exact time stamps in the show notes.

Also, sound came out a little weird on this one. That’s fine. I shouldn’t even have mentioned it. But, if you hear something weird, you’re not making it up.

Ok. But before we get to that, two real quick things first. It is Pride Month. If you would like to chip in even just a dollar to help support the work that Julia and I are doing on this show, you can do so at patreon.com/gender. We’ve got all sorts of cool rewards for you there. Also, if you would like to support other trans artists and trans organizations, we have a nonprofit merch store at bit.ly/gendermerch and there’s a bunch of great stuff for you there. There’s tank tops that say things like, “hot trans summer,” and, “more kink at pride.” There’s a t-shirt that says, “I don’t know any straight people.” All sorts of stuff. So head to bit.ly/gendermerch. Everything disappears at the end of the month so go look soon. See if you want anything.

You can find this week’s *This Week in Gender* gender news segment in our Monday episode with Maddy so let’s get straight to the interview.

[background music begins]

**Tuck:** John Paul Brammer is an author and illustrator from rural Oklahoma, based in Brooklyn. He’s the creator of ¡Hola Papi!, an advice column and now, a book.

[background music ends]

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

**JP:** I am a cisgender gay man.

**Tuck:** And I feel obligated to ask cis people, how do you know?

**JP:** (laughs) That’s a good question. I’m not entirely sure.

**Tuck:** Yeah. (laughter) That’s fair!

You were talking to Maria Hinojosa a year ago and you said that ¡Hola Papi! allows you to embrace your feminine side.

**JP:** Yeah. It sort of plays off of the advice form that being one that was different to other media avenues in that it was a place where women, queer people, and nonwhite people could make names for themselves in a way that they maybe couldn’t in other avenues. So, for example, when the advice column first started a long time ago in the 1600s, it was the avenue of predominantly educated white straight men. They asked questions like, “Where does the wind come from?” “How does nature work?” Stuff like that.

**Tuck:** Hell yeah.

**JP:** (chuckles) But then, once the questions started veering more into issues of the heart, of emotions, of etiquette, people decided that, “Oh, I think this is women’s work. This is something that women should take care of.” So that sort of pigeon-holing women at the time -- a lot of women writers at the time actually used it to their advantage to become household names because they were allowed to write under pen names but they were also allowed to make a lot of money, to get fame, to get notoriety. So, it has historically always been a place where, if you’re not a straight white male, you might actually be able to make a living with your writing. So when I engage in the tradition of the advice column, it really reminds me of “Yeah, this is a medium that I found and that found me and probably for good reason.”

**Tuck:** I love that. I also want someone to wait 9 months until you forget and then, send you a question that just says, “¡Hola Papi! Where does the wind come from?”

**JP:** (laughs) You know, I did forget where the wind came from. I’m not sure I know! (laughter)

**Tuck:** Well, one more question about femininity, which is that you write in your book about your journey from dressing like a parody of a straight Mexican kid with anger issues to wearing statement jewelry and billowy tops and all that. Do you feel like both the feminine dress and the advice column is a way to express femininity that you can take on and off? Or do you feel like it’s present at all times?

**JP:** I certainly think parts of it are present at all times but, of course, with ¡Hola Papi!, it really does feel like I am writing from the perspective of a cartoon character sometimes because not only, in the way he presents with the personality but also, he’s just very much unhinged. There’s a lot of humor there that I wouldn’t normally use in the other kinds of writing. And also, just the ability to play with the format. Because I kind of have to stick to the advice column format when writing from the perspective of Papi, that gives me a lot of rules to break, which I think lends itself more to being a mischievous, playful sort of eccentric figure in a way that maybe I wouldn’t be in other formats. I’m very lucky in that way. And I try to bring some of Papi into my everyday life but, at the end of the day, that’s a completely different voice. It’s one that I really enjoy doing but I can’t say that I’m Papi all the time.

**Tuck:** Yeah. Do you feel like your ¡Hola Papi! book is written in the same voice as the column?

**JP:** I think it’s very different. There are similarities, of course, but one thing I did with the column is … I’m a pretty superstitious person and I was always like, “You’re not allowed to make up a question. You can only answer questions that you actually receive from other people. Whereas, with this book, I didn’t have to adhere to that because I’m not really writing from the perspective of ¡Hola Papi! Just that alone puts me in a different mindset and I think the way it’s written is very different. But obviously, it’s a little meta in that it’s a memoir and essays based on the advice column and it sort of follows the advice column format.

**Tuck:** In your advice column, you answer questions from trans people sometimes. How do you decide which questions are in your lane to tackle and which ones aren’t?

**JP:** Yeah. I only really ever answer a question if the letter really sings to me and I feel like I have something to say. Because obviously, there are a lot of situations where I could do more harm than good or I’m just not educated on the subject and it’s sort of what the book tackles that. Because it ends in me not answering a letter, which is something you wouldn’t think an advice columnist would do but any time I can really relate … I think one example would be, there was this trans guy who was dealing with male pattern baldness for the first time and he was like, “What the hell is this? This is not what I signed up for. I don’t feel good about this. How do I deal with the beauty standards that people have for men and dealing with my confidence?” Because it is very scary. It’s this process happening on your scalp that you can’t really control. You can prolong it and you can try your best but it’s scary knowing that our bodies are constantly being affected by time and by things that are beyond our control.

I related so heavily to that and I was so eager to talk to him about it. I wanted to, obviously, reference his transness, of course, but also to some extent, we’re just two guys dealing with the same anxiety. So, instances like that, I really feel comfortable answering the letter. But obviously, of course, if I don’t, then I’m like, “No, someone else should probably help with this.”

**Tuck:** Yeah, it’s funny because we also have advice segments on this show and I have a backlog of probably 100 questions and I was going through to be like, “Are there any that I could throw at you?” And kind of, yeah but they’re all so specifically like, “Can I be trans and be this?” “Can I be nonbinary and be this?” “Am I an imposter?” “Can I be a lesbian and be nonbinary?” “Is my relationship queer enough?”

You write in your book maybe there’s a way to recognize that we are unknowable beings that exist beyond language and to recognize at times that we are to simply decide what we are and keep it moving if we are to move forward at all. And I really like that and I feel like that answers probably 75% of the questions that were asked. But can you talk more about how you tackle those questions? Because I know you get them, too, about, “Am I this enough?” “Can I call myself this?”

**JP:** I think that my column existing at this specific intersection where it does, which is on LGBTQ-related topics and Latinx related topics, it tends to touch on a lot of feelings of being an imposter and not being this or that enough. Like you said, a lot of the letters I get have to do with the question of “Am I allowed to be this?” Or, “Is there a way for me to be more comfortable being this?” Whether that’s, “I’m a bi person but I’m a woman, I’m married to a man. Am I still allowed to be bi?” It seems like there are a lot of questions about people seeking permission from some authority figure to let them know that it’s ok to be someone or something.

I, from peeking from behind the curtain of it, know that it doesn’t really work like that. If you really run the numbers, it’s like, “You’re a bisexual woman asking a gay man if you’re allowed to be bi.”

**Tuck:** Mm-hmm.

**JP:** On paper, that doesn’t really work out a whole lot. But I understand completely because I have often sought out people who I see as being in positions of some sort of authority, some sort of knowledge that I don’t have to just sit me down and be like, “Here is what you are,” because that is how we move through life. We want to have a good idea of who we are so that, when we encounter new situations or when we go about the very necessary act of living, we don’t have to worry about this existential crisis on top of everything else. “Oh, this is new information. Who am I? What am I?”

That’s a very scary place to be. It can often feel like you’re drowning and that you don’t have a map or something like that. And it’s hard, I think, to supply someone with that map in the context of just writing an advice column. I always feel like I want to help more than I’m able to. But I think, if you can just admit that, to an extent, we are all trying to pass something off as who we are and we are all sitting at least a little uncomfortably in who we are at any given moment no matter how you identify. Yes, in certain instances, the feelings of being invalidated crop up a lot more because of the way the world is. But I don’t think anyone is fully, completely, 100% inhabiting themselves with utmost confidence, or if they are, they might just be one question or one event from experiencing that one earthquake, that fracture. So I think embracing the chaos and letting people know that they’re not alone in questioning these things is really important.

**Tuck:** It’s so funny because I am a mixed Mexican person also and I have that pathological “not Mexican enough” thing and it was so funny when I read you have that same thing because you would be one of the people that I would be like, “Unlike this person.”

(laugh)

And then, of course, I read your book and you’re like, “Well, I’ve remedied that by working at the tortilla factory,” and I’m like, “Well, I didn’t work at the tortilla factory so what do I do?”

But you wrote an op-ed in WaPo a couple years ago that I really like. My favorite line is, “It’s important to free our imaginations from the tyranny of authenticity,” and I was wondering if you could talk about the tyranny of authenticity and how it impacts people of color because I think that’s a smart way to put it.

**JP:** Oh, yeah. I really like that essay. It’s from my food writing days. There was this year of my life where I was like, “What if I just wrote about food this year?” And it was such a fun little jaunt for me because I love food. Everyone eats food every day. And I love how it intersects with culture and how we define ourselves by it. And I was really keen on figuring out what makes an “authentic” Mexican restaurant to some people because my great grandfather, my bisabuelo, had a restaurant in TX called Mexico Cafe, run by real Mexicans, serving real Mexican food, which got me thinking, “Oh, this is a branding enterprise. This isn’t for Mexicans. This is for people who are seeking authentic Mexican food so that they can feel like they’re eating the real deal even though, at the end of the day, it was really Tex-Mex, which some people in Mexico would say, “That’s not real Mexican food, either.” It’s all subjective.

What I found was that there is a certain aesthetic to authenticity that is a little bit of a problem for me because it’s almost like people want to be tourists to some sort of pain or suffering, to poverty, to immigration, to something that feels other that they can step into but then step out of. And it oftentimes, is very limiting in terms of what you’re allowed to do and the creativity you are granted because I see a lot of people saying, “Well, that’s not an authentic Mexican restaurant because they have this kind of taco.” And it’s some wild taco that no one’s ever heard of and it was like, that’s someone who’s just trying to be creative and make their own new thing based on what environment they’re in. I remember the controversy was the super low Yelp rating to this Mexican restaurant that was in middle America that was actually being run by Mexicans. But a woman there came up with the idea to fry parmesan cheese around the taco shell. It was this cheesy taco thing and it was fun and super popular and everyone loved it until the trend came in of, “No, we want to eat authentic Mexican food actually,” and its Yelp reviews took a severe beating because it was like, “This is a fake taco. This isn’t real.”

I think that way of thinking is so limiting and so silly and it denies nonwhite or marginalized people a certain degree of creativity and agency over the stuff they make. Who are you to tell someone that they’re not allowed to play around with the ingredients in their immediate area? So, I think pointing out ways that authenticity is a story, is a narrative, can be really helpful in affirming to yourself … Because sometimes, you hit that rock bottom, where you have to remind yourself, “Ok, people are complicated. Identity is complicated. I’m coaching myself over this right now but I have to remember that it’s a story. It’s a narrative. It’s a construct. And I’m never going to fit perfectly within it because, by its nature, it exists to exclude people.”

**Tuck:** Yeah, one of my best friends is Nigerian-American and a chef and having Nigerian dinners in Portland, Oregon is so horrific for that reason. It’s just white people being like, “Ok, is this authentic Nigerian?” (laughs)

**JP:** Exactly, yep.

**Tuck:** “Well, I made it so …”

I had a strange thing happen to me last year where I suddenly had 10 times the Twitter followers I had before but it was something not associated with my career as a professional homosexual or anything. I had all these people following me because I reported on the Portland protests. So, they were following me but they didn’t really understand anything about what I was about on a fundamental level. And I was wondering if that happened to you when you had the tweet thread about the animals in your apartment, of being perceived but not actually seen by the people who are perceiving you.

**JP:** (laughs) Those freaking animals. That engagement really taught me a lot about the internet and social media because, even though the attention was positive, there was still this feeling of being flattened into a one-dimensional kind of thing so that people could enjoy me the way they wanted to enjoy me. I realized in the immediate weeks following that huge surge of followers …

What happened is, in case anyone wants to know, is that these two dogs and a cat got loose from the apartment above me where I was living at the time and I recorded my zany antics of trying to get them back into that apartment, wondering where the owners were, trying to keep the dogs locked inside their room but then they found out how to open the door and I couldn’t lock it from the inside. The cat came into my apartment and was running all over the place. It was this very cute, cartoony situation and I got a huge wave of followers after that.

What I found in the weeks following is that a lot of people would hold that over my head if I said something they didn’t like. “I thought it was so cute what you did with those animals but I don’t really like this tweet,” and stuff like that. So it really informed me on how people view other people on the internet because, of course, all this time, I was just some guy with a lot of different personality traits and opinions that not everybody’s going to find palatable, especially people who are huge on pets. I feel like that’s a certain kind of personality and they were looking for something really wholesome out of me and I’m just not that wholesome. I found myself getting sad that I couldn’t be that person for this new wave of people that I didn't know what they were there for. I didn’t know what they wanted out of me. I’m sure some of them ended up liking me as a writer and as a professional but the vast majority, no matter what I said afterward, even if it was completely unrelated, they were like, “Haha. Where are the pets? Where are the animals?” And it’s like, “I don’t know. I no longer live in that building. Why are you still on this?” People will build all kinds of narratives for strangers on the internet.

**Tuck:** Yeah. It’s so funny. I had such a similar thing where people would be like, “You’re talking about being gay a lot. Can you talk about the Portland police?”

**JP:** Right!

**Tuck:** And I’m like, “No.” Or I would be subtweeting a specific part of radio community and they would be like, “Who are you subtweeting? Is it Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler?” No. Please, leave me alone.

**JP:** That really reminds me, because it sounds like that’s a super important topic that it’s not always some frivolous dog thing. Sometimes, people just want your serious voice all the time and that, too, is really limiting because it’s like, “No, sometimes, I just want to make jokes or post a selfie. I want to do my own thing here.” And people are giving you their list of requests.

**Tuck:** Yeah. How do you … You’re on Twitter a lot still. You still live there, it seems. How do you have the stamina to still be on Twitter when you have this many people perceiving you? Because every time I post, I look at the replies and I’m like, “Why did I post?”

**JP:** No, every time I post, I wonder why I posted. Every tweet I make circa from now to maybe a year or two ago has been a failure of will. If you see a tweet from me, it does mean I have lost a battle. (laughs) It means that some tweet has overcome the hill of my brain and willpower and has managed to gain form and manifest on that website. Because I don’t like saying things on Twitter. I don’t enjoy it. I don’t like reading tweets. I feel like being on Twitter feels a lot like Hell but I can’t stop. (laughs) It’s hard to stop and also, I have so many friends who want to talk about what happened on Twitter.

**Tuck:** Mm-hmm. Yes!

**JP:** Even when I take breaks from it, someone will be like, “Oh my god. Did you see what happened? Blah, blah, blah, blah.” And it’s like, “God, how do I get out of here?”

**Tuck:** Well, I was glad you were on yesterday because we were all discovering together that Dear Evan Hansen isn’t gay.

**JP:** What?!

**Tuck:** I was also in that position. Why did we all think it was gay?

**JP:** Why did I have such a crystal clear picture of what that show was? I read the synopsis and was like, “What?!”

**Tuck:** I just thought it was Love, Simon. It feels like the Berenstain Bears thing where we all have … or what is it? Shazam Shaq movie where we all have the same collective delusion. That’s what it feels like to me.

**JP:** Our one community brain cell just creating mirages and hallucinations.

**Tuck:** Yeah! And what if we got off Twitter, we would never know that we didn’t know the plot of Dear Evan Hansen. That’s not acceptable. How would we live like that?

**JP:** That is exactly the thing. It’s just like Twitter sucks but what, if not Twitter? What is there?

**Tuck:** You live in New York, though, right?

**JP:** Yes. I’m in Brooklyn.

**Tuck:** I was talking about how I’ll literally be like, “I need to go back to New York once COVID’s over to go visit the internet.” You know?

(laughs)

**JP:** Here, you go to a bar and it’s like, “That’s @so-and-so, that’s @so-and-so.” And it’s just, “Ok, got it.” It’s just Twitter. Twitter the room.

**Tuck:** (laughs) Exactly. Well, you’ll know why but my brain went from Twitter to suicidality.

**JP:** Yes, of course.

**Tuck:** Because you write about suicidality several times in your book in this tone that is so identifiable to me as, “Oh, as someone who has thought about or attempted suicide several times.” That’s the kind of tone that you get. Was there any part of you who either hesitated to talk about that in the book or hesitated to write about it in that tone? Because I really appreciated it. It felt like the tone that I talk about with my friends but I can see it hitting other people weirdly.

**JP:** I was scared because, if I were to tell the truth, which is what I did in the book … The truth is that I don’t think I came very close to dying because the way I wrote about it in the occasion that happens later in the book -- the second time -- I talk about how I knew it wasn’t going to work. I wanted to sort of indulge in instinct to injury. And I thought that writing about it that way, people would be like, “Oh, you just want attention for saying it like that or you knew that nothing would happen and therefore, you weren’t really suicidal or you weren’t really going through something. You were just feeling bad.” I really was worried about people not being able to accept that my feelings and what I ended up doing were complicated and pretty nuanced but, at the same time, I think pretty common. I think a lot of people feel … Maybe they don’t want to die. Maybe they just feel like, “I don’t want to be in pain,” or, “I’m not living inside a life that I feel is accommodating me or that feels comfortable or that I think I can turn around.” And that feeling of helplessness, it’s more like, “I just want to feel better. But how do I do that when I feel like I can’t?” It’s this complete bereftness of options that you feel. That’s really what I experienced and I was just trying to portray that in a way that felt true to me because I didn’t want to make it bigger or even more over the top. Because I know that everyone’s experiences look different and, for some people, it certainly feels a lot more urgent but I nonetheless wanted to write about what was going on through my head and how I experienced it because I think it’s more common than we think.

**Tuck:** Yeah, absolutely. Especially for queer and trans people. You write near the end of the book, “Years upon years of sharing and oversharing -- my thoughts, my pictures, my words, words I didn’t necessarily agree with anymore. Words I had maybe only written to meet a quota or get a paycheck; I felt naked like I had given too much of myself, a bad self, away. … I had given some of the worst people alive thousands of openings to hurt me.”

I relate to that really deeply but it’s interesting to me that after feeling that way, you wrote a memoir.

**JP:** (laughs) I know.

**Tuck:** How are you feeling about continuing to share even more thoughts and experiences and traumas with everyone?

**JP:** I think it’s a lot like Twitter, in that I have to ask myself why. I engage in my instincts a lot and that brain, that hat, is different from the one that I’m using right now to talk about it. It’s almost like the writing happens in this other room in my head and I have to deal with what it comes up with later after it already comes out because it’s almost like I can’t stop myself. When I think about people asking, “Why did you write this book,” “Why did you make it like this,” etc and I come up with answers as best I can but the reality is I don’t really know. I just am one of those people who does things to do them because it occurred to me and it felt very natural.

I remember there was this tweet the other day where it was like, “Name one super important decision you made that you know changed your life completely and, if you hadn’t made it, life would look very different for you,” and I struggled so hard to even think of an answer to that because I was like, “I’m literally just cruising on vibes and have been for many, many years now.” I know that I do make explicit decisions. It’s just that I can’t recall the exact point where I make them. It’s more like this slow and inevitable arrival at what I see as what I’m supposed to be and what I’m supposed to do. On paper, I can look at my life and be like, “You suffer from a lot of anxiety. You don’t enjoy it when people know a whole lot of things about you. And yet, you wrote this memoir full of all these really important things that happened to you. It’s a very vulnerable thing. What’s going on there?” And it’s a mystery. It really is a mystery. All I can do is say I think I just have, like most people do, different modes of thinking, different modes of being, and they’re not always in perfect harmony with each other.

**Tuck:** Yeah. We’re recording this before your book’s out in the world-world. How are you feeling about it?

**JP:** It’s definitely scary. At the same time, this is something that I’ve put a lot of practice into doing. I’ve certainly had people react to really personal stories of mine in the past. And at this point, I am somewhat of a professional so I think there is a cushion there between me and the world’s reaction to it. But at the same time, it’s always going to be scary because it’s like, you write a book because you want people to read it and then, when they do read it, it’s almost like I don’t feel like I have the right to be like, “Wait. No. Stop.” (laughs) “Don’t look at that.” So I’m just trying to take the punches as they come and just do my best to keep myself intact through the process of being perceived on such a wide scale.

**Tuck:** Yeah. I feel like the hardest part for me is when I put out something really vulnerable -- not in the same scale -- but something vulnerable and then, you just don’t hear a lot back for a while.

**JP:** Oh, I know! I know!

**Tuck:** Because people didn’t drop their whole life just to read and give you feedback. Then, you’re like, “Oh, no. What are you thinking? Tell me what you’re thinking!”

**JP:** Right! I do this all the time. I want to shake myself and be like, “What does winning look like to you here? Because, if no one responds and no one reads it, you feel bad. If a bunch of people read it, you feel nervous.” It’s just like, “What do you want? What do you want?” And it’s like, “I don’t know.” (laughs)

**Tuck:** It’s really hard. Are you a Pisces?

**JP:** I sure am. (laughs)

**Tuck:** Yeah. I feel like that comes across in the book. That’s my whole question. Just-

**JP:** More of a statement. “You’re a Pisces.” (laughter) No, that’s so true. I’m also an Aries moon. I know that much. And I like rams and goats so I always think about it more. But I think when you get to the core of it, I’m very much a Pisces.

**Tuck:** I think both of them show up. I love a fire moon with something else on the outside.

**JP:** I do, too.

**Tuck:** Well, I know you talk about, in the book, a question that has stuck with you about this person who’s gay in a country where homosexuality is illegal. Are there any other questions that you have answered, that you haven’t answered, that have stuck with you?

**JP:** Oh, yeah. Absolutely. A lot of them have to do with coming out questions, which I decided very early that I wasn’t going to really touch because my worst nightmare is telling some young queer person to come out in an environment where I don’t have all the information that I know it’s safe. So, even if they’re presenting it to me like, “Oh, I think they’ll probably be fine with it,” I still don’t want to be like, “Yeah, go off! Do it,” because I don’t know. I don't know what situation they’re in and I’m some rando on the internet. I’m not going to tell someone to come out like that, especially a young person.

Things that touch on issues beyond the G in LGBT, I try to tread very lightly. One letter that has really resonated with me, though, that I did answer was from this woman who was like, “I feel kind of hopeful even though this is a time of really no hope at all.” This was deep quarantine. Because she was like, “I am starting the process of my transition right now and I’m inching closer to who I’ve always wanted to be and how I’ve always felt. Is it ok for me to feel good about this?” And that was something I could really relate to because any time anything good happens to me, I immediately -- because I’m Mexican -- I think of all the suffering and I think of all the reasons that I shouldn’t feel happy. Maybe call it Catholic guilt. I don't know. I felt a lot of symmetry in her letter to me because I was like, “Yeah. Feelings of joy can be complicated and troubled by feelings of pain and despair but I think those things also texture each other. You really can’t have one without the other so I think it’s perfectly fine and even encourage you to find your joy right now.” I think about that letter a bit whenever I’m feeling not so great.

**Tuck:** Yeah, there were a lot of letters at the beginning of the pandemic that I felt were really helpful to me as someone who was going through a breakup at the beginning of the pandemic.

**JP:** Oh my gosh. Yeah.

**Tuck:** It was really nice when you were like, “Hey, did you know that people in relationships are also having a bad time right now?”

**JP:** I know. And I knew that because my friends in relationships wouldn’t stop complaining to me about it. They were just like, “Oh my god. This is horrible.” It’s almost like once you become aware of someone else’s experiences, you can actually look at the contours and the nuances. It really makes you feel better because it’s like, “Oh, ok. You’re human, too.”

**Tuck:** Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. The newsletter that you wrote that I think about the most is the one that starts out by saying, “Hola Papi, I’m a cool young lesbian in one of the gayest cities in the US and no one has ever been in love with me,” which is iconic but the thing that sticks out for me about that is the part that says, “I’m going to do something perhaps you didn’t expect and I’m going to believe you because I think I’m the same way. I’ve been reluctant to talk about it in my column but I haven’t been in an official relationship since a girlfriend in high school.”

So, two questions here. You can choose what you want to talk about. I’m curious about the decision to “out yourself” as a gay relationship advice professional who hasn’t been in an official relationship since high school but I also -- more than that -- think about how powerful it felt to read, “I’m going to believe you. I think I’m the same way.” I’m just wondering how many people’s advice questions really just come down to wanting to be believed and wanting to not be alone in their experience, which is more of an existential question but …

**JP:** So many. And I think that … I often get a lot of letters that I don’t think are meant to be answered. Because it’s just someone who wants to write their problem down and send it somewhere so that they can work through their thinking on it and work through how they want to feel about it while talking to someone without the pressure of the other person trying to correct them in the process of talking.

I know it doesn’t always feel great when I’m talking about what I’m upset about and someone keeps trying to interrupt by being like, “Oh, that’s not true. No, you’re great! Remember this? Remember that? You’re not the problem here.” Some people just want to feel like, “No, yeah. That sucks. And it’s actually happening. You’re not making it up. It’s painful to be single. You’re not making it up that it’s hard to find someone.” Because everyone always wants to be like, “But how is it hard for you? You’re such a catch! You’re blah, blah, blah, blah.” And this is what friends want to do to help each other. I’ve done it before. Sometimes, it’s just nice to sit there with someone else and be like, “This is not fun. (laughs) This is just not fun.”

I think that, as a person who often has not fun, it’s really helpful for me to relate to other people and being single so chronically, I think, has really helped me on that front. Because I can relate to all the people who write because most of the people who write to me are also single and not really feeling it.

**Tuck:** That’s really interesting because I just interviewed Maddy Court who does Xena Worrier Princess and I feel like so many of her questions are about, “I’m in a relationship. What do I do?” And yours are like, “I’m single. What do I do?” (laughs) And mine are like, “I’m trans. What do I do?”

**JP:** (laughs) Yeah, I think that part of that comes from the lingering original DNA of the column being on Grindr. It’s a lot of people who are single who are looking for something.

**Tuck:** Is there anything else that we haven’t talked about yet that you want to talk about about the book or anything else?

**JP:** No, just that I’m really proud of this book and I hope that people get something out of it. People often ask me, “What do you want a reader to get from this book?” And I’m always like, “Yeah, that’s a big ask honestly.” I just hope … Being read at all is such a privilege. Someone told me that this book got them through a flight because they read it on a plane and I was like, “That’s good enough for me. That’s serviceable.” You know what I mean? That’s fine. I did something for someone. It kind of validates the whole project.

**Tuck:** Yeah, no, it’s a really, really good book. I’m really excited for people to read it. The way we always end the show is by asking, in your ideal world, what would the future of gender look like?

**JP:** Oh, wow. I think, in my ideal world, the future of gender would look like people feeling like gender is a comfy house or a nice home for them where they can feel more at peace with themselves. Maybe not necessarily abolishing it. I don't know. I’m not the smartest person in the world when it comes to these things but I just want people of whatever gender they identify with to feel like they belong and that they don’t have anything to prove and that they can have fun with it. Because I think that oftentimes, it’s not the case nowadays, especially in the past. That would be a nice future for me, I think.

[*Gender Reveal* closing theme begins]

**Tuck:** That’s going to do it for this week’s show. If you had a good time, please share this episode with your community. And, if you’re new here, please subscribe and tune in for episodes with actual trans people. You can find ¡Hola Papi! wherever books are sold and in newsletter form on Substack. It is one of my absolute most cherished newsletters and it is free so why not sign up? You can also find John Paul’s work at jpbrammer.com and at holapapi.com. Plot twist! JP is also a very talented artist. He sells prints and beautiful masks and tank tops with tied up cowboys on them. Again, that’s at holapapi.com. JP is, of course, trapped on Twitter where he tweets @JPBrammer.

We are also on Twitter and Instagram @gendereveal and at genderpodcast.com, where you can find transcripts of every episode and starter packs for new listeners of the show. Shop our limited edition, Pride Month only merch collection at bit.ly/gendermerch. And support the work that we do to make the show at patreon.com/gender.

Today’s episode was produced and edited by me, Tuck Woodstock. Our associate producer is Julia Llinas Goodman, our logo is by Ira M. Leigh, and our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. We’ll be back next week with more feelings about gender. Throw a brick at a cop.

[*Gender Reveal* closing theme ends]

**Tuck:** God, I just got back on Tinder and they are showing me … They won’t stop showing me straight people. No matter what gender I tell them I am and no matter what gender I tell them I’m looking for, they’re like, “Here is a bunch of straight people.”

**JP:** Wonderful.

**Tuck:** I have to leave.

**JP:** I love this thing Tinder is doing now where it’s trying to be like, “You’re trying to like a popular user. Are you sure you don’t want to Super Like?”

**Tuck:** I love that one!

**JP:** It’s like, “Ok. I feel worse. Thank you.” (laughs)

**Tuck:** Oh my gosh. It’s so bad except for when that person matches back with you and you’re like, “I’m popular by extension now,” and you never message them.

**JP:** (laughs) You match with each other and you’re like, “Wait. I’m beautiful and unstoppable actually.”

**Tuck:** Yep. Exactly.