

Ally ([00:00](#)):

As many of you may know, the writers and actors are on strike together for the first time in over 50 years. Today we have a guest who is an actor. So for those of you chomping at the bit to hear what they have to say about acting and projects that won't be a part of this interview. Solidarity looks like not talking about projects or doing any sort of promo, so everything is kind of ground to a halt, which actually, I don't know if you felt this way about it, but I feel like we got to really talk to them-

Babette ([00:35](#)):

As like a person.

Ally ([00:36](#)):

About who they are. Yeah. Apart from their function in this capitalist society.

Babette ([00:43](#)):

Totally. Or it's just like, I think people get entangled with their work and it's like, "You're not your work." So it was just great to talk to a really smart and amazing person about their gender and yeah, it's a strike girl summer, so there's so many strikes happening across so many industries.

Ally ([01:00](#)):

Exactly.

Babette ([01:01](#)):

So exciting, worker power. Ally, have you had any personal involvement in the strike? What does that look like for you as someone whose kind of in the entertainment industry?

Ally ([01:10](#)):

Yes. Yeah, definitely. The company that I work for most is definitely not part of the AMPTP, but we're definitely on strike. We've halted all shooting and everything like that. I think maybe the best thing that I've read recently was last month, there's a Wired article from Madeline Ashby, and it's called Hollywood's Future Belongs to People-Not Machines. It was such a good read. It really goes into this Silicon Valley way of thinking that has taken over-

Babette ([01:45](#)):

Optimizing.

Ally ([01:45](#)):

... Yes. Taken over so many industries. The people at the top have found ways to cut full positions to increase their enormous wealth, and we're just kind of really seeing that in the UPS strike, as you said, all the strikes that are going on in chorus in this really cool way.

Babette ([02:05](#)):

Today's guest, I don't even know if I could say it, you might know them from a show called [inaudible 00:02:12], which I was so excited about. I'm a huge fan. We were talking about it. It was just so amazing to talk to them just as a person, as a fellow non-binary person.

Ally ([02:23](#)):

Totally.

Babette ([02:24](#)):

Ally, how did you actually meet our guest today? How are you able to get them on the show?

Ally ([02:29](#)):

I actually met them on their podcast.

Babette ([02:34](#)):

Oh, really?

Ally ([02:34](#)):

Yeah. We have a mutual friend named Jasmine, and she asked me to be on her podcast, so I met them doing The Homo Schedule, which is another gay podcast. It was very fun and then through that we became friends.

Babette ([02:47](#)):

Amazing. Okay, let's get into the interview.

Audio ([02:53](#)):

Am I even queer?

([02:54](#)):

I think I want to take testosterone.

([02:56](#)):

I mean, I'm wearing men's underwear right now.

([02:58](#)):

Is that a boy? Is that a girl?

([02:59](#)):

Man, woman, cisgender, transgender. We're born into language.

([03:03](#)):

Butch, femme, T-girl.

([03:04](#)):

Decolonized.

([03:05](#)):

Queer, Trans, BIPOC.

(03:05):

Neurodivergent.

(03:06):

Cisgender, hetero, patriarchal, capitalist girl boss.

(03:10):

Queer femme lipstick every day.

(03:12):

T for T, like Fagboy relationship.

(03:15):

Butch boyish and spritely.

(03:17):

A softer, more [inaudible 00:03:19].

(03:18):

Oh, but you're so feminine. You're so feminine.

(03:21):

Attraction to a hot T boy.

(03:23):

I used sexuality to try to understand my gender.

(03:26):

What does it look like for non-binary people to quote-unquote, "Transition"?

(03:30):

I was a boy. If I was looking down at the memory, I was a boy.

(03:34):

It's really difficult to look at gender identity head on.

(03:38):

Wait, I think I'm-

Liv (03:49):

My name is Liv. I'm non-binary, my pronouns are they/them. That's the headline, generally speaking, I think always. It's like, okay, quick, 1, 2, 3. That covers the bases.

Ally (04:03):

Yeah. Well, this is a politics podcast, so I don't know why you brought gender in.

Liv (04:08):

Which was gender [inaudible 00:04:09]. Get a life.

Babette ([04:08](#)):

Exactly.

Ally ([04:12](#)):

Okay. So you have been out as a non-binary for a while, right?

Liv ([04:19](#)):

Yeah.

Ally ([04:19](#)):

When did you first come out?

Liv ([04:19](#)):

Well, it happened in layers for me. I told my friends when I was 16, and so for the backend of my teens, my friends were using they/them pronouns for me, and that was it. I knew that about myself, but my understanding of what was possible for me as a non-binary person was like, "Well, this is about as much as I can get away with probably."

([04:41](#)):

And then I told everybody else when I was 23... 22, 23. So coming out for me was a process and continues to be a process that has more layers to it as my understanding of what is possible for myself changes. Now I'm at a place where it's been 11 years since I've had an understanding of myself as non-binary since I've known how I want to be spoken about. Since I've known what my gender feels like for me and how settled that is. I mean, I had top surgery just over a year ago, so that's another piece of it too. So it's complicated talking about coming out for me because in some ways it happened quite early, but then it took forever to completely integrate bits of my life into one piece, and then my body and my brain, things didn't coalesce properly until maybe about a year ago, maybe five minutes ago.

Babette ([05:45](#)):

Right.

Liv ([05:46](#)):

It's been a long time and a short time.

Babette ([05:48](#)):

How would your 16-year-old definitions or ideas about yourself being non-binary compare to now? Could you kind of take us through how those things are different? And like you said, they coalesce. What does that kind of look like for you? What does that look like?

Liv ([06:02](#)):

Yeah, I'm still kind of puzzling it out. I mean, the position that I'm in now, in terms of how I feel about myself and how I moved through the world and what my understanding of my gender and my body and what's possible for me is so different from when I was younger. I would not be able to explain my life to

myself at that age, and that's a thought exercise that my therapist and I do all the time. I think it's really useful. I didn't think-

Ally ([06:27](#)):

In what way. It's so good.

Liv ([06:28](#)):

Yeah.

Ally ([06:29](#)):

You're just like, "Hell, the possibility's open."

Liv ([06:31](#)):

Yeah.

Ally ([06:31](#)):

Okay, okay.

Liv ([06:33](#)):

I didn't think of myself as having possibilities when I was younger. When I was younger, my understanding was like, "Well, this is not going to be good. This is good for me on a personal level, but this is a lot of closed doors and a lot of walls in front of me," and everything just felt kind of impossible. There was something about the world that felt inherently hostile to me. I felt resigned almost. It's like, "Well, all right." Wasn't a sense of movement or joy or freedom about it necessarily. It was like, "Okay, it's a good thing. I understand this about myself and I can't do anything with it at all."

([07:11](#)):

Whereas now it's so radically different. I feel like nothing but possibility and nothing but freedom and movement, and it's on every level, psychological, physical, social. I feared when I was younger that everything was very closed and that I was going to have to live my life from a reactive place as hostility or obstacles or shutdown came at me. And when I thought about my life, that's just all I could see. Whereas now, when I think about the future, I think about expanse and reaching out for things, giving things out and it doesn't feel threatening anymore.

Babette ([07:52](#)):

Oh my gosh.

Ally ([07:53](#)):

Yeah, seriously-

Babette ([07:54](#)):

That was really amazing.

Ally ([07:56](#)):

What kind of things do you think changed your thought around this from like, "Oh, I have this kind of like, curse to gifts. Now, it feels like amazing." I mean, was it top surgery? Was it friend groups? Was it moving to a bigger city or like-

Liv ([08:15](#)):

Yeah. A little bit it had to do with connecting with other people, living from a position of shutdown and limit or it's like, "Oh, I can't tell anybody about this. I can't do anything with it. I'm alone. I'm alienated and isolated." It's the antidote to that for me came through connecting to other people. I think connection is generative. The more you get, the more you're able to give, and then the more you're able to give, the more you get. Other queer people have always been such a lifeline for me, and accessing a larger sense of history as well, was really, really important and continues to be really important.

([08:56](#)):

Then being able to provide those things for other people also makes me feel stronger and more capable and more in the world. It was just always about finding ways to be in the world. I don't even know if that makes sense as I'm saying it out loud, but that's how it feels like feeling like a participant in my own life, I think. Feeling sort of actualized and top surgery was a big part of that, but top surgery was the final boss of that. That was the last 500 meters of a very intense hike. It's like, "Okay, this is the hardest, most final bit." And "Oh look, we made it. Isn't the view nice?" But lots of other things had to happen first in order to get me there.

Ally ([09:37](#)):

Yeah. I don't know what meters are but-

Liv ([09:40](#)):

Sure. Of Course.

Ally ([09:44](#)):

We've talked to a lot of people. I think there's this really interesting thing coming up about top surgery specifically where people have been saying, "I waited so long," and I really identify with that where I'm like, "Oh my gosh. The relief I felt immediately." I think Devin Price a few weeks ago talked about this where it was "Already, I don't have to think about what am I going to wear? How feverishly am I going to work out" and just this pressure. But it is also true that it is a giant surgery. I think -

Liv ([10:19](#)):

It's huge.

Ally ([10:20](#)):

... it makes sense that you waited a long time on that. So yeah, I think that people who transition really early face this pressure of like, "Are you sure? Are you sure you're so young? How can you make a choice for yourself?" And if you wait, then you're like, "Wow, so much missed time. I could have transitioned so much earlier." And I think that's really interesting. It's like everyone just needs to be a thousand percent easier on themselves.

Liv ([10:47](#)):

Oh God, so much. We are fucking going through enough for God's sake.

Babette ([10:56](#)):

No, for real.

Liv ([10:57](#)):

And for me, I know exactly what you mean. I literally did wait a long time. I knew that it was something that I wanted and that would help me, and that I didn't do anything about it for 10 years. It's the longest I've ever thought about anything. I'm very impulsive, but not about this. I tortured myself over it for a long time, and it's like that's true. It's also true that it happened when I was ready, when I did feel capable, strong and ready to engage with myself as I am. Be in the world in a way that feels honest to my internal experience. I did have to sift through a lot of things before I was ready to have surgery. So it's like, "God, that took forever."

([11:32](#)):

And also, "That's fine. That's okay. And I'm so much happier now." The thing that struck me so much, I love talking to other people who've had to have surgery about this because it's like, "Oh, the clothes [inaudible 00:11:45]". "Oh yeah, your sensation coming back if you've got the kind that lets you keep some." But what really took my breath away was like, "Oh, my posture's different." I stand differently. Knots in my back that used to be there weren't there anymore. I got some new ones because my shoulders were in a different place. It's like my body spent six months figuring out how to stand.

Ally ([12:07](#)):

Oh my God.

Liv ([12:07](#)):

And that just never occurred to me until it was happening. And it's the best.

Ally ([12:11](#)):

Yes, my body didn't autocorrect. So honestly, I'm proud of you. I still find myself standing in a way that I have, my whole life. That's this kind of shrouding hunch that I'm just so used to. I don't know if you guys get these targeted ads on Instagram, but I feel like every single one for me is about posture. And I'm like, "Okay-

Liv ([12:34](#)):

That's so funny.

Ally ([12:36](#)):

... leave me alone." It's like little gadgets that you tape to your spot and that remind you to sit up straight or something. But yeah, that's definitely still something for me.

Liv ([12:45](#)):

A friend of mine runs a binder company and I started getting targeted ads for their binders, but after I had surgery, I was like, "I don't need this anymore." I want to-

Babette ([12:57](#)):

Yeah, a little too late.

Liv ([12:58](#)):

[inaudible 00:12:58] friend's business, but I can't, it's beyond me now,

Ally ([13:01](#)):

Honestly. I still think about wearing my binder even post-op surgery. I'm just like, "It's a good look at the beach."

Babette ([13:08](#)):

That's true.

Ally ([13:09](#)):

I think that's a beautiful timeless silhouette. Now I don't have the relationship with it. It's been years for me, so I'm not like, "Oh my God, get that away from me." That's the thing I would have to struggle out of in the car the second I left somewhere. Just so awful. But now I'm like, "Ooh, I kind of love it. It's a beautiful object." It's hanging on my wall in my bedroom, actually.

Babette ([13:34](#)):

That's sick.

Ally ([13:34](#)):

It's so nasty. It's insane that my girlfriend lets me do that.

Liv ([13:38](#)):

Oh, I love that.

Babette ([13:38](#)):

That's so funny.

Ally ([13:41](#)):

Yeah, it's a beautiful relic.

Babette ([13:43](#)):

I guess I'm wondering, it can be really difficult for trans folks to access surgery. I think that's part of what takes so long is sometimes the decision making, but also the bureaucratic processes, all of that shit or whatever. I finally actually just got my surgery date for an aggressive breast reduction in January.



Ally ([14:02](#)):

Oh my God.

Babette ([14:07](#)):

Thrilling, exciting. Very excited. But figuring out Care Logistics and stuff like that. But what's really funny is that this whole time I was going through the process, trying to do it kind of the trans way, thinking that it would be easier because sometimes if you ask for a normal breast reduction, they're like, "You need to go to physical therapy for five years," or something like that.

Ally ([14:26](#)):

Oh my god.

Liv ([14:26](#)):

Five! God.

Babette ([14:27](#)):

Something crazy. And so I was doing it the trans way. I got my therapist letter. I did all the things. Turns out I still have my parents' insurance.

([14:35](#)):

I have one year left, and it turns out my insurance doesn't cover under any gender-affirming-care, which I thought was illegal, but literally-

Ally ([14:46](#)):

In California?

Babette ([14:46](#)):

... where my dad works, yes. Where my dad works, it's like this big engineering company. No gender-affirming-care. But what's crazy is I went to the doctor and I have an L cup. They're really, really big. And I went and doing it the non-gendered way, just the woman way. I immediately got accepted. That's how I immediately got it. So I was like, this world, literally hates trans people. It's so nuts.

Liv ([15:16](#)):

Because cis people access gender-affirming-care literally all the time.

Babette ([15:21](#)):

All the time. It's the same procedure. I'm getting the same procedure either way, but the way that was for trans people is harder. So that's a long-winded way of asking. What was that process like for you for choosing a surgeon and getting a date, and were you able to find a surgeon that was affirming towards non-binary people because I know non-binary surgery is also a specific thing.

Liv ([15:44](#)):

The clinic that I worked with, what attracted me to them specifically was literally that they had experience working with non-binary patients and operated under the informed consent model. I was like, "Great, thank you so much. I won't be looking at anyone else."

Ally ([15:57](#)):

For listeners who don't know, can you explain that model, the informed consent?

Liv ([16:02](#)):

I hope I don't botch too much of the academic language around it, but it's basically we explain what the procedure is to you and then you say, "Yes, please," and then we believe you about that, as opposed to, "Okay, but go see a psychiatrist for X amount of time and jump through X amount of hoops to make sure that you are sure," because ultimately nobody actually wants you to do this. It's just like, "Here's what the procedure is. Do you want it?" It's like, "Yes, I do." "Okay, great."

Ally ([16:29](#)):

Oh, we trust that you've done your own research. I had to do all the hoops. Okay that's so sick.

Liv ([16:36](#)):

But the informed consent model is basically, "We inform, you consent, and we're all adults, so that's fine."

Babette ([16:43](#)):

Right. That's amazing. So it was pretty smooth sailing with them. They treated you like a human being.

Liv ([16:51](#)):

Yeah. Yeah, and I mean, not to say that it was fun because it's still very administrative and bureaucratic and it's a lot of forms. It's a lot of back and forth, so it wasn't stressless, but it wasn't charged in a way that felt personal. I never felt like I had to explain myself or make a plea to anyone, and that is an experience that I'm very grateful to have had.

Ally ([17:16](#)):

Yeah, totally. I felt like I was really educating people every step of the way. I was maybe the first non-binary trans person that anyone had ever met. I just walked through there being like, "I should fucking send a Venmo request to every single person I've talked to in this building."

Liv ([17:33](#)):

Literally.

Babette ([17:33](#)):

For real.

Liv ([17:34](#)):

I remember really wanting to avoid that in a medical setting at all costs, basically, partly because it's hell on earth, and then also partly because I realized, privately in my social life, I have been the first non-binary person that anyone's met for 10 years. I don't want to do it anymore. I really don't want to do it anymore. I remember noticing a real shift. I mean, I guess, I don't know when it started happening, but maybe in the last two or three years as mainstream awareness of us and our lives has changed. I remember being a teenager and literally having to do a one-on-one hand holder with everyone I ever spoke to about it. I couldn't tell you exactly when that shifted, but it happened to me once this year where I had to start from scratch with somebody and I was like, "Oh, I haven't had to do this in a while. That's funny. When was the last time I had to do this? I don't remember." "Oh, good." Good but also why is it happening now?

Ally ([18:30](#)):

Yeah.

Babette ([18:30](#)):

Right.

Ally ([18:33](#)):

Yeah. It does feel like non-binary literacy has taken off and that feels so nice.

Liv ([18:41](#)):

It's a big relief.

Babette ([18:42](#)):

So nice.

Ally ([18:46](#)):

Yeah. It seems like it's only going to get better. I feel like there are so many non-binary children. I am just like, "Oh, okay. That's like generations are coming." That will sound like so old being like, "I had to explain they/them wasn't terrible."

Liv ([19:03](#)):

I had to tell someone how they would speak if they found somebody's wallet.

Ally ([19:13](#)):

I love that one.

Liv ([19:14](#)):

It's good. It really works. I always meant telemarketer. I was like, if a telemarketer calls during dinner, you say, "What do they want?" But it's one person on the phone.

Ally ([19:22](#)):

Oh, that's concise.

Babette ([19:25](#)):

Exactly.

Ally ([19:26](#)):

Wow. The way that I'm going to use that for my own mother who's gotten pretty much every one of those, I'm just like, "One of these is going to stay."

Liv ([19:34](#)):

It's going to be great.

Ally ([19:36](#)):

Yeah. Okay, so another thing that we love to talk about on this podcast is kind of the terms masculinity and femininity and how in our just existence we reject that binary, but let's start with masculinity. What does masculinity mean to you?

Liv ([19:55](#)):

It's so funny. I think about this all the time and a big part of swimming in the gender soup for me when I was younger, before I knew what was going on for me, was people would talk about masculinity and femininity, or people would talk about men and women, and I would just be like, "I don't know what the fuck you are saying. I have no idea what you're talking about." For me, it's like masculinity and femininity, both are so much about what people think they're looking at, rather than what they're actually seeing. Because the second you ask somebody to break it down, it sort of falls apart or it's like, well, is leadership masculine? It's like, "Well, no, not inherently," right? It's like, okay, well, is having long hair feminine? It's like, "Well, no," because it's like I've seen pirates and vikings and skateboarders.

([20:48](#)):

Masculinity and femininity, both feel like mirages to me, and when I'm thinking about myself, neither of them stick to me. The kind of masculinity that I understand myself to have or that I understand myself to be pulled to in terms of my expression is masculinity that is feminine, the kind of stuff that [inaudible 00:21:09]

Babette ([21:08](#)):

We always talk about that on the show.

Liv ([21:12](#)):

One of my dear friends told me recently that the last person she saw that really made her think of me was Sam Reid in Interview With a Vampire as he's playing the [inaudible 00:21:25], and I was like, "Yes, because that's the kind of masculinity I have," which is like-

Ally ([21:30](#)):

That was everyone's gender awakening. I feel like.

Liv ([21:33](#)):

It's like [inaudible 00:21:36], theatrical and flamboyant, and sometimes when people look at me, I think they sort of look at me and they're like, "Oh, but you are kind of feminine still," and it's like, "I don't think that's true," because I don't think you can explain what that is, and that's not how I feel, but when people look at me and they're like "Feminine?" I think what they're noticing is that I'm flamboyant, but they get confused because of the hair and the estrogen, but that's not my fucking problem, and it's just masculinity and femininity. They're two mirrors facing each other. Is there anything actually here at all, or are we just doing stuff and looking at each other and trying to find things in common?

Babette ([22:17](#)):

Totally.

Liv ([22:18](#)):

When people say the word masculinity, I'm always like, "What are we talking about? What are you actually saying?" And it's the same with femininity too. It reminds me of that quote about pornography from some court proceeding sometime where a judge said about pornography. "I couldn't define it, but I know it when I see it."

Ally ([22:39](#)):

Oh, yes.

Liv ([22:41](#)):

And it's like, okay, so it's nothing. So what? It's like, okay, it's something, but none of us can settle on a definition. It's just vibes, but the vibes change from person to person and situation to situation, but in terms of masculinity and femininity, it's like, okay, but it's also something that you feel comfortable ascribing to me based on what you think you happen to be looking at when I walk into a room. I don't know, dude.

Ally ([23:07](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Oh, so it's just vibes?

Liv ([23:08](#)):

Yeah, it's just vibes.

Babette ([23:10](#)):

It's just vibes.

Liv ([23:15](#)):

I don't get to pick necessarily. I don't know.

Babette ([23:16](#)):

Do you think that same elusiveness of those terms applies to the terms like masc and femme? Would you say it's the same thing where you're like, "What is that?" I think we found in the show it kind of similarly [inaudible 00:23:29]

Liv ([23:28](#)):

It does similarly.

Babette ([23:30](#)):

And it's maybe something that queer people have put on themselves a little bit. What do you think?

Liv ([23:33](#)):

I don't think it's the same because I think there is a sort of consciousness and intentionality to the way a lot of queer people do gender or think about gender expression.

Babette ([23:45](#)):

Totally.

Liv ([23:45](#)):

It's like in trying on how masculinity and femininity sit on all of us, we spend more time looking at it and more time doing things with it, so it's not like I don't look at masc and femme and think that's nothing in the same way that I look at masculinity and femininity and think that's nothing. But I do think that it's not rigid and not concretely definable in any kind of blanket sense, and also it's not for everybody. It's not a rubric you can put everybody in. Because there isn't one. There isn't a rubric. You can put everybody in, and that's the whole thing.

Babette ([24:22](#)):

That's the whole thing. That's the whole point. Yeah.

Ally ([24:24](#)):

There's something about the way that you specifically navigate your gender. I feel like having things masc or femme put on you can be really aggravating, but I feel like you have a very calm and collected, those are kind of annoying words to use for this, but it does feel kind of effortless and ultimately very positive.

Liv ([24:47](#)):

Thank you.

Ally ([24:48](#)):

Yeah. How do you maintain that, or what do you do that's kind of generative in your life, or is there logic or reason that you fall back on or is it kind of buoying you?

Babette ([24:58](#)):

Where do you store your rage?

Liv ([25:05](#)):

That's sort of two-pronged, I think because the calm that's noticeable I think, or this sort of peace that I have around it is a kind of zen that I feel noticing other people bringing their baggage to me. If somebody is really struggling to deal with me, I'm just like, "Oh, isn't that interesting?" Because that doesn't say anything about me at all. It's funny, there's a whole thesis in here somewhere, but people looking at me and trying to figure out, it's like, "Are you masculine or are you feminine" or, well, "What does it mean about me if you are X or how can you pull yourself X if Y is true about you?" And it's like, "I'm just hanging out, dude. I'm just sitting. I'm not doing anything."

(25:43):

I'm not doing anything at all, and so my presence is disruptive to you and that is not my problem," so that's where the peace is for me. I am good, and that's something I've really come into in the last year or so is I've started talking about this more and more is cis people in particular often imagine my gender identity to be something that I am dealing with, and that is not true at all. I'm not dealing with anything, you are dealing with it and you actually are maybe struggling to deal with it, and isn't that interesting and isn't that what's going on? Because I'm good. I'm okay.

Ally (26:22):

Yeah. There's no crisis here actually.

Liv (26:24):

No.

Ally (26:25):

It's not a gender crisis. It's actually your gender binary crisis.

Liv (26:29):

It's your gender crisis, and that's what I mean. It's like I notice people bringing their baggage to me. I notice people being confronted with their baggage bi like me or people like me being around, and I feel a lot of calm about that. It's like, "Oh, well baby, you should probably work that out. Yeah, it's probably good for you to be thinking about, isn't it? I'm okay, so if I'm okay, you are probably okay too and everything's good and everybody just relax." It doesn't need to be anyway.

Ally (26:57):

I love that.

Babette (26:59):

That's gorgeous.

Ally (26:59):

There's something about not... You're not taking what they're up to personally. You're really seeing it. There's so much wisdom there of being like, "Actually, this has nothing to do with me, even though all your questions are about me, and it seems like your meltdown is about me."

Liv (27:14):

But it's actually very simple.

Ally ([27:15](#)):

That's very cool.

Liv ([27:15](#)):

It's like I know who I am and I'm very clear about that, and all I've done is tell you that that's true. There was nothing loaded or contentious about that. That's very simple, calm and good and fine. Why are you freaking out?

Babette ([27:31](#)):

Yeah. When you think of the people freaking out, is it literally just "Randos" who are bored or have you had to have also these conversations with family? What is that?

Liv ([27:43](#)):

I think what I'm describing this thing of like, "Oh, this isn't hard for me. This is hard for you." That sort of crops up from micro to macro kind of across the board where it's hostility and it's fear and it's anxiety. It's just sort of all encompassing where it's like, somebody telling me that I am mentally ill and being very furious with me about that, who doesn't know me at all. They're having a freak-out. That's about them, and then when somebody well-intentioned in my life who loves me dearly slips up and mis-genders me and then can't deal with the fact that they've done that and really struggle with it for a little bit, that's also about them. That's not about me either, and obviously those things are not the same, but I do think there's something in common about them, which is like, "Oh, you are dealing with something." My experience is bringing something up within you, for you, that is actually not about me at all.

Ally ([28:39](#)):

Yeah, totally. Yeah. That's really great.

Babette ([28:42](#)):

It puts the work on other people-

Liv ([28:43](#)):

Exactly.

Babette ([28:44](#)):

... also, I think if it's the emotional work.

Liv ([28:45](#)):

Yeah, and like to varying degrees, if people are struggling with me or with non-binary identity as a concept, if it's like, "Oh, I'm going to fuck-up," or "Oh, I might have some questions or I don't really get it" or whatever it is, what I've started doing is instead of saying, "It's okay," I've started saying, "You are okay." It's like, "You got it. You're okay. You'll get it. It's all right."



Ally ([29:06](#)):

That's shady as fuck.

Babette ([29:06](#)):

"Yeah, it's okay, honey."

Ally ([29:16](#)):

No, I love that. I love that. No, seriously,

Liv ([29:19](#)):

It's really that's what it's about is being soothed.

Ally ([29:21](#)):

100%.

Liv ([29:23](#)):

I don't want to give people the impression that I agree with them that it's difficult or that it's a burden or that it is something to be dealt with. That's not true. That's not how I think. What I do think is that, "You are going to be okay. You'll get it. You'll figure it out. You'll be all right." Because what it's about right, you dealing with it.

Ally ([29:40](#)):

Yeah, totally. Wow, that's great.

Babette ([29:43](#)):

Do you have to be Australian to be that chill?

Liv ([29:47](#)):

Yeah.

Babette ([29:47](#)):

How do I get there? How do I get there? I want to be where you're at. That's amazing. That's such a great way of thinking about it and it feels very much... The way that you're talking about it. I'm trying to apply that to so many other realms of my life and therapy or something where it's like, "It's not on you. It's on them, so that's amazing."

Ally ([30:04](#)):

That's very-

Babette ([30:06](#)):

I love the way you're thinking about that.

Ally ([30:06](#)):

...boundaried, I think. Yeah.

Liv ([30:07](#)):

Thank you.

Ally ([30:08](#)):

That also seems like it would lend itself to having more bandwidth to advocate and do kind of progressive work if your day-to-day doesn't feel so fraught with crises.

Liv ([30:23](#)):

And there is a real beautiful piece of that too, which is once you realize so much of it is about other people figuring it out, and actually you are okay, then watching other people figure it out becomes quite beautiful where it's like, "Oh, yeah, but see, that's it. Amazing. See how comfortable it's possible to be and thinking about this stuff isn't so scary, and you do get the hang of it, and maybe you learn some things that change how you think about the world in a way that's surprising and lovely, and we all get there. Wonderful."

Ally ([30:59](#)):

Yeah, and then the book closed and the credits roll. Yeah, totally.

Babette ([31:01](#)):

I think it also ties back to kind of what you were saying at the top of the interview about how it felt comforting for you when you first came out was thinking about history. It feels like it's moving more from an individual. "This is all about me and it's all centered in me," towards more of a bigger picture thing, which is actually trans people have been around forever. This is not new. I am not singular. I am connected to all of my trans ancestors and the thing that can feel often very isolating and singular. It's such a nice way to think about it.

Liv ([31:33](#)):

Yeah, and I think there's something in there too about a lot of the fears that I think a lot of people deal with in terms of like, "Oh, I have to fucking explain this to everybody over and over, or I'm facing X amount of logistical obstacles, or I am having to beg to be understood" Sometimes in internalizing that you start to believe that that's true, where it's like, "Yeah, I know it's hard, or I know it's a lot of work, or I know it's a big ask," and I think a really big important shift for me was like, it's not hard. It's not a big ask. There's nothing wrong with it. It's not challenging. It's okay. Not only is this not impossible, it's not a big deal because connecting to history was such an important piece of that too because, yeah, people like me have been around the whole time.

([32:16](#)):

Maybe the language changes depending on the place and the culture and the time period and whatever, but the kinds of people that are around, every kind of human being you could possibly imagine exists and then hundreds more that you couldn't think of if you were left alone at a room for a year.

([32:35](#)):

So there is no like people and then default to people. There is no baseline human being, so it's not like, "This is the way things work, but my thing is a little different and now I have to explain it to you." It's like, "No, no, no. There's just a bunch of different ways to be a person and this is who I am and it's not hard and it's not impossible and it's good. It's just true." So it sort of takes the stakes out of it.

Ally ([33:03](#)):

I really like your style and I was wondering if you could walk us through the iterations of that.

Liv ([33:11](#)):

Yeah, definitely.

Ally ([33:12](#)):

And how you got to where you feel, what do you feel most comfortable in currently and what has that looked like?

Liv ([33:17](#)):

I had to sum it up to somebody fairly recently where I was like, my favorite thing is the kind of androgyny that pirates or new romantics have. I love a ruffled shirt. I love a well tailored pants. I love-

Babette ([33:34](#)):

It's very Prince.

Liv ([33:36](#)):

Yeah.

Babette ([33:36](#)):

Like Bowie.

Liv ([33:38](#)):

I buy pretty much all my clothes secondhand style is quite sensory to me. I love fabric that feels good. That is cut together nicely. That stitch well, I like things that I can take care of and keep that I can hang onto for a long time. I like stuff that's well-made, but in terms of style and shape, it's like soft, androgynous, but theatrical leaning. I have a lot of vintage trench coats that I can't wear enough because I live in Los Angeles.

Babette ([34:05](#)):

Oh my God.

Liv ([34:08](#)):

But yeah, it's something that allows me to move and allows me to feel like I have some swagger, but stuff that feels a little bit out of time as well, where it's like the way that these pants are cut is a little bit '40s, but the color of this shirt is a little bit '70s. Something that could exist out of time almost, is what I'm trying to get to.

Ally ([34:28](#)):

Yeah. I feel like some of the things I'm really interested in wearing don't come in my size, which is so annoying. Have you just been able to find these things secondhand or is it a pretty big search?

Liv ([34:46](#)):

I'm lucky in that I don't struggle with that too much or haven't historically, I have tended to historically size up myself and wear things that were kind of loose and slouchy, which is funny. Some of that was sort of seeking body comfort reaction. I feel more comfortable wearing tighter clothes having had top surgery now.

Ally ([35:03](#)):

Yeah, totally.

Liv ([35:04](#)):

I feel like I went through so many fucking fashion cycles. I wore all black and nothing else for a number of years. I had a bit of a goth stan as a teenager and I wore a lot of clashing prints for a while, but I've always liked buying secondhand stuff. I've always liked having pieces that I can hang on to for a long time. It's like this overlap between versatile basics and also things that could be onstage, costumes where it's like this suit is really well tailored and you could wear it to a bunch of different things, including on stage if you had to. That's kind of the sweet spot for me, I think. There's something expressive and flamboyant about it, but comfortable, so something soft about it at the same time.

Ally ([35:51](#)):

Yeah, totally. I wanted to go back to the history and is there anything specific that you've been really liking and digging into, situating yourself in the history of queerness, of transness as a whole.

Babette ([36:07](#)):

Or maybe what you found when you were 16? What helped you when you were younger too?

Liv ([36:11](#)):

I love either online or in secondhand bookstores or whatever, trying to get my hands on my queer books. If you do some digging either on the internet archive or just googling around, it's like if you find one thing and you find who wrote it and then you find who their contemporaries were and what they wrote, you can sort of spider web out and we live in such a blessed time for connecting information together like that, but I feel like I've been scrambling through PDFs of stuff for the past year. I got my hands on a copy of *The Persistent Desire*, which is a collection of writings that butches and femmes did about each other, and the earliest one is from the 1800s, and the latest one is from the '90s. It's fantastic.

Ally ([36:50](#)):

Oh my God.

Babette ([36:52](#)):

Oh my god.

Liv ([36:52](#)):

Being like, okay, I should sit down and read everything that S.Bear Bergman wrote or everything that Leslie Feinberg wrote, because a lot of that stuff is available even if the books are out of print, PDFs have been uploaded. The information is there. You just have to go dig in for it sometimes, the queer archive is so fucking important because you lose what isn't kept and then people will use the loss of it to pretend that it was never there.

([37:17](#)):

Even stuff like hanging onto posters of events or getting your hands on documentaries. I saw a documentary recently called Commitment to Life, which was about the AIDS crisis in Los Angeles specifically, and what the response was specific to the city, and that being a city that I live in now that was really connective and I just feel like I scrabble and I feel like that's always what I've done when I was younger. What I remember so much is just being hunched over my laptop and googling around and ripping stuff and saving it to my computer, or finding musicians, finding poetry anthologies, documentaries or writings and just being like, "Oh, okay. Okay. Everybody's here. Everybody's here. Everything is here, but it's not necessarily going to be put in front of me, so I am going to have to go digging for it." And then it's important to me to keep that stuff, have it around and be able to recommend it to other people because it just lifts everyone up.

Ally ([38:11](#)):

Totally. Yeah. I want to talk to some queer archivists on this podcast for sure. I really respect that work so much, and sometimes I feel really silly when people tell me about stuff that exists and I'm like, "I had no idea," and it's like, "Oh, yeah, this is kind of deep cut, but it really shouldn't be."

Liv ([38:31](#)):

Yeah, but I don't think it is silly to not have had access to it before or to not have been put in touch with it before. It's like when a friend of yours hasn't seen a movie you love and it's like the reaction isn't like, "You've never seen it." The reaction is like, "Oh my God, you get to see the movie."

Ally ([38:45](#)):

Yeah.

Liv ([38:46](#)):

It's like, "How could you not know about this?" It's like, "No, no. This helps. No one. Isn't it now exciting that you get to learn about this?"

Ally ([38:53](#)):

Yeah, yeah. Totally.

Babette ([38:54](#)):

Totally. I'm in a PhD program and that's such a researcher impulse that you have, that so fucking cool. Where do you find the time? You're doing everything. That's amazing.

Liv ([39:06](#)):

Thank you. It's my favorite thing.

Ally ([39:08](#)):

Yeah. Speaking of that, actually, Babette, I feel like something that people don't realize is that you can go onto the websites of any university you can think of and find the course listing and the required reading, and there are a lot of queer graduate programs or whatever, and you can find these incredible book lists that maybe will be kind of hard to go through on your own without a literal teacher there, but it's kind of great primer if you find this intro to gender, intro to queer thoughts.

Babette ([39:42](#)):

I think it's also what Liv said. I feel like it's so much more also about the social webs of connection that form out of these texts and stuff, so even if you're not reading it's just so nice to know how queer people and trans people have always been connected.

Liv ([39:56](#)):

Yeah. It's really important.

Ally ([39:57](#)):

Totally.

Liv ([39:57](#)):

And it's so important to remember too, that just because something hasn't been put in front of you doesn't mean it isn't there.

Ally ([40:03](#)):

Yeah.

Liv ([40:04](#)):

Sometimes you got to go scrounging around for stuff, but there is real reward in doing that even if you're not sure where to start.

Ally ([40:12](#)):

Yeah. The truth is out there, Liv Houston.

Liv ([40:13](#)):

Yeah. It literally is.

Babette ([40:21](#)):

Wow. I feel like Liv is a whole ass philosopher and that was a whole philosophical intervention, that whole interview.

Ally ([40:33](#)):

Can we talk about how we both really want to be in Liv's book club?

Babette ([40:38](#)):

Yes. Oh my God, sign me up. Dude, that would be so sick. I was like, as we were talking with them, googling furiously, everything that they were talking about, absolutely. Sign me the fuck up.

Ally ([40:49](#)):

I love a conversation with someone that fills your notes app and you're just like, "Oh, gosh, I got to look at this person." I was just like, "Oh, they were so generative in such a sick way."

Babette ([40:58](#)):

They are just, oh my God, so calm and collected, and when they were talking about coming out of 16, that feeling of, "Oh my God, this is going to make my life complicated and difficult." The dread that so many queer people feel about coming out feels so deeply relatable. I was thinking, I was like, it's so sad that queer people don't get to feel excited about coming to a certain part of their identity, but it was so amazing to hear them talk about how now they think of gender and queerness as expanse and possibility, and I love that turn that they made. That was basically putting the work on cis people to get their shit together. Kind of putting trans and queer people like, "No, we're not on the outskirts. We are marginalized, but we're not on the outskirts. We are the center of our own universes and cis people need to kind of get it together. It's not on us. It's on them," and so that is life-changing for me. That was so amazing.

Ally ([41:49](#)):

Totally. There's a meditation retreat that I go on that's kind of intense and silent, but one of the teachings in it that really changed my life is so similar to this, but the teacher kind of talks about how anger is a gift that someone is bringing to you in your house, and you're allowed to be like, "Oh, no. Take that with you when you leave. Oh, no, thank you." They're holding this thing that they want so badly to stuff into your hands, but you're allowed to be like, "No," you have to maintain holding that. "I'm not going to hold that for you."

Babette ([42:28](#)):

Totally.

Ally ([42:29](#)):

It's very zen.

Babette ([42:30](#)):

Absolutely. Absolutely. I would love to get to that level of zenness at some point. I mean, I think it's just so hard. I want to embody that kind of philosophy in all the spaces that I'm in where sometimes I'm the only trans or non-binary person, and it feels hard to embody that in spaces where you're always feeling like you're kind of being marginalized. I feel like when I'm by myself, I'm like, "Yes, I am the center of the universe. You guys can't tell me anything," but to have to everyday correct people's pronouns, correct

people's stuff. I just think that is something, the way that Liv described it is something that I really want to aspire to, even when it's difficult. For me, I think what I do is if someone [inaudible 00:43:14] hurts me, I'm just like, "Ugh, whatever. It doesn't matter. I don't care." That's my way of coping with it. It doesn't matter, but no, it does, and it's not that difficult and you need to get it together, and I'm like, how do I become like Liv? That's what I'm thinking of right now. That's so amazing.

Ally ([43:30](#)):

Yeah. I think there's a raising of the bar of expectation there, that's really cool. The bar is literally on the floor if we're kind of like, "Wow, they apologized for..."-

Babette ([43:42](#)):

Exactly.

Ally ([43:42](#)):

... Whatever. Yeah.

Babette ([43:44](#)):

No, exactly. I'm so grateful that family is not being evil to me, and it's like the bar is in hell, the bar-

Ally ([43:52](#)):

The bar is in hell.

Babette ([43:54](#)):

And we need to raise the bar because also this isn't new. Turning to history, turning to a queer archive. It's just like none of this is new and yeah. I literally don't know how Liv has the time to be an actor as well as philosopher and a scholar.

Ally ([44:15](#)):

And they were holding a quill the whole time. I know the audience wasn't able to see that, but it was a large feather quill.

Babette ([44:21](#)):

Exactly.

Ally ([44:24](#)):

I really like that because it kind of gives... I don't know, you're trusting people to go with you further I feel like when you raise the bar for the people around you. You can have deeper relationships with them because you're trusting them to get there. I don't know. I just feel like I've felt that from people when I can tell that they're expecting more from me and they're kind of like, "Okay, it stops here." I'm not putting up with as much and I'm kind of expecting more out of everybody. I think people really rise to the occasion and it's kind of giving them a really cool benefit of the doubt.

Babette ([44:59](#)):



Totally. It's moving from a place of scarcity to allowing abundance and possibility. I have learned for myself in all realms of my life. If you kind of come in with scarcity, that's actually kind of what you'll get usually actually.

Ally ([45:14](#)):

Self-fulfilling, prophecy. Totally.

Babette ([45:17](#)):

Yeah. Low-key. Low-key

([45:25](#)):

Gender Spiral is an original podcast from Ideation. This episode was mixed by Matt Noble, and music is composed by Chanell Crichlow, art by Joey Han and graphics by Honey Hodges. This show is executive produced by Ireland Meacham, myself, Babette Thomas, my co-host Ally Beardsley and Sandy Smallens, with additional story editing from me.

Ally ([45:47](#)):

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Babette ([46:03](#)):

You can also check us out [@gendersspiralpod.com](mailto:gendersspiralpod.com) where you'll find a link to leave us a voicemail, to ask us questions, tell us who you want to hear from and what you want to hear about on the show, and follow us on Instagram. It's [@gendersspiral](#). Subscribe wherever you get your podcast to stay tuned, we're releasing a brand new episode every single week this summer.

Ally ([46:25](#)):

Tune in next week to Gender Spiral.

Babette ([46:27](#)):

Where you never have to spiral alone.

Speaker 5 ([46:28](#)):

Audiation.