

[music]

0:00:02.3 Nicole Antoinette: Welcome to the Pop-Up Pod, a podcast that's similar to a pop-up shop or a pop-up restaurant in that it's sporadic, sometimes it's here and sometimes it's not. Each 12-episode season dives deep into a single question, and our question for season 1 is this: Should I get married? Twelve episodes, twelve different people, honest conversations about the joys and struggles of long-term romantic relationships. I'm your host, Nicole Antoinette, and today I'm bringing you the final episode of this first season. And who better to interview to close out this 12-part conversation on marriage than my own partner, Tom Grossmith, who many of you know by his trail name, Gent. In this conversation we answer a bunch of listener questions that came from my Patreon community, questions about money, kids, conflict, jealousy, alone time, and of course, marriage. We also talk too much about our dog, [chuckle] but I hope that you enjoy it. Big thanks to the folks who made season 1 possible, the 400-plus people in our Patreon community who have come together to ensure that everyone involved in this 100% listener-funded show gets paid, that includes me as the host and creator, my sound engineer and musician, Adam Day, hi, Adam, thank you for all of your brilliant work on this first season of the show, as well as payments for every single one of our guests.

0:01:29.7 NA: And our Patreon community also funds the creation of a full transcript for each episode, which you can find linked in the show notes to help make these conversations more accessible. Those are our production ethics here at the Pop-Up Pod, and if that aligns with your own values, then I would love to invite you to come check out our community, help support the creation of season 2 and all of that good stuff at patreon.com/nicoleantoinette. It's a really fun and easy and welcoming space, and remember that it's run on a sliding scale, so that means that you can pay whatever amount makes most sense for you, either as a monthly payment or an annual payment, moving up or down the sliding scale as you need to over time, and you'll get access to lots of thoughtful monthly bonus content, the chance to help shape the topics and the conversations of season 2 later this year, and more. So one more time, that's patreon.com/nicoleantoinette. I would love to see you there. In a moment, we will dive into the conversation between me and Gent, and then the show will be on hiatus for some months in service of its name, the Pop-Up Pod. We popped up, we were here, there was a 12-episode season 1, and then there will be months where there are no episodes.

0:02:47.2 NA: And then later in the year, maybe late summer, early fall, mid fall, I don't know, we'll see, it depends how long it takes us as a community to decide on what the topic is going to be for season 2, and for me to start to put together all of those episodes with a new round of beautiful guests, then there will be 12 more episodes exploring a totally different question, and then we will pop back up, Pop-Up Pod, sometimes here, sometimes not. Hopefully, in the time off, you can listen to any episodes that you might have missed. I know that these are long, juicy conversations, and not everyone is listening to an hour-and-a-half podcast each week, and so my hope is that having cycles of rest built into the show is really nice, not just for me as a creator, but also for you as a listener. Okay, that's enough from me. Here we go.

[music]

0:03:45.6 NA: Alright, babe. What do you think? You wanna make a podcast?

0:03:48.6 Tom Grossmith: Yeah, take 2, though.

0:03:50.7 NA: Take 2. Yeah, we recorded for 45 seconds in which the dog was aggressively licking herself, and I wasn't sure if it was loud enough to pick up on the microphone or not.

0:03:58.7 TG: And my banter was deemed inappropriate.

0:04:02.1 NA: I didn't say your banter was inappropriate.

0:04:03.3 TG: Air quotes.

0:04:07.3 NA: Okay.

0:04:08.3 TG: Do you regret this?

0:04:09.5 NA: Do I What, inviting you on to the podcast?

0:04:11.8 TG: Yeah.

0:04:12.2 NA: I feel like... 'Cause obviously you came on my past podcast a couple of times, I feel like in the first three minutes I always regret it, and then I'm glad that we did it.

0:04:18.8 TG: I'm a bit of a wild card. I'm podcasting's bad boy.

0:04:23.7 NA: Oh, my gosh, okay.

0:04:24.7 TG: Do you regret it now?

0:04:26.9 NA: I'm regretting it more and more as we go along.

0:04:28.2 TG: Okay, okay, I'll keep it up.

0:04:29.7 NA: Okay. The dog's just staring at us. I feel like potentially I'm too distractable to have a dog in a room while podcasting.

0:04:35.8 TG: Not me.

0:04:36.4 NA: Not you, yeah.

0:04:37.5 TG: I'm great.

0:04:38.7 NA: You're the most distractable person I've ever met. Do you wanna answer some questions?

0:04:42.8 TG: Sure.

0:04:43.6 NA: So we got some great listener questions from folks in my Patreon community.

0:04:46.7 TG: From you folks.

0:04:47.5 NA: From you folks, from you wonderful, beautiful listeners. And we can't get to them all, but I picked out a bunch that seemed like multiple people asked them, and we're just going to talk about our relationship under this heading of Should I Get Married, which is the theme of this season. And I feel like it's only appropriate to have the last episode of the season include the person to whom I'm asking that question about. So, great, in the next hour of this podcast, we're going to decide whether or not we're going to get married, are you ready?

0:05:19.5 TG: Yes, yes, a thousand times, yes.

0:05:22.1 NA: Yes, you're ready, or yes, you wanna get married?

0:05:24.3 TG: Yes, yes, a thousand times, yes.

[laughter]

0:05:26.5 NA: Oh, God. Okay, so the first question to kick us off says: What did you each want out of a romantic relationship when you were a kid? How about when you were a teen and in your early 20s versus now? I'm curious how that has changed and evolved over the years for both of you.

0:05:42.7 TG: I don't think I really gave much thought to romantic relationships as a young person. I never really was like... I had crushes and stuff like that, was never pursuing a partner in the way that other kids seemed to be. Even in high school, as I got older, again, there were people that I crushed on, but there was never really anything that solid that I would say I was like pursuing relationships or even putting that much thought into what I wanted out of them. I had a lot going on in high school outside of romantic relationships that I was more focused on being severely depressed through those years.

0:06:23.8 NA: Sure. Not that I'm laughing at that, I'm laughing at the idea of being focused on it.

0:06:28.4 TG: I was so focused.

0:06:28.9 NA: Like my top priority was being really depressed.

0:06:30.4 TG: Oh, man, it was a grind.

0:06:33.0 NA: One of the interesting things now that we live in the town that you grew up in, is that we'll be out at the grocery store or something, and you'll be like, "That's such-and-such. I had a crush on her in second grade." And I think, I've moved around so much and I can't imagine what would have to be true, A, for me to recognize someone that I went to second grade with, like that would just never happen, and then to even be able to remember I had a crush on that person and then that we were in a scenario where you could get introduced to... Yeah, pretty wild.

0:07:00.5 TG: Yep, it is.

0:07:01.8 NA: But it's happened a not insignificant amount of times where you're like, "Oh, I had a crush on her younger sister,".

0:07:04.7 TG: Yeah. It was her older sister, for the record. We were out for breakfast the other day, and there was this family coming through the line, and it was two parents and a daughter, I was like, "Oh, my God, I had such a crush on her older sister."

0:07:18.2 NA: That's true. You did say that.

0:07:19.3 TG: I did say that. Verbatim.

0:07:20.3 NA: Scintillating breakfast conversation.

0:07:21.9 TG: Yeah. Oh, my God, wild stuff. We should have recorded that.

0:07:25.5 NA: Really, yes. Live podcasts all the time. Oh my gosh, the dog is just sighing in the background. Speaking of that tangent, that tweet that you found, that you showed me that says... What does it say?

0:07:42.4 TG: "My dog sighs a lot for someone who doesn't contribute anything to this household or know what a government is."

0:07:47.2 NA: Yeah. Gracey sighs a lot for somebody who does not contribute to this household and doesn't know what a government is, that's true. What did I want when I was a kid? I feel like this is an interesting gender split a little bit, probably, that I watched a lot of the kind of Disney princess happily ever after, and was so indoctrinated into that being a life goal, the finding your one person and getting married, and I don't remember a time where that wasn't on my mind, it's not like I was like, okay, now this is going to be a goal, right now, this is an aim of mine, but I think it was just always in the back of my mind like that's what success looks like, that's what adulthood is, that's what happiness is. And that was true when I was a kid. That was true when I was a teen, that's in my early 20s obviously, and then up till getting married, I think it was something that was always really focused on. I actually feel like I'm less focused on it now, on the other side of divorce, like having gone through check box, check box, check box, get to the pinnacle that you're supposed to reach, and then, okay, that didn't work out. Maybe I need to step back and re-evaluate what I have been told about marriage and relationships.

0:09:07.0 TG: Also in my early 20s, I again, didn't focus on it because I was working a ton, I was working like 60 hours to 80 hours a week through my early 20s and then hit a certain point, I was like, I hate this, I no longer wanna be doing this, then was taking off months at a time, with work and like traveling, and at the time, hadn't met anyone who also prioritized that or was living kind of a non-traditional lifestyle and not just like two weeks of vacation a year. So again, didn't give it much thought, I was content to do my own thing and happy, and honestly, didn't really see myself in a long-term partnership, like projecting forward from then, I just didn't put much stress on it, really.

0:09:54.5 NA: Yeah, well, also, you even mentioned sort of jokingly, but obviously it's not a joke, you were severely depressed, and so recovering from that degree of mental illness, and you didn't go to college, and lived with your dad, and were working not just full-time, but multiple full-time jobs with people who were all decades older than you, that from what you've described to me, there weren't a lot of opportunities for you to organically be meeting people that would have been even remotely appropriately aged partners for you.

0:10:23.7 TG: Right. A lot of the people I worked with, especially in town here, I went to school with their kids, so they were full-grown adults who had established relationships that I certainly was not going to be their tag-along and like "We'll find someone for Tom," kind of thing. Yeah.

0:10:44.2 NA: Do you ever remember a time where dating was something that was a priority for you or that you were trying to put effort into?

0:10:54.3 TG: For a little while. When I was like 24 or something, I was prioritizing a little bit more and then...

0:11:04.6 NA: Meaning what, like dating apps?

0:11:06.6 TG: Dating apps, seeing a couple of people, like former flames, rekindling stuff, and then really went hardcore on not spending time locally, meaning Massachusetts, and was like six months elsewhere, six months back in Massachusetts, which for most people, that doesn't work well for a relationship.

0:11:30.3 NA: Yeah, I was just going to say, very few people, I don't know how true that is, but I think we're definitely in the minority of the type of life that we want of, you know, traveling so much and prioritizing that, yeah, definitely. The next question is partially for me and partially for you. It says: Curious what you learned from this season's guests. Did Gent listen to the episodes? And if so, what did he take away from the season?

0:11:54.0 TG: My mind works in mysterious ways. I listened to the first episode of the season...

0:12:00.9 NA: Shout-out to Melissa Fabello.

0:12:02.4 TG: Shout-out, Melissa, if you're listening, I don't know, I don't know where that was

going to go.

0:12:07.9 NA: I was going to say, yeah, you backed yourself into a hole there. You have nothing to say.

0:12:12.8 TG: Most of the podcasts that I listen to are very easy listening, like drift in and out kind of stuff, because my mind is all over the place, so I just kind of have a hard time listening to podcasts that are legitimately meaningful. I enjoyed the first episode quite a bit and took a lot out of it, but at the same time, it's just not my thing at all.

0:12:34.6 NA: Gent, no, this is not your genre of media at all. I am not upset by that, and also we've talked about that quite a bit, and it's not that I'm passive aggressively, you know, my expectation is that you listen to these two-hour episodes, right? I mean, one of the interesting things, because this is so meaningful to me and takes up such a big part of my brain space, I'm often, whether it's we're on a walk or over dinner, I'm telling you about, oh, I interviewed so-and-so and we talked about this, and so I feel like the topics kind of make their way into our relationship, that you're not consuming the finished product of the content, but we're still talking about the issues.

0:13:12.6 TG: I get the listeners' digest from you essentially, of after you record, we'll go for a walk, we'll have dinner, we'll cook whatever it is that we're going to do together, and I get a run down essentially on what the conversation was, what was meaningful and impactful to you, and I'm very happy with that.

0:13:31.3 NA: Yeah. As far as what I learned from this season's guests, I feel like that could be a whole other episode. Doing this first season has been incredibly impactful for me in a couple of ways. I mean, this was and is a selfish question. This is a conversation that we had been having for months of, Do we wanna get married, what does marriage mean to us? It was something that was really on my mind, and so to be able to have the opportunity to be so nosy to 11 different people and actually get the honest behind-the-scenes details about their lives, their marriages, their heartbreak, their having kids or not having kids, I feel really grateful to have been exposed to that. And also, I feel like my main takeaway, it wasn't from a particular episode, but from the season as a whole for me was the reminder of something that I already knew to be true, which is there's so many different ways to do relationships. And I think it's really easy to get stuck in a normative script of, this person is my partner, and therefore it has to look like X, Y, Z, and this is what the relationship has to be. And I don't believe that that's true, and I know you don't necessarily believe that that's true, and that's something that we talk about a lot, is building our relationship with intention, but even still those scripts and that conditioning is so deep and so prevalent that it still comes up, it still comes up.

0:14:48.2 NA: And I feel like there was at least one moment in each of the episodes this season that almost shook me awake out of that, of, Oh, right, I could do this, like thinking about in episode 2 with Ev'Yan Whitney living in a different city from their partner, from their husband intentionally for a year. And in episode 1, when Melissa talked about the bucket exercise, which I love and I'm obsessed with, and if anyone hasn't listened to that, go back and listen to episode 1, high

recommendation, that it was just my takeaway was a reminder of we can do whatever we want with our relationship.

0:15:20.4 TG: Yeah.

0:15:23.2 NA: Anything else you wanna say about that?

0:15:24.3 TG: I do not believe so.

0:15:26.5 NA: Okay, let's talk about marriage. That's what these next two questions are about.

0:15:31.1 TG: Ooh, cornered.

0:15:32.6 NA: Yeah, right, cornered. You who started out...

0:15:34.5 TG: That's what this is about?

[laughter]

0:15:39.3 NA: What did you think?

0:15:40.5 TG: I don't know.

0:15:40.6 NA: Okay. This question: You started this podcast 'cause you're genuinely unsure how you feel about marriage, but how does Gent feel about marriage in general, and then also for him and why?

0:15:52.5 TG: I feel pretty neutral about it. I feel I'm currently happy in our relationship, why mess with it? Marriage makes it really difficult and complicated to break up.

0:16:08.0 NA: And expensive, potentially.

0:16:09.6 TG: Yes. My parents didn't have an awesome marriage and are currently in a whole weird...

0:16:17.1 NA: In a whole thing, we'll say a capital T Thing.

0:16:18.4 TG: Yeah, in an interesting relationship. Your parents also have their history in their relationship, and I figure why complicate things, why not just, if we're happy now, I don't need to get the law involved to say, oh, they do love each other and care about each other, here is the legal proof. I'm just happy to be with you in this iteration, and that's what I care about.

0:16:44.7 NA: Obviously, I feel the same way. Spoiler alert, this podcast is not the first time that you and I have had this conversation.

0:16:50.7 TG: No.

0:16:51.9 NA: What do you think would change that for you? Like, are there a set of conditions in which you feel like marriage would be a definite yes?

0:17:02.7 TG: I think I would start thinking more seriously about marriage if there were some kind of illness involved or something like that to make things easier for, God forbid, someone's in the hospital or something like that, where unfortunately, the only way that you're going to have access is through marriage. I know a couple who were not married, they were together for 40-plus years, and one of them was ill and in the hospital and their partner wasn't able to come in and visit them, and wasn't able to make decisions for them, and things happen fast, unfortunately. But I think if there were signs of illness that that would probably be a thing that we would do.

0:17:49.3 NA: Well, and we've talked about some of that stuff. Some of the institutional privileges of marriage, you can get through other legal paperwork, and my understanding is a lot of that health stuff you can do, and I know that on our long to-do list of moving into this house and fixing things up later this year, on our list is, let's sit down and figure out how much of this we actually can do without getting married, which I know we're both interested in, seeing what the protections are for that kind of thing, but it's funny, I almost feel like the more that I think about this topic and the more that I have these conversations, the less that I wanna get married. And not because anyone's really sharing horror stories, I mean, just in these past 11 episodes, there have been some beautiful stories, and some really long-term marriages, and things that are so beautiful. I think, for me, it's just I haven't yet landed on a good enough reason to do something that has, as you named, a lot of potential downsides, especially as someone who is already divorced, right? So I obviously don't believe marriage is forever, because I didn't do that already. So I'm just kind of thinking. Like I'm almost curious to see how we feel in the coming years that, Is there something that I feel like our relationship would feel different on the other side of marriage? I don't know that it would.

0:19:08.6 TG: Neither do I, and kind of going back to the first question about what did I want out of romantic relationships throughout my life, I never thought I was gonna get married. Even in thinking about myself in a long-term relationship, there was never the draw to get married for me, I never understood why that was the pinnacle of a relationship.

0:19:34.3 NA: Right. But the relationship is only successful if you're together until one of you dies.

0:19:36.0 TG: Yeah.

0:19:36.8 NA: Yeah. Gent, Do you attribute that to your parents not having what you considered to be like a happy marriage?

0:19:42.8 TG: I think that plays a large part of it. Also, growing up, seeing friends whose parents were getting divorced and why make it more complicated than it needs to be? Why not just be together and let that be enough?

0:19:58.3 NA: Is there any part of the ritual around having a wedding or that aspect of marriage as, I don't know, more of a commitment ceremony or the more public declaration of moving your relationship to another level that's appealing to you?

0:20:14.5 TG: Having people gathered for my wedding seems terrifying. [chuckle] I don't wanna be the center of attention. I don't want parties thrown in my honor anymore, used to be all I ever wanted, yeah.

0:20:28.6 NA: Right, so everyone listening, cancel the parties, yeah.

0:20:30.7 TG: Yeah. I think about what my sister and her husband did, they eloped, they went to Justice of the Peace's office, got married. I tell everyone, not only was I not invited, I was specifically told not to come because I asked where it was and she wouldn't tell me, and I totally respected that she didn't want anyone there, I would never in a million years have shown up, but after that, my family had a very small get-together, aunts and uncles, cousins with some food, and that was it, and I would be very happy with something like that, but never in a million years would I want a traditional wedding.

0:21:01.5 NA: Yeah, same, same. There is something though, and I can't quite put my finger on what it is, but I do like the idea of marking a relationship transition, I mean, especially, and we'll get to this in some of the later questions. Like we got together, so soon after I got divorced and I wasn't in a good mental health space, so it's like we don't have a, "This is our anniversary", or when I look back to the beginning of our relationship and not anything to do with you, I was really unhappy, and so, I don't look at that as a really joyous time, the way that I think a lot of people do when they think about kind of the honeymoon phase, of the beginning of their relationship or courtship.

0:21:39.5 TG: We started dating and everything was so great.

0:21:41.5 NA: Right, the new relationship energy and the rose colored glasses, and there is something really beautiful about that and our story is more complicated. And so, there is something for me that I like the idea of, I don't know, not that we couldn't just pick a random anniversary, we could, but having something that was ours to celebrate, but yeah, thinking about, "And now I've organized this party where everyone's gonna fly in..." Like Paul and I eloped when we first got married, I didn't want that the first time around.

0:22:08.1 TG: You lost me at organizing.

0:22:09.4 NA: Right. [chuckle] Yeah, to be fair, between the two of us, I would be the one.

0:22:12.3 TG: Do we have a rimshot button?

0:22:14.8 NA: Right. No, we don't have sound effects, yeah, you can make your own sound effects.

0:22:18.3 TG: Great.

0:22:18.9 NA: How about that?

0:22:19.3 TG: You should not have said that.

0:22:20.6 NA: Okay. You can make sound effects with approval.

0:22:22.7 TG: Okay.

0:22:23.1 NA: Right, you can request approval for sound effects. So yeah, I could see us potentially doing something like that. I mean, I'm also aware of the fact that in general, when you get married, your relationship is seen as more legitimate, and I don't care, like that doesn't bother me if there are people that are kind of like, "Oh, what are those crazy kids doing"? It doesn't bother me.

0:22:42.8 TG: No, but at the same time, there have been a couple of occasions in which I have been like, "That's my wife's thing. Give me the keys."

0:22:51.7 NA: What? I'm sorry, that as a stand-alone sentence, is so weird.

0:22:55.9 TG: No, no, that's not gibberish or weird.

0:23:00.1 NA: Tell me I'm learning about this for the first time. When do you secretly refer to me as your wife?

0:23:03.7 TG: There have been instances on trail, like picking up a resupply box or something, where it's easy for me to be like, "Can I also have the one for Nicole Antoinette? That's my wife." And people trust you if you're married. You couldn't do anything wrong, you're married, someone else trusts you.

0:23:18.0 NA: Which is funny because we don't sound like we have the same last name or anything, but yeah, that's interesting. Good to know also. That's totally fine. I mean, yeah, let's take advantage of the system. If people are gonna be more likely to do stuff for us because they think that we're married, that's chill, that's fine. Okay, so the next question, or the other question in this section, there's a couple of questions per topic, so the second one for marriage is, I'm curious what it's like to have never been married and to be committed to someone who has gone through divorce and isn't interested in a super conventional marriage, what's that like for Gent? I mean, I know we just talked about that a little bit, but anything else you wanna share?

0:23:52.3 TG: It's just kind of like super neutral. Once you hit a certain point, it is a safe expectation that your partner has been partnered with someone else to some extent. The relationship that you and Paul have together, I'm completely comfortable with. There is no jealousy or weird feelings.

0:24:12.9 NA: And there's a whole category about that in questions.

0:24:14.0 TG: There's a whole, the Paul category of questions.

0:24:16.5 NA: There is, there is. Do you feel like... This isn't one of the questions now, this is my question.

0:24:22.6 TG: You're riffing.

0:24:23.0 NA: Yeah, I am. I am riffing, I'm going off script. Do you feel that you're missing out on anything that I had this whole experience that if we never get married, you won't have?

0:24:34.8 TG: No.

0:24:35.9 NA: Just flat no? Okay.

0:24:38.8 TG: Yes.

0:24:39.8 NA: Was there any aspect of the proposing to someone, was that ever a fantasy of yours? Is there something in that that you're like, 'cause I see of all of this that being the thing that you'd be into?

0:24:49.9 TG: I love love. You know that about me. I always thought it would be like cute and stuff, and then the more I think about it, like kind of why? I don't know. A proposal should never be a surprise, the act of when and where should be a surprise, but there should never be like, "Oh my God, we've never had a conversation about marriage, and now this guy has a ring out in front of me. Now what?" So I think more as my feelings about marriage have become more solidified, my feelings about a proposal have become much more lukewarm.

0:25:26.7 NA: Yeah, that makes sense, that it's taken it out of whatever kind of romantic fantasy stage it is.

0:25:30.4 TG: Right.

0:25:33.1 NA: Yeah. Anything else about marriage specifically that you wanna talk about? So in conclusion, we're both like "eh!".

0:25:43.8 TG: I may not have been the best guest for this. I'm not an expert, I only play one on TV.

0:25:50.2 NA: Oh my gosh! I do think that it's interesting that we are at this place where we don't really have strong feel... Like we're both kind of like eh. It's not that if it made sense to do it, I'm not like vehemently opposed to it. I don't feel like really strongly anti-marriage, and I still feel when I have friends that get engaged, really excited for them, because I know that it's something that they want, I'm just, whatever that thing is in me that used to feel like getting engaged, or getting married

would make me feel more complete or more anything, it's just not there.

0:26:25.6 TG: Yeah.

0:26:25.6 NA: Yeah.

0:26:26.2 TG: We're already living in sin.

0:26:27.5 NA: Right. [chuckle] Oh my God, let's talk about money. That's our next category. This person asks, I would love to hear more about money, not sharing finances and navigating shared expenses, how do you guys divide up who pays for what? So I guess some background that, yeah, we don't share finances, I feel very strongly about that. Even if we were to get married, we would do a pre-nup for sure. We would keep separate finances. I feel so lucky that my divorce was smooth and we were on the same page because we had all joint finances, and even still, it was logistically challenging to get out. I'm still on his mortgage, we're doing another round of paperwork now to get me off it.

0:27:10.8 TG: You still legally own his home!

0:27:11.8 NA: I mean, hopefully by the time this airs, that won't be the case anymore, and he's getting remarried later this year.

0:27:18.4 TG: And [0:27:19.4] do not have me do the service.

0:27:22.1 NA: You did offer, you offered...

0:27:23.2 TG: Several times.

0:27:24.4 NA: Yes, that you're ordained.

0:27:25.8 TG: I was very heavy-handed about it.

0:27:26.4 NA: You are. You're ordained.

0:27:27.5 TG: Ham-fisted could be the phrase.

0:27:29.0 NA: Yeah. What were you saying? Money, that yeah, my desire to have my finances completely combined with someone else is absolutely zero.

0:27:37.5 TG: And I also think an overarching theme with both of us is, we really appreciate our independence, and I have hobbies that you're not interested in, I have friends that you have no interest in being friends with, not that they're bad people, it's just that you don't wanna be friends with them and that's totally fine, and I respect that. I'm very open with you about how much I make, what I do with the money, all of that stuff, I'm not hiding anything, but also why do we need to

intertwine it?

0:28:06.7 NA: Right. Also, it's none of my business. Yeah, like at the time of this recording, I'm a couple of weeks out from leaving to hike a big portion of the Appalachian Trail that I'm going and you're staying here, and obviously, we talked about that decision is in so much as it relates to us as a couple and I'm gonna miss you and what's our communication gonna be like. But we never one time had to talk about the money aspect of it, like I'm spending my money.

0:28:27.0 TG: Where's this money coming from?

0:28:28.1 NA: Right. Exactly, you don't have to worry about that.

0:28:30.5 TG: So I'll go to work and pay for you to be on vacation, no, there's none of that.

0:28:33.2 NA: Yeah. Well, obviously, I know you're joking with that tone of voice, but that was an issue with Paul and I, not an issue, but I did feel guilt.

0:28:44.3 TG: It's a conversation anyway or a thought that he's had.

0:28:46.7 NA: Yeah, and I really agree with you on how much I value my independence, I actually didn't know how true that was until getting divorced and working so hard to build my business up from a part-time thing to something that now supports me full-time, and that I feel so proud of the fact that that's true. And I never want to have to, not that I ever felt being married that I had to ask permission to spend money, 'cause that's not how it is, but I really like that I just do whatever I want with my money, and you do whatever you want with your money, and as long as we can pay for the things that we are sharing together, that is my only concern.

0:29:24.7 TG: Right. I spent my money on those magic beans.

0:29:27.0 NA: What magic beans?

0:29:28.3 TG: I didn't tell you about those magic beans? [chuckle]

0:29:34.0 NA: I'm glad that everyone's seeing what it is that I, what I deal with. Navigating shared expenses. You wanna talk about that?

0:29:39.1 TG: So we used to have a spreadsheet system.

0:29:42.1 NA: Shocking to anyone who knows me.

0:29:42.8 TG: And when I say we, I mean, you had a spreadsheet.

0:29:46.4 NA: A very simple spreadsheet, two columns, I had a column, you had a column and every week or so, we would...

0:29:50.9 TG: We would sit down.

0:29:51.7 NA: What it... I spent this at the grocery store, I spent this, and it would just kind of tally up over time, and if any of us was really ahead, like if we had paid for a hotel room or something like that, we would Venmo the difference, but usually we would just kind of keep alternating spending until it was equal-ish.

0:30:05.0 TG: Yeah, we've since graduated from that and we now have a joint credit card, and then you just go through it, I Venmo you my half of it. I trust that your numbers are accurate and you're not...

0:30:21.3 NA: Having right, yeah.

0:30:21.9 TG: Doing sketchy shit.

0:30:23.8 NA: Yeah, and that is the extent of our shared finances, yeah.

0:30:26.1 TG: And that's our shared finances.

0:30:27.9 NA: And we only got the shared credit card because we were moving into a house together, and there, between furnishing the house and having utilities and all of that, it makes a lot of sense to have a shared credit card, but I don't know about you, but that is the extent of shared finances that I'm interested in, is the same shared credit card.

0:30:43.5 TG: Yeah, same, same.

0:30:45.5 NA: When we're working on doing what's called a cohabitation agreement, which is essentially a pre-nup for non-married couples, and it's funny, I was talking to my [0:30:54.2] [REDACTED] earlier today about that, and she had never heard of that before as that being a thing, I hadn't really heard of it either until I started researching what the options were for people in our situation, and describing it to someone else made me realize that maybe it is kind of rare to do that, but again, after having gone through a divorce, I would much rather have talked about these things in advance, and it's a lot easier to make clear-headed decisions that are respectful to everyone involved when you're not in a point of emotional crisis or breaking off.

0:31:25.9 TG: Definitely.

0:31:29.9 NA: Do you have different income levels, this person asks, and if so, what is it like to navigate that?

0:31:35.5 TG: We do have different income levels, I hate work. Blanket statement.

0:31:39.5 NA: Everyone who's listening thinks he's kidding. He's not.

0:31:42.7 TG: It's not that I hate my job. It's not that I hate the people I work with, I hate working, I hate exchanging my time for money, even though obviously it is necessary, I would much prefer to be doing my own thing at all times.

0:31:55.0 NA: It's so interesting to me to hear you talk about this. I also feel like it's pretty refreshing because I think that this is a thing that in a lot of ways, we're not supposed to say, that you're supposed to build a lot of your identity off of your career, and I don't even see you being someone who identifies as having or wanting a career.

0:32:12.7 TG: No, I don't want a career, I don't wanna be in charge of anyone, I don't wanna be in charge of anything, I wanna clock out, I wanna go home and I wanna not think about work or have anyone calling me ever.

0:32:22.7 NA: Yeah. And it's interesting knowing, obviously knowing you as well as I do, that you are so incredibly talented in so many areas, and a harder worker than pretty much anyone that I know, so none of this is reflected in poor job performance or not having all of these skills, it's just you wanna use the skills to do your own thing.

0:32:40.5 TG: Yes, and I don't half ass my job. Like if I'm there, I'm doing my best at all times. If that's not good enough, so be it, but I am doing my genuine best at all times if I am at work.

0:32:50.5 NA: So that's the context that you're giving for this income question?

0:32:53.9 TG: Right, right. Let me know where I can drop my resume.

0:32:56.9 NA: Right. [laughter]

0:33:00.2 TG: But yeah, generally, I don't care for work, I'm currently working three to four days a week, I'm making okay money for the time that I'm putting into it. It's not the most money I've ever made, it's not the least amount of money I've ever made, but it is enough for me, and it's especially enough for me because it gives me three to four days off a week, which is more important to me, and especially since we've moved, We moved into a house that was built allegedly in 1840-ish.

0:33:28.0 NA: Allegedly. Is it really a house?

0:33:29.1 TG: Who knows?

0:33:29.7 NA: It's allegedly a house, yeah.

0:33:30.6 TG: Yeah, right. What is anything? So it has been nice to have a lot of time off right now because it requires a lot of effort and work to have this house in the condition that I ultimately would like it to be in, so routing back to the original question, I probably make \$20,000 a year.

0:33:53.8 NA: I don't think that's true. I think you make more than that. It's also funny that neither of us really know.

0:33:57.9 TG: I would say, I have no clue because it fluctuates so much.

0:34:01.3 NA: Because also you've taken such a big portion of the last however many years off, but also, you've sold a van each year, right? So it's like you take this big chunk of time off and then you sell a van for \$24,000.

0:34:12.2 TG: Yeah, so what I should say is based on my current wages at this current job, punching in, punching out, with the hours that I'm working it's probably like \$20,000 a year is what I will make if I continue this trend. If I don't build another van and sell it, that's what it is, probably about \$20,000, so definitely not getting rich.

0:34:33.4 NA: Yeah, and I definitely make more than that.

0:34:34.7 TG: Yeah.

0:34:35.8 NA: Yeah. But also look at our situation, right?

0:34:39.2 TG: But I'm rich in my free time.

0:34:40.7 NA: Yeah, well, and also, like a large degree of this comes from the family wealth privilege that you have, that now I have like proximate access to that all of the time that you were like in the years past when you would prioritize work just as much as you needed to, to make the money that you needed to go travel and do other things, you were living with your dad, and that house is paid for, so you're not having to pay rent as, obviously, I just lived with your dad for 14 months and didn't pay rent, and now we're living in a house that your dad also owns where we don't have to pay rent, and so, I feel like you and I are both able to right now make decisions where, of course, money is important and we wanna be putting away money for the future, I know that's something we both care about, but not having to pay rent or mortgage is an unbelievable financial privilege.

0:35:30.5 TG: Oh yeah.

0:35:31.0 NA: Yeah, that lets that happen.

0:35:32.3 TG: And also sort of tying back into my general distaste for work is, it's not that I'm lazy, I don't wanna do anything or that kind of stuff. It's I like to be busy, but I like to do my own thing.

0:35:46.7 NA: Yeah, you wanna clear out the barn at our new house and put in a pottery wheel and have a wood shop and make things.

0:35:52.1 TG: Right, I don't wanna be doing Zamboni maintenance in my time off, that's what I do

at work.

0:35:56.8 NA: Which is his job, yes.

0:35:57.3 TG: Right.

0:35:57.7 NA: Yeah. Yeah. Well, okay, I feel like we just bounced around a bunch, which is fine, and all of this is part of the context, but navigating the different income levels. How do you feel about the fact that I earn more money than you?

0:36:09.3 TG: Totally fine about it.

0:36:09.8 NA: Yeah, and also the fact that neither of us really knew that, you're like, "I think I make this much", it's funny that we don't really talk about it, I guess, to that degree.

0:36:19.1 TG: I'm not worried about paying my bills, I don't live a huge lifestyle, all the things that you just said about not having to pay rent or anything like that, essentially, it is an early inheritance, and then I do the upkeep, pay the taxes, pay the bills, all of those things, and do the upkeep, and then don't have to pay rent.

0:36:39.4 NA: Well, and that's also been a part of our... When we were talking earlier about navigating shared expenses, that we had a lot of conversations that I was really glad we were on the same page about in moving into this house, because yes, this is our home together, but this isn't my house that your dad owns this house, so your family owns this house, if you and I were to break up, this is still gonna be your house and I'm gonna have to move out and figure out something else, and so, the conversations around what feels equitable for us to split, what makes sense for us to pay for individually and kind of where we landed on that was structural things for the house, the house needs a new roof, things like that, you're paying for, you and your dad are paying for. We split furnishings, that type of stuff, we each paid individually for the furnishings in our own bedrooms 'cause we don't have shared bedrooms, and I'm happy with where we landed on that, but it definitely is an ongoing conversation of what does it mean to live together in a home that you share, but don't co-own, and that for me has been interesting because I felt like when Paul and I bought our house, we were 100% only able to do that because of his salary, I was never considering home ownership.

0:37:50.7 NA: Also, my family never owned homes, we lived in apartments in really big cities my whole life, that that wasn't the same way you said you didn't think about marriage, I never thought about home ownership, that wasn't like a mark of success to me, I mean, I grew up in Manhattan and in London to have the money to buy a home in a place like that. That's just wild. And so when we bought a home, I felt really acutely aware of the fact that that's not something I could have done on my own, and that's fine, it's not like we have to always be doing something on our own, we are better in community, but I felt like it was mine, but there was always a little part of me that was like, Well, is it yours? And it's been interesting, this is why I have a therapist, talking about that stuff really came up in the couple of months before we moved into this house for me of like, I'm only being able to move into this house and have access to this through proximity of a partner's like

generational wealth essentially, and do I feel secure in that? And there's no right or wrong answer, but it has been interesting emotionally for me, the tying together of housing and partnership, if that makes sense?

0:38:52.5 TG: Yeah, also going back to income of, without being as fortunate as I am in my generational wealth, there's no way that I'm affording rent, there's no way that I'm affording a mortgage, there's no way I'm getting approved for a mortgage.

0:39:08.6 NA: You would have made different life choices.

0:39:10.6 TG: But those are the things of, I think, instead of that, I would have bought a bigger van and been living in that full time.

0:39:14.1 NA: Yeah, that's right and you would have made different choices, but it's like we have to pull the threads back to... You got on this, the path that you were on because of what you knew and had access to and what your earning needs were. That was the same thing for me moving into the van or just keeping my lifestyle really small over these last couple of years, same thing. I would have made different choices, had I out of college, gone into a more traditional job? And that path was available to me and I chose not to take it, and so you kind of adjust as you go. Yeah.

0:39:47.8 TG: I had a conversation with my boss last week or something, and talking about the amount that I had been working, and he pretty much said, if you don't have to, Why would you? Like, if you have a roof over your head and food in your stomach, why work more than you have to? And it was really refreshing because he's someone who has worked full-time since he was 18-years-old, multiple jobs, and is now in his 50s.

0:40:13.7 NA: It's interesting this conversation about navigating different income, which is a totally fine question, but I feel like there's even more nuance and complexity under this, in general, and specifically for us, 'cause I think about this house project, so our best guess is that this house was built in the 1840s, so that alone, What?

0:40:33.8 TG: Our best guess as of right now, the town does do this thing where they will look up the history of your house, figure out when it was built, any notable things that were done.

0:40:41.7 NA: Okay. So people who were on the edge of their seats about the history of our house.

0:40:44.4 TG: Stay tuned.

0:40:45.5 NA: Right, TBD. So, any house that was built that long ago, of course, it is gonna have ongoing work and projects, and then the people who are living here, like the former occupants at the house, kinda destroyed a bunch of stuff.

0:40:57.5 TG: Did not appreciate the House for what it is.

0:41:00.2 NA: Right. That's the nicest way to say what he has been saying.

0:41:01.7 TG: They trashed it.

0:41:02.7 NA: Yeah. And so, it was a full-time job getting this up and running, and we had a bunch of interesting conversations because the type of skills and talent and craftsmanship that were required to do these projects are things that you have, that your dad has, that not only do I not have but I don't really have any interest in. And then we had conversations of this part of the project, if it were up for me, I would just pay someone to do it, and that A, wasn't on the table. That's blasphemous to you and your dad...

0:41:34.5 TG: Not. Don't say that around the Gossmiths, Madyln, you should pay someone to do that.

0:41:39.7 NA: Oh my god, I know.

0:41:40.8 TG: I'm clenching my pearls, and I am wearing pearls.

0:41:43.7 NA: But that's the difference. I was very much raised with parents who we would have called someone for everything, and also if you live in a department, you are pretty much not allowed to do things even if you had the skills to do it, it's like you call the landlord, they take care of it, so if there's any problem you're not liable for whatever the damages. It's just a totally different mindset. And so it's been really helpful for me learning from you that it's like how much of the money that I would have needed to earn, let's say having my own place, being able to hire people to do the things that you have the skills to do, it's like, what is wealth? Obviously, of course, money is necessary, we live under capitalism, but when you just said you have a wealth of time, you also have a wealth of skills and a wealth of knowledge that saves so much money. When people talk about the upkeep costs for a house, they're gonna be so much lower for us than they would be, I'd say for the average American family.

0:42:40.0 TG: Yeah, like just painting this place would have cost like \$10,000.

0:42:45.8 NA: I mean, you and your dad are gonna redo the roof yourselves, like painting the outside of the house, yeah. I feel like we went really deep into that.

0:42:53.4 TG: Outside of electricity, I feel as though I can do it all myself.

0:42:57.4 NA: Yeah, that's the thing you would hire for?

0:43:00.0 TG: Yeah, 'cause I don't wanna die with electricity.

0:43:01.1 NA: Electrocute yourself?

0:43:03.1 TG: But beyond that, I'm confident that even if I don't know how to do it right now, I can

figure it out. It might take a little time, it might not come out perfect, but I believe that I can do it.

0:43:12.0 NA: And even just like, of course, you have built out the van, so there's the carpentry aspect of that. But it's like you get new breaks in the car, there was something going on with the vehicle, you hear the weird noise, you do the fit, like so many things that I would have spent money on that I haven't sent money on because... So thank you.

0:43:28.9 TG: I would rather frustrate myself endlessly in these things instead of pay someone else to do it.

0:43:33.4 NA: That's true, that's true, you would rather do that than have to trade your hours for dollars at work?

0:43:36.2 TG: Yes.

0:43:37.0 NA: Yeah, great. Let's talk about kids.

0:43:40.0 TG: Okay.

0:43:41.6 NA: There's only one question. It says, Since you don't want children and you two seem to be in it for the long haul, I assume that at least right now, Gent also feels similarly about kids, but I'm still curious, how does he feel about having children? Is he also child-free by choice? Why is that? And was it always like this?

0:44:00.9 TG: I have never, ever, ever wanted kids, it has never been a question in my mind, do not want.

0:44:06.6 NA: Was there ever a time that you thought, you just kind of assumed it would happen because "That's what people do"?

0:44:11.7 TG: I was always adamant, I do not want kids.

0:44:14.2 NA: Why?

0:44:15.8 TG: It just never appealed to me. I, again, value my free time quite a bit, you have no free time as a parent, and that's totally fine if that's what people want, but I just never wanted that, I never saw that for myself, and then especially once I started working less and traveling more, I was like, You can't log a kid around and do this stuff, you can't.

0:44:35.7 NA: Or you could, but it's a whole different adventure.

0:44:36.7 TG: Yeah, exactly, and I just wasn't interested in that.

0:44:39.3 NA: Yeah. I feel like one of the things that you and I have learned, that we have in

common that maybe we didn't realize when we first got together, is how selfish we both are in this regard, in a way, I think that selfish is used in a negative pejorative context, and it doesn't need to be, but we both really, really value our time autonomy, like I wanna be able to do what I wanna do when I wanna do it, obviously, that's why I work for myself, right? And we have had off air conversations about what it would be like for you to build up a woodworking business or to do more of the van conversion stuff as a job, you obviously have lots of possibilities, but that was always it for me too, with kids, that I'm not willing to give up that degree of freedom, and I feel grateful that it's such an automatic answer for us that this isn't something that we have ever grappled with. Yeah. My gosh, Gracey is laying on the ground, having some kind of dream and twitching and being very cute. Did you ever think that I would fall in love with a dog?

0:45:47.3 TG: Yes. I mean, you would have to be a stone cold psychopath to not fall in love with Gracey.

0:45:55.7 NA: Yeah, but I am so not a dog person.

0:45:57.1 TG: Everyone's a Gracey person.

0:46:00.4 NA: I know. She is pretty great. And even that, having Gracey part-time, man, your dad really has welcomed me into this family, here's come live with me for 14 months, don't pay rent, here's a home that you and my son can live in, and also I'm gonna let you take my beloved dog part-time. So this is now, just a your dad Appreciation podcast?

0:46:21.2 TG: Yeah, I guarantee he never in a million years would have assumed that I would be in a long-term partnership and he would be as close with my partner as you too currently are.

0:46:29.9 NA: Say more, why do you think that?

0:46:32.3 TG: I would say that this is a pretty non-traditional relationship in that regard of like, You and my dad are pretty close.

0:46:39.9 NA: I've spent more time with your dad in the last couple of years, I feel like then collectively I've spent with my parents since I moved out at age 18, obviously living together would do that.

0:46:48.7 TG: Right. But I don't know, and even now, we only live a mile down the street from my dad and it's...

0:46:55.3 NA: And you do have a second job, you're the dog taxi.

0:46:57.2 TG: Yeah, I'm the dog taxi.

0:47:00.3 NA: One of the main reasons that you and I don't share a room, for people who don't know is A, we like having our own space, but I really, really, really don't sleep well in a bed with

anyone else, and that includes animals. So for me, I want to know that no one else is alive at all, when it is bedtime and your dad sleeps really poorly without her, so I get her for a lot of the day and then you dogtaxi her back before bed.

0:47:22.1 TG: I shuffle her back and forth.

[laughter]

0:47:25.8 NA: Tom Gromsmith Dogtaxing.

0:47:27.0 TG: Yeah.

0:47:28.0 NA: Yeah. Anything else about kid? Okay, here's a question. Do you think that your parents are disappointed that we're not having kids?

0:47:37.5 TG: I think maybe a little bit, I don't think they've never said anything, they've never guilt me, they've been very respectful about my decisions in that regard, but I do think that they would have appreciated a grandchild from me.

0:47:49.9 NA: At least your sister has a kid, so they're not completely out, but I think same, I mean, my parents, especially my mom, has been really supportive of my choices, and 100% they wish I was making a different choice. So I think that that both are true in that regard. Yeah. Let's talk about conflict.

0:48:09.2 TG: Let's talk about conflict. I don't wanna talk about conflict. We're already doing it.

0:48:12.7 NA: It's too conflicting? What conflict comes up for you over and over again, if you have one? That is this question, when we were reading through this list beforehand, this was the one that we bumped on.

0:48:23.6 TG: We don't have a lot of conflict in our relationship, I feel.

0:48:26.9 NA: Also conflict sounds like such an intense word, but I know what the question is referring to, right?

0:48:32.5 TG: I'm really forgetful. I think that's a thing that we maybe bump against or that you maybe have frustration with, I'm also incredibly frustrated by it, I would say that's maybe some kind of conflict you and I have in our relationship. I'm a bit of a liability when it comes to bringing stuff places.

0:48:50.5 NA: That's a stretch. Did you remember this thing that you went to the store for? No, but you came back with these other, three times.

0:48:57.7 TG: Yeah, right.

0:48:58.9 NA: Let's think about this for a second, because obviously I don't wanna be that person who's like, we never have any conflict 'cause I don't mean it in that...

0:49:06.3 TG: It's all smiles.

0:49:07.9 NA: That's not true. But we don't fight. But that's true, I don't know if you would categorize yourself this way, but that's true of me in general, I am not someone who fights, I will have the deep conversations and sometimes those conversations feel really hard or scary or frustrating or emotionally vulnerable, but fighting has never, ever, ever been my style. My only memory of fighting with partners was while drunk.

0:49:31.5 TG: Yeah. I'm not much of an arguer.

0:49:35.0 NA: I feel like our biggest conflicts come up when we're both really depleted at the same time, and it happens a lot around dinner or around like, Okay, what's for dinner? And are you gonna make it? Am I gonna make it? And that's an easy example to talk about what I wanna talk about, if we've both had really intense work days or we're feeling particularly tired or run down, or there was a stretch of time this past winter where both of our mental health was not great at the same time, and that was the first time that it ever happened. It was either you were having a hard time and I was feeling pretty great and so I could pick up the slack or vice versa, where I was having a hard time and you really took over a lot of that stuff, but I think that was our first experience of we were both doing poorly at the same time, and that was really challenging, and I think when we're depleted and we just keep punting the things back and forth that can create conflict, I think.

0:50:29.7 TG: Yeah, and I feel like conflict is a bit of a heavy term for it, we're not angry at each other, we're not fighting, it's just we're bumping up against this thing, we are at an impasse more than a conflict, which I know probably is by definition of conflict, but I'm not upset with you or anything like that about any of it.

0:50:52.9 NA: I think that we're pretty good at talking about the things in real time as they come up, but yeah, I think our biggest source of conflict is If we both let ourselves get too depleted and poorly resourced at the same time.

0:51:06.1 TG: I'm good at that. I'm real good at overdoing it and depleting myself.

0:51:10.7 NA: Same, I feel in different ways, right? And that's been hard. The other question in this category is, Are there patterns either of you learned growing up that clash with the other person's kind of patterns or way of operating?

0:51:27.0 TG: I wouldn't say it is a clash, but sort of what we were talking about earlier, of why wouldn't you just pay someone to do that? I never in a million years would I assume I'll have someone else come in and paint, or I'll have someone else come in and sand the floor, it's like, I can do it, I've got the stuff to do it, I'll do it. And it's not a thing that we clash on but it is a...

0:51:49.1 NA: We were brought up differently.

0:51:50.7 TG: We were brought up differently, it's a way of life for me of, you have the tools, you can do this, whereas you have not been that way.

0:52:00.0 NA: Yeah, and I think that you, rightfully so, get frustrated with, I don't wanna say how quickly I give up, but with things like this, I just default into assuming that I'm not gonna be able to do it, and I think that you get frustrated by that.

0:52:14.9 TG: I very much do get frustrated by that because you're a very smart person, and even though you might not be mechanically inclined, there are a lot of things that you can learn, even if it's not your natural inclination, and I do think that you give up a little too quickly, sometimes on things.

0:52:29.1 NA: No, I think that's fair. I definitely think that's fair. Under the patterns that we learned growing up from my side, so one of the main reasons that I started seeing a therapist again toward the end of last year, was to work on my experience of essentially being put in the position to parent my parent, when I was like 14-years-old, and I don't need to go into all the details of that, but that sort of learned the behavior of parentification, being the parent, being in charge, minimizing my own needs to take care of other people's needs, feeling like I need to be the one who remembers, Okay, well, did you make the doctor's appointment, did you do all the kind of things that you would typically associate with a parent, Does that for a kid? I tend to replicate that behavior in my intimate relationships, and I think that I've seen that come up a little bit with us, where I will almost feel resentful of being in that role when you never asked me to be in that role. It's just that that is what I default into because it was 23 years or whatever of conditioning, and so it's been really useful, not that the pattern changes overnight, but it's been very useful for me to get my own therapy about that.

0:53:39.7 TG: Yeah.

0:53:41.7 NA: And now Gracey is scratching herself.

0:53:42.7 TG: Gracey's got an itch.

0:53:43.7 NA: She's got an itch. I'm sure people are loving our asides about Gracey. Anything else about that that you wanna talk about?

0:53:50.4 TG: I don't think so.

0:53:51.4 NA: Okay, the Paul category or the former partners category. How does Gent feel about your relationship with Paul? Was it weird for him being friends with your ex, especially early on in your relationship? You know what's funny? I don't know that I have ever referred to Paul as my ex.

0:54:08.6 TG: I don't know that you have...

0:54:09.6 NA: If that term makes me feel really uncomfortable, I'll always say my friend or my former spouse, but anyway. Yes. So Was it weird for you, early on?

0:54:18.9 TG: Paul loves me. He stated it publicly. He shouted it in the streets.

0:54:24.9 NA: Do you wanna actually tell that story? Because there's the real story, and then there's what you have internalized to be that he said, I love you.

0:54:31.2 TG: There's the real story, and then there's alternative facts. On today's episode of Joe Rogan. We were doing something as a group, the four of us, you and me, Paul and his partner, and I was going in the car with his partner, Kelly, and Paul shouted from his car to her, correction to me. I love you. I said, I love you too Paul, and eye rolls all the things, Paul loves me.

0:55:04.0 NA: Yeah. So you've taken that on as a...

0:55:07.5 TG: He shouted it in the street I love you, to me and then...

0:55:10.7 NA: Not to the person you were standing near that he's about to marry?

0:55:11.9 TG: Not to the person that I was standing near that he is gonna get married to. He was showing it to me, and I took that and ran with it hardcore classic fashion.

0:55:21.4 NA: You did. That's true. That is very true. But what was it like early on? Honestly.

0:55:29.6 TG: It was fine. I don't really know how to put it. I like Paul, we get along well. We have things in common. We text every once in a while.

0:55:40.7 NA: Yeah, you tease me. Oh my God, the other day, yes. Okay.

0:55:45.5 TG: Do we put the picture in the show notes?

0:55:46.8 NA: We will not put the picture in the show notes. Something that most people probably don't know about me, unless they have seen me open my mail, which is very few of you.

0:55:56.9 TG: Hopefully.

0:55:58.0 NA: Right, exactly. Yeah, I tend to hawk open things, I will just rip it open the package or the envelope is like in 10 pieces.

0:56:07.9 TG: You open things as if you work at a confetti factory.

0:56:10.7 NA: What do you mean?

0:56:11.7 TG: Like you are just shredding it and just ripping it all up.

0:56:14.7 NA: So that's how I open things and it used to make Paul crazy. And What was it the other day? I was opening something, I like Hulk-opened a pizza box...

0:56:24.2 TG: Frozen pizza boxes, you opened them from the middle.

[chuckle]

0:56:27.4 NA: I don't know. You had the pizza, didn't you?

0:56:30.1 TG: I did, but it was just a mindblowing way to open it.

0:56:32.1 NA: Anyway, so he is just sort of surreptitiously taking this picture, and he's texting Paul the picture of me opening these things, like, "Guess who opened this?" And they're both dragging me in the text message that I'm not even on.

0:56:43.7 TG: You're saying this as if it was a long ongoing thing, I sent a picture to Paul saying, "Guess who opened the pizza boxes?" And he responded with, "What the actual fuck?" End of communication.

0:56:54.4 NA: Yeah. Okay, fine, but that's not the first time that you... That's true.

0:56:57.9 TG: No, that's true, that's true.

0:57:00.3 NA: But I like that, I like that you have that relationship.

0:57:02.8 TG: Yeah, I like Paul. And he loves me.

[chuckle]

0:57:06.2 NA: You have it on record.

0:57:07.1 TG: I only like him. He loves me.

0:57:08.6 NA: Sure, sure, sure, sure. You're working for it a little hard here, babe.

[chuckle]

0:57:15.5 TG: Oh, I just ripped my shirt stretching, reaching.

0:57:17.2 NA: Yeah, reaching for Paul's love?

0:57:19.7 TG: Yeah.

0:57:21.5 NA: I also think that, all joking aside, all of us were really intentional and slow about integrating this relationship. When Paul and I got divorced, we were thinking of it as a transition to a friendship, which doesn't mean we were best friends overnight, of course, it was sad and hard, and there was a lot of grief and things to get over and they were phases, but my intention was always that we were gonna have that relationship, and he knew that you and I were gonna try to start seeing what was there between us very, very soon after I moved out. And so he and I had a series of conversations about that, you and I had a series of conversations about the fact that I care about you and I wanna start this partnership with you, and this other person is always gonna be a really important part of my life. And that was never something that I was willing to compromise on. And you never asked me to compromise it on.

0:58:10.5 TG: Yeah.

0:58:12.5 NA: Which I appreciate. And I think he's been really welcoming to you.

0:58:16.7 TG: I agree.

0:58:20.1 NA: All things considered, I feel incredibly grateful for the way that it worked out.

0:58:23.7 TG: Yeah.

0:58:24.2 NA: Yeah. Have you and Gent had to navigate jealousy around past partners?

0:58:29.9 TG: Nope.

0:58:31.9 NA: So say more, do you think that's because you're not a jealous person, or that we've had so much communication around it? Because, obviously Paul is not the only of my past partners that you've met.

0:58:42.7 TG: I'm not really the jealous type, I feel like this whole episode has me like bordering on apathetic that like, you've been with people, I've been with people, it is what it is. It would be more concerning if there was some veiled feelings there that I felt we weren't being honest about or something like that, but I feel we're very honest about how we feel about people, we're very honest about what that person means to you, that it doesn't strike up any jealousy feelings.

0:59:17.2 NA: Yeah, I also think a big part of it for me is, because we have, from the very beginning of our relationship, had an ongoing conversation about, "Do we want to choose monogamy, and what does that look like?" And obviously, so far in our relationship, we have continued to choose to practice monogamy, but that that's not a given, I think, excuse me, at least for me, it leaves space for us to talk about things that maybe would cause jealousy in other relationships because you wait so long to talk about it or you try to hide that you feel that way, whereas I feel like we have made space and I'm really grateful for that, to talk about those things

earlier on.

0:59:53.4 TG: Yeah.

0:59:53.9 NA: Yeah. The last question in this part, how did it feel for Gent to enter a relationship with you so soon after your divorce? Which I think this is a good question, 'cause as I alluded to earlier, I was a mess.

1:00:06.5 TG: No, there was definitely a grieving process, I just gave you your space, I felt, and was there if you needed me, and I would leave you alone if you needed to, although maybe I wasn't so great at that, I just tried to be there for you and do whatever I could.

1:00:23.1 NA: Did you ever have the feeling of, "Oh, maybe we should wait."?

1:00:27.5 TG: No. Oh, I gave you the space to feel the way that you felt about what you were going through, and I knew what I wanted.

1:00:37.7 NA: What do you mean?

1:00:38.8 TG: Like with us.

1:00:39.4 NA: Yeah.

1:00:42.5 TG: And I didn't wanna wait for it.

1:00:44.3 NA: Yeah. Yeah, I felt that way too, I felt like what was sort of sparking between us was interesting enough to me and compelling enough to me, and we had a really strong friendship beforehand that there was so much mutual respect, I don't think that I would have gotten divorced and been like, and now I'm getting on a dating app, I don't think that I would have made the choice in that state to seek out dating or partnership, but because we already knew each other and you had been such a good friend to me, and we were both on the same page, if there's something here, we wanna explore what that is, but I was very honest about, here's where I'm at, and here's what I have the capacity to give and not give in this relationship. And I think had we not known each other really well, that it wouldn't have worked out, it would have been a mistake, because had we met on a dating app and I was in this deep grieving process, you would have been like, "This is not for me."

1:01:46.3 TG: Right, like had I been trying to date, I don't think that I would have been actively looking for newly divorced women.

1:01:52.8 NA: Right, exactly, yeah. And also, you had met Paul by then, and already established a relationship like this, it was a unique enough situation that I think that we were both willing to be like, "Let's be patient and see what happens, yeah."

1:02:03.0 TG: And see where it goes, yeah.

1:02:05.6 NA: Yeah, yeah. So the last category is about alone time. The first question is, what does alone time look like for both of you, and how often do you feel like you each need or desire it?

1:02:16.8 TG: So alone time for us is interesting because at work I don't get alone time, and we have defined alone time as, if you are at work, even though you may technically be alone, it's not alone time because you're not doing whatever it is that you wanna do, it's not restful, it's work. You work by yourself. I work with other people, so, I'm an introvert, and being at work trains me, like in a social way, whereas you are at home working...

1:02:52.7 NA: Predominantly alone, yeah.

1:02:53.4 TG: By yourself, so you recharge via interaction, and I don't.

1:03:00.9 NA: Yeah. So this could have been something that came up in the conflict section too, this idea of like, you get home at the end of the work day after having been really social and you want to shut down and be by yourself, and I've been alone all day and I'm like, "Play with me."

1:03:11.5 TG: But I would say that we've moved past the point of conflict with this, because we've had the conversations.

1:03:13.0 NA: But I think that was an issue.

1:03:16.7 TG: Yeah, it certainly was an issue for a while. We've not been so great at it as of late for different circumstances, but once a week, it's nice to have an alone night where...

1:03:27.7 NA: Like where it's pre-set, so there's no decision fatigue, because I think something that we struggle with is like, we love spending time together, and so one or both of us is like, "Oh, but we could be together." There's never a time where I'm like, I actively don't wanna be with you, so therefore I want alone time, it's like, I'm happy being with you, and that sort of pushes me to not take as much alone time as I need, and so I think that's something that we've gotten a lot better at in the last year and a half, is, being willing to be like, "After dinner, I'm gonna go to my room?" and like, "I'd like some alone time tonight," we're asking each other, "Hey, babe, do you want alone time tonight?"

1:04:00.4 TG: "I'll come home from work, we'll prepare dinner together, we'll eat together, and then alone time," it was Wednesday nights was the night, 'cause for a while I was working via hours that Wednesday night was gonna be it for me, but yeah, we had decided Wednesday nights would be alone time, come home from work, make dinner, eat dinner, and then go our separate ways for the evening.

1:04:24.0 NA: Which also really helps to have our own spaces in the house, 'cause we have separate bedrooms, it's really nice, that's also been really nice too, especially in this new place of like, our bedrooms are decorated very differently, we each have different styles, we have different

preferences as far as lighting.

1:04:37.2 TG: Some are decorated, some there's a bed in the room.

1:04:39.7 NA: Right, you just have a bed, and my room is completely finished, but also that speaks to our personality too, where I'm like, "I need this to be a cosy living space."

1:04:48.1 TG: It also speaks to our different priorities and things like, it's not that I don't want a decorated room, it's not that I'm happy with a minimalistic, only a bed and a couple of things up on the wall, I have been prioritizing everything else I feel, and then at some point I will come around to doing my room.

1:05:08.7 NA: Yeah, no, absolutely, but yeah, the alone time thing has been a work in progress, for sure. The other question in this category is, like, you, meaning me, Nicole, have shared how you agree to not default all non-work time to couple time? So I'm gonna provide some context on that. I used to feel in past relationships, that there was sort of this expectation, and no one ever said it, it's maybe it was like a conditioned thing, that if you weren't already scheduled to have plans with somebody else, that just all of your free time was defaulting to couple time, you're gonna watch Netflix together, you're gonna do something, and it's been a very intentional pivot away from that for me, of like, all time is my time, all of your time is your time, and I shouldn't expect access to all of your free time, that if we didn't live together, we would have to make plans, "Do you wanna come over for dinner? Do you wanna go on a breakfast date? Do you wanna go on a hike?" That just because we live together, I don't wanna assume that I just have access to all of you, and I think sometimes, that still comes up, I have to remind myself, "Oh, actually, he can just be on his phone, that's fine."

1:06:19.8 TG: Yeah.

1:06:20.2 NA: Right? But, so then this question is, how do you manage the specifics of not defaulting all non-work time to couple time? Do you have standing date nights? Do you ask which days or times you want as couple times, or is it more fluid?

1:06:35.4 TG: I think you are good about asking if I want alone time, I think, also you are better about asking about it than I am because I am someone who probably needs more alone time than you do, but it's not super fluid, I feel, like it's nice to have the defined, "Okay, tonight, it's gonna be my night, where I watch The Simpsons and don't do anything," or, it's nice to have a defined...

1:07:03.7 NA: But I do think that it's fluid in terms of it's responsive, if you've had a particularly intense day or if I had, and to say like, "Oh, you know what? I'm feeling like I need some alone time now," and also as I'm about to go out for a month or a two-month hike, you're gonna have plenty of alone time.

1:07:18.4 TG: Right. Yeah.

1:07:20.5 NA: I will miss you.

1:07:21.2 TG: I'll miss you.

1:07:22.7 NA: One more question, someone asks, Nicole, I would love to know how moving to Massachusetts has been? Was it a compromise? How did you two get to this decision?

1:07:30.5 TG: You're such a Masshole now.

1:07:32.3 NA: Is that what we're called?

1:07:33.1 TG: That's what we're called, Massholes.

1:07:35.6 NA: Like Massachusetts Assholes? That's not very nice.

1:07:37.7 TG: Masshole.

1:07:38.5 NA: Do I have to be that?

1:07:40.0 TG: Already are.

1:07:41.7 NA: And sure I have a driver's license, okay, well, I'd like to put that up to the committee, I don't know that I consent to being called that.

1:07:49.3 TG: You've already become a much more aggressive driver.

[chuckle]

1:07:53.0 NA: And people here say, if you don't go, the moment, the millisecond the light turns green, people are on the horn. Yeah, but not me.

1:08:03.4 TG: Not you.

1:08:04.6 NA: I'm not a Masshole, I'm an Oregon transplant. How did we get to this decision? Well, I was living in the van, in 2020, it was a pandemic, everything in Oregon was on fire and I needed a place to live, and your dad was like, "Hey, come move in with me," and so that's how I wound up coming to Massachusetts, and then throughout pandemic years, we split our time between being in the vans and being with your dad, but even through that whole time, we were kinda talking about, where do we wanna live? What city do we wanna live in?

1:08:34.0 TG: Yeah, so there was a bit of an incident, in September, that...

1:08:40.3 NA: Well, I'll get to that, I'll get to that, hang on. But that I was saying, throughout those last couple of years, like we were having a lot of conversations of, "Oh, we've heard Asheville is

nice." We've heard this place and we were starting to...

1:08:48.7 TG: We had looked at places a little bit, yeah.

1:08:49.1 NA: We had looked at, and then had started to think about where we might wanna live, and what we kept coming up against was the financial reality of, if you think about the three things that are maybe our core financial priorities, hiking and traveling, as one, having some kind of housing, so we knew that we didn't wanna do the van thing forever, and then being able to put money away for the future, obviously, we want to enjoy our lives now too, but those three things together, I always felt like it would be two out of three, that it couldn't be all three, I could either put money away for our future and hike, which is what I had been doing because I wasn't paying rent living in the van, or I could pay for housing and put money away for our future, but I wouldn't be able to hike, and we kept circling around to, "Where can we live that's gonna be affordable, that we're not all of a sudden gonna have to work so many weeks a year in order to be able to afford to live there?" Basically, to be house poor.

1:09:41.0 TG: Yeah.

1:09:42.7 NA: And so that, I think, we were both in that situation of like, how do we have the things that we want, and then I think the two things that happened that made moving here make sense were, well, number one, living in this house became an option, and it's an un-turn-down-able offer.

1:09:56.8 TG: Yeah.

1:09:58.9 NA: To not have to pay rent or a mortgage and to have this beautiful permanent space, and this is the town that you grew up in, all of your family is here, you didn't really wanna leave, combined with, now, you tell your story.

1:10:10.8 TG: My dad broke his back, hip, a couple of ribs, inner wrists.

1:10:18.9 NA: Pelvis, collapsed lung, head collapsed.

1:10:19.7 TG: Partially collapsed.

1:10:21.3 NA: Yeah.

1:10:21.9 TG: Well, it wasn't that bad.

1:10:22.6 NA: Okay, okay, partially collapsed.

1:10:23.0 TG: It was only partially collapsed.

1:10:24.5 NA: Head lacerations, yeah.

1:10:25.7 TG: Yeah.

1:10:26.7 NA: He took a really bad fall a couple of days after we had been in Colorado for the Colorado trail.

1:10:30.3 TG: It was like three days after we had gotten home.

1:10:31.4 NA: We had been home for three days and he took this horrible fall, was in the hospital for days, and the amount of caretaking that he needed was...

1:10:37.6 TG: A lot. Yeah.

1:10:38.3 NA: Immense, as you can imagine with that. So go ahead, yeah.

1:10:42.6 TG: My sister and her husband had recently had a daughter, so were plenty busy on their own, no one needs to be taken caring of an ill parent.

1:10:55.5 NA: But they didn't have the time and resource.

1:10:57.0 TG: They didn't have the capacity to do it, yeah.

1:10:58.5 NA: Right, and they both work more traditional jobs, and they had a young baby, and so, you had planned to come back here and go back to work and didn't because you were full-time taking care of your dad?

1:11:07.0 TG: Yeah, I was not...

1:11:08.3 NA: And I was helping, obviously, but the degree of, "You're gonna shower him, and do..." The things that I wouldn't have done.

1:11:13.1 TG: Yeah, it was not an easy Autumn for me.

1:11:16.0 NA: And so I think that, that also maybe got him thinking, "Hey, it would be nice to have them closer." Right?

1:11:21.3 TG: Yeah.

1:11:22.8 NA: Yeah, was that what you were gonna say?

1:11:23.4 TG: Yes.

1:11:24.9 NA: Yeah. And you wanting to be around too.

1:11:26.8 TG: Yeah, and living with my dad for so long, our relationship has its rocky sections and everything, but I genuinely love my dad, and even after we've moved out, I see him almost every single day.

1:11:39.6 NA: Yeah, dog taxi.

1:11:40.1 TG: The dog taxi.

1:11:41.0 NA: Yeah, and the question was, how moving to Massachusetts has been for me? I think that it's been a couple of things. I'm incredibly grateful for this housing situation, and it feels really good to be setting up something that feels more rooted and permanent with the van, without me feeling trapped and house poor, that we just moved in, whatever that was, like a month ago. And not even, and I'm about to leave to go hiking, I can have both. So that's incredible. But I will say, I don't have any friends here. I have some friends in the Greater Northeast, because of the pandemic I haven't really been in a space where I felt comfortable prioritizing going to things where I would make more friends that I'm hopeful maybe this coming Fall and Winter, I will be able to prioritize that because living in a place where I don't know anyone is not sustainable. Right? And so I think that for me has been the downside, but I'm excited to be here, also, and after three years of a lot of impermanence where I was using Paul's address as my address, he was opening and scanning and emailing me my mail.

1:12:40.3 TG: Right, he was rifling through your mail.

1:12:42.1 NA: Right, and which I was so grateful for.

1:12:44.8 TG: That was sent to your home.

1:12:46.3 NA: Right. My home that I was on the mortgage for, but that everything was all spread out, this address didn't match this thing, didn't match this thing, and now having done all of the admin to just live in one place and have my billing address and my mailing address be the same, it feels really good.

1:13:01.6 TG: Good.

1:13:03.7 NA: Is there anything else you wanna share before we go and make dinner and feed this dog?

1:13:07.6 TG: I wanna see if we can get her on mic.

1:13:09.3 NA: No, I mean, no, let's not do that. Okay, and we don't need to try to make Gracey make sounds.

1:13:15.3 TG: I'm pretty sure she'll just sniff at it or something.

1:13:17.3 NA: She probably would just sniff at it, you can try in a minute, and then maybe we will cut it. So where are we at on this? We're not getting married yet.

1:13:26.0 TG: No kids.

1:13:27.9 NA: No kids.

1:13:28.7 TG: I hate work.

1:13:29.8 NA: No kids. He hates work. We love Gracey. I'm happy about the house, but feel lukewarm about Massachusetts. But maybe that will change.

1:13:37.3 TG: I think that it will.

1:13:39.3 NA: We're not sharing money. Was that it? And we might or might not get married, and I would like an anniversary.

1:13:45.9 TG: Yes.

1:13:46.4 NA: Great, fabulous.

1:13:47.1 TG: Right.

1:13:49.1 NA: Thanks for being willing to do this with me.

1:13:50.5 TG: Of course.

1:13:51.5 NA: I'm always delighted to have you as part of my projects, and I know, like we said at the beginning, you don't listen to the podcast, but I feel like it's really special to be able to share my work with you in this way, and I'm grateful that you're game for it.

1:14:07.2 TG: I love you.

1:14:07.9 NA: I love you. Are you really gonna try to get Gracey on? Okay, go ahead. Alright, here we go, here we go.

1:14:12.2 TG: Hey, Gracey.

1:14:15.8 NA: She's just sniffing it, this isn't...

1:14:18.4 TG: This is good podcasting.

1:14:20.4 NA: Is it? Is this what they teach you in podcasting school?

1:14:23.5 TG: Yeah.

1:14:24.9 NA: Oh, my gosh, you have to get her all riled up or something? No?

1:14:27.3 TG: No, she just sniffed at it and bumped it with her nose.

1:14:30.3 NA: That's it, so everyone that's it.

1:14:31.4 TG: You just met Gracey...

1:14:32.1 NA: I like that we're ending season one of the Pop-Up pod, with my dog, or my half-time dog, my partial dog, bumping her nose on the mic. Congratulations, so we are done.

1:14:42.4 TG: Yeah.

1:14:43.5 NA: Do you wanna share your Instagram or I always ask people, where can someone find you? But I feel like you don't really do stuff on the internet.

1:14:49.2 TG: Yeah.

1:14:50.4 NA: Yeah? Yeah, you can find him on my Instagram, for sure.

1:14:51.4 TG: Right.

1:14:52.5 NA: Yes.

1:14:52.7 TG: My GoFundMe is, not allowed my GoFundMe?

1:14:53.7 NA: No, stop. Oh my god, you don't. You of the generational wealth, do not need the GoFundMe.

1:15:00.3 TG: Here's the thing, I'm racing Leadville Mountain Bike 100 in August.

1:15:04.3 NA: The Leadville 100-Mile Mountain Bike Race, sidebar, he has never done a bike race before and bought his first mountain bike for this.

1:15:12.6 TG: It's my first new mountain bike.

1:15:14.8 NA: Your first adult mountain bike.

1:15:16.4 TG: Yeah.

1:15:16.9 NA: Yes, but we're super excited, he's gonna be doing this race.

1:15:19.1 TG: I am raising funds for the Life Time Foundation, and the link is in my Instagram.

1:15:25.9 NA: So now you're gonna have to share your Instagram.

1:15:27.3 TG: It is at Tom Grossmith, and the money goes towards giving...

1:15:30.6 NA: It's like lunches for kids, and like just for kids, right?

1:15:32.4 TG: Yeah, it is, like good healthy meals for kids. If you feel so inclined, if you are able to do so, please make a donation, if not, no big deal, any amount helps, and thank you.

1:15:42.0 NA: There you go. You had a thing to shout out.

1:15:43.2 TG: Yeah, I have a platform.

1:15:45.3 NA: You do, you have a platform. Okay, let's go feed ourselves and this dog.

[music]

1:15:56.2 NA: Thanks so much for listening to this very first season of the Pop-Up Pod, all of the intimate and honest conversations you'll hear on this show are 100% listener-funded, paid for by a sliding scale Patreon community, that means no ads and no sponsors, just a couple hundred people coming together to ensure that everyone involved in making this podcast gets paid, that includes me as the host and creator, my sound engineer and musician, Adam Day, as well as every single one of our guests. The Patreon community also funds the creation of a full transcript for each episode, which you can find in the show notes to help make these conversations more accessible for all. Those are our production ethics here at the Pop-Up Pod, and if that aligns with your own values, I would love to invite you to come check out our community at patreon.com/nicoleantoinette, it's a fun, easy, and welcoming space, you also get access to lots of bonuses, and remember, it's run on a sliding scale, so you can pay whatever amount makes most sense for you each month, depending on your circumstances, that's patreon.com/nicoleantoinette, and hopefully, I'll see you there.

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