

[Episode 1.10 Baby Noises & Decoding Toxic Masculinity with Brenna Clarke Gray](#)

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Hannah (Host): [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans] Hi, I'm Hannah McGregor and this is *Secret Feminist Agenda*. Oh, alright, who else is having a rough week? I hope not you. Either way, I hope you're excited for another conversation with another dope as heck feminist. But before we get to that, let me tell you what my secret feminist agenda is this week. [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans]

Hannah (Host): All right. Let's talk about diet culture. Oh, you know, fatness is going to be a theme on this podcast because, I mean, it is one of the important, particular sort of politicized aspects of the way that I move through the world, and so it is often sort of one of the fights of feminism that I am feeling most engaged in and, gosh, it is a sticky one. It's a really sticky one for a lot of reasons, including the ways in which diet culture, particularly dieting as a celebratory and valuable thing is embedded into the very fabric of our culture. You know, I had spent a lot of years of my life in grad school surrounded by so many, like, cool feminists that I kind of had forgotten how central diet culture was to a lot of people. It really wasn't until I joined my first choir during my postdoc and sort of started spending a lot of time in women-dominated spaces that were not also academic or explicitly politicized spaces or queer spaces that I was reminded how one of the default modes for women to relate to one another is to talk about diet and diet with a fixation on the celebration of restriction and/or the vilification of the self. Right? So it's either, "Let me tell you about my new diet. Let me expand for you the many permutations and rules and restrictions and labels and apps that I have adopted to sort of circumscribe my life." Or "Let me tell you how bad I am. Let me tell you how ashamed I am of myself. Let me tell you the various sort of vaguely moral ways in which I had failed as a human being." And at the center of the logic of all of those conversations are two basic premises: One is food has moral meanings, moral valences, right, like to eat or not eat is a moral question, and two, fat is bad. And when you're a fat person, diet conversations imbue every space you're in with fundamental toxicity. That is, the second that somebody around me starts to have a conversation about diet, I immediately feel unsafe in that space.

I think that sometimes when people look at a fat person, they assume that that person doesn't understand anything about dieting. They might even think that they are doing you a favor by telling you about it. But I assure you that the vast majority of fat people in the world know more about diet than you ever will, because we have been on them on and off for most of our lives until the point when we, if we're lucky, made the decision to disembark from that particular runaway train. Um, you know, my diet's like many other fat children, dieting started young for me involuntarily, um, imposed on me by doctors and parents, and it continued as an internalized and self-imposed way of living my life for years after that, and so it's

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really actually quite viscerally distressing for me to be in a space where people are talking about their diets.

Now that gets tricky because a lot, a lot of people are dieting all the time and when people are dieting and, like, what's the fucking point of dieting if you're not telling people about it, right? And two, because bodily autonomy is really important and people are allowed to do with their bodies what they want and if people want to be on diets then that's their goddamn right. Like, you know, live your bliss. Go ahead and do it. So that's always, it is always a really sticky point for me of saying like, "I respect your right to do with your body as you want. I respect your right to do all manner of things with your body that I wouldn't do and I don't, you know, in so far as you're allowed to do with your body whatever you want and can do all kinds of things I wouldn't do to mine." Like you know, dieting is like any other form of body modification that's like, yeah, you do. Except that it's not because [laughter] it's a form of body modification that is explicitly praised and held up as valuable in the face of others, but it's hard to say like, "Yeah, absolutely. You do you," you know, as Adèle put it, sort of, that's your kink. Absolutely. But also could you just like, could you save this conversation for somewhere where I'm not? And when those conversations happen in spaces that you're obliged to be in, your workplace, for example, or a classroom or your family's home around the dinner table, it can get really, really difficult. Um, it can get really difficult to navigate those spaces because it feels like you're choosing between telling people that they're not allowed to have the kinds of conversations they want to have and not allowed to be in their bodies and the way that they want to versus saying, like, that actually this conversation feels deeply hateful to me. When you say I have become thinner and I want to celebrate that, what you're saying is that my body is aberrant and bad. My body is the failed thing that we're all aspiring to move away from, but fat phobia so profoundly embedded in our culture that, you know, even saying that to people, they might indeed say like, "Well, yeah." They might not say it to my face, I mean, that's one of the glories of adulthood. Like as a kid, people say that shit to your face; as an adult, they don't. But you know, I'm not going to lie to myself and think that people aren't thinking that, but I would like to encourage those of you who are into dieting to... I'm not going to say don't diet, because again, like, be on your own body journey. I mean don't diet, but whatever. Be on your own body journey. That's an agenda for a different day, but I really want to encourage you to rethink the way that you use diet discourse and language around the morality of food and what kinds of bodies are good and what kinds of bodies are bad. I want you to rethink how you use that language in public spaces. I want you to rethink, you know, when you say those things around your coworkers or around you know, somebody else in the change room or around your kids at the dinner table or, you know, to a classmate in the hearing of other classmates. You know, really think about what it means to idolize weight loss as an inherent good and what that tells some people about what their bodies mean to you. [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans]

Hannah (Host): All right. Let's meet Brenna. Brenna Clark Gray is an academic and a writer and a public intellectual. Before I'd ever met her in person, I knew her from her

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fantastic work on the website *Book Riot*, which, P.S. you should all be reading. She also writes for *Graphixia*—I really hope I'm saying that right—a collaborative comics blog. Brenna has a PhD in Canadian literature and she teaches English here in Vancouver. I drove over to her place on a sunny weekday afternoon to eat the vegan blondies she'd made and shake rattly things at her very adorable baby. Also, we talked into a mic like for like 20 minutes. Enjoy [Music: "Anthem" by The Once]

Hannah (Host): [conversation fades in] It can be whatever you want. The way, the place we've started, I started, with a lot of these conversations is, like, talking about some of the, uh, the small ways that, like, your feminism feels for you like you are enacting it on a day to day basis. [baby noises and crying in the background] [Talking to the baby and reading its clothing] What about you? How are you doing it? Girls who like trucks, boys who like trucks; girls who like dolls, boys who like dolls. I like your onesie!

Brenna (Guest): I used to coordinate the gender studies program at Douglas, so this was the gift they gave me when I went for mat leave.

Hannah (Host): That's what you get.

Brenna (Guest): Yes. He has this and he has his *Secret Feminist Agenda* onsie, which doesn't fit him anymore. I found out today. So those are my small ways to enact [laughter]

Hannah (Host): [laughter]

Brenna (Guest): Make my baby wear—[Talking to the baby] Oh, you want that, huh? Real bad.

Hannah (Host): Really wants the microphone.

Brenna (Guest): Oh Wow. That's exciting. It's a good question though, right? The small ways of enacting feminism, because I feel... I feel it a lot parenting. I feel like I'm acutely aware of... [laughter] I feel like I'm acutely aware of gender roles now. Being pregnant had a huge impact on my feminism, in ways that surprised me. Like on the one hand, all the stuff I can sort of convince myself of like, "Everybody's equal and everybody can do all the same things and there's no real differences." Like, my very, sort of, like 1980s in a power suit feminism? [laughter]

Hannah (Host): [laughter]

Brenna (Guest): Right? And then you have a baby and you're like, "Oh no, literally my husband can leave the house and I can't because this person needs me to survive." Oh, that really changes my understanding of how my body impacts, you know, my feminism politically. But also, uh, I've always been strongly assertively pro-choice, but I am aggressively pro-choice since actually being pregnant. Right?

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- Hannah (Host): Marcelle has said the same thing to me, that she feels like her pro-choice politics were amplified by the experience of pregnancy and having a kid
- Brenna (Guest): Because like, he was planned for and wanted and still days were difficult and labor was scary and awful and there are days now that are long and weepy and, and that's for a baby that I desperately wanted and, you know, has two parents who love him and are present and involved in his life. So yeah, it just made me sort of in a really visceral way, I would lie in bed thinking like, "Oh my God, if I was in this situation against my will, if I was in this situation accidentally, if I was in this situation and didn't want to be here, how horrific with this alien-like experience be for me? Right? So yeah, I've definitely found that I'm, I don't know, more.... I'm less patient with those kinds of like, "Well, you know, how would you feel?" Well, I'll tell you how it would feel. [laughter]
- Hannah (Host): [laughter] I know how I would feel. Yeah.
- Brenna (Guest): The same way I felt before, but times a million, you know. So I don't know, it's interesting being home and I always sort of wrapped up my understanding of feminism, I think, in work and teaching and my writing and now I'm doing none of those things and I'm in this very traditionally domestic, traditionally feminine, traditionally a "not woke" social position [laughter] or at least presumed and assumed to be a not woke social position, and I'm finding that I'm as much a feminist as I ever was, but [baby noises] I'm sorry. [laughter]
- Hannah (Host): I have said it many times: baby sounds on a podcast are a feminist act. Like you gotta have babies sounds on a podcast if you were going to work with women. Otherwise it's—
- Brenna (Guest): This is true. Yeah. He smiling. He's like, "Yeah, mom. Let me talk, man! Let me talk!" [laughter]
- Hannah (Host): [laughter] "I've got things to say!"
- Brenna (Guest): Yeah. So, I guess, I don't know. I think about it a lot because I noticed, you know, people who know me really, really well, family and stuff, have made comments about, you know, of surprise that I will go back to work for example, which seems like... I went to school for like a million years to do the job that I do. [laughter] Like, not—I'm really enjoying being off with him. I certainly don't regret it. I'm grateful for all the time I have, especially when I talk to my friends in the States, but, I'm going back. Like, [laughter] you know, and the assumptions that people make about us and our bodies when we're pregnant and the way in which we become just public fodder for consumption? I was walking up the hill—so Douglas like is half a block from a great sushi place here in New West, and so it's where everybody eats and I was walking—so, everybody knows the bag, right—and I was walking back up the hill with my sushi and very pregnant and one of my colleagues stopped me and he's like, "You shouldn't be

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eating sushi. That's bad for the baby." [laughter] Like, number one, it was veggie sushi anyway, but number two—

Hannah (Host): It's avocado, it's fine, it's good.

Brenna (Guest): It's great for the baby. But number two, how do you possibly think that's appropriate? You know?

Hannah (Host): Yeah, because once you have entered into the like great history of heterosexual reproduction, you're like part of this public property, right? In a way that like is both a sort of, it's an interpolation; it's a like, "Oh, you're part of the system now" and it comes with all of these assumptions about who you are and what your values are going to be and the life that you're going to live and how your priorities are going to shift and your understanding of yourself is going to shift. Like, it's a, yeah, it's a deeply interpolative thing, isn't it?

Brenna (Guest): Yeah. And when you're pregnant, people take weird pleasure in saying things like—I, you know, I'm a planner nerd. I very much enjoy a planner and I like to do a post on Instagram or whatever, and people would say, "Oh, well, when the baby comes, you won't have time for that anymore." You know, like "When the baby comes, you won't be doing, you won't be reading so much. When the baby comes, you won't be doing this. You'll be doing that." Like this desire we have to, no matter who the person is and no matter how well you know them, force them into this box that we've labeled mother [laughter] and it has to look the same for everyone... Yeah. My thoughts are terribly disjointed today. I can't imagine why.

Hannah (Host): [laughter] I mean, you're doing this, this very literal juggling act, right?

Brenna (Guest): [laughter]

Hannah (Host): It is at least two separate and challenging tasks simultaneously. I was thinking about, uh, this particular, like going back to work with a child and a conversation I had. I went to the digital pedagogy lab that was in Vancouver and Jesse Stommel was co-teaching the stream that I did and he was talking a lot—he and his partner have recently adopted a daughter and he wants, you know, he was showing a lot of pictures of her and talking about her a lot and he talked at one point about the sort of political act of bringing his child to work, bringing his infant to work. And I was like, that's really interesting because I feel like you can get away with that in a way that a woman academic could not.

Brenna (Guest): Because we have all these other—we have this insanely low bar set for, for dads. And it's interesting, I would love to talk to Jesse about it, because the queering of that I think is really interesting and not something I know enough, anything, about. But you know, my husband can take our son out for the day and he's like the greatest human being who has ever existed. Like, "Oh my God, you were spending time with your child. Wow!"

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Hannah (Host): [laughter]

Brenna (Guest): Like, "look at you." I remember when I was pregnant somebody said to me like, "Wow, your husband went to every single doctor's appointment with you? Wow!"

Hannah (Host): "And I went to all of them too!" [laughter]

Brenna (Guest): That's exactly what I said. That's exactly what I said! [laughter] Like, I was also there. You know, [to the baby] you were there too, bud. But this idea, and so I think we tend to find, we tend to find men encumbered by children deeply charming as a culture, because we're like, "Oh, look at you, pushing against the grain and in really positive ways," whereas I think we can have a tendency to be impatient with women who do the same because then it's like, "Well, you're not managing your business." [Baby noises] I took him to Congress.

Hannah (Host): How was that?

Brenna (Guest): It was actually amazing. It was a really, really good experience. Um, people were great. They were to a one, great. I mean, I think if they hadn't been, they wouldn't have said anything because

Hannah (Host): [laughter]

Brenna (Guest): ACCUTE is not the place where you stand up and go, "Shut the baby up."

Hannah (Host): "I'm going to take a strong stance against babies"

Brenna (Guest): In this, and you know, and I went to, we went to a lot of family panels and he was, I mean, with him, I mostly only made it to my own panel, professional concerns, that was about it, right? Um, but everybody was great and one of the grad students came up to me at the end and she said, on the last day, and she said, you know, "It was really neat to see you here with him because like I could see doing the same thing." She was, you know, thinking about getting pregnant in grad school, which of course people have such strong opinions about whether or not you should get pregnant in grad school.

Hannah (Host): Sure do!

Brenna (Guest): So she, um, she was really, she said, you know, "It's neat to see it so visible." And I was thinking back to my own, the modeling in my academic career, because my advisor, Jennifer Andrews at UNB who's still amazing, when I met her for the first time, she was heavily pregnant with her second child, to the point where she took me and my husband up for lunch to welcome us to Fredericton and she totally did not fit in the booth. [laughter] She was like ready to pop. And um, Joe was always present on campus. Just, you just knew that that kids would be around, and UNB was a really family friendly campus, for

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both men and women. So, I think the modeling is a huge part of it. I'm interested to see what it's like when I go back because there haven't been babies in the department in a while. It's been at least five years since there was a baby and that was a male academic, so again, the difference in the presence level. And then I took him to a con when he was nine weeks old. I was panelling at Norwest Con and took him to that and he ended up on panels with me because... well, anyway, there was just a timing thing and my husband couldn't take him and so I was, I just wrapped him and took him to the panels and he was great and everybody was great. It's interesting that I felt a lot less anxiety though, taking him to the con environment—which that con in particular is very focused on the family unit of nerds [laughter] and how they will sort of interact together in the space—than I was about Congress. I was nervous about Congress.

Hannah (Host): I mean, there's a central premise of academia in general is that you don't bring your whole self to work, right? You bring only this very, very sort of narrow intellectual slice of yourself and so you can work with people and like never know a single thing about them: if they're married, if they have kids, if they have siblings, if they're caring for an elderly parent, like anything. You know nothing about your colleagues because when you get together with them you either complain about other faculty members who you hate or about your students or, like, talk about your research and this idea that like in order to prove that you are smart, you must like suture off all of the other parts of your life, like that has like significantly—I mean this is like an obvious point—this is why it affects women to a higher degree. It has a really significant impact when you, say, have a young child.

Brenna (Guest): Yeah, absolutely, because I've just been sort of running through my head options, right? Because a childcare in Vancouver is a horrific ordeal, finding it, paying for it, right? [laughter] It's a horrific ordeal and we are on the waiting list for a few places but you don't know until the time comes if you've gotten it or not. So I've been thinking about, you know, how am I going to—what requests am I going to make for my schedule and how is that gonna work and will people be okay with it and will they say they're okay with it but secretly be really pissed off, you know? [laughter] And then you find out five years later that actually you become a pariah, you know, all those good academic things, right? So I think about that a lot. You know, I'm lucky. I'm off until next September, at least from full-time teaching, and so I don't have to think about it yet but it's still keeps me up at night, you know, just wondering how that's going to all slot together. And just, I was musing about this on Twitter the other day, but like, you do a lot of service and my job is entirely teaching and service, and I've been kind of thinking like, how is that gonna look when I go back and all of a sudden I have this person to care for, right? Where before I could fill my evenings and weekends with my research, which is the, you know, something that I find really fulfilling. What's that part of my life going to look like and then where do I fit, right? Because like, so much of my identity as an academic is about advocating for research in the colleges, at ACCUTE, and that's like what I'm sort of noisiest

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about when it comes to professional concerns and service and talking to my colleagues. And so what does that look like if I can't do that anymore, right?

Hannah (Host): Yeah.

Brenna (Guest): I don't know. I don't know. There's all these different ways that your identity shifts that you're not even really aware of until you start to think about putting the pieces back together. Because the first few months were just such a fog of like, is he fed? What time did I last get up? Is he in the house, where's I put him? [laughter]

Hannah (Host): [laughter] I do think that is one of the reasons why women experience the sort of baby penalty in a way that male academics don't, is that sort of so much of what we do is on the evenings and weekends, and there is this sense that, like, you are going to be parenting and especially in those early years, you know, a lot of the hands-on parenting, like, in straight couples gets put onto the mom, no matter how good that co-parenting relationship is. There's just like some things, some things, some nursing things. Yeah.

Brenna (Guest): Yeah. No, absolutely. And it's, I've been thinking about it in relation to my teaching a lot too and our students and how we engage with our students about this. Like, I think so many of us expect our students to just come with their brains to class, right? And leave their bodies and their families at the door and just bring their minds. And I think we expect it, I mean, I think we expect it to a punishing extent of grad students, but I also think we expect it of 17-year-olds, right? [laughter] We expect them to walk in—

Hannah (Host): Well, because I can't do it!

Brenna (Guest): It's insane, right? [laughter] Like, first year students come in, sit in the class, you know, I think about it in relation to some stuff like trigger warnings and content warnings, right? Like, sit in the class, read this book about, say, I used to teach *Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, which is a delightful book to teach, but has really graphic depiction of two parents dying of cancer at the beginning of the book. What I learned is that in any given semester, several of my students will be either going through or have just gone through that process, right? And figuring out ways to manage that that isn't just, "Well, suck it up." [laughter] Right? So, which I think so many—so much of the fight against trigger warnings is like, "Well, they should just suck it up." Well, they're 17.

Hannah (Host): Yeah.

Brenna (Guest): Right? And that's asking for the emotional... I don't even think that's emotional health. I think we once considered it emotional health, but it's the emotional partitioning of like a 55-year-old man, right? [laughter] You're expecting it of a 17-year-old kid. Right?

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Hannah (Host): But even assuming that that's like what you should be teaching them in the first place, right? That that's the goal, even if they can't do it at 17, that in order to become fully-fledged adults, that maturity is signaled by the ability to sort of shut off your life from your mind. Like I mean—

Brenna (Guest): And um, this is totally not even on the same topic now, [laughter] but it reminds me of one of the things I think about a lot as the angry feminist mother of a little boy, which is that I think that is a very, um, that is an ideal of toxic masculinity, right? To be able to shut off the emotional parts, you know, and it's the reason why we punish women for crying at work, but we don't punish a guy who screams at his colleagues, right? In the office.

Hannah (Host): Did you see that thread on Twitter that's been going around from a clown who's talking... It starts like, I'm a clown—

Brenna (Guest): Yes!

Hannah (Host): —and then they're talking about wanting to paint a little boy's face with a blue butterfly and the mom being like, "Absolutely not, skull and crossbones."

Brenna (Guest): [laughter] I just... Okay, first of all, I read that because my brother retweeted into my timeline and my brother and I talked about this all the time, about, like, what is the emotional world that men have access to and like, why are we surprised when the only emotion we let them feel when they're little is anger, right? Like, boys don't cry, so you can be—if you're feeling frustrated, don't cry, just be mad. And if you're mad, don't cry, just be mad. And if you're sad, don't cry, just be mad, right? We blunt their emotional world into anger and then, and then we're surprised when toxic masculinity is the problem, right? I think about it all the time with him, like how do you counteract a society full of moms who prefer skull and crossbones to blue butterflies, because they're terrified of what that blue butterflies represents for their son or their husband, in that example. From that threat, right? Husband's like, "No, don't you dare." How do you counteract all of that and give him like a full palette of emotions to draw from? Right?

Hannah (Host): And doing that knowing that your pushing against messaging that he's going to be getting from every other direction.

Brenna (Guest): And potentially putting him into painful, difficult situations where he's the only boy who cries. Right? And knowing on the one hand that that's like, that's really a healthy thing for him to be able to do, and on the other hand, knowing that that's gonna make grade three suck a lot if it happens on the playground, right? And like who wants to set their kid up for that? So I'm just going to lock him in a bubble and uh, he's just going to read like Erin Wunker's book for basically all of his life and all of the things she cites—

Hannah (Host): Like, we need a kid's picture book edition of *Feminist Killjoy*.

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- Brenna (Guest): I'll let him out fully fledged and sufficiently woke at 18. [laughter]
- Hannah (Host): [laughter] At 18, huh?
- Brenna (Guest): Yeah. That's the plan.
- Hannah (Host): [laughter]
- Brenna (Guest): But yeah, I think about that a lot. Like, it's all, it all ties in together, right? The way we are expected to behave, particularly as academics, but I know it's true in the business world for women too. What we expect of young men, how we allow them to be whole people. Yeah, no, it was interesting buying stuff before he was born and not knowing and looking specifically for gender neutral stuff. It's not easy to find even now, although I was listening to, um, you know, *Age of Persuasion* on CBC? They were doing their summer repeats and it's the two episodes he did on gender and marketing. [baby noises] [speaking to baby:] Oh sweetie. Um, and he was talking about how kids' toys and clothes are more gendered now than they have ever been. I was so fascinated by that! [laughter] I don't know why it surprised me. I live in this academic liberal bubble where I'm just like, "Everybody is cool with people being themselves and doing their own thing."
- Hannah (Host): But then do you remember what happened when target de-gender segregated their toys section, their kids sections, and like the response that they got—and I read a lot of the comments that they got. Why? I don't know. I think I feel like every once in a while, to get myself out of that liberal academic bubble, I really want to like read what people are saying and, and the response is like, people get so mad about gender and they get extra mad around kids, because there is this sense that, you know, that whatever you do with your kids has this really high stakes, right? And that to refuse these like really ingrained social structures at a young age, it's like threatening to the social fabric in a way that isn't in the same way when you're an adult.
- Brenna (Guest): Yeah. That's interesting. That's a really interesting way of thinking about it.
- Hannah (Host): Which isn't to say that it isn't when you're adult because like people who are gender non-conforming as adults like obviously get treated like shit, but yeah, that social panic around, like, what are you doing to the children?
- Brenna (Guest): Well, what do you do with children, like it ignores the fact that all of that is stuff that we've imposed on society, right? Like if we weren't dealing with that mire of toxic masculinity that we were talking about before, if people had more freedom, if the patriarchy didn't exist, then what would we be kicking against? Right? And you wouldn't be sending your, you know, you wouldn't be sending a woke eight year old to the slaughter in grade three, right? Which I mean, as I say like, it's this concern. I want my son to be able to cry. I want him to be able to feel the whole pallet of emotion. [Spoken to baby:] Oh, you just realized there's

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painters out there, didn't you? He says, "Woah." I want him to be able to feel all of the possible emotions. Like I don't want him to be the target of bullies, right? But I don't get to raise all those other kids, you know. [laughter] And I think there's some of that too, like if we could just acknowledge that we're all doing it to each other, you know, and not that it's like this larger social—there's no larger hand saying, "Girls wear pink and boys wear blue" and "Boys are mad and girls have tears." We're doing it to each other all the time. [laughter] I just took a boat to the face, listeners.

Hannah (Host): A boat to the face! [laughter]

Brenna (Guest): A boat to the face. [Dramatic:] Bump bump, bum. [laughter]

Hannah (Host): [laughter] [Music: "Anthem" by The Once]

Hannah (Host): If you'd like some more Brenna, you should for sure be following her on Twitter at @brennacgray. That's B R E N N A C G R A Y. You can find more of her work at *BookRiot.com* and *Graphixia.ca*. The links to those sites are in the show notes. Before we move straight into my regular closing spiel, I've got a special treat for you today. By popular demand, episode 4 guest Kaarina Mikalson has agreed to start coming back onto the podcast regularly in a new segment called Kaarina's Cozy Self-care Corner. We're so confident that this is going to be a new podcast regular feature that we even created a sound effect to introduce this segment. Enjoy. [Music: Kaarina's Theme: loon hoots, instrument plays]

Kaarina: Hello from Kaarina's Cozy Self-care Corner. It is fall and I love fall and not just because I'm a student forever and always and it's the start of new things for anybody involved in school and academics, but also because August is the worst month. It's humid and it's hot and the extent of my loneliness is only matched by my eczema flare ups. So August is over, it's behind us, and September is here and it's a new opportunity. Today's self-care activity is going to be about realizing how competent and capable you are as you face a whole new year, season, month of challenges. Your self-care mission, if you choose to accept it, is to sit down with a piece of paper and a pen and choose a time frame. It can be this past week, this past month, this past year, this past term, whatever makes sense to you and I want you to write down everything you accomplished during that time frame or everything you're proud of yourself for doing. I'm just going to give some examples based on my last month. In the last month, I got my driver's license. I submitted my dissertation proposal. I went out dancing. Yes, I did. For real. I worked out more than three times. Yes, in a month. I worked out more than three times. And just a note, they don't have to be solid things with solid results that you completed. They could be things that you made a concerted effort to do, so one of the things I always beat myself up about is not being a good enough friend, so any month, week, year, season, et cetera, where I can say, "Yes, I made an effort to be a good friend," then that's something I can feel proud of. The first time I did this was in January and I sat down on New Year's Day with a cinnamon bun and I wrote a list of everything in 2016 that I was proud of myself for doing, and then I cried. And I cry a lot, but I don't often

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cry because I'm so happy with myself or I'm so pleased with everything that I've achieved and everything that I'm capable of achieving. So I hope that you're able to approach that feeling and carry it with you as you face new challenges and new sweaters and new scarves. Bye. [Music: Kaarina's Theme: loon hoots, instrument plays]

Brenna (Guest): You can of course find those show notes and all the episodes of *Secret Feminist Agenda* on secretfeministagenda.com. You can follow me on Twitter @hkpmcgregor and if you are going to tweet about the podcast, you can also do that on Twitter because that's what you do on Twitter and you should use the hashtag because that's also what you do on Twitter and the hashtag that you should use is #secretfeministagenda. Also, keep rating and reviewing and sharing the podcast please. You're the reason why we're finding new listeners every week. You are spreading the good news. The podcast theme song is "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans off their album, *Chub Rub*. You can download the entire album on freemusicarchive.org, or follow them on Facebook. Brenna's theme is a beautiful cover of Leonard Cohen's "Anthem" by The Once. Fun fact: this is the number one song that makes me cry the most. Seriously, cry to this song all the time. Anyway, that's it for this week, my darlings. This has been *Secret Feminist Agenda*. Pass it on. [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans]