

Episode 2.15 Complaining About Your Crummy Week with Friends

April 27, 2018

Hannah (Host): [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans] Hi, I'm Hannah McGregor and this is *Secret Feminist Agenda*.

Kaarina: Hey, hey, let's start over.

Hannah (Host): Hi.

Kaarina: Hello Hannah, how are you? You just popped up on my screen.

Hannah (Host): Look at that. Sometimes I just show up on people's screens. So, so here, here's some context listeners, I was just messaging with Kaarina and said, "I had seizure crummy week and I really don't want to record a minisode of *Secret Feminist Agenda* tonight." And Kaarina said, "maybe we could just chat about our crummy weeks instead." I was like, "that sounds like podcast gold. Let's do it."

Kaarina: I mean, who doesn't want to hear two amazing people complain?

Hannah (Host): {Laughs} I think it's what, I said, "The secret feminist agenda this week is complaining with your friends about why your week was shitty."

Kaarina: I remember when I was growing up, I complained a lot and my oldest brother did not complain a lot. And when I had braces it was really painful and I was complaining and he was like, "when I had braces I never complained." And I was like, "well, joke's on you because it's great. You missed out. You should've complained."

Hannah (Host): Sounds like a real missed opportunity because I am finding it a very satisfying

Kaarina: I don't want to suffer silently. That sounds terrible.

Hannah (Host): Who has stoicism ever served literally ever? Not into it.

Kaarina: So tell me about your week.

Hannah (Host): Well, I will say that work is stressful. And then, as is the case with, I think anybody who has been paying attention to the news about the killing in Toronto this week, I've been pretty bummed out about misogyny this week.

Kaarina: Yeah, like especially bummed out, lower than usual, like level of bummed out.

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- Hannah (Host): Yeah. Like I'd say usually I'm like, a steady A- bummed out by misogyny, but this week I'm an A+, an A++ bummed out. I'm going up.
- Kaarina: Oh, I was expecting the scale to go the other way. We're using hand gestures, they're not helpful to you. They're not really helpful to us, to be honest.
- Hannah (Host): Yeah. So that has been sort of the reading and the, you know, my social media feed being filled with information about online misogynist hate groups has been like, a downer.
- Kaarina: Yeah.
- Hannah (Host): And then right at the same time that, that news— like I believe the same day— that that news broke, the smaller of my two cats Pancakes just stopped eating.
- Kaarina: Oh.
- Hannah (Host): And not to like, anthropomorphize a cat, but it felt so awful that like, in the midst of all of this misogynistic hate, my tiny lady cat was like, "I shall reclined in my bed and take no sustenance." Like, No Pancakes stop being a metaphor for the way that women are crushed by oppressive systems.
- Kaarina: Pancakes, you're such a metaphor
- Hannah (Host): I need my cats to not be metaphors. And, and so today, after she hadn't eaten anything for 48 hours, I was finally like, "fuck, okay, I need to take this cat to the vet."
- Kaarina: And does she have anorexia?
- Hannah (Host): She does not. No, she has a very delicate stomach, and I think she has been sneaking bites of Al's food and it upsets her stomach. So I have to switch him onto the food that she eats. As the vet said, I "need to let Pancakes drive the dynamics of the household." And I was like, "okay, that makes me feel better."
- Kaarina: This is a better metaphor. I can work with this. The reason I asked if she was anorexic is because when my cat had a cold and he hadn't eaten in like, 24 hours, I took him to the vet and they were like, "your cat is anorexic." And I was like, "what?"
- Hannah (Host): That's not a real thing I cat can be.
- Kaarina: But when cats are anorexic it means a very different thing. It just means that they are like, the food equivalent of dehydrated.
- Hannah (Host): Oooooooh!

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- Kaarina: Right? And so I was like, "I don't know." I had had this cat for three days. And I was like, "I don't know about cat anorexia." And they were like, "oh yeah, that's a really confusing term. That was probably more upsetting than it had to be." I was like, "yes."
- Hannah (Host): Yeah, so that was, like, it'll be fine, but Pancakes is very, very hard to get into her carrier. And so that took me like I, I made an appointment at 9 for a 10:00 visit, and then spent 40 minutes trying to get her into her carries, failed, called back, delayed the visited another half an hour, spend another half an hour trying to get her into her carrier, failed. Eventually through pure luck, my friend Ashra texted me to ask how Pancakes was doing and I was like, "Pancakes is hiding from me and I am sitting on my living room floor weeping because I cannot take care of this animal properly." And Ashra was like, "would you like me to come over and help get Pancakes in her carrier?" And so Ashra came over and it took the two of us another half hour--
- Kaarina: Wow.
- Hannah (Host): --to get Pancakes into her carrier. It was, from that ten, it was, it was about three and a half hours total of this day that I spent alternately crying and trying to get my cat into a carrier.
- Kaarina: Oh, no.
- Hannah (Host): Yeah. So I'm very tired.
- Kaarina: I feel very lucky because I have to take Cobweb— I mean, I'm not lucky that I have to take Cobweb to the vet like, every month, but he's really good about going in his carrier. And it's a top loading one which makes it even easier and I just like shove him in and he's like, "again?"
- Hannah (Host): The problem with Pancakes is that she doesn't like to be picked up, and so...
- Kaarina: Yeah.
- Hannah (Host): Like, you've got a corner her, and cornering her is very hard because she is small and fast. And the more you try, the more panicked she gets, and the more evasive she gets. And it just escalates, and she's getting more and more upset that I'm getting more and more upset. It was a real scene.
- Kaarina: Pancakes, you metaphor. So slippery!
- Hannah (Host): [Laughs] Metaphor for all the things in my life that I wish I could handle by myself but can't. Because then I was like, weeping on the floor because like, everything hard I have to do, I have to do by myself. And it's so sad. And then like my lovely friend texted me and was like, "do you need me to?" I was like, oh

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yeah, I don't actually have to do things by myself. This is fine. So why was your week crummy?

Kaarina: It wasn't really that crummy.

Hannah (Host): [Laughs] I know, you had good news this week.

Kaarina: I have like, this constant level of stress because I'm teaching my own course in a week and a half, and it's my first time teaching. And it's like three hours a day, four days a week and it's a lot of planning.

Hannah (Host): Three hours a day, four days a week?!

Kaarina: And it's very stressful because I feel like if I could try out some things but instead I have to plan as much as I can in advance. And if I find out on day one that my way of writing lectures and writing discussions is totally wrong, then like, I just need to adapt on the fly. So I'm nervous.

Hannah (Host): Awww.

Kaarina: But I think it's going to be okay. But I'm also pretty sure it's not. [Laughs]

Hannah (Host): It's definitely going to be okay because you have like, you might not have taught a course before, but you public speak quite a bit, and you administer things and you do like, you do workshops, you do lots of knowledge delivery. Like, you don't know how to teach people stuff.

Kaarina: I think it's more like, time management and classroom management. And I'm sure it'll be okay, but it's also our roller derby season is starting the same week as I start teaching.

Hannah (Host): Oooh.

Kaarina: And as the PR person I have had to like, get our photo shoot done, and our posters edited and sent to the printers, and our tickets printed. And oh my God, I've spent like three hours a day on roller derby stuff every day this week. And I'm so tired.

Hannah (Host): That is too many things.

Kaarina: And I love too so much so I can't stop, but I resent it. And all my friends are going on a road trip to Montreal and they were like, "just, just come with us. It'll just be like, a 15 hour drive, and then three days of watching roller derby, and then 15 hour drive back it will be fun." And I was like, "[Laughs] no." Sometimes you need to love things and also have boundaries.

Hannah (Host): [Laughs]

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- Kaarina: I'm sounding so much more dramatic than I mean too.
- Hannah (Host): This is a conversation I've had so often with, particularly with my friend Nancy who used to be— so she is in my chorus and in my quartet, and until recently was also our chorus's artistic director. Which meant when we were putting together our finals packages for internationals, like she was the person who was like, the point person for every aspect of it. And she is also a high school teacher. And so like she has a demanding job, and then did the same thing that so many of us do is just let our hobbies turn into this thing that like, you start off by just being like, "oh, I love this so much. I'll say yes to so many new opportunities," and then all of a sudden you've said yes to too many things and you don't love it anymore. And like you've got to— so like she stepped back from, from artistic directing this year as a like, "I want to still be able to love my hobby. Like, I need this to still be something I get to take pleasure in."
- Kaarina: Yeah. Burnout is a thing that happens even when you love the thing that is slowly sucking you dry. [Laughs] I'm fine, I'm fine. I just need to get through the next few weeks. And of course my cat is in a cone again because he is ridiculous.
- Hannah (Host): What is your cat's ailment other than being too cute?
- Kaarina: He has an allergy to cat litter, certain cat litter. So we found one that he's not allergic to, because they really get into his paws, so they like, cause wounds in his paws and then infections. So we found one that he's not allergic to, but then he was at a cat sitters for a week, so he got exposed to more. So this is hopefully the last time he's going to be in a cone for awhile. And he was being a good sport, but also he keeps getting wet food caught in his cone and then he's just sitting there like, trying to lick it off, while being so smelly. And he's just like sitting six inches from my head, like licking his cone. And sometimes he whips his cone and wet food just flies everywhere. I have to remember that I love him.
- Hannah (Host): [Laughs]
- Kaarina: And also he's on antibiotics, so he puked all over the bed yesterday, because they're upsetting. Right? They upset your stomach.
- Hannah (Host): Oh my God.
- Kaarina: Cats are so wonderful and like, so awful. [Laugh] So capable of hurting you in tiny ways.
- Hannah (Host): [Laughs] Yes, yes. In small ways and big ones. I was talking to, I was talking to my friend Sanara today about like, whoever convinced us that cats were like, an easy pet to have, and how it's like now you're in, you're in it and you're like, "oh, this isn't fucking easy at all." [Laughs]

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- Kaarina: As you're like, carrying a giant back of like, special litter from the far away pet store home. And you're like, "you're not easy."
- Hannah (Host): You could not be— like she was telling me about like, needing three people to get her cat in the carrier when they moved last. And like, it's just like, they're not easy. When they're good, it's just like, "oh look at me. I'm the Snow White of spinsters. Just living here surrounded by all these beautiful cats."
- Kaarina: Snow White without the creepy man at the end. {Laughs}
- Hannah (Host): Or the creepy men in the beginning. Without any of the creepy men anywhere in this story, just the, just the forest friends. Maybe Sleeping Beauty would've been a better, whatever. They're all terrible.
- Kaarina: Okay. All three of those stories— because I also thought of Cinderella— start with a woman who has lots of animal friends, and end with her married. And I'm not sure that that's like an actual happy end.
- Hannah (Host): [Laughs]
- Kaarina: Like, you start off with a ton of beautiful, helpful creatures who really love you and then you have to like, change fundamental parts of yourself to be with a man you hardly know.
- Hannah (Host): [Laughs] Almost like it's a trap or something.
- Kaarina: Yeah, So, but I also had a good week because I became co-director of the project I've been working on for like, five years. Not, not that long.
- Hannah (Host): That's, that's really exciting. Will you tell the good people where they could look at the work that you do on that project?
- Kaarina: Yeah, they can go to spanishcivilwar.ca and see it all.
- Hannah (Host): [Laughs] It will unfold before you.
- Kaarina: You can search "volunteers," and you can read case studies, and you can flip through old books. Yeah, it's fun. You can read testimonies from prisoners of war about how bad the food was in fascist prisons. It's a really fun website.
[Laughs]
- Hannah (Host): [Laughs] Yep.
- Kaarina: And I have really happy feelings about the whole project, and the people I work with who are the best.

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- Hannah (Host): That's awesome. I love the people you work with very much, and also I just think that it's really amazing that you were an undergrad when you started working on this project, right?
- Kaarina: I was, or I just finished my undergrad. Yeah, I just graduated. I remember the first time I talked to Bart, who is one of like, the principal applicant. Oh my God, words.
- Hannah (Host): Oh my God, I don't know.
- Kaarina: I was in Sackville, New Brunswick for a day to see Angela Davis speak. And I was sitting in a cafe drinking a hot chocolate because I didn't drink coffee, and it spilled and Bart was like, "hi, you're going to work for me."
- Hannah (Host): [Laughs]
- Kaarina: And I was like, "My hot chocolate is spilling." And he like, cleaned it up. He like, went and got napkins and cleaned it up and then was like, "so let's talk about the Spanish civil war." And I was like, "okay." And I don't know if he remembers that.
- Hannah (Host): That's really tender.
- Kaarina: Another great moment— now this is just like, great moments with the people I work with--
- Hannah (Host): Yeah, that's great.
- Kaarina: --is when we went to London and ate pies, and then a year later he emailed me a giant picture of us eating pies with the subject line "Remember when we ate pies?"
- Hannah (Host): [Laughs] Is that picture public? Can I share it?
- Kaarina: No.
- Hannah (Host): Alright everyone, you'll just have to picture it. Just like three cool nerds eating some pies.
- Kaarina: Yeah, secret between co-directors.
- Hannah (Host): I mean, I've seen it but, you know, I have my ways. I just was thinking about how what's so cool about all of this is that Bart and Emily when they started the project, we're both what one might categorize as emerging scholars, which is a disgusting term because it sounds viscous and sticky.

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- Kaarina: Thank you! I've never talked to somebody before but my feelings about that term.
- Hannah (Host): It's really gross. But then they like, not only involved even earlier career scholars in the project from the get go, but then have also like, mentored those scholars up. And then now that you are at the point where you're ready to take on responsibility, have like offered you a position of a equality with them, which is like, unprecedented in academia.
- Kaarina: I know. They are so thoughtful, and they are just so supportive, and I'm so lucky to work with them. They're just the best. What exciting things do you have coming up?
- Hannah (Host): Well, I have one very, very big and very exciting thing coming up, which is that regionals are next week.
- Kaarina: Oh my God! You're going to regionals.
- Hannah (Host): I'm going to regionals. That is the regional competition for Sweet Adelines International. That is the international women's barbershop singing organization. We're region 26, which comprises BC, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. The only all-Canadian region. I believe we're called Maple Leaf Region 26.
- Kaarina: Cute, I think. No, I take it back.
- Hannah (Host): It's, you know what, I hate nationalism but, nope, that's the end of it. I hate nationalism.
- Kaarina: Also, it's weird because maple trees don't grow in any of those provinces. Okay. Continue. [Laughs]
- Hannah (Host): No, they sure don't. Yeah. So, I've competed in regionals, in region 26 regionals, a number of times before, but in a different chorus because I was in a different chorus in Edmonton. And so I've seen Lions Gate perform. That's my current chorus. I've seen Lions Gate perform in regionals, but I've never been in Lions Gate performing in regionals, which is very exciting. Lions Gate usually does very well at regionals, and it's the only large size chorus in our region. So we're almost a hundred women on stage, which is really, it's really something to behold when you're in the audience.
- Kaarina: That's huge, wow.
- Hannah (Host): Yeah. Yeah, it's really awesome. When we get to internationals, we are one of the smaller choruses competing.
- Kaarina: Whaaat?

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- Hannah (Host): Yeah. But I am also, so not only am I competing with my chorus this year, but I'm also competing for the first time as a quartet.
- Kaarina: I've seen pictures of this. It's really cute.
- Hannah (Host): Which is really exciting and really terrifying. Yeah.
- Kaarina: Yeah. I mean, I guess if you're used to competing on stage with 99 other people, then three other people is going to feel very different.
- Hannah (Host): Yeah, and like you are the only person singing your part. And so if anybody is even the slightest bit off, it sounds bad. And we've only been singing together since November. It's all of our first quarteting experience. Quarteting, as it turns out, is surprisingly hard to do. Which was sort of a like, revelation for all of us that we sort of thought like, "yeah, yeah, we'll get to like a basic level of competence pretty easily. We're all good singers." And then we started and we were like, "ho, shit. This is hard."
- Kaarina: We were like, "Frat boys do this all the time."
- Hannah (Host): [Laughs] I've seen *Pitch Perfect*. We can just figure this out in an empty swimming pool. No. So like, we're learning a lot and that is really exciting and really cool. And our dresses look amazing and have really deep pockets.
- Kaarina: Hoo, good.
- Hannah (Host): But we're all really nervous, and I think we'll consider it a win if nobody cries or throws up on stage.
- Kaarina: Oh, yeah. Totally.
- Hannah (Host): So that's my big, my big exciting thing coming up. That is exciting, but is also nerve wracking and you have so many exciting things coming up.
- Kaarina: Yeah. So teaching and playing in my first game with my team for roller derby. So people I know will be watching, hopefully, trying not to cry but then crying anyway. Those are things I'm up to.
- Hannah (Host): [Laughs] That third one is, seems to be a daily activity for me these days.
- Kaarina: Oh my God. My whole body is controlled by my uterus this week, and I cried so many times on Tuesday, including when I found a smashed robin egg and brought it home to show my partner. And then even after I'd like taken it outside and like, locked the door like, an hour later I was like, but that could have been a baby bird and then I just lost it. Oh. And I'm crying now just remembering it.

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Hannah (Host): Because it's a metaphor! Oh no. You know what else I did this week? I watched season one of *Glow*.

Kaarina: Oh, what do you think? I wasn't a fan.

Hannah (Host): No? Tell me. I was surprisingly touched by it.

Kaarina: Okay.

Hannah (Host):: Like, I did not expect to like it, or to be even remotely moved by it because I have zero interest in wrestling, but I found there were like, a number of scenes where like, the women talked about the sort of experience of getting to use their bodies in those ways, and how that made them feel like they were getting their bodies back, which I found very moving. And I also found the idea of sport as a way for these two women to repair a friendship, really moving.

Kaarina: Yeah, that was nice.

Hannah (Host): And it was really, really exciting to see multiple fat women on screen who were doing things as competently and as athletically as the other characters.

Kaarina: Yeah, that's true. I think my problems with it were mostly that I felt like they had all these interesting plots and then they just couldn't get any further with them. So like, the miscarriage plot and the race and stereotyping issues that some of the women were raising. And instead of like, spending more time on those, they were like, let's have Marc Maron on screen for awhile. I was like, done.

Hannah (Host): I was literally about to say when you were like, "what I didn't like..." I was gonna say, "was it Marc Maron's face?" Cuz on the screen so much.

Kaarina: it was like, how much time his face was given. Yeah.

Hannah (Host): Yeah, the only function he seems to serve narratively for me is to like demonstrate how much more competent and interesting all of the women around him are.

Kaarina: Including the woman who sleeping with him.

Hannah (Host): Oh she's, she's great.

Kaarina: Yeah, right? She's so great.

Hannah (Host): Yeah. But I love the women and I am hopeful because they're doing another season. I'm hopeful that they will, that we will get to see more of their stories and less of Marc Maron's face.

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- Kaarina: Yeah, I mean, I felt like it was one of those, you know, there's like that study where men think that women speak so much more than they do. I felt like if I had plotted a diagram Marc Maron would've like, talked for 95% of the series. And then like, this group of amazing women would have talked for like, 5%. That's how I felt, even though that's not true. That's the feeling that left with me.
- Hannah (Host): That is really legit. And I'm trying to remember, there's this Netflix series that went up not too long ago, that's like a western about a town with no men in it.
- Kaarina: Oh yeah, isn't it called like, *The Town With No Men*, or something? [Laughs]
- Hannah (Host): It might be. [Laughs]
- Kaarina: Yeah, I've read about this and like the poster only has men on it.
- Hannah (Host): And did the first episode only men talk. Yeah. [Laughs]
- Kaarina: I have movie recommendation for you, and maybe you've already seen it. It's this movie called *Unfinished Song*.
- Hannah (Host): Oh, I've never even heard of it.
- Kaarina: It's a British movie about a choir for like, seniors that this young woman runs. And all these seniors are really into it, including this woman, but her grumpy husband is too grumpy to ever enjoyed anything. But eventually he's like, encouraged to sing. And it's really sad and beautiful, and my mom really loves it, and I really love it. [Laughs] And I think you will too.
- Hannah (Host): Sounds great. Yeah. [Laughs] When don't I need to cry?
- Kaarina: Maybe when you're onstage. [Laughs]
- Hannah (Host): [Laughs] Yeah. Okay. That's legit. I had a really intense moment. So we had our friends and family sneak preview— it's like a dress rehearsal— and my, our mutual friend Lucia came, and we were singing our ballad, our contest ballad is "Something Good," you know, from *Sound of Music*.
- Kaarina: Somewhere, Emily Hovan just like, her ears perked up.
- Hannah (Host): [Laughs] Yeah. And we're always told to like, connect to a particular narrative in order to like, emote in that song. And I have struggled to because the narrative that we're always being offered is a very like, heteronormative romantic narrative that just like, doesn't evoke any feelings in me. But when we were singing it on Tuesday night, and I was thinking about Lucia being there, and about how grateful I am for her friendship--

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- Kaarina: Aw, Hannah!
- Hannah (Host): I actually teared up on stage a little bit.
- Kaarina: Oh my God. That's so beautiful.
- Hannah (Host): It's like, "oh no, this is a feeling."
- Kaarina: Wow. Yeah. Today— speaking of like, really nice feelings about people in your life— today one of my friends posted on Facebook and was like, "does anybody have a copy of *Notes From a Feminist Killjoy* I can borrow?" And I said "Yep." And my other friend from roller derby, she commented that she was on her way to Montreal for the roller derby tournament with a signed copy in her bag, and she doesn't know the author who is my supervisor, and she's such a wonderful person, and it just made me so happy.
- Hannah (Host):: When somebody doesn't know that your, your friend's friend and just independently compliments your friend in front of you, like, that is a rare but splendid experience.
- Kaarina: Yeah, and also knowing that like, a book that I really enjoyed and I know like, kind of the kind of work that went into it, knowing that it found like, that it's found its way to, you know, a woman and a mother and a feminist and who like, will really love it makes me so happy. Feelings.
- Hannah (Host): [Laughs] Well that was all beautiful, and we've been talking for half an hour, and I think I should stop recording now.
- Kaarina: Yeah, that sounds good. [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans]
- Hannah (Host): As per usual, you can find show notes and all the episodes of *Secret Feminist Agenda* on secretfeministagenda.com. You can follow me on Twitter @hkpcgregor and you can follow Kaarina @Kaarinasaurus. And of course you can tweet about the podcast using the hashtag #secretfeministagenda. Don't forget to rate and review the podcast wherever one might rate and review things. Apple podcasts, for example. 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. *Secret Feminist Agenda* is recorded on the traditional and unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh first nations, where I'm grateful to live and work. This has been *Secret Feminist Agenda*. Pass it on. [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans]