

Pretty Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Amy Schneider

JVN // Welcome to Getting Curious. I'm Jonathan Van Ness. And every week I sit down for a gorgeous conversation with a brilliant expert to learn all about something that makes me curious. Now, if you could hear the literal burgeoning queer excitement in that intro that you maybe don't always hear. You're gonna understand why right now. Do you remember where you were when you first saw Amy Schneider compete on *Jeopardy!*? Chances are, you were in your living room with your pets or people you love, a work day behind you and dinner was in the freaking oven—or you were, like, ordering it like I probably was. For people who ritually watch *Jeopardy!*. We welcome contestants into our homes night after night, we get to know them, we play along with them, we care for them. So when Amy ascended to *Jeopardy!*'s legendary status, it was a win for her and for everyone rooting her on. Her *Jeopardy!* career is so major. She's major and it's major that we have a chance to literally meet her today and spend time with her and get to see what it's like to be one of the most iconic people ever on *Jeopardy!*. Now, if you've been living under a fucking rock and I don't know what's wrong with you if that's the case. Amy Schneider is an American software engineer and *Jeopardy!* champion. Following a 40 game winning streak. She became the most successful woman to ever compete on *Jeopardy!*. She is second all time in the show's history trailing only Ken Jennings. Also, she is the first openly transgender contestant to qualify for the Tournament of Champions. Her new book—*In The Form of a Question: The Joys and Rewards of a Curious Life*—is out this month. Amy, how are you?

AMY SCHNEIDER // I am doing fantastic.

JVN // Forty fucking games. That's longer than a month. You sent 40 hoes packing, and I just wanna say, good—Wait, that's way more than 40!

AMY SCHNEIDER // Eighty!

JVN // Yeah. 80 hoes packing more like 40 times two. I'm obsessed with you for that.. So you're a literal expert in curiosity. What is something that has sparked your curiosity recently?

AMY SCHNEIDER // Yeah, it's—just last night I was, I was thinking about how in Britain they've got, like, knights that are, like, "sir" and "lady" and, like, whether there's been any controversy over there around, you know, any non-binary people or people transitioning or things like that, but I haven't researched it. I'm gonna look at my Wikipedia history and see what I've been, what rabbit hole I've gone down recently.

JVN // I only ever just go down, like, deep gymnastics and figure skating history holes on Wikipedia, usually. I'm really excited to hear what you do.

AMY SCHNEIDER // Let's see. Oh, I was actually, like, going and looking at the Kennedy assassination. There was, like, that secret service agent that, like, revealed something about a bullet or something.

JVN // His new book! He placed the bullet in a different place so it wouldn't get stolen or whatever. Right.

AMY SCHNEIDER // Yeah. Which, like, I couldn't quite figure out why that mattered, really.

JVN // Well, because maybe there's like, like—the multiple killer thing.

AMY SCHNEIDER // Yeah. You know, that's, that's a thing. I mean, I was just trying to remember, like, what the conspiracy theories kind of say and, like, I looked at it and I was,

like, I don't know—if it was a conspiracy, it was so good we're never gonna figure it out. So, like, it's not something I'm gonna like, obsess over too much.

JVN // Ah! So I guess you kind of accidentally, we all just discovered that together. We just, like, accidentally answered our next two questions, which is, like, where did you go to learn more? Wikipedia. And what we discovered is that—well, what did you discover?

AMY SCHNEIDER // I hadn't known about the fact that there was, like, a House Committee investigation that did say that there were probably multiple gunmen.

JVN // Ooooh! Was that, that Warren Commission or whatever or, like, some commission?

AMY SCHNEIDER // It was later than that the Warren Commission said that he acted alone, but then there was another commission that said that there were multiple gunmen, but that was based on this audio recording that later kind of got debunked. So it doesn't really mean anything.

JVN // Wow. Okay, okay, okay, okay. So your book, which, congratulations. I know how hard it is to write a book, honey. And, like, congratulations. Your book is about so much more than your Jeopardy! run. But in the spirit of going for \$1000 clues first, how do you tell the story of your Jeopardy! career?

AMY SCHNEIDER // Yeah. Well, I mean, it's, it's something that I—I grew up watching it. I can't remember ever not watching the show, you know, and I was always, like, good at school and things like that. So it was just sort of always in my, in my plan to, to be on the show someday. And I'd been trying out for, like, maybe 15 years before I actually got on the show, which, you know, turned out to be a great thing because it meant that I didn't get on the show until after I had transitioned, which, you know, first of all is just something that I'm, I'm happy about. And second of all, I know that I wouldn't have done as well. You know, I just wouldn't have been myself and, like, pre-transition, there's always some part of my mental brain that's, like, busy, like, maintaining the facade of boyness, and not having that anymore just, you know, freed up my brain to, to focus on the game.

JVN // Fuck yes, I'm obsessed with that.

AMY SCHNEIDER // That's all the sort of like leading up to being on Jeopardy! and then the Jeopardy! run itself was just such a shocking thing to me, you know, like, I knew I was pretty good at the game and I, I thought I could, you know, win a couple of episodes or whatever. But then for what happened to happen was just something that was really mind blowing. And for it to all happen, all of my episodes being taped before any of them had aired and knowing this thing that nobody else in the world knew was such a, a weird and fascinating month of my life.

JVN // Oh, so it took about a month for your episodes to start coming out after you had recorded them.

AMY SCHNEIDER // Yeah, more or less. Yeah.

JVN // How interesting! That reminds me of, like, when *Queer Eye* was wrapped but no one knew yet. And I was, like, "Well, I wonder..." Yay us! So how would you describe yourself as a Jeopardy! player? Like, cool, calm, collected? Fucking aggressive? Fucking more, like, leaves it all on the dance floor or more, like, consistent queen?

AMY SCHNEIDER // I would say more consistent. That was certainly something I aimed for. I would also say definitely competitive, which is not sort of my natural state, but I really, like, pushed myself to really be competitive and be there to win. You know, it was the only chance I was going to get to be on the show and then the only chance I was going to get to

make that amount of money in that short of a time. And it was also, once I got into, it was so fun. I just didn't want anybody to, to take it away from me. I mean, I was, like, "These are all nice people that I'm meeting every day and I'm here to crush their dreams and I'm gonna do it."

JVN // Were you stressed out having to come up with, like, a different blurb about yourself? Like, every fucking day for 40 days?

AMY SCHNEIDER // I definitely was, I was getting very close to, if I had gone another, like, three or four episodes, I would have started making some stuff up because I was just running out of ideas. And I also, like, I kind of held myself to as high a standard as I could with those anecdotes. I'm, you know, a theater kid, I'm a performer and, and I was always conscious of the fact that it wasn't just a game, it was a television show. And so I was always trying to have an anecdote that's, like—you know, the 10-15 seconds that you have—beginning, middle end, punch line, get out.

JVN // Okay, awareness! Because sometimes the people's stories just suck and you're like, oh God, that was like the most painful 10 to 15 seconds of my life. So thank you for giving us a Master Class and just, like, gorgeosity in exactly what you just said, like, stand up comedian vibes. I'm obsessed. So how would you compare your on-camera *Jeopardy!* self with, like, who you are off camera?

AMY SCHNEIDER // You know, I tried to keep it like, reasonably similar, you know, that was, that was one of the sort of conscious decisions I made going in was, like, not worrying about how I was coming off or trying to, like, present myself a certain way—it was just gonna again take energy away from, from focusing on the game. You know, but that said I wanted people to like me, you know, I've watched the show my whole life. I know what I like contestants to be like and what kind of annoys me. And so I didn't want to be one of those people that are annoying...

JVN // Which is...

AMY SCHNEIDER // Like, being really frantic, visibly frantic with the buzzer and, and that sort of thing.

JVN // Do they ever not work? Like, the people who are frantic, do you think they're just not working, like, those days? Like, does the buzzer, a little—is there a little lag time of the buzzer? Is there a little QAnon conspiracy around like the efficacy of those buzzers or what?

AMY SCHNEIDER // Well, no, not really. I mean, the way the buzzer works is that if you buzz in too early, then when the buzzers do get enabled, yours is, like, a quarter second slower than everybody else's. So it penalizes you if you buzz in before the light goes on.

JVN // Ooooh!

AMY SCHNEIDER // And so the secret of it is, is that actually every contestant is buzzing in that frantically, it's just, I kept it below the podium where nobody could see it. Which is also partly a way of, like, then people don't know how many times you're actually ringing in and you can sort of be, like, if somebody else rings in on something you didn't know, you just sort of be, like, "Oh, I got that. I just, I, I just got beat on the buzzer but I, I knew that, I knew that."

JVN // Ah! So one of the first things that we learn about *Jeopardy!* contestants is their names, obviously. And in your book, you write candidly about how you landed on the name Amy. What was it like to introduce yourself as Amy on the show, and in such a public way?

AMY SCHNEIDER // I mean, it was, you know, wonderful in, in, you know, the—is the short answer. You know, again, like, thinking about if I had been on the show under my, my dead name and, like, what it would have been like to go back and see that would have been such a bummer. And it's been a few years at this point. But it's, like, there's such a pride in, like, I picked out that name and it's perfect for me and I love it and I'm very, just very happy about it. You know, growing up, I could never have imagined that I would be allowed to change my name somehow. So it was, it was pretty cool. It was really gratifying.

JVN // Ah! Trans joy, we deserve it. Love! And then, writing about your childhood in Ohio, you note, "That I was not a boy was not a possibility I considered. I assumed that other boys felt the same. Found it just as exhausting and unbearable." Okay, the resonance that I feel with that was major. What was it like to reflect on this period of your life for the book? Because I'm sure this was, like, such a whirlwind time. You'd become—in this time, you'd become, like, a public figure—like, so many people know who you are. So, yeah, what was that like?

AMY SCHNEIDER // Yeah, I mean, I think that that's something that I was spending a lot of time reflecting on already, just in my life. That's again, one of the things about transitioning, like I say in the book is that you have to kind of re-tell your whole history of yourself to merge it back together with, with your current self. When I first transitioned, I felt so alienated with the person I had been pre-transition and that was really unpleasant and I had to work to kind of reconcile myself throughout my life. So when it came to writing the book, those sections were kind of just, like, ready to go because I'd been kind of, like, thinking about that so much. And like you say, too, like, having become a public figure and all of a sudden, like, my life changing so much in that sense, it does make you re-examine yourself because, you know, ultimately so many people know me, but they know just this, like, one part of me and it can become a weird thing where you start to, like, lose your private self in your public self. And so that was another thing that was kind of, like, forcing a lot of self reflection at the time anyway. Where it was more challenging was just about some of the harder points in my life that I talked about and sort of revisiting those. I felt like for whatever reason, it felt important to do so, but I was surprised at how emotionally intense it got to be kind of reliving those and how it would—certain chapters I was working on, it would really, like, kind of put me in a tailspin and affect, like, the rest of my life when, even when I, I put the laptop down, that wasn't something I was expecting.

JVN // I used to say in therapy it felt like—when I wrote *Over The Top*—it felt like putting my soul into like a blender and then putting it back together again. It really is a lot. But you're a strong ass woman for fucking doing it. So, more power to you. So, I don't know about you but as a non-binary trans person, you know, I'm a queer person. Some of these states are just really giving it to the girls, boys and non-binaries out there. You come from Ohio. You're from Ohio, which you write about. So, what's it been like to return to Ohio as an advocate for trans youth? I wouldn't imagine Ohio as being, like, super *not* wanting to legislate against trans people.

AMY SCHNEIDER // They're pretty into it. Yeah. So, yeah, I did go back there and actually testify at the state legislature in a hearing about one of those bills. Basically, I was debating what I was gonna do and I was in the middle of a trip, I was gonna have to, like, fly from New York to Columbus and back in a, in a day and, and all of this sort of thing. But then I was sitting there thinking about it and I said, you know, what, like, compared to being a trans kid in Ohio, if this passes, having to take a couple of plane flights and do something scary is nothing I owe it to them because their lives are on the line, you know, and then I get there too. And as I was waiting and I was with the people that have invited me, there was this real sort of, I guess you would say kind of imposter syndrome sort of thing because, you know, these are, like, nonprofits, people working in government, people that are there, you

know, on the ground every day, like fighting this fight. And I'm just this celebrity from Oakland that is, you know, flying in and flying out and, you know, I felt kind of weird about that. But they were so reassuring and they were so saying, like, "Look, you're getting attention that none of us could get and you have your role to play and we have ours. That's what the fight takes is everybody contributing in their own way." So that I came out of it feeling a lot better and, you know, we were able to delay it at the time. It has since gotten revived and it, it did get passed. I think I just saw that recently, that it had been blocked by a judge for the time being. But yeah.

JVN // Hm. A lot of these bans on gender-affirming care, education bills, anything targeting trans folks. We definitely think that we're gonna start seeing those at the Supreme Court is what we've been thinking on the pod just because we're gonna get so many different decisions on, like, some laws being blocked, some not being blocked and that's certainly gonna send it to the Supreme Court. So we're watching that really closely over here. But this was one moment back to the book. That was a small moment that I loved when you came out to your co-worker and they gave you a mug with Amy on it. What are some simple ways listeners can support trans folks in their lives?

AMY SCHNEIDER // Yeah, I think that the main thing is just to listen to them and take them at their word and not, you know, not debate them when they tell you what is true about themselves, you know, I got a message from some stranger online but it was their, you know, like, maybe mid-twenties son had just moved back in and had expressed, like, they, you know, kind of felt some discomfort with their gender and they wanted to, they were asking if their parents could take them out to buy some, like, you know, women's clothes that they might feel more comfortable in, in this sort of thing. And the parents were completely accepting and, and nothing wrong with with their attitude towards the whole thing. But they were asking me, like, "What should we do? How should we handle this?" Partly, like, asking between the lines, like, should we start using "she / her" pronouns since it looks like that's where this is going to go you know, and the answer was just, like, your son already told you what to do. He said that he still wants to be using he / him pronouns for now. And he would like to buy some clothes, do that. You know, when the time comes that he wants to change pronouns, he will say so or she will say so. And until then they don't need, you know, it's hard, it's hard to go through that change.

And I certainly spent, you know, a few months in a situation where I was going out, dressed as a woman was sort of on the road to transitioning. But I didn't know that I could call myself transient. I didn't have a new name. I didn't know if I wanted to change my pronouns and I really appreciate the people who just said, "OK," and didn't ask follow up questions and didn't, you know, try to figure out what was really going on. That's really just what it's about is let people transition at their own time and their own way and don't question them about it and don't react like it's a huge deal. It is a huge deal to them, but they don't necessarily want you to be reacting that way again. Like I say, it's a scary thing to do to transition. And the reason it's scary is you're worried that everyone in your life, you're changing your relationship to them. And so when you, the person in your life kind of oversells it and wants to talk about it too much and things like that, that kind of plays into that fear. Like, "Oh, now I'm not this person's friend, now I'm their trans friend," and, you know, like, don't, don't let that happen.

JVN // Hm. Thank you so much for that. So, you also write about dealing with ADD, and in the book, you say, "ADD made me literally addicted to learning." And I loved your point that, "When you're talking about your internal mental processes, what's the difference between a disorder and a soul?" Honey, how have you come to understand your ADD?

AMY SCHNEIDER // Yeah, I mean, I think, you know, the main thing that it's done for me is giving me a path out of like a lot of, like, negative self talk and beating myself up about things. It's made me realize that the reason that I can't keep my house as neat as other people that I know is just that my brain doesn't work that way and that is just harder for me than it is for them. It's not that I'm lazy and it's not that I'm flawed. It's just that I'm different, and I have different skills. And you know, again, that thing about it making me addicted to learning like that's 100% true. It's why I do, like, go through all these Wikipedia wormholes and, and things like that because I get bored so easily. And I need something to do that'll interest my brain and learning new things works every time to keep my brain happy. And so that's gotten me so much benefit in my life, you know, not least, you know, a million dollars on *Jeopardy!*. And so I can accept the tradeoff that it's also harder to keep my place clean and it's also harder for me to stay focused on long projects and not go off and drop it and start something new.

JVN // Hm. So what advice do you have for people who are trying to understand their brains?

AMY SCHNEIDER // I guess, you know, keep at it. I think it's sort of a lifelong process. I certainly have found therapy incredibly useful and it, it took me a while to find the right therapist. But once I did, I've learned so much through that work with my therapist about, about my brain and about, you know, my sort of underlying motivations and things. And I think, you know, when it comes to mental health, our mental health system and the way we talk about it is so pathologizing, you know, it's again, "attention deficit disorder," like, what makes it a disorder? It's a disorder because it's harder for the kid to sit still in class. But that's, you know, society's problem potentially and not yours. So, you know, you have to engage with that kind of pathologizing language to get treatment and to get, you know, medication and things like that, but don't internalize it. Being ADD is not a disorder any more than being trans is a disorder even though I'm on prescriptions for both of them. You know, and like I, I, I, in a sense, I need treatment for both of them, but that's not because there's anything wrong with them. It's just, I just want my life to be as happy as possible.

JVN // Yes. Amy. Come on de-stigmatization. So how did you learn to, like, thrive? And I mean, because you wrote an incredible book and you were incredibly successful on *Jeopardy!* all while having ADD. So how did you navigate that? And you, because you obviously like are in a really good place with it

AMY SCHNEIDER // in the case of *Jeopardy!*, you know, I was really able to kind of leverage it for myself and to really have that, like, hyper focus during those 30 minutes at a time that I was, that I was in the game. I did a lot of work beforehand, like, visualizing, like, how am I going to deal with distractions when my mind starts to wander? And you know, and then it didn't turn out to be that hard—because the thing about *Jeopardy!* is it goes so fast, like it's like bang bang bang. So it's sort of constant stimulus, there's not time even for my ADD brain to get, to get bored and distracted during it, which is not the case for writing a book, that was a, a whole different challenge.

JVN // But one that you were able to do, and I'm so glad that you did. So in the book, you write that quote, knowledge is a shield and a sword, a joy and a duty. How has knowledge had all of these meanings for you?

AMY SCHNEIDER // Yeah, I mean, I think that, you know, knowledge as, as a shield, I think about it in terms of, like, not getting scammed, basically. Like, if you sort of know, kind of what money is and how it works and you know, the history of some, like other things, then you can see that Cryptocurrency was never money and could never be. And you could see that it was a scam, which it was. That's sort of one of the examples of, of it being a shield and, you know, as a sword. It, it, it, I think, you know, I don't like to think of it as, as

attacking people with, with my knowledge or whatever. It is a *tool*. It, it makes you prepared to, you know, whatever a situation arises, it makes you, you know, better at, at your job, it makes you better in relationships and, you know, it, and it's not always easy to pin down, like what specific thing you never know what particular piece of knowledge is gonna come in useful at what time. But you can trust that if you keep learning, some of them are going to turn up when you least expect it as being just the knowledge that you need. You know, and it's a joy just because it is for me. I don't know, like, maybe it isn't for everybody but I just, I just get such gratification of, of knowing things and learning new things and being like, "Oh, I didn't know that. That's so cool."

JVN // Ah! That reminds me of this time when I was watching *Outlander* and there was this, like, scene from the Battle of Kum Ladin that it was like Kum Ladin, 1748. And then like three days later, I was at this gay party and the tiebreaking trivia question was when was the battle of Kum Ladin? And I just like, I was like, and I knew and everyone was so impressed with me and I knew it all because of not *Jeopardy!* but *Outlander*. So, yay! OK. So I don't know how much you can talk about this but like, how does *Jeopardy!* work, queen? Like, you wake up, you're in a hotel you gotta, to get and then you, like, go do HMU, like, did you guys do like because this is kind of crazy, but I used to do the wife of the announcer of *Jeopardy!*'s hair. So I feel like I know some of the things like, don't you do like several episodes a day? Like, yeah. Right.

AMY SCHNEIDER // Yeah, you do five episodes a day. So your call time is 7:30, you meet up in the, in the staging area in the parking garage and, and they walk you all in. Everybody brings at least three changes of clothes. So you take that to wardrobe, they decide what one they want you to be wearing for your first episode. And then they rotate everybody through hair and makeup and while they're doing that, they go through this long briefing of explaining basically, like, all the rules, all the basics of the game play, you know, which like 95% of us know all of it already because we're, like, *Jeopardy!* obsessive, but they just have to make sure that everybody has been told the same thing. That part got real tedious real fast when I was coming back in every day.

JVN // Yeah.

AMY SCHNEIDER // And so once they've got everybody in hair and makeup, you go over and do a rehearsal, they run everybody through in batches and everybody gets two chances up on the stage to practice the game and to get used to how the buzzer feels and to, you know, just be on the stage and, and, and take it all in.

JVN // So Final *Jeopardy!*, you're like, kind of, like, "Ok, I have this much, my competitors have this much," and then the category comes up. So it'll be like historical figures or something. And then because like they can all be because like there's not like set topics for final *Jeopardy!*. It could be like anything, it could be, like, 18th century literature or like anything. So it's like literally anything. And then that's when you see that and you're, like, "Ok, based off how much I know about like, you know, 18th century literature, I'm gonna wager however much, like, based on how much I know." And then you see the question and then once you see the question, you're, like, "Fuck me." So—or maybe, "Yay!" And then, and then is the screen, like, does that screen just look like a little whiteboard or something? What do you write on or do you just use your finger? Is there like a little pen?

AMY SCHNEIDER // There's a stylus, yeah. So it's a screen that you're, you're writing on with a, with a stylus and you know, I definitely, I have had terrible handwriting my whole life and doing it with like a thick stylus on a little screen did not help that at all. So I was, I was always kind of like one of my secret fears. Like, the whole my whole time on *Jeopardy!* was that I would get a Final *Jeopardy!* answer, right? But, like, write it allegedly and not get credit for it. Like, I was always, like, freaking out that that might happen.

JVN // And why can't I remember right now? But on Final, you still have to write, like, "what is" or "who is," like, you do you have to write the answer as a question on Final *Jeopardy!*.

AMY SCHNEIDER // You do. But this is a, a behind the scenes fact. So like there's a moment in the commercial break between them announcing the category and then them coming back and reading the clue where they'll always come back with a shot. That's, like, of all the contestants writing on their thing. And the implication is that they're writing down their wagers, but that's not true. Actually, what they're doing is we're writing down either the word "what" or "who" and they tell us which one is going to be so that we've already got it written down before the clue comes up so that we don't forget to write this a question.

JVN // Fuck. Yes. Queen with the scintillating behind the scenes knowledge. Ok. I'm so obsessed and wow. You're also a tarot queen, which I know that this is, like, something I shouldn't, well, not, shouldn't. But it's, like, I just grew up in a really religious family and we had this, like, really ultra religious cleaning lady who would wear knee pads and, like, blast Joyce Meyer 24 hours a day. Like whenever she was with us, not literally 24 hours because she didn't live at our house. But whenever she was there, like Joyce Meyer was on and whenever I would ask a question about something, like, she'd be, like, "That's how the enemy gets in and makes you gay," or whatever, she didn't really say that. But she, she would just say "the enemy in" and then you become an addict or whatever, but I need to be more into it. I think I'm not, like, really that scared of it, but like tarot. Cool. How different is reading tarot from, like, solving a trivia clue and like, yeah, and also like, what is tarot in, like, three sentences or less?

AMY SCHNEIDER // Yeah. So tarot is, is just a, a fancy deck of cards that was developed by some, you know, nut jobs in like around the year 1900. But they all, they all kind of have meanings associated with them. And so when you, you, you pull some at random and then you think through the meanings and, and you try to tell a story about how that meaning applies to, to either you or the, or the person that you're giving the reading for. I got into it. I don't know, maybe like 10 years ago, like, and it wasn't something I ever expected to get into because like, I am like, you know, I'm a software engineer, I'm a very, like, kind of rationalist, like, you know, atheist type of person. And I was, like, "Oh, it's all just a scam or whatever," but I, I came to learn that it's not really a scam. It is a tool for self analysis. I would always tell people I would, I would sit at the bar and give readings to strangers. And I've always told them, "I'm not going to tell you anything that you don't already know, it just is a prompt to make you think about yourself in a different way and come to truth about yourself that, that you knew on some level but didn't have them at the surface." And that's what I think is really just cool and valuable about it and I've, I've seen it help so many people and I've been helped by it so many times.

JVN // Uh... how jelly that like someone just, like, sat next to Amy Schneider got a fucking free tarot reading. That's cool. I love that. Like, you fierce. Ok. So now some of our dream, *Jeopardy!* Clues would be about figure skating, gymnastics, Dolly Parton, the Golden Girls and gardening. So our amazing producers have pulled some for each topic from old *Jeopardy!* episodes. Shall we play? Sound of *Jeopardy!* then? Darling?

AMY SCHNEIDER // Well, not, not one of those is a topic I would have picked but yeah, let's do it.

PRODUCER // Here are our *Jeopardy!* clues for today. From show 616 on Monday, April 20th, 1987. We have Celebrity Quotes for 300. These are all sourced from the *Jeopardy!* archive. The clue: "He revealed, quote, 'Marlow and I watch Golden Girls every Saturday night. It's our foreplay.'" End quote.

JVN // Well, I accidentally saw it on the answer. When I scrolled to the next page. It was the only answer I saw. It's the only answer I saw.

AMY SCHNEIDER // Who's Marlow. I know who Marlo is, and it's not coming to me, because I don't because I have no other context for it.

JVN // He—I'll give you a hint. He was a talk show host.

AMY SCHNEIDER // Was a talk show host.

JVN // Or is, was maybe was, it's Phil Donahue, right?

AMY SCHNEIDER // Oh!

JVN // Yeah, I saw that, but that's the only one I saw. Ok. What's our next one?

PRODUCER // Ok. From show 3442. This is Tuesday, July 20th, 1999 from movie songs for 400. The clue. Jonathan, this is customized for you. Whitney Houston sang this 1974 Dolly Parton. Ha the bodyguard.

JVN // Ah! Ah, what is? I will always love you.

PRODUCER // You got it.

JVN // Oh my God. But you already, I, I know you knew that, Amy.

AMY SCHNEIDER // I definitely knew that. No. And that is one of the very few, like a lot of people have covered a lot of Dolly Parton songs and that's maybe the only one that I think is actually an improvement over Dolly Parton's version of it.

JVN // Oh my God, honey. And I clicked my pin button just so you guys knew. What's our next question?

PRODUCER // From show 3181. Monday, June 1st, 1998. The category is judges for 600. The clue. She was the first Olympic gymnast to receive a perfect 10 from the judges.

JVN // Do you know this Amy?

AMY SCHNEIDER // I do indeed.

JVN // Do you, do you take this one? But I also know it! But I know it too. Should we say it together? Should we count down? 3-2-1 and then say it? So we'll go on what would be zero ready?

AMY SCHNEIDER // Alright.

JVN // Ok. Ready. 3-2-1.

TOGETHER // Nadia Comaneci.

JVN // Yeah, we did it. That's right. Right. I know. It's right. I don't even have to ask. Yeah, I know. What's the next one.

PRODUCER // From show 7502, more recent. This is Tuesday, April 4th 2017. We've got our Daily Double. The category is gardening for \$1000.

JVN // Holy shit!

PRODUCER // To keep this vegetable's head white, tie up the leaves around the developing curd.

JVN // What is—can I do it? Do you know?

AMY SCHNEIDER // Go for it, do it.

JVN // Ok? Ok. But this isn't because you don't know. I just, I really want to know if I'm right and I'm pretty sure you probably already know what it is. Ok? Ready? What is, what is fucking cauliflower?

PRODUCER // Yes, that's right!

JVN // I was so scared it was gonna be asparagus, I freaked out. I got so scared. How did you do this, Amy? I'm gonna get diarrhea? We haven't even really been playing, I'm already freaking out.

AMY SCHNEIDER // I mean, it was, it was intense. It was hard. Yeah, it's stressful.

JVN // Is there any other questions?

PRODUCER // There's one more. We have a final *Jeopardy!* round.

AMY SCHNEIDER // Oooh!

JVN // OK, what is it?

PRODUCER // Jonathan, maybe we need you to go on *Celebrity Jeopardy!*. We need to start training. It starts today.

JVN // Okay!

PRODUCER // Okay, this is from show 5748. This is a Wednesday, September 16th, 2009 edition of *Jeopardy!*. This is our *Final Jeopardy!* round and the category is 20th century women. The clue—

JVN // Wait, I would like to wager, I would like to wager \$3. Do you wanna wager something? Yes, unless Amy wants to wage something also big spendy.

AMY SCHNEIDER // I, I'm, I'm going all in whatever I've got.

JVN // Oh, my God. Oh, my God. I should have gone all in too. We're both all in. We're both all in. Oh my God.

PRODUCER // Alright, the clue. She won gold at the 1928 1932 and 1936 Winter Olympics and also has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

JVN // I know this! I know this! Ok. Do you know this Amy?

AMY SCHNEIDER // Uh, is it, uh, Fleming?

JVN // No.

AMY SCHNEIDER // No? Then I guess I don't.

JVN // Who is Sonja Henie?

PRODUCER // That's correct. These are tailored for you, Jonathan.

JVN // The only thing about her that was not great. And this is pretty major is that she was, she was either a full Nazi or a Nazi sympathizer. So, we didn't know right away. I don't know if everyone knew right away. I, you know, when you go on the Wiki now it's—and her parents were really rich and it was like rigged. Like she was turns out she was kind of a “see you next Tuesday” if you ask me. But—no Michelle Kwan.

AMY SCHNEIDER // If I've learned anything from watching the first half of the Disney Channel movie *Ice Princess* last night—

JVN // Wow.

AMY SCHNEIDER // It's that you, you need to come from a rich family to, to make it as a, as a figure skater.

JVN // You watched that last fucking night?

AMY SCHNEIDER // Yes. It was Genevieve's idea. I don't know how we, how it came up. But she was, like, "Oh my God, you've never seen this? You have to." And so, yeah.

JVN // Is that the one where the lady is blind? No, that's *Ice Castles*.

AMY SCHNEIDER // No, it's Joan Cusack is the mom and, like, the girl is, like, a physics student and just, like, using physics to become a good figure skater.

JVN // It's, it's so smart and it's so correct. That was the best, most amazing *Jeopardy!* round I've ever participated in, personally. Erica, can, can we give it up for our producers? Yay, team Getting Curious. That was so good, Amy. Thanks for playing *Jeopardy!* with me.

AMY SCHNEIDER // I would like to endorse the idea that you should be on *Celebrity Jeopardy!*. Like, you know, I've watched *Celebrity Jeopardy!*. You would do just fine, I assure you.

JVN // I'll do it fucking right now. I'll, I'll fucking go right here fucking right now. When, when is it, when do we sign up? Who do I gotta talk to? I'm gonna tell, I'll tell somebody, I wonder if it's, like, I wonder if it's like a, a struck show, I'll figure it out—and if it's not, I, I'm gonna go. OK, it's time for a *Jeopardy!* rapid fire. [JVN SINGS] I don't know why I did the "It's Friday night and I just got played," song by N'Sync as the background of that. But whatever, Rapid Fire we're going in. Favorite outfit you've worn on the show?

AMY SCHNEIDER // I love a lot of them, but I have to go with the, the pink jacket that I wore a bunch in my first run because I kind of, like, doubted my, I, I was, like, "Can I really, like, wear this, like, bright hot pink on the show and, like, can I pull that off?" And then I realized that I could, and it actually looked great on me and it was, it was very exciting.

JVN // Ah! I, I love that story. Any game day rituals?

AMY SCHNEIDER // Yeah. I mean, I tried to keep things pretty much the same. One of my rituals that I've talked about before a lot was that I had a playlist that I called Victory Morning that I would listen to every morning on my way to the studio. And then I would also, like, try to, like, be singing, Eminem's "Lose yourself" in the moments that I was on stage right before the camera started rolling.

JVN // Ah, honey! Not Marshall! A clue that made you LOL.

AMY SCHNEIDER // I don't know about a, a, you know, I, I don't, I don't think they're generally that funny, really.

JVN // True!

AMY SCHNEIDER // Yeah. No, I can't, I can't think of one off the top of my head.

JVN // Now, the key to a well written clue.

AMY SCHNEIDER // That is a great question and it's something that I think is, like, underappreciated about *Jeopardy!* and its success is that they're so good at this. The real

key to a good *Jeopardy!* clue that they're always trying to do is to give you more than one way to get to the answer to give you like sort of two little paths that either way that, that, that might lead you there and to do it, they have such a small space to work with like, like less than a tweet to, to fit the whole clue onto and to phrase it in the weird way that they have to. So that it's an answer, not a question and all of that sort of thing. And it's just amazing how much, how many clues they write and how consistently good a job they do.

JVN // Come on WGA, and come on writers, give them that money, give them that money! A piece of advice for people trying to get on the show. It's the last rapid fire.

AMY SCHNEIDER // I mean, I get asked this a lot as, as you might imagine. You know, the first thing I say is, like, be persistent and stick with it. Like, it's, like, 2% of applicants every year get on and just the fact that it's going year after year and you're not getting on doesn't mean, you won't, eventually. Like, I, like I say, it took me like, 15 years. The other thing I'd say that is, is kind of for some, some subset of people that are, like, kind of really obsessive about it and really like into it is that you should probably be a little less obsessive about it and care about it a little less because the fact is there's a lot of luck involved. You don't know who you're gonna go up against or whether you'll be good on the buzzer. And there's a good chance that when you get on the show, you'll play one game and you'll lose and that'll be it. So don't make it work for yourself. Don't study like it's finals exams, like study things that you're interested in, have fun with it, you know, learn for the sake of learning and then whatever happens on *Jeopardy!*, it won't have been wasted because you'll have had a good time.

JVN // And was that how you approach your experience? Like you weren't like cramming for finals or you just kind of like, were engaging with learning as you saw, as you saw fit?

AMY SCHNEIDER // Pretty much it's engaging with learning as I saw fit, I think, I mean, the other specific thing is going through J archive, like, consistently on, like, my commutes and things like that. Just to sort of see, like, patterns and, and things that they asked about or things that I was consistently missing. So, like, there was a few little, like, cramming things I did for those. Like, for example, I could never remember which Bronte sister was which or, you know, they're like figuring out like the different parts of the brain that they asked about a lot. So, like, some small things I, I crammed on at the end. But for the most part, my attitude going in was like, I either know it at this point or I don't and it, the odds of something coming up that I came across in that last frantic two hours before, before the game show, like, that's not gonna happen.

JVN // Come on hippocampus. I love that. That was so much fun. Amy, what's next for you and your work, your book's out, maybe some more *Jeopardy!* in your future where—and what like platforms you the most engaged in like where can people follow you and, like, keep up with you,

AMY SCHNEIDER // Instagram and Tiktok, mainly. You know, I do, I still have an account on Twitter but, like, that seems to be dying. So who knows what's, what's gonna come out of that? And yeah, as far as what's next, I mean, my hope is that it's going to be another book. So, like, everybody get out there and buy this one so I can get another book deal.

JVN // Yes!

AMY SCHNEIDER // And yeah, and there's, there's some other things like some podcast ideas that, that are kind of in development and, and that I hope are actually gonna happen. But, you know, nothing, nothing really confirmed yet there. But that's, like, I've already started—I've got a whole like list of ideas for what's going to go in the next book and I, I kind of want to just get going on that.

JVN // Oh my God. Well, y'all, this book is incredible. It is out this month: In The Form of a Question: The Joys and Rewards of a Curious Life. Like I said it out this month, Amy Scher. Thank you so much for coming on, getting curious. We were so excited for you. Congratulations on the book and thank you so much again for coming. Oh,

AMY SCHNEIDER // thanks so much for having me. This is really, I was really excited to get the invite.

JVN // Amy. Thank you so much. I had so much fun. Uh

AMY SCHNEIDER // Yeah, same.