

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Sabrina Strings

JVN: Hey, curious people. It's Jonathan Van Ness and welcome back to getting curious. It is Valentine's Day season. It's that wonderful time of year that seems to extend all year around all the time in the sense that like our world seems to be centered around finding love and then if you do find love, then you become happy. Um It seems that love is just everywhere we look, it is in our music, it is on TV. It is all over social media. We see that in the rise of dating apps, we see that in the rise of dating shows. Why is that? Um And also it's kind of like when the economy goes bust and we used to say in the salon like, well, we'll always have a job as a hairdresser because people need to get their hair done. Well. Really the true winner of the economy is love because people will always be talking about romantic relationships because we are just like bipedal ass fuckers who went to be loved in this goddamn world, I think or maybe we don't, I don't know. So and also like, what role does racism and sexism play in dating and as ideas about gender and gender roles change. How is that affecting people's relationships? So to talk about this, we're gonna bring in our guest who is none other than the iconic and also previous guests are getting curious who we literally live so much of hers. Sabrina strings Sabrina strings if you don't know is an author and professor. Her book Fearing The Black Box. The racial origins of fatphobia is an NYU press bestseller. She has been featured in dozens of venues including BBC News, Los Angeles Times, Essence and Vogue. Her new book, The End of Love, racism, Sexism and The Death of Romance just came out on January 30th. So get into that. Uh Our guiding question today is romantic love dead. And was it always a scam with a side of our fuck boys stronger than ever and our straight people? Ok. Or like worse than ever because honey, the streets, I'm worried for you guys almost as much as you guys are probably worried for us. Anyway, Sabrina, how are you? Uh

SABRINA STRINGS: Jonathan, it's so great to see you again. I'm feeling great. So excited to be on

JVN: and congratulations on your book. Thank you. Was this your sophomore album book or do you have like a book even before your first book? Um So

SABRINA STRINGS: this is my sophomore album book in a sense, but actually, I started writing on some of the memoir pieces that you read in the book. When I was in graduate school. So some parts of this were written even before my

JVN: first book. Oh my God. I love that we're going into the archives, into the vault. I'm obsessed with that. So let's start off with, I'm going to work back to front on of my intros. Questions are the streets. OK.

SABRINA STRINGS: The situation with the Straights is dire. That's just what it is. I mean, because for a very long time, straight people expected that they would date and then find love and get married and that would be the full course of their lives. That's not happening for the majority of straight people anymore. Notice that I said the majority not a lot because according to the data, not only is sex down, especially for young people, but 52% of all adult women in the United States are single. This is nothing short of a revolution. Wow.

JVN: 52% of adult women in the United States are single,

SABRINA STRINGS: right? And the majority of those women would have been straight has

JVN: the perception of gender roles and romance changed. And is that a part of this breakdown?

SABRINA STRINGS: So that's exactly what's going on here. We don't really know how old patriarchy is. Um According to G Lerner, who is the fantabulous badass historian and feminist patriarchy might be like maybe 5000 years old, right? So it were not immediately clear on that. We do know that patriarchy had a major reboot in the 12th century. And it was the dawn of romance, romance re articulated gender roles. It led to an understanding of the way that men needed to be Valorous, courageous, brave knightly. I mean, Braveheart. Right. We're thinking like Mel Gibson and the way that women needed to be, oh, we needed to be passive and turned. Have we need to have a man who's going to rescue us? This idea came out of romance in the 12th

JVN: century and we can't say that we're into anal.

SABRINA STRINGS: Nobody, a woman can say she's into any kind of sex. And a man who says he said to a,

JVN: she's a fucking Yeah,

SABRINA STRINGS: she's a slut. She's a whore, right? And significantly, and this is a big part of what's going on right now. The idea of romance meant that romance was only accessible for women who were chaste and religious and sweet and nice and kind. Romance was never meant to be accessible to hoes. So if you a hoe good for you, we're in a hoe revolution. But know that this immediately puts you outside of the discourse for romance and that's why you ain't got your partner. OK?

JVN: Not to like go on a major off course here. But every once in a while I learn that I've been saying a word wrong for my whole life. Um Chaste, I thought that was chaste, chast chas. I don't know. I've just been, I never really knew and I never really asked, but I'm glad that I know how to say that word. Now it's sometimes the short ones really fuck me up and thank you for that Serena. But um well, how did that like shaped the romantic ideals and stereotypes that you were just talking about that? Like, it's not available to you if you a ho I mean, we see that a little bit in pretty woman and then that she was like the girl who like the lovable ho um who was, you know, the teeth, the gold and like the perfect hair and like, you know, very giving like movie montage ho but also like, I love Pretty Woman and that was my favorite movie from preschool through now. Um So, but what, what does that mean for our stereotypes and like how we think about literally the, the history that you were just talking about how it shapes how we see women in romance now.

SABRINA STRINGS: So when we go back to the history of romance, what we will notice is that they were very clear about the very religious and obviously like western cultural ideas that they wanted these women to uphold. You couldn't just be any woman. And so even in the 12th century, there was this writer, his name was Kiano and he was just like taking on all of the stereotypes that men were producing about women for the purpose of romance, right? They even had a particular way in which they looked so overwhelmingly, these women were supposed to be surprised, fair skinned and slender, right? Sometimes women would be described as having dark hair. Sometimes they would be described as being voluptuous. But over time, these romantic narratives kept reproducing a very similar beauty ideal to what we

have right now. So there was the beauty ideal that we have still with us. And then there was this idea about what constitutes a good woman. She is giving, she is polite, she is sweet. She doesn't challenge a man. These ideas are integral to romance. So when the feminist revolution started in the 19th century, they were attacking these ideas about the way women should be. They're like women can be anything we can do anything we can occupy a variety of different personalities and characteristics. We, well as I uncovered in my research, there were a number of men who hated this idea and it was these men who started to chip away at romance as a way of taking something back from feminists, how they were what they do. So these men who were and I suppose I can reveal this. Now, many of them were writing for Playboy. Don't get me wrong. These men were writing for a variety of different places. Some of them were writing for Esquire. Some of them were just writing books independently. But they found in Playboy in the 19 fifties, a massive platform for their anti romantic ideals. And So what they would say in Playboy is do not commit to women like this. And the like this were women who were not attractive enough, women who were not polite enough women who are not chaste enough. Those were the wrong kinds of women.

JVN: Why, why did they say they weren't good partners?

SABRINA STRINGS: They were saying that these women were asking too much of men. They were saying that these careerists, these feminists, these women were abhorrent. They don't care about beauty, they don't care about kindness, politeness, all the things that romance dictates that women should care about. And for that reason, these women were not worthy of a romance. These women were not worthy of commitment. These women were hoes and sex workers. And so you treat them like hoes and sex workers.

JVN: Wow. So basically toxic masculinity really became embodied in the fifties. That's right. But it was probably like happening in pockets before that probably. Yeah,

SABRINA STRINGS: I mean, so it seemed as if Playboy was like this clearinghouse for these ideas. But there were men who had been writing against feminism since the first wave of feminism. It's just that they were doing so in a sneaky conniving way. It was clear that they didn't want the vast majority of women to find out about this, but they wanted to be able to transmit this information to men and what better way to do that than through pornography. They know the vast majority of women are not going to pick up a playboy. And it's only because of the fact that these things are digitized that I had access to it. Otherwise we might not have

JVN: known when was the first feminist like wave.

SABRINA STRINGS: So we talk about the first wave of feminism as being in the 19th century. So this is when this is when a lot of suffragists were coming out, they were demanding the enfranchisement of women. They were also demanding the abolition of slavery. Many of them, I don't think enough feminists get credit for that because a lot of white feminists and black feminists were deeply invested in abolition. But there was also a movement already by the 18th century, by the like by the likes of people like Mary Woolstone craft to say, you know what women are more than our parents. We're more than sitting at home raising kids being polite to our husbands. We have goals and dreams and ideas, right? So this is the vindication of the rights of women. This is already in the 18th century. Interestingly enough, the 18th century is also the time in which this beauty hierarchy, this racist beauty hierarchy that was also serving to undermine romance in ways we haven't

gotten to was taking off. So there's a very clear connection between men doing things, working to undermine romance and women engaging in feminist practices.

JVN: OK. Let's break that down because that's I think that's major. So if romance is the goal which romance is, in my view. And I think in your view is like, true connection and intimacy between like two people. Maybe it's more we can get into polyamory later if we need to. But real romance is like connection and intimacy and like two people really seeing each other, like, and really, like, you know, lifting each other up, like doing like, really seeing each other, like not putting each other into boxes or something. Do you agree with that? I think

SABRINA STRINGS: that could be a very equal aarian modern example of a sexual love. But I don't necessarily think that's what romance is or does I can understand how our culture keeps trying to tell us that our culture is always trying to collapse a variety of different things onto one notion as if these all are connected. But in reality, the earliest romantic tales didn't lead to deep long lasting loving partnerships. Those ideas only came later around about the 19th century. The earliest ideas of romance was that there was this man a Lancelot. He was willing to sacrifice everything for an elite, an attractive woman that he loved. So when he finally is able to prove his love for her and she's able to show that she loves him. The romance is ill fated because a well win is married. And you know, b that's how these tales played out in the early period. They were tragic tales. They were not about the consummation of a forever love. That idea only happened in the 19th century and it's my view that that idea actually serves to oppress women. I think

JVN: a lot of those historical examples of romance, like, it wasn't for women to be like, embodied or seen or nurtured or like, have their goals realized or like have all women. It's like, it was like to give like some women like status but they didn't really get to be like seen or heard or like their goal celebrate like, and so is that what you were saying with like really that that idea of romance that serves to oppress women or the thing that I was saying oppresses women or both?

SABRINA STRINGS: This is a new asked question and I really love it because I think that when we imagine a connectedness between two people that seems beautiful. I mean, there might be some, I'm gonna argue that there are some problems with adjusting that we can have a couple that's connected and that they lift one another up and that's all that they care about. That's their entire social world because it means everyone else in the community can fuck off, right? But we want to exist hopefully in a world in which we can have a loving partnership and also be connected to other human beings in a community that we're trying to help flourish. You know, we want to have a strong public square. I think, I think that many of us would want that. The problem is that romance doesn't offer that opportunity. It's

JVN: like someone who you wouldn't be ashamed to go out to brunch with like, you wanna, like, date some. But it's like, but why would you be ashamed of going out to someone to brunch? It's like, well, because of these ideas that we've been told about, like, oh, are they too fem? Are they too big or they too? Whatever thing that you don't want to be seen with? Well, where do we learn those ideas from? A lot of them are racist or sist or fat phobic or a lot of the things that we think about like, oh you need to get a good partner. It's literally ideas that our families have talked about that come from like eugenicist ideas from that fucking Galton, right?

SABRINA STRINGS: Yeah, this is like, I really appreciate you breaking all that down because in reality, there is so much bad science out there and people don't realize it. So race science was never fully conquered. Gender science was never conquered. Eugenics. Fact, like all of these things are still with us and people are simply figuring out new ways to legitimize them, right? And so, I mean, we can get into the many different ways in which that manifests but the whole question of like going to the salon or the barbershop and conversations about attractiveness that take place there. Unfortunately, a lot of the time these conversations will be indebted to race science, they will be indebted to a very sexist form of medical science. And what we have to do is challenge that, I mean, because of course, the idea of like straight hair and the idea of slim hips, you know, these are things that we've all heard of and if people are like, oh, well, you should be voluptuous. It's like, ok, now you're picking and choosing different ideas from different places and claiming they're scientific, they have nothing to do with any real scientific principles. They are simply things that have been validated after years and years and years of people hearing about them. And usually they've come from some corny ass places that we should be in fact challenging,

JVN: hey, we're all familiar with the idea of a fuck boy or at least I think that we are. But how do you define a fuck boy? And how do they like in your work and also toxic masculinity? I'm just wondering like, how does that, how do you define that does have something to do with fuck boys? And then that whole thing of like, well, men suffer too. I'm always scared to say that and I'm like, oh my God, am I gonna cancel for that? But we kind of mentioned it earlier when you were like, we don't talk enough about ways that men are pressured to do certain things and then that like proliferates like men acting like fucking assholes. So yes, leaving all of that's, that's the question, fuck boys. How do you define them? And are they all suffering from toxic masculinity? And how do we pull the plug on that fucker?

SABRINA STRINGS: So I just want to say first off that not all men are toxic. And so I wanna make that clear that this is a certain type of learned behavior and a lot of it is relatively new. So a fuck boy is a man who is emotionally manipulative and frequently of the way in which they are emotionally manipulative is by being withholding. They might withhold love or other forms of affection, they might withhold sex. That's why when we hear about fuck boys, we hear about men who are hot and cold one day, they're so excited about you. Oh, they're over the moon the next day you can't hear from them. They're ghosting you. Fuck boy bullshit. We hear about men being cheap, right? This is also a fuck boy quality. All of these are ways in which interestingly enough, these men have figured out how to un mind male expectations that are attached to the romantic ideal because the romantic ideal since the 19th century said men should be providers. It said that men should be loving, divulge with their emotions, even players are divulge with their emotions. They love telling women how much they love them, right? But fuck boys have taken that back and they have changed the game to say, we don't tell you how we feel about you. We don't love them hoes. Hm. Where does that idea come from? And that, in fact, you don't care enough about our feelings. You don't know how I feel about my last break up. I'm still a processing situation with my last girlfriend. Ok. That's a fuck boy. An emotionally manipulative man. Any

JVN: thoughts on like, how to disentangle or get, obviously a lot of times it does come to like money and like being able to get like afford to get away from a fuck boy, if you've really gotten in too deep. But if you're still in a place where like you haven't gotten in so deep, but they're circling and you see bad shit happening, you're seeing red flags. Any thoughts on how to like disentangle,

SABRINA STRINGS: I think it's important for women to recognize if they're in a relationship or even worse a situation, which is frequently what women find themselves in with these fuck boys. So a situation is something that is almost like a relationship except for there's no commitment. You don't really know what this person is feeling. They don't really care for your emotions. You're basically hanging out with someone and there's no parameters to what you're doing. Now, there is a way in which that can be um freeing, for example, if you wanted to be in an open relationship, but being in a situation is very much anxiety producing. That's how, you know, because you have not had a conversation about the status and the contours of your relationship. So the first step is simply for women to recognize like, hm, has he cared about my feelings at all? Is he constantly divulging his emotions as a way of shutting mine down? Is he withholding love? Is he ghosting? Right. Does he go away for a week and then come back? All of these things are huge red flags. So if you feel like a man is in your life and out of your life and in and out or for whatever reason, just not concerned about who you are, this is the time for you to extricate yourself from that because this is a form of emotional relational abuse.

JVN: What about? Well, let me say, OK, so you mentioned it before but like possessiveness and then I didn't really finish the thought but like it is a more, is there a modern romance that's possible for women, non binary, transgender, non conform? Is, is romantic love possible and like a way that fulfills everyone or like both parties? Like can we have romantic love and a strong town square? Um or is that just totally like, is, is it a fucking scam or what do you

SABRINA STRINGS: think? I think sexual love is possible. I think that sexual love could be an amazing feeling because now you're having a beautiful and true connection with another human being but I do not think romance is going to be the path to get us there. Not anymore. Don't get me wrong. There are those people who did use the romantic path, romantic narrative and find sexual love for a long time in this country, right? But that started to go away in the fifties. And we can already see by the era of Seinfeld precisely how foolish romance had become. I mean, so Seinfeld Bills itself as being a TV, show about nothing. But when you look at it, it's actually about the trash ass nature of boomer romantic relationships. Partially because of all the foolish nonsense that Jerry and George get up to as they're trying, um, increasingly to get women who are attractive, the kind of attractive women that they want. So clearly the problem with romance. The number one problem with romance is that it is conditional. It is a conditional form of love. It says you need to look for a partner with these qualities and if a partner doesn't have these qualities, especially a female partner, you don't want that. So that's the major issue with romance is that is conditional. The other thing I think we should look at is that when we look at relationships across the globe, historically, many of them were arranged and I can understand why people wouldn't want to have an arranged relationship. But notice that the relationships that we choose for ourselves based on romance are trash they're falling apart everywhere. They don't last, sometimes they don't form at all. And divorce rates are sky high. I think we need to acknowledge that romance is over and we're not going back to it. And largely that's because there are a number of men, these fuck boys who do not want that. We start thinking about what other ways we can have love in our lives.

JVN: What's the difference between romance and sexual

SABRINA STRINGS: love? So, sexual love is just a loving connection with someone with whom you have a sexual relationship. That's it. And romance articulates a very clear set of norms for how you're supposed to get that sexual love. And that is the problem. It says historically that men should court women, men should spend money on women. That's a big part of the narrative of romance. Since the 19th century, men should provide for women, give her flowers and candy on Valentine's Day, right? There's no expectation of women to be buying a man. Anything on Valentine's Day. What should a woman do on Valentine's Day? She should offer her body to her man, right? In lingerie, you can do those things if you choose to. But notice that you are following a very clearly laid out script that is gendered. And when we fall into that, we're going to start finding that we have a bunch of problems in our relationships because women no longer want to live under the yoke of historical femininity and men don't want to live under the yoke of historical masculinity. So we need to figure out ways to connect that don't involve these romantic

JVN: ideas. But what about the trap lives that are on my Instagram now all over the fucking place being like, I love to cook. I love being submissive. And this is what that means. And this is us doing our little, you know, my pure wet couple's dance with my husband and he's actually really safe. And are you check in with me in 20 years, honey? And let me know how that went for you married at 22.

SABRINA STRINGS: Well, you know what, actually, if you want to be a trad wife or, and a trad husband, it could work. And the reason being that there's a very clearly scripted notion of how you're supposed to be behaving. And so as long as everyone performs according to the scripts, you might find that you're just completely happy. But if you as a woman are expecting equality, if you don't want to cook and clean every single day for your man, if you as a man want to live in a home in which you're not responsible for 100% of the finances. If you're not responsible for 100% of the safety of the home. For example, as a man, if men and women want to break free of the gender roles, well, then, hey, honey, we gotta let go of

JVN: romance. So, what about the fight of the people who think that, like, that is an existential threat to society and to like the future of our country because it is, it is,

SABRINA STRINGS: it is, it is that, and I love that people and I think this is the real terror. I think this is why there are so many shows proliferating. Like, let's get the romance back. Oh, Marion one day, Mary, having never seen the person and don't get me wrong. These shows are fire. I love Mary first sight. You know, I was fully an addict. Um But but a lot of this is happening because of the fact that we have a society that's built around the idea that we can have romantic relationships that last whereas we cannot at this historical moment have romantic relationships that last just look at

JVN: the data. Is it gonna collapse? And it's gonna be ok because reality or something,

SABRINA STRINGS: I think we should embrace what is inevitably going to be a little bit of chaos because I think so many of us are sick. Let me just tell you the number of times that I mentioned to a woman and especially a black woman, the book that I'm working on. And it's like they are so ready to hear about some other way of relating to men. You can almost see their soul escape. They're just like, you know, there's something else, but someone's gonna tell me about why this is happening. And if there's a possibility for something else, hell fucking, yes. You know, I think that a variety of different women and men are ready for this to be over and it pertains to non binary people, trans people consider the fact that there's no

role for your all within a romance. Unless you're going to be performing the expected roles of a man or a woman, there's no role for you in a romance. So if we want to truly embrace a free open sexual society, we need to start letting go. Some of these hundreds of years old ideas,

JVN: hey, how do we embrace a new norm in this, in the face of OK, romance is dead. But like is that going to cause like are these fuckers gonna actually like civil war ass because we're threatening the patriarchy? Like you know, I mean,

SABRINA STRINGS: so let me just say that indeed, romance is dead. But the situation is that it was straight cisgender men who killed it. They don't have anything to say to non-binary people or trans people about this problem. Romance started dying with pornography in the 19 fifties when there were so many elite white men who were cisgender and straight who were saying uh uh with hold love, don't commit, don't get married. You need to look for a woman who was not a career woman or a feminist at a time in which we were experiencing a feminist revolution, right? A revolution in which more women were entering the workforce than ever. So if they are angry, they need to be angry with themselves. They are the ones who have undermined romance at the end of the day. But there's been a second hit to romance. Interestingly enough. And this also involved men because romance began with a song, the very first representation of romance. It's seedling where these men who were known as Troubadours in the 12th century who would go around and they would sing songs that would include these that we now call romantic. That was the origin actually. And some of them date this earlier. Some people argue it even began in the 11th century. But it was really a phenomenon with men by the 12th century. Now, just as a little side note, there were also women in the 12th century who were singing not as many. And they were talking about how these men going around, talking about romance were completely phony. They were not prepared to do any of the things that men themselves claimed that they were, they were Valorous and brave and courageous and you know, sacrificial. There were plenty of women at that time who were like, this is horseshit, but I digress. So the point is that it was men in the fifties, beginning in the fifties rather who were starting to undermine romance. But if romance began with a song, it also ended with a song, it ended with a rap song. It ended with all the rap songs that are saying fuck love. We hate women don't commit to women. Women are hoes, we don't love hoes. All of those songs are also helping to upgrade romance and most of those songs are being created by black male rappers. So if men are upset, they only have themselves to blame.

JVN: Oh my God. So should we like, can we really count on men to fix this? And like, what does like are stray people doomed? And like, what does the world without romantic love look like?

SABRINA STRINGS: I don't think they're gonna fix anything, but I think that we shouldn't have to worry about trying to fix it. I think this is an incredible opportunity for all of us. And I say this as someone who thinks that I could be in an open relationship. But quite honestly, you know, it could be hard. I understand that it could be hard. I think it could be hard for me. But I also think that in my past relationships which were a fucking hot mess. I think that one of the reasons why those were so bad is that I was in relationships with men and they were being possessive and I was being possessive and I was going to them. Why weren't you there? And they were going to me, why wasn't I there? But what if instead we imagined relationships with people in which maybe gender is not as serious as we can take it right

now. Consider that even looking back before romance. Actually, before Christianity, we were talking about the era of like the Greeks and the Egyptians and the Persians. It was common for men, especially who have more power to take lovers of a variety of genders. So prior to the dawn of the romantic age, having these kinds of more fluid sexual relationships were common. We can go back to a world in which we don't have to be like I am this gender, my partner must be this gender. We will only have this kind of sex and only with each other for the rest of our lives. Something about that doesn't feel free to me.

JVN: Something about the possessiveness of how it is now doesn't feel free but like something but then wasn't there like, so we could just do that like minus the like pedophilia because that didn't they do that? I feel like people talk about that. That stresses me out too. Like I think

SABRINA STRINGS: the of the Greeks, we don't want to be that back and of course, we don't want the Catholics. We are doing that too. We don't want

JVN: that. Well. Yeah, and they're still doing that so like that. But like because like it's like it's like, yeah, so that sounds interesting. That sounds interesting and like, yeah. Interest. OK. So um we, we talked, I talked about toxic masculinity like um what is there a positive or more positive version of masculinity is um and also just because I respect you and I think that you're like a genius, like, what's gonna happen in November? Like, should we really leave? Like I'm, but like, is it um like uh like masculinity Trump all these Nick Fuentes crazy fuckers? Like the, I mean, and also like, I was about to say like the rise of domestic violence or what I've been talking about intimate partner violence is like the, what is the rise? It's, it's, it's like to quote ST Whitney Houston and never left like it's been like it like fuck. But yeah, fuck. So what's up for 2024?

SABRINA STRINGS: Well, I mean, there are a lot of people who are suggesting that Biden is out and I mean, I just wish that the Democrats would take seriously the fact that we want someone else. We want someone else. We told you that when you ran Biden the first couple of times and now we certainly want someone else. So uh we're probably gonna get Trump and let me just say that part of the reason why so many people who are traditional like Trump is because he is giving them back what they claim we are taking from them. As I've already explained, it wasn't the progressives who took romance away, it was the conservatives who took romance away, right? But if the conservatives who also want this historical way of life back. And Trump is saying, I'm gonna give you everything that America was historically about back including women and men knowing their proper places. So if you want old, old timey gender roles, Trump is for you and a lot of people unfortunately, still want that. I think the problem for us as liberals and also as progressives is that we know we don't want that, but it's not immediately clear what things we do want. We have a diversity of things that we want. So it's a little bit chaotic. I think that we could start imagining a world in which we have different types of families. And here, queer people have always been leading the way queer people have chosen families. Queer people's families can look like we see them on polls like we see them in Paris is burning. It's just a group of people who are loving on one another. Sometimes these people have sexual relationships, sometimes they don't. But the idea is that you can have a family of people who are reciprocal and loving and caring and nontoxic and sex doesn't have to always be at the center of that, that in and of itself would be a tremendous revolution in this country. And to your question about masculinity, I've been spending time thinking about that. And the, the, the thing that I've ultimately come

up with is, I don't know that we should have different definitions from masculinity and femininity at least not things that are aspirational because how could we create a masculinity that is not oppressive to men and people who are not men? Because I

JVN: mean, it does, it also feels like for me, at least it feels chicken and egg sometimes because people say like, you know, men in dresses, like bring back strong men. But then I'm like, do you know how strong I have to be to walk out of the house in Texas and a dress in heels. Like knowing that it could be my last day. Like, do you know the courage and the strength and like most men really could never, could never show the strength or the courage or the resilience that trans people show at least in terms of what, a month or what a classic, if courage equals masculinity than most men, a lot of men. But then they could also say like, well, we have the courage to oppress our feelings of wanting to show up in the world like that to, to be this way that we think we're supposed. So it's like what came first? And so I think that is true. It's like let things that don't work, don't work anymore or like just let them go away like traditional masculinity and femininity. How could you make something not oppressive that was designed to be oppressive into someone else's? Yeah,

SABRINA STRINGS: I mean, so, you know, I used to be a sociology professor now I'm in black studies and that feels amazing. But when I was a sociology professor, I would have these incredible undergraduate students. And I remember doing a class once in which I was like, ok, students. I want you to come up with three attributes that all women share and my students who are brilliant, they came up with this. Ok. Um, all women are expected to be polite. All women are expected to be sexually available, especially to men. All women are oppressed by femininity. I mean, my bad ass students, I was so proud of them when we talk about masculinity and femininity, we're talking about power and privilege and oppression and integration. And so what we can do is do away with these ideas altogether. We don't need to tell men what's masculine and what they can and can't do. We definitely don't need to tell women what's feminine and what we can and can't do. You can just allow people to be, ah,

JVN: abs. Yeah. Right. Um, it's really fascinating also. Um, I forgot to ask you this earlier, but I think this is like, probably like the most fun thing to go out on other than the next follow up question, which is like, what's next for you in your work? How can we follow you? Um, we're just so excited for your book. Um, I meant to ask this earlier though, in your, this is more of GVN. So if there's any, like, high school or college professors that are still listening to this episode, you may want to skip the next, I don't know, two minutes. Um Sabrina and the work for this book did any specifically straight leaning women that you talked to express interest in pegging. It just came up for me thinking about um broad city and if you don't want to, I was like, we, there's this not in our prep and you know, I've, this is definitely the wildest prep, non prep question I've ever uh but yeah, like, don't women ever just wanna fuck? Like, don't they wanna talk? Like, aren't they curious to like, dominate a man? Honey? Like I feel like if I was a sis hat lady, I would want to put on a strap on and just like, fuck the shit out of my husband thoughts. Did any other lady say that?

SABRINA STRINGS: So I didn't talk to anybody about pegging, but I can speak for myself. Which is that one of the reasons why I think that feminist and queer porn can be very valuable is that it shows women in other sexual positions that are not always just receptive or passive. Like I'm like sometimes when I'm thinking about having sex and I mostly don't think about having sex with men anymore. But if I were going to, I would want to feel like I wasn't just laying there like a dead fish while he sort of like penetrates me and I'm just taking

it No, I want to take an active role. Sometimes I, I want to be on top. Sometimes I want to initiate, sometimes I want to grab you in various ways. Like, uh you know, women are fiery, passionate animals. We want to show that

JVN: fuck. Yes. Um That's glorious. I love that. I really miss Broad City. I'm just saying, I think that show is incredible. Um Wow. So I'm obsessed with you. I guess I already knew that, but I just continue to be. So um what's next for you? Where are you the most active? Are you like all up on Tik Tok? Are you more on the gram? Are you more on X? Where are you, where can people really just get into your work the most?

SABRINA STRINGS: Um You know what, I'm one of these tentative social media users, I need to be better, but I'm most active on the site formerly known as Twitter so that you can still catch me there. Sometimes if anybody is familiar with my work and is also interested in being a social media manager, please reach out to me. I'm on Twitter at, at a strings uh or you can also reach me um through my email, you know, you can just Google me and find that um strings at U CS b.edu. I need somebody to help me figure this shit out.

JVN: Who, what, what, what's your budget, what's your budget? Do you know? Um I can, I mean, the university for me, but for someone,

SABRINA STRINGS: yeah. Um I I don't know what a, what a proper salary is but um I do have a university budget for this very

JVN: thing. I would pay good fucking money to see your tiktok or Instagram. Like I think it like I would just, just spending time with you. This is the obligatory time at the end of the podcast where I pressure our guests to get on tiktok or just more on social. Um But so, but so X for now and also your new book, we're this coming, we're definitely in for this. Um your new book is out now. It's the end of love, racism, sexism and the death of romance. It just came out on January 30th, get that book. Uh Stay tuned with us because we will keep telling you, I'm curious with JB N and on my Instagram uh where to find Sabrina where she continues to pop up. Um And you guys stick around. We're going to get into our post episode wrap up. Um And yeah, Sabrina, thank you so much for coming on getting here. So we love you so much and thanks for coming on the show. Oh, I

SABRINA STRINGS: love you so much too. Thank you so much for having me so much fun. How

JVN: much do we love Sabrina strings obsessed with her? I'm so glad she got to come back on the pod. I'm so excited for her book, but it reminds me of what my endorsement agent always tells me about like parallel paths, which is that like sometimes like multiple things are going on at once. So it does seem like according to Sabrina romance is dead, at least the way that we thought of it. Um It just seems like we are in the middle of a revolution that instead of thinking of it as a threat, it's more about thinking this era as an opportunity for us to imagine a way of human connection and love and fulfillment that is like bigger and sees our humanity in a different and more like fulfilled way. Um But I just thought that was a fascinating episode. I think that we definitely found that racism and sexism do play a huge role in dating. And I think the other thing that I found really interesting is that we don't exactly know how old patriarchy is. Uh But we do know that it is still alive and it is killing romance or that romance is already dead. So, and, and is there a way towards healing? I think it requires imagination. And what I'm really curious about from that is, are men? Ok. And toxic masculinity? Like how does that show up in racism and how does toxic masculinity show up

in our day to day lives in ways that we don't maybe name as such. It reminds me a lot of Sonia passy. Um And I think that a lot of these things are, are a lot more interconnected than what we think. But it does bring up a lot more questions according to Sabrina's work, like straight men really started to kill this in the fifties. And in, in terms of that playboy, uh you know, rejection of what men's responsibilities were in the classic sense of romance. And also like, why are straight people so triggered by or why is that type of evangelical conservative so triggered by feminism and queer queerness? And, and why are they so threatened by the idea of like patriarch or why are they so take it so personally that like patriarchy may not be good and that there are ways of like classic gender roles, there could be other ways that could be good too. So we'll research more of that. I'm getting curious. Thank you for coming on and we can't wait to see you next time. We have uh some great episodes coming up and thank you for coming on. We love you so much. Yes, you've been listening to getting curious with me, Jonathan D ness. You can learn more about this week's guest and their area of expertise and the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on. And honey, there's more where that came from. You can follow us on Instagram at Curious with JB N. We are doing the most over there and it is so much fun. You can catch us here every Wednesday and also make sure to tune in every Monday. We pretty curious, still can't get enough. So, subscribe to extra curious on Apple podcasts for commercial free listening and our subscription only show Ask JB N where we're talking sex relationships and so much more. Our theme music is Freak by Quinn. Thank you so much to her for letting us use it. Our engineer is Nathaniel mcclure. Getting curious. It's produced by me Chris mcclure, Julia Melfi and Alison Weiss with production support from Julie Carrillo, Ann Curry and Chad Hall. Hey.