

20 Questions, with my partner Tom (aka Gent!)

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0:00:02.0 Nicole Antoinette: I'm Nicole Antoinette and this is Real Talk Radio, a podcast filled with honest conversations about everything. Today's episode was a particularly fun one for me to record because it features my partner, Tom, who most of you know by his trail name, Gent. Our conversation is centered around 20 questions that folks submitted on Instagram. Well, we got a lot more than 20 questions, but we tried to pick ones that covered a pretty wide range of topics, and also ones that multiple people asked. So everything from how we met, what demonstrating love looks like for us on a daily basis, upcoming adventure and family plans, our thoughts about monogamy, and so much more. It's a pretty deep dive into our relationship and what makes it work, what's been hard, all of that, and I hope that you enjoy listening.

0:00:48.8 NA: Big thanks to Gent for joining me for this one, and even bigger thanks to my Patreon community, whose monthly financial support makes it possible for me to keep making new episodes, paying all the guests and writing my weekly essay series on Substack, plus all of the Patreon-only offerings, as well, like... Oh, there's so much stuff. So we have our end-of-month journaling and reflection circles that happen on the last Sunday of every month. I do a monthly audio series with Julia Hanlon, where we go into the real-time goals, things we're learning, things that are working, things that are not working, highs, lows, talking about money, work, wellness, all of that. We have our live small group Google Hangouts, those are really fun. The super transparent behind the scenes business and money report I send out each month for folks who are curious about what it looks like to run a business like this, and there's other things, too.

0:01:40.8 NA: Oh, and we just launched Discord for our Patreon community as well. So now, there's a fun and much more robust way for the 400 plus people in our community to really talk and get to know each other, so I'm excited to see where that goes. It just started, people are going in, introducing themselves, finding people, hopefully, that live in their area. So that is something that we have going over the next couple of months. And if you love this show, I bet you really enjoy our community, there's really neat folks in there. We operate on a sliding scale with all tiers getting access to everything, regardless of how much you're able to pay, and you can find us at patreon.com/nicoleantoinette. That's patreon.com/nicoleantoinette. I would so, so, so appreciate the support. And now, on to the show.

[music]

0:02:28.6 NA: Okay, my love, it's on, it's recording, welcome to the podcast.

0:02:31.5 Tom Grossmith: Hi! Thank you. Feels good to be on this American life.

0:02:35.4 NA: Oh, my God! Stop it. You made a wrong turn, this is not the podcast that you thought that it was.

0:02:39.9 TG: I've gotta go.

0:02:40.8 NA: Yeah. [chuckle]

0:02:41.2 TG: I've got somewhere I need to be.

0:02:42.5 NA: Shut up. So set the scene for folks. Where are we sitting right now?

0:02:46.7 TG: We are sitting in a PVC cubicle that we draped with moving blankets and one of my preferred fleece blankets for a sound booth.

0:02:57.3 NA: Yeah, you sacrificed your favorite soft fleece blanket to be the roof of my DIY sound booth.

0:03:00.2 TG: Yeah, yeah, my softest fleece blanket that is now never touched.

0:03:05.4 NA: I know, I'm sorry. But it looks really nice as the roof of this... We should put up a picture of this, I think I put it in my Instagram stories. But yeah, basically, so you and I are living in Massachusetts, in your dad's house right now. And it is a beautiful old house and very, very echo-y; lots of wood, lots of exposed things. And we found that it was really not great for recording when I got here.

0:03:31.7 TG: It's pretty crazy that no one, up until now, has thought about podcast recording in this house between 1860 when this house was built to now that no one once has thought about the sound quality in any of these rooms.

0:03:41.7 NA: Well, I appreciate you building me this recording box.

0:03:45.9 TG: Of course.

0:03:47.1 NA: This is my first time recording with someone else in the box in times of COVID where I see no one in person that is not you, your dad or his dog.

0:03:54.6 TG: Yeah, little Gracie Lou.

0:03:56.2 NA: Oh, my gosh!

0:03:56.9 TG: Shout out to Gracie Lou.

0:03:58.2 NA: Shout out to Gracie.

0:04:00.2 TG: If you're listening right now, Gracie, who's a good girl?

0:04:03.0 NA: Oh, my God! [chuckle]

0:04:03.1 TG: Also, if you're listening to this, what are you doing? How'd you figure this out?

0:04:07.6 NA: Oh, my God! Am I already regretting inviting you on this podcast. [chuckle]

0:04:10.7 TG: Probably, probably.

0:04:13.1 NA: Okay, so we're gonna talk about a bunch of things. When I mentioned on my Instagram that I was gonna have you on the podcast, I opened it up for people to ask questions. People submitted many questions. We are not gonna get to all of them. We'll probably get to, I don't know, 20-ish of them. But before we do questions, I would love for you to introduce yourself to all of the listeners.

0:04:36.6 TG: My name is Tom Grossmith, aka Gent, a lot of people might know me as or some people might know me as that, some people might not know me whatsoever. I am a timber framer and hiker.

0:04:47.7 NA: There's definitely folks that have no idea what that means.

0:04:50.4 TG: I build and restore post and beam structures, stuff that was built in the 1700s and 1800s, and build new barns. That is what I'm currently doing for work. I live in a van sometimes, I hike sometimes and do stuff.

0:05:09.0 NA: Great intro.

0:05:09.6 TG: Thank you, thank you!

0:05:10.0 NA: Solid business card.

0:05:11.0 TG: I'm definitely gonna get noticed today, I feel.

0:05:13.0 NA: Yeah, so our work days are really different. [chuckle]

0:05:16.3 TG: Yes.

0:05:17.6 NA: You build and restore old barns, and I do this.

0:05:20.8 TG: Yup, yeah.

0:05:22.9 NA: Yeah, it's great.

0:05:23.3 TG: Yeah, yup.

0:05:25.4 NA: Yes, I... The fact that we have such different work lives is actually one of the things that I love about our relationship. It's incredibly comforting that, I don't know, we're not in the same world, so to speak, so we don't spiral out about the same things.

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0:05:42.3 TG: Yeah, I go the entire day without being on the Internet or anything like that for the most part, and then come home and you spend most of your day Internet-ing for your work, which is interesting.

0:05:54.8 NA: Yeah, no, I appreciate that, for sure. Is there anything else that you want to say about yourself as we get started?

0:06:00.8 TG: Well, I really wanna get my message, I have no message.

0:06:03.8 NA: Right. [chuckle] Well, you really want to tell your brand story, yeah. [chuckle]

0:06:05.9 TG: Yeah, exactly.

0:06:07.0 NA: I know. I feel like you're one of the only people that I've had on the podcast that... Obviously, you do have an Instagram, but that you don't have a link, a thing to link to, or a thing to sell.

0:06:16.4 TG: Right, I have nothing to plug, there's nothing I'm trying to push or anything like that.

0:06:19.0 NA: Right, no one's gonna buy your book, yeah.

0:06:22.0 TG: Well, we'll see, we'll see.

0:06:25.0 NA: If you write a book, I will buy your book then.

0:06:26.4 TG: Okay, thank you, I appreciate that.

0:06:27.5 NA: Great, great.

0:06:28.4 TG: I wanna take... Hold you to that.

0:06:29.9 NA: If you had to write a book, what would it be about?

0:06:32.9 TG: Probably just nonsensical ramblings, really. Bad business ideas, worst jokes.

0:06:41.2 NA: Yeah, you do tell a lot of bad jokes.

0:06:43.2 TG: That's debatable, but...

0:06:44.5 NA: Well, when we will go into this in the questions, but for folks who don't know, we met hiking the PCT, Pacific Crest Trail, and you had a whole note on your phone, in the notes app of your phone, filled with what I will say, I won't call them bad jokes, I'll call them dad jokes, maybe, very cringy jokes.

0:07:05.1 TG: Yeah, I don't even know that dad jokes is necessarily the right term for it. They're just really cheesy, not awesome jokes. They get a groan more than a laugh, maybe a chuckle, but I go for groans more than laughs, I feel.

0:07:18.4 NA: Yeah, and our trail family had to limit you to, you were allowed to tell one joke per break.

0:07:23.3 TG: Yeah, yeah, I've since started using a different notes app and deleted that one by mistake and lost easily 30 jokes.

0:07:31.8 NA: Heartbreaking.

0:07:32.6 TG: And lightning only strikes the same place once, so those are gone.

0:07:37.0 NA: Yeah, they are gone. So cringy joke, your book that you would write would be filled with cringy jokes.

0:07:42.6 TG: Yeah, definitely.

0:07:43.5 NA: Yeah, that checks out.

0:07:44.8 TG: Maybe not cringy so much, but groany.

0:07:46.7 NA: Yeah, I feel like everyone listening is gonna be like, "Tell a joke. Tell a joke." So maybe you can think about your most appropriate, but most cringy... Oh, your finger has gone up. Yes. Okay. Oh, God, I'm regretting this already. Go ahead.

0:08:01.7 TG: My most recent idea, some of them are just ideas, they're not really jokes, they're just really bad ideas, but funny business names, I think, a lot of the time. Danny Boy's Plumbing Service, "The pipes, the pipes are calling." Yeah, you chuckled. Yeah, it worked.

0:08:17.9 NA: So someone can start that business for free. You're giving that idea away.

0:08:20.6 TG: Yeah, you can take that.

0:08:21.6 NA: Okay, cool. Let's answer some questions. What do you think?

0:08:25.0 TG: Let's go for it. Let's open up the lines. Caller one, what do you have for us?

0:08:31.2 NA: There's no callers. I'm sorry. I hate to break this to you. These were all submitted on Instagram. I know we're not, 'cause I don't know what kind of fancy recording studio you think that you built me up here, but there's no live callers.

0:08:43.5 TG: I thought you were a Drive Time DJ.

[laughter]

0:08:45.4 NA: Oh my God, can you imagine if this whole time you fully didn't know what I did?

0:08:51.2 TG: That's what I've been telling people.

0:08:53.8 NA: Sure. I feel like that's almost what my mom... My mom doesn't really know what I do. I feel her answer would be, "Nicole does stuff on the internet. Nicole does something on the internet," which I think is a level more than my dad knows what I do, so, sure, Drive Time DJ. Let's go with that.

0:09:09.4 TG: Shock jock.

0:09:09.9 NA: Yeah, that's definitely my brand. So the first question here that someone submitted that I picked just because I think it's really funny, and I wasn't sure if they were being serious, or if they were making fun of you. So I'm gonna ask it anyway. The question just says, His hair care routine, question mark, with a fire emoji. So I don't know if someone's saying they actually like your hair, or if they think you have real dirtbag hair, but go ahead and answer, tell us your hair care routine.

0:09:36.9 TG: I will fill in your blank, they love my hair. My hair care routine is, don't use shampoo. Just don't use shampoo. It's bad for your hair.

0:09:44.4 NA: That's real. You actually don't use shampoo.

0:09:45.9 TG: Yes, I don't...

0:09:46.4 NA: I know, but you say a lot of bullshit, so I'm just clarifying that this is real.

0:09:49.5 TG: These people don't know I'm a bullshitter.

0:09:52.3 NA: They do now.

0:09:53.8 TG: So I don't use shampoo. I wish I wasn't someone, but I shower on like, not a super regular basis, every other day or something like that. Lots of hot water is bad for your hair. Most soap is bad for your hair. Yeah, just like not a lot of maintenance to be honest.

0:10:11.4 NA: So don't shower a lot. Don't use shampoo. Live in the woods for part of the year, and you too can have this glorious dirtbag hair situation.

0:10:20.2 TG: That is correct.

0:10:20.9 NA: That is correct. Right now, you have the very long COVID hair.

0:10:25.0 TG: It's more of a mane than anything.

0:10:27.3 NA: Yeah, I feel like if I were braver, I would give you a haircut. But that's... I feel like I would really mess it up. So, I'm sorry. I love you too much to do that. And I think the person who asked this question probably agrees, they don't want me to mess up your hair. Okay.

0:10:41.0 TG: Thank you.

0:10:41.5 NA: Well, that's your hair care routine. This question is from our friend Kelly, who says, "When are you guys coming back to the West Coast?"

0:10:48.5 TG: April-ish?

0:10:51.2 NA: April-ish, maybe. So anything we talk about in this conversation that has to do with future plans, I feel like is very up in the air, shrug emoji, TBD, COVID, vaccines, question, question, question. So we don't know, but we are hoping sometime toward the end of April. I have my tiny van named Trixie that I live in for part of the year. Last year, you built out a van that you lived in. We did side-by-side van life during the summer in Bend, and then you sold that van, and now you are building out a new van that you will live in for part of the year in Bend, and then sell again. So this, in addition to the timber frame construction, you are also flipping and living in... Yeah, building, living in, and then flipping mobile dwellings.

0:11:37.3 TG: Yeah, they works pretty well. It helps for my seasonal employment of work for some months, don't work for some months, and then somehow all profitable. I'm not getting rich, but...

0:11:49.6 NA: Not yet, not until everyone listening wants you to build them a van.

0:11:52.3 TG: Exactly. Exactly.

0:11:54.1 NA: So that's your thing to pitch.

0:11:55.7 TG: @Tomgrossmith on Instagram, slide into those DMs.

0:11:58.5 NA: Oh my god. [chuckle] Yeah, slide into those DMs. So when are we coming back to the West Coast? Hopefully sometime toward the end of April, although, the interesting thing about living in a van during a pandemic is that nothing that you rely on to make life easy and doable during van life is really possible. We found that, over the summer when we were in Bend, that usually we would be showering at the gym. But either gyms were closed or their showers were closed. We'd be going to coffee shops and the libraries for WiFi, none of that was really an option. I would usually get a membership at a co-working space, which that also either wasn't open or I didn't feel safe. So trying to make it work was very interesting.

0:12:43.4 TG: It was. There was a lot of generosity from our friends of like, someone has a sink in their garage, we can park in their driveway and go hang out in their garage and wash our dishes, or go over to Paul's house and cook in his kitchen every week, and batch cook things until we were sick of them.

0:13:02.6 NA: Yeah, I feel like we would not have made it through COVID van life without Paul. That was... And Kelly, who asked this question, is Paul's partner. And yeah, being able to... We would go every Tuesday to Paul's house and shower. So we showered once a week and did our laundry. Yeah, we would just show up like, "Hey, your dirty homeless friends are here. We're gonna... I'm gonna use your facilities."

0:13:24.5 TG: I'm gonna do my hair care routine.

0:13:26.0 NA: Yeah, yeah, you're gonna do your hair care routine. Exactly. So we will see. But hopefully, towards the end of April. This next question asks, will you be doing van life together? Whenever you go back to living in your van?

0:13:40.1 TG: Together in the sense of we will both be in the same location, but we'll have separate vans, it's nice having separate vehicles, so we're not tied together throughout the day of someone has to ride a bicycle somewhere or someone has the dwelling unit kind of thing that we both have vehicles, we both have our own space. I'm someone who really appreciates my own space and time, so I think we do it in a really nice way without... We don't have big Sprinter van, so there's not like two massive vans parked side by side, yours is ridiculously small, mine's...

0:14:15.0 NA: Alright, alright.

0:14:17.1 TG: It isn't, it isn't, And mine's reasonably sized, it's not huge or anything like that.

0:14:21.6 NA: Well, yours fits a full bed, mine has a twin-size mattress that was cut down both length-wise and width-wise, and has 20 square feet of living space, so I think you are correct in saying that it's really ridiculously tiny. Yeah, we talked about getting one van. About getting something maybe the size of a Sprinter or a large transit, which would have had its benefits, but when we just started talking through the reality of living together in one vehicle, that's also the vehicle to get around places, and it's not like, I'll be working and you'll probably be working on projects and stuff as well, but it's not like, "Oh, we're gonna quit our jobs and move into this van and travel around the country," I think maybe potentially then we would think about sharing a van. But just since we're basically using living in vans as a cheaper alternative to paying for housing for the most part, that the thought of trying to do that together and always having to negotiate, "Well, I wanna go see my friend here, or I'm gonna go to the grocery store... Who's gonna take the car? If you take the car, you're also taking the house," that that just seemed... It seemed like one step too far. Yeah, yeah. So yes, we will be in vans but side by side van life works for us. This next question, you mentioned this before of most people know you as Gent. The question is, What are your trail names?

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0:15:42.4 TG: My trail name is Gentleman, I go by Gent just because it's shorter and sounds cool. I got that in 2018 from a guy named Bram, he said... I had a crisp blue button-up shirt, I had a tight haircut, this was before I turned long term dirtbag really, And he was like, "I think that your name should be Gentleman, you look clean cut, but sometimes you say fucked up things. So I think it kind of works". And it was Gentleman ever since then, it was my like third day on trail, and I'd hiked with them for a little while and yeah, Gentleman it is.

0:16:21.5 NA: And Gentleman it is. My Trail name is Tinkerbelle, Tink for short. I was given that trail name in 2016. Also on the PCT, that was my first long distance hike, I hiked the Oregon section of the PCT, that was my very first hike, and as some folks listening will know, I had zero experience going into that, something else that's different about you and I is you had quite an outdoorsy upbringing, and that was canoeing, fishing, being outside, hiking...

0:16:52.8 TG: Just always outside.

0:16:53.8 NA: And for me never outside, and I didn't get into this kind of stuff until I was really in my 30s, and when I went out for that hike, I was terrified of everything, I was absolutely convinced that something was gonna eat my face in the night, I couldn't sleep, I was every sound was something coming to get me, I was terrified, and I was out there alone and I went out alone, and I brought with me an impulse purchase, the last day before I left at REI, they have bear bells or cougar bells, and they usually make big ones that you put to the outside of your pack that when you're walking, it makes noise, and the idea being that it alerts animals, whether it works or not, I don't know. But they also sell tiny ones, which...

0:17:39.5 TG: Ultra light.

0:17:40.8 NA: Right ultra... But they don't make... They barely make any noise.

0:17:43.5 TG: No, they're for a cat.

0:17:44.0 NA: Yeah, right, so basically like a cat bell, it's for suckers like me who are like, "Oh my God, I'm terrified of going into the wilderness, let me buy the bell." So I brought my little bell the second day on trail, I was going toward a water source and the whole trail was blocked by a herd of cattle, and I had never been that close to cows before, this was really funny 'cause your dad has cattles, cows on this farm.

0:18:05.5 TG: We have cows, there's cows like 100 yards away right now.

0:18:08.3 NA: Right, right, so again, grew up on the 26th floor of a 35-story building in Manhattan, did not have cows.

0:18:12.8 TG: Fifth generation in this property, so yeah.

0:18:14.5 NA: Exactly. Fifth generation cow owner, I was gonna say, cow parent, but that's not...

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No, not given birth to any cows. And there were all these... And I don't know if you have not been around... They're huge.

0:18:27.0 TG: They're intimidating.

0:18:28.0 NA: They're really big, and just because you assume they're gonna be relatively docile.

0:18:31.3 TG: You don't know.

0:18:31.5 NA: They're animals, it could change its mind, that thing could stampede over me, and there were so many of them and they were blocking the trail and they're blocking the water source and I was all alone and I was so afraid, so I took my little bell out of my hip belt pocket, and I was just ringing the bell, ringing the bell trying to dance by them, "Excuse me, excuse me, can I go?" My heart was pounding, I was terrified. And that night I camped with a bunch of folks who were through hiking the PCT, so I was on day two of my very first outdoorsing, basically, and these folks had been on trail for 1700 miles or something, and I was recounting this story to them and I guess, I don't know the way I told it or the usage of the bell, someone gave me the name of Tinkerbelle, so I kept it.

0:19:12.5 TG: Yeah, I like it.

0:19:13.5 NA: Yeah, well, thanks 'cause it's the trail name.

0:19:16.3 TG: I know you as Tink now, we refer to each other as Tink and Gent.

0:19:20.3 NA: Yeah, that's always a question that I get from folks. I think someone did submit that question.

0:19:23.3 TG: I think so yeah.

0:19:23.5 NA: Do you call each other by your trail names?

0:19:25.5 TG: Yeah.

0:19:25.8 NA: Yeah, 100%.

0:19:26.8 TG: That is what I know you as, calling you Nicole feels weird.

0:19:31.8 NA: We refer to each other by our actual names sometimes to other people when I'm talking to my... My mom calls you Tom. So when I'm talking to her like, Oh, Tom said this, but I don't call you Tom. Would that even... It feels weird that...

0:19:46.5 TG: It sounds weird.

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0:19:47.4 NA: Yeah, I'm looking at your face and calling you Tom myself makes me feel weird.

0:19:49.9 TG: No, I don't care for it.

0:19:50.7 NA: Yeah Tink and Gent always.

0:19:51.7 TG: Also, I remember too, Bram said that I looked like a Wall Street type, which is kind of funny because I was like a Zamboni driver before I went on the trail in 2018, which was like a glorified janitor pretty much.

0:20:05.1 NA: For people who don't know what is an Zamboni driver is, and does.

0:20:07.9 TG: It is a ice resurfacing machine, so between periods at hockey games and stuff like that, the big thing that goes out and makes the ice shiny again, I used to drive that.

0:20:17.8 NA: So not a Wall Street type.

0:20:19.8 TG: Not a Wall Street type.

0:20:22.1 NA: So the other part of this question was, how and where did you meet on trail? Paint us a picture.

0:20:27.9 TG: It was a bright morning July 6th on Hopkins pass. I had camped at Hopkins Lake and was climbing up Hopkins pass, heading back towards Hart pass after tagging the border heading southbound on the PCT.

0:20:43.1 NA: You wanna explain the how we were going in opposite directions.

0:20:47.3 TG: To southbound the Pacific Crest Trail, you get dropped off at Hart's pass, which is the closest road access, you hike 30 miles north to the Canadian border, touch it, and then essentially start your southbound hike.

0:21:00.4 NA: Yeah, because you can't enter the US from Canada that way, it's an illegal border crossing.

0:21:04.8 TG: Yeah, so I had started a day before you and had tagged the border the day before you had, and then was heading back south doing my southbound hike. I was coming up Hopkins pass, eating a granola bar, hiking up a bunch of snow, when I see this person coming towards me, and it happened to be you, and you go, "Oh is the snow bad?" And I was like, "Oh, it's no big deal. I slid down it on my butt," and we had a quick conversation, as you do with hikers, everyone's very excited, eager to make friends, that kind of stuff, and we both go on our merry way and we met again in Stehekin, now tell your side of the story.

0:21:40.3 NA: Okay, I have... Between 2016, when I started long distance hiking in 2018, I

definitely acquired more hiking experience, I did the Arizona trail, but I had no snow hiking experience at all other than a couple of times of snowshoeing on flat, fresh snow. So I was really nervous the year that we... Well, we didn't do the whole PCT, but the year that we met on the PCT, it was what, like a 200% higher than average snow year in Washington?

0:22:07.7 TG: Yeah it was really high.

0:22:08.5 NA: There was quite a bit of snow still in July, and I was really nervous about it, and I was out there alone, and so every time there would be a new pass to go over, and I knew there was gonna be snow, I was trying if people were coming the other way just to get some information about it, and so we meet you're very nonchalant about the whole thing. Oh, the snow is totally fine. It's whatever, I'm on my way to the border.

0:22:28.5 TG: Picture a Wall Street type, telling you this.

0:22:30.5 NA: Yeah a Wall Street type. Spoiler alert, you were 25 years old at the time. Right, so I'm eight years older than you for people listening. So here's this younger guy with a his short hair, clean cut, whatever, "Oh the snow is totally fine." I get there, the now is not fine, or at least not for my... 'cause I realized afterwards that's kind of a useless question to ask because it's all dependent on people's experience.

0:22:52.3 TG: It's when another hiker tells you, it's gonna take you 20 minutes to get there, it's like, Just tell me how many miles it is because 20 minutes is different for every... Right. How long it takes you to hike is different.

0:23:02.4 NA: And so I got up there, I was terrified, the snow was not fine, I did not slide down it on my butt, it took me so long. And the whole time I'm like, "Fuck this guy, I'm not gonna see him again. Whatever." And then our paths crossed in Stehekin, which was the first trail town resupply, and we will move on in a second, but do you wanna tell a little bit of our second... Paint the picture of when we met for the second time at the Ranger station?

0:23:30.1 TG: At the ranger station, you camped behind the Ranger Station because it's a tiny little resort town, pretty much that you can only get to by boat or by hiking in. There is a hotel, but it's really expensive, so you camped behind the ranger station, I had set up my tent, me and a guy I was hiking with were the first ones there for the day, and we set up and we were like near the showers or something, and you came up and you were like, "Is that your green tent up there? I set up inside yours pretty much," and I was like, "Okay, we'll see about that."

0:24:00.1 NA: 'Cause there wasn't that much space.

0:24:00.4 TG: No, it's a pretty small spot.

0:24:01.7 NA: It had filled up and the only empty spots were on the tent pad that you were on, and in order to get my tent to fit, I had to put one of my 10 stakes. It was right up against your tent,

basically. And I was like, "Well sorry, I guess I'm gonna be neighbors with this guy."

0:24:14.9 TG: And it was pretty much inside my tent, it could not have been any closer, so I had a small interaction that day, and then the next morning, we were charging things on the front porch of the Ranger Station and started talking and I started going over some family stuff that I had been dealing with and had a tearful interaction tearful on my side, I'm very much a crier and then... Yeah, I left that morning, I believe you left that afternoon or midday, and then we met again in a town called Skykomish.

0:24:50.6 NA: Yeah, and we wound up becoming part of the same trail family, but yeah, this person that I had just met, who gave me bad snow intel is now sobbing heavily about family things, and I'm like, "What's happening here? What is this person?" And here we are, and now I'm living in your dad's house, so... That's great. So this question comes from Pete aka King, who was also in our trail family that year, and he asks, "Are you guys still doing weird butt stuff?"

0:25:19.6 TG: Yes.

0:25:21.3 NA: I think we need to provide some... Let me provide some context here with this question, so weird butt stuff, one of the things that happened to me in Washington, on that hike that had never happened in my previous hikes is I got really bad butt chafe, which I had heard about from other hikers, and I always felt really smug that for some reason I had not gotten, butt chafe.

0:25:42.1 TG: I've had butt chafe so bad, I almost started a wildfire, there was so much friction. It's terrible...

0:25:47.0 NA: It was so so painful. And we at that point, a small group of us had become a trail family and we were hiking together and I was in so much pain. And then you provide the solution.

0:25:58.7 TG: I carry tube of Vagisil with me. It's a really good anti-chafing agent and...

0:26:04.7 NA: I don't know the science on that, I don't know why it works.

0:26:06.8 TG: Neither do I but shoutout to science.

0:26:08.6 NA: That was the first night that we all camped together as a trail family and you just handed me this tube of Vagisil and you were like, "Trust me, this works."

0:26:16.4 TG: Put it on your butt.

0:26:17.2 NA: Yeah, put it on your butt. So I went in my tent and zipped up the doors, closed the little privacy thing, took off the bottoms, everyone's just sitting around the tent talking basically, and I'm like, "Yeah, I guess I'm just gonna put this dude's Vagisil on my butt chafe."

0:26:30.4 TG: We're all sitting 10 feet away from you messing with your butt.

0:26:35.4 NA: And then that became a topic of conversation. And here we are. Again, here we are. So thanks, King for that. Someone wants to know, I just wanna hear about planned adventures for 2021.

0:26:48.4 TG: So we are thinking of doing the Colorado trail. Pretty much every plan that we have right now is...

0:26:53.4 NA: Tentative.

0:26:54.2 TG: Yeah, it's all with an asterisk of as long as things feel safe.

0:26:57.9 NA: Right, are we vaccinated, what's happening around the country with COVID? Yeah.

0:27:01.8 TG: Yeah, so we're thinking of doing the Colorado trail with a friend. We have a couple of other hikes that we are thinking of just interchanging, we have three other trails that we're thinking of doing, but not all three, we'll pick one or two and do them, some shorter hikes in the Northwest, maybe the Wonderland Trail, if we can get permits, probably the Timberline trail, 'cause we're close to the area when we're out west... Yeah, that's kind of it for now, but it's... Again, I'll just up in the air because... Who knows with anything right now.

0:27:31.1 NA: Yeah, we like to talk about things that could potentially happen. I feel like we're in that place right now of wanting to have things to look forward to, so talking cautiously optimistically about things, but still holding it with a loose grasp, but not getting so attached to it that we're gonna be devastated if it doesn't happen, 'cause I mean, that's what happened in 2020, we were gonna hike the Colorado trail and some other stuff last year. And obviously decided not to do that. Yeah, so we will see, but there's... I'm planning, I scheduled my work plan to hopefully take a three-month adventure sabbatical, that's what I'm calling it, August, September and October off set aside for hiking, hopefully, so there will... There will be adventures...

0:28:14.4 TG: We will see.

0:28:14.6 NA: As soon there could be adventures we are ready. We have our adventure fund from last year that we did not spend...

0:28:19.8 TG: That we do.

0:28:20.5 NA: That we are... Luckily, did not have to use. How did being partners on trail prepare you for being partners in life?

0:28:33.5 TG: So back to the butt stuff story, it's very easy to put up a front a little bit with a new partner of... You don't wanna poop at someone's house yet, it's a little too new, you don't want them to know that you make these bad smells or...

20 Questions, with my partner Tom (aka Gent!)

0:28:50.2 NA: I like that this is where you're going.

0:28:51.4 TG: I don't know, it's just...

0:28:52.3 NA: That's great.

0:28:52.8 TG: Yeah.

0:28:53.3 NA: Tell the people about your bad smells.

0:28:55.7 TG: They don't wanna know about my bad smells.

0:28:57.2 NA: That's true, you all don't wanna know about the bad smells.

0:29:00.1 TG: To not be fully human around someone, it takes a while to get totally comfortable with people and being on trail, you're very human. I don't think there's a lot of people that you would tell, "Hey, my butt's chafing really badly." You had met a lot of us...

0:29:17.0 NA: Can you give me something to put on? Or even we're hiking together, "Oh, I have to poop. I'm gonna go dig a hole in the woods over there, you can either keep going and I'll catch up with you, or you can wait for me," the amount of times that we waited for each other to go dig a hole and poop in it, that forms a solid friendship, that changes your relationship.

0:29:33.4 TG: Yeah, and like, you're gross, you don't always feel comfortable with how disgusting you are yourself, and there are these other people that are around you and love you for who you are, how you smell, how you look, how dirty you are, all of these things, and it's just really easy to just accept someone for totally who they are.

0:29:52.3 NA: Yeah, I think so too. That's a good, that's a really good point. I also think in terms of how did essentially meeting on trail and forming a relationship on trail translate to off-trail, there's so many ups and downs emotionally, on a long distance hike, at least we can only speak to our own experience, but you can be having the best day and then two hours later, the worst day and the mood cycling can be really quick and you can experience some really extreme moods if you're really fatigued or you're running out of food or something, you have a scary fall or it just... Can be a pressure cooker, emotional climate, and being able to show the other person that. It's really hard to hide it. It's really hard to...

0:30:37.0 TG: Yeah. Definitely.

0:30:38.5 NA: The same way that you can't pretend that you are not sweaty and disgusting and smell bad, also it's really hard to... All your emotions are really close to the surface.

0:30:47.8 TG: And you spend so much time with someone that, "Hey, you've been a little bit quiet, what's going on?"

0:30:51.4 NA: You get to read each other 'cause you're together so much, yeah, yeah, that's a good point.

0:30:55.0 TG: It's a really weird thing, but you can read the back of someone's head really easily after walking behind them like for days on end.

0:31:03.2 NA: Yeah, yeah, yeah. The one last thing I'll say on this question, I feel like talking all day, and this is also unique to some of the hiking we've done together is we have spent all day, every day together for portions of hikes and talking all day, you end up covering a lot of topics, some of them really serious, some of them really random funny bullshit. And I think that that for us developed an incredibly solid foundation of off trail communication...

0:31:29.8 TG: I agree.

0:31:30.4 NA: Because our entire friendship initially was built off of, let's just talk all day. Yeah, this question is from our friend, Muffy.

0:31:40.7 TG: Muffy, hello Muffy.

0:31:42.2 NA: You do love Muffy very much.

0:31:43.4 TG: Muffy gets a lot of my bad business ideas or really funny jokes, Muffy is my sounding board a lot of the time, and I'm like, "Ooh, I need to text Muffy that."

0:31:53.3 NA: Well, usually what happens is you tell me I don't react appropriate, I don't appreciate it enough, or I don't react appropriately and you're like, "I'm gonna text Muffy." And like Muffy will appreciate me and that is accurate.

0:32:01.5 TG: That is exactly how it goes.

0:32:02.6 NA: Thank you Muffy. Yeah, Muffy says, excuse me, "Can y'all talk about what love means to you, like what daily acts do both of you do to demonstrate love? Obviously the relationship functions well, and it's because you're hearing one another's love even when you're far away." This is a sweet question.

0:32:18.2 TG: That is a sweet question. From a sweet person.

0:32:20.1 NA: Yes, maybe we can switch off, you share one, what do we do to demonstrate love to each other on the regular?

0:32:27.4 TG: It's... I bring you tea every morning before I go to work.

0:32:32.2 NA: You bring me tea in bed before you go to work at 6:30 every morning. Yes, you do.

0:32:36.1 TG: And it's the little things. I'm making coffee anyway, I'm making breakfast, and lunch, and stuff like that to take with me to work and you're still in bed, I have the hot water I'll bring you tea. I love you. I love to do it. I wanna see you before I go to work so I might as well come up and be with you for some minutes.

0:32:54.6 NA: One of your love languages is definitely acts of service.

0:32:56.8 TG: Yeah. I have most of the love languages, I would say.

0:33:00.7 NA: All of them, much love. Yeah, so that's one. I'd say something that we really reciprocally do is express gratitude to each other really often for relatively mundane things, but sincere gratitude like thank you for emptying the dishwasher, or thank you for doing my laundry, or making the bed or these types of things that... Regular gratitude is part of our... Baked into our relationship.

0:33:29.5 TG: Yeah. Knowing that things aren't just taken for granted.

0:33:31.1 NA: Yeah, which is important. We talk about that a lot, really trying not to take each other for granted. What else do you think?

0:33:38.5 TG: I would say being able to just ask for the things that I need in the moment of like I need a hug, or I'm a big fan of, I call them mid-section hugs. When I sit down and you stand up and I hug your mid-section, wrap my arms around your waist and stuff, I ask for those all the time.

0:33:58.5 NA: You do.

0:34:00.8 TG: I'm a very physical person, and I feel as though I need that a lot more than you do.

0:34:06.4 NA: Yeah, I agree with that. I have gotten a lot more touchy and a lot more cuddly in this relationship because of you.

0:34:13.8 TG: Yeah. Yeah, just voicing my wants and needs to, not necessarily feel love, but to feel the love between us.

0:34:21.7 NA: Yeah, and I think, again, this goes back to communication, we have done a lot of talking about, not specifically the love languages template or whatever, but the way that you... What makes you feel loved is often different than what makes me feel loved. And so remembering that if I want you to feel loved, then I need to meet you where you're at and do the things that make you feel loved, and that's not always the things that I would want, but I think we're both conscious of, this is you need the mid-section hug more than I need the mid-section hug.

0:34:53.2 TG: Exactly.

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0:34:55.6 NA: I would say that I also would say, the last thing I'd say on this is my desire or standards for cleanliness and tidiness of spaces is higher than yours, and yet I think that you appreciate... I'll go into your room, 'cause I work from home and you don't, I'll make your bed sometimes during the day, and I know that you have expressed delight at coming home and the space is cleaner than you left it.

0:35:22.0 TG: I don't understand the way that I am a lot of the times. It's nice to come into your room and the bed's made, but for some reason, I just get up. I don't make my bed.

0:35:30.8 NA: It's 'cause you're busy making me tea.

0:35:32.0 TG: Exactly. But also it's not a, you're making my bed in a "I have to freaking do this for this guy" kind of thing.

0:35:37.0 NA: Oh no, not at all.

0:35:38.0 TG: It's like you know that I'll appreciate it.

0:35:40.5 NA: But also, one of the things you mentioned before that we like to have separate vans, and this will come up later, someone asked a question about this, we also have separate bedrooms. You can do whatever you want in your bedroom. I feel no responsibility to make your bed.

0:35:51.7 TG: Just shut the door if it bothers you.

0:35:53.4 NA: And frequently I do. I'm like, "This is his dumb problem. I'm not gonna deal with this." Yeah. Yes. Anything else you wanna say on that?

0:36:03.1 TG: Expressing love throughout the day even when we're not together. It feels good to get a "thinking about you" text or just...

0:36:10.0 NA: Which is a brand of text because most... A majority of our relationship was long distance. Either we were together all day, every day on trail, or I was in Oregon and you were in Massachusetts. So this is our first time being actually actively together and not on trail, and so we always used to send each other, multiple times during the day, just like, "Thinking about you" or "Thinking about you" with a little smiley face or kissy emoji, and that was always... It's nice to feel like someone's thinking about you.

0:36:34.6 TG: It feels good.

0:36:34.7 NA: And we still do that.

0:36:35.4 TG: Yeah, we do.

0:36:38.1 NA: This question, yeah, I appreciate this one. It says, "How do you show up for each

other even when you're having your own hard days and struggles?"

0:36:47.0 TG: It's been difficult recently. My mental health hasn't been really that great.

0:36:53.0 NA: Same. We've gotten...

0:36:54.0 TG: Yeah. It's not an uncommon thing right now. A lot of people are having a hard time.

0:36:57.5 NA: I was talking about this with our friend, Julia, recently that we have lucked out in the last what, almost two years of being together, that just coincidentally, we have tended not to have poor mental health times at the same time. So like you're having a hard time and I'm not, so it's much easier to, "Oh, I have a higher capacity, step in," do that, and vice versa, that you have done that for me. And the last, I'd say, two months, we have both had plenty of days where we're in the hole at the same time, which has been tough.

0:37:27.1 TG: And a lot of the times, I'll be in my smaller funks in a couple of days or something like that, and I'll bounce back. But this one's been a bit of a longer rut, and unfortunately, I'm familiar with depression, like, have had really long bouts of it, and I'm fortunate to have a partner who understands that and is there for me. But realizing when someone has less capacity than you currently do of, "I'll take the charge on dinner, or go upstairs and read, do you need alone time, do you need a snack, what do you need, what can I do for you?" and just realizing that someone might be lower than you right now. So kinda cowboy up a little bit and help out, and not to say that one person is always doing for the other, or anything like that. It goes back and forth for sure.

0:38:17.9 NA: Yeah. I think something that we've really normalized in our communication is frequent check-ins about capacity, and not even necessarily during times of depression, maybe it's just I had a really exhausting workday, or you had a really exhausting workday. I think we've gotten relatively comfortable saying, "I really don't have the capacity to do this," or like you said, "How do you feel about taking the lead on dinner," or being clear about asking for what you need I think is, I'm just reflecting on this, what I'm about to say, I didn't realize it until we were having this conversation, you and I have both struggled in past relationships, in past, on our own, of feeling like too much, like we're too much for someone, that fear of not wanting to be a burden. And that often translates into not asking to get your needs met, or at least it has for me, and I feel like we've talked about that enough, that we've arrived at this, not to say it's always easy, but this relatively sweet place of being able to, with emotional neutrality and not really feeling like a burden, saying, "I don't have the capacity for this. Can you help?"

0:39:18.3 TG: Can't do this right now.

0:39:19.6 NA: Exactly, yeah. I think that. And the other thing that I would add that we haven't talked about about this is, I don't think there's an expectation that we're gonna fix each other.

0:39:30.2 TG: No, definitely not.

0:39:30.7 NA: There's no expectation that I'm having a hard time, sure, I can ask for help with things, but I don't expect you to fix it. And that, I think, helps because it lowers the stakes.

0:39:42.1 TG: Yeah, definitely, and a lot of the times, I do kind of realize why I'm in... Feeling the way that I am feeling, whether it's work, whether it's family stuff, whether it's home life, any of those things, that it's not just a mysterious funk for the most part, and even though I know the reasons I feel that way, it's not easy to get out of them. Yeah.

0:40:05.1 NA: Yeah, so this question. Do you have differing values, goals or interests? If so, how do you manage those differences? I think that we are aligned on a lot of things and that that's not an accident. We mentioned the way that we met was basically through non-stop talking for many, many days, and that as our relationship was transitioning from a friendship to more of a romantic partnership, we talked a lot about, "What do we want from this partnership?" or, "What is the point... Not what is the point of partnership, 'cause that will be different for different folks, but, "What is the point of partnership for us?" And one of the things that came up really strongly for me, just as like a self-reflection during the period of getting divorced and all of that is, realizing that what I want, or at least what feels important to me right now is, a romantic and sexual partner and an adventure partner, and it's great to have other things in common, but the things that I want the most, to essentially to share with you are, being on the same page about romantically, how... Does that manifest in our relationship? Sexual compatibility, and then the prioritization of adventures.

0:41:29.8 NA: And I think that we were really clear on what we do need to have in common and what we don't need to have in common...

0:41:37.7 TG: Yeah, for sure.

0:41:39.1 NA: And that... That's my... That doesn't really answer this question, 'cause of course, there are things that we differ on, and you can talk about that a little bit, but I think that it was a clarity of, "It's cool if we are not aligned in these ways, as long as we are in these ways."

0:41:53.5 TG: Right, there's no thing that it's like, "Well, we don't agree on that, so we don't talk about it," or anything like that. There are some. Things that maybe we don't see so eye to eye on, but we can have respectful conversations about things. And I would say, for the most part, our ideals do align pretty well.

0:42:11.6 NA: Yeah, I think that the biggest difference is some of our interests.

0:42:15.6 TG: Yeah, I agree with that. I like to go fishing, I like to have several old motorcycles to your dismay. I have an old truck that I restored and I have very physical hands-on hobbies that you have zero interest in, and that's totally cool. And it's nice to have my own thing and not constantly have shared activities.

0:42:38.4 NA: Yeah, especially because talking about long-distance hiking, and traveling and adventuring, that type of stuff, when that is a thing that we're doing, it's really pretty full on, and

we're together almost all of the time, or at least a lot of the time. And so one of the things that we have found that we've to work on in our relationship is, prioritizing alone time more. You and I both... I think everyone needs it. We both really need it, but I think that our tolerance for not getting it, is pretty high, that we don't realize it's been too long without alone time, until it's like, "Oh, fuck."

0:43:10.0 TG: Yeah, I haven't had alone time in some time. Gee, I'm in a really kind of foul mood and don't really like anyone right now. What's that about? Oh gee, I haven't had a second of alone time in a month.

0:43:22.4 NA: And one of the things that we bumped up against, particularly last year, when we were living in the vans in Bend, or other times when you would come to Bend is, you would essentially quit a job or finish a project and come out to be with me and not be working, and I would still be working, so you would get plenty of alone time while I was working, but I was either working or we were together. And so that, I feel like, in the last, maybe six or seven months, has been something that we've really intentionally worked on, of, "Let's carve out the alone time before we reach the... It shouldn't be something that happens as a last resort in a breaking point."

0:43:56.9 TG: Right, yeah. Definitely.

0:43:58.6 NA: And honestly, I feel like we've done better.

0:44:01.2 TG: Yeah, I agree with that.

0:44:02.1 NA: In the last few months, about that. The other thing that I will say about sort of how do we handle managing those differences of not having certain things in common, one of the things that I know is a value of mine, and obviously you can speak to what the role is of this for you, is I don't... How do I wanna say this? Our partnership is not the pinnacle of relational connections, I don't believe that your partner, your romantic partner, your spouse, that they are the top of the pyramid, they're at the top of the hierarchy, and everyone else in your life comes below that, that's... I don't believe that that's true. My relationship with you is as important to me as my relationship with Paul, is as important to me as my relationship with my mom and with my best friend. And so that being true, helps, because I have things that we don't have in common that I would like to share with someone else, I share with someone else. So there's no... We don't have... There's I think, some pressure on the mainstream romantic partnership story, that, "They complete you, they're your person that meets all your needs," that to me is just so much pressure and it's so wildly unrealistic. There's no way you're gonna meet all of my needs, there's no way I'm gonna meet all of your needs. Cool. Let's not expect that.

0:45:21.2 TG: Exactly. Yeah.

0:45:22.9 NA: Yeah. Anything else on that?

0:45:25.3 TG: I don't think so.

0:45:26.6 NA: Alright, this is a sort of related question. Asks, advice on how to grow together as partners while growing as individuals.

0:45:37.9 TG: Respecting other people's time and space, it's okay to have separate interests and invest yourself into things that maybe your partner isn't totally into or totally aligned with, and yeah. It's totally okay to do your own thing a little bit and... Yeah, I kinda don't know.

0:45:58.5 NA: I think... Yeah, in general, I try my best to stay away from giving advice, I'm not always great at that, but because what works for us might not work for someone else.

0:46:07.5 TG: Exactly, yeah.

0:46:08.5 NA: I think for me, in response to this question, growth for me requires knowing what I wanna grow into or what it is that I'm working on. So if we're... A lot of things we've already talked about is ways that we have intentionally tried to grow together, and then growing as individuals is just, I would like to be more proficient in this or unpack this psychologically, and we talk about the things that we care about individually and that we're each working on, whether it's a skill or an activity of yours or something I'm working on with my business coach or therapist or something like that, we keep each other sort of informed but we respect each other's individual process. You are allowed to be a private autonomous person, you don't owe me, all of your... Everything that goes on in your head, it's not my business.

0:46:54.9 TG: Right, even though I do tell you most of what goes on in my head.

0:46:58.3 NA: Yeah, yeah.

0:47:00.2 TG: You love that.

0:47:00.8 NA: Yes, you do.

0:47:00.9 TG: You love that.

0:47:00.9 NA: You really do. Yeah, yeah, no, my real favorite is when you recap books that you're reading for me.

0:47:06.7 TG: It's the best.

0:47:06.8 NA: But you start in the middle of... We've never talked about the book, and you're like, "Okay, so Robert goes into the bank," or whatever, and I'm like, "I don't..." "

0:47:15.1 TG: I did that with Circe and it drove you nuts. I loved Circe by Madeline Miller. That's, I believe, who wrote it?

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0:47:21.4 NA: I don't know, I haven't read it, but...

0:47:22.4 TG: Anyway, great book. Highly recommend it. I gave her the chapter by chapter synopsis, she hated it, and I feel bad because I feel like you would genuinely like that book and I ruined it for you.

0:47:33.6 NA: Yeah, that's true, that's true. I love you anyway.

0:47:35.4 TG: I love you.

0:47:37.2 NA: What are some of your favorite things about the other person? Yeah, say nice things to me.

0:47:42.1 TG: You're so organized. My life is chaos.

[laughter]

0:47:49.5 NA: But you have a budget now.

0:47:50.9 TG: Oh my God, I have a budget. I update it sometimes. It's crazy.

0:47:53.7 NA: You're welcome.

[chuckle]

0:47:55.7 TG: Yeah, I've never had a budget up until now, my 27th and 28th year, and always feeling like, "This seems like enough money to have and I'm doing okay." Yeah, I have a budget now, which is pretty wild, but yeah, I really like how organized you are, you're very much a planner, whereas I'm a...

0:48:16.1 NA: "It'll be fine."

0:48:18.7 TG: It's all gonna work out and it'll be totally cool, which in fairness, it's always worked out for me in that way. Throw caution to the wind, recommend that.

0:48:28.9 NA: A factor of luck and many, many privileges.

0:48:30.9 TG: Oh yeah, definitely. I come from a really big place of privilege, we have free housing now because we live with my dad who is mortgage-free because he's a fifth generation living here and it's all...

0:48:41.9 NA: Many much Generation Wealth anyway. Yes, yes, continue.

0:48:45.2 TG: And yeah, just like a lot of the planning that you do that I would never ever do, it

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pretty much always benefits me, I really do like that about you, I like the cleanliness that you bring, even though I'm not someone who would do it myself, clean spaces feel nice.

0:49:04.0 NA: It's funny, all the things you are mentioning, the flip side of those things are a lot of the things that I like about you, meaning I like that you are more chill, I like that you don't take things as seriously, which doesn't mean you can't be serious but I feel like a lot of the ways in which we... It's funny, we definitely have things in common, but personality-wise, I think we're incredibly different.

0:49:29.3 TG: We're pretty different. Yeah.

0:49:29.4 NA: But I think we bring each other closer to a middle that's more sustainable for both of us, that I'm a lot more playful because of you, you just have a really lovely, almost silliness and a light touch to things that I don't. I tend to be quite a serious person.

0:49:49.3 TG: I like to call it a sense of whimsy.

0:49:51.0 NA: Yeah, exactly. You have a sense of whimsy. Well, a similar question that we got from our friend, Julia says... Oh yeah, you have your hand up like you wanna say something.

0:49:57.6 TG: Childlike sense of wonder.

0:50:00.1 NA: Childlike sense of wonder. Yes. It you. Julia says, "How would you describe the other person in three words?" I feel like these questions are really hard.

0:50:07.7 TG: Yeah, I'm panicking a little bit, right now. I'll be honest.

0:50:10.0 NA: Would you like to pass on this one?

0:50:12.8 TG: You go first and then maybe I'll pass.

0:50:14.6 NA: Okay, keeping in mind that this is hard and you are more than just these three words.

0:50:19.2 TG: And very easily insulted.

0:50:20.4 NA: Okay, very easily insulted. Three words, I would say loving, fun or playful, sexy. Something along those lines, you are, you have a very sexy energy.

0:50:38.6 TG: I accept it.

0:50:39.5 NA: Sexy as hell, those are three words. How about that?

0:50:42.0 TG: Boom, good.

0:50:42.5 NA: You feel good?

0:50:43.0 TG: I accept, that's me.

0:50:44.4 NA: Do you wanna go? You're welcome to pass. It's too much pressure for you?

0:50:49.0 TG: It's a lot of pressure. It's a lot of pressure. I would say you are meticulous in pretty much everything that you do.

0:50:58.8 NA: I don't know if we're allowed to argue but I'm going to. I feel like I'm very light switch, either I care a million or I care zero, I don't have a lot of... I'm meticulous about the things that I really care about and then things that I don't care about, I don't care at all.

0:51:12.4 TG: That's true. I've seen a lot of the spreadsheets that you make. I've seen the budget that you have for your business and how crazy in-depth it is, which like it makes sense, you run your own business, you should probably do those things. I didn't have a budget until I was 27 years old, and you almost threw up when I told you that.

0:51:33.9 NA: No, I respected how you wanna run your life. So the word that you are using to describe me is budget.

0:51:39.8 TG: Yes, meticulous, budget. Also sexy.

0:51:44.0 NA: I like... That sounds very begrudging, the way you said it.

0:51:46.0 TG: No, yeah, sexy. No, sexy as hell.

0:51:51.3 NA: Alright. Alright, we're not... Keep it down.

0:51:52.6 TG: Get over here.

0:51:52.7 NA: Yeah, yeah. Keep it down. This question, "How did you know that you wanted to go from friends to more?"

0:52:01.6 TG: There are certain ways that you miss someone or you think about someone, and I have friends that I'll think about during any random day, and the thought comes, the thought goes, and I would think about you and couldn't stop thinking about you, and I had to reach out and there are ways that you miss someone that is really deep, and you feel it in your soul kind of not to be too cheesy or whatever, but...

0:52:33.9 NA: No, I'm here for it.

0:52:36.6 TG: Yeah, it's... Yeah, I felt it pretty deep inside that you were someone that I wanted to spend a lot of time with and be involved with in a really deep way.

0:52:47.4 NA: I feel like this is a hard question to answer because maybe if there's someone who's listening who's had a different experience... I don't know. I know, I just used the light switch metaphor before, I don't know that it's really a light switch thing of like, I think about someone this way, and then all of a sudden I think about them this other way. I think it's usually relatively gradual, that sort of build. But I do remember that there was a point, and this is gonna sound dramatic, which potentially it is, but it's also honest, where I felt like if we didn't give this type of relationship a shot, that it could be one of the regrets of my life, which as I say that, I know sounds intense, but I just... I felt like there was a lot of potential here for us both to feel really appreciated and loved and fulfilled, and to have a sexual relationship that we wanted and... Yeah, I just had this feeling that if I don't try and see what's possible, keeping in mind that you never know what's gonna happen, and like, "Hey, this could be a disaster."

0:53:53.4 TG: Yeah, you never know.

0:53:54.0 NA: But if we don't try, it will always be in the back of my mind, that sort of what if question, and a lot of the rest of my life, my career choices, a lot of things have been built around, I don't want this to be a deathbed regret and that's how I felt about you.

0:54:07.9 TG: Yeah. I love you.

0:54:11.0 NA: I love you too.

0:54:12.4 TG: It was weird getting off the PCT in 2018 together when it was like, you grow close with someone... And you lived in Oregon, I lived in Massachusetts...

0:54:21.9 NA: And you have this friendship and it's like, "Are we we ever gonna see each other again?"

0:54:24.7 TG: It doesn't matter how often you talk on the phone, I could see you once a year or something, and that would be kind of a bummer.

0:54:32.4 NA: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Future trails that you want to do, either separately as individuals or as a team. Tell me one thing that you would like to do as a solo adventure?

0:54:45.9 TG: So I have been very interested in bike-packing as of late. I would love to try the great divide mountain biking route, Go big or Go home.

0:54:54.4 NA: So you say you're interested in bike-packing? To clarify, you have never actually gone bike packing?

0:54:58.7 TG: Correct, I've never done it, but I have a gravel bike, like a decent touring bike, I don't have any of the stuff to tour with yet, but...

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0:55:08.0 NA: But you know how to buy stuff.

0:55:08.9 TG: Yeah, I know how to buy stuff, I know how to ride a bike...

0:55:09.8 NA: And now you have a budget so...

0:55:11.5 TG: Exactly, and bike stuff is in that budget.

0:55:14.3 NA: It is, you see, you're welcome.

0:55:16.9 TG: There's a system.

0:55:17.0 NA: I'm sorry, as much as I feel like you're dragging me a little bit about this budget, which is...

0:55:19.9 TG: Oh, it works.

0:55:20.6 NA: It's totally fine. I will never forget, whatever this was, a couple of months ago when you wanted to buy a bike-related thing and you were like, "Yeah, I don't know if the money..." And then you looked at the budget, you're like, "Oh, I already have the money set aside for this." And I was like, mic drop, you're welcome.

0:55:33.5 TG: I bought that set of tires.

0:55:34.6 NA: Yeah, you did, yeah you did.

0:55:35.3 TG: Yeah big time.

0:55:36.3 NA: So that's your solo adventure. I don't know that I had a particular one that I wanna do, but it is important to me, for as much as we love adventuring and long distance hiking together, I would like to do another solo hike.

0:55:48.4 TG: Yeah, I agree with that.

0:55:49.3 NA: Yeah. I think that that would be fun.

0:55:51.4 TG: I'm also fascinated by paddling the Mississippi River. Our friends Carrie and Travis did it, and I feel like I'm an annoying little kid every time I'm with them 'cause I feel like I ask about it all the time, but yeah, long-term canoe travel, I feel is really cool and really interesting, and I don't know how that would be for you.

0:56:11.6 NA: Well, I've been in a canoe once, it was last July, your canoe up in Maine. We were in it for an hour and a half, I had to keep taking breaks because the paddle was heavy and my arms were really sore, so I think potentially something between taking breaks a few times in one hour to

paddling the Mississippi, there's gotta... I should probably learn how to canoe.

0:56:33.8 TG: I disagree with that. Let's go.

0:56:35.0 NA: Okay, well, you're gonna be doing a lot of paddling then, my love.

0:56:37.8 TG: Let's go with the flow of the river.

0:56:39.2 NA: Okay cool, done. As far as things that we wanna do together, everything else?

0:56:45.3 TG: Yeah, pretty much.

0:56:47.1 NA: I wish that people listening had even a percentage of an idea of how much bullshit we talk about adventures that are either way outside of our skill level or that we have no business doing, or that we don't have the money to do, or that we don't have the time to. Like we watch so many trail documentaries and stuff on YouTube that we will pause, "Oh, we could do this, We could do that," we talk so much game about things that you could never...

0:57:11.0 TG: Huge.

0:57:11.7 NA: Yeah, not never, but... Do you wanna talk about TCYTC?

0:57:17.0 TG: I was just gonna ask you that. So we have a fake podcast called TCYTC talk and Calendar-Year Triple Crown. The Calendar-Year Triple Crown is hiking the Pacific Crest Trail, the Continental Divide trail and the Appalachian Trail, all in one calendar year. Under 12 people or something have done it.

0:57:36.7 NA: It's like almost 8,000 miles of hiking and you're doing a lot of that in the winter, the snow...

0:57:42.1 TG: Way less than ideal.

0:57:42.9 NA: It is a wild, wild thing. You have to average 30 miles a day or something crazy that I think we have hiked 30 miles or more a day. Maybe six times.

0:57:53.1 TG: And hated it.

0:57:53.9 NA: Hated it every time. Like I said, I'm terrified of the snow and many, many other things. Like nothing in... We quit the PCT after 16,100 miles of nothing. That was other extenuating circumstances, but nothing in either of our histories says that we can complete one of these trails, yet alone all three, yet alone all three in the same year, and yet we talk about... This is probably our number one hobby is like we go on day hikes and we... Okay, at this trail or this thing, we talk and we talk about it so much that we have... We joke that we have a fake podcast called TCYTC that nobody would ever wanna listen to except us 'cause we're all...

0:58:30.7 TG: Oh, it's just nonsense ramblings.

0:58:31.9 NA: It's nonsense. It's nonsense. Our big dream is to hike the calendar Year triple crown, and it will never happen.

0:58:37.9 TG: No, it probably won't.

0:58:39.6 NA: But we like talking about it.

0:58:40.5 TG: We love talking about it. It's so fun.

0:58:42.1 NA: Yeah.

0:58:43.1 TG: Because it's an unsolvable puzzle.

0:58:45.2 NA: Like, what day do you start... Yeah.

0:58:45.8 TG: You can do it in so many different ways. You can fail in so many different ways, succeed in so many different ways. Yeah, it's just, we thought we had a plan at one point how we could do it without hitting too much snow, and then we're like, "We're stupid. What are we thinking?" And then we scrapped the whole thing.

0:59:00.6 NA: Yeah we looked at the plan again and we're like, "This is terrible." Yeah, the last thing that I will say about this, my interest in the talking about really wild adventures and a lot of my interest in taking on challenges adventures, new hobbies. I like the idea of doing something that I didn't think that I could do. That's how getting sober was for me. That's how when I started running I could barely run two consecutive minutes at a time, and a thought of being able to run a half marathon was like sprouting wings and flying to the moon. It was, there's something that I love about this seems impossible. Let me try. And that's how long distance hiking was. In 2016, I had gone car camping once for one night and backpacking once for two nights as test trips all in the month before I left alone for that long hike, and so it seemed there's no way I'm gonna be able to do this. And I really, what I like is not necessarily doing the things that feel impossible, but I like the person that you have to become to even be able to give it a shot, and so one of our favorite segments on TCYTC is what would have to be true for you, and then fill in the blank.

1:00:03.5 NA: What would have to be true for you in order to even feel like you had any business starting, attempting the adventure? And so it's like well, I would have had to have done a shorter trail, averaging 30 miles a day. I would have to, we have this whole list, and so I like it's less about completing the thing that it is about, I like the idea of becoming a stronger, tougher, more resilient, more skilled version of myself.

1:00:28.1 TG: Definitely.

1:00:29.0 NA: Is that a long TCYTC tangent?

1:00:31.0 TG: I mean, not nearly as long as some of the tangents we go on privately.

1:00:35.2 NA: That's true.

1:00:35.5 TG: So you're asking the wrong person.

1:00:36.5 NA: That's true. A couple more questions here and then we will wrap up. This question is thoughts on monogamy/non-monogamy. Broad question. As it relates to our relationship.

1:00:53.4 TG: My thoughts on it, thumbs up to both of them. We have discussed monogamy and non-monogamy, and at the moment we're choosing to be monogamous. Relationships work differently for different people, and at some point we may choose to be non-monogamous, but it's a conversation we continue to have and check in with each other on it, and make sure that we still align with that and that going into a relationship, knowing that it is potentially something that is on the table, I feel is a... Easier pill to swallow isn't the right word, because I don't know why but it just doesn't feel right.

1:01:34.0 NA: Because it's a totally valid choice. Exactly.

1:01:35.0 TG: Exactly, yeah. But to some people, if you had a partner who was like, "I wanna be non-monogamous" that's a really hard pill to swallow. And for other people it's a, "Okay, let's have the conversation, figure out how this is gonna work for us."

1:01:47.6 NA: Yeah, this is something that I thought about a lot before you and I were in a relationship and thinking that non-monogamy was something that I wanted to explore for many different reasons, and I've talked about that on this podcast before, and what I realized isn't that being non-monogamous is a need or an identity for me, and it is for some folks and I totally respect that. It was more that I was uncomfortable with monogamy as the unspoken default or the preferential option or the only "right" way to do a relationship. That all felt really constricting to me, and the idea of, I'm gonna commit to being with this person for however long or forever, or... And they're gonna be the only person that I'm ever attracted to or the only person that I'm ever gonna have romantic or sexual feelings for in my life, has proven again and again to not be true, and what I wanted and what I think that we built because we talked about this before we were partners. This is something that we've talked about, and I think that has also helped. It's been on the table the whole time which is just, I guess, coincidental. We got lucky.

1:02:57.1 TG: It's easier to have these conversations when there's no emotional attachment because talking about non-monogamy...

1:03:03.5 NA: We talked about a lot of it theoretically. Yeah, exactly, exactly.

1:03:06.6 TG: Talk about being non-monogamous with someone that you're not in a relationship

with is much different than having that conversation with a partner.

1:03:14.4 NA: So we talked about it a lot and just sussed out each other's feelings, just talking it through the way you would with a friend, which was helpful for me in clarifying some of my own thoughts and feelings, and what I realized again was that I want it in our relationship to be acknowledged that being attracted to multiple people is completely normal.

1:03:34.2 TG: Totally.

1:03:35.5 NA: And that I want there to be a safe space in our relationship to talk about that, not if it happens, but when it happens, because for me, I don't see a situation where I am in a relationship with someone for years and years and years and years, and this doesn't come up for one of us. I just think the likelihood is that it is. And so it's something that, how often would you say that we check in about this?

1:04:01.5 TG: Maybe every couple of months or something like that.

1:04:03.6 NA: Every couple months is this feeling good to you? Do you still wanna practice monogamy together? And the feeling of it feeling like a choice, which no one ever forced me into monogamy, but was just never a conversation before, the fact that we are continuing to opt into this model and that we're both very aware of the fact that at some point that might change, that feels very satisfying to me.

1:04:25.6 TG: Yeah. And also along those lines of, we're not on a relationship trajectory of we've been together for X amount of years or months or whatever, that why hasn't anyone proposed? Why haven't they done this? Why haven't they done that? Of like, I'm happy with you now. And that's what's important to me. It doesn't have to lead to marriage. It doesn't have to lead to there being, the courts involved with our relationship or anything like that.

1:04:56.9 NA: And that's again, something we've talked about all the time, that I am not opposed to getting married again, but I'm not seeking it out. It doesn't represent the pinnacle of anything for me, and we're not on a relationship escalator where certain... Now this is gonna be happening, and then we're exclusive and then we're gonna live together, and then this... That for me, and since neither of us want children, I know there's no pressure, really. I am not concerned of whether you are my forever partner or not, because forever is essentially just today, today. Tomorrow... It's like a bunch of todays stacked together that turn into forever, and that's more... I don't know, I'm okay with that, and I wanna give our relationship the space to evolve and grow and iterate into whatever it's meant to, and to try to not put anything unnecessarily confining on it.

1:05:46.4 TG: Definitely.

1:05:47.0 NA: Yeah. Yeah.

1:05:49.1 TG: You saying that almost reminds me of people who have been in the 12-step program

of like, "I'm not gonna drink today." In like, "I'm gonna be with you today."

1:05:58.4 NA: Yeah.

1:05:58.8 TG: And that's what's important to me is I'm gonna be with you today.

1:06:01.1 NA: Yeah. Yeah, and...

1:06:03.4 TG: I do think that we project a little bit in stuff of like, I would like to be together with you for much longer than today, but we check in with each other and make sure that we're still happy with things and just because we're together now, it doesn't mean that we are always gonna be together in this iteration forever.

1:06:21.0 NA: Exactly, exactly. Well, I mean... And obviously, you having been my friend and now my partner, through me uncoupling with someone who, as we said at the top of this conversation, like we showered at his house every single week during the summer, he's my family, we're incredibly close friends, I value that so much. So it's like I have first-hand experience of a relationship changing and that's still being really beautiful, and it gives me more... I don't wanna say hope, but it makes me see a wider range of possibilities that I wouldn't have seen before. Like the narrative that I was sort of raised with is like, "This person is your X, you know, you don't talk to them, you cut them out of your life." And sometimes that is absolutely the right decision.

1:07:02.0 TG: Oh, yeah, definitely.

1:07:03.3 NA: But yeah, I think choosing for us to not operate according to any sort of rules necessarily, is useful.

1:07:11.4 TG: Yeah, I agree.

1:07:11.5 NA: Yeah. Four more questions, you feel like you have four more questions?

1:07:16.6 TG: I do feel like...

1:07:17.3 NA: In you? How do you communicate about desire, libido... So a sex question, things that you enjoy or not, about changes in sexuality at different times, or with life being different, like with COVID, for example?

1:07:31.8 TG: Right now it's been kind of hard for us. We live with my dad, so...

1:07:35.1 NA: Right. So yes, spoiler alert. If you're looking to have a really raging sex life, moving in with a partner's parent during a pandemic, when those are the only people that you see and nobody ever leaves the house... Real sexy environment.

1:07:48.4 TG: These walls are thin.

1:07:49.3 NA: Right. Exactly... Hey, we've been recording this, is this soundproof enough?

1:07:56.3 TG: Baby... [laughter]

1:07:57.0 NA: Yeah, so circumstantially... It's funny considering that having our sexual relationship be a huge part of our relationship, both living in a van and being like... Living in a van, showering only once a week, spending very little time indoors, that had its own challenges 'cause the other part of this question that this person asked is, what was the fun sex thing in 2020, and I guess like figuring out how to have sex in the van, that feels great...

1:08:21.3 TG: I got into really some fun stuff, but...

1:08:22.6 NA: I mean... Okay, we're not gonna go into detail, but that's a different kind of podcast darling... That's like TCYTC, the dirty edition.

1:08:31.3 TG: After dark.

1:08:32.1 NA: Right. TCYTC after dark on my god, please.

1:08:34.3 TG: Look out for the mountain lions.

1:08:36.3 NA: Yeah. Yeah, that's... I don't know what sexual things...

1:08:38.8 TG: Neither do I. Neither do I.

1:08:40.3 NA: This has gone in the direction, I think maybe you don't wanna go.

1:08:43.3 TG: Cut. Edit.

1:08:47.3 NA: Yeah, edit. Edit. Abort. Abort. But that wasn't very conducive to having...

1:08:49.3 TG: No, it wasn't.

1:08:50.3 NA: I remember the day that we got the hotel room for a couple of nights just because it was too hot during the summer, and we were like, "Oh my God, sex indoors." Right?

1:08:57.3 TG: Yeah. Right.

1:08:57.8 NA: Like that was great, and then now we've moved in with your dad, so...

1:09:01.1 TG: Yeah.

1:09:02.1 NA: That wasn't... The question was how we talk about it. I feel... I wish I had something

useful to say to this because I know that this is a question that a lot of folks had, it's a question that I have had in a lot of past relationships. I think so far, we've set the groundwork or made it clear, we just talk a lot, and that's... I think it comes easily to us to talk about pretty much everything, sex, especially because it's such a foundational part of our relationship. The one more, I guess, tangible practical thing about how talking about sex works in our relationship is we have normalized, like it not being a big deal to talk about it. So it's not like, "Oh, we have to sit down and have this serious thing or I'm afraid to bring something up." We talk about it, like, "Oh, hey, do you want me to make you coffee? Oh, could we try this thing?" It's a really normalized thing.

1:09:52.6 TG: And a way that we have put it is sex is a hobby, like...

1:09:57.1 NA: Yeah, talk about this. I love this idea.

1:09:58.8 TG: So, sex is a hobby, TM, I coined it. It's a thing that we're interested in together, it's a thing that we think about a lot, we spend not a ton of time doing it, but we spend time doing it, so we might as well invest in it. And even if it's not like a financial investment, we're not into toys or anything like that, but it's invest the time, invest yourself in it and have the conversations and it pays off.

1:10:26.8 NA: Yeah, when you first talked to me about the sex is a hobby thing, I really latched on to that idea, 'cause it made me think about when I was first getting into running, that was a huge hobby for me. I cared about it a lot, it was my hobby so what does that mean? Okay, it means that I'm gonna prioritize time for it in my schedule, if I have an early run in the morning, I'm gonna make sure I go to bed at a certain time, I'm... This is playing it out a little far, but...

1:10:46.3 TG: You can eat a light meal.

1:10:47.6 NA: Right. Exactly. Like paying attention to what I'm eating or investing money in a coach, but... And so that's a little... Not extremeness, sorry, but that doesn't really apply, but it is...

1:10:57.1 TG: Not not.

1:10:57.6 NA: Like not... Right, exactly. Oh, I wanna learn new things. Oh, I wanna get better at this. Oh, I wanna consume well done content about this, whether that's erotica or other various things that... That idea of thinking about sex as a hobby, the same way that I would with any other hobby.

1:11:16.1 TG: Right.

1:11:16.6 NA: And the fact that that's a hobby that we share, I think that perspective helps us a lot. Yeah. Yes. Okay, so this question I think is really interesting. How do you feel like a couple when not sharing a bedroom or a van together?

1:11:34.3 TG: We do everything else together, or like, maybe not everything else, I go to work, you

stay home and work, but the way I talk to you, the way I look at you, the way we do things together, we meal prep together, we go to the grocery store... Just because I have my own space and you have your own space, doesn't make things any different really, like once you go to sleep, you don't know the other person's there next to you until they wake you up or something.

1:12:03.8 NA: I think this question itself could be an interesting conversation of why... I think there's some assumptions in the question even, that why does sharing a bedroom the thing that makes you a couple? And obviously, I was just gonna say I get where the question's coming from, but of course I don't, 'cause I have no context on of the question, but I think that there is a cultural narrative of, "Ooh, they're sleeping in separate bedrooms. They're having problems." There's something around that that I would really like to push back on or question because what if I'm traditionally not a great sleeper, I sleep so much better in my own bed, you snore sometimes.

1:12:44.2 TG: I'm a hot sleeper, I'm sticky.

1:12:46.5 NA: You want basically no blankets, I want my electric blanket on max and no cold air coming in all night, we just have what makes us each comfortable in the night is so different that why would we force ourselves and I'm not... There are plenty of people that sleep great in a bed together, and that's part of their intimacy and they really love that, there's nothing wrong with that either.

1:13:03.9 TG: No, definitely not.

1:13:04.4 NA: But then why would there be anything wrong with wanting something different? And I think, especially for people like us who, like we said, sometimes we really have to push ourselves to take alone time, having that, I go into my bedroom or I go into my van at the end of the night, and I shut the door and it's my space, that feels really good. I love that. I wish it was, and I guess it can be... We just talk about it more. I wish this was a thing that more people talked about, and I will tell you as I have started to talk about it more, so many people have said similar things.

1:13:33.8 TG: Well, it is the kind of thing, if you've always been told, "This is what has to... This is how relationships work, you share a bed, you share a bedroom, you have your sink next to their sink in the master bath or whatever," and it doesn't have to be that way, like our relationship works great and...

1:13:48.4 NA: Also a relationship of any kind can be whatever you want it to be.

1:13:50.7 TG: That's very true.

1:13:51.5 NA: Yeah, yeah, so I appreciate that this question was asked because I think that it's an interesting one. How do you intentionally nurture your relationship when it's long distance? You wanna share a couple things and then I'll share a couple things?

1:14:02.9 TG: We spoke about it a little bit earlier of sending the "thinking about you" texts and

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putting time aside in my day every day of I'm gonna talk to you on the phone, I'm not gonna do anything else, I'm not gonna talk to you while I'm working on my hobbies or while I'm actively paying attention to something else, I'm gonna give you my focus 100%.

1:14:24.1 NA: We would often go on walks and talk to each other that way. Yeah, yeah, I'd say prioritizing phone time, texting throughout the day, like you said...

1:14:31.6 TG: Sending something spicy every once in a while.

1:14:33.8 NA: Nudes, right, definitely nudes. Also when we were long distance last spring, we signed up for the paid subscription for that app Dipsea, which I highly recommend to anyone, it's like audio, erotica, and one of us would pick, "Hey, let's listen to this one," and then we each listen to the story and a sexy Skype time, sexy Zoom time.

1:14:54.9 TG: Yeah, and it wasn't always easy. I definitely missed you a lot, but I don't know... We make it work. We've made it work.

1:15:04.7 NA: Yeah, yeah, made it work.

1:15:06.3 TG: And also along those lines, where we've talked about doing independent adventures in the future, that we are well-versed in long-distance relationships, and it's not something that I'm worried about like, "Oh my God, you're gonna be away from me for a month and a half or two months or whatever." I'll definitely miss you if that happens, but we'll both be okay.

1:15:24.7 NA: Yeah, and that's important to me that our relationship is not conditional on proximity, that I want us to be able to exist in many different iterations, whether it's like you're on a long bike packing trip or we're living together in your dad's house, or we're on a hike together or I'm gonna travel with a friend for a month, or if our relationship only works under a very tight set of parameters...

1:15:45.4 TG: It doesn't work.

1:15:46.0 NA: What happens when those parameters change? And that feels limiting to me, and you and I are both people who like the idea of living our life in different chapters like, "Okay, in this chapter, we're gonna do this and in this chapter, we're gonna change completely and do this other thing."

1:16:00.5 TG: The same way that you were never into outdoors things, and now you're into backpacking and living in a van, there needs to be room for evolution in a relationship, and I feel like being long distance gave us the tools to deal with that stuff in the future.

1:16:16.1 NA: Yeah, I agree with that. Yeah, I totally agree. Last question, what weird parts of your personality only come out around each other?

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1:16:26.2 TG: I have a alter ego, sort of...

1:16:31.4 NA: Okay, so you mentioned that Gent or Gentleman is your trail name, you have a trail alter ego, which is also sort of your alter ego... Continue.

1:16:42.7 TG: I got ringworm while hiking the PCT.

1:16:46.5 NA: You've had ringworm multiple times since we've been together.

1:16:49.6 TG: I'm a gross person, sort of. No, you can have ringworm and not be gross.

1:16:52.7 NA: Exactly.

1:16:54.6 TG: I'm mean to myself, sometimes. Yeah, I had ringworm for a month on the PCT, and I went to see a doctor and he was like, "Just wash your shirt in a creek and it'll be fine." I was like, "That doesn't seem like good medical advice."

1:17:06.7 NA: That's how you cure fungus.

1:17:08.0 TG: Right, and then he went back to being a janitor, but I don't know how any of that works. So we bounced some prescription like from trail town to trail town that I couldn't get for various reasons, and then I would like... I am kind of a trash bag in some ways like, yeah, I say some...

1:17:29.3 NA: You say some really questionable things.

1:17:31.3 TG: Yeah.

1:17:31.7 NA: No. Okay, let me... I feel like you're gonna...

1:17:34.1 TG: I'm painting myself into a corner a little bit, I feel.

1:17:36.0 NA: Yeah, you're painting yourself into a corner.

1:17:38.1 TG: Your tendency to say ridiculous nonsense as part of your sense of humor, it can sometimes, and the two of us together I would say the weird parts of our personality are we say a lot of very trashy things together or things where it's like, "That's a very crude" whatever.

1:17:52.8 NA: It's mostly crude things.

1:17:54.1 TG: Right, exactly.

1:17:54.7 NA: We're not saying off-color things that directly insult someone.

1:18:00.1 TG: Right, but just either really gross or really crude.

1:18:02.2 NA: We pile things on.

1:18:03.5 TG: We can egg each other on. Right, exactly. We can go from zero to 60 really fast with this, and so we created this alter ego for you named Ringworm.

1:18:11.4 TG: Yeah, 'cause the ringworm took over.

1:18:13.6 NA: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, this is what happened. I think the conversation was, what happens if this never gets cured? If the prescription keeps bouncing and the ringworm keeps growing and the ringworm takes over?

1:18:21.5 TG: I am the Ringworm.

1:18:22.4 NA: You are the Ringworm, and so Ringworm became the code word for when you would say something that was like, "That's a little too much" I'd be like, "Okay, Ringworm." That's how hey, shut it down, but then I remember the day on trail that we built Ringworm a whole backstory.

1:18:34.5 TG: Yeah, that was pretty fun. He played lacrosse, probably went to an Ivy League college.

1:18:41.2 NA: Had the actual notches in his bed post.

1:18:43.2 TG: But he went as a legacy. He shouldn't have gotten in but 'cause his dad went and donated money, he got in.

1:18:47.8 NA: Right and he says things like, "Do you know who my father is?" Right, yeah, that's our worm.

1:18:50.3 TG: Yeah, right, right. And no one knows his dad is. He pops his collar.

1:18:54.5 NA: Yeah, yeah. Anyway. Anyway.

1:18:56.0 TG: He's a real piece of work, this guy.

1:18:58.0 NA: So the weird parts of your personality that mostly come out around each other is your Ringworm-ness I feel. I don't know that we, I think we just made that sound worse than it is.

1:19:06.7 TG: Probably.

1:19:07.3 NA: Weird parts of my personality that only come out around you, I think I'm really weird with you sometimes.

1:19:12.4 TG: Yeah, I agree with that.

1:19:13.4 NA: I'm relatively serious and sort of buttoned up, or maybe because I've done live my life online public things for such a long time, the real real letting loose or the real vulnerability or I don't cry a lot in front of other people, but I feel very comfortable crying with you. So I don't know if those are weird parts necessarily, but there are things that tend to only come out around you and that also the really playful and like I said, more cuddly aspects.

1:19:41.8 TG: Yeah.

1:19:42.5 NA: Yeah. So I'm really cuddly and playful. You're a trash bag. But your hair looks great.

1:19:46.9 TG: But somehow we manage.

1:19:48.0 NA: Yeah we manage. We manage. That's all the questions my love.

1:19:50.6 TG: That is all the questions.

1:19:51.7 NA: Anything else you think that you would like to add to this conversation?

1:19:56.4 TG: I don't think so.

1:19:57.8 NA: Irish goodbye. Just exit out the...

1:20:00.9 TG: Yeah, yeah just end it. Check out my Kickstarter. I don't have anything.

1:20:04.8 NA: You have nothing. What's your Instagram?

1:20:06.8 TG: @Tomgrossmith. Scope it out.

1:20:09.3 NA: There's pictures of the cows that we live with.

1:20:12.9 TG: The barns that I've been building, restoring.

1:20:16.0 NA: There will soon be pictures of the van you're building. Yeah, awesome. Thanks for coming on the podcast babe.

1:20:21.4 TG: Thanks for having me. I've loved it.

[music]

1:20:28.1 NA: And that's our show for today. Our music is by Adam Day, who also handles our sound editing. Thanks, Adam. You're the best. And huge thanks as well to every single member of

20 Questions, with my partner Tom (aka Gent!)

our Patreon Community for making this honest conversation, this entire podcast, and so much of my other work, like my twice weekly personal essay newsletter called Good Question, possible. Your monthly funding allows me to keep creating resources and gatherings for folks who crave honest conversations, both with themselves and others, and I fully believe that these conversations can change our lives, our relationships, and our world. To join us, just come on over to Patreon.com/NicoleAntoinette. Our community operates on a shame-free sliding scale, so you can feel good about supporting this work from within your own means. So I'll see you over in the Patreon Community, yeah? And until next time, I want you to know three things. First that you are enough. Second that you are not alone and third that I'm totally rooting for you.

[music]

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