

# Ep. 13 - Second Adolescence w/ Garrett Schlichte (he/they)

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

Adam James Cohen (he/him), Garrett Schlichte (he/they)

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 00:09

Hello, and welcome to this week's episode of the Second Adolescence podcast. I'm your host Adam James Cohen. On this week's episode, we have writer Garrett Schlichte (he/they). Garrett recently had published on the New York Times his Modern Love podcast, his essay entitled Confessions of a Late Bloomer, which literally before you listen to my conversation with Garrett, you need to go pause and first listen to that essay on Modern Love. I'll link to it in this episode's description, because you'll hear me share on this podcast that it was just such a beautiful representation of what second adolescence is all about. So go listen, then come back. And then you'll hear in today's conversation that we get to hear Garrett share about writing this essay and the dynamic that was central to it, which was between him and his then 14 year old sister where he was going through his second adolescence in his 20s. While she was simultaneously going through her first adolescence, he shares about how his experience growing up left him without the adolescence he saw her getting to have and how his 20s have been filled with getting these experiences and relationships that have allowed him to flex the muscles and parts of self that laid dormant in his adolescence and be in the continuous journey that is clear healing that so many of us have to travel. It was such an honor to get to halftime with Garrett and I'm so excited to invite you into this conversation. And as with each episode of second adolescence, I want to invite you as the listener to listen with open curiosity, knowing that each of our stories are unique and different. You might hear something shared on the show that really differ from your experience. And you might hear other things that absolutely give voice to what you went through or are currently going through. And I really hope that all of this happens and that together we can continue growing and expanding our awareness of what life and queerness and healing can be for folks. If after the show you want to connect further, feel free to head on over to [secondadolescentspod.com](http://secondadolescentspod.com) For shownotes and more or you can connect with the show on Instagram at [secondadolescencepod](https://www.instagram.com/secondadolescencepod). All right, enough for me for now. Welcome to the conversation. Thanks for being here Welcome to Second Adolescence. I am yes so pumped and curious to have you here really excited to see where this conversation goes. And before going anywhere. I like to invite the person in your shoes to give a little introduction to who you are just to give a little context to the person behind the voice.

G

**Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 02:41**

Sure. My name is Garrett Schlichte, I am a writer. I write fundamentally about like dating and relationships, very often my dating and relationships, which makes my parents very excited. Because all the updates on what's happening from the internet, a Virgo sun, Capricorn rising Libra moon, that means anything to anybody. It does to my therapist, which is great. Hey, I live in San Francisco. And those are the heads I think those are the those are the greatest hits.

A

**Adam James Cohen (he/him) 03:17**

I'm sure we'll get more of the deep tracks as we go on. And so yeah, I'm really excited. And so I guess the first place I want to land is how I first came across you and your work and maybe some others who are listening is through this essay you wrote for The New York Times Modern love column, and it was featured on their modern love podcast called Confessions of a late bloomer. Is that right? That's the title, right? Yes,

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**Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 03:39**

that is one of the three titles they give in this article so far.

A

**Adam James Cohen (he/him) 03:45**

I loved it. Yeah, I saw it pop up. And I was like, oh, wait a minute, this feels so resonant. And then I listened. And absolutely, I found it to be such the, such a beautiful and powerful illustration of both, like the grief that many of us go through after not getting an adolescence that we've longed to have perhaps, and then also speaking to this kind of under development of our romantic selves and kind of that whole process. I guess before going anywhere. I'm gonna invite the listener, if you haven't listened to it, I'm gonna link to it in the show notes. Pause this conversation. Go listen to the Modern Love Episode Confessions of a late bloomer, and then come back because it is beautiful. But so Okay, so I want to ask you so many things about this article, but I guess first like, what was it like, like, walk me through your own process of knowing you wanted to write it? And then what was it like for you going through that process of constructing that narrative?

G

**Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 04:40**

It's so interesting. It is like something that I I think I've like always been deeply fascinated by and I think like, particularly in my own life, something that I like talked about in the article or in the essay is like the assassination that I have or like this really like love affair I have with rom coms and like ever since I was like very little. I was like, writing poems and like second grade about like, God knows what I was like never I certainly never in loud I like certainly didn't know what that was like I was reflecting all of these love stories that I was just like so enamored by growing up Notting Hill, my best friend's wedding, I had HBO in my room, because my parents have no idea how to set up parental control. So I was like, taking it I was like, I was watching Sex in the City well, before it should have been watching Sex in the City. Like, these were just like the people who I was like, really modeling a life after not anything like I was like, in, like, I

was in like, eighth grade quoting like Mr. Vega and Carrie Bradshaw to like friends. And then I think I like finally got to a place where I was like, Okay, I'm gay, and are like queer, I'm, like, ready to admit that to myself. I like that, like language, that information available to me. And I have no idea how to be in love to tell someone I like them to kind of go through those motions, which was like such a strange disconnect. Because for me, I've been doing that since I was in second grade. I was like doing it through, like I talked about in the essay, like through Meryl Streep through Sarah Jessica Parker through like, through Angela Basset, like all these like strong, broken women that I like, modeled myself after I'm like, at like, 22 I was like, I am like a single divorcee, mother of three, ready to take on the world. . In actuality, I'm like, single never been tested, like what is happening. And so really my like, first real relationship, like what I talked about this, like, suddenly being like, all of his experiences, I felt like I was having, I wasn't actually having I'd like never actually felt that emotion. In my own body. I'd like acted it out in my room through other people. And I like slowly realize, like, a lot of other people are like, just kind of as clueless at this stage as I am, which was really interesting, because I like, no offense to anyone who's listening to this, who is straight, but I just like think gay people are better. I think, like, I think like, so much of like, the emotional depth and intelligence that I experienced, like, come from your people in my life. And it was like, it's just like, it was such an interesting disconnect to be how we feel like so clueless. And like, also, you guys are like, the ultimate advice givers. Like in a lot of ways. So I like started to write this essay, like, I think two years before it actually got published, like two years before I thought that it was like ready was like one that I just kept, like returning to over and over again. And like adding little pieces. And then after hearing the essay, like the catalyst for it was really my little sister who at the time was like, 14, so just like, essentially half my age, like having a crush for the first time and like coming to me for advice and being like, well, you're 14 you're having a crush for the first time you want to talk about it. I was 22 before I had a crush for the first time that I like felt comfortable talking about. So I guess we're doing this thing together are all really one of us.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 08:25

Totally. I mean, yeah, and like on that piece like I want to jump in because there's this part of your essay that I literally had to go back and re listen to like 10 times just because it was just felt so I mean, the whole thing was so powerful but this in particular just like left me just like feeling so moved and so then inspired so much thought in my own process and I want it like just actually read it aloud, which might be a weird thing on your end to hear your your words read aloud by someone in your face, but I'm just going to do it. And I'd love to hear hear your thoughts. So you share talking about this difference between your sister's experience and adolescence and yours you say my sister can embrace and revel in her teenage crushes. So she'll be able to develop an emotional skill set that I lacked into my 20s and still act she'll be able to process electric attraction and aching jealousy a decade before I even allowed myself to admit I had those emotions. She will sing out about her first love instead of choking it back like a secret. Our parents will pepper her with advice and concern and be there to comfort her the first time she gets her heartbroken. a rite of passage I had aged out of by the time I needed it. Oh, oh my god that throws me in so many pieces. Can you speak more about that experience between your own experience observing your sister's experience and what she gets in what you were not able to have access to?

G

Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 09:50

Yeah, I think like maybe like a great example of this or like a nice way to illustrate those. Those.

I have like a really good relationship with my parents. I like very much we've learned built it, we worked on it, I like go to them for a lot of things. And I think that there's just something about, like, I'm 31 now, right? Like, I, I have most of my life under control. I know that I can like go to my parents with a lot of things. But I think like a very surface level level example it says like, if I was like really in a pinch for money, I would like to be very uncomfortable asking my parents because I'm like, I'm supposed to have this part of my life now. And I think that like the like, crushed piece of that it was like, a similar exam, like at 25. It just really felt like to go to my dad to be like, how do I talk, not just like to a person, but like, to a boy about this just like felt so like, there was like a shame tied up. And I felt like I didn't have that piece figured out. And I think it was really hard because, at least for me, my parents didn't know me, so well. And I like really wanted that level of support. When I when I came out to my mom, I was like crying. I was like this whole big thing. And she was like, you know, just like you, you really need to be like, careful when you get out there and like start dating, like, you need to be careful. And I was like, please do not have a sex right now. Like, that's like, please don't do that. And she was like, no, like, not that she was like when you fall in love for the first time. Like, I know you and you were really gonna fall in love. And not everyone is like ready to get that. And you need to be careful with your heart because like you will get your heart broken. And that was like, really deep and very sweet. And by the time but I was actually in the place where it was like, my mom is right about that. Like she was so devastatingly right. I just didn't feel like I could like go to her for that, like support or like the process to go through it. Because like, the space between coming out and like actually being out and being in love was like a difference.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 12:13

Yeah, yeah. Okay, I've so many questions. I guess I want to first jump back just to kind of frame us in your story. Like, first off your parents sound fantastic. Where did you grow up with them? Like what were they like growing up? Like give me walk me through a little bit of childhood where that started?

G

Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 12:29

Sure. So I grew up in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, which is for myself. I am like everything you say about Florida is true. And that's where I'm from. I was raised by my dad until I was like 11 years old. He was like a single dad which was great. I got very lucky I think that my dad and I have like always been my dad is like me but straight that's like kind of the best way to put it like he is like a very like sports boy fisherman but like also cries at Lifetime movies like every single day like my favorite movies are his favorite movies it's like a lot of like again my best friend's wedding Sister Act First Wives Club like those are like the hits in the Schlichte Family.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 13:17

Would you watch them together growing up?

G

Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 13:19

oh yeah. Like sound that music was like on we have like a double being just tape about and I think like in a really sweet way my hand. I've always like been like this like the way that I sound

think like in a really sweet way my dad. I've always like been like this like the way that I sound and like listeners cannot see my hands but like the nails are painted in the hands are like flying across the screen I like have always very much like in a nice way my dad is always just like seeing me as his kid. If that makes sense. And so when I came out it like wasn't like oh yay, you're gay and that's awesome. It was very much like I love you and I want to understand this and so I want to work on it. I have like also written a different essay about this but I think like that was really like the most perfect response from my dad which was like I don't get it but I love you and I want to get it and I'm gonna make mistakes and I'm gonna say things that are wrong. And you have to know that I love you because you're my kid and so like helped me understand as like that like really laid a foundation for the rest of everything to like be good, if not easy, if that makes sense. And my mom came along when I was like 11 or my whole life also. They got married when I was 11 and like is the best she's like a hairstylist like oh this alone in South Florida if that like also illustrates anything about my personality. I spent like most of my childhood after school like in her salon in South Florida like with the other women in that salon like with a hairstylist and the nail techs like well my dad was in his office and so like there was a lot of like Shop Talk girls or a lot of like Cosmo magazine like that. is where this all came from.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 15:02

Wow. Yeah. What do you remember about being in the shop? Like what was what was that like for little you?

G

Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 15:06

Oh my God and you know, great. There's like this thing and like salons when they have like a makeup counter where they have like sheets of paper with women's faces on them like blank. And like that's how they do like that. So I like didn't have coloring books I like would sit at the makeup counter and like put makeup on like blank women's faces because like that was their version of coloring books. I would sit with like Challis at the nail counter. It's so funny now to be 31 and think back and be like, Oh my god, she was probably like 27 or something and just like really talking about just like big long acrylic nails, airbrush with butterflies on them. And I was like, This is the life that I want to live like these women are just like, so fun, so alive. There's a lot of talking about boys. I think like that's like where I was like, This is how I was coming to understand relationships. I think you're right. He's not sure he is. I'm 12 but I was like, I'm on. I'm on the girls side always. And that has been true. But it was the last like that.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 16:02

Wow. Oh my gosh, what a dream.

G

Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 16:05

It really was. It was like a gay fever dream.



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**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 16:08

Well, and then Okay, so in terms of like gayness and queerness, like, What do you recall in like your socialization and like the vibe, both kind of on the micro culture around you and kind of what you were exposed to? Like, what do you recall younger you coming to learn about queerness and gayness? Like, what was the narrative around that?

**G** Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 16:25

I think like two things. One is that like it was that or like that it was not acceptable, I think like is the unfortunate I went to private Catholic school, from kindergarten through 12th grade with like, the same 60 Kids essentially, like K through eight and then high school got like, a little bit bigger, but it was like most of those kids. And I think like the first I'm no offense, technically, no, Bill is a great person now. But like Nikola was the first person that ever called them gay, on the playground in fourth grade, because he had an older brother who thought I acted gay. And so like, from fourth grade on I like spent all of my time being like, I'm not this that, like, I'm not gay, I'm not doing this thing. And so even by the time I like, realized it, or like, came to terms with that myself, probably in like, early high school, I was still very much like, I'm not this thing. And I don't even think it necessarily had so much to do with me personally feeling like it was bad. It was mainly like, I'm not gonna let those people who were mean to me be right about me. Like, I will not give them the satisfaction of like, knowing something about me before I. And so I was like, so deeply in the closet in high school, it can be like a laugh when I say this, I was like a huge volume high school, like I was a big bet. I absolutely can. Okay, great. I was like, mean, out of self defense, I was like, I am going to, like, get you before you can get me. And so I was like, friends with all of the cheerleaders, I was like, really gonna, like put myself in a position to like, protect myself. And like, when I came out all my aunts and uncles were like, Girl, like, of course, and I was like, no, just like, given me the slightest hint that they were on board with, like at the beginning, and I think that it is misguided and like misguided with love the idea that like, we don't want you to be gay, not because we think it's bad, but because of how hard it's gonna make your life. And I think that was like it was always just like very much associated with like, because of the way the wider world treats your people, your life will be hard. And so it's not that we think you're gonna go to hell, because you're gay. It's because like, we're afraid of what's going to happen to you. And so like, that was like what guided so much of it. And like on the other side of that I like got to college. And the second my parents drove away, I was like, I am a big homo. And I need everything to know that like immediately I was like she has tau chi it's free. We're doing that. I was like 30 seconds. I was like in the dining hall on my truly first night of college with this girl named Melanie Sarah pika who like lived down the hall for me. And then we were like at the salad bar and I was like making the little salad and this boy walked by and said she like looked at me she's like, oh my god that points so cute. Like as a question and I've never said but if I was to out loud to anyone in my entire life, I'm like I had this like quick internal dialogue was like, Oh my gosh, I thought it was really cute. I've never said a few before I don't know if I can do this. Like I've never been paid before. Oh my god knows that boy was so cute. And like, I was just like, everywhere. And it was like never I was just like so like everyone. I went to a very big state school I went to Florida State but like I was like very out from that moment on like, I wrote an essay in my like freshman year English class like about being gay. They ended up publishing and like the freshman year writing textbook, and I remember being like so afraid that's Um, how my parents were gonna, like get a hold of this textbook that was like being distributed to like, 20,000 kids on campus. And like, that's how they're gonna find out that I was gay before I told, like I was just like, they are immediately like, I now I want to write about being queer. I want to tell these stories. This is really important to me.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 20:20

You've gotten away from them. No, no. Oh, my God, this is beautiful. And like, Okay, going right there, though. Like what? I'm thinking about you kind of in line telling Melanie, you said her name was. I'm so curious. Like, what was that? Like, after you said, yeah, that voice cute. And then what was it like really just sounds like you really leaned into your queerness? And had that really lead you in college? What was that then that like to have this be a part of your identity that other people observe?

G

Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 20:48

I mean, it just like truly changed everything audibly. I think like going back for one second to like being a bully. I was like, immediately the nicest person you've ever wow, I was literally like, I have like no reason to like, I was like it was so about subjects. Like, obviously, like other people from my high school or from my college. I'm at Florida State. So it's like 40,000 kids. And like, I remember I had this one friend Paul, who like had a class with this girl, Amanda, who I went to high school with. And Paul's like, Oh, my God, you don't get it. Like I love here. He's like, one of the nicest people I know. And Amanda was like, we can not be talking about the same era. Like Paul was like, Amanda was like, he brought me in and I was like, I was meeting him. And then I like, remember running into Amanda at a party my freshman year, kind of drunk and being like, I'm so sorry. Like, I literally want to like an apology towards like, all these people that I was like, I was so unhappy. You have no reason Forgive me like, but please just know that like, anything I said was like, so not your fault. And deeply my fault. And like, truly by gay divine intervention, I happened to meet this girl Nicole who like we gone to middle school together. We like hadn't talked to each other essentially since like fourth grade, but we were like, mortal enemies. In fourth grade, we like hated each other. We were very mean to each other. And we were both like, smoking cigarettes outside of our freshman dorm room and like having to like look up from across the smoking benches. And we were like, are you that and like, from that moment on, we were like, inseparable best friends. And like, she was like this, like really rad, queer feminist. And like, I was very much this like, like, closeted, like just coming out, like, at the time, like, since identifying like, why gay man who like because of my, the way that I was raised, like, didn't have very strong beliefs about anything, but like, certainly kinds of like unlearning to do. And she was very definitively like, what you just said, it sucked up. And I was immediately like, oh my god, right? Like, I did not have like a very strong belief system and like, in a poll really did. And so like I we talked like four times a day on phone still, I like, love her very much. But like, she really made me this like, cool, aware person who like gave a shit about paintings. And like, I very quickly fell into this like, kind of like big queer group of misfits my freshman year was like, person Jack and like John and Justin and Jessica, and like, all they were just like these, like rad kind of like queer grungy people and I was very much this, like, private Catholic school boy. And they were like, we're gonna, like, shake that out of you and like, radicalized you. It's like this, like big, fucking fairy, which is like, exactly what they did. I think like, the best way that I can, like, describe it as, like, I really think that I like after I came out with like, kind of this blank slate of being like, I've never actually leaned into believing anything socially, politically, like my parents, for like, all the ways that they are great and are very loving, like, we're very conservative, like, still kind of a bar. And so I was like, I don't think this feels right. But like the other side of things I can't engage with because like, if I was like, engaging with something progressive, I'd be outing myself somehow. And so I like didn't really believe in anything. And so I think I was just like this big blank slate. And like, really, luckily,

and the way that I like so appreciate just like these people who like, we're so like, rad and smart and progressive. Like, we're willing to like take this weird person under their wing and be like, let us like teach you some things and I just like, I don't want to like not credit myself but like, like truly I don't know credit to myself. I think it's just kind of like I don't know anything and so it keeps me insane. And I like feel like I got to learn from like the best people who like shaped me into being the best way. Hopefully that I am.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 24:39

Oh my gosh, house. I mean, first with Nicole like as you were talking, I was just like, kind of thinking about like in fairy tales. There's always like the guide that like kind of guides the protagonist to like, where they need to go and she very much felt like that first guide for you.

**G** Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 24:55

Yeah, like truly as like, I mean, absolutely. It was like my first like, guide.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 25:01

And then that whole community of misfits where you got to really be invited to like, ask Who am I and like, get things deconstructed and like discover parts of yourself. Oh my god, what a cool experience.

**G** Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 25:15

Yeah, it was just I think it was also like, they weren't gentle with me. If that like makes sense. Like, there was not like a lot of like, handful. There was like, a kind of like, hey, what you just said, it's like fucked up for like the Jetsons. And like, you can fix it or you can, but like, you'll be and I was kind of like, I love tough love and hails. But we'll tell you what's wrong. You go figure out why it happens. Do the reading do the work. Figure that out. So I like did, because I was like, I really liked you guys. And I think you are right.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 25:45

Yeah. Cool. And then so what was like discovering dating sex relationships, like then at that phase? And did you?

**G** Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 25:53

So? Yes, no, I think like, this is like a side bar to the entire coming out process. I think that like something maybe, honestly, on the same level, it's like pure Ness, some I have always really struggled with body image and physical appearance, which like, I think without belaboring the point, like no, particularly in like, gay sis, male spaces, like, it's a whole thing in and of itself. So it was like, really hard for me to perceive myself as a person who was like, worthy of love and



affection and intimacy. I was like, very fat in college. And I think that, like, I always, like struggled with my weight. And I think that like, maybe a little bit less so now. But like, certainly back then, a little queer representation that like did exist also like, particularly in the little bit movies, or TV. And then like, obviously, in like porn and other spaces, where it's like, one particular kind of body that like we think about as like preserving love and attraction. And so I always just kind of like, a slot and myself into the funny best friend role. And, and really kind of continued the, like, adolescent version of my love life, which was like, I'm going to do it through movies, and I'm going to like, write about it, I'm gonna, like, dream about it, I'm going to, like, do a lot of like, gay yearning, which like, I also wrote an essay about what to do like a lot of this, like, hoping and wishing. And so I like, had a lot of best friends in college, like, I just like, was so afraid to tell anyone that I liked them. I think for like, all the reasons that I talked about in that essay, because it was like, just under practice, and they didn't know how it's gonna go. And also, because it was like, really hard for me to believe that like, anybody would even like me back, like, the fear of rejection was so much greater to me than, like, the pain of not getting it that I just like, was like, Okay, I'm not gonna get it. And I think like, in the same way, when I was on Facebook, I was like, I'm going to be in the closet forever. Because I don't want people to be right about me, like, very early on, after I come out. I was like, I'm gonna be alone forever, because they don't ever want to let anyone say no to me. And so that was like, kind of just college for me, which was like, both like, nice and obviously sad. But like, I had a lot of like, relationships by proxy, and also kind of like, still join, like, if someone pulls the door for me and makes eye contact. We're in love and we're

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 28:32

totally

G

Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 28:35

I'm like, as like, you have proposed seventh grade. Like, still think that I like believe that about, like, a lot of love. And so yeah, I like had a bevy of like, not boyfriends who like I would spend all my time with or like, stay up really late with all of those kinds of pieces. Yeah, like wasn't until I like I got a little bit of practice obviously like grip a little bit and I was like, Honey, pull it together. Like it's not the worst thing that happened like I made out with the boys I hooked up with the boys that was very fun. It was all very like not transaction it was just very like fleeting and like never really last didn't anything the first boy ever like really really liked this like now one of my best friends and like a very sweet way. I've written essays about all I can like really go into like it's Yeah, I think that was just like a muscle to answer questions like needed to be flats, I like finally got over the idea of being like, you are your earliest of early 20s. Like, you are not a single divorced mother of three like no matter how much fun it is for you to like believe that in your mind. And like, I eventually want to be a symbol for some other free like the only way to get there was like by a lot of trial and error. And so I just like started going through that process and was like, I just kind of had to get over some of those like initial fears and like start flexing the muscle I like eventually I think like, at least for me, as I, like continue to date you like, at home that a little bit, right? Like, it's not every person who holds the door and smiles at me that like is attracted to me that's like, a nice person on the street who like I could just like, move on from I just like started to date and get better at talking to people and like, understanding those emotions and moving through a lot of that. And then you had dated my first boyfriend, who I talked about in that modern love essay.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 30:34

Yeah. Now what was that first relationship like?

G

Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 30:38

It was great. It was like, Really, I have his name is Brandon. I like wrote a nother essay. He broke up, we have a bust. It's fine. That's like, that's made me fun. Good. But he was like, a very good verse. He like would tell this like really funny story. We like when our first date he like went to this coffee shop in Washington, DC. And we're like, on this date. And I was like, Is this even a date? I don't know what's like happening here. We were both like kind of awkward. We'd like obviously started talking about zodiacs, like over Facebook Messenger, when we'd like first met. And like the idea was that like, there's this book called The Birth playbook, which like, there's an incredible horoscope book, or like, just like, really everyone read up. But like, the purpose of the state was like, we were gonna, like meet up and talk about it, because we've been like, vaguely flirting about it over Facebook Messenger. And then we were on the state, he went to the bathroom, I was like, this is going so not well. And then I was like, Oh, we're going to talk about this book, which is kind of my bad when I pulled it out. And like, we talked about the book and like it was ended up being like a solid first date. And he like, tells a story of just being like, yeah, I didn't think that you even liked me or were interested until he pulled out that book. He was like, What are we doing here? And then things kind of just like escalated from there like a really nice way we went to like, demon sell concert. Virginia somewhere like, again, not to be like she does solo music and love her. But like, yeah, it was just kind of like a part like, I don't know, we like went on a Ferris wheel like history on a Ferris wheel at sunset and like, I like stayed up all night. It was like really kind of like a picturesque first three quarters of our relationship. Which was like really nice. I like could not have asked for about our first life and I got married.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 32:40

And and what was it like, in so like, in my own personal story and lots of other people I've chatted with like, there's a an evolution of learning to like, see ourselves as someone who could be in a relationship who could be desired who could be that person and I'm thinking about, like, you leaning into being the funny best friend and kind of you then being on the state? And like not sure, like, is this a day of what's going like? What was your own process of like, integrating in this idea that I am someone in a relationship? And do you resonate? That that was a struggle for you?

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Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 33:15

That is like still a struggle. To be to be perfectly honest, I think that my answer is like, because I grew up being like, I am Julia Roberts, I think all of my friends are telling you like, I was like, now that I was out now that I was like dating, I was like, I will be married and like I was like born to be in a relationship like this was like, exactly like, the role that I was born to tell, like, I knew that about myself. And so it was like less about can I see myself in this I think because like I had been putting myself in that situation in my mind for so long. And more about like, all the

other components of a relationship that you have to like get comfortable with. So I think for me, it was like less about can I be in this in a relationship sense and more about it's, I think a lot of it again, just like has to do with body image. I think it's like really when it comes down to your for me I think that like the sexual components of a relationship like I have always just been the most difficult part to me. And so I think my answered like your question is like a little bit of a guessing game and it is like I think the place that I like find myself in most frequently is like not getting that side of that lockdown early enough because they still so preoccupied by the idea that like I'm gonna end up being the best friend if that makes sense. So I think it's a real roller coaster and

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 34:52

no, yeah. And if you're open to it, I'd love to hear invite you to share more. What does it look like for you to Do that unlearning to work with that body staff to kind of travel the evolution you've traveled and are still traveling, what does it look like to kind of do that type of work?

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Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 35:11

One of the biggest things is believing my partner when they tell me that that is the case, I think that there's like so much internalized stuff that has happened in my own brain and in my body for so long that like when they're just like, I hate this about myself. There's like an episode of Sex in the City, where Miranda for anyone who's listened to stressed out, she's like a lawyer, she doesn't think she's the most attractive. She's like, kind of harsh. She's a redhead. I heavily related, although I carry son, she, there's like this one scene where like, discover this one episode where this guy is really attracted to her. And she's like, I can't believe that he's like, attracted to me. He's like, calling me like, beautiful and sexy. And she's like, I That's not how I see myself. Like, I always try and win people over like with my mind and my personality first, and then like, the lowest parts come second. And like that entire relationship blows up and like never happens. Because like she essentially doesn't really get on board with that kind of idea of, and I think that is the piece for me is that like, it really just looks like shutting my own cell phone. And like listening to me when like, my partner's, like, I think that you're attractive or am into this or like, we aren't good. And like, you need to just like stop looking at myself from above my body and like just be with the person who I like they could well, and I think that's just like, unfortunately for me like trial by like, adjusted you. Yes. I think it's like, immersion, that totally. Like is the old native. I have done the reading. I'm in therapy. And thank God I like, obviously done the writing about it. And I think like with that, specifically, it's just like figuring out in your own brain how to like believe the person who's like telling you, they like you. They like yes,

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 37:13

yes. And it is not easy. Like in that I hear like this greater theme of unlearning scripts of shame for whatever the shame is telling us whether that's about body, about identity, about our love ability about whatever like that is so the process for so many people, but particularly queer people, this unlearning of that script that manifests in so many different ways. And it's tough. It's absolutely tough.

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Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 37:37

I think that that Yeah. Funny stuff. There's relationship. And there's like, all those pieces the right kind of relationship, right style relationship.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 37:46

Yeah. And you mentioned like therapy and writing as tools for doing a lot of this work. And it sounds like I can only imagine like, such a tool for making sense and meaning out of what's happened before what's happening currently, I guess, what has that been like for you utilizing? Like, what's been your relationship with writing, and maybe therapy in this whole process of your own personal journey?

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Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 38:10

I think, for the writing piece of it, certainly, I like have an interesting relationship with it. Because I like the second someone paid me to write about my relationship, or like, my dating life or anything. I was like, okay, if I'm not getting paid for it, I can't do it. Like you immediately, like, monetize, like, the thing that like, was like a healthy outlet for you. And so I think I like started writing probably in the way that like, most people write in a journal to like, process, emotion. And then someone paid me to do now. And then I was like, Oh, I can only do this, if it is like a story worth telling. And I think like, the happy side to that, or the side that like made me want to continue to do that. More than the light \$250 some editors gonna, like give me for like, I don't know, opening up my own little vault of personal trauma for the public is that people are so generous with their feedback or their compliments are their own stories. Like I am like, this is not like me talking down to myself. I'm like a relatively small little writer on the internet. Like I don't have a lot of like ambitions to like be an influencer or like, go viral. I just like like to tell my little stories. And so many people reach out afterwards and it is just like such a nice reminder that it is like not a singular experience that I'm not doing it alone that I'm not feeling it alone. After the Modern love podcast version came out, so many people responded and also this like woman who like grew up she's straight and like grew up in like a very conservative environment just like talked about like the way that like it really spoke. to her as feeling like she was like so sheltered for her entire life and so not allowed to experience that like, even though she like, doesn't identify as queer, like she, like found so much resonance in that. And like that has just been such a nice thread and connective tissue. For the writing piece, like the ability to like talk to, literally strangers on the internet from like, truly all over the world is like, I think the Internet can be like a really bad place. And like knock on wood for me, like, throughout my writing, I've like mostly found it to be a really lovely place, like where people are just like wanting to engage with that side of things. And so that's been like, really nice. And like through therapy, I have started to also write again, like, just for me, which is also been really nice, because I'm like, I have these things to work through. I think like one of the greatest things you can also realize as a writer is that like, personal published essays are not your journal or diary. And they also shouldn't be like that as like not the place to do that work. The things that like are worth sharing the stories that are worth telling. It require like a self editing, and then like a professional editing. And like that stuff that I'm doing just for me, is not like public fodder. It is like just to work on my own chat. And that has also been really nice to come back to therapy.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 41:30

Cool. And yeah, kind of going back to this article that you just wrote and released. Did your sister read it? Because she's such a pivotal character and kind of her story versus your story is so central to it. And curious, what was that process? Like with her?

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Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 41:45

Yeah, so when I first published then she was 14. She didn't she was like, obviously, like, old enough to read and write she like didn't read. I didn't like really know why. I think also at the time, my parents had like a lot of like hesitation around like, The New York Times being like a really big publications, obviously. And so like, I think they had wanted to like shelter her initially, because they were like, what if someone like we didn't set something, and like, I don't know, like, wants to be mean to your sister. Like, I think they really wanted to protect her. Because, again, the internet can like be a really terrible place. And she's like, read basically all of my other writing, but never really circle back to this. And so when the podcast came out, it was the first time that she'd heard it. And she like, loved me, like, she called me she was like that, like, yeah, it was just like a really sweet, nice moment, I think she was like, obviously, so navigating all of those things. And like she just had, like, it came out with through, like, I think four days before her prom. And so we were like talking about like, when she was going to wear like, the boy, he was taking her prom and all of these things. And it continues to like be kind of very similar. And also it's really funny, I, the day that came out, I was walking Everest, I logged in somewhere. And I was like, I just put my headphones in to like, listen to it for the first time because I hadn't heard of, and it like gets to the part in the essay where he talks about like looking down and crying and like being like, Thank God, at least my toes are painted gold. Because otherwise it's look ridiculous. And like without showing my feet too and like my toenails are painted right now. Oh, really? Yes, like parallel but like not on by just like wow, like, sent a picture of my toes. So like my friends and it's like, nothing has like some power and like still exactly in the same place like talking to my sister about relationships and like looking. I was not crying this time. But I just truly it's like mitosis. So they've been repainted since and initially Yeah. Well have probably been like 1000 colors since then. And like we're, again when it came out like that felt really special. Yeah,

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 43:54

I mean, cool how it's both a symbol of you continuing to kind of be you but also it's like a marker of like, you were at a very different place that first conversation looking at your toes than you were then and makes me curious just for as you kind of think about your own journey, even what happened between those two time windows in your own personal story. How do you make sense of that about why it was so different? The second time around?

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Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 44:15

I mean, I think part of it is just like experience. I think it's like truly, I just like dated since then I have like falling in love a couple times and like re not really anything I think I just like gone through that feeling so many times I also the gold toenail thing is like also specifically funny because like I really tried to clarify for people like some people thought that the essay had like

just come out when it came out on the podcast. And I was like, I promise I don't feel this stupid still. Like I promised that I like learned some things or like I'm not as inept as I once was. And I think like the goal toenail thing was really like people were like, Okay, sure. Like you're kind of like I do things that are in that space and like, in different ways without, like taking us into like a fully, entirely, I think they're like so many iterations of that feeling, the feeling of like being queer and, and dating and like having an experience and relationships. And I think that like, in my last relationship, I was like my last year's relationship, but I was in I was like, in a poly relationship where like, the person I was dating also had another partner. And like, that was the first time that I like, kind of been in that situation. And I think that like, in that situation, I probably felt like, again, really similarly to how I felt when I like, wrote that modern love essay of being like, why is there no example of this? Like, Why have I never seen any, like, as much as I felt like, I'd like was living my life through like straight love stories. When I was an adolescent, I like, that was like, why am I only ever like seriously conceptualized a monogamous relationship as as a way to like be and like, now I have to, like, learn this whole other thing. And like, go through this entire other set of emotions, and like, come out on the other side and be like, really happy about it, or like, was really excited about like, the new outlook that that gave me on like, how relationships can be Eve, I think like it both a blessing and a curse. And it's like, when does it fucking? Look? When do I get to like, stop figuring things out and just do it. And I think like, The upside to that is that like, I never got to stop figuring things out. And you just got to, like, keep figuring things out. And keep painting my toes gold, and like, hoping that at some point, I like settle on something.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 46:45

Good. I want to talk with you all day long. And I know I have to like, give us the time. But I don't want to I guess before looking at winding down. Was there anything else that wanted to be a part of this conversation? Anything else that you wanted to make sure it got shared? Honestly,

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Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 46:59

I don't think so. I don't think I have like, I like if you have questions I truly, like I said all day, I think, yeah, I really just came into this wanting to like, talk about whatever you want to talk about. I think like the idea of this podcast is so great. I think like these conversations are so like, beautiful and important. So I really didn't like put anything in my head because I kind of just wanted to go with the questions were talking about and yeah, I don't have anything else. Yeah,

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 47:30

well, then like on the topic of second adolescence, just curious kind of when both when I first approached you, but then also kind of whatever you first engage with this idea of second adolescence, I mean, so much of your essay, again, feels like a symbol and an expression of second adolescence, but curious, like, how that lands for you that that phrase? And? Well, yeah, but just what comes up when you think about it? I think

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Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 47:52

maybe two things. One is that I think that it really does feel like a perfect encapsulation of the spirit behind the modern lamp essay, is the idea, at least like for me, and I think like some other folks I talked to that we didn't have a chance to do all these things when we were younger, right. And so I think that mostly, it's important to definitely, for me, in my case, like have grace with yourself, like give yourself the space to be like, Hey, I didn't have this space when I was little. And so I do need to like, grapple with some of these things. And I'm like, not going to get it on the first try. And that doesn't mean that I'm like, broken or bad or that'll never get there or I'll never figure it out. I think like certainly for me every single time I felt like oh my god, I'm never going to get this. And then I like Blink and suddenly it's a little bit of time later and like I've gotten it or like gotten closer to getting it. And that has felt really important. And I think the other side of that is also like giving ourselves giving myself more credit than I give myself sometimes I think that like sure I didn't get to like work out romantic jealousy out loud or I didn't catch like flex that I like you muscle for a little bit of time. But I got to like do a lot of other things and those other experiences. One can like help serve the other thing that I'm looking for and to also help me to like not be a little brat if that makes sense. Like the thing that I talked about in the modern love essay about like wanting to like scream at my partner the first time you like really had a fight because I like didn't know how to deal with this. Like if I would have done now and like that there wasn't an excuse to like behave badly because I had never done that. And I have like other tools that I could pull for be like you You don't know how to do this, but you know how to do other things that are similar. So like, let those inform this interaction. It is both about like being gentle with myself, and also like not letting myself get away with something just because I never got to like it's not from the Trump piece.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 50:19

Totally, totally. Yeah. Everyone do exactly what Garrett says, I love that absolute, like, what was just powerful. I mean, not advice, but just modeling of a way of working with all this stuff. And I just experienced that throughout this whole conversation again, first, engaging with your essay, but then in this whole conversation, just really appreciating you sharing your story and your experiences as such, like a model for a path to do so in a really meaningful way. And I just feel Yeah, just really touch to get to receive your story and be witness to it in this way. And that you want to share it with other folks. And so just thank you for being here contributing doing the writing you're doing. I am so eager to continue diving into your past work. And I guess Yeah, on that note, like, where's a good place to send folks if they want to read more of your work? Learn more about you follow what you're up to? Yeah, that's a good place.

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Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 51:17

Sure. I mean, truly anywhere on the internet, I think so. i If you are like interested in reading any of my writing, I love and appreciate that. I have a website which is garish like the.com which is like a horrible name for a website because maybe it was so long. I assume my name will be like in the episode description or somewhere. It's like it's literally just like first name last name.com. And then obviously on Instagram and Twitter, like at G Schlichting. Again, horrible because my last name is absolutely insane. Everyone's like obviously welcome to follow me I always have just like, I'd like a normal NES just like writing things I don't think you'll find anything like special but I certainly like obviously post when there is like new stuff. So if you like like my writing, that's probably a great way to like save a little cool, cool. Also, you can like just read my stuff and not follow me. And that is

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 52:11

awesome. Well, normal any debatable, but I again yeah, just so appreciate you. And it's been so special to connect and I'm really eager to stay connected as we move forward.

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Garrett Schlichte (he/they) 52:24

So great. Thank you so much.

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 52:34

Hey, thanks for joining us for today's conversation. Feel free to head on over to [secondadolescencepod.com](https://secondadolescencepod.com) for show notes and more. And you can connect further by following the show on Instagram at [@secondadolescencepod](https://www.instagram.com/secondadolescencepod). If you're interested in being a future guest on the show and you want to come on and share about your own second adolescence visit [secondadolescencepod.com/be a guest](https://secondadolescencepod.com/be-a-guest) and you can submit your interest there. Alright, that's it for me for now. Whether it's morning, afternoon, night, wherever we're finding you in your day, go on out there and keep doing things that would make younger you absolutely thrilled. That is what it's all about. Alright, take good care.