



Hi there,

I think I'm into podcasts now. Specifically: *Who? Weekly* and a new one, *Normal Gossip*. The latter is quite popular, but if you don't know, it lives up to the name: the host, accompanied by a slate of rotating guests, walks through a juicy, anonymous story of gossip from everyday people.

Unlike other podcasts, *Normal Gossip* feels like you are comfortably eavesdropping on two friends dishing it out. It's lighthearted and surprisingly engrossing. (This episode on [fanfiction](#) dealt entertainment and excruciating second-hand embarrassment in equal measure.)

Let's pretend I'm on it, for fun!

**Normal Gossip host Kelsey:** Hi Rachel.

**Me:** Hi Kelsey!

**NG:** So let's start with the classic question: What's your relationship to gossip?

**Me:** I think my relationship to gossip has evolved. It used to be this kind of unbecoming activity that you either sought out (bad!) or were mired in it before you even realized that the conversation had regressed. My elementary school classmates were big gossips: who pissed their pants, who liked who, who got in trouble with the teacher... it was reality-show catfighting over in Coral Park.

Look, gossip can be useful. It can give you information. Political gossip is valuable; it can basically be traded around like currency at a cocktail party

here in DC. It can give you insight into pay equity. And I think if it comes from that purely informational standpoint, there's nothing wrong with gossip. But talking behind someone's back, prattling on for no reason—that feels wrong. One time, I stopped someone in the throes of a monologue because it was mean and it felt weird to be a party to it. When this happens, I think of this [Moira](#) quote: "Gossip is the devil's telephone. It's best to just hang up!"

**NG:** And how does it feel when someone is telling you a bit of gossip? How does your body react?

**Me:** There is no better feeling than seeing a text from your friend: "omg rachel" and them typing for 5 minutes. Like, yes. I'm so ready to receive this information.

**NG:** And is texting your preferred way to gossip?

**Me:** Not really. Almost all my friends are texters, but I'm a caller at heart. But the best is IRL, over drinks.

**NG:** Are you ever the one gossiping? Or are you just getting the information, ostensibly innocent?

**Me:** [laughs] Oh I'm sure I gossip, maybe without realizing it. I remember something really odd happened to me at work once and I kind of sat with the interaction, not sure who to tell, not sure if it would bring me any joy to regale someone with the bizarre water-cooler convo I'd just had. In the end, I did end up telling a colleague when that person's name came up and it, admittedly, felt good to commiserate in our coworker's weird behavior. Is that gossip? I don't know.

At this point in the podcast I would listen in, as a third party, to a long and captivating story from Kelsey's "friend of a friend." But if I had to come up with my own, it would probably be one of these:

- The time my friend in middle school made up an elaborate tale about knowing and being friends with one of the members of Fall Out Boy, and I believed her.

- When my cousin was ghosted by her boyfriend - in a city she did not live in! - before ghosting was a thing. (This may actually be the one because it involves trespassing, stalking, and it did not resolve until two years later.)
- The lasagna incident. (real ones know)

## LET'S CONSUME MEDIA

### Books

- *A Far Wilder Magic* by Allison Saft. I don't think I can do YA anymore guys
- *The Rabbit Hutch* by Tess Gunty. This was a good one. I felt like I was THERE in some bygone midwestern city. I love bored teens against the backdrop of ruin. This book was the perfect mix of violence, spirituality, late-capitalist commentary, and more. HOWEVER... I finished the last half in one night and had terrifying dreams full of dead animals and sad apartments, which was not pleasant.
- *Hell-Bent* by Leigh Bardugo. Real talk: I did not love The Ninth House. It felt like dark academia taken too seriously - lots of complicated plot for little reward. But this book had everything I want out of urban fantasy: grit, a tenacious and broken protagonist, and consequences for meddling with the unknown. It's always refreshing when not every character makes it back from a brush with magic alive.

### These are called "pieces" for some reason!

- [Dems should be more patriotic.](#) Read this piece I co-authored in The Hill!!!!!!
- [You should never talk to the police.](#) Seriously, you should never talk to the police.