

MEGHAN: This past summer, a friend of mine was in town with her kids for a few days. Now this to me was very exciting. Because I hadn't seen her for a while and the idea of getting our kids together, this was a real treat. We swam, we drank wine, we splashed in the water. Then threw some pool floats in. By the way, the inflatable pizza slice proved to be a big hit. Which I found online and I kid you not, the one without pepperoni was a few dollars less than the one with pepperoni. And yes, I'm still talking about the inflatable pizza float for the pool. We all got a good laugh out of that. But all that aside, this wasn't our day of being the wives and moms all perfectly coiffed with updos and pearls and demure smiles. This was the other version of us. Both with wild curly hair and swimsuits and loose linen and huge belly laughs. Big cuddles with our little ones and quiet whispers of girl talk on the terrace, giddy, like absolute school girls. We were just having so much fun. You wondering who I'm talking about? I'll let her introduce herself.

**Sophie:** For homies, it's Sophie G in the house, but nobody knows this! *(laughs)*

MEGHAN: Ok, If you didn't guess it yet, perhaps this introduction is more of what you're familiar with.

**Sophie:** Sophie Gregoire is my legal name and then Sophie Gregoire Trudeau because of the association. And I get called Madame because of protocol very often I'm sure you know about, you know, how that feels. And it just my ears screech every time I'm like, "Oh, I'm not a madame!"

MEGHAN: That's Sophie Gregoire Trudeau. She's an activist, humanitarian, mother, and also wife to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Sophie has become a dear friend, and someone who I think is so emblematic of strength that comes from embracing your humanity, even in the face of all these family and home and public pressures. Keeping that sense of self while holding up the mantle of what comes with being a parent and a spouse...that's a full plate.

**M:** I just absolutely adore you. And Sophie and I have known each other for, gosh, how many years now since I was living in Toronto.

**Sophie:** Yeah.

**M:** When was that. When we went to. So. The Canadian Fashion...

**Sophie:** CAFA

**M:** I think that's when. CAFA that's when I met you. And that was what, seven years ago?

**Sophie:** Yeah, for sure. For sure. Seven years ago. Or more than that?

**M:** Yes

**S:** Ay yi yi.

MEGHAN: Sophie's not just a wife, or a First Lady. She's the type of person who cares deeply about her friends – she used to send me these little meditations during my pregnancies, and voice notes, just these moments of encouragement.

And I've gone to her over the years for advice. She knows what it feels like to be a mom, and a partner, and specifically a mom and a partner in the public eye – and also how crushing the guilt of expectations can become...

**Sophie:** The guilt that we feel as mothers or as women in general is self-imposed. I think we've learned to self-impose it. We're not born. A little girl is not born feeling guilty for being a girl. We learn it. And that's completely unacceptable... So I think that when I started becoming, you know, an older girl and in an early adult stage, I realized that // we often define freedom as a way to be free from the world. But it's really a way to be free in the world.

MEGHAN: Ah, a way to be free in the world, not free from the world. I loved it when Sophie said this. And it reminded me of this book I had been reading called *A Radical Awakening* by Dr. Shefali Tsabary. And I ended up sharing this passage, this opening poem from it with Soph. But I wanted to share it with you, too. Let's see if it resonates.

*There comes a time in the life of a woman when she discards her old ways, like tossed shoes in the garbage...when she shreds her list of shoulds and obligations. And when impossible expectations are burned in an incinerator, there comes a time in the life of a woman when the approval of others, once jewels, now turn to pennies in her sock. When the hunt for another is now replaced by the hunt for herself. And when parental tentacles of tradition no longer define her truth. There comes a time in the life of a woman when her desire to fit in with the crowd dissolves, when her manic compulsion to be perfect vaporizes, and when her obsession to be voted popular eviscerates. There comes a time in the life of a woman when she simply says 'No more.' When facade, artifice and guile leave her nauseated and when righteousness, dogma and superiority repulse her. There comes a time in the life of a woman when she no longer fears conflict, but faces it boldly like a lioness, when she guards her authenticity as fearlessly as she guards her babies. And when she drops the role of savior, knowing she can only save herself.*

**Sophie:** When you said lioness, I was like, I almost roared. But I can't do that now, can I?

**M:** Yes, you can! I even looked up to see your reaction as I said that—

**Sophie:** [roars!] [laughs]

**M:** [laughs] Yes! There she is!

**Sophie:** You know, this is a metaphor. I think the lioness is a metaphor for for everything, because, well, first of all, she does a lot of the work in the in the lion tribe. She's the one hunting the food and all of that. So, you know, women across this planet are still the nucleus of the family. They still carry most of the load for housework, contributing to the family's well-being and most decisions concerning the kids. And this is in countries where they have those rights. But, you know, I think we're all that lioness. We all have that inside of us. And we all long to ... to be free in who we are.

MEGHAN: She's so right. Because being free in who we are, breaking out of whatever is expected of us – *this*, this is the work. The start of it, at least. And look, it's not easy. And that's why I wanted to hear from that incredible author I was just mentioning...Dr. Shefali Tsabary herself.

**Dr. Shefali:** We've fallen into this trap that we as a modern woman can do anything. Now, that sounds like a liberating message, but it's not so liberating. I would go as far and boldly to say it is toxic.

We are falling into these misguided beliefs about who we should be, these personas of perfectionism and, you know, grandiose delusions that we can do it all. The the pendulum swings the other way to great self-abnegation, loathing and shame. That's the other side of that pendulum. So the goal is not to not guilt ourselves or not shame ourselves. The goal is to get out of that pendulum swinging madness all together.

MEGHAN: Ahh, and If we could just get off of that pendulum – get off this rollercoaster – we could take Dr. Shefali's next piece of advice to heart...

**Dr. Shefali:** Don't destroy your essence for this illusion of perfectionism or this image of the Good Wife or the Good Mother. Because those are just images. They're illusions. The best mother and the best woman you can be is the authentic one, the one who is deeply connected to her own knowing. And that doesn't take effort. That takes stillness. It takes quiet. It takes relaxation and reflection. You know, most women in their fifties and sixties learn this, and we want to share this with the women in their thirties and forties. Hey, I overdid it. I burned out. It got me nowhere. Thank goodness I'm still alive to tell the tale. Don't do what I did. It's a pursuit of an illusion.

MEGHAN: Mm-hm...so what do you say we find out what happens when we step outside of the molds that don't fit – and we stop buying into this illusion?

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## INTRO

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<< INTRO THEME BEGINS >>

I'm Meghan, and this is ARCHETYPES – my podcast about the labels and tropes that try to hold women back.

In this episode, we're digging into the roles women play along the homefront – from wives, moms, partners, caretakers. And we're really thinking about... how do we break out of the limiting version of these molds that society has carved out for us – and settle into the layered,

complex and fullest versions of our own truths? How can we shift the roles we play, the expectations that we set – for ourselves and for each other?

I am so excited to dig into all these questions with even more incredible women...

**PA:** I realized that you're just dying to hear them say, "Mama, Mama, mommy or mum", And then that's all you hear. Mom, mommy. Mom. Mom, mom, mom. Mommy, mommy, mommy mom.

MEGHAN: Actress, director, screenwriter – Pamela Adlon! And wait, also...

**SJ:** My girl, really felt like I was masculine. So a lot of times she would put masculine things on me to do. Like, take out the trash or lift this heavy thing, and sometimes I have to let her know, like, I'm not a dude. We're going to get a guy in here.

**M:** [Laugh]

MEGHAN: Comedian Sam Jay! You guys, get ready to laugh. This will not disappoint. More right after the break.

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## ACT ONE

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**PA:** Hi!

**M:** Hi! How you doing?

**PA:** (loudly) Hi, Meghan.

**M:** Hello.

**PA:** Hello! Wait, do you remember? Do you remember when we met?

**M:** Are we joking? Yes! Ok, so I can take you right back to that moment. It was Gloria's Steinem's birthday lunch at our mutual friend's home.

**PA:** Yes!

**M:** And I remember, you know, my friend said, Do you want to just come? Gloria's having a birthday lunch? And I thought, okay, great. This would be really casual. Like when I go and sit with her at the cottage and just have– not realizing it's a bit of an extravaganza. And I haven't gotten out of the house in a long time at that point. And I'm pregnant.

**PA:** Supes pregs.

**M:** I was so nervous when I walked in and just saw this room full of women. And you came up to me and you said something that was just so affirming.

**PA:** Oh, you're going to make me cry?

**M:** No, but honestly, you have no idea what that moment meant to me because I don't–

**PA:** I was so proud of you. I was kvelling over you.

**M:** Thank you. That moment really meant so much to me it really did... And I'm so excited to be talking to you now. So, the first thing I've had everyone just say because the world often tries to define us, I want to give each guest the opportunity before we begin to just introduce yourself, in your own words, as you would like to be introduced.

**PA:** Ohhhh... Well, my name is Pamela, and my last name used to be Siegel, and now it's Adlon. But I like to go by Jupiter. I'm a mom of three, been a single mom for most of that time. I'm an actor. I'm a writer. I'm a director. I'm a producer. Very lucky to say that I'm all those things. I can do things now that I never thought I could do and have jobs that I never thought I would have in my mid-fifties. Been working since I was like nine years old. And I'm very happy to be here with you.

**M:** I didn't know that I would be sitting with Pamela Jupiter.

## MUSIC IN

**M:** Where's the Jupiter from?

**PA:** There you go! It's Jupiter. You know Cree Summer. So she's a very dear friend of mine. She's in my show, and she said, you need a pirate name. So my full pirate name is Jupiter the Generous Thunder Road Mighty Heart. Patron saint of divorced women.  
[laughs]

**M:** [Laughs]

MEGHAN: Here's the thing about Pam, Patron Saint of Divorced Women – yes, she's a director, producer, writer, and actress – who's been working in Hollywood ever since she debuted as spunky little sister Dolores Rebchuck in *Grease 2*! Are we joking? That was in 1982. I loved that movie. And yes, she's got this incredible voice – which earned her an Emmy for her voicework as Bobby on *King of the Hill*...

**Bobby CLIP** *[sniffs] There's some milk in the fridge that's about to go bad...[sniffs] and there it goes.*

MEGHAN: But talking to her... it feels like you're talking to your favorite cousin, your cool aunt, your best friend, just all in one. And everything she says and how she says it, it feels like an honest, authentic breath of fresh air.

She breathes that same life into the characters she creates – most recently on her TV show, *Better Things* – which just ended its brilliant 5-season run. And Pam co-created the show and she also stars in it as Sam Fox, a single mother and working actor raising her three daughters in Los Angeles.

## MUSIC OUT

**Sam:** *This is very annoying! I made dinner and it used to be hot!*

MEGHAN: Sam's house is *the* epicenter of their community on the show – friends are always over, and Sam is always, *always* cooking. In the show, Sam also looks after her aging mother, a British ex-pat, who lives next door. And navigating all these relationships, the show captures what it means to be a mom, a daughter, a sister, a friend, *a person in the world* in the most nuanced and real way... and one that I've, I don't know if I've ever really never seen play itself out in TV this way. *Especially* the complexities and the vulnerability, the softness, all of it, of the mother-daughter relationship.

**Sam:** *You know what would be great, Max? If you helped me, it would be great if you helped me. If you cleaned up after yourself, that would be great. If you helped me with your sisters, that would be great.*

**Max:** *Kids aren't supposed to help their mom. Their mom is supposed to help them.*

**Sam:** *Oh, is that the law? I didn't realize that I was breaking, like, the mommy law.*

**Max:** *Yeah and great job you're doing by the way, mom. Frankie does basically whatever the fuck she wants. And I'm probably going to be fired now, so.*

**Sam:** *Oh yeah, I'm bad, that's bad. I'm a baaad mommy.*

MEGHAN: Now, maybe part of the reason the show feels so real is that it's very much based off of Pam's life off-screen. She was divorced in 2010, after 14 years of marriage. She and her ex have 3 girls together, who are all grown now. And her mom? Well, her real life mom is also an English expat, who lives next door. Pamela's dad was a TV writer and producer, and a comic book author.

And look, her art imitates and excavates her life, finding new layers to the role of mom – without all of this pressure of perfection. It's part of why I wanted to talk to her for this episode because throughout our conversation, it felt like we could share notes. Just two women, in different phases of motherhood, united in this reality that we're still just figuring it out as we go.

So we jumped right in, talking about childhood, and her *own mother*.

**PA:** *My mother supported us with all her various jobs, because my dad was a writer and he was trying to, you know, get paid. And, my parents went bankrupt when I was in my twenties, and they lost everything. And then my father dropped dead of a heart attack after the bankruptcy. My father was always struggling, struggling my whole life. And my*

brother and I both have this work ethic that came from our parents. So it's about survival, if it's scorched earth, you're rebuilding yourself again and again and you know, my grandmother, you know, she worked in a factory when she was 11 years old and she was English and she grew up during the turn of the century. Oh, that's another thing we have in common, the English people thing. I'm English, too.

**M:** Yes, I heard you just got your citizenship! A couple years ago?

**PA:** Yeah, I did a couple of years ago.

**M:** That citizenship exam is so hard. I was studying for it and I remember going, Oh my goodness. I would ask my husband, did you know this? Did you know this? And people went, oh, I had no idea.

**PA:** I think they made it harder for you.

**M:** (laughing) You think?

**PA:** Yeah. They were like, we're going to really throw up walls on this one. *(laughs)*

**M:** With your grandmother and your mom, and both sound like incredibly strong women who are juggling being moms, having careers. I mean, starting work at 11, like just that example because, you know, part of the labels that we're talking about – this idea of what it means to be a good mom or like *The Stepford Wife*, all of these different archetypes where you feel this pressure to have to be a mom or a wife or a partner in a certain way. And then the mom-shaming that comes with it. oftentimes. And I think it's so interesting to hear your journey of that.

**PA:** Here's the thing. I'm here on the other side of all of that. How old are your kids now? A baby–

**M:** Lily is... just started walking. She's a year and a couple of months old and Archie's just over three years old. So yeah they are... Oh I'm in the thick of it. Toddling.

**PA:** Yeah. So when I was in that world, I was looking for moms that would share with me. I remember going to my first like, dance and jingle class with my oldest and just not feeling like I fit in at all with the other moms and, you know, you're literally learning as you go. And then, you know, just understanding, like, you know, how do you do it? Like, I'd want to knock on other moms' doors when they were making breakfast before school. Like, how, how is it in your home? Like, is it crazy like it is in my home, like that morning rush. Like, that's what I call it.

**M:** Oh no no, the mornings are... The mornings are, I mean, how old are your kids?

**PA:** I know. Well, mine are all mine are all grown now. They're 25, 22 and 19.

**M:** Yeah, well, so the morning rush, I'm sure it'll only get more chaotic as they get older, but for me, it's. You know, both monitors on for the kids to hear them always up with Lily. Get her downstairs. Then a half hour later, Archie's up. Start doing his lunchbox right before he's up, while I have her getting her a little nibble. My husband's helping me get him downstairs, and it's — I make breakfast for all three of them. It's very important to me. I love doing it.

**P:** That's so sweet.

**M:** And it just, to me, feels like the greatest way to start the morning. And then it's like, feed all three of the dogs because we just got another dog and then get Archie out the door to school and, you know, but it does, it feels like a whirlwind.

**PA:** Also I hope Daddy's being a good contributor to like the time, the kid time because...

**M:** Oh my husband, oh he's, he's great. I mean, to do this as a single mom, I like bow down to you. How someone does this without a partner to help them through. It is so much work to be a mom when you are just trying to be a conscious parent to raise good, kind human beings and to do that solo is the most—

**PA:** Yeah. Well, it's—

**M:** — impressive, admirable thing on the planet.

**PA:** I always say that the reason why I was able to kind of go through this growth exponentially, like in all the seasons of my show, is because my training is being a single mom of three daughters. And now I'm running a show and these people are paid to listen to me. Those other ones, they're like, they're not listening. When you're raising kids, they're, they're rolling their eyes. They're like, okay, whatever, fine, you know? But it was really for me, the training ground for what I do now. And, you know, when I run my set and run a crew, it's because I run it like a mom.

**M:** Ok, I love that. That's so good. And still... Why is it still so judgmental and hard out there? And why — there's an expectation for it to look so easy for some? Just so put together, and that's what I love about your show breaks through all of that it's like can we just all be real?

**PA:** I wanted to present a person. I don't like to say a flawed person because that's all people. Everybody's flawed. And I didn't want it to be like, you know, this antihero or whatever. But the whole thing about Sam Fox in my show is that she's making mistakes left and right.

*Friend: I don't know how you do it. I don't. What with the girls and working and everything else.*



*Sam: I don't, actually. Everybody always gets a little bit screwed. Even when I do my best, it ain't never enough.*

**PA:** Yeah. It's, it's, um, you know, I used to call the moms who seemed like really high achievers, robot moms. And I definitely portrayed it in my show. But just like I would, I would see them and they would be like, oh, we went. We had the most awesome docent on our field trip. And she taught us how to make soap out of twigs and dirt and whatever. And I'd be like, I just couldn't keep up, and, and they would bring, like, beautiful platters.

### **ARCHIVAL: Bad Moms**

*"Now, this is the list of toxic ingredients that are absolutely banned from the bake sale. No BPA, no MSG, no BHA, no BHT. Plus, no soy, no sesame, and, of course, no nuts or eggs or milk or butter or salt or sugar or wheat OK? Sorry, what ingredients can we use?"*

You know, now I know so much. My kids are grown, and I wish I could go back and have a one year old and a three year old. And, and my kids have so much nostalgia for their little young childhood days, which is so sweet. But, you know, we build the base.

**M:** Yeah. And building the base is a lot of work. But even when you just said that, I thought, Oh, then what advice would you give me as a mom right now with a one and a three year old?

### **MUSIC IN**

**PA:** Yeah. I mean, I wish you could time jump and be in your mid-fifties and look at yourself right now and say, just have more patience. But I was so under the gun with three. And I was too exhausted to make lucid, conscious choices. (Laughs) You know. I say this, this thing I realized that you're dying to hear the words, mama. You're just dying to hear them say, Mama, Mama, mummy or mum, whatever your kids call you, And then that's all you hear. Mom, mommy. Mom. Mom, mom, mom. I put this in my show, and then you're like, Oh, God, please stop saying that.

### **MUSIC OUT**

Because I couldn't respond to everything, um I always felt like I was never measuring up. And then kind of the din goes away, and then the quiet becomes even louder. Because, you know, I raised three kids and then my first moved out and then my second moved out and then the third one, they're out all the time, or they're at their job. And I'm like, Wow! The silence is deafening. It's the most heartbreaking thing. And I say that in my show this year that the meanest things your kids ever do to you is grow up and move away from you. So just remember that.

**M:** Yeah. I mean, and there's also that quote from what you were saying about how deafening the silence is. But I've always loved that quote, the quiet part of the song is still part of the song.

**PA:** Oh, huge, huge. And it's and it's a big part of of, you know, what I do in, in the stuff that I make because you, you, you have to leave space for your life to breathe.

**M:** Mhm.

**PA:** You know, and I remember one year it was Christmas, New Year's and I used to go up to my best friend Johnny's house in, in upstate New York outside of Cooperstown,

## MUSIC IN

and he would get like, just this huge amount of snow. And it was New Year's Eve. And I went outside to do like, resolutions. And I looked up at the stars and I said, okay, so what's it going to be next year? You know, so here's the things we need. And I always say we because it was always me and the girls and my mom, you know, these are the things we need. These are the things I want. And then leave space... because that's not it. In the circle, that's half of the pie chart. The rest is the unknown and the stuff that you don't know what's coming. But the capacity that women have is endless.

[BEAT]

MEGHAN: After the break, we'll hear more of my conversation with Pamela. And we'll also explore another layer to the homefront, which is, how do we grapple with our capacity for love and care, not just with our children, and not just with ourselves, but with our partners, too?

**SAM JAY:** If I come home, she's like, Oh, babe, I have your drink right here. But that's what her mother was for her father. So for her, that's what a good partner does, you know, whereas I didn't grow up like that at all. And so for me, at first it felt, uh, smothering. And I was like, Why are you, like, on my back?

MEGHAN: Comedian and writer Sam Jay stops by to talk about that and more. Lots coming up! After this very short break.

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## ACT TWO

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MEGHAN: Welcome back. So, a few weeks ago, while I was working on this very episode... my mom called...She actually facetedimed.

M: All right. So the first one is you said, oh, sugar, my mom's face timing me. Hey, Mommy.

Mom: Hey! How's my girl?

M: I'm okay. I'm hanging in there. It's okay. I'm recording right now. Do you want to see?

Mom: I see.

M: Hi. We're just doing some podcasting. Can I call you back in a little bit?

MEGHAN: It was just your run of the mill mother-daughter conversation...

Mom: You have on a smiley face.

M: I have on a smiley face. I love you. Yeah [click-click-click]

Mom: I love you, too. I'll see you on Saturday.

M: Okay. I'll talk to you later. Bye.

MEGHAN: But my mom did this thing... you may have heard this clicking sound that she was doing...

## MUSIC IN

M: All right, gang. My mom literally just pulled out a reference of what I came up with as a cool handshake to do with her when I was about eight, which was snap, scissors, cut chicken wing. I'm 41 years old and she's like, okay [fade rest] that's great.

MEGHAN: And it just put me right back into the past. Thinking about my childhood, our little quirks together... and then, with this episode on my brain, it got me thinking about all the ways my mom supported me, how she took care of me and the house and herself...and how she just juggled so much...

The amount that women carry, that they navigate – it's immense. And it's often the most thankless, unpaid labor there is. There's no union. There's no lunch break. There's nothing like that. At home, women just work really, really hard. And a lot of that work is borne out of necessity. But so much of it is also borne out of expectations... the idea that we need to fit the exact cookie cutter shape the world wants to jam us into. And I talked about some of this in my conversation with First Lady of Canada, Sophie Gregoire Trudeau.

## MUSIC OUT

M: This whole archotyping of good mom, bad mom, the judgment, what's wrong? What's right? Ultimately, isn't it what authentically makes sense to you as a mom, as a human being, as a parent?

**Sophie:** And I don't want to get too emotional, but the stress and anxiety that people are feeling these days, whether it's the pandemic, whether it's because you're a struggling mom, and your kids can't make it to school, whatever your situation is, the stress and anxiety is real. And our sense of community has completely exploded. We have sisters who can mother, we have aunties who can mother, we have friends who can mother. Mothering is a way of being. It's not just biological.

**M:** And I think we're seeing how that's evolved so much. I mean, we talk about how progressive the world has become. Yes, without question. Now we have an ability to see it through a different lens where it's not just I don't know if you had *Leave It to Beaver*, that show in Canada like this, very, like very 1950s. Perfect housewife, cookie cutter.

**Archival:**

*"Beaver you don't have to say anything. When you were a baby you couldn't talk, you couldn't tell me if you were cold or hungry or if you had a pain. But I always knew - and somehow, well that just never changes"*

**M:** No, that Stepford wife. And that model has evolved. It takes different shapes. It takes different ways of what it looks like. So much of the work that I've been doing is, you know, to be able to have support for family leave, paid leave in this country—

**Sophie:** Yes, paternal leave across the world!

**M:** Paternal leave! Maternal leave! Just parental leave in general – Can you, can you imagine having a baby and then having to make a choice of, oh I can stay home with my child but if I do, I won't have a job anymore. It doesn't make any sense!

**Sophie:** It just doesn't make sense, at all.

**M:** Well, and then the ripple effect of how many more societal issues we have if we haven't given the foundational support to a family. And I think, doesn't just come with what the government in the country can provide. But what we, as you say, as a sisterhood, as a community, beyond just sisterhood, beyond just women, what we as people can provide. They used to say it takes a village to raise a child.

**Sophie:** Yes, of course.

**M:** We no longer have villages really. For us, in, at least in where we live, it doesn't feel that way. That sense of community has changed in so many regards, but it doesn't mean that that energy and that sentiment can't still be there.

**Sophie:** I think the expression is, if I'm not mistaken, "Ubuntu: I am because you are and you are because I am," right.

**M:** I love that you know that. Yes it is!

**Sophie:** Of course! And it resonates like in my, in my blood. Like it's just. Yes, that's exactly how the world is an intricate, interwoven system where everyone and everything is intertwined. It really is that.

MEGHAN: This speaks to my heart so much. And it makes so much sense!

### MUSIC IN

MEGHAN: But how, then, did we come to find ourselves in a world in which so many women feel so alone when it comes to matters of the home?

**ANGELA GARBES:** American culture has just done a really good job of indoctrinating us and sort of brainwashing us and really, um, like insinuating itself into our, our identities. The expectations we live under are actually very recent historical inventions.

MEGHAN: That's Angela Garbes – a brilliant thinker and the author of two books on mothering – *Like A Mother* and *Essential Labor: Mothering as Social Change*. And as Angela says actually, for most of human existence, we lived in a way that speaks to what Sophie and I were just talking about, and how Sam Fox makes a house on *Better Things*...

### MUSIC OUT

**ANGELA GARBES:** So, you know, if you go back through the history of the world, you know, cultures, civilizations, societies, villages, we really lived communally. Taking care of, the home was not the sole province of mothers, going out and earning a living and being financially responsible for supporting a family– that was not an expectation that resided solely on men.

MEGHAN: Okay so then the question becomes where in history should we time travel to, to look for the origins of these expectations?

**ANGELA GARBES:** Let's jump now to like feudal Europe, right? So obviously, feudal society has its own drawbacks. But at that time, you know, women had jobs, women were smiths, women were butchers. And it was really when capitalism started happening, where people went out working for an individual wage, working for an employer and trying to build individual wealth. We really started to see these expectations come down on women. And I say women specifically, I mean, people who are able to give birth. And so women were really confined to the domestic sphere and we've just continued with that idea and the idea that the home is not a workplace.

### MUSIC IN

MEGHAN: And this idea – that work at home is not *real work* – That's hurting all of us

In the US – we don't have federally guaranteed-paid parental leave – and that speaks directly to what we value in a society. And also what we undervalue as a society. But if we didn't devalue the work of care and work in the home, maybe, maybe it would be easier for women and people to step outside of the societal molds that have been cast for them and step more fully, more comfortably into their truthful roles, the roles that they feel comfortable in... whatever they may be.

## MUSIC OUT

MEGHAN: I talked about some of this with comedian Sam Jay. Now when she was hired as a writer on SNL in 2017, she was the first Black lesbian to fill that role. She now hosts her own late night show called *Pause* – and she has countless comedy specials where she digs into queer relationship dynamics. The good, the bad, and *everything* else.

### Archival (Sam Jay standup):

*The period sync up is huge! It's a huge issue, man! It's hard! We're fighting, I don't even know why. We're just two broads for one week out of every month going at it. I don't even understand why....She's in the bedroom crying over Love Actually, I'm in the living room crying over ESPN 30 for 30 documentaries. Losing my mind!*

MEGHAN: Sam is newly engaged – so, of course, ever the romantic, I had to get the story about how she popped the big question.

**M:** Can I just ask, did you get down on a knee? On bended knee?

**SJ:** I did. I knew she was — she's a get down on a knee kind of girl. I knew that.

**M:** Mm.

**SJ:** I was like, I got to do the whole she-bangbang.

**M:** All the romance.

**SJ:** All the stuff. All the stuff. We had, like a sax player, there was a Ninja Turtle. It was a good time.

**M:** A Ninja Turtle. Now that's not normal. Tell me about that.

**SJ:** *(laughs)* Now that's not normal.

## MUSIC IN

MEGHAN: Okay, it would take too long to get into the details of the Ninja Turtle – but suffice it to say it involved a 90s themed 40th birthday party, and of course, pizza.

What I really wanted to talk about with Sam is how gender roles and norms change – or you know, perhaps don't – in a same-sex relationship. And how do the pressures of being the perfect wife, the perfect partner, how does that manifest when you're writing your own script?

## MUSIC OUT

**SJ:** I really think it is like how, what you're raised on. I really, really do. I like the more you were delving into the one thing about even her, like as a as a partner, she's very attentive and like she likes to dote on you. She wants to cook for you. home, she's like, Oh, babe, I have your drink right here. If I come home from, like a long day and like, that's how she wants to be. But that's what her mother was for her father. So for her, that's what a good partner does, you know, whereas I didn't grow up like that at all, like my mom worked, my dad worked. I didn't have like one parent staying home. They were kind of like ships passing in the night all the time. They didn't do a lot of things together. And so for me, at first it felt, um, smothering. It felt very smothering. And I was like, Why are you, like, on my back, lady? Like, I just I'm just trying to like chill.

**M:** You're like, Why are you loving me so hard? And bringing my drink?

**SJ:** Why are you loving me so hard? Yeah, I know it sounds nuts, but that's I felt like, what is wrong with you? And it took a while for me to, like, grow into letting that in because I just didn't really understand it.

**M:** Yeah but it's so interesting because I actually hadn't thought about that until you said that it's less of gendered norms as opposed to just learned or mimicked norms.

**SJ:** Yes, yes. It's like for her, she's always felt like in her life someone is going to come in and be a breadwinner and I'm going to be able to, you know, have my career when I feel like it. But that is going to be solely dependent on me financially because that's not how she grew up. Whereas it was a big conflict at first for us because I've only known women that work.

**M:** Mmmm. You're like, I don't need my slippers at the door, and my drink in my hand and dinner on the stove. That's not my expectation. You had a different expectation of partnership. How did you guys reconcile that?

**SJ:** Um we fought a lot.

**M:** Mm hmm.

**SJ:** We went to therapy, and I think we just had to learn each other. And we had to learn where. Where we both were coming from and find that respect for each other, and us being two women in the house, we had to learn that. My. My girl, you know, really felt like I was masculine. So a lot of times she would put masculine things on me to do, like take out the trash or lift this heavy thing, and sometimes I have to let her know, like, I'm not a dude. Like, we're going to have to call - get a guy in here. You know what I mean?

**M:** (laughs)

**SJ:** I'm like, I'm not capable. So, you know, I think there's just all those different little things you don't think about even when you start. When you start living a gay lifestyle, you know, like you're not really considering it. And then the both of you are staring at a jar of spaghetti sauce you can't open and you're like, hm, well, this is a conundrum.

**M:** Yes.

**SJ:** And usually what I do in those circumstances is I just wait for one of my guy friends to come over and I just have him open a bunch of stuff and put a bunch of things up that are too high for us.

**M:** (*laughs*) I'm just picturing you guys standing around with all these open cans and going now what?

**SJ:** I'm like get them now you get them, now.

**M:** Get them now while you're here. Get them all now.

**SJ:** Just get it all done.

#### **MUSIC FADE IN**

**M:** Well I'm so excited for you and your fiance—

**SJ:** Thank you.

**M:** I think you're both gonna be a good wife, whatever that means to you. Whatever you make it.

**SJ:** I do too.

**M:** Amazing. Thank you Sam.

**SJ:** Thank you.

**M:** Have a good one.

MEGHAN: My conversation with Sam, it's got me thinking back to Pamela. And she, herself, has a very sort of— as she'll tell you, tomboy energy about her — and it's interesting to think about how that plays into the roles she's been able to play, both at home, and in the entertainment industry...

#### **MUSIC OUT**



**PA:** When I grew up, you know, Tomboy was the expression, and then it was androgynous. And, you know, I've always felt more comfortable in a masculine kind of world, you know, even though I've only ever been strictly dicky. But that's another story.

**M:** [laughs]

**PA:** But, you know, that's, that's the world that I feel comfortable in. And I never really connected to my femaleness until, you know, I got into my fifties and I was doing my show and and–

**M:** Interesting. That didn't feel different for you when you were pregnant?

**PA:** No. I always felt like a pregnant boy, kind of.

**M:** Wow. Wow. That's so interesting.

**PA:** And for me, being a woman in the business and having to just really understand the - the patriarchal bias that everybody lives under, I'm seeing that what I do, you know, with the, the stuff that I make, um...And and I'm seeing the systems are still the same. They're still the same. And I feel like a big part of my work is how I make people, you know, *feel* a certain way. And it sneaks up on you because it's about *your* feelings, but it's also about breaking these systems. Because they're all janky and messed up.

**M:** Yeah. I mean, I first just had Archie, now I'm a mom of a daughter. And whether I thought it was going to happen or not, it did. I see the world differently through how she is going to see the world and how she is going to look at certain women as role models. And when I look at a lot of the women that I'm speaking to on this show, you included, I want her to understand that it is not just a box you have to fit into, but you get to be a full fledged, interesting, curious, kind, strong, all the things, human being. But you also get to be a woman with a voice. And you have such a strong voice that I think, for so many women, it's just liberating – because when you speak freely and truly, it gives people permission to feel that they can do the same.

**PA:** Well, I really just want to embolden and empower people. I feel like the world gets better when women are involved and when women help each other, it's the biggest gift,, of change, the biggest arbiter of change. You know, when women share with each other. And, you know, season four of my show, I remember I kind of sent an email to all of my, my female friends and I said, Did you guys go through menopause? What was that like for you? How do you feel about it? You know, and, and I got so many responses back and so many of them said, please don't tell anybody I told you this.

**M:** Oh, wow. Wow.

**PA:** Oh, yeah. Yeah. There's so much–

**M:** Why do you think it's still stigmatized–

**PA:** Huge.

**M:** What do you think it was? Shame? Fear? Fear of judgment?

**PA:** Yes. Yes. It's your, you don't want to talk about, you know, the fact that it hurts to have sex or you've got to take this kind of medicine to make your vagina feel like a person again or whatever the thing is.

**M:** Yeah, then the only way to break through that is to do what you do, which is to create zeitgeist moments through your content, to create cultural conversations that move the needle. But I'm actually really surprised that even when you reached out to your girlfriends, they'd be like, Okay, but don't tell anybody. That makes me sad.

**PA:** Yep.

**M:** I mean, I would ask, especially because of so many of the things that you touch on in your show and in your work, and your candidness about it, you know – there are some very hard parts as you touch on the program, like the choice to get married. I'm curious, like, what is the piece of advice you would give to someone who's making a choice to get married? And equally, what is the piece of advice you'd give to someone who's making the choice to get divorced?

**PA:** Well, if they were making a choice to get married, I would say. Whyyyy? They're getting divorced, I would say, “Atta girl.” No, I, I really love people making a commitment to each other. I love love. I want people to feel safe and secure. You know what the prophet Kahlil Gibran said on marriage? He said, always leave enough room for the winds of the heavens to dance between you.

BEAT

**M:** Oh, I mean, what on earth more can I even say to that? That's just the most beautiful close. Thank you for that. And before we go, I'm asking each woman who joins me the same set of questions. Which is... if you think about yourself as a little girl, and if you could describe her in three words, which three words would you choose?

**PA:** Shy, feisty...Tough.

**M:** Hmm. And three words to describe the woman that you are today.

**PA:** Shy, feisty and tough. (laughs)

**M:** (Laughs) Thank you so much for doing this, honestly. I have to run and pick up my son from school. But I hope I see you soon.

**PA:** Yeah, for sure.

**MUSIC FADE IN**

**M:** So grateful for your time and support and—

**PA:** For sure. I'm here for you. Stay in touch. Get my number.

**M:** Pam, huge thanks.

**PA:** Love you.

**M:** Huge thanks — Love you, too. Thank you so much. Bye everybody!

**PA:** Love you guys. Take care.

**M:** Bye!

**PA:** Bye!

**M:** Sorry, I got to run and get the little one.

MEGHAN: And before I wrapped things up with Sophie, I couldn't pass up the chance to ask her her Three Words, as well.

**M:** So if you were to have three words to describe yourself as a little girl, what three words would you choose?

**Sophie:** You're killing me. Okay.

## MUSIC OUT

**Sophie:** Sensitive. Courageous. And funny. I'm funny. *[laughs]* People don't know this!

**M:** You are really funny! Oh, it's so true, though. You're so funny. And cheeky!

**Sophie:** And I'm quite mischievous.

**M:** Great sense of humor. Okay, so then three words to describe yourself today. Now.

**Sophie:** Oh, you just triggered something. I just felt that I hope I can say those three words again... Courageous, sensitive and funny because I've been doing so much work to go back to that little Sophie inside of me, through all the adversity, through all my own struggles. And I found her. So I'm going to continue to take care of her.

**M:** *[claps]* I love that so much.

## MUSIC FADES IN

**M:** Sophie, thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I'm so grateful for your time and for you being here. And I can't wait to see you soon, but just thank you. Just huge gratitude for

you being so candid and sharing like this. I think it's going to make a big impact. It certainly has for me. So thank you, my friend.

**Sophie:** This was, it was really great. Thank you. It was really deep and beautiful. So I just hope it resonates. That's the only thing I hope for. And thank you to everybody in the studio who was there, too.

**M:** Thanks, Team! Sophie, I'll talk to you soon. Big kiss. Thank you. Bye!

## MUSIC OUT

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### CLOSING THOUGHTS

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MEGHAN: Great conversations with some great women today. And it made me think. Growing up, I used to love I Love Lucy and also occasionally, watch Leave it to Beaver. Both of these shows, by the way, had the good wife and good mom archetype locked solid. As did cartoons. Do you remember, Wilma Flintstone from The Flintstones, or Jane Jetson from the Jetsons? Wilma wore she wore pearls and Jane was always perfectly polished. The happy housewife with the perfect apron, dinner in the oven, husband's slippers by the door, this was all aspirational to me. And being a mom was, too. I'd saved up my allowance to buy a real diaper bag from KMart. Like real moms have, you know? I didn't want the fake one for my fake doll. I longed to be a mom as much as I longed to be a wife. And at the same time, also at a young age, I was a feminist. And despite what people would think, I didn't find those things to be mutually exclusive. The pressures imposed being a mom, a good mom or a good wife. The ideals we try to live up to and the expectations we self-impose, as we heard today— they're pretty trapping. And they're in many ways, a fallacy. Because you can be a feminist and be feminine. You can clutch your pearls one day and let your curls be wild the next. You can be a working mom in or out of the house and you can have drinks with friends after putting your baby to bed. You can be the mom who says she needs a break for just a minute. And then if you're like me, sits in bed scrolling through pictures of, you guessed it, your kids. And you can be the mom who never misses a school pick-up or drop-off and bakes the perfect cookies or be the one who buys the cookies from the store. Because that works, too. Just as you can be the wife whose claim to fame is making pot roast. Or the wife who admittedly makes only one thing well — reservations. I have friends who are like all of the above. And they are all — we are all doing the best we can. So maybe it's time to let go of these archetypes. These challenging, limiting archetypes riddled with so much judgment. So it's less about that's the right way to do it — that's the wrong way to do it — she's a good mom, she's a good wife, no she's a bad mom — she's a bad wife.

And instead just focus on one thing — being a good person.

As I once read, out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I'll meet you there.

As ever, I'm Meghan. And I can't wait to be with you next week. Have a good one

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**CREDITS**  
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