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**COLD OPEN**

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MEGHAN: I used to love a show called *Bill Nye The Science Guy*.

It was a kid's science show with experiments and some laughs. And actually, what's funniest about all of this is when I think back to when or why I would watch that show, I... It's bizarre to me because I wasn't really a science kind of girl growing up. I loved cooking, gardening, writing letters. I mean, not much has changed with any of that. But also during my childhood, STEM wasn't something I ever remember people talking about, let alone STEAM. I love that that is what kids and girls especially are encouraged to sink their teeth into today. But as a kid in the eighties, that wasn't what I was exposed to.

And yet as an adult, while science may still not really be my thing, my fascination with understanding how we're wired, digging deep, and understanding the chemistry behind something – that's very much present for me. And as luck would have it, amidst the stack of books on my bedside table, I stumbled across a concept in one that explores how we change the way we think and even rewire our brains. I got my pen. I marked it up. I don't know if you're like me with books or you scribble it up. You highlight. You make little stars on, on things that just stand out for you. Because when I saw this, it immediately made me think of archetypes and what we've been working on throughout this season. Because if these labels and boxes are so ingrained in our thinking that we subconsciously judge, engage or limit both ourselves and others as a result of them, then the larger question is, what's the fix? Is it cultural conversation? Perhaps. Is it learning? Well, yeah, learning is always good. But how do we actually do the reframing? And is it possible to actually rewire those thoughts?

So in this book, they posited a concept that, stay with me, stay with me. If you're like, "Oh, she's getting *woo woo*," – I'm not. I'm getting scientific. And what I found in this book is a concept called "neuroplasticity." Here's an expert to tell you a little bit about it.

**Dr. Tara Brach:** Neuroplasticity describes our capacity to keep on learning and growing through our lifetime. And there's an understanding that neurons that fire together, wire together, so that the more we have certain thoughts and certain feelings, the more those grooves or those neuro patterns, deepen. So neuroplasticity says that if we shift our thought patterns and we shift our emotions, we can actually change our brain in a very dramatic way towards more health and more happiness.

MEGHAN: That's Dr. Tara Brach. She's a psychologist, author and mindful meditation teacher. And her work focuses on releasing the limiting beliefs that might be holding us back.

**Dr. Tara Brach:** There's a saying that where attention goes, energy flows, and if our habits are paying attention to, let's say, what we think is wrong, what we think is going to

go wrong, what we think is wrong with us, what we think is wrong with others, then we're going to be living chronically in a kind of contracted, fearful place. But if instead we train ourselves to deepen our attention, then we can have more choice. And the most exciting research that's come out – there's been 15,000 studies or more – are on how meditation, the practice of mindfulness can do this, can take advantage of neuroplasticity and change our mind and really open our hearts.

MEGHAN: This practice can be so helpful, it seems, to many aspects of a person's life. So as I was suggesting earlier, what I really wondered is – as we talk about archetypes, these labels, these tropes, these limiting beliefs that we've explored through this entire season of the podcast... I wondered, is this really possible, can we really change our thinking?

**Dr. Brach:** We can use mindfulness and self-compassion in undoing the gender stereotypes that keep us really limited. And this is both men and women. I'll give you an example. For a lot of women, there's that stereotype of thinking, you know, women are weak or emotional, oversensitive, don't have real power. It might be that men are overbearing and dominant and yet aren't capable of tenderness. So, you know, we have these polarized stereotypes and there is a... understanding that helps us to wake up out of them. It's the words strong back and soft front. And this is something I got from Roshi Joan Halifax, strong back, soft front. And what it's really talking about is something that brings the best out of both genders. You might think of it as fierce compassion, where you have to have a strong back, which means you have to stand up for truths, be protective, have your boundaries... and simultaneously a soft front where the heart is open, the heart is caring. So I think it's a really valuable image that both genders can use to wake up out of the limitations of the stereotypes and to move forward in our world in a way that's both compassionate and strong.

MEGHAN: Okay, so... it seems that, yes, according to Dr. Brach, there's hope. And I think, you know, if we're about to shed some light, not just on the history of these labels, and the lived experiences of the women boxed in with them... but the understanding of how we can move away from them... then it has to be larger, I would guess, then just conversations with women, even if we are rewiring, because there's more of this population that probably need to be involved in the same conversation.

I'm talking about men, and I thought, for this final episode, wouldn't it be interesting to sit with some men, hear their thoughts, and see what they think of Archetypes. So we asked for some impressions from men all around the world...

## MUSIC IN

KAY: Hi. The name's Kay and I've been listening to the podcast for over a month now. I'll tell you my biggest takeaway really is just understanding or appreciating the history of words and how said words evolve over a period of time.....

*(crossfade)*

SPENCER: You know, while I consider myself an ally generally, it made me aware of adjectives and descriptors and qualifiers that I use as compliments to women in my life, that I often don't interrogate. And it made me question, are these reinforcing archetypes? Am I playing into a stereotype?

*(crossfade)*

ANGELO: A lasting take away for me was the deep cutting reality of a forced identity, where women are essentially forced to explain themselves through a lens that's not theirs in order to create the space to present who they really are, free of labels and archetypes.

## MUSIC OUT

MEGHAN: Now, if you've been listening to the past 11 episodes, you may have noticed that you haven't heard many men's voices... In fact, until now, outside a pop-in from my husband in the first episode, this show has featured exclusively women's voices.

And that's by design. It was important to us that women have a space to share their authentic and complicated, complex, and dynamic experiences. To be heard. And to be understood.

But through that process it also occurred to me, and truth be told, at the suggestion of my husband – that if we really want to shift how we think about gender and the limiting labels that we separate people into, then we have to broaden the conversation... and we have to actively include men in that conversation, and certainly in that effort.

So today, we are doing just that. We're opening it all up, breaking out of the boxes and the binaries and doing things in a new way... so who's ready to be open to a little bit of change? Today's the day.

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**INTRO**

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<< INTRO THEME BEGINS >>

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

And in order to help us truly break out of these boxes, for this – our final episode – I've enlisted some very thoughtful men in the effort... men who've been behind some of the most successful movies and TV shows, but also, who are part of cultural conversation in such an impactful way through their roles in media, and also, for some of them, their roles as husbands and dads.

**Andy:** I mean, I think the Housewives of New York, to me, in a crazy, crazy way, is actually one of the most feminist shows on TV. It's about women who are over 50, close

to 60, who are so in touch with their sexuality, but they don't need men to define them and they're in control.

MEGHAN: Talk show host and TV producer, Andy Cohen! As well as...

**Trevor:** I think of that when I look at the lessons my mother taught me and how I try and process the world, especially as it pertains to men, women, race, gender, whatever it may be, is understanding that these ideas often limited men themselves.

MEGHAN: Comedian and writer Trevor Noah. Oh! And there's more.

**Judd:** I think the ultimate lesson for me was you need to collaborate with people. You know, I, I can't do most of this alone. I do need to sit in a room with somebody, you know, from another gender, another culture, another sexuality and say, what's it like for you and for us to do it together.

MEGHAN: Director, writer and producer Judd Apatow!

I am so excited to share these conversations with you and I really hope you find them as interesting and also, as encouraging as I do.

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**ACT 1**

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**Meghan:** Hello.

**Andy:** Nice to meet you.

**Meghan:** [laughs] It's good to see you. I've met you before. You'll never remember it.

**Andy:** You're kidding.

**Meghan:** Would I joke about that? This is great. Just brace yourself.

**Andy:** This is going to ruin my day.

**Meghan:** No, it's not.

MEGHAN: [laughs] I absolutely did not want to ruin Andy Cohen's day. But – for this reality TV powerhouse and host of the late-night talk show *What Watch Happens Live* – I did need to set the table a bit, to maybe go down memory lane when we met once upon a time... or shall I say, twice upon a time.

**Meghan:** I've met you twice.

**Andy:** \*gasp\*

**Meghan:** Oh, you ready? The first one, *Suits* wasn't even on yet. The pilot hadn't even aired. And there was some sort of event for USA and Bravo at the SLS Hotel.

**Andy:** Oh, in L.A. Okay.

**Meghan:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. And I was such a huge fan.

**Andy:** Oh, no, and I ruined it. What did I do?

**Meghan:** No, you didn't. You didn't. You were, you were perfectly, you did that thing. Where you, your eyebrows went up. I was gushing. I was like, da da da da da. And you said, Uh-huh.

**Andy:** Oh, God.

**Meghan:** It's okay. And I said, That's fine. That's fine. I still was a huge, huge fan. And then when we had maybe season two or three, we were in New York.

**Andy:** Oh, no.

**Meghan:** No, it's not bad. It's not bad. It's not bad. This just shows. Don't sweat. Don't... He's breaking out in sweat now...

**Andy:** Okay, go on. Season two and what happened...

**Meghan:** I was so eager to be on your show because I was such a *Housewives* fan at the time and I just couldn't get booked, *Andy*! So thanks for being here with me.

**Andy:** You know what's so funny? I had that feeling when basically we started to kind of forensically figure out if it was you, because we had a sense that you were we kind of put it together a little. We were like, I think she may be a *Housewives* fan, but even worse, *Andy*, we think we didn't have her on the show. And I was like, oh my god. If it turns out that Meghan Markle actually expressed an interest to be on *Watch What Happens Live* and we - it is now the biggest blunder in the 13 years of the show. So it's a great story.

**Meghan:** I think you're doing just fine.

**Andy:** And now I can't even do my pitch to try to get you on *Watch What Happens Live* because you just own me completely.

**Meghan:** Nope. Well, we started here. It's great. So now we've started. Now you're here with me, which is amazing.

**Andy:** Oh my god.

MEGHAN: [laughs] Oh man, that is such a trip down memory lane. And, look I didn't want to embarrass him but I thought it was funny to remember how things were. And to that point - though I couldn't, at the time, get on the couch to talk to Andy on his late-night show, I was certainly well-aware of his other big creation... *The Real Housewives* franchise. Now Andy greenlit the show back around 2005/2006, when he was a programming executive at Bravo. He still serves as Executive Producer on the franchise.

**Andy:** Oh my god. I guess the million dollar question is, do you still watch *The Housewives*? This is what we've been dying to know.

**Meghan:** Well, I will tell you the truth. I stopped watching *The Housewives* when my life had its own level of drama that I stopped craving—

**Andy:** Other people's.

**Meghan:** Yeah, there was so - I get why it was such a huge, huge part of pop culture. And when it began, because you began with Orange County and I'm from California, at least it felt remotely like a world that I knew but still felt so foreign.

**Andy:** Yeah.

**Meghan:** But I mean, I would say almost every one of my friends still watches it and I go, why are you watching that? There's so much drama. And it's because it bring - it's entertainment. It's entertaining to them.

**Andy:** It is.

**Meghan:** And it's also I think it's so familiar because it's been on for so long. You've created an empire.

**Andy:** And I think also we love judging human behavior. And so it's a way to kind of judge other people's behaviors in, kind of, a guilt free way without, you know, feeling bad about it. It's like an excuse to gossip about friends who aren't really our friends.

**MUSIC IN**

MEGHAN: With *The Real Housewives*, Andy really has created, most would call it an empire of sorts. There are *eleven* different *Real Housewives* series that have aired in the U-S. Eleven! Who would've thought. And there's even more internationally. And look, I'll be honest, I'm conflicted about this. Not about his success – his rightfully deserved success – but on what his success, specifically with this franchise, has been based off of. Because as we grapple this season with what archetypes are and how limiting they are, on the flip side of that, is are we exploring giving women the space and allowance to be exactly who they are? As complicated, layered, challenging, funny, silly, etc. Or, in a franchise like *Housewives*, are we fueling the fire of archetypes by creating caricatures of women?

## MUSIC OUT

MEGHAN: And we're not just talking about a couple women. When you talk about representation, it is no small number of women on this show – we are talking, hundreds! Literally – over 200 women around the world as part of this franchise. And apparently, at some point, people thought Andy should maybe add *one more* to the mix... [laughs]

**Andy:** And then what did you think? Because it had to have bubbled up to you somewhere that you moved to the States and everyone is like, oh, she should join the Beverly Hills Housewives. I'm like, she ain't joining the Beverly Hills Housewives, everybody.

**Meghan:** I never heard that!

**Andy:** She has a full plate! She's Meghan Markle. You never heard that? Good. Well, I never even tried to stoke the fire because I was like, folks, that's not happening.

**Meghan:** Yes. You mean really that this is my audition for Real Housewives of Montecito? Is this the moment?

**Andy:** You don't have, you don't have to audition. We'll build the— We'll build the show around you. How about that?

**Meghan:** There will be no reality show.

**Andy:** I know.

**Meghan:** But I think it's so funny. No, I never heard that. I never heard about the Beverly Hills of it all.

MEGHAN: [laughs] Alright, so for those who are *unfamiliar* with the franchise – here's the gist... each series of *The Real Housewives* is filmed in a different location – Beverly Hills, Salt Lake City, New Jersey, on and on and on, I mean genuinely all over the place. And they're centered

around the lives of, let's say, between 5, up to maybe 10 women... And the show is really all about the social dynamics at play amongst these women. And oftentimes, that means a lot of drama.

### **Archival: Real Housewives**

*You know what Margaret? You're used to an environment of cheating! Alright, your mother f\*\*\*\*\* someone for 15 years... I get it, but some things should be kept secret. You're right, you're absolutely right and you know what, that's why your husband sleeps in the f\*\*\*\*\* pool house.*

MEGHAN: Oh my gosh. Oh man, this is a tough one for me. This is a tough one. Because, as you heard, Andy describes this as a feminist show... and I want to hear him out on that, because this *drama*, it tends to feed off the kinds of women they, they often feature on the show, or at least one facet of their personalities. And yes, some might call them stereotypes. And I think for this reason, people have really – like I'm explaining – mixed feelings about the show. And the role that the show might play in perpetuating the sorts of labels we've been discussing on *Archetypes*. So, I thought it was important to really hear Andy out on this and to get to know him a little better, too.

So I asked, first, for him to introduce himself in his own words...

**Andy:** I'm Andy. I'm a Gemini. I like the ocean and disco balls. My *Housewives* tagline is, I'm a father of two, but a daddy to many.

MEGHAN: [laughs] Like he just mentioned, Andy is a father of two – a son, Ben, who's 3, and a daughter, Lucy, who's just about 7 months – both of whom he had through a surrogate. And I wondered, what sort of world does he want them to grow up in? What messages does he want them to receive about gender roles and norms?

And so we went back to Andy's beginnings, his own childhood, and the types of women that he grew up around...

**Andy:** Grew up in St. Louis, really nice, you know, two parent home, middle class, family food business. My mom was so smart and so driven and such a big influence. And I grew up in the age of the, quote, bimbo, you know, where like Suzanne Somers was on TV pretending to be like an idiot, a dumb blonde, you know, I mean.

**Meghan:** Oh my gosh! On Three's Company!

### **Archival: Three's Company**

*"Well this is typical - getting a girl pregnant. Only a man would do a thing like that!" [audience laughter]*



**Andy:** And you know I grew up with, like Jiggle TV and whatever, but I never believed any of that because I saw in my own home – my sister was so smart and my mom is just kind of brilliant and speaks her mind and is such a great role model and taught me to be myself. And I was obsessed with TV. I was obsessed that there was like a business behind television. And I thought, Wow, it would be cool if I could ever be on camera and kind of be myself in front of the camera. I didn't know how that would exist because as a gay man and I was fully in the closet, I had no sense that I was ever going to be able to live my life as a gay man because it just seemed completely insurmountable, unacceptable. It just all seemed that, like, the odds were against me. But I loved soap operas, and specifically I loved all of the strong women on soap operas. I was really connected with them. I was energized by them. I loved how outspoken they were. I love it that they took no crap. I love that they always look like \$1,000,000 and it was just exciting for me to watch. So fast forward years later, I get a degree at Boston University in broadcast journalism thinking, well, I'll become a reporter and maybe that's a way for me to get on camera and kind of be me. And I love journalism. And I worked at CBS News for ten years. And my mentor there said, you know what? You have, your eyes are crazy crossed. You're never going to be in front of the camera.

**Meghan:** Did he really say that?

**Andy:** Yeah, he did.

**Meghan:** No–

**Andy:** But it's okay, because I just really doubled down on producing and I wound up being in charge of programming at Bravo and we got to pitch one day. That changed my life, certainly, which was... someone brought us this VHS tape of these women who lived in a gated community in Orange County. And it was he I don't know that he totally knew what the show was at that point either. The pitch we got was kind of for a Curb Your Enthusiasm type, kind of mockumentary-ish–

**Meghan:** Oh interesting.

**Andy:** And we were like, Well, I don't know what that is because they're not actresses. But to me, they all went to the same tennis club. They all lived down the street from each other. They were all friends. And in my mind, in the best possible world, what this show could be would be like a Knots Landing type show, like in suburbia. And at the time, Desperate Housewives was the number one show on television, on ABC. And we said, well, maybe this is The Real Housewives. And these are how real, kind of, women who are maybe nouveau riche and nouveau boobs and nouveau everything are living their lives. It was really just taking the trope of, well, this is an outsized soap opera about suburban women. But what if we found outside suburban women who might be even as wild as this in their own ways?

**Meghan:** You know, what's so funny is when I had Paris Hilton on, which was eye opening for me, because I didn't really know a lot about her origin story and certainly about her experience before she was on *The Simple Life*. And when she's talking about that, she said very clearly in casting, and I think this was about the same time. This is when reality was having a huge boom. And she said they were really clear with her that she was being cast as the dumb blonde because - well, as you said earlier - people seem to be drawn to these tropes because it feeds into... well what you just described as human instinct. This, this craving for whatever reason to want to judge or gossip or pick apart. So I think in some ways, whether you want it to or not, the culture of reality shows was created with these archetypal types that I would imagine even if the people who are cast on the show are real women, wouldn't you say that they start to play into the caricature? They're playing into the type that they've been cast to play. Don't you think so?

**Andy:** I think that there's a big conversation to be had about how much, you know, how much are they playing into and how much are they living their lives. And I think that if you look at these women, they really are - we don't cast wallflowers on this show - so they really are as kind of activated and dramatic as you see on the show. And my, my text messages and my conversations when we're not filming can attest to that. But I think certainly listen, I mean, so if we were doing *The Real Housewives of Montecito* with you and you were at Oprah's house...

**[MUSIC IN]**

**Andy:** ... and you and Oprah had a luncheon and you maybe had a disagreement about the crudité.

**Meghan:** And Ellen came over.

**Andy:** I was going to say. And then you were seeing Ellen the next day. I think certainly the producers would say to you, hey, don't forget the last time you saw Ellen was at the fight at Oprah's about the crudité. You might want to, you know, see what she thinks of that or whatever. So, that, that's the level of, of construct that's going on.

**[MUSIC OUT]**

**Meghan:** And I wonder, you know, the women have to be, I would guess, incentivized in some way to want to if they're enjoying their experience and they want to stay on the show. And so at a certain point, I would guess if we're talking about popularity, be it popularity, because an audience loves to love someone. They love to root for someone. They love to hate someone, too. So if they're trying to fit into one of those categories, you do see how some of these - I was going to say characters - but some of these women only have a season and then they're gone. And there has to be a reason for that.

**Andy:** It's true. But then on the other hand, some of the women who I think have been, who have driven so much story on the shows for so long, I think are the ones who have remained kind of oblivious to what the viewers are really saying about them. And I think, you know, if you look at Teresa on *New Jersey* or you look at Ramona or even Luann, some, some of these women, I feel like I'll be seeing what the viewers are saying on Twitter, but they're not really logged in or they just don't care.

**Meghan:** Really?

**Andy:** And they're moving forward. Yeah, I think it's the ones that care that get really tripped up. I was just telling a housewife of Salt Lake City who was very popular, the other day, I was like, listen, do not get tripped up by what people are saying about you because it's good one day and bad the next and you're not, you know, you can't live or die by that. You just have to worry about being, you know, yourself and being a version of yourself that you can be comfortable with putting out there. You know, don't compromise yourself.

**Meghan:** Well, there's also a really good just piece of advice in general, whether you're on a reality show or not. I think most people can sniff out inauthenticity. And so I think it's a really good reminder for people, especially as we talk about labels and tropes and trying to fit into some sort of box or mold. People can feel it when you're doing that. They can feel it when you are not being yourself. Just thinking about some of the labels we've talking about on show, I was doing an episode purely about the B-word, but most of the women that I spoke to had very little issue with the word because it's so oversaturated that it's almost diffused. And instead, they were saying what is charged for them is how easily women are now being called difficult, and that it's really just a euphemism for the same thing. But it has more of a dig to it.

**Andy:** You know, it's funny, we banned the word bitch. We've had a weird relationship with the B-word on *The Housewives*. And there was a housewife that wanted to use it in her tagline. And we finally, the women who ran Bravo, said, we don't want the B-word in the show open for *The Housewives*. This is a negative... And I think what ultimately wound up happening was that the woman used – in the same way we empowered the word queer in *Queer Eye* on Bravo. And queer used to be a weaponized word– I think the case was made by the woman like, no, I'm — this is a positive to me.

**Meghan:** See and that's what's so interesting. And that is honestly, part of the discovery throughout this entire podcast that I'm recognizing. But, you know, to that point, I do wonder what role you feel that you have in some of the archetypes that are negative and how that has an effect on culture.

**Andy:** Yeah, um I think it's a great question and I even look, I had Gloria Steinem on *Watch What Happens Live* once and she is not a fan of *The Housewives*. She called it a minstrel show for women.

### **Archival : Watch What Happens Live**

Gloria: It is women all dressed up and inflated and plastic surgeried and false bosomed, and not getting along with each other, fighting with each other. It is a minstrel show for women. And I don't believe it.

MEGHAN: And while Glo, who's one of my dear friends, made her opinion very clear about this franchise, so did Roxane Gay. And what she said is super supportive so you have this incredible contrast of strong feminists with strong opinions on both sides of the street.

### **Archival: Watch What Happens Live**

Roxanne: I think the, *The Real Housewives* franchises allow women to be their truest selves. And we see the mess. And we see the amazing friendships and everything in between. And when women are allowed to be their fullest selves, that's most feminist thing we can do. [cheers, fade down]

## **MUSIC IN**

**Andy:** I think if it was just only about fighting and wine tossing, the show would not have made it sixteen years and nine spin offs, because it has to be about more. There are too many people who actually get something out of this show. And what I think they get is I think it's really funny. I think that the the moments that really have resonated with people are women figuring out, wait a minute, I am in a bad marriage and I'm going to empower myself to leave. But I'm scared and I'm vulnerable and I don't feel attractive and I'm over 50. And am I ever going to find a man? And I mean, I think *The Housewives of New York*, to me, in a crazy, crazy way, is actually one of the most feminist shows on TV. It's about women who are over 50, close to 60, who are so in touch with their sexuality, but they don't need men to define them and they're in control.

## **MUSIC OUT**

**Meghan:** What is the role that men can have and certainly the role as an influential man and personality, really, mogul probably at this point, I would say, in media, what is the role that you can have to help keep women's stories told in, as we've talked about, an authentic way? Keep us out of this boxed in stereotyping? What do you think the role is in general for men and then the role that you can play in that... or want to play in that?

**Andy:** I mean, that's a huge question. I'll speak for myself. I mean I work with all women. My executive producer of *Watch What Happens Live* is a woman. Most of the EP's of *The Housewives* are women. So I'm in a sea of women, housewives, producers, the women who have shaped my entire career and life, my mom and my mentors that I've had, they've all been women. So for me, it's just showcasing their stories and letting them shine and fly.

**Meghan:** So let's say *Housewives* goes on for another ten years. 20 years, who knows? Let's say all of that happens. And your daughter Lucy is now grown up. Or she's growing up. She's adolescent at that point. Right. That's the age where she's going to say, what is this show, Dad? How would you describe this show to her?

**Andy:** I would describe the show is - that it's a soap opera. If she understood what that was, because they'll be long gone by then, I would say it's a show about a group of friends and how they get along or don't get along. And that in a weird way, it may not be that different from her group of friends on a playground. They agree and disagree about different things. But, you know, maybe it's not that different.

[BEAT]

## MUSIC IN

MEGHAN: Coming up... I'm talking with director, writer, and producer Judd Apatow about the women in his life – and the crucial ways they've shaped his career and the stories he tells...

**Judd:** A lot of it was also seeing, you know, the types of scripts that were coming in for Leslie and understanding, you know, what the stereotypes were and what parts were really thin and not worked out and trying to get a handle on, well, what could they be? What could you do?

MEGHAN: And we'll *also* have a very exciting and far-ranging conversation with comedian and producer Trevor Noah –

**Trevor:** And I found myself wondering. I was like, if men had their periods and we designed the office, I wonder if we would have just said, yeah, there's seven days a month where there's no work because I mean, this is ridiculous. You can't work like this. Why would I work like this?

MEGHAN: [laughs] All that, coming up. Stay with me.

## MUSIC OUT

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**ACT 2**

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MEGHAN: Welcome back.

I was thinking about it as we were putting the guests together for this episode and as we've talked about a lot throughout this season, so much of what informs our point of view about the world comes through pop culture and definitely comes through media and I grew up loving TV

and films. Some of my favorite films though – I don't know if you guys find this as well – when you watch them years later, some of the jokes, some of the things that were so funny, or made so much sense or seemed so true... with time, you maybe watch it through a different lens.

And I wanted to explore this very thing with someone who has created some of my favorite films and continues to... and has also seen how this landscape has changed and how the role that he plays in it has changed as well.

**Judd:** Hello?

**Meghan:** Hello?

**Judd:** Hello.

**Meghan:** How are you doing?

**Judd:** Good. How are you?

**Meghan:** I'm well.

**Judd:** Excited to chat.

**Meghan:** Oh, my goodness. Me too!

MEGHAN: There's a good chance that the director, writer, and producer Judd Apatow is responsible for at least one of your favorite comedies. Because for the past three decades, he's helped create dozens of them – on both the small screen – with shows like *Freaks and Geeks* (which was so good!).

Archival: *Freaks and Geeks*

*You're gonna ruin her life. If you don't care about high school then you won't get into a good college, you'll have no future and you'll wind up dead or in jail. / Really? / Were you asleep during scared straight?*

MEGHAN: ...And on the big screen with... I mean take your pick, literally dealer's choice: *Superbad*, *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*, *Knocked Up* – the list, it goes on and on. He is a megahouse when it comes to comedy masterpieces that people just love to watch.

And one of his creative partners – Leslie Mann, the amazing actor – also happens to be his wife.

**Meghan:** Can I just say – your wife. I met her once. It must have been season one of *Suits*.

**Judd:** Mhm.

**Meghan:** No one knew who I was. And it was the evening before a party, and I just saw her and I said, can I just tell you I'm such a fan of your work. She was the nicest person!

**Judd:** She is!

**Meghan:** I talked about this for years. I was like, Do you know how nice Leslie Mann is? Do you know how amazing Leslie Mann is? So it only, it only made my girl crush even more extensive because on top of being so talented, I was like, she's just so nice. She was so sweet to me. She made me feel so seen.

**Judd:** Yes. Well, that's, that's her. She's very present and kind and she's right there. You know, what you experienced. You know, that, that's her. That's the amazing part of her.

## MUSIC IN

MEGHAN: Okay, so I had to do that - I had to tell Judd how great his wife is but this wasn't just all about the fangirling... there's a real way in which I think Judd's family has informed his work. He and his wife Leslie have two daughters – Maude and Iris – also both actors. And while some of his films – like *The 40-Year-Old Virgin* and *Knocked Up* – both gave a really specific depiction of women and relationships at the time that they were created, Judd's work, and his writing, has continued to evolve, as has his depiction of women on the screen. He's gone on to produce some of the most successful women ensembles of the last 20 years... including *Bridesmaids* and the HBO show, *Girls*.

And in some ways, it seems as though his own personal evolution has tracked alongside those larger scale shifts in our society and our culture. So I wanted to dig into this correlation with him.

**Meghan:** I mean, you have written a lot of fascinating female characters, some of which really, I think, feel like they are archetypal in terms of some labels, especially earlier things, and then watching your work and the evolution of it and how these characters, especially female characters, become even more layered and more multifaceted. I reference *Knocked Up*, but that's such a different one because you look back at that now – and I loved that movie – and you look back at it now and even some of those female characters I see so differently now than I did through the lens then.

### Archival: *Knocked Up*

*You want me to lose weight? / No, I don't want you to lose weight. We didn't say "lose weight." I might say... "tighten?"*

**Meghan:** Do you see it differently as well than when you were writing it at the time?

**Judd:** You know, I haven't watched it in a long time. I mean, I think at the time, both with the *Forty Year Old Virgin* and with *Knocked Up*, we were trying to just be really honest about those situations. And, you know, those movies are, you know, mainly fiction, but they're taken from experiences we've had and that our friends have had. And Leslie is, you know, a creative partner in all of those stories and how we tell them. And I think that for a little while, I was talking a lot to friends about how in movies, a lot of times women were presented as perfect. And you, you had a man trying to get this perfect person to like them. You know, that was kind of as deep as it got. And especially in that period, we thought, well, let's do men and women, warts and all, all the flaws, the good and the bad. And to have fun with comedy and truth about that, that sometimes it's really easy and sometimes it's really difficult and people are immature. And a lot of, you know, the male characters, were making terrible mistakes and we wanted to show that like, here's what an idiot looks like, here's a bad attitude and here's how you might grow up. Here's what would have to happen for you to get that you've been wrong in a lot of your ways of behaving and looking at the world.

MEGHAN: And to Judd's point – of finding new ways of looking at the world – he himself started to create and produce in a way that reflected more of that.

#### **Archival: Bridesmaids**

*I don't have any female friends. I'm so sad. Why are you smiling? It's just... this is the first time I've ever seen you look ugly.*

**Meghan:** I think *Bridesmaids* specifically changed so much about the female ensemble comedy and the liberty and the license I think people then took to be able to double down on this idea of what real female friendship looks like. But also, it gave this allowance for women to be seen in a way that was - even if it wasn't delicate or ladylike and could come across as a little crass - it just showed women in a much fuller form than I think we had ever seen. Did you have any idea what a huge success and moment this was going to be - not just for the film industry and numbers, ratings, all that. But, but what it was going to do for the role of women in film and media and the allowance that I really think it opened up.

**Judd:** Well, usually when these things start, you're not thinking about that at all. So, you know, Kristen Wiig was on *Saturday Night Live*. I saw her very early and just thought, I mean, this is as funny as a person can be. She's incredible.

And she started working with Annie Mumolo on the script for *Bridesmaids*. And at the beginning, we didn't think about it even as a comedy that starred a lot of amazing women. But then when Paul Feig, the director, cast it and it started coming together, you see it, you're like, oh, my gosh, look at this cast. Look what this has turned into. And then in post, when it's just about done. I think Paul was very aware, oh, it's significant that this movie exists and it can say something about the types of movies we should



have way more of. We should have more stories of this and we're all lucky to have been a part of it.

**Meghan:** Well, but I think part of that success, too, is that what *Bridesmaids* did, each of those women was so specifically and uniquely interesting and layered. As opposed to being one note. And I guess my question would be, you said Leslie's really involved in being there with you on the creative aspect of things. Do you think being a husband and a father of daughters informs how you write these female characters?

**Judd:** Oh, definitely. You know, I wouldn't know anything if it wasn't for them. I would literally know nothing. And you could see it in the arc of my career. As they arrive, I start understanding things. You realize, oh, I'm beginning to get it more and more. And you have to admit how much you don't get and how much you didn't get as you sit with these people and they're insightful and brilliant and funny and we're all trying to figure out how to tell these stories. But certainly early on, I didn't understand almost any of it. And a lot of it was also seeing, you know, the types of scripts that were coming in for Leslie and understanding, you know, what the stereotypes were and what parts were really thin and not worked out and trying to get a handle on, well, what could they be? What could you do? But it is a lifelong process to to understand how other people think and what their experience might be. And I think the ultimate lesson for me was you need to collaborate with people. You know, I, I can't do most of this alone. I do need to sit in a room with somebody, you know, from another gender, another culture, another sexuality and say, what's it like for you and for us to do it together. That's the best version of it.

**Meghan:** Yeah you know it's really true. A lot of what I've been thinking about is attitudes or maybe expectations for men to show their emotions — how that's changed a lot over the years. In that it's a lot more acceptable now, even more encouraged. And I wonder, if in some ways, part of the solution for allowing women to have the space to be something more than just an archetype – is in also giving men the liberty to be more sensitive, more vulnerable, more expressive, more open. What do you think ends up being more additive, I guess, having men have more leeway to just be more expressive and emotional and perhaps more of themselves and they internalize or really creating more space for women to be accepted as they are? Or is it both?

**Judd:** Well, yeah, I think obviously it's both at the at the same time, you know, when we did *The King of Staten Island* with Pete Davidson, you know, we talked a lot about this for years, all of these issues, because Pete is someone that's very open about his pain and he was willing to make a movie that went all the way. There wasn't a moment where he said, Yeah, I feel weird expressing that.

Archival: The King of Staten Island

*I know we don't really talk about it much, but I, I miss dad, a lot. I'm sorry that I've been so difficult to deal with. I'll try, I'll try and get it together. It's just hard.*

**Judd:** And that's really all anybody can do is, you know, do their best to evolve and to heal. And it's like a, you know, two steps forward, one step back situation for most of us, most of the time. And, you know, do we have the courage to admit how hard it is and get help when we need help.

## MUSIC IN

MEGHAN: That's really interesting. This is and was in this conversation — this was a revelation for me. Because in addition to the need for men to be allies in the effort of getting rid of damaging archetypes... is our need for *men* to lean into *their own* emotions... to express themselves in a way that sends a message that *it's okay* to feel. Because at the core of so many of these archetypes we've been discussing in this series, has really been the way that women's emotions are used against them. But maybe if men were more outward with their emotions, that expression would be less stigmatized.

## MUSIC OUT

MEGHAN: So lucky for me, I was able to also sit down with a man who's very in touch with his feelings and emotions — and open about it.

**Trevor:** Can you, you can hear me now?

**Meghan:** Yes! How are you?

**Trevor:** Fantastic. How are you?

**Meghan:** Delightful. Thank you.

MEGHAN: Let me just say: sitting down with Trevor Noah was indeed delightful. He's calm, gracious, warm, and thoughtful, and he's also a comedian and host of *The Daily Show*. And on our video call, we were having some... *technical difficulties* to start things off... but he was also so patient.

**Meghan:** Isn't this so much fun, Trevor? Isn't this so much fun? Isn't this what you always thought you'd be doing this Thursday?

**Trevor:** You know, I've done this - like this is all the pandemic has been. I don't get stressed by this anymore. I get stressed for the people who are getting stressed by it. But I like, I myself am like, Oh, this is welcome to digital - everybody doing things from their couch homeland.

**Meghan:** Thanks for joining me.

**Trevor:** Thank you for having me.

MEGHAN: Trevor Noah didn't actually start performing comedy until his early 20s... before that, he grew up in apartheid era South Africa, largely with his mom. Until, one fateful night when his cousin dared him to get up on stage. He found a home there – and in between some acting and some dj'ing – his comedy career took off in his native South Africa in the early 2000s.

### Archival: Trevor Noah Stand Up Comedy

*The downside of being light was that, just being light, I was different. People mocked me, gave me names like uh mixed breed, half caste, I hate that term, half. Why half? Why not double? Or twice as nice? I don't know. \*laughs, cheers\* [fade under tracking]*

MEGHAN: And he started getting noticed elsewhere, too – and when Jon Stewart announced he was leaving *The Daily Show* in 2015, Trevor Noah was tapped to step in as host...

### Archival: The Daily Show

*A new study sponsored by the National Institutes of Health has found that kids who play video games for at least three hours a day have better memory and impulse control than non-gamers. And I'm not the kind of person who would say "I told you so" to my mom, because she could still whip my ass, but uh.... I told you so. [applause]*

MEGHAN: In September of this year, Trevor announced that he's leaving *The Daily Show* for new pursuits... including his new *Netflix* special called *I Wish You Would*... his work with his production company, Day Zero Productions, and as he recently announced, his world tour — which starts next year.

Look whatever Trevor does next, like all of us – his past is always with him... informing the way that he sees and movies through the world... and how he understands all the people in it.

For Trevor, who grew up in a segregated country, in a culture dominated by ideals of uber-masculinity – almost toxic masculinity – with alarmingly high rates of violence toward women... this all made for a complex, and as you can imagine, a very nuanced picture.

**Trevor:** I was born in South Africa to a Xhosa South African mother, a Black woman. My father is Swiss, was from Switzerland. He lived in South Africa most of his adult life, I would say. And yeah, I mean I grew up in a world that, you know, for those who are familiar with it will understand it was, well, completely defined by, by race, you know, your race determined where you could go, what you could be. I grew up in a world where that was the status quo. And so, you know, Black people were at the bottom of the totem. And I think, you know, something that holds true all over the world is, you know, Black women were the most oppressed. You know, they always used to say – I butcher it every time I say it – But it's... the Black man and the Black woman walk from neighborhood to neighborhood. Stones are thrown at them. They finally get home and stones are thrown at her.

**Meghan:** Mm! Wow, I've never heard that.

**Trevor:** And that always stuck with me because it just spoke to the story of, you know, what it's like to be a Black woman in society. And, I mean, I experienced it second hand witnessing my mother's journey, my grandmother's journey, my aunt's journey, because I grew up in a very patriarchal society, which was quite common in South Africa, not just because of, you know, the government and how it was set up, but because many men were forced to, to become migrant laborers. And so, many of us as children grew up in homes where all we saw were our mothers and grandmothers, our aunts, etc. But the men weren't in the same space for extended periods of time. And so I think it was an interesting upbringing that informed a lot of how I see the world. You know, I spent more time being comfortable in that space than in many other spaces.

**Meghan:** And so if you're saying as a young man, as a young boy, even to grow up in a patriarchal society – Where does the idea of what it means to be a man get informed by if, as you say, the men were sort of in migrant positions, they're not as prevalent in the home. Where does that then come from?

**Trevor:** I think a lot of it is shaped by culture and, and an idea of culture that has been in many ways, you know, bastardized over time. There's this idea of the man, you know, the man who is in charge, even though he's not there, the man who is the head of the household who decides everything, even though he's not deciding everything, because the mother is running everything in the household. So it's really interesting because many of the ideas are based on an archaic image of, of the relationship between a man and a woman and the father of the household. And I think you can't deny that a lot of it was reinforced by, you know, whether it was colonial attitudes or, or the apartheid system itself. You know, it's not like women were given the keys to do anything. It's not like they were allowed to do things by the government. So that only served to reinforce how people saw who was the head or who was in charge of who was doing what. And so and so I think, unfortunately, that meant you grew up in a world where, you know, many boys were raised by women and then turned into men who unfortunately saw women as, as being innately beneath them, when in fact, they were the ones who had shaped everything they'd become.

**Meghan:** Mmm, wow, that's such an interesting observation, and it's also so complicated — it's so layered.

## MUSIC IN

**Trevor:** One thing I'm eternally grateful to South Africa for and my family for and the society I grew up in is that women are always, you know, pursued more. They pursued justice. They pursued equality. Our movement in South Africa, you know, our civil rights movement, the fight for freedom was largely driven by women. I mean, many of the men were in exile. Many of the freedom fighters were abroad either studying or imprisoned.

And it was many of the women on the ground, predominantly women, who were driving the civil rights movement, not unlike in America. You hear stories of how Martin Luther King Junior was rightfully given credit for so much of the work he was doing. But Coretta Scott King, his wife, is oftentimes a footnote when in fact, she was the driving force for many of his ideas and many of the most impactful moments in the movement, so you know, this unfortunately the world that many women and especially Black women have existed in for a long time and so, my perspectives were shaped because I was with the woman, I lived with my mom predominantly. We couldn't live with my dad initially because, you know, he's a white man and the government didn't allow that. But what that created was a world where myself and my mom were just doing our own thing. So I saw the world through her lens predominantly, and she voiced what she was experiencing, which has shaped how I see the world forever.

**Meghan:** One of the moments that Trevor is referencing there is something that he wrote about in his book, *Born A Crime*. And that was the experience of seeing his mom get shot, and surviving that. And the trauma that came with it.

MEGHAN: This was back in 2011, and the shooter was his mom's ex-husband — his ex-stepdad — who had been abusive to them both during the time that they were together. This shooting happened after she had remarried someone else. But what she modeled for Trevor, which he writes about in his book, is a level of forgiveness and understanding, and a tremendous level of empathy, in the aftermath of that experience.

**Meghan:** You said, "I remember after the shooting, my mother was in the hospital and all I felt was rage. But my mother said to me, 'Don't hate him for doing this, but rather pity him because he too is a victim in his own way of a world that has thrust upon him an idea of masculinity that he has subscribed to and is now a part of. As for myself, I do not wish to imbue myself with a hatred that only I will carry.'"

**Trevor:** Yeah.

**Meghan:** Powerful.

**Trevor:** It's... I mean, I think of that when I, when I look at the lessons my mother taught me and how I try and process the world, especially as it pertains to men, women, you know, race, gender, whatever it may be, is understanding that these ideas often limited men themselves. You know, as a man, you, you have these additional pressures that we've, we've created and put on ourselves. Now, you have to be the head of the household. You have to you can't allow your woman to be doing more, earning more, getting more, because that that now challenges your masculinity. I still talk to men today will say I will never be with a woman who earns more than me. That's ridiculous. You know, and I remember my mom saying to me when I was very young, she said, remember, you can be the head of your household as a man without earning a cent more than your woman. She so you can earn nothing. She said being a man has nothing

to do with, with how you wield your power in the household. It's just how you fulfill your role. And so I think that stuck with me my entire life.

**Meghan:** So then how does that change when you moved to New York, your perception, that is.

**Trevor:** I only moved to New York seven or eight years ago for *The Daily Show*. So when I came to America, I assumed so many things about the place. The biggest assumption and the most incorrect one I made of all was that America is a monolith. You know, that's what you're sold when you live outside of it. You know, there are four kinds of Americans, and that's that. And this is how it is. And then you come to America and you realize it's a lot more nuanced and complicated than you may think. And one of the more interesting aspects of America for me was how familiar it was as it pertains to gender roles and how evangelical religion has shaped that and how political affiliations or how outdated ideas on what a woman should or shouldn't be, you know, exist as freely as they do in America as they do in Africa. People always be like,

**Meghan:** Oh, interesting.

**Trevor:** You know, the people in Africa, this I'm like, Oh, no. There's many parts of America I've been to where people hold many of those same ideas, if not more archaic ones. We have imprisoned ourselves with this idea of how we are meant to exist in relation to women as opposed to just how we're meant to exist, you know, in a space where I think we, we coexist with women.

**Meghan:** What do you think then in all of this, in this next chapter, as women are trying to understand where they sit in the world, what is the role for men to play, and specifically, what is the role for men in media to play, to help change some of these conversations?

**Trevor:** Well, I think first and foremost, as men, we have to grow comfortable in our vulnerability. You know, if we. If we exist in a space where we are perpetually portraying the stoic idea of what a man is, I think it's limiting. I think it's limiting. And it means that. We then hold only onto aggression and anger and strength and violence, and we forget the balance that is needed. You know, I think many men have to become a little more comfortable understanding that they can be soft, they can be intimate, they can be kind, they can be crying. They can, they can be all of these things and still be a great man. You know, if we think we're only going to cry when our team loses the Super Bowl or the Champions League final. That's not enough. You know, there are too few spaces where that happens for guys.

**Meghan:** It's not going to help your EQ in the long run if that's what you're bottling up for those moments.

**Trevor:** Yeah and, and so I think I think that's where we just have to have those conversations amongst ourselves and just have them a lot more. You know, and as for the men in media, I think it's looking around you and asking questions. You know, for instance, I have had to learn these ideas. I've had to understand how my conditioning has been conditioned. I never think that I know. And when I do know, I try and remind myself that I don't know. I just know up until that point. And it's hard to do that, you know, because at some point you want to rest and say, all right, I've got it now. I figured it out. But I think it was C.S. Lewis, who had a quote that I you know, I paraphrase, but basically said, I wish to be in a space where I'm able to hold ideas that I hold today and then be able to change my mind tomorrow and say, yeah, I was I was wrong. So I think in media we should be able to do that is look around and say, what do we consider ambition and how have we defined it? And can we acknowledge that a lot of how we see the correct manner to be ambitious is shaped through the lens of being a man. ~~And so~~ I think of tone of voice as a simple one. You know, when a man shouts in a boardroom, it's like, enough of this. People are like, oh, he was passionate. But then because of a woman's tone of voice and how we've been taught it, she's like, enough of this. You're like, She was hysterical. They both did the same thing. It's just where the tone of the voice is and these are all ideas that have been gendered in many ways, and they don't necessarily need to be. But it will be tough because, again, it's been a relatively short amount of time that men and women have been in the same workplace together.

**Meghan:** Yeah. So to that point, when you're in [a] work environment, are these conversations that you have with your team, are these conversations that you have with women in your life?

**Trevor:** Yeah, definitely. My showrunner is a woman, the two executive producers on my show are women. You know, I'm surrounded by writers, producers, you know, performers who are women. And, I mean, that's that's the world. You know, I don't even say it's just like, oh, look at the good thing I'm doing. I'm just like, no, it's the world. I always think you should, especially when you're creating. I think you should be creating in a way that reflects your world. Otherwise you're going to be missing something, aren't you?

**Meghan:** Mhm. Well and also, you're approaching it through a lens of, as you say, a curiosity and just constant learning, which can probably feel exhausting for some. But what do we, what if we're not learning something more every day. You only know as much as you know at that point. And if you're at least trying to make the effort to understand it through a different lens, you've given yourself the allowance to say, I didn't know that yesterday. Now I know that now. And I might move through the world differently.

**Trevor:** Yeah. Yeah. So I remember, for instance, in and around the MeToo movement, that was some of the wow. I mean, there was learning that took place there that I had no — I felt like an idiot. I felt like a, like a true idiot. I was like, wow, this is how you feel?

You know, some women in the office, we just sat around and women would say, Oh, yeah, sometimes when I'm walking at night and then I hold my keys in my hands like a claw, and and other women would say, you know, if I'm walking on a street and then a guy - and and there's just small things that you take for granted.

## MUSIC IN

**Trevor:** But yeah, it's really interesting when you sit with it and understand how programmed we are. The easiest way to think of it for me is to understand that a space is always created by someone, and the someone who creates that space will generally create the space with themselves in mind. You know, if I build a house, the natural way for me to think that I will move from one floor to the next is stairs. But this is because I have functioning legs. I'm able to use them. It is only when I encounter somebody with a disability who cannot use those stairs that I realize, oh crap, I built this house only for me and I didn't even consider this as an element. Okay. But there is no person who's disabled who doesn't have the use of their legs, who would build a house that way.

## MUSIC OUT

**Meghan:** That is such a good point. That's a, that's honestly — that's a great way to just reframe our thinking surrounding this. That it's not done with an intent to cause pain, but maybe it's just done because you're only seeing it through the lens of what you know.

**Trevor:** Yeah, And so I think the same thing goes to the way we design our structures and society, the way we design our office, you know, I remember joking with a friend of mine. So I had a urinary tract infection. Yeah, I remember this. And it had gotten really bad. And I was I was telling her about this, and we were chatting and she was like, Oh, how does it feels like, Oh, my stomach is sore and all of this and you know, and blah blah blah. And she's like, Oh, it sounds like you sounds like period cramps to me. And we laughed about it and I said, What do you mean? Like, it can't be this bad? And she's like, Oh, it gets pretty bad. And I said, So I was like, How do you, how do you come to work? How do you do that? And she said, Yeah, that's what I wonder sometimes. And I found myself wondering. I was like, if men had their periods and we'd designed the office, I wonder if we would have just said, yeah, there's seven days a month where there's no work because I mean, this is ridiculous. You can't work like this. Why would I work like this? You know, so—

**Meghan:** With no one having any sympathy, because no one knows what's going on!

**Trevor:** Yeah, yeah and so I think I think of all of these ideas of of how we just take it for granted because it was made one way.

**Meghan:** Yeah



**Trevor:** And until you notice it, you don't notice it. And then when you do, you try and figure out how you, how you amend or improve, you know, the house that was built without the accessibility for, for all the people who need to use it.

**Meghan:** I love that analogy of the idea of building a house and building a house for everyone, at least with an openness of you may have built the house that you think the foundation is perfect. Yeah, certain. Yeah. You have to make some modifications to the house. Right. So maybe this is part of the reset of saying what are the modifications we make to this house?

**Trevor:** Yes. Oftentimes, these conversations are framed as if men have to give up something. But I think what we have to give up is...is the shackles. You know, we've shackled ourselves to these ideas that don't help us. You know, it's like, yeah, guys, let's free ourselves from these ideas, you know? Wouldn't it be nice to be led? Wouldn't it be nice to let go of of these ideas that you have that hold you back and how you pursue the world and what you can do and who you can meet and how you can relate to them because they are women. We have to understand it's oftentimes framed as a do it for the ladies. The ladies need this. It's too don't they deserve something nice fellows do it for the ladies. It's like, no, guys don't. You don't want to take a break. Don't you just want to — wouldn't you? You know, they just want to be like, more you know? None of the stress of this idea of what you're supposed to be as a man, but just be you. Wouldn't that be a wonderful change?

**Meghan:** And how refreshing for everyone. Look, part of - I wrote a children's book that came out a year ago or a couple of years ago and is basically about this softer side of masculinity. And how I've seen my husband as a dad and the example of that, that's the person that the young boy can look to and say, oh this is what it means to be a man. This is the example of that, that's the person that I can go to when I'm crying and that's the person that will sit with me. That's the person that can put the Band-Aid on my knee. And that that level of being nurtured can come from a male figure in, in your life just as much as it can from a female figure, but also for those male figures that it feels really good —

**Trevor:** It does.

**Meghan:** To be able to provide that and to be able to show that part of your personality that it doesn't make you less of a man in doing so.

**Trevor:** Mm hmm. Mm hmm. Yeah. I, you know, I think you only realize how simplistic and limited your ideas are when you travel or you or you read or see another place in the world where they have a completely different idea on it. And there's maybe as limited but in a completely flipped direction. You know, I, I've been to many countries in the Middle East where, again, people are trying to revolutionize how men exist and how their role relates to women in society and how women can be active members of society. And

you'll hear these men and they're like, oh, these opinions of this and men are this and soft and whatever. And then they'll walk down the street with pinky fingers locked together, which when you come from, like a Western society like way, what, what does that what do you are you guys holding hands but pinky fingers, then they're like, yeah, this is, this is normal. And I find that so funny. You go like, oh, wow, you know where we're from. That's the thing that would be considered effeminate. They're like this is ridiculous. Men hold pinky fingers here, that's what we do. And, and I love that because then you come to realize that it's all made up.

**Meghan:** Yeah, it's all an illusion.

**Trevor:** Yeah and that should be liberating. If once you realize it's all been created, then you realize that you can be part of recreating it and reshaping it, trying to make it a little more comfortable.

**Meghan:** Yeah, do you want to be a dad one day?

**Trevor:** Yeah, I would love to. I think it's I think it would be a fascinating journey to be on.

**Meghan:** What kind of dad do you want to be?

**Trevor:** What kind of dad do I want to be? Oh, that's an interesting question. I would hope to be the kind of dad... I think the kind of dad where my kid goes, this was a human being who loved me and cared for me and helped prepare me for the world, but also appreciated me because they brought me into the world.

**Meghan:** Mm hmm.

**Trevor:** I'd want to be the kind of parent who appreciates this human being who I've created. I think sometimes parents can be assholes in that, I brought you into this world. Yeah. I didn't ask you to. You need to relax with that. You know, whenever they say that, I'm like, you need to calm down.

**Meghan:** Yeah

**Trevor:** So, yeah, not that I hope to be a dad who's like, you know, soft and tough and fun and stern and, you know, wants the best for, for my child and also isn't afraid to engage in the child in me with, with my child. That's, that's the kind of dad I want to be and I want to learn. I think that's probably my favorite element of what I see in parenthood, is that it forces you to relearn because you're teaching and then you realize how much you teach that you don't actually apply to what you do in your life.

**Meghan:** Oh, that's very true. But, you know, equally, that can be done in partnership. Do you want to be married one day?

**Trevor:** I think I would be. Yeah.

**Meghan:** What kind of husband do you want to be, Trevor?

**Trevor:** The kind of husband that my wife would want me to be. You know, I think even there, I think we have so many limiting ideas on what a marriage is. That's where I've loved seeing, you know, as Gen Z, as they're called, just play with the ideas of what a relationship is, how a relationship is defined. We're so interesting and diverse as people. And yet we've created this monolith of what a marriage or a world or a life is. And I look at how we've slowly allowed these ideas to be, to be eroded. But we don't like to admit it.

**Meghan:** Yeah, Yeah.

**Trevor:** And so, yeah, the type of husband, the type of partner I would like to be is just the type of partner who is the best possible puzzle piece for the other person I'm connecting with.

**Meghan:** Yeah. And vice versa. I think you'll have that. You'll have whatever it is that you're, you're after.

[BEAT]

## MUSIC IN

MEGHAN: Before we wrap things up... we did a special little twist on the *Three Words* for our male guests. Let's call it... One Stereotype, as in: what is one stereotype or idea that you believed about women when you were a young boy that doesn't stand true to you now, as the man that you are today? We're gonna hear from Andy first, then Judd, and Trevor.

**Andy:** Was there a stereotype about women that I believed to be true? There's got to be, hold on. Okay, hold on. I think that a trope that I probably had about women was that they were dramatic. And I think that I might still have that feeling that women are more dramatic than men.

**Meghan:** Do you think? Do you think that?

**Andy:** Do I think women are more dramatic than men?

**Meghan:** Yeah

**Andy:** I do, because I think they express themselves more. I think that they are conditioned to express themselves more. And I think when you express yourself more, it leads to feelings being shared and conversations.

**Meghan:** Yeah

**Andy:** And I think men keep it really bottled up and are probably messes inside. I mean, I'm teaching my son. We talk about emotions every day. What do you feel? Why do you feel this way? You know, and I'm someone who speaks my emotions – You know, when I feel a certain way, I will express it. It helps me to go to bed at night and just feel centered. I mean it's so freeing to be able to speak your feelings.

**Meghan:** Well, I've just loved chatting with you. Thank you.

**Andy:** I loved chatting with you!

**Meghan:** Thanks.

**Andy:** I think we cast the Housewives of Montecito.

**Meghan:** Oh, yeah. The work here is done.

**Andy:** Our work here is done.

**Meghan:** [laughs]

**Andy:** You have an open invitation to come on *Watch What Happens Live* and show everybody what a gas you are, because you are.

**Meghan:** Thank you.

**Andy:** And thank you for having me. I really appreciate you hearing me out about *The Housewives*.

**Meghan:** And now, Judd...

**Judd:** A stereotype. That's a good question. What was a stereotype? I see women, but everyone is really complicated. I think we're all, we're all a mess. We're all amazing, we're all everything. It's like Kristen Wiig's character. She's very self-involved in *Bridesmaids*. She's blaming everyone else for her problems, and she is having a really hard time. But she's also awesome and hilarious and wonderful and she figures it out and then she pursues a better path, which is making friends with all the characters with Rose and Maya and having a relationship. And I think that's maybe that's a stereotype I see of everyone. I think everyone is a complete disaster on the road to getting better.  
\*laughs\*

BEAT

**Meghan:** Thank you so much. And I mean, best of luck with everything. You certainly don't need it. And send my my love to your wife and daughters, too. And remind your wife how wonderful she was when I met her.

**Judd:** I will. Thank you very much.

**Meghan:** And Trevor...

**Trevor:** Hm. I would have to say the biggest change in how I viewed or experienced women from when I was a young boy to how I live now is I was definitely under the impression that women were an idea as opposed to human beings. And I don't know how else to express that. Whether it was the movies I was watching or the stories I was being told or the, the music I was even listening to. You know, I was listening to my favorite R&B songs as a young boy, whatever they were. I remember how my idea was always that the man had the agency and the woman's job was just really to respond to it. It's almost like a woman was this object that was waiting to be interacted with -

**Meghan:** Interesting

**Trevor:** And the success or failure of that interaction was being decided by your skill or deft ability as a man or as a boy, you know. And over time, thankfully, because of some amazing women in my life, who are friends and colleagues and peers— over time, I think I slowly realized, oh, no. Women also have desires. Women also have wants. Women also have needs. Women also have joys. Women are not a monolith. All of these ideas, I think, slowly, slowly have, have been eroded away. And I would say that's the biggest shift. And I think it's something that many men aren't naturally taught. I think of all of the romantic comedies I watched as a little kid, it was all on the man. Very seldom were you thinking of it from the woman's perspective. Did she wish to engage you? Or was she attracted? Was she, what were any of these things? No, it was always seen as a, your skill, your ideas, your ability was determining it.

**Meghan:** And if she didn't want you, then there's something wrong with her, not something wrong with you.

**Trevor:** Oh, yeah. And sometimes it was even like. Oh, it was just. I didn't. I didn't push the buttons. Right. The computer's not responding as it should. It was like, no, it's. It's not a computer, you know, you. Yeah, you're trying to type in commands. It's like, oh, there's somebody on the other side. Yeah.

**Meghan:** Yeah, well, it makes me think. Do you remember that movie, *Weird Science* where they literally create...

**Trevor:** *Weird Science*?

**Meghan:** ...their dream girl.

**Trevor:** No, I don't. I've never seen it.

**Meghan:** It's all about these two - oh, I think they were using a Commodore 64 where they're not really going "do-do-do-do-do" and create this dream girl - you should watch it, they should remake that movie!

**Trevor:** Okay, I'm gonna check it out!

**M:** But also, when you were talking about music, the first thing I thought of. I don't know why I haven't thought of this song in ages. I thought of that song. Poison, "That girl is poison..."

**Trevor:** Oh, yes, yes, yes. Right.

**Meghan:** Poison, p-p-p-p-poison.

### "Poison" by Bell Biv DeVoe plays

**Meghan:** Think about all of the lyrics back then and how it informed. Like, she's either the dream girl or she's bad. Stay away from. But you're right. It was all through the lens. Of what? What the male gaze was. We're going to definitely cut that part out. No one needs me singing a couple of lines of Poison.

**Trevor:** I think that part is staying. That is the heart of the podcast. That is where we came. We got it. That is it.

**Meghan:** Done! Trevor, thank you so much for taking so much, genuinely so much time to have this conversation.

**Trevor:** This has been fun. Thank you for having me on, Meghan. Thank you for, for having these conversations, you know, with the women who've been on with the men who've been on. And thank you to everybody for taking the time to listen to them.

[BEAT]

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### CLOSING THOUGHTS

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MEGHAN: And on that note, that brings us to a close on these twelve episodes of *Archetypes*.

Twelve moments of opportunity and conversation and time to really think about the things that we say, the words that we use, and where it all comes from. At times it's been funny, eye opening and sometimes, uncomfortable. And in that, especially in the discomfort, it made me think of the alchemy process, which is this process in which a really dense, hard piece of material or metal can just be churned and churned and put under so much pressure that you

can't begin to imagine how it's going to survive, what's going to come out of that. But when it comes out on the other side, it's gold. Actual gold.

Now whether your takeaway from this podcast has been gold or not, I don't know. But what I can speak to is my own experience of this. And I don't know what I'd been expecting, but what's come out of it for me, has been illuminating. And also ironic. Because while this format is only audio and each week I use my voice, you can hear my thoughts without any visual, I feel seen. I had never considered that in using my voice, that I would feel seen. But I do. And so much of the feedback throughout the season from women is that they feel seen as well. As we heard today, that men see our experience differently now, too. They see us. They see us more clearly.

The guests I've had join me have been so generous with their time and vulnerable in sharing their stories. And I found that in listening, really listening, I learned so much – about them, of course. But also about myself. Finding common ground and discovering that people that come from different worlds and have different life experiences still share so many of the same feelings. I learned how much more similar we are than different. So for example, I'm not Asian, but my goodness, did I connect to what I heard on the *Dragon Lady* episode. And I don't identify as ever wanting to dumb myself down. But in talking to Paris Hilton about the label Bimbo, I learned that she didn't either. Mariah taught me about her definition of being a diva. We celebrated the choice to be single with Mindy, and we talked about business and the B-word, how our mental health is weaponized against us, the pressures we feel to be a wife and a mom. The loaded misconception that often comes with being a woman of color and the courage that it takes to step out and speak up, even when it puts everything on the line. I learned so much. And I loved it.

We're working on other ways to keep the conversation going but just know that as we close out this season of *Archetypes*, that I thank you. Thank you for listening and learning with me. This has been liberating and healing and it's been fun. And many moons ago, I heard a quote that I will share with you today, because as we talk about labels and tropes, boxes some may try to squeeze you into, and roles and stereotypes that are attributed to you that don't quite fit the full person that you are... this is what I wanted to leave you with. It's from a couplet within a piece of writing by Greek poet Christianopoulos. And he says, "what didn't you do to bury me / but you forgot, that I was a seed."

To that point, my friend. Keep growing and I'll see on the flip side. As ever, I'm Meghan.

[BEAT]

A huge thank you to the team who've made this happen. Not just for this episode, but for the entirety of the season. You've all been integral in a passion project that has helped me, and so many others, learn, laugh, and listen. I am forever grateful for your dedication. Thank you so much. And now, over to Andy...

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**CREDITS**

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Archetypes is a Spotify Original

The podcast is a co-production between Archewell Audio, Gimlet and Spotify

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For more information on how you can get involved, visit [archewell.com/archetypes](https://archewell.com/archetypes)