

Episode 3.10 A Trickle of Ladies with Amber Nash

December 7, 2018

Hannah (Host): [00:06](#) [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans] Hi, I'm Hannah McGregor and this is *Secret Feminist Agenda*. And now that November is over by logical extension, we can conclude that it is December. We're doing it folks, we're counting forward through months in sequential order. Which maybe for some of us is a better time of year and maybe for others is harder. I know that the holidays are really complicated time, and in honor of that complication, I have just reshared and added some new tunes to my Sad Christmas Jams playlist on Spotify, which I will totally link to in this episode. And maybe I will also share with you that I am trying hard this year to use December as an opportunity to slow down and do a little bit of reflecting on this year, and think a little bit about what I want next year to look like. I know that that is a pretty standard approach to the new year, and I also know that that approach can often be tied into really toxic ideas of self improvement. But I also feel like, especially because, you know, working at a university, my year is charted around the, sort of, you know, the break over the holidays, these kinds of like, structured measures of time. It still is an opportunity for me to slow down a little bit, think about what I accomplished, revisit what I prioritize, think for myself about to what degree those were the right priorities, and what I want 2019 to look like. And right now, cuz I'm still coming off that wildly busy November, I kind of feel like I want 2019 to look like a very long nap, but probably I'll have to do things. It's not going to be a less busy year, but it might be a more balanced year if I can get my shit together. Anyway, I definitely need to go drink another coffee. So here's what we're gonna do. I'm gonna go make some coffee while you listen to this episode. Shh. It's not how time or podcasts work, but go with it. It's time to meet Amber. Amber Nash. Josh is best known for being the voice of Pam Poovey on FX X's animated comedy *Archer*. She's an actor and improviser that can be seen on stage just about every weekend in her hometown of Atlanta, Georgia, where she lives with her husband and weird dog, Carol. Amber and I met over Skype to chat about feminism, and improv, and voice work, and tragically, not at all her weird dog Carol, but it was a great conversation and you're going to enjoy it. So I'm going to go put the kettle on, you listen to this. [Music: "Voodoo Lady" by Ween]

Hannah (Host): [03:04](#) I like to record everybody on a separate device, ideally routed through six or seven different programs.

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Amber: [03:29](#) Sounds great.

Hannah (Host): [03:29](#) Because that way there's the most possible ways things could fail, and failure's a important feminist act. I like to open up myself as much potential for it as possible.

Amber: [03:44](#) Sure, sure.

Hannah (Host): [03:44](#) Thank you so much for agreeing to chat with me.

Amber: [03:48](#) Of course! I'm excited!

Hannah (Host): [03:48](#) What I would really love to chat with you about today. I mean, it's a podcast about feminism.

Amber: [03:55](#) Right.

Hannah (Host): [03:55](#) So I'm going to make you talk about feminism if you're comfortable with that.

Amber: [03:59](#) Sure.

Hannah (Host): [04:00](#) The real, the real scope of the podcast is talking about how feminism plays out in people's everyday lives.

Amber: [04:07](#) mmhmm.

Hannah (Host): [04:07](#) And so specifically, I really like talking to people who work in really different fields--

Amber: [04:13](#) Okay.

Hannah (Host): [04:13](#) --about the way it has or has not played into the kind of work you do. So I want us to come around eventually to talking about *Archer* and about a sort of feminist politics of the character you play on *Archer*.

Amber: [04:26](#) Okay.

Hannah (Host): [04:26](#) But I'd really like to start by talking a little bit about the world of improv.

Amber: [04:31](#) Okay.

Hannah (Host): [04:32](#) So you are, you are an improviser by training.

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- Amber: [04:35](#) That's right. That's how I got into entertainment at all in the first place.
- Hannah (Host): [04:39](#) And what, what drew you to improv in the first place?
- Amber: [04:42](#) I was, I was studying psychology, so I was getting a degree in psychology and, I kind of grew up in a very conservative, very religious family where entertainment wasn't really an option for a career path. So it wasn't really anything that I ever thought that I would be able to do. So it was never really anything that I pursued. I mean, I did like, I did like drama in high school and did like, you know, a school play. And I was always a like a class clown, because that's how I made friends growing up. So I was in college and I was like really bored and I wasn't being particularly challenged. I was studying biology, which was completely wrong, and then I finally switched to studying psychology and that's what I got my degree in. And a friend of mine was like, "Hey, have you ever heard of this thing called improv? And in Atlanta, Georgia, cuz you're an Edmonton, right?"
- Hannah (Host): [05:31](#) No, I'm from Edmonton. I'm not from Edmonton, that's a lie. I was in Edmonton until recently. I live in Vancouver now.
- Amber: [05:38](#) Okay, great.
- Hannah (Host): [05:39](#) Yeah.
- Amber: [05:39](#) And in Canada I feel like, especially I think, I think young people are exposed to Improv so much earlier. Like it's like a sport in high school, I feel like in Canada.
- Hannah (Host): [05:47](#) Yeah. Yeah. No, I feel like it's a thing that like, every white dude named Mike who I know does Improv.
- Amber: [05:54](#) Sure. Yeah, yeah. In Atlanta in the 90s, especially when I started, like it wasn't a thing, so, so many people didn't really even know what it was. And so a friend took me to see an improv show and I signed up that night. And I never stopped doing improv, because it was just like, it was like so freeing and I'd never seen anything like it. And it wasn't, there was nothing about it that was pretentious or scary and you know, they sold beer in buckets and so I just kind of fell in love with it immediately.
- Hannah (Host): [06:22](#) Just to clarify, is that bottles of beer in a bucket or just a full, a bucket entirely full of beer?

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Amber: [06:28](#) [Laughs] Not just a bucket of beer! Bottles of beer in a bucket.

Hannah (Host): [06:28](#) Okay. Okay, cool. Just checking.

Amber: [06:33](#) [Laughs] Good clarification.

Hannah (Host): [06:33](#) I was listening to an interview with Glen Weldon this morning, of Pop Culture Happy Hour.

Amber: [06:39](#) Yeah?

Hannah (Host): [06:39](#) Who has his undergraduate and marine biology.

Amber: [06:43](#) Oh, my god.

Hannah (Host): [06:43](#) Like what's up with all of these entertainers starting off by wanting to be scientists?

Amber: [06:48](#) I know, it's so weird. I had this really amazing science teacher when I was in middle school and I was like, "I want to be a biologist." And then I was like, "I'm not cut out for this."
[Laughs]

Hannah (Host): [06:56](#) I, like, did you want to be a biologist because leaves were cool, or because you wanted to hug a dolphins?

Amber: [07:01](#) I wanted to be like, in the Peace Corps and like, travel around and like, you know, like be a dirty hippie and like, save animals.

Hannah (Host): [07:08](#) [Laughs] That's great. That's so specific. I wanted to fight people for trees.

Amber: [07:16](#) Right.

Hannah (Host): [07:18](#) Great. Great. So, so improv, at that point in your life, was it, was it the difference from studying psychology? Like was it, was it a sort of night and day, or do you think that there was something about psychology, and improv? Like were there connections there for you?

Amber: [07:31](#) I think early on I don't, I didn't realize what the connections were. I think I just needed a creative outlet, because I was like, studying science in school and I needed, I needed to perform, I think. I just didn't realize what that was yet. And later on after I got my degree, I started working as a counselor with teenagers, and that's where I really was able to bring in a lot of what I'd learned in improv to the world of psychology and kind of mash

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them up. But at the beginning I didn't quite realize what it was, but obviously I was being drawn to both these things, you know what I mean? So there was something there.

Hannah (Host): [08:00](#) Yeah. Yeah. I mean it makes me think right away of how, how often psychology, or being psychologized, that's how you say, it is humiliating.

Amber: [08:12](#) Yeah.

Hannah (Host): [08:12](#) Like the, the, the demands. I have been asked by psychologists to do things like, like speak, pretend that your younger self is sitting on this chair. What would you say to them?

Amber: [08:22](#) Right!

Hannah (Host): [08:22](#) Like, there is a really improvisational dimension to it as well as a really important drive to take yourself less seriously.

Amber: [08:31](#) Totally. Yeah. I never thought of that before, but you're so right. That's so true. Where you're like, okay, I'm going to do this weird thing that I don't feel comfortable doing, but somehow it's going to help me. [Laughs]

Hannah (Host): [08:41](#) [Laughs] Yeah. Yeah. And along the way, I have to maybe take really powerful senses of who I am and put those to the side for a moment in order to play around with who I might be otherwise.

Amber: [08:53](#) Right, right.

Hannah (Host): [08:54](#) Great. So do you do any just recreational hobby psychology these days?

Amber: [08:59](#) I don't actually, other than like being in therapy. [Laughs]

Hannah (Host): [09:04](#) [Laughs] Yeah. Everybody's favorite recreational psychology.

Amber: [09:07](#) And I read like, you know, psychology magazines. And it's funny because it's been so long, I mean graduated from college in 2000. So it's like, I don't remember shit that I learned. And anything that I learned back then is completely like, nobody uses it anymore. You know what I mean?

Hannah (Host): [09:20](#) Yeah, it's outdated.

Amber: [09:20](#) So it's like I might as well not even have that degree.

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- Hannah (Host): [09:25](#) [Laughs] Great. Okay. I won't quiz you about psychology. So you, you got into improv in Atlanta in the 90s. Do you think the improv scene has transformed? It's been 20 years.
- Amber: [09:37](#) Yeah!
- Hannah (Host): [09:37](#) Sorry, I'm just gonna, I'm just going to crumble into a pile of dust now.
- Amber: [09:41](#) Yeah. It's changed so much. Like it's, it was really small when I started, there was only three companies, Dad's Garage, where, who I'm with still today is one of them. And then there was Laughing Matters, which was a group that was like, kind of the corporate family friendly, school shows kind of group, and, and then another theater called Whole World. And now there's like so many, like there's tons of theaters, and there's tons of groups, and there's people doing improv all over the place. And partially because all those companies have grown and then they have a lot of students that go out and do improv in the world. And I just think it's better known today than it used to be. And so it's definitely changed. And there's a ton more women. Like when I started at Dad's Garage, I was the second woman to ever be put in the ensemble, and the ensemble was 18 people. So it wasn't like a small ensemble. And it was all white males that had started the company, and, you know how it is and it's how it was, especially back then. And today our company is so diverse, there's so many more women, and because of that we're telling a lot, a lot of different stories. Like, we're not just telling stories that white men tell.
- Amber: [10:47](#) Yeah.
- Amber: [10:47](#) The funny thing is, is that a lot of that is due to my husband, who's from Edmonton, Kevin Gillese, who is a white man.
- Hannah (Host): [10:53](#) I mean, they do things right sometimes.
- Amber: [10:57](#) Yeah. He was like, "diversity is really important to me." He's like, "especially in a city like Atlanta that's so diverse." And we have such a giant black population, but we weren't seeing any of that on our stage, and we weren't seeing any of that in our audience because audience members, like "If I don't see myself on stage. I'm not going to go there." And so that's been a huge thing. That's changed a lot too, which is really made us a stronger community.

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- Hannah (Host): [11:15](#) That's wonderful. And it's got to be a deliberate. Like when you are a community that looks the same, tells the same kinds of stories, then not only do people not want to come see you who aren't also part of that community, but people also can't see themselves as somebody who might be able to, to enter into that. Right? Like, you're getting very strongly the message like, "this is a thing for white men."
- Amber: [11:37](#) Yeah. yeah.
- Hannah (Host): [11:38](#) So what, what, what was that jump for you in terms of looking at, you know, an art form that at the time was advertised very powerfully as being a thing for white men that made you go like, "maybe I too, could do this thing."
- Amber: [11:51](#) You know, I think it was like, sheer defiance. Like I, I've, I, I was always the one that was like, "I don't do girly things. I do things that guys do and I can do anything I want and I'm one of the boys." And like I was like, "I want to be the first woman in this group. Like I'm going to, I'm going to crack them."
- Hannah (Host): [12:12](#) It said "No girls allowed" on the door and you were like, "over my dead body!"
- Amber: [12:15](#) Exactly. So that was very much like, honestly, like that was what drove me and that was what kept me, even though I got like, I got knocked down a bunch and I, I felt like I wasn't, like, I wasn't in the right place a lot, but I like fought through it because I was like, the sheer will to defeat them is what I wanted. And, and it ended up working out. I mean, the company learns how to improvise with me. The guy's got more comfortable with me. I mean, I got a lot of flack from ladies too, especially later on in improv. When we started traveling more to Canada, honestly, and meeting more Canadian improvisers, we met with more female improvisers and they were like, "well, you have a man." And I was like, "well, that's how I was taught." And so I had to learn that I could also be a woman and an improviser at the same time, and tell...
- Hannah (Host): [13:00](#) Yeah.
- Amber: [13:00](#) You know? So there was a lot of that. Like, I mean, I like learned who I was as a person through doing improv and figuring out what were my goals in this particular company.
- Hannah (Host): [13:10](#) Okay, let's drill down a bit on what it means to improvise like a man.

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- Amber: [13:13](#) [Laughs]
- Hannah (Host): [13:13](#) [Laughs] What's that? What does that mean?
- Amber: [13:16](#) You know, I think the first time I heard that I was like, "what does that mean?" And then I think what it was is that there were women that saw me and they were like, "you look like on stage--" And also the weird thing is, is that I wouldn't, I wouldn't particularly dress feminine either cause I didn't think that it was wanted. So I would, I really tried to like, do everything I could to fit in with the boys. And so I think that it meant that I was big, and loud, and rowdy, and I presented myself in a very aggressive, masculine way on stage because that's the only way I knew how to be heard. And so I think that's what people were responding to.
- Hannah (Host): [13:56](#) Yeah. The last interview I did was with a couple of criminal defense attorneys.
- Hannah (Host): [14:01](#) Ooh!
- Hannah (Host): [14:01](#) And we were talking about this sense that in order to enter into a space that is male dominated, that you basically have to do your best imitation of a white man in order to convince people that you belong.
- Amber: [14:13](#) Yeah!
- Hannah (Host): [14:13](#) And that, that, that might grant you as an individual, a temporary pass to occupy that space, but it doesn't break ground for anyone else.
- Amber: [14:23](#) That's right.
- Hannah (Host): [14:23](#) Yeah. So, so do you feel like over time you like transformed that improvisation style?
- Amber: [14:29](#) I do. I do. And I think part of it was that another woman came along, who ended up being my roommate later, and then ended up being my best friend. And like she, and she gave me the opportunity to play with another woman on stage that I respected and felt like it was a peer. And so that kind of gave me, especially living with her. And I have like, I grew up, I didn't grow up with boys, like I have a sister.
- Hannah (Host): [14:52](#) Yeah.

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- Amber: [14:52](#) And so I think that that kind of softened me a bit, cuz I was like, "it's okay to be a woman on stage and it's okay to tell female stories," and it's okay to, you know, there's women in the audience that are responding to this. It's not like our audience isn't just dudes, though there was a lot of dudes in our audience. There's a lot of like college dudes, you know?
- Hannah (Host): [15:08](#) Yeah.
- Amber: [15:08](#) And so I think really helped having Megan and then after that, like the company started opening up little by little. And it was a trickle at first of ladies and now it's, I think we're probably over, maybe we're close to half women, which is awesome.
- Hannah (Host): [15:20](#) That's fantastic, yeah.
- Amber: [15:20](#) So that's just having other women around is what enabled me to feel like, okay, I can do this. And it was scary. Like I was like, I have to be vulnerable. I have to change the way that I'm doing things and I have to learn. And the guys all went with me. They're all a lot better than they were in the beginning. It was a hard fight, but we all kind of learned how to do it together.
- Hannah (Host): [15:41](#) Yeah. I mean, I've definitely heard stories from, from women improvisers about the way that you get constantly, sort of, backed into corners when improvising with men in terms of the positions that they want to put you in, or the kinds of stories that they want to tell.
- Amber: [15:54](#) Right. Yeah.
- Hannah (Host): [15:54](#) And it does seem like to some degree you've got to just sort of muscle your way through in terms of driving different kinds of narratives.
- Amber: [16:01](#) Yeah. And the funny thing is, is I would always play male characters a lot, and finally the guy stopped like, calling me Janet and would be like, "oh, Amber is playing Steve." And now I'm known as like, I like to play a lot of characters. That's kind of my favorite thing to do an improv, and my favorite kind of character plays old men, like scary old men. And so everybody knows, well Amber is going to play an old man in this, in this scene, and that's just how it is. And so it's, it's funny now that that's kind of my calling card, you know?

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- Hannah (Host): [16:32](#) Yeah. But that jump, right, the fact that you are asking people to hear what you are saying and what you are telling them about who you are and--
- Amber: [16:40](#) Right.
- Hannah (Host): [16:41](#) At least for a while people were saying, no, you're, you're a lady. I can tell.
- Amber: [16:47](#) Yeah.
- Hannah (Host): [16:47](#) Like I feel like there's, there's a link to be made there in terms of, I don't know, maybe a larger cultural shift towards just like, letting people tell you things about themselves.
- Amber: [16:57](#) Right! Yeah, yeah. And also like, as you're teaching each other how to perform as performers, you're also teaching your audience what to expect. And then your audience is, is trained over time, and the audience that comes to see your shows knows what to expect too, which is also kind of an interesting part of it.
- Hannah (Host): [17:12](#) That's a really great point. Like you, you build the audience who will respond to the work that you're doing, in that audience receives, I mean this is what comedy is like, like for the most part, based on the history of language and how we've used it, right? So like, that's, I really know how to make things sound extra funny.
- Amber: [17:31](#) [Laughs]
- Hannah (Host): [17:31](#) Like, let's take apart comedy and really understand how it works as linguistic and social play.
- Amber: [17:36](#) Right.
- Hannah (Host): [17:36](#) But like the basic premise of so much comedy is upending expectations, which is why when you go back to comedy from the 70s and 80s, that often ages so very badly because what's funny about upending expectations is built on what the expectations are. And so you go back and you're like, "oh, this is really transphobic" or really racist or because those expectations are coded with that same power.
- Amber: [18:07](#) Right. Absolutely.

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- Hannah (Host): [18:09](#) [Laughs] Yeah. Yeah. This is fun. Feminism is fun. Great. So let's get to how you moved from improv into voice work.
- Amber: [18:20](#) Okay! So there was a guy, actually funny enough, our company and is a lot bigger than it was, but back in the day we had probably about 20 ensemble members. And a lot, and still a large portion of our ensemble are people that are in advertising. It just make sense for advertisers to also be improvisers, I guess. And one of the guys was the director of his advertising agency, and so he would hire a lot of improvisers to do voice work, or radio spots, or just like little things cause people would come in and they'd, they'd be there in 10 minutes and they do stuff. And so he needed somebody to do some radio spots that, you know, they were easy, and cheap, and dirty and they didn't even air in Atlanta, they were like for different markets. And it was like \$150 bucks a pop. And so, and this was kind of when the voice, voice work was changing from like, everybody looking for that announcer voice into more like, we want every person's. And so luckily, because I am still completely untrained as a voice actor, and I get that note from agents all the time, they're like, "these sound completely untrained." And I was like, "well..."
- Hannah (Host): [19:24](#) You just sound like somebody with a science undergrad. I don't know what's going on here.
- Amber: [19:32](#) And so, I did a few radio spots for him, and I was easy to work with, so he would just call me and I could run in and do some spots. And so he's still hires me to this day; he still works at the same company. His name's Mike Schatz. He actually does a lot of voice work also. He--
- Hannah (Host): [19:47](#) Wait, is...
- Amber: [19:47](#) Huh?
- Hannah (Host): [19:47](#) Is he a white man named Mike?
- Amber: [19:49](#) Yep. He's a white man.
- Hannah (Host): [19:49](#) Just checking. Cool. Just making sure, just making sure that my, my broad sweeping generalizations are accurate. Keep going.
- Amber: [19:56](#) And then another white man in Christian, who is a part of our company, he had just gotten out of art school. He was a good friend of mine, and he started working with these guys that were making, they were making *Sealab 2021*. So it was the same guys that ended up making *Archer* up, but they were

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making it for Adult Swim, which is a tiny little network that's based in Atlanta. And it was just like, six dirty dudes, like in a shitty house in East Atlanta making cartoons. And, improvisers were a great pool of talent--

- Hannah (Host): [20:27](#) So unappealing sounding. It's a great show, but you just made the process of making it sound like a god damn nightmare.
- Amber: [20:34](#) It was!
- Hannah (Host): [20:34](#) So improvisers were a great pool of talent. Got it.
- Amber: [20:37](#) We would show up at the house to record stuff and it was like, it was like going into like a dorm room of, like a really gross dorm room. Just like a bunch of dirty dude's making cartoons. And they would make--
- Hannah (Host): [20:48](#) Yeah, yeah, yeah. And again, people wonder why women don't get into comedy. Like, cool, cool, cool, you can have this opportunity. You just have to enter into this terrifying space.
- Amber: [20:55](#) Yeah. Yeah.
- Hannah (Host): [20:55](#) Okay.
- Amber: [20:55](#) It was always so gross in there. I never wanted to use the bathroom at that house, cuz it was like, it's so gross. So they were making, after *Sealab*, they made a show called *Frisky Dingo* and improvisers were like, just a good pool of people that they could, you know, that could do weird voices. And so they used us a lot when they were making *Frisky Dingo* and Christian would do voices, but he also was an animator. So he worked for those guys. And so because those guys were a small group of artists and we were a small group of artists, they would come see shows and we kind of knew them, and we kind of ran in the same circles. And they needed somebody for *Frisky Dingo*. And I auditioned for a role that was like a teenager and I was completely wrong for it, and so I didn't get it. But then the role changed and they were like, "hey, do you want to do this thing?" And so I ended up doing, I think, like five or six different voices on that show. And so it was my first like character voice work job. And I can't do accents at all really, like I can do like an asshole, but like I'm so bad at it. People always think that if you're a voice artist you can do accents, and I'm like, "literally, no, I can't." [Laughs] But I can do--
- Hannah (Host): [21:58](#) [Laughs] Maybe if you're a trained voice artist.

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- Amber: [22:01](#) Yeah, I know, exactly. If I had ever trained. So then that show got canceled, and I think they were kind of like, oh, that's the end of the road. And Adam came up with the idea for *Archer* and they pitched it and it went ahead. And I think for sure, they wanted to work with me because I was like, you know, I was a local talent Atlanta that they like to work with, but they had all these famous people on board. And so the fact that they even asked me to do it, I still am dubious about. Like, I feel like they probably auditioned a bunch of people and couldn't find the right person, and they're like, "ah, fuck it. We'll just ask Amber to do it."
- Hannah (Host): [22:35](#) [Laughs] Fine.
- Amber: [22:35](#) Yeah. And I didn't even have to audition for it; they just gave me the job.
- Hannah (Host): [22:37](#) That's great. And then over, is it the 9th season..?
- Amber: [22:41](#) We're making the 10th season now.
- Hannah (Host): [22:42](#) Making the 10th right now. So over nine seasons you just watch, you going from being side character like, "Haha, idiots. Now I'm the lead."
- Amber: [22:50](#) Yeah, it's crazy.
- Hannah (Host): [22:52](#) [Laughs] It's great.
- Amber: [22:52](#) It's really been like, quiet a ride. And, and I still like, I'm like, oh no. Like people would be like, "what do you do?" And I'll be like, "oh, you know, I'm a theater actor." And like I never, never tell people that I'm on *Archer* because I'm just like, it's just too much to deal with.
- Hannah (Host): [23:07](#) [Laughs]
- Amber: [23:07](#) But it's so fun. I'm so, I'm so proud of the show, and I'm really proud of the character. Like, I think Pam is so awesome. And I'm like, like every time she does something, I'm like, "way to go, Pam!" [Laughs]
- Hannah (Host): [23:16](#) [Laughs] Okay, let's talk about that. I have some questions about voice work in general.
- Amber: [23:20](#) Okay.

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- Hannah (Host): [23:20](#) Let's, let's talk about Pam, about like, what it has been like occupying that character for the past decade. Because she's like sort of a filthy monster--
- Amber: [23:32](#) Yeah.
- Hannah (Host): [23:32](#) --in all of the most delightful ways. But, but you, so you just described that she sort of, she does things and you go like, "way to go, Pam!" Like she's, she's a, another person who you're like observing the behavior of.
- Amber: [23:44](#) Yeah, yeah. You know, just, because I've watched her like, grow so much from this tiny little character. And I think that, in the beginning I think that, you know, Adam was just creating a bunch of characters and then he put a bunch of actors in those roles, and then kind of let it happen and see where it went. And I think that over time he kind of started writing everybody more for the actors that were playing the characters, and they, they just became more fleshed out characters over time, because the actors were kind of getting into them and Adam was, was writing for them. And I think a lot of Pam's like, how she's changed is that Adam was like, "well, I need somebody that can do this," or "I need something that can do this," and he didn't always have the right person, so he would just like, have Pam do it.
- Hannah (Host): [24:25](#) [Laughs] Yup.
- Amber: [24:25](#) And then he like woke up one day and he was like, "Oh shit, Pam does all this crazy shit now." She's got like this laundry list of crazy skills nobody else has. And so yeah, it's been really, and it's been fun to see people's reactions to Pam like, the fact that she's like this like sex symbol in a weird way.
- Hannah (Host): [24:44](#) Uh huh.
- Amber: [24:44](#) And like, the fact that that she was in the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition. That's like something that I grew up like that's like, it was like being a Dallas Cowboys Cheerleader. I was like, "what??" It was such a huge thing. I couldn't believe that it happened.
- Hannah (Host): [24:57](#) Yeah, it is why, I mean, the audience response to her is obviously very powerful, and the degree to which she seems to have given a lot of people permission to be like, publicly into a filthy, sex positive fat woman is really intriguing to me.

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- Amber: [25:15](#) I know! It's so weird. I know. I wish, I wish somebody would like do a study and like really dig into it because I totally agree with you. Because she's like, so many people were like, "I know this person," or "I'm like this person." Or like, there was just nobody like that really? That was, I mean, I guess there was like, maybe Roseanne like, in the, you know, the old Roseanne, before it got really...
- Hannah (Host): [25:34](#) [Laughs] Yeah, pre-white supremacist Roseanne.
- Amber: [25:38](#) Right.
- Hannah (Host): [25:38](#) For sure.
- Amber: [25:39](#) And also maybe because Pam was a little bit younger and like, more attractive maybe, I don't know. It's such a weird thing. I, it was just such a phenomenon. I don't understand it, but I'm happy about it.
- Hannah (Host): [25:48](#) Yeah. It's, it's, it's an incredible, however one might account for it. And I did, I heard you talking about, sort of, how in general Pam gets away with saying the things that she says, and you sort of hypothesized briefly that it has something to do with the animation, that there's some distancing effect in like it being animated characters that are doing it.
- Amber: [26:10](#) Yeah.
- Hannah (Host): [26:11](#) That just the, just we're okay with them saying like really horrifying things.
- Amber: [26:16](#) Mhmm. Yeah. I tried to explain that to my mom and she doesn't quite understand, like she gets really upset that I, as a person, am saying these horrible things, and I'm like, "but it's not me, mom. Like, it's a character that you can't even, I don't even, it's not even, you don't even see it coming out of my mouth." And she's like, "I just..."
- Hannah (Host): [26:30](#) But I know. But I know it came out of your mouth.
- Amber: [26:34](#) Yeah.
- Hannah (Host): [26:34](#) And I made that mouth.
- Amber: [26:36](#) [Laughs] So I do think, I think because, because they're animated. I think that's how adult cartoons became so popular in the first place, cuz it was like, how can we say the things we

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want to say and get away with it, or put some kind of distance between us and the words. And I think that that's why, you know, South Park and so many other things, cuz especially too, because they have the other layer of it being children, which makes it even another way to get away with it.

Hannah (Host): [27:00](#)

Yeah. Uh huh.

Amber: [27:00](#)

You know? So it's a, it's a fun, powerful tool that I think that we found to just deal with the world we live in.

Hannah (Host): [27:06](#)

Yeah, I mean it's great. It's absolutely the case. I, I hadn't thought of that in terms of the rise of adult cartoons, but they do let you go right up to the edge of kinds of, of horrifying ideas.

Amber: [27:19](#)

Right.

Hannah (Host): [27:19](#)

And in forms like in, in different cartoons, levels of violence that would be unacceptable. But also, you know, playing up political scenarios in different ways and it's an, it's an incredible medium. As an actor, what is it like, sort of, working exclusively with your voice rather than with your body? Like do you find it liberating? Limiting? Just different?

Amber: [27:42](#)

Because it's the, the, the thing that I found the most success in doing so far, it's been like, it's the job that pays my bills.

Hannah (Host): [27:50](#)

Gotcha.

Amber: [27:50](#)

And so, you know, I have the most experience and time in doing stage acting. And that's so big, and so using everything you've got. Especially doing improv because you have nothing but your body, you don't have costumes and set pieces or props usually that you have to use everything around you and, but also you have to use a lot of your body, and you have to use a lot of like, you know, if you're playing an old character then you use your body to portray that, that old person. And with voice acting you have to get all of that out through just your mouth.

Hannah (Host): [28:23](#)

[Laughs] Uh huh.

Amber: [28:23](#)

And I've learned on the job really like I, I really like, I said like, *Archer*, well, well *Frisky Dingo* was kind of my first, my first stab at it, and at least that that one I got to play a lot of different characters. But so like, trying to get all of the things out with Pam and all the different incarnations of her, and like how physical of a show *Archer* is. Like, there's a lot of like action

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scenes and people getting shot, and pushing heavy things, or eating stuff. Like, so there's just a lot of stuff going on that I, that I've got to, it's got to come out in my voice. And so I've learned a lot about that. And so when I get into the booth, I come out and I'm tired, and I'm sweaty and like, you know, my hair's all over the place and it takes a lot.

- Hannah (Host): [29:04](#) [Laughs]
- Amber: [29:04](#) It's a lot more physical than I ever would have realized it being because you have to do all the same amount of acting, but you just, the end product only has your voice.
- Hannah (Host): [29:13](#) Oh, you know what, that never occurred to me, but it does make perfect sense.
- Amber: [29:17](#) Yeah.
- Hannah (Host): [29:17](#) That like, you would be using your body in the same way.
- Amber: [29:20](#) Right.
- Hannah (Host): [29:21](#) You just not, you know, people just aren't seeing it.
- Amber: [29:23](#) Yeah. And the other trick that I kind of came up with years ago that really helped was, I would look at the microphone and pretend it was my scene partner, and so I could actually have somebody to interact with. Do you know what I mean? That kind of helped too.
- Hannah (Host): [29:36](#) Yeah. Do you always do all of the recording and totally separate? Like are you on your own when recording?
- Amber: [29:41](#) I'm not on my own, but we're in the booth all separately. And so I'm in the booth and then on the other side of the booth is like in the control room is the director and usually one or two producers, and then like the guy that's the engineer. So they're there and I can like, I can read with them and play off of them a little bit, but they're just, you know, sitting on the other side, eating candy, giving me notes.
- Hannah (Host): [30:04](#) [Laughs] Like, "I need more. I need more energy outta you. Come on." Yeah, that does sound like, like, harder in a lot of ways, to be generating all of the energy out of yourself rather than being able to play off the energy that's coming from other people and amplify it that way.

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- Amber: [30:18](#) Right. And it's always early in the morning, it's like, "guys, why are we doing this so early? Come on."
- Hannah (Host): [30:23](#) That's a really, that's a really good question. Why are you...
- Amber: [30:24](#) Yeah.
- Hannah (Host): [30:24](#) Isn't the whole point of being an artist that you don't have to do things at 9:00 AM?
- Amber: [30:29](#) Exactly!
- Hannah (Host): [30:29](#) That's rude. It's unreasonable. Yeah. I was thinking, you know, in terms of, of, sort of, voice versus stage work, about an interview that I read with Lupita Nyong'o, after *The Force Awakens* came out. When she was talking about, remember she played that like computer animated character in it? Did you--
- Amber: [30:50](#) I didn't see it.
- Hannah (Host): [30:50](#) Did you, have you, have you been keeping up with the 400 new Star Wars movies that come out every year?
- Amber: [30:56](#) [Laughs] No.
- Hannah (Host): [30:56](#) Anyway, she played this computer animated character who's like this elderly alien and she's, you know, doing a funny voice and it looks nothing like her. And people asked her "why, you know, she's a beautiful A-list actress. Like, why would she take on this role? And she was talking about how liberating it was, as a black woman, to play a role where she wasn't being a black woman.
- Amber: [31:18](#) Wow.
- Hannah (Host): [31:19](#) Particularly in terms of the sort of optics of her body on screen, that she's always aware in whatever role she plays, that people are, are looking at her and interpreting her body in particular ways. And that to, you know, as an actor, to get to play with a character in which people aren't looking at your body or reading anything into it, felt liberating for her. And so I was wondering about that too. Like, is there something about getting to, to act and perform in a context in which people are not looking at your body, or formulating any judgments or ideas about it, or about you based on how you look that is, that opens up what you can do.

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- Amber: [32:02](#) Yeah. You know what, I never thought of that. But yes, just hearing you say that of, yeah. Like, of course! That's so great because it's not me. Again, like it's, it's not, it's somebody else and I don't even have to worry about like, what my legs look like. You know what I mean?
- Hannah (Host): [32:16](#) [Laughs] Uh huh.
- Amber: [32:16](#) And on top of it, Pam, Pam would be like, "come on. Are you kidding me? Like, you're so you're, you're so fine looking." But yeah, cause I think about too, like when I do Improv, and like when young women are coming up and like, it's always like, "what do I wear?" And like, you know, I want to be able to express my femininity, but I also want to be comfortable and I don't want to make people uncomfortable. It's just like there's so much that goes into it the men never have had to think about. And I know for me like if I were, if I, if I'm playing a character, and at the theater we work at, not all improv theaters do this, but we do a lot of shows with costume. Like we do soap operas that are costumed and murder mysteries and the costume and stuff like that. And if I ever am playing an ugly, or character that their value doesn't come from their, their attractiveness, then it's always so much easier and I'm so much happier. And if my costume is like big and baggy and I don't have to worry about like, it pinching or like a roll falling out, if I like bend over, you know like stupid shit like that?
- Hannah (Host): [33:16](#) [Laughs] Yup.
- Amber: [33:16](#) Like he's so much happier and I have a much better show and I feel like I'm able to perform so much better. And it's that exact thing that you're talking about. And it's because I'm not worried about presenting, but again, I'll play characters that are like, you know, in gowns, or very feminine, or whatever and it's, it can still be fun, but it's like, it is a whole different set of things you got to worry about.
- Hannah (Host): [33:39](#) Yeah. You have to think about whether or not you're going to fall off your high heels all the time.
- Amber: [33:43](#) Yeah, yeah.
- Hannah (Host): [33:43](#) Like it's really rude. Yeah. That I have to be out doing the same job and also worried about falling down because our shoes are dumb.
- Amber: [33:51](#) Totally. Yeah.

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- Hannah (Host): [33:51](#) I mean we, I say "we," but I have not worn a high heel in several years.
- Amber: [33:55](#) I know, I never perform in them, but you know, I did do a show. We did, we do Christmas Carol every year, and we've done a lot of period shows and so I've done shows where I have to wear corsets and it's like, "what the hell? Like why on earth would anybody have to do this?" But it helped me. I've, I had a, I was climbing up on stage, and I was kind of running and I jumped up on stage and I tripped. And when I fell, and because I was in this corset my body felt completely flat. So I think I was able to not injure myself because I was wearing the corset. So it ended up working out.
- Hannah (Host): [34:26](#) [Laughs] That's great. Between corsets, bustles, hoop skirts, it's just protection.
- Amber: [34:34](#) Yeah. That's right.
- Hannah (Host): [34:34](#) It's protection for our delicate lady bodies. Can't help ourselves. It's okay. Thinking about, to go back to that, that question of like, you know, how your body is and is not being read and what you sort of said offhand about like, what Pam would say about that. I am really curious about, I mean not to impose identities on you, but I would describe you as a thin woman.
- Amber: [35:03](#) Thank you.
- Hannah (Host): [35:04](#) And I, well, I am a fat woman and I don't like, it's not, it's not a, a value judgment one way or the other--
- Amber: [35:11](#) Right
- Hannah (Host): [35:11](#) --as far as I'm concerned. But I am interested in what it is like to be mostly famous for playing somebody who's body is politicized in a way yours isn't.
- Amber: [35:21](#) That's really interesting. And I feel, I don't, I have struggled like many women my whole life with weight, and so it's like a very, I don't know if I've come to terms with it. So I don't know. I think that it's nice for me to be able to look up to Pam in that she's like, "I'm fat and I'm beautiful and I don't give a shit." Like, she doesn't give a shit what anybody thinks about her, and I think that's one of the things that when I say that I'm proud of Pam as a character, it's because she didn't learn to do that. She just is that. You know what I mean? And she's always been that, if we give Pam a long history.

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Hannah (Host): [36:02](#) [Laughs]

Amber: [36:02](#) So it's, it's to, and I, there are plenty of people out there, and I definitely did not come from that place, and I didn't come from that family, and I have so much baggage when it comes to that kind of stuff. But to know that there are people that are like, "oh my god, finally somebody that like, isn't so worried about it all the time." So it's, it's something that I look to, I look to Pam to, to give me strength on often.

Hannah (Host): [36:26](#) It's amazing to think about that in terms of like, again, she's, she is not real and is being written by a man.

Amber: [36:34](#) I know!

Hannah (Host): [36:35](#) Right? Like that's so interesting that, that through the process of playing her, it's actually pushing you to think about body politics in different ways. But like, you know, she, she's a font, a font of wisdom invented by somebody who also doesn't have that identity.

Amber: [36:52](#) Yeah.

Hannah (Host): [36:52](#) And yet has been so, so for so many people, I see this all over the Internet, is the degree to which she matters to viewers as an opportunity to see themselves on a screen.

Amber: [37:03](#) Yeah. And you know, I think too, I think that in the beginning her being fat was a joke. And then the, it wasn't, somehow through Adam taking what people took from Pam, as an audience, but also kind of Pam growing outside of what Adam was writing into, kind of, this other character like, it just wasn't allowed anymore. You know what do you mean?

Hannah (Host): [37:26](#) Yeah

Amber: [37:26](#) Which is kind of weird, but it's like, it just became something. It took on a life of its own and became something different, which I think is so cool.

Hannah (Host): [37:34](#) Yeah, I mean I see, you see that across the show and I think you see that across actually a lot of long running comedy series, is that character start kind of two dimensional. They're, they're a joke about an identity, or an idea about a kind of person. But if the writing is good and the acting is good, over time they turn into fully fleshed out characters who the, the joke has got to stop being, "It's funny cuz she's fat."

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Amber: [37:59](#) Yeah.

Hannah (Host): [37:59](#) Because that's not going to last nine seasons.

Amber: [38:01](#) Totally. Totally. Like, it's so boring after a while. Absolutely.

Hannah (Host): [38:04](#) Yeah. So but, but she is also, so in the last couple of seasons, which have taken a real fun turn into some sort of fever dream, is specifically in the last one, which I just finished watching. In season nine, she's not fat anymore. She's a different kind of like, she's this massive Amazonian figure.

Amber: [38:25](#) Yeah, yeah. She's giant. She's like, when they showed me, they sent me a sketch before the show started airing and there was there, there's still kind of animating it, and we'd done a lot of the recordings already. And they sent me a picture of Pam standing next to Cyril for scale, so I could see how big she was. And she's so stacked, like she's so muscular. [Laughs] It's really funny.

Hannah (Host): [38:49](#) It's amazing.

Amber: [38:49](#) Yeah. And the reason was like what they had intended was that she was, she was the Chewbacca of the show. Right?

Hannah (Host): [38:59](#) Ooooooh!

Amber: [38:59](#) So she was, she was the Chewbacca to Archer's Han. Is that right? I don't know. I'm not a Star Wars person.

Hannah (Host): [39:07](#) [Laughs] Yeah, sure. I mean, probably.

Amber: [39:10](#) Yeah. And so I was like, oh, okay. That's great. And, and the great thing too is that nobody really thought twice about it. They're like, "oh yeah, Pam's different again this season. She now she's just a giant, like seven foot tall person."

Hannah (Host): [39:23](#) Do you, do you feel like you're doing or did the voice of differently in that season, thinking of it as coming out of a different body?

Amber: [39:30](#) You know, after going back a season to Dreamland where the character was Poovey, and it was kind of a gender-neutral character. And they told me that that character was based on Russell Crowe's character from LA Confidential, which I thought was such a great, what a great thing to get as an actor.

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Hannah (Host): [39:48](#) Yeah.

Amber: [39:48](#) And so when I went in, I was like, "do you want my voice to be any different?" And they're like, "Nope. Nope. You're still the exact same person, the exact same character, you're just inhabiting a different body." And one of the things that when they were designing the character new for the season, because you know, they do tweaks depending on how different people are in different wardrobe and all that stuff. And they couldn't get it right and they were really struggling with it and they couldn't figure out what it was. And they were like, "you know what, she just needs lipstick." And so they put lipstick on Poovey and then everything was fine. [Laughs]

Hannah (Host): [40:19](#) [Laughs]

Amber: [40:19](#) Like, that's all it was. That's all it took. So yeah. So yeah, so when we got this Danger Island and Pam was so big, I didn't even ask cuz I was like, they're going to say no.

Hannah (Host): [40:31](#) Yeah. I mean, part of the comedy of the, of these like, reworked seasons is that it is the same recognizable voice coming out of an unlikely body, like Krieger as a parrot named Crackers.

Amber: [40:43](#) Right!

Hannah (Host): [40:43](#) Which is just the, the wordplay of Krieger and crackers made me laugh for maybe five minutes, cuz I have a simple mind. So, so I, I hear that and then it is also sort of pleasurable to have those voices come out of those unfamiliar bodies.

Amber: [40:57](#) Right.

Hannah (Host): [40:57](#) And then, and then to see the degree to which they are getting played similarly like, Amazonian Pam is still defined by a very powerful sense of occupying her body comfortably.

Amber: [41:11](#) Mhmm!

Hannah (Host): [41:11](#) That's true no matter what that body is.

Amber: [41:13](#) Yeah. Yeah. And it's funny too because it's, it's really what is the hook that keeps the show similar enough every season, is that that the core of every character, they're still the same terrible asshole they were the season before. They just look different and interact maybe a little bit differently with their, with the

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- other characters based on what now those other characters do too.
- Hannah (Host): [41:36](#) Yeah.
- Amber: [41:36](#) So we all still treat each other the same terrible way, but it's just with a different filter based on what we're doing or what our characters up to that season.
- Hannah (Host): [41:45](#) So is there like a certain pleasure in playing such an asshole all the time?
- Amber: [41:53](#) I think playing bad characters, and I don't think, I don't think Pam's a bad character. I think the, a lot of times she's weirdly like the heart. At the end of the day when nobody's any good, it's like, "well, Pam's still a little good."
- Hannah (Host): [42:06](#) [Laughs] "Good" might be the wrong word, but she's got some sort of strange moral compass.
- Amber: [42:11](#) [Laughs] Some heart. Yeah. And so I think that, yeah, I think playing characters that are bad, like when I'm doing improv that's always my, playing villains is so much fun. We did a show for a while at Dad's, Dad's Garage that was a wrestling show, and a lot of us learn actually how to wrestle from professional wrestlers. And--
- Hannah (Host): [42:28](#) Sounds so dangerous.
- Amber: [42:30](#) It was very dangerous, and I did not have health insurance at the time.
- Hannah (Host): [42:33](#) Good. Great.
- Amber: [42:34](#) Right? Best way to do it. But hey, I was in my twenties. Who cares?
- Hannah (Host): [42:37](#) Oh, you're taking your art seriously, it's fine.
- Amber: [42:38](#) [Laughs] Totally. But I was like a heel and it was really hard because like you usually, what we're trying to do is get audiences to love us, but my express purpose was to get the audience to hate me and boo me when I came out.
- Hannah (Host): [42:51](#) Yeah.

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- Amber: [42:51](#) And it was such a powerful lesson to, you know, figure out how to do that. And it was ended up being so like, one of the most fun character I've ever played.
- Hannah (Host): [42:58](#) Uh huh.
- Amber: [42:59](#) Yeah. So I do, I do love playing a bad character
- Hannah (Host): [43:01](#) And to bring that inevitably just back to feminism, cuz I'm really just a broken record.
- Amber: [43:06](#) Yeah.
- Hannah (Host): [43:06](#) I do think that there's also something really exciting about, about women who again, in performance settings, are so often driven towards, I mean, not just in performance settings, in our lives driven towards likeability, right?
- Amber: [43:18](#) Yes.
- Hannah (Host): [43:18](#) Your job is to be pleasant, to smile, to make people comfortable and that sort of radical move of being like, "actually my job here is not, not to make anyone like me. It's actually to make people boo me."
- Amber: [43:30](#) Yes.
- Hannah (Host): [43:30](#) Like, how freeing?
- Amber: [43:32](#) Totally. And also on top of that being like, from the South and from a conservative Christian family, it's like, good god. Like, the only thing that's important is that you are a [ironic Southern accent] likable, nice, very compassionate woman that just takes care of everybody and has a bunch of kids. [Natural voice] And those are all things that I did not do, and my mom doesn't understand. So yeah, like we don't talk about my creative life because it's so opposite of what my mom wanted me to be. That she's like proud of me and I'm her daughter and she loves me, but like, we just don't talk about that.
- Hannah (Host): [44:05](#) Gotcha.
- Amber: [44:05](#) So, cuz it's just like, she doesn't understand why in the world I would ever make these choices and be like, dirty and, you know, especially in front of a bunch of people on stage.
- Hannah (Host): [44:14](#) Yeah.

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- Amber: [44:14](#) To be known in the city for being such a bad person.
- Hannah (Host): [44:18](#) [Laughs]
- Amber: [44:18](#) And especially with *Archer*, I mean like, her friends at church are like, just like [disapproving huffs]. They can't.
- Hannah (Host): [44:26](#) [Laughs] So a lot of literal pearl clutching going on.
- Amber: [44:28](#) Yeah. Lots of it. So, so yeah, it's very empowering. And I, and it wasn't easy. Like, you know, it's hard, it was hard to make those choices and be like, I'm going to go against my family on this and then all my teachings and do what I want and be gross.
- Hannah (Host): [44:43](#) [Laughs] Yeah, it is. It is because that stuff, I mean, in a way that it's very similar to the body messaging, like all of it is just stuff that you get fed all the way through your life and then as an adult to be like, "I am going to deliberately refuse this," I think it's hard. Though it also brings us back to euro, your claim right at the beginning that when people tell you you're not allowed to do something, you want to do it more.
- Amber: [45:08](#) Yeah. Yeah. It's pushing that big red button.
- Hannah (Host): [45:10](#) Yup.
- Amber: [45:10](#) And, you know, as I've gotten older, I've started to be, you know, I think everybody kind of mellows out a little bit and I, I sometimes am like, "man, I was such a badass 10 years ago, or 20 years ago. Like, maybe I need to, you know, maybe I don't need to be in the bath by nine o'clock every night." You know what I mean?
- Hannah (Host): [45:29](#) In the bath?
- Amber: [45:29](#) Yeah. I gotta have my bath at nine o'clock every night. Not true, but I do like taking baths.
- Hannah (Host): [45:34](#) That sounds great! That sounds so soothing. I want to be in the bath by nine o'clock every night.
- Amber: [45:39](#) It is! It's so great. But yeah, so it makes me, it makes me sometimes be like, "you know, I've got to kind of keep being a badass and pushing those boundaries," but you know, sometimes you just got to settle down and get married and chill out a little bit.

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Hannah (Host): [45:50](#) I mean there's probably a middle ground.

Amber: [45:53](#) Yeah, for sure. For sure.

Hannah (Host): [45:54](#) It's like, can I, can I be in the bath but not get married?

Amber: [45:57](#) Exactly! Yeah.

Hannah (Host): [45:57](#) Cuz one sounds great and the other one sounds exhausting.

Amber: [45:59](#) Or do a show and be really gross on stage and then get in the bath at midnight.

Hannah (Host): [46:05](#) [Laughs] Get in the bath at midnight. All right. That's a good, that's a good show title. It's either that or going to be "a trickle of ladies."

Amber: [46:10](#) [Laughs]

Hannah (Host): [46:10](#) Which is a great turn of phrase, also really graphic. [Music: "Voodoo Lady" by Ween]

Hannah (Host): [46:32](#) If you'd like to hear more about Amber, you can follow her on various social medias @ambercnash. You can find show notes and all the episodes of *Secret Feminist Agenda* on secretfeministagenda.com you can follow me on Twitter at @hkpcgregor, and you can tweet about the podcast using the hashtag #secretfeministagenda. And of course, you can review the show, which people did this week. There are new reviews from Ashra Cole, who is my IRL friend, Minimum Head and Good Golly Smally. This is some very good user names. Everybody's doing a great job. The podcast theme song is "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans off their album, Chub Rub. You know, I could just have recorded this once and use the same recording at the end of every episode, but I never get tired of saying Chub Rub. You can download the entire album on freemusicarchive.org or them on Facebook. Amber's theme song was "Voodoo Lady" by Ween. *Secret Feminist Agenda* is recorded on the traditional and unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh first nations where I'm grateful to live and work. This has been *Secret Feminist Agenda*. Pass it on. [Music: "Mesh Shirt" by Mom Jeans]