

Girls Night #238: The Secret I've Been Keeping From you for 18 Months! — with Stephanie May Wilson and Carly Kellerman

0:00:03 - Stephanie

Hey friend, welcome to Girls Night, where we work through life's biggest decisions and transitions together. I'm your host, Stephanie Mae Wilson, and I'm so glad you're here. So if you've spent any time in my little corner of the internet lately, you've probably heard me say that I have three big secrets I've been keeping from basically everybody for the last gosh. It feels like forever. I finally got to share secret number one a few weeks ago, and that was some of the big changes we've had going on here at Girls Night New cover, art, new music, new focus, new network. I've been so excited to share that news with you, but I have to tell you secrets number two and number three have been much harder to keep because they impact everything.

Well, I finally get to tell you secret number three on March 18th and I get to tell you secret number two today. Friend, I am truly over the moon about this. During this episode, I'm going to get to tell you my huge news and all of the details that I've been dying to share with you for ages. I've been keeping this secret for the last 18 months and today I finally get to tell you everything. My dear friend Carly Kellerman is here to help me share the news and I honestly can't wait any longer. So let's do this, let's dive in hey friends.

0:01:27 - Carly

This is a very extra special episode of Girls Night. I am not Stephanie May Wilson, which you've probably already gathered. My name is Carly Kellerman and I am so, so, beyond delighted to be taking the reins from my dear friend, Stephanie, to talk about something wildly exciting that's going to impact all of us. So, Stephanie, welcome to your own show.

0:01:50 - Stephanie

I am so nervous. It's just how everyone else feels when they sit in this chair. I am super nervous. It's a vibe. It's a vibe, oh my gosh, hi guys.

0:02:01 - Carly

Hi, Hi, Stephanie, dear friend and listener, we'll be familiar to you, of course, but let's just give her a taste of her own medicine. Shall we and Stephanie share a fun fact with the realm about yourself, would you?

0:02:16 - Stephanie

Oh my gosh, you know what. I was ready for this. And then now again I'm panicking. Okay, a fun fact about me is that I for my whole life I mean until the last handful of years, I guess have been a dancer. I'm like a dance kid. My girls just got their first pair of ballet shoes and I'm like tearing up as I'm slipping them on their little feet, because the first time I took my first dance

class I was their age and I danced all the way through high school, danced competitively at my school. We were good, we won, state it was. It took up 11 months out of my year. We had 11 month seasons and then in that off season I was preparing for tryouts again. It was like some people in the audience know exactly what I'm talking about. It was intense, it was wonderful, it taught me so much. So, yeah, I'm totally, totally a dance girl.

0:03:10 - Carly

It is a full-on Disney Channel original movie.

0:03:12 - Stephanie

it sounds like it is a full-on Disney Channel original movie.

0:03:15 - Carly

absolutely yes, it's a good to you, Brent, to state I'm obsessed with this. Excellent. Well, I love that. I'll have to find a picture. I have to obviously have pictures. I mean, like, come with receipts, we'll. We'll cross that bridge when it's time to actually air, okay. Okay. So, Stephanie, we started the season.

You started the season not so much with like a single big announcement, but rather like a series of explosions it felt like all of your updates and it's been so fun watching them kind of take off in real time, right and so, from the podcast network to some shifts in how you're doing things with the podcast, to your life updates, I mean, my gosh, you have been insanely busy behind the scenes and the craziest part is that what we're going to talk about today is so much bigger than all of those things. I was thinking about it as I was getting ready and I feel perhaps a touch grandiose but also justified in saying that Girls Night will forever hinge on this episode. I think there is pre this episode and post this episode and I'm going to stand by that. I love it. No big deal, no pressure. Will you talk to us a little bit about what has been taking up so much of your heart, mind, soul time behind the scenes over the last 18 months, two years, mm-hmm.

0:04:45 - Stephanie

Yes, so you're totally right. I narrowed it down to the fact that I have three big secrets that I and you know this about me, Carly I am a horrible secret keeper. It's like exploding out of. I have to cover my mouth. Don't tell me that you're pregnant. Don't tell me that you've got a new job. Don't be the first to tell me.

0:05:06 - Carly

You're just a big from SNL. Oh my gosh, I totally am I totally am.

0:05:12 - Stephanie

So I've been dying behind the scenes over here. So secret one was all the changes that have been happening to the podcast, which you guys know. Now we have new music done by my amazing friend Amanda Wallace and her new husband, Erin Beaumont. We have a new like kind of focus for the show. Like same show but a little different and so good. I'm so excited about where we're going. And new network I'm so honored to get to be part of the that Sounds

Fun network with such amazing shows. So that was secret number one and they've gotten like. The secrets are harder. Number two and number three are much harder to keep. They are wild. And so today I'm so excited to get to share number two. Number three is coming in a few weeks. Number three has to do with number two, but you'll find out why soon. Kylie, for the last really, yeah, 18 months it all kind of started a little more than two years ago I've been writing a book. You're writing a book.

0:06:11 - Carly

You wrote a book. You're not writing anymore. Praise Jesus, that is just an undertaking of a lifetime.

0:06:17 - Stephanie

Seriously, yes it all. So I looked back and this whole thing started actually with a lunch date with you A little over two years ago. It was September of 2021. Does that make sense? Does?

0:06:31 - Carly

that make sense. Yeah, that's right.

0:06:33 - Stephanie

So it was September of 2021. You took me to lunch and you said Steph, I think it's time and we can talk about your role in all of this as well. But so that's when it all kicked off, and so since then, I've been writing, I've been trying to figure out exactly what it is, I want to say. I've been putting together the book proposal, which is a whole thing. I've been presenting the book and saying anyone want to publish it? Hello, hello. And now it's like I got to do the whole thing. I got to sign the book contract. I got to spend gosh 18 months writing this thing and editing it. So today, as of today, we are in the very, very, very final stages of everything, and the book comes out in just a few months. It comes out on April 30th.

0:07:20 - Carly

But Nanas, how does it feel to say all of that?

0:07:24 - Stephanie

Oh, like a weight is off my shoulders. Well, I feel like, should we show it? Carly and I have Carly tell us what we're holding, because I feel like I don't know if people most people know the difference.

0:07:36 - Carly

These are let's share with the class. These are called ARCs that stands for an advanced reader copy. So there are some tweaks. It's not a totally finalized manuscript. There might be a comma or a rewritten sentence here or there, but we are so close to final and so these are the advanced reader copies that go out to folks that you're friends with so that they can get an early read and make sure they're sharing the awesome message in the great news about the book with everybody else.

And I mean, just like Stephanie, you've created so many amazing products. You've written prayer journals and your memoir and all of these different pieces. How does this feel compared to that? Is there a difference in how it feels in your hand after the lengthy process that you went through to get to this point, the different kind of effort and soul that went into this product? I don't want to tip my hat or take anything out of this, but, like I've been so privileged to walk alongside you in several of those products and I can speak with complete authority and confidence, this one was such a labor of love, even more than what I've seen before. So talk about how this feels different than what you've done before.

0:08:52 - Stephanie

Oh, man. Well, I want to talk about the back side of it, the publishing side of it in a second, but just in terms of the book itself, I've discovered, I've learned a lot lately. There's such thing called a trade book, and a trade book is sort of I mean, helped me with this, but presenting an idea from beginning to end, like how would you describe a trade book different from like a journal?

0:09:21 - Carly

Trade's a little bit of a bigger umbrella than what you're kind of getting at. I mean it mostly just means in this context it means adult nonfiction, right, and so it's different from a devotional or a journal, which would probably fall into more of a specialty or gift space. Trade books are often going to be either narrative nonfiction, so memoir, or they take more of a teaching kind of preaching position. And this book you haven't even said the title, babe, I can't say abuse, this is over baby, oh man, ok.

0:09:59 - Stephanie

So it's called *Create a Life You Love: How to Quiet Outside Voices So You Can Finally Hear Your Own*, oh my gosh. And so the really fun thing about this you guys, I'm like all over the place with this announcement because, again, this is my first time saying any of this, but the cover I'm so obsessed with and we, I mean every bit of this has been such a labor of love. Trying to get it exactly perfect is the wrong word, because it's not about perfection, it's just about like right, like trying to do the message justice, trying to be what it's really supposed to be. So anyway, this cover, this genius, is what was created by my husband, Carl Wilson. Who else? He did such an amazing job with it.

0:10:42 - Carly

Dream team Dream team.

0:10:44 - Stephanie

Carly, how so? Can you just tell how you fit into all this? Because obviously you know a little bit about publishing and you've been here behind the scenes. But I want to make sure that everyone gets to hear, like really who you I mean, you've been on the show a lot of times as Carly, but official work, Carly, how do you fit into this whole picture?

0:11:06 - Carly

I have cobbled myself into Stephanie's professional life, whether she likes it or not. What I am in mesh now. So my professional context is I worked in publishing for more than a decade at this point. I worked for Herbert Collins Christian Publishing for most of that time in a variety of roles, and so my position when Stephanie was in the process of sort of thinking through this, I had the privilege of working as the associate publisher for Zahnarvind Books and in that context I had the privilege to go to Stephanie and say you've built something so special.

This community is so authentic and so real and it's time for the next step in the messaging like what is the next big thing that we're talking about here? So, Stephanie, you and I sat down several times. We had a couple of writing retreats, which were just some professional highs for me to kind of parse out. What is the need here? What do people really really need in their lives? Where are women lacking permission? Where are women lacking agency? How do we re-establish that squarely, as you are in the driver's seat of your own life? And so we got to work together to craft this message and outline. So we did that together and then Stephanie went back and wrote the book. I had the privilege of editing it and then promptly took a different job, which was it would have been rude. Except my new job is that of a literary agent. And so day one I was like, hey, back to this situation, and so I am now a your literary agent and get to kind of be a bulldog advocate on the other side of the table.

0:12:56 - Stephanie

It is so funny and amazing that we get to do this together. It is and I want to talk about the behind the scenes of publishing, because I know that there are women who are wanting to write a book and I feel like maybe we can tell that story like another time.

Yeah, this isn't about yeah, ok, yeah, we can talk about that more another time, but it's been so fun to get to do this together and I think that that really is how this book has been so different. So not only I feel like this book is the umbrella over everything that I've been doing for the last 10 years.

0:13:35 - Carly

That sounds right.

0:13:36 - Stephanie

I just I've been walking through my own season of life trying to figure out who I am and where I'm going and who I'm going to spend my life with, and if I want to be a mom, and how to be a mom like what does that look like? And my career, and just making all these big decisions and going through all these transitions in my own life over the last 10 years or so, and along the way because this is totally my personality I learn something, figure something out, take a couple steps and then I'm like, ok, well, now I have this insight, or I have this like turn left there, don't turn right there, like bring a sweater at this point it gets a little chilly, and so I just turn around and go does anyone need this? And it turns out that people do, and so that's really what I've been doing for the last 10 years in all these different areas of life. But the tricky thing is that I've never been able, I've never had the space to be able to fully articulate like the common thread, like whether you are single or dating or engaged or newly married or have been married for a

long time, whether you don't want to be a mom or you're trying to be a mom, or you think maybe at some point you want to be a mom, or you're pregnant, or wherever you are in all of these spectrums. We still all have to make all these decisions about our lives, and we're also going through so many transitions.

What's the through line? And that's what this book is. It's the thing that I've been talking about in the between places, that prayer journal, or in Love, your Single Life, my Course, or it's the thing that's been through every single thing and every episode of Girls Night. It's just never gotten to be in one place, and so I think that's why it was such a labor of love, because I did want it to be perfect, because it wasn't. It was simultaneously. I was saying something new and collecting something that's been around for a really long time, something that's been tried and true for 10 years, and wanting to make sure that it hits an exact right place in the exact right way, wanting to make sure that it is as helpful as possible, and I've just been so picky about every single bit of it, wanting it to be exactly right for the women who are going to read it, and so, yeah, this is absolutely. Writing this book is the hardest thing I've ever done professionally and it's the best thing I've done professionally. I just am so sure.

0:15:57 - Carly

I think that's very well articulated, because you're exactly right, Stephanie, it was 100% kind of this gathering and sifting of what you were already talking about, because it was one of those things where you've talked around this into so many specific applications, and so it's almost harder in some ways to pull back a little bit and say what is the common denominator here, what is the actual takeaway that is more broadly applicable than I'm making this course for women who are in a singleness season, or I'm writing this prayer journal for people who feel kind of in the middle of things, and so it's like you've been talking around this concept in specificity, but not consistency maybe, and so to finally find the language. It's like it kind of reminds me a little bit of one of those thought exercises that you do in a stats class or English class or something where you have to write instructions for how to make a peanut butter sandwich. Did you ever do one of these? Absolutely yes, that's really what this was right, because it's like, well, obviously you spread the peanut butter on the bread, but if you never told people you need bread and you need peanut butter, and you need a knife and open the peanut butter, it's like you're missing steps.

And so this book Create a Life you Love is really about that foundational level, but it's widely and deeply applicable into anybody's personal circumstances, which is kind of like I don't want to call it a magic bullet, in as much as like this isn't going to solve all the world's problems, but I really think it has what readers need to consider their life both critically and generously, and to decide for themselves when do we want to go? What are we building here? You put together this just beautiful toolkit to empower your readers in practical and tactical ways, and I'm just so thrilled personally.

0:18:02 - Stephanie

Well, thank you. Like I said, it was so hard because it had to be exactly right, like every word was so painstakingly chosen, because we're not talking about that, we're not talking about this,

we're not talking like this isn't a general no, that's not what this feels like. It's like I knew exactly what I was trying to do. Doing it was really hard. The thing that's been so cool about this process is and I don't know if the women in our community know this all of my books up until this point have been like independently published, like we have done them all ourselves.

Carl is just a jack of all trades and an incredible designer and art director and everything else. He's one of those people who's good at everything. It's infuriating and also very helpful, but so Carl and I have worked together. Carly, you've worked with us, especially in the last couple of projects, which has been so awesome. Like I've put together my own little team of geniuses who have helped me with this, the last handful of projects, and that's been so cool because we've had control over every bit of it getting to make it exactly what we want it to be, getting to pick out the exact color of foil for the cover, and that's been so wonderful. But really, what you pitched to me or what you proposed to me when you said, like, okay, let's sit down and talk about this again, because we've always been talking about books and publishing, our whole friendship, it's something that we like having, it's a passion we both have in common.

So we've talked about it in various at various times, but this was the first time we were like I really think it's time, like I really think it's time to take this step of doing this traditionally, of working with a publisher, working with an established team, working with a team of editors, working with a sales team that gets it into all the different bookstores and things. Like I think this is the time. And so this was my first project working with a publisher, signing a book contract, working with a team and like a big team. Yeah, and it's been so cool because it's been so cool it is.

I'm so just passionate about the idea that, like we are so much better together, like we, and when everyone gets to be a genius in their little like zone and we put those things all together, what like the culmination of it, I mean it's just amazing. It's amazing what can happen. And the other thing is that I for the longest time thought that writing, especially, was a very solitary undertaking, like you go into a cabin in the woods and you come out with something brilliant. And I've always struggled with that because I am notoriously wrong about my own ideas. Like I will have an idea that I think is amazing and it turns out like it's not that amazing.

0:21:10 - Carly

Or I'll have an idea that, I think, is just You'll be a nugget of amazing in there. What'd you say? Your idea? There's a nugget of amazing in there, it just needs you know.

0:21:19 - Stephanie

Some more Well, like it's things sound, you know, when you're just in your head, you know, trying to figure things out by yourself, like you just have.

It's really helpful to have people to bounce it off of. And so, yeah, they're like I'll have an idea and I'll be like this is the best thing I've ever thought of. And then was saying it out loud. It's like, oh, actually, maybe it's not, but then there are things that I'll think of that I think are just like you know, medium ideas, and it turns out those are some of my best and I wouldn't know that if I

didn't have someone else to work through them with. And so, like this book in particular has been so collaborative, especially with you, like you've been with me every step of the way, helping me get it out of my head and helping me arrange it in a way that's helpful for somebody else, and it's just been so freeing to be like a book does not have to be something that you do by yourself, like none of this life at all, none of it. We don't have to do any of it by ourselves. We can like all of it's better when we work together.

0:22:14 - Carly

Which is really that's. That's not the point of create a life you love, but it's definitely a byproduct of it. I think you know so much of what we talk about in the book is about how you choose who you're surrounding yourself with and how you set your priorities and how the people around you you know, I don't want to give a ton of the content away, but you talk so deeply about your cabinet and I think that as a concept here of of having the people in your life who you can turn to and trust and get wise counsel, that's a hugely significant part of it. And I think that, having walked through we talk about, talk about our new favorite term for this season of life. Ok, because I feel like, because I feel like that really we need we need to have that language in order to talk a little bit more about who this book is for and why it's just the best companion for a very fraught season of life for most women at some point post grad, pre menopause, just be honest.

0:23:21 - Stephanie

Well, so, as I've been doing this work for the last 10 years, walking with women through some of the biggest decisions and transitions of their lives like we said we've been I've been doing it sort of in these little silos, like, ok, well, let's talk about this relationship, or let's talk about this relationship or this decision, and I think that we it can feel like we're we're all solving different problems and therefore alone in the problems that we are solving.

But the more time I spent with women and like who were asking big decisions and going through big transitions, the more I started to see like some through lines, the more that I started to see like I think we're actually doing a lot of the same things. They just sort of have like different costumes on. And so I started to ask more questions like what is happening here, what is happening to women, our age and what is even like our age look like, because you're right, there's, there's this when you're in your late 20s, 30s, early 40s, no-transcript like I guess you're an adult but you're still young, but you're not a young adult, because that feels like kind of patronizing and also like a little too young. We're not old enough to have a mid-life crisis. We're not really necessarily young enough to have a quarter-life crisis, but a lot of what we're dealing with feels like a crisis.

0:24:47 - Carly

It's this giant pile up right of expectations, hopes and dreams, biological clocks, the reality of our finiteness. You know, it's the season where you need to be hustling the most in your career, because we all know that our financial implications in the long run are in large part determined by what we do in this season of life in our late 20s and early 30s. It's also the time that we're settling down and either considering getting married, or wanting to get married, or navigating

marriage in the first few years, and or all of our friends' vibes too right. And then the family piece of it. And how do you, as a woman, hit pause on one of those things in order to concentrate on the other, when it doesn't feel like that's an option, like everything's gonna keep moving forward?

0:25:34 - Stephanie

I'm looking around at all of these women dealing with different things, trying to make big, different decisions, but they're all kind of similar in some ways. I start doing some research about like, what does this look like historically? Like, how did we get to where we are today? How did like, how women done this in the past? Has this always looked like this? And really that, as I uncovered more and more and more, it turns out there's a lot of history there. There's a lot more to this.

This is not the stressfulness of this season isn't just an us thing. It's a like last 200 years thing. And also we're building the plan as we're flying it all at the same time, which we can talk about later. But I just couldn't believe there wasn't a name for this season of life, for the fact that women are putting their whole lives together all at the same time, and so I made one up and it's called the everything era and it's this weird, wonderful and wildly difficult span of years during which you'll make the most biographically significant decisions of your life, all at the same time and in front of a very opinionated audience. That is my definition the everything era, and the thing is that everything like it is everything. It is all happening at the same time. We're trying to figure out our whole lives all at the same time, and it's so. It's as stressful and significant as that word implies, but also it's an incredibly exciting time in life, because this is a season of life where you can create anything you want and the paint is still wet.

Like so much is still up in the air, so little is set in stone, which means there's still so much you can change and so much you can do and so many different paths available to you, and you get to choose which one to take. But of course, that's incredibly overwhelming, and there are so many people around you, around all of us, that have opinions about what our lives are supposed to look like, particularly during these years, and so that's where this book comes in. The book is like a place to get quiet, a place to turn down the volume on all the supposed use in your life. You're supposed to get married at this point. You're supposed to have this many kids. You're supposed to feed your kids like this. Your house is supposed to look like this. You're supposed to have this kind of job Turning all of those down and going who am I, what do I want and how do I get there? This book is a guide through the everything era.

0:27:56 - Carly

And I think what's really powerful about the positioning of this book is it's going to be meaningful to somebody at the front end of that everything era and somebody who's like elbows deep in some choices they've already made. I think about this book as what I needed when I was 24, 25 and feeling like everybody else's life is progressing and I feel stuck. This book would have been a godsend in that context. Similarly, 10 years later, I still take things away from this and I'm in a wildly different season of life than I was at 25. I have a husband and a career and a house and

two babies and all of these things that 10 years ago seemed like pipe dreams and hopes and prayers. Now that's my everyday.

But there are still elements about this book that are so important to be reminded of on a regular basis. Everyone's facing some kind of transition in their life most of the time, and the powerful thing about creative life you love is that, no matter where you find yourself in your everything era, this book is going to give you permission to put yourself again in the driver's seat and to say, just because this is how it has been doesn't mean it's how it has to stay, just because I've been on this path doesn't mean I can't take a look over there. It's an incredibly powerful message in that way.

0:29:21 - Stephanie

Thank you. I really, like you know, I've spent so much time thinking about. The thing I love about this book is that it's kind of a lot of things in one. Like, in sort of one part, my stories you know my stories of how I decided to travel around the world for a year, how I decided, like knew that Carl was the one, how I decided what I wanted to do for a career, how we ended up in Nashville, how we ended up starting our own businesses, how we ended up buying our house, how we ended up deciding we wanted to have kids, like all of these giant decisions and moments where I've put the pieces in my life together. Like all those stories are in here and I love that. It's also one part women's history which has been such an important thing for me as I've been making all these different decisions in my life.

I've felt this like almost nagging, like pulling at my ankles, like you know, when you're walking through, you know, water, you have, like you're walking through the ocean. It's like, maybe up to your knees you can feel the pull and push of the tide. You can feel like, depending on how strong the undertow is, it can totally knock you over and you're just up to your knees, and that's what I've felt throughout the last 10 years. Is this pull of like it's supposed to flick this way?

0:30:42 - Carly
or like.

0:30:43 - Stephanie

I have to do this or women always, or women should, or people would be so happy if I and there are some ways in which I realized I was building a life according to those supposed to's, not according to what I actually wanted.

And so that's really when I started looking into our history as women and I got to trace some threads back of like this is why I feel this pressure, or like this is why it feels like the only option for me is blank, or this is why I feel so much guilt when I choose this option instead of that one.

So, really, like in a manageable, not boring history class way, we dive into, like what the pressure has looked like on women for the last 200-ish years and also what options have been available to us for the last 200-ish years. And I love that part because I just think that when we can understand, like, where we've come from, we can understand what is pulling at our ankles

and either go with it on purpose, you know, saying like this is what, historically, women have been encouraged to do, I want to do that, I'm going to do that on purpose or no, like this pressure has been pulling at women for generations. I am rejecting that on purpose. But the reason it feels so hard to do that is because this pressure has been on women for generations.

0:32:05 - Carly

Yeah, and I think I love your position in that section as kind of like a participant guide, right. I mean, you and I talked about this 100 times in through our 20s of like. You know, I felt by the time I was 24, I felt like I was living off of any known map that any woman in my family had lived before. That was an aggressive assessment of the situation for the record. But like I kept doing that really like unhelpful thing where I'd say, when my mom was my age, she already was married with like three babies and I'm living single in a new city and supporting myself, and like she didn't ever do this. So like how do I know what to do? You know, and it wasn't even that there was like external pressures on me to like align my life with her trajectory. But I think that there's something really deeply inherent about trying to do that of the people that you love and respect. You see, they have a life that you'd like to have from me like that one day. So you think, well, if that was their roadmap, I guess I should do the same thing. But my route is so different. Like the exits off this highway are not remotely getting me where I think I need to go. And so what you do in that section kind of illuminating that right, it's giving a voice to the kind of nagging. It's not supposed to be this way, it's supposed to look like that that so many of us do feel.

And I want to add to Stephanie, because I think this is so, so important you anchor this kind of this history and your personal story. Those are some guiding points in the book, but this is not a memoir, right? This is not just how you got through it and make your own assessments on how you get through it. Dear reader, this is you doing. What you have always, always, always said is your primary goal, which is being the person younger you needed right, or not even younger, you necessarily it's. You are legitimately inviting everybody into your home to say here's what I know, here's what I think, what are your thoughts on the topic, and that's something that you're so naturally gifted at.

And so to see it in this long form in a book that I know people are gonna get their hands on and just scribble in the margins, they're gonna be torn up copies and it's gonna be something that, as soon as you have your hands on this and read it, it's gonna be like, oh my gosh, have you read Creative Life you Love Yet? Like we've gotta talk about this. Please read this book so we can talk about it, because it has that effect of gathering and encouraging and empowering.

0:34:46 - Stephanie

I kind of oh, I love that. I think like the idea of bringing everyone into my house is like so it, and I feel like it's it's here's what I know. What do you think? But also I feel like I'm like taking you and and Putting a blanket around your shoulders and ushering you into another room until, like my favorite cozy chair, and Bringing you a cup of something delicious and then shutting the door, mmm, so you can be in there by yourself for a while, like just giving you some time to be quiet by yourself in a place that's cozy and safe and With a pen and a you know beautiful journal, so

you can just like really Think and reflect and like just Hear yourself for a minute. I just maybe. It's just that I have two toddlers right now and I'm like someone putting me in a quiet room by myself is like the kindest thing you could do, so I'm like probably projecting a little bit, but it's, it's that. It's like, okay, let's do this, let's give you some time and some space, but it's not just a journal, it's it's. It's not a journal at all, it's not. But it's not just like space, it's okay. You know how.

You know how cleaning out your closets is like the most frustrating task. It's like when your closet is a mess any of your closets it's the kind of thing that is like always like six on your studio list because it's super overwhelming. It's not a small task, yeah, you know like you know it needs to get done. It's not quite annoying or pressing enough to like move to the top of your list. It just bothers you a little bit every day. And finally, it's like you get to the weekend and you're like I am going to make this the day that I do it, and you pull everything out, which makes everything way worse before it gets better. You're totally like I just like underwater in all of this junk that you've Accumulated, and finding your way through is so overwhelming, and the thing that I so so you like put it all back and are like I'll just deal with this later. I forget that I quit, I quit.

The thing that's so helpful, though, is like having someone sit with you and just like Be with you and like keep you in, keep you in it, but then also like help. You hold up different things and go. What do you think about this? Like you keep her toss, you know, donate or trash and that's kind of what this is. It's like it's some space, but it's also Like I'm sitting with you going okay, let's just do this one little bite at a time. You don't have to like, you don't have to figure this out all at once. You don't have to figure this out by yourself. Let's just do this a little bit at a time. And that I know, like some hand-holding, like that is so helpful for me, especially when it's something that's overwhelming for me, and so I think that that's what I've really tried to put into. This is like you don't read a chapter and then have to come up with a vision statement for your life. Like that is too much. That is not helpful for anybody.

0:37:42 - Carly

That's absolutely right. I mean, and I think that the most impactful books in this world are the ones where the author takes a position as guide instead of guru. You're not. I mean, you have done the work, you have created a life you love and no spoilers for secret three but like, you continue to make choices and pivot and try new things, which is such a testament to the authenticity of this message and the messenger right, but like, if you're looking for somebody to like hype you up with a microphone and Like, slap you on the butt and be like, go forth and do it. I Know that's not this book. This book is so your cooler big sister, your best friend, somebody coming alongside of you and being like I'm in a to-do. Here's what I'm thinking. And so that guide piece of it is really, really crucial, I think, to the ultimate impact that it's gonna have on readers.

0:38:38 - Stephanie

I love that. I Think that there's something really special about this format like, or the, the position I get to take, because, you know, when we're going through our everything era, a lot of people have opinions about your life, which is something we'll be talking about, like Honestly for the rest of the year. The rest of the decade is like the opinions, where they come from, what they are,

who's saying them, how did they'll turn through them, whatever, I have so many thoughts on that. They're all in this book, but, you know, so many people do have decisions about the way we live our lives, but I don't have an opinion about the way you live your life.

Yeah, I think you know the people who are in your corner. It's wonderful to have people in your corner, but a lot of times they have stronger opinions about what you should do than you do, or they have a clearer vision for your life than you do, and that's really tricky. That's really tricky, and so I think the the beauty of the position I get to take is that I don't have a specific vision for your life. Like, I care about you and I care about how your life turns out, but I don't care what you decide to do.

I want your life to turn out the way you want it to, yeah, and so in this book, I feel like I get to just help turn the volume Down on what people are telling you to do and how you should do it, and make some space for you to figure out, like, what you want. Um, but I think that that's pretty rare. I think most of the time, people care what we choose and and I think even a lot of like most books it's like hey, this is, this is the Goal I'm trying to get you to reach, like this is how to do life, this one specific way. And this is not that like I don't care what you choose, I care that that you choose. Yeah, but I'll help you.

0:40:21 - Carly

It's so good, it's so good. So we've touched on this in a few different angles, but tell me who who's. Who is this?

0:40:28 - Stephanie

book for um. So it's for the girl who is about to have a big birthday and Feeling like she is not where she thought to be at this point in her life. Uh, it's for the girl who is trying to make a massive decision right now and she is drowning in pro and con lists and she still has no idea what to do. Um, it's for the woman who knows exactly what she wants in life, but that thing is just no matter. What she does is just beyond her reach. Like she, she knows what she wants, she just doesn't know how to get it. It's also for the woman who who has no clue what she wants, but maybe she knows she doesn't want what it feels like she's supposed to want, and that Internal wrestling is like just crushing. And then it's also for the woman who feels like she's trying, like she has several Dreams and she's trying to juggle them and figure out how they fit together.

One of the things I talk about is how, um, this season of life, or everything era, feels Kind of like a game of tetris. You know, we're trying to figure out like if and how, and Like all of these pieces of our life are going to fit together, and so we're, we're doing the math, like, okay, well, I have to get married by this age. If I want to have, if I, you know, and if I get married at this age, then I can start trying to get pregnant at this age, because that's when my Bible, like you know, by biologically, that's when that needs to happen. And but I need to get to this place in my career before all of that, like we've all done that, yeah, math, and so it's. It's for the woman who's like I have these different Hopes and dreams for my life and I'm not totally sure how they fit together.

It's for all of us. It's for for everyone Trying to figure out what they want to do with their lives and and how to actually do it, and this is to help.

0:42:15 - Carly

I mean I have goosebumps. That's exactly it. That's exactly it. I think that, um, I think that sometimes in our circles, this kind of question of choosing and figuring out what you want, like I think it's really falsely attributed to seasons of singleness exclusively, and that is just so inaccurate. You know, it's like you used to think, oh, once I'm married, then my questions will be answered. You're like based on what? And so I love that this again kind of zooms out into all of those people that you just described. You know you could be happily established in five areas of your life and still wonder about others. I think this really speaks to those blind spots and those deeper secret polls. I think it's really really a beautiful celebration of that and, again, a very empowering, very practical exploration of how to go about truly creating the life that you love.

0:43:24 - Stephanie

There's something I wanted to talk about really quick is, I think that there's this idea that like. So initially we wrestled hard with the title because we were like, is we wanted it to say exactly what we wanted it to say? And so we've played with every word in the English language and probably like five other languages and every combination they could be. But the reason we played with it so much, or the reason we had such trouble with it, is because I think we have a hard time sometimes with the idea that we could or should create a life we love. Like it feels maybe selfish or entitled a little bit to think that life should just be easy and breezy and work out for us, because that's what this book could be, you know, like create a life you love could be a slap on the butt and like you deserve everything and like you know whatever. And we I think there's a part of us that really resists that, where we're like you know, I'm not trying to be entitled or or no one's trying to game the system here, yeah, and and like I don't think life should be just we, just there's there's like a little bit of resistance, I know, in me, in the idea that we can and should create a life we love, but something that I keep coming back to is the idea of pants.

We have to wear pants. We each have a life, we each have to wear pants, and we can and should wear pants that fit us. Like there are a million pants in the world. There are so many options of fits and sizes and colors and fabrics, and like there's no benefit, there's no prize at the end of the day, for wearing a pair of pants that you hate, that doesn't fit you, and that's the same with our life. You know, like there are so many different, different ways to customize this thing.

There are so many decisions that go into your life that you have to make before lunchtime today, let alone over the span of a year or or your life, and there's not one right way to do it. Like there's, and you don't get extra points for wearing pants that don't fit you anymore. And so I think that's really what this is about. It's not about like pressing the easy button and having just this like really perfect life. It's not that. It's. It's about making, making intentional decisions every time a choice is presented, it's making that choice intentionally so that you are living in a way that is authentic to who you are, what you need, what your family needs and who you want to be, and I think it needs to be articulated right.

0:46:02 - Carly

A life you love is not a life without conflict, it's not a life without hardship. It's simply the life that you chose right, that you intentionally had a hand in creating, and that's a powerful position to be. In One of the one of the images that you use in the book and in earlier iterations it was more of like an organizing metaphor, but you talked a lot about life being a collage that you're putting together versus a puzzle, and I always loved that imagery. Can you talk about that a little bit, for?

0:46:32 - Stephanie

us. Yeah, I think that really, you know, for a thousand reasons we have this idea that that there's a right way and a wrong way to do things, and it's a big picture and a little picture. You know, like I don't know. Well, this is what my mom bought from the grocery store. So I think this is what I'm supposed to buy from the grocery store. You know, I'm brand loyal to this, just because my mom was.

We feel like there's a right and a wrong way to do our lives, like we should. We have to figure it out and there should be this satisfying click and we'll know that we got it right and then also, at some point, we're done. But I feel like there just is. It doesn't work like that. Our adult lives aren't puzzles to complete, they're collages to create. It's so much more. Hey, there are all these beautiful images that you can choose from and how you choose them and what you choose and how you arrange them, and how big, like the scale of all of it, and the margin, like how much margin you have around everything. That's all variable. You get to choose all of that and the way that your life will look, the way that the life you live will be so different as a result. But, like you have to choose, and that's the thing.

If we don't choose, life is going to happen to us Like the choices are going to get made. Either like we will end up creating a beautiful life that looks nothing like us because we were just sort of following the past, or we miss out on our chance to do some things that really were only available to us in this season of life. We, just because we're so, we're in such analysis, paralysis, like we don't do anything until we miss our shot. Or we end up getting to, you know, making some of the things that we wanted, or doing some of the things we want to do, but because we did them so late, like they don't get to be as good or as beautiful or as full as we wanted them to.

Like there are just our life is going to happen to us. These decisions are going to be made by someone else or just by circumstances, if we don't get involved. But we can get involved, and in so many ways. Like of course there's some things we can't choose. Of course there's some things like, I don't know, paying your bills that you have to have to do.

0:48:43 - Carly

Like we're in.

0:48:45 - Stephanie

But there are so many ways to do so many things that we get to customize this and be as creative with this as we want to be, and the process of doing that, I think, when we, when we start to realize this isn't like a collage or this isn't a puzzle we're just trying to complete, it's a collage we get to create, it's a masterpiece. Then it becomes really fun and I think our lives are so much beautiful, the process is so much more beautiful and the result is so much more beautiful as well.

0:49:15 - Carly

Powerful. Stephanie, we are close to time, but the last question I have for you is a take on our beloved Barbara Brown-Taylor's. What's Saving your Life? And I want to know specifically, throughout this book writing process, which was arduous and lengthy and took so much emotionally, mentally, spiritually, the whole vibe what has been saving your life through the book writing process?

0:49:45 - Stephanie

Two things. One is you. I should not have said that. Like really there is so much to be said for like we just I think a lot of us feel like we have to do life by ourselves, and that is what strength looks like. But I think that strength is being smart enough to know what you're not good at and gathering a team of people who are really good at those things. That is the key. Like you just don't have to do this by yourself. And so why would you find someone who's better at it than you are? Better at all the like you are better at outlines than I am, like by far, and so get with someone who I'll allow that.

0:50:23 - Carly

But also, if I may, I mean the team goes so far beyond anyone individual, you know. I think about Mari and Casey offering counsel. I think about Carolyn and Amanda, the other two editors who were so crucial in getting this book to where it is now. Katie, our brilliant marketing director, who I just obsessed with the team around you, who believes in you, who believes in this message. It is a sight to behold.

0:50:49 - Stephanie

You kind of have to love that it is. Like it is. This is an incredible team. So, yeah, it's really not doing it by myself. That has been saving my life.

And then the other thing is, with a book like this or with a giant project like this, I'm so tempted to break it up into pieces. This is, like more practical, but I'm tempted to break it up into pieces and to be like okay, like you know, I need to get through chapter one today. Well, I don't know what chapter one's going to entail or how long. That, like it's just really hard to put a value on that. And so I think you know you spend a lot of time feeling like you're you're failing, because you're like it just doesn't fit in the a lot of time.

So instead I started saying I'm going to give this an hour, or I'm going to give this two hours, and so I would say by the end of this weekend, this project is going to be seven hours better. And every hour I would like, you know, write it down and like check off a box, or I would, you know,

do a sticky note, something like that, to like really give me that satisfaction. But it was like I don't know what's going to happen in this hour. I can't really control like I can't just like get it done, but I do know that this whole thing is going to be seven hours better by that, by the end of this, and I just will be doing that forever. I love that, it's such a good posture.

0:52:05 - Carly

I can attest that it's exactly how you talked about it Eight hours better, and I'm like sure that's a unit of measurement. We like that, okay, true, last thing, last thing who is your book dedicated to?

0:52:18 - Stephanie

Oh, this is such a cute question. Um, so the book is that? I didn't know you're going to ask this. The book is dedicated to a woman who's gone before me and the women who are going after me, and dedicated to my mom. My mom is a doctor of psychology and she taught me that it's possible to have a great career and be a great mom all at the same time, and she just has been in my corner forever as I'm trying to do the same. And then it's dedicated to the women who are coming after me, the little girls Annie and Quinn, and I just hope to be a great example of what a beautiful life can look like, and in their corner as they create that themselves, whatever it looks like for them.

0:53:01 - Carly

I'm not a sentimental person and I'm literally crying right now, Stephanie, it has been one of the greatest delights of my life to walk through this with you in real time from 22 years old on Bananas for the record, but wild and wonderful, and it's been an honor in my publishing career to be a part of it too. And we have daughters just three months apart, and to know that this is the work that we get to do to pave the path for them my dear God, what an unbelievable privilege. So I am so proud of you, I'm so proud of you, and I cannot wait. You guys, this book is it? It is it. It is what you have been waiting for from Stephanie. I am obsessed. You are going to love it.

I cannot wait to see what you guys have to say as you get your hands on it. There's going to be so much more information to come, as far as pre-orders and gifts and locations and celebrations. I mean my gosh, we are going to blow this out. It's going to be incredible, but we will save that for next time. Stephanie. Congratulations, babe, so proud of you. This is awesome.

0:54:13 - Stephanie

Thank you. Thank you, Carl, I love you. I love you.

0:54:18 - Carly

Thanks for tuning into this very special episode of Girls Night with Carly Keller, Madame Stephanie and the Rapsists.

0:54:23 - Stephanie

For Now. I'm so happy you finally know this secret, but there's something I actually didn't get to talk about in this episode, and that's the fact that I really, really need your help Now. Can I tell you some publishing behind the scenes real quick. When an author writes a book, the most helpful thing you can possibly do to support them is to pre-order it. Now, pre-ordering just means that you order it before it's officially released, and at least on Amazon. When you pre-order a book, that means it'll show up on your doorstep on the exact day the book officially comes out. Isn't that cool? It's crazy, though, because the success of a book isn't really measured by what happens once it comes out. Instead, it's determined by how many people pre-order the book before it even releases. No pressure, right? The reason it's so important, though, is because pre-orders are how retailers like Target and Barnes and Noble and local bookstores decide if they want to carry your book and how many copies they're going to carry. In fact, as far as I know, Target is currently making their decision, like right now, as to whether or not they're going to carry my book, and it is a massive dream of mine to be in Target. I would love it so much I'm trying not to think about that too much. So the kindest, most wonderful, most helpful thing you could do for me today would be to pre-order the book. It can be from Amazon, your local bookstore or from Target if you want to help give them a little nudge, no matter where you order it from.

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