

Wonderful! 85: Mr. Balloons Goes to Washington

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[theme music plays]

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hello, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is Wonderful!

Griffin: Carly Rae Jepsen. Did it. Did the fuckin' thing again-- You don't know what it's like, having to sit on that, that energy!

Rachel: She's got an album out.

Griffin: She has an album out, it has a thousand tracks on it, and each one is a, I'm gonna say, sensual banger. Those two words together aren't great, but it's a different Carly, it's a grown-up... And this energy that it's pouring into all of us-- And it's good! It's wonderful. The tour is going to happen, and the music.

Rachel: I haven't listened to it yet.

Griffin: [chokes] Bwa-- The musi-- You, you haven't listened to...

Rachel: When'd it come out, Friday?

Griffin: Uh, it came out, uh, I don't know. It seems like i-it's time immemorial, because of how much it's changed the just sort of landscape.

Rachel: I mean, it's Tuesday. I just, I just haven't gotten around to it.

Griffin: Okay. I mean, I guess we had a busy weekend together. Um...

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: So it's good. It's called Dedicated. It's good, and that's a... You got anything?

Rachel: What's that on, Spotify or something?

Griffin: No, you can only get it at Suncoast.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [sighs] Sorry. Now that I'm like, actually here and the moment's come where I can talk about a good thing on our good podcast I'm just, like... I've run out of steam. I've run out of steam so quickly.

Rachel: Mm.

Griffin: Oh-- Here it comes, the steam's coming back-- [strained] It's so good!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, this is a show where we talk about good things.

Rachel: Things that we like.

Griffin: Things that we love, even?

Rachel: Sometimes.

Griffin: Things we're in love with, maybe, even.

Rachel: Sometimes, yeah.

Griffin: All the time. I, uh, am in love with you, so Rachel--

Rachel: [excited] Are you gonna talk about me this week?

Griffin: No.

Rachel: Am I the wonderful thing this week?

Griffin: You're the wonderful thing every week, but people would not tune in to that show if I was like--

Rachel: Ehh, they probably would. [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs] This week, you got it folks, it's Rachel! You've heard me talk about her smile, her humor, her wit, her intellect--

Rachel: My butt.

Griffin: The butt.

Rachel: What that butt do.

Griffin: We did a whole holiday special about each butt cheek. It took two years.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: But today, we're gonna talk about... her soft hair. Dammit! We've done that one already.

Rachel: We have. [laughs]

Griffin: Her left earlobe? Okay. It's cool. This one dangles. It's unpierced, because it's not a conformist, and that's... is good, a good earlobe.

Rachel: Do you want to know what my small wonder is?

Griffin: Yeah, please.

Rachel: PEN15.

Griffin: I've heard that's good.

Rachel: I watched the first season on Hulu while Griffin was on tour, and it is so much fun.

Griffin: What's it-- What is it like? What's it about?

Rachel: Uh, it's these two women who are now in their early 30s, and they play themselves as middle school students, and the cast is entirely middle school little teens and them.

Griffin: Oh, okay. Is it like-- Did you ever watch, uh, like, Strangers With Candy?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: A little bit, but they don't address the fact that they're older.

Griffin: Oh, okay, I see, I see.

Rachel: It's them actually inhabiting themselves as, as young people.

Griffin: Oh, that's fun.

Rachel: Uh, and, and they do some stuff that's very like, 90s specific, which I appreciate a lot. Uh, and it's a great show.

Griffin: I been watchin' The Americans. Holy shit, that's a good one. Wow, that's a good show. Rachel is angry about me, because I think she wants to watch it.

Rachel: Yeah, you really took off. Well, see, initially he said, "Oh, I just started it, maybe you can catch up." And I said, "How many episodes?" And you said, "Six." And I thought, "Well, that's-- that's not--"

Griffin: It's eight now.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: You need to-- you gotta hit the g-- you gotta pound the pavement. I have a lot of wonderful things right now. Like, I am super into a lot of different stuff. The Carly album, I just got the Oculus Quest, the standalone VR thing.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And I fu-fucked with it for like, a half hour and it's like, changed my life.

Rachel: I came home and Griffin had the telltale marks on his forehead.

Griffin: The raccoon face.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, and then... I had something else. I've been playing Golf Blitz on my phone. It's a golf game, stick man golf game. It's really good, and I want everybody to play it with me, so I can beat you, because I'm better than you, and I need the trophies. I gotta get the trophies, babe. I think I go first this week.

Rachel: Sure.

Griffin: Do I?

Rachel: Sounds right.

Griffin: My first thing this week is rice. My first thing is rice, the stuff, the grain. The thing we call rice that you can eat any damn way you please, 'cause it's rice, baby.

Rachel: Huh!

Griffin: We had rice last night. I had rice last night.

Rachel: Yeah, I did not.

Griffin: You had a salad. I had rice last night. Odds are, we're gonna have rice tonight. I think I'm eating rice, like, three or four times a week at this point.

Rachel: You know we're gonna have rice tonight. [laughs]

Griffin: Hell yeah, we're gonna have rice tonight. We got big plans to eat Chinese food and watch the hockey game.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: We're super, super stoked about it. Uh, unless the Blues lose, in which case... Well, I guess we'll know by the time this comes out, but anyway, rice is so good. Don't you think so?

Rachel: I do. Actually, I, uh, had always kind of convinced myself that it was a healthier option.

Griffin: Oh, no! [laughs]

Rachel: But it's, it's just a carb.

Griffin: It is-- It's a, it's a com--

Rachel: But it's nice, small carb.

Griffin: Y-yeah!

Rachel: And you can put a lot of stuff on it, unlike a... Like bread, for example. Um...

Griffin: Yeah, you can't put hardly anything on bread.

Rachel: They-- you know? [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs] Um, I didn't-- I never really liked rice when I was younger. I didn't really like it-- I mean, I was a very, very picky eater, and so like, actually a lot of like, particularly Asian food I was like, just not into until I was like, in--

Rachel: Well, and you were also having like, the West Virginia spin on, uh, Asian food, which maybe isn't as reliable?

Griffin: That is fair, but I didn't even like... I think what excites me about rice is that rice is, for me, a medium. A food platform.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: And I didn't appreciate that. I just thought it was a kind of, um, mostly flavorless side dish. Uh, and that's not the case, because A), it's got good flavor, especially brown rice. Like, uh, I-I prefer white rice, but brown rice has kind of a nuttier flavor that I can, I can get into.

Rachel: That's true, it is nuttier!

Griffin: Um, but also it's just like, when you have rice, you've got options. Like, we've got a big bag of rice in our pantry and now, like, if we have that and we have a vegetable of any kind and maybe a protein of some sort and a sauce, that's dinner!

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It can be dinner!

Rachel: Now, make the case for me why it's better than pasta.

Griffin: Why rice is better than pasta?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: I don't know, I feel like with pasta you have to think about the type of noodle. You have to think about the shape of it. And obviously there's, uh, long grain, medium grain, short grain rice, although short grain is mostly for like, mashin' into a pudding, and long grain is, uh, you know, typically like side dish, eat it as, as it is grain rice.

Um, you don't have to worry about that with rice, though. I just feel like rice is more... Sometimes I get in the mood for pasta. Sometimes I do get in the mood for pasta. But like, if I'm going to eat some meat and vegetables on something, I want that to be rice.

Rachel: Yes. I agree.

Griffin: If it's a-- if it's a hearty sauce, if it's a hearty sauce or something, maybe I'll talk to you about pasta. Maybe we'll get there together.

Rice is obviously enjoyed by a few people around the world.

Rachel: Just, uh, you and me.

Griffin: It's me and Rachel, and most people aren't into this underground hit grain that is called rice.

Rachel: [quietly] Yeah, hey, hey. Hey, you guys-- you guys heard about rice?

Griffin: [laughs] Yeah. The only thing is that it is, uh, an agricultural commodity with the third highest worldwide production. They only did 741.5 million tons of that shit, um, what was that? In 2014, and also it provides, uh, more than one fifth of the calories consumed by humanity.

Rachel: Weird...

Griffin: That's so much rice, holy shit!

Rachel: I woulda-- I woulda thought it was, uh, the Krispy Kreme donuts.

Griffin: Oh, those Krispy Kreme donuts have my number, don't they?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um. Yeah, I think--

Rachel: How do you like this character, by the way?

Griffin: I do! It's--

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It's very Kathy, and I like that a lot.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, it's versatile. It can be anything you want. You can-- it's what sushi is made out of, and that's-- sushi's good, isn't it?

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah!

Griffin: I was thinkin' like, oh, I could bring jambalaya. I could bring sushi. I could bring, uh, you know, pork tonkatsu on rice. But why not just bring rice? Well, I could do paella, or I could do rice, because rice is all of that shit!

Um, I just like-- I don't know. I like having the... I like having the safety and comfort of knowing I have rice in, in the pantry. That I have some amount of rice. Easy to cook. They make machines that just fucking cook it for you! And then you don't have to wo-- set it and forget, baby!

Rachel: Yeah, that did-- that was a big game changer for us when we like, invested the whatever, like, 16 dollars into a rice cooker.

Griffin: Get a rice cooker, and then get instant, instant, uh, curry, and then like, it's instant, and the rice is done, and that's dinner, baby! And it can last you two days! It's so fucking choice. Rice is so good.

Rice can also get-- you can make it into, uh, what are-- like, the rice cakes. You can wrap-- oh, dude! Frickin' rice puffs, Rice Krispie Treats, rice puffs and the little rice, like, uh, uh, saucers, what are those called? Those are just called rice cakes, aren't they?

Rachel: Yeah. [laughs]

Griffin: Those are good. Onigiri is nice, and that's, like, a little hand pie! But it's rice, baby!

Rachel: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. You haven't even mentioned the like, uh, the Mexican opportunities.

Griffin: There's so many Mexican opportunities for rice, baby. Make it spicy rice, I love it! Uh, you can do, uh, you can do r-rice flour! You can do, like, a sticky rice dough to make a little bun. Hello, rice! If you freaking drop your iPhone in the toilet with pee-pee in it, you throw it in the rice bag and it soaks it all out!

Rachel: That's true, yeah.

Griffin: That's not true. One time I was... I was inebriated, and I jumped into a hot tub like a cool guy. I did like, a cool guy move into the hot tub to like, hang out with our friends and show off what a cool guy I was, and then I, I remembered I did have my iPhone in my pocket. Put it in the rice bag. It did not save it.

Rachel: No. Well...

Griffin: Dr. Rice did not come through this time.

Rachel: You had a few things besides water at play, there.

Griffin: Uh, I guess so. Hot?

Rachel: Hot.

Griffin: Um, and probably the urine of everybody who had ever went to that Airbnb we stayed at.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Where's that part of the press conference? "Yeah, most phones are waterproof. But this one? It's piss proof."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: "And to prove it--"

[distantly] "No, please don't prove it!"

"No, come on. Get out here, Joni. Pee on this phone."

[English accent] "I'm going to pee on this phone to show you how pee proof it is."

Rachel: Is Joni their like, Chief Pee Officer?

Griffin: He has evolved into that. They created the position for him. They didn't want to. What's your first thing?

Rachel: [laughs] So, my first thing. I'm excited to take you on this journey, and it is the journey of Bunch O Balloons.

Griffin: Th... This is the most... Rachel sent me a link to this. It was a YouTube video with, like, 400 views, and I was like, "Are you s-- are you sure you want to go down this extremely obscure--"

Rachel: It's not just the product, Griffin. It's the journey.

Griffin: Uh, Rachel, take me on the journey for this. Is it an active Kickstarter, still?

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Bunch O Balloons. This all got started 2014. This man, last name of Malone--

Griffin: Last name is Malone?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: You mumbled a bi-- [laughs] You said it kind of like Borat, like, [Borat voice] "Last name a Ma-Malone."

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, he is a father of eight.

Griffin: That is... Okay, now I unders-- Can I say something? You just un-- That was the key that unlocked the mystery of Bunch O Balloons.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: When you have eight children, you need a bunch o' [gruffly] 'everythang'.

Rachel: He-- so, he's a mechanical engineer, and he decided to develop Bunch O Balloons, which enables more than a hundred balloons per minute to be fit and tied. These are water balloons.

Griffin: These are water balloons, folks. Don't try and fill these things up with air. They'll pop. Probably.

Rachel: Yeah. So, you twist it onto a hose. It's like, it's like a long tube that has a bunch of little, um, uh... What do I want-- I want to call 'em flanges. [laughs]

Griffin: No, I don't think flanges is the right word. It has, like, straws.

Rachel: Little spouts that come off.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And--

Griffin: Imagine, like, a octopus with a hundred arms, and then throw yourself into bed and try to sleep and forget it because it's so scary, what I said.

Rachel: Uh, fills 37 balloons at a time, and then you shake the contraption, and then the water balloons slide off and automatically seal themselves.

Griffin: Because they have little rubber bands around the, the, the hole. Man, why is water balloon terminology so difficult?

Rachel: [laughs] Well--

Griffin: The nipple. The nipple of the balloon.

Rachel: A lot of folks don't fill balloons as part of their daily life, but apparently this, this Mr. Malone does.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh, with his eight children. So, he set a \$10,000 goal on Kickstarter and managed to rake in nearly a million dollars, uh, with more than 20,000 backers.

Griffin: Holy fucking... That's a lot of families with eight children that went to-- went to for that thing.

Rachel: Well, have you tied a water balloon before? It's like-- it sucks.

Griffin: Yeah, it sucks. It's the worst thing in the world, because you goosh yourself, and then it's like, well, if I've gooshed myself and I'm already wet, what's the point of going out there and... Like, there's no more danger in the fight, you know?

Rachel: So Mr. Malone gets a lot of attention. I believe his first name is Josh, but I don't seem to have written it down.

Griffin: [laughing] I actually like you calling this honored individual--

Rachel: Mr. Malone.

Griffin: "Mr. Malone, the balloon-- the many-ballooned man."

Rachel: He gets a lot of attention. He, uh, gets press in Sports Illustrated and Time. He appears on Good Morning America and The Today Show, and the demand is so great he pairs up with Chinese toy giant ZURU for manufacturing and distribution, and applies for a patent in February 2014.

The patent-- he applies for two. That includes system and method for filling containers with fluid, and device for filling multiple water balloons.

Griffin: Good, you gotta fuckin' protect yourself, Mr. Malone. You got to. You've struck gold. Don't let somebody snatch that out right from under you.

Rachel: But this is just the beginning of the story.

Griffin: Oh!

Rachel: [laughs] I'm really trying to do like, a, uh--

Griffin: Like a serial s--

Rachel: Reply all kind of...

Griffin: Yeah, sure, sure.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: Hold on, let me play-- let me play some like, like, cool music.

Rachel: Let me-- let me take you to the present.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: May 2019, Wall Street Journal article. They received 31 million as part of a settlement of a long running dispute between Telebrands, which is the As Seen TV, and Mr. Malone.

Griffin: Mr. Malone received 31 million dollars?

Rachel: Him and, him and ZURU.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Yeah. Because what happened in 2014, Telebrands claims that Malone's patent wasn't valid, and makes Balloon Bonanza, Easy Einstein Balloons, and Battle Balloons.

Griffin: [angrily] Balloon Bonanza!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Einstein Mini-- what was it? Einstein Balloon...

Rachel: Easy Einstein Balloons and Battle Balloons.

Griffin: Battle Balloons? It's not-- you've made it violent!

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: What the fuck, man?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: We can't-- Lot O Balloons is good, perfect!

Rachel: So Telebrands, Telebrands has made as-seen on TV brands like the PedEgg, which is the little egg, and something called the Crank Chop, which I'm pretty sure is the Slap Chop, so their whole thing is going after popular items, and selling 'em in like, Bed, Bath, and Beyond, and whatever.

Griffin: Now I will say, Crank Chop is a much more powerful name. It makes me want to do both motions that they have suggested.

Rachel: So in November 2017, a jury in Texas found Telebrands had willfully infringed on the patents, and ruled Malone's original patents to be valid--

Griffin: [whispers] Yes!

Rachel: And awarded 12.25 million.

Griffin: Nice!

Rachel: But Malone had spent about 20 million in legal fees.

Griffin: Whoa, damn!

Rachel: During the years of litigation against Telebrands. At this point, though, Bunch O Balloons is a hundred million dollar business.

Griffin: [muffled laughter] What?!

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: [laughing] It's water balloons! What?!

Rachel: They were making a hundred million annually at this point.

Griffin: It's water balloons!

Rachel: I know, isn't that fascinating?

Griffin: It's wa-- I guess there's a lot of like--

Rachel: I, I-- When's the last time you used a water balloon, right?

Griffin: It's been a minute, but I guess there's a lot of like, vacation bible schools around the country.

Rachel: I guess so!

Griffin: That need some, some, some wet summer fun.

Rachel: So he's paying for these legal fees because he's making a bunch of money, uh, but here's the thing. So, in March 2019, US District Court Judge Robert Schroeder ordered Telebrands to pay enhanced damages after finding they had demonstrated an intent to delay and obstruct the court proceedings.

Griffin: Don't even-- Oh, fuck.

Rachel: So this is when we get up to the 31 million, uh, as of this year.

Griffin: As of this year? There's-- there could be more. I want there to be more.

Rachel: I think we're done now.

Griffin: No, I want them to be fucking ruined.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I want them to-- I want them in the ground, Rachel. Because it's one thing to step on the Lot O Balloons brand, but when you step on the neck of Lady Liberty like that, Lady Justice like that?

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: That won't fly, and Mr. Malone's gonna get you.

Rachel: So, so this is a permanent injunction. So at this point, Telebrands has to stop with all the...

Griffin: Their balloon bullshit.

Rachel: You know, the Battle Balloons and the, and the Einstein Balloons. So, here's the thing that I also loved about this. So, the judge pointed to an exchange in the record from a Telebrands executive from an employee.

Griffin: [laughs quietly]

Rachel: And this is the quote from the email: "So you know what the original, actual product, Bunch O Balloons, looks like?" And then inserts a picture of Bunch O Balloons. "Here's a pic below. Here's our version below where we would just paint the cap and change out the balloons."

Griffin: [laughs distantly]

Rachel: [laughs] "Using the bands removed from their product. New blue balloons we load up and on a painted cap."

Griffin: Uh, that's fuckin' ironclad, dog!

Rachel: So, like, [laughs] literally evidence saying, "Hey, you know this original product that we're going to rip off, see the picture below? We're gonna just change the color."

Griffin: Yeah. It's super bad. That's-- you're a very bad criminal at that point, but also even if we didn't have that evidence, if you were in court and they were like,

"This is literally the same thing," your defense was gonna be, "Uh-uh! This one's blue, so, heh heh."

Rachel: So this guy is, is a Texas guy. He was living in Plano when all this was going down. Now he's moving to Washington and making like, a whole career out of, of--

Griffin: Suing the as seen on TV people?

Rachel: [laughs] Basically.

Griffin: 'Cause I'll be there, baby. I'll be there. Just say when.

Rachel: 30 million. This father of eight, so now maybe he can send all of them to college.

Griffin: Water balloon fights were really fun back in the day, and I will say this: this seems environmentally disastrous, because you're-- [laughs] I mean, water balloons are already not great, um, but--

Rachel: So the reason I sent you that clip, too, is it's like, him probably using his own kids to like, do this demonstration.

Griffin: Yeah. It is a very-- now that I know-- it looked like a home video. It was, like, very, very, uh, very tame, very cute.

Rachel: This guy just starts out with a Kickstarter, and then this company steals it from him, and now he is a multimillionaire from water balloons!

Griffin: I would have more water-- that-- this establishes water balloons as a thing you can do, because me, I would be like, "Let's have a water balloon fight," and then a half hour later I'd have five and I'd be like, "This is gonna be a short, short fight."

Hey, can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

[end of the Home Improvement theme, muffled and distorted]

Rachel: Okay. Hey Griffin, can I tell you about our sponsors this week?

Griffin: I wish that you would start immediately.

Rachel: The first is FabFitFun!

Griffin: FabFitFun!

Rachel: We got one of these boxes. It had a really nice water bottle in it, and it had a full size of this leave-in conditioner that I've been using all the time now.

Griffin: It's so nice.

Rachel: Uh, and it had a jump rope in there. Uh, it's like, this whole health and wellness and beauty thing, all in one box.

Griffin: There's a little diffuser, a little diffuser action happening in there.

Rachel: Yeah! Yeah. Here are some of the items that, uh, you can look forward to with a FabFitFun box. Uh, you can also get things like facial sprays and tote bags and resistant bands and makeup setting sunscreen. Uh, it's all full size beauty, fashion, home, and fitness wellness products for just \$49.99 a box! Every box is guaranteed to have over \$200 in retail value, and this is four times a year.

So sign up for FabFitFun, today! Go to fabfitfun.com and use promo code "wonderful" to get \$10 off your first box. That's over \$200 in products for only \$39.99. It's fabfitfun.com, and use code "wonderful" to get \$10 off your first FabFitFun box.

Griffin: Can I just say, you did a good job. FabFitFun is a tough thing to say a thousand times in a row.

Rachel: Thank you!

Griffin: It's a great company, but it's tough to say a bunch in a row, and you crushed it.

Rachel: Thank you.

Griffin: I'm gonna tell everybody about Lola. This one... Can I do Lola?

Rachel: Please!

Griffin: Lola is a company that makes organic cotton tampons, pads, liners, and all-natural cleansing wipes. Take it away, Rachel.

Rachel: Wonderful is brought to you in part by Lola. Lola offers complete transparency about the ingredients found in their tampons, pads, liners, and wipes. Lola products are 100% organic cotton, with--

Griffin: Cotton!

Rachel: No added chemicals, fragrances, synthetics, or dyes. Lola offers pads, liners, and both BPA free plastic applicator or environmentally non-applicator tampons.

Griffin: [laughs] I just had...

Rachel: Environmentally non-applicator.

Griffin: [laughs] I just had a great idea, and this can be our patent that we can make a bunch of money on. It's called "Lot O Tampons," and it's 37 tampons, and they are attached to 37... I guess tubes or hoses or whatever, with a single sort of, like, application... Pod.

Rachel: [laughs] Like the Build a Bear cotton thing. You know how they have the stuffer, the bear stuffer? But it's tampons.

Griffin: And there's 37 of them, so you and your 36 close friends will, I guess, go in on this.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And have a special afternoon. But it's more than once a day, isn't it?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Ah, shoot.

Rachel: Yeah, several times a day, actually. 37 would probably, uh, only get you through a few days.

Griffin: Okay, so there's 37, and you just use one of them, and the other 36 just go rocketing upward into the ceiling and they bounce around like a, like a confetti.

Rachel: Can I tell you what I like about Lola, though?

Griffin: What's that?

Rachel: Uh, so you get it mailed to your door. You can sign up for a subscription service. Uh, a lot of people, including myself, get their period once a month, and having a subscription service where it arrives before you have to worry about running to the store is incredible. So, for 40% off all subscriptions, visit mylola.com and enter "wonderful" when you subscribe.

Griffin: I'm just sayin', a hundred tampons a minute is... a tremendous value.

Rachel: It is. We'll work on it.

Griffin: Uh, I got some Jumbotrons here. This one's for C and it's from B, who says, "To C, from B. Heya, Ace! I'm writing this from the end of 2018, and boy howdy what a year! I'm so glad to have you as a best friend and as a teammate in so many of our mutual endeavors. One of the most wonderful things in my life is having you to come home to every day, and I hope you always believe in this gal that believes in you. Love Daddy."

I don't know if B is Daddy, but I do know that--

Rachel: But 2018 was a year.

Griffin: I will say that. That is one thing I can definitely understand in this message, is that many things happened in 2018. Am I right, folks?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I got another one here. This one's for Claire and it's from Meg, who says, "Claire, I'm so glad we spent six years together, in metaphor, and some months together, in location. I love you lots! Thanks to you and my Awful Squad Junior friends for encouraging me to live my grad school dream, and for putting up with

my obscure science nerdiness. You all make up the best parts of me. Also, don't forget to drink some water."

That is a good message. Glad Awful Squad Junior is still out there, changing the world one, uh, chicken dinner at a time. And also...

[pauses]

Rachel: Griffin's been really good about drinking water lately.

Griffin: They told me to!

[static]

Speaker One: Welcome back to Fireside Chat on KMAX. With me in studio to take your calls is the dopest duo on the West Coast, Oliver Wang and Morgan Rhodes. Go ahead, caller!

Speaker Two: Hey, uh, I'm looking for a music podcast that's insightful and thoughtful, but, like, also helps me discover artists and albums that I've never heard of.

Morgan: Yeah man, sounds like you need to listen to Heat Rocks. Every week, myself, and I'm Morgan Rhodes, and my co-host here, Oliver Wang, talk to influential guests about a canonical album that has changed their lives.

Oliver: Guests like Moby, Open Mic Eagle, talking about albums by Prince, Joni Mitchell, and so much more.

Speaker Two: Yo, what's that show called again?

Morgan: Heat Rocks: Deep dives into hot records.

Oliver: Every Thursday on Maximum Fun.

[static]

Rachel: What's your second thing?

Griffin: Uh, my second thing... Before I-I t-tell you my second thing, I gotta ask you a question.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: [singing] Where in the world is Carmen Sandiego? Goes from Nashville to Norway, [mumbling the words to Carmen Sandiego] and [mumbling some more] and [still more mumbling] and something--

Rachel: Is your--

Griffin: [loudly] And back! She's a [he's mumbling gibberish] Wall of China to [mumbling more not real words] of Belize. He's a frickin' [mumbling]--

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [mumbling] tell me, [deep voice] where in the world is Carmen Sandiego?

Rachel: Please tell me your second thing is Rockapella and not the TV show, Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?

Griffin: My second thing is actually, um, uh... The accordion, I want to talk about the accordion.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: No, I want to talk about fuckin' Carmen Sandiego! I'm gonna talk about the, the br-- the Carmen Sandiego brand. How's that? And there will be ac-- Rockapella discussion. Is that--

Rachel: Okay, good, good, good, good. That's what I want.

Griffin: Um, I, I talk about this a lot on this show but I was not a very good student, and so I feel like there are large gaps in my knowledge of things that people learned about in school, and I think geography is chief among them. But the little knowledge I do have about geography I solely owe to Ms. Dr. Professor Carmen Sandiego. Actually she was a thief, but you know what I mean. And all her--

Rachel: This is like when I talked about Mavis Beacon.

Griffin: It's funny you say that, because this is also a Broderbund jam.

Rachel: Oh! They love taking a character to inspire learning.

Griffin: They sure do. Broderbund made, uh, Mavis Beacon. They... They had a lot of edu-games, uh, which where, like... I was in, in our talented and gifted class in elementary school and middle school, like, we had a whole pantheon of edu-games that we played. Like Zoombinis. I don't think that was them. And Math Blaster and the like.

I didn't know they also did like, Prince of Persia. They did the Prince of Persia on the original Apple II, and they did Myst, which I could do like, a whole segment on Myst. Holy shit, Myst rules.

Rachel: Wow, yeah.

Griffin: But yes, they did Carmen Sandiego. It launched in 1985, um, and since then Broderbund has actually been picked up by, uh, The Learning Company, who is still making... They made a Carmen Sandiego game in 2015. There are dozens of these things, and obviously some of them are, uh, Where in Time is Carmen Sandiego, her time heist, or, uh, you know. They've made a bunch of different variations, but for the most part, if you've never played a Carmen Sandiego game, the, uh, traditional structure is this.

You are an Acme detective, and you show up at the scene of a crime where a theft has been committed, and you have to find clues as to where the perp, uh, ended up, and also find, uh, like descriptions of what they look like that you write down in [sing-song] the warrant!

And then you follow them from country to country and city to city and you learn and you eventually catch up to them, and if your [sing-song] warrant! Matches them and what they look like, they get put in Acme jail and you get a special reward from the Chief, because you're so smart and you did such a good job. And they get harder and harder, the levels go-- They get harder and harder, because eventually you do face off against Carmen Sandiego, and it's a whole "catch me if you can" just, like, web of just sexual intrigue.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Did you play these? Did you play Carmen Sandiego?

Rachel: Uh, I mean, I just watched the TV show.

Griffin: The TV show is important, and I know you're so rowdy to talk about the TV show. What I love about the game is it was scripted by a guy named David Siefkin, uh, who created the character Carmen Sandiego as well as the other characters, the other criminals in the game. Uh, and I don't know what the game was going to be called, but the project manager at the time, a woman named Catherine Bird, was like, "You need to name this Carmen Sandiego, because it's the best fuckin' name I've ever heard."

Uh, according to Wikipedia, "Her name suggested mystery and exoticism as well as humor."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, she is named for, uh, Carmen Miranda, the singer, the Brazilian singer.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And, uh, get this? The city of San Diego.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, what was great about these games is that they also had like, a lot of super, super groany dad humor to them, because other, other criminals included, uh, M. T. Pockets, and Ruth Less, and Hardly Worthit, uh, are some of the other ones.

But my favorite thing about these games was always the crimes that were committed. Uh, the thefts. They were-- I say crimes. It was just thefts. It wasn't-- Nobody was murdering. There was no-- there was no--

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, arson happening. They would steal, like, Mount Rushmore. Somebody stole Mount Rushmore. In one of the-- in one of the games, somebody stole the Mason Dixon line.

Rachel: Whoa...

Griffin: So are those two states just the same state now?! I don't even know how you steal the Mason Dixon--

Rachel: Did they do, like, a little animation of her, like, running, carrying...

Griffin: The later games. The later games, I think--

Rachel: Carrying the Mount Rushmore.

Griffin: Right, when you had to animate... It wasn't always her doing the crimes. It was her flunkies. She was the--

Rachel: Oh, okay.

Griffin: She was the big prize, right. Um, and of course then we eventually got the game show in, I believe, 1991. Yeah, it ran from '91 to '95.

Rachel: I didn't realize there was a computer game before the game show.

Griffin: You're kidding me!

Rachel: I thought everything was after the game show.

Griffin: No! No, no, no.

Rachel: Interesting!

Griffin: Yeah, no, uh, in fact Broderbund was, like, the developer of the game show, and, uh, fun fact, it came out of... It was on PBS, right? So it was like, "We gotta teach people some shit about where things are on the globe," uh, because, uh, in I think 1990, Nat Geo ran a survey that showed that, um, Americans were very bad at geography with a one in five or one in four, I forget the actual number, uh, are unable to locate the Soviet Union or the Pacific Ocean on a map. Ruh-roh! That's pretty bad!

Rachel: Well, also the Soviet Union's not a thing anymore.

Griffin: Well, that's fair.

Rachel: So that would be hard.

Griffin: But that-- It's even easier to show where the Soviet Union is! It was a big ol' thing! You could point at, like one quarter of the globe and--

Rachel: Pacific's Ocean's a little troubling.

Griffin: That's a big ocean, huh?

Rachel: Yeah, it's a big one.

Griffin: It's a big one. Uh, so, yeah. In reaction to that horrible fact, PBS and Broderbund, uh, designed a game show that would torture children by forcing them to solve, uh, nearly impossible geographical trivia. That was round one. Round two was like, there was a big board, like a jeopardy board with 15 tiles, and it was like a memory game, because you had to find the loot, and then you needed to find the [sing-song] warrant, and then you had to find the crook, in that exact order. Uh, and then whoever won that went on to the final game.

The final game involved, uh, a continental map of like, Africa or Asia or Europe, or eventually... Like, I think they just did North and South America together, maybe? Uh, and you had to find countries on that map, which I will tell you, like--

Rachel: This is Griffin's favorite thing.

Griffin: Like, nobody won this fucking game. If you got Africa on the map, I feel like no-- I never saw a kid win Africa, because first of all, I feel like you're running around more, but also just like, the kids just didn't-- they didn't swing it. They just didn't get it.

Europe is like, easy. You just fucking-- bloop-bloop! You don't even have to move. It's all like, really, really compact. Uh, but yes. You have to run around and place these beacons on the ground, and I do not know who decided what the fucking time limit for this should be, but they are a war criminal, because it was impossible.

Not only that, here's a not fun fact: one of the episodes never aired because during that round, a girl fell and broke her arm while they were filming the show.

Rachel: Oh my gosh!

Griffin: Because that's what fuckin'-- the Chief wants from you! The Chief is like, [old timey detective voice] "You get out there, gumshoes. You have eleven seconds to place-- to find fifteen countries!" It was wild. Uh, but two other things made the show great. Uh, Rockapella, as Rachel wanted to discuss.

Rachel: Yes! That could be a whole thing!

Griffin: It was a whole thing. They were very, very good. I thought that they were a... They were the house band for, for this show. I thought that they were, like-- they came together for this show and then went out and did their own separate things after, uh, finding their footing.

Rachel: That's what I assumed, too.

Griffin: No, they were, they were a, uh, acapella band before this.

Rachel: So they weren't, like, a supergroup established by--

Griffin: No, they were not.

Rachel: Carmen Sandiego.

Griffin: Uh, but they are still actually touring. I think the lineup has completely changed at this point, so it's not the original Rockapella, but they did find, like, success after this game show, because it had the fuckin' best theme song for any game show.

Rachel: I bet they get heckled all the time, though, right? At their live performances.

Griffin: I mean, they probably just do it. They probably open with I think.

Rachel: People-- yeah, they should start with it. Otherwise people are like, [deep voice] "Play it!"

Griffin: [deep voice] "Play it! Do it! You know what we need!"

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And also, uh, the Chief, who was played by, Lynne Thigpen, who passed away in 2003 unfortunately, but she was a Tony award winning actor who fucking killed it as the Chief.

Rachel: PBS was all over that stuff, though, right? Like, remember when, uh, what was it? Shining Times Station had, uh, Ringo Starr?

Griffin: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And her performance was actually so good that they, like, the... They were like, "Well, we have to put her in the video games now." So then she started performing in the video games as, as they went on.

Rachel: That's awesome.

Griffin: Uh, from that point on. Uh, Carmen Sandiego. Like, I think, uh... This is not-- for me, it's not like, a kitschy like, edu-game, [fake laughter], "Hey, 90s kids will remember this!" I feel like those games and the, the show that came after it had, had like, a tone that extended beyond, "Let's teach kids about geography."

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: It had a tone that was like, very, very... Just super playful. Like, super, super playful. The games and the, the game show both, uh, that, uh, really stuck with me.

Rachel: Well, there is very little-- there is very little, as a kid, that makes you feel like a citizen of the world.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Rachel: If you don't have a lot of privilege, you know? Like, I feel like if you're not a kid that gets to travel all the time...

Griffin: And I was not.

Rachel: Yeah. You don't really feel like your place in the globe, and that game really kind of gives you that.

Griffin: Gets you all over.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: That and-- that and Encarta really did it for me, too.

Rachel: Oh, gosh. I had Encarta.

Griffin: Holy shit. En-- Well, let's save it. I can do a segment on Encarta.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: What's your second thing?

Rachel: My second thing is peanut butter.

Griffin: Okay! Rice and peanut butter, we'll really hittin' the staples this episode.

Rachel: I know, I know!

Griffin: Here's the thing. If you're about to tell the history of peanut butter, I feel like that's what-- I feel like that's-- I don't know anything about history, but I feel like I know the history of peanut butter.

Rachel: Do you?

Griffin: Aw, dammit!

Rachel: [laughs] Who's-- who's your go-to guy for peanut butter?

Griffin: Well, now it's gonna be wrong, isn't it?

Rachel: It is gonna be wrong, but I just want you to get it out there. Let's get it over with.

Griffin: The thing they teach in school is George Washington Carver.

Rachel: He's not the guy.

Griffin: Are you sure about that?

Rachel: He definitely has a relationship to peanut butter, but he is not the peanut butter guy.

Griffin: I'm gonna google "the peanut butter guy," and if George Washington Carver's the first result...

Rachel: Well, that's, that's fair.

Griffin: I would say he's the peanut-- First of all, he's not the--

Rachel: Historically, he's not like, the inventor of peanut butter the way people think, so.

Griffin: Okay. But he did invent a billion things, including like, stoplights and all kind of shit. George Washington Carver.

Rachel: Yes, yes! Of course! I'm not saying he's a fraud, I'm just saying he's not the peanut butter guy!

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: But yeah, if you google "peanut butter guy," he is--

Griffin: [slowly] "The peanut butter guy."

Rachel: [laughs] He will come up.

Griffin: George Washington Carver comes up, yeah. Wild, yeah. He just comes up. I think if you're the first Google result, now you are the peanut butter guy!

Rachel: Well, your revisionist history is not what I'm here to do.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Uh, so peanut butter--

Griffin: By the way, it also gave me an image of the baby covered in peanut butter.

Rachel: Oh, that's good. [laughs] Peanut butter, yeah.

Griffin: You remember that vine? Oh, shit, that's good.

Rachel: So, George Washington Carver was given credit, but the US National Peanut Board confirms that he did not invent it.

Griffin: What did he-- he just perfected it?

Rachel: By the time Carver had published his document about peanuts, entitled "How to Grow the Peanut and 105 Ways of Preparing it for Human Consumption" in 1916, many methods of preparation of peanut butter had been developed or patented already. So when we see the original patents... Patents are big in this episode, I realize.

Griffin: They sure are, yeah.

Rachel: Uh, this was back in 1884. Carver didn't hit the scene until 1916.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: So we had peanut butter prior to Carver.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: But I didn't-- I didn't come here to like, slam on Carver.

Griffin: No, he was badass.

Rachel: I think it's important to know the real history, which started in Canada.

Griffin: So, what did they do? They just smashed some of these bad boys and they were like, "Hey, that looks creamy creamy! Let's go!"

Rachel: [laughs] They milled roasted peanuts until the peanuts received a fluid or semi-fluid state, and then mixed sugar in the paste to harden its consistency. Uh, then we have some history with Kellogg, in 1898.

Griffin: Always gotta get a hand on the ball, this nasty freak.

Rachel: He used to serve peanut butter to patients, because they needed food that contained a lot of protein, but could, uh, be eaten without chewing.

Griffin: Hmm.

Rachel: Mm-hmm! And then this is when we really start to see the-- it take off is, uh, in the 1920s. Uh, there was a chemist that involved a process for making peanut butter by separating the, uh... Or rather, to keep it from separating by using partially hydrogenated oil. And this is what started Peter Pan peanut butter in 1928.

Griffin: Ohh, okay.

Rachel: And then Skippy peanut butter in 1932.

Griffin: Which one's your favorite?

Rachel: Well, I wanted to hit on Jiff, too.

Griffin: We gotta get to Jiff, baby.

Rachel: We gotta hit on Jiff. In 1955, Proctor & Gamble launched a peanut butter named Jiff, which was sweeter than other brands due to the use of sugar and molasses in its recipe.

Griffin: Yeah they did, yeah they did! They came right up on top, didn't they?

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: What makes it better? A spoonful of sugar. It was right there in the song. You could've just made it sweeter with sugar and molasses.

Rachel: I am one of the few people, maybe, that while I like crunchy peanut butter better, I'll eat either. I'll eat any--

Griffin: It's peanut butter. It's peanut butter.

Rachel: I just-- I love-- I love it. I'm one of those people that would eat it right out with a spoon.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: You know, on a tough day. Uh, I like to put it in with a pint of ice cream. I like to put it on a cookie. I like to put it on bread. Um...

Griffin: Yeah. Crackers. Dip a Ritz in there.

Rachel: Oh, God, peanut butter. And because of the protein--

Griffin: It's good for you.

Rachel: You feel like, "Hey, that's not so bad."

Griffin: I do not like the... And this is probably gonna get me in a spot of trouble.

Rachel: Uh-oh.

Griffin: But like, the organic peanut butter--

Rachel: Yeah, where, where it separates, right?

Griffin: Where it separates is terrible to me. Also because it doesn't taste... I mean, it tastes like peanuts and fine, whatever. But I think I want peanut butter to taste like sugar and molasses, maybe, now that I think about it?

Rachel: This is a theme for you a little bit, that you like your food to just generally taste sweeter.

Griffin: I do enjoy that. I get my glucose levels down a little bit, so it's not... It's a tough transition, but, um, yeah. I do, I do like a sweet p-- a sweet nut butter. Dammit! Now I want a peanut butter and jelly sandwich very badly, and I don't think we have the stuff to make one.

Rachel: We do! We have all of the things.

Griffin: Fuck yeah!

Rachel: Yeah, hit it.

Griffin: Let's-- let's finish this episode real quick. [speaking quickly] Uh, we got, uh, Wonderful submissions. We got one from Scott, who says that he likes bug spray, and we have...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, Scott says, "I got a little thing for you this week: the smell of bug spray. I went hiking yesterday, and I realized that it always takes me back to running around outside as a youngster with all my cousins late into the summer night, until the only thing we could see is the lightning bugs."

Rachel: Aw...

Griffin: Ooh, that's nice!

Rachel: That's a good story, because at first I was like, "Bug spray? Who likes that?" But then, you're right!

Griffin: It's got-- it's the summer smell.

Rachel: There's a real strong association, yeah. I think of summer camp when I smell it.

Griffin: Uh, I got one here. I'm gonna, uh, not do good on the name, I apologize. Ari-- Ariathna? It's a cool name. It's cool how I said it. I bet it's even cooler how it's supposed to be said.

Ariathna says, "I love golf carts. At work we use them to get around the facility, and those 40 seconds of getting from one building to the next are so liberating and wild." I've gone golfing, like, twice. The golf cart is the absolute fucking best part.

Rachel: Oh, did you guys use a golf cart?

Griffin: Absolutely we did.

Rachel: That's nice.

Griffin: If the option is available, of course. Because then, you feel like a s-- a sort of sports road warrior.

Rachel: Uh-huh?

Griffin: You don't drive a fucking small car when you're playing football.

Rachel: I think I've maybe only driven a golf cart once, and that was like, over 15 years ago.

Griffin: That baby's got some get up and go. A good one.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, here's one sent in by Griffin, a person named Griffin. Isn't that wild?

Rachel: You mean there's another one?

Griffin: Griffin says, "Hey Rachel and Griffin! My small wonder this week is preschoolers. I work at a preschool, and the other day a kid said his favorite sport was swords, and I think that's wonderful and hilarious."

Rachel: [laughs] That's very good.

Griffin: He might've been talking about fencing, but I do like the idea of just "swords."

Rachel: You think the preschooler was talking about fencing?

Griffin: N-- maybe? It's hot right now, with the-- with the teens.

Rachel: The teens? Yeah.

Griffin: The teen preschoolers.

Rachel: Well, you do know teens.

Griffin: That's true. Thank you to Bo En and Augustus for the use of our theme song, "Money Won't Pay." You can find a link to that in the episode description. Thank you to Maximumfun.org for all of their support.

Rachel: Yeah, thank you Maximum Fun!

Griffin: What shows should people be listening to on Maximum Fun right now?

Rachel: I mean, there's Bubble.

Griffin: There's Bubble, yeah. If you haven't listened to Bubble, go listen to Bubble. And they have a bunch of other stuff too, like Can I Pet Your Dog and a bunch of other shows, all at Maximumfun.org.

If that is it, if I may... Let's try this. I've never done this before.

Rachel: Okay, all right! Let's do it!

Griffin: I would very much like to eat a peanut butter and jelly or jam sandwich.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: May I please be excused?

Rachel: [laughs] Because you asked nicely, yes you may.

[theme music plays]

[Chord]

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Speaker One: If you are looking for a new comedy podcast, why not try The Beef and Dairy Network? It won best comedy at the British podcast awards in 2017 and 2018. Also, I-- [pitch lowers and distorts before cutting out]

Speaker Two: There were no horses in this country in mid to late 60s.

Speaker Three: Specialist Bovine Ass Vet.

Speaker Four: Both of his eyes are squid's eyes.

Speaker Five: Yogurt buffet.

Speaker Six: She was married to a bacon farmer who saved her life.

Speaker Seven: Farm raised snow leopard.

[deep pitch, distorted]

Speaker One: Download it today. That's The Beef and Dairy Network Podcast from Maximumfun.org. Also, maybe start at episode one, or weirdly, episode 36, which for some reason requires no knowledge of the rest of the show.