

Wonderful! 103: Candle Coitus

Published October 9th, 2019

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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: Do you feel it? Do you feel the energy in the room, Rachel?

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Do you feel it?

Rachel: No, not at all.

Griffin: Oh, join me. Do what I'm doing. I'm doing a little flamenco. Do it with me, audience. This is my new thing, is just a little sort of...

Rachel: You haven't described as what you're doing.

Griffin: Oh, I think I have.

Rachel: A little flamenco?

Griffin: You can hear it in my voice. It's just arms up, just sort of grabbing the podcast juice out of the air and wringing it dry. This is Wonderful. This is a podcast where we talk about stuff we're really into these days. Stuff like flamenco energy weaving.

Rachel: Griffin snapped before we started and it really rubbed me the wrong way.

Griffin: Oh, I wasn't—it wasn't like I was snapping like a—it was like a, [snaps] "Here goes." Do you know what I mean?

Rachel: Yeah. I thought it was like a—

Griffin: Makin' the podcast.

Rachel: You go now.

Griffin: No, no, I would not—hey, no, I would never. There are a small handful of reasons I would ever snap at you. One, if you got in a really good dig. If you got a really good dig, and you burnt me up good, I would... [snaps] Aw. If I am trying to give you the tempo of the barbershop duet that we're doing. It's an unconventional size for a singing group.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: And then, uh, if I'm trying to scare you.

Rachel: You'd snap at me?

Griffin: I can snap really loud.

Rachel: I can snap really loud, too.

Griffin: Let's do a contest. Audience, you write in. Text 44424644 and let us know who snaps louder. Go.

Rachel: Well, you should announce—

Griffin: Just go!

Rachel: You should announce yourself.

Griffin: They'll know who's who!

[snapping sounds]

Griffin: Oh damn, that it really loud. Look at this sound—look how big your waves get, babe.

Rachel: I know. I told you I can snap really loud.

Griffin: Doggone. Doggone. [sighs] Is this the intro, or do you think we should do something...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Maybe we can salvage it. Do you have any small wonders?

Rachel: I like that I get to go first, because then I can say Killing Eve.

Griffin: Aww, man. Yeah.

Rachel: We're real late to this party, but we're glad we came.

Griffin: We just watched the season one finale. We're extremely late to this party. But boy howdy, what a tense one.

Rachel: Turns out, really good show.

Griffin: Turns out, good show.

Rachel: Nobody knew.

Griffin: Who knew that murder was so... compelling?

Rachel: [laughs] Mm-hmm. What about you? Small wonders?

Griffin: Ah, shoot. You really caught me off guard there.

Rachel: Aha!

Griffin: Uh, beef jerky. It's a topic of jokes on My Brother, My Brother, and Me recently, and I don't really know why. I think it's just because I've sort of been more vocal about my love of this uh, dried up meat.

Rachel: Your brothers are not reliable narrators. 'Cause can I tell you what—I have heard Justin McElroy say he doesn't like root beer, and I just like... I don't even know where to start.

Griffin: Yeah, I know. Me, I like a jerky float.

Rachel: Mm-hmm. [laughing]

Griffin: That's a horrible soup I make.

Rachel: That's a dance move, too.

Griffin: Yeah, it is, it is. It is.

Rachel: It's like the flamenco.

Griffin: It's a lot like—I add flamenco elements to it.

Rachel: But there's more knees.

Griffin: I'm not sure I know what flamenco dancing actually is.

Rachel: Well, I mean, you know there's snapping.

Griffin: It's too late now.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I go first this week.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: I had a hard time thinking of a thing. Folks, let's—as long as we're being vocal about stuff... sometimes it's hard to think about a thing to talk about on the show. Which is not to say that, uh, there's a dearth of good things in the world. Or that I am not thankful for those good things. That's not true. But if we're gonna fill a good seven to eight minutes of podcast with something that's going to be fascinating and true, and powerful...

Rachel: There are so many good things I have thought of, researched, and realized that I can't talk about this for more than two minutes.

Griffin: Cannot. Just can't do it. I had one today. I can't remember what it was, but I was like, working on it... oh, it was to-do lists.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I was like, gonna do a thing on Trello, 'cause I like Trello a lot. It's a piece of software that helps you stay on track with things. But then I was like, "That's boring as hell."

Rachel: Yeah. [laughs]

Griffin: Anyway. One of the things I'm bringing, this thing, my first thing, is incredibly, like, personal. Nobody else is going to be able to... well, very few people are probably gonna be able to relate to it. But...

Rachel: Is it being in love with Rachel McElroy?

Griffin: It's being in love with Rachel.

Rachel: And being married to her and having a child with her?

Griffin: Yes. What's your first thing?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: No, I was trying—I mean, I am. But I was, uh, yeah. So like, I was, y'know, struggling, and then I was like, "Well, what am I into lately?" And then, the answer to that was, y'know, what I have spent the last couple weeks doing, which is writing a theme song for the new season of Adventure Zone. And so, my first thing is writing a theme song for a thing.

Rachel: Oh!

Griffin: Writing a theme song for a thing, and again, not super relatable, but I thought maybe I'd share my perspective.

Rachel: So not even just writing music.

Griffin: Writing music's great, right? Writing specifically soundtrack music is great. I do not know where I would start writing non-soundtrack music. Like, I need that jumping off point of, y'know, here's a... here's a stressful scene with spooky stuff in it. Okay, well, then let's write some stuff around that.

But writing a theme song, in particular, has its own set of like, constraints and challenges that makes the process of like, figuring it out, like, this musical puzzle. And it's so frickin' satisfying to like, chip away at that puzzle

until you come up with something that like, fits this myriad list of requirements.

Rachel: Um, when you're doing this, are you like, listening to other theme songs? Do you like, pull up Happy Days and spend a lot of time like, listening to Happy Days?

Griffin: I start with Happy Days every time.

Rachel: 'Cause that's a real—on Mondays, Tuesdays Happy Days, Wednesdays, Thursdays... and I think that's how it was going.

Griffin: Hey, y'know what? That's the worst theme—[laughs] That's the worst theme song ever.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: "Okay, the show's called Happy Days. And I need something, uh, oh shit, three minutes from now."

"Okay, what are the days? Um... Monday, Tuesday, Rob's Day... no, that's not one of them, shit."

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: Um, yeah, I mean, I listen to some—if I'm trying to—so like, one of the things I have to write for is like, the tone of the like, story, and the genre of the story. Both kind of necessitate their own sort of thing, right? And so, when one of the stories that we did on Adventure Zone was Dust, which was like this supernatural, like, monster wild west inspired thing. And so like, trying to write a wild west song was like, really hard, especially when it had spooky gothic elements. Like, those two things are very—that's a weird needle to try and thread. That's the kind of puzzle that I'm talking about is like, having all these constraints.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Not to mention like, the usual stuff of like, okay, y'know, I've probably only got like, 16 measures to really like, make it stick, and there should be like, a lead in, and a drop, and there should be a long tail that I can fade out over... but really, I only have like, a few lines here to like, y'know, to make it pop. Make it happen.

Rachel: Yeah, I really have no idea how you do that. Like, it's the same thing where, in high school, some of my friends started taking private music lessons, and they could like, improvise.

Griffin: Can't—I can't do that.

Rachel: But I mean, what you're doing... I recognize it's not on the spot.

Griffin: Right, it takes me two weeks.

Rachel: But you're making like, something out of nothing.

Griffin: Yeah, I—usually, I just need to find the first thing that like, helps it—so like, with that wild west one, the theme song that came to mind was the West World theme song. I listened to that a lot, and really, the only thing I got from that is like, spooky drawn out minor key piano chords. Like, that's the backbone of it, and then everything else kind of like, fell in line. So it's like a snowball effect. Once you figure out the first thing...

The new theme song I've been working on is like, way more upbeat and fanciful and carefree than anything we've like, done in the past. And so like, trying to write a happy, adventurous, playful, proper, uh, mostly acoustic, like... all of these different like, key words, like, trying to write something that is fun and loose, but also kind of, uh, adventurous and badass and action-y. Like, trying to make all those things come together into one thing is like... I don't know, it's tough.

I really don't want this whole segment to be like, "Check out how smart I am," 'cause it has taken me literally two weeks of just constantly shaving away at this thing to like, come up with a—

Rachel: Well, can I, um... can I share... when you were writing music for your dad's work?

Griffin: Oh my god.

Rachel: What he said to you that we found so funny?

Griffin: The miserable jag—the note he gave me.

Rachel: He—he was asking Griffin to write some music for his, uh, game that he was gonna run. And he gave Griffin this particular note, which I found humorous.

Griffin: Go ahead.

Rachel: Um, he asked Griffin if he could come up with something kind of John Williams-y. [laughs]

Griffin: Which is awesome. Totally, totally.

Rachel: Just real casual. Just like, “Oh, y’know, oh, who is it? Who is it? Oh, it’s like the... maybe the most well-known composer.”

Griffin: [laughs]

Rachel: “Of, y’know, soundtracks. Uh, yeah, be that.”

Griffin: “Just knock out some real Aaron Copland shit. Like... and we need it by next week. So can you make that happen?” Uh, no, not a joke, and I’m not gonna put anybody on blast, but that note was also bandied about for this theme song.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And I told them to literally eat shit. Did you learn nothing from Dad’s superhero...

Rachel: I think it’s a big compliment, because it shows that they think you, someone with little to no musical training, could just produce that on your own.

Griffin: [laughs] Yes. That is fair. Uh, do—gotta put the caveat in that Justin did write the theme song to TAZ: Elementary. That wasn’t me. He did that all on his own and he did a great job. Uh, if you don’t listen to Adventure Zone, you can find them on Soundcloud, if you just want to listen to music or whatever.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Which I haven’t updated at all lately. But yeah, I just thought like... couldn’t think of anything that I really wanted to like, talk in depth about,

and then I was like, "Well, what about the thing that I've been doing that I've been really, really, really, really enjoying?"

Rachel: No, that's a good point. That's a good point, 'cause I think a lot of times, we try and think of something that's gonna be more universal. But a lot of times, the things you're most excited about are the things that are most interesting to other people.

Griffin: And then like, I'll take a break, and I'll leave it for the day, and then come back the next morning and listen with fresh ears and be like, "Oh, okay, no no no. This part doesn't work. This part is good."

Rachel: "This is just dogs singing Christmas carols."

Griffin: "This is shit."

Rachel: "How did I do it again?" [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs] Hey, what's your first thing?

Rachel: I think my thing will be a little more relatable.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: But pretty small.

Griffin: Okay?

Rachel: It's the smell of an extinguished candle.

Griffin: Wow. Wow!

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Is this the Poetry Corner? 'Cause that hit me a little poetic.

Rachel: [laughs] Y'know what I'm talking about though, right?

Griffin: Oh yeah, oh yeah. What is that smell? Is it sulfur?

Rachel: Well, I can tell you.

Griffin: Okay, okay. Is that saltpeter?

Rachel: I did a little research. Now, the research I did... [laughs]

Griffin: Is it saltpeter? What's in there?

Rachel: What is—can you tell me what saltpeter is?

Griffin: Uh, no. I only know it from 1776. Saltpeter. Pins. Abigail.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: Set out, John... hey, I know what I'm talking about next week.

Rachel: Different song.

Griffin: Yeah. I know, I'm doing a medley.

Rachel: [laughing] Um, so, I love this smell.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: It's great, because you get one smell with the candle, right? And then you go to put the candle out, and then you get that other smell, and you think, birthday cake.

Griffin: Oh, is that where you go?

Rachel: That's where I go immediately. I say, "It smells like birthday cake." Because that was my early exposure to candles being blown out.

Griffin: Yeah. I'm just realizing that I have this chemical response in my brain any time I do smell this smell, where I reflexively go, "Did you just blow a candle out?" Because the other option is, our house is burning down.

Rachel: [laughing] I know. I know. You know if our house was burning down, it wouldn't smell like that.

Griffin: It wouldn't smell like that. This is what our house would smell like post being burnt down.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, okay. So, I did some research. I couldn't find a lot of sources on this, so I'm just gonna say what I found and assume that it's correct.

Griffin: Okay. What is a match? Did you please learn how matches are made?

Rachel: It has nothing to do with a match, Griff.

Griffin: Oh, I guess it's just a...

Rachel: It's a wick.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: In some wax.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Goes out.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: There's a little smoke. And the smell.

Griffin: Okay. I guess I'm just assuming the match smells the same smell.

Rachel: So when the candle burns, the wax starts to melt. But also, the liquid wax rises up and vaporizes in the heat of the flame.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: So kind of what you're smelling isn't just the melted wax, but y'know, the melt—melted wax kind of rising up into the air like vapor.

Griffin: Okay. Is that not how its stink is traditionally transmitted?

Rachel: Well, I think some—because you know how they make those little Scentsy things? You melt the wax, and you plug it into the wall? So I think maybe some people think it's just the hot wax that smells.

Griffin: Ohh, I see, I see, I see.

Rachel: Uh, so, when you blow out a candle, the top of the wick remains hot. It is still hot enough to vaporize wax, and also continue reacting with the oxygen in the air. The blackened wick is effectively a piece of charcoal. So without an actual flame, most of the vaporized wax doesn't burn; instead, it condenses in the colder air around the wick to form the first mist of tiny liquid wax droplets, and then solid particles. So the smoke you see is primarily unburned wax particles.

Griffin: Wow!

Rachel: They're little tiny, translucent spheres that float around like dust particles. They have a strong smell that most of us find irritating. Not true.

Griffin: No, what?!

Rachel: Not true at all.

Griffin: Who's—what fuckin' monster is like, "Oh, god. This candle smells so good, but the last thing I want to do is blow it out and smell that irritating smell."

Rachel: A lot of people apparently get annoyed at the black smoke and the smell associated with it. I personally like it.

Griffin: It just—that's the—y'know, that's the cigarette after candle coitus.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: That's a horrible...

Rachel: Although what...

Griffin: Yeah. Yeah.

Rachel: What would a...

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Coitus...

Griffin: For candles look like?

Rachel: Scented cand—no.

Griffin: Oh, oh, okay.

Rachel: A coitus scented candle...

Griffin: You want me to answer this, baby?

Rachel: I don't know if I do.

Griffin: No. I don't want you to have asked it, but here we are.

Rachel: [laughs] Here we are. Um, I just couldn't—I mean, something about the phrase 'coitus candle' really did something for me.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And now I'm deciding if I want to explore it, and I think I don't.

Griffin: Well, we can—

Rachel: Want to.

Griffin: There's lots of time for us to talk when we're not recording our voices for other people to hear. [laughing]

Rachel: Okay. Okay, we'll return. [laughing] Uh, so, when I was researching this, I found a lot of guidance on extinguishing a candle.

Griffin: Ooh, how to do it cool and sexy?

Rachel: [laughs] Well, how to do it to like, preserve the life of your candle.

Griffin: Ohh.

Rachel: Uh... this is not gonna be especially interesting. But I found it kind of interesting.

Griffin: Okay. How should I be extinguishing my candle? How have I been doing it wrong?

Rachel: Well, first of all, if you blow out a candle before the entire surface has melted, what will happen is that you will create a tunnel.

Griffin: Oh no.

Rachel: So y'know how sometimes, if you blow out a candle, it just goes further down into the candle, like, melts, like it continues to melt in that reservoir?

Griffin: Oh, I hate that.

Rachel: So you gotta let the whole top burn. In fact, I saw that you are supposed to let a candle burn for at least one hour per inch of container diameter. So if you bought a new candle that is three inches in diameter, you should burn your candle for at least three hours.

Griffin: [gasps]

Rachel: Though, not more than four hours at a time.

Griffin: Wait. Hold on. My candle is five inches in diameter! What the fuck? Am I just up shit creek?

Rachel: Well, I don't think you see a lot of candles five inches in diameter. Maybe for that reason.

Griffin: Hmm. There would have to be a multiple wick situation, wouldn't they?

Rachel: They would.

Griffin: Ooh, now we're talkin'. How many wicks per square inch diameter of the circular candle?

Rachel: Um, so, a lot of the things I said don't... a lot of the things I read said don't blow out a candle. And they—the reason they gave is that you would potentially spray wax out.

Griffin: Done it.

Rachel: When you blew out the candle.

Griffin: Done it.

Rachel: You have?

Griffin: Powerful lips.

Rachel: Ooh. [laughs] Uh, that has never happened to me. I did not think that was an especially common thing. It did not seem like a good reason to me.

Griffin: Well, you're having a fight. Or a fright. You're having a fight with a friend, or you've had a fright with a skeleton, and you go—

Rachel: Just aggressively, like... [laughing] Release.

Griffin: And you go to the candle... not today, Derek! [blows aggressively] And the wax is all over my coffee table. That's why we need these little brass cups, like a little gentleman would use.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: With the long sticks, and the little—

Rachel: A snuffer.

Griffin: A snuffer. Just a little... [makes a squish sound]

Rachel: I did read a lot about snuffers. I mean, I didn't like, learn the history of the snuffer, but a lot of the sites I read recommended a snuffer.

Griffin: That's—that's fuckin' wild.

Rachel: I read another piece of advice that said, use the tip of a screwdriver to dip the wick in the wax to extinguish.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: Then use it to straighten the wick out for the next burn.

Griffin: Oh, that's a lot of business.

Rachel: Yeah, I know. I thought so too. You just have a screwdriver out next to your candle all the time?

Griffin: Yeah, I'm gonna put that third behind blowing it out and having a snuffer. 'Cause that's wild. If you are having a dinner party, and you're like, "Oh yeah, thanks for coming, guys. Yeah, I should put out these candles. Hold on. Let me get, uh, my toolbox out. Now I'm going to stab it. No, hold on, I gotta fish this little sucker out of there. Please don't leave yet."

Rachel: I also read about how if you don't trim your wick, there's problems associated with that, too. But I decided it wasn't really related, because what we're talking about today is how great the smell of the candle is.

Griffin: How good candles are.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Let's get ourselves a snuffer, baby. Let's live that good life.

Rachel: And then, it can also be...

Griffin: Yeah?

Rachel: A little tiny hat for a cactus.

Griffin: Ohh! [laughs] Yeah. Aw babe, what's it like in there?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I wish I could jump in there. Jump in that brain space and live in its folds for a bit. What would I see, do you think? All kinds of wonderful new shapes and surprises around every corner.

Rachel: It's kind of like Ariel combing her hair with a fork, y'know? There's a lot of that in there.

Griffin: You think about Ariel combing her hair with a fork a lot.

Rachel: No, I think about how something could be used for something else that would be potentially more adorable.

Griffin: Well, okay. Let's explore that.

Rachel: Alright. Let's go.

Griffin: That's not Ariel's fault. That's that fuckin' bird's fault.

Rachel: Oh, I thought you were gonna—I thought you were gonna give me a challenge.

Griffin: Oh, no.

Rachel: I got really excited that you were gonna—

Griffin: No, I'm about to shit on this pelican. Because like... or what was he? What was that bird? That shithead bird that was like, "Oh, this is—"

Rachel: A seagull, babe.

Griffin: Yeah, I forgot my birds for a second. But listen – let's focus on that fucking seagull for a second. It's not Ariel's fault that she's brushing her hair with a fork, because she doesn't know anything. She's a fish. And this bird comes around and is like, "Oh, that's not a fork, that's a comb for your hair!" He should know better, and if he doesn't, he should keep his fucking beak shut. 'Cause he's gonna make her look like an asshole when Prince Eric is like, "Why are you doing that?"

Rachel: I mean, he's just mansplaining, Griffin. You know that, right?

Griffin: He's birdsplaining, and I hate it. Yeah.

Rachel: [laughing] Hey, can I steal you away?

Griffin: You better, 'cause I'm so PO'd right now.

[Home Improvement theme plays]

Griffin: Oh no, it's Flamingo! Oh no!

Rachel: Now this is a bird we both like.

Griffin: Now this is a bird whose name I can remember.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, Flamingo makes the razors. And the shave gel, and the body lotion, and the wax strips.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Are you trying to get hair off your body?

Griffin: They gotcha.

Rachel: This bird's for you.

Griffin: Mm-hmm. [laughs]

Rachel: Uh, think about it. You probably spend more than \$16 on razors and blades already. With the Flamingo shave set, you can upgrade for less or the same as you're paying now, including the parts you skimp on, like shave gel and exfoliating lotion. They even send you a shower holder. If you are interested in Flamingo's shave set, you can get all of their products for \$16, and it ships free. It's a \$22 value for just \$16 with free shipping today when you visit ShopFlamingo.com/Wonderful.

Griffin: [sighs] If only Ariel had found a Flamingo on that fuckin' rock. It'd have been like, "That's a fork."

Rachel: She does—I will say—

Griffin: "That's a fork. You use it for spaghetti."

Rachel: When her mermaid tail turns into legs...

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: They come out remarkably hairless. So it's very possible...

Griffin: Ohh, I see! There was another bird...

Rachel: She did have another bird helpin' her out.

Griffin: Who was like, "Well, that's a sniffledoodle! You use that to clean your ears out!" And then a flamingo rolls up like, "Uh, listen, Ariel..."

Rachel: "Excuse me."

Griffin: "Hey, can—can you give us a minute? First of all, that's a fork. It's a piece of silverware, and you use it for spaghetti. Also, this isn't applicable to you right now, 'cause I don't know how to shave a tail. But if you ever do get your wish... you come and see me, okay?"

Rachel: "Got those products for you."

Griffin: "Do not wear shorts around Prince Eric until you have talked to me first. Do you understand?"

Uh, hey, we are also sponsored by Zolaaa. Zola. Zola is here for you, if you are planning a wedding, and you're so freaked out and panicked out and stressed out about the planning of it... not the future part of it. That's sort of on you to navigate those waters. But everything else, Zola is gonna help get you there.

Rachel: Like, from the very, very beginning, you can do save the dates with Zola. It's not just like, "How do I organize my guest list?" It's like, "How do I get this whole party started?" Day one, Zola.

Griffin: Yeah. And you can build your own little spot for yourself with your photos and stories of how you met, and accommodations info for the wedding that you share with the folks who are coming in. And uh, yeah, it's just a really slick thing. Planning a wedding is very, very stressful, specifically because you have a million plates to spin all at once, and Zola is like, "Don't worry about it, we're gonna make it into one big plate that all your family's gonna come eat off of together and watch you fall in love."

Rachel: Aww.

Griffin: So anyway, if you want to start your free wedding website and also get \$50 off your registry on Zola, go to Zola.com/Wonderful.

Rachel: \$50 off your registry? That's rad.

Griffin: Cool beans.

Rachel: Hey, can I read you a personal message?

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: This is for Austin. It is from Esther. "Hello, love. By the time you hear this, we will both be in the thick of new jobs and internships. I am so proud of you, and I'm so excited to watch you grow into an even more wonderful counselor. Thank you for always loving and supporting me, and for making even the most stressful days better. Every day is better because I'm with you."

Griffin: That is... [sighs] Nourishing.

Rachel: That's darling.

Griffin: Nourishing is the—I feel like I got vitamins out of that one.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I feel like I got vitamins and minerals out of that one. I got E and zinc. Thank you, Esther. And Austin. For your love. [pause] It's made me strong.

This is a message for Doris, and here is, uh, you know who it's from. It's bae. And bae says to Doris, "First Hamilton, and now this? Guess I'm just good at winning drawings to buy things. I wanted to say I love you, and that you're one of the many wonderful things in my life. Thanks for your friendship, my cat, and for harassing me nonstop until I finally listened to TAZ and got just as obsessed as McElroy content as you. You're a cool gal and a great friend."

Rachel: Wow.

Griffin: That's a lot of good things.

Rachel: Hamilton tickets.

Griffin: Yeah. It sounds like bae is crushing it.

Rachel: I don't know anybody that like, won the...

Griffin: Won the lottery? I thought it was all—and don't tell `em I said this... [stage whispers] I thought it was all a hoax. And it was staged, and the people they said won were just people in the cast who got all excited in the crowd. `Cause think about it, they must be takin' a bath on that.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And so you'd see like, Jonathan Groff in a big mustache and be like, "Aw yeah! My wife's gonna love this one!"

Rachel: "I'm a winner!"

Griffin: I'm just sayin', people. Run the numbers on it.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Add the math. That's not what people say.

[ocean sounds]

Speaker 1: Ahh, there's nothing quite like sailing the calm, international waters on my ship, the SS Biopic.

[ship horns]

Speaker 2: Avast, it's actually pronounced bio-pick!

Speaker 1: No, you dingus! It's biopic!

Speaker 2: Who the hell says that? It's bio-pick.

Speaker 1: It's the words for biography and picture!

Speaker 2: If you—

[ship horn]

Dave: Alright, that is enough! Ahoy, I'm Dave Holmes. I'm the host of the newly rebooted podcast, formerly known as International Waters. Designed

to resolve petty, but persistent arguments like this. How? By pitting two teams of opinionated comedians against each other with trivia and improv games, of course! Winner takes home the right to be right.

Speaker 1: What podcast be this?

Dave: It's called Troubled Waters, where we disagree to disagree!

Rachel: Can I hear your second thing?

Griffin: My second thing is... and you're probably gonna tell that I've been locked to my computer writing music for the last two weeks. 'Cause my second thing is desktop backgrounds.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I... I like a good desktop background. And for as long as I have been a computer, or like, hardware with the screen user that you can customize that shit, I take great pride in customizing that shit, and I make a big deal out of having it just right. Because this is a picture you look at, or a, y'know, a nice, y'know, gradient that you can look at, uh, y'know, a lot of the time. I look at pictures on my desktop background more than I look at any other pictures. So you gotta make it good.

Rachel: I don't know what's up there right now. Can you...

Griffin: Right now, it's just one of the Apple—Apple has a gradient that changes colors as the day progresses, and it's supposed to simulate, like, sunlight. And it's really nice.

Rachel: Oh, that's kind of sad though a little bit, huh?

Griffin: It's a little bit sad. If I didn't have this also door behind me, letting in beautiful sunlight from the outside, it would be a—it would be a real shame. But I like lookin' at that. It's nice. It's soothing on the eyes. But on my phone—I just got the new iPhone with the preposterous camera on it, because I like taking pictures of our child that we have, and... I took a really

good picture of him down at the Thinkery, and put it as my desktop background, and y'know, my phone wallpaper, and... it just makes me so happy to see it.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And I like that we have all this stuff that we have to interact with all the time. Y'know, that's whatever. But every time I pick up my phone to see what time it is, or to check my text that I just got, or whatever, there's my—there's my boy, and a nice picture I took. And I like that I can swap that out if I get bored of that picture, 'cause he's, y'know. Y'know. Bein' a real stinker or something.

That's awful. I'm making it sound like, on a day where he is not behaving well, I—

Rachel: I'm changing my phone!

Griffin: Well, I'm removing you from the lineup.

Rachel: You're back in business, Sonic.

Griffin: And then like, you can get—like, Apple has all kinds of cool, like, uh, when you unlock my phone and you get into it, then there's like, a neat little gentle background with these soft lights that move around on the background behind all my apps. I like that. I like that you can customize that, and I love it.

I had a Zune. I was an early Zune adopter, and this is when I was going through my Jackson Pollock phase. So I had Jackson Pollock backgrounds on everything, including my Zune.

Rachel: I didn't know you had a Jackson Pollock phase.

Griffin: Sure, sure. Dude made a great Zune background.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: So... and that made me feel erudite every time I looked at all of my, y'know, songs that I was into back then. I could look at my Jackson Pollock art and feel good about it. I just like that this is—

Rachel: I actually did something similar at my work computer. I took a piece of art that I kind of wanted to buy, but didn't want to pay for, and just made it as my desktop background. So I get to see it every day.

Griffin: Love it. That's it. Um, so, I was looking into the history of desktop backgrounds, of computer wallpapers. I'm lumping in phone stuff too, but this was sort of the origins of it was, uh... there was an operating system, early operating system in 1985 called X Window that was like a, y'know, pre-Windows, so it was very patchwork, and you just had to like, do all the UI shit yourselves.

And they had, uh, a program for it where you could set an image as your background. This was in 1985. The image did have to be a solid color, or a binary image X BitMap file. So I can't imagine that that is the most high-def image around.

Uh, but then four years later, the X Window operating system updated, and they started letting you use more and more image formats. I learned a lot about old image formats today. Uh, and then like, pretty much in the '90s, the world was your oyster. Windows 1990. Dropped that Windows 3.0 of course, and they were like, "Do whatever, y'all. Put whatever the fuck you want on this desktop background."

That's also where they started to use the term 'wallpaper' to describe it. They were the ones who coined that. Uh, and in 1990, Windows 3.0 only worked a 8-bit color BMP files, which looked like absolute garbage.

Rachel: Oh gosh.

Griffin: This took me on a fuckin' trip trying to remember all of the like, really, really old desktop backgrounds we had on like, my computer growing up at home. Justin installed a Ben Folds Five like, skin on a computer that

would change the icons to stuff, and the desktop background was like album art.

Rachel: I had one of those for Pee-Wee's Playhouse.

Griffin: And it also had like, the error noises were switched out, so it'd play like, little clips from uh...

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: I remember, there was, uh, from... I forget which song it is. Uh, The Battle of Who Could Care Less, there's a bit where he says, "Oh well, maybe not, try again." That was like—that was the error message.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: So if like a thing crashed, you would hear that. And now that part really annoys me, actually, because it made me think of all the times that EverQuest crashed on me. Wow, I just went on a whole thing there by myself.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, and then Macintosh started out with those... you ever see like a—I don't know if you had a Mac or knew anybody who had like an old, old Mac. But it had that eight by eight like, pixel patterns of just like, black and white diamonds, and it was all like, very gray scale, like, patterns of stuff.

Rachel: Yeah. I mean, this could lead us down the path of screensavers, but I know that's not what you're talking about.

Griffin: Oh no, that's a whole other thing. I could go on and on about that pipe screensaver, which was on like, every school computer I grew up with.

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah.

Griffin: Now, what is the most common and most famous desktop background? When I say, you walk up to a computer, say, at a school, and it's new, and you turn it on, and it's like, nowadays... or, y'know, aughts. Something in the aughts. You turn on the computer. What do you see on that desktop background? Describe to me the image. Close your eyes. Go on this visual journey.

Rachel: So, it's not a solid color?

Griffin: Not a solid color. It's an image. From Windows XP on. It was introduced in Windows XP.

Rachel: Is it like a leaf or a flower?

Griffin: No. It isn't. It's a field. A field of green, green grass, beneath the bluest sky you've ever seen.

Rachel: Ohh. Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Griffin: I learned about this image today. This image is called Bliss, which is very nice. That's the name of the desktop background. It is the most observed image on earth. Uh, and it was introduced in Windows XP. It's just a picture of some nice ass grass on a field under a beautiful blue, cloudy sky.

Rachel: Yeah, I know what you're talking about now.

Griffin: You see it, and you think, "Oh. Oh. Here I go, on a journey to the Napa-Sonoma County line, just looking at this." That's where the photo was taken. It was taken by a dude named Charles O'Rear. This freaked me out, 'cause I was like—

Rachel: Whoa, it's like a real—

Griffin: Oh yeah, I guess somebody took it, I guess.

Rachel: Ohh. I always assumed it was like, totally computer generated.

Griffin: No. This was Windows XP. This was like, the year, what, 2000 or something? They didn't have that kind of technology. This is a real photo taken by a dude. And there was an interview with him I was reading. I forget where, where he was like, talking about how, y'know, you see a picture of a computer lab in North Korea, and like, there's the photo I took back in 1998.

Uh, 1998. Charles O'Rear was driving back from visiting his girlfriend, now wife. He was in the Napa Sonoma county line, and he just passed this big, open field between these vineyards, and eh was like, "Oh, that looks nice." And he took the picture, sold it to a stock images company. That stock images company was owned by Bill Gates, and when they were trying to release Windows XP, uh, this was the image that they chose to demonstrate the raw power of this new operating system.

So they were like, "We'll buy it for six figures. Send us the original." But no shipping company would insure a six—uh, six hundred thou—or whatever.

Rachel: Ohh.

Griffin: Six digit amount photo purchased by Bill Gates. And so, they had to fly him out, like, with him holding this image the whole time in his brittle, brittle hands.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, and yeah, I thought that was an interesting story.

Rachel: I love the idea of him... see, I am doing—

Griffin: "Anything to drink, sir?"

"No, I don't fucking want anything—please get those liquids away."

Rachel: We're assuming he's on a commercial flight, which I think is cute. But I also like the idea of somebody next to him being like, "Oh, that's a cool

photo.”

“Don’t look at it!!”

Griffin: “Don’t look at it!”

“Achoo!”

“Nooo! This is for Bill!”

If you look on every desktop background of Bliss, you'll see a little bit of...

Rachel: Little sneeze.

Griffin: Little sneeze juice.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, what’s your second thing?

Rachel: My second thing is a long awaited... return to the Poetry Corner.

Griffin: Oh my god. Thank—I feel like I can breathe again.

Rachel: [laughs] Are you gonna do my song?

Griffin: Oh, yeah. [sings] Waiting for tonight, whoaaa! I've wanted Poetry Corner so long! Waiting for tonight...

Rachel: Little different than what I'm used to, but I—I mean, I like it.

Griffin: It’s been so long, I don’t remember what I usually did. I thought it was Waiting For Tonight.

Rachel: Usually it’s a little jazzier. And there is actually snapping.

Griffin: Oh!

Rachel: But...

Griffin: You've already gotten your theme song out of me. I don't know what you're wait—

Rachel: Oh, okay. Is that what I get?

Griffin: Yeah. Well, that's the thing, I love writing theme songs, but it's so exhausting.

Rachel: Mm, I know. Uh, the poet I am bringing to this episode is Michael Palmer. [laughs]

Griffin: I don't know that one.

Rachel: I really had thought about doing E. E. Cummings, just to like, go...

Griffin: [laughs] That would be the worst audio poem ever.

Rachel: Well, and to go head to head with you.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Just like, you sharing your E. E. Cummings knowledge, and me just sharing mine.

Griffin: [sighs] I feel like I can walk down that path my mind. Like, I can play that chess game out like 60 moves ahead, and it's gonna end with... your fart, I carry it in my fart. And I don't want to go there.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And I don't want to take you there.

Rachel: Uh, okay. Michael Palmer. Born in New York, he's 76 years old currently. He came up, um, learning about poetry during the confessional

movement, which was like, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Robert Lowell, all the poets that are writing these like, very personal, emotional poems. And he kind of went against that. He was really influenced early by Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, these poets who were more interested in experimentation than in emotion.

Uh, and so, he's often associated with language poetry, which I've talked about on this group before. So Charles Bernstein is a poet I've talked about on Poetry Corner before.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: Uh, and I thought this description was really appropriate. It says, uh, "Palmer's work confronts notions of representation and habits of language, and examines the space through which poetry acts." So the idea is less about like, "I'm gonna tell you this personal story about, y'know, how terrible I'm feeling," and more about like, "I'm gonna, y'know, kind of play with your sense of language and how sentences are constructed."

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Which I find really interesting. I don't know if this is the kind of thing where you have to already like poetry before this will appeal to you, or if you can just start day one with this guy. But he's somebody I got to see read at University of Chicago. University of Chicago had this great poetry series called Poem Present. And they would bring in somebody every month, if not twice a month, to read poetry and talk about their book.

Griffin: Wow, god.

Rachel: And so, it was just a tremendous education for me, and he was one of the poets that came in. He's a real impressive guy; not just because he is a great poet, but he's also collaborated with dance companies and visual artists and composers. I couldn't really figure out how this was happening. My sense is that he is writing, and they are performing.

Griffin: In front of him while he writes? And he's like, "This is great. This is great stuff."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: "That dance makes me think of a new, fun word."

Rachel: [laughing] Um, he's also won a lot of awards and grants. He's received two grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Stevens Award from the Academy of American Poets... and then, from 1999 to 2004, he served as a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets.

Uh, he currently lives in San Francisco, and I wanted to read one of his poems.

Griffin: Yeah, please.

Rachel: This is called The Village of Reason.

"This is a glove,
or a book from a book club.
This is the sun,
or a layer of mud.
This is Monday,
this is an altered word.
This is the village of reason,
and this is an eye torn out.
This is the father,
or a number on a chart.
This is a substitute,
this is the thing you are.
This is the varnished picture,
or else an accepted response.
This is the door,
and this the word for door.
This is a reflex caused by falling,
and this is a prisoner with an orange.

This is a name you know,
and this is the poison to make you well.
This is the mechanism,
and this is the shadow of a bridge.
This is a curve,
and this its thirst.
This is Monday,
this her damaged word.
This is the trace,
and this, the term unmarked.
This is the sonnet,
and this its burning house.
You are in this play,
You are in its landscape.
This is an assumption,
the length of an arm.
This is a poppy,
this an epilogue."

Griffin: That was hypnotizing.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I feel like I've just been activated. I'm not joking. I was like, sitting here like, "Okay, but what's that—okay, but how does the—"

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: It reminded me of like, song lyrics from like, a '90s weird...

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: Like if this was the lyrics to like, an REM, or like, a They Might Be Giants song, I would not be surprised by it.

Rachel: Yeah, I don't usually bring poetry that's that abstract, or inaccessible. But I find it really powerful, 'cause I feel like you forget that

you have total control over the words you use, and you can use them in any context, and you can say it any way you want to. And that poem really reminds me of it, of he's just creating things. Y'know, he's just like, conjuring these images like a magician. Just like, "Oh, hey, this is an orange. I just made it."

Griffin: It is wild to think about like, if you were to say like, "Try and think of two words. You have one second to think of two words together that have never been used before." And my mind immediately—like, I was trying to do that, and I came up with 'monster truck.'

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: That's a thing.

Rachel: That's a thing.

Griffin: You do it. Now, you have one second. Say it.

Rachel: Uhh... yellow tambourine?

Griffin: That sounds like Yellow Submarine.

Rachel: I know.

Griffin: I feel like that's how you got there.

Rachel: [laughs] I mean, typically poets aren't doing it under that kind of duress.

Griffin: [laughs] That's a fair point.

Rachel: I don't imagine that, y'know, one of these composers was standing over him like, "Keep going! Keep going! Keep going! Keep going!"

Griffin: Yeah. You gotta watch a badass visual artist to get some wild thoughts like that. Gotta get some... some visual artists up here in the studio.

Rachel: What would they do?

Griffin: Visual art.

Rachel: Just while we were recording our podcast?

Griffin: Uh-huh. This man is covered in paint.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: Now here comes a new joke. [laughs] A new kind of joke you've never heard before. Whoa, look at that dance crew outside on our front lawn! I'm gonna say something smart no one's ever said before!

Rachel: It's so inspiring.

Griffin: See, I can't even say it. I can't make that shit up, because we don't have the visual artist. We don't have the dance crew. [sighs] This show's so—we're on a shoestring budget here, folks. If you know any visual artists who will work for peanuts, hit us up.

Rachel: I'm more concerned that they would paint a reaction to what we were saying.

Griffin: Oh, we don't want that.

Rachel: And that makes me uncomfortable.

Griffin: I have submissions here. This one is from Emma, who says, "My wonderful thing is the Duolingo app. I think it's just so cool that anyone can learn a new language for free if they have a smart device."

Oh, gosh. I get in moods, right? Where I'm like... I have nothing to play on my phone. I got so much time to kill. Wouldn't it be nice to do something productive? And I'll jump into Duolingo, and it'll be like, "Hey, it's been a year and a half. Do you remember any of these Japanese katakana?" And I'll be like, "Oh, no, I don't. Bye."

Rachel: I did Spanish for a while, and I got pretty far.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: And then I just... and then it was all gone, y'know?

Griffin: Yeah. From—Spanish is weird for me, because I studied it for like, god, seven years in high school and college? And I am fairly, like—I know what people are saying, and I am completely incapable of speaking it, which makes like, trying to relearn it so frustrating.

Rachel: Yeah. They need to teach foreign language in a way that makes you a less anxious person, because I feel the same way. I went to France, and I took French in high school, and I did fairly well. And I could hear people saying things, and I could think of the words that I was supposed to say back.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: But I was terrified to say them. [laughs]

Griffin: Yes. Yes. [laughs] Yes. What they should do is like, when we were going to Japan for our honeymoon, I knew that the language barrier would be pretty significant in certain places, and we'd be in a lot of trouble if we couldn't communicate some basic ideas. That's what they gotta do to you in high school is just like, this class is for six weeks, and we're just gonna like, go, y'know, drop you in, y'know, across the Atlantic ocean somewhere, and then it's on you at that point. Good luck.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Uh, here's another one. This one's from Colton who says, "My wonderful thing this week is Little Caesar's pizza. It's not fancy, but for five dollars, it's a great, tasty dinner, especially while watching The Voice on the cable I steal from my parents." Big aesthetic.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: Huge aesthetic on Colton.

Rachel: That's a whole story right there.

Griffin: It's a whole story.

Rachel: In that one submission.

Griffin: And it's a story—is it a story, or is it a memory? Ooh boy, Colton. Takin' me back.

Rachel: Do you remember your first introduction to Hot 'n' Ready?

Griffin: So, I mean, Hot 'n' Ready wasn't invented 'til I was like, in college, right? But then like, once it was introduced, I was hard pressed to eat anything else.

Rachel: Oh no.

Griffin: This stinky, spicy, garlicky pizza... I'll go to bat for Little Caesar's pizza. Those five dollar Hot 'n' Readys, they got something goin' on, where it's not good pizza, but it is like, viciously flavorful.

Rachel: That's true.

Griffin: It's like, dusted with like, Doritos Locos dust or something like that.

Rachel: Yeah. You eat it, and you think, "I am eating something."

Griffin: "I am eating something." And you can crush it. Like, I am—I can't eat more than two slices of pizza, right? That's about how much my tum tum can fit inside of it, and then my tum tum's like, "You're gonna be sick. Stop. No room for three." I can crush like, half of a Little Caesar's pizza in one sitting. And it's five dollars? You're in college, like, you can really spread that out. That can be lunch and dinner for two days if you're smart about it.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Ooh. And it's only one trip out of the house? Damn, Little Caesar's.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I want to crush a Little Caesar's five dollar Hot 'n' Ready.

Rachel: Not me. This is gonna be Griffin's journey.

Griffin: [inhales sharply] I'm debating. 'Cause it's gonna make me feel so bad.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But I do want it so bad.

Rachel: See, I associate it with a sad time in my life. I'd rather not. I'd rather not go there.

Griffin: Yeah. I think for me, it was just like my fun years in college, and then, uh... I've done it—I did it a couple times here in Austin. I remember, we told some friends we were gonna get 'em pizza if they helped us move, and then a lot of them showed up. And so, we did get a nice couple of pizzas, and then we did like, fill in the gaps with some extra five dollar Hot 'n' Readys. And guess what? People went crazy for the five dollar Hot 'n' Readys, 'cause they're not special. This is turning into my third segment.

Thank you so much 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, and

uh, you can go to MaximumFun.org for all kinds of great quality comedy programming.

Rachel: Yeah, like Switchblade Sisters, and Minority Korner, and...

Griffin: Story Break!

Rachel: Story Break.

Griffin: Mission to Zyxx.

Rachel: Yes sir.

Griffin: All of them at MaximumFun.org. We got other stuff, too, at McElroy.family, don't we?

Rachel: Yeah. I mean, there's merchandise, there's video content, there's information about tours...

Griffin: Shows, yeah.

Rachel: Episodes.

Griffin: Yeah. Got some shows coming up. I don't know if there's tickets available, 'cause I don't go to my own website. That's a little too high-falutin' for my tastes.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I don't—I want that traffic number to be exactly accurate. I do not want to be accused of padding it by visiting the site.

Rachel: Oh, the little counter at the bottom?

Griffin: Yeah, we have the counter at the bottom. This is a new age website, people. It's got the counter at the bottom. It's got the little guy

with the hard hat chipping away the bottom of the webpage, as if to say, "We're working on it, folks."

Rachel: That's good.

Griffin: It's got... [sighs] Fun songs.

Rachel: Hmm?

Griffin: It's got fun songs by the All-American Rejects on it. You're gonna love this website. And you're gonna love this outro. Goodbye.

Rachel: [laughs]

[theme music plays]

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Speaker 1: I listen to Reading Glasses because Brea and Mallory have great tips.

Mallory: My suggestion for book festivals is just go for one day.

Speaker 2: I listen for the author interviews.

Speaker 3: I was a huge Goosebumps fan.

Mallory: Oh yes. [laughs]

Speaker 3: RL Stein was totally my jam.

Speaker 4: I don't even read – I just like their chemistry together.

Brea: Literally if, on the bag, it said like, “This book made me shit my pants.” I'd be like, that's... I'm buying this book. Like, I think the problem with blurbs a lot of the times—

Mallory: I like that we both want to crap ourselves over books.

Brea: I'm Brea Grant.

Mallory: And I'm Mallory O'Mara.

Brea: We're Reading Glasses, and we solve all your bookish problems, every Thursday on Maximum Fun.