

## Wonderful! 116: Pooch Hooch

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[theme music plays]

**Rachel:** Hi, this is Rachel McElroy. [laughs]

**Griffin:** Hello, this is a swordfish.

**Rachel:** And this is Wonderful!

**Griffin:** Codename Swordfish, hacking in. Hacking into... don't even bother lookin' into your computer wires. I'm in there. You stick your hand inside your computer, and you part the wires, and I've been living in there. You find crumbs and toilet paper. That's where I live, in your computer. Codename Swordfish.

**Rachel:** Like a little... like a little Donkey Kong.

**Griffin:** Like a little Donkey Kong.

**Rachel:** Throwin' the bits and bytes down.

**Griffin:** That's how he works. That's how he does his work. This is, uh, Wonderful. It's a show where we talk about good things. And I'll go ahead and say it – computers? Not one of them. Computers? Not high on the list for me today.

**Rachel:** Oh, babe... you know that's not true.

**Griffin:** They got me P'd O. And you know I don't like to use this kind of language, but computers got me P'd O. I built a new computer today, and that's usually a very satisfying process, but it took me a very long time, and then we just sat down to record, and it took us a half hour to get going because of how bad the computer was bein' a stinker. So...

**Rachel:** To be fair, your setup in here is a little complicated.

**Griffin:** It's a little convoluted. It's a little tough to follow. Critics have uh, called it... labyrinthine. Labyrinth—that's a tough word to say, huh?

**Rachel:** Labyrinthine?

**Griffin:** Labyrinthine? Anyway, do you have any small wonders?

**Rachel:** Uh, I do. Um, I am going to say... uh, the movie we just watched. The Farewell.

**Griffin:** The Farewell. Yeah.

**Rachel:** It was very, very good.

**Griffin:** Man, I do not want to say farewell. Hello to good acting from Awkwafina.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Do you know what I mean?

**Rachel:** Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** When I say that?

**Rachel:** Yeah, I do.

**Griffin:** Yeah, it was good. Uh, I thought it was gonna be a sort of emotionally, uh, devastating...

**Rachel:** Me too. I think I actually used the word 'devastating' when I was thinking of what I was getting myself into.

**Griffin:** It's certainly like, uh, y'know, emotional, but it's not as manipulative as you would think.

**Rachel:** No.

**Griffin:** Uh, it's about a family in China. Awkwafina's character lives in the states with her parents, and their grandmother is dying, but they don't tell her. They like, lie to her about the state of her health. And that sounds extremely sad, but it's like—it's actually a really, really subtle flick.

**Rachel:** It is—it is pretty sad. But it is also very funny.

**Griffin:** It's a very, very funny—god, I really do like Awkwafina a lot. I was thinking about, uh, Crazy Rich Asians, how just fucking hysterical she is in that.

**Rachel:** Mm-hmm.

**Griffin:** Uh, I'm gonna say, uh... Kinect, the Xbox controller that you do with your body. We've been playing some stuff with Henry, and it's just—it's, uh... been diggin' some stuff out of the bone yard. Reminds me of how much I enjoyed some of those games.

**Rachel:** We were really into it for a while there. That was kind of like our go-to weekend activity.

**Griffin:** Yeah, we had a party. We did a lot of Dance Central with our friends. I was a big fan of Fantasia, the Fantasia Harmonix from the Rock Band folks. Played that—picked that one back up. It's like fallin' off a log. Good stuff.

Uh... [coughs] Let's keep that nerd-ass train a'rollin' with my first thing, if you don't mind.

**Rachel:** Go right ahead.

**Griffin:** My first thing is, uh, a speed run that took place during AGDQ, Awesome Games Done Quick, uh, this past weekend, or this past week I guess. And I missed most of it this year. I wasn't watching a whole lot. And so, the past couple days, I've been getting caught up, and I watched one speed run that really, uh, boggled my mind of how wild it was.

And then, I was talking to like, everybody in Slack, and everybody's like, "Yes, that is the wildest run." And I know you—it's not really your scene, but I'm hoping I can get you as on board with it as you did with Dr. Fatbody's sort of seminal Sonic the Hedgeh—

**Rachel:** His crowd work made it, y'know?

**Griffin:** It was—well, and his play. I mean, he's a master.

**Rachel:** Yes, he's very good. But he was also like an excellent hype man.

**Griffin:** Right. The run I'm talking about for this year's event is The Legend of Zelda: Link to the Past crowd control randomizer speed run. So there's like, four layers of things to sort of unpack there.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** Uh, The Legend of Zelda: Link to the Past was the Super Nintendo game in the Zelda franchise, which—

**Rachel:** Is this the one that you always used to try and speed run?

**Griffin:** Uh, no, that was Ocarina of Time.

**Rachel:** Okay.

**Griffin:** And I didn't try to speed run it. I did. No, I did pretty bad. Uh, I just didn't know the strats. Anyway, we can't start unpacking that. This Super Nintendo game, Link to the Past, is like a staple of the speed run community. For a lot of people, it's like, the best Zelda game out there. Just top down, 2D, like, action adventure sort of RPG thing.

Uh, a couple years ago, this new scene developed around the game called 'the randomizer scene.' And it was because, uh, folks developed this piece of software where you could drop in, uh, an emulated, like, y'know, computer, executable version of the game, and it would switch everything in all the chests. Like, all—all around.

So, you play Link to the Past, you know where everything is. You know where you're gonna get the boomerang. You know where you're gonna get the hook shot. You know where you're gonna get the bombs.

**Rachel:** Ohh.

**Griffin:** This would generate a randomized version of the game, where every time you played it, you didn't know where anything was going to be.

**Rachel:** Oh, that's cool!

**Griffin:** And because it's a Zelda game, you could really sequence break the whole thing. So instead of having to go to this dungeon, this dungeon, this dungeon, and then get the Master Sword, and then you can travel back in time and do this dungeon, this—you may open up the first chest and like, oh, there's the Master Sword. So I can just go ahead and skip the first half of the game and just like, run straight ahead.

Uh, and so, it kind of becomes a puzzle of like, how can I continue to progress in this game? And there's lots of other fun modifiers. You can just turn the sword off, so you just like, have to play without a sword. Like, hitting things with your shovel and hoping for the best. It's been in a lot of GDQs.

So, this run is randomized. The person playing it, this guy named Andy, has no idea where anything's going to be. Uh, it's being watched by, y'know, thousands and thousands of people. Uh, a lot of which are watching on Twitch, which is the online streaming platform. Uh, and here is where the other layer comes in, and this is nothing I'd ever seen before, and it was the

wildest shit. And even if you don't care about this stuff, like, it is such a fun watch.

Uh, Crowd Control is a plugin on Twitch, where everybody watching could donate bits, which is like a Twitch currency, uh, to the Prevent Cancer Foundation, which is the foundation that they were raising money for with this event. Uh, and by donating bits, you could do things in the game.

So, if you donated like, 150 bits, you could give Andy, like, an extra set of arrows. Or an extra bomb. Or here's some rupees, or an extra heart container. And it would show up in game. Or, you could pay some bits to like, remove one of his like, health bar pieces. Or just get rid of all his bombs. Or take away—

**Rachel:** Wow!

**Griffin:** Keep that item from being able to be used for a little while. Uh, those are like, the cheapest options.

**Rachel:** Like, while the game is happening, or in advance?

**Griffin:** Live. Live. While the game is happening.

**Rachel:** That's crazy!

**Griffin:** Everybody's watching the game, and spending—donating money to do things to change the game. So those things, like, adding or removing certain items are like, the cheapest options. Uh, hysterically, you can also mess with the controller. So you could donate like, a significant amount of money, and you would switch the face buttons and the D-pad on the controller left to right. Or you would switch it vertically, so up would be down and down would be up, and X would be B, and B would be X.

Uh, and so, you would just watch this guy playing as Link, just like, running, and then immediately turn left and jump into a pit, and it's like, ahh, they just switched the controls on you.

And then you can do like, wild, wild, wild stuff, like uh, like triple the speed of the game all of a sudden, with no warning whatsoever. Or turn on like, ice physics, so everybody's sliding all around all over the place. Or turn on swarms of like, killer chickens, or turn it into one hit kill mode, where if he gets hit, he just dies instantly.

Uh, and then, the highest priced item on like, this menu of things you could donate money for, would just kill him instantly. And so, people would just do that while at sort of significant parts of the run, and just out of nowhere, Link would just fall down, dead, because somebody just donated \$500 to nuke him from orbit.

Andy, the guy playing this game, is like, an experienced random Zelda speed runner.

**Rachel:** Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** Was this Sisyphean, tortured, heroic figure...

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** ... the likes of which I have never seen a performance—the run took almost four hours. And this is a—

**Rachel:** Did he get like, legitimately pissed off?

**Griffin:** No. That's what's so incredible is he kept his cool. He had, uh, a couch of like, commentators behind him who have like, played this mode before, like, providing commentary on what was happening. And they were just badgering him. Like, really picking on him a lot in jest. But just like, nonstop just like, riding this guy's jock.

And then, y'know, you have the game that you're playing. You're playing a video game, so that's a kind of challenge. You have the pressure of the audience watching you. Right, so you're like, playing against yourself. You have the randomization. You don't know like, where anything's gonna be.

And on top of all that, you have like, an audience who are actively trying to kill you all at the same time.

**Rachel:** Yeah, this seems terrible.

**Griffin:** It is a man against the elements. It is—but at the time where he would like, use his tremendous skill at this game to overcome, like, its one hit kill, and all of these flying chickens are coming at him, and his controller is reversed, and the ground is ice, so he can't move, and he's just trying to stay alive until the timers run out on all these shitty effects, like... it was so fun to watch. It was so hysterically funny. And it's not like anything I've ever seen before, and I think it's just rad that this kind of technology even exists.

**Rachel:** Yeah, it's really hard to fathom how that works.

**Griffin:** I know. It's like a game that uh, I played so many times in my childhood, and watching it be played in this like, complete bizarre-o interactive, like, online way, was like, one of the coolest things I've seen come out of the speed running scene in a while. So that's my highlight from this year's event, and uh, I had a real good time watching.

I skimmed it mostly. I couldn't watch four hours of a speed run. I'm not at a place in my life where I can do that. But uh, it is—it is super, super entertaining.

What's your first thing?

**Rachel:** My first thing is not anything that I have any personal relationship to, but that I appreciate.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** And that is good penmanship.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** [laughs]



**Griffin:** I feel like this is come—like you're coming at me a little bit with this.

**Rachel:** I have terrible penmanship.

**Griffin:** Whose is worse? I have had you—I have had you like, fill out, like, birthday cards before.

**Rachel:** I don't think mine is... noticeably better than yours.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** I think mine is more legible, but it is not remotely, um, artistic in any way.

**Griffin:** A lot of people would argue that legibility is a sign of good penmanship.

**Rachel:** Yeah. [laughs] I feel like my handwriting looks approximately like it did when I was 11 years old.

**Griffin:** Yeah yeah yeah.

**Rachel:** Which is kind of a problem, I think.

**Griffin:** I think it's not great for me.

**Rachel:** Part of this is because handwriting, just as a practice, kind of disappeared in the '80s once computers took over.

**Griffin:** Mavis took it down, huh? Mavis stranglehold to the ground until it died.

**Rachel:** The emphasis became on, y'know, keyboarding and typing more than, y'know, handwriting.

**Griffin:** Yeah, it's wicked fast. Did you know? Do you think the handwriting people out there know? Like, people I see—

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** I see people doin' calligraphy, and it's like, "This is taking foreeeever!"

**Rachel:** [laughing] Um, but I don't know if this is the case for you, but like, I have noticed like, my mom's handwriting and my grandparents' handwriting was just like, incredible.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Y'know? And I always thought like, how... how did this happen, and how was mine so terrible? And that's because handwriting was something that was actually valued for a very long time. [laughs]

**Griffin:** Yeah, but they didn't have like, memes, right? They didn't have all these funny memes.

**Rachel:** Yeah, that's true.

**Griffin:** 'Cause they took so long to say like, "Hello, my dearest. I write to you in..."

**Rachel:** On a Saturday, y'know, when we were like, y'know, on our Nintendos, they were like, writing letters.

**Griffin:** Yeah. They were writing letters.

**Rachel:** Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** And I was over—I was on my Nintendo like, "Lol, yeet."

**Rachel:** [laughs] Uh, so, handwriting—there are like, different schools of handwriting. Um, in the mid-1800s, a abolitionist and bookkeeper named Platt Rogers Spencer, uh, developed—

**Griffin:** Are you sure that's not like, a last name presented first, like a formal surname presentation?

**Rachel:** Well, because the system is known as the Spencerian method.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** So I'm assuming that's the last name. Uh, it was a cursive writing system. Uh, and it can, uh... he's known as the father of American penmanship. And his book, *Spencer and Rice's System of Business and Ladies' Penmanship*...

**Griffin:** Oh.

**Rachel:** ... was the first kind of foray.

**Griffin:** So are those the two schools, is business and ladies?

**Rachel:** So this was the thing. Back in the day, so, there were professional, like, penmen, responsible for writing things like the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** Like, people with super great handwriting, that was all they did was write things for people.

**Griffin:** Is that like John Hancock, or is that apocryphal? He didn't write any—

**Rachel:** Well, that was his signature.

**Griffin:** That was his—but it was Tommy J. who wrote it, yes?

**Rachel:** Well, this is supposing that it wasn't—I mean, Thomas Jefferson may have drafted it, but the actual, formal document was written by a professional penman.

**Griffin:** Ohh. Who?

**Rachel:** Well, I—

**Griffin:** That's the real father of our country! What the fuck! We don't know that?

**Rachel:** I'm gonna go National Treasure. I'm sure we do. I just personally don't. Have I let you down today?

**Griffin:** I'm just—I want—I need to go pull out all of the bills out of my wallet and start folding it until I find out the answer to this fucking question.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Um, the most popular of Spencer's books was the Spencerian Key to Practical Penmanship that came out in 1866.

**Griffin:** Were people not writing good?

**Rachel:** It wasn't like an art form, y'know? I think, initially... well, first of all, there were like—for a long time, there wasn't like, standardized spelling, for example.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** Y'know? Like the idea that there was like, a set way to spell and communicate was not something that always existed.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** In the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Charles Zaner and Elmer Bloser came out with the—what has become the new kind of fundamental guide to handwriting. Uh, and this was something that was called the Zaner method of arm movement...

**Griffin:** Wh—

**Rachel:** And it was developed especially for elementary-aged children. So especially for kids coming up learning how to write.

**Griffin:** Are we talking—when you say a book about—I'm thinking about what a book about handwriting looks like, and it's the wildest shit. I'm just imagining that the like, charts that they would hang up on the chalkboard of like, the three lines with the big—

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Okay, that's what we're talking about?

**Rachel:** Yeah. Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** Okay. That's the Zaner.

**Rachel:** Yeah. And just like, practicing. Like workbooks. Just like, practicing over and over again.

**Griffin:** Oh, okay, okay.

**Rachel:** Um...

**Griffin:** I thought—I was imagining like a literary book that's like, "Okay, let's begin with A. Uh, this one's, uh, big, round..."

**Rachel:** Round. [laughing]

**Griffin:** "Like an O?"

"I hear you asking me if it's like the O, and the answer is kind of. But there's a lot more going on here."

**Rachel:** [laughs] "There's a line."

"Well, where does the line go?"

"Well, I'm gonna get to that."

**Griffin:** "I'm gonna get to that in the next paragraph."

**Rachel:** "If you just wait."

**Griffin:** "The line—the line goes on the right."

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** "No, not like that. God. I wish I could just show you what the cursive A looks like instead of having to—ugh. Fine."

**Rachel:** Um, Zaner-Bloser is actually still around. In 1972, they became owned by the Highlights for children.

**Griffin:** Oh, shit!

**Rachel:** Yeah! And then, in 1991, they launched a handwriting contest, uh, for kids aged K through eight.

**Griffin:** Okay. Now I'm just imagining, like, uh, y'know, two harried businessmen like, sweating, leaning over their desks like, "What are we gonna fuckin' do, man? What are we gonna fu—a contest! A contest for children!"

**Rachel:** [laughs] Now the—like, that whole organization is more founded on like, reading and literacy.

**Griffin:** They had to do—they had to change it to something else.

**Rachel:** But they still, to like, stay true to their roots, have this handwriting contest.

**Griffin:** It was for a, y'know, 120 years, it was all about good handwriting. And then for like, a year, while they tried some stuff out, it was about Pogs. And then they were like...

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** We need—it's—it's gotta be more endemic than...

**Rachel:** Slammers used to be called Zaners.

**Griffin:** They were called Zaners to begin with, yes.

**Rachel:** Mm-hmm. It was a brief time period. Uh, now, see, when I was doing research online, a lot of this is from History.com. They said that in many European countries, students still get handwriting instruction.

**Griffin:** Of course. I don't doubt that at all.

**Rachel:** Yeah. Which I would've appreciated. I remember when I was learning cursive, for example, there was a little bit of that. But even then, I was not particularly good at it.

**Griffin:** I would also be surprised—I—I'm almost certain this is not limited to like, Europe, right? I imagine in...

**Rachel:** No, what I studied primarily was American, and then they just referenced that European countries, they're still doing it.

**Griffin:** Oh, okay. I was thinking of countries with like, uh, representative character sets. I forget what like, that category of like, handwriting is called.

**Rachel:** Oh, yeah.

**Griffin:** But like, uh, uh, y'know, hiragana and kanji and all that stuff.

**Rachel:** Yeah. Yeah. No, I'm talking about English, primarily.

**Griffin:** Okay, yes.

**Rachel:** Um, this is a little fun fact to just kind of end it. Um, a legible handwriting is called a... griffonage.

**Griffin:** Are you kidding me?

**Rachel:** Mm-mm.

**Griffin:** G-R-I-F-F-I-N-A-G-E?

**Rachel:** No, G-R-I-F-F-O-N-A-G-E. Isn't that funny?

**Griffin:** I love that! That's so good.

**Rachel:** I found this website that listed all these kind of obscure words and what they meant, and then I came across that one.

**Griffin:** That's so good! Because it's true! And it's not great when it happens... at my child's daycare. When I have to write his name on something. And they're like, "Who's Hedry?"

**Rachel:** [laughs] Oh, and I also read about different—there were a lot of tips online about how to improve your handwriting style. And one of the things I read talked about how the—the grip of the pencil... there isn't actually one, like, preferred grip. It really depends on your hand shape.

**Griffin:** [gasps] You're kidding me!

**Rachel:** Yes.



**Griffin:** So all of the times that I got yelled at... I hold... how would you describe my pencil holding technique?

**Rachel:** Most people take their index finger, and that's kind of the main player in what they're doing with their writing implement. Griffin...

**Griffin:** I kind of use the side of my middle finger.

**Rachel:** Yeah. He's got two fingers out there. Um, it looks like he's just picked up a pencil for the first time. [laughs]

**Griffin:** It is. And it's how I get—y'know what I'm thinking about now? Y'know how I have crooked middle fingers?

**Rachel:** Oh, uh-huh?

**Griffin:** I'm wondering if that's why.

**Rachel:** Just from real intense gripping?

**Griffin:** Yeah, just from gripping a pencil, like, for, y'know, the times in my life where a pencil was still relevant. God, what if keyboards hadn't been invented? What would my—

**Rachel:** [laughing] Your hands.

**Griffin:** My hands would be like a wild...

**Rachel:** Like roots of a tree.

**Griffin:** Like a curs-ed monkey's paw.

**Rachel:** [laughing]

**Griffin:** Uh, hey, can I steal you away?

**Rachel:** Yes.

[ad break music plays]

**Rachel:** Can I share a message from our first sponsor this week?

**Griffin:** [goofy voice] Yuuup!

**Rachel:** It is HoneyBook!

**Griffin:** Mmm, the sticky one. The stickiest book around.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Don't let Pooh bear near that book!

**Rachel:** Griffin, you don't always have to be on.

**Griffin:** [imitating Winnie the Pooh] Oh, could I have a smackerel of your HoneyBook?

**Rachel:** Um, this actually is really relevant to you, so I want you to just be a little serious here for a moment.

**Griffin:** [imitating Tigger] M'kay. It's me, Tigger! I'm gonna bounce all over your—[laughing] Your HoneyBook!

**Rachel:** This is for small business owners, Griffin McElroy.

**Griffin:** [imitating Eeyore] Like meee...

**Rachel:** Someone has trusted you to own a business. [laughs]

**Griffin:** That was Eeyore. Yeah. Uh, not for much longer, if this is how I decide to keep doing advertisements.

**Rachel:** Uh, HoneyBook is an online business management tool that organizes your client communications, bookings, contracts, and invoices, all in one place. It is perfect for freelancers, entrepreneurs, or small business owners that want to consolidate services they already use, like QuickBooks, Google Suite, Excel, and MailChimp.

And right now, HoneyBook is offering our listeners 50% off when you visit [TryHoneyBook.com/Wonderful](https://TryHoneyBook.com/Wonderful). Payment is flexible, and this promotion applies whether you pay monthly or annually. Go to [TryHoneyBook.com/Wonderful](https://TryHoneyBook.com/Wonderful) for 50% off your first year. That's five zero percent off. That's [HoneyBook.com/Wonderful](https://HoneyBook.com/Wonderful).

**Griffin:** I like that. That's a good idea. It's like a little... would you say it's like a little kangaroo pouch that you can tuck everything into? And then, I was gonna—maybe this could be another Winnie the Pooh reference.

**Rachel:** But less sticky, I think, is probably what they'd want you to lead with.

**Griffin:** You think they don't like it saying that their service is very sticky?

**Rachel:** I don't think most, uh, businesses would like that.

**Griffin:** But it's good for your allergies and stuff.

**Rachel:** Mm. Mm-hmm.

**Griffin:** If you have a cold or something like that. Hey, did you have a long day at work or a tough day at school, or are you still at the office? One of those three things is true about you.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And so, I want you to treat yourself to a meal that you deserve, that you need to have in your body, and have your favorite restaurants come to you with DoorDash. They connect you with your favorite restaurants

in your city. Ordering's super easy. You get the DoorDash app, you open it up, you pick what you want to eat, and your food will be delivered to you wherever you are.

And not only is your favorite pizza joint already on DoorDash, I'm talking about Dougie's Nasty Stuff. That's the name of the new one. Dougie's Nasty Slice. Uh, and this one's down on 53<sup>rd</sup> Street. Avenue. And they have... it's true to form. They're disgusting slices. Disgusting pies.

**Rachel:** Of the over 340,000 restaurants on DoorDash, you want to talk about Dougie's?

**Griffin:** There's a certain charm. Their pizza is a fucking dumpster. Their garlic knots? I'll fuck with their garlic knots.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Anyway, right now, our listeners can get five dollars off their first order of \$15 or more when you download the DoorDash app and enter the promo code 'WonderfulPod,' all one word. That's five dollars off your first order when you download the DoorDash app from the app store and enter the promo code 'WonderfulPod.' Again, promo code 'WonderfulPod' for five dollars off your first order from DoorDash.

**Rachel:** Can I read you this first personal message?

**Griffin:** Yesss.

**Rachel:** It is for Justin. It is from Brie. "You are the best bae a goblin could ask for. From the amazing care you take of our long snake son and trash cat baby, to the unwavering support you show me, no matter what creative or athletic endeavor I think I can tackle. Thank you. I can't wait to marry you this Halloween and spend the rest of my spooky life with you."

**Griffin:** You better be careful with that. I wish you great love and great success with your love, and your wedding, and congratulations. Halloween

wedding, though? I feel like you're... inviting in some spirits, is all I'm gonna say.

**Rachel:** Well, I mean, it sounds like Brie is a goblin, based on the message, so that seems like a great... environment.

**Griffin:** Maybe this kind of all hallows trickery is exactly what they are looking for.

**Rachel:** Mm-hmm.

**Griffin:** Okay. I'm just gonna say... be careful. Skeletons like to hide in big cakes.

**Rachel:** Ooh.

**Griffin:** So here's a message for Tommy, and it's from Courtney who says, "Dear Thomas, surprise! Here's a jumbotron! I just wanted to thank you for enduring my silly songs, playing board games with me, parenting our kitty boys, and most importantly, loving me unconditionally. I love you so very much and I'm so thankful to have you in my life. I hope you have a wonderful day love Courtney. Love, Courtney." Do you think that that's... a sign off, or do you think that that's sort of—

**Rachel:** [laughs] An order.

**Griffin:** An order. "Love Courtney." Have a good day. Thank you for the kitty boys. Love Courtney.

[music plays]

**Jesse:** Hey gang! Jesse here, the founder of Maximum Fun, and with me is Stacey Molski, who is, among other things, the lady who responds to all of your tweets.

**Stacey:** Hi everyone! I also send you newsletters.

**Jesse:** Uh, so anyway, something really awesome. You, Max Fun listeners, have given us the chance to do something really cool on behalf of our entire community, and we wanted to tell you about it.

**Stacey:** Last summer, following the MaxFunDrive, we put all of the enamel pins on sale to \$10 and up members, with proceeds going to the The National CASA/GAL Association for Children.

**Jesse:** Your generous support and enthusiasm raised over \$100,000. Our bookkeeper staff would be quick to tell me exact total is \$109,025, to be exact.

**Stacey:** Your money will go toward pairing kids who've experienced abuse or neglect with court-appointed advocates, or Guardian ad Litem volunteers.

**Jesse:** In other words, kids in tough spots will have somebody in their corner. Knowledgeable grown-ups who are on their team through court dates and life upheavals and confusing situations. Whatever.

**Stacey:** The money we raised together is going to help a lot of kids.

**Jesse:** Whether you bought pins or not, you can help us build on that \$109,000 foundation. Make a donation to support The National CASA/GAL, and help some of our nation's most vulnerable children at [MaximumFun.org/CASA](http://MaximumFun.org/CASA). That's [MaximumFun.org/CASA](http://MaximumFun.org/CASA).

**Stacey:** And seriously – thank you. Our community rules.

[music ends]

**Rachel:** Can I hear your second thing, please?

**Griffin:** My second thing is a music thing. I'm really excited to talk about it, 'cause it's a band I discovered... like last fall, sometime? And I just assumed that they were like, a pretty big deal that lots of people who were fans of this type of music knew about. And then I was like, researching them today, and they're like, wicked not.

If you base a band's like, sort of mainstream appeal by Spotify plays, like, there's, uh... I don't know. They're a bit more underground than I thought. They're called The Westerlies, and they are a four piece, chamber brass band. I'd heard that term, 'chamber,' like, in reference to like, a band before.

**Rachel:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** And I never actually knew what it meant.

**Rachel:** Me neither.

**Griffin:** The definition is uh, it is a small band with one player to each part.

**Rachel:** Ohh.

**Griffin:** As opposed to an orchestra, which would have, y'know, there's five flutes and here's the violin section. Uh, the chamber literally referring to a band large enough to fit into a palace chamber or large room. So like, a string quartet is probably the most common form of, uh, chamber band.

Uh, Westerlies... I don't think they actually fulfill the requirements, because there are two trombonists, and uh, two trumpeters. It's just four folks. Uh, but they make the most beautiful, just dreamiest, biggest sounds with their, like, with their limited roster.

They formed in 2011, and uh, I think their like, biggest exposure at this point is they've done some collaborations with uh, Fleet Foxes. And I think they played like, a show or two with them, and I think that they have provided like, backing instrumentation to uh, one of their albums.

But their sound is just so unique, and uh, I am always on the lookout for like, nice, chill, atmospheric work music. And this has been like, my jam for a few months now. So I'm gonna play one of their songs now. It's my favorite song of theirs, and it is called Sorrow.

[‘Sorrow’ by The Westerlies plays]

**Griffin:** It’s like, super cinematic. And that’s like, another sort of thing I’m always like, into, is like...

**Rachel:** Yeah! I’m always surprised by like, your interest in that. Like, not in context, y’know? Just by itself, to like, listen to that kind of music.

**Griffin:** Yeah, I don’t—it’s just some way that my brain works, where... and it’s why I started to like, get into music when I was doing TAZ, is like, I like to listen to a song and like, imagine the kind of scene that it would underscore.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Uh, and I just cannot not do that while listening to The Westerlies. And they have a pretty broad range of sounds. Like, they have more like, sort of poppier songs, and they have more sort of traditional, y’know, classical format songs. Uh, all just four piece brass.

But this type, like, they have a few songs like this that are just really just, uh... I don’t know, cinematic, and big, and beautiful. It is really tough to categorize, uh, as evidenced by, they have, of course, done a tiny desk concert for NPR.

**Rachel:** Oh, okay.

**Griffin:** And NPR wrote of the band, uh, “Young musicians today routinely resist being pigeonholed into a single genre. Such is the case with this unconventional band, which, through its compositions and tight ensemble playing, reveals a built-in sympathy for improvised jazz, rigorous classical structures, and sunshiny pop.”

Another neat thing about them... I’ve been listening to them for months now, but it wasn’t until I researched them that I learned that they are actually a nonprofit that is like, supported by a like, board of donors, uh, that they are also sort of all about like, education and community building through music.



And that's through like, going out and actually like, teaching seminars and underserved schools and uh, participating in, uh, y'know, panels and conventions about sort of equality in jazz, or uh, music composition, or whatever.

Their mission statement is, "The Westerlies are committed to dismantling racism, sexism, and economic inequality in their field, and aim to reflect their values of diversity and inclusion in the music they make and the spaces they occupy." Uh, they're just like, doing dope shit across the country.

They don't actually tour that much. A lot of the shows that they play are like—

**Rachel:** Yeah, I was trying to picture like, what a concert would be like.

**Griffin:** Uh, yeah. I mean, I've seen a like, uh, a string quartet play. It's, y'know, it's not dynamic, right? I imagine that there's not pyrotechnics or anything like that. Um, but I don't know, I just love their music, and I love, like, the cool shit that they're doing outside of it. They're also, on top of all that, like, recording artists. They have a new album out at the end of this month, which I'm very excited about, called uh, *Wherein Lies the Good*.

And there's a few singles out for that album, so just to leave this bit, I'm gonna play one. And it's called *Robert Henry*, and it's also very much in that just like, y'know, cinematic soundtrack-y sort of vibe. So here is *Robert Henry*.

[*'Robert Henry'* by The Westerlies plays]

**Griffin:** What's your second thing?

**Rachel:** My second thing... and I told Griffin, like, I had a hard time coming up with my second thing.

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** And then this kind of hit me like a bolt of lightning.

**Griffin:** Mm.

**Rachel:** And I like, furiously, like, did all the research I could in the short amount of time I had left in the day. [laughs]

**Griffin:** What is it?

**Rachel:** McGruff the Crime Dog.

**Griffin:** You like this dog.

**Rachel:** I... love this dog.

**Griffin:** Okay... he's kind of a narc, right?

**Rachel:** No!

**Griffin:** Alright. I don't know anything about McGruff the—

**Rachel:** You don't understand what McGruff is about.

**Griffin:** Is it—

**Rachel:** I think—I'm pretty sure my mom had a McGruff puppet in her classroom.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** This was like a big movement.

**Griffin:** I—I don't think I—my school was ever visited by McGruff. I don't think I ever had any McGruff exposure to speak of.

**Rachel:** Oh no, Griffin!

**Griffin:** It may have been, y'know, after my time. It may have been... I was getting like, Slim Goodbody. Like, that's who I was—that was the heat I was getting.

**Rachel:** But how did you know to prevent crime?

**Griffin:** I didn't. That's why I did...

**Rachel:** You did all the crimes?

**Griffin:** I did so much like, y'know, stealing, and uh, hurting, and uh... y'know, jumpin' on the grass that I wasn't supposed to be on. Littering. Oh man. And...

**Rachel:** That wasn't really the kind of crime McGruff was...

**Griffin:** Stole a airplane from the airport. Aaand...

**Rachel:** Just like, as a youth?

**Griffin:** Uh-huh. And... dug a hole. Way too deep. I hit power—I didn't call before about power lines. I just started digging.

**Rachel:** Uh-huh. [laughing]

**Griffin:** I did some time for that one. Anyway, what's this narc dog all about?

**Rachel:** Okay, so, McGruff was an animated bloodhound that was designed to crease—uh, to increase crime awareness and personal safety in the United States. McGruff debuted in 1980 with a series of public service announcements educating citizens on personal security measures, such as locking doors and putting your lights on timers when you go out of town.

So, personal measures you can take to reduce crime in your own life.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** Not like—

**Griffin:** I got super worried that it was gonna go like a Clint Eastwood direction of like, McGruff was like, "Are you strapped? You gotta be strapped."

**Rachel:** [laughs] No, the idea was that, y'know, you were reducing the potential for crime. Y'know how like if you're in a parking lot, and it tells you to like, hide your belongings?

**Griffin:** Precog shit.

**Rachel:** Mm-hmm. That's what McGruff was all about.

**Griffin:** McGruff was a precog. There were three McGruffs floating in tanks of goo, and—

**Rachel:** People always reference Minority Report like it's a part of our like, shared understanding?

**Griffin:** Minority Report fuckin' bangs, dude. That movie is—

**Rachel:** I don't know that everybody's seen Minority Report the way you think they have.

**Griffin:** Pfft, well, I know what my segment next week's gonna be. Brush up, suckers. I'm talkin' Minority Report. That movie bangs.

**Rachel:** Uh, so, McGruff was a hugely successful campaign. In the first year, over \$100 million in free air time was donated, and it reached over 50% of adults.

**Griffin:** For a dog that just said, "Lock your doors, everybody"?

**Rachel:** Oh, babe, so much more than that.

**Griffin:** [laughs] Okay.

**Rachel:** In 2008, they did a survey, and nine out of ten people recognized McGruff. This is 2008. This is like, significantly later. People still see McGruff, and they're like, "Oh yeah, I know who that dog is."

**Griffin:** He's a brown bloodhound with like, a fedora on?

**Rachel:** And a trench coat.

**Griffin:** And a trench coat. Okay. I do—I am familiar with this pupper.

**Rachel:** So uh, the Department of Justice in 1977 reached out to the ad council to create a public campaign. Uh, ad council passed it onto an agency, uh, Dancer Fitzgerald Sample, who was the agency that worked on Keep America Beautiful.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** Uh, so, they connected focus groups, and people in the focus groups said that the police officers should be the one to prevent crimes. And we're not gonna pay more to support more officers. Which was a challenge. But they said, y'know what, if you're able to emphasize individual actions and come up with easy, accessible opportunities, then we'd be willing to help out, basically, is what the focus groups came down with.

**Griffin:** M'kay.

**Rachel:** Tell us little things we can do, and yeah, that's okay. So, the EVP of the agency was kind of channeling Smokey the Bear when he came up with the idea of an animal. And he quickly came up with "take a bite out of crime" as kind of the slogan, which McGruff ended up using.

**Griffin:** What do you think crime tastes like? [pause] You can do it as like a punitive action, this bite, but you're gonna end up tasting some crime.

**Rachel:** Batteries.

**Griffin:** Ooh, interesting.

**Rachel:** Mm-hmm.

**Griffin:** Like you get that—like a shock. Like a... [gasps] Ooh!

**Rachel:** Yeah. It's like, unpleasant, but very like, specific.

**Griffin:** There's a—there's a bloo—like an irony taste to it. Like blood or something like that, but then it's also like, "Ooh, I shouldn't!" It's like a—because there's power in it, y'know? There's power in the crime. And you should be afraid of it.

**Rachel:** Yes. I gotta tell you about these dogs.

**Griffin:** Okay. Do the—were there multiple takes? [laughs]

**Rachel:** Yes.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** So here's the thing. So, first dog, um, kind of looked like Snoopy, wearing like a Keystone cop hat.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** And his team was like... there's no way that dog's gonna be taken seriously. And so, the EVP said, "Okay, you've got a day to come up with some proposals." According to the article I read, the rejected proposals included a bull dog version of J. Edgar Hoover...

**Griffin:** Mm.

**Rachel:** A golden retriever. A, quote, "aggressive looking deputy dog," and quote, "a mongrel who became a wonder dog."

**Griffin:** Do we need an origin story? Was the first McGruff the Crime Dog PSA like, "So anyway, I got bitten by a radioactive cop."

**Rachel:** [laughs] "You might wonder how I became interested in crime. Let me tell you a little bit about where I came from."

**Griffin:** "Well, this is a magic hat that lets me talk."

**Rachel:** [laughing] Um, what the EVP decided on was, uh, the dog in the trench coat who, quote, "was tired, had seen the world..."

**Griffin:** [bursts into laughter]

**Rachel:** "... and had epitomized all the detectives we had seen from Raymond Chandler to Dashiell Hammond, and even Columbo."

**Griffin:** Yeah, there's big Columbo energy in that there pooch.

**Rachel:** It's true. There's something about McGruff that's kind of like, rough around the edges. No pun intended. Of like...

**Griffin:** Ooh, shit!

**Rachel:** Like, I've seen some stuff, kids. And let me tell you... put your lights on a timer. [laughs]

**Griffin:** And every PSA, did he like, sneak just like, a finger of hooch? Just a nip of it from a little... like a...

**Rachel:** [laughing]

**Griffin:** Like maybe a um, a saint Bernard with like a neck cask came over and just like, gave him a little... just a finger.

**Rachel:** [laughing] Not that I saw. Um, that doesn't mean it didn't happen. I haven't seen all of McGruff's work. And there has been a lot of it. Um, when they came up with the design that the agency was really proud of, the attorney general at the time was really disappointed that they had, quote, "been spending good money on a talking dog." [laughs]

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Rachel:** And he ordered it to be shut down. But at that point, the advertisements had already been distributed to the media and were set to run.

**Griffin:** You can't stop the signal, baby. This thing's bigger than you. It's bigger than the Department of Justice.

**Rachel:** [laughing] In November of 1979, the dog was introduced at a press conference in New York City.

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Rachel:** Which... I really wish there was video footage of that. [laughs] "Alright guys, we've figured out how we're gonna solve crime. First, let me show you a picture of this dog. Second, this name will be determined by a contest." Which is exactly what happened. Eight months later, a nationwide—

**Griffin:** Please tell me you have—do you have other names? Do you have other names?

**Rachel:** I have the runner up.

**Griffin:** Okay.



**Rachel:** Nationwide contest to name the dog. McGruff was the winner, obviously. The runner up was Sherlocked Homes... 'locked' being a reference to the idea...

**Griffin:** Oh, that sucks!

**Rachel:** ... of locking your doors.

**Griffin:** That sucks!

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** That sucks as bad as that one episode of Sherlock where that was like, the solution to the big mystery at the end. Do you remember that one?

**Rachel:** No.

**Griffin:** I will talk about it after. I don't want to go about spoiling Sherlock for people.

**Rachel:** Um... yeah, so that's how we came up with McGruff.

**Griffin:** That's how we got to McGruff.

**Rachel:** I was reading, like—up until 2012, they were still using McGruff's image in like, campaigns to like, guard the elderly, and to prevent, like, cyberbullying. Like, McGruff still gets trotted out every once in a while of like, "You can prevent crime by being better."

**Griffin:** Yeah. It's a little presumptuous. Y'know what I mean? It's like, lock your doors. And don't get cyberbullied. And also, don't cyberbully. I'm McGruff the crime dog, and I done done it again.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Uhh, ruff ruff. Uhh, take a bite. Uhhhh, turn around in a circle and lay down.

**Griffin:** "Lock your doors."

"Okay, they smashed in my windows."

"Bar those... up."

"Okay, well, they used C4 and blew a hole in the wall."

"Dig a... big hole. You live in there—you live there now. I'm McGruff the crime dog. You're a hole dweller."

**Rachel:** "Speaking of crime, let me open this trench book. I'm selling some bootleg DVDs." [laughs]

**Griffin:** You said trench book, and I'm imagining—that would be—

**Rachel:** Did I say trench book?

**Griffin:** You did, and that's like the new—that's like, your new dark underground Facebook.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Um, I loved this time period. This like, idea that like, a little spokes animal was gonna like, motivate people to do things.

**Griffin:** Have we talked about Louie the Lightning Bug before?

**Rachel:** We haven't. But I didn't know if that was a regional thing or not, 'cause we had that.

**Griffin:** We had that as well. I think it must've been... must've been... yeah, we had that, we had Smokey, we had McGruff, we had... Mr. Yuck. Did you have Mr. Yuck?

**Rachel:** Yeah! Oh yeah.

**Griffin:** Uhh... Slim Goodbody may not be as universal.

**Rachel:** I'm not familiar.

**Griffin:** Uhhh... yeah. There was a lot. Louie the Lighting Bug was always my favorite. `Cause his—he had like, jams.

**Rachel:** Yeah, he was jazzy.

**Griffin:** He had like... [sings in a silly voice] "You gotta play it safe around electricityyy!"

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Uh, it was fresh. Hey, can I tell you what our friends at home are excited about?

**Rachel:** Yes.

**Griffin:** I'll tell you what Beauregard says. "One of my favorite small wonders is when people ask you to take their picture, partly because it's cute to know that they want to have a picture badly enough to ask a stranger, and partly because I like to start taking pictures before they're ready, just in case I can capture something cute."

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Something fuckin' real!

**Rachel:** Griffin always gets asked to take photos.

**Griffin:** I do. I have that face of a person who can't run away very quickly with your camera.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** David says, "My small wonder for this week is Neil Pert, the drummer from Rush who just passed away. His drumming was unbelievably good, and watching videos of him is really exciting, even if you don't know a lot about drumming. He just worked so hard to make that giant drum kit. He put out a bunch of interesting rhythms and sounds. He also wrote all the band's lyrics, and most of it is really interesting poetry."

**Rachel:** Oh, I didn't know that!

**Griffin:** I didn't know that either. Neil Pert is one of the drummers that I gained a deep respect for through playing like, Rock Band for five years nonstop. Just drums, like, holing up in my room and just practicing playing Rush songs, like Limelight, on drums, like, over and over and over and over again. And figuring out like, all of the different kinds of drumming that there are.

And I feel like that gave me a weirdly, like, uh, detailed look at like, how weird a drummer Neil Pert actually was. Like, he pioneered a bunch of like, very, very strange, mathematical ways of playing the drums. Yeah, he kicked ass.

Uh, hey. Thanks to Maximum Fun for having us on the network. They're good friends, good family, good times. Great oldies. And uh, hey, 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.

I went backwards with those.

**Rachel:** I know. I'm a little thrown.

**Griffin:** Maybe you can say something nice about Bo En and Augustus.

**Rachel:** Um... I absolutely love that song.

**Griffin:** Yeah. Money Won't Pay is a good one. You can find the link to that in the episode description.

**Rachel:** [laughs] You're all tripped up now.

**Griffin:** And thank you to Maximum Fun. Uh, we have other stuff at McElroy.family. We're doing a couple shows in Cincinnati here in February, and we got more announcements comin' up soon. Uhhhh... is that it? I think that might be it. We got shirt. We have shirt.

**Rachel:** Yeah! Thank you guys that have taken a picture of yourself wearing the shirt. We also got our shirts in. They are, in fact, very soft.

**Griffin:** Very soft. Sarft. Very sarft. These shirts are soft. They're soft shirts.

**Rachel:** We also got the Christmas ornament, which is very sweet. I've never, um... I've never had an ornament designed with my likeness on it. Or a shirt, for that matter, so that was a real treat.

**Griffin:** Yeah, uh, it's uh... it's good. All day, it's all Rachel wears is this shirt, and she carries around the ornament.

**Rachel:** Mm-hmm.

**Griffin:** She's always got one hand occupied by the Christmas ornament.

**Rachel:** Mm-hmm. And when I go grocery shopping, I just—everybody I run into, I say, "Ehh? Ehh? Ehh? Ehh?"

**Griffin:** "Ehh?"

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Anyway, uh, that's the end of our show, and um...

**Rachel:** Can you come up with some other names for McGruff the crime dog that you would've liked to have heard?

**Griffin:** [blows raspberry] Spanky the no-nonsense police pooch.

**Rachel:** Barry Beagle, chief of police.

**Griffin:** Terry the anti-terrorist terrier.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Oh shit. [laughs]

**Rachel:** That's really good. [laughs]

[theme music plays]

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