

Wonderful! 126: The Goop Threshold

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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: It is still that.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: We're not doing Rosebuddies again. We haven't changed the format again. It would be, at this point, frankly, babe? Pretty irresponsible for us to change formats once again.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And this is a podcast where we talk about good things goin' on in the world. I think this is probably the first recording we've done in a very long time, where we both have big Tammy Taylor sized glasses of white wine.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Just at the go, at the ready. Um... you haven't done this yet. You have not sort of recorded a podcast since it popped off.

Rachel: No. Not—not post-pandemic.

Griffin: I've done a couple now, and it's uh... it's a strange vibe. It's a—this show, I think, we try to focus on the good things that are happenin'.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: And that is not to say that there aren't good things happening, but I worry that... there's a—there's a notch on the meter, right?

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: And that notch reads... 'goop.' And I'm really cautious about this podcast hitting the goop—the goop threshold.

Rachel: Yeah, we have danced close to it, for sure.

Griffin: Ooh yeah, we've danced with the goop in the pale moonlight. But it feels like... the more sort of serious things get, and the more actual genuine suffering is happening out there, where I talk about how good pistachios are... ooh, that goop line a'comin'!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I don't really know how to fix that. I don't really know how to walk that.

Rachel: We also have to be sensitive to the fact that some of the things we talk about are more difficult to access now than they were before.

Griffin: Of course. Yes. I—yes.

Rachel: So, we will try and be conscious of that, and try and do our best to kind of be sensitive, I think.

Griffin: This podcast, for... okay, I'll speak personally. This podcast is, um, is one that I never really stress out about making. And that's not to say that like, y'know, making TAZ and MBMBaM and Besties is a miserable experience or anything like that. But like, I'm a genuinely, like, anxious person, and uh, my anxiety about the world, it's hard to sort of keep that separated from the stuff that I make.

And so, with MBMBaM and TAZ and everything else I do, it's really hard for me to completely put that aside while I am making the thing. But... because of the nature of this show, and because of the person I make it with, uh, that is not true for this podcast. And so, like, for me, it is, um... it is still—it is still very, very good to be making this show. Like, that hasn't changed.

I'm anxious about the world pretty much all the time, pandemic or no, and so, I don't think we should necessarily change what we're doing too much. But just know that we're, y'know, we're thinking about those who are having an incredibly hard time with this. Much harder than us, and uh... I think we can still talk about things that are good, because I think there's also a lot of people who want to hear that.

Rachel: Yes. I think that's true.

Griffin: We just gotta watch that goop mark, don't we? If we are trending towards the goop mark, please do not like, sleep on telling us. We're gonna do our best, though.

Rachel: Yeah. There's a difference between saying, "I like lemons!" And, "Lemons will save you."

Griffin: Mm-hmm.

Rachel: And just make sure that we are... [laughs]

Griffin: I guess that's a good point. Um... a lot of people have been like, asking us, like, how we're doing. I've been doing some streaming, and like, a lot of the comments are like, asking how Rachel and Henry and I are doing. And we're doing very well. Thank you for your concern.

Rachel: Yeah. We're healthy and we're safe.

Griffin: Since we got back from the JoCo Cruise, which was, I think, a sort of story that we will never sort of forget being on that while everything else was happening and sort of how it hit us, and the surrealness of that

experience. But as far as I can tell, like, I haven't heard any reports of anybody getting sick on that cruise.

Rachel: As of this recording, yeah.

Griffin: As of this recording. We're, y'know, a couple weeks out. We have been, basically, in complete quarantine, aside from like, one or two grocery trips, for like, ten... or 11 days now? And we're all doing—we're all doing very well.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: We're trying to sort of, like a lot of you, like, put together a rhythm? Put together like a semblance of normalcy to this.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: To the best of our abilities. Um, and y'know, we're only a couple days into that, I would say. But we—thank you for your concern. We are doing fine. There are lots of other people who need that concern more than us, at this moment.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Small wonders.

Rachel: Small wonders.

Griffin: I mean...

Rachel: I actually wanted to give a shout out to somebody who doesn't listen to the podcast, and that is Sarah, who is watching Henry for us while we both work our jobs.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: We desperately needed a childcare solution, and we found a wonderful woman that is helping us out every day, and it has made this whole thing a lot more manageable.

Griffin: It is a very nice—it is a very part-time arrangement. Which, again, I know a lot of people don't have access to, so we are lucky in that sense. But it also means that like, we are having to figure out how to do our jobs in essentially like, half the time that we use to do them. Uh, but that's really nice.

I'm surprised. I thought you were gonna talk about Animal Crossing.

Rachel: Well, I feel like that's your domain.

Griffin: That's fair.

Rachel: For me to step in as like, a carpet bagger, and say...

Griffin: [laughs]

Rachel: "I've got a great new thing *I* wanna tell *my* listeners about, and that's this game that *I* play."

Griffin: That's not what—it's not one of my topics. It's—one of my topics is kind of adjacent to it, but we're gonna be doing—this week's Besties is all about Animal Crossing, and we'll be talking about it then. It is unlike, uh... I'm not even talking about the game now. I have not experienced anything quite like the, um...

Rachel: It's abuzz.

Griffin: The cultural sort of phenomenon. The extremely localized, extremely time-specific cultural phenomenon of...

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Every time I turn on my Switch, there is, no joke, 20 people playing this game, all at the same time.

Rachel: Oh, it's—yeah.

Griffin: And that is like, uh...

Rachel: You have a lot more friends than I do. [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah. [laughs] Uh, and that—it's everyone. Like, I turn on my Switch, and nobody's playing anything else. All 20 people are all playing Animal Crossing, and um...

Rachel: Yeah. I am playing too, by the way.

Griffin: Rachel's playing too. She's got a nice little island going. Maybe I'll dip in on the next stream that we do. Um, and I've never seen anything like it. Like, Halo, Destiny, like, any big game that has ever come out that has like, a bunch of online stuff, like... I have never seen this level of like, saturation of people just kind of... needing to... be in that space for a while.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And that is—it is, uh, as a person who loves games, and as a person who like, loves this game franchise in particular and is using it as a sort of like, escape, uh, it is like, breathtaking to see that. It's indescribable. But I'm going to talk at length about that game tomorrow morning, so I should save a lot of my most erudite thoughts for then.

You want to spin this bad boy up?

Rachel: Yeah. Am I going first? I've already forgotten.

Griffin: No, I am going first this week, according to Wonderful.fyi.

Rachel: Okay, well, please. Please spin this up, then.

Griffin: Uh, it is a transition that is, uh, kind of seamless, because my first thing that I want to talk—both—both my things this week are sort of a reflection of where I'm at. Uh, as being in quarantine for almost two weeks now, and having a little kiddo at home during that time. My first thing is online video games.

Uh, so, Animal Crossing: New Horizons I have been playing online, and it is really neat and fun to just kind of like, see who's got their gates open. That's how it works in Animal Crossing. If you want to play with other people, you just open up your gates, and if anybody wants to, they can just dip on in.

I've done that, and I've played with people who I haven't necessarily even like, met or hung out with in real life. And y'know—

Rachel: To be fair, you did share your code.

Griffin: On Facebook, yeah. But I did not sort of widely broadcast that. And it is neat, because even though, like, some of these people that I've been playing with, like, I have not talked to, or don't like, often talk to, uh, we are all kind of doing the same thing for the same reason. And so, it is somewhat charming to be like, "Hey, in this moment, I just met you, and this is crazy, but do you need these oranges? Because I notice that you have pears, and I would love some of those—"

Like, it puts you on the same level, and it is a like, full blown rainbow connection that I adore.

Rachel: Yeah, the game allows you to like, give little gifts to other players. And so, it's like, a really nice gesture.

Griffin: And when I play with my friends, and like, being able to chat in there, like, that has actually, tangibly sort of helped me out, y'know, socially speaking, since we have been in isolation here. And honestly, like, that has been true about online games before any of this happened.

Like, in my most introverted days, uh, online games have always been like, a very valuable resource for me to like, scratch a certain social itch. And I think that—I think that, throughout most of life, like, I am a person who kind of craves social interaction in a way. But I am so, like, anxious about going out and getting it. Like, I am so anxious about putting in the effort to go out and arrange said social interaction. And so, I think online games have sort of like, helped me get around that.

I remember—like, I think the first one I really got into was EverQuest, which was like, this original online RPG that I played with my brother's older friends, and I thought I was so cool, 'cause I was hanging out with my cool older brother's cool friends; only, they were like, wizards and shit. And uh, like, that was big for me.

I played a lot—did you ever play The Sims? I don't know if we've talked about this.

Rachel: Yeah, I did! Mm-hmm.

Griffin: There was an online version called The Sims Online.

Rachel: Yeah. Never did that.

Griffin: That's probably good, 'cause it got pretty, um... it got a little nasty in there.

Rachel: [laughs] I can imagine it got a little raunchy.

Griffin: Got a little raunchy. Got a little rambunctious. Let's just say, the woo-hoo was, uh... just woo-hooing off the walls, if you know what I'm sayin'.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, but like, I was super into—like, I had my own little café. And I was like, so into having like, my own little café.

Rachel: Oh my gosh, Griffin.

Griffin: And in that, I mostly played with like, y'know, internet strangers. And that is like, I guess, one way of scratching the itch. But then like, Halo 2 on Xbox, I was playing with my friends. I was playing with like, the jocks at my high school, who like, used to be my friends in middle school, and now we had like, caught up with each other on the other side of the nerd bridge of just like, hey, we don't really like, fuck with each other anymore, because our lives have gone a different path, but like, Master Chief is still both our best friends. So now, we can still party and pretend like we've got it, like our friendship never sort of trailed off.

Uh, and like, uh... World of Warcraft, obviously, was like a big—a big one for me. Like, I met people on that game, just because of how much I played it for how long that like, I actually was like, emailing with them. I think I'm still on an email chain that hasn't, obviously, had a new email in like, seven or eight years. Like, with these people that I met in that game the first year I started playing it.

And then, Destiny is like, another online shooter that like, I still play with my buddies back home. Um, and I keep in touch, like, with certain people just through that game. Uh, so, like, I think, y'know, I love games in general, and I love the idea of playing games with my friends, and using that as like, a way of being social with people.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And this week in particular, playing Animal Crossing and a few other online games, some Final Fantasy XIV. I know there's some Wonderful! fans out there who are into that one. Um, it is... it makes me feel... like... on some sort of base level, like, less lonely. Like, it makes me feel like... I think there's different levels of social interaction, and then there's the like, deep, intimate social interaction that you get from like, having a really deep conversation with a really good friend.

And then there's just like, the kind of social interaction of just like, seeing a character move across a screen, and knowing that it's a real person pushing

a button on a controller to make them do that. It's faint. It's like, a ghost of an interaction. But like, even that, at times, is soothing to me.

And so, that's the thing that I'm like, just really kind of... kind of grateful for this week.

Rachel: Yeah! No, it's been cool to be a part of that. Y'know, typically when Griffin is on some kind of cultural game, y'know, wavelength, I am not. And so, it's been kind of fun to be in it. And Griffin's like, two days ahead of me, maybe? One day?

Griffin: Yeah, you are not far behind me. Yeah.

Rachel: And so, a lot of times, he'll be like, "Hey, did you see this thing?" And I'll be like, wait... now I have.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: It's fun to kind of like, check in with you on games, which is something we've never had before.

Griffin: It's true. But like, also, Justin and Travis are both into it. Like, I don't think they've ever really played an Animal Crossing before. Like, everybody's playing this game, y'all!

Rachel: Yeah. Have you been over to Justin's, uh...

Griffin: I have not. No, I have not visited.

Rachel: I'm curious, because I remember you telling me his previous game was not particularly, um... uhh, finessed.

Griffin: I think that's probably fair to say. Um, what is your first thing?

Rachel: My first thing is Clarence Birdseye III.

Griffin: Clarence Birdseye III.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: The name sounds familiar. I may just be thinking of Clarence Carter, which is not this.

Rachel: You may also be thinking of Birdseye Foods...

Griffin: Ohh!

Rachel: Clarence Birdseye kind of perfected the art of making frozen food.

Griffin: Oh, okay! This is also, I imagine, influenced by the...

Rachel: [laughs] Yes.

Griffin: The fortnight that we have been living through.

Rachel: Yes. Yeah. Uh, frozen food was something that was a big part of my childhood. [laughs]

Griffin: Imagine that!

Rachel: And continues to be. Um, y'know, when both individuals in a relationship work full time, uh, and you're kind of coming up for air at the end of the day, frozen food is like, kind of the... the nice option.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: And Birdseye made it so that it actually tastes pretty good.

Griffin: Hey! Okay, I do want to hear about these innovations!

Rachel: Which was not something—which is not something that used to be true. Uh—

Griffin: It's gotten good. It's gotten so much better than it was when I was—like, I don't even feel—I love cooking for you, and I love like, having a nice home-cooked meal, and it's so tasty and good. But like, it's gotten to the point where I don't even feel that guilty anymore.

Rachel: No.

Griffin: About havin' like, a biiiig Stouffer's.

Rachel: [laughs] Or we do a lot of meals that you can like, y'know, pair with rice, for example.

Griffin: Oh yeah.

Rachel: Y'know? And so, then, you have kind of like a fresher element, and then, the frozen piece, and it just kind of...

Griffin: Yeah. The rice is like, "Don't worry about it, guys. They're with me. We're all fresh here, right?"

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, okay. So, Clarence Birdseye. Kind of an interesting guy. So, he is the sixth of nine children. Uh, which was not too uncommon. This is, y'know, early 20th century.

Griffin: People were fuckin'.

Rachel: Mm-hmm. [laughs] Uh, from childhood, he was obsessed with science, and also, taxidermy.

Griffin: Huh. I guess... frozen? [laughs]

Rachel: Which, if you think about it... yeah, right?

Griffin: Oh man, I've never thought about it that way.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, he apparently taught himself taxidermy through a correspondence course. And then, at age 11, he started advertising his own courses on the subject.

Griffin: Okay!

Rachel: Like, he really got into it, and then kind of became an expert at a young age and started teaching others the art.

Griffin: That's... something.

Rachel: Uh, so he went to Amherst College, and became kind of really into insects in particular, and started collecting them. And his classmates all started calling him Bugs. Um, there is a biographer named Mark Kurlansky who has wrote extensively on Birdseye, and he said that Bugs became Bob, and then apparently, after college, he never went by Clarence again. He just went by Bob.

Griffin: He just—Bob?

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: How did they get from Bugs to Bob?

Rachel: Well, you know how it is with nicknames.

Griffin: As the early—it's the 20th century, and the early 20th century, those people just say whatever. [in a strange, old-timey accent] 'Cause everyone talked like this, see? [normally] In the '20s? Y'know?

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: [in a strange, old-timey accent] Merr, everyone talkin' like this! Merr, come over here, Bugs! [normally] You could see how that—

Rachel: So 'Bugs' could sound like 'Bob.'

Griffin: [in a strange, old-timey accent] Myeah, when you're talkin' like this in the 1920s, see! Come here, Bebs! Come here, Burb!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [in a strange, old-timey accent] Myeh, I see ya lookin' at them— uhh, lookin' at some of them frozen peas there, Brrsh! Y'know?

Rachel: [laughing] That's good. That's really good.

Griffin: And they're doing a little Charleston dance. [in a strange, old-timey accent] Get over here, Brubs!

Rachel: I'm transported right now.

Griffin: Yeah, it's like the Great Gatsby.

Rachel: [laughs] Just so you know at home, Griffin is shaking one finger.

Griffin: [in a strange, old-timey accent] Mrr! It was the best of times, it was the worst of times!

Rachel: It's really adding...

Griffin: [in a strange, old-timey accent] 'Ey, Brebs!

Rachel: ... adding to the accuracy of the impression.

Griffin: [in a strange, old-timey accent] Runnin' Carolinaaa... get over here, Bubs! Charleston with me!

Rachel: This is getting worse the longer it goes.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: So Birdseye went to Amherst College, and then was hired by the US Agriculture Department to survey animals in the west. He also worked as an entomologist, and captured several hundred small mammals from which the entomologist removed ticks for research, and then he, in turn, isolated the cause of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever.

Griffin: [gasps] Hey!

Rachel: That's a little connection to Griffin McElroy.

Griffin: That's true, I had them. I had that particular, um, uh, mountainous fever.

Rachel: After the ticks, he went to Canada, and spent a lot of time researching food preservation by fast freezing. Uh, and this is because he was with the Inuit people, learning how to ice fish, and he discovered that, in those really cold temperatures, he would get the fish out of the water, they would freeze almost immediately, and then, when they thawed, still tasted fresh.

Griffin: Huh, interesting.

Rachel: So, previously, uh, frozen food would happen kind of slowly, which would really compromise the quality of it. Freezing occurred slow enough that ice crystals would start to form, and that would damage the tissue structure of the protein.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: So y'know how like, when you get something out and it has that freezer burn on it? And then it like, never tastes as good.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: That usually happens because it's lost that like, flash frozen, y'know, process.

Griffin: Yes, okay.

Rachel: And the fast freezing is what like, keeps it from getting like, mushy and dry when it is thawed.

Griffin: Okay. I never thought of that being particularly difficult to achieve, but...

Rachel: It's smaller ice crystals, so slower freezing, larger ice crystals, which are more detrimental. Faster freezing, smaller ice crystals, less, y'know, detriment to the product.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Okay, so. He, 1922, establishes this company to do this. To freeze the fish. Uh, and then, two years later, his company went bankrupt, 'cause nobody was like, interested in it. Y'know, people didn't have fridges. Y'know, they didn't really understand the value or really need it at that time. Uh, then comes World War II.

Griffin: Aw, man!

Rachel: Uh, there's a shortage of tin, because of the war. And then, also, women were working more frequently, and spending less time cooking. And frozen foods was a real appealing option. So now it's like... y'know, if you kind of follow that progression, like, Birdseye really was ahead of the game in a big way.

Griffin: I would love a super cut of Rachel's segments, and the points at which she has said, "And then came World War II."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I feel like it happens a lot. You'll be talking about, y'know, the can opener, and you'll be like, "Yeah, people weren't really interested in the can opener... and then came the big one! Airplanes? Yeah. We love 'em now."

Rachel: I think it's—

Griffin: "But then came World War II."

Rachel: What I appreciate... I mean, I appreciate Birdseye's persistence, y'know, of like, really kind of hunkering down and continuing to pursue this, 'cause he knew that it was a good idea.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: But also, like, he creates this innovation that becomes very, very relevant in time of like, great challenge to the country. So it's kind of—it's like an optimistic way to think about how these kind of big, challenging moments in history can kind of lend themselves to greater innovation.

Griffin: Yeah... yeah.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Maybe we'll get some sort of frozen food innovation, add some new fro—maybe the Hungry Man dinner will step it up or something to fill in the gap for us. I'm very thankful to the Clarence.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: We've had a lot of meals at Clarence's expense as of late, and I couldn't have done it. I couldn't have frozen the food that good, could I have?

Rachel: I know. I know.

Griffin: I could've frozen it pretty good. I think we can all agree.

Rachel: Right? Right? Like, you'd get it kind of cold, and then you'd get it a little bit colder, and then maybe it's a little bit colder, and then it doesn't taste good.

Griffin: I could make a sort of like, tilapia slurry.

Rachel: But if you get it cold really fast...

Griffin: Ah! That's the secret, isn't it?

Rachel: It's ready to go.

Griffin: Can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

[ad break music plays]

Griffin: Hey, can I read the first jumbotron here that is for—

Rachel: Please. Please do.

Griffin: Well, this one is for Chloe, and it's from Lauren, who says, "Chloe, my best friend and my spooky sidekick. Thank you for making my life so wonderful. I am so proud of you for landing an awesome new job, and being an overall badass. I can't wait to cause more mischief, go to more horror-themed bars, and finally watch all of the Lord of the Rings movies with you. I love you so much."

Rachel: Can I ask you a question about Lord of the Rings movies?

Griffin: You may.

Rachel: So I have not watched them, as you know.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Is there a way... like with the Harry Potter movies, to just jump in mid-trajectory?

Griffin: Like, jump into the middle of the Two Towers?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: No. [laughs]

Griffin: That would be...

Rachel: You really gotta, start to finish, watch every single one?

Griffin: Yeah, you kind of do.

Rachel: Aww...

Griffin: Well, here's why. 'Cause if you jump in the middle of the Two Towers, you'll be like, "Who the fuck's that? Who's that? Who's that? Who's that? What are they doing? Who's that? What are they doing?"

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: "Why is that tree walking and talking? Who is that? That eagle is also a wizard. Why is he glowing? Why is he Jesus?"

Rachel: So kind of Worst Idea of All Time, Grown-Ups 2 kind of...

Griffin: No. Because these are fantastic movies that are incredibly good. It's not like they're watching it in the wrong way. Well, okay, you could argue that they're watching it in the wrong way.

What, uh—can you read the second jumbotron?

Rachel: Yes. This one is for Ian. It is from Kate. "Hello, darling. Ian, you're my very favorite person, and the most wonderful part of my life. I love you

so much, and I'm excited we get to spend our lives together. Let's have pasta for dinner tonight. Always yours, Kate."

Griffin: Y'know, the schedule's been a little bit weird lately. Our recording schedule. So I hope Kate has not just been sort of preparing big bowls of pasta, just waiting for this episode to drop, just always got big ol' boxes of rigatoni, and elbow macaroni...

Rachel: I mean, pasta keeps really well though, right? So like... it's okay if she did.

Griffin: Why does so much pasta end with 'oni'? Macaroni. Rigatoni. Fettechoni.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Lasagoni.

Rachel: You working on like, a tight five?

Griffin: I don't think I could get five minutes out of that. I just said lasagoni. I don't think that's... I don't think there's anything—I don't think there's a next joke.

[Maximum Fun advertisement]

Griffin: Can I tell you about my second thing?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Also influenced by our week this week, I'm gonna talk about pillow slash blanket forts.

Rachel: Ohh!

Griffin: Yeah. I was worried this would actually be a dupe. I was worried you were also gonna bring this one.

Rachel: No, hun!

Griffin: But um, apparently I'm in the clear. Well, we've been doing it quite a bit, haven't we, to entertain our child?

Rachel: We have. Yeah, but I don't have a lot of history with them.

Griffin: I guess being an only child, maybe it's not as big of a thing?

Rachel: I didn't—yeah. I didn't—I mean, if I created the fort, it would just be me sittin' in it, and then it'd be me takin' it down and puttin' it—y'know? Like, there's not a lot of magic there.

Griffin: Yeah, I guess that's true. We did, I guess, most of our fort building was a sort of communal activity between bros. Um, I... I feel like it is, um... having a kid our age – really, a kid at most ages, having to be, y'know, not able to go anywhere for a very long stretch of time here, uh, we are... having to learn how to get better about just like, constantly having some shit to do.

Rachel: Yeah, so here's the thing with three year olds. Their attention span is very short.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: So, the quicker you can execute an activity, and the easier it is to take down, the better. Because most activities last about five minutes.

Griffin: I got Henry this—a little, um, synth made for kids called Blip Box that I saw an ad for, and I was like, "That looks so cute, and I bet you Henry would be into it." And he played with it for about five minutes today, and set it aside, and I've reached the point now where I'm like, "Okay. That's five minutes. Maybe tomorrow, we'll get five more minutes out of it."

But if we have sixty of those things... sixty five minutes is a lot of the day.

Rachel: I know.

Griffin: His waking moments, and then we are... we are in the clear. And I feel like blanket forts is a really rich vein.

Rachel: We got like, 20 minutes out of that.

Griffin: We got a lot of minutes out of blanket forts. Uh, I... so, when I was younger, growing up, we did build ourselves quite a few blanket forts.

Rachel: Did you use couch cushions like we did?

Griffin: Couch cushions and blankets. Uh, I am not like, a purist between... y'know, there's a lot of people arguing about blanket forts, pillow forts, what can you use? What can't you? Like, anything's on the table, in my opinion.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh-huh.

Griffin: Uh, we had a... we had a bunk bed. Me and Travis shared a room and had a bunk bed, and that is like, a blanket fort builder's, like, sweetest dream. 'Cause it's just like, a lot of—

Rachel: Yeah, I can see that.

Griffin: —structural integrity can be lent to a project by a bunk bed. It is, essentially, sleepy scaffolding, if you think about it.

Rachel: Oh, Griffin. TM TM TM.

Griffin: TM TM, please don't take that. Uh, there is something very therapeutic about just taking something that you use all the time in your house for one specific thing, and then, trying to discover, like, a structural soundness to it. Like, trying to be clever enough to make couch cushions stand up and support, uh, a tent.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: 'Cause you know, you get cocky. You're like, "I have an idea. I'm gonna put these two couch cushions, and I'm gonna put one on top of it to hold it up like a deck of cards." And then that falls and just crushes your boy, and the boy yells and cries, 'cause the couch cushions are on him now, and you're like, "No! I flew too close to the sun!"

Rachel: There was a point, when we were doing this activity, where Griffin had a vision that he really wanted to execute. And Henry had limited interest. But I really wanted to see it myself. And so, at a certain point, even though Henry had moved on, I said, "Griffin, will you please—will you please do this? I have to see it." [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah, you really wanted me to cross the finish line, even though the rest of the cars had long since left the track. It's like that Cake song. Uh, it is... I just like... uh, I think this goes back to like—I think I did a segment on like, um, when you're younger, having like, a personal space. Having like, a rec room, or like, your bedroom to design for yourself, is something that is very, um... enticing.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: I think that there is something to that for the blanket fort that is like, gets in your bones, like, gets in your DNA, and even when you're an adult, like, building a blanket fort, uh... I guess it's just nostalgia, right? Like, thinking back to the little spaces that you would make for yourself, to like, carve out for yourself.

Uh, because making these blanket forts made me remember, in our rear neighbor's backyard, there was like, a weird shared yard between all of our like, entire neighborhood's back yards. And in the like, very far back of that, there was this huge honeysuckle bush that was essentially, like, kind of hollowed out. So we took, uh, like, cardboard boxes into like, the hollowed out space to like, kind of build a barrier around it, to like, form a little room in there.

And me and my like, neighbor friends would like, go in there to like, chill and hang out and play Gameboy with our little bendable Gameboy lights and stuff. Uh, and eat snacks and stuff. And it just made me think about that, and I have not thought about that in... 25 years? Like...

Rachel: Y'know what? You just saying that reminded me the time... I must've been in elementary school. I went over to my friend Tasha's house, and she lived a few blocks away from like a refrigerator appliance store.

Griffin: Yes!

Rachel: And we got a bunch of refrigerator boxes, brought them back to her house, and made this huuuge refrigerator box fort in her front yard. And then, her little brother systematically destroyed it.

Griffin: Isn't that how it fucking goes, man?

Rachel: Box by box. And I remember realizing, at that moment, that I was so grateful not to have a sibling.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: 'Cause I just couldn't imagine the cruelty. We had such an incredible fort. And it was gone so fast.

Griffin: I didn't—for what it's worth, I didn't fuck with that. Like, I was a... if my brothers—

Rachel: You're a team player.

Griffin: I'm a team player. Also, I didn't want my brothers to... my brothers were bigger than me. And that's just like—I respect the sort of, um... the evolutionary sort of line of logic there, of just like, they're bigger than me. What am I supposed to do, trash their shit? No. No. I'll delete Travis' Final Fantasy VII save off the memory card when he's 30 hours in. That's one thing. But I'm not gonna like, blow up his blanket fort. That's a whole different kettle of fish.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, yeah. I don't know. I just... I—I enjoy—I have enjoyed building blanket forts this week. I have enjoyed doing it, because it is also a challenge that is very approachable for me, of just like, how—how big can I make one of these fucking things?

Rachel: It's like, easy to clean up. Y'know, it's like...

Griffin: And if it falls down... it's just blankets and pillows!

Rachel: And as listeners may remember, we do have that sectional couch, so we have a lot of cushions.

Griffin: Got a lot of cushions to work with, don't we?

Rachel: There are so many opportunities that we haven't even tapped yet.

Griffin: Little round for my tastes. I wish we had—if I could go back to when we chose the couch we would have in our room, I wish we had gone with a more sort of square, load-bearing...

Rachel: I would love to have that conversation with the saleswoman.

Griffin: Yeah, please.

Rachel: Just like, "Um, we are planning on building forts, ma'am. Just so you know."

Griffin: I looked up the biggest, uh, according to Guinness, the biggest blanket fort ever built.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh-huh.

Griffin: I want to asterisk. I want to put an asterisk next to it, 'cause I looked it up. It's from, I guess, a media production company called Murder Boat Productions, which like, threw this huge rave in the biggest blanket fort ever built. They were trying to beat the record in late 2018. The fort was 6,736 square feet big.

Rachel: Hoo, yeah! Yeah yeah yeah yeah.

Griffin: Quite a big—quite a big blanket fort. But I watched a video of this like, rave, and most of it was just like... like, canvas stretched over like, these big metal geodesic domes.

Rachel: Nooo.

Griffin: That ain't a fuckin—

Rachel: Boooo.

Griffin: Guinness called that the biggest blanket fort. I don't—I disagree. They had like, blankets like, hanging from it? Like, hanging down like banners? Like, "See, there's our blankets! Give it to us, Guinness!" I think that's BS. I think everything involved in the process...

And then I watched like a BuzzFeed video that was like, "Here's how to build a badass blanket fort." And they used like, dowel rods? Like a bunch of dowel rods and stuff, and like... dowel rods is like, the outer limit of like, what I'm willing to consider.

Rachel: No! It's supposed to be like, stuff you already have in your house.

Griffin: Well they were like, "You can also use a broomstick," but they used dowel rods. So like, come on, y'all. Come on, y'all. Don't say you can substitute that shit when you're not gonna do it yourself, BuzzFeed.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And this is the problem with journalism today!

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: What's your second thing?

Rachel: My second thing... is a trip to the Poetry Corner.

Griffin: Oh god, I've wanted to go so bad.

Rachel: Uh-huh. Do you want me to sing my song?

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: [sings] A boom boom boom boom boom boom badum, boom...
baboom badoom.

Griffin: I just got ASMR.

Rachel: [singing] Badoom boom boom boom bing bong. Badoom badoom
boom, boom bee bomp bomp.

Griffin: I've never gotten ASMR that bad before!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: That was fuckin' wild, babe.

Rachel: Congratulations.

Griffin: Yeah! I'm gonna listen to that to help me go to sleep tonight.

Rachel: [laughs] I'm glad that I really put a lot of thought into it, if you're
gonna be listening to it over and over again.

This week's poet...

Griffin: Yes?

Rachel: Lucille Clifton.

Griffin: Nope. Ah, shoot. Don't know that one either.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Rachel: I bring like, 20, 21st century poets, too. Like, in the hopes—

Griffin: I know! Well, you know I'm all about like, the enlightenment, like, the poetry of the... of the dark ages.

Rachel: Mmm.

Griffin: Mm-hmm.

Rachel: Yeah, the dark age is known for their poetry. [laughing]

Griffin: Well, no, but that's what makes the stuff that really rose to the top so special.

Rachel: Uh-huh. Uh, Lucille Clifton grew up in New York, and met her husband through another writer poet named Ishmael Reed. Ishmael Reed also, uh, connected Lucille Clifton to Langston Hughes.

Griffin: Okay!

Rachel: Uh, they were all part of this like, drama workshop in Buffalo, New York. And so, when she shared some of her poetry with Reed, he in turn shared it with Langston Hughes, and then Langston Hughes included it in a collection of poetry that came out in 1966. That kind of like, spring boarded her into, uh, into the community.

In 1967, she moved to Maryland. And then, in 1969, her first poetry collection, *Good Times*, came out, and was listed by the *New York Times* as one of the year's ten best books.

Griffin: That is a good name for a book.

Rachel: Isn't it?

Griffin: Of any kind. Especially to come out in 1969. Like, nice. Like, so good.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, she has kind of long been known for her kind of uplifting, y'know, very like, humanity-focused poetry.

Griffin: Oh, good!

Rachel: Yeah. She... uh, has also written a lot of children's books, by the way.

Griffin: Can you give me one that I might know the name of?

Rachel: I cannot.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Was not my focus.

Griffin: The name actually sounded kind of familiar, but I like—I wanted to like, try and pull it, but I just cannot.

Rachel: Uh, she became, in 1988, the first author to have two books of poetry named finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.

Griffin: Wow!

Rachel: So in the same year, it was like, oh hey, both of these books are under consideration. Uh, in 2007, when she won the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize, the judges said, "One always feels the looming humaneness around Lucille Clifton's poems. It is a moral quality that some poets have, and some don't."

Uh, so, Lucille Clifton, um, wrote a lot of really great, kind of easy to access poems. But I wanted to pick one that I thought was particularly uplifting. Thought people might enjoy it. This one is called Blessing the Boats.

"At Saint Mary's
may the tide
that is entering even now
the lip of our understanding
carry you out
beyond the face of fear
may you kiss
the wind then turn from it
certain that it will
love your back may you
open your eyes to water
water waving forever
and may you in your innocence
sail through this to that"

Griffin: That is really good.

Rachel: Mm-hmm. I like—I like that "sail through this to that."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I find that kind of really, um, profound, of just this kind of like, temporary but very present moment that you are in, and then going to the next, y'know?

Griffin: Yeah. It's applicable to a great many things, I imagine.

Rachel: Uh, so in an interview with Antioch Review, Clifton said that she writes because “writing is a way of continuing to hope. Perhaps, for me, it is a way of remembering I am not alone.” And then, when asked how she would like to be remembered, she said, “I would like to be seen as a woman whose roots go back to Africa, who tried to honor being human. My inclination is to try to help.”

Very prolific. Wrote a lot of poetry, but as I mentioned, also wrote a lot of children’s books. And then, I guess, just passed away about ten years ago.

Uh, I feel like, y'know, there’s a lot of opportunity to like, find poets like her that are writing kind of about the human experience in a way that can kind of... I don't know, lend itself to reducing your isolation.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Y'know? And so, I wanted to bring that, and just kind of... y'know, shed some light on a really great poet that maybe a lot of people haven’t heard about.

Griffin: Thank you.

Rachel: You're welcome.

Griffin: Hey, do you wanna know what our friends at home are talking about?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Well, uh, our friend at home named Anna says, “Since working from home, I've been reminded just how wonderful the sound of the mail truck is. The slight rev up and deceleration sounds as they get to each mailbox are distinctive, and mean that postcards, letters, or other goodies will be dropped off.”

Rachel: I do like that.

Griffin: It's very good. I mean, it's true for uh, delivery trucks in general, and also, is now like, a heroic anthem of people who are doing, like, a job that is like, virtually unthinkable at this time, and are uh, actual heroes.

Rachel: Can I tell you that I also feel that, um, the other day, I heard the sound of a truck coming down the street, and raced out to meet it with our trash can, and I almost missed it. And I was so grateful for that sound.
[laughs]

Griffin: Yes, I guess it is a good—I always hear that, and it always fills me with fear of just like, “Is it out there?! I don't know!”

Uh, and uh, this one is—this one's a little uncommon for this segment, but I wanted to read it. Uh, Dara says... 'cause I don't know if you saw this email. Dara says, “I've been teaching as an adjunct English and composition instructor for about two years, since leaving grad school. Though I love teaching, I've felt like I could be doing more. Your podcast episode talking about your journey to grant writing, and your successes set me in motion. I did an internship for a small nonprofit last summer, and then found this amazing school in Detroit who was giving me the perfect opportunity to grow my skills and serve education in a completely new way. Not only have I found grant writing to be exciting, but it turns out, I'm really good at it!”

Rachel: Oh my gosh! That makes me so happy!

Griffin: I thought it might. Uh, yeah, Dara is a grant writer, and only kind of like, learned about the profession through your bit about it.

Rachel: Oh, that's so great! I've had a few people reach out to me, 'cause it's not a very well-known profession, and it's kind of mysterious on how you break into it.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: But I don't think—y'know, you don't have to get a degree or take any particular course. Y'know, if you are good at communicating and kind of

passionate about an organization's mission, it's something that can be really fulfilling. And so, I'm excited that other people are discovering it!

Griffin: Yeah, me too. Uh, thank you to Bo En and Augustus for the use of our theme song, Money Won't Pay. You can find a link to that in the episode description. Thank you to Maximum Fun for having us on the network.

Rachel: Yeah, thank you so much, Maximum Fun. Uh, if you haven't checked out a lot of the shows on the network, I would really encourage you to do it. Y'know, I always recommend Stop Podcasting Yourself.

Griffin: You love that show so much.

Rachel: I love it so much, and it's just like... it is always good to listen to.

Griffin: Yeah, it's a very good pick me up. Pick me up show. They're good—they're good boys, Rachel.

Rachel: They're very good boys.

Griffin: Uh, and yeah. We obviously had to push back the MaxFunDrive, and if you are already a member, we did put up our bonus episode of Rachel talking about Animal Crossing: New Leaf.

Rachel: Yeah! Oh, and if you checked out the McElroy Family YouTube, you might've seen Griffin streaming the new Animal Crossing game, and I make a little guest appearance on that!

Griffin: And Rachel does make a guest appearance. I think I'll probably be doing some more tomorrow. The demand is just—

Rachel: Oh yeah?

Griffin: People really want to—people want to see. People know I got my hand on some coconuts. They want to know where them trees got planted. And so like, I am... gonna...

Rachel: [laughs] They want to see how many turnips you have in that house.

Griffin: None. I—

Rachel: Oh, did you sell today?

Griffin: I cashed out today.

Rachel: Oh, see, I did not have a good number.

Griffin: And a gentleman does not kiss and tell, but uhh... there was a great profit, so...

Rachel: I did not. I do not—I'm not there yet.

Griffin: Welp, uh, anyway. This is—this is for very—there's lots of people who are gonna be turned off by this actively, so, to those people, thank you for sticking with us. Thank you for listening. Thank you. Stay well. Drink lots of water. Stay inside. Wash your hands, good, for 20 seconds. I'm not your dad or anything. But I am and have been this whole time! Look inside your heart. You know it's true. Come on in. Come on.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Come on. You wanna go for a catch?

Rachel: Aw, that's not what they say?

Griffin: Wanna go in for a catch, pal? Come here, sport! Got a ball with your name on it!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Got a glove with my name on it! It's time for a catch!

Rachel: Everything we have has our names on it!

Griffin: That's—in this household, everything is labeled! You're my child!

Rachel: [laughing]

[theme music plays]

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