

Wonderful! 134: Gamer Camp

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[theme music plays]

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hello, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is Wonderful!

Griffin: Do you feel us in the room with you? Or the car? You're probably not in a car. You're probably in a room. Do you feel us there?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Lot of people talkin' about the lack of sort of physical intimacy in these trying times, and I do not want to cross any boundaries. But I just want to say, we're right there in the room with you.

Rachel: Hey, who's that attractive couple over in the corner in the beanbag chair?

Griffin: Well, listen to you.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Who's that—hold on. Who's that sexy, tight bodied, hilarious couple?

Rachel: Who's that muscular man over there with that stunning woman?

Griffin: Who's that hot bodded, sexual... this is Wonderful. This is a show where we talk about things that are good, things that we like, things that

we're into. Um, and y'know... we want to be there for ya in a way that is socially responsible. Uh, and that's why we do what we frickin' do, man.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: You don't need a mask for your ears to listen to this show, unless that's what you call ear—headphones. And that's a thing I've been trying to think of a good way of saying that for a long time.

Rachel: Uh-huh. [laughs]

Griffin: I think it still needs work. Do you know what I mean?

Rachel: Yeah. Well, don't give up.

Griffin: I never ever do. And... how are you doing? How's your heart and your spirit and your soul?

Rachel: Y'know, it changes hour to hour. Right now, I feel good!

Griffin: I feel great right now.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: I felt like dogshit earlier in the week. But now, I feel like a million bucks.

Rachel: There are no longer good days or bad days. There are like, good hours and bad hours for me.

Griffin: Oh no, for me, it's not good days and bad days. It's like, fucking apocalyptic end of the world days, and then like, pretty good. I wanna, y'know, do some swing dancing.

Rachel: Hug a tree.

Griffin: I wanna—well, no. But mostly, I want to listen to Zoot Suit Riot. That's where I get when I'm in a—do you have any small wonders?

Rachel: I do. And forgive me if we've talked about this before, but I wanna say pesto.

Griffin: Huh, interesting. Pesto. The...

Rachel: Have we talked about pesto?

Griffin: Ooh, I don't think so. Uh, the—it's the ideal form... that like, vegetation can enter your body in, I think.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: Y'know what I mean? Above any cooked vegetables, above eating grass, pesto is it, man.

Rachel: Yeah. I mean, you can make a lot of different kinds of pesto. What we have been digging on lately is uh, the basil kind. Y'know, with the nuts in it and the parmesan cheese.

Griffin: Sure sure sure sure.

Rachel: Uh... it just like—it makes everything feel fancy, I feel like.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: Y'know? Like, for example, we've been, y'know, hitting it on the pasta lately. Y'know, you could just—you could put a red sauce on it, but ho hum. Why not—why not a pesto? That's a fancy meal.

Griffin: I love a good red sauce. You make a killer red sauce. But yeah, occasionally, you want to mix it up with some green.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: 'Cause the color's different. I'm gonna say, the video we saw, uh, that our friend Anna posted on Twitter of... it's at a Twista concert, and Twista raps very quickly. Very, very speedy rapper.

Rachel: Yes, yes he does.

Griffin: And there is a video of an ASL interpreter on stage, just fuckin'... fuckin' dropping it.

Rachel: Just the best in the biz.

Griffin: Like, Twista's doing a verse that is just like, y'know, very Twista-y. Extremely, extremely, extremely fast. And just seeing this woman, like, ASL it, like, so fuckin' quick. But not just like—it's not even like, frantic and fast. It's still like, smooth as fuck. Like, it's still like, to the beat and like, choreographed, and she's like, kind of bouncin' to it. It is the best, like, thing.

Rachel: I love—there is this moment where he just like, literally goes and stands next to her and just watches her, and it's so powerful.

Griffin: And the audience is losing it! The audience is like, losing it! It's so, so good. I wish I could, uh... I don't really know what to—if you Google 'ASL interpreter Twista,' you'll probably get there. I highly recommend watching this video. It is, uh... so fuckin' fresh.

Rachel: It's a beautiful thing.

Griffin: I think I've seen stuff with her before. I feel bad that I cannot remember her name. Uh, but she is like a—she is known for like, doing ASL at concerts like this, and like, adding a sort of musical sort of like, rhythmic, uh, uh, flair to it. Which, I'm sure she's not the only one doing it, but like, she's the one who I've like, seen do it. But watching her keep up with Twista is like... fucking amazing. It's so good.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Uh, I don't know who goes first, because we kind of got off our usual schedule with our self-care sedan last week. Thank you so—we got so much fan art of our self-care sedan.

Rachel: [laughs] So awesome.

Griffin: Uh, yeah. I don't think we knew, uh... we were a little not confident in that episode, because we were a little sort of down in the dumps, but um... I'm glad that people hopped in the whip with us. So why don't you go first?

Rachel: Okay. Uh, my first topic is dance movies.

Griffin: Mm! Yeah yeah yeah.

Rachel: Movies with the dancing.

Griffin: This is, at first blush, a fairly broad category.

Rachel: Yeah. No, and I'm gonna break it down into kind of two distinct groups. Obviously, there's the movie musical.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: Which often will have dancing. Particularly like, *West Side Story* and *Chicago* where dancing is really a prominent feature.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: And then there's the movies in which the characters dance because they are either trying to be better dancers, or are trained dancers in the films.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: I'm gonna primarily talk about those.

Griffin: Oh, okay. Interesting. So not a Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo, but more of a Dirty Dancing.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Okay, fantastic.

Rachel: Yes. Um, I... I have a real long list of, y'know, Teen Vogue did a list of like, the best dance movies.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: And I realize, I've seen a lot of them.

Griffin: Okay. [laughs]

Rachel: Like, more than half.

Griffin: You enjoy, uh, a dance. You turned me onto, uh, what was it? Not America's Next—So You Think You Can Dance.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: So you think you can dance, dance, dance? You were big into that show.

Rachel: The brilliance of Travis Wall.

Griffin: Travis Wall makes a good dance, and uh, I don't think I really appreciated the form of it, or how much you, uh, appreciated the form of it until we watched that show together.

Rachel: I am somebody... I took dance classes from like, age three to like, age 17. Um... I'm not particularly good. Uh, I'm not—

Griffin: That's not true.

Rachel: I'm not asking you to agree or disagree on this. I get very in my head about it. So when I was learning choreography, I'm very much like, focused on like, "Is that the right hand or the left hand? Left foot? Does left foot go first? Does it go in front of the right foot? Does it go behind the right foot?"

Griffin: That's so interesting.

Rachel: It like, really trips me up a little bit.

Griffin: 'Cause when I watch you play like, a Dance Central, you're just elbows and knees just sort of flailing around. But like, you at a wedding, like, having fun? Like, you're so fun to dance with. You're the best.

Rachel: Yeah, choreography kind of trips me up a little bit. Um, I just—I get very focused on like, y'know, doing it precisely. Which is never a good recipe for dance.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: [laughing] Um, and... uh, there was a kind of a golden age of dance movies that I will say is like... 2000 to 2006, maybe?

Griffin: Not a very long golden era.

Rachel: Yeah. Well, so, I... what really brought me to this category is Center Stage.

Griffin: Oh, wow! I don't know that I've seen Center Stage.

Rachel: The Peter Gallagher film?

Griffin: Yeah, no. I know he's in it, so it's a cryin' shame I haven't watched it.

Rachel: It's like, a super, like... it came out in 2000. This is like, a super late '90s movie. There's a lot of like, late '90s fashion. A lot of wedge shoes. A lot of sweaters around the waist.

Griffin: Upon further investigation, I am willing to put like, 2000 to 2003 in the late '90s.

Rachel: Okay. [laughs]

Griffin: 'Cause we really—we had not stepped it the fuck up yet, really.

Rachel: Um... largely, that movie, not particularly, um, great. But a lot of professional dancers in it.

Griffin: Oh, okay.

Rachel: Like, the cast is largely people who like, actually worked with ballet companies. And also, a young Zoe Saldana.

Griffin: Oh!

Rachel: Yeah, she actually had dance background. Was not obviously a professional dancer. Later became a very successful professional actress.

Griffin: Yes, yes.

Rachel: Um, but like, pretty much everybody else in the cast, like, actually were like, principle dancers, in like, San Francisco, and New York, and... so, it's just like, a really impressive film.

Griffin: Is it your favorite of the dancing movies?

Rachel: Oh, see, that's hard to say.

Griffin: Oh yeah.

Rachel: That's hard to say. Um, another movie I enjoy came out just a year later, called Save the Last Dance.

Griffin: I know this one.

Rachel: [laughs] With the Julia Stiles.

Griffin: Yeah. Was she in other dancing movies, uh...

Rachel: So, she believes that her table dancing in Ten Things I Hate About You is what landed her the role in Save the Last Dance.

Griffin: Ohh, okay. I always think of her as being somebody who was in a lot of dance movies, but I think it was—

Rachel: Yeah, she—it's—the internet is conflicted as to whether or not she has professional training.

Griffin: Wow! This is like a Mandela effect thing.

Rachel: I think part of it is that she probably just took dance classes kind of informally.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: And that is her training. Um, there's also a suggestion of whether or not she did her own dancing in the film.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Um... she says she did.

Griffin: Is it CGI, like the Ally McBeal baby?

Rachel: Well—

Griffin: Is that what it was?

Rachel: The only thing that she has claimed, or like, accepted that she did not do was like, the point scenes, where she's up on her toes. She said they used a stand in for that.

Griffin: God, that—man, that would hurt!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I know there's people that really enjoy watching ballet, and I—I have nothing against the craft, except to say that, when I do see them standing on their tippy, tippy, tippy, tippies... uh, I can't—it's hard to look at that, 'cause I think about... just sort of the bones in there, and what—what real troopers they're being. [laughing]

Rachel: Yeah. I always—I always wanted to do it. My little community dance classes, it was kind of like an off shoot of like, hey, if you want to be doing this on point, you can do it. Uh, but it was never really pushed, because the shoes are expensive, and it's very difficult.

Griffin: And the toes are expensive.

Rachel: Yes. [laughs]

Griffin: The toe meat and the bones in there? They're quite pricey.

Rachel: Uh-huh. Uh, so, *Save the Last Dance*, again, like... not—not an incredible film. The choreographer for it, um, Fatima Robinson, has done choreography for Michael Jackson, Aaliyah, Mary J. Blige, Black Eyed Peas, Meghan Trainor... uh, she's pretty, like, illustrious. So the choreography is really good.

Um, she also did choreography for *The Wiz* and *Dream Girls*.

Griffin: Ooh!

Rachel: Mm-hmm. So she's pretty accomplished.

Griffin: Yeah, I'll say.

Rachel: Uh, so that's—so that's 2000, 2001. Um, there are films I haven't seen, like Honey and Step Up, that came out in 2003, 2006.

Griffin: Step Up was the sort of launch pad for—

Rachel: The Channing Tatum.

Griffin: For the Channing Tatum—okay. And Jenna...

Rachel: Dewan.

Griffin: Dewan. Yes.

Rachel: Yeah, who has the dance show that we've watched, too.

Griffin: Oh, god, that's right! That I can never remember the name of.

Rachel: Yeah, I can't either. Uh, the premise of the show is that people go on a blind date, but the blind date is just dance choreography that they have learned individually, and now have to do together.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And then they decide if they want to go on a second date after their dance performance. [laughs]

Griffin: It's something else. It's really something else.

Rachel: Um, and another film I haven't seen, um... I haven't seen Magic Mike. I have seen Magic Mike XXL.

Griffin: Oh, god.

Rachel: Speaking of Channing Tatum.

Griffin: That movie whips ass. It's so good.

Rachel: So good. So good. Um... Channing Tatum – I looked him up, because y'know, he has become quite well known for his dancing ability. From what I can tell, he does not have any real dance training. He just kind of leaned into it.

Griffin: Hm. That gives me hope, huh?

Rachel: He's just a powerful man.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh, there are a lot of other films. A lot of documentaries about dancing. A lot of American adaptations of international films. I... I love it.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I love it so much. It's so fun to watch. It's such a nice, like, athletic component of a film. And to be able to act on top of that is just always a— it's charming.

Griffin: Would you watch Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo with me? If I could find it digitally... I bet it's on YouTube somewhere.

Rachel: I mean, are the dance performances remarkable?

Griffin: Do you like, like, b-boy shit?

Rachel: Sure.

Griffin: Then yeah.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: You're gonna enjoy it.

Rachel: I would watch it.

Griffin: There's some...

Rachel: Now, should I watch the first Breakin'?

Griffin: You kind of have to.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: It sets up the whole cinematic universe. I've never actually seen the first Breakin'. We bought, uh... me and friend Justin Minsker bought Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo on DVD. He may have gotten it from me for like a present or something like that, but... it was like a joke, because the name of the movie is so outrageous.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: And then we watched it, and we were like, "[laughs] So silly. Let's watch it immediately again."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: There's a part where somebody has like, a first kiss with somebody that they are into, and then they go into this room, and they start dancing, and then they start walking on the walls and dancing on the walls, and dancing on the ceiling, in this like, completely uncut... just like, dancing all over the walls of this room thing, that's like, uh... it is hypnotic.

Rachel: I mean, just quickly, I want to mention... obviously, there is, y'know, Footloose, and Dirty Dancing, and Black Swan, and any number of other dance films. Too many to mention, one might say.

Griffin: I would argue Black Swan is maybe not... mostly about the... choreography and dance itself.

Rachel: True. There is some incredible dancing in it.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: Not as light hearted as, say, a Dirty Dancing.

Griffin: Yeah. Um, my first thing is just as sort of, um... sort of artistically enriching. A piece of content as dance based videos, especially one of just sort of like, uh, ballet and really smart stuff like that. Uh, my first topic is pressure washing videos.

Rachel: Ohh. [laughs] Satisfying, yes, for sure.

Griffin: I didn't actually check to make sure we have not talked about this before. We really need to get better about that. Uh oh. Oh no! [laughs] I typed pressure into Wonderful.fyi, and it got a result, and I was like, "Oh shit!" But it was, uh, Under Pressure. The song.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: We've not talked about pressure washing before. Isn't it sad that like, I kind of thought that that is the type of thing that we have for sure talked about before?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Anyway, um, I... y'know, my algorithms are fuckin' garbage at this point. Uh, it's all like—at this point, it is, uh, like, Final Fantasy XIV

walkthrough videos, almost exclusively. And also, there's like a side category of just... some shit.

Rachel: Well, Chef Club. Don't forget about Chef Club.

Griffin: Well, that's in Facebook. I'm talking about, specifically, like, YouTube.

Rachel: Oh, okay.

Griffin: Uh, Facebook, I do get—Facebook, it's still like, we made a table out of reclaimed wood and resin, and doesn't it kind of look like a river? Or, we made some sort of weird hot dog cake.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Enjoy that. I don't even see pictures of like, kids. Like my friends' kids anymore. Now it's exclusively resin tables and hot dog cakes, like, all the way down. Um, anyway, uh... pressure washing videos is just sort of the latest chapter in my, uh, garbage video feed.

Rachel: Should we mention that we have never pressure washed?

Griffin: I've never pressure washed anything. Here's the thing about pressure washing. I find videos of pressure washing very, um... hypnotic. Might I even say, seductive. The power of pressure washing videos really, really, uh, enraptures me. If you're not aware, pressure washing is... the technology of it is a little bit beyond me, but from what I understand, this machine forces a tremendous amount of water through a very, very small cavity.

Rachel: Y'know when you put your thumb over a hose?

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: It's like that, times...

Griffin: Times infinity.

Rachel: Times a lot. [laughs]

Griffin: Um, and you point that at a driveway. And it cleans the ever-loving shit out of that driveway.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Um, and—or, y'know, insert whatever here. Anything that has deep, deep, baked on grime, dirt... stuff that I don't even know what the fuck—like, you look at a driveway. You sweep it. And you're like, "That driveway is clean." And then you bring in a pressure washer, and the pressure washer is like, "No, idiot."

You're only seeing the like, layers of dead driveway skin that are on top of that. And when I remove that, it's going to elevate it. It's got a whole different hue.

Rachel: I don't know about you... I'm a little scared of it, myself.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: I like watching other people do it. But I am perpetually worried that anything that we pressure wash would crumble.

Griffin: Explode.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Our house has, uh, some stucco siding on it that is a little nasty. Like, I wish we could—I wish we could just point a pressure washer right at it, but our realtor, when we bought the house, was like, "Don't do that. You will punch a hole in the fucking house, and it will collapse."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Everybody's kind of afraid of a pressure washer.

Rachel: Yeah. Yeah.

Griffin: I think if you pointed it at a car, it'll like, strip the paint off the... like, it's a tremendous amount of force.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But... I'm all about... I feel like I've talked about this on the show before. Like, I'm all about like, the hidden, like, worlds of every day sort of reality. Uh, and there is nothing sort of more instantaneous, uh, a revelation than a pressure washing video where you point it at a driveway, and you're like, "I know what that driveway looks like." And then you just sort of sweep, effortlessly sweep, this magic wand across it, and it's like, "Oh shit! That's what that actually looks like!"

A big one for me is, uh, the interiors of pools, where you see it, and somebody could've just scrubbed the interior of this like, pool that sort of, uh, synthetic, like, tile material. And then you spray it with the pressure washer, and like, I watched a video where I was like, "Oh, that's like a nice little aquamarine pool interior that somebody's done some real primo work on." And then they just spray it, and it's like, actually, it's a completely different sort of thing, and that was—what was on there?!

There's a moment of terror of just like, what was on—I've been touching that! My car wheels have been touching that dirty ass driveway this whole time! My kids have been doing chalk drawings on that! And it's just covered in... what, tar and shit? I don't know!

Rachel: I think it is the magic wand element. I think that's really what... what speaks to us.

Griffin: I—this bit is gonna make you upset. But there's a part of me that I think actually enjoys... the concept of cleaning. And things being clean.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And it's never something that like, I prioritize. You may not believe this – I'm better about it now. When I was like, in college, and living by myself, it was a fuckin' disaster area. Like, I am—I was okay with living in a level of filth that you would find absolutely jaw dropping, at this point.

Rachel: I think, this—here's a question. This is a good question. As I've become an adult, I'm not particularly clean. But I've lived with a lot of people that are not clean, and the biggest indicator I find is how often you wash your sheets.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: When you ask somebody that, the answer they give you will tell you a lot about how clean they are.

Griffin: Yeah. For me... not... never. Never.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I don't really... I'm okay with that.

Rachel: And I'm only like, a once a month person. Like, I'm not even, y'know, particularly fastidious.

Griffin: That feels fastidious. I'm really showing my hand quite a bit. For me, it needs to be a sort of visible... clutter. If there's like, a visible clutter... like, my office right now is like, on the precipice. Like, I probably need to... there's just some shit laying on the floor. I would like to get rid of some of that. Sheets that, like, that has my stink and sweat and dead skin or whatever? Like, I can't see that. I don't care.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: Um, I just enjoy the sort of extreme home makeover transformation of just like, "It's like we have a new driveway, Denise!"

Rachel: Yes, exactly.

Griffin: But also, I think that... it's just, you watch a pressure washing video, and there is a grim part of your mind that is just fascinated by the dangerous, raw power of the pressure wash.

Rachel: Yes, yes.

Griffin: There is a respect that's probably—that's, I think Poe... Edgar Allen Poe talked about that sort of macabre fascination with pressure washers, specifically.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: But yeah. It's—I get served a lot of them these days. I get served, also, a lot of, uh, we're going to detail the shit out of this car. Which is also, uh, hilarious, considering I have never had that done to a vehicle ever before.

Rachel: No, no, not at all.

Griffin: But it's—I like it. It's like a new thing. It's taking something and making it new.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Speaking of which, let's renew this podcast by pressure washing it with advertisements. Can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

[ad break stinger plays]

[advertisements play]

Griffin: Can we talk about these grimatrons?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Here's one for Casserole, and it's from Kairi, who says, "Thanks for being a wonderful partner and even better friend. There's no one else I'd rather navigate life's chaos with. Here's to figuring things out, coping with some late night Animal Crossing, and listening to our fave podcasts together. We got this!"

Rachel: Can I tell you something embarrassing?

Griffin: Sure!

Rachel: I have never had or participated in a meteor shower in Animal Crossing, and part of that is, I'm just not as committed to late night Animal Crossing as perhaps I should be.

Griffin: You are a real early worm. That's not the... what's—that's not what they call them.

Rachel: Once Nook's Cranny closes, I'm like—

Griffin: You're done.

Rachel: See you tomorrow! [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs] What's the point? What are you gonna do, catch some bugs and sell them at an 80% loss? No thanks! That's ridiculous.

Uh, here—you wanna read the next one?

Rachel: Yeah! This is for Donna and Raphael. It is from Glitch. "Donna, you and Raphael are the two most wonderful people in my life. You're always there for me, whether it's to comfort me while I cry, or to kick my butt at games. You also feed me all the delicious food. I'm so glad you two got married, and that I was there beside you when you said 'I do.' I love you."

Griffin: That's so sweet!

Rachel: That is super sweet!

Griffin: But you gotta... get your game. Step it up and come to my Griffin McElroy gamer camp.

Rachel: Oh my gosh.

Griffin: If you're getting your butt kicked at games, come to Griffin McElroy's gamer camp. I'll make you win at any video games. I'm talkin' about Halo. Super Mario Party.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Fuckin'...

Rachel: Zelda. The Zelda one.

Griffin: Zelda. Well, that doesn't typically have a multiplayer component, but Logical Island of the Zoombinis.

Rachel: Ooh!

Griffin: Chex Quest.

Rachel: Oh. Is that—

Griffin: Cool Spot.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Any of these games that you're getting your ass whipped at? Psh. I got you. Come to Griffin McElroy's gamer camp. It's, uh...

Rachel: How many weeks?

Griffin: It's \$500. It's like, a day.

Rachel: Oh.

Griffin: It's like an afternoon.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: But we do provide lunch.

Rachel: Which is Mountain Dew.

Griffin: Which is just gamer fuel, Mountain Dew. Yeah.

[Maximum Fun advertisement plays]

Griffin: Hey, what's your second thing?

Rachel: My second thing... are poet laureates.

Griffin: All of `em?

Rachel: Just the whole... the whole concept. The whole tradition.

Griffin: Of... you're the best poet.

Rachel: Just the... the honorary... distinction itself.

Griffin: Is there a dance laureate? Because, to tie it back to your first point, is there ever like, a thing where it's like, somebody gets a medal and it's like, "You are... the country's best dancer!"

Rachel: [laughs] Well, that's not really what poet laureate is.

Griffin: Come on.

Rachel: But there should be a dance laureate. I agree with you on that.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh, I... y'know, I've mentioned, uh, the position of poet laureate a lot on this show, because a lot of the poets I choose have received that distinction. Uh, but I didn't actually really know much about it. Uh, I just knew that it was a title you could get, and it was kind of like... kind of the biggest—the biggest one you could get.

Griffin: I clearly have just shown that I don't know fucking anything about the position or its history.

Rachel: Yeah, I had to do a little research, because the concept seems... crazy.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: That like, our government would prioritize poetry so much, that there would be an official poet of the country.

Griffin: And is... as far as I know, still kind of doin' it. Like, still—they just named a new poet laureate fairly recently, right? Maybe I'm wrong. But like, in this current, uh, administration.

Rachel: There is. There was a 2019.

Griffin: Yeah. That's strange to me.

Rachel: Yeah. So it actually started as kind of a continuation of what was happening in the UK. Um, this started in the US in 1937.

Griffin: Hm.

Rachel: Um, it is a position that is appointed by the librarian of the United States Congress, and serves less than a year, typically. Although, there have been poet laureates that have served longer than that.

Griffin: I say, try to kick me out of my poet laureate office!

Rachel: The position does provide a stipend, and that stipend is \$35,000 a year.

Griffin: Hey! Not bad!

Rachel: Yeah, but you definitely can't live on that.

Griffin: No, but you're probably not, y'know... you're probably not saying, "My job is poet laureate." Right? It's like an honor. A prize or something.

Rachel: Yeah. It is, uh... it is an annual stipend that is provided from a, uh, existing kind of endowment.

Griffin: That's maybe why we're still doing poet laureates, is because \$35,000 is not a tremendous amount of money in the grand scheme of the federal budget.

Rachel: Uh, the responsibilities of this position are pretty light, and each poet has kind of made it their own. All the poet laureate has to do is present an annual lecture, and then, they usually introduce poets at the library's poetry series. Their whole job is to just kind of increase, uh, the greater appreciation of reading and writing poetry.

Griffin: Cool. I—yeah. It's amazing that that is a thing.

Rachel: Isn't that amazing that that is still a thing? Uh, so, here's a few poet laureates and kind of what they've done. Uh, Maxine Kumin, who I've mentioned, I believe, on this show, uh, started a popular series of poetry workshops, specifically for women. And then, Gwendolyn Brooks met with elementary school students. She has a big presence in Chicago because of that work.

Griffin: I recognize the name, yeah.

Rachel: Uh, Joseph Brodsky initiated the idea of providing poetry in airports, supermarkets, and hotel rooms.

Griffin: Okay! [laughs]

Rachel: Robert Pinsky, who I've also mentioned, initiated the Favorite Poem Project. And then, Billy Collins, uh, did a Poetry 180 project that distributed a poem to all high schools for every day of the school year.

Griffin: Cool!

Rachel: Isn't that cool? Um, before we move on, I just want to say, the 2019 poet is Joy Harjo, who is the first Native American woman to be appointed US poet laureate. She is a performer, actually. I don't know if you're—are you familiar with Brave New Voices?

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: There was that, and there's like, Deaf Poetry Jam.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: These are all like, performance poetry, and you can find some Joy Harjo poems.

Griffin: Back when my Facebook feed was—had any redeeming value at all, I used to see those pop up, and I like, watched this incredible Brave New Voices performance before it was, uh, pressure washing videos.

Rachel: So here's how poet laureate, um, really took off in the US. There's actually, you may recognize this name. In 1936, philanthropist Archer M. Huntington provided an endowment for the maintenance of a chair of poetry and the English language at library of congress.

Griffin: I mean, I recognize that the name is the same as the name of the city that I grew up in. But he's not like, the Huntington that... people talk—that people know?

Rachel: He is the adopted son of Collis P. Huntington.

Griffin: Oh, interesting! Okay! Wow, fascinating! Collis P. Huntington, the founder of Huntington.

Rachel: Yeah, yeah. Uh, so he, um... not only provided the endowment for this position – he was also a major benefactor of the American academy of arts and letters. Uh, contributed extensively to the Hispanic Society of America. Uh, also founded the Brookgreen Garden Sculpture Center in South Carolina. The Mariner's Museum. Um, and was involved in the founding of Newport News, Virginia.

Griffin: Hot damn!

Rachel: That was established in the late 19th century, largely through the efforts of his adopted father, Collis P. Huntington.

Griffin: That's interesting! I had no idea that he was such a sort of like—

Rachel: Yeah, I didn't realize they were like... they were just springin' up cities all over the place.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Um... so yeah. I think it's... really kind of surprising that this position exists. I enjoy that it does. I can't imagine any president would do away with it.

Griffin: I can imagine that! I can abso-fucking-lutely imagine that!

Rachel: [laughs] Um...

Griffin: It almost kind of seems like this administration has maybe forgotten that the position exists, and we're all just kind of trying to like, stay quiet about it, so maybe they don't remember.

Rachel: Yeah. [laughing] I hope this is something that continues. Um, as you can see, some of the poets that have had this position have really done a lot of work to kind of spread the awareness of poetry, which, of course, is something that I care about a lot.

Griffin: Yeah! Um, can I talk about my second thing? It'll probably be pretty quick, but I got very excited about it. Um, my second thing is aromatics. The things that smell good when you cook them. And they're the first things that you cook in most dishes.

I don't think I appreciated aromatics, or how common they were. Uh, until I started to do cooking seriously. And once you do, it is so eye-opening how every food has like, the same two or three things in them. Uh, specifically, onions.

I remember the first time I had the realization. I think it was probably during, like, the... y'know, when we started doing Blue Apron. And I was like, "Man, I sure have been cuttin' up a lot of onions lately."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And then I was like, "Wait a minute. Every recipe in the whole universe has onions in it."

Rachel: Yeah. If it is a savory dish, there are onions.

Griffin: Odds are, it's got onions in it. But really, onion is an aromatic that is a very, very common one. Uh, but every sort of culture; every sort of way of cooking has different... base level aromatics that, once you kind of like, look at them on a list, you really do realize why different cultures have food that tastes the way it does. And certainly, like, way smarter people than me can identify like, why those became the aromatics. I'm sure, like, a lot of it

has to do with geography, and like, what grows well in certain parts of the world.

Rachel: Yeah, exactly.

Griffin: Um, but I find it very, very, very fascinating that just like, when you think of these different, um... these different cultures and the flavors that their food sort of like, brings to the table, uh, no pun intended... it is—it is largely because of the really core DNA based stuff that goes in, like, virtually everything that, uh, is cooked in those cultures.

Uh, so, you want to talk about French cooking. The mirepoix, I believe, is what it's called, is like, the holy trinity of aromatics. Very first thing you do, get some butter or some oil. I think it's typically butter for French cooking. Uh, in a pan, and you're gonna put some onions, carrots, and celery. Cook that in butter.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Usually, the butter or oil or ghee or whatever is like, what brings out the good stink in the aromatics.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh-huh.

Griffin: And that is going to serve as like, the base. Everything else that you add, that you like, y'know, supplement in on top of that, is what sort of gives it the specific flavor that you're gonna cook. But that like, core... like, depth of flavor comes from that. And across all French cooking, like, it is almost like, uh... y'know, universal that these three things are gonna be in it.

Those three, uh, vegetables are also the same components of a sofrito, which is, in Italy, the common aromatics that are used.

Rachel: Yeah, yeah yeah!

Griffin: But they use olive oil. Most Latin cuisines also have a sofrito, but it uses garlic, onions, bell peppers, and tomatoes in olive oil. And then, of

course, like, the things that they supplement it with are different, obviously, than French and Italian cuisine, where you have things like, uh, coriander and cumin. Uh, you have chilies, obviously. Paprika, wine, and vinegar.

Like, the stuff that you add on top of that, that like, really defines the flavor is obviously different from culture to culture. But there are so many commonalities between just those three things. Then you get into like, uh, Chinese dishes have an entirely different sort of sweet. Where you do have garlic, but then you get, uh, scallions and ginger, of course.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Always cooked in oil, and then you have the stuff you add on top of it, like five spice, and star anise. Uh, and y'know, different kinds of chilies and shallots.

Curry paste is also another sort of form of aromatics where you have this thing that the flavor sort of originates out of, where you have shallots, garlic, and chilies. It's almost—for Thai curry, that is like, the holy trinity for Thai curry.

Um, uh, Cajun cuisine has its own thing where uh, I forget specifically... I think it's, uh... I wanna say onions, celery, and bell peppers? And that is like, the basis of a lot of different... Cajun cuisine.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: I love this idea that there are these like, just sort of like, first building blocks. The foundation that you lay down before you cook a dish.

Rachel: Yeah! I just kind of think about like, laying out like, a pasta, or like, a rice, and then choosing which ingredients. And that's like, what country you're going to.

Griffin: Yeah! There's like a taxonomy, almost like a genealogy there of just like, well, I'm gonna cook this thing. I'm gonna make a red sauce. I

know that I'm going to put these same things in it that have always gone in it for like, across time and space.

Rachel: Yeah, and your body just like, knows. Like, oh, this is what nationality I'm eating right now.

Griffin: Yes! Uh, the other things that I really like about aromatics is... one, it's always the thing that like, when you are making something in the kitchen, and I walk by and I'm like, "Ooh, that smells good!" It's always like, I just started—like, what you are smelling right now is onions being sweated out in oil, and maybe there's some garlic in there.

Rachel: Yeah, exactly.

Griffin: I've not done anything particularly fancy to them. What you are smelling are these two stinky vegetables that I have made hot in oil. But like, there is this Pavlovian response in my mind of just like, "Uh oh! Someone's cookin'!"

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: And on the same note... and this was really the only other thing I have about aromatics. When you cook aromatics, that is the moment where I always feel like... I'm cooking.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh-huh.

Griffin: I'm not making some bullshit, like, y'know... I'm not makin' dirt cake with pudding and mashed up Oreos.

Rachel: Uh-huh. [laughing]

Griffin: I'm fucking cooking. I have chopped up... look how small I chopped up this garlic!

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: And now I have it in oil in a pan? I'm cooking like a big boy right now.

Rachel: Yeah, there's like a chemical reaction happening that you caused. It's exciting.

Griffin: That I made. This is—I'm really transforming this. I can put gummy worms in the dirt cake, and say that I'm cooking, but I'm really not making stinky vegetables hot in oil. That's—that's capital C cooking.

[whispers] I really want to cook some... some onions right now.

Rachel: Well, y'know, you were talking. We have onions, we have carrots, we have celery...

Griffin: Yeah?

Rachel: We could really—we have butter. We could really get goin'.

Griffin: We could get something going, huh?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Let's figure it out.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: Maybe tonight, maybe I'll just go down to the kitchen, chop up them shits, put it in some butter, and put it in a pan without knowing what I'm gonna do next.

Rachel: Ooh, that's exciting!

Griffin: That'd be fun, wouldn't it?

Rachel: Uh-huh!

Griffin: What comes out of that would almost certainly be bad. You'd be like, "Are you adding... Honey Nut Cheerios?"

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: "Yeah, I panicked. It was getting so hot! I don't know!"

Rachel: [laughing]

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

Rachel: Yes, please!

Griffin: Heather says, "Something I think is wonderful is getting into a band that has a large discography. Recently, I've started listening to ELO..." That's Electric Light Orchestra. "... who have got a large catalog of albums, and being able to deep dive into decades of music from the same artist is so good."

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: ELO is like, the perfect one of those. ELO is the one where I remember, I heard, uh... my former boss at Polygon, Chris Grant, sing a song at karaoke, and thinking like, "Man, that song beats ass! What is that?" And every time I have that realization, it's always Electric Light Orchestra.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: The first time I heard Telephone Line, I was like, "Man, this song kick—who is this?" And it's like, oh, it's the Mr. Blues Guy people. Yeah. They're fantastic.

Rachel: Yeah. Yeah yeah.

Griffin: Um, Marcus says, "A wonderful thing that I've gotten into this past year is the sport of cricket. I only dove in after the Don Bradman Monster Factory, and it has been an ever-blooming rose that gets better and better. I've even found a team to play with in north Alabama."

Rachel: Oh my gosh, I would like to learn how to do that.

Griffin: It is prof—it is wild how arcane...

Rachel: It seems very complicated to me.

Griffin: Complicated isn't even the right word. I feel like it's maybe even easy to grasp the rules of it, but just the rules seem so... wild.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Like, so Calvinball-y, in a way.

Rachel: Did you actually learn any of the rules when you were doing—

Griffin: Oh, no.

Rachel: Okay. [laughs]

Griffin: No, I learned how to hit the—I learned what button to press to hit the ball very far, and that seemed to make the points go up to a satisfactory level, so... yeah, I just took that and ran with it.

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

Rachel: Yeah, thank you Maximum Fun, for hosting our show and all the other great shows. I would really encourage you to check it out. If you are a parent that has been, perhaps, struggling with parenting during this time, One Bad Mother is a solve. A solve, even.

Griffin: It's not a—it won't solve, necessarily, the particular issue, but it is a sal... how do you say that frickin'—

Rachel: I don't know!

Griffin: Salve?

Rachel: I could split the difference and say solve.

Griffin: You just said it the same... you know you just said it the same way.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I think it's sal... salve? Why can't we say this word?!

Rachel: Well, it's not a word you hear very often in our lines of work, which are not... medical.

Griffin: Actually, my dad was an apothecary. So...

Rachel: Oh! [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah. He made a lot of unguents. A lot of poultices that he would rub on boils and what have you.

Rachel: Ew.

Griffin: Okay! People get boils, Rachel! Sorry! Hash tag sorry not sorry about these boils.

Rachel: [laughs]

[theme music plays]

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