

## Wonderful! 138: All the Dan Marinos

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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:** In the studio of frickin' Dilbert, over here. On your frickin' computer and your phone, checking your texts.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** "Excuse me, I have business emails." Rachel just, like, I was like, "I'm ready to record with you, my love," and you were like, "Hold on, lemme put you on hold for a second. Yeah, Kyle. Go. Shoot. Yeah, Kyle."

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** "Ha ha ha no, it's just Griffin, don't worry about it. How's the mergers going?"

**Rachel:** Mm hmm.

**Griffin:** Like frickin' Dilbert over here.

**Rachel:** Buy, sell, sell, buy.

**Griffin:** All the time with me. Just putting me on the back burner so you can Dilbert out.

**Rachel:** Gotta get that commission, you know?

**Griffin:** And you're reading Dilbert. You're reading a hardback, which I didn't even know they made, collection of Dilbert comic strips. Which, baby, I don't know if you've got the, like, heard the news.

**Rachel:** It's got that ribbon built in, for a bookmark, you know?

**Griffin:** It's funny and it's like, the tie that curls up, but Dilbert is cancelled.

**Rachel:** Okay. [laughs] Well, I guess I'll have to get rid of these books, then.

**Griffin:** Scott Adams is an extremely problematic big piece of shit, and I think that means by proxy Dilbert, who did nothing wrong, is cancelled.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Wait, here, I'm gonna throw away my books right now. Clunk, clunk, clunk.

**Griffin:** And that's them rolling down the stairs?

**Rachel:** [laughs] That's them falling into the...

**Griffin:** Or are you just very quickly throwing away, like, six books?

**Rachel:** That's them falling into the trash can.

**Griffin:** Okay. This is Wonderful! A show where we talk about things that we're very into. Do you have any small wonders aside from Dilbert, your very favorite comic strip?

**Rachel:** [laughs] Uh, okay. Um... you go first. [laughs]

**Griffin:** Always. I am playing a video game right now called The Last of Us 2, which I don't really wanna talk about. But I do wanna talk about accessibility options in video games are very cool and something that developers are very much prioritizing right now. And Last of Us 2 has a ton of them, including things like, you know, text-to-speech for a lot of things, there's a high-contrast mode where, like, the backgrounds are in sort of black and white, but characters and important objects are just bright, vivid colors, to help people who need help seeing things like that.

**Rachel:** That's super cool.

**Griffin:** I think it's fucking rad and such an important thing for, like, making video games available to everybody. And it's really nice to see a game as huge as The Last of Us 2, it's like the year's biggest blockbuster so far, take that stuff so seriously. It is, I believe, a guiding light for other games that will follow in its footsteps. And it's just really cool to see that stuff.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Also, the game's pretty neat. Okay.

**Rachel:** I thought of it. I thought of a small wonder.

**Griffin:** Okay, what is it?

**Rachel:** The puddle Jumper.

**Griffin:** The puddle Jumper is good.

**Rachel:** When I was a kid and I wanted to get in the pool, I had to put on a water wing.

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** Which was sort of effective, but not particularly safe.

**Griffin:** Exhausting. It was exhausting, because you were essentially keeping yourself afloat by the strength of your biceps alone.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Like, you kinda had to, like, constantly—yeah, it was not the best.

**Rachel:** The Puddle Jumper is for children, it is for particularly small children, and it has, like, bands around the arms and then this whole, like, band around the chest thing.

**Griffin:** It's a life vest plus water wings, essentially, that is designed to keep a kid just upright no matter what they try to do.

**Rachel:** It's not for, like, infants, and I will say that for a long time Henry was so slim that he could not effectively wear it, but this summer has been the first summer where it has fit him appropriately and it is incredible. [laughs]

**Griffin:** Yes. Yes, it's very nice. Hey, you go first this week. Do you wanna break me off a piece of that big wonder?

**Rachel:** [laughs] Is that gonna be our thing?

**Griffin:** Big wonder. [laughs] No.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Um, alright. I'm gonna give you a teaser for my first thing.

**Griffin:** Oh boy.

**Rachel:** [sings Jaws theme] Duh-nun.

**Griffin:** Oh!

**Rachel:** Duh-nun.

**Griffin:** I know this one.

**Rachel:** Duh-nun.

**Griffin:** Yeah, Rocky.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Yeah!

**Rachel:** I'm talking about sharks.

**Griffin:** All sharks?

**Rachel:** Yeah, just sharks.

**Griffin:** Oh yeah, sharks are fantastic.

**Rachel:** I can't really talk about Jaws, although that is how I lifted the song. I'm saying mainly I can't talk about Jaws because I'm not super familiar with the film.

**Griffin:** Oh, really?

**Rachel:** I have seen it maybe once, and that was a long time ago.

**Griffin:** I've seen it, yeah, I've only seen it a couple of times, but I feel like it leaves quite an impression.

**Rachel:** It does.

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** It does, so much so that Henry knows that that is the song associated with sharks, because that is what we sing.

**Griffin:** The things he knows that I don't know where he is learning them from. I dunno. He's quarantined, like, he has no excuse. It's not gonna be like "Yeah, this kid at school is obviously teaching him about Jaws."

**Rachel:** I think a lot of times we don't pay attention to the things he is watching and maybe that is how he's learning it?

**Griffin:** Maybe, but he's not watching Jaws.

**Rachel:** That's true. [laughs]

**Griffin:** I would notice if he was watching fucking Jaws. Anyway.

**Rachel:** Sharks are the big fish.

**Griffin:** They are. There's a lot of debate about whether they're fish or mammals.

**Rachel:** What I read said fish. [laughs] I used to think mammals, too.

**Griffin:** Yeah. Whales, I guess, are big, sort of more chill sharks, most of the time. This is my understanding of ocean taxonomy.

**Rachel:** The fish, so they have the gill slits on the side of their head. Like, the fish do.

**Griffin:** Right.

**Rachel:** And then they have the pectoral fin.

**Griffin:** Right.

**Rachel:** Um... [laughs]

**Griffin:** This is going great, so far.

**Rachel:** I feel like, always, the need to like, you know, set us all on the same level. You know?

**Griffin:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Rachel:** Let's just agree. [laughs]

**Griffin:** So it's important to note shark have fin and shark have gills. Yes, we are all in agreement.

**Rachel:** Let's agree. There are more than 470 species of sharks. Number one. [laughs] Nah, I'm just kidding. I'm not gonna—

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Rachel:** Not gonna name them all.

**Griffin:** Most of them are fish.

**Rachel:** I love this. I think you'll appreciate this, because I know you love a nickname. Until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, sharks were known to marine-ers as—nope, not marine-ers. Mariners. [laughs]

**Griffin:** To Dan Marinos as— [laughs] All the Dan Marinos got together and agreed.

**Rachel:** This is the Tito Taylor of 2020.

**Griffin:** [laughs] Thank you for reminding me about Tito Taylor.

**Rachel:** I still get tweets about that. People still—

**Griffin:** From people named Tito Taylor?

**Rachel:** [laughs] Um..

**Griffin:** Mariners called them...

**Rachel:** Mariners as, quote, "sea-dogs".

**Griffin:** But that's like, seals and stuff. I feel like...

**Rachel:** No.

**Griffin:** Seals are very clearly the dogs of the sea.

**Rachel:** I know. Well, maybe before we even knew what a seal was...

**Griffin:** We discovered seals. I see.

**Rachel:** Mm hmm. I didn't know this. The teeth? Embedded in the gums. Not affixed to the jaws.

**Griffin:** That's probably why they come out all the damn time.

**Rachel:** Yeah. Sharks can lose 30,000 or more teeth in their life time.

**Griffin:** Fuck off. Fuck off. That's more hairs that I lose—

**Rachel:** [laughs] The rate of tooth replacement varies from once every eight to ten days to several months. Can you imagine?

**Griffin:** Every day a shark loses one of its teeth, right?

**Rachel:** No, they said once every eight to ten days.

**Griffin:** They lose one tooth?

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Or they reset all their teeth? That's what it sounded like.

**Rachel:** No, the rate of tooth replacement, from once every eight to ten days to several months. So that, to me, suggests that they—

**Griffin:** All their teeth get replaced.

**Rachel:** No!

**Griffin:** Because if they lose 30,000 and then you only lose one every eight to ten days... how long does a shark live?

**Rachel:** Oh gosh, I can't do that math.

**Griffin:** The math is hard, but I think it's saying they replace all their fucking teeth.

**Rachel:** I don't think that's true.

**Griffin:** I think that's true! I've collected so many shark teeth necklaces. The only way that's happening if shark are just like, every time they talk, like, "Hey Jerry, how's the— oh shit, hold on," clunk, "How are the kids— aw fuck another one came out, shit, oh man."

**Rachel:** In most species, teeth are replaced one at a time as opposed to the simultaneous replacement of an entire row.

**Griffin:** That's probably good for sharks, huh? That would be a bad tooth day.

**Rachel:** There is a shark though, there is a shark though that has an entire row replacement, and that is the Cookiecutter Shark.

**Griffin:** I like that. That's cute.

**Rachel:** Apparently, they leave little round cookie-bite marks in, you know, like, other sharks. And so that's how they got their name.

**Griffin:** That's adorable.

**Rachel:** Isn't it adorable? I was reading a description that was saying they can take "ice cream scoop size bites" out of other sharks. So, they really should be the Ice Cream Shark.

**Griffin:** Yeah. It stopped being cute, though. Unfortunately.

**Rachel:** I wanna tell you about another shark, super rare, called the Megamouth shark.

**Griffin:** Ooh.

**Rachel:** Only, actually less than 100 have ever been seen of these sharks.

**Griffin:** Holy shit.

**Rachel:** They swim with their mouth wide open.

**Griffin:** Good... so far...

**Rachel:** [laughs] And they have 50 rows of small, sharp teeth.

**Griffin:** Alright.

**Rachel:** In each jaw.

**Griffin:** I know we're supposed to like sharks now.

**Rachel:** [laughs]



**Griffin:** And I get it, like, sharks are over-hunted and like, have very, very, very bad and unfair PR.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Which is probably not helped by me actually featuring Deep Blue Sea on this very show that we're talking about now. But I am still allowed to be extremely afraid of them, right? Like, I would never do anything to hurt a shark, or get out there say, like, "Hey, we should all be out there hunting more sharks," but I personally am allowed to hear the thing that you just said and be fucking mortally terrified of that, right?

**Rachel:** Yeah, I mean, that's a lot of teeth. Granted. Growing up in Missouri, not particularly afraid of sharks.

**Griffin:** No.

**Rachel:** Did not go to a beach until I was a teen.

**Griffin:** Wow, really?

**Rachel:** Yeah. And it was Virginia beach. Probably not super well-known for sharks.

**Griffin:** Maybe not.

**Rachel:** Here's what I'll tell you for 2019. Only 64 unprovoked shark attacks.

**Griffin:** See? That's fine.

**Rachel:** And only two people died from shark attacks in 2019.

**Griffin:** That's not— that's not great. But 64 unprovoked, like, how can we prove, you know what I mean?

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** They probably came to shore and they're like, "Uh, I didn't do anything!" and like, you're probably—

**Rachel:** I will say of those 64, 41 were in the US. So...

**Griffin:** So I think we all know.

**Rachel:** [laughs] I think they're great. I think they're super cool. There's so many of them and they all have different little features. I read about a shark that is pink that I was kind of excited about.

**Griffin:** Oh!

**Rachel:** I mean, there's a lot of cool sharks out there with a lot of different quirks. And I would encourage you to look into it and I will tell you, don't worry about these guys.

**Griffin:** No.

**Rachel:** You'll be okay. I read something that said don't wear glittery jewelry and splash around a whole lot and you'll be fine.

**Griffin:** Okay. That's probably good advice.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Yeah, I remember, I think it was on the— man. It may have been on the special features of the Deep Blue Sea DVD.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** But I remember somebody talking about, like, "Oh no, all the sharks are very sweet. It was the dolphins that we worked with who are real assholes."

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** That quote always stuck with me, whenever I think about sharks, and I'm like, "Sharks are fine." Lisa Frank has done a lot of good PR for dolphins, who are apparently big assholes.

**Rachel:** I believe it.

**Griffin:** Hey, can I tell you about my first thing?

**Rachel:** Yes.

**Griffin:** My first thing. We were watching, because everybody's talking about it, The Last Dance.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** The sorta Michael Jordan, Chicago Bulls, in their heyday, mid-90s, documentary.

**Rachel:** Neither one of us are huge basketballs enthusiasts so we kind of delayed in watching it, but I'd heard so many good things that we just started.

**Griffin:** Yeah. It has— I guess quick sidebar about The Last Dance, like, dredged up— I have never been, like, my interest in sports as a thing that I would watch, like, multiple games of a season of and become invested in a team and its players and their performance and stuff, like, that only happened in my adulthood. I feel like after I moved to Cincinnati, where I was living in a city with a baseball team that I really enjoyed. But watching The Last Dance, even though I wasn't, like, watching a ton of games, I knew so much of that stuff through, like, cultural osmosis, in a way that was so interesting.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Cause when you grow up and you're in elementary school, and especially middle school, during that Bulls, Jordan era, like, it's just every— it was everything. It was so huge. Anyway, I'm not talking about that for my first subject. My first subject is actually the greatest sports game ever made, which is NBA Jam.

**Rachel:** Oh! [laughs]

**Griffin:** And this such a big, I feel like, contributing factor to that. Even though Michael Jordan wasn't in NBA Jam, which is a topic I will cover as I get into NBA Jam, because there's an interesting oral history on Sports Illustrated that you should go read if you're interested about NBA Jam. Have you played NBA Jam? Like, how much do you know about it?

**Rachel:** No. I mean, the only sport video game I have played was, like NHL 98, I wanna say.

**Griffin:** Ooh, 96 was like, the hot one.

**Rachel:** It was 96 or 98.

**Griffin:** I think 96 is the one that was in Swingers.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Yeah. Okay, anyway, NBA Jam is a series of basketball games that kinda had its heyday back in that mid-90s, like, Jordan, Bulls era of basketball. And it was like that pre-Space Jam heat, which I think was 96. The first NBA Jam came out in 1993 and it was a two-on-two basketball arcade game from Midway, who made a lot of sort of arcade hits like Mortal Kombat and Cruis'n and, um, NFL Blitz, which was sort of the NBA Jam of football.

**Rachel:** Wait... when you say two-on-two, does that mean there were two players on the court versus—

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** Oh.

**Griffin:** Yeah, there were two players from each team on the court. So, you had a pair of players from each team.

**Rachel:** Oh, interesting.

**Griffin:** It was all very, very single-minded about being just a very fun, accessible arcade basketball game. This oral history I read in this Sports Illustrated article was like, super, super interesting cause it really dives into how that idea kinda came to be. So, one of the developers at Midway, a guy named Mark Turmell was credited with, like, taking this new technique that game developers were using where they could take photos of people and create these sort of photo-realistic assets and sprites and stuff out of it.

Kind of reminiscent of rotoscoping. You know that animation technique that they did back in, like, early Disney movies like Sleeping Beauty and all those old films. Kinda doing something similar with that, except they were using them mostly for, like, fighting games and things like that. But Mark Turmell was a big basketball fan, so he was like, "Let's see if we can do this for basketball." So, the developers at Midway went around Chicago and, like, found players, sort of more lesser-known NBA players and just, like, took pictures of them while they were playing basketball.

**Rachel:** Oh wow, that's cool.

**Griffin:** And that's how they got, like, all of these assets and animations. And so, in this Sports Illustrated oral history, Mark Turmell talks about how he was showing these, like, dunking animations to other developers and they were like, "Oh, yeah, that looks pretty good," but nobody was, like, bowled over by it. And

they didn't have the NBA license at this point. SO this was just all proof of concept. So it was like, "Ah, we'll see. Maybe we'll turn it up. Maybe we'll just, like, ratchet up the dunking height."

**Rachel:** At the time, it was called the Ball and Hoop Game.

**Griffin:** It was called Respectful Basketball Simulation.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** But they kept kinda tweaking it and tweaking it and tweaking it, and then eventually Turmell started to show off this animation internally of players just jumping two stories into the air and doing cartwheels and, like, dunking from the mid-court line and doing all this, like, impossible superhero shit. And there were people in the studio who were like, "What the fuck are you doing?" Like, "This is wild, nobody's gonna buy a basketball game where you can do this," while other people were like, "More. "

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** "Deeper. Faster."

**Rachel:** [laughs] "Keep going."

**Griffin:** And so, they kept going, and eventually that direction of just, like, "Let's just make it stupid," like, "Let's just make it as fun as possible without adhering to, like, the simulation idea of basketball." And that's how they got, like, the idea— they wanted something to sort of change the tempo of the game or add momentum to the game, so they got this system where if you scored three baskets in a row you became on fire, and now all of your dunks are just non-stop stylish, like, wild maneuvers.

**Rachel:** It's like Tony Hawk Pro Skater kind of, right?

**Griffin:** Even deeper than Tony Hawk Pro Skater, because the basketball was literally on fire.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** And Mark Turmell was like, arguing with other developers, like, "The basketball has to be on fire," and people were pushing back like, "No? What are you fucking talking about?" But that resistance eventually gave way to just this

idea of let's just make it fun. Like, there's a turbo meter where you can hold in a trigger button and just, like, now you're running at the speed of light and, like, jumping three stories into the air, and it adds sort of a strategic element to the game.

And the further they went into this process, the more they kinda leaned into like, "Let's just make it fun." And that sort of single-faceted designed direction I think is so amazing, and it is why this game still holds up to this day. Because, like, when you just sort of design a game without worrying about, like, "Oh well let's cut this fun thing because it makes it less so-and-so." When you don't have that, you just make a game that is just fun no matter when you play it or who is playing it or what.

**Rachel:** Yeah, that is so smart to me. Because I feel like the number of people that would like a game specifically because it was realistic is actually pretty small.

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** It seems like most people really just wanna get in there and do crazy stuff.

**Griffin:** So, there's a bunch of other stuff that kind of falls in line with that, like, "let's just make it fun" aesthetic. One is the commentary for the game, which is so iconic. It's all done by a guy named Tim Kitzrow, and the script that he went off of for this entire game that, like, inspired all of these catchphrases like "Boomshakalaka", which was sort of a misquote of a lot of different funk songs. There's a Sly and the Family Stone song where they say, "boo-laka-laka-laka." Like, it is pulled from that, right? And all of these things that people still fucking say, like, about basketball or anything. I have a pair of shorts, and I looked in and, like, it said "boomshakalaka" like, inside the fly of them?

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** It's everywhere. This script was two pages long.

**Rachel:** Are we just gonna gloss over those shorts?

**Griffin:** No, we're not. We'll talk more about them later. They're Chubbies. I got Chubbies, everybody. Cause I wanted to show off my gams. Get off my fucking case.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** And they can't do, like, color commentary, because this game shipped on cartridges with very, very little memory, so they can't be like, "Oh, and he's reversed it and now he's coming down and dropping it off the key," like, so instead you just have carnival barking of just like, "Oh! He's heating up! Boom-shaka-laka!" And all of that is so stupid and so, like, iconic and great.

They could not pitch this game to the NBA. They would not accept it, because at this time in the mid-90s, like, arcade machines, especially coin-operated ones, existed in what everybody sort of thought of as, like, seedy places, like bars. There was a quote about, like, this peep show in New York where you could see arcade machines through the window, and so the NBA didn't want their brand associated with that. So Midway had to do, like, this whole PR campaign and pitch it and show, like, all these family entertainment centers where there are arcade machines. And finally, the NBA agreed to it and that's how we got NBA Jam.

Now, Michael Jordan was not in the game because at this time, Michael Jordan had secured his likeness from the NBA, so whenever they did licensed things they couldn't include Michael Jordan in it without his consent and without him, like, getting a chunk of change out of it. So, he wasn't in the game. I forget who was... it was Scottie Pippen and... I can't remember who the other player was from the Bulls that you could play as. But they did get a call once, Midway did, from Gary Payton, who was also on that Bulls team, saying that him and Michael Jordan wanted a copy of the game with them in it as players. So they sent in their own photographs on them playing basketball to use as animations.

**Rachel:** Oh my gosh, that's cute.

**Griffin:** And they sent them, like, special edition arcade machines with them as players with, like, maxed-out all-star stats. There's only a handful of these cabinets that exist. Shaq had two of them.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** One of them was in Shaq's home so he could just play it whenever he wanted, the other of these, like, special edition NBA Jam machines travelled with Shaq, like, wherever he went.

**Rachel:** Oh my God. Wow.

**Griffin:** Like, wherever they were playing games, they would have somebody pack up this machine and bring it with them. Isn't that fucking great?

**Rachel:** Can you imagine that? Like, LinkedIn? Like, well what was your job during this time period? "Oh, I was the caretaker for an arcade machine that travelled across the country."

**Griffin:** In that person's defense though, an incredibly, I would imagine, valuable arcade machine. Because I don't know how many of these exist, but they were very scarce. There have been a few NBA games, NBA Jam games that have come after that. But none of them really lived up to that heyday. I played this game so fucking much and then in college, like, we played it every night when we would go over to our friends' houses and have a few beers. Like, eventually this just kinda— we would put away, you know, whatever Halo game we were playing or whatever and just would play NBA Jam, because you can play it all night and it is just fun. It is just a fun game.

**Rachel:** What system was this on?

**Griffin:** Well, it was on a few different systems. It was on Genesis, but we played it on SNES. There was also a tournament edition. But it was also in arcade cabinets and stuff.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Yeah, man. I think I could still probably pull out the code that you had to punch in to, like, play as Bill Clinton.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** NBA Jam kicks ass. It's a good video game. And that's all there is to say.

**Rachel:** There's a lot I don't know about this game.

**Griffin:** There is a lot I don't know about this game. But it's a very good game. Hey, can I steal you away?

**Rachel:** Yeah.

[ad break]

**Griffin:** Got a couple Jumbotrons here. Shall we bring up the fact that we repeated Jumbotrons last week and didn't even realize it? [laughs]

**Rachel:** Well, you did mention that it sounded familiar and we chalked it up to wedding season. But yeah, turns out... whoops.



**Griffin:** Turns out, whoopsie doopsie. Listen y'all. It's tough. But—

**Rachel:** More bang for your buck, huh? [laughs]

**Griffin:** I guess so? Probably won't happen again. And then watch us do it, like, literally right now this episode. We do a lot of Jumbo—we do a lot of content, in general. I tell the same jokes on MBMBaM all the time.

**Rachel:** And when you say we, we mean mostly Griffin.

**Griffin:** Mostly me. Well, you write grants and stuff. That's content.

**Rachel:** Oh. Huh.

**Griffin:** If you think about it.

**Rachel:** I guess so.

**Griffin:** Yeah. Anyway, here's a Jumbotron for Daniel and it's from Andrea, who says, "Having entire conversations through gifs of Muppets and goats isn't for everyone. How lucky then that we met under such strange circumstances, since we're fluent in many of the same languages, my ASL and your science stuff notwithstanding. Can't wait to come bother you and Colleen and give Kayleigh a smooch on her perfect furry face. You're the best."

**Rachel:** You know we love some Muppets over here.

**Griffin:** We do. We do. What's a perfect furry face, do you think? Are we talking about, like, length of the fur, or softness? Are we talking about if there's stuff matted in there?

**Rachel:** It has a lot to do with, I mean, with the features, right?

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** I feel like, good eyes, nose and mouth placement.

**Griffin:** Symmetry.

**Rachel:** Mm hmm.

**Griffin:** Fibonacci sequence.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** The golden ratio.

**Rachel:** Eyelash length.

**Griffin:** Eyelash depth.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Can I read you the next one?

**Griffin:** Please.

**Rachel:** This one is for Corey. It is from Hannah. "My dearest goofball, quarantine has not been great, but quarantining with you makes it better. Thanks for always being down for a game of hand and foot, a carpool karaoke session, or cleaning up after Henry when he eats too fast or has a hairball... "

**Griffin:** Okay, almost had me there.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** You had me in the first half, I'm not gonna lie.

**Rachel:** "Henry, Bo and I think you're the best. Love, your weirdo forever."

**Griffin:** Our Henry has never done a hairball, right?

**Rachel:** No, but he does eat too fast.

**Griffin:** Yeah. Maybe they are talking about him. Is he doing hairballs? I don't know, there's a lot about this kid.

**Rachel:** He puts a lot of stuff in his mouth.

**Griffin:** He does. I've seen him eat hair before. Not, like, a lot of it, but like, one or two.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** I shoulda done something. Gosh. Being a parent is hard. Hey, if you wanna get a Jumbotron and maybe twice on this show because we're bad at this, well, good news. We have spots for Wonderful that are opening up for the second half of 2020 and we're gonna be doing a drawing to let folks in to purchase

Jumbotron slots, because demand is, you know, we do two of them an episode and demand is pretty high for these. So, if you want to get a Jumbotron, you have until Friday, July 3<sup>rd</sup> to enter the drawing. And then if your name is drawn, you'll have the option to purchase a Jumbotron on the show for 100 bucks. Only personal messages, we're not doing commercial messages at this time, and the air date is estimated, not guaranteed. So, if you want all the details, go to [maximumfun.org/jumbotrongrawing](http://maximumfun.org/jumbotrongrawing) and if you have questions, email [daniel@maximumfun.org](mailto:daniel@maximumfun.org).

[ad break]

**Rachel:** Can I tell you my next thing?

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** It is also a game.

**Griffin:** Oh wow.

**Rachel:** I know.

**Griffin:** Oh wow. Where are you going with this?

**Rachel:** It is Simon.

**Griffin:** Simon?

**Rachel:** Mm hmm.

**Griffin:** I'm curious to hear about Simon.

**Rachel:** Yeah. This game has been around since we've been alive. It feels like it has always existed. I imagine are people are familiar with it? There have actually been a lot of...

**Griffin:** I don't know, man.

**Rachel:** A lot of versions of Simon, that I will allude to in my segment.

**Griffin:** But maybe not in the last, like, 15 years, yes? I feel like Simon kinda had its heyday.

**Rachel:** So, it is a device, operates on batteries, traditionally. Creates a series of tones and lights that you have to repeat. So, you push buttons, there's colors, there's lights, there's sounds, you have to remember them and repeat them to win the game.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** If you lose the game, you have to start over. You can play this by yourself or you can play this as a team. I personally liked this game because you could play it by yourself.

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Rachel:** [laughs] As an only child, I was always seeking out games that allowed you to play by yourself, and this was one of them.

**Griffin:** I'm trying to remember— you have sent me on a fucking complete trip right now, babe.

**Rachel:** Yeah, I'm wondering what you're doing over there.

**Griffin:** In a way that you never have really before. Like, I find your segments very engrossing, but this is the first one that is like, reminding me of all of those, like, Tiger electronic games that we had. And we had a fucking lot of them.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Like Lights Out and Merlin the 10th Quest? Like...

**Rachel:** Yeah, so that's the thing. There were a lot of variations of this that were created.

**Griffin:** Right.

**Rachel:** I am familiar— and this apparently, so this was a Milton Bradley Product, and I thought, "Oh, I had a version of this also from Milton Bradley, called Max Backtalk."

**Griffin:** Whoa.

**Rachel:** It's from 1986, and the thing with this was that you could record your own sound under the light. So, the light would shine and then you would record into the speaker a sound, and it would be associated with that light.

**Griffin:** That's cute.

**Rachel:** There was a commercial for this that did star the guy from Police Academy.

**Griffin:** Oh, sure. Guttenberg?

**Rachel:** No. The one that did the voices.

**Griffin:** Oh, Michael Winslow.

**Rachel:** Yes. Sorry, couldn't remember his name.

**Griffin:** See, Guttenberg could do voices, too.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Everyone remembers Michael Winslow for his incredible voices, but uh...

**Rachel:** The problem was that you had to remember which sound you'd made with which color.

**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Rachel:** Because it would repeat it to you, and a lot of times I would kinda trip myself up, so most of the time I just usually ended up saying the color. I would be like, "Red!" [laughs]

**Griffin:** [laughs] I'm pretty sure, by the way, I just my phone a terrible virus by looking at listings for Merlin, the 10th Quest. But sorry.

**Rachel:** So, Simon was launched in 1978, appropriately at Studio 54 in New York?

**Griffin:** Wha?

**Rachel:** [laughs] Apparently they constructed, like, a big Simon that hung over the dancefloor, and that was their big release.

**Griffin:** Fuck yes.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Are you kidding? You would not catch me on that dancefloor at that point, like, people would be like, "Griffin, come on! We're all doing so much cocaine!" I'd be like, "Hold up guys." Beep, boop, beep-beep, bip.

**Rachel:** [laughs] It was created based on Atari's arcade game, Touch Me.

**Griffin:** [laughs] No thank you!

**Rachel:** [laughs] This was an arcade version that was housed in a cabinet, and it had four large, circular buttons of the same color. And this was in 1976. Richard Baer and Howard J Morrison saw the game, thought it had nice gameplay but was visually boring and the sound was terrible. So, they did a prototype using the Texas Instruments microcontroller chip, which apparently a lot of the games used in the 70s.

**Griffin:** It makes a lot of sense to me, yes.

**Rachel:** And they named the game at the time Follow Me, which was renamed Simon based on the whole Simon Says phenomenon. Not really a phenomenon. [laughs] I don't really know what to call it, I guess it is also a game.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** So the sounds, the tones of the game were inspired by the notes of a bugle.

**Griffin:** [laughs and claps]

**Rachel:** So, they used the tones associated with what a bugle could do.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** I think they were talking about, like, you know, four tones and what instrument would be appropriate for that, and they based it—

**Griffin:** Does the bugle only make four— I guess so, right? I guess a bugle only makes— doesn't cover the full range of an octave. Right?

**Rachel:** Yeah, so they said there is the E note, C# note, A note and then an E note that was an octave lower than the blue. So, I guess three? That makes more sense, I guess, when you think about it.

**Griffin:** Well no, it's four different notes. That's like the taps notes, right? That's like what the bugle plays?

**Rachel:** Yeah, yeah.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Simon debuted in 1978 at a retail price of \$24.95, which is equivalent to \$98.

**Griffin:** Holy fuck! No way!

**Rachel:** I know. This explains why I got a Max Backtalk. [laughs]

**Griffin:** [laughs] Well, I'm pretty sure as technology advanced... we did have one of those old-ass Simons, though.

**Rachel:** It was the top selling toy that Christmas.

**Griffin:** Wow.

**Rachel:** But that's 1978, that was a little before your time.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** I imagine it would have reduced in price a little, hopefully.

**Griffin:** Yeah, and advanced in tech—although we had a lot of very old toys by the time I came around.

**Rachel:** So, there have been other versions, as I mentioned, of Simon. There have been, let me just name some of them. There's the Simon Trickster, the Simon Sticks, the Simon Flash, the Simon Swipe, the Simon Air and the Simon Optics. So let me tell you a little bit about the Simon Air and the Simon Optix.

**Griffin:** Are these new, like, advanced tech Simon?

**Rachel:** Yeah, these are like post-2000.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** Simon Air, it was like a circular device and you could just wave your hand over the color and it would sense. And sometimes you had to do, like, two

at the same time. Or, if you were doing two players, they would light up four. And you and the other player had to wave at the same time.

**Griffin:** Ah. How pointless.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Just let me touch the button. It's dawning on me right now, sorry, while you're talking, like, have we explained exactly what Simon the game, Simon is?

**Rachel:** Yeah, I said it's a device and there's a series of tones and lights and you have to repeat them.

**Griffin:** Okay. But they get longer and you have to— it's a memory thing. Yes, okay.

**Rachel:** Yeah. Simon Optix is like, you control it. It's like a Google Glass situation.

**Griffin:** I bet that works really good.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** There was a thing Tiger made called the R-Zone that was a head-based game system, that had the sophistication of a Tiger game handheld, which were like these very, very, very low-quality kinda game and watch games. But they had little cartridges that you could plug into them. And I remember I had, like, a Primal Rage fighting game cartridge that could plug into your R-Zone, which was a lens that covered one of your eyes, but it looked like dog shit.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** And the games were, like, so bad. And it cost so much money. It was so stupid.

**Rachel:** I really enjoyed this game, partially, cause I mentioned, because I could play it by myself. Also, I have always had a terrible memory.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Like, I psyche myself out when it comes to, like, patterns and lengthy sequences. But I still remember with my Max Backtalk, the song that it would play when you messed up.



**Griffin:** [laughs]

**Rachel:** [laughs] Which says a lot about my skill.

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** But it would go [sings tune]

**Griffin:** Wow.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** That really left a mark on you, huh?

**Rachel:** I know, right? That was the song of failure that I became so accustomed to.

**Griffin:** It became your anthem, wow.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** You have made me very nostalgic just now. Congratulations.

**Rachel:** Thank you.

**Griffin:** Can I tell you about my second thing? I'll go quick, because we've been going pretty long.

**Rachel:** Yes.

**Griffin:** Mine's a movie, and it's Spirited Away. And you can watch all of these Ghibli flicks on HBO Max now, which we picked up mostly for this very reason. Because Henry likes him a Totoro and he also enjoys him a Ponyo.

**Rachel:** Yeah. It is shocking how little Totoro appears in that film, by the way.

**Griffin:** [laughs] Yeah. Upon further reflection, it's not a great film for a three-year-old, because not a lot of stuff happens in it.

**Rachel:** A lot of challenging themes in there, too.

**Griffin:** Well, yeah, I guess so. Sorta handled in a Ghibli-esque way.

**Rachel:** There's, I mean, a sick parent. Which is not easy for a young child.

**Griffin:** Sick parent is not great. A lot of convalescing in the Ghibli oeuvre.

**Rachel:** But that Totoro, so squeezable.

**Griffin:** Totoro's very soft and Henry likes to squeeze him a Totoro. Spirited Away, I feel like, is aimed at an older crowd. Maybe not Princess Mononoke old, because that has a lot of decapitation in it, but an older crowd. Miyazaki, I think, was aiming for, like ten-year-old girls when he was designing, like, this movie and who it would be for. And if you have never seen it before, rectify that, because it's one of the best movies, I think probably, ever made.

It's my favorite Ghibli movie. And I actually got to do, like, an intro for it when they re-released all the Studio Ghibli kids movies in theatres last year. So, if you saw that then I'm probably gonna repeat myself quite a bit. It is about a young girl named Chihiro who, along with her parents, ends up in this, like, strange magical world where spirits come for R&R, basically. And she gets trapped there, her parents get transformed into pigs, and she has to kind of integrate herself into this world to find a way to save her parents and get out.

**Rachel:** Really great character, by the way.

**Griffin:** Oh, yeah.

**Rachel:** Like, if you think about movies that are targeted towards young girls, like typically it's all love interest, princess kinda stuff. And this is not that movie.

**Griffin:** There is nothing conventional about this movie and the way that it handles, sort of like, conflict and plot structure and, like, what her quote-unquote "hero's journey" is. Like, she definitely follows the archetypical hero's journey, but in a non-archetypical way.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And she starts out the movie kind of a bratty kid who's moving to this new town and just isn't happy about it, and is just very scared of everything. And by the end of the movie, like, her journey has been, like, very strange and non-linear, but it's also been very realistic, I feel like, in the way that she grows.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** The thing about this movie that really bowls me over is how, like, deep and rich this spirit world is, that this movie takes place in. All sort of focused

around this big resort where spirits come and, you know, relax in the baths that are set up there and just have this sort of like luxurious break from, you know, the real world that they inhabit. And it doesn't tell you a whole lot about how this world works, right?

**Rachel:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** It just establishes that, like, there are rules. Like, these are clientele from the spirit world that come here very often, but like, you don't learn why, you don't really learn much about these spirits. They have very, very specific traits and very, very specific attributes, but you never really, like, go beyond the surface level. The movie just kind of assumes, it just throws you in there right with Chihiro, who doesn't know anything about this world, and just kind of assumes that you're gonna just roll with the punches.

**Rachel:** Yeah, that's one thing. So, when you're younger and you're first learning about, you know, creative writing, you hear a lot about trusting your reader. You know, trusting your audience, and that if you are too expository, like, it's going to be very clear that you don't trust, you know, your audience to come to the conclusions that you want them to come to. And Miyazaki, like, is always just like—

**Griffin:** Really good at that in all...

**Rachel:** "Hey, you can hang." [laughs]

**Griffin:** Yeah, in all of his movies. Like, he's very, very good about that. But *Spirited Away* for me is just like, Ghibli firing on all cylinders. The movie comparison is often made, and I think it's apt, is *Wizard of Oz*. Although *Wizard of Oz* is even, like, a little bit more explanatory about the things that happen in this world. But not super explanatory. She lands in the Munchkin village or whatever and like, they're just like, "Oh, you killed the witch and now it's time to go to the Wizard."

**Rachel:** [laughs] Yeah, and she starts out in Kansas. Like, this is very real and then it's totally not.

**Griffin:** Yeah, and that happens here. It's all of like, the spirits and themes of the movie are based in, like, Shinto Buddhist folklore, which like, I'm not an expert in. But like, I find that very, very fascinating that, you know, he is plumbing a very sort of like traditional thing for these very, very vivid and colorful ideas.

All of the, like, architecture is based on classical— I forget, there's like an open-air architecture museum of Edo-Tokyo era buildings and stuff that's still open that you can go visit, that apparently all of the designs are based in. Everything is so ornate, like, every room from you know the bathing rooms to the boiler room where some of the movie takes place, like, everything is so like— that's nothing new, again, for Studio Ghibli movies. They are all about these scenes dripping with detail. But it's just so, so rich here.

But the things that this young girl has to do to, like, survive and find her way out of this world are just so weird. Like, she has to save this one spirit whose body has accumulated all of this garbage by giving him a bath, although his body is just, like, filthy and disgusting and taking over this whole room. That whole sequence, to me, is so fascinating because it's not like she's fighting off this beast and it's not like she's conquering this villain, it's like she's trying to do this act of kindness with this terrifying thing that she doesn't understand. And to me, like, that portrayal of bravery and growth is so great. It instantly endears you to this character, I feel like, and shows you very concretely a way that she is growing. And that's just, like, one example of the kinds of things that she has to do, the challenges that she has to overcome. They are not the usual things that you see in movies.

And to me that's just, like, is why this movie succeeds so much, on top of the fact that, like, you feel like this world, you are only seeing the top layer of it and you are just overwhelmed with this belief that there's so much more going on that it's just not gonna show you because it just doesn't have time. Like, if it explained why these spirits were here and who they all were, that would be the whole movie and it would be bad movie.

**Rachel:** Yeah, right? Like, for me, fantasy tends to be intimidating because with something like, you know, Lord of the Rings, where there's this, like, really rich history and you have to kind of absorb all of this knowledge of the world, like, this movie does not require you to do that.

**Griffin:** It's also a movie about sort of like traditional Japan butting up against, like, commercialism in the wake of the 80s, when Japan had this bubble economy around technology that kinda popped in the early aughts and they were sort of having a reckoning with that. It's a coming of age story about, you know, a ten-year-old girl, but it's also, like, tackling much heavier themes that I do not consider myself qualified enough to talk about.

It was the most successful Japanese movie of all time when it came out in 2001 and received just rave reviews. Currently, it is the 9<sup>th</sup> highest rated movie ever released on Metacritic, which is like an aggregator of, you know, review scores and stuff. It came out in 2002 with Disney as the distributor in the US, but Disney, like, barely put it out in theatres and made it in 151 theatres and they advertised it less than their direct-to-VHS, like, "Here's the third sequel to Aladdin!".

**Rachel:** Yeah, I remember, like, my cool arty friends talked about this movie, but I had never heard of it.

**Griffin:** Well, then it won the Oscar for best animated picture.

**Rachel:** Yeah, right.

**Griffin:** And then people were like, "Okay, well maybe now we should start paying attention to it." And you can watch, again, you can watch all these movies on HBO Max. But like, if you've never really gotten in Ghibli, like, Spirited Away is a very, very good one to get in there to, because it really shows you, one, how very, very good they are at animating things, just like, no matter what they are, and creating these incredibly vivid scenes. But it also represents this kind of non-traditional storytelling that is just so beguiling. It is just fantastic. And I love it, I love it. It's a good movie. And I just watched it again, and it's good. Kinda spooky. Henry didn't like it, there's a big, big, big mean baby in this movie.

**Rachel:** Oh yeah.

**Griffin:** We were watching it and, like, Henry watched the bathing the monster scene and No-Face and all this shit, and Henry was like, "I'm down to clown," and then this big baby shows up and is like, "I'm gonna break your arm," and Henry is like, "I'm done. Bye! Turn it off. Baby's too big. Get it out of here."

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Do you know what our friends at home are talking about?

**Rachel:** Well, I mean, obviously I wouldn't. Please tell me.

**Griffin:** Well, I'll tell you. Rosario says, "Something I find particularly wonderful is running into sticks or branches from trees that look like or could be used as walking sticks. We decided to make a campfire for Father's Day yesterday and my dad found a tiny branch that looked just like Yoda's walking stick." There's a

picture included, it is a primo walking stick, with like, a head and everything. Good walking stick. I love a good walking stick.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** We used to go hiking in the trails behind the museum in Huntington and every time I found a walking stick, I was like, "Yeah, I'll pretend to be Gandalf for a little bit." That's all it was really, if I'm being honest.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Zachary says "Something that I find wonderful is the feeling of crushing up a still-warm popcorn bag after pouring the popcorn into a bowl. I like to hold the warm ball of garbage in my hands until it's cold before throwing it away, and that feeling always relaxes me, even if it is just for that short moment." How powerful.

**Rachel:** [laughs] I am so envious sometimes of these submissions, because it indicates a mindset that I wish I could have more of. You know?

**Griffin:** Mm hmm. If we had this mindset, this show would be so fucking easy. We could do it every day.

**Rachel:** [laughs] I know! I know, like, paying attention to like, "Oh wow, a hot knife in butter, wow that is really great" and like, actually being able to retain that joy.

**Griffin:** A hot, wadded up bag of popcorn is like, so far beyond hot knife through butter.

**Rachel:** You're right, you're right.

**Griffin:** Zachary is on some next-level shit and I appreciate it. And you know next time I make popcorn from a bag I'm going to savor the moment.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Really enjoy it. Thank you so much for listening. 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. Maximum Fun, really great community. There's a lot of really great content right now. If you go to [maximumfun.org](http://maximumfun.org) you will find just tons and tons of podcasts. Like, new episodes coming out every day. You do not have to wait around to find a new incredible podcast on Maximum Fun.

**Griffin:** We will have a link in the episode description to resources to support Black Lives Matter and find more resources for anti-racism education that are invaluable. There's a lot to dig into there that are very, very helpful. I think we do have ads again next week, and we will be donating the ad revenue to another cause that we will select and tell you all about. But for right now, you know, don't let up on the gas. There's still a lot of things to fight for, like arresting the police that killed Breonna Taylor and so, so much more. But, you know, a good place to start and keep going is that link that we will include for you. Um, I think that's probably it?

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** [high-pitched] Think that's probably it?

**Rachel:** ... And until next week...

**Griffin:** I'm sweating like a dog.

**Rachel:** Me too!

**Griffin:** I'm sweating like a dog up in here.

**Rachel:** I thought it was cause I was nervous, but I think it just actually hot.

**Griffin:** It's not nerves, and I don't even think it's that hot, I don't think it's that hot.

**Rachel:** And Griffin's got on a sleeveless tee.

**Griffin:** I've got— some people call it a tank top, and I'm wearing the hell out of it. Or is it wearing me? No, anyway. Do you think it's the sexual heat between us?

**Rachel:** Ooh.

**Griffin:** I didn't even consider the fact that it may be the sexual heat between us, but I am wearing a tank top and you are looking at my freckly, freckly biceps.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** And I know what that does to you.

**Rachel:** Each freckle just sends a beam to me, just like...

**Griffin:** Mm, pure erotic energy.

**Rachel:** Just heat.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Mm hmm.

**Griffin:** It's like a sexy magic eye painting.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** What's in there? Uh, um, me. Just tell me.

**Rachel:** Um, it looks to me like a rhinoceros.

**Griffin:** That's correct. That's actually my rhinoceros tattoo, so you're cheating.

[theme music plays]

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