

Wonderful! 139: A Most Powerful Laugh

Published July 2nd, 2020

[Listen on TheMcElroy.family](https://www.themcelroyfamily.com)

[theme music plays]

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hello, it's Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is Wonderful!

Griffin: I'm gonna bring a lot of intensity this episode.

Rachel: Ooh, that'll be fun!

Griffin: Mostly to you, with the way I'm looking at you, just like... can you describe it? It's very intense and very fierce and very cool.

Rachel: Yeah, a lot of eye contact.

Griffin: I'm not gonna look away from you this entire episode.

Rachel: That's gonna be difficult.

Griffin: When I do have to refer to my notes, I'm gonna kind of just like...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Hold it up in front of your face, but I'll always at least have one eye in my periph', okay?

Rachel: Okay, I'm not gonna do that.

Griffin: I need you to do that! I can't just give out that energy and you not give it back!

Rachel: Yeah, that's... yeah.

Griffin: Baaabe! How am I supposed to perform like this?

Rachel: It's just I—my computer. I don't want to have to lift it.

Griffin: You just looked away from me. I win.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: We were actually having a secret staring contest. This is a show where we talk about things that are good and things that we are very into, and um... it's a—maybe a bit of a challenge, considering um... everything. But we're still happy to be here, talking to each other.

Rachel: Plugging along, y'know?

Griffin: Plugging along.

Rachel: On that enthusiasm train.

Griffin: Doing our best. Uh, hey, there's a poster with our faces on it.

Rachel: Yeah! It um... it is incredible. Um... I never thought I'd be on a poster, but here I am. On a poster.

Griffin: It was designed by Beck Hurley. You can get it at our store. If you go to McElroy.family, you'll find a link. But yeah, if you like stuff like stuff like that, that's where we are. We look cute as hell, and it's on a poster.

Rachel: We really do.

Griffin: Um... you got any small wonders?

Rachel: I was just trying to think about that.

Griffin: You're gonna ask me to go first, aren't you?

Rachel: [laughs] I'm trying not to... oh! What about—can I say—have I said copper mugs? A little copper mug? Have I said it?

Griffin: I think we've talked about specialty drinking cups before. I think you've done a segment—

Rachel: Oh my gosh!

Griffin: Yeah, no, it's a—don't get discouraged. If you do want to talk about that, then you can... you can talk about that.

Rachel: [laughing] Y'know, I will share this anecdote. So, um, we purchased two copper mugs, exactly two, for the purpose of drinking one drink, which is the Moscow mule. And we were doing it on a Zoom call. And one of our friends thought we were so fancy, and I was so charmed by that. [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah. They thought the cocktail itself was fancy, and I wanted to be like... it's vodka and ginger beer, and maybe sometimes lemon juice. It's like, not fancy.

Rachel: She told a story that there was a bar she went to in college that required you to turn in your ID if you were to drink out of a copper mug, because they had had so much theft.

Griffin: So they didn't steal it? Oh god, yeah. I don't blame them. Um, I'm gonna say the Leatherman multitool. I'm almost certain we've talked about the Leatherman multitool before, but we have two of these now in our house, because I think I got one as a present from your parents.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Uh, because we lost the other one, but then we found the other one. So now we got an upstairs one. It just lives on my desk now, and I use it all the time.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: And the one downstairs, like, I use it all the time. It is so nice to not have to like... run to the toolbox anytime I need a, y'know, something to pry something, or a knife, or pliers, or whatever.

Rachel: Griffin does a lot of prying. He doesn't talk about it.

Griffin: I do. That's me. [laughs]

Rachel: Typically, there's something in something, and he wants to pry it open.

Griffin: I always need to get it out of there, don't I? Those two things are attached! No thanks! Pry pry pry pry pry.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, hey, I go first this week I believe.

Rachel: I think that's right.

Griffin: My first thing this week is one of those segments that I do sometimes where I try to justify a recent irresponsible purchase to my wife, Rachel.

Rachel: Ohhh...

Griffin: Because today, I want to talk about 3D printing.

Rachel: Oh, should we have a song for...

Griffin: [singing] Irresponsible purchase! You're feeling kind of down! You got a little bit of expendable income, you may as well use it to make yourself happy for a moment, 'cause it does not last! Just gonna tide you over 'til the next thing that pulls you out of a depressive episode!

Rachel: [laughing] Yaaay!

Griffin: [singing] Irresponsible purchaaase!

Rachel: [laughing] I love this.

Griffin: So I bought a 3D printer. Um, and I think 3D printer is cool, except—

Rachel: Can I say that we don't even have it in our house yet?

Griffin: Gets here today. Very excited.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, I think 3D printing, the concept of it, the tech evolution of it, is very cool, except when people use it to make illegal guns. That part's not great, obviously. But putting that aside... 3D printing is pretty cool.

I think I—I think probably both of us were informed, and myself, sold, on its capabilities on the JoCo Cruise, which we've gone on a couple times now, uh, where a person or group of persons – I'm not entirely sure who is the responsible party – uh, hid little 3D printed, low-poly Pokémon all over the ship so that people could do like, a real life Pokémon hunt.

Rachel: I feel like that is what is responsible for Henry being interested in Pokémon.

Griffin: I think so too, yes.

Rachel: Is finding those little creatures.

Griffin: It was also responsible for us not losing our minds at sea, because Henry would get so bored, and we would just wander around the ship, trying to find little Pokémon toys for him, and he went wild for it.

Rachel: The ship was not—the ship was not designed for children, and as such, like, the gift shop—

Griffin: Well, not two year old children. They have like, facilities and stuff.

Rachel: But like, the gift shop, for example, did not have a lot of toys, which concerned us. And then we found these little guys!

Griffin: We found these little Pokémon! It was so delightful, and they were really cool, and then I learned, like, hey, you can just like... frickin' make these. Y'know what I mean? So I'm excited to get a 3D printer for a few reasons, but also because like, it'll be neat to just make little figurines for 'em.

A lot of people use them to make like, minis for tabletop roleplaying game things, which is a cool concept. Not that we, y'know, have a tabletop game here in town that we're playing.

Rachel: I have yet to figure out how this is gonna be useful to me. And I feel like that...

Griffin: And I know that's so important, any time I buy something for myself...

Rachel: I feel like that's gonna be important, is how do I benefit from this? And I haven't figured it out yet.

Griffin: Right. It's like when you buy like, a Lush bath bomb set or something like that.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I'm like, what do I get out of this? And you have to be like, "Well, it make my skin get softer and smells better. And you have to be around me."

Rachel: Maybe you could make me some beads that I could string...

Griffin: I love that.

Rachel: In a jewel.

Griffin: Rachel loves a bead. I could make you a new toe ring.

Rachel: [laughs] Ohh.

Griffin: What do you think about that? You want a new toe ring?

Rachel: Ohh... [laughs]

Griffin: I could make you a new... very stylish, cool toe ring. I could put whatever the hell you want on there. That's 3D printing, baby.

Rachel: I made the mistake of bringing this up the other day, that I wore a toe ring all the way until 2011.

Griffin: Yep yep yep yep yep yep yep yep yep! That's very soon! That's not that long ago!

Rachel: And now you all know it, too.

Griffin: Now you know it as well. I think 3D printing is like, one of the more futuristic things to happen in my lifetime. Uh, there's this book, uh, that I like from Neal Stephenson, who is a sci-fi author, called The Diamond Age.

And it's like this futuristic, uh, book, that isn't necessarily about this, but it informs like, a lot of the story, uh, is that there are just publically available matter compilers all over the place, hooked up to this infrastructure system, like water or electricity, called The Feed, where just like, anything you want,

you go and just print it off in one of these compilers. And I thought that was such like a cool concept in the book. But now like, you can kind of do that a little bit at home.

I am excited, obviously, to have it to make dumb stuff like little toys and things for Henry. And other things that, y'know, I just kind of want to goof around with. I've been getting into sort of like, electronics modding stuff that started with like, tweakin' around with Switch controllers and things like that, and having a 3D printer opens up a lot of doors for that. Whether it's like, making parts, or components like drill guides to help you like, actually do a good job with the things that you're making.

But also, there's like this annoying faction of things... that if you lose them, you're just kind of up shit creek. And like, the thing I'm thinking of specifically is like, the uh, back of—the battery cover on a remote control. If you lose that, it's like, welp, that's it. But now, like, you have a way of kind of like... if you can find the design for it, obviously, printing it off and replacing it.

The idea of having that sort of, uh, means of production sort of available in your house? It's just like a really, really neat concept to me. I don't know how actually, like, applicable it will be, but like, having this other thing that, y'know, if you need a document printed, you have a printer for that. If you need... pasta extruded, you use a pasta extruder. That's a terrible example.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: But like, there are things that just like, if you lose them or they break, you have to go out and buy them, but sometimes, they're not available, because they're very niche. And having something that can make things in the house that you otherwise couldn't get is like a... I don't know. I think is very, very, very cool.

And how like, readily accessible—this 3D printer was not a very expensive purchase, like, in the grand scheme of things. They make very, very inexpensive models. I think it was like 170 bucks or something like that?

Which like, compared to a few years ago, is very, very cheap for one of these.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And you can just a little line of filament into it, which is like, not that expensive either, and you can just start makin' stuff at home! And I think that's very cool.

Uh, this technology sort of came about in the early '80s; although, as time has gone on, it's become more sort of sophisticated and easier to put in your own house. And most of the time, printers use a thing called fused deposition modeling, where it just like, sort of gooshes out little bits of, uh, filament, hot filament at a time, and in rings, as it goes.

Rachel: Yeah, I feel like I've seen videos of that.

Griffin: Watching a 3D printer work in like, a time lapse is very cool. Apparently, the prints take very long, so I'm not gonna be like, cranking out a lot of uh, material every given day. Uh, and I think it—where my interest also spiked was right around when coronavirus stuff was first hitting.

Uh, there were stories about this pair of Italian printers who were making these valves that were necessary for a certain type of breathing machine that was like, in limited supply. Like, these valves were in limited supply, and they were necessary for this machine to work. And so, they just started printing off these valves so that people could use the machine without burning through this expensive, sort of limited resource.

And that story got a bit blown out of proportion, and has been sort of like, uh... corrected a bit, because there were stories of like, uh, the company who made that machine wanting to sue these guys, and that the valves cost ten thousand dollars a pop, which like... that stuff wasn't necessarily true.

But I like the idea of like, these two have lives attributed to them that they saved, because they were able to provide these little, tiny plastic things that were, essentially, a bottleneck to people surviving COVID.

And like, the idea of having that sort of power in your hands is like, super, super cool to me.

Rachel: Yeah. No, that is cool.

Griffin: Yeah. Um, I also know that people have used it to sort of make, um... mask hooks that you can kind of put on the back of your head, so people who are working in, uh, like the medical field, who need, uh... who are wearing masks all day, like, it can get pretty uncomfortable around your ears if you're wearing them for hours and hours and hours at a time. So it's super easy to print out these little hooks that you just put on the back of your head, and they hook on there instead.

Uh, yeah. I think just conceptually, having a way to make something that is not like... uh... before this, like, I couldn't make little plastic things. Like, whatever it was, and there's lots of things in our house that are little plastic things that break all the time, like... having the ability to sort of recreate that is very, very cool to me.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Is it an irresponsible purchase still? Yes. Have I justified it? No.

Rachel: [laughs] This has been Irresponsible Purchase.

Griffin: This is my poetry corner.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I mean, I could also do a whole Irresponsible Purchase segment on the many tools that I have purchased to work on my electronics game. Uh, I bought a Dremel. Very excited to fuck around with that.

Rachel: I appreciate that, so far, your irresponsible purchases have been relatively small. So they do not take up a lot of space, which is...

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Which is nice. I appreciate that.

Griffin: Yeah, no, I'm not gonna buy like, a rock climbing wall. Or anything like that.

Rachel: Although...

Griffin: Although, we do have a... hold on... hmm! Hey, what's your first thing?

Rachel: My first thing...

Griffin: Yes?

Rachel: Is the singular laugh of Griffin McElroy.

Griffin: Aw, babe!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Baaabe!

Rachel: I'm talking about like, the *real* laugh.

Griffin: The real shit. Did you—

Rachel: The one where you back away from the microphone.

Griffin: Where did you—when did you write this? 'Cause I—we played some Jackbox games with our friends last night, and I was...

Rachel: It was yesterday while you were recording Besties.

Griffin: Ohh.

Rachel: You were really bustin' up!

Griffin: I was rippin', yeah. We recorded two episodes of Besties back to back yesterday. Uh, and one of them is a very special episode, where we decide a winner of the upcoming console wars, and I was just... man, I was just bustin'.

Rachel: I heard. So, Henry was downstairs, um, and he was being kind of grumpy, and I could hear him, from upstairs. And then I heard him say like, "My daddy's laughing! That's my daddy laughing!"

Griffin: Aww, that's so good!

Rachel: And it seemed like it snapped him out of his, uh... it snapped him out of his funk.

Griffin: Oh, that's so pure.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I thought you may have written it last night, because also on this... we have a weekly Zoom call with our friends that is like, the highlight of our week, and has—we've been doing it for like, two months now, and it's like, incredibly important to me. But also, one of our friends cut his own hair.

Rachel: [laughing] He—

Griffin: And it looks good on the front, but the back... the back looks like, uh... on Jackass, they used to do like, this series of pranks where they would just go up to somebody and just shear off hair off the back of their head, and it looks like that. And I li—I just fucking... went into the ground.

Rachel: It was darling, because his wife was like, "Oh, I wasn't gonna say anything," and we just fully put him on blast. [laughing]

Griffin: Just fully ripped... oh, shit. Okay, sorry, yes. My laugh is...

Rachel: This is one of those things about Griffin that I think took a while for me to get used to. Um... [laughs]

Griffin: One of those things. One of those many, many things.

Rachel: He has a very... I mean, you all know it. He has a very loud, distinct laugh. And it is unlike any laugh I have heard before, and I think at first, I was like, I was a little—I was a little, “Whoa! This is unique about him!”

Griffin: I know that it gets—I know that like, I am unable to control my laughing when it hits like, a fever pitch. But I never knew it was like, particularly unique in how...

Rachel: Oh, people talk about it.

Griffin: Oh, really?

Rachel: People talk about it. Occasionally, like, I will get tweets about the show that will reference how much people have enjoyed your raucous laughter.

Griffin: Oh, fantastic!

Rachel: Yeah. It is... it is an endearing and beautiful quality about you.

Griffin: Do you have any peer-reviewed research, uh, about my powerful laughter? Or...

Rachel: Well, no. I did some research on laughter in general, because what interested me specifically was that like, distinct laugh. Like, the fact that some people have a very, like, identifiable laugh. Like, uh... the person that came up a lot was like, Seth Rogan, for example.

Griffin: Yeah. His is not even necessarily loud. His is—his is more just like... [imitates strange laughter]

Rachel: It's just like, constant.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: What I found that I really enjoyed... so, there is a whole study of laughter, and it is called gelotology.

Griffin: Gelotology?

Rachel: It's spelled G-E-L-O-T-O-L-O-G-Y. I actually looked up Google, like, the thing where it'll tell you how to pronounce something. And it is. It's pronounced 'Jell-O-tology'.

Griffin: I like that a lot, babe. That's really good.

Rachel: I know. I know. Uh, and the thing that I was really excited about was a TED talk I found by Sophie Scott. And she talks about a lot of things associated with laughter. Uh, one thing she talks—she does like, a whole diagram of the ribs. And shows like, how they like, contract when you laugh, and how many muscles you actually use throughout your body.

Which, if anybody has ever been injured in the torso area...

Griffin: Oh, yeah.

Rachel: You really realize how many muscles you use when you laugh, because it is excruciating. [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: People that have like, injured a rib for example, talk a lot about that. Uh, but she also talks about, um... just the—people originally thought that human beings were the only ones that laughed. But actually, rats and primates, most mammals, laugh.

Griffin: Yeah. Primates doesn't—I feel like primates...

Rachel: Well, so they—they talk about—so, if you tickle chimps or gorillas, they laugh in kind of a panting way. Which they think is kind of like, the origin of laughter. Like, as we have evolved, it has like, taken a more... human quality.

Griffin: I was thinking more Dunston Checks In. Dunston pulls a prank on Jason Alexander, and like... [breathy laugh] Does the laugh. I feel like I can—

Rachel: Yeah, they call it like, a panting sound.

Griffin: Yeah. Monkey Trouble, y'know, is another... monkey-based movie. [laughs]

Rachel: Okay. [laughing]

Griffin: What are some more of your favorite ones?

Rachel: I mean, there's the episode of Quantum Leap where Sam leaps into a, uh, a chimp...

Griffin: Holy shit, babe. What hasn't that gentleman jumped into?

Rachel: [laughs] So here's the thing that she talks about that I found particularly interesting, that speaks a lot to the different types of laughter that people have. There's two types of laughter. There's what they call kind of social—what she calls posed laughter, which is what you do kind of when you're interacting with people that is a way of like, connecting and bonding. And sometimes, you're doing it to kind of support your friends.

Griffin: For their benefit. Okay, interesting.

Rachel: And then there is what they call helpless or involuntary laughter. Which is like, the loud, signature Griffin McElroy cackle. Is when something like, really tickles you, and you just can't control yourself.

Griffin: Y'know what's funny? I—that makes so much sense to me, and like, as you were explaining it, I was like, “Yep. Okay. That all clocks.” And then I was thinking like, I don't think I've done the first laughter on one of our podcasts that I do with the fam in... many, many, many years.

Rachel: Yeah, you just stopped that courtesy.

Griffin: I feel like I only do the—yes.

Rachel: [laughs] Um, they uh... they say that when you are with another person, uh, you are 30 times more likely to laugh. So like, if you're watching something by yourself, y'know, you're less likely to laugh out loud.

Griffin: That—yeah, absolutely.

Rachel: They talk about a lot, like, a lot of like, the social capital of laughing, and how it is a way of like, showing community when you laugh. Um, so, they said that helpless laughter is longer, louder, and higher pitched. A lot of times, you can tell, like, they've done a lot of experiments where people can tell right away if somebody is doing the social laughter or the helpless laughter. Like, you can hear it in your head.

This is another thing, like, your brother Justin, for example. Like, the wheezing. Like, that's when you know you are hearing helpless laughter. Um, they also say that, as far as that recognition, it gets clearer as you get older. Like, for example, you can fake laugh with a kid and they will not be able to tell you are fake laughing.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: But they said this—this awareness really peaks in your 30s, actually.

Griffin: Wow!

Rachel: That people have more of awareness of like, posed versus involuntary laughter, and that gets more and more distinct, the older you get.

Griffin: Huh!

Rachel: So yeah, I would recommend, if you're interested, it's Sophie Scott. It's a TED talk. She plays a lot of laughs that they have collected throughout their research, which are incredible. Um, and she also kind of quizzes the audience to see if they can tell the difference, and everybody immediately gets it right. It's a really cool TED talk. I would recommend it.

Griffin: Yeah. Just to cap this off, I thought I would like, show everybody like, kind of what that laugh that I do that you love so much that you think it's so cute, what it sounds like.

Rachel: Oh, yeah, please, please.

Griffin: It's... it's... hold on, I gotta tickle myself. [lets out a high-pitched squeal and does some truly awful fake laughter]

Rachel: Please. Please.

Griffin: [continues fake laughing at an ear-splitting pitch]

Rachel: Please. Please.

Griffin: [continues fake laughing]

Rachel: Griffin, that laugh is just for me.

Griffin: [just making weird noises at this point]

Rachel: Please—please stop.

Griffin: Ha!

Rachel: Griffin, there are other people in our house right now.

Griffin: Ha ha haaa! Oh oh oh ohoho! [grunting] Like that.

Rachel: Yeah, that's the one.

Griffin: Can I steal you away? [grunts]

[ad break stinger plays]

[advertisements play]

Rachel: Hey, we have some personal messages, Griffin.

Griffin: Cool cool cool!

Rachel: This first one is for Matt. It is from Taylor. "To my dearest Matt, you are truly the most wonderful thing to happen to me on my 30ish years on this weird spinning void rock. I love you heart, body, and soul. You make me believe in the future, and I cannot wait to spend the rest of my days with you. You are mine, and I am yours. Love, your adorable space ace."

Griffin: That's very sweet, and I do... I sympathize with the 30ish years, 'cause... I forget how old I am all the time, too. Y'know what I mean? I think right now, it's 32 or 33. It's around there. I shouldn't say that out loud. There's lots of um, people on the internet who I don't really understand, who want to know all my stats.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: My stats and statistics.

Rachel: What's weird is height. A lot of people seem to—

Griffin: Everyone wants to know my fuckin' height!

Rachel: If you look online, like, Griffin's height is listed. And it is accurate.

Griffin: And everyone wants to know it. My shoe size.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, here's another one. This one is for Charlie, and it's from Jane, who says, "While we are apart, I wanted to send a message to light up your little egg head. You are the funniest and smartest hedgehog a duck could ask for, and I am constantly thankful for your care and your kindness, and hope to continue to share love and fox pics with you. Continue being Bobo. Beebo." Continue—continue being Bobo, Beebo.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Continue... being Bobo, Beebo. Don't horde all those fox pics, buh. Don't fuckin' bogart those fox pics, buh.

Rachel: What's a... what's a... what's a...

Griffin: A good fox pic?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Oh maaan. Those faces. The triangular faces.

Rachel: The little—the little hands.

Griffin: The little frickin' hands with the toe beans? Baby!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [high-pitched laugh]

Rachel: Alright. [laughs]

[Maximum Fun advertisement plays]

Rachel: Can I hear your next thing?

Griffin: My next thing, uh, probably will also not come as a surprise to Rachel. It is a television program that we've been watching a lot of, and I can't stop thinking about. It is Taskmaster, a British comedy show that, uh... so many people have recommended to me over the past year or so.

Rachel: Yeah! It is something that I had never heard of until very recently, and now it seems like everybody is talking about it, and I completely—

Griffin: And we slept on it so hard.

Rachel: Completely understand why.

Griffin: Uh, and I feel bad for how much we have slept on it, because it is like... again, it has just consumed my every thought. It's all I want to do is watch it. Uh, and great news – it's like, all on YouTube right now.

Rachel: They have multiple seasons.

Griffin: Full episodes, all on YouTube. It's official channel, not like, pirated shit. Like, the real, real, uncut stuff.

I am going to try and describe Taskmaster, but I think one of the reasons why it didn't really land for me, like, one of the reasons why I didn't immediately seek it out when my friends were telling me about it is, I think it's kind of difficult to describe in a way that makes it sound as funny as it actually is.

Rachel: Yeah, and it varies so much episode to episode, because the tasks are always changing.

Griffin: Right. So, uh, the basic premise, each episode, there are five comedians. Uh, the same five comedians throughout like, a six to ten episode series, compete in a series of like, seemingly menial challenges, which they try to... they compete to solve sort of as quickly or cleverly or efficiently as possible, depending on what the task sort of demands.

Rachel: Yeah. And there are very little rules or parameters. And so, it's really on the creativity of the comedian to figure out how to do the task.

Griffin: How to best solve—do the task. It could best be—I think it could be described as like, lateral thinking, the game. And that is where like, the true joy of Taskmaster lies.

Rachel: Yeah. So they'll walk into a room, and there'll be a car there that will give them the task. And then, y'know, they are filmed as they are completing the task.

Griffin: And it's how they find the wiggle room in those rules that like, much of the comedy of the show comes from. Uh, what is also very funny is that, the show is staged in front of a live studio audience where these five contestants are being judged by Greg Davies, who plays the Taskmaster, and his production assistant, uh, Alex Horn, who is the actual creator of the show, but plays this like, deferent figure.

Rachel: Oh, I didn't know that!

Griffin: Oh, really?

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Yeah, he's the creator of the show, and he plays just this sort of like, uh... obsequious like... helper.

Rachel: That's incredible.

Griffin: Uh, and what's great is, they don't know what their competitors did each challenge. Like, they all had to do these challenges, and they don't

know how their competitors approached it. And then watching each other, like, do these sometimes profoundly strange solutions to the puzzles is like, so hysterically funny.

Rachel: So these puzzles are filmed offsite, and then they all watch the video together on stage, in front of an audience.

Griffin: Each episode also starts with a prize challenge, where they all bring something that will be in a prize pool for that episode that the winner will walk away from, and it will be things like... your most valuable possession. And in one of the challenges—like, one of the prizes somebody brought in was like, their wedding ring. They're like, "Yeah, that's my most valuable possession. I sure hope I don't lose."

Rachel: Can you give an example of a task?

Griffin: I have several examples of the tasks here. Uh, first episode, I think maybe even the first challenge, uh... is the comedians walk into a room, one at a time, and sitting on a table in a room, like, sort of surrounded in plastic wrap, is a watermelon. And they open the card, and it says, "You have 60 seconds to eat as much of this watermelon as you can, and your time starts right now."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: So you see this—every challenge, you see a basic sort of like, panic response, as they like, try to immediately start putting together a game plan. And without fail, each challenge, you see a lot of different approaches to it. Uh, a few of the contestants just like... immediately get the knives out and start cutting the watermelon in half. One of the contestants just picks up the half of it and starts burying their face in it and eating it. One of them actually picks up a spoon and starts like, scooping it into their mouth.

Uh, one of the contestants, Tim Key, uh, who is like, a superstar of the first series with the way he comes up with solutions to things, uses the corner of the table to just kind of like, smash into it.

Rachel: Yeah. [laughs]

Griffin: Another one, Romesh Ranganathan, who is probably my favorite contestant in the first series, picks it up, hoists it over his head, and just immediately smashes it to the floor.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I watched this clip of this happening today as we were prepping for this like, five times. It never fails to make me laugh, because of his surprise at how quickly it just shoots all over the room, like a bomb has gone off. And then he realizes he has to eat it off the floor. And he like—his immediate regret is so fucking funny to me.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: That's like, an example of like, how things can like, uh—how people approach things in different ways. In one of the challenges, probably one of my favorites from the first series, they have to—all the challenge says is, "Throw a tea bag into a mug from as far away as possible. Furthest from the mug wins. You have one hour." Or something like that.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And you see, Romesh just sets up a bunch of mugs in like, a cluster. And you're like, "Oh, how clever." And then he starts throwing dry tea bags at them, which like, don't have a lot of great momentum or velocity. And like, almost towards the end of the challenge, he realizes like, "Oh, if I get these wet, they would go a lot further." Which like, everybody else figured out fairly quickly.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: One of the contestants built like, a cardboard chute that they put the mug at the bottom of, so you could throw it at the chute and it would have a bigger target.

Tim Key, who is the master of lateral thinking, uh, digs a funnel into the ground, and puts the mug inside of that ground dirt funnel, builds a backboard out of like, a big tarp, and then cuts open a tennis ball and tucks a teabag inside the tennis ball, and then uses a tennis ball sort of like, thrower that you would use at like, a dog park or something like that, to launch it from like, sooo far away, and gets it in his first shot.

Rachel: This is what's incredible about this show, is it seems like they have unlimited resources available to them. Like, I recognize it probably is limited in some way, but they come up with these ideas and these constructions that take like, any number of supplies.

Griffin: Yes. The Rube Goldberg machines that they sometimes build, uh, to solve these tasks are like, uh... it's like a different—it's like a strange kind of humor, those, because like, it is a... and this is very British, I feel like, of just like, "Oh, how clever!" Like, you get a laugh out of just like, how fuckin' clever and smart a solution. Like, it is—'cause comedy is all about like, the unexpected. And so, this is a very kind of like, weirdly cerebral, unexpected laugh that you get.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Sometimes it's fuckin' funny. When Romesh smashes the watermelon to the ground, it's hysterical. His look of regret as he realizes he's wasted all this time throwing dry tea bags is hysterically funny. But seeing somebody put together a contraption that is so smart, or see how it works.

Another great example is uh, one of the contestants, there is a challenge where all they'd have to do is, they have a half hour to collect as many tears in a cup as possible. So a lot of people are like, cutting onions, or watching sad things on a computer to try and like, make themselves cry, which like, most people are not able to do.

One of the contestants realizes, it doesn't say your *own* tears. So he gets the entire production crew together and has *them* cut onions while he sings

them this beautiful, traditional, like, folk ballad. And he wins, 'cause he collects the most tears from everybody else in the cup!

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: It is such a universally... like, great idea. It is such a universally funny idea. So much so that like, we've watched, uh, a series and a half now. We don't know any of the comedians that have been on it so far, but they are still like... we don't need that recognition to make us laugh.

There is a series coming up with James Acaster on it that I cannot fucking wait for, because he is incredibly funny.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It is also universal enough that it has had a few different, uh... international versions.

Rachel: Yeah, I was gonna ask about that!

Griffin: There was a version in the US on Comedy Central. Uh, it ran for one season. Alex Horn was the producer of it. He played his production assistant role. The uh... what I—this'll be fun. Guess who they got as the Taskmaster. Greg Davies is just this very sort of uh, tyrant king figure on the show who like, judges who wins and who has broken the rules each episode. So who do you think they got for the—

Rachel: Am I—do I know this person?

Griffin: Yeah. Not personally, but like...

Rachel: Yeah, but like, am I—is it possible for me to guess it?

Griffin: Uh, no. Because I don't know that it's a—it matches that energy, necessarily. I love who they cast. I do not think it was a great pick, necessarily, for the Taskmaster.

Rachel: Uhhh... Joe Rogan.

Griffin: Jesus God, no! Jesus God, no! I would've said John Hodgman, I think, would be fucking hysterical.

Rachel: Oh, he would be good!

Griffin: Like, perfectly matches that energy. They got Reggie Watts, who I adore, and I think is like, very very funny and talented. But like... it's not... like, Greg Davies is an asshole on the show, and like, I would never use that to describe Reggie Watts.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: So it ran—it also, like—

Rachel: Wait, what are you saying about John Hodgman? [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs] Well, John Hodgman can play a character who is very, like...

Rachel: That's true. [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah. And the—the vibe was just kind of wrong? Like, it—it never quite, like... I think Taskmaster has a very, very specific vibe that the US version didn't really get. So—

Rachel: The host has to be a little subdued. Like, the host doesn't typically draw focus from the contestants. And I feel like Reggie Watts, part of what's so great about him is he has this big personality, and it would have—like, he'd have to be kind of restrained, I feel like.

Griffin: There's a lot of restraint in the show that—I fuckin' hate being the guy that's like, "Yeah, the UK version is better!" 'Cause I don't feel that way about a lot of things, including The Office. Come at me.

But... uh, it ran for one season, and then got cancelled. And I would love—I still think there's a chance for it to like, come back. It is such a brilliant idea for a show that I would love, y'know, to see a US version of it.

But, fortunately, there's a lot of episodes of the UK version of it. All of them are on YouTube. Uh, and you should watch it, 'cause it's fucking hysterical. It has brought a lot of joy into mine and Rachel's lives over the past couple weeks, so... check it out.

What's your second thing?

Rachel: My second thing... now, I have talked about, I believe, a small wonder I had at one point was printing a digital photo. So you can actually, physically have it. But I have not talked about photo albums, which is something that I love!

Griffin: Oh, yeah. I bet I know what inspired this.

Rachel: Well, actually, y'know what was funny? I came up with this before...

Griffin: Oh wow!

Rachel: Before yesterday. Um, so, part of what I really loved growing up... and this might be an only child thing. But um, I really loved looking at photo albums before I was born.

Griffin: Oh, interesting!

Rachel: My parents, when they were younger... one thing that happened when my mom's parents passed was that her older sister, I believe, just went through boxes and boxes of photos and made each of their siblings like, an album that had primarily pictures of them in it.

Griffin: Oh, that's great!

Rachel: And it's just fascinating to me. Like, I—there was something really interesting to me about seeing my parents when they were younger, because to me, they looked totally different than they do now.

Griffin: Oh yeah.

Rachel: And it was just like a weird thing to kind of wrap my head around as a kid. And it's something that I love to do when I go home. I love seeing pictures of me as a kid, too.

Griffin: Yeah! [laughs]

Rachel: Especially now that we have Henry. Like, to see the similarities at the different age ranges...

Griffin: It's wild, yeah.

Rachel: It's cool.

Griffin: I feel like my version of this was home movies. Which like, you know I was like, obsessed with our home movies growing up.

Rachel: Yeah, no, that's true! That's very true. Um, it is something, y'know, as you know, my dad is uh, a collector of many things. But my mom and I have the common trait of just like, kind of liking photos and really nothing else. [laughs]

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: So that was one of the first things I did with Henry, after he turned—or right around when he turned a year old. I like, made sure to like, pull all the photos off of Facebook and put it in like, an album of his first year.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And then yesterday, totally unprompted, we have hired childcare support so that Griffin and I can continue to work. Uh, and uh, her name is Sarah. She just kind of, unprompted, made this little photo scrapbook of like, her summer with Henry. And all these pictures, I had never seen before.

Griffin: So darling.

Rachel: And you could tell had been taken over a series of days, because he's wearing like, the different outfits. And I was just so, like, endeared and charmed by it. I just, I looove photo albums. And it's something that I feel like is really important to me. Uh, because I feel like once you put photos, like, in the digital space, it's like, less likely for you to look at them.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: We did finally get one of those like, digital photo frames from Griffin's dad. And it's helped a lot to like, get us looking at older pictures.

Griffin: Yeah. I have always thought about those as being the purview of uh, older folks. Because like, I don't know, I'm fine with the static images that don't move, like they're in the Harry Potter castle. What is it? Hogwarts. Jesus.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, but yeah. Having that—we have that in our kitchen, so like, we're just constantly walking by it, and it's—it is, uh, y'know... it's very nice. It actually makes me feel a little, uh, more homesick than I like, thought I would feel.

Rachel: I know!

Griffin: 'Cause like, I—this is, by far, the longest I've ever gone without seeing my family.

Rachel: Yeah. And it is. It's like—it's comforting in a way to see those pictures. But it is also just like, it reminds you that like, you cannot be with those people right now. Which is also difficult.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: When I was looking into photo albums, um... first of all, like, this should not be a surprise, but like, photo albums have existed since, basically, you could have a photo.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: Since the 1850s. The oldest one is in the Library of Congress right now. Uh, but there is an artist who, in 2013, did an exhibition called Album Beauty in France that, over 15 years of like, flea markets and second hand stores, he just like, compiled all of these photos he found.

Griffin: Cool!

Rachel: And turned it into an exhibit, and made it kind of something you could walk through. Like, the images were blown up and displayed as wallpaper. Others were in like, interactive albums that you could like, leaf through. There were photo, uh—life-size props that you could put your face into, and then, photos printed on the carpet that you could walk over.

Griffin: Jesus.

Rachel: So, this artist obviously spent a lot of time just looking through other people's photo albums. And he said—this is what I found interesting. So, this artist, uh, is Eric... Kessels. And he said that most people make an average of seven or eight albums during their lifetime. [laughs]

Griffin: I feel like I've already done that many.

Rachel: Well, yeah. That's what's interesting. He kind of noticed some themes, though. He said that the first album he would find is usually when a couple meets each other. And so, there's a lot of photos of the couple.

Y'know, they're like, going on trips together. Y'know, they're like... being with friends and all this stuff.

And then, after that is more related to the marriage. So there's like, the wedding album. And then, the third one is usually dedicated to either the first child, or if they do not have a child, their pets.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: And uh, then, he said the fourth through seventh albums are kind of like, a complete mix of like, holidays and important occasions.

Griffin: Boudoir. Like...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Everyone has a boudoir album, right?

Rachel: Oh yeah. [laughing] Yeah.

Griffin: I mean, we got a few of them.

Rachel: Yeah, no. Griffin is the master of the erotic pose.

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, no. It's uh... yeah.

Rachel: And he can be doing any kind of, y'know, menial task, too. Like, he can make, y'know, taking the garbage out erotic. And we have a whole album dedicated to that.

Griffin: Right. Well, I have a lot of sort of like, um... sort of voluntary muscular control of my butt cheeks.

Rachel: Yes. No, that's true.

Griffin: Each individual one. Right?

Rachel: Any position, too. He can be in repose, and that butt...

Griffin: I can make `em clap, or...

Rachel: Oh god. [laughs]

Griffin: Can spread `em out pretty wide. What were you saying?

Rachel: [laughs] I wanted to talk about the eighth album of the seven or eight that most people make. Uh, which is usually when the couple is older, and they are traveling together. This is like, particularly like, relevant to me. My grandparents, my dad's parents, traveled a lot once they retired, and just have all of these albums of just like, landscapes from different countries they went to. Which is not particularly interesting to me, but the artist said that that is usually what happens, is that the couple is typically less interested in each other. [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Rachel: And they tend to make more photos of the environment they're in. Which is, yeah. Any time anyone gets back from a vacation and they like, bring all these photos of like, here's a mountain we saw! It's like, great, I want to see you.

Griffin: Cool. Yeah. [laughs]

Rachel: I want to see you in a place! Um, so yeah.

Griffin: Well, but then they have their ninth album, which is their sort of uh, elderly boudoir.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: One to sort of cap it off. Do you want to know what our friends at home are talking about?

Rachel: Please.

Griffin: Okay, well, this one is from Tasha who says, "My small wonder are fireflies. In my 32 years, this is the first time I've seen a yard full of them boppin' around."

I wonder where Tasha lived for that long to not see... I mean, I guess in the city.

Rachel: If you're in a super urban environment, it's hard to see them.

Griffin: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, these are... these little bugs.

Rachel: I still get delighted. I don't know what it is. I guess because you don't see them as much in the non-summer months.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: But every time they appear, I'm like, "Oh my gosh!"

Griffin: Yeah, I mean, we had our first firefly sighting this week, too. And like, just seeing them like, through the window. Just seeing one. I get so excited like... [gasp] Was that a firefly?! And you have to look and confirm.

Okay. Shannon says, "Something I find wonderful this time of year is taking a moment to enjoy a powerful AC unit. I work in an order fulfillment warehouse, and it always feels so good to slowly stroll down the aisle where the big AC unit is located, and just feel the breeze on my skin. Plus it provides a much needed relief for my masked face." Mmm!

I mean, that's very, very good. Coming in from outside into an air-conditioned room is very great. This made me nostalgic for, um... our wall. Our like, window AC unit. We had one like, in mine and Travis' bedroom that we shared that was like—

Rachel: I had one in mine, too. Those old houses, like, if you were on the second floor, it was impossible to keep it cool.

Griffin: It was impossible. Yeah. So we'd have to like, leave the door closed. That was like, a big thing. We'd get in trouble if we left the door open with the AC on. Uh, but the smell... there's like a smell that it created that like, I got very, very nostalgic for. It felt like, very, very kid summer vibe to me. This took me back.

Uh, hey, thank you to Bo En and Augustus for the use of our theme song, Money Won't Pay. You can find a link to that in the episode description. And uh, you can check out all the shows on the Maximum Fun network, and enjoy them, and... think they're cool and subscribe to them. And listen to them.

Rachel: Uh, I'm gonna recommend Baby Geniuses.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Super funny ladies. Check it out.

Griffin: Uh, yeah. FANTI. I know we uh, hosted one of their episodes on this show. I've been listening to them every week, and uh, it's uh... it's incredibly good. You should—I'm assuming you're already listening. This is redundant.

Uh, yeah. I think that's it, yeah? Yeah?

Rachel: Oh yeah, and I wanted to thank everybody, uh, for your patience. We have been a little late on our episodes lately. It's been a little more challenging to find the time. But we are... we are figuring it out, and we are dedicated to you, the listener.

Griffin: Doin' the best, uh... oh, uh, we're—the new The Adventure Zone comic, uh, graphic novel book comes out in a couple weeks!

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: You should preorder it at TheAdventureZoneComic.com. We just got it this morning.

Rachel: It is—it is a lovely, thick book.

Griffin: Yeah, it's a... it's a dense one. But it's got lots of great jokes in it, and cool art, though. Uh, I think that's it. Thank you again, and... uh, goodnight. And... good luck. Do you know him?

Rachel: Uh-huh. Yeah.

Griffin: [in an old timey voice] Goodnight, and good luck.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: That's a really good... Edward Murrow?

Rachel: Edward R. Murrow.

Griffin: I don't care about his middle name.

Rachel: People always use the middle initial, though. It's important.

Griffin: I'm just gonna call him Edward Murrow. I'm in a hurry. Goodnight and good luck! That's what he sounded like. He would get angry. At the end of each broadcast. [in a gruff old timey voice] Goodnight and good luck!

[theme music plays]

MaximumFun.org
Comedy and culture.
Artist owned.
Audience supported.

[Maximum Fun advertisement plays]