

Wonderful! 144: Inside Out LARPing

Published August 6th, 2020

[Listen here on TheMcElroy.family](#)

[theme music plays]

Rachel: Hello, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hello, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is Wonderful!

Griffin: Hello.

Rachel: Hi.

Griffin: This is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: Look at this, this stance you have.

Griffin: Which stance is it that I'm doing? Oh, you're talking about crane pose.

Rachel: Oh, is that what that is?

Griffin: That is what this is, and I'm ready to strike, and if someone comes at me with a weapon, or at you with a weapon, they're gonna get one of these.

Rachel: A little kick.

Griffin: One of these.

Rachel: Yeah. Ooh, yeah.

Griffin: That was three kicks all in one, all in a row. And a lot of people can't even kick once as fast as I can three times.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: 'Cause I think it's important to protect my... protect this house, protect my love, protect our child, with my many kicks that I can do. And I don't know, maybe I shouldn't be talking about this on the podcast, you know, because I don't wanna sound like a bad boy. But if you come to my house with a weapon I'll do, like, six or seven kicks at you, so...

Rachel: Do you wanna talk about the MaxFunDrive?

Griffin: Sure, yeah, I mean that's what's paid for all of my different lessons—

Rachel: In kicking?

Griffin: In kicking and fighting, and this is the final week, isn't it? Just a couple more days here on the old MaxFunDrive, and... [sings and claps] Although we've come to the end of the road, please support our show, it's impossible to do this show without your support!

Rachel: Aw, babe!

Griffin: I've been working on that for... three years?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah, if you do not uh... mind...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs] It would be super solid of you to go to MaximumFun.org/Join and think about becoming a member of the network and a supporter of our show. It is a very, very direct way of supporting our show.

When you do become a member, you choose the membership level that works for you, and you get to check out all the different rewards that you can get at those levels. Five dollars a month, you get that bonus content, \$10, you get the pin, and \$20, you get the games—

Rachel: And you get to select all the shows.

Griffin: But yeah, you pick the shows you want to directly support.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: A chunk of that goes to Max Fun for helping us out with all the things that they do, but otherwise, just the shows that you pick are the shows that your money is directly sent to. So, like, it's a very, very just democratic way of choosing how to help us out.

Rachel: Last week, we put up a new bonus episode.

Griffin: We did. We did.

Rachel: It was our cruise show.

Griffin: From the JoCo Cruise, the doomed JoCo Cruise, which feels like a million, billion, skrillion years ago. You get to hear all about some of the horrifying events that happened to us and our friends on that cruise.

Rachel: And some of our favorite ocean-related things.

Griffin: Yes. There's an at length discussion of Deep Blue Sea, starring LL Cool J.

Rachel: I talk about the Sharknado franchise.

Griffin: Yes, you do. It's a lot of fun. I mean, we have a ton of bonus content on there.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But, you know, really, the biggest thing you get is the sense of satisfaction and, you know, feeling of good cheer for helping us out. We've been—I've been doing podcasts on Max Fun for ten years now, and the lives we have now, the careers we have now, the stuff that we make now is only possible because of the support we've gotten from folks like you.

So, if you've been thinking about doing it, don't delay, because again, there's only a couple days left in the drive. Go to MaximumFun.org/Join now, please. I think, uh, well, small wonders.

Rachel: Small wonders! Hey, I can go first this week.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Butter.

Griffin: Butter!

Rachel: Love butter. Realized maybe 80% of the time, when I find a dish particularly good, it is because there is a lot.

Griffin: A lot of butter in it.

Rachel: A lot of butter.

Griffin: I actually heard that Paula Deen got her whole sort of, like, aesthetic from you.

Rachel: Oh. [laughs] Yeah.

Griffin: And by that, I mean her love of butter.

Rachel: Uh-huh. She saw this tiny St. Louis girl just really slathering it on in a restaurant, and—

Griffin: Eating a stick of Land O'Lakes like it was a Snickers bar.

Rachel: And thinking, "You know what? I'm gonna make a whole thing just around that."

Griffin: Yes. I wanted to talk about a show that we recently watched on Netflix called Love on the Spectrum.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Which I don't know a ton about, or how it was made, but it is a, essentially, a reality dating show about people on the autism spectrum. And you follow along with, like, eight or so folks. I think it's only, like, four episodes. It's not a very long, very long haul.

But, you know, Rachel and I are fans of a good dating reality show, of which there are very, very few these days. And I think that it, like, you know, scratches all of those particular itches, but it also offers a look at the autism spectrum in a way that is so... God, it's so tangible.

It's so, like... by placing it through the lens of first dates, which is, like, one of the more sort of socially uncomfortably life events that any person can go through, it makes it so, so relatable. And so then, when you are, you know, offered these glimpses into where each of these different people land on the spectrum, and like, how that sort of manifests on these dates, it gave me a genuine, I feel like, understanding of what the spectrum is and what it looks like to be on different parts of it. Better than, like, literally anything I've ever seen.

And I wanna couch that by saying, like, it felt like, to me, it was a fairly responsibly made show. Like, I didn't find anything about it particularly exploitive, which I think would be a very, very easy thing to do. But I don't wanna, like set that in, you know...

Rachel: Well, I think part of what's really successful about it, and I Griffin and I commented on it right away, is that they show a lot of really successful couples where one or both partners are on the spectrum, and so it's not like you just see these dating shows and it's just like, "Oh, dating's hard." It's like, "Let's see what this looks like when a couple is successful."

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: So you feel like, oh, okay. You feel hopeful and you feel, um, really encouraged. And it's really heartwarming.

Griffin: It is heartwarming. Like, you are rooting for the people on this show, so, so, so hardcore.

Rachel: The couples that are making it work, it's just... it's great. It's great.

Griffin: But also, genuinely, you know, I feel fairly, like, with it when it comes to, like, the autism spectrum and understanding what it is, but it really, really, like, I don't know. It just, it is very, I feel like, educational

about, sort of like, what it means to be on different parts of the spectrum. And I thought it was really, really incredible.

You do get the, like, you know, it is not—much like a dating show, it's like, there's this element of non-reality to it, because like, they are being filmed, right? And because, like, a lot of the folks on this show who are on the spectrum have, like, an aversion to sort of social, um... what's the word? Artifice like that, there is an element of discomfort there that maybe should not be there, or maybe is like more uncomfortable than it needs to be.

But I don't know, I think in general, like, I thought it was really terrific and heartwarming and genuinely sweet. You go first this week. Do you wanna hit it?

Rachel: I do, yeah. I wanted to talk about, for my first thing, pretend play.

Griffin: Mm! Like with kids, or like, in the uh... [snickers] You mean pretend play like... [snickers]

Rachel: Is this who you wanna be?

Griffin: You know what I mean? Like how we in the bedroom sometimes do, like, a little light Jon Garfield play?

Rachel: Mm-hmm. Like sometimes you're a pharmacist, and I am picking up a prescription?

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Rachel: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Griffin: Or sometimes like I'm a cumulonimbus cloud and you're an airplane?

Rachel: [laughs] Wow.

Griffin: Flying through me.

Rachel: That was really powerful for me.

Griffin: Yeah, I mean, yeah. It has to be.

Rachel: No, I'm talking about kids.

Griffin: Oh, okay, that's better. I would rather talk about that.

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah, me too, that's why I picked that.

Griffin: Good.

Rachel: This is something that I'm really proud of for Henry. I think it's one of those things like, you know, in those early years you have those milestones of, like, talking and walking and potty training and all that stuff, but I think the thing that has been most fun for me to watch and the thing that I really, like, like... I don't know, I don't wanna say brag on, but I feel like this is a demonstration of like, how cool he is, is his pretend play abilities.

Griffin: Well, I think we can, like, couch it by saying... maths, he's just constantly putting up bricks.

Rachel: Yeah, he's never been really good at kind of the showpieces that a lot of parents say, like, "Sing your ABC song." Like, can't do it.

Griffin: No, yeah.

Rachel: Can't do it. Infrequently can count to ten, but not like, uh, not the kind of thing we put on a stage and say, "Do it, Henry." It's more like hey, take this Batman and this Flash and create a world for us.

Griffin: An entire—yesterday, he... it is exhausting for us in a way that is kind of difficult to understand, because it's not like he is running us ragged. He certainly does do that from time to time, where he just wants to, like, sprint all around the house or, like, you know, be pushed on his scooter or whatever all around the neighborhood. And that's exhausting in one way. But yesterday, for probably about an hour and 15 minutes, he wanted to do an extended Inside Out roleplay.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Using, like, these little—using Magna-Tiles. So like, the red triangle was Anger and the yellow triangle was Joy, and like, he wanted to do all the emotions for, no joke, about the runtime of the entire film *Inside Out*. And I got to the end of it like, “I am creatively spent, my man.”

Rachel: [laughs] It’s one of those things too, like, when Griffin and I talked about our own childhoods, we realized was a big part of our growing up. I mean, me particularly, because I was an only child and maybe you because you were the youngest. It’s like, you create your own little characters in your own little world and it becomes like, a big part of what you do when you play. Particularly when you’re not, let’s say, an especially athletic kid.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: And so, it was something that, like, when I saw Henry do it, I was like, “Oh, I remember that. That’s me.” And I feel like it’s also particularly suited well for Griffin because Griffin’s such a good, like, storyteller and improviser, you know?

Griffin: It has improved my improvisational skills, like, really dramatically.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: We were talking to your parents yesterday about how Henry likes wrong books, when he wants us to read books but do every single thing in the book wrong. Like, say the wrong names and the wrong colors and the wrong, like, everything. And like, I feel like I could join, like, a Harold team at this point, because of how—

Rachel: He’s forgotten too, like, part of me understands it, right? He has so many books that we’ve read to him hundreds of times, and so for him, he knows the book now and he’s excited to see what the story would be if it were different.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: But he’s started doing that with new books, which I think he doesn’t really get, like, you don’t even know. You don’t even know this is

wrong, really. I mean, I guess you could look at the pictures and determine it. But you've forgotten the point of this game.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: And so I, you know, maybe for my own, like, edification and also just out of curiosity, I looked into pretend play.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: Because it seems like the kind of thing that would build a lot of skills, right?

Griffin: Absolutely, sure.

Rachel: Like you... there's obviously a lot of creativity involved, but there's a lot of opportunities to kind of demonstrate and act out different things that you're not maybe personally experiencing?

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: There's a lot of value in that, like a lot of research talks about how you have the opportunity to express both positive and negative feelings. And kind of integrate emotion with cognition. And I've seen that with Henry, too. Like sometimes, all the characters are playing, and one doesn't have a friend, and he'll, like, bring a friend in and talk about how it feels, and it's just, like... it's cool to see him kind of test out emotions and problem solving in this little made-up world that he's created, you know? And there's a lot of value in that. Especially in a time where he's not really getting to be around a lot of other kids.

Griffin: I will say though that yesterday during our extended Inside out LARPing that we were doing, he got really angry that I wouldn't make the sadness emotion become happy. And I was like, I don't think you understood the entire thesis of that film, my three-year-old dawg.

Rachel: [laughs] They also talk about how it gives the opportunity to walk through kind of reduced aggression and delay of gratification, empathy, this idea, especially if you're playing with other kids and you can't control the narrative as much. I will say with Henry, as you just mentioned, he kind of

tells us where the story can go. I imagine if he were playing with other kids, they would be less accommodating.

Griffin: Yeah, he'll steamroll right over us, but he has a deference for older children that I think, you know, nullifies that somewhat.

Rachel: I mentioned the increase of creativity. There's also suggestion, like, when they look at Nobel Prize and MacArthur winners, that those early childhood games were kind of more make-believe and creative.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: You know, kind of expanding your later capacity to kind of imagine these worlds.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: You know, and do things that aren't possible currently. And just building curiosity, too. For me, like, if anybody were to ask kind of the skill that I think is most valuable, just in your entire lifespan, I feel like curiosity, like number one.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Right? It's one of the things that I always respected so much—

Griffin: And whistling.

Rachel: About older people.

Griffin: Yeah. Whistling is first and then curiosity.

Rachel: Was their whistling.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Their whistling ability. I mean, when you look at a person that can whistle, you think, like, what isn't possible? You know?

Griffin: Yeah. What else that mouth do, is what Rachel likes to say.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Rachel likes to say that. Rachel loves to say that.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: On the street. Like, you see somebody, like, little skip in their step, like... [whistles] And you're like, "What else that mouth do?" You don't say it out loud.

Rachel: Well, no. I mean, I have shouted it across the street before.

Griffin: You have. You did do that once or twice.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And you were, um, spoken to sternly by an officer of the law.

Rachel: [laughs] "Excuse me, Miss."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: "We don't do that."

Griffin: "We don't do that here."

Rachel: Um, I will say, there was a researcher that looked at kind of the stages of play, which I thought was interesting. This is Dr. Sara Smilansky. And she talks about kind of, you know, initially kids, when they're learning to play, there's doing something called functional play, which is just like a, "Here is a teddy bear and I am giving it a drink of water." And that's kind of the first stage, like, "I'm pushing a shopping cart to put things in."

And then constructive play, where they're like, building a house out of blocks. Like, this idea of like, they're doing a little bit more creativity, but it's still like, "I'm gonna make this thing that I know really exists and it's gonna look like the thing that exists."

And then, dramatic play is what happens from like, age three and on. Which is like, you know, you're cooperating, you're using something to represent something else from its original purpose, and you're kind of imitating familiar scenarios in your play.

Griffin: Yeah. You're writing an entire fucking Tennessee Williams play, but starring The Avengers.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Which is our usual MO around this household.

Rachel: Yeah, he has started to understand, I think, a little bit, that the Avengers universe is different than the Batman universe. I've noticed that.

Griffin: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Rachel: They still interact, but he gets that they're not, like, coexisting traditionally.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: The fourth stage of play often is just like where you learn how to play games. Like, when you learn how to do—

Griffin: Ooh...

Rachel: I know. Griffin is really anxious for this one.

Griffin: Ooh, really pushing that, really pushing that. Come on, bud.

Rachel: When you figure out that there are rules and there are ways to play certain games and that it is important to stick to those rules.

Griffin: Yeah. I get out the chess set every once in a while, and he'll like roundhouse kick all the pieces off of it. I'll be like, "That's... that's progress!"

Rachel: [laughs] We've gotten to, he kind of understands hide and seek.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Which is... I mean, there are rules associated with that.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: So we're getting there.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: That's, yeah, that's my thing. Pretend play.

Griffin: That's very good. I have weirdly—my first thing is kind of the exact polar opposite of that. And it's real work.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: No, my first thing... okay, this is gonna sound really, really out there, so I need everybody to kind of like stick with me and grant me, like, five or six minutes of just kind of like clemency while I lay it all out, okay? My first thing is nightmares.

We've talked about dreams on the show before. Rachel specifically has talked about dreams on the show. I don't think nightmares themselves are great, obviously. I think they're scary and they can contribute to sleep deprivation. Which I've never really—I don't think I've talked about on this show or any other, but is like, a thing I really struggle with, particularly since we've been in quarantine.

I have had bouts of insomnia that have lasted for very, very, very long stretches of time where I only get like a few hours of sleep a night. And it sucks shit, and it's bad, and I've definitely seen my nightmares count tick up during that time. And when I say nightmares, I'm not talking about just like, bad dreams. I'm talking about, like, long, extended, like, vivid, disturbing dreams that like—

Rachel: Then why are they wonderful?

Griffin: Oh, I'm gonna get there.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: They are common among children, but they are less so among adults. I didn't realize this, but I found a couple places that corroborated this. About only half of adults actually have, like, occasional nightmares.

Rachel: Really? That seems so low.

Griffin: It seems wild. Only two to eight percent of adults have them, like, very frequently. And I would count myself among that number, because I have them really quite frequently these days.

Rachel: You never talk to anybody and have them be like, "Oh yeah, no, I don't know that I've had a nightmare in a few years."

Griffin: Nightmares take place in REM sleep, much like dreams. That good sleep, the deep stuff. And because REM cycles get longer as time goes on, most nightmares that you have happen closer to the morning. They happen in, like, the early morning hours instead of, like... typically you don't wake up in a cold sweat and it's like, you know, 11:30 at night, and you have just had a very, very quick nightmare.

I didn't realize that's the distinction between nightmares and night terrors. Night terrors typically happen, like, pretty soon after you fall asleep and they are more based in... they feel like feelings rather than dreams. So, it's like a completely sort of different thing. And that is not what I'm talking about, night terrors are horrifying and scary.

Nightmares are sometimes spontaneous, but they also have a lot of attributable causes. Eating before bed, like, I think you hear that in, like, A Christmas Carol. Like, "You're just a glob of mustard!"

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But eating right before bed can increase your metabolism and brain activity, which can contribute to having more nightmares.

Rachel: Ohh.

Griffin: There are medications, specifically ones that act on the brain, like antidepressants and narcotics are associated with nightmares, as are some,

like, non-psychological medications. Things like a lot of blood pressure medication has been attributed to nightmares.

Sleep deprivation can be a trigger, which is a vicious cycle, because it can also lead to sleep deprivation if you—I have had nightmares that are so rough and rumbly that when I, uh, you know, wake up, I am so, you know, jacked that I just cannot fall asleep, which then makes me more sleep deprived, which then makes it more likely.

Rachel: That is still something I hold on to today that started happening as I was a kid. You know, the idea that you wake up from a nightmare and sometimes if you fall back asleep right away, you will like, be in it again.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: I feel like that happened a lot as a kid and I, like, would teach myself to try and stay awake for a while. And I still do that as an adult.

Griffin: Not great. It's not a great behavior. And then also just like, anxiety and depression and, of course, PTSD can also, like, lend themselves to chronic nightmares, as can sleep disorders like sleep apnea or restless leg syndrome and... yeah. Nightmares are fucking brutal and they are bad.

The good news is that they do have a lot of, you know, attributable causes and so there is—there are things that you can do to limit them if you do end up having them chronically, before they can have a detrimental effect on your health.

So, nightmares are not wonderful. I have them a lot and frequently, like, wake up literally covered in sweat. I showed you the, like, Griffin-sized sweat mark in our bed from the other day when I woke up in the middle of one.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And right, it's rough. What is wonderful is... that sense of relief when you wake up from a nightmare and you realize it wasn't real.

Rachel: Whoa. This was a long walk, Griffin.

Griffin: I told you, I needed like five or six minutes to get there, but now we're here.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I genuine—in the same way that I have, like, the dream that I have that I'm, like, always the most pumped about is the telekinesis dream where I'm like, "Oh shit, it's real! I'm moving stuff with my mind, yeah! Oh, I probably won't remember how to do it. Oh, I can remember how to do it, I just have this superpower now!" and then I wake up and I'm like, "Ah fuck. Let me at least try and turn the lamp on with my mind. No. Ah fuck, it was a dream, dammit." This is the inversion of that, where I have some horrible dream.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And my nightmares are never, like, I'm being chased by a killer through the woods. It is typically, like, either way more apocalyptic than that, or something like a person I know has, like, passed away and now I'm sad.

Or, like, I very frequently have the actors nightmare of just being on stage and not knowing any of the words of the show and being, like, humiliated about that. And much like Christmas Carol, which I referenced earlier, when you wake up from one of those nightmares and it's like, "Boy, what day is it today?"

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah?

Griffin: It wasn't real. Like, that is incredible. That is the good stuff for me. And it also sometimes has, like, a very tangible effect on my life. I remember when I was living in Chicago, I was having nightmares like, literally every night. Just constantly I was having nightmares. Because I wasn't, like, leaving the house. And I was, like, super depressed and not really doing anything about it, I was eating like garbage and just like not taking care of myself. So, my nightmares were just like, constant.

And I had one where a friend of mine had died and I was just like, it was so real. It was like I had woken up and my friend was gone.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And I was so, so, so, heartbroken about it. And so when I woke up the next morning and realized that it wasn't real, I was so over the moon, and I got back in touch with that friend and stayed in better touch with them, because I felt this, like, incredible relief that they were still there and it made me feel more, sort of like, grateful.

That is the best-case scenario of it. But even just like a dream where, you know, the world is ending or whatever, and the anxiety that that brings about, and having that just be nullified, is kind of like a super power.

Rachel: Yeah. That is nice. I will have dreams a lot of times where I am in some kind of argument with somebody. And it is nice to wake up and be like, "Oh good, that didn't happen."

Griffin: Yes! Yeah, I don't really have anything else to say. I couldn't find a lot of, like, research on this. There's a lot of research on what causes nightmares and I am not—please do not walk away from this segment thinking I'm saying, like, "Nightmares kick ass!" They're not.

But that, like, second chance? It feels like a second chance that you get sometimes, after like a really, really vivid, really realistic nightmare, that makes you feel grateful that it wasn't real when you wake up in the morning. Like, there's not a lot of research on that, but it is, uh... I had a terrible dream last night. And this morning I woke up and it wasn't real and I was very, very, had a little spring in my step.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It was really nice. That was a weird segment.

Rachel: Yeah, it was a real glass is half-full kind of moment for you.

Griffin: Yeah, thank you. Well, that's the whole thing here on the show. Speaking of glasses full, you know what else is more than half empty? In fact it's three-quarters empty, and change. It's the MaxFunDrive.

Rachel: Yeah. [laughs]

Griffin: We're almost out of time, folks. You wanna talk some about the gifts you can get for giving at different levels?

Rachel: Yeah. So, Griffin mentioned if you give five dollars a month, which I'm just gonna do the math for you on that, that's 60 bucks.

Griffin: A year.

Rachel: For a year.

Griffin: Yeah, it's a... yeah.

Rachel: Yeah. Well, some people hear five dollars a month and they think, "I have no idea what that would be." That's \$60, friends.

Griffin: Rachel can multiply literally any number times 12. Like 12. 12 times 12.

Rachel: 144.

Griffin: There it is, baby. Bazinga. Ten.

Rachel: 12 times ten? 120.

Griffin: Like it's nothing, folks. It's nothing.

Rachel: Yeah. Let's stop there. Let's, please.

Griffin: Yeah, 'cause if I said, like, seven...

Rachel: Let's please immediately stop there.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: And that's bonus content, right?

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And that's a lot of bonus content. And I know some of you are reaching the end of your podcast feed, because you've had a lot more time to sit around and listen.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: This would just dump a whole bunch of new podcasts right in your lap, from your favorite Max Fun hosts. So, five dollars a month, that's a win-win for everybody.

Griffin: Sure. What about at ten?

Rachel: At ten. So, um, lots of folks are looking for ways to show their support and their love for particular podcasts. \$10 a month, you get to pick a pin associated with your favorite podcast. You put that pin on a backpack, you put it on a purse, you put it on a jacket, and you've got that pin.

Griffin: You've got that pin. It was designed by Megan Lynn Kott, who makes new designs every year, and they are just these really nice enamel pins. And you're gonna love it. You also get a little Max Fun membership card, and you also get the bonus content that you get for the five dollar tier. What about at \$20 a month?

Rachel: At \$20 a month. So, it is not a surprise to a lot of you, but many of our Max Fun listeners... kind of gamers.

Griffin: Oh, yeah!

Rachel: Little bit of a gamer type out there. And you will get, you will get playing cards.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: You will get dice.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: All, like, specifically related to and in tribute to the Maximum Fun shows and family.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: And I think, you know, \$20 a month might be a little steep for some of you, but if you've got that, that's a nice little benefit for you, if you're able to give at that level.

Griffin: Yeah, it really does not matter what level you give at. And straight up, like, we know it is a terrible time out here, and that a lot of you are not in a position to become members at all, and that's totally fine. We fully, fully, fully understand that.

We also hear from some folks like, "Hey, sorry five bucks a month is all I can do right now," like, that's incredible. You are literally, you know, uh, putting energy into something that you like and you are allowing us to do the exact same thing. And, like, it doesn't matter what, you know, how much you are able to do that. The fact that you have chosen to do that at all is a really, really remarkable thing and it means the absolute world to us.

So, yeah, go to MaximumFun.org/Join, look at the different levels that you're able to give. If you're already a member but you've been listening to a lot more of our shows maybe during quarantine, you've been holed up and, you know, you've been consuming more Max Fun shows, and you wanna, you know, up your donation, you can jump up to a new level, or you can boost by just, like, kicking up your donation level a couple of bucks. Maybe not up to the next, you know, tier. If you don't wanna go from five to ten, you could do seven or whatever. That's an option that's available to you now.

You can also gift memberships to other folks if they are not able to, you know, become supporters but they really want to, or they want some of those pledge gifts. You can do that as well. But yeah, please think about supporting us. Your support has allowed us to make these shows what they are and we can't thank you enough.

Rachel: It's MaximumFun.org/Join.

Griffin: And hey can I, while, can I, hey. What, hey!

Rachel: Hey!

Griffin: Can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Okay.

[ad break stinger plays]

[ad break]

Griffin: Hey, we have a couple of grumbo prawns here, and I would love to read one of them, if you wouldn't mind me doing that.

Rachel: Please do.

Griffin: Okay, here's one and it's for—and I didn't say this, like, I didn't make this name up, because it's gonna sound rude. But it is for Taylor, AKA Stinky. Like, I would never. Like, to a person I don't know very well, I would never.

Rachel: Not even to a person you know very well. You're very polite.

Griffin: Thank you. It is from Alison, AKA Stinkus. And I wouldn't do that either, and you know me. Anyway, Stinkus says to Stinky, "Dearest Stinky, I am so glad you enjoy this good, good podcast that brings me light even in the darkest of times." I think that that qualifies for now.

And, "You have a fine tooshie, and I'm glad to have spent three years with you and ideally many more. All my love, Stinkus." I've never seen the word tushy spelled out like this. It's T-O-O-S-H-I-E. And I would love for Merriam and Webster to just follow in this grand example and update the book. Because I know they do that a lot these days. Tooshie.

Rachel: You wanna push the button we have to indicate to Merriam-Webster that we have a suggestion?

Griffin: Yes. I want them to change it. Actually, if I have power over it, I will make them change it to say Tucci.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Like Mr. Stanley, but referring to a buttock.

Rachel: Mm-hmm. Can I read you the next one?

Griffin: Please do.

Rachel: This is a message for Spike. It is from Justine. "Hi honeybun. Marrying you was the best thing I ever did, aside from when I asked you to walk me to my car and Closer by Nine Inch Nails played at top volume when I started it. You're my best friend and an authentic fart and the best person I know. Hope this message makes your day."

Griffin: Do you think when people write in the jumbotrons they understand your aversion to, like, scatological, gastrointestinal sort of...

Rachel: [laughs] I hope not. And now that you've brought it up, I'm even more concerned.

Griffin: I mean, I had to call two people stink-adjacent, so we all have our crosses to bear today.

Rachel: I really enjoy the Closer by Nine Inch Nails reference.

Griffin: Sure, sure.

Rachel: Really brings me back.

Griffin: Number two.

Rachel: [sings] Can I tell you about my second thing...

Griffin: [booming voice] Who does Number Two work for? Who does Number Two— [cockney accent] Who does Number Two work for? [worse cockney accent] Who does Number Two work for?

Rachel: I gotta find a new host.

Griffin: To do the show with you?

Rachel: Yeah, I gotta find a new—I gotta find someone who not only does not do Austin Powers, but has never seen an Austin Powers film.

Griffin: Whoa...

Rachel: Gonna put an ad out.

Griffin: Hmm. Our babysitter's pretty young.

Rachel: Yeah. [laughs]

Griffin: Do you want me to go tag out?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: She maybe hasn't seen them. Hey, what's your second thing?

Rachel: My second thing is the Ferris wheel.

Griffin: Oh my God.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Oh my God.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I feel like everything I know about the Ferris wheel came from Devil in the White City.

Rachel: Oh, yeah. I mean, that would be appropriate, right?

Griffin: It would be app— have you read that book?

Rachel: I have not, no.

Griffin: Oh man. It kicks ass.

Rachel: I may be actually restating some of the information that is in there.

Griffin: Oh, you almost certainly are. It is a book that is largely about the Ferris wheel, at one point.

Rachel: Yeah, yeah. I, uh, I love the Ferris wheel.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: When I was a kid and I was a little terrified of rollercoasters, Ferris wheel was my go-to.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Like, I wanna get up there. I wanna see the park, I wanna see the sights. Particularly scared of the upside-downs, and you can't do that with a Ferris wheel.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: At least not on most of them.

Griffin: Wanna know which games have the best, like, stuffed animal prize? Like, where's the big Sponges Bobs? Where's the big Sponges Bobs at? Because that's—those are the games I'm gonna make a beeline to.

Rachel: [laughs] You can see it from up high.

Griffin: I'm not gonna waste my fuckin' money on the frog hammer launch game. I'm not gonna do the ping pong balls into the fishbowls. No way.

Rachel: Also, Ferris wheel: good for cuddling. Good for smooching.

Griffin: Oh, it's, no one can see. When you're at the zenith of it, you're the highest in the park. No one's gonna see you necking. But you do have a limited arc there to neck before your youth pastor can see you again.

Rachel: [laughs] A lot of the rides are restrictive, you know? You're really buckled in. You can't do the arm around the shoulder. But you can with the Ferris wheel.

Griffin: Also, Tunnel of Love is not a thing that actually exists anywhere in the actual world.

Rachel: Well, I mean, the dark rides.

Griffin: Dark rides, yeah, what are you gonna do? You gonna kiss on the, you know, haunted house ride? That's too scary.

Rachel: You gonna ask the ride attendant exactly how long the ride is so you know how much time you have to work with?

Griffin: No way, man.

Rachel: [laughs] Ferris wheel... so, was not the actual, like, the actual first of its kind. The big Ferris wheel we know about, designed by George Washington Gale Ferris, was after there had been such a creation by William Somers, who built a 50-foot wooden wheel at Asbury Park, Atlantic City and Coney Island.

Griffin: Whoa, okay.

Rachel: He called it a roundabout. But the Ferris wheel was designed as kind of the answer to the Eiffel Tower. The World's Columbian Exposition was happening in Chicago, this was in the 1890s, and the Eiffel Tower had just come out and everybody's like, "Well, what are we gonna do?" And it was kind of the big task.

There was a man named Daniel Burnham in late 1890 that was tasked with kind of turning this little square mile of Chicago into a world showcase. And he approached a bunch of designers and said, "We gotta figure something out. It's gotta be as good as the Eiffel Tower, but is not just the Eiffel Tower." [laughs]

Griffin: This is explicit—you have to read *Devil in the White*—it is explicitly about Daniel Burnham and the, like, incredible infrastructural challenge of creating this World's Fair. Yeah.

Rachel: So, George Washington Gale Ferris, who at the time was 33 years old and from Pittsburgh, said, like, "Alright, I've got an idea," and he was initially in charge of inspecting the steel use by the fair and thought, "Oh, well, let's do a huge revolving steel wheel," and everybody was like, "That'll never work." And he spent a lot of his own money making sure that it could happen.

So, he spent \$25,000 on safety studies and hiring more engineers and recruiting investors, all to make this happen. And it ultimately measured 250 feet in diameter—

Griffin: What's up, how's your shitty 50-foot wheel?

Rachel: [laughs] And 36 cars, which made it capable of holding 60 people.

Griffin: That's... that is... I forgot how—that is so fucking big. To get on something like that in the 19th century. Let's me just hop aboard this 250-foot tall man-made object in the 19th century.

Rachel: I know. And get, like, way higher than I have ever been in my life.

Griffin: Yeah. Yeah.

Rachel: You know? Over the next 19 weeks, more than 1.4 million people paid 50 cents for a 20-minute ride during that time period. And I will say, the most notable part of this wheel was an 89,000-pound axel that had to be hoisted onto two towers 140 feet in the air. Just the construction of this thing, I mean, it's incredible. I think, I mean, obviously, the Eiffel Tower gets a lot of credit for even inspiring somebody to think this big.

Griffin: Well, the Eiffel Tower was a creation of what was essentially, like, a Parisian World's Fair. Like, it was its own sort of, like... everything like that, made in that era, was just an engineering flex. Of just like, "Yep, now we've made the greatest object currently extant in the world," and so, that's what this was a swing at.

Rachel: Yeah. The Ferris wheel that was created for this Columbian Exposition did not survive. It actually made its way to St. Louis. It was sold for the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis and then, two years later, dynamited. [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs] You have—that's the only way to kill this big, this big bastard.

Rachel: [laughs] Ferris also became immersed in a lot of lawsuits about debts that he owed suppliers and that the fair owed him. It did not end well

for him. Which, I mean, you know, you invest a lot of your own money into something, there's always some risks associated with that.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: There is a big Ferris wheel in Chicago today.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: You even go up in that Navy Pier Ferris wheel?

Griffin: I never really went to Navy Pier very much.

Rachel: There's not a lot there.

Griffin: Well yeah, and also I didn't really know anybody in Chicago, so that's a weird solo excursion, I feel like.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: For me to just go to the Navy Pier Ferris wheel by myself.

Rachel: The Navy Pier Ferris wheel was added to Pier Park in 1995, was 150 feet tall, had 40 gondolas. In 2016 they updated it up to 200 feet, and had climate-controlled gondolas.

Griffin: Ooh.

Rachel: The biggest Ferris wheel currently, 2014 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Griffin: Oh, really?

Rachel: Mm-hmm. 550 feet tall.

Griffin: That's quite large.

Rachel: That's a big one.

Griffin: Big one, guys! That's so big.

Rachel: Yeah, you can learn a lot. There's a lot. I mean, it becomes kind of a showpiece for a lot of cities, 'cause it looks great on the skyline.

Griffin: Yeah, I love it. I love it in a skyline. I was just about to say, like, London has it.

Rachel: London.

Griffin: I forget what the—I feel like I know its name, it's on the tip of my tongue. Hong Kong has like a great one, I remember. Love it. I love the Apple—Apple TV does this incredible screensaver, essentially, which is just like these panoramic, sweeping shots of either different sort of like, beautiful environments or city skylines, and I feel like I can identify most cities by the Ferris wheel that they have going on.

Rachel: The London one's called the London Eye, by the way.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Yeah, I just—I don't know. It seems kind of ridiculous in a lot of ways. Because it's, uh, it takes up a lot of space, you know? Not a lot of people can be on it at once.

Griffin: [laughs] Yeah.

Rachel: You know, it's not exactly a thrilling thing for a lot of people, now that they've been on a bunch of rollercoasters. But I love it. There's something kind of romantic and beautiful about it.

Griffin: It's great. It's a good shape. It's a great—it's the simplicity of it is what makes it so perfect.

Rachel: Plus it's always fun to think about it, you know, coming off its stand and rolling...

Griffin: Sure, and you roll for a while.

Rachel: And rolling for a while.

Griffin: You'd probably be terribly injured.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But what a way to go, right?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs] Like, "How did your Uncle Mike pass away?"

"Oh, heart failure."

"That's too bad."

"How did your Uncle Mike pass away?"

"Oh, well, okay, he was on this Ferris wheel and it came off the thing..."

Rachel: "Do you remember when that Ferris wheel went down the highway?"

Griffin: "It was radical." Hey, can I tell you my second thing?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: So excited for this one. It is my favorite music video of all time. Hands down, no competition. For, also, an exceptional song. It is the music video for Scenario by A Tribe Called Quest, featuring Leaders of the New School.

Which, I finally kind of looked into the origins of this collaboration and learned a whole lot. But Scenario is like... Scenario is one of the all-time best, like, hip-hop bangers in the history of recorded music. It is widely regarded as the Tribe's best song, and also one of the best posse cut, which is like—

Rachel: Oh yeah, it makes sense.

Griffin: Yeah, it's like essentially just like a pseudo-competitive round robin of MCs just, like, each doing a verse.

Rachel: Yeah, I feel like anybody, like, that can very strongly remember their introduction to hip-hop and kind of as they explored the genre, will have A Tribe Called Quest sort of moment in that.

Griffin: Yes, they were known for—they did a lot of collaborations, a lot of posse cuts, and this is, you know, it's their best-known song so it is of course their best-known collaboration.

With Leaders of the New School, who were this, like, young upstart quartet from Long Island, and they were young as hell and making this huge name for themselves. They started opening for Public Enemy and Chuck D was like, this, like father to them. Gave two of their members their names. Those two members were Charlie Brown and a young Busta Rhymes. Was the standout member of Leaders of the New School.

And in fact, like, after this collaboration, after Scenario, where A Tribe Called Quest was like, "These guys are fuckin' incredible, let's, you know, get them on a track," Busta Rhymes was, like, this was the launch pad of his career. And I think Charlie Brown also, like, everybody is incredible in this song.

Busta Rhymes is the only one that kind of just had this meteoric rise that his band mates did not necessarily follow that same trajectory, which led to a bit of hostility between them, some of which was actually sort of aired out during a kind of infamous episode of Yo MTV Raps.

But... this song is fuckin' amazing. Busta Rhymes comes in with the very last verse and it is, like, so memorable. There's so many memorable single, like, pairings of lines in this song that—

Rachel: Yeah, that you hear sampled all the time now.

Griffin: You hear sampled all the time. "Who's that bro-own" is like, in so many fuckin' songs and it's three words.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: So, like, hearing it and knowing a little bit about who has sampled what and hearing it all in the same fucking track is like, a staggering history lesson contained in one, single, just, absolute bop.

I am going to play a little bit of it now, because I know that it was recorded in 1991, so there's probably a lot of our listeners who have maybe never even heard it. So, here is Busta Rhymes's verse at the end of Scenario.

[excerpt from 'Scenario' by A Tribe Called Quest featuring Leaders of the New School plays]

Griffin: Well earned. His career launch off this song is well earned, because that verse is so fuckin' good. When I hear this song, I don't just wanna listen to it, though. I absolutely have to watch the music video, because it is... perfect.

Rachel: I was not familiar with the video.

Griffin: It is perfect.

Rachel: Like, I had heard it, you know, hundreds of times, and then I watched the video and I was like, "I don't think I have ever seen this before."

Griffin: You're on this level with me now, though, right? That it is, like, all-time fucking amazing.

Rachel: It's very nostalgic for a lot of reasons.

Griffin: It is 1991 sort of like, boiled down into this beautiful, prismatic crystal. It was directed by Jim Swaffield, who did a lot of work with A Tribe Called Quest and directed a few music videos back in that day. Most famously, the music video for Summertime by DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince.

Rachel: Oh my gosh!

Griffin: Which is another great, great music video. But Scenario plays out like—and I would encourage you to just watch it now, before I talk about it, because it will be impossible for me to describe the rampant charm of this video. It is shown as an interactive computer desktop where windows appear featuring, like, low-res videos of, you know, the members of A Tribe Called Quest and Leaders just, like, going at it, or clips from like, you know, concerts and...

Rachel: Are there particular video games being referenced?

Griffin: No.

Rachel: Okay, because I saw some of the, like, little interactive elements reminded me of these, like, game player creation.

Griffin: Well, what it is reminiscent of is just some Windows 3.0-ass interfaces that run the gamut from like—they are present in the entire video. It is shown as like, these overlapping windows that are popping up of, like non-existent applications. At one point, Phife Dawg is doing a verse, and he appears in this, like, salon app where a menu toggles him through various haircuts.

That's a trick that they really like to go—I think at one point, Busta Rhymes is doing a verse, but he's wearing a green screen shirt and so the app is, like, switching the shirt between different patterns. They really, really like that trick. There's, like, fake camera control editing interfaces that is, like, switching between dutch angles and all kinds of different things.

At one point, there is like, there are inscrutable cameos, of just like, a window will pop up and there's Redman. Or a window will pop up and it's just like, there's Spike Lee, for some fucking reason.

Rachel: I know, I couldn't—like, I did a double take when I saw that. I was like, whoa, wait, that's...

Griffin: Why is Spike Lee there?

Rachel: That's really him.

Griffin: Spike Lee's just like, he appears in a window and he's just kind of like bobbing his head along to the music. It's like, "Okay, I guess?" It is, so much of it is kind of, like, nonsensical. But it is also, like, extremely fresh and playful and... again, like, just some Microsoft Encarta-ass interfaces that feel so, so, so wildly nostalgic and so—

Rachel: Yeah, I thought for sure it was based on some actual, existing game, because it seemed so precise.

Griffin: No, I mean, there were—okay, so there were certain games like MTV Music Generator, or there was a Sega CD game called Make My Video.

Rachel: Oh...

Griffin: And in Make My Video, which would of come out, uh, maybe mid-'90s I wanna say, there was... I think it came with just, like, two songs. I think one of them was Jump Jump, and you could, like, press different buttons on the controller to switch between different, like, video feeds. So you would, like, edit together essentially a very bare bones music video, essentially just using three different feeds of music. And then at the end, a director or a producer would be like, "Hey, that was pretty good. You got 90%."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: So maybe it was like, I don't know, it feels like this video informed that game more than that game informed this video.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But it is just so... it is so '90s, but it is also so fucking fun. And the song is so fucking good and I get, like, obsessed with it. I will think about it and I will be like, "Oh, I haven't watched that in a while," and I will watch it, and then it will be all I can think about for, like, a solid week. I've watched it like, eight times today. It's so beautiful and incredible and good and you should watch it, again. If you've heard the song, and you know the song rips, but you've never seen the music video, you owe it to yourself to go on this journey.

And you also owe it to yourself to go on the journey of going to MaximumFun.org/Join, and for the last time, we will ask you to consider becoming a supporter of the network. Shows like ours, shows like Jordan Jessie Go, Stop Podcasting Yourself, the other shows the McElroy family does, MBMBaM, Adventure Zone, all of those shows exist and have become what they are now because of the support that we have gotten from our members through the MaxFunDrive.

Rachel: Thank you, Maximum Fun.

Griffin: Thank you, Maximum Fun, for having us and for everything you do. And thank you to you. One last time, MaximumFun.org/Join. 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 um...

Rachel: Thank you to Griffin.

Griffin: Thank you to Rachel!

Rachel: We're a good team.

Griffin: That's funny, 'cause like, ten minutes ago, you said you wanted to replace me.

Rachel: [laughs] It's just... Mike Myers has consistently driven a wedge between us.

Griffin: Sure. But not—you love *So I Married An Axe Murderer*. That's, like, your shit.

Rachel: I haven't watched it in a very long time. I don't even know if I feel comfortable saying that anymore. I think my hostility towards Mr. Myers has grown such that I might not appreciate it as much.

Griffin: Well, yeah, I will admit that you are not a fan of Mr. Powers or Mr. Shrek, or Mr. Borat, which like, he didn't do, but I also think you could lay some of the blame.

Rachel: Informed. There would be no Borat without Mr. Myers.

Griffin: [laughs] Yeah. It's interesting. You can read Rachel's entire, sort of, capstone paper that she wrote in college about, is Borat Mike Myers?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It goes off the rails, but I mean, it's 60 pages of well-researched, well-documented and well-cited information. So. What was the conclusion that you arrived at for that paper?

Rachel: Uh, no.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Yeah, it was a short end. Long, long—

Griffin: Long road to get there.

Rachel: Body of research, lot of surveys, lot of focus groups. Ultimately, no. The answer was no.

Griffin: Yeah, it was a different actor.

Rachel: Yeah. [laughs]

Griffin: You did prove it.

[theme music plays]

MaximumFun.org

Comedy and culture.

Artist owned.

Audience supported.