

Wonderful! 154: Closed Casket Almond Funeral

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[theme music plays]

Griffin: Hi, this is Griffin McElroy.

[pause]

Rachel: Heyyy, this is Rachel McElroy!

Griffin: And this is *Wonderful!* Watch the throat, babe!

Rachel: Oh, I was drinkin' some water...

Griffin: You were drinkin' some fluid. I saw my opportunity to seize the crown. When you play the game of *Wonderful!*, you win or you die.

Rachel: Now, I can say that this— whoa.

Griffin: [snorts]

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Rachel: I can say this is a show where we talk about things that we like, and things that other people like, and just generally the good stuff.

Griffin: Not as good, though, saying that, as it is to get in there with the tight— ooh, sayin' the title of the frickin' program. Oh! That's so satisfying.

Rachel: I'll tell you what, though.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I don't know that you did it as well as I do.

Griffin: Oh, heavy is the head that wears the crown.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, yeah. So, do you wanna talk about small wonders, or should I? 'Cause now I feel like the world's all fuckin' topsy turvy. I don't know which way's up. I don't know who's doin' what, who is who. Am I Rachel? Are you Griffin? Are we both Rachel?

Rachel: I have a very specific small wonder.

Griffin: I can't wait to hear it!

Rachel: I like a dried fruit in a salad.

Griffin: Oh my God.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Oh my God, forget about it.

Rachel: Like a cranberry. Or Trader Joe's has a dried blueberry—

Griffin: Dried blueberry in a salad is the all time best shit. You get that in there with, like, a nice, like [munching sound] crunchy, cool salad with some dried blueberries in it.

Rachel: Usually there's a nut—

Griffin: Oh God.

Rachel: Usually there's a nut in there too with the dried berry, mm-hmm.

Griffin: Yeah. That's all time, babe.

Rachel: A+.

Griffin: That's all time. Um...

Rachel: Oh, look at you!

Griffin: Look at me!

Rachel: You're all thrown now!

Griffin: Yeah, I don't have one? I mean, have we done Sun Chips?

Rachel: [through laughter] I don't— [laughs] only on this show.

Griffin: Only on this show would we try to remember if we've discussed Sun Chips.

Rachel: Have we talked about Sun Chips? [laughs]

Griffin: I like 'em. I like 'em. I like Sun Chips. I like the graininess of it, and I like the flavors. The little, uh, garden— garden salsa.

Rachel: Me too!

Griffin: Garden salsa Sun Chip. It's like the exact kind of spicy that I like. Garden salsa. We also have been gettin' hummus every week, like nice hummus. Been dippin' just plain— plain Sun Chips into the hummus. That's a— that's a little flavor combo from me to you! Here from the *Wonderful!* kitchen.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, you go first this week. I know this for sure. We've gotten all switched up, confused, mixed around, thrown in a big tornado of podcast chaos, but I know which way is first, and it's you.

Rachel: I brought a show and tell.

Griffin: Oh, shoot! Okay. [quietly] What— what has she got? [normal volume] Rachel's got some— what is this, hun?

Rachel: Take it. I clipped it out of our tree!

Griffin: Okay. So, let me— can I try and describe what it is I'm looking at?

Rachel: Please.

Griffin: So, Rachel has handed me a piece of... arbor.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I think it's safe to say, it is a sti— a stick, like, from a branch. But a sort of mutant tumbleweed has grown around the branch.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Uh, a sorta— I'm a little alarmed having this inside my house.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, because it looks like sort of a, um— like a monster, like a Behol— like a fantas— like a Beholder from D&D with all these tentacles expanding outward, with what looks like wheat? But it can't possibly be wheat, because it's part of this nightmare sort of Lovecraftian thing. So, are you gonna tell me what it is I'm—

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: What is this?

Rachel: Yeah, that is Tillandsia.

Griffin: Tillandsia.

Rachel: Uh, which is also called an air plant.

Griffin: An air plant, okay. So, this—

Rachel: You seen these guys in, like, the little globes? People are hanging 'em from the ceiling?

Griffin: Yeah, this is just—

Rachel: Putting 'em in a piece of driftwood?

Griffin: This is one you found naturally, out in our yard?

Rachel: Yeah! So, that big oak tree in front of your office has a few of 'em.

Griffin: [distantly] Oh yeah.

Rachel: Up ins.

Griffin: How 'bout that? Yeah, I didn't know that these were, like, a thing, but I guess it makes sense. It is literally like a— like a tumbleweed that has grown on the tree. This is interesting.

Rachel: Yeah, uh-huh. That's how I would describe it, mm-hmm.

Griffin: Huh. Okay. You gonna tell me about these bad boys?

Rachel: Yeah! Uh, so I didn't realize— like, I didn't know anything about them.

Griffin: What am I supposed to do with this, by the way? Now I'm just holding Tillandsia.

Rachel: [laughs] You can put it on the ground.

Griffin: But is it gonna shed? I don't want a bunch of—

Rachel: No!

Griffin: I don't want a bunch of dusty plant pl— leavings, a bunch of pollen in my carpet—

Rachel: I mean, you can throw it out your window right now if you want.

Griffin: No, it's nice! You gave it to me, it's a gift.

Rachel: Well, I don't— you don't have to keep it.

Griffin: I'm just gonna hold it the whole show, out in front of me like this.

Rachel: [laughs] It's very large, by the way, too. I think—

Griffin: It's huge, yeah.

Rachel: It's like softball-sized.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh, so this is something I was not familiar with. I had seen air plants in little displays. I thought it was, like, a cactus thing.

Griffin: Well, I thought it was a syntheti— when I saw those, I thought it was, like, a synthetic thing, like some—

Rachel: Oh no, that's a real—

Griffin: Huh.

Rachel: That's a living thing. Um, when my friend Ariel came to visit, she spotted them and said, "Oh, that's an air plant!" And I said, "Oh, I didn't know what they were called."

Griffin: Don't you wish... you had nature proficiency?

Rachel: I know...

Griffin: If you could— if you could, like, look at a tree and be like, "Oh. That's that tree. It's up to no good."

Rachel: [laughs] Sometimes I've noticed my dad will do that, 'cause my mom gardens. And so, they'll just be walking around and be he'll be like, "Hey, what plant is that?" As if she, as a gardener, can maintain the encyclopedia.

Griffin: I at least knew— I wish I knew which ones you could eat. I wish that I could be out in nature and look around and be like, "You can eat that bark. That grass is sweet and delicious."

Rachel: And you'll get conflicting info, too. I posted on Instagram a photo of this wild berry bush that is growing around our house, and some people were like, "Oh, don't eat that!" And other people were like, "If you cook it, you can eat it." And I was like, "Well... " [laughs]

Griffin: Well, that's true of virtually anything. If you cook anything enough, except for, like, uranium.

Rachel: [laughs] Okay, so, the plant.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: So, the plant. Uh, there are over 600 species of this plant. Uh, it is included in the family bromeliaceae—

Griffin: Oh, sure!

Rachel: —which is pineapples, Spanish moss—

Griffin: One of my favorite.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Wait, s—s—spa—pineapples *and* Spanish moss?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Those two seem pretty distant relatives.

Rachel: So, like, what— the characteristics, I was like, "How is this related?" Is that they get a lot of their moisture from their lives, from their little pointy or, you know, textured leaf system. Uh, which is why they don't need— or at least in the case of the air plant that I brought in, the Tillandsia, they don't need soil. 'Cause they are absorbing their nutrients, like, through the air, and through moisture, and in the environment.

Griffin: Oh, that's interesting.

Rachel: Uh, and so their leaves are kind of silvery-ish, and they are of varying sizes, depending on the climate. Okay, so the thinner-leafed varieties grow in rainy areas, and the thick-leafed varieties grow in areas more subject to drought.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: So you can see— you can find 'em in the desert, you can find them in Central America, and they'll just look a little different depending on how much moisture they have access to.

Griffin: Are succulents part of this family? 'Cause I'm thinking about it and, like, the top of a pineapple is so succulent-like. It has these big, broad leaves that absorb the moisture. [pause] Boy, howdy I wish one of us knew the answer to that.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: We need, like, a real fuckin' nerd in here.

Rachel: I know!

Griffin: That can sit in here— I guess that's what a producer is? A pro-ducer just—

Rachel: Pro-ducer?

Griffin: A pro-ducer just sits in the studio with you and you're like, [goofy voice] "Hey, is this a— is—"

Rachel: And they look it up real fast?

Griffin: "Hey, do this math," but they don't even look it up. They just fuckin' know it.

Rachel: They just know it.

Griffin: Yeah, they push up their nose a little, [nasally voice] "Oh, well, uh, technically, uh, those pineapples blah blah blah."

Rachel: Well, that is a cost savings to the listener, you know?

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Like, we—[laughs]

Griffin: We pass the value along to you.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: By not fact-checking.

Rachel: So you have to do it. [laughs]

Griffin: So *you* have to do it. It's like you're our producer!

Rachel: It's like you checking yourself out at the grocery store!

Griffin: It's exactly that.

Rachel: You feel empowered when you listen to this show. [laughs]

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: So, these plants, you'll see them on trees, as the example I brought in. They'll also be on telephone wires, uh, bare rocks—

Griffin: How'd they get up there?! How the fuck did they *get* up there?!

Rachel: I mean, you said it yourself. They're like a tumbleweed.

Griffin: So they just blow up onto a telephone wire and grab hold?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And, like, "Ah, I live here now." Trees make sense. Trees is plants, too. But I don't like them being on... man-made objects.

Rachel: And what's incredible— so, I said that they will get their nutrients from rain. Uh, they can also get it from decaying leaves and insect matter.

Griffin: Ugh!

Rachel: Uh, they have something called trichomes, which allows them to absorb that moisture.

Griffin: I've heard that word before.

Rachel: Ooh! Look at you!

Griffin: A long time ago. Don't know what it means.

Rachel: [laughs] It's— it's the structure of the leaf that allows them to absorb—

Griffin: I think I may have been thinking of a tri— tricorn hat.

Rachel: Hmm, you always are. [laughs]

Griffin: God, but I look good in a tricorn hat, don't I?

Rachel: I have a picture of me when I went to colonial Williamsburg wearing a tri—

Griffin: Gotta make it about you. [loudly] Here we were, talking about me—

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: —and how good I look in a old-timey tricorn hat, and immediately—

Rachel: I'm saying, as another person with a large head, there is something about the tricorn hat—

Griffin: [laughs]

Rachel: —that I think is flattering.

Griffin: The triangle is a very slimming shape.

Rachel: It draws the focus. [laughs]

Griffin: [through laughter] It draws focus to a— to a point. It's all about forced perspective when you're dealing with a large dome.

Rachel: I just— I am not a hat-wearer, and that picture of me at colonial Williamsburg, I was like, "I look good in a tricorn hat!"

Griffin: Let's bring— let's bring it to the mainstream, the tricorn hat.

Rachel: I will say, it is tricky to find one large enough for me. [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah... yeah.

Rachel: Um, so they, uh, are very hardy plants. They can go a long time without water. Uh, if you have an air plant, what they suggest is that you take it and you just dunk it in water once a week and soak it for a few hours.

Griffin: Oh...

Rachel: And then you just let it dry out, and that'll hold it over.

Griffin: So, have you been looking at this air plant that is now laying on the floor of the office and thinking, like, "Wow, you really went through a lot to grow and flourish in the way that you did, and I ripped you from your home."

Rachel: I mean, I think— I could put that back out there, it'll be okay!

Griffin: Yeah, you're right. I should just chuck it back into one of those trees.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: Let me do it right now.

Rachel: Okay.

[thumping noise]

[pause]

Griffin: [very distantly] I don't know how to open this. I can't open this!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [loudly and distantly] You're free!

Rachel: [laughs] Right— right back on to the ground.

Griffin: I'll take another swing at that later.

Rachel: Uh, I will say that that particular air plant looked like it had already flowered, and that is something that they do towards the end of their life cycle.

Griffin: Well, you just—! Why did you have me do that whole symbolic gesture, then?

Rachel: Well, I don't know how close it is! Maybe it's got a good few months left.

Griffin: Had me throwin' a dead-ass plant up in the air.

Rachel: Uh, these plants do need sunlight, but not, like, necessarily direct sunlight, and they do need air circulation, too. So it's— if you're gonna buy one and put it in a little globe, make sure that you can still get air through there, and that you don't put it directly, like, in the hottest part of your house.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: People think that these are, like, parasites? I mean, if you look, like, that particular, uh... specimen that you just threw out the window— [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah. Heroic— heroically threw out the window.

Rachel: It was actually on a dead branch, which was why it was so easy for me to clip. Um, and so people think, like, "Oh my gosh, is this killing the tree?" And it's like, no, it just— it likes to go in places where it can absorb, you know, more nutrients, and also get more shade.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: So it doesn't have the full sunlight. So, you'll find 'em a lot on the dead limbs.

Griffin: That is a cool subject. I never really knew that that was, like, a thing. I thought it was just sort of detritus that had gotten stuck on a tree. I didn't know it was its own, sort of, functioning organism.

Rachel: I know, I know! [laughs] I watched a lot of videos about these air plants, and they're very popular with the millennials? The video suggested that because they are so low maintenance and kind of alien-looking, people like them as little decorative elements. And they absorb some of the toxins, like, in the air too, just like a regular plant does.

Griffin: Oh, thanks! Thanks. I feel terrible for what I just did to that— that poor guy then. Can I tell you about my first thing?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: We've been doing this show for so long now that I feel like you can follow our growth as people. You can, like— you can—

Rachel: Are you gonna talk about flossing? [laughs]

Griffin: No, you— God, no. You can track the, like, changes in our preferences and the kinds of things that we like, and I think that's kind of cool.

Rachel: Yeah. I mean, when we started this show you were talking about Sudafed.

Griffin: Right, right. Um, so I wanna talk about something that's a new love of mine, and that's the Almond Joy.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: The Almond Joy candy bar. Um, that is very good, and my love for it is very, very new. It's, like, just now we got a big— Rachel's parents sent us a big bag of Halloween candy, not knowing that we, you know, have no plans to do, like, a safe candy dis— we don't know how to do a safe candy distribush, so really they just sent us a big bag of candy for us to eat. And it's all fun-sized Hershey's and Kit Kat and, for some reason, Whoppers and Milk Duds.

Rachel: Yeah, Milk Duds! Who's that for?

Griffin: I enjoy— we talked about this. I like one Milk Dud. But then any more Milk Duds and it just becomes sort of a chore. But the Almond Joy was in there, and I was like, "Uh, I haven't eaten an Almond Joy in a while. Let me pop one of these—" and it was an absolute journey. It was an absolute flavor delight, but more than that, it was a textural masterpiece, the Almond Joy.

Rachel: When you talk about your evolution on the show...

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: ... do you feel like the Almond Joy is a more dignified candy? Do you feel like you—

Griffin: I think it's more of a grown-up candy!

Rachel: Oh, okay!

Griffin: I feel like I am putting away my childish things, in which I know that I've talked about the Milky Way on this program, but now you offer me a Milky Way and I'm like, "That's a lot of nougat and caramel, my friend."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: A Three Musketeers is just a big fuckin' nougat log. I am 33! I can't eat that much nougat!

Rachel: I love a Three Musketeers.

Griffin: [loudly] It's so much nougat!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: But an Almond Joy is— you get that snap of that tempered milk chocolate. You get a little chewy grainy from the coconut, and then you get that hard crunch when you hit that almond inside, and then those three textures just dance— dance around your palate, and just a little— like, a little orchestra of textures and flavors? Now, that's a mature bite, isn't it?

Rachel: Are you trying not to say "symphony" because that is another candy bar?

Griffin: I guess it is sort of another candy bar. Uh, I like it. I like it in the same way that I feel like I have also grown to love a Snickers, in that there's a lot going on inside of a Snickers.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: That, like, you can just enjoy all of the different textures of it, instead of just having a more one note— a Hershey's bar, I don't even get it. It's just chocolate. It is just chocolate.

Rachel: Yeah. I mean, you want to pair a Hershey's bar with something else.

Griffin: Yeah, absolutely. It is—

Rachel: Like a— like a s'more, for example.

Griffin: It's a chocolate platform.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Kit Kat, you get the crunch, but then it's just, like— it's just the crunch. Almond Joy is comin' at you from all different— all different angles. What's the— Take 5 might be the ultimate— might be the—

Rachel: Oh my gosh, that is my favorite.

Griffin: —maybe that's too much. Maybe Take 5 is too far, 'cause what—

Rachel: I haven't had one in a while. Maybe I can't handle it. [laughs]

Griffin: Take 5 is like, what? Peanuts and pretzels and caramel and—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: — and— it's got five different sort of layers in it.

Rachel: Peanut butter, yeah.

Griffin: Maybe that's too much. I don't know. But an Almond Joy I feel like comes at you in the right— I don't even like almonds that much, and I don't really eat that much coconut, but for some reason, you put all these things together—

Rachel: I like that's it's, like, one whole almond. Like, they're not trying to sneak anything past you.

Griffin: Well, per fun-size bar.

Rachel: Well, yeah.

Griffin: There's— there is— I do like the way that they are nestled into the coconuts, as if you are at, like, a wake or a visitation for the almond.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: You're at a closed casket almond funeral. And I really, really dig that. So that's, like, the first fold of my two-fold love of the Almond Joy.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: My second is more conceptual, and that is that Almond Joy is the only candy bar with an evil twin, that is the Mounds bar.

Rachel: Yeah, how fun is that?

Griffin: It's so fun.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: The difference is this. Mounds uses dark chocolate to Almond Joy's milk chocolate, and Mounds doesn't have an almond in it. That's it. It is a— it is a hollow, empty vessel for a tree nut that will never arrive, and that is sad—

Rachel: Wow...

Griffin: —in a lot of ways, if you think about it.

Rachel: See, I thought about it as, like— you know, they did some testing, and maybe there was an even split of people that were like, "You know what I like? I like dark chocolate, I like coconut, I don't like nuts."

Griffin: But that is what they have— this is what I want to talk about. They have *made* you think that! And that's fucking wild!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I want everybody to take a step outside of themselves to really holistically look at the Mounds bar and the Almond Joy bar, and what the creators of these bars have tried to do in, like... like—

Rachel: They've forced you into a binary.

Griffin: Synthetically driven a wedge between America.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Between Americans. Which, we don't need more wedges!

Rachel: [laughs quietly]

Griffin: Coming between us. But there was— if you were alive in the 80's and 90's, you saw the ads that they don't do so much anymore, with the song written by beloved jinglesmith Leon Carr, "Sometimes You Feel Like a Nut." The whole thing is "Sometimes you feel like a nut. Sometimes you don't. [singing] Almond Joy's got nuts. [deep voice] Mounds don't."

And they come in, like, with that [deep voice] "Mounds don't." In a way that makes you think, like, "Well, that's the— that's the workin' man's candy.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Rachel: Listen—

Griffin: [loudly] I don't have time for your—

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: —for your almonds, 'cause I can't afford to feel like a nut! I'm supporting a fucking family over here!

Rachel: [laughs] You've got three seconds. Maybe you don't have time for a nut now.

Griffin: No. No. I just want the— I just want the dark chocolate and the cara— uh, and the coconut, and that is it.

Uh, didn't know this. Mounds came first. There was a candy maker in Connecticut in the 1920's, made the Mounds bar, sold it for five cents a pop. Uh, and then

when World War II broke out, the company that made Mounds, like, had to— they had a shortage on all of their candy making supplies, so they just focused on the Mounds bar. And then, you know, we got past World War II, and they started to thrive because people were crazy about the Mounds bar, so they went ahead and threw a fuckin' almond in there and they were like, "This is now Almond Joys, uh, which we are selling alongside the Mounds."

They also made the Peppermint Patty. The, like, weird, like, peacemaker.

Rachel: The must've had a good deal with some coconuts somewhere.

Griffin: Yeah, they got— what? Peppermint Patty doesn't have coconut in it.

Rachel: Oh. But it has that same texture, I guess.

Griffin: It has, like, a— well, kind of, but it has a pep— it's more of a peppermint creme pat. Creamy— creamy cream. I can see why you would get there, though. If you did a cross section—

Rachel: Well, when you think about a Mounds— I mean, the inside seems similar.

Griffin: Yeah. Um, so in the 70's, right, they did this ad campaign, "Sometimes you feel like a nut," and it positioned these two... nearly identical candy bars, as conceptual rivals. It created the candy binary, as you put it. And that's gotta be one of the cleverest marketing stunts, like, of all time, right? Because I— before I discovered my love of the Almond Joy this year, I still would've sworn myself to be a Mounds man.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Even though I didn't really like Mounds either, 'cause I don't really like coconut, but I knew that about myself. It's like, "What's your— what's your— are you a Hufflepuff or whatever? Like, are you a cake or pie—" like, everybody has these, like, things in their mind. And they created one out of fucking nothing!

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: By saying, "Which of these two, again, virtually identical candy bars, do you now love, and you hate the other one, and you hate everyone who likes the other one and think that they are, like, completely abnormal?"

Rachel: The same company, too. It's not like, you know— it's not, like, two rivals created these similar products. It's, like, the same company said—

Griffin: Two— two— [chokes on spit] [laughs quietly]

Rachel: "We've created a rival for our own candy bar."

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: "Choose one."

Griffin: Two candy houses, equal in standing.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It's like... it is wild! And it succeeded, obviously, because, like, you went from not giving a shit about these two candy bars to giving a shit about at least one of these candy bars. It was this huge success. I feel like Twix tried to do this with their, like, "Are you left Twix or right Twix?" And, like—

Rachel: [laughs] That is nothing.

Griffin: People were like, "That's nothing."

Rachel: That's nothing.

Griffin: That's fucking nothing. Get outta here, Twix.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, but it's still, like, the source of that— that meaningless distinction between do you like Mounds, and do you like Almond Joy? Is the fact that a distinction between these two candy bars exists at all. That there was some candy maker that took a look at Mounds and plopped a single fucking almond on it, and then was like, "That's a different thing!"

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Plop! "You're not Mounds anymore!"

"Alright, what are we gonna call it, sir? Mounds with almonds?"

"You're fucking fired."

Rachel: [laughs] "You don't get it."

Griffin: "You don't get it! That's a different thing!"

Rachel: "It's a totally different thing."

Griffin: "It's a different thing entirely. We're gonna give it a different colored wrapper. We're gonna give it a different name, and we're gonna create a fake civil war between these two candy bars—"

Rachel: I think you're underestimating the power of dark chocolate, though. You're acting as if it is a similar candy, but not only does it have the nut, but... it has a different kind of chocolate.

Griffin: Okay, I will grant you that. But what I will not grant you is that Snickers has tried out a *looot* of stuff over the years. Snickers has had, like—

Rachel: True.

Griffin: "Here's peanut butter Snickers. Here's dark chocolate Snickers. Here's—here's—" When Hershey's bar is, like, "Here's dark chocolate Hershey's—" I guess they do call it Special Dark, but they don't call it, like, "Stewart's chocolate."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: "This one's Stewart's. Or Evil Hershey's, and you can only like one of them."

Rachel: That's true.

Griffin: It's fucking wild to me that these two candy bars are called different things, and it's not just called... Almond Mounds. It's called Almond Joy, and if you like these, you have to fucking hate Mounds.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It's out of control.

Rachel: It is.

Griffin: Uh, and yet it is, like, foolproof, because I— now I will never eat another Mounds. I will only eat Almond Joy.

Rachel: Oh, so you've totally switched camps!

Griffin: I've completely switched camps. I— I am just— because I realized, I don't like almonds. But it's not about that!

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: [holding back laughter] When you're eating an Almond Joy, it's not about how you feel about almonds. It's about what almond— that— that one almond crunch brings to the... entire— the entire bouquet.

Rachel: I feel like this is a much larger, more emblematic conversation, because I feel comfortable liking both.

Griffin: Huh. Interesting.

Rachel: That's the difference between us.

Griffin: Hm. That is interesting.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: It's wrong.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It's wrong. I just love it. It's— this is for me, I feel like, a good form of marketing that is very, very smart, and not, like, explicitly predatory? It's like, "Oh, you— you f— [laughs] you got me!"

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: "You got all of us, and our fucking parents, with this 'Feel like a nut' thing. You really got us on that one. Good goin'."

Uh, can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

[ad break]

Griffin: We have a few Grumpoproms here. Can I read the first one? 'Cause it's for Davis, and it's from Rebecca. Can I please read it?

Rachel: Yes, please!

Griffin: Rebecca says:

"Happy birthday to my sweet husband. Since our California birthday trips have been canceled two times this year, I figured this was a surefire way to celebrate your special day. You mean more to me than I could ever articulate. I want you to know that you are wonderful, and I wouldn't wanna do life with anyone else. You're the best partner and dad. Luv you."

Spelled love "L-U-V" there, and I'm thinking it may be because they ran out of characters?

Rachel: Oh, yeah.

Griffin: To fill in the message.

Rachel: Well, maybe you were supposed to say it different.

Griffin: "Loov you".

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: [high pitched] "Lee— lyooove you".

Rachel: I enjoy this relatable content, 'cause there are so many people I know that in March were like, "Well, we've gotta cancel this April trip. Let's push it to September. I'm pretty sure—" [laughs]

Griffin: "[high pitched] Yeah, maybe we'll be—" yeah. Yeah. There may be one or more extensions to follow that. But not for us! October 17th is Davis's birthday, I believe, so happy birthday, Davis.

Rachel: Can I read the next one?

Griffin: Please do.

Rachel: This message is for Anne, Kinsey, Logan, and Sunday, from Nathan.

"Wow! I can't believe how far we've come in our weird little D&D game. I honestly can't wait to see what kind of adventurers Uwag, Whimsy—

Griffin: Try "Ugga?" I don't know. You tackled that word in such a wild way!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It's U-G-G-A-H, and you hit it like [nasally] "Uwag." [pause] I don't mean— aw, babe. Come back.

Rachel: [laughs] I'm so used to words in these messages just being, like—

Griffin: [laughs loudly]

Rachel: Indiscernible. [laughs] I was like, "Clearly there's no easy way to say this."

"I honestly can't wait to see what kind of adventures... [laughs] Uggah, Whimsy, Schroeder, and Fern get up to next. Y'all are seriously the best friends I could ask for, and I love you all so much. Your kind and benevolent DM, Nathan."

Griffin: Or perhaps Nyamph!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I am Nyamph!

Rachel: [laughs] I love that character!

Griffin: Me too!

Rachel: [laughs]

[Max Fun ad plays]

Griffin: Uh, hey, can you tell me about your second thing that you have prepared to speak on, uh, this— this morning? For me? Please? Tell me now?

Rachel: My second thing is obstacle courses.

Griffin: Yes!

Rachel: I didn't wanna just talk about *American Ninja Warrior* again. [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Rachel: 'Cause according to wonderful.fyi, we have talked about it twice.

Griffin: Hmm.

Rachel: I think once was maybe a small wonder, and once was an entire segment.

Griffin: That makes sense.

Rachel: Uh, and I realized kind of fundamentally what I love, uh, and the reason that *American Ninja Warrior* isn't just necessarily a show that, like, I put on in the background, is the obstacle courses! I'm fascinated by, like, the design and, like, the suitability, and the placement, like, how they put it together—

Griffin: Especially for *Ninja Warrior*, because they take themselves very seriously, so much so that, like, people have entire careers based around that show and that they open up gyms and shit, so they have to take the thing— you can't just have some bullshit obstacle in there that knocks everybody out. Like, everything has to be possible to accomplish, yet very, very hard. It's really interesting to watch them tune those.

Rachel: There's just— yeah, as Griffin mentioned, there's just this whole culture now built around, like, designing and running obstacle courses around the globe,

and it was just kind of fascinating to think about. Like, why— why do people love these things so much?

So, I was doing research. The obstacle course, kind of unsurprisingly, seems to have its roots in the military. Uh, it was designed with this idea of kind of building— building skill and confidence through these different courses. It's interesting, and I was reading about it, uh, the 20th century Georges Hébert—

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Just really wanted to say it with a French accent.

Griffin: I love it.

Rachel: I was just so excited about it. Created what he called *un parcours*—

Griffin: Oh!

Rachel: Which is the French word for course.

Griffin: Interesting.

Rachel: Which is also the root of parkour, I'm assuming.

Griffin: Hmm.

Rachel: Uh, but the idea is that it's a course where one walks, runs, jumps, crawls, climbs, walks on unstable balance, carries, throws, et cetera.

Griffin: Frolics.

Rachel: Frolics. Loves.

Griffin: [simultaneously] Lo— loves.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Aww, babe!

Rachel: [laughs] And the idea was that, you know, you build not just, like, the confidence, but the mental toughness of taking on these different obstacles. So instead of just, you know, running or push-ups or jumping jacks you're, like, attacking things that are designed to kind of knock you off balance.

The kind of, the phenomenon of the race, the obstacle course race, started in something called the Tough Guy—

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: —in the UK, uh, in 1987. Uh, eccentric former British Army soldier Billy Wilson, AKA Mr. Mouse—

Griffin: [snorts]

Rachel: Started a 15 kilometer obstacle course, and designed it to kind of push participants to their limits. And then later, what you may be more familiar with now is the Tough Mudder, which—

Griffin: Is just a super sloppy *Double Dare* version of the Tough Guy.

Rachel: Yeah, [laughs] exactly. I have seen— I don't know if you've seen people do this.

Griffin: Sure!

Rachel: But everybody will post pictures on the Facebook of them covered— covered in mud.

Griffin: I'm like, "Great job, you're dirty." Like—

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Cool.

Rachel: Yeah, the dirtiness doesn't appeal to me. I think that's why I like the kind of— the sterility of the *Ninja Warrior*.

Griffin: I remember at a church camp once there was, like, a mud activity, that they were like, "Put on some grody shorts and a shirt you don't mind ruining, and we're just gonna have a big mud fight and play in mud," and I was like—

Rachel: How was it?

Griffin: —and I was like, "Fuck yeah, let's do it!" And then you're in the mud and, like, a few minutes in you're like, "Wow. I'm super dirty right now, and the sun is starting to kind of bake it on to me in a way that is fucking terrible. I do not—" when you're wet and muddy and gooshy and slimy, oh, it's so much fun! But then you get out of the mud and you're like, "Now what?!"

Rachel: Well, and you know it's gonna get in your fingernails and in your mouth... and that's hard to get out.

Griffin: Your butt crack?

Rachel: Yeah?

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: That's part of— you know, I have a hard time with the beach, because sand...

Griffin: [quietly] Gets in the butt crack. It's, like—

Rachel: Gets right up in there.

Griffin: No. [pause] No. Ugh! No!

Rachel: [laughs] I don't know if you talked about this, let me know, when we did *American Ninja Warrior* did you talk about the company that does the obstacles?

Griffin: No!

Rachel: Okay. So, it is a company called ATS. They started in 1999 as Alpine Training Services, and they taught outdoor classes like canyoneering, uh, and then it was actually *Biggest Loser* was the first show to come to them and say, "Build us a course." And then they kind of took off from there, and so they do,

um, as I mentioned, *Ninja Warrior*. They also do *Amazing Race*, whenever there are obstacle courses.

Griffin: Oh yeah! Is that show still on?

Rachel: I don't know.

Griffin: I feel like there hasn't been a new—

Rachel: You know what? I heard that they did film a season prior to the pandemic that they have not released yet.

Griffin: Oh, yeah. I guess they wicked could not make that show now, considering there are [laughs] many countries that we are not allowed to fly to right now.

Rachel: Mm-hmm. They also did a bunch of shows that I was not familiar with. Uh, they did something called *Dodgeball Thunderdome*, which is currently on Discovery.

Griffin: Okay...?

Rachel: So, I guess the idea is you are doing an obstacle course, but then they are also throwing balls at you. It sounds a little like *Wipeout* to me.

Griffin: Sounds quite a bit like *Wipeout*. But meaner.

Rachel: [laughs] I don't know if the participants themselves are also throwing the balls?

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Also shows like *Spartan*, which was The Rock's show.

Griffin: Oh yeah.

Rachel: With the obstacle course.

Griffin: That's not still on the air, I don't believe.

Rachel: I don't think so. Uh, they also did a show that is also not on the air from 2018 called *TKO* with Kevin Hart, which was another obstacle course show.

Griffin: Did they do *Floor is Lava*? I guess that's more of a—

Rachel: I didn't see it on their website.

Griffin: Hmm.

Rachel: It's possible it just hasn't been updated. Uh, so a lot of the people that work for ATS not only design the obstacles, but they have to be kind of fit enough to test it out. If you go to a live taping of *American Ninja Warrior*, you will see people running the obstacles right before the show is filmed—

Griffin: To prove that they are able to be—

Rachel: Yeah, like, they are ready to go. And I think that's all that I wanted to say about that. The other shows that I got excited about but I've never seen is something called *America's Top Dog*, where they do a—

Griffin: [gasps] Awww!

Rachel: —you know, a dog show—

Griffin: I think I've seen clips of this.

Rachel: —style obstacle course?

Griffin: I've definitely seen dogs try to run up a warped wall. And it's like, they can't. They don't have opposable thumbs!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Don't try it, guys! Don't try it! You're gonna hurt yourselves!

Rachel: Uh, and then this show I kind of remembered being excited about, but we never watched, *Holy Moly*, which was a ten-episode mini golf competition.

Griffin: Oh no, we did watch that, and it didn't quite do it for us.

Rachel: Didn't grab us.

Griffin: Didn't quite grab us.

Rachel: Uh—

Griffin: 'Cause we take our shit seriously!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: We wanna watch hard bodied athletes—

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: —who have honed their craft, and have a fuckin' 14-foot horizontal leap, do their thing.

Rachel: I've kind of read a little bit about, like, why people like watching these shows. And some of it is just that, you know, the individuals that run these courses are sometimes, like, Olympic athletes, but then they are sometimes people who have just spent the past few years really training, you know?

Griffin: Yeah, I think that indulges a part of my brain that's like, "Man, I wish I could get to point in my life as a person—"

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: "—as an adult that I could do this."

Rachel: I love it when they're, like, 45, too, and you're like, "Alright."

Griffin: "Alright, get it."

Rachel: "I could still do this." [laughs]

Griffin: Right. Uh, can I tell you about my second thing?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: My second thing is an album from a Canadian indie rock group in the mid-2000's, uh, which really— I'm sure somebody just checked off their fuckin' *Wonderful!* music segment bingo card. Uh, but I wanna talk about Wolf Parade.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Uh, specifically the album *Apologies to the Queen Mary*, which came out in 2005, was their first album, and a huge sort of critical smash hit breakout success for them that I don't really think they ever quite caught up to or surpassed, because there was so much buzz. Wolf Parade was sort of formed Voltron-style from members of a lot of other, like, big Canadian— well, comparatively big, like, Canadian indie rock groups, and so before the album even came out, they had two EP's that were out, and so, uh, the big— you know, your Pitchforks and what-have-you were, like, abuzz about this album before it came out.

Rachel: I can't tell if that was, like, a particularly great time for music, or if we were just of the age where we were really into music.

Griffin: I think it's almost certainly that, like, that was the per— it was a great time, I think, objectively, a lot of really good music was being made, but, you know, there's good music being made all the time. I think that's just the part of our lives where we were really paying attention and, like, really open to hearing new stuff.

Um, so Wolf Parade came about in, like, 2003, and it came together— the group came together pretty quickly. They formed and recorded an EP over the course of, like, three weeks, and a couple years later they released *Apologies to the Queen Mary* after being signed to Sub Pop, which is, like, one of the all-time best indie labels ever. Uh, and this record was huge.

I remember it was, like, one of the first, like, cool bands that I listened to in— in real time. It was my freshman year of college when this album came out, and I was listening to it and I was like, "Ohh! This is, like, the first cool band I've listened to—" well, it's the first band I've listened that wasn't, like, They Might Be Giants since I was, you know, 11 years old. Uh, so that is notable. And, like, I just put this album in my iPod, and it never left, uh, until I guess I got rid of my... iPod. Because people weren't using iPods anymore.

Um, it slots into this, like, indie rock field with Modest Mouse, like, very, very cleanly. And, uh, like, Arcade Fire, and Neutral Milk Hotel.

Rachel: Yeah, I was thinking TV on the Radio.

Griffin: TV on the Radio— I mean, it definitely fits into that time period, but I think it has a sort of wild, screechy, ambitious, like, sort of Canadian brainy sound that a lot of bands that, you know, everybody was into were— were enjoying at the time, and a lot of those artists really collaborated. Modest Mouse sort of shepherded Wolf Parade to Sub Pop, and they performed together a whole lot.

And this album is just loud, and it's wild with these, like, huge arrangements, and there's two lead vocalists on the album so there's, like, that— you get that sort of, uh, Lennon, Harrison, sort of McCartney vibe, where it's just each song is, like, a different sort of tone, with a different voice singing it, which is always, I think, really, really cool, when it's not, like, fully discordant and weird.

Um, there's just guitars and guitars and guitars and guitars, uh, sometimes it's, like, kind of shrill? [laughs] In ways that you don't really expect, but works to what the songs build to. Um, and it's, like, real— again, like, it's very brainy, but in a way that they still have a lot of rough edges on a lot of the songs. Uh, it's just a fucking great album.

[music begins in the background]

And to give you an example of what it sounds like, I'm gonna play the— the sort of most successful song I think they ever did, like, their big arena rock anthem, if you wanna think of it that way, which is "I'll Believe in Anything."

[excerpt from "I'll Believe in Anything" by Wolf Parade plays]

Griffin: You know this song, right? I think it's the one—

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: I can't remember if it's the one I sent to you yesterday to— to listen to.

Rachel: No, I do. This— this, uh— I mean, this was on my iPod.

Griffin: Yeah. It's, uh— it is a phenomenal song. It's, like, in the pantheon in my mind of, like, the great songs with, like, "Under Pressure" and stuff like that, where it's just like, "Oh, well, this song is just kind of perfect," uh, and is ambitious, but it achieves, like, everything that it tries to go for.

It's really complicated, the arrangement is, but it builds, like, so you hear all the individual parts, like, really, really clearly. Uh, and I think doing something that is kind of unpredictable, I think the parts of this song that you hear, or even, like, the opening screechy, like, [imitates guitar] like, is unpredictable, and it's also anthemic, is, like, a needle that I don't know how they threaded. Like, I don't know how anybody threads that needle, but they do that a lot, uh, throughout this album, and that's, like, the hallmark of really good indie rock, in my mind.

Um, and I think for all of its, like, loudness, it is also lyrically, like, very cerebral and very, like poetic. There's a track called "Grounds for Divorce," which is also one of my favorite songs on the album, uh, and I wanna play a bit from, but there's lyrics that go, "You said you hate the sound of the buses on the ground. You say you hate the way they scrape their brakes all over town. I said pretend it's whales, keeping their voices down."

It's like such a weird, like, kind of dreamy way of—

Rachel: I love your descriptor of Canadian brainy. I feel like that for some reason feels really apt to me. [laughs]

Griffin: Oh my God, it's, like, fully, fully, like— they work with poetic... what's the word? Like, visualization of things, uh, that is just so out there, and yet, like, you hear it and you're like, "Oh, I get what they're— I get what they're saying by that."

I think another— I think that's, like, really tough to do also, is, like, writing things that are kind of abstract, but can... again, be the kind of thing that at a live concert people are just, like, screaming at the top of their lungs. Like, "Yeah, man! Whales keepin' their voices down!" Like—

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It's such a, like, wild thing.

[music begins in the background]

It also has just these— "Grounds for Divorce" has these, like, nonstop guitar arpeggios out of just, like, an 80's, like, soft metal band, uh, so I'm gonna play a little bit of that right now.

[excerpt from "Grounds for Divorce" by Wolf Parade plays]

Griffin: So, they had other albums after this that get a little bit more experimental and a little bit less, like, accessible, a little less, like, populist in a way that, uh, is kind of remarkable for *Apologies to the Queen Mary*.

Uh, and it— again, like, it's one of those things. I say it a lot whenever I talk about music on this show, but as soon as I— this popped up in a time capsule playlist that Spotify generated— I think partially out of things that I've been listening to since I've been a Spotify user, but part of it was just kind of wild guesses, which is why, like, there's a lot of Eminem on there. That's like, "Oh, I didn't— Spotify, I never really had an Eminem phase."

But there is this, uh, "I'll Believe in Anything" popped up, and it just transported me back to fuckin' Pitchfork Fest 2010, just, like, jumping up and down with all my friends in Chicago, like, *screaming* along— like, [holding back laughter] tearing up to "I'll Believe in Anything," which is, like—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: —uh, I don't know! Just a really, really wild experience, and there are so many songs on this album that can accomplish that.

Rachel: I'm glad you brought this band. I had kind of forgotten.

Griffin: Me too! It was so huge, too. I remember I— I think I've talked about this. I had a *Zune* living in Chicago that had this album on, and I was on the Brown Line, on the L, and just, like, riding downtown, and I saw a woman sitting in front of me who also had a Zune that I could see she was also listening to Wolf Parade on it.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And I was like, "Man! What a—"

Rachel: I'm glad you didn't fall in love!

Griffin: Yeah, me too. It was, uh— it was—

Rachel: By the way, you always talk about that Zune like it's ancient history, but you definitely had that when you moved here in 2011.

Griffin: Oh, I still have it! It's in my closet right now.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I, like my father, lost my charger for it, so it will probably never run again. I think a listener of *Adventure Zone* sent him a charger for it that they, like, had. Please don't send me a charger. I won't use it.

Um, but yeah. This is one of the all-time best albums, I think, and if you have never heard Wolf Parade I'm, like, deeply, deeply jealous of you, because it is, uh— *Apologies to the Queen Mary* is just a— just a trip, man. Just a trip. Good jams, good bops.

Uh, can I tell you what our friends at home are talking about?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: I'm very excited to talk about this one. Ryan said:

"Something that's been wonderful for me recently is Neil Cicierega's newest parody, question mark, album, *Mouth Dreams*. With the entire world being just so much lately, a new batch of his absurdist, humor-laden mashups have been absolutely clutch for me keeping my cool.

For me, there's just nothing better for resetting after a session of doomscrolling than hearing Johnny Cash's voice proclaim, 'When I was just a boy, when I was just a baby, I shot a man in Reno. I was just a baby boy.' To be followed up by, 'I shit my pants,' over the hook from Justin Bieber's 'Baby.'"

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I don't know how familiar you are with the *Mouth*, uh, series of albums from Neil Cicierega, but it is—

Rachel: I am not. I mean, I know what you have played for me. That's it.

Griffin: Uh, yes. I have played them for you. *Mouth Sounds* just came out I think at the end of last month, and it is— I just found out about it yesterday, because our editor on the TAZ graphic novels pinged me about it like, "You must— you must—"

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [holding back laughter] It opens with a... four minute long ballad of harmonized... clips of the guy singing [singing] "Yahooooo!" from the Yahoo commercials.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: From the 80's, that had me, like— I had my door open, and I thought people were gonna think I was, like, losing it, because I had it on the speakers just— [singing loudly] "Yahooooo!" And me just on the fucking floor dying laughing. It is so good.

Rachel: Is this the guy that did "Mom's Spaghetti"?

Griffin: Uh... oh, I don't— I don't know. He's the one who did Lenny Kravitz's "Fly."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: "I wanna— I wanna fuck a milky way."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, "I wanna eat the sun." Oh, man. Deedee says:

"The orchestra tune-up. That controlled cacophony always changes the room— uh, charges the room with anticipation, and makes the first strains of music sound even more beautiful. Plus, it just sounds neat."

I like that too. It gets you pumped. What are we about to hear?! I mean, I know. We're at— we're at a production of *The Nutcracker*, so I know what we're gonna hear, but ooh. Anything's possible.

Rachel: I know.

Griffin: You ever— I've never played in a big band like that. You probably did this, like, a lot, huh?

Rachel: Yeah. I mean, I was in band.

Griffin: And y'all did the, like, [hums one note]. That's my impression of the tune-up.

Rachel: Honestly, I don't remember.

Griffin: Oh, okay. That's more of a stringed instrument thing, I guess.

Rachel: Yeah. It's been 20 years. I mean, I'm guessing that we all played a note together, yes.

Griffin: Do you tune a flute?

Rachel: Of course you do!

Griffin: How do you tune a flu—

Rachel: You know the little head joint?

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: You know how it's, like, three pieces?

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Rachel: The head joint you can kind of pull in and out of the instrument to make it longer or shorter.

Griffin: Ahhh! Interesting.

Rachel: Depending on how, like, sharp or flat you are.

Griffin: Fantastic.

Rachel: So sometimes you'd have to, like, pull it out.

Griffin: Nice. You were trying— I have to applaud you for the great lengths you went to not make a jerk off motion just then?

Rachel: [laughs] I realized I was doing it!

Griffin: No, but you—

Rachel: As if it was necessary.

Griffin: Like, within a millisecond you were like, "But I can't... open that door."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It was really impressive, baby.

Rachel: Thank you!

Griffin: I wanna thank 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. Uh, and thank you so much to Maximum Fun for having us on the network!

Rachel: Yeah, I would encourage everybody, if you haven't, go to Maximum Fun and check out a new show this week.

Griffin: Um, yeah. Triple Click is a really good one.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: It's got some— some—

Rachel: Video games!

Griffin: Yeah, some Kotaku and ex-Kotaku folks on there, and it's all about video games, and it's really, really good! Um, oh! I also do a video game podcast, if

you're into that kind of thing, called *The Besties*. It's on Spotify. I do with Juice and our buddies Russ and Chris from Polygon and, uh, we talk about one video game a week. And it's, uh, real cool. Started talking about next gen consoles, 'cause those are comin' out really soon, and Chris has one of 'em, so that's gonna be this week's episode, so... please— please enjoy. I think that's it.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: I think we're gonna stop recording now.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: I've got, downstairs, a granola bar with my name on it.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I am going to absolutely destroy that thing, and then I'm gonna go outside, and I'm gonna try to throw an old dead plant back up into a tree again.

Rachel: [laughs] Oh, I wanna watch that.

Griffin: Gonna take a— gonna take a few tries!

Rachel: [laughs] I hope one of our neighbors walks by and just shouts some words of encouragement at you.

Griffin: "You can do it—" I— I need—[loudly] is anyone a basketball coach?

Rachel: [laughs]

[theme music plays]

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