

Wonderful! 161: Ricolaaaaaahhhh

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[theme music plays]

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hello, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is Wonderful!

Griffin: [singing] It's beginning to look a lot like podcasts! In the studiooo!

Rachel: [laughs] And what does podcasts look like? Is it wrapping paper and scissors on the ground?

Griffin: [singing] Rachel makes fun of my mess, and that doesn't make me feel the best. But I still love her, despite how she makes me feel.

Rachel: [laughs] I'm sorry.

Griffin: This is Wonderful, a show where we talk about things we like, things we're into, like the current state of my office and its orderliness, which is not great. Uh, I may have wrapped some anniversary present up here. A big one. And I think I did a pretty bang-up job. I don't want to brag, but I—this is my small wonder. I'm gonna go ahead and hop right into it. I like wrapping presents.

When you get that good fold over the corners...

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Ohh my god.

Rachel: That's really nice.

Griffin: That's so satisfying.

Rachel: I always think of this throwaway line from an episode of The Office, where Pam is talking about wrapping presents, and she says that you only should use three pieces of tape. And you can see how that's possible, and it is a goal to strive for.

Griffin: I'm usually a fiver. You fold it all the way over length-wise, and then you only need one piece on the bottom. But then, for each sort of folded up corner, I use two on each side.

Rachel: Oh, you like... ohh, okay. Okay.

Griffin: So, for a total of five. So I'm the problem. I'm what they made the movie Ferngully about, because of my insatiable appetite for adhesive strips.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Do you have a small wonder?

Rachel: Why don't you go first?

Griffin: I just did! I talked about wrapping presents!

Rachel: That was your thing?

Griffin: I can't do a second one! I could. Let me think. Uh, I've been playing so much chess lately, and there's a move you can do in chess called forking, which is like, you put a piece in a place where it could capture two pieces, and so, they can't save both of them.

Rachel: Ooh, I like that.

Griffin: Yesterday, I was playing a game against a buddy, and I forked three pieces at the same time.

Rachel: Oof!

Griffin: And it was just like, how do you want me to do you, bud? 'Cause, like, ooh, it's gonna go bad!

Rachel: Is there comments in the chess app, where you can be like, "How you like that?"

Griffin: Yeah, I mean, you can chat. I usually don't, because I am not confident enough in my skills to do so. But man, forkin' three pieces at once, ooh, it is hard to beat that. Yum yum.

Rachel: I'm just gonna say, the house on our street that has the 18-foot-tall snowman.

Griffin: I guess, just in general, *huge* fucking outdoor holiday decorations is a real theme for 2020.

Rachel: [laughs] Because y'know, everything requires reservations now, we've had difficulty finding an opportunity to bring Henry to holiday lights and decorations.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: But on our very street, you can walk a few houses down, and there is a giant, 18-foot Frosty the Snowman. And it's like—it's free entertainment.

Griffin: It's free. It's sad, but that's entertainment for us. We take our son on a walk, he sees a big snowman, he's like, "Cool." And then we go home.

Um, this is probably gonna be a bit of a short one. We're on a bit of a tight, uh, timetable here. But I wanted to start, 'cause it's my turn. And I wanted to talk about... this is holiday themed. We're going right in for it. Is uh, Carol of the Bells! Y'know that one? [sings a segment of 'Carol of the Bells']

Rachel: I do.

Griffin: Why, do you like it? Or do you not like it?

Rachel: No, I was just—I was excited to hear you—

Griffin: [continues singing]

Rachel: —replicate it. [laughs]

Griffin: Do you know what that's called? I learned a piece of musical terminology. I've probably heard it before, but I didn't know what it meant. It's an ostinato.

Rachel: Ooh!

Griffin: It's like, uh, a phrase that is repeated, like, constantly throughout a song. So I guess technically, like, uhh... Under Pressure, the bass line. The... [sings the bass line of 'Under Pressure'] Is an ostinato, because it's just like—

Rachel: Or—or like the Meow Mix commercial.

Griffin: [sings] Meow meow meow meow, meow meow—yeah, I guess so. Sure.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: But that four-note ostinato goes throughout like, the whole thing. Um, and y'all know what it is. I mean, I probably learned what this song is, mostly, I think, most of the sentiment, we all feel for it is thanks to Kevin McCallister and his many machinations.

Rachel: Yeah, I was gonna say.

Griffin: The version by Mannheim Steamroller is the most beloved version. But I've always sort of conceptually enjoyed Carol of the Bells, because it

doesn't sound like any other Christmas carol or Christmas song at all. Like, the idea of someone like, "I'm gonna write a Christmas song, but let's make it extra spooky and weird and tense."

But what I found out in my research is that, uh, that's not really how it went down. This—the melody of the song was written by a Ukrainian composer whose name was Mykola Leontovych in 1914. And he was commissioned to write, uh, a song based on Ukrainian folk music by this like, big Ukrainian choir.

And so, he did all this research into old Ukrainian folk stories, and he found this four-note ostinato, and he liked it, so he just composed this entire song around it. So this song that he wrote was called Schedryk, and it's based on this folk story that was sort of all about the new year, which, in like, pre-Christianity Ukraine, before they got on the Gregorian calendar I guess, was in... they celebrated that in spring. So it happened in April.

So this was an April-time, springtime sort of song without any lyrics, and the Ukrainian National Chorus in 1919 brought it all over Europe and America and toured with it. And I guess that's where, uh, Peter Wilhousky heard it, who wrote the lyrics to the song. He heard it and was like, "Oh, that's a good song. I think I'll take it."

Rachel: I don't think I knew there were lyrics.

Griffin: The... "Merry, merry, merry, merry Christmas! Merry—"

Rachel: Ohh. Yeah, I guess you're right.

Griffin: Um, so he wrote these lyrics to the song. He rearranged it for orchestra, because he was the arranger for the NBC symphony orchestra, right? So he wrote these lyrics to it, and the song, like, the melody reminded him of hand bells. So, hence the whole title. And because the lyrics of the song specifically, the, "Merry, merry, merry, merry Christmas!" It just kind of... now, his version was a Christmas song. But it wasn't that when it was originally composed.

And this song got a lot of play, because he was the arranger for the NBC symphony orchestra. Like, it was everywhere, and that is how it sort of became part of the canon of American holiday songs. And what's busted is, he trademarked—he copyrighted the lyrics, and he published it, even though... in the Ukraine, it had been published almost 20 years earlier. I guess everybody just kind of like, wasn't paying attention to that, or was okay with that.

But that is why, to this day, the lyrics to that song are copyrighted. The melody of the song is public domain.

Rachel: Ohh!

Griffin: Because they still uphold the copyright on that song. Isn't that wild?

Rachel: That may be why I hear the song more than the lyrics.

Griffin: Yes, maybe that's why. Mannheim Steamroller is coming at you with that pure, uh—that pure orchestral version.

Rachel: See, Metallica wouldn't have let that stand.

Griffin: No way. Not at all. Uh, so yeah, Mannheim Steamroller released the most sort of known version of it on their 1988 album, *A Fresh Air Christmas*, which is... it sold like six million copies. It's like, one of the best-selling holiday albums ever recorded.

Um, and yeah, I'll play it, I guess, to wrap up. But before I played it, I wanted to point out this like, cool, weird music illusion that exists in it, that I also found while I was researching it. That like, um, melody... that ostinato that goes throughout the whole thing gives it a flexible time signature, where uh, different—if you play it on hand bells, right?

If you think about like, a hand bell choir playing it, certain bells play it in 3/4 time. And certain bells play it in 6/8 time. And as a result, when you're listening to it, you can focus on either way of like, either time signature. The

like... [clapping] One, two, three. One, two, three. Or... [clapping] One, two, three, four, five, six. You can hear it either way, and it works.

Rachel: Oh!

Griffin: I forget the term for it, but it's like, a weird thing. So, um... yeah, I thought that was really interesting, and now, uh, here's a little bit of Carol of the Bells.

[‘Carol of the Bells’ by Mannheim Steamroller plays]

Griffin: What's your first thing?

Rachel: Uh, my thing is also kind of festive. Although, it has a longer shelf life, I'd say, in this season, and that is s'mores.

Griffin: S'mo—okay. F—nah.

Rachel: You don't think it's festive?

Griffin: In what way is that—who has Christmas s'mores?! Who has—it's time for the Hanukkah s'mores! Like, who does—

Rachel: I'm saying, it's like a wintertime...

Griffin: I guess so? But you also go camping in the summertime.

Rachel: Yeah, that's true... I was just trying to segue.

Griffin: No, I feel you. I feel you. It's good.

Rachel: Oh...

Griffin: You can say this – Carol of the Bells is fire. And speaking of fire... s'mores?

Rachel: [laughs] S'mores? This is one of those things that I couldn't believe we hadn't talked about before.

Griffin: Yeah, it's unbelievable.

Rachel: 'Cause it's such a like, perfect little treat.

Griffin: It's good.

Rachel: And it's easy to kind of forget how good a s'more is until you have one, and then you're just like, there is—there is nothing this good in the world.

Griffin: I think, um... I think, for me, it's—I think about how messy it is and sticky it is, and I just think, "This is not worth it." And then I eat one, and I'm like, "This is so fuckin' worth it. This is so hugely worth it."

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, yeah. I uh... I was thinking about this the other day, because a lot of times, you can buy like, dessert treats in s'more flavor.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: We got a series of fancy donuts the other day.

Griffin: That's true.

Rachel: Like a flight of donuts, one might say.

Griffin: Well, they were anni—they were anniversary donuts. Let's call them what they were, which was... Rachel and Griffin's sad anniversary dessert donuts that we had.

Rachel: [laughs] And there were a lot of donut options that had graham cracker on it. And I said, "Oh man, I wish they had a s'more one." They didn't.

Griffin: Yeah. We also get—uh, we were occasionally getting these little... what were they called? Ice box pies? These little cups of s'more leavens. It was real good.

Rachel: So good. Uh, so I did a little history on, uh, the s'more. And it's interesting, because it's a combination of a few things, y'know? And when I was reading about it, a lot of people weren't talking about the chocolate. They were like, "Chocolate's chocolate. There's no story there." [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh, but I found some information about graham crackers and marshmallows that I thought was kind of interesting.

Griffin: Okay, hit me.

Rachel: Uh, so, the very first marshmallows came from a plant called *Althaea officinalis*. Uh, and it was the root and the leaves of the plant would create this like, white, stretchy, marshmallow kind of stuff.

Griffin: Gross!

Rachel: And it was used to help with inflammation and as a laxative!

Griffin: Fantastic! I imagine that's a side effect of most stuff you can rip out of plants and just eat.

Rachel: That's true! That's a fair point! Uh, they used to take it and also make it into a lozenge to kind of soothe the throat.

Griffin: And excite the bowels.

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah, right? That was probably like, uh, those olestra snacks, where it was like, "Don't have more than five of these." [laughs]

Griffin: I'll be honest – I can think of many times in my life where I could use a throat lozenge. I'll be honest – right now, I wouldn't mind having a

laxative throat lozenge. Where is that at? I want the commercial where the guy's on the mountaintop with the horn, and he's like, "Ricolaaaa—I gotta go!!" Doot doot doot doot! "Where's the bathroom? I'm on top of a mountain! Oh no!"

Rachel: I mean, he's got that big horn with the open end.

Griffin: Are you saying he's gonna poop into the horn, Rachel McElroy?

Rachel: I'm saying, in an emergency, all horns serve as toilets.

Griffin: Rachel!

Rachel: I know. This is not the kind of humor...

Griffin: This is so off brand for you! So wildly off brand!

Rachel: [laughing] Uh, but—so, this is like, very labor intensive and expensive to do. So, by the end of the 19th century, they started using gelatin, because it was, y'know, kind of approximately the same texture, and you can make gelatin taste like a lot of things.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Graham crackers. This, I feel like, has to have been covered on a Sawbones. Although, I'm not 100% on that, but...

Griffin: Oh, that they were like a digestive thing?

Rachel: Well... it's a little more sinister.

Griffin: Uh-oh.

Rachel: An early 19th century Presbyterian minister named Sylvester Graham believed that humanity was on its way to collapse, due to a like, sex obsession. And so, he—

Griffin: In the 19th—in the 19th cen—sorry, did you say 1969? The summer of love? No, you said... the 19th century.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: No! Simply not! If only he knew!

Rachel: [laughing] Uh, yeah, no kidding.

Griffin: Show him some—show him a fuckin' episode of Riverdale. Like, what's up now, pal?

Rachel: [laughing] Uh, and he thought that the food we ate was contributing to our need to have sex.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: He said uh, that for example, a steak dinner with wine could increase the excitability of the genital organs.

Griffin: Depends on the size of the steak. Just sort of anecdotally speaking.

Rachel: No, that's a good point.

Griffin: Me and a big ol' just... gut full of red meat? Not at my most randy, let's say.

Rachel: [laughing] Uh, so he tried to find a food item that he thought would curb that desire. And so, the graham cracker was invented, which he named after himself.

Griffin: [laughing] I'll say this – I think he crushed it. I don't think of graham crackers as being a particular aphrodisiac in any way.

Rachel: No, it's true.

Griffin: He created a boner-neutral food.

Rachel: I bet the s'more would just... outrage him.

Griffin: The s'more, though. The lascivious stretching of the marshmallow, and the dripping, gooey chocolate. Oh my.

Rachel: [laughing] Do you need to go eat some... some snake? Some snake?! Some *steak* to calm down.

Griffin: I think I might go actually eat a snake.

Rachel: [laughs] That would probably do it.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: Uh, so, the combination of everything together actually first debuted in a 1927 Girl Scout guide book.

Griffin: Okay!

Rachel: Uh, the book was all about, y'know, being a good Girl Scout. But there was a suggestion... a troop leader named Loretta Scott Crew called for, uh, a recipe that she called "some more."

Griffin: I figured that that was probably the, uh, etymology.

Rachel: Which was 16 graham crackers, eight bars of chocolate, and 16 marshmallows. Uh, we're not sure exactly when it went from "some more" to "s'more."

Griffin: Probably—I mean, somebody was in a hurry. I can figure that one out.

Rachel: [laughs] Um, but yeah. And then, of course, y'know, there are like, Mallomars and Moon Pies that have kind of a... a similar vibe.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: The s'more in its proper form was actually a creation of the Girl Scouts.

Griffin: Do you like a Moon Pie?

[pause]

Griffin: Oh no.

Rachel: [sighs] I think I'm lookin' for the graham cracker in the Moon Pie.

Griffin: Ohh, okay.

Rachel: The Moon Pie is all—it's very spongy. Like, the whole thing, top to bottom.

Griffin: Okay. I legally... I feel like, being from West Virginia, and being from Appalachia, I can't say anything bad about the Moon Pie.

Rachel: Is that the origin of the Moon Pie?

Griffin: No, we just really liked Moon Pies. It was a good—that, and RC Cola were like, a huge thing growing up.

Rachel: The chocolate isn't really chocolaty, as I recall. Which is part of it. Like, there's a suggestion of chocolate, but I like that. I like the texture of a s'more, because you get like, a little more...

Griffin: Oh, it's no substitute for a s'more, but I like a Moon Pie a lot.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah. Is there anything else?

Rachel: Nope, that's it.

Griffin: Now I want a Moon Pie. So now we have to talk about what we're gonna do about that.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I guess a s'more would also do it, but we don't have the stuff for that, I don't think.

Rachel: I mean... we could put that together.

Griffin: With what? We don't have marshmallows, I don't think. We do— just whip some eggs with like, sugar and mayonnaise?

Rachel: We don't, but we have plants. So, let's just dig—

Griffin: There's gotta be some white stuff in some of these plants! Hey, can I steal you away?

Rachel: [laughing] Yes.

[ad break stinger plays]

[ad break]

Griffin: Alright, we got a bunch of jumbotrons here. We're catching up, making up for lost time, so let's start doin' 'em. Here's one for Shane, and it's from Ashley who says, "Shane, you are my sunshine when skies are gray, my partner in quarantined binge-watching crime, my favorite everything, and the most wonderful part of all my days. Have a fantastic birthday, and don't forget to take your vitamins! I love you always, Ashley."

P.S. I will be replaying this episode of Wonderful for all your birthdays to come. Love you.”

That’s so smart, Ashley. You gotta work smarter, not harder.

Rachel: It is smart, but not technically allowable, unfortunately.

Griffin: It is illegal. And let me say, this time stamp, Shane – this one is only for your 2020 birthday. And any other—it doesn’t apply to any other ones, and Ashley, if you want that, you gotta... you gotta pay up.

Rachel: Uh, can I read the next one?

Griffin: Please.

Rachel: This is for Claire. It is from Ty-Ty. “Claire, watching you work in your new garden has been one of the most wonderful parts of this year. I’m so proud of your new green thumb and excited to eat those dang beans and peas. You and our shitty kitties, Nina and Nugget, fill my heart with joy in a tumultuous, frequently un-wonderful world. Let’s get Thai and finish DS9. I love you. Tyler.”

Griffin: DS9. What do you think that stands for?

Rachel: I was assuming you would know!

Griffin: I do.

Rachel: Oh.

Griffin: [sings] This is a nerd test! Prove your credentials!

Rachel: Uhh... Deep Space Nine!

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: I did it!

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: I did it.

Griffin: Babe, congrats!

Rachel: Thank you.

Griffin: That's so choice. You fucking *geek!*

Rachel: [laughs] I'm gonna add this to my LinkedIn.

Griffin: Neeeed!

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: Anyway. Uh, here's another message. This one's for Ara, it's from Jude, who says, "My darling Ara, thank you so much for all the joy and love we've shared in the last three years. I never want to imagine my life without you, and I hope I never have to. Here's to many more years of laughing, cooking, and growing together, and snuggles with our bunny. If this airs in December, happy birthday and anniversary. All my love. Forever your pumpkin, Jude."

Uhh, that's just economical right there. You get that birthday. You get that anniversary. You sneakin' up on the holidays. That's good. Plan to have all that stuff to—me and Rachel, anniversary on the seventh. We get that slammed right up against Christmas. We make it—we got it so tight. If only our birthdays were in December, too. We could really just sort of cram it...

Rachel: And just have a joyless rest of the year. [laughs]

Griffin: But boy howdy, would it be anticipation for the big one! Ooh! That would be nice.

Rachel: Uh, this next message is for Mike. It is from Adina. "You're the best partner out there for me, and I couldn't be happier about how far we've come, or what a strong team we make. Thank you for being so wonderful, loving, and supportive. I can't believe how much fun we're still having after seven months of quarantine, and that makes me incredibly excited for the fun life we have ahead of us. I love us."

Griffin: I love us too! That's such a nice way of saying that! That is such a lovely way of saying that, and I'm glad you're having fun after seven months of quarantine. What do you think the secret is? You think it's, um...

Rachel: Twister.

Griffin: Twister, you think?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Just straight up Twister? I think after seven months of playing Twister every night, you probably have some pretty wild homebrew rules.

Rachel: Mmm.

Griffin: Some additional sort of secret dots. The forbidden Twister dots. Y'know what I mean?

Rachel: Mm-hmm. [laughing]

Griffin: Do you... know what I mean?

Rachel: I mean...

Griffin: Yadadada mean?

Rachel: I assume so.

Griffin: Wink wink wink wink wink wink wink! Wink wink wink wink!

Rachel: [laughs] Y'know, you didn't actually have to wink, because this is an audio... but you did.

Griffin: That's fair. I didn't want to confuse you.

Rachel: Yeah.

[Maximum Fun advertisement plays]

Griffin: My second thing is gonna be very, very fast, because I'm looking at the notes I wrote for it, and it's mad fuckin' boring. So...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: You gotta be honest with yourself sometimes. The thing I wanted to talk about was Microsoft Paint.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: For reasons that will become clear to anybody who watches our upcoming Candlenights special, uh, which we'll have more details about here at the end of the episode, because I don't have them in front of me... but it's gonna be very, very fun. I think it's on the 19th? That feels right, but we'll have more details that will be for sure accurate at the end of the episode.

Uh, I did a lot of illustrating this past week or so. Not in Microsoft Paint. I think I did it in Procreate, which is like, the unfortunately titled Apple illustration app that's very, very fun to mess around with. But that got me thinking about my long history with digital illustration, most of which took place in MS Paint. I just—MS Paint has been included in some form or another in every Windows release, sometimes as like, a third party drawing app. And then, as a more, uh...

It was Paint Brush for a while, and it still is there today on Windows 10. But all the way back in 1985 with Windows 1.0, there was a Paint app included with the operating system. And back when it came out in 1985, it was this

third-party app with one-bit monochrome graphics. So, y'know... not the best, not the most sophisticated stuff at all, but it was free. It came with the thing, and it was probably everybody's first exposure to digital art, which is really cool.

And then as time went on, you got Windows 3.0. They were like, "Hey, here's color." And everybody's like, "Whoa, that's huge."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Another big thing was like, graphical formats, which is like, not something that we think about today, but back in the day was actually super important. Like, now we got JPGs! And people were like, "Oh, shit. I've heard about JPGs."

Rachel: I used to use it a lot for cropping. Uh... back before the platforms would give you the option to do that, like, in the platform itself, I would open up a JPG in the Paint, and I would crop it, and then I would save it again.

Griffin: Yeah, I mean, things like importing actual images was a feature that had to be added to Paint as it went along, alongside color. In '95, you could make your own color palettes, which is, of course, like... now it's a huge deal. Now it doesn't have to be these bright, neon sort of primary colors. We can make it be whatever we want.

And then you got like, interface improvements, more format compatibility, things like transparency options, which you don't think about as being like, a thing that had to be introduced. Uh, they added 3D support when Windows 10 came out. In 2017 – I really loved this – Microsoft added an alert whenever you launched Paint that said like, "Hey, this is gonna be deprecated soon," meaning that they're not gonna keep it updated, and it won't be included automatically.

Rachel: Ohh.

Griffin: You can like, download it from the Microsoft store, but it won't have this like, continuous support. And that alert stayed on whenever you launched Paint for two years, until they updated the app in 2019, and just removed the alert, 'cause they reversed their decision and were like, "We can't drop Paint! It's fuckin' Paint! We gotta have Paint! They love Paint!"

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah. I mean, I've talked about my lack of artistic ability a lot. I think, very recently on this show. But I always felt very empowered with Microsoft Paint, because of simple things like drawing and drag and drawing shapes. Like, hey, now you can draw perfect geometric shapes and fill them in and not worry about it. That's why I think most of my time with MS Paint, I used to like, make maps for like, different made up board games or fantasy bullshit.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: That I was on at the time. Um, there was something just really—there was something very reassuring about knowing that it was gonna be on every Windows PC. And now, I guess I can sort of expand this topic to like, all of the Windows freeware stuff.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I think back a lot to... uh, my mom was a secretary at our church that we went to. So there were a lot of days, especially during the summer, where I would just like, be at the church building for my mom's entire workday, right? And the—y'know, you can play hide and seek, or explore—y'know, just poke around the church and get lost in weird closets and stuff for a while, but that gets boring after a bit.

But I knew, if I sat down at one of the computers at the church, when it was somebody else's, I could paint. I could play Minesweeper. Solitaire. I could play some fuckin' Ski Free. I could play some Jezz Ball.

Rachel: Free Cell.

Griffin: Free Cell. I could play some Space Cadet 3D Pinball, which was the real shit, and I think was included in like, '95 on. There are people right now who know exactly what I'm talking about. I do not think you're included among them.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, yeah. I just like—I like the idea of just like, seeing a computer and saying like, “I can paint on that if I need to.” I did a lot of that during—I would produce the newscasts for the radio station at Marshall, and to try and make the news anchors laugh, I would draw like, really terrible silly drawings on the monitor, and then like, suddenly switch between windows so it would just appear, and try and make the anchors laugh while they were in the middle of the newscast. Like, I don't know. I have a lot of fond Microsoft Paint memories.

Rachel: Wow!

Griffin: And it's free, and ubiquitous, and I think that's... pretty magical.

Rachel: It is!

Griffin: And also not very interesting to talk at length about. So yeah. What's your second thing?

Rachel: Uh, my second thing is... I don't know. It'll be interesting to kind of see how you experience this.

Griffin: Oh boy.

Rachel: It is the “what's in my bag” concept, made popular by Us Weekly.

Griffin: Okay? Okay.

Rachel: It's the idea... and I don't know if you've seen this or not, but they take a celebrity, and they like, quote, like, dump the contents of their purse

out, and you see the products they're using and what they're carrying around.

Griffin: Sure. We've glanced off this a couple times. I think I've talked about the concept of your load out, like, your all-day carry scenario. And then, I think there was a music magazine or blog that did something like this with like, uh...

Rachel: Oh, the records!

Griffin: The records, yeah.

Rachel: Yeah. Amoeba Music, I think, did that.

Griffin: But this is, I will admit, a different sort of experience from that.

Rachel: Yeah, so I wanted to give you an example. So, this is, uh, Busy Phillips from 2018.

Griffin: Fuck yeah! What's Busy workin' with?

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, and so, she's got some, uh... some Goldfish crackers in a fruit pouch.

Griffin: Fuck yeah, Busy Phillips! [laughing]

Rachel: I mean, she's got kids. It's not like, for her.

Griffin: Oh. Well, still.

Rachel: [laughs] There's y'know, some earrings, and then, some kind of carefully, uh, curated products. Y'know, like a hand sanitizer or a lip balm. Some mascara.

Griffin: You got to.

Rachel: And then there's just loose slime in a small plastic tub.

Griffin: I'm glad you reminded me that Busy Phillips has kids, or else I would've gone from like, "That's so dope," to like, "Loose slime, huh?"

Rachel: At the time, she had a ten year old and a five year old. So...

Griffin: We recently, just quick sidebar, went through the slime crucible, because Henry got a Clayface—big Clayface action figure from Batman that came with slime that would like, dump out of his mouth. And he did that exactly once, and it like, stuck to the cardboard that we were playing with it on, and he didn't seem—he did not seem to enjoy it very much. And so, we were able to throw it away, and he didn't really notice. So I feel like we've...

Rachel: He did mention it again, though.

Griffin: He mentioned it once. He was like, "Hey, Clayface slime. What happened with it?" And we had to remind him like, "You got it on the cardboard and were grossed out by it, and so, we threw it in the garbage can."

Rachel: Mm-hmm. We do have a Venom toy coming soon, though, with a similar accessory.

Griffin: Fuuuck!

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Stop it! Don't package—it's fucked up to package slime with cool action figures.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: 'Cause our son likes cool action figures, and you guys are trying to backdoor slime, like, into our house and lives. It's terrible.

Rachel: Um... yeah, I'm glad you reminded me of the all-day carry thing, because I do feel like there's a similar thing at play here. Where, I like this feature, because there is this idea that there is this like, perfect combination of goods that will, uh, address all of your needs, and can be compact enough to carry around with you. Y'know?

Griffin: Oh, for sure.

Rachel: Part of it is definitely that. Part of it is like, a voyeurism of just like, "Oh, yeah, what does Darcy Carden carry around?"

Griffin: What do—real quick, what does Darcy Carden carry around?

Rachel: I mean, I could tell you. She is a feature on here.

Griffin: Alright. I mean, I'm curious! I think whatever she's on is probably some pretty cool shit. Maybe not as cool as the Goldfish and fruit snacks and slime of Busy Phillips, which is truly a fantastic inventory.

Rachel: Okay, so this is from March 2020.

Griffin: Oh, boy! Hot off the presses!

Rachel: Looks like she's got some Trident gum.

Griffin: Perfect.

Rachel: Some gummy vitamins, which you'll appreciate.

Griffin: Whoa! In the bag?

Rachel: In the bag!

Griffin: Damn, that's a new one! That's bathroom candy! But now it's, what, bag candy? I love it!

Rachel: Uh, she has a spray painted rubber dinosaur that she got at her sister's wedding.

Griffin: Okay?

Rachel: Some ear buds. Um, and then, y'know, some eye drops and hand sanitizer. Some mascara.

Griffin: Yeah, I imagine everybody's bag contains hand sanitizer after March of 2020. That's pretty much a guarantee.

Rachel: Uh, so, the history of this kind of feature goes back to the '90s. I found an example. So, there's this great article, this Racked article, where they talk about how this has kind of evolved over time. And they talk about a 1995 Seventeen interview with Claire Danes.

Griffin: Where they were like, "Dump your fucking bag out." And she was like, "What?!"

Rachel: Where she had, in her backpack, a tape of a song that her boyfriend, Ben Lee, wrote about her.

Griffin: [laughs] Oh man! Wait, were they together?

Rachel: I guess so!

Griffin: They're not still together, are they? Claire Danes and Ben Lee?

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: No, this was a '90s thing.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: I also found a 2002 Spin article on Fiona Apple.

Griffin: Oh, gosh.

Rachel: Where she was carrying around, quote, "a bag of jewels and ribbons." [laughs]

Griffin: That sounds good. That sounds right.

Rachel: And then, quote, "lots of empty card packets from when David Blaine was around." So I guess she was with David Blaine for a while? These are little time capsules.

Griffin: I just love the idea of, wherever David Blaine goes, he leaves a trail of empty card packets in his wake.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: She was carrying around his refuse?

Rachel: Like, at the gas station. Y'know, maybe the attendant wants to see a trick, and he's like, "Alright, hold on..." And he pulls out one of his 37 packs of cards that he has.

Griffin: Yeah. Or he just rips it open and looks for a holo foil Charizard in there, and he's like, "No. Again, no Charizard." And he throws them away.

Rachel: Uh, so... [laughs] Us Weekly is the one I'm referring to, because they put it in every magazine. It's always towards the front. And you can find all of these archived online, which is how I was able to find them on such short notice.

Griffin: Fantastic.

Rachel: Uh, it is also definitely like, a marketing thing.

Griffin: Oh, yeah.

Rachel: Jennifer Garner, like, showed her Neutrogena products. And then, uh, Jessica Alba showed her like, Honest Company products. Like, oh, hey, y'know.

Griffin: Oh, yeah. I mean, I'm sure they do carry that stuff around, but alright.

Rachel: There's also—Katy Perry had one of her own perfumes in her purse, supposedly, which I think is kind of delightful.

Griffin: I would use—if I made a scent, I would carry it.

Rachel: Carry it around with you?

Griffin: For sure, yeah.

Rachel: Yeah?

Griffin: It's all about, y'know, spreading the brand around.

Rachel: It can also be kind of quirky and fun. Uh, and one of the examples was Nicki Minaj carrying five thousand dollars in loose cash.

Griffin: [laughs] Alright.

Rachel: [laughing] Which I just love. Like in case, y'know, she needs to shower herself in it, or purchase, y'know, a lot of... y'know, uh, gum.

Griffin: I come at this from a different way, where I love seeing that shit for like, uh, music producers and like, uh, traveling digital artists and stuff like that. Or like, journalists who carry around like... I want to see what laptop they're using, and what, like, headphones they're using, and what moleskin they're using. Like, that shit, I'm super into.

Rachel: Yeah! It's—I feel like it is, like, equal parts voyeurism and also like, someone tell me...

Griffin: What a grownup has?

Rachel: Yeah, exactly. [laughing]

Griffin: [laughing] Yeah.

Rachel: The person that wrote this Racked article recognized kind of a trend in this “what’s in your bag” story, which is, there is a quirky personal item, a healthy snack, beauty products, which combine both kind of high end and low end, so like, a chap stick and a super expensive something. And then, something related to either your kids, husband, or boyfriend.

Griffin: Interesting.

Rachel: Which is almost universally true, when you look at these.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: There’s a new thing out there, which I'm not as familiar with, but... through Instagram, there is something called a top shelfie, which is a “what’s in your medicine cabinet.”

Griffin: N—no.

Rachel: I know, right?

Griffin: Y'all don't get to see that.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Y'all don't get to see my—I don't have a medicine cabinet, but I do have two drawers that I don't want nobody looking in to see my two bottles

of fuckin' eczema cream side by side. Y'all don't get to see that. That's my secrets.

Rachel: So, the thing about this... it's this site called, uh... Into the Gloss. And if you use the hash tag #ITGTopShelfie, you're kind of competing to get featured on their site.

Griffin: Who the fuck wants people to see their medicine cabinet?!

Rachel: This is the thing. So, it is a bunch of people trying to be influencers, and they have all the like, top end facial creams and moisturizers and toners, and...

Griffin: Okay. Yes.

Rachel: It's not like, here's my like, three year old Band-Aids. [laughs]

Griffin: As a protest, I am going to send a picture of my drawer, which contains, just off the top of my head, several empty pill caddies.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, some poorly maintained electric razors.

Rachel: Some like, Nyquil that expired in 2016.

Griffin: Yes. Uh, nose hair clippers that have needed new batteries for about three months.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: Because of the truly astonishing amount of play those bad boys get.

Rachel: [laughing] Um, this one appeals to me a little less, because it is so deliberately curated.

Griffin: Yeah, of course.

Rachel: Like, not only does this website kind of screen for the products, but it also screens for the person. So they're looking specifically for a person who is not wearing a lot of makeup, and has some kind of like, romantic backstory, so they can feature them and the lifestyle that they've created.

Um, but uh... yeah, I was kind of fascinated by that, that this has evolved into a new thing. And of course, Instagram would be the perfect place to do this.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: So yeah, so this is one of those things, like... I have thought about it for a while and bringing it to Wonderful, but it's kind of embarrassing, because it's like... well, I'm not hugely into celebrity culture. Like, I definitely was interested in knowing, y'know, what kind of gum, y'know, Madonna chews.

Griffin: And it's surprisingly Zebra Stripes.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, hey, real quick, I want to tell you what our friends at home are talking about. I know we're out of time. But Emma says, "Hi, y'all. Something I found wonderful recently is the YouTube channel, Lockpicking Lawyer. He reviews locks and how easy they are to pick. The comments section is immaculate, including absolutely destroying the locks that take a short amount of time to be picked. It's so satisfying and so fun to laugh at something so innocuous."

I've seen some of these. It pops up in my YouTube recommendations.

Rachel: Oh!

Griffin: It's fun. Sometimes he gets sent like, locks in the mail from somebody who's like, "You'll never break this fuckin' lock." And then he breaks it in like, a second and a half.

Uh, Ben says, "An album, Gay Story, by In Love with a Ghost. So great to de-stress /sleep/meditate/vibe to." Wanted to include this one, because I recently did my Spotify Year in Review thing, and this album is, I think, my number one. It's a great little chill sort of lo-fi album that I, uh—I love In Love with a Ghost, and uh... I also highly recommend this album, Gay Story. You can find it on a lot of places, but it's real nice. Nice to vibe out to.

Hey, okay, lot of stuff real quick. MaximumFun.org, thanks for having us on the network, and thanks to Bo En and Augustus for the use of our theme song, Money Won't Pay. You can find a link to that in the episode description.

Two events that we need to tell you about.

Rachel: Yeah! One, you know about. One is news to you.

Griffin: Yes. So the one you know about, maybe, is our Candlenights special. It is airing December 19th at eight PM Eastern standard time. It has little bits from all of the McElroy shows. It's pre-taped.

Rachel: Holiday-themed.

Griffin: And it's all holiday-themed, all Candlenights themed. The—Rachel and I have presented, uh, a long form Rachel's Poetry Corner with illustrations and an original piece from myself.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: And it's uh, pretty buckwild, and the hardest I think I've ever worked on anything. So I think you're really gonna enjoy that.

Rachel: Yeah. There'll be a Candlenights poster available for sale, and all proceeds will go to Harmony House in Huntington, West Virginia.

Griffin: Yes. Tickets are pay what you want with a \$6.25 minimum. That's six dollars and 25 cents. And you can find details all at McElroy.family. So, come watch it. It's gonna be absolutely amazing, and I'm actually really excited to see how it all turns out, and I think you will, too.

Rachel: Yeah, so if you go to McElroy—or, sorry, TheMcElroy.family and then click on tours, you can get more information about that.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Also there will be a newly announced show that we are doing specifically with just Wonderful!

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: And that'll be December 29th. Tickets are going to be available December 10th at that same location. There is an organization here in Austin that I am passionate about called Austin Bat Cave, and as kind of a year-end fundraiser, we're gonna do a Wonderful performance online.

Griffin: Yeah. Rachel's been on the board for them for, what, like, half a year now or something like that?

Rachel: A year. Mm-hmm.

Griffin: And it's an amazing organization that like, helps to foster all kinds of sort of interest in writing, and...

Rachel: Yeah, they do, uh—they do writing programs for youth, and they actually also do some adult programming now. But the idea is to bring creative writing instruction to people all over the city that might not have access to it otherwise.

Griffin: I've done summer D&D workshops with them, with like, young folks for the last three years. It's a really, really special organization. We're stoked to be able to support them with a live show.

Rachel: So there'll be more information about that on TheMcElroy.family if you go to tours.

Griffin: Yeah. Uh, yeah. Hopefully by the time this comes out, that link will be up there.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But yeah, that's it. Okay, we gotta run, 'cause you're late for a meeting now.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: So, I guess tell them that, uh, the dog ate my computer. Right?

Rachel: I was recording a podcast with my husband. And everyone will be like, "Yeah, us too." [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs] It's 2020. We're in Austin. We all have podcasts! Get out of here!

[theme music plays]

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