

Wonderful! 167: The Christmas Crab

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[theme music plays]

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hi, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is Wonderful!

Griffin: Thanks for joining us. Today, thanks for— I feel your spirit in the studio. You ever do that? You ever feel like the listener, like, they're in here with us, and it's like...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Y'know, they're like, ghosts or angels or something, and there's two of them, 'cause there's two of us, right? And so, one of them's behind me, and they have their little spectral hands on my shoulders, and then there's one behind you with their hands on your shoulders, but I see that, and I'm like, "That's my— that's my *wife!*" Do you ever do that?

Rachel: Y'know, I took a lot of creative writing classes, and they talked about how some writers have like, a particular person in mind that they are writing to.

Griffin: Interesting.

Rachel: That helps them kind of focus their work and their voice.

Griffin: Okay. So, what's your— who's your ghost angel that you're writing for?

Rachel: My ghost angel.

Griffin: Mine is named— uh, his name is Thomas. And he lives in... uh, he lives in Detroit. And he loves alt comedy, and podcasting, and it's going straight to Thomas.

Rachel: Uh-huh. Mine is Connie Britton.

Griffin: Oh yeah. Can't go wrong there.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: If you make something for Connie Britton, it's gonna be a crowd pleaser, pretty much no matter what.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Do you have any small wonders, though, is what I'm wondering?

Rachel: I want to say Valentine's Day stuff.

Griffin: Oh yeah.

Rachel: Just like, the candy, the cookies, the treats. I went to Trader Joe's. They had all of their little seasonal Valentine's things out, and I just— I just pushed them into my cart aggressively.

Griffin: Yeah, I had myself a little snack attack last night, didn't I? Ooh, little gummy Xs and Os. Had some of them. Had some of those chocolate covered shortbread hearts. Num num num num num! Good stuff, good stuff.

Rachel: I know that it is basically the same thing I could buy year-round, but when it is in a little seasonal shape, I'm just like, well... that has to belong to me now.

Griffin: Right, yeah.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Uh, we just sta— I'll say Ozark. We started watching Ozark. It's not our kind of show. It's very bleak. Oppressively bleak, I would argue.

Rachel: Yeah, we're only in the first season. So, it may get worse, y'know?
[laughs]

Griffin: It probably will. It's like Breaking Bad, but like, less fun. It's— I'm describing it. I don't know why I— it's just—

Rachel: There's no build up. I was telling Griffin, with Breaking Bad, you get some time to like, get used to this life of crime. Whereas, Ozark, it is literally episode one.

Griffin: It's just nasty, nasty from the jump.

Rachel: Episode one is like, hey, there's crime.

Griffin: Yeah. So it's— I never feel great after finishing an episode, but it is— like, I get it now. I get why people have been talking about this show for a while. It's— I guess it's okay to watch a little, y'know, a prestige grim dark drama like this from time to time. Not my usual cup of tea, but y'know, we need something to watch.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: There's a new season of the glass blowing show on Netflix.

Rachel: I know! I didn't watch the first season.

Griffin: Oh, well—

Rachel: So now we can experience it together.

Griffin: No, there's no point. You'll miss out on all the important plot points.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, I think I go first this week.

Rachel: Great.

Griffin: I prepped this first subject without realizing that it is very kind of similar to a subject that I brought, uh, last week, when I talked about trading card games and Pokémon and stuff like that. But I saw an article pop up about this thing, and it's not so much the thing I like as the concept of the thing. And it is the concept of Beanie Babies, and the investment...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And listen, this is not— I do not want to judge the people who got, uh, snookered into the Beanie Baby habit. Because they're, but for the grace of God, went I. Um...

Rachel: This feels like a real pivotal moment in our relationship for a lot of reasons.

Griffin: [nervously] Okay.

Rachel: But largely, because I don't think of you as much of a collector.

Griffin: Are you— really, babe? You don't think of me as much of— should I open my closet door for you, where I have all my dark collections?

Rachel: Yeah, I guess you're not— you're not regularly on the eBay.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: You don't have a bunch of doodads that are like, spilling out into all the rooms of our house. Like, when I think—

Griffin: No, I keep them neatly organized in my office closet.

Rachel: Maybe this is just like, a secret little habit that I just haven't really explored with you.

Griffin: I mean, it depends on what you call a collection, right? I have, probably, 500 different video games in my closet right there. I'd say I probably have been collecting those across different generations for most of my life.

Rachel: Yeah. I guess collections can be what you hold onto, and not an active habit.

Griffin: Right. Most of my Beanie Baby collecting took place through the McDonald's Teenie Beanies. Uh, which, even then, I remember like, getting a Happy Meal with a Teenie Beanie inside it, and getting it, and being like, "Oh, this is gonna... be my nest egg!"

Rachel: How does it feel for you to say 'Teenie Beanie' out loud?

Griffin: Not great. Not great. But people used to say shit like that all the time in the '90s. So this is— '90s kids 'member. I really do want to talk about this, because I know our audience skews young, and I think that sort of... through cultural osmosis, people probably know about Beanie Babies, but I don't know that everybody really recognizes the true depths of depravity that people went through to get their hands on these little guys.

Um, if you don't know, Beanie Babies were these little wildly under-stuffed kind of rag dolls that looked like different animals with different sort of colorful cloth exteriors that were stuffed with these tiny little... what were they, like, PVC little beads.

Rachel: Yeah, like a bean bag. I mean, stuffed in the way that a bean bag is, so it's kind of floppy.

Griffin: Yeah, they were not— they were not very full, which some folks took as a knock on the quality of the Beanie Baby line. Uh, Ty Warner, who created Beanie Babies, and was the titular founder of Ty Inc., the company that made Beanie Babies...

Rachel: Wow!

Griffin: Uh, he said that under-stuffing them like that made them look, quote, “real.” I like that.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I like that a lot. So, this first line of nine Beanie Babies launched from Ty Inc. in 1993. Um, and those nine are like, among the most, quote unquote, “valuable,” but I will get to the value of these stuffed toys here in a moment.

But they really didn’t take off until late 1995, and that’s when beanie buying fever kind of hit its zenith. Um, and there were two main reasons why, like, this was such a thing in the late ‘90s, and why they attracted all of these collectors. And the first is that Ty Inc. was vicious about artificial scarcity of these dolls.

They would only release like, a certain number of each model of Beanie Baby, and then would just stop selling them, stop manufacturing them entirely. And then, would move onto the next model and do the exact same thing, right? So there was never this like, overwhelming surplus of certain models of Beanie Babies.

They also all had these tags on them. Uh, and the tags would have, uh, the birthday for the Beanie Baby, and a little poem for the Beanie Baby. And because the speed with which they were manufacturing these, there were a lot of typos on those tags. So if you had one from like, a limited set with a typo tag or some, y'know, rare tag, then the value of it sort of multiplied, right?

And the way that they really tapped into their consumer base – and this was kind of revolutionary at the time – in late 1995, Ty Inc. made a website that they would post the link to on these tags. Like, hey, go to TyInc.com or whatever the website was, to learn more about this Beanie Baby and find out more about like, its value and what the next line of bea— and they were really the first ones to like, interact with customers through their website.

Which seems like... every— that’s the only reason websites exist now.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But in 1995, like, nobody was really doing it like that.

Rachel: No, it’s true.

Griffin: And so, y'know, you had this market of artificial scarcity, and then, this website for information for collectors to go and like, learn all about their shit. And because of that, like, 1995 to 1998, like, Beanie Babies were... like, buckwild. And people were buying them and seeking them out.

eBay, during this period, like, ten percent of all sales on eBay were Beanie Babies, of people who would like, find them and then flip them for a profit, and sell them to collectors, and these like, y'know, big clear plastic resin boxes that were hermetically sealed, and would be a down payment on a house in the future.

Certain dolls that were very, very valuable... again, I put that in quotes... the Princess Diana Beanie Baby.

Rachel: Yeah, I was gonna bring that up. That is— that is where I remember, like, realizing, “Oh, this is kind of a weird thing.”

Griffin: Yeah. They made a limited run. I think they made... they sent like, 12 dolls each to vendors. So each vendor would only have a run of 12 dolls. And then, of that run, there was a first printing that had a like, misprint on the tag. And so, in 2017, it was the 20th anniversary. They released this doll

in 1997. 20th anniversary. These dolls started to show up again on these different websites, of people selling them for like, \$60,000.

Rachel: Oh my gosh.

Griffin: One, I think, sold it for like, half a million dollars, in this pristine box. And as far as anyone can tell, none of those ever sold. Because... the cruel joke of Beanie Babies is that they aren't really worth anything. You can buy one of those Princess Beanie Babies on eBay for like... I saw one for like, 15 bucks.

Rachel: Wow.

Griffin: I saw one for like, at the max, like, in its like, ultra rare form, like, a hundred bucks on eBay.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And so, there is... there is no value to the Beanie Baby. And is that a cruel twist of fate for people who, y'know, sunk some cash into this, hoping that one day, they would be able to turn around and sell this under-stuffed Princess Diana bear for, y'know, \$60,000?

Rachel: [laughs] You're really big on this under-stuffed thing. Like, this is—

Griffin: It's a shit— it's a shitty—

Rachel: This is what really gets to you. [laughing]

Griffin: It's not a good... I had some. They did a lot of licensed Beanie Babies in sort of late Beanie Baby era, in like, '99. I think they did Pokémon? I definitely had like, that kind of thing, uh, of like, a Vulpix or whatever.

But the idea of people saying, these little... these tiny little rag doll toys... I have to— I have— it is my— I have been put on this earth to buy them. And then, one day, I will become a very rich person. And then like, now, in 2021,

we have the context of looking back and saying like, those were bad stuffed animals. Of course they were never gonna be worth anything.

But there was this thing. I feel like it's a common thing for collectors. Like, baseball cards, Pokémon cards certainly... although, Pokémon cards have bucked the curve, because some of those are *extremely* valuable still, these days. Beanie Babies never really got over the hump of being an actual worthwhile investment.

Rachel: Yeah, I mean, it's... y'know, it's primarily a children's toy, and typically, that is not where one really makes their money.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: Y'know, on Antiques Roadshow, I feel like it's more rare that you see a stuffed animal as like a, "will you appraise this" item.

Griffin: Right. Our first hint should've been when they started giving them away in Happy Meals, is that these items would never be particularly... valuable.

Rachel: Yeah, you said it, but McDonald's toys, I don't know. There's like, something about it. Like, they're... I mean, people will get the set and they will sell it. I mean, not for a lot of money, but..

Griffin: No.

Rachel: There's something about like, a set, and a number, and a limited time release that you still kind of think, well, I mean... if nobody else can get it after this time window, then maybe it is valuable. [laughs]

Griffin: Maybe it is valuable. But then you think that there's five million people saying the exact same thing, and maybe it's not—

Rachel: I know.

Griffin: It's not to— I don't want to poke fun at people who get bought into, y'know, not get rich quick schemes, but investment schemes like this. But I do want to say that like... building your hopes, building your sort of investment portfolio around these poorly stuffed bears, is like, as far as hopes go, like, pretty delightful to me.

Rachel: [laughing] There is a suggestion in the way you're phrasing this that, if only they had been stuffed a little more, you could buy into it.
[laughing]

Griffin: No, if they had been stuffed more, then nobody would have ever given a shit about these guys.

Rachel: [laughing] Um... I mean, it's just like gambling, right? Like, there are opportunities to potentially make money, and you— if you enjoy it, y'know, you go for it.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: Y'know, I don't see a whole lot of difference between this, and like, people who, y'know, bet on horse races.

Griffin: No, I mean, I, again, held onto Pokémon cards for a very long time, thinking that they would be worth some money. And then it was worth some money, and today, would be worth much more money. So like, yeah. No, it's— sliding doors, man. The Princess Diana doll could be worth a billion dollars in some world. Just not this one.

Rachel: How strange. How strange, for somebody to pass from this earth, and be brought back in a stuffed bear.

Griffin: Right, that people then go out and seek out, thinking it will be worth millions of dollars someday. Yes, it's a strange twist of fate.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: I don't know much about Princess Diana, but that doesn't seem like it was sort of her vibe, necessarily.

Rachel: How do they decide on the animal, I wonder?

Griffin: Yeah, I don't know.

Rachel: I don't know if she was a big bear person.

Griffin: I don't know either. Again, I know very little about Princess Diana, and I'm sorry for that. I just don't know. I know lots of other stuff.

What's your first thing?

Rachel: So, I don't typically take requests on this show.

Griffin: Yeah, that's wild.

Rachel: I usually just kind of go with my gut. But it happened that the requests and my gut kind of lined up.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: With this national poetry corner...

Griffin: Oh yeah.

Rachel: ... focused on Amanda Gorman.

Griffin: We almost went to this national poetry corner last week, before the inauguration.

Rachel: I don't know what I was thinking. I wanted to do it last week, 'cause I knew that she was gonna give the inaugural poem, but not having heard the inaugural poem, it felt like a big swing. Not that she was gonna come out and like, really... [laughs]

Griffin: "My name's Amanda Gorman and I'm here to say that I love democracy in a major way"? No, I don't think anybody assumed...

Rachel: [laughing] I didn't think she was going to like, y'know, put up an air ball. But I also felt like... I mean, she's very young. She's 22.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: There is not a lot to pull from. She has one book of poems out.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh, her second book of poems, and actually a children's book, are set to come out in September.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: So there just wasn't a lot of content, and there also weren't a lot of articles. It wasn't really until after the inauguration that she kind of blew up, and now there's tons of information about her.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: So I wanted to... I wanted to bring her this week, in this national poetry corner.

Griffin: I just watched it this morning. I talked to you about this, that I didn't watch the inauguration because of... just sort of general... y'know, political anxiety, and uh, y'know, skepticism, I would say, in general, of what's happening right now. But it seems sort of inarguably... inarguably uplifting, her poem. Everything else aside, of like, what the new administration might mean from a practical standpoint. Putting all that aside, like, it was a fucking great poem, and a really really genuinely powerful moment.

Rachel: Yeah, and I— this is an easy thing to track down right now, if you want to go look. The poem she wrote specifically for the inauguration was called *The Hill We Climb*, and you can find a lot of videos of it.

Griffin: Watch the full thing. It's like five minutes long.

Rachel: Yeah. I excerpted some particularly powerful little lines, images that I'm gonna share. But yeah, if you want to see the whole thing in its entirety, which I recommend you do, you can find it. Um, but... she uh, told the *New York Times* in advance of this performance. She said, "In my poem, I'm not going to, in any way, gloss over what we've seen over the past few weeks, and dare I say, the past few years. But what I really aspire to do in the poem is to be able to use my words to envision a way in which our country can still come together and can still heal."

Which I think is what made it so powerful for people.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: There was nothing about her poem that I found to be, like... y'know, too, uh... too optimistic, too sunshiny. Y'know, she's very straightforward.

Griffin: Yeah, no, absolutely.

Rachel: Like, part of being in America is going through some really terrible stuff.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: Like, democracy, at its core, is people kind of fighting for what they want. And there's been a lot of that lately, and it has been kind of gross, and, uh... that doesn't mean, necessarily, that we're broken forever. Y'know.

Griffin: Yeah. Do you have the line— the one that stood out to me, and I saw people talking about it, is the... being American is more than the, uh, pride we inherit. It's the past we step into it and how we repair it.

Rachel: That's exactly it!

Griffin: It's fucking incred— I heard that line once this morning, and like, it stuck with me that hard.

Rachel: Yeah! I actually— I had planned to include that one, because I found it so powerful.

Griffin: So incredible.

Rachel: She went from— this is kind of like an arbitrary measurement, but it kind of communicates the impact. She went from 7,000 Twitter followers to one point four million.

Griffin: [laughs] Yeah.

Rachel: [laughs] And it was powerful for me, like, just to see all these people on Twitter... I mean, obviously, there was a range. There were a lot of people that were like, "That was an incredible poem." And then there were people like, "She should be president!!" [laughs]

Like, it was... but like, no matter what, it was like, a bunch of people like, hearing somebody read a poem, and feeling like, so moved by it. And it was just like, on this national stage, uh, and it just... particularly on Twitter, it was just surreal to just see all these people like, "I love this poem!!" And it was like, this doesn't happen on Twitter. [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: So I was telling Griffin, there were parts of it that reminded me a lot of like, performance, like, slam poetry. Particularly with like, the word play, and the rhythm of it. And so, I just wanted to read a little...

Griffin: And her body— not body language. Like, her actual hand movements, and yeah.

Rachel: Yeah, the like, gesticulation. Like, yeah, it felt very... performance poetry focused. Okay, so here's the part I wanted to read.

"We've braved the belly of the beast,
We've learned that quiet isn't always peace,
and the norms and notions
of what just is
isn't always just-ice.
And yet the dawn is ours
before we knew it.
Somehow we do it.
Somehow we've weathered and witnessed
a nation that isn't broken,
but simply unfinished."

Griffin: [whispers] So good.

Rachel: Isn't that incredible?! Like, that reminds me a lot of like, y'know, when I was in Chicago, going to these performance poetry events, and feeling like, kind of like, "Oh, okay, I know how this works. Like, there's a formula to performance poetry, and there's a rhythm, and you just kind of have to find words that fit in that rhythm."

But that kind of like, uh, focus on just like, the meaning of the word, and the meter of it, and the message behind it, is just incredible.

Griffin: Yeah. It's like an— it was this, like, very beautiful and poignant outline of the tremendous amount of work that is still— that is still required, and the tremendous amount of like, accountability that like, everybody needs to hold themselves to.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And seeing that in like, an inauguration, uh, which is... typically a little bit more sort of like, straightforward, optimistic, like, "Here come the good days!" Not that that poem wasn't saying that, but as much as it was saying like, you have to work for those good days, and my god, there is so much to do.

Rachel: Yeah. Yeah. And y'know, that there is optimism to be found in that work.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: Y'know, that it is hard, and that it is obviously not the circumstance you want to be in, but... that it is just part of what being, like, a good citizen can be.

So, she is the first national youth poet laureate. Obviously, there's been poet laureates for a long time now. But she is the first national youth poet laureate, and she's been that since 2017. She went to Harvard, and that is when she became a national youth poet laureate, and her first book came out in 2015.

Griffin: When she was 17 years old, if I'm doing that— or— how old was she in 2017? How long ago was that?!

Rachel: [laughs] That was four years.

Griffin: Four years ago. So she was 18.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Shoof!

Rachel: Yeah. Uh, she has started, uh, a organization called One Pen One Page which provides free creative writing programs for underserved youth.

Griffin: Cool.

Rachel: Yeah. I don't know exactly— y'know, it's still kind of new. We're still finding things out about her. So it is hard for me to really know like, how she has made all of this happen. [laughs] The thing that got a lot of attention, uh, is that she had a speech impediment. And a lot of reason that got attention was because Joe Biden also had a stuttering issue.

Griffin: Oh yeah! He has a stutter.

Rachel: And so, she has an auditory disorder that makes her hear and process information differently from other people, and she was still struggling that while in college. She said that like, particularly, letters like R were still difficult for her, and that she, in order to kind of become better at her pronunciation, started learning all of the lyrics to Hamilton.

Griffin: Oh, okay. [laughs]

Rachel: Which is kind of the connection, and people have noticed that there were some references to Hamilton in her inaugural poem.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: But uh, other than that, it's hard to kind of find information. She was born and raised in Los Angeles. She's a twin sister. Uh, her mom is a middle school English teacher. And now, she's world famous! [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: She's like— she's gotten endless numbers of offers. Apparently, she just got a modeling contract.

Griffin: Whoa.

Rachel: In addition to, y'know, all of her accolades. It's just— it's very exciting. Y'know, I think there— the inaugural poet, y'know, there is a clip of Maya Angelou's inaugural poem, which apparently was very inspirational to Amanda Gorman. Like, there are poems throughout inauguration history that have kind of changed the world.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And I think this is one of them.

Griffin: It's an important thing to... not to talk about like, the priorities of recovering from COVID-19, 'cause it's a— y'know, there's so much. But I have a lot of friends who are, essentially, like, displaced theater workers, and performing artists, and stuff like that. And I know it was powerful for them to see... this much weight and attention given to something that has largely gone by the wayside when talking about like, what needs— what needs help right now.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Like, the performing arts are in very dire straits, as are a lot of industries, but uh, y'know, unlike a lot of industries, performing arts is seen as like... y'know, frivolous and kind of unnecessary. But when it comes to sort of capturing the contents of the, y'know, our soul on a sort of national historic level, like... an incredibly good poem is kind of what got the job done.

And so, I know it's been sort of, um... it's been fulfilling, I think, to a lot of my friends who are out of work right now to see people kind of like, pay attention to performing arts in such a like, meaningful way.

Rachel: Yeah. And not to mention, too, like... we haven't talked about the impact of her as a young person that is black, performing a poem at a presidential inauguration. Like... uh, the idea that that could inspire just a whole new generation of young, black writers is really... is really cool.

Griffin: Yeah! It's rad. Hey, can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Thank you.

[ad break stinger plays]

Griffin: Hey, we got a couple of jumbjohns here, and I'm gonna start reading the first one! 'Cause it is for Kenny. And it is from Michael and David, who say,

"Your non-binary journey has been deeply moving and inspiring, and we are so proud to call you a sib! We can't wait 'til we can start gathering again at the old board game café for all our celebratory occasions, and spend all day playing board games, drinking beer, and eating those good, good nachos. Much love from your brotherly changry changry chippos."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Holy shit. First of all, incredibly— incredibly sweet message. Loving that. But the idea, also, of sitting at a board game café and playing board games while drinking beers and eating nachos actually took my breath away.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: The thought of being able to do that took my breath away, and gives me hope for the future.

Rachel: Yeah. Gosh. Yeah, y'know, that is one food that doesn't travel well. Griffin and I have talked a lot about how difficult it is to get nachos delivered to your house, and have them be in a condition that is satisfactory.

Griffin: Not doable. Not doable. We could learn to make our own nachos...

Rachel: I know, yeah. It seems like it probably would be pretty easy.
[laughs]

Griffin: Not to make them good. Like... I don't know.

Rachel: Yeah. Well, see, the problem is, we do a lot of microwave, and I feel like...

Griffin: It's gotta be oven... an oven-based...

Rachel: Yeah. The cast iron skillet is really, I think, the way to go.

Griffin: Oh yeah. Absolutely. Unless we did the trash can nacho. We'll talk after the show.

Rachel: Okay. [laughs]

Griffin: We could probably find a recipe online for Guy Fieri's trash can nachos.

Rachel: Can I read this next message?

Griffin: Yeah. Should I start looking at my phone for that recipe while you read it?

Rachel: Mm, sure. [laughs] This message is for Bunny. It is from Julie. "Hi Bunny! Thank you for introducing me to my favorite show with these two married cuties. I love you, and hopefully we can be two married cuties as well one day. Thank you for being my wonderful thing. Love, Julie."

Griffin: That is so sweet.

Rachel: That is so sweet!

Griffin: Sweet and romance. And I like— I liked it. And it made me feel good.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Y'know sometimes, you see a sweet, good romance, and you're like, "Aw, that makes me feel good."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: You ever do that? Like The Lake House?

Rachel: Like The Lake House. Yes. Those are some cuties, in The Lake House. [laughs]

Griffin: Did you see that picture that Guy Fieri tweeted of him with Bernie Sanders Photoshopped into his car, and he said, "Not me, us." I was like, damn, Guy Fieri! Welcome to the fuckin' resistance, Guy Fieri!

Rachel: [laughing] That uh, that did shake the internet. 'Cause first everyone's like, "Oh, he's getting in on this— wait a minute..."

Griffin: Wait a minute!

Rachel: "What does that mean?" [laughs]

Griffin: Anyway, the romance is very good.

[advertisements play]

Griffin: My second thing is gonna be... fairly brief, I think. I don't know that I have a lot to say about my second thing. But uh... we went on a walk this past weekend with our son. Walked by something that I realized I kind of wanted to talk about, and that thing is honeysuckle. Honeysuckle. You like honeysuckle?

Rachel: You sure we haven't talked about this?

Griffin: I looked on the website. Didn't see nothin' about honeysuckle. On Wonderful.fyi. Feels like we have, huh?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: There must've been some other sort of sweet-smelling plant that we talked about.

Rachel: It's possible that I was going to bring it, and then thought, "Ehh, there's not enough here."

Griffin: Well, but you didn't have the sort of keen analytical...

Rachel: [laughs] I don't have the chops.

Griffin: ... honeysuckle sense.

Rachel: I don't have the chops that you do.

Griffin: You got me— now you got me freaked out, so I'm gonna— no. There is no honeysuckle entry on the Wonderful.fyi website.

Rachel: Alright.

Griffin: So if it is a dupe, take it up with them. Honeysuckle. It is, uh, a very, very... it's a real stinker of a plant. I don't think I realized that it is a hugely invasive species.

Rachel: Yeah. I mean, you never see just, like...

Griffin: A little bit?

Rachel: A little tiny bit of honeysuckle.

Griffin: I had a neighbor growing up who I was very close friends with, and in her back yard, her like, back fence was this wooden fence that was just like... just completely covered in honeysuckle. And it was so deep, like, this shrub, that we like, made a burrow in it, essentially, that you could kind of climb into. And we had like, a little secret honeysuckle fort.

Rachel: Aww. [laughs]

Griffin: So like, I am not a botanist. I am not like... I don't know shit about trees or plants or anything. But I find it very exciting whenever I am walking, and I recognize, through scent first, like a... a plant. Or I recognize like, what that smell is. And honeysuckle, for me, is like, one of those very recognizable smells, and it also is like, deeply nostalgic for me.

We would like— I loved, uh, plucking the actual flowers off, and then you can kind of pull the stamen, I guess, or the pistil out through the bottom of it, and then like, eat the nectar of it. I didn't realize that a lot of the berries, a lot of the species of honeysuckle, the actual berry there on it, is poisonous.

Rachel: Oh! That seems risky.

Griffin: Seems a little bit risky, but y'know, you gotta risk it for the biscuit. And by the biscuit, I mean the nectar. But that was such an eye-opening thing for me, like, realizing that you can eat that nectar, and all of a sudden, like, I started to look around at nature like it was like, y'know, the Willy Wonka candy room. What other of these plants can I eat?!

Rachel: I could never tell, like, what... what made a blossom more likely to pay off. Y'know? 'Cause sometimes there's those real juicy ones.

Griffin: There's really juicy—

Rachel: And sometimes, you get like, nothin'. And I could never figure out like, what is the method here?

Griffin: Well, there would be big ones that you would see that and be like, "I bet that's got a lot of nectar." But they would be open in a way where the nectar wouldn't really collect on the stamen when you pulled it out. I got good at identifying those, and I would just tear down 30 or 40 of those bad boys. Just be full of nectar like a big bee.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: Actually, it's not bees. Do you know who loves the honeysuckle? The moth. Moths love the honeysuckle.

Rachel: Oh, interesting!

Griffin: Drop a little larva in there, and the larva will eat it. Eat it up. Come out, just strong. Strong with nectar energy.

Um, there is a species that is called *Lonicera Japonica* that is so invasive, uh, all over the northern hemisphere. Like, pretty much every— every continent's got this bad boy. Um, and it is also grown as a commercial crop, because it is used in some traditional Chinese medicine.

Rachel: Oh!

Griffin: So like, it's funny to think like, this pest, like a lot of people, a lot of gardeners and botanists see it as a, y'know, a pest, is also grown for commercial purposes for traditional Chinese medicine. Which I think is kind of delightful.

Um, but they're like, a really common garden plant for their sort of aesthetic properties. Like, if you have an ugly shed, or some sort of wall that you don't want people to be able to see, you plant a little bit of honeysuckle there, and within minutes, it is just going to be completely occupied. It'll be honeysuckle country.

And they are really, really, very, very strong plants. It is kind of tough to get honeysuckle out. It grows in a, uh... it's a twining climber, which means it will wrap around the thing sort of naturally in a helix as it grows on it. So then, y'know, once it's on there, it's kind of difficult to get off.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And the stems are very, very strong, too. They've been used for textiles, and for, y'know, rope and twine and the like. Yeah. I just like it. I really don't have much else to say about honeysuckle, except that I really— it's one of my favorite sort of like, herbal smells. One of my favorite like, plant smells. And I don't like a lot of plant smells. I find them kind of

overpowering. But you get some honeysuckle, it's just like a... nice little sugary treat for your nose.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Sounds like I just described cocaine. I didn't mean to describe cocaine. I just, uh... I just think it's cool.

Rachel: Yeah, no, there's something like, very strong about being a kid, and being able to like...

Griffin: Eat a plant?

Rachel: Yeah, to just find something, know that you can put it in your mouth, and just doin' it. Like, y'know, like... you're only young once, and it's summertime, and...

Griffin: Yeah. That devil may care attitude of just eating honeysuckles in the summertime. I remember, once, we cooked, like, dandelions I think? Like, her mom knew how to like, cook dandelions, in like, sugar water or something? God, this is a weird memory. Maybe it was just a sick prank that was played on us children.

Rachel: Well, dandelion wine is like, a real thing.

Griffin: Yeah, but we were children, so I don't know that that was necessarily what was going on there. Honeysuckle! Catch it! Catch the wave! What's your second thing? Bet it's not as cool as honeysuckle. Bet you wouldn't have as much to talk about as I had to talk about with honeysuckle, which I think we can all agree was a pretty exhaustive... a pretty exhaustive discussion of the plant, honeysuckle.

Rachel: My second thing...

Griffin: Yeah?

Rachel: Uh, which has kind of come up in other topics, but we've never really focused on animal migration.

Griffin: Just in general? The idea that animals go from one place to the other to survive? Okay.

Rachel: Mm-hmm. Like, we talked about the bats.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Y'know, um... but all major animal groups have a species that migrate.

Griffin: Interesting. I'm gonna start... whales, salmon, and a lot of birds. I think that's about it. That I know about.

Rachel: Oh. Well, there's also crustaceans.

Griffin: Crustaceans do, you say?

Rachel: Mm-hmm. Y'know what you didn't mention? Wolves.

Griffin: Wolves! Gosh, they're always sort of roamin' around, huh?

Rachel: Mm-hmm. But only 1,800 of the world's ten thousand bird species migrate.

Griffin: Oh, okay.

Rachel: When I was a kid, I thought it was like, all the birds. [laughs]

Griffin: I thought pretty much every bird went ahead and left, and then just...

Rachel: And I never— I just— I just remember like, not really seeing many birds, and figuring that literally every single bird had gone south, and wondering what it was like to be south and to have all of the birds... [laughs]

Griffin: Probably shitty!

Rachel: Just every bird. I mean, we see a little bit of that in Texas, I feel like. Like an increase in bird habitance.

Griffin: Yeah, there's definitely a grackle-pocalypse that does happen at certain times of the year.

Rachel: [laughs] So, animal migration is defined as the long distance movement of individual animals, usually on a seasonal basis. And it encompasses four related concepts, which include persistent, straight movement, relocation of an individual on a greater scale than its normal daily activities, seasonal to and fro movement of a population between two areas, and movement leading to the redistribution of individuals within a population.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: So, it is not uncommon within a species that not all individuals migrate. So it's not like you turn around, and every single bird of a species is gone. It's like, some of them hang back. Some of that is due to age or sex, like, just depends on the circumstance.

Griffin: Right, I guess that makes sense.

Rachel: Um, but yeah, I just had always thought, like... all the geese. Every goose. [laughs]

Griffin: I mean, the geese that hang back have to be at risk, right? Like, there's a reason why...

Rachel: Oh, for sure.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: For sure, but they... I mean, there are limited resources available, but I imagine there are still enough resources for a drastically reduced population.

Griffin: They gotta be cold, though.

Rachel: Yeah, no, I know.

Griffin: It's still kind of cold outside. I'm gonna go find a goose right now and take good care of them.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, and this— this migration is like, real intense for some animals. The caribou can travel as much as 3,000 miles in a year. The gray wolves can go even farther. So, they track a lot of these animals, scientists do, to just kind of see the distance, and they found a gray wolf that traveled 4,500 miles.

Griffin: Wow.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I remember watching on the Kratt brothers' show that monarch butterflies...

Rachel: Mm-hmm!

Griffin: The distance that they travel is equivalent to if a human being walked all the way around the earth four times. That's a pretty long journey, huh?

Rachel: Yeah, that's a long one!

Griffin: Thanks, Kratt brothers. I just impressed my wife with some zoological knowledge. Thanks, Kratt brothers.

Rachel: [laughs] So, I mentioned crustaceans. So there is, uh, a crab called the Christmas Island red crab.

Griffin: I love him already.

Rachel: Uh, which lives on Christmas Island, which is in the Indian Ocean.

Griffin: Is this just one crab? So far, I feel like you've been talking about just one crab called the Christmas crab.

Rachel: [laughs] No.

Griffin: Don't tell me any different— don't! Just say yes! Just say, "Yes, Griffin, there's a Christmas crab that lives on Christmas Island, and he makes Christmas wishes come true. He's got a little sort of sleigh made out of chitin, and he's got a dolphin with a red nose, and he goes and give a octopus eight presents."

Rachel: I mean... that's really nice.

Griffin: And it's true. Just say, "And it's..." What? And it's the truth.

Rachel: And it's just him and 43 million of his friends. Who also deliver presents to sea creatures. [laughing]

Griffin: Okay!

Rachel: They all do.

Griffin: They work together on it! Now this is starting to make some sense!

Rachel: They all use their little crabs, and they put together little tiny gifts, and they hold onto them with their little pinchers, and they...

Griffin: I bet they crush a lot of those gifts accidentally, though.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I love you, Christmas crab.

Rachel: Um, well, then you would not be a fan of the yellow crazy ant.

Griffin: Yellow Crazy Ant?!

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: Who named that?!

Rachel: I don't know. That its own topic, though. I didn't even click on yellow crazy ant, 'cause I want to surprise myself with that later.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: But apparently, there was accidentally, uh... this yellow crazy ant was introduced, and it really...

Griffin: To what? Introduced to what?

Rachel: To the island, and really put a hit on that Christmas crab.

Griffin: Aw man!!

Rachel: Killed about 10 to 15 million of these in recent years.

Griffin: Wh— wow!! I would not even— I would not say yellow crazy ant. I would say... rude ant. Yellow mean ant.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, so these crabs, uh, they make an annual mass migration to the sea to lay their eggs in the ocean.

Griffin: I like that.

Rachel: But they're— I mean, they're okay. They're not like, on a list of endangered or anything.

Griffin: Of endangered crabs?

Rachel: This ant is really putting the hurt on them.

Griffin: I'm about to put those ants on the endangered ant list, 'cause I'm gonna go to Christmas island with my biggest boots, and I'm gonna squish every single one of those ants.

Rachel: Oh my gosh, they should be called Grinch ants.

Griffin: They should be definitely called Grinch ants!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: They're gonna— they're not gonna be called anything. They're gonna be called goo on the sand. Goo on the sand when I squish all— every single— I'm not kidding, every single one of them.

Rachel: Well, be careful, Griffin, because they're crazy.

Griffin: I don't— I don't— look at me. I do not care. I do not care. I will not be defeated by ants.

Rachel: So yeah. So migration. Lots of fish do it. 120 species of fish. You mentioned the butterfly. There's also dragonflies that do it.

Griffin: Oh!

Rachel: There's a desert locust that flies westward across the Atlantic Ocean. It's a thing that a lot of animals do. Sometimes, by choice, sometimes, just kind of their... their whole rhythm. For example, like, birds are kind of set up to like, feel this like... undeniable pull to move.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: And it's just... I don't know, it's just a really cool thing. I would like to have a little summer place I go in the winter. Y'know?

Griffin: I think that's— I think everybody does.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I think for some of us, it's Christmas island.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Or it was. We got work to do. If we want to move to Christmas island, we're gonna have to do some stuff there that we're not gonna wanna talk about later. To some ants.

Rachel: Yeah. Yeah.

Griffin: This is all I'm gonna be able to think about today.

Rachel: What is— I think like, a giant picnic basket, and you just lure them all in there.

Griffin: Oh my god. That's great.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Mm-hmm. That's all.

Griffin: Alright. Uh, do you want to know what our friends at home are talking about?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Well, okay. Erin says, "Something I find wonderful is the smell and feel of a stack of warm papers fresh from the laser printer." Ooh, that's good!

Rachel: That is good.

Griffin: My mom was a secretary at our church that we grew up going to, and I spent so much time, like, in her office, just like, kicking it on a week day when there was nobody to like, hang out with me at home. And so, I would use the Xerox printer to like, y'know, copy my hand or my face or like, whatever.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And the smell of that Xerox printer, and like, the warmth of the paper as it came out of it is like a huge, like, sense memory I feel like.

Rachel: I got in trouble for doing that once.

Griffin: Oh no!

Rachel: My mom taught kindergarten for years and years, and uh, I went in and tried to make some fun copies for myself, and the principal yelled at me. [laughs]

Griffin: Oh my goodness! That's rough. Uh, Rain says, "My small wonder is, every once in a while, the air in my town smells like oranges. I live about five miles away from the Tropicana factory, and when they burn orange peels, the whole town smells like oranges. It's great." That is great!

Rachel: Whoa!

Griffin: I can't say that I would love it forever. I don't know, it feels like if you get that smell a little too much, it could be too much of a good thing.

Rachel: I don't know, I think I would love it forever. It's like the... the cookie smell in Chicago.

Griffin: Oh yeah. Or the Heiner's bread smell in Huntington.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It's a real smell! Heiner's bread factory makes a good smell out in— if you're out in the stend? Woof!

Rachel: Do you ever get tired of it?

Griffin: Um, nope. Not really. 'Cause I didn't live in the stend. Like, I worked in the stend, so I would, y'know, go down there and get the stink. Get the bread stink.

Rachel: I'm gonna say this, and you can put it on a t-shirt if you want, but some smells are just always good smells.

Griffin: I don't know why I'd put that on a... t-shirt... Hey, thank you to Bo En and Augustus for the use of our theme song, Money Won't Pay. You can find a link to that in the episode description.

And thank you to MaximumFun.org for having us on the network. Go to MaximumFun.org, check out all the great shows that they have on MaximumFun.org. I mean, they got Switchblade Sisters. And uh, Triple Click. And um, Story Break. And uh—

Rachel: That's very true. Minority Korner.

Griffin: Minority Korner. And a whole bunch more.

Rachel: Oh hey, you've got a book out.

Griffin: Hey, I do. Aw, dang it, wouldn't you know it?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I regret to inform you that...

Rachel: Every time you turn around.

Griffin: Another book has come out, written by me and Justin and Travis, with special guests, our lovely wives, and uh... it's called Everybody Has a Podcast (Except You). And it's a sort of— a lot of people are saying, the definitive guide to creating a podcast.

Rachel: Yeah, and I want to emphasize, too, 'cause I know not everybody wants to make a podcast. There was a period of time in my life when I did not want to make a podcast.

Griffin: But then you found out where all the money is.

Rachel: I still would've read this book, is what I'm saying.

Griffin: Oh, okay. Yeah, it's fun, and it's written for people who have like, no audio engineering or hosting experience or anything. It's for you to make something. And uh, I think that's gonna be it. So... hang in there. Stay tough and vigilant, and um... safe. And uh...

Rachel: But also, soft.

Griffin: But also, risk it.

Rachel: And unobservant.

Griffin: Be soft and hard.

Rachel: And dangerous.

Griffin: And dangerous. Be, I guess, everything?

Rachel: Be... just be... just be.

Griffin: Just— ooh, that's it! That's it! That's it!

Rachel: [laughs]

[theme music plays]

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