

Wonderful! 181: Magic 8-Tube

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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: Thank you, everybody who supported us in the Maximum Fun Drive. You know, we say Maximum Fun a lot of the times and I'm being fully honest, and Jesse would hate me saying this...

Rachel: Oh, here comes the bad boy.

Griffin: For me, I can usually only hit, like, 94% fun? 93% fun? And I guess for me, that upper echelon, that is my maximum fun.

Rachel: Mm.

Griffin: But I got to say, this year, against all odds, operating on, one might say criminal levels of sleep, one might say physically impossible to survive levels of sleep, I hit it! Maximum fun this year! And when you do hit it, a beam of light shoots out of your chest.

Rachel: Can I—

Griffin: Yeah?

Rachel: Can I interject?

Griffin: Did you do the beam of light or not?

Rachel: No, I always get distracted when you talk about the amount of sleep that you're getting.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Because...

Griffin: It's more than you.

Rachel: [laughing] Significantly more than me.

Griffin: Right, yeah. You're getting up, what? About every hour in the night time.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: So you're seeing, like, times on the clock that are so bonkers, right?

Rachel: Sometimes it hits 4:20 and I think about waking you up just to say, "blaze it."

Griffin: It's funny to see that, yeah. I've seen a 4:20 or two during this stretch and I always bust up and I get, like, blazed-stonked-stoned. Just totally zooted out of my fucking gourd. And don't tell anybody about that, though, because I don't think they want you to do that when you got a baby, but listen. I... I'm so appreciative to our fans, to our friends, to our family.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: To our—

Rachel: Our faith.

Griffin: Faith.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Everything, you all came out in a big way and supported us and year after year, you come out in a big way and we just— It means so much and we'll never be able to thank you enough.

Rachel: Yeah, a lot of really nice messages, particularly about how this show has been helpful to people during this challenging year and that is nice to hear, because it's not always the easiest show to make when times are tough.

Griffin: And a lot of solidarity from fellow parents of, well, let's say fart-laden babies. Just babies who are heavy with farts.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: We're doing great, though. Gus is really turning it around. But he turned it around 360 degrees, so it's right back to where we started, which is the toilet. But we're, I don't know. I'm feeling ready to do a podcast, aren't you?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Well— Hey, this might— This is being a good— Good little way to— Hey, this might be a good little way to, uh... kick start things. You got any small wonders?

Rachel: Uh...

Griffin: Oh, boy. Nuh-oh.

Rachel: Will you go first?

Griffin: Technology on my phone lets me play video games on my computer, upstairs. That's wild to me. I think I've talked about it on this show before, but like, I can get on my phone and play— I've been playing *Mass Effect*, which is like an old game that they just remastered.

I've been playing it on my phone, like, downstairs, you know, in the middle of the night. Just, like, hanging out and it's wild to me that I can do that on my phone, you know what I mean? That's what I use for taking pictures and... What's other things you can do with a phone? Talk?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And pictures— Look at pictures.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: And do, uh...

Rachel: See how many steps.

Griffin: See how many steps and do temperature.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And a calculator.

Rachel: Okay, you've given me a lot of time now.

Griffin: Okay, good.

Rachel: Cashew milk.

Griffin: Okay, wow.

Rachel: [giggling] I...

Griffin: This feels like— I love you. This feels like B.S. to me. I've never seen you drink cashew milk.

Rachel: No, but it's in a lot of products that I enjoy!

Griffin: I see!

Rachel: I am learning, now. So, for those of you keeping score, I am off dairy, I'm also now off soy, again. As per recommendation because our babies have terrible digestive systems.

Griffin: True, true, true.

Rachel: Which I'm not gonna say comes from a particular side of our family, but...

Griffin: Yeah. It's mine.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: That's— Sorry, for folks who are new to the show, it's mine. We're really bad at eating food and digesting it without making terrible stuff happen.

Rachel: Um, and so I have this ice cream and then that butter.

Griffin: Oh, that butter though.

Rachel: Both made with cashew milk. It's a very rich kind of fatty milk.

Griffin: Ooh, it sure is. Not like your almond's milk.

Rachel: No, no, no, no, no.

Griffin: No, no. This is that chunky stuff.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: We're not gonna say the brands, though, because they didn't pay us. Hey. Do you want to know what my only thing is this week?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: What the thing is that I'm bringing?

Rachel: Yes, please.

Griffin: In this new truncated format that we're getting a lot of positive feedback and a lot of buzz from the press saying that they love it and that's the only way that they want us to do this show.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: From now on.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: I want to talk about— And this is a topic that is important to me and you can vouch for this, sweet rolls! Sweet rolls. Sweet— I was gonna do cinnamon rolls, but I felt like it wasn't enough of a topic. So I decided to expand that out into sweet rolls.

Rachel: I was confused because you were saying sweet rolls like it was a TM thing and I was thinking Swiss Rolls, but...

Griffin: I wouldn't— No, I'm not talking about Swiss— Swiss cake is like its own category of, like, rolled up cakes. That's not what I'm talking about. In fact, there's a sort of quartet of baked goods that one would consume typically for breakfast, right? You've got your doughnuts, you've got your cakes, which I think waffles and pancakes would fall in that.

You have your pastries, right? Your Danishes, your what-have-yous, and then you have your sweet rolls. And boy howdy, if I could only keep one of them and the other three had to get launched into the sun? Sorry, doughnut lovers. For me, I've got to keep the sweet rolls.

Rachel: So what else is there besides a cinnamon roll in this category?

Griffin: Cinnamon roll, there's orange roll, there's a pecan roll, pecan swirls. I would count honey buns in this category. And I'm gonna talk about all of these in depth. Chelsea buns, those thingies with the currants and nuts on them and...

Rachel: Can I request that you start calling me honey buns?

Griffin: Um... you can certainly request it and I will file the motion through the correct legislative bodies and we'll, you know, whip up support for it and

see what we can get going, but if I'm going to be honest... Things are really tough right now in the House of McElroy Representatives.

Rachel: Yeah. [laughs]

Griffin: Especially when it comes to pet names. They've been so divisive. Like, pet names are the third rail of household politics.

Rachel: Yeah. I mean, I guess you call me "honey."

Griffin: Yeah and sometimes I look at you and I yell "buns."

Rachel: [giggles]

Griffin: I think they are— You know me. Like, I'm big into a handheld food that— I just rewatched *The Lord of the Rings* movies and there's this thing in sort of the Tolkien-verse called— I think it's called lembas bread and it's elven bread and the whole thing is that you take a bite of it and it's like eating a whole meal.

So they give it to the hobbits when they go on their big quest so they can save room in their backpacks. And to me, a two-bite cinnamon roll is basically that. Like a two-bite cinnamon roll fills me up so good, which is wild because I know how many bites of food I just ate.

Rachel: And also, do you actually eat it in two bites?

Griffin: [croaking] No. [giggles]

Rachel: [laughs] I wonder who they're thinking of when they call that a two-bite.

Griffin: Oh, I don't know. Not me! I'd do it in one big monster bite. You called me out, I can't believe it. I'm so embarrassed! The longest running Christmas tradition that our family has, inexplicably, every Christmas morning, we eat cinnamon rolls and orange rolls. We've done this every year.

Rachel: [simultaneously] Yeah, I've noticed this!

Griffin: Of course you've noticed it. You've done it now, like, 11 times or however many Christmases we've spent together. I don't know why that tradition got started. I'm not complaining. So for me I think that there is probably a bit of, like—

You know, neurons connecting positive memories with cinnamon rolls and orange rolls. They're positive to every sense, right? Except hearing. I don't think one hears a cinnamon roll or an orange roll or a pecan roll and is like—

Rachel: Hey, side bar, did you ever go to Anne Sather's in Chicago?

Griffin: Anne Sather's? Are they the ones that make the big boys?

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Rachel: Oh, my gosh. That— Oh.

Griffin: The big boys— So, I wanted to say and now I'm all—

Rachel: I'm sorry.

Griffin: My shit's all mixed up. There is a limit to my love.

Rachel: Oh, okay.

Griffin: And that limit is, like, a Cinnabon... and an Anne Sather's. Anne Sather's is fine if it's, like, this is what I'm doing today. But Cinnabon, I will walk by a Cinnabon at an airport and be like, [sharp inhale]. The smell is so outrageous.

Rachel: Those things are, like, five pounds, it's...

Griffin: But you eat one and it's like, you miss your flight because you fell asleep wherever you were standing at the moment where you started to eat the Cinnabon.

There's like an event horizon of Cinnabon that when you've eaten too much of it, your body stops functioning. And maybe it'll start functioning again later. Maybe you have died, is the other thing. So Cinnabon for me is a little too much of a good thing.

Rachel: Yeah. No, that's fair.

Griffin: But, in a house? You wake up in the morning and you got one of them Pillsbury cans and you [imitates popping a can open]. Pop those open, which is scary. That's probably the worst part of the cinnamon roll experience for me is that you have to basically just defuse a bomb.

And there's not a great way to do it. They say unwrap the wrapper, put a little spoon on it, and push the spoon to pop— Still scary every time. And I do cry. Every time. And, um, you've been worried about me in the past I think, when you came into the kitchen and see me crying over a cinnamon roll.

Rachel: Yeah. I said, "Griffin, are you cutting onions?" And you're like, "No, I had to open cinnamon rolls."

Griffin: Right. Um, I just— The way my brain thinks about breakfast foods is broken and I think that that's probably true for a vast majority of Americans where when I see a doughnut, I'm like, "Well, that's a dessert that we have made acceptable to eat in the breakfast times."

Or when I see a sugary cereal, it's like I've put away my childish things, I can't because of all the sugar in you. But when I see a sweet bun or a sweet roll of any variety, of any stripe, it's like, "Ah. There it is. The reasonable— The thinking man's breakfast breads." Even though it's probably not even remotely healthier.

Rachel: Yeah, I noticed that line that we arbitrarily draw because a lot of times, Henry will ask for, like, fruit snacks in the morning and we'll say, "No, no, you can't have that for breakfast."

Griffin: "But have these Fruity Pebbles, which are small, crunchy fruit snacks, essentially." But these have been endorsed by the Flintstones, and they know health. Are Fruity Pebbles technically part of the Paleo diet? Food for thought, huh? Didn't think about that. These are the tough questions.

Rachel: What has happened to you? [laughs]

Griffin: That's a good question that nobody's asking. Are Flintstones vitamins part of the Paleo diet?

Rachel: Oh, my gosh. This would be perfect if you were doing this show with Travis McElroy.

Griffin: You're right.

Rachel: But I'm sorry, you're not.

Griffin: I'm happy to be doing it with you. You take me down so many delightful roads on this show. You think Travis knows anything about poetry? He does not, I can pretty much guarantee that.

So, to dial in on the cinnamon roll specifically for a moment, although again, I love all types of rolls, my mom used to make pecan rolls at home with, like, white raisins in them. Ooh, boy. You got a lot of nuts and fruit and stuff in there and it just excited me every time.

Raisins are a thing that people put in cinnamon rolls, which I don't know how I feel about that in general. I feel like the cinnamon roll is pretty good to go already.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: Anyway, cinnamon rolls. It's a very popular food across Europe and North America. Although, we are, get this, usually the only ones that slather

them in icing and cream cheese frosting, if you can believe that. Apparently, they run a little bit spicier up in Canada? Up in Canada they run a-spicy. They use a lot more cinnamon.

Rachel: Oh.

Griffin: And so it's, um, spicy to eat them.

Rachel: I thought you were talking about, like, a savory spice, like a little cayenne.

Griffin: Ooh, no, but this is the thing that I read where I was like, okay, now I do want to talk about this because I love my beautiful midwestern wife and she may have some knowledge of this. And if so, I want to drill down into it, to sort of—

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: There's a midwestern tradition, I've seen it in Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa, where cinnamon rolls are frequently paired with [trills] chili.

Rachel: No, I don't know anything about this.

Griffin: It's a thing that a lot of people are very strong advocates for. I would say most of those people, it's on the side and you eat some of the savory chili and then you have some of the sweet cinnamon roll. And then there are some people, who I will call ghouls, that do a dip situation into it.

Rachel: Oh. I have never heard of this. Uh...

Griffin: It shattered me because I— There's a fragment of my soul that hears that and is like, "That sounds actually like something I would definitely do."

Rachel: I mean a lot of people put kind of sweet stuff in chili, like cinnamon and...

Griffin: Sweet potatoes, it's right there in the tin, yeah. But this is a— Oof. This is quite a pairing, huh?

Rachel: Yeah. St. Louis tends to kind of skew differently than a lot of the Midwest, so it's possible that this exists in Missouri, but I have never heard of it.

Griffin: Okay. Well, all our Nebraskan and Iowan and Kansan, Kansas-an...

Rachel: I'm curious how Ohio feels about this, because I know they have strong chili beliefs.

Griffin: They have terrible chili beliefs. And I can say this because I lived in West Virginia, which is basically Ohio and lived in Ohio for a year and have had a lot of exposure to Skyline Chili, both externally and internal exposure to Skyline Chili and, uh, I don't claim that. I don't claim that as my heritage.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Because it's not good chili! Um, but— So a sweet roll really gets me there. Oh, God! We had a vending machine at our high school. First of all, we had a Fruitopia vending machine at our high school, which is fucking nuts. I've talked about that before.

Rachel: 90s kids know.

Griffin: Except I didn't go to high school in the 90s! This was like 2004! We got a Fruitopia machine. It's like, it's 2004! What are we doing? Who's the Fruitopia vendor that's, like, driving up the hill to our high school to refill the Fruitopia vending machine once a year because nobody's buying Fruitopia.

Rachel: It must have been a heavily discounted option for your school. They must have had a budget set aside for vending machines and they said, "What could we get for this much?" And they said, "Well, I think we still have a Fruitopia."

Griffin: But there were copious vending machines with Honey Buns in them and I probably spent, I would say \$400 on Honey Buns, just throughout my matriculation at Huntington High School.

Um, I just like a hearty food and I like a sweet breakfast food and I feel like the sweet buns are what bridges that gap beautifully. And also I'll close this out by saying in Finland and in Sweden they celebrate Cinnamon Bun Day on October 4th, so mark our calendars.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Because that's when we're gonna— Maybe that's when we do our chili dive.

Rachel: Whew.

Griffin: Oof, I know. You make a good chili!

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Pillsbury makes a good cinnamon roll.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: We bring them both together and if it doesn't work, we never talk about it ever again. We definitely never admit to it, never tell anybody.

This, I imagine, will be one of those segments where we get a lot of posts in the Facebook group of people, like, "Y'all don't even know. It's heavenly." We'll see. But you've got a long road hoe, if you're gonna convince me of that.

Rachel: I just pictured a bread bowl, but it's a cinnamon roll and you put chili inside.

Griffin: Now I'm back— I've actually circled back around. Actually, no wait, I'm thinking about the consistency of that break after the chili has sat in it

for 8 seconds. And I'm not, I've actually circled right back around. Gross. Yuck. No thanks. Can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes!

[ad break]

Griffin: Hey we have a couple of jumble-brams here and I would love to read this first one, if it's okay with you.

Rachel: Please.

Griffin: This first one's for Joseph and it's from Riza, who says, "Hi, Joseph! We met on a garbage app during a garbage year full of garbage things, but our love is not garbage and is definitely wonderful. Here's to more recipes cooked together, cuddles, and *TAZ* on the couch, and way more adventures to places that aren't our homes. You make me so happy, love your first and only boyfriend, Riza." Aw, man.

Rachel: When I think of people listening to *TAZ*...

Griffin: Always on the couch.

Rachel: [laughs] I just, like, I always assume people listen when they're doing other things.

Griffin: No, no, no. Not *TAZ*. They turn the lights off and sit in a dark room. They can sit next to somebody like Joseph and Riza, but I know that they're keeping it absolutely silent and respecting the art.

Rachel: Honestly, I have tried to listen while doing other things and I get very lost very often.

Griffin: Yeah. Oh so rich is the tapestry we weave.

Rachel: [laughs] Can I read the next one?

Griffin: Okay!

Rachel: This is for Jack and Ryan and it is from Jeremy! Exclamation point. "Hey there Jack and Ryan, betcha didn't expect to see me here. Well, maybe you did. I'm sure you don't have much expectations anymore. We've just passed the 50th episode of our podcast and it's been so much fun doing this with you both. Can't wait to hit it big and leave you suckers behind. With love and beans on the stove, Jeremy."

Griffin: I respect and appreciate Jeremy's restraint for not trying to drop that plug.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: People have tried, people have tried. Oh, boy. Unless— Wait. What if their podcast is called Beans on the Stove?

Rachel: [laughs] Sneaky!

Griffin: Damn it! They got us again!

Rachel: 50 episodes, though. That's pretty significant.

Griffin: That is. That's, uh, yeah. I mean, you're rounding that year mark and that's when you start getting the big bucks. That's when you get a signed letter from Marc Maron in the mail congratulating you on your diligence.

Rachel: And a coupon for a hug and a head scratch.

Griffin: That's right.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

[MaxFun ad]

Griffin: Hey, what's your thing you want to talk about this time, huh? What is it? Oh, getting out the laptop, huh? Ooh. Opening up Nexis Lexis. Got some peer-reviewed research that we want to talk about.

Rachel: Did you say Nexis Lexis?

Griffin: Is it LexisNexis?

Rachel: I'm pretty sure it's the other way around.

Griffin: It's not a good name for a service regardless.

Rachel: That's fair.

Griffin: They should call it Search-o! And you can have that, Nexis Lexis. You can use it. Because Lexus is already a car thing.

Rachel: [laughing] The quality you're bringing to the show today is, like, it's like Griffin's kooky cousin.

Griffin: This is what I've brought to every podcast recording I've done in the last six weeks so I don't know what you want from me.

Rachel: So, I also was looking for kind of a big category like your sweet roll.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Um, because what I found myself looking at a lot was, like, children's fortune tellers, kind of.

Griffin: Okay, like a cootie catcher, I believe is what—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: So I looked a little bit into the cootie catcher.

Griffin: And Mash.

Rachel: I looked at Mash, too. Um, what I settled on talking about though, was the magic 8-ball.

Griffin: This is good. We should also clarify that talking about cootie catcher and Mash in the age of when everybody is born sort of with a smart phone in their hand is probably buck wild, because I'd be willing to bet there's a lot of our listeners who have no idea what we just talked about.

Rachel: Yeah. So the cootie catcher is like an origami folded, handheld, little pincher toy where you move your fingers to move the catcher and people guess numbers...

Griffin: It's impossible to describe it. It is!

Rachel: [laughs] And then you, like, unfold the flap on the number they pick to, like, reveal a fortune. And mash, if you listen to Janet Varney's show, you know about it. She does it with all her guests.

Griffin: That's right.

Rachel: But it was a way to predict, kind of, where you would end up living and who you would marry and what car you would drive and... A lot of kind of, like, fortune telling, basically.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: But not as sinister as maybe some fortune telling seems to be to kids. Like the Ouija board was a little more controversial, I think.

Griffin: That was less fortune telling and more communing with the dead.

Rachel: True.

Griffin: But yeah, I understand.

Rachel: But yeah, I wanted to talk about the magic 8-ball. Did you...?

Griffin: Of course, yeah, I had a magic 8-ball. I think I had, like, a Yoda magic 8-ball where, like, the dice would come up and it would be like, [doing a Yoda impression] "in for good tidings, thou art." That sounded more like the Bible than Yoda.

Rachel: [laughs] But the voice was good! I was very impressed with the voice.

Griffin: Yeah, thank you.

Rachel: So, the magic 8-ball, the standard one has 20 possible answers.

Griffin: Wait, what?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: It's a 20-sided dice inside it?

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: I never knew that.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: I think I just assumed it was, like, 8 or 10.

Rachel: Maybe you just always got the same ones.

Griffin: I can't— Gun to my head, I can give you, like, three different responses. Like, ask again later and signs point to yes and...

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Honestly, that's it. And then there's 18 more, apparently.

Rachel: Yeah. So there's ten affirmative, five noncommittal, and five negative.

Griffin: Then that's not a very good fortune telling device.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Seems like, yes?

Rachel: Is it supposed to be evenly split? Which you can't do with 20, by the way.

Griffin: Well, you could have, like, six yes's, six noncommittals, six no's, and then like, two jokes.

Rachel: [laughs] Just one that says, "orange you glad I didn't say banana?"

Griffin: Yeah! Wait, one of the things is "roll again." Is that one of the noncommittal ones? I guess so.

Rachel: Uh, reply hazy, try again.

Griffin: You're a fucking toy ball filled with juice, delicious juice that all I ever wanted to do was drink it and know... and know its properties.

Rachel: [laughs] You know what I read? And I don't know if this has always been true, but it is alcohol dyed blue, so...

Griffin: Oh, shit! So there probably were some scoundrels cracking one of these things open and drinking that sweet juice inside. Why does it have to be alcohol, though? I guess because water would... evaporate? But alcohol evaporates faster than water, I think. Dang it, I wish I knew anything about chemistry or also anything.

Rachel: [laughs] Um, I had one for a while and then I decided to paint it? I wanted to paint it like the globe and— Because I thought, oh, there's water inside, it'll be kind of fun if it's like a globe and you shake it and you hear the water.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: But then... you can't use it anymore. [laughs]

Griffin: You can't? I guess if you— You didn't paint over the hole, did you?

Rachel: [through laughter] Yes, I did.

Griffin: Hon!

Rachel: I know.

Griffin: Why?

Rachel: You know...

Griffin: No, I don't know.

Rachel: [laughs] Um...

Griffin: It's like the one part— You could have painted the rest of it except for the hole.

Rachel: Alright, you know, I was dedicated to my art and I wanted—

Griffin: If you were dedicated to your art, you shouldn't have painted the hole. You never paint the hole!

Rachel: [giggling] So hey, magic 8-ball is, uh, connected to Cincinnati.

Griffin: That doesn't surprise me.

Rachel: What are you basing that on?

Griffin: Just a... You know.

Rachel: You know!

Griffin: Listen, I lived in Cincinnati, I can say this stuff about their chili and their proclivity for soothsaying toys.

Rachel: Uh, so the component, the functional component of the magic 8-ball was invented by Albert Carter who was inspired by a spirit writing device used by his mother, a Cincinnati clairvoyant.

Griffin: Okay, a spirit writing device.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: I don't know about that.

Rachel: So it was called the Psycho-Slate and it—

Griffin: Holy shit, yes! Holy shit!

Rachel: It was a small chalkboard inside of a sealed container and when she met with a client, she would close the lid of the container, ask a question, and the room would fill with sounds of chalk. And then she'd open the container and there would be writing dictated by the spirits on the chalkboard.

Griffin: Okay. Does that mean that she would, like, shake the container with, like, a piece of chalk inside of it and would, like, try to read what came out of it or...? Because that seems like a lot, to be like, "open up the box." That seems more like a magic trick than any kind of sort of clairvoyant activity.

Rachel: I'm guessing that she did not operate in isolation and perhaps somebody assisted her.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: That is my guess.

Griffin: It's usually more abstract than that is all I'm saying, like, "Oh! Did you hear that over the radio? It sounded to me like they were saying, 'biscuits, please.'"

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: So we all know what that means.

Rachel: Have you ever been to, like, a fortune teller of any kind?

Griffin: Never been to a fortune teller of any kind. I don't believe so, no. I had, uh, somebody do, like, a tarot reading for me once, but I'm like 100% sure they bought them on Amazon and did not know, actually, what it was they were doing. And I am pretty sure, actually, I was their first one.

Rachel: I haven't either. I'm always surprised by the number of people who've kind of invested in that, you know?

Griffin: I mean, it's rad. Like, I'm all for it.

Rachel: It is! Like, I think, you know, it's the kind of thing that you're curious about and it doesn't, you know...

Griffin: It doesn't hurt you.

Rachel: Yeah. So I get it, I'm just like, I'll have a conversation with somebody and they're like, oh yeah, no, I've totally done that. And it surprises me. So, Carter in 1944 created what he called the Syco-Seer, which was a liquid-filled tube divided in the center and there was a clear window which allowed a view of the dice that he placed in it.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: And so you would turn the tube upright and then one of the die would raise and so it was basically the magic 8-ball, but it was a tube instead of a ball.

Griffin: Not as fun, I think we can all agree.

Rachel: Uh, he presented it to a local Cincinnati store owner and they started mass-producing it. We end up with the 8-ball because he actually worked with a billiard company.

Griffin: Okay. That's it, that's like, it's arbitrary. The 8-ball is not, like, the most prophetic of the billiard balls. It's just that that's the one— I guess it makes sense. You couldn't do, like, a magic 3-ball. Like, the 3-ball doesn't have a ton of significance in pool.

Rachel: Yeah, they didn't really realize it was a toy for like a long time. They were, like, marketing it as, like, a paper weight, kind of. Like, not a children's toy.

Griffin: Well, let's be clear here, the magic 8-ball is not a toy. It is not anything that anybody ever picks up and is like [laughs joyfully]. "Papa, pass it to me! [squeals]"

Rachel: [giggling] Um, so the Syco-Seer was not doing particularly well.

Griffin: Because it's not as cool a name as Psycho-Slate. The fact that he changed it from Psycho-Slate, which still gives me chills every time I hear it, is wild.

Rachel: Brunswick Billiards approached them and asked them to create a billiard-shaped version of the Syco-Seer for a promotional campaign. In 1951, they began marketing the toy as the magic 8-ball with a retail price of \$1.98.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: The redesigned product was an instant hit and the rest is history.

Griffin: I guess so. Man, there are some things in history that, like, you can say, "and then it became an instant hit," and then I'm like, "yeah, but why though?" This is a juicy billiard ball that tells that future. Why is that the— Why is the juicy billiard ball the thing that people were like, "this is it!"

Rachel: That's why I was talking about cootie catchers and Mash. Like, when you're a kid, your whole life is in front of you and it seems like you have no control over anything, you know?

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: And you don't necessarily trust what adults are telling you and so you look to the dark arts. [laughs]

Griffin: [laughing] I guess.

Rachel: Yeah and also, like, how are you gonna find out whether or not Brad likes you?

Griffin: Ask Brad. Or ask Brad's friends.

Rachel: Well, more like, you'd have your friend ask Brad's friend and/or fill out a piece of paper with a "check yes or no."

Griffin: Or do what was sort of more common in my generation, which is you make a very obscure passive-aggressive AOL instant messenger away message that it might get through the grapevine, like, "hey, I think Griffin is, uh, asking about whoever." There were so many, there were so many.

Rachel: [laughs] Um, so the ones that you forgot about: outlook good and outlook not so good.

Griffin: Okay. Lazy.

Rachel: Which I had to kind of learn. I feel like I didn't really understand what outlook meant. Like, what did that mean as a kid? I had no idea.

Griffin: It's just a noncommittal way for this ball to say things might be good.

Rachel: Also, concentrate and ask again, which I feel like is kind of a—

Griffin: It's your fault.

Rachel: Kind of a—

Griffin: It's your fault I fucked this up. I'm a ball, you're a person, so don't blame it on me.

Rachel: Okay, I will provide a little guidance on the magic 8-ball.

Griffin: Okay, is there a good way to do it?

Rachel: You're not supposed to shake it.

Griffin: Do you just, like, turn it upside down?

Rachel: [simultaneously] If you shake it, you get lots of bubbles.

Griffin: Oh.

Rachel: And you're not supposed to do that.

Griffin: That's true about babies, too. There's a lot of reasons not to shake the babies and they tell you that in, like, babies 101. But a big thing is bubbles, you do not want bubbles in there anywhere. Trust me on this one.

Rachel: [laughing] Um, in— So apparently, the bubble problem used to be a bigger thing in 1975, the Ideal Toy Company, quote, "fixed the bubble problem". They patented a bubble-free dye agitator with an inverted funnel that rerouted the air trapped inside.

Griffin: Oh, cool. I'm glad—

Rachel: So, I guess shake it. I guess shake it is what I'm saying.

Griffin: Yeah, I agree. Shake it. Shake it up. Life's short, shake the ball.

Rachel: That's all I got. [laughs]

Griffin: Alright, that was fun! That was a fun one. It's one of those wild things I literally never thought about, like, how did this big juicy billiard ball become a prophet? And it doesn't— You explained it to me and, to be honest, I still don't understand, but I'm closer.

Rachel: It does seem strange to me that somebody would look at that tube, that fortune telling tube and say, "that's perfect for my pool brand."

Griffin: Yeah. "This is a great tube you've made. Can you make it ball-shaped, a completely different three-dimensional, geometric object?" Uh, hey, thank you for listening. 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 again to everybody who came out in the Max Fun Drive, seriously. You all blew us away. We know times are shitty, still. They were shitty last year as well and you— Both times, you all came out...

Rachel: Yeah. Over 20 thousand new and upgrading donors.

Griffin: Yeah. So, seriously, thank you all so much. It is humbling and life-affirming and... yeah. Thank you. Um, hey, we have a lot of stuff at McElroy.family. Lot of other shows.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Got a lot of merch, a lot of fun merch that you can find there and there's a ton of shows also at MaximumFun.org that you should check out. Hopefully you tried out some new stuff during the Max Fun Drive, but we encourage you to go support those shows, too. There's a lot of great ones on the network, like *Fanti* and *Stop Podcasting Yourself* and just a whole bunch of shows, all at Maximum Fun.

Rachel: *Reading Glasses*.

Griffin: *Reading Glasses*, of course. All at MaximumFun.org. And, uh, I think that's it. Hope y'all are staying cool, having a cool summer.

Rachel: Hey, think some good thoughts for the St. Louis Blues this playoff season.

Griffin: [groaning] Oh, boy howdy.

Rachel: Because they're gonna need it.

Griffin: They're gonna need it, oh boy. They got Perron with the COVID, didn't they?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Damn it! Damn it, what are we supposed to do? I actually got the call yesterday.

Rachel: Oh, are you gonna play?

Griffin: Yeah, so I gotta get up to St. Louis and they said, "As long as Perron's on COVID protocol, we need you to become our new top scorer." And I said, "I've never played hockey and I don't know how to ice skate, I don't think, and am I supposed to hold the stick this way with this hand or this way with this hand?" And they were like, "Don't worry about it."

Rachel: You're also not much of a big boy.

Griffin: They do favor a big boy, yeah, sure. Uh, but I'm fast and—

Rachel: They would call you a little guy.

Griffin: They would call me a small boy. But I can probably do a great job and I think I'm gonna make you proud and I think I'm gonna make your dad proud, most of all.

Rachel: [giggling]

Griffin: Bye, everybody!

Rachel: Bye!

[theme music plays]

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