

Wonderful! 199: In Relationship with Orbeez

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[Intro music plays]

Rachel: Hi, it's Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hey, it's Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And it's *Wonderful!*

Griffin: It's comin' at you fresh, it's comin' at you hot.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It's—

Rachel: Trying something new.

Griffin: Hey. It's Griffin.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Ungh. Hey. What's up? It's Griffin. Uh. And Rachel. Heh.

Rachel: It's your girl.

Griffin: It's your girl, and your boy, Rachel and Griffin. Ungh! Here for another show of podcast.

Rachel: I don't like the grunting.

Griffin: I feel like I have to flex a little bit. If this is the...

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: That felt like the right energy for me.

Rachel: Oh. Okay.

Griffin: Just a sort of MTV Spring Break, like "It's Griffin! Ungh!"

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Did you ever... Were you ever at a age where you saw MTV Spring Break and thought, "Eh, that looks like fun. I'd like to be out there."

Rachel: No!

Griffin: No? Okay.

Rachel: It wasn't for you and me.

Griffin: Well, okay. Let's not...

Rachel: Alright. It wasn't for me.

Griffin: Yeah, I mean, I coulda danced up on a stage—

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: ... and looked super-duper-duper cool.

Rachel: Heh-huh.

Griffin: Me and Kurt Loder just--

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah, Kurt Loder. [sarcastic] Famous dancer.

Griffin: Known— [laughs]

Rachel: Kurt Loder was always old, you know?

Griffin: I adore Kurt. I got to meet Kurt Loder when I did the Street Team stuff.

Rachel: I know, you told me.

Griffin: I had lunch with him and Sway, and it was one of the most memorable meals of my entire life.

Sway just sat down with us like, "Hey, what's up? Can I sit here?"

And we were like, "Yes, Sway, you can, because you're Sway."

Anyway, we are, I worry, narrowcasting to people with a deep well of knowledge of VJs.

Rachel: I don't... Can I be honest? I don't even know who Sway is.

Griffin: Oh my god, babe!

Rachel: I've only heard of Sway through your mentioning of this very specific experience.

Griffin: This very specific luncheon, that I had?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: With Kurt Loder and Sway.

Griffin: Um... Do you have any small wonders before we really get into the nitty-gritty of it? The meat of the matter?

Rachel: Do you wanna go first? [laughs]

Griffin: Uh... I've been having trouble sleeping lately.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Which means I've been dipping my toe back into the waters of ASMR.

Rachel: Ohh.

Griffin: And I like a weird ASMR at this point. When I say... I guess that is an incredibly loaded and non-specific term.

Rachel: Yeah, what makes a weird ASMR?

Griffin: I like the ones where it's like, "We're going to put this 3D microphone into, like, a bunch of Orbeez", and it's like, yeah, that sounds pretty good, actually.

Rachel: Can I tell you something that's maybe revealing about me and my own fears of intimacy?

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Is that ASMR feels like something like... I'm not supposed to be doing.

Griffin: It's inherently quite intimate.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And there are smarter folks that I... I mean, smarter folks that I have certainly waxed philosophical about the sort of like neurological link between that sort of stimulation response and the feeling of "Ooh, this is a... you're whispering in my ears."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And it's tough to separate that out. And I find that... I dunno. There are a few videos that I find are genuinely quite helpful for—

Rachel: It works, yeah?

Griffin: ... mellowing me out, yeah.

Rachel: I think the same part of me that doesn't like someone touching my face also doesn't like ASMR.

Griffin: For sure. For sure. I don't get into a lot of talking though. There's a lot of videos that's just like, "We're going to submerge your head in a bucket of Orbeez" and I'm like—

Rachel: Yeah, see that's better. Then you're not like in a relationship with the Orbeez.

Griffin: Yeah. No, yeah. I like to keep a distance away from my ears and people on the internet's sort of mouth sounds. But Orbeez? Dunk my head right in those nasty balls. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go.

Rachel: [laughs] God, I hope nobody extracts that terrible phrase you just said out loud.

Griffin: I just assume everybody's just ripping our sound quotes out to make weird deepfake voicemails for themselves and stuff. Certainly that was enough time.

Rachel: Yes. I am gonna say like a Jumperoo, a bouncer.

Griffin: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Rachel: This is, of course, for the babies.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Rachel: Before they can stand up and jump on their own, you can put them in this device designed to allow them to live that dream. And our youngest, little Gus, he is so delighted by it.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: It's like... You can tell that he's like, "I can't normally do this!"
[laughs]

Griffin: Uh-huh. It's really... It's turbo empowering for a baby who like, "I can't crawl yet, but you put me in this special device and I can fucking jump really high? That's outrageous."

Rachel: Yeah, it doesn't matter what time of day or how many times he's been in it, every time he gets in he's like, "Wha— I—"

Griffin: "Are you kidding me?!"

Rachel: "I'm upright?"

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: It's great.

Griffin: It's very good.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah. Our boys are really good right now.

Rachel: They're getting good now.

Griffin: they're really good now. I mean, they were always... We love them with our soul, the core of our existence, right?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But also, there have been highs and lows and uh—

Rachel: Yeah, those of you that listened to our early episodes with the second one, know that he was quite an angry infant, and complete 180.

Griffin: Complete 180. Total dreamboat now.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Him and Henry have been like, goofing around together, oh, shit. That's so good. It's such good stuff.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I feel... it's funny, we do this show where we talk about things that we like and things that we're into.

And if we were being a hundred percent, like with the audience all the time, it would just be us talking about our kids nonstop.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Because they do things that are so delightful and soul-nourishing literally all the time, but I feel like that is... I don't know, that's probably a thing that I'm sure some folks like hearing about and stuff. But I don't know that we could sustain a podcast out of, "Well, okay, Henry is..."

Rachel: Well... And also like, nobody likes your kid as much as you like your kid.

Griffin: That's another fair point.

Rachel: I find that even we have friends who have children, whose children are approximately the same age, that we see all the time. And when they talk to me about their kids, I just know I'm not as interested as they think I might be. [laughs]

Griffin: Well yeah, I mean, but that's true of not just... I mean, that's true of anybody, right? That's true of any parent on the planet.

Rachel: So I just assume the listener who has no vested interest in our children is like...

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: "Cool, like..."

Griffin: I just want to say to our friends who do listen to our podcast, I love hearing about your kids. Just keep that train a-rolling. I don't know why Rachel has taken this stance.

Rachel: It's just the sparkle and the joy in their voice I know cannot be matched by me.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: Who did not produce their children.

Griffin: Right. Sure, sure. I go first this week.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: I kinda... I feel so sure I have glanced off this topic before, but it is in the pantheon of things I think are valuable and life-changing for me. GPS is like, maybe number one up on there.

As far as I can tell, I talked about geocaching, which maybe is where we discussed GPS before.

Rachel: Yeah, that sounds right.

Griffin: And that is partly what inspired this, because Henry and I went geocaching at a park in Austin this past weekend and it was super, super fun.

Rachel: Did he get into like, I don't know what technology you use, but were you like, looking at a map and—?

Griffin: Yeah, we were looking at a map on my phone and had a compass that was leading our way to it.

And before we found the first cache he was like, not super into it, but then we opened it up and he found this little tiny astronaut eraser inside of it that we replaced with, I think, a Carcassonne piece.

And at that point he was like, "Hell yes. Treasure. Let's go."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: But like, I try very hard not to go full Andy Rooney on this podcast, but this is probably the biggest thing that I feel like folks born into smartphones don't really... cannot appreciate, is the fact that like...

When you used to leave your house to go somewhere new, or somewhere that you were unfamiliar with, 50 percent of the time, you would get lost.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: There was just a very— there was a reality where you would... If somebody showed up to a party that we were throwing and they were two hours late in 2021, and were like, "Sorry man, I got lost."

I would be like, "That's bologna."

Rachel: What I used to do a lot is I would print out the directions off of MapQuest. And the problem with that is that if you take a wrong turn, you have—

Griffin: Even a little bit. If you take one wrong turn.

Rachel: The directions are useless to you unless you're able to reverse engineer, like "Okay, I turned left here where I shoulda turned right, so in order to get back to where I was I should turn... right?"

[laughs]

Griffin: Yeah. and even then, there was a time, a long period of time, before MapQuest, right? I feel like by the time I was driving, MapQuest was there for me.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And I definitely took a couple of long-ass road trips with like 30 pages of MapQuest printed out—

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah.

Griffin: ... to get me from Point A to Point B. I did a drive from Huntington to Boston and back on MapQuest directions, which is wild to me.

But at the same time, one of the last trips I took pre-iPhone, pre-GPS on the thing I take pictures with and post them on the internet, I went to Chicago and on the way back I got lost in Cincinnati for a long time. Because there was one on-ramp that I just could not find to get me to the highway. I drove on the wrong side of the highway for a little bit, in Cincinnati, which was—

Rachel: Whoof.

Griffin: ... rough. I had to like pull onto the shoulder and wait for there to be like, no cars anywhere.

Rachel: Oh gosh.

Griffin: It was terrifying.

Rachel: I mean, when you moved here in 2011, I still didn't have GPS on my phone.

Griffin: Yeah, that's bonkers to me.

Rachel: I was still using, like, a little flip phone.

Griffin: Because by the time I moved to Cincinnati, that was just about the time where I had the iPhone, which I genuinely would not have done it if I did not have a smartphone with GPS on it.

Because I don't like being lost. I don't like that experience.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I certainly would not have moved to Chicago without it.

Rachel: That is one of the things that you and I have never really had to weather as a couple, is the experience of being lost with somebody is so stressful. And I don't know that you and I have ever really had to deal with that.

Griffin: We definitely... Like when we were in Hong Kong, like on our international trips, certainly we got lost while looking for places.

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

Griffin: Definitely—

Rachel: But just like a restaurant or something, not like, you know...

Griffin: Home?

Rachel: Yeah. [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs] Yeah, for sure. So, I feel like this is the big thing that I take for granted, because I use it a lot, like a few times a week if I'm going somewhere. Even places I've been before, right?

Rachel: Oh yeah.

Griffin: There are some kids' activities that I like to do with Henry here in Austin that are like a good 30, 40 minutes away from the city. And even though I've been to them dozens of times, I still don't like, fuck around with that. I'll punch it into my phone because that takes one second and it saves me from driving the wrong direction for a half-hour.

So GPS... By the way, I'm using that term generically, like the capital G-P-S, Global Positioning System is owned and operated by the US government. It's actually operated by the Space Force, previously known as the, what, US Air Force Space Command before it was split off into its own independent branch of the military, which is still bonkers to me.

But there's like other countries, other world powers, with their own global positioning systems and independent tech and stuff like that.

I'm talking about, specifically, Map on the Phone, or Special Map Electronics that you can have in your car. That technology, unsurprisingly, has like a long lineage tracing all the way back to, like, radio navigation in the early 20th century.

In the 60s, especially during the space race, work toward GPS tech was done and all of that stuff was very classified and so it's hard to sort of know... to pinpoint the exact origins of it. But in 1973 the Department of Defense created a 24-satellite array that would go up into orbit and then would help you figure out where you are in relation to whatever satellites were visible to your device at that time.

Rachel: Do you know—

Griffin: That was 1973, it wouldn't become fully operational until like 1995.

Rachel: Do you have any, and I am not trying to put you on the spot, but do you have any understanding of how satellites... like how do they get them where they want them to be and how do they make sure they stay there?

Griffin: I mean, it's very complicated stuff.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: From what I... I mean, they get them up there like they get anything up into space, which is to say they boost that shit.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: They thrust that shit up there. And then get it into a geosynchronous... that's not what that word means... an orbit that will like—

Rachel: Yeah, but they have to like... how do they pick a spot and then they put it and it just like, doesn't just float away. [laughs]

Griffin: Well, because it stays in orbit around Earth. And as long as like the momentum of it doesn't change... I mean, it won't change, because there's no... And I'm sure they have little correctional thrusters—

Rachel: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Griffin: ... and stuff in case they need to put a little bit of English on the ball.

Rachel: Yeah, because there's always stuff like debris, you know?

Griffin: Sure, yeah

Rachel: I don't know. Like I always kind of took for granted the idea that there were satellites and they helped us know things about our Earth.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: But just in this moment now, I'm like, "How do... but why... how are they still there?"

Griffin: Yeah, well the US owned and operated Global Positioning System is made out of, at this point, 31 satellites. That's it, by the way, which seems like not very many satellites.

Rachel: Doesn't for space. [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah. and I think like, back in the day it was like, if 4 of them could see you at any point they could, not triangulate, square... Quadrangulate? Your position.

But today there are more satellites and so it is easier to sort of get more accuracy to the...

When I was geocaching with Henry, it was like, "You're one and a half feet away from it." Like, holy shit space eyes, you can tell that? Umm...

Rachel: Yeah. Well, you know how they know, is the vaccines. [sarcastic] [laughs]

Griffin: [sarcastic] The vaccines do... It's just a bunch of tiny [singsong voice] "satellites" that you put right in your— that's not true. Please get vaccinated, holy shit.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It's just... This entire field of cartography and navigation was supplanted by this technology that became incredibly ubiquitous incredibly fast. Like I bought an iPhone... And there were other, what was it, TomTom was like the one that you could get, or like GPS—

Rachel: Yeah. or Garmin.

Griffin: Garmin, yeah. Like things that you could like, "Buy our 1999 Jeep Grand Cherokee. It's got a Garmin in it, that's like just right there, right on it." And now it's like, well, I just plug my phone into this shit.

But like, this was a thing, a human civilization experience of like, "I gotta get from here to there, time to figure out how." And some people were good at it and some people were bad at it, and there were entire industries based around, like, "Here's an atlas of all the highways of, you know, Tennessee."

And then they were like, but now you just do it on the phone and all that shit is now completely irrelevant, and that's wild to me, whenever that happens to any kind of huge thing, that it can be just sort of replaced overnight.

Rachel: [laughs] There's so many comedians that had bits about folding maps and how difficult it was.

Griffin: Those are gone now!

Rachel: And now none of it matters.

Griffin: Those are just done now. I don't know. I find it very, from a just sort of like conceptual standpoint, I find GPS, the fact that it works, kind of remarkable.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: The fact that it is everywhere, pretty remarkable. The fact that you don't really get lost anymore, and reducing the amount of anxiety that that caused me, which is to say a tremendous amount of anxiety—

Rachel: Yeah, completely.

Griffin: ... because I don't have a keen navigational sense. Remarkable.

Like, it is... It's very cool and it is the kind of thing that like, in my lifetime, I didn't have, and then I'm probably among one of the final generations of whom that is true.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And this is not like a, "You kids today don't know!"

Like, I'm genuinely glad that kids today won't experience the anxiety of driving the wrong way down a highway in Cincinnati for two hours.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But it is novel to me that, like, that's a thing that happened to us and then probably won't happen to the folks who come after us.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Like right after us.

Rachel: Yeah, to just... to have the comfort of knowing that when our children are old enough to drive and they are going somewhere...

Griffin: I pulled over at a gas station and borrowed their phone to call Dad, like, "Hey, I'm lost."

And he's like, "Where are you?"

And I'm like, "A gas station in Cincinnati. There are trees outside, like..."

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah.

Griffin: Oh, man.

Rachel: Yeah, I have definitely done that before, where it's just like, "I am on this highway near this exit. I can tell you that, and then just sitting on the phone with my dad being—

Griffin: I can see your Dad at the fucking command center.

Rachel: No, I... [laughs] Not to ruin your impression, but neither of my parents are particularly good with directions.

Griffin: Well, they still print out MapQuest directions, which I admire tremendously.

Can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Thank you.

[Ad Break Music]

Griffin: Got a couple of Jubblebobs here, and this first one's for Justin and it's from Tine, who says:

"Happy anniversary Yaybies. I'm so thankful for your unconditional love and support. I'm grateful for all the laughs we have shared together listening to all the McElroy content over the past decade. Cheers to 12 years and counting. You are a force all on your own and there is no greater privilege than to love you for a lifetime. Tine and Zoe."

Have we really been creating content for 10 calendar years? I think maybe even closer to 11 at this--

Rachel: Me and you? No.

Griffin: No. I suppose not. We've known each other for about 10 years. You met me at the—

Rachel: More than 10 years now.

Griffin: ... prime of my life.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs] When I was at my most sort of....

Rachel: It's just been a—

Griffin: ... supple...

Rachel: ... steep decline, since then.

Griffin: All downhill from that supple young gentleman.

Rachel: Aw, can I read this next one?

Griffin: Of course.

Rachel: It's for Brunch Squad and from Chess.

"Back at it again with the Brunch Squad lovin'. Y'all, I can't believe it's only been two and a half years since that fateful spontaneous Brunch in Nashville. I can't thank you enough for the love and support you send year-round. You are my family. I can't wait to hold all eight of you collectively in my arms again. Until then, so much love, Chess."

Griffin: Startin' to think Chess might be a secret octopus, if you're trying to hold eight people in your arms all at once! The only way that works, spatially speaking, is if Chess is a octopus that learned how to do internet stuff.

Rachel: And shout out to friends of the show, Brunch Squad.

Griffin: Yes, shout out to Brunch Squad.

Rachel: Always love hearing about them and what they're up to.

Griffin: Sure, sure, sure. But can we get back to this octopus-human—

Rachel: To the octopus, yes. Yes.

Griffin: ... hybrid that listens to our show.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: And has money with which to purchase and secure a Jumbotron.

Rachel: I think it's a wingspan thing. I don't think you necessarily need all the arms.

Griffin: Ohh...

Rachel: I think you need a good reach.

Griffin: I see.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: No, it's definitely a octopus.

Rachel: [laughs] Okay.

[Ad break]

Narrator: From the internationally acclaimed creators of *Who Shot Ya?* comes the movie podcast, *Maximum Film!*, starring producer and film festival programmer Drea Clark, as a woman bound by passion.

Drea Clark: I saw this eight months ago on the festival circuit, and I loved it.

Narrator: Film critic Alonso Duralde as a man corrupted by greed.

Alonso Duralde: Why watch one Hallmark Christmas movie when I can watch seven?

Narrator: And comedian Ify Nwadiwe as a man protecting a love that society simply won't accept.

Ify Nwadiwe: I think Pacific Rim is a perfect movie, and if you can't accept that then I want you out of my life!

Narrator: From the makers of the movie podcast, *Who Shot Ya?*, comes *Maximum Film!*

Ify Nwadiwe: That's right, we changed the name of our show to *Maximum Film!*

Alonso Duralde: But don't worry, we're still a movie review show that isn't just a bunch of straight white dudes.

Drea Clark: So tune in to Maximum Film! At maximumfun.org, or wherever you get your podcasts.

[Ad break ends]

Rachel: You want to know my thing?

Griffin: I bet I can guess what it is.

Rachel: Well, don't cheat!

Griffin: Wink.

Rachel: It's carrots.

Griffin: Oh.

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Woah.

Rachel: No, I'm kidding. I'm kidding, I'm kidding. Carrots, come on.

Griffin: [sarcastic] They're terrible!

Rachel: [laughs] In the ground.

Griffin: That's not true, I love carrots so much.

Rachel: I know, I do too. Next week, carrots.

Griffin: Next week. Look out for it.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: You can put `em in a soup. You can dip `em.

Rachel: Bunnies eat `em.

Griffin: The sound they make is excellent.

Rachel: Yep. No, I'd say a trip to the Poetry Corner.

Griffin: [Imitates jazzy bass riff for some time] I'm just gonna keep walking down this fretboard until you tell me to stop. [continues singing bass riff]

Rachel: There it is. [laughs] Sometimes I like to see how long you can go before you just instantly start signing that.

Griffin: [as Thanos] It is... inevitable.

Rachel: So this Poetry Corner was actually motivated by a listener.

Griffin: Oh, hey!

Rachel: Which is not something I've done before, but Milo Rey on Instagram reached out to me and said that they review books professionally and recently read a poetry collection that made them think of me.

And typically, I would or wouldn't... You know I don't have a strong process for taking recommendations, but I just said, "Okay, I'm looking for new poetry."

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: And I found the new collection of poetry, and the first collection of poetry, from Rachel Long, called, *My Darling From the Lions*.

Griffin: Now, did you just pick this poet because they got the same name as you?

Rachel: Dahhhh!

Griffin: Ahhhh!

Rachel: You got me. I bet for you that's like a real—

Griffin: Never, ever, ever happens?

Rachel: [laughs] That's a real thing.

Griffin: Yeah, sure. It's just me and Griffin Newman out here sort of holding it down.

Rachel: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Griffin: And appropriately we do get confused for each other, I think, a great deal, because it is just the two of us.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: We can make it if we try.

Rachel: [laughs] Rachel Long. So, this book actually... She is a UK poet, and it was released in the UK in 2020 and then Tin House picked it up here, and it just came out this month—

Griffin: Oh, wow.

Rachel: ... in the US. And it's pretty incredible.

Griffin: Yeah?

Rachel: It's pretty incredible. Um—

Griffin: What's it like for you finding, like, a new poet, these days? Because I know you're not like, constantly seeking it out.

Rachel: I'm not in the scene?

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Yeah, I mean, when I was in Chicago, Chicago has such a like, crazy vibrant literary community.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: There are readings constantly. And so I was finding new poets literally every week. And then that time of my life ended. [laughs]

Griffin: Mm-hm.

Rachel: And there are definitely poets that come to Austin, Texas. I'm just very removed from that scene. So, I went years without finding a new poet. And now, like I've kind of taken it on as a job a little bit.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And so it's very exciting. I have... You know, when I was in school I had a very academic sensibility, and then I kind of returned to my preschool sensibility of, like, I just want something that I can sit down and read and enjoy, not something I have to look up 25 references for.

And Rachel Long is just a really great poet in that regard. She writes a lot from her personal experience, and seems to just kind of inherently have a sense of what is interesting and important. Because each of her poems, like... She doesn't write any like, "I ate a really good apple and I took a nap"

Griffin: Well, no that... Yeah.

Rachel: Kind of poem.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Which can be a good poem. I mean, you know I love some William Carlos Williams, you know? Like—

Griffin: Yeah. My man loves produce, for sure.

Rachel: Yeah. Like a good plum, thanks.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: But Rachel Long's poems speak really strongly to her personal experience and jus— but makes it... I don't know, it's hard to really speak to what exactly she's doing, so maybe I'll just read one of them, I guess?

Griffin: Yeah, I think that's a great idea.

Rachel: [Pages rustle] You hear the pages rustling?

Griffin: I love that.

Rachel: This is like an actual book that I bought.

Griffin: Yeah, it's not... Yeah, it's not one of them cyber books.

Rachel: [laughs] This poem is called, "Thanksgiving."

"As if by accident, I find my head
washed up window-side of his bed.
After all that fucking, look!

the sky's still pinned up.
His nose is longer with his eyes shut.
This whole time, I've been holding,
squeezing, wringing, folding,
bending, nodding, thank you,
God, for giving me someone who makes me hold
my breath. I will be so light
upon his life he won't realise
he's kept me.
I'll leave not a mark
on his pillow, papers,
knife, DVDs or wineglass.
What blessing
Only when he is sleeping
can I breathe out. So deep
my ribs come up like a ship."

Griffin: Wow!

Rachel: Wow. Isn't that great?

Griffin: That was good stuff.

Rachel: Yeah. she writes a lot—

Griffin: [sarcastic] I don't appreciate the language, if I'm being honest.
The coarse language.

Rachel: The coarse language, yeah. No, I know.

Griffin: At the top of it.

Rachel: I know swearing makes you uncomfortable.

Griffin: [sarcastic] Yeah, because it's a poem, you know? It's supposed to
be like, all—

Rachel: [laughs] It's supposed to be like—

Griffin: [laughs] I can't even pretend to be this person.

Rachel: A little crumb-scraper on a table, you know?

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: That's what a poem is.

Griffin: [sarcastic] Yeah. It's all thou and thou art.

Rachel: [laughs] So she is a Black woman who has done a lot to speak to the experience of women of color. In fact, she is actually a founder of a poetry collective called the Octavia Poetry Collective for Women of Colour, based at the South Bank Centre in the UK.

She talks a lot about the experience of being what she calls, like, both the invisible and also hyper visible. And in an interview with the *Guardian* she talks about how you're either the spokesperson or the translator. And her experience just in school, particularly in higher education, like not finding a place for herself and being, like I said, invisible but also hyper visible.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: And so that poem kind of gets at that a little bit, of just this idea of like trying to exist in this space and be what somebody else wants you to be, you know?

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: And I mean, obviously I don't have that exact experience, but that experience of being with somebody that you feel is different than you, and trying to just keep everything unique about yourself, like, hidden.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Rachel: You know? This idea of like, she doesn't exhale until she knows he's asleep. I feel like there are a lot of people that can kind of speak to that experience of like... I'm with somebody who would see my flaws and see my reality and... you know.

Griffin: You worry... This is a very relatable thing, I think, for people who have been in a maybe not-so-great relationship.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Just like, if I make myself even the smallest bit of a burden—

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: ... this whole thing is just gonna come crashing down.

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah. Yeah. So her book, the book that I am talking about today, *My Darling From the Lions*, talks a lot about her growing up

and her experience of being somebody of mixed race and trying to figure out how to navigate that...

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: ... is really powerful, it's really well done and really, like, subtle but done in a very kind of interesting, exciting way.

I read this interview between her and Alice Hiller, who is a blogger. And she asks about her experience of writing and growing up and kind of how she captured that in her book.

And Rachel Long responded, "Being of dual heritage, I grew up in a white working-class area on the outskirts of London. My schools were majoritively white. My friends, half my family. I'm not sure that I thought of myself as Black for a long time. Mixed, half-caste, dark, light-skinned, all the rest of it, but not Black particularly. That was an understanding, a knowledge and an acceptance of a self that I had to carve out later as I grew up, as I left that estate, as I read, spoke, and understood myself within a much wider context.

When I was a girl, I thought you had to choose what colour you were. I remember sitting in the backseat of my dad's car, Dad driving, Mom in the passenger seat, and suddenly thinking, 'You must choose now whether you want to be white like Dad or Black like Mom.' Isn't that disturbing? And as I thought, that I get to choose how the world perceives me."

Griffin: Huh.

Rachel: Yeah. I mean, it's a lot to take on in a first collection of poetry. [laughs]

Griffin: Absolutely, yeah. For sure.

Rachel: And she does it in a way that feels very intimate and very relatable. And she just talks about... Like, there's this great series of poems about her playing with Barbies when she's a kid and having a Ken doll and then a Black doll that was Steve.

And the experience of like, playing with your dolls with Ken and Steve and Ken being this ideal and Steve being this thing that she is trying to fit into this world of Barbie and Ken. It's a really great group of poems, and I would just... I would recommend it. It's exciting, I feel like, to find a poet that is this new and has so much to say in this first collection, and yeah, I would really encourage people to check it out, Rachel Long.

Griffin: Thank you, to, to, uh...

Rachel: Milo. Thank you, Milo.

Griffin: Milo, for sending that in. Yeah. That's awesome.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: That's nice. I like that you've got a... You know, you found some—

Rachel: A new friend?

Griffin: A new friend.

Rachel: Yeah, no, finding a new poet, especially at the beginning of their career is really exciting. I mean, it's like finding a new musical artist or you know, a new... I dunno, what resonates with you? Like a new...

Griffin: What you are about to say is going to be insightful.

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah....

Griffin: Sometimes I can tell when you're like, running up to something that's going to be fake demeaning. You're not a demeaning person—

Rachel: No, no.

Griffin: ... toward the fact that I play a lot of video games, but sometimes you play that character a little bit. So like you were thinking, like, I'm going to guess, it's like when Mario learns a new jump or something like that, or they like announce a new Pokémon.

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Sometimes I like to play at you being this character that I think some of the world has reduced you to.

Griffin: Sure, yeah.

Rachel: And then sometimes it feels so mean I can't even get it out of my mouth.

Griffin: Like then.

Rachel: [laughs] That was then.

Griffin: Like just now, yeah.

Rachel: [laughs] That was then.

Griffin: No, and I appreciate that.

Rachel: Yeah, you're welcome.

Griffin: We know each other now.

Uh, 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 Maximum Fun for having us on the network. Go to maximumfun.org, check out all the great shows there. They got so many podcasts. Talk about *Maximum Film!*, we did a fun thing with them for *MBMBAM*, that will be out at some point... I mean, and you've got...

There's so many frickin' shows on this.

Rachel: *The Flophouse!*

Griffin: *The Flophouse!*

Rachel: They just did a live show that I think you can still get tickets for where they watch the original Mario Brothers movie.

Griffin: That's fun. We have to go right now, because somebody's at our front door, but thank you all and thank you for listening and we'll be back next week.

Rachel: And keep it up.

Griffin: And keep it going. Keep it up! Bye!

[Outro, *Money Won't Pay Plays*]

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