

## Wonderful! 212: Chaotic Eye Energy

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[theme music plays]

**Rachel:** Hello, this is Rachel McElroy!

**Griffin:** Hello, this is Griffin McElroy.

**Rachel:** And this is *Wonderful!*

**Griffin:** We're here. We're back. We're doing it. They're doing the damn thing. They're in the studio together, making love eyes at each other.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And that can only mean one thing... is that it's time to record *Wonderful!*

**Rachel:** I feel like I'm making love eyes. I don't know that you are.

**Griffin:** Can I tell you something—

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** —I've learned about myself since I've, uh, appeared on video a handful of times—

**Rachel:** Okay.

**Griffin:** —for the content that we create?

**Rachel:** Uh-huh?

**Griffin:** People tell me that I have, like, a thousand-yard stare going pretty much all the time.

**Rachel:** Yeah, I mean, that's what I'm seeing right now. [laughs quietly]

**Griffin:** I don't even think of myself as having sort of intense eye contact or, like, eye technique?

**Rachel:** Yeah, no, I don't think it's intense eye contact. I think it's just when you are looking at me, I don't see a lot of emotion conveyed through those eyes.

**Griffin:** It's— it's— I think in, uh— because I'm very relaxed right now, when I'm around you.

**Rachel:** Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** But, like, if I'm— if I'm being filmed for something I go, like, deer in the headlights. Like, I blink three times...

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** ... an hour. People have been telling me about it since I started doing the *Zelda* Randomizer series.

**Rachel:** Oh yeah.

**Griffin:** The, uh, Legend of... Fieri. Or— what? I for— or Trial by Fieri.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Uh, is that, like, I get so focused on the game and my eyes are just, like, boi-oi-oi-oi-oi-oi-oi-ing!

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** I did not know that about myself. One—[laughs] another side story. One time I got a craniosacral therapy thing that I didn't realize was, like, energy healing.

**Rachel:** Yeah...

**Griffin:** But I— you know, I'm down to— I'm down to try whatever.

**Rachel:** Can I couch this a little bit?

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** So people don't think that you, like, really actively sought this out. Um, we were staying at a nice place as kind of a getaway evening, and they—

**Griffin:** It was like a health— health kind of resort?

**Rachel:** Yeah, they gave us— they gave us a booklet of services and, uh, so Griffin found this on the list, uh, and was intrigued. [laughs]

**Griffin:** I was like, "I have problems with my cranium and sacrum, so let's do it!" But it was, like, an energy thing. And, you know, it's... to each their own. Uh, I don't know that I would opt for this again. But at the end of it, the— the therapist was like, "You have... wildly frantic and chaotic energy in your eyes."

And I was like... I haven't stopped thinking about that.

**Rachel:** I know!

**Griffin:** I haven't stopped thinking about that, because I—

**Rachel:** I wish I had gone too, just so we could compare and see, like— see what is the typical, like, response, you know? Like, how often do people get told about their chaotic eye energy? Are you the first?

**Griffin:** I was the most. She said "I've never seen a case like this."

**Rachel:** [laughs] A case like this.

**Griffin:** [laughs] Uh-huh. Anyway, hello. Do you have any small wonders?

**Rachel:** Oh!

**Griffin:** Oh.

**Rachel:** Maybe the most recent Blues game that we watched.

**Griffin:** Fuck yes!

**Rachel:** Um, so Blues were, uh, trailing against Dallas, and it was, like, a few minutes left in the game, and Dallas got a few unfortunate penalties, and the Blues tied it up...

**Griffin:** With 23 seconds left.

**Rachel:** Yes. And then they got another power play, which means that they had more men on the ice, and since they had pulled their goalie, it was six on four, so they had two more men. And they just immediately scored again off this crazy fluke, like, bank shot off of somebody's skate.

**Griffin:** Yeah, Jordan Kyrrou hit it into one of the Stars player's, like, shinguards, and it just bounced at a perfect 90-degree angle into the goal.

**Rachel:** And this is not necessarily wonderful, but it was fascinating. The Dallas coach was so outraged by these penalties and the surprise outcome of the game that he took a stick and beat it all over [laughs] the, uh— the box where the players sit, and he got fined \$25,000 for it.

**Griffin:** And he didn't even break the stick!

**Rachel:** For his tantrum. [laughs]

**Griffin:** He didn't even break the stick, though.

**Rachel:** So unprofessional! It made me really worry about those Dallas players if they had a coach that was, like, so off the rails.

**Griffin:** I don't know, dog. To lose a game in the final 23 seconds of it?

**Rachel:** I guess that's fair.

**Griffin:** When you were, like, pretty dominant the whole game, that's a tough— that's a tough blow. Um, I'm going to say... um... I've been— our, like, friend group text, group text chain, uh, in Austin, we've been, like, sharing music recommendations lately, and that's been really—

**Rachel:** Oh, that's cool!

**Griffin:** —yeah, it's been nice!

**Rachel:** You all have, like, the most active text chain.

**Griffin:** It's pretty active. And what's great is, like, our friend group here in Austin is, like— we all have very disparate musical tastes.

**Rachel:** Yeah, that's fair.

**Griffin:** Like, wildly different. Like, uh, you know, I'm big into, like, synth pop, electronica stuff, but then, like, we have friends who are, like, only into... like, 1940's, like, old-timey gospel or whatever, and—

**Rachel:** Do y'all talk about Bruno?

**Griffin:** The song, the talking about the— the "Don't Talk about Bruno" song?

**Rachel:** Yeah. Has that come up?

**Griffin:** No.

**Rachel:** No, yep.

**Griffin:** No. I mean, I know I— the folks in that chat who have kids have definitely been familiarized with that song many, many times.

**Rachel:** You know, I— what's interesting is that I have, like, a counterpart where all the partners of the people on your thread are on a thread with me, and mostly what we share are pictures of our kids. [laughs]

**Griffin:** Oh, we do that too.

**Rachel:** Okay.

**Griffin:** We— you know. But, you know, it's fun. It's fun, getting exposed to different kinds of... art.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** I think you go first this week.

**Rachel:** I do!

**Griffin:** Hit it!

**Rachel:** Uh, let's go to the...

**Griffin:** No way!

**Rachel:** Poetry Corner!

**Griffin:** [scatting]

**Rachel:** [laughs] That was good! I liked it. It was very succinct.

**Griffin:** I was— yeah, I was excited to do it. We haven't had a visit to the Poetry Corner in a bit.

**Rachel:** Uh, this is a poet that was actually— it's been recommended to me a few times, because this poet went viral.

**Griffin:** Oh boy!

**Rachel:** Uh, several years ago, with a poem called "Good Bones." Yes, you know her, you love her, the poet... is Maggie Smith. Not the actress.

**Griffin:** Oh— oh.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Sorry, I gotta head it up for you.

**Griffin:** Yeah, you were not even fast enough to, like—

**Rachel:** [laughs] I really killed that comedy for you.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** [laughs] No, this is a poet named Maggie Smith, born in 1977, so not the actress that we've all come to know and love.

**Griffin:** Sure.

**Rachel:** Uh, and—

**Griffin:** That's M— that's McGona-McGonamagall, right?

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** McGona— McGonamagall? And the... Dowager— Dowager—

**Rachel:** Yeah, Dowager Countess.

**Griffin:** Countess.

**Rachel:** Mm-hmm.

**Griffin:** I don't remember anything about *Downton Abbey*.

**Rachel:** I don't, either. Should we rewatch that?

**Griffin:** No, I don't think we should.

**Rachel:** No? Okay. [laughs] It seems like a very specific time period in our history.

**Griffin:** Yeah, yeah.

**Rachel:** Um, so this poem, "Good Bones", was actually from a collection that she released in 2017 under the same name, and it blew up! And it got recommended to me because of my, as you know, predilection for the poem.

Uh, but it was also used by a lot of people on Twitter and Facebook in response to just kind of a lot of horrific events, um, because of the nature of the poem. Which at first I was like, "I'm not gonna read this poem. I wanna read one of her other poems, because everybody knows 'Good Bones'."

And then I was like, "Well... "

**Griffin:** I don't know "Good Bones."

**Rachel:** Yeah. [laughs] I bet a lot of people don't actually know "Good Bones," so I will read that poem. Uh, so again, uh, Maggie Smith, poem called "Good Bones," here we go.

"Life is short, though I keep this from my children.  
Life is short, and I've shortened mine  
in a thousand delicious, ill-advised ways,  
a thousand deliciously ill-advised ways  
I'll keep from my children. The world is at least  
fifty percent terrible, and that's a conservative  
estimate, though I keep this from my children.  
For every bird there is a stone thrown at a bird.  
For every loved child, a child broken, bagged,  
sunk in a lake. Life is short and the world  
is at least half terrible, and for every kind  
stranger, there is one who would break you,  
though I keep this from my children. I am trying  
to sell them the world. Any decent realtor,  
walking you through a real shithole, chirps on  
about good bones: This place could be beautiful,  
right? You could make this place beautiful."

So.

**Griffin:** That— that's good and sad.

**Rachel:** Yeah, I know. That's the thing, is that people are like, "This isn't exactly an uplifting poem."

**Griffin:** No.

**Rachel:** Um, but a lot of people share that, kind of in the wake of events that really challenging.

**Griffin:** Damn, and even in the last five years since that poem came out, the— it's— I— it hasn't gotten... better.

**Rachel:** So, before her collection came out, that poem had been published, and so in 2016 in the wake of the Pulse Nightclub shooting in Orlando, this is when it really kind of took off. Like, everybody, like... Megan Mullally, a lot of different celebrities were like, this poem kind of speaks to what we are trying to do as a



nation in the wake of these events which is, like, okay, let's still try and be hopeful. You know, let's realize that there is good and there is bad, and there is a way to look at these situations and think that we can grow from them.

**Griffin:** And that was— I mean, also, I believe, in the specter of the 2016 election which is, like, where a— where fatalism became sort of the order of the day.

**Rachel:** Yeah. Uh, and so I read this Slate article from 2020, and they talked about how through this poem, a lot of people kind of found the language they were reaching for but couldn't access. Um, it's not necessarily inspirational as much as it kind of helps you find the words to kind of explain what you are seeing and experiencing at this time.

**Griffin:** I think that's the— the greatest strength that, like, good writing can provide to humanity in challenging times. Is, like, no one's gonna write something that's like, "Whoa, that fixed it!"

But it will, like— they are providing the words that you are unable to come up with yourself to, like, explain how you're feeling.

**Rachel:** Yeah, the writer of the Slate article said, "Feeling so seen by a work of art is a potent experience, and I transformed that feeling into a kind of hopefulness the poem doesn't actually contain." [laughs quietly] "My brain replaced the actual meaning of the poem with the buoyant feeling being seen gave me, which is a lot like hope."

**Griffin:** Hmm.

**Rachel:** Which I feel like is a really— really precise way to kind of talk about this. Uh, Maggie Smith, in that article, said that she kind of still grapples with the legacy of that viral poem. She said, "What I'll always be known for is writing this poem about how bad things are, and maybe they could be better, but they're bad." [laughs]

She said her social media feed became kind of a weird disaster barometer. "Every time my mentions tick up, I have to check the news, because something bad has happened."

**Griffin:** Oh, Jesus Christ.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Which is, like, probably very true.

**Griffin:** Yeah!

**Rachel:** Um, you know, it's intere— this— there are other poems and poets out in the world who get kind of dismissed because they do go viral, you know? These kind of, like, short, aphoristic, you know, idealistic pieces of art that go out and people use in the event of complicated times, and then they don't really necessarily get their accolades as a poet because of that.

**Griffin:** Right.

**Rachel:** But I just— I love— I love the way that poem ends, that idea of just, like... yeah, you're selling, you know, you're selling this world to your kids, ultimately.

**Griffin:** Sure.

**Rachel:** You're, like, trying to get them to buy in to what can be so great about the human experience. Um, even though it is complicated and sometimes terrible.

**Griffin:** The— the stuff that people are going through in obviously varying degrees of, uh, horribleness, is so isolating, in a way. 'Cause it's— it's, uh, too much to sort of comprehend or measure all at once. And so, like, you feel like you are going through kind of your own thing, and I think when you have kids, that is intensified in a way. Because it's like, I don't understand how to really encapsulate everything that is going on, let alone... you know, teach you, or responsibly show you how to do that.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And that's— you know, in parenting that's true of so many things, 'cause you really do feel like, I am doing this my own— my own way, because there's no way to, like— there are manuals, I suppose, you can follow. But, like...

**Rachel:** [laughs quietly] Yeah.

**Griffin:** ... you're getting different results from everybody else, you're doing it in a different way from everybody else. So, to resonate with, like, anything like this

is— is, uh, a genuine— even if the thing I'm resonating with is, like... "Here is how to talk about how challenging things are right now," it is a breath of fresh air. To just, like, have the diagnosis.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Uh, is— is helpful.

**Rachel:** Yeah. Uh, right around this time, she also started tweeting these kind of, like, notes for herself, as kind of like pep talks. Uh, which turned into an essay collection called "Keep Moving: Notes on Lost Creativity and Change."

Uh, she was going through a divorce right around the time that all of this was blowing up, uh, and she... kind of turned it into a sort of optimism, because she would tweet these messages that were mostly for herself, uh, and then get a lot of response to them. Uh, and so she's like, "I didn't really envision writing, like, a self-help book." And she's like, "I don't know that that's what this is, um, but it became this essay collection that I think would probably be really exciting for people if they are needing support during a challenging time, too."

**Griffin:** Sure, yeah.

**Rachel:** Uh, so yeah. So again, that's Maggie Smith. Um, I bet you will see that poem more now that I have brought it up, uh, and obviously as times continue to be challenging.

**Griffin:** Yeah. Well... here's what I'll say about that.

**Rachel:** Okay. [laughs]

**Griffin:** To fix it, and make everybody feel better.

**Rachel:** Okay, great.

**Griffin:** [pause] [singing] The sun'll come out...

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** [singing] ... tomorrow. [speaking] Oh, that was a little pitchy.

**Rachel:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** Can I steal you away?

**Rachel:** Yes.

**Griffin:** Great!

[Home Improvement theme]

[ad break]

**Griffin:** We got a few bom-bom-boms!

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** And I will read the first one. It is for Ben, and it is from Laney, who says:

"Hi, sugar bee! Merry end of the year/beginning of the year, maybe." Definitely. "I just wanted to tell everyone how much I love you. There's nobody I'd rather argue about how not everything is math. You're the best cat dad Mr. Meatball and Alfredo could ask for, and the best boyfriend I could ask for. Love you!"

**Rachel:** Ohh...

**Griffin:** Two incredibly powerful cat names.

**Rachel:** Mr. Meatball and Alfredo! I would read a whole graphic novel about those two.

**Griffin:** Which one do you think was named first? Which one do you think was christened...

**Rachel:** Whew. Meatball?

**Griffin:** I think Mr... oh, I don't know! Either— either order is so good.

**Rachel:** Alfredo is so good, I know!

**Griffin:** They're both really good names. Damn, well done.

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

**Griffin:** Yes!

**Rachel:** Uh, this is for Chris. It is from Ace.

"Chris, I love the way you tooch that booch and work the hallway like a runway. You are not just my small wonder, but all the big wonders. I love that we are almost as cool as Rachel and Griffin. Thank you for introducing me to *Wonderful!* and for always giving me your final rose. I love you almost as much as Griffin loves HEB Superwater Zero. Ace." Whoa! These are—

**Griffin:** [gasps] God! What a— these are some deep cuts, Ace!

**Rachel:** Yeah, these are super fans, here!

**Griffin:** Uh, man. I haven't had HEB...

**Rachel:** I know, I forgot about that!

**Griffin:** ... Superwater Zero in a while, man.

**Rachel:** I wonder if they have, like, a replacement now.

**Griffin:** Yeah. I don't think— I believe they discontinued—

**Rachel:** [simultaneously] 'Cause— they took it off the shelves.

**Griffin:** —the Superwater brand.

**Rachel:** But maybe they brought it back.

**Griffin:** Maybe, for 2022!

**Rachel:** I'll have to check, mm-hmm.

**Griffin:** Uh, here is another one. This one's for Andy, and it's from Madeline, who says:

"Andy! My wonderful husband, my favorite person! Happy late? Birthday/couple months wedding anniversary/merry holiday! I love our cute little life together, but I love you most of all. You're the absolute best and the absolute worst, and I wouldn't have it any other way. Looking forward to all our terrible puns and all the magical years ahead."

A little bit late. A little bit late on this message.

**Rachel:** Yeah...

**Griffin:** And for that we true— we do truly apologize. Um, but it sounds like— it sounds like you all have plenty to celebrate, and... m— I— and I— and the love that you share...

**Rachel:** [laughs] Uh-huh?

**Griffin:** ... is a love worth fighting for!

**Rachel:** Ohh, babe you should officiate weddings!

**Griffin:** I...

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** I— I've been practicing!

**Rachel:** "And to hold, and to love."

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** "Together with... uhh... magic... "

**Griffin:** Sometimes I'll marry two bugs that I see.

**Rachel:** Okay?

**Griffin:** Outside, to just practice 'em.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Jordan:** You're in the theater. The lights go down. You're about to get swept up by the characters and all their little details and interpersonal dramas. You look at them and think, "That person is so obviously in love with their best friend. Wait, am *I* in love with my best friend? That character's mom is *so* overbearing. Why doesn't she stand up to her? Oh *God*, do I need to stand up to *my* own mother?"

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[music plays]

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[music and ad end]

**Griffin:** May I?

**Rachel:** Oh, share your thing?

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Yes, please.

**Griffin:** Okay, good. Uh, my thing is, uh, idle games. Idle— idle games.

**Rachel:** I-D-L-E or O-L?

**Griffin:** Oh, wow! Wow, really, you could imagine one of two ways—

**Rachel:** Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** —that I'm going with that.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Because I-D-O-L games, there's definitely, like... games where you, like, pay a real dollar and, like, some sort of, you know, anime priestess pops out of a ball or something.

**Rachel:** Uh-huh?



**Griffin:** No, I'm not talking about that. I'm— I-D-L-E games, also known as incremental games, or clicker games, or clickers.

**Rachel:** Ohh, okay. I also thought maybe it was, like, the name of some studio or something, too.

**Griffin:** Ooh, that's possible.

**Rachel:** There's a lot I don't know.

**Griffin:** So you don't know what this is?

**Rachel:** I mean, I can imagine, uh, but I'm sure there's a more precise definition.

**Griffin:** It's— I'm curious how you will feel about it, because I feel like on paper what an idle game is probably sounds like the biggest waste of time... ever? And I guess you're not entirely wrong, but I suppose that's shades of grey when you're talking about video games in general.

Um, to sort of illustrate how an idle game works, I'm going to sort of talk about the gameplay loop of one of the most popular ones that was ever released called *Cookie Clicker*, that came out, I believe, in 2013.

So, in *Cookie Clicker* there's a big cookie on the screen.

**Rachel:** Okay.

**Griffin:** Uh, I don't know if it's on phones, but it started as a browser game, and that's where I've played it. Every time you click that cookie, you get one cookie. And that's, like, the currency of the game is cookies.

And if you click that cookie enough times, you can buy sort of passive cookie generators, like grandmas.

**Rachel:** [laughs breathlessly] Okay.

**Griffin:** Like, you could spend ten cookies that you got from clicking the cookie ten times, and now you have a grandma who generates, like, two cookies a second automatically. So you keep clicking that cookie, keep getting cookies, buy

more grandmas to up your automatic, passive cookie generation, until you can purchase a cookie farm, which generates more cookies and is more expensive. And then you start saving up bunches of cookies and you can purchase, like, upgrades. So, like, now your grandma efficiency is doubled, and so your grandmas are really churning out the cookies.

**Rachel:** [laughs quietly]

**Griffin:** And you do that until you can afford a cookie factory which just, like, takes it up to a whole `nother echelon.

**Rachel:** So the objective isn't necessarily to cook... to click the cookie as fast as possible?

**Griffin:** You can click the cookie as fast as possible and get more cookies faster.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Or you can get it to a point where it just, like— the passive generation is just, like, all it is.

**Rachel:** Oh, okay.

**Griffin:** And then you just leave the browser tab open and come back, and you've got 30 million cookies.

**Rachel:** It's like blockchain.

**Griffin:** No, honey.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Sorry.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** I barely know what the blockchain is, but I'm pretty sure it's not... *Cookie Clicker*.

**Rachel:** Okay.

**Griffin:** Um, and so you just keep buyin' more facilities that generate more cookies, and purchase expensive cookie upgrades, and so on and so forth, and that is... that is the genre. Some games in the genre take it one step further where you can reset your progress and start over from scratch but in doing so, like, gain permanent upgrades that will, like, make it so much faster for you to get back to that point the next time so you can just skyrocket, you know, and get up into, like, the septillions of cookies, uh, because games in this genre usually do go up to, like, these absolutely bonkers large numbers that are just sort of abstracted out at that point. Um, that's it. How does that hit you? Does that sound like a— a fun experience for you?

[pause]

**Rachel:** [sighs] Umm...

**Griffin:** It could be anything, too. It's not just cookies. Sometimes there's a game called *Candy Box*, where it's candies, or experience for a little adventurer guy.

**Rachel:** You know, so my interests tend towards puzzles.

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** Like, I like puzzle games.

**Griffin:** Sure.

**Rachel:** Uh, I like the satisfaction of solving something.

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** Uh, and then moving on to the next thing, which is maybe harder to solve. This doesn't sound like that? I guess I'm wondering, where is the satisfaction coming from?

**Griffin:** The satisfaction comes from a few different places. Uh, I think, you know, having an established level of effort required to, like, hit some break point, right?

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And then being able to, like, get some sort of upgrade that completely, uh, uh, makes that, uh... obsolete.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And now, like— now I'm getting a trillion cookies per click, and I started out getting just one.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** You get this sense of being weak, and then powerful, and then weak again, and then powerful again. So, like, that kind of—

**Rachel:** Okay. Yeah, okay.

**Griffin:** —uh, incremental jump is, you know, pretty satisfying. And then the games that, like, add more mechanics on to it where, like, you're making decisions on, uh, you know, how to spend this one very rare upgrade to get, like, the maximum benefit so that you can get back to that point the next time even faster. Like, there are some strategic decisions that you have to make if you wanna, like, try and make it, you know— try and optimize your output.

Um, these games, uh, sound paradoxical of, like, a lot of roleplaying games and MMO games like *World of Warcraft*.

**Rachel:** Yeah, I was gonna say, when you said becoming more powerful, that's what it made me think of.

**Griffin:** Which is funny because, like, that's how the genre started. So the first—the— how it is attributed, the first game in this genre came out in 2002 from a dev named Eric Fredricksen who made a game called *Progress Quest* that was literally just, like, a parody of *EverQuest* and games in that genre where you just click something to get stronger to watch the numbers go up. And, like, a lot of early games in the genre were explicitly that. Like, parodies of, uh, of these games that are all about sort of incremental progress.

Uh, and a lot of them popped off on a website called Kongregate with a K, which was a huge, like, Flash game, Flash animation, uh, website. And the reason it

took off there is because one, like, it was easy to make these games in Flash. But two, Kongregate had, like, a site-wide chat that was very active for people who, like, played games on that website. So people would gravitate towards these idle games that were very low intensity, very low interaction, so that they could just kind of have something on while they chatted with their buddies and so, like, that was a huge, you know, incubator I think for games of this genre. Um, and then of course, like, when mobile phones came out—

**Rachel:** [laughs] Yeah!

**Griffin:** —that was a huge thing. Facebook gaming, when that was, like, a big deal.

**Rachel:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** A lot of games in that, um— that were successful on there, like I'm thinking of, like, *Heyday* and, um... uh, you know, *Mafia Wars*, those style of games, incorporated elements from this genre. It's what made those games, like, as sticky as they were.

**Rachel:** Interesting, yeah.

**Griffin:** And, like, the idle game genre itself is, like, incredibly sticky, because a lot of games make it so that when you're not playing you're still generating the passive currency so that— you know, it behooves you to come back tomorrow and have this huge bank waiting. Like, knowing that that huge bank is waiting for you makes people come back.

There's also— this genre is hugely monetized for, like, real-life transactions. Where it's like, "Hey, you wanna just double your shit? Two dollars. That's it. Gimme two bucks and we'll double your shit."

Uh, which, you know, if you are putting that much effort into clicking a cookie, like, I feel like you are fertile ground for those sorts of microtransactions to take place. Um, some games, like, have stories and have finite, like, endings.

Uh, there's an iOS game called *A Dark Room* that is just a text-based, like, clicker game, but it's all about, like, rebuilding this destroyed society by, like, going out and gathering sticks, and then building a bonfire to attract more people to your

village to send them out to get sticks, and then it just escalates till, like, you're building a spaceship or some shit.

Uh, but most games are just infinite. Like, *Cookie Clicker's* infinite. There is no end to *Cookie Clicker*. It just goes and goes and goes and goes and goes. Uh, and I'm sure that that has merit for people too.

Um, I just... I— I— I enjoy these types of games, because I feel like I have room in my life for these sorts of very passive, very low intensity games.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Where, like, I can't, uh... I've been looking forward to this expansion to this online *Final Fantasy* game I've been playing forever, uh, that, like, came out I think November, and I have barely touched it.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** 'Cause it's like, our shit is just bonkers right now.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** But I can get on my phone and click a thing a few times and get some upgrades so that next time I come back I can get more upgrades.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** There's something also very Zen-like about it for me, 'cause I love— I love the kinds of games that this genre was created to parody, and so, like, even though this genre, you know, almost doesn't want itself to exist, they are very... they are very compelling games.

**Rachel:** Well, and it's, like, perfect for the phone, right?

**Griffin:** Exactly, yeah. That too.

**Rachel:** That's the thing. Like, the idea of going to my, like, desktop computer and playing this game, like, doesn't really seem like it would happen. But if it's like, I can hold it in my hand while I'm, like, waiting for my oil to be changed, like, that makes total sense to me.

**Griffin:** Yeah, exactly. And then there's some that, uh, me and Justin and a lot of people at Polygon when we were working there got into this game called I think *Tap Titans 2*, which is very...

**Rachel:** [laughs] That's fun.

**Griffin:** ... phonetically pleasing. Where you could, like— you had, like, a guild. So, like, other real players and you could, like, work together to, like, take down these big boss monsters using the quintillion, you know, damage points or whatever that you had built up by clicking and clicking and clicking. So you can almost, like, you know, show your swag off to your friends. Where it's like, "Yeah. I'm a septillionaire."

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** "Of— of this one idle clicking games."

**Rachel:** "I've— I've— I've clicked a *lot*, guys."

**Griffin:** Yeah. Um, and those kinds of hooks are very clever, too. Um, yeah. I've just always— I've always enjoyed— Justin is huge into this genre. I feel like he is the one that I usually— maybe not so much these days. Uh, I have definitely been less of a consumer since we had our second child. But I think it speaks to a type of person that just sometimes wants to just vibe out and not—

**Rachel:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** —and just go smoothbrained for a while and let— let the— let the game wash over us.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** Uh, so that's— that's what I got this week. I'm saying that because I am playing an idle game right now that has been, uh, scratching the itch.

**Rachel:** Do you want to say what it is?

**Griffin:** It's called— I don't remember the name of it.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** It's called, uh, *Idle Slayer*.

**Rachel:** Okay.

**Griffin:** And it's just, like, you're a little guy running around and you get new swords?

**Rachel:** Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** It sounds like any other video game. You run around, you click a button, you get more swords. That's it.

**Rachel:** Okay.

**Griffin:** That's— but it's fun. It's doin' it. Hey.

**Rachel:** Hey.

**Griffin:** Thanks to Bo En and Augustus for the use of our theme song, "Money Won't Pay." You can find a link to that in the episode description! And thank you to Maximum Fun for having us on the network.

**Rachel:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** So many great shows there that you're gonna just— you're just gonna love, when you go to Maximumfun.org and just start clicking randomly. And hey, we— our live show! Thanks for everybody who watched it!

**Rachel:** Yeah, yeah! We had a really good time. Uh, and we had a lot of great viewers that raised a good amount of money for Austin Bat Cave.

**Griffin:** Yes, thank you so much for that. The video on demand is still available if you wanna get up in it. It's [bit.ly/wonderfulabc2021](https://bit.ly/wonderfulabc2021). Uh—

**Rachel:** Can you still buy a ticket?

**Griffin:** You can still buy a ticket and watch it on demand, so it's five—



**Rachel:** Oh, cool!

**Griffin:** —five bucks, or, you know, more, and all of that goes to Austin Bat Cave, which is awesome.

**Rachel:** We picked the best year in history.

**Griffin:** Yes, that's true.

**Rachel:** Uh, to entice you, if you have not yet purchased a ticket.

**Griffin:** Yeah. Um, that's it. That's it.

**Rachel:** That's it!

**Griffin:** That's all— that's literally it.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Like, there isn't anything else. So let's just go ahead and... just piss off.

**Rachel:** [laughs quietly]

**Griffin:** We're just gonna— we're just gonna piss off.

**Rachel:** That's kind of a weird tone shift, I would say.

**Griffin:** Hey, don't— we're sorry, everybody. We're— we'll get outta your hair.  
[sighs] Aw, man.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** We did it again. Fish and friends. Ba— go bad after 35 minutes.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Is the saying.

**Rachel:** Yeah!

[music plays]

[chord]

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