

## Wonderful! 213: Dairy-free Samwise Gamgee

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[theme music plays]

**Rachel:** [giggling]

**Griffin:** What? What?

**Rachel:** Are you ready?

**Griffin:** Yeah!

**Rachel:** Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

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

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

**Griffin:** You caught my wife laughing at me.

**Rachel:** He had to do his gargoyle perch for us to begin.

**Griffin:** What does that mean?

**Rachel:** It's when you kind of tuck your feet up in the chair...

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** ... uh, and so you are perched in a way.

**Griffin:** In sort of like a butterfly-yoga position, wouldn't you say?

**Rachel:** Just real spread. Real spread.

**Griffin:** Yeah. We're not sharing chairs, do you know what I mean? Like, I think it's okay to do what they call manspreading if I'm just, like, over here living my life.

**Rachel:** It's just you've chosen a pose that is impossible to sustain for the duration of the podcast.

**Griffin:** Fucking watch me! I think you're upset because you're a little too tempted.

**Rachel:** Well, you have your hand on the desk to kind of steady yourself.

**Griffin:** I don't need that.

**Rachel:** [laughing]

**Griffin:** Well, the problem is that our house is slightly tilted and so...

**Rachel:** [sarcastically] Oh, okay.

**Griffin:** ... if I don't hold on to the desk, I will just constantly rotate.

**Rachel:** Okay.

**Griffin:** Very slowly, almost imperceptibly.

**Rachel:** Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** But I want to stay looking at you, my wife, and continuing to show you my goodies.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Do you have any small wonders?

**Rachel:** Uh, if I haven't recommended it already, I wanted to recommend the show *Yellowjackets*.

**Griffin:** Oh!

**Rachel:** The entire first season is now complete and available to you. Uh, we do not actually have any Showtime app, but we do have cable and we have On Demand and it is On Demand and in demand by me. I loved it.

**Griffin:** Yes! Is it over? Is the first season done?

**Rachel:** First season done.

**Griffin:** Okay, so now I should watch it?

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** Yeah, it's like nine or ten episodes, uh...

**Griffin:** [groans]

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** So much.

**Rachel:** And it's particularly interesting to me because it, uh, it has two periods of time. One is the present day and one is 1996.

**Griffin:** Oh, great year.

**Rachel:** And they choose a lot of music and clothing and culturally relevant references for that year, which is memorable to me.

**Griffin:** Was '96 in contention for our best year live show award? Well, I guess I can look at the— No, doesn't— 1998 was, though.

**Rachel:** Oh, okay. Yeah, '96 I believe was my freshman year of high school, so like, a lot of this was very important to me.

**Griffin:** Yeah, of course.

**Rachel:** Uh, and even if it's not a relevant year to you, perhaps it's the year you were born, perhaps it's before you were born, either way, A+ television show.

**Griffin:** I'm gonna say Wordle, but I was thinking about doing a big segment on Wordle, but like... I feel like everybody knows what it is now? And everybody knows, like— I don't know if you know about this, the guy who made it, made it to have something him and his wife could share and play.

**Rachel:** Aw, that's sweet. I didn't know that.

**Griffin:** But, he's not into the idea of, like, commercializing it in any way, which made people really get angry when people started to just clone the idea and sell it on the app store.

**Rachel:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Griffin:** Like, people feel very protective of Wordle, but I play it every day and I'm on a— I've never lost the game, but I'm on a bad— I'm on a bad, like, fifth or sixth round streak right now that I just cannot get out of.

**Rachel:** I'm surprised you've never lost. I have definitely lost. Part of it is because I don't want to play it for very long. There's no time limit, but I always feel this urgency of, like, if I'm gonna sit down and do it, I'm gonna do it in one sitting.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And so, I get kind of lazy and I'll, like, know a letter isn't in the word, but I will still use that letter again.

**Griffin:** Oh, my god.

**Rachel:** I know, because I, like, I want to be like, get a little bit closer?

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** But it's totally wasting a turn.

**Griffin:** We made dad play it for the first time today while we were recording *TAZ* and he guessed some word that had a 'E' in it and it wasn't in there. I think it was, like, heard was the first word he guessed. And then for the subsequent three guesses, he kept putting 'E' in it. And I kept saying, like, "No! Stop it! E is not in the word!"

**Rachel:** I know.

**Griffin:** Although today's— Have you done today's? You did.

**Rachel:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** You sent me a text. Today's was fucking devious.

**Rachel:** Yeah, I will say I got the last letter right away, which helped inform my guesses.

**Griffin:** Ohh!

**Rachel:** A lot of people struggled with this one, but once I got the last letter it helped me a bunch.

**Griffin:** Well, it had a 'X' and a 'Y' in it. I don't know if— Our editor, Rachel, might have not done Wordle today, so let's not ruin it because by the episode come out, it'll be a different Wordle.

**Rachel:** I guess 'Y' a lot because a lot of times, for whatever reason, I can't think of a full 5-letter word and so I'll just add 'Y' to the end.

**Griffin:** Fascinating. Cool. Um, hey can I tell you my big thing? My big thing is Polaris.

**Rachel:** Oh!

**Griffin:** Yeah, and I don't mean the band that did the *Pete and Pete* theme song.

**Rachel:** Oh, okay, because I was gonna say I think we've talked about that *Pete and Pete* band before.

**Griffin:** Uh, have we? Maybe.

**Rachel:** I don't know, feels like it.

**Griffin:** Uh, that theme song's so— I probably could do a segment on Polaris, the band, uh, because I have one of their albums, like the one that the— [sings a short line] That whole song was on? Uh, anyway, so one time, maybe a month ago— Well, it was before Christmas, me and Henry went out on the back deck and I told them about, like, wishing on a star, which is a concept he was familiar with and very quickly was able to be like, okay, that's the North Star right there and so we did it. And since then, he has made us do what he calls star wish every night.

**Rachel:** It's so wholesome and adorable.

**Griffin:** It's very wholesome, uh... Because it's so cold, he doesn't want to, like, get dressed up just to go out on the back deck. So, he'll make us wrap him up in a blanket and, like, fireman-carry him outside so we can really quickly knock out a star wish and come back inside. It's sweet. I also think he thinks it's, like, a superpower that he can use to conjure physical items in his—

**Rachel:** Well, because in his mind, it worked for Christmas.

**Griffin:** Right. He did get a gift from Santa Claus that he did wish for and we set a terrible precedent with that...

**Rachel:** We did!

**Griffin:** Because now, for the past couple of weeks, he's wished that tomorrow he would wake up and there would be 300 Easter Eggs inside his

house that he has to find. And I've told him, and I don't want to deflate him, but that you can't travel through time by wishing on a star.

It's not that— It's more like the secret where you're like, sort of setting your intention and just trying to have the universe guide you towards that. You can't have it be like, I wish tomorrow was March 29 or whatever day Christmas is this year.

**Rachel:** I mean, although that is kind of how the plot of *13 Going on 30* happens.

**Griffin:** Yeah, but that's a film.

**Rachel:** Yeah, true.

**Griffin:** That's not real life. Anyway, I just think it's pretty dope that there's a star we always know how to find because it's in the same spot. More broadly speaking, I guess it's pretty dope that there's a star that everybody can navigate by throughout most of history.

**Rachel:** Is this another name for the north star?

**Griffin:** Polaris?

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Oh, I didn't know that.

**Griffin:** Well, here's the thing and this is— I'm going to get into this a little bit later. Polaris means polar star. Right? So Polaris literally means, like, this is the star over what is called the celestial pole, which is just like, draw a line straight up from the center from the north pole above planet Earth and that's the celestial pole.

But it's almost perfectly above the north pole. It's not quite. It's like two thirds of a degree offset. So the north star actually makes very tiny, almost

imperceptible circles in the sky if you were able to kind of follow it for nine hours or whatever, as long as it's dark outside. And that offset changes throughout history. Uh, it has not always been the north star. It's only been sort of registered as that since, like, fifth century, like late antiquity is when astronomers started to kind of say, "Oh, okay, there's—"

Because even before that, the idea of the celestial pole existed around the, you know, that BCE changeover, but it was described as like having no stars, that it was void up in space. But, you know, around the fifth century, and then especially as we get into the Middle Ages, like around 1000 CE, it started to be recognized as, "Hey, it's always up there and you can navigate by it."

So, you know, since then, transcontinental voyages used it with a certain degree of, like, calculation to figure out, because it's not perfectly above. If you used it exclusively, you would end up missing the mark of wherever it was that you're trying to sail to. Um, it's just been a navigational aid ever since then. But it's very fascinating to me that it's not— Polaris will not always be the north star. It's estimated by around the 41st century, a different star will be up there, Polaris will have changed, and a different star will be closer to the celestial pole than Polaris is right now.

**Rachel:** That's crazy and also, like, one heck of a run, though.

**Griffin:** It's a heck of a— He's done a great job, Polaris.

**Rachel:** That's a big term in office.

**Griffin:** A fun fact in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Julius Caesar has a line where he says he's as constant as the northern star. But Caesar reigned around like, you know, 50 BCE when there was no constant northern star. So that is a reflection of how it changed, man.

**Rachel:** God, Shakespeare, man. So many levels every time.

**Griffin:** Yeah, but I mean, a plot hole there. Good going, dude.

**Rachel:** Or maybe it was intentional. Shakespeare is incredible.



**Griffin:** Well, by that point, there was a northern star. When Shakespeare wrote the play, he just forgot that there wasn't one. You know what I mean? Shakespeare wrote *Julius Caesar* in, like, 1500 something when there was a northern star called Polaris, but there wasn't one in 50 BC when Julius Caesar actually reigned. So it's a fuck up!

**Rachel:** Oh, so you're saying it's an inconsistency.

**Griffin:** It's an inconsistency. It's a plot hole. Nice try, Shakespeare. This is the part that really blew my mind today when I learned it. North star, easy to find, right? Because it's so wicked bright. That's because Polaris is actually what's called a Turnery system, which means it's a cluster of three stars that appear as one from our perspective.

There's Polaris A, which is this huge yellow supernova that has six times the mass of our sun and it's also 2500 times brighter than our sun. Of course, our sun looks pretty fucking bright to us because it's wicked close. You know, it's like 150 miles or something like that. Probably more. It has another star, though, that orbits it 2 billion miles from Polaris A, which is the big yellow supernova, but it's 430 some odd light years away, so 2 billion miles is nothing. So they appear right next to each other.

It's as hot as Polaris A is, but doesn't give off nearly the amount of luminosity. And then, uh, what is it? 240 billion miles from Polaris A is what's called Polaris B, which is about the same size as Polaris AB, but it's a little bit further away. I mean, it's 238 billion more miles away than Polaris A.

**Rachel:** Okay.

**Griffin:** So all these three stars, when you see them from Earth, appear as just one star.

**Rachel:** That's incredible. I didn't know stars could orbit stars.

**Griffin:** Sure they can. I mean, they all have mass and gravity.

**Rachel:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Griffin:** You know, there are binary star systems, which are just two stars that have a similar amount of gravity that just spin around each other.

**Rachel:** Oh, man.

**Griffin:** Do a beautiful dance in the cosmos.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Um, so even considering all that, that this— That Polaris— Even if you just took Polaris A, it's several thousand times magnitude brighter than our sun and six times heavier, but is it only, you know, this whole Turnery star system is only the 50th brightest star in our sky. But it's bright enough, right? Because you can see it no matter where you are in the night sky.

**Rachel:** Oh, my gosh. I'm so poetically inspired right now. It's unbelievable.

**Griffin:** It's incred— I mean, it's—

**Rachel:** There's, like, so much metaphoric potential in everything you just said.

**Griffin:** Yeah. It is simultaneously, like, this remarkable thing that is true about our universe. Right?

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Uh, and simultaneously, there is— You have to bear in mind that it's not always going to be this, like, incredible anchor for the northern sky. Like, that is going to change over the next, you know, couple millennia and that's fucking rad also. That's also cool.

**Rachel:** Yeah, oh, man.

**Griffin:** Um, yeah. I just find it— I find that very interesting. That, like, other stars, I think in the— Polaris is, like the tail star of the Little Dipper, but I think one of the stars in the Big Dipper is going to be the pole star

starting in the 41st century. And then around like the 94th century, a different star will be over the celestial pole.

**Rachel:** [wistfully] Oh, man.

**Griffin:** Isn't that cool?

**Rachel:** Yeah, super cool.

**Griffin:** Anyway, I just thought that was neat. I also like that we go out there and make star wishes and it's always— We have a pole holding up a shade sail over our back deck, and it's always right above— It's the pole star there, too, because it's above the pole that holds up our shade sail every night, and I can always find it and that's really sick.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** So Polaris, they're doing a great job up there.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Good job, Polaris. Keep it up. Can I steal you away?

**Rachel:** Yes.

[ad break]

**Griffin:** Got a couple of Grandpa Johns here, a couple of Grandpa's named John, and there's some messages and I would love to read them. Can I?

**Rachel:** Yes.

**Griffin:** This one's for Kathleen and Lauren. It's from Caitlin, who says, "Howdy besties. I'm so thankful to have you all as such wonderful friends. We're living our big kid adult lives now, but I will forever cherish and make fun of our years in CStat. Thank you all so much for introducing me to McEl-content and the endless laughs. Can't wait for Disney round two? Question mark? And remember to hump it, gig 'em, and saw them off. Go aggies!"

**Rachel:** Oh, these are Texas folks.

**Griffin:** Is that what— Is that what those things mean?

**Rachel:** Texas A&M.

**Griffin:** [slowly] Okay.

**Rachel:** Aggies.

**Griffin:** Yeah. Gig 'em? What's that mean?

**Rachel:** It's just the thing they say.

**Griffin:** Alright!

**Rachel:** I don't really know why. [laughs]

**Griffin:** It's fun that your school has fun things to say that's not words. I love that.

**Rachel:** Can I read the next one?

**Griffin:** Oh, yes.

**Rachel:** This is for My Sammy Lady Baby. And it is from Chya Boy Matthew. Do you like how I said chya boy?

**Griffin:** I did, it was very— Sounded very authentic.

**Rachel:** Hello, my Sammy Lady Baby. I'm probably asleep, so here's a message from 2021 Matthew. Thank you for being my amazing wife, my best friend, and a wonderful Mama to Chieferson. I love our little family so much. Every day with you is the best day ever. But maybe this is a sign for when it's time to add a skinny, nerdy, big eyed little you and me to our family. What do you think?"

**Griffin:** That's good. And what I love the most about what Chya Boy Matthew has done here is there's a lot of use of the letter 'U' to represent the word 'you', like, getting efficient with the use of character limits.

**Rachel:** And a lot of deleted spaces between words...

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** ... which I was able to navigate seamlessly.

**Griffin:** Now, this also could be a puzzle, like some sort that we could work out like, oh, all these letters are missing and when you put them together, it spells the DaVinci code.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** It spells the DaVinci code.

**Rachel:** Which then means that you go read *The DaVinci Code* and you look for the spaces that aren't there and the spaces that are.

**Griffin:** And that's how you found out that Jesus had a son named Jesus Jr. I'm pretty sure that's what *The DaVinci Code* is about.

**Rachel:** I don't know. I've never read it or seen it.

**Griffin:** That's okay.

[MaxFun ad break]

**Griffin:** What do you got for me?

**Rachel:** My wonderful thing this week is something that is called the cheese pull.

**Griffin:** I am so excited for this.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Because this is a topic of fascination, not necessarily just the cheese pull, but I guess what the cheese pull represents. And I am very excited for you to do a deep dive on it.

**Rachel:** So, y'all know I've been living dairy-free since our little son was born and I have found a lot of great substitutes for dairy. There is great dairy free ice cream and yogurt. A lot of it is nut based, like cashew or almonds. Just any kind of like fatty nut out there, you can turn into a fake cheese.

**Griffin:** Sure.

**Rachel:** I have been using some fake Mozzarella cheese and a lot of times it advertised its bubbly stretchy quality, similar to cheese, but it cannot deliver.

**Griffin:** This is false.

**Rachel:** Uh...

**Griffin:** Some of it tastes a lot like cheese, but then also it turns into the fucking Mood Slime from Ghostbusters 2—

**Rachel:** So, I buy it in shredded form so that it looks like cheese, but a lot of times people just sell the liquid. Like, you can just buy a can—

**Griffin:** Cut out the middleman.

**Rachel:** Yeah, because ultimately, like, that's what it's going to do.

**Griffin:** At room temperature, it becomes gak.

**Rachel:** So nothing makes me miss real cheese more than a commercial with a good cheese pull.

**Griffin:** Yeah, do you want to describe maybe what a cheese pull is?

**Rachel:** Yeah. So there is a 2016 *Quartz* article that describes it as "a stylized shot of perfectly congealed cheese strands that stretch seductively from a slice of pizza as it's lifted from the pie."

**Griffin:** Ugh. Seductively is the best adjective or adverb for that action.

**Rachel:** Yeah. It is a technique in advertising that is used to communicate with a part of our brain that is not verbal. It's kind of a primal core. It doesn't understand words, but responds with hunger. It is a really effective way to get people interested in your food item without a lot of work or words or time.

**Griffin:** I mean, it's a lot of work to trick people into thinking that this is what their pizza cheese is going to look like when they buy the product. It is subterfuge, at the end of the day. It's lying about cheese.

**Rachel:** Well, what's the lie?

**Griffin:** That your cheese is going to do a perfect cheese pull every time you eat the cheese on the pizza.

**Rachel:** I don't think that is my expectation. I think when I see the cheese pull, I think like, "Oh, man, I love cheese." [laughs] I don't think, like, "I can't wait to get this food item so it will do that."

**Griffin:** I do think that.

**Rachel:** You do think that?

**Griffin:** I think it's normal to think that. If you advertise a product on television— And again, deeply fascinated in this topic and not actually at all mad about it, but by the principle of the thing, if I see a cheese pull on my Domino's Pizza, I better get a cheese pull when I buy the Domino's Pizza and bring it home to my kids.

**Rachel:** I will say there have been issues with the cheese pull. There is a whole Taco Bell segment that I'm going to get to a little bit later.

**Griffin:** Fuck, yes. I'm going to stop talking then.

**Rachel:** [laughs] So the cheese pull. There is an assistant professor of marketing in this *Quartz* article that talks about how it can trigger deep-seated memories of food experiences. Food is what we call a primary reinforcer. We recognize the value of food items even when we can't touch them or feel them in person.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** So it's just kind of like seeing the food is enough to set off a lot in your body, which is kind of remarkable if you think about it.

**Griffin:** Sure.

**Rachel:** You know? And just kind of the emotional attachment to that. It can set off a release of chemicals akin to those involved in drug addiction. As many of us know, pizza can be an addictive food. So the cheese pull in an ad can set off a craving simply by showing you.

**Griffin:** The cheese pull.

**Rachel:** The cheese pull.

**Griffin:** Seductively.

**Rachel:** So, I sent you a link to a Domino's Pizza video that documents how the cheese pull has been created.

**Griffin:** Even the concept of a Domino's Pizza video. This is a video that Domino's Pizza made about their pizza. It's actually a video of them exposing their own fraud, but that's cool, too.

**Rachel:** Yeah. So, in this video, and this is not saying that this is how it is done all the time. This is just one example. And they show, like 20 lights, 50 c-stands, 150 people, including pizza chefs and hand models, to create this cheese pull in which the pizza is actually drilled to the table.



**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** So that when the piece of pizza is lifted, it does not pull the rest of the pizza with it.

**Griffin:** Of course, that's basic physics. You've got to drill your pizza.

**Rachel:** There's also a lot of discussion with the hand model who talks a lot about how she is able to achieve this kind of perfect pull.

**Griffin:** Is that who the woman is that they're—?

**Rachel:** Yes.

**Griffin:** Oh, my God. She is so invested in her work. It's like watching Daniel Day Lewis talking about pulling a piece of pizza away from other pizza.

**Rachel:** Yeah, and she talks a lot about the technique and then the noise that she makes personally, to kind of get the timing right with the pull. I would really recommend a watch of this video. The pizza chef in the video also talks about how, if we're lucky, we get one shot an hour because of just the precision they want with this. So it is a real pizza. It's just kind of the way that they get it together is a little devious.

**Griffin:** The video ends with that pizza chef, though, like taking a Domino's Pizza out of the oven and saying, but it's fine just like this.

**Rachel:** I know.

**Griffin:** Then shoot it. Like, show me a commercial where you pull it and if you're lucky, maybe one strand of cheese gets pulled away from it. Don't—  
It's all—

**Rachel:** See, you said that you're not angry about this, but you sound a little angry.

**Griffin:** This is honestly pretty innocent. I have watched videos about food photography before.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Because it's honestly, like, a very impressive discipline, but it involves, like, a lot of the time— And I expected this from the video. I'm surprised that this was not the case. To achieve the cheese pull, they will just use glue.

**Rachel:** Yeah. So this is interesting. This came up. A lot of people had assumed there was glue involved and then a lot of restaurant chains had to come out and say, no, we don't. Pizza Hut said, no, we don't use glue. Papa John said something very specific, which I think is interesting. They said, "The pizzas Papa John's uses on set are 100% edible."

**Griffin:** Well...

**Rachel:** So, I mean, technically glue is edible.

**Griffin:** Yeah, sure.

**Rachel:** But more often than not, what is happening is that, kind of, when the pizza comes out of the oven, there is additional cheese added, and then they use a heat gun to really make sure that effect happens when the slice is pulled out.

**Griffin:** Okay. See, I would still eat that— Well, I would eat around the screws, but I would still eat that pizza.

**Rachel:** So, per... This is an article from Delish where I found this. "Per the FTC, there is no specific rule saying advertisers can't add inedible products. But in the 1960s, the FTC sued Campbell's Soup for adding marbles to a soup bowl to make the soup seem chunkier."

**Griffin:** Yeah, that's the thing. I have heard of that. So wait, people can't use marbles like that anymore?

**Rachel:** I think what it was is that the slogan of Campbell's used to be that the soup was so chunky you could eat it with a fork.

**Griffin:** That's fuckin—

**Rachel:** And then adding the marbles was a way to kind of misrepresent it.

**Griffin:** Okay, I see, I see.

**Rachel:** So it wasn't like, you can't use marbles. It's like if you're going to make this claim...

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** You can't fake it.

**Griffin:** The one that blows me away is whenever there's, like, cooked meat, especially in a fast food commercial, what they do is they make a mixture of water and shoe polish and then brush it over the meat to give it, like, a dark and glistening sort of aesthetic that makes it seem more like a nice, juicy, dark burger. That's the same— People, like, using whipped up adhesive material to be whipped cream because it peaks so much better?

**Rachel:** Well, yeah. And I'd heard glue with cereal because the milk will make the cereal soggy and so they would use glue.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Okay. So Taco Bell.

**Griffin:** Uh-oh.

**Rachel:** So Taco Bell gets in the cheese pull game with the quesalupa.

**Griffin:** Oh, God, the quesalupa.

**Rachel:** I thought you might have a connection to quesalupa. [laughs]

**Griffin:** Any Taco Bell food experience was so dope. Was that the one where it was a chalupa, but there was an extra, like, tortilla wrapped around it that was stuffed with cheese?

**Rachel:** I guess so? I didn't actually get into what this item was. I never had it.

**Griffin:** I believe that's what it was.

**Rachel:** So the quesalupa premiered in a 36-store test in Toledo and then there was a 32nd TV spot during the Super Bowl that claimed the quesalupa would be, quote, "bigger than man buns, drones, aliens, and James Harden's beard," among other things.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** The commercial airing during the Super Bowl cost an estimated 5 million to broadcast and it was all about the cheese pull with the quesalupa.

**Griffin:** How much did it cost to make the cheese pull happen, though? That's what I want to know.

**Rachel:** Oh, yeah. I don't know.

**Griffin:** You get fucking Weta Workshop in there? You got James Cameron working on cheese pull technology?

**Rachel:** So I found a Bloomberg article from 2016 that talks about a tweet somebody did which said, "Dear Taco Bell, why can't the quesalupa be as cheesy as your commercials? Sincerely, a customer who would marry cheese." This tweet popped up on a wall with a dozen TV screens that employees monitor in the, quote, "fishbowl" at Taco Bell headquarters in Irvine, California.

**Griffin:** That's horrific. I didn't know Taco Bell had a fucking panopticon that they used to watch our every activity and hear everything we ever say about their products.

**Rachel:** I know, right? So there's a 15-person newsroom team, and it's job is to defend and protect what Taco Bell calls the cheese pull. This is in 2016. I imagine that they do other things, but their focus at that time was the quesalupa and the cheese pull. So that Tweet is an example of kind of a series of feedback points that caused an email to the restaurants reminding staff not to overcook the tortilla or allow the shells to lie around too long after they've been fried.

**Griffin:** Is that because it has a negative effect on the cheese pull?

**Rachel:** Yes.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** Yes. So, yeah, there's a lot about, uh, with the quesalupa, if the shell isn't fried the proper 90 seconds or if it sits more than 15 minutes, the cheese hardens and won't be melty enough for the pull.

**Griffin:** Oh, my God. The people who refer to fast food work as, like, low skill labor are out of their fucking minds.

**Rachel:** The timing involved in everything is so critical.

**Griffin:** I mean, the endurance required. This is not a joke, like, the endurance required to do that and just put up with 100 people during a dinner rush all being shitheads and yelling at you because the cheese pull wasn't, like, gooshy enough? That's miserable.

**Rachel:** The cheese pull, the quesalupa, the whole thing was kind of inspired by the stuffed crust pizza.

**Griffin:** Now that was some stretchy shit right there.

**Rachel:** Yeah, it really was.

**Griffin:** It really was.

**Rachel:** Uh, yeah, so that's the cheese pull. I, um...

**Griffin:** I want to eat a hot pizza worse than I've ever wanted to eat anything.

**Rachel:** I know, my mouth has been watering this entire time that we have discussed this.

**Griffin:** Like, you can't even scratch that itch.

**Rachel:** I know I can't.

**Griffin:** You could probably pull Dia— If you worked hard enough at it, you could probably get a Dia-pull.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Yeah, I am relatively satisfied by the dairy alternatives that I have found.

**Griffin:** I think Dia's pretty good.

**Rachel:** Yeah. It gets close enough for me that I can feel like, "Okay, that craving was addressed."

**Griffin:** But also on this journey that you've gone on and I tried to go with you like a Dairy-free Samwise Gamgee, I've had some pretty nar cheese. Some pretty narfo cheese.

**Rachel:** Yeah. Lately I've gotten into, like, a cashew queso, which I feel like scratches my queso...

**Griffin:** Cashew queso can do it.

**Rachel:** Yeah. Um, but yeah, man, the cheese pull, it is a beautiful thing, and it is used constantly. I think a lot of people are moving away from it because it's so cliché. But it is effective.

**Griffin:** It's cliché for a reason, man. I want it. I want to pull— How long a cheese pull do you want? If I could pull it into another room and it'd still be tethered to the pizza in the kitchen and I could just kind of grab it in the

middle of the strand and eat my way back into the kitchen toward the pizza? That's the dream.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Anyway, 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. They got so many great shows that you're going to just vibe with and vibe on, like, *The Flophouse*.

**Rachel:** Yeah. Or *Judge John Hodgman*.

**Griffin:** *Judge John Hodgman*. There are so many more all on MaximumFun.org. We got merch over at McElroyMerch.com. Uh, stuff you're just going to dig man. Stuff you're really going to... crank.

**Rachel:** Is that the word you want to use?

**Griffin:** No. Is there anything else? I guess I want to say thank you. For... thank you. We don't say that enough, do we? As a people.

**Rachel:** Oh, do you want to tell people about your Guy Fieri thing?

**Griffin:** Yeah, sure. Today, I guess, the day that this episode comes out and every Wednesday, hopefully, I played the *Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past* only I die in one hit and all the enemies and items are in the wrong places and I'm Guy Fieri and it's going very well so far. Genuinely.

**Rachel:** Can you say what it's called?

**Griffin:** It's called Trial by Fieri and you can find it on the McElroy Family YouTube channel.

**Rachel:** For me, I don't even want to watch it because the name of it is so perfect that I'm satisfied by that...

**Griffin:** It can't live up to what your expectation of what it is in your mind. It's very fun. I'm doing surprisingly well at this impossible version of *Link to the Past* that I've created and I hope you'll join me on my journey.

**Rachel:** Mm-hmm.

**Griffin:** That's it though. For real though. And I know I wanted to say thank you before.

**Rachel:** Yeah, let's say thank you again.

**Griffin:** But no, I don't give a shit. Now I'm a bad boy. I turned into a bad boy in the last, like, 70 seconds and that's how I can flip on you, isn't it?

**Rachel:** Yeah, it's tricky in a relationship, I think.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Sometimes you come at me sweet like a kitten and I'm, like, I go in for the hug and then you just, like, step back...

**Griffin:** Claws. I got claws.

**Rachel:** ... and I fall to the floor.

**Griffin:** I want to eat cheese so bad. Can we please stop?

**Rachel:** Yes.

[theme music plays]

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