

Wonderful! 207: Boy Performer

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[theme song plays]

Rachel:

Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin:

Hello, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel:

And this is *Wonderful!*

Griffin:

This is a show that we do about things that are good and that we love.

Rachel:

Yes.

Griffin:

And you can't— you can't tell us any different. You can't come in here and demand these changes.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Like, "The advertisers want more, um, you know, lewd talk."

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Like, if you—

Rachel:

Oh, I thought you were suggesting that people would come in and say, "You don't like hot dogs."

Griffin:

Oh no. I'm saying like the advertisers. Uh—

Rachel:

They want us to get raunchy?

Griffin:

Yeah. Like raunchy or they're like, "You're married. Prove it by talking— by talking lewd, dirty stuff." And we're like, "We don't... [laughs] This is a family show."

Rachel:

Oh, we were raised to be shame driven. Thank you.

Griffin:

Thank you very much.

Rachel:

I'm not gonna talk about my body.

Griffin:

No way. We're sex positive, but, um—

Rachel:

But terrified of our own parts.

Griffin:

But so scared.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

So, so scared. Yeah. When I take a shower, I have to have all the lights off. Thank you very much.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Weird way to start the episode.

Rachel:

[laughs] I think it was your choice, though.

Griffin:

I think it was my choice. Yeah. Well, the advertisers sort of forced our hand a little bit.

Rachel:

Hmm. True, true.

Griffin:

But DoorDash just wants it sexy. I don't get at it. Uh—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Do you have any small wonders?

Rachel:

Oh my gosh. Um, I'm gonna say the boy performer that came to our house.

Griffin:

Let's talk about the boy performer.

Rachel:

I, you know, Henry just turned five and we knew this was maybe gonna be the first birthday party he actually remembered. And he started expressing

interest in— in what the party would contain. And I wanted this one to be big, you know.

Griffin:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Rachel:

In the past, like for example, the theme of his first birthday was balls, just because Henry likes to play with balls.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

The second one was hats because Henry liked hats.

Griffin:

Sure.

Rachel:

It meant that I didn't have to put any effort in to the upfront.

Griffin:

Right.

Rachel:

But this one felt like, important. So I reached out to an organization—

Griffin:

Yeah, the Avengers.

Rachel:

... [laughs] that had connections with both princesses and superheroes. And I said, "I would like a superhero." And the person on the phone said, "Which superhero would you like?" And I indicated the one that I wanted and they said, "Let me check with our boy performers and get back to you."

Griffin:

Such a fun phrase.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

I'm gonna say that that is my job title. Like—

Rachel:

[laughs] Oh, yeah.

Griffin:

... whenever somebody asks me like for paperwork or whatever like, "What's your job title?" I usually say podcast producer, because it's the most official sounding way to refer to the bullshit that I do.

Rachel:

[laughs] Uh-huh [affirmative].

Griffin:

But I could also just say, "Me, I'm a boy performer."

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

"I'm a boy performer."

Rachel:

Uh, there were pictures on the website, and I— I knew that this was gonna be a professional operation just based on the photos. But I mean, it was exactly 30 minutes. I was given an overview of the services that would be provided. Uh, and there was a suggestion that this boy performer would basically take over the party for us and all the parents could stand around and just enjoy the fact that their child was being entertained—

Griffin:

That is more or less how it panned out.

Rachel:

... by a person in costume who was very committed.

Griffin:

So committed.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Like could have been, I would say Toby's stunt double.

Rachel:

Have I said it's Spider-Man? I kind of, I don't know. I, for some reason I decided to say—

Griffin:

You did just keep saying boy performer.

Rachel:

Right. [laughs] I don't know, I kind of wanted to leave it open.

Griffin:

That's fun. Yeah.

Rachel:

But yes, correct. It was Spider-Man.

Griffin:

Yeah. He did, he did a great job.

Rachel:

He did a great job. He, he, I—

Griffin:

Can I talk about the video? [laughs]

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

At one point he was playing Spidey Says with the kids and I was like filming it 'cause it was super cute. And then he like bent down to like tell everybody to touch his toe— to touch their toes. Not his toes, touch their toes.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

And his— his— his suit was pretty tight. And so his butt was— was out.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

And so I like panned down when he bent over to touch his toes, 'cause like I was just following the action. And then I realized I was like right up on his heinier.

Rachel:

[laughs] Like frantically.

Griffin:

Like, and then I frantically panned back up, like, instinctively.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

It's a pretty funny... I would never post it online because it is, I, I felt a little, uh, uh, a bit accidentally revealing, but my puritanical—

Rachel:

Yeah, you like course corrected, uh, in a way that was so just like reflexive that it was very entertaining. [laughs]

Griffin:

Yeah, like I don't wanna... This, this dude came here and is doing an incredible job to, for, entertain our children. I don't wanna creep shot Spider-Man.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Uh, so yes, that was, that... We got a hardy laugh out of my own—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... sort of hang-ups there. Uh, yeah, that was a fun one.

Rachel:

Okay. What's your small wonder?

Griffin:

I don't have, I really should have.... I was so excited to think about and talk about boy performer Spider-Man that I didn't, uh—

Rachel:

I thought you might draw on just our experience from the past few days. We did— we did a lot of exciting holiday celebration and birthday.

Griffin:

Yeah, you know, putting up the tree to the Vince Guaraldi Trio, like you cannot really beat that.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Um, you know, uh, you know, we had a nice, nice Thanksgiving meal. It was just, it was a nice, it was a very exhausting weekend. Got Henry his first vax shot, which was—

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

... thrilling and came outta nowhere, just like there at the annual checkup. And the doctor was like, "We got the vax." And I was like, "Fuck yeah, dude!"

Rachel:

Yeah. We didn't have to go to a CVS. We could do it in a professional establishment—

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

... with people that were familiar with our child.

Griffin:

Yeah. Henry was a big boy about it. Um—

Rachel:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Griffin:

... it was, it was—

Rachel:

Can you d— demo your soothing voice that you used to calm our son before anything challenging?

Griffin:

Yeah. You know, it was like, [gently] "Now listen, buddy. Remember it only hurts for a second. And last time that you got your shots, it only hurt for just a few seconds. And then they put the bandaid on and it's all better." Then after he got the shot, he was still upset. And so I, we held hands and I was—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... like, "You're gonna count to 10 and take a big deep breath in between each number." By the time that kid got to 10, it was—

Rachel:

Oh man.

Griffin:

I know man. It's—

Rachel:

I gotta tell you like using that voice, I would do almost anything for you. So just keep—

Griffin:

[laughs]

Rachel:

... that in mind. [laughs]

Griffin:

Y— y— yowza. In the context of me using it to soothe our panicked child, That's not—

Rachel:

Just, just saying if, and I'm not— I'm not getting raunchy here as much as our advertisers would like. I'm just saying that if you were like, [mimicking Griffin's soft voice] "Rachel, would you take out the trash and maybe finish up the dishes?" I'd be like, "Yes, yes, I will, Griffin."

Griffin:

You're making me sound like the [unintelligible].

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Like, um, I'm so glad that you can get those references now these days. That makes me excited.

Rachel:

Barely.

Griffin:

Barely get them.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Um, it was a good weekend for me feeling really good about myself as a dad.

Rachel:

Yeah. We got a big boy in the house and he's turning out great.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

And I think that's in large part to you.

Griffin:

Well, and to you, honey.

Rachel:

I, you know, I like to think that I do the first couple years, like I really get in there—

Griffin:

Oh, okay.

Rachel:

... on the first couple years. And then I kind of step back and you, you're gonna take over for the rest—

Griffin:

For the rest of his life?

Rachel:

[laughs] Yeah.

Griffin:

I mean, I know how rough those first couple years are on you.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

I think that is actually a pretty fair trade.

Rachel:

I'm still in recovery from those first couple years.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Uh, and I'm having to do them again.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

So I'm happy to let you parent for the next, I dunno—

Griffin:

But I feel like—

Rachel:

... 50.

Griffin:

50 years?

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Okay, fine. Uh, I go first this week.

Rachel:

Okay.

Griffin:

I'm— I'm— I *am* gonna talk about owls. I am gonna get deep and talk about owls. Think about it though. Your, your brain immediately went, "Owls?" And then you thought about owls for a second and then you're like, "Actually, yeah."

Rachel:

Can I ask like what inspired your— your segment and to and to—

Griffin:

What inspired my segment to talk about—

Rachel:

Whenever you bring a segment, I try and like go back through our week and figure out where this segment originated.

Griffin:

Um, I was thinking about, uh, things that got me excited, uh, just sort of knowing that they are a— around, like sounds—

Rachel:

Okay.

Griffin:

... that make me excited for the thing. And then I thought about, like, our house, uh, backs up to some— some wilderness, a small patch of wilderness and you know, we will be sitting with our two baby monitors just on—

Rachel:

Okay. [laughs]

Griffin:

... on lookout or sound out for, uh, a baby sound—

Rachel:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Griffin:

... or a five-year-old sound, knowing that like, well, we have to go, you know, turn off Only Murders in the Building and go hang out with our—

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

... uh, child who's supposed to be sleeping right now. But then sometimes you'll hear [mimics owl] outside and it's like, "Stop everything!"

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

"I have to know if there are owls around."

Rachel:

Griffin gets really frustrated with me because his hearing is remarkably better than mine. He'll be like, [gasps] "Oh, did you hear that?"

And I'm like, "Hear what?"

"That, outside."

I'm like, "I have no idea what you're talking about."

Griffin:

It was an owl.

Rachel:

It was an owl.

Griffin:

One time in the morning, Henry and I got ready and went outside to go to—take him to daycare. And there was a little owl just like sitting on our front porch, like looking at our garage door.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

And I didn't even see him until we got close and he like flooded up his wings and like bumped into a wall and then flew away. And it scared the shit outta me—

Rachel:

Yeah, yeah.

Griffin:

... and Henry a little bit. But then when I realized like, "Wait a minute, that was an owl!"

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

We talked about it for weeks.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Every time we went outside to like, go to daycare, he would be like, "I hope we see an owl today."

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

I just love owls because they are top tier, coolest predator animal. Like in terms of like predatory evolutions, these guys are killing machines, but also are so cute.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Like when I see when I'm like, "Oh look at the cutie."

Rachel:

They are very cute.

Griffin:

They're so cute. They're just like hunch shoulders, little round faces with their big stupid eyes—

Rachel:

Yeah, yeah. The biggest eyes and the tiniest little beak.

Griffin:

Tiny little mouths and they're just so squat and they hop around.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

But then they will fucking kill you silently like a ghost. And that's awesome to me!

Rachel:

And pass, and pass your whole body through their system.

Griffin:

Yeah. Well, no, about half your body goes through their system. The rest of it comes out as a little b— [laughs] Now you're a barf fossil, idiot.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

It's like, "Whoa. Insult to injury, but so cute too?" I just love an owl, man. I love an owl man, you know—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... half... Have you seen Owl Man before?

Rachel:

Yeah. He's at the Blues games.

Griffin:

He's at the Blues games. I love his style.

Rachel:

Every time they score—

Griffin:

Every time they score, he launches up a [crosstalk]. It's awesome.

Rachel:

[mimics owl] [laughs]

Griffin:

Uh, okay. So owls, I feel like everybody knows cool shit about owls, but if you take o—

Rachel:

Yeah, they can rotate their head really far. Right?

Griffin:

Yep. And they barf up the fossils.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

That's all good. When you take everything though, in one big package, owls are kind of, it's unbelievable that owls are real, and that they—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... have evolved in the way that they have. Uh, they are solitary in nature. They don't really fuck around in groups. But when they do, you know what you call a group of owls?

Rachel:

No.

Griffin:

A parliament of owls. That's a good one. Hmm, that's a good one. Uh, they are nocturnal. Duh. Uh, and they eat small animals and other birds

sometimes, and insects and lizards and whatever. Uh, so they're not too picky. They'll gobble you up no matter what. Uh, they are divided into two families. I don't think I ever realized this. There are true owls, which are sort of the quintessential owl. They got the big eyes, the— the beaks, the eyes are like sort of cat eyes, like predator eyes. Uh, and they've just got feathers all over their faces, you know, a typical owl. But then barn owls are the ones with those, like, white masks, like the big—

Rachel:

Oh, yeah.

Griffin:

... circle of, of usually like pale feathers.

Rachel:

And those aren't true owls?

Griffin:

Those are barn owls. And they have like the black cold eyes, like a doll's eyes, not the like—

Rachel:

Doesn't it seem like a little elitist. They're like, "These are the true owls. And those are the *barn* owls."

Griffin:

A little bit. I mean—

Rachel:

It's like a little city mouse, country mouse. [laughs]

Griffin:

Yes. It is two sort of, uh, t— taxonomy—

Rachel:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Griffin:

... like level family— families of owls.

Rachel:

Okay.

Griffin:

Uh, not in the like—

Rachel:

It's not like red state, blue state. [laughs]

Griffin:

No. And not in like the, uh, *Fast and The Furious* context—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... of families. It's like in the scientific, boring level of families. Um, so owls, they have binocular vision, right, which lets them see very, very, very far, uh, and very, very well from far away, which is why like, unlike most nocturnal, nocturnal animals—

Rachel:

Oh, that's great.

Griffin:

... unlike most n— nocturnal animals—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... they don't use echolocation in the dark. They just—

Rachel:

Oh.

Griffin:

Their eyes are just really, really good. Here's the thing though. They're farsighted, which means like when something's up close to them—

Rachel:

Oh.

Griffin:

... they cannot see them very well. So you know what they do, they use their filo plumes, which are very, very like small hair-like feathers on their claws and on their beaks that they use as like feelers.

Rachel:

Oh. So when you and Henry walked up on that owl, it maybe couldn't tell what you were—

Griffin:

Couldn't see... Yes. I mean, it didn't touch us and use its filo plumes, but that's rad. That's like—

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

... "I can see from very, very far away. And when you get up close, I'm like, you know, on— on some like snake shit."

Rachel:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Griffin:

"Like I just touch you and I know what's up and I know where you are." Uh, they can rotate their necks very, very far.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Griffin:

Do you wanna guess how far out, like 360 degrees?

Rachel:

Oh my gosh. I know it's like, it's like 325 or something.

Griffin:

270. 270 degrees.

Rachel:

Oh, okay.

Griffin:

Uh, is kind of buck wild. Like I don't know why you would need to be able to rotate your head more than 180 degrees, right? 'Cause you can go 180 in one direction and then 180 the other direction and that's 360 degrees. 270 is like, "Yeah, I can see all the way behind me *and then some.*"

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

I can turn my head right and see to the left of me. That's a lot of—

Rachel:

Oof.

Griffin:

... that's a lot that you can do that, that's so much. The reason they're able to do that, they have twice as many neck vertebrae as— as we do. And they're a little bit more spaced out, so that you can turn them.

Rachel:

Wow.

Griffin:

But also, like, that's not it, right? If it was just that, uh, sure, you could turn your— your head in that direction, but you would also cut off circulation to your brain and die pretty fast. But the, like, passageways that their arteries

and all their blood stuff runs through are, like, so wide. They are cavernous. They are 10 times wider than the, like, arteries that are passing through them. So they can do that stuff without cutting off circulation to their brain and dying. So, like, they are evolutionarily like... wow, that was a word, completely built for that shit. It's like they were, like, generation through generation, like, "We gotta, why—"

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

"... we gotta turn our heads further. Further!"

Rachel:

This, uh, this is very interesting. But all I've been thinking about is whether or not owls get stiff necks. And, or if, like— if— if, you know, sometimes they're like a little sore so they can only see like, 230, degrees—

Griffin:

Uh-huh [affirmative].

Rachel:

And they're like.

Griffin:

Ugh. Gosh.

Rachel:

... "Oh, gosh, I really slept wrong."

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Or maybe when they sleep wrong, they can— they accidentally go too far, and—

Rachel:

Oh. [laughs]

Griffin:

... they're like, "Oh, shit. Did— did you hear about Carl?"

"No, what happened?"

"He 360-ed."

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

"Oh, no, Carl. Uh-oh." Um, so as if they were not, like, terrifying predators enough, uh, their feathers are specially built too. They are hu— like much bigger than usual feathers. They are super velvety and serrated, and I don't know why all that, when put together, makes this true, but it makes them completely silent in the air. Like, other birds, you can kinda hear them coming. But owls are, because of the way their feathers are shaped, and it— it allows them to fly and sort of dive slower than other birds and be completely silent, which is awesome for two reasons. One, the prey cannot hear them, but two, owls, the— the sound of their own flight doesn't sort of, like, flood their senses. They can hear their prey, too, over the sound of their own flying.

Rachel:

Huh.

Griffin:

So, it's like a two-for-one death combo—

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

... of it's like, "You can't hear me, but I can hear you completely," because their hearing is so, like, powerful.

Rachel:

Gosh. And you can't even see those little ears.

Griffin:

You can't even see those little— cute little ears.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Uh, their beak is very sharp. They have one sort of hook shaped part—

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

... of the beak on top, and the other one, uh, underneath is also kinda hook shaped, so that when they clamp together, it does like a scissor—

Rachel:

Gosh...

Griffin:

... a scissor type motion that kills their prey instantly, which is genuinely a favor they're doing their prey, because then they swallow them whole.

Rachel:

Yes. Yes, see this is— this is what I know about owls, right?

Griffin:

Yeah—

Rachel:

It's like—

Griffin:

... they're conscientious—

Rachel:

... you could—

Griffin:

... they— they do terrible things to their prey, but they're conscientious about it.

Rachel:

Like, you can get the whole little skeleton sometimes—

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

... and this little leavings.

Griffin:

And in their... right, but that's not their poop, right? They snip ya so you're dead, they swallow you, they digest what they can and the rest they barf up in a little conveniently baked pellet.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

And those pellets are so plentiful, like, they are so easy to find pellets, and that is why they are so, like, typically, like, sold to schools for—

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

... dissections and stuff, so that you can, like, get an idea of what the owl tried to eat, which is just radical—

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

... which is just— it's— they are these, like, genuine predator from *Predator*, predators, where they can see you perfectly, you can't hear them as they dive down on you, they gobble you up in a second and barf up what they don't need. They are eating machines, the owls are.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

And I love all of that stuff when put together, because they're also squat little goofballs—

Rachel:

[laughs] Uh-huh [affirmative].

Griffin:

... that look so curious—

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

... and so, like, you know, sorta up to no good all the time, like, "What are you thinking about, little owl? You're thinking about if you could swallow me."

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

"You're thinking about if you could kill me in one bite and swallow me, and if I would— i... you know, if I could hear you coming or not."

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

It's amazing.

Rachel:

It is. They're, like— they have a lot of similarities with snakes, but they're, like, so much cuter.

Griffin:

They're air sharks, is what they are—

Rachel:

Ah, okay.

Griffin:

... in the way that sharks are, like, evolutionarily sort of like designed to kill shit in the water and eat it, so that they can keep on killing and eating shit in the water.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Owls are just the same way, except sharks... uh, and this may be contentious sort of, uh—

Rachel:

Uh-huh [affirmative], uh-huh [affirmative]—

Griffin:

... thing, and not—

Rachel:

Good.

Griffin:

... not the cutest ocean animal—

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

... but an owl?

Rachel:

Adorable.

Griffin:

Adorable, and you can— and they'll live in the barn with you.

Rachel:

And they're— they have the little graduation cap, and that's how you know they're wise.

Griffin:

They have the little graduation cap?

Rachel:

Yeah, the— the whole wise old owl thing and the like [trails off]—

Griffin:

Sure, sure.

Rachel:

... I— I don't know, for some reason, the graduation cap just came to mind, but that was like a indication that it was learned.

Griffin:

Yeah. In the Tootsie Roll Pop commercials—

Rachel:

Hmm.

Griffin:

... was the owl the one that ate the— the... or was it the one? 'Cause I know it had, "One, two, three," and then it would eat it in one bite. Yeah, that's just like, that's factual.

Rachel:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Griffin:

That's— that's, uh, that's how they really do it. That's how they would eat a Tootsie Roll Pop.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Just something to think about, you know—

Rachel:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Griffin:

... when you're super high later.

Rachel:

[laughing]

Griffin:

Hey, can I, uh, can I steal you away?

Rachel:

Please. [laughs]

Griffin:

Thanks.

[theme song plays]

Rachel:

Hey, Griffin?

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Do you— do you wanna read the Boop Bop Beeps?

Griffin:

That was a little abstract, uh, and I don't want— you did a good job [crosstalk]—

Rachel:

Does— should it rhyme? Should it rhyme, is that part of your criteria?

Griffin:

It doesn't have to rhyme with itself, but, like, you know, jumbo dogs—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... uh, you know, plumbo blobs—

Rachel:

Uh-huh [affirmative].

Griffin:

... uh, you wanna hit that hard, "Ah," sound, obviously, yeah.

Rachel:

Ah, okay. So the Boop Bop Bombs?

Griffin:

Yeah, that— that's better—

Rachel:

Okay.

Griffin:

... I think that we're getting— we're, yeah, we're definitely moving in the right direction.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Uh, yeah, sure. Do you wanna read the first one this time?

Rachel:

Sure.

Griffin:

As long as we're switching shit up?

Rachel:

[laughs] This message is for Liv, it is from Avery, "To my Bepis. I love you so enormously. You bring so much joy and light into the world and we're all so lucky to have you. I can't wait to keep listening to all the McElroy's with you, whether we're driving across the country or coloring at home. You are kind, beautiful, strong, and amazing. Happy Jumbotron Day. I love you. Big love, your Bopus."

Griffin:

Now, that's a confusing one, 'cause I— I don't know if it's Bo-pus or Bop-us.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Which one do you prefer?

Rachel:

I don't know, uh, b— I— I think Beep Bop a lot. You know, like when I'm thinking about a robot noise, I think, "Beep, bop," and so, I'm thinking Beepus and Bop-us.

Griffin:

Beepus and Bop-us, yeah. I guess it's, eh... and that's what's, uh, is so special about love.

Rachel:

[laughs] Yeah?

Griffin:

If you really think about it, yeah.

Rachel:

Uh-huh [affirmative].

Griffin:

Uh, here's... whoa, wait. Oh, my god. Rachel, we were both wrong, because this message is for Avery, Beepus, and it's from Liv—

Rachel:

Oh, *Boopus*.

Griffin:

... Boopus. Eh, eh, Beepus, Avery, "I love you. You fill my life and my heart with love and joy. You are a gift. I love listening to podcasts with you while we color and I am so excited to keep doing that for many years. In adoration and admiration, Boopus."

Rachel:

I love when Max Fun does this, 'cause they both—

Griffin:

They're stinkers.

Rachel:

... they both wrote, "Any timeframe."

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

So, these didn't have to be in the same episode—

Griffin:

They didn't have to, but—

Rachel:

... but here they are.

Griffin:

... but here they are. We def... it this had been in the episode after and they were split up, we definitely would've forgotten.

Rachel:

Completely.

Griffin:

Completely. But here they are, Beepus and Bopus Boopus.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Beepus Beepus plus Bopus Boopus Boppus—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... in love forever.

Rachel:

Congratulations. [laughs]

[Max Fun ad plays]

Griffin:

Do you wanna s— talk about what happened to your computer, and see if— maybe there's some, like, IT folks in our audience that could, uh, you know, you— have had this exact situation happen before, and can, like, offer you some advice of, like, "Oh, when this happened to me, here's what I did to fix it?"

Rachel:

Ha, so... [laughs] it's a little embarrassing. Uh, I— I will assume that I'm not the only one that is— has ever done this.

Griffin:

Sure.

Rachel:

Oh, my gosh, I— I c— so, the other day, our son was at daycare and I, uh, was, um, pumping the milk out of my body to make bottles for him.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

And, uh, our five-year-old was in the bathroom, uh, calling for me, and in kind of a frantic moment, I—

Griffin:

And— and— and, uh, you'll probably wonder, "Where was Griffin?" I was in the other bathroom—

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

... doing my own bathroom stuff.

Rachel:

Yeah. And, uh, uh, some breast milk, uh, was dumped, uh, into my computer.

Griffin:

Unceremoniously, not— not—

Rachel:

And so now, some of the keys work and some of them don't—

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

... some of the keys do different things than they used to. [laughs]

Griffin:

That's awesome, I didn't know that.

Rachel:

So, for example, when I press the volume down feature, all of my windows—

Griffin:

Oh, okay.

Rachel:

... go away, and, uh—

Griffin:

So all the function keys kinda did a switcharoooney.

Rachel:

... and the letter V won't work—

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

... and the letter C now won't work. Uh, so that's where I am.

Griffin:

Okay, well, you don't have to— the— you just can't copy, paste. Like, that's the only thing that [crosstalk 00:25:08]—

Rachel:

I know, I'm having to go up to the m— menu up top like some kind of Philistine.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Can I tell you my thing?

Griffin:

Sure, you— you... sure you an. [laughing]

Rachel:

That's nice.

Griffin:

Thanks.

Rachel:

That's nice. Uh, it is the MacArthur Fellows Program.

Griffin:

Oh.

Rachel:

Also known as the MacArthur Genius Grant.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Although it has never been called that.

Griffin:

It's never been called the MacArthur... well, not by them, I imagine.

Rachel:

No. [laughs] I mean, yeah. So, it was kind of developed, uh, in— in discussion, like, you don't have to be a genius. Apparently, the media coined that nickname in 1981, uh, when the first—

Griffin:

It's catchy.

Rachel:

... when the first class of fellows was announced and it just kind of stuck. Um, it's narrow because, like, the— the genius thing is kind of narrow because, like, a lot of different people can get it. Uh, the whole point is to kind of advance creativity. Uh, and so, uh, so yeah, so you don't, like, have to have some kind of score on some kind of, you know—

Griffin:

Genius test.

Rachel:

... yeah, yeah.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

You don't have to be like a Mensa member—

Griffin:

Right.

Rachel:

... to, uh, to get it. Uh, it is intended to, quote, "Encourage people of outstanding talent to pursue their own creative, intellectual and professional inclinations." So recipients can be writers, scientists, artists, uh, humanists, teachers, entrepreneurs—

Griffin:

Musicians, uh, drawers, draw— people who draw.

Rachel:

... people who draw. Yeah, there was a cartoonist that won recently.

Griffin:

Yeah. It's fucking, uh, Scott Adams—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... from *Dilbert*. [laughs] People were like, "Ah, man. Wait a minute."

Rachel:

He could have just a normal tie that just sat against his shirt in a normal way—

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

... takes a real genius to turn it up. [laughs]

Griffin:

Huge genius brain, and it wasn't only until recently when people were like, "Wait a minute. This is commentary on, like, today's business."

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

I didn't really think about... I thought it was just a funny comic but, like, this guy's saying a lot of stuff about business today.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

I didn't even put that together.

Rachel:

Can I tell you more about this program?

Griffin:

Sure. I'll say real quick about Scott Adams, though—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... I don't know this dude, but based on the things he says about business, I'm guessing he is, like, dyed in the wool, pro-union, like anti-work, like, super liberal, uh, you know, hu— humanist, like, watching out for your fellow man, and if anyone deserves this grant, it should be him. Am I right about that or am I right?

Rachel:

This is, uh, the— maybe the second or third episode where you've chosen to go on a *Dilbert* rant.

Griffin:

Just vociferously, like, endorsed the super, super woke Scott Adams and the great work he does, keep it up, pal.

Rachel:

So this prize is awarded annually between, uh, t— to be between 20 and 30 people. Uh, it does not accept applications.

Griffin:

Whoa.

Rachel:

So anonymous and confidential nominations are invited by the foundation and reviewed by an anonymous and confidential selection committee.

Griffin:

Okay.

Rachel:

So people aren't submitting applications to this thing, like, you, eh, you just find out. Usually, you find out when you have received it, like you do not know that you are under consideration.

Griffin:

So, where did the many applications I've sent for this thing come from?

Rachel:

[laughs] I don't know.

Griffin:

Is it like *Letters to Santa*?

Rachel:

[laughs] You're applying to the McArthur Fellow Program—

Griffin:

Oh.

Rachel:

... which is a McDonald's program where you just get a lot of hamburgers.

Griffin:

Well, see, I haven't gotten that either, so I'm wondering—

Rachel:

I know.

Griffin:

... I'll go to the McDonald's today and ask them about it.

Rachel:

So you have to be a genius for that one.

Griffin:

Yeah. [laughs] [exaggerated sarcasm] Duh.

Rachel:

[laughs] Oh, okay. Uh, the prize is \$625,000 paid over five years, uh, which was increased from \$500,000 in 2013, uh, you know.

Griffin:

Awesome. The MacArthur Genius Grant is adjusted for inflation, but not the minimum wage—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... excellent, good, good, good.

Rachel:

Uh, so the three criteria are exceptional creativity, promise for important future advances based on a track record of significant accomplishments, and potential for the fellowship to facilitate subsequent creative work.

Griffin:

Oh, okay.

Rachel:

So the idea is, like, this money is supposed to help you—

Griffin:

Right.

Rachel:

... make bigger, better things, although there is kind of like a— a rumored MacArthur Curse, uh, 'cause the idea is that they— you get all this money for, you know, like, your significant accomplishments and then you're just so, like, bogged down by the fact that you won it—

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

... and there's expectation you're gonna create more. There was this interview in the *Los Angeles Times* with this choreographer that won it, and he talked about how the prize helped him erase his student loans and helped provide his dancers with healthcare, uh, but then, you know, he got it in 2013 and he was just paralyzed by it, of just this idea of, like, "I have to work super hard, I have to make the best I've ever made, like, I have to earn this. Why did I get it? Like, I have to demonstrate that I was worthy of it," like—

Griffin:

Yeah, that's wild.

Rachel:

... it can be a total, like, impediment to actually creating, uh, which is the reason you got it in the first place, because you're— you're thinking, like, "How do I demonstrate—"

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

"... that this was the right call?" [laughs]

Griffin:

Do people ever refuse it? I wonder, because, uh, that's a—

Rachel:

Oh, oh—

Griffin:

... genuine concern—

Rachel:

... interesting.

Griffin:

... of, like, "Well, hold up, because I don't really work well with the kind of expectation that I have to retroactively earn this thing that I didn't apply for."

Rachel:

I mean, so here's the thing; there— there are no strings attached, uh, you don't have to report any kind of products or outcomes. There's no evaluation of the recipient's creativity during the term of the fellowship—

Griffin:

Huh.

Rachel:

... like, it's not like you can lose it halfway through. You know, so, like, I can't imagine turning it down, because they're not gonna be like, "And what did you do?"

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

And a lot of really important people have won it. Uh, uh, I don't know, it's exciting just to see the range, too, like I've mentioned a lot of poets that have won it in the past, graphic novelists, uh, puppeteers, neuroscientists, mathematicians, Jazz composers, um, friend of the show Lin-Manuel Miranda has won it, and it, you know, allows them to... Oh, Jad Ambumrad won it too.

Griffin:

Okay. Jad Abumrad?

Rachel:

There you go. [laughing softly] And, yeah, it's been around since the 80s, uh, and it really changed the lives of a lot of the recipients.

Griffin:

Sure.

Rachel:

Uh, just a quick shout out to, uh, John Donald MacArthur and his wife, Catherine T. MacArthur. N— n— neither of them came from particularly, you know, magnificent or, you know, auspicious backgrounds. Uh, John was one of seven children and was born in a coal producing area of Eastern Pennsylvania, and just made some really great investments early in his life, bought a life insurance company and then made some real estate investments and then, you know, when he passed away, he had, like, a billion dollars, basically—

Griffin:

Whoa.

Rachel:

... built up, and was convinced, uh, prior to his death, to start this foundation. And then kinda left it up to the board, like, "Alright, you guys. I'm not gonna make the call on this, you all can figure out how to best invest this money."

Griffin:

That's fascinating, 'cause I thought all you could do once you had a billion dollars was use it to make more billions of dollars—

Rachel:

Yeah. [laughs]

Griffin:

... or go into— or try and go into outer space.

Rachel:

Uh, and then his wife was one of nine children born to Irish immigrants and she ended up keeping the books, uh, throughout the career, uh, and then, [laughs] uh, did the records for a variety of companies anonymously under her maiden name, C.T. Hyland, in the position of corporate secretary director or both. Uh, and then he passed away in 1978 and she passed away in 1981. Uh, and since then—

Griffin:

It's like *The Notebook*.

Rachel:

[laughing]

Griffin:

Sorry, it's not funny to laugh at people who died. I'm just imagining that ending scene taking three years.

Rachel:

[laughs] Uh, I just— I don't know, I'm always excited when there's an opportunity for creative people to receive recognition—

Griffin:

Sure.

Rachel:

... just for being creative, uh, without having to, you know, produce some kind of [crosstalk], yeah, like, "Well, show me how many cartoons you drew after this."

Griffin:

Oh, I, uh, okay. I am betting that, more than most people on the Earth, though, that is of interest to you, because it is antithetical to what your job is, right? Like, your whole job is securing grants that *must* be reported, you know, that there was some level—

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

... of success for the— the funds, uh, based on the sort of intention that you implied with them for, so—

Rachel:

Well, and it just— it's just— it's really prohibitive. Uh, you know, typical grants are really prohibitive to kind of grassroots efforts because, you know, in order to make a good case for yourself, you have to have a certain amount of resources to do it.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Uh, and—

Griffin:

You have to prove that you *can* do the shit [crosstalk]—

Rachel:

Exactly, like, "Before I give you your money, you have to show me that you can manage this amount of money." Uh, and it's— it's a very kind of, like, suspicious approach to giving out awards, whereas this one is like, "Eh, hey. You wrote a really great book—"

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

"... and you've given some really great talks and I'm confident that you're gonna do great things and here's some money and good luck."

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Uh, I— I like that a lot.

Griffin:

Yeah, I do too. Hey, thanks to bo en and Augustus for 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. There's so many s— fucking shows on there, man. There's, like, 1,000 billion shows on there, gang.

Rachel:

Uh-huh [affirmative].

Griffin:

Um, there's— there's a delightful little show called *Just the Zoo of Us*, where they debate animals and how great they are and what different... you know, it's basically what my segment on this episode of *Wonderful!* was—

Rachel:

Yeah, right?

Griffin:

... but way, way, way smarter.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

Um, so go check that one out, why don't you? Why don't you do that? Um, we have a bunch of merch at McElroyMerch.com that I wish you would go check out and, you know what? We also got our Candlenights show—

Rachel:

Oh, yeah!

Griffin:

... that is coming up very soon.

Rachel:

Griffin and I made a little video for it, uh, eh, that we really enjoyed making, uh, and I think you will enjoy too.

Griffin:

The show is, uh, is a pre-taped, virtual spectacular for Candlenights. Uh, it's on December 18th at 9:00 PM Eastern Time, uh, of— t— tickets are on sale now for \$5 with an option to give more, and all proceeds from those tickets go to benefit Harmony House, which is a organization we love in— in Huntington that helps to support people experiencing homelessness. You can get those tickets at bit.ly/candlenights2021 and the video on demand will be available through January 2nd. We got segments from all the shows in—

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

... in that, uh, and—

Rachel:

It is— it is always, like, if you are not feeling festive, I recommend a dose of Candlenights—

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

... because it always warms my heart.

Griffin:

And we have beloved guests, uh, who sent in stuff as well—

Rachel:

Yeah!

Griffin:

... B. Dave Walters, Hank Green, uh, Jean Grae, Paul and Storm, uh, Adam Brody, uh—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... wh— which is, uh, wild and wonderful, to me. So, yeah, go— go check that out again, bit.ly/candlenights2021. We're gonna be debuting it live at December 18th at 9:00 PM, Eastern Time.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

I think that's it.

Rachel:

That's it.

Griffin:

Thank you so much for listening and being here with us, um, and believing in us. That's the biggest thing.

Rachel:

Uh-huh [affirmative].

Griffin:

A lot of people, when you start with, like, a show about things you like and things you're into, but lovers, made by lovers? Get out of here with that.

Rachel:

You know, we did that whole episode on what the folks at home are interested in—

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

... and— and I think at that time, we— we indicated we will continue to do it, and here we are—

Griffin:

Then we for— then we did fucking forget.

Rachel:

[laughs] Here we are.

Griffin:

But we only forget stuff like that when our backs up are aga— uh, our back up against the wall, um, in terms of like how much time we have to record, uh, with, ah, dang, wouldn't you know it, is true virtually—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

... every time that we record.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

But we'll try and be better about it.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Thank you, all. Goodbye, go with God. And also with you. Be c— find peace today and treat your par— tr— treat the other people on Earth pretty good.

Rachel:

Uh-huh [affirmative].

Griffin:

That's— those are some of my favorite Bible verses.

Rachel:

[laughs]

[theme song plays and ends]

[chord plays]

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