

Wonderful! 230: Peruse Your Pleasure

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[theme music plays]

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hello, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is *Wonderful!*

Griffin: You came at that so smoky, I feel like.

Rachel: I know. I felt like a news broadcaster.

Griffin: Hi. Well, like a sexy newscaster.

Rachel: Oh. Like a sexy newscaster.

Griffin: Hi, I'm Rachel McElroy, and this is sexy news.

Rachel: And here's the news!

Griffin: Is that the—

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Is that the s...

Rachel: I don't know how to—

Griffin: No, it was good!

Rachel: —uh, entice people.

Griffin: Clearly that's not true.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [whiny voice] Here's the news! [normal voice] Now I'm revved up and ready for news!

Rachel: I only know what works for you.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And it's that voice.

Griffin: Yeah. I think just looking— whenever I turn on news, there's very little that could be done to make it sexy, I feel like.

Rachel: Yeah, no, I know.

Griffin: It's never like, "Here's a new business that opened up." It's, like, usually rough stuff that you just can't sex up. You just can't do it. You can't punch it up with sex. Um, but maybe *you* could. I don't know. I think you missed your calling.

Rachel: You know, I thought I wanted to be a journalist, briefly.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: Uh, but turns out I'm just—

Griffin: Just a regular journalist though, right? Not, like, a sexy journalist.

Rachel: Yeah. No, it's just 'cause I'm curious.

Griffin: Yeah you are.

Rachel: But then, you know, after that there's really no other interest. [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah. Well, getting, like, a perm... there's always a lot of coif, coiffure that happens.

Rachel: That's true. I would have to get a— a broadcaster haircut.

Griffin: Yeah. I don't want that.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: That's a— that's not my favorite type of haircut.

Rachel: I'm too *edgy* for the news.

Griffin: You are! You're, like, alt and emo, kind of.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: Don't you have big—

Rachel: Those are things.

Griffin: Don't you think you have sort of emo goth vibes?

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Isn't that how you would categorize yourself?

Rachel: No, I don't think anyone has ever categorized me as that.

Griffin: As emo or goth?

Rachel: Well, definitely not goth, let's say.

Griffin: I feel like those were the— if you didn't wanna be a jock you had to choose between those two in high school, for me. And so I definitely trended toward the emo route.

Rachel: Yeah, of course.

Griffin: But I was a pretty big poser, I think. It wasn't my favorite type of music. I tolerated Dashboard Confessional.

Rachel: Wow, here he comes! [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah, is that a—

Rachel: [through laughter] I don't know.

Griffin: —controversial opinion?

Rachel: I don't know.

Griffin: Okay. [singing] Your hopes are so high that your kiss might kill me!
[speaking] You know that one?

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Oh, really?

Rachel: No.

Griffin: [singing] Hands down, this is the best day I can ever reme—[speaking]
you don't know that one?

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Alright. Well, fuck me, I guess.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: You got a small wonder?

Rachel: I was hoping you would go first.

Griffin: You was hoping I would go first?

Rachel: I really was.

Griffin: Um, hum... I, uh— I did some, uh, Switch modding. I had a Switch Lite that I customized and made, like, all white, and it was very sleek. And then I ate, um, tasty curry popcorn from a restaurant here in town—

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: —and I stained—[laughs quietly] I stained the console bright yellow?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh... and so— and also I just, like, left it out in our living room, and Gus got to it. And so, like, the screen was all scratched up.

Rachel: There is so much about this story that could only happen to you.
[laughs]

Griffin: I know, right? Uh, and so I gave it a new shell, new buttons, new screen, uh, and it was very satisfying, and I have— I acquired this tool kit from I think a place called I Fix It, and it's just got everything. In this little, like— it folds out, and then it's got, like— like, 40 different screwdriver tips with, like, a really nice screwdriver body, and, like, tweezers, and, like, all kinds of great stuff.

Rachel: Sometimes I will take Gus upstairs to kind of kill some time.

Griffin: Now, you shouldn't do that.

Rachel: And I saw your office.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: And I saw everything that was on the ground, and I just promptly closed that door. [laughs]

Griffin: I'm an artist, you know? And so cleanliness is not one of my main— I mean, on the desk in my work area, it's gotta be totally sanitized and clean. But then I'll open up something and just throw it on the ground when I'm done with it.

Rachel: Do you think you became an artist as an excuse to not be cleanly?
[laughs]

Griffin: Yes! I think you have to choose between those two things at some point in your life, and I made my choice.

Rachel: Well, I'd better be an artist, so I don't have to clean up.

Griffin: What about you?

Rachel: Uh, so I thought of this. Mine is actually related to cleaning up, and it is when someone is gonna come over to your house and it gives you a reason to clean up.

Griffin: Yeah, that's nice.

Rachel: [laughs] We have somebody coming over to our house later today, and I thought, "Oh it would be good to clean up a little bit." And I realized that I probably wouldn't do that otherwise, yeah.

Griffin: Yeah, my mom took that very seriously.

Rachel: Mine too!

Griffin: And it was always kind of nice 'cause, like, when you had friends coming over, there would be— the furniture would be polished with that lemon scented stuff that was so good.

Rachel: See, my mom's big thing— I would tell her, "Someone is gonna come pick me up," and they probably wouldn't even come in the house, but she would still vacuum. [laughs] I would hear her vacuuming.

Griffin: Yeah. Did she use the powder? I don't know what—

Rachel: Sometimes, yeah!

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Because we had cats, and so it was like a necessity to put the powder on the rug.

Griffin: I've never, as an adult, used powder and vacuumed it up, so I don't know if that's a thing that people just don't do anymore. But she— my mom always used this just, like, very powerful floral powder on the floor that she would then vacuum up.

Rachel: Well, carpet— carpet as a whole is not as much of a popular thing these days.

Griffin: I love carpet.

Rachel: I know, me too! But I like— I like having a mix of both, I think.

Griffin: Yeah, me too. Um, you go first this week.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: I can't wait. What do you got?

Rachel: I actually thought of this last week. I felt really on the ball, because I thought, "Okay, let me look and see if this is a thing. Oh, this is interesting. Now I have my topic all ready in advance." And it is the wave.

Griffin: The wave! Have we not done the wave?

Rachel: Oh. [laughs] You did the green wave, which is what it's called when you hit every green light.

Griffin: Oh, okay.

Rachel: I don't see the wave I'm talking about, which is in a stadium.

Griffin: Yeah. I like a wave.

Rachel: I do too.

Griffin: I like interactive fun.

Rachel: Have you participated in a wave?

Griffin: Of course I've participated in a wave.

Rachel: What sporting event was it?

Griffin: Uh, a lot of Marshall football games.

Rachel: Football games, okay.

Griffin: Yeah. Uh, gosh. I know I've participated in quite a few but, like, they're not big in baseball, are they?

Rachel: They're huge in baseball!

Griffin: Oh, are they?

Rachel: Baseball is, like, ex—

Griffin: Okay, well then that's probably where I've done the most waves is at the great American ball park.

Rachel: I was gonna say, like, specifically baseball is great.

Griffin: 'Cause you don't have anything else to do.

Rachel: Exactly. Like, the wave—

Griffin: The sport's not very fun to watch, and so, like, you gotta entertain yourself somehow.

Rachel: [laughs] I was gonna get to this later, but there was an NPR article from 2016 that talks about the physics and psychology of the wave. Uh, and it basically says, like, you have to be in a situation where the mood of the crowd is right.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh, specifically, you know, if it seems like the home team is gonna win, or if there's not a lot going on.

Griffin: Yeah. Which in baseball...

Rachel: In baseball, 100%

Griffin: 100%, always.

Rachel: Like, doing the wave in a high stakes game where anything could happen, and if you move your vision away from it you could miss it, like, that's not gonna happen.

Griffin: No way.

Rachel: Uh, so the reason I thought the wave would be a good topic is there is actually, like, a very specific origin story for it.

Griffin: Oh! Okay.

Rachel: Uh, so the wave, at least according to the research that I have seen, is approximately 40 years old.

Griffin: Wow!

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: That's not very old!

Rachel: No, I know.

Griffin: I feel like we should've cracked that one way earlier.

Rachel: I think— when I was looking at, like, what old cheerleading used to be, it was just a lot of, like, shouting and a lot of particular section work. Like, "Hey, this section! Get loud! Alright, now this section! Can you be louder than that section?"

Griffin: Huh, interesting.

Rachel: There was a lot of that. Uh, but the person who takes credit for the wave is Krazy George Henderson.

Griffin: I love this guy already!

Rachel: [laughs] Krazy with a K, that's important.

Griffin: Even better!

Rachel: [laughs] He was leading a cheer in 1981 at a baseball game, and it was specifically it was October 15th, 1981. That becomes important. Um, and what he had done was he was doing that thing where he was doing section work, but the fans were kind of delayed in their response, and it kind of resulted in a sort of wave pattern that then continued throughout the stadium.

Griffin: Oh, wow!

Rachel: So he's like, "Hey, it was me, and it was on videotape." October 31st, so 16 days later, a wave was created at a University of Washington football game, and they said "We popularized the wave," and it was like—

Griffin: Stop it.

Rachel: It's like, hey, hey. 16 days earlier we have videotape of Krazy George doing this.

Griffin: Don't take this from Krazy George. I— he probably doesn't have much else.

Rachel: By the way, if you go to krazygeorge.com, you can see his biography, his memoir, and then there's also a section of the website called Controversies Settled. [laughs]

Griffin: Awesome. That's fucking great.

Rachel: Where he shows that video of him leading the first documented wave.

Griffin: Not much of a controversy.

Rachel: I know. But for him it was.

Griffin: Yeah, absolutely. If you create the wave, you gotta really plant your flag there.

Rachel: Uh, Krazy George started cheerleading as a student at California State University in 1968, and then basically made it his whole career. [laughs quietly]

Griffin: That's cool.

Rachel: He, like— basically his whole life, if you, again, go to the website I mentioned, he has cheered at NFL games, at MLB games, at NHL games, uh, at a variety of university games, minor league hockey. Uh, [holding back laughter] he also does corporate events.

Griffin: I love that.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Watch me tear this phone book in half!

Rachel: I started watching the video. I couldn't get through it but, like, some company had hired them to go through their event and, like, it's a video of him going up and down the aisles of people, banging his drum, getting them excited, [through laughter] and it's so uncomfortable to watch.

Griffin: Yeah, I bet, man. There was probably an era where that would get some— some, you know, team building going, but I do not think this is the era. I think people don't have time for that.

Rachel: Uh, so the wave. So I mentioned this NPR story. Um, there was some researchers that decided, "Hey, how weird that they can get people to stand up and do this." Uh, and it's totally unplanned, but highly coordinated. You know, I wonder if there's, like, any factors or, like, things that motivate the success of the wave? [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: So, uh, this researcher and his colleagues looked at a dozen videotapes of waves, and built computer models around the wave, and zeroed in on three key parameters: the distance between audience members...

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: ... uh, how many neighbors an audience member could see... uh, the readiness of an individual to start standing up.

Griffin: How do you measure that?

Rachel: [laughs] Assuming that others nearby are already standing.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I think—

Griffin: Are they holding two hot dogs?

Rachel: [through laughter] Yeah, exactly! Are they looking at a newspaper?

Griffin: Do they have two— a hot dog in each can and holding a beer in their lap?

Rachel: I wonder if the success of the wave has faltered due to smartphones.

Griffin: Ooh.

Rachel: Right? Like, you're looking down at that device, and the person next to you is trying to get a wave going.

Griffin: Or maybe the wave has combated the rise of smartphones. Discuss that.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Speak on that.

Rachel: So you're just saying that people enjoy the wave so much that they don't want to use their smartphones? They want to be ready.

Rachel: That's when we conne— what better sort of connection with humanity is there than participating in a wave? I don't know. I can't think of one.

Rachel: I mean, that's part of the reason I like it.

Griffin: Yeah, sure!

Rachel: I remember as a kid— I don't know if you remember this, but at baseball games, feeling, like, very intent on doing my part for the wave.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And really following it around, and really making sure, like, "Okay. I've gotta do this. [laughs quietly] They're counting on me."

Griffin: Wasn't there an *SNL* sketch or a *Kids in the Hall* sketch about a guy who, like, really endeavored to start a wave?

Rachel: [laughs] I don't know.

Griffin: This— this feels right to me. I can't remember which of those shows it was, but it was just somebody who was, like, extremely, extremely— like, they were the guy who starts the wave at the games.

Rachel: It does seem like an *SNL* thing.

Griffin: And they're like, "Pretty good wave, huh? That was me."

Rachel: [laughs] I mean, that is kind of what Krazy George is all about.

Griffin: Yeah, that's a fair point.

Rachel: Uh, so according to the researchers it only takes about 20 to 35 people to really start a wave.

Griffin: That's a lot of coordination, though.

Rachel: Yeah. I mean, you really have to work at— this is—

Griffin: You gotta stand up and say, "Hey, everyone! Join me."

Rachel: This is the success of Krazy George.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: According to Krazy George, he has been the reason for some rules in professional sports?

Griffin: Uh-oh.

Rachel: Uh, supposedly in 1989, the NFL adopted a rule specifically targeting, quote, "noisemaking specialists hired exclusively for that purpose of disrupting play calling," a rule that Henderson says was aimed at him. Uh, the Vikings apparently lodged an objection, claiming that the cheering inspired by George disrupted the signal calling of the officials.

Griffin: Hey, tough shit! Like, don't—

Rachel: And the Vikings lost 21 to 16, because I guess the crowd was too loud.
[laughs]

Griffin: Okay, go play somewhere else! Play private— private little skirmishes! You're in a— you're— you are a football player! You don't want people to yell at you?!

Rachel: You know, I don't— I recognize that it is probably hard to hear sometimes when the crowd gets rowdy.

Griffin: Yes!

Rachel: And I guess if you've got somebody like Krazy George that seems to be instigating it, it's an easy target.

Griffin: But this is like a thing for some teams, right? Like, I think the Seahawks have a stadium that is acoustically a nightmare for anybody on the field, where just their voices of their fans are so wildly amplified that it just, like, hits you with this wall of sound.

So it's like, that's sports, man! Like, that's sports. If you can't take somebody yelling at you, that's— that is what sports is. I don't know. Maybe that's a— maybe that's a controversial opinion.

Rachel: I don't— yeah. I mean, I agree with you. I don't think it's— I don't think it should be anything that is prohibited.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: Uh, but Krazy George was hired by a bunch of different entities. He worked for the California Golden Seals, which is not anything I knew about. It was a National Hockey League team from 1967 to 1976.

Griffin: I bet Hodgman knows all about it.

Rachel: I know, right?

Griffin: I bet he's got mad merch.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, he was scouted from the Seals to a San Jose Earthquakes team, which was the soccer club at the time. Uh, and he has gone on to work for NFL teams, the Kansas City Chiefs hired him in 1975.

Griffin: Damn.

Rachel: Just— just literally, like, running around banging his drum. I'll give you a little look at him just so you can see he's everything you want him to be.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I mean, it's exactly— when I say Krazy George Henderson, if you go look him up, that's exactly what you want.

Griffin: That is quite the haircut.

Rachel: It's exactly what you want Krazy George Henderson to look like.

Griffin: Thank you, Krazy George, for your many contributions. Um, that was great. Let's start a wave just right now. [pause] It's not— when you do it two people it's kind of a workout.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Hey, can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

[ad break]

Griffin: We got a couple rumplerobs here. This first one's for Nick, and it's from Anna, who says:

"Nick! Happy early or belated birthday."

How come they think we can't... thread the needle and get it right on it? Probably because they know that the birthday doesn't fall on this publish date. Anyway.

"I love and appreciate you so much, even though you are a big dumb dumb who is always trying to steal my dog. One day we'll live in a big house with Ezra and Poe and your 50,000 unpainted miniatures. Love, Anna."

50,000 is a lot of miniatures to have, painted or unpainted. Um, you should not—this is a very sweet message and you can tell there's a lot of love and a lot of affection there. But I do wanna say, don't steal dogs. And I know that this is maybe a controversial opinion, but I think that dogs shouldn't be stolen, because they can't be owned. What do you think about that?

Rachel: Whoaaa! And would you say perhaps in the words of Griffin McElroy that they should vote?

Griffin: I do think they should vote. But also, who saved who?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: That's my whole thing. Like, when I'm looking at my pupper's toe beans it's like, "Who saved who?"

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I don't own you. It was a relationship we're in.

Rachel: A partnership, almost.

Griffin: A partnership. What's the next one?

Rachel: The next one is for Avery. It is from Tanner.

"Hey, Avery! I feel so blessed to have spent the last two years together. You have brought so much joy to my life, and I couldn't wish for a better partner. You are beautiful/kind/smart/funny, and a bigger blessing than I could have ever imagined. I'm so excited to get to spend the rest of our lives together. Happy birthday, and I love you a whole lot."

Griffin: I like that a lot.

Rachel: What's great is that this could air at any time, and so happy birthday any day, every day.

Griffin: Every day's your birthday when you're beautiful, kind, smart, funny. That's my favorite TLC album.

Rachel: Hey, if you wanna enter the jar...

Griffin: If you want to enter the jar. [forcefully] Get in that jar right now!

Rachel: [through laughter] If you want to enter the drawing for a jumbotron...

Griffin: We put sweets in there. Your favorite snacks are in the jar, and there's holes in the lid! Get in the jar, please.

Rachel: Do you want me to talk about this?

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Rachel: Okay. So there is a drawing to enter to win a jumbotron spot on *Wonderful!* If you go to Maximumfun.org/jumbotrongrawing, I believe as of this date of air it may be the last or the day before the last day you can enter this drawing.

Griffin: Get in there! Do not sleep!

Rachel: So if you want to send a special message to your lover, uh, we will do that.

Griffin: Only that.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: That's the only way we'll accept it.

Rachel: That seems to be most of the ones we get. [laughs] Uh, if you just love your lover and want the world to love your lover the way that Griffin and I will soon love your lover...

Griffin: This is getting so frickin' weird, babe!

Rachel: [laughs] Anyway. Maximumfun.org/jumbotrongrawing.

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?"

If you've ever recognized yourself in a movie then join me, Jordan Crucchiola, for the podcast *Feeling Seen*.

We've talked to author Susan Orlean on realizing her own marriage was falling apart after watching *Adaptation*, an adaptation of her own work, and comedian Hari Kondabolu on why *Harold and Kumar* was a depressingly important movie for Southeast Asians.

So, join me every Thursday for the *Feeling Seen* podcast, here on Maximum Fun.

[ad ends]

[music plays]

Kirk: Video games!

Jason: Video games!

Maddy: Video games. You like them?

Jason: Maybe you wish you had more time for them?

Kirk: Maybe you wanna know the best ones to play?

Jason: Maybe you wanna know what happens to Mario when he dies?

Maddy: In that case, you should check out *Triple Click*, it's a podcast about video games.

Jason: A podcast about video games? But I don't have time for that!

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Kirk: *Triple Click* is hosted by me, Kirk Hamilton.

Jason: Me, Jason Schreier.

Maddy: And me, Maddy Myers.

Kirk: You can find *Triple Click* wherever you get your podcasts, and listen at Maximumfun.org.

Maddy: Bye!

[music and ad end]

Griffin: I am done giving my topic the short shrift. Because we have discussed it in small wonder form.

Rachel: Oh, okay.

Griffin: But I'm done hiding my light under a bushel, and I'm done being ashamed. I wanna talk about *The Circle*.

Rachel: Ohh, here we go!

Griffin: *The Circle* is a reality competition show on Netflix. It came out in the US in 2020, but it is based on a UK television show of the same name that came out in 2018, and it's off the fucking chains.

Rachel: It is, like... it feels so exactly right for the time we are in, too.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Like, it is the kind of thing that I imagine will be a time capsule, you know, 20 years from now. But, like, right now it feels like exactly the moment.

Griffin: It launched on US Netflix during the origins of COVID, during the origins of quarantine. That's bonkers. Because the show, if you have never heard us talk about it before or haven't watched it, show is— you got, like, eight or so strangers living in one big building, but they're sequestered in their own rooms, sequestered from the outside world and from each other.

Rachel: In, like, little apartments.

Griffin: In little apartments.

Rachel: Like, comfortable—

Griffin: Like, it's not like solitary.

Rachel: Yeah. [laughs]

Griffin: Like, they are—

Rachel: They are comfortable living situations with kitchens and bathrooms and bedrooms.

Griffin: They are fed.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: They have food and drink. So, like, they're— they're doing alright. Um, and the premise of the show is so simple that it sounds like, why is that enjoyable?

Rachel: I know!

Griffin: In an era where there are much more evolved and complex sort of reality competition shows on the market.

Rachel: 'Cause you are basically, as a viewer, watching these people, like, text with each other. [laughs]

Griffin: Text. That's all it is. So they're all separated from each other. They don't meet face to face unless they make it to, like, the very, very end. And then, like, there's just sort of reunion thing that happens at the end.

But otherwise, like, you don't actually get to meet these people that you are chatting with. And their only means of communication is this fake social media app called *The Circle*, where they can post their profile, uh, and photos. They can chat publicly or privately. Uh, and they can participate in various little icebreaker games, essentially, that the show throws at them from time to time.

Rachel: Yeah, they show up with their own, like, photo album of pictures. But, like, they make their bio and share information they want to share, like, on the spot.

Griffin: Yeah. And so it's not a lot of information to go off of. Like, there's only a few, like, group chats in each, like, round or episode or whatever. Uh, and so it's all about, like, going with your gut and how you read somebody based on the very curated, limited amount of information that they are willing to share about themselves. Which is what society really is all about, in non competition game show form.

So in each round, everybody rates their fellow players from, you know, first to last.

Rachel: Yeah. It's like— ultimately it's a popularity contest.

Griffin: Absolutely it is. Uh, and the top two players in the ratings become influencers who then usually they must mutually agree at that point to kick somebody off the show. Uh, at which point usually new contestants come in to replace them until you reach, like, the final, you know, six or whatever.

Uh, and that's, like, the baseline thing! And just as limited as it is, watching people...

Rachel: Except you didn't mention...

Griffin: Well, the catfishing.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Watching people's sort of sense of deduction is what makes the show so compelling. And it is what makes the— we're on the fourth season now. Every season has been hot as fire, but also, like, has had people on it that you can't

help but root for, because you watch them try to sus people out. Because some people are not playing as themselves. They are catfishing as different personalities.

Rachel: Yeah. For whatever reason, they think that their— that their character that they would be is not likely to win. And so they have chosen somebody they think is more likely to win, which can be a person that is older, a person that is younger, a person that is a different gender. Like, they bring a bunch of different options. They come with their photos, and they embody that person that they choose.

Griffin: This season there was a dude in his 20's who's playing his mom. And there was also a woman in her 20's who was playing her dad.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And we were watching that really hoping that there would be a nice little meet-cute at the end.

Rachel: No spoilers.

Griffin: But— yeah, but no spoilers.

Rachel: But anyway, it's interesting to see these people, like, what they choose to catfish as, and then the ways that they try and be loyal to that persona. A lot of times they will choose, like, a generation, for example, that they have no knowledge about. And then they will, like, research slang and figure out what they would know as a person of that age. It's fascinating.

Griffin: And what's funny about the catfishing is, like, the only mechanic of *The Circle* is the ratings, where people are chosen as influencers who then kick somebody off the show. And sometimes there's twists on that.

Sometimes, like, the person who comes last in the ratings gets kicked off immediately. Sometimes they twist it up. But usually that's how it works, right? So at the end of the day, it doesn't matter if someone's catfishing. You just need them to vote for you, right?

Rachel: I know! This is what Griffin and I keep talking about, is that everybody gets really concerned with catching a catfish. Like, the idea is that when you vote

somebody off, you kind of want them to be not who they say they are, I guess 'cause it makes you feel better, like, that you voted them off or you saw through some ruse. But it doesn't matter, ultimately.

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: Like, it's still a game.

Griffin: Yes. I mean, ultimately there's something to be said for, like, dishonesty, right? You need to make alliances with people that you can trust will rate you highly, and will have your back. If they become an influencer, they won't send you home. Right? That's, like, the social game.

And as straightforward as that is, it presents a very distilled version of the social game of other, like, older reality shows like *Survivor*. Uh, and that's... that's great. Like, I love *Survivor*. We watch every season. We have seen every episode of that show, basically.

But it's kind of easy to get lost in the sauce a little bit when there's, like, a bunch of different people trying to make a bunch of different moves, and you don't know who's doing what. And sometimes, like, the story of a particular episode gets a little too complex for you to follow what's actually going on.

Rachel: Yeah. Well, because they're around each other constantly.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Like, they are living together. They are with each other 24 hours a day. This is, like, the opposite of that. Like, they have almost no contact, so every exchange is, like, very targeted.

Griffin: And very measured. Like, you see people really agonize over every word of every message they send, because there has to be an efficiency of info sharing without, like, giving too much away.

Rachel: And the emojis.

Griffin: And the emojis. There's lots of emoji use. And hearing the way people describe emojis, especially older folks who are like, "And then do the one of the

guy, and he's got his mouth open, and he's got crying tears but he's not sad? Do that one please, Circle?"

Rachel: Or like, "Oh, uh, okay. Uh, Circle, write "Stop it!" but do a lot of extra letters." [laughs] And so—

Griffin: It's my favorite type of reality show, too, because we have watched it for all four seasons now, and it's— it's simple enough that you can't help but, like, think of fun ways that they could sort of twist up the format. And what's great is they have people working on that show who are extremely good at that. And that makes you feel like, "I am being— I am being seen." Like, there are people who really like this show making this show. And that's fucking great.

Uh, this season—[laughs] uh, somebody becomes an influencer, and their reward is that they can pick the next person that comes on from two different people. Only the thing is, the person that they pick is going to be played by The Spice Girls, specifically Baby Spice and Scary Spice, who then have to, like, go on this stealth mission to not get caught that they are The Spice Girls catfishing as somebody else.

Rachel: And this is not a spoiler. This happens in, like, episode two. [laughs]

Griffin: This happens very early on. Uh, and that's funny. That's very good, to then find people— watch people try to figure out who The Spice Girls are that they've been talking to the whole time. Uh, that's very good. In one season, an influencer got to control The Joker, which was basically an anonymous profile that could, like, hop in and talk shit and, like, get people all riled up without anybody knowing who it actually was.

Rachel: Yeah. Another season, somebody got to play two—

Griffin: Yes!

Rachel: —two profiles.

Griffin: That was the best twist, is somebody got basically a bonus profile that they could play at the same time as themselves. And then they had to, like, talk to each other sometimes. Like, there was one time they both got into a group chat with someone, and so this guy had to run back and forth between these two rooms playing these two roles.

Rachel: Yeah, which he didn't— there was no rule that he had to do that. He just did it intentionally so that he could, like, not—

Griffin: Keep separate, not accidentally speak as himself when he's— yeah. Uh, and all of those little twists are so brilliant. And add, like, just a little bit of an extra layer on top of what is already, like, an incredibly, like, enthralling concept for a show.

Rachel: Well, yeah, and it also— like, a lot of reality television— and we know this— like, the drama is manufactured in a way that you start to kind of, like— you just start to kind of hate the production of the show. 'Cause you can see people are being, you know, like, pivoted against each other. And— and that's not really an issue on this show.

Griffin: That is not what *The Circle's* about.

Rachel: They definitely— they definitely set up opportunities for people to kind of snipe at each other.

Griffin: [through laughter] Yes.

Rachel: Uh, but it's like nobody is made to say certain things.

Griffin: Yes. There is a— there is a heartbreaking arc where this young man is playing this— this sort of fashionable young woman. He is catfishing a fashionable young woman. And then one of the challenges, one of the, like, little icebreaker games, is everybody has to put makeup on a mannequin.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And he just fucking tanks! And everybody is like, "Well, that's... "

Rachel: Catfish.

Griffin: "... that's clearly not right. That's clearly incorrect." So there are some times where you feel like, "Oh, this is kind of— they set them up to fail a little bit." But most of the time it is hands off, and they are left up to their own devices to sleuth out not only who is the catfish, but more importantly, who is being

honest with them, and who is actually presenting an authentic version of someone?

Whether it's themselves or the catfish that they're playing, and putting out a good vibe that they feel like they can trust. Like, this person has my back. And that's it! Like, that's the only thing that matters in this game. And seeing people try to figure that out, it is a— it is just so entertaining, and it really magnetizes everybody. And you feel like you are following the game, you know what kind of game everybody's playing, and you are rooting for them to succeed.

Rachel: Yeah. And unlike, you know, *Are You the One* or *Survivor*, like, contestants are given, like, paper and post-it notes, and they're able to, like, create these little walls with string of, like, who says what, and why we think this person might be trustworthy, and this person isn't. And you get to see them, like, map out their strategies in real time.

Griffin: And I think... [sighs] to sort of distill down the... [sighs] kind of good heart that beats at the center of this show that you would not expect from a show that is essentially a social media competition, is when somebody gets kicked off the show, they have an opportunity to go visit one other player.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Uh, and so they can essentially find out if somebody was a catfish, uh, or if they just had somebody they were close to that they want to, like, chat up and, like, share their strategies and their thoughts to try to help them out. And you think, like, oh, I bet that breaks bad a lot. Of people, like, "I'm gonna, you know, vindictively go visit somebody and then rat them out in my, like, goodbye message as being, like, a faker."

But that almost never happens! It's almost always they walk into the room, and even if it's somebody who just directly— if they were an influencer— that voted them off, it— it— maybe it's just because they haven't seen another human being in a while.

Rachel: [through laughter] Yeah.

Griffin: But it's, like, nice! And people talk about, like, how wild an experience it is, and "Aw, man, you did such a great job. I had no idea you were a catfish!" Like, there is a respect for the game and each other that is so... nice!

Rachel: Almost always after the visit, the person that has been kicked off will be like, "Alright, I'm rooting for you." And they will usually, like, reveal all the things they have found out. Like, "Just so you know, he said this to me, and that should really be suspicious to you."

Um, and then at the reunion at the very end I think, like, "Oh, man. This is gonna be rough." Because usually there will be, like, flirtations that will develop, and a lot of times the flirtation is happening between a catfish and a person who is authentically themselves. And I think, like, "Oh, this is gonna be so awkward."

And usually there's, like, a second of it being awkward. And then it's just like, "Oh my gosh, you really got me!" [laughs]

Griffin: There was a dude in the first season who played, I think, a woman who was kind of flirty— this has happened I think a couple seasons, where somebody has had, like, a pretty flirtatious relationship with somebody, who then, like, in the finale is revealed, like, "Oh, that's— you're not them at all."

And you think like, "Oh, no! That's gonna be a bummer." But they play it off for laughs, like, pretty much right away. It's a phenomenal show. It is a show that is so much purer and... more enjoyable than I think anybody would guess at first blush.

Rachel: Yeah. I think it's easy to dismiss. You know, I feel like even when we watched the first episode we were like, "I don't know about this." 'Cause you think, like, oh, like the emojis and the texting and the popularity contests. Like, it feels like, oh, this isn't for us, you know? We're not, like, the hip young people. [laughs]

Griffin: But when you see that as, like, means to an end. When you see that where, like, every emoji and hashtag, as unpalatable as it is to my sensibilities, is a sort of posturing where you are just trying to present this version of yourself or somebody else that people will feel... is trustworthy. And that's really cool! To, like, see how people do that. And also seeing that as a sort of simulacrum of, like, how people do that shit on social media in real life.

Like, as— as unbelievable as it sounds, like, it does that really well. And even for somebody like me, who does not give a rat's ass about social media for the most part, I think it's super fascinating.

Rachel: Yeah. I mean, it reminds me a little bit of, like... I mean, in your context it would be like when you are in, like, a production of a play. But, like, for me it's like if you go to, like, a two day long conference or something. Like, you develop this little ecosystem within your little group, and everybody's kind of, like, becomes, you know, friends for the week or whatever.

Like, it feels a lot like that. Of, like, you know, when we went to, like, a childbirth class for example. And it was like, you have your little friends there, and you develop, like, who does what and who says what. And then it— it's gone.

Griffin: Yeah, right?

Rachel: But, like, while you're in it, it feels very real. I don't know. There's something about *The Circle* that reminds me of that.

Griffin: It's a great show. There's— they still have the UK version. There's a *The Circle* Brazil, and I believe *The Circle* France?

Rachel: And Japan too, right?

Griffin: No, I don't think Japan has *The Circle*.

Rachel: Oh, no.

Griffin: It has *Love is Blind*. I would— I— yeah.

Rachel: I'm thinking of *Love is Blind*. [laughs quietly]

Griffin: That would be fun. I think— honestly, like, I would watch any of those shows. I've heard *The Circle* Brazil is off the chains.

Rachel: I know, I know, we need to watch that.

Griffin: We need to— maybe once we're done with this— this season. But this fourth season I think is still going on. Actually, I think it ends today, the day you're hearing this.

Rachel: Oh, really? I thought they would— they would parcel it out in, like, chunks, the way they usually do.

Griffin: No, they usually put up, like, a couple episodes a week, so it is a pretty short lived thing. But if you've never watched it, there's four seasons waiting for you. And genuinely, there has not been a weak season of this show. They have all been really fun. Uh, and I cannot recommend this show enough. I think I was ashamed of my love— 'cause I know we watch some garbage TV.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But a lot of the garbage TV we watch has let us down lately, and *The Circle* never fails to satisfy.

Rachel: That's exactly right.

Griffin: So yeah, that's *The Circle*. And that was *Wonderful!* And 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. Uh, thank you to you for listening. Thanks to Maximum Fun for having us on the network. Go to Maximumfun.org. Check out all the great shows that they have on there. Shows like *Triple Click*, and *Stop Podcasting Yourself*.

Rachel: Oh, and if you missed the recent live *Adventure Zone*...

Griffin: Oh my gosh!

Rachel: It's still available, right? Video on demand?

Griffin: Yes, it's available for, like, another week and a half.

Rachel: It was so funny.

Griffin: Y'all, we played a Jenga-based RPG called *Dread*. And it was a story about a vampire community, and there's one human being that moves in, and it's so... it was so off the rails, like, right away. Uh, it was— and the—

Rachel: It was one of those things where the fact that you all are in different locations actually, like, added an element to the show that I really liked. 'Cause you're all, like, playing your own little Jenga game and watching each other do it. It was so funny.

Griffin: You get to watch our dad... build the worst tower.

Rachel: Has he played— have you played Jenga with him?

Griffin: He swore on a stack of Bibles he had never played Jenga before.

Rachel: That's unreal!

Griffin: It's unreal to me. But anyway, it was a lot of fun. I think just go to mcelroy.family. You can find a link to where you can still get the video on demand for that.

We also have shows coming up in Boston, at Mashantucket, and Salt Lake City, and Portland, and San Diego, and DC, and Detroit, and Cincinnati.

Rachel: Wow.

Griffin: Coming up later this year. Did you like that?

Rachel: Good memory.

Griffin: Thanks, yeah, it's— I've said it a lot. Uh, so go to mcelroy.family. We've got a bunch of stuff at mcelroymerch.com too that you should go and peruse at your pleasure. That's it!

Rachel: I thought you were gonna say leisure.

Griffin: Did I say— what did I say?

Rachel: You said pleasure.

Griffin: Peruse at your pleasure.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: That's nice, I like that! I like that. Peruse your ple— per— how about just peruse your pleasure? And that could be, like, the tagline for the show.

Rachel: I feel like I'm looking at an ad for Las Vegas in an in-flight magazine right now. [laughs]

Griffin: Yes, absolutely! It's like one of those weird commercials where, like— Vegas used to do commercials where it was just like a bunch of people in, like, rabbit costumes, like, coming off an elevator and, like, "Shhhh!"

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And it would just be like, "Vegas." And it's like, "What the fuck does that— I don't want any of that! Are you kidding me?!" Anyway, go to Vegas. This episode was brought to you by the Vegas Council.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Annie up!

Rachel: [haltingly] What happens there is what happened.

Griffin: Peruse your pleasure.

Rachel: [laughs quietly]

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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