

Wonderful! 234: One of Your Donkeys Kong

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[theme song, "Money Won't Pay" plays]

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hello, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is *Wonderful!*

Griffin: Vroom, vroom, vroom. Get in the truck, everybody. It's time for, uh—it's time for the next chapter. The next evolution.

Rachel: Oh! Okay.

Griffin: Yeah. I mean, we should talk about this. Yes?

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: Yeah. So, this is a show where we talk about things that we like and things we are into. If this is your first episode, I'm Griffin. That's Rachel. We're married. We got two kids. We've lived in Austin, Texas for, well—

Rachel: Ever since we met.

Griffin: Ever since we met. I've been here since 2011. You've been here since, what? 2009?

Rachel: 2008.

Griffin: 2008. Gosh, dang.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But that's all over now. We say, "Fond farewell, Texas and Austin." 'Cause, we are moving. Here, in a little over a month, which is bonkers.

Rachel: Yeah. We're not saying this 'cause it'll have any kind of dramatic impact on the format of the show.

Griffin: No. I mean, it won't have any impact on the format of the show at all, but it *may* have impact on the release schedules for several of our products here—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: ... at McElroy Industries and—

Rachel: Yeah. At least, towards the end of July, beginning of August.

Griffin: Yeah. So, we are going to be up and moving to—oh, and everybody's wondering right now. I bet we have friends in [pause] Bill-oxi. Then they know I'm not moving there, or else I would have said the name of the city correctly.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: In Biloxi. Or [enunciates as spelled] Des-Moin-ess. We're not moving to any of—what are some other cities we're not moving to, honey?

Rachel: [laughs] I feel like there's some judgment implied in this, and I would rather not.

Griffin: Oh, okay. I mean, they're beautiful cities. It's just not where we're going. We are going to... [sings] Washington, DC!

Rachel: Yeah. 'Cause Griffin is running—

Griffin: The room where it happens.

Rachel: ... running for President.

Griffin: I want to be the new President of The United States of America.

Rachel: [laughs softly]

Griffin: Here is my platform: Everything going on all around us... sucks! Let's do something about it, America.

Rachel: [laughs softly] And we have both been to Washington, DC a bunch of times now and have enjoyed every trip.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: And we also wanted to be closer to the rest of the McElroys.

Griffin: Yes!

Rachel: Uh—

Griffin: We have had to miss, like, four of the last five sort of Christmas trips.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Sometimes, very last minute because of Covid and, uh, it is just not possible to hop in a car and drive to where the rest of our family is here. Which has proven to be a constant thorn in our side, I would say, over the last few years. Um, and, you know, DCs got a lot of really cool stuff going on.

It's a *really* great place to raise kids. Got lots of really neat activities for them. You can hop on a train and be in, like, any other city on the East Coast within a few hours, and I like that a lot. And, uh—

Rachel: Griffin loves trains.

Griffin: Uh, people. It's well-trod ground, I think...

Rachel: Is it well known?

Griffin: ... at this point.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: That are we—we have a fondness for these long steel beauties.

Rachel: [through laugh] Uh-huh.

Griffin: Um, but yeah. August 1st, we're going to be rolling up into Washington, DC.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: We welcome your recommendations for things to do or eat there.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And, uh, we're very—we're very excited. And also, I would say, extremely stressed out.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: Because moving cross country by yourself is a tough putt. Doing it with two kids is, I would say, an impossible drive, to continue the golfing metaphor. But we're doing the damn thing.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And, uh, I mean, that's all—Austin, we know we have lots of listeners here. Lots of fans here. Lots of *friends* here.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And we're going to miss—we're gonna miss all—you know, we're going to miss it a lot! I'm very sad to be leaving Austin, but—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: ... a new chapter is beginning. So, turn the page with us. As I inquire with my wife—

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: ... if she has any of those good small wonders that I do crave so much.

Rachel: [exhales softly] You know, I—this happened several days ago where I thought, like, "Oh, this is going to be in my small wonder." And then, "For sure, this will be my small wonder." Uh, and now I can't remember what any of them were. I really need to write these guys down.

Griffin: Yeah. It'd be good. I'm going to say, "U-Haul boxes." Now that our—the cats out of the bag.

Rachel: [through laughter] Okay.

Griffin: Whenever it's time to move, swing by the U-Haul and pick up some of the best damn cardboard boxes in the business. I am so wild about this.

Rachel: I got some that I'm really excited about. They're, like, specifically for dishes, and they come with little separators.

Griffin: Yes. Yes.

Rachel: Like specifically sized for glasses and dishes.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: And I'm real excited about that.

Griffin: Yeah. We need to pick up some, uh, like, mirror boxes? I forget what they're called.

Rachel: Yeah. I didn't see those at the store. But, yeah, there's supposed to be boxes designed to put in wall art.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And I have not seen them. But—but, whoo, boy! Am I excited? [laughs]

Griffin: Whoo boy. Yeah. I like a U-Haul box! I'm excited. They're, like, indestructible. You're supposed to be able to use them for, like, multiple moves. And I just like, uh—I very much enjoy going through the, like, pile of garbage I have accrued over the last decade plus. And have just held on to thinking, "I'm sure I'm going to need that someday."

And then throwing it away or donating it or selling it is *very*—is *very* satisfying. I would say half the things I have in my office are going to a better place, but not our place. Uh, and that's been a very rewarding process. What about you now? You gotta have something, right?

Rachel: I'm going to say, and I may have mentioned this before, but it's been a long time. So, Griffin has not, uh, left town without me in a very, very long time. And he did recently. Uh, and I was able to watch some shows. You know the shows that you watch when you're by yourself, like, your partner is not there?

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: And so, I, uh—I'm not, in particular, recommending *this* show, but I did watch the rest of *The Ultimatum*. And it was not that it was a great show, but it was a show that I could watch by myself.

Griffin: Did we talk about *The Ultimatum* on here? I don't know that we did.

Rachel: Probably not. It's not—it's not, what one would say, a great show. It does take place in Austin, which is fun to watch. But it was just—it was very much one of those shows, like, "Griffins not gonna be sad that I watched this without him."

Griffin: Absolutely not.

Rachel: And I can have a good time, uh, and feel like, "Hey, I'm doing something for me." [laughing]

Griffin: The show is wild conceptually. Where it's a bunch of couples, who have been dating for a while but haven't gotten engaged.

Rachel: Almost all of them were two years. Like, every single couple sat down and said, "We've been together two years."

Griffin: Which is *not* an outrageous amount of time to be dating.

Rachel: No. And most—

Griffin: Especially when you're like in your early twenties.

Rachel: Yeah. Exactly. And most of them were like, "I want to get married. My partner is not sure."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: "I'm gonna say, either you marry me at the end of this show, or we're breaking up."

Griffin: So, they swap partners for, like, six weeks or something like that?

Rachel: Yeah. So, everybody has to, like, pick a person that they want to live with instead, from this group. And then they live with them for, like, a week, and then they go back to living with their original partner for a week. And then at the end, they're, like, either they're like, "I for sure want to get married now," or "I really enjoyed this other partner, and it made me rethink this relationship, and now we're breaking up."

Griffin: Yeah, this is a fucking mess. It was a mess from the jump. I only watched, I think, the first episode and was like, "This is a disaster."

Rachel: Yeah. Because a lot of these people that, understandably, that made the decision to go on this show, where they would potentially put their relationship in danger, did not have really great relationships to begin with. [laughs]

Griffin: No!

Rachel: So, you watch them have these arguments that are very clearly, like, "You should not be together" arguments. Uh, and that's always difficult to watch.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Because you'd feel sad for them, and—

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: ... you know? And it's just—it's watching hateful people say hateful things to each other.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And that's not great either.

Griffin: Not my favorite.

Rachel: Yeah. But man, did I watch that—

Griffin: Um—Rachel ate that garbage up.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: Uh, do you wanna go—I mean, you *do* go first.

Rachel: I do. Yes. Uh, so my wonderful thing this week is the lunch box.

Griffin: Yes! This is the box for food for the middle of the day.

Rachel: And I'm speaking specifically about, kind of, the vintage lunch box.

Griffin: Oh! Interesting.

Rachel: Yes. So, um, and I want to preface this by saying, um, "To my dad, who enjoys collecting things. I'm not saying this because I want more lunch boxes." [laughs]

Griffin: That's an important caveat to put out there.

Rachel: A lot of times, my parents will use this show as, like, a gift-giving inspiration. And I just want to make clear, we are getting ready to move across the country.

Griffin: Please, Christ! Do not send us any lunch boxes.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: Or anything.

Rachel: [through laugh] Yeah, or anything.

Griffin: In fact, I'm going to say to all family members who listen to this show, "Don't send us anything, *please!*" Every tangible object that enters this house must be shrewdly categorized—

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: ... in a way that it requires a lot of emotional labor. So, please, do not send us anything.

Rachel: But I will say, years and years ago, um, my dad got me some lunch boxes. First, there were Pez lunch boxes.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: `Cause I used to have a real affinity for Pez. And then he got me a *Fraggle Rock* lunch box and an *Alf* lunch box. I believe there's a *Return of the Jedi* one.

Griffin: Mmm!

Rachel: They're pretty great. And so, what I did recently, is that—when I was working at Austin Community College, I put them up top on my little shelf space.

Griffin: Oh, that's fun.

Rachel: It was, like, a—it made my office more colorful. It was, like, a little conversation piece for people.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I kept waiting for somebody to come in and be, like, "I love *Alf* too." It didn't happen. [giggles]

Griffin: Well. And that's why you're leaving.

Rachel: [laughs] But it was—I don't know. They're cool. They're cool to display. Like, they're just like little pieces of art. Uh, and they're all

approximately the same size and shape. And so, you can get a few together and put `em up on a wall, and there you go.

Griffin: I'm *struggling* to think of a lunch box I ever had.

Rachel: It is hard to remember, and part of that is because when we were coming up, the whole idea was that you got a new one every year.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And you would get the design of the thing that you were into at the time. So, you know, it was, like, super cool to have a *Care Bears* one when you were in kindergarten, but then you're in first grade, and it's like, "Oh man, *Care Bears* are out." You know? You gotta get a new one.

Griffin: I feel like I had a *Power Rangers* one at some point. Just, sort of like, statistically speaking. I *must* have had a *Power Rangers* lunch box at some point.

Rachel: [laughs softly]

Griffin: But I was much more into, sort of just like, a nice neutral tone, sort of member of the JanSport family of products.

Rachel: Yeah. Well, so, that is the other thing I found in my research. Is that... [chuckles] With the invention of backpacks—which is, like, a crazy sentence to say out loud.

Griffin: Yeah, it is wild.

Rachel: But the big, like, big plastic or metal lunch box kind of went out of favor.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Because it took up so much space, uh, in the backpack. And so, you saw a lot more of the, like, reusable, foldable, soft lunch box.

Griffin: Yeah! I was—I brown paper bagged it, pretty much *every* day.

Rachel: Well, that's what happened in high school for me. Like, you couldn't—you couldn't roll up to high school with, like, a, you know, a *Rainbow Brite* lunch box.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Unless you were, like, super alternative. [laughing]

Griffin: Unless you were really cool.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh, but yeah. So, then it was—then it was all brown bag. I think that it was brown bag by, like, 5th grade.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: But those early lunch boxes...

Griffin: By which I mean, I had a lot of really, really crushed oatmeal cream pies.

Rachel: [bursts out laughing] The lunches that Griffin describes from his youth are—

Griffin: They're very sad.

Rachel: They're appalling.

Griffin: Well, my parents made the critical error in judgment of allowing me to pack my own lunch.

Rachel: [through laugh] Uh-huh.

Griffin: And so, it was usually, like, a Star Crunch, a Ziploc bag of Snyder's chips, uh, and, like, a Sam's Club brand Mountain Dew.

Rachel: [exasperatedly] Ah!

Griffin: By which I mean, like, you know, a Hill's Light thing, or something like that.

Rachel: [laughing] Yeah! Uh, do you want—you wanna hear about lunch boxes?

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Okay. So, uh, the first kid's lunch box, like, as we know it today that had, like, the hip—the hip show on it, uh, 1950s.

Griffin: Whoa! Was it, like, *Howdy Doody* or some shit?

Rachel: That is one of them. But the first—so, Aladdin was kind of the industry leader in the—in the lunch box, and their first children's lunch box was *Hopalong Cassidy*.

Griffin: Ohh! Yeah, I have no idea who that is.

Rachel: [laughs] It's like a western show.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: You know, how, like, westerns were a big thing for a while?

Griffin: Weirdly, it was, like, the only thing.

Rachel: Yeah, it kind of was the only thing. [chuckles] Uh, so, the *Hopalong Cassidy* lunch box sold more than 600,000 in the first year. Which has got to be, like, the population of the United States back then, right? [laughs softly]

Griffin: At this point, yeah. Or the planet.

Rachel: I think it's funny because part of the appeal of lunch boxes now is that you get one that, like, is distinctive.

Griffin: Uh-huh.

Rachel: [through laughter] And the idea of, like, a classroom of 20 kids showing up and everybody has—

Griffin: Just eating each other's shit, every day.

Rachel: Seems like a real nightmare. Um—

Griffin: I had a Doorman Greg lunch box—

Rachel: [laughs softly] Yeah.

Griffin: ... that really set me apart from the rest. What is the—shit... I'm trying to remember it. At the very end, during the credits, of *Waiting for Guffman*, uh, and Corky is, like, going through all of his—

Rachel: Ohh...

Griffin: ... and he has, like, a My Dinner with Entrée lunch box.

Rachel: Yes! Yes.

Griffin: And, like, the little figurines.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: So, he can—he, like, does a little role play with. Fuck, that movie's good.

Rachel: Well, most lunch boxes came with a Thermos.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Which was a thing. Did you—do you remember thermoses? Do you have—

Griffin: Sure. Of course.

Rachel: Did you ever have, like, soup or something warm in them?

Griffin: Never.

Rachel: No, me either.

Griffin: Never, not once. Not once in my life.

Rachel: The idea of packing your kid some soup in a thermos, like, kind of blows my mind a little bit.

Griffin: Yeah. It's wild.

Rachel: I don't think I really started eating soup until, like, college.
[laughs]

Griffin: We had, at some point, we acquired, like, tiny, little Tupperware cups you could seal up. And I started to bring salsa in my lunchbox.

Rachel: Oh!

Griffin: So, I could have chips and salsa with lunch.

Rachel: That's fun!

Griffin: And that was a—and that was, for me, really putting on the ritz. [pause] I mean, I didn't put them on Ritz crackers.

Rachel: [laughs softly]

Griffin: I had, you know, tortilla strips of some sort, but yeah.

Rachel: Yeah. Well, that's a vegetable too.

Griffin: Sure. It's several vegetables.

Rachel: You're set. Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: God, if only we could get Henry to eat salsa, that would be something. Right now—

Griffin: Yeah. Well, when I was Henry's age, what I would do, is I would just take a chip and press it down into the salsa to get the—

Rachel: Yes. Yes.

Griffin: ... to get the good juice but have no solid content on the chip whatsoever.

Rachel: [chuckles softly] Uh-huh. I think that's every kid everywhere.

Griffin: Is that true? Okay. I didn't know.

Rachel: The idea of, like, chunks of vegetable on a chip was very disturbing—

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: ... as a child.

Griffin: Now I can't get enough of this stuff.

Rachel: So, I mentioned the move from the metal to the plastic.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Uh, which happened in the eighties. And there is all of this, like, lore around the departure around metal lunch boxes because people were concerned that children were using them as weapons.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: Yeah. I mean, people were using plastic lunch boxes as weapons too, but they possessed, sort of, less ballistic force.

Rachel: There's stuff on the internet about a statewide ban in Florida, uh, where a group of moms lobbied together to say, like, "No more metal lunch boxes." And so, the last metal lunch box came out in 1987 with the feature character Rambo.

Griffin: That is appropriate.

Rachel: Which, like, should kids be watching *Rambo*? [chuckles softly]

Griffin: Probably not. Well, I remember seeing som—I've never seen a single *Rambo* movie, but I did see, like, a chart that tracked the number of actual murders in each *Rambo* film, and the first one only has, like, one murder in it. And then, the second one has, like, four. And then, the third one has, like 397 or some wild leap like that.

Rachel: I've never seen any of those films.

Griffin: Nor I.

Rachel: Uh, so I just—

Griffin: But only because they seem pretty bad.

Rachel: Yeah. It's not my—it's not my thing, you know? Like, any kind of movie that's like, "This is a violent movie." I'm like, "I don't know."
[chuckles]

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: So, I wanted to talk a little bit about the valuable lunch boxes out there.

Griffin: Oh! Okay.

Rachel: So, if you get onto eBay, there's tons.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: There's tons and tons and tons. Uh, the one right now that seems to be getting the highest rate is a *Superman* lunch box from 1954.

Griffin: Oh, yeah!

Rachel: Pretty cool looking.

Griffin: I mean, that does look pretty cool, actually.

Rachel: Uh, and if you remember, like, that was right when they first started with lunch boxes. Sixteen thousand dollars.

Griffin: [yells] What's in it?

Rachel: [bursts out laughing]

Griffin: What's in there?

Rachel: It's just super—I mean, they're just super hard to find, right? Like, that's the thing.

Griffin: Some rare, fossilized Moon Pies in there.

Rachel: The next most valuable one, at least on the site I'm looking at, uh, Working-money.com.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: You know?

Griffin: Ah, my favorite.

Rachel: You know, Working-money.com.

Griffin: Yeah. I'm always on there.

Rachel: Is Toppie?

Griffin: Toppie!

Rachel: Which is, like, a plaid elephant?

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: And, uh, that—the origins of those elephants, apparently, it was a Kroger item. You could collect stamps and turn them in for this lunch box—

Griffin: Wow.

Rachel: ... at Kroger. And now, you can pay six thousand dollars for that lunch box.

Griffin: Gah. There is some kid who is, like, "Mom, can we please go back to Kroger today? I'm so close to my Toppie elephant lunch box. It's an investment, mother. You don't understand. Someday, I'll be the one laughing."

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: "When I'm sitting six thousand dollars pretty."

Rachel: [through laughter] With Toppie.

Griffin: With Toppie.

Rachel: Ah, but most of the lunch boxes I saw, like *Lone Ranger*—

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: ... *Star Trek*, uh, there's a Beatles one.

Griffin: Oh, yeah. For sure.

Rachel: Which I'm sure my dad has.

Griffin: I'm sure your dad has some very valuable lunch boxes.

Rachel: Um, well, *he* doesn't collect them. But, I mean, if there's a Beatles one—

Griffin: They're in his possession.

Rachel: ... he probably has it. Most of them value, like, a thousand dollars.

Griffin: Whew!

Rachel: Still a lot for a lunch box.

Griffin: Pretty money. Yeah.

Rachel: But, you know, not, like, you're not going to send somebody to college your lunch box collection.

Griffin: Well, you could in 1956 or whatever.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh, yeah. So, that's lunch boxes. I really—I don't know. I think they're cool.

Griffin: I do too. I just like school supplies in general.

Rachel: Yeah. And that's the thing, like—and I don't know if anyone else has this experience, but to get Henry excited for school, we—

Griffin: Oh, yeah.

Rachel: ... go find him a cool lunch box.

Griffin: Yeah, he's got a really sick Marvel one that he's been rocking for a while now.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Surprisingly. It has not been destroyed by the ravages of preschool. [chuckles]

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Hey, can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

[ad break stinger plays]

[ad break]

Griffin: Got a couple Stromboliboy here, and I would love to read the first one because it is for Boone Hart. And it's from the artist formerly known as Ang Heart. And they say, "Babiest brother Boone, you aren't even a little bit a baby anymore and have babies of your own, but you'll always be my little bro. Watching you be a wonderful father and husband to 3 slash 4 of the best gals I know is a constant joy. I love you, and I'm so proud of the man you have become."

And that's a very sweet message. You know, I never hear from my big boys about how much of a man I have become, even when I'm doing my lumberjack stuff and strutting around with my huge muscles out.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Don't you think that's—don't you think that's unfair?

Rachel: When you say it—you mean your older brothers?

Griffin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: Not my sons.

Rachel: Yeah. No, I mean, they should talk about your strut more.

Griffin: My strut, my strength—

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: My dignity.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Nah, I don't have that.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: You want to read this next one?

Rachel: Yeah. This is for Claire. It is from past Claire. "Hi, Claire Bear. Boy, you have had a rough first year in Mexico, but you are tough, and you are smart, and you deserve love. Hang in there. You got this. You're amazing. Treat yourself to something nice today. XOXO, past Claire."

Griffin: Mm, just like agent Cooper said in *Twin Peaks*, "The secret is, you give yourself a little gift every day, and that's why I buy myself so many—

Rachel: Candies? [chuckles]

Griffin: Candies and Roblox gift cards.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [laughs softly]

Rachel: So, Claire, if you're out there—

Griffin: Candy and Roblox, baby! That's all you need.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

[Maximum Fun ads play]

Griffin: I wanna talk about a little pink friend of you and me, and his name is Kirby. Kirby, the little guy.

Rachel: Aww! Kirby!

Griffin: Kirby from—

Rachel: I would *love* to know more about Kirby.

Griffin: You're going to.

Rachel: Uh, 'cause Kirby is one of those characters—like, it's not like a Sonic or a Mario.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: Where it's like a, "Oh, that's a thing that's based on something I know in the world."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Kirby is just a...

Griffin: Just a little blob.

Rachel: A little pink ball.

Griffin: Just a little pink ball. I would say he ranks among the, like, B-tier of Nintendo mascots. Like, he's not a Mario, or a Link or, uh, a donkey, one of your Donkeys Kong.

Rachel: [laughs softly]

Griffin: Uh, but man, if—I'll be damned if my appreciation for this little guy hasn't improved dramatically over the last year.

Rachel: Yeah. Henry *loves* this game.

Griffin: Loves this dude. The new game, uh, *Kirby and the Forgotten Land*, came out a few months ago, and it's just all we play.

Rachel: He will replay levels over and over again.

Griffin: We have beaten the shit out of that game, and he still wants to go back and just play it—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: ... over and over.

Rachel: I also like the idea that he can, like, eat stuff and spit it out.

Griffin: Yep!

Rachel: That's a really unique idea—

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: ... for a character.

Griffin: Yeah, not a lot of characters out there eating enemies and spitting them out.

Rachel: And Kirby—Kirby doesn't have, like, a gun typically.

Griffin: Well, he does if you have the gun power up. Yeah, he does have—

Rachel: In this one, he does, but—

Griffin: He does. Yeah.

Rachel: I like the idea that he inflicts his harm with—

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: ... with chewed up... [laughs]

Griffin: Bad guys, yeah. It's kinda grotesque actually, when you really explain it that much. So, Kirby is the star of the *Kirby* series of games which has been running since *Kirby's Dreamland* on the Gameboy in 1992. Which is kind of weird already, 'cause when the Gameboy came out, it was, like, stuff got ported to it.

Like, you got *Super Mario Land* which was, like, the sort of more lightweight Gameboy-ified version of *Super Mario Bros.* But Kirby was, like, born on the Gameboy and kind of went from there. Um, and even back then, the character was basically the same as he is now. Little pink blobby guy who runs around and sucks enemies up and floats through the air when you jump 'cause you can, like, press the jump a bunch to float.

You couldn't even do the, like, copy abilities in that original game. It was just sucking enemies up and shooting them out. In later games, he got the ability to steal enemy's powers.

Rachel: What—oh, okay. Yeah, I didn't know what you meant by copy.

Griffin: Yeah, it's like his—his other main thing that he does. He sucks up an enemy and gets their powers.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: So, the game and the character was designed by a guy named Masahiro Sakurai, who is still, like, a pretty big name in the industry. He went on to spearhead all of the *Super Smash Bros.* games. And so, especially for, like, the most recent one that came out on Switch, he would do, like, a video presentation every couple months to, like, announce a new character, and everybody—like, everybody adores this dude because he is so enthusiastic about everything that he works on.

Rachel: [laughs] They do a presentation every time a new character comes out?

Griffin: Oh, for sure. Yeah, absolutely. So, like, he'll do one for—

Rachel: How long do those take? It seems like it could be over and done in like three minutes.

Griffin: No. I mean, when you want to show off, like, "And here's the special smash ability of Banjo-Kazooie."

Rachel: Oh, okay. [chuckles]

Griffin: It can get pretty granular. Um, the concept for the game *Kirby*, like, pre-dates the game itself because originally Sakurai wanted to make a platformer for people who were, like, new to gaming and action games in general. So, when you think about, like, the *Kirby* games, like, they're pretty easy, and that is by design.

Uh, there are a lot of facets of *Kirby's*, like, controls that are geared for more sort of amateur players. So, like, the fact that he doesn't just jump once. You can push the jump button a bunch to float over enemies or gaps. And some of the *Kirby* games, like especially the older ones, you can just fly through the whole level without, like, having to interact with anything in it at all.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Um, and that makes it a much more sort of approachable thing for people who are not big, big gamers, or experienced with the genre at all.

Rachel: Yeah. I mean, Henry experiences something that I experience, which is if a game is too hard, you get frustrated, and you don't want to play it anymore.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Uh, and *Kirby*, kind of, gives you a way in, you know? That is, like, super appealing.

Griffin: Right. So, Kirby, the little ball was originally a placeholder for what was going to be a more fleshed-out character, right? Like, when they were designing the game, they made this little ball child. This small spherical baby. Just as, like, a—just as, like, a sprite that they could use while they tuned up the rest of the game.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And then, as the game got close to, you know, finishing development Sakurai decided like, “Let’s just—let’s just go back to that ball. ‘Cause, it really fits, like, the aesthetic that we’re going for.”

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: “Like, the simplicity that we are going for *is* reflected in Kirby, the ball child.” And, like, that character hasn’t changed much through, like, the 30 games that he has been in at this point.

Rachel: I like that they give him shoes just to, like, ground you in, like, what he can and can’t do. Like, he’s not going to roll anywhere. He has shoes. [laughs softly]

Griffin: Right. So, actually, those aren’t his shoes. Those are just his feet that are a different color than the rest of his body.

Rachel: [moans] Ahh.

Griffin: [gasps softly] You heard it here first, folks.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: In—what’s really amazing is that though the character hasn’t changed that much in North American, like, artwork and ads, he is depicted with a more, sort of, intense look on his face because Sakurai said that North Americans like a more battle-ready Kirby.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: Which is sad and telling, I think. Um, and yeah, he's been in 30 games since that first title in 1992, which is, you know, impressive! That's a game a year, essentially, since then. And, of course, the most recent one is *Kirby and the Forgotten Land* on Switch, which has been just an absolute slam dunk in this—in this household.

Um, I think it's really—I think it's just as difficult to make an easy game that is fun to play as it is to make, like, a well-balanced, challenging game.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Like, there are so many games that are designed for kids that are, you know, one-button beat 'em ups, right?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: That gets so old, so fast.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Because their design is not just easy but, like, insulting in a way.

Rachel: Yeah. That is true. We got Henry a lot of, like, iPad games for when we travel, and a lot of them specifically for kids, and he has no interest in playing them anymore.

Griffin: No, because they do one thing.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And then they—that one thing is designed to be very easy to accomplish so that you can just move on to the next one.

Rachel: It's, like, you're a Paw Patrol, and you have to move left and right on this road to avoid the potholes. And then, at the end of the game, it's, like, "Yeah! You did it."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: But this most recent *Kirby* game, like, we were able to beat it, and along the way, like, did a bunch of different stuff. That was all, like, fun and varied, and enjoyable. But, at the end of the day, not that difficult to accomplish.

Rachel: Is this a new thing in games, where after you beat the game, they give you, like, little new challenges that keep you playing it?

Griffin: I don't know how new it is, but it is, I would say, for a lot of games. Especially, Nintendo's really good about that. Like, it is kind of par for the course.

Rachel: Yeah. It kind of, blew my mind a little bit. Well, 'cause one, I've never, like, beaten a game.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: So, I had no idea, like, that there could be stuff after it. Uh, but I feel like that's very clever.

Griffin: Yeah. Um, so, my very favorite thing about *Kirby*, is the origins of the name. Do you know anything about this?

Rachel: Of course not.

Griffin: Okay. So, in 1984 Nintendo had, like, found some success in North America with arcade machines, specifically *Donkey Kong*. And, you know, it started their, like, expansion out of just being a Japanese game developer

company. But they were sued by Universal City Studios, uh, who claimed that *Donkey Kong* infringed on the *King Kong* IP.

Rachel: Yeah. I think that's fair. [laughs]

Griffin: Sure. But this case, like, really threatened Nintendo's, like, fate as a company that could expand beyond just Japan because they had finally gotten a foothold in North America, and here it was being threatened by this lawsuit. But, ultimately, Universal had kind of screwed itself over in a previous case against RKO Pictures, who was the studio behind the original *King Kong* movie.

Uh, apparently, the creator of *King Kong*, whose name was Merion C. Cooper, did not do a particularly good job of securing the rights to this character after the original film came out in 1933. And so, like, no one was really sure if the character belonged to Cooper, or RKO Pictures, or Universal, or who. Because then, like, you know, um, some Japanese studio started to make, like, *Godzilla vs. King Kong*, and nobody was quite sure who was licensing that character to whom.

Because in the 1930s and they just were not good at keeping—so, it was ori—uh, like, determined at some point that *King Kong* was just public domain. The character was in the public domain, but then you get into the weird *Winnie the Pooh* territory where it's, like, Winnie the Pooh, the character is in the public domain, but the story—like, this specific depiction of Winnie the Pooh is not in the public domain. Like, it starts to get in that weird territory.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: So, essentially, Nintendo had to argue that *Donkey Kong* is, like, different from *King Kong*. Uh, that nobody in their right mind would get this character confused with the film version of *King Kong*.

Rachel: 'Cause he throws barrels.

Griffin: He throws barrels and—

Rachel: And he sometimes wears clothes.

Griffin: And he hates Mario [through whine] so much. [normally] And so, in this court case in 1984, uh, the judge ultimately ruled in favor of Nintendo saying that nobody would confuse *King Kong* and *Donkey Kong*. And said that, you know, that there was this precedent that there was no, uh, you know, official claim to the IP of the character of *King Kong*, that Universal Studios could claim.

So, it's a *huge* win for Nintendo, but essentially, like allowed them to—I mean, if they had lost that case, it would have been very hard for them to maintain this, like—this small step out of the East that they had taken.

Rachel: So, *Kirby*.

Griffin: According to Shigeru Miyamoto, who made *Mario* and a ton of characters—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: ... for—for Nintendo. According to *him*, the character of Kirby earned his name from Nintendo's North American council on the case, whose name was John Kirby. [pause]

Rachel: Wild. [laughs]

Griffin: Fucking wild! The lawyer for this, like, very important case for Nintendo is named John Kirby, and so, when they had this character for this 1992 Gameboy game, and they needed a name for him, named him after the lawyer in that case who won the case for them. And now, *Kirby* is, you know, one of the more prolific names in video games.

Rachel: Is this guy, like, a round pink man?

Griffin: He is a—and he—the thing is—

Rachel: With red feet? [laughing]

Griffin: He sucked up—he has big red feet, and he sucks up the... [chuckles] the prosecution and the case.

Rachel: [imitates lawyer] “Your Honor... I would like to cross-examine the witness.” [sucking noise]

Griffin: Hm. Yeah.

[imitates lawyer] “Hey, objection!” [mocks game sound] Hyup!

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: “Did someone say something? I don’t think so. Oh, wow! I gained double lawyer powers.”

Anyway, that’s Kirby. I love him. I love Kirby. I just think he’s neat.

Rachel: Yeah. I like any game that is, like, colorful and pleasing—

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: ... and there’s no, you know, flesh wounds. [soft laugh]

Griffin: There’s no flesh wounds in *Kirby*. I think that was one of the first games you and I played together, was, like, uh, *Kirby’s Epic Yarn* or something like that?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: On the Wii? Or Wii-U? We, like, really got into that game and it was—it was, uh, it was one of the first, like, video games that we played together.

Rachel: Wow.

Griffin: I remember really enjoying that.

Rachel: Yeah. You were really good at kind of curating my experience to make sure the game I was going to play would not turn me off of games forever. [soft chuckle]

Griffin: Yeah, for sure. That's it. Thank you to bo en and Augustus for the use of our theme song "Money Won't Pay." You can find a link to that in the episode description. Thank you to Maximum Fun for having us on the network.

Go to Maximumfun.org. Check out all the great shows that they have on there, just waiting for you to click on them, subscribe to them, and listen to every episode of them.

Rachel: And thank you to everybody that went and saw the guys in Boston and Mashantucket.

Griffin: Yeah. It was a fun tour.

Rachel: And for taking pictures 'cause I do this thing where after Griffin performs, I'll go on Twitter and try and look for pictures of the performance because—

Griffin: Like a—like a lonely sailor's bride—

Rachel: [laughing]

Griffin: ... on her widow's perch, watching the sea waiting for signs of her seaman to return to her loving embrace.

Rachel: That is what I call you. I call you "Seaman."

Griffin: That's true. Um, anyway, we have stuff at mcelroymerch.com, if you want to go check that out. We are going to be doing a few more shows this year.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: If you want to come see us, go to, uh,... —uh, I mean, if you go to mcelroy.family, you can find a link to where we're doing all the shows, but gonna be in, uh, Salt Lake City, Portland, San Diego, D.C., Detroit, and Cincinnati. I'm not good with this year so...

Rachel: Yeah! When we do the D.C. show, we will be residents of there and we can do a lot of local humor.

Griffin: Oh, that'll be fun.

[imitates audience member] "Did you hear about this Joe Biden guy?"

Rachel: [laughs] Who's got a metro card?

Griffin: We may... see... Ted Cruz.

Rachel: [hesitantly] No.

Griffin: You don't think we'll ever just bump into Ted Cruz, and immediately have to go change clothes, because the piss that would get on us?

Rachel: No. I mean. We've lived—[chuckles] We've lived in Texas and haven't seen him.

Griffin: Yeah, that's true. Yeah, that's a fair point.

Rachel: But I do think... we will see... another politician.

Griffin: Wow! Couldn't even think of one other politician?

Rachel: [laughing] I was going to say Nancy Pelosi, but I don't even know how I would see her. I'm trying to think of a politician who, like, would roll up to the same spots that lived.

Griffin: AOC.

Rachel: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Griffin: That'd be fucking great.

Rachel: We'll be, like, at an arcade and AOC will be right next to us just murdering—

Griffin: Yeah. Just pounding quarters into, like, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*.

Rachel: Yeah.

[outro music, "Money Won't Pay," plays]

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: That'd be cool.

Griffin: Well, let's—let's end the show so we can start writing this fan fiction.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Bye!

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