

## Wonderful! 237: Emily Ssspinach

Published July 13th, 2022

Listen here on [themcelroy.family](https://themcelroy.family)

[theme music plays]

**Rachel:** Hello. This is Rachel McElroy.

**Griffin:** Hello, Rachel McElroy. I'm Griffin McElroy.

**Rachel:** This is Wonderful! —

**Griffin:** Your husband!

**Rachel:** This is Wonderful!.

**Griffin:** This is a show where we talk about things we like, things that are good, things that we are into. Things that bring us joy, peace, relaxation, spicy flavors.

**Rachel:** Laughs.

**Griffin:** Laughs. Cries?

**Rachel:** Cries?

**Griffin:** Pleasure. It's all raw pleasure here on Wonderful! Every episode, week in, week out, we are serving it up hot.

**Rachel:** Mm-hmm.

**Griffin:** And I'm so happy to be here in the studio for, I believe, maybe our penultimate recording in this space.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** We've already said goodbye to a lot of friends in here because I put them in boxes.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And then we are—

**Rachel:** So not really “Goodbye” as much as “See you later.”

**Griffin:** “See you soon, buddy.”

**Rachel:** Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** And, um... Ah, gosh. I’m gonna... A lot of memories in this space, huh? In these old bones.

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

**Griffin:** Look around at the bones, hun. You don't care. You're so... You're so ready to be rid of these bones.

**Rachel:** [laughs] I admit that the office has always been kind of your space.

**Griffin:** I don't think of it that way.

**Rachel:** And when I walk into this room, I think, like, “I don't have to worry about anything in here.”

**Griffin:** That's good. Okay. I do like that. We aim to please here in the studio.

**Rachel:** Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** Yeah. We are... We are going to be moving, like, in six days, which sucks.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** That's so soon. We have so much to do, babe. We'll figure it out. We always do.

**Rachel:** Yeah. I'm trying not to think about it in the moments when I can't physically do anything.

**Griffin:** Yeah. You're sitting at a desk and you're about to talk about...

**Rachel:** 'Cause I can't pack right now.

**Griffin:** You can't pack right now. You're about to talk about, you know, Honey Nut Cheerios or whatever.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Uh, we are—

**Rachel:** Wouldn't that be great if that was it? Like, you just nailed it.

**Griffin:** One of these days I'm going to guess it.

**Rachel:** I know.

**Griffin:** Um, we are going to be on a biweekly schedule for the next month, so no episode next week.

We will have one the week after that that we're going to record probably in the next day or so.

And then we will be skipping, I believe, the first week of August. And then we should be back in the saddle, baby.

**Rachel:** Yeah. We've never done a cross country move together.

**Griffin:** No.

**Rachel:** So this is gonna be something else.

**Griffin:** It's going to be something else indeed. It's going to be very good. I am very excited.

**Rachel:** We are not— We are fortunate in that we are not, like, driving a big U-Haul ourselves with our two children.

**Griffin:** Christ no. No.

**Rachel:** We have that under control. But we are definitely going to be ping-ponging around the country for a little bit.

**Griffin:** It's going to be kind of outrageous, these next few weeks that we have ahead of us.

But I'm very excited, DC, very excited to get up in you. Austin, it's been so real.

The threat of ERCOT rolling blackouts here in the last... in the home stretch is enough to kind of send me off with a little kick on the tuchus on our way out and that's a shame.

**Rachel:** Yeah...

**Griffin:** But we're ready and we hope you are too, for small wonders because we're ready to talk about small wonders and Rachel is going to go right now.

**Rachel:** Ooh!

**Griffin:** Oooh!

**Rachel:** [laughs] Oh, man. Um... Do you have one?

**Griffin:** I mean, it's just TV stuff. We finished *Barry* season three, which is maybe some of the best television I've ever seen.

**Rachel:** Yeah, it's really remarkable.

**Griffin:** Cannot recommend it enough. Never seen- It got... So, the Emmy nominations came out today.

**Rachel:** Oh, yeah!

**Griffin:** People are sort of up in arms because Sadie Sink, who plays Max on *Stranger Things*, didn't get a nomination. A lot of people were expecting that...

**Rachel:** Oh, wow, yeah.

**Griffin:** ...after that one incredible episode. Um, *Barry* got a nomination for best comedy series, which, like I get it.

**Rachel:** I know.

**Griffin:** This season in particular, I would not classify as a...

**Rachel:** No.

**Griffin:** There weren't a lot of belly laughs as much as there were. "Oh, God. Oh, no."

But we also just started *Murders in the Building— Only Murders in the Building* season 2. And that show kicks ass, too.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And we started watching *Russian Doll* season two last night, too, and that show kicks ass. A lot of ass kicking on TV these days.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** A lot of good television.

**Rachel:** Yeah, that's 100% true.

**Griffin:** It's been nice.

**Rachel:** Mm-hmm,

**Griffin:** In our sweaty... Our sweaty AC-free home on the first floor.

**Rachel:** I'm going to say I came up with one.

**Griffin:** Yeah, please.

**Rachel:** And I don't want to, like, buzz market a particular company, but I'm going to say that I was not aware that there is a company where you can sell your car to it.

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** And you can do most of the work online and then you just show up and they give you the money that they told you they would give you.

**Griffin:** I like that.

**Rachel:** I haven't gone through the process entirely yet, but we are going to become a one-car family when we are in DC. So I'm getting rid of my car.

And I was very nervous about that process because I have never sold a car before. And then...

**Griffin:** Though you've traded them in, at dealerships, which is not—

**Rachel:** Yeah, exactly. And then they kind of like wink at you and give you like \$50.

**Griffin:** Yeah, right?

**Rachel:** You know?

**Griffin:** Yeah, they give you a Taco Bell gift card.

**Rachel:** But this is the first time that I've actually tried to sell a car.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And I was very happy that it was not nearly as scary as I was expecting.

**Griffin:** So stoked to—

**Rachel:** I thought I was going to have to put it on Craigslist and then I was going to have to deal with—

**Griffin:** Yeah, get murdered.

**Rachel:** ... a lot of emails about like, "Well, I don't know. Show me a picture of the cup holder."

**Griffin:** "And put your feet up by the cup holder when you do that."

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Uh, yeah. I'm excited to reduce our carbon footprint by removing one of our feet. One of our car feet.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Griffin:** That's the company we're selling to, by the way, is Car Feet.

**Rachel:** Car Feet, yeah.

**Griffin:** Uh, I go first this week. And the thing that I am going to talk about, I know empirically that you are not going to be very into because—

**Rachel:** Oh this was fun!

**Griffin:** ...we tried talking about it last night.

**Rachel:** Okay.

**Griffin:** And it was... It was, uh... It was not your bag, baby.

**Rachel:** Before you really get into it, can I explain?

**Griffin:** Yes, please.

**Rachel:** Okay. But go ahead and say what your thing is.

**Griffin:** Mine is the image that came out today that Joe Biden just threw up on the PowerPoint presentation in the... What? The Rose Garden or whatever, of the Webb's first deep field taken with the NASA's James Webb Space Telescope.

**Rachel:** Yeah. So here's the thing, and this is what I was explaining to Griffin.

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** I feel like the easiest way for me to get this across is to tell you that when I have dreams at night, my dreams often involve navigating a grocery store and or being in a public place and realizing that I'm not wearing shoes or socks.

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** And I say that because when it comes to space, it is so beyond my comprehension. I am so concerned with the minutiae that when someone talks to me about space I...

**Griffin:** It just— Your eyes just sort of glass over and you...

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And so I see a picture of space, and I think "That's cool."

**Griffin:** Yes.

**Rachel:** But, like, I can't... I can't get there, man.

**Griffin:** Here is why I want to take another swing at this. It's the coolest picture of space ever taken.

**Rachel:** Okay. [laughs]

**Griffin:** And I think I can kind of try and explain why.

I have no astrophysics knowledge, really, whatsoever. My understanding of this high-res glossy JPEG is very rudimentary.

But even on that level, there is so much cool shit going on that I can't help but be, like, really, really, really fascinated.

**Rachel:** And I also want to say, I'm not one of those people that thinks, like, the moon landing was fake. I just want to put that out there. I believe space.

**Griffin:** Well, no.

**Rachel:** I believe space.

**Griffin:** You believe space.

**Rachel:** I believe space. I just don't know how to be a space enthusiast, so please help me.

**Griffin:** I totally understand you. I don't know that this is going to get you there, but...

**Rachel:** Okay.

**Griffin:** Okay, so this image that came out yesterday, Webb's First Deep Field, I showed it to you.

How would you describe— It's just a bunch of galaxies. It's just a whole bunch of galaxies.

**Rachel:** Yeah. It's a very dark photo with a lot of little light points, and there are varying shapes and sizes.

**Griffin:** Yes. And you can— The image is of a resolution where you can really get in there and look at, like, these never-before-seen structures inside of each of these galaxies featured.

And it's dozens and dozens of them, sort of occluded at points by these, like, very pointy-looking stars that are just local stars in our system that we have sort of snapped a picture beyond using the super deep infrared camera.

Uh, the scale of that one image, which like, I'm sorry, you're going to have to look up, I feel like, to really hang with this segment, if you haven't seen it.

It is of a portion of space that if you imagine holding a grain of sand and holding it out in front of you at arm's length that is the... That grain of sand represents the actual space of space that this picture depicts.

It is microscopic on a sort of terrestrial level. And even though it is such a small, small, small, small portion of our sky, it has a lot of stuff going on inside.

**Rachel:** Yeah, there is a lot of stuff in that picture.

**Griffin:** So this telescope, the James Webb Space Telescope, just launched last December, I think. And this is the first image that has come out from it, that has been made public from it.

And this telescope is the most powerful telescope we've ever put in space by a pretty huge margin, right? Up to this point, Hubble has been— Which—

Did I do a segment on Hubble? I think I might have. This may be my second space telescope themed segment on this show.

**Rachel:** Yeah, yeah.

**Griffin:** But the mirror array and sensors and everything that are on the James Webb are three times bigger than the Hubble.

**Rachel:** Oh.

**Griffin:** And it has all sorts of sensors and things on it that the Hubble is just not capable of doing.

It's able to— Specifically, it's able to sort of pick up infrared light at a way deeper wavelength from way further away and therefore way longer ago.

**Rachel:** Oh...

**Griffin:** That is the first thing that is kind of mind boggling about this image. What you see in this image, all of these tiny little blips of light galaxies floating in the void. What we are seeing is light that is billions of years old.

It is the youngest, like, picture of our universe that we've ever seen, as humanity, that we've ever seen.

One of the galaxies pictured, I think they said was 13.1 billion years. The light has traveled for 13.1 billion years—

**Rachel:** Wow.

**Griffin:** ...to reach this telescope, which is wild.

Their estimate is that we are seeing a portion of our universe from within 1 billion years of the Big Bang. It's like the furthest out by a pretty wide margin that we have ever seen.

That alone is very, very cool.

A couple of sort of observations about the picture. I showed you the sort of distortion of some of the galaxies.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** So some of the galaxies that are depicted are kind of like curved into these pretty dramatic arcs. It's not something that you have to really

get in there and look at. Like, some of the galaxies look like, you know, pretty archetypical galaxies that you have seen in space pictures from the past and some of them look like capital C's.

Like they are really, really bent. What that is, is called a gravitational lens.

And essentially what that means is that these more dense clusters of galaxies form this gravitational force that bends space-time around them, creating a physical fisheye lens effect.

That's not some like "Oh, the camera took a weird picture of these galaxies and therefore it distorted the image." Space itself is distorted by these really dense clusters of galaxies that form this gravitational lens.

Like, being able to see space-time affected in a very visible, very surface level way is fucking bonkers. It is a wild, wild thing.

For me, somebody who doesn't know anything about space and for astronomers and shit who are learning a lot of things about our universe just from this one image.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** That's not the only thing that is, like, new about this image. That's not the only thing that people are studying about this image.

Um, the telescope captured the light from these galaxies, right? By using a sort of broad spectrum of sensors, they were also able to sort of color-code like the stuff that... the signals that they received from these galaxies. And from that they can learn about the composition of the galaxies.

So looking at the image, red galaxies are just obfuscated by so much space dust that they can't really penetrate and see what's going on in there.

There are blue galaxies in the image which have stars, which have a lot of stars, and not much space dust.

And then there are green galaxies in the image and those have, like, chemical compounds that they can kind of read, and hydrocarbons, which is a word I wrote down without knowing what that means.

The telescope also captured what's called spectra. And spectra is basically like, readable data, about distant object's, like, physical and chemical properties.

Using that, they can study, like... They can reveal all sorts of stuff about the universe hypothetically, right? And about physics.

Like, they can learn why galaxies form and combine.

They can learn what a galaxy that supports habitable planets looks like and as an extension, like, could potentially find out what types of galaxies could potentially have life living in these exoplanets inside of them.

**Rachel:** Yeah, see that... That makes it a little more real for me because that's the other thing I wondered.

Like I never really understood like, obviously, space is incredible and exploring it is worthwhile and just how incredible it is, but what does it inform, you know?

**Griffin:** That's the thing, is like— This telescope represents such a tremendous escalation in our ability to see distant space and study distant space.

And this is the— I don't have a whole lot to say. I'm sort of running a roughshod over my notes here at this point but, like, that's the first image.

They're expecting four more to come out this week from this telescope that is magnitudes more powerful than the most powerful telescope we've had before.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** There hasn't been, like, at least from my sort of, again, layman's view, like some staggering development in our understanding of the physical universe that has made huge headlines.

I'm sure there have been, you know, obviously, things that we have learned that have made small headlines that I couldn't be bothered to see.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** But the potential from these images, the potential of things that we have to learn, cannot be understated.

And the fact that there's all of this stuff that people are excited about that we could potentially learn from a single image that Joe Biden held up in front of the White House like, "Look at this shit, gang!"

The first image of it, right? The possibilities are literally endless. This is a grain of sand that we are seeing in the sky that is like filled with all of this data.

And beyond that, it is like tearjerkingly beautiful. Like it is existentially, sort of, nourishing, in a way. If that is, again, your jam, which I understand if it is not.

**Rachel:** Yeah, I mean, it is incredible. Somebody I know posted that and gave like a Carl Sagan quote just about like our size...

**Griffin:** Our little blue dot?

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Our size in relation to the rest of the galaxy and the rest of the space. Space place.

**Griffin:** It is... Uh, it's not... It's literally incomprehensible.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** The scale of it is incomprehensible.

And if I get thinking about that too much—

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** I do start to, sort of, derealize in a way I'm not a big fan of.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** But from a, like, “this could change everything” perspective or if not change everything, it could introduce a whole new era of our understanding of the universe, of existence.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Like, that's so powerful.

**Rachel:** That's very true. I feel like kids, with the exception of maybe Pluto, have been taught kind of the same thing about space for generations now.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** It would be interesting to see that change.

**Griffin:** And a lot of that gets lost in the sort of, like, theoretical, right? Which is not... You know, obviously has tremendous scientific value.

But now... But... I saw an image yesterday of spacetime bending around...

**Rachel:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** Bending around shit.

And that's, like... That's... I've never seen anything like that before in my whole life.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And that's, like... That's really cool.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And it's... I think it would be easy to kind of leverage the criticism of, like, everyone's fascination with this, that, you know, when it came out yesterday.

Because this is happening... It came out at a time that is like, pretty horrific in civilization.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Specifically for, you know, our country and where it is at.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And so it's easy to be like, "Oh, boy, it sure is bad here, but man, those galaxies sure are pretty." But I—

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** But it is more— This is bigger than that. It's more fulfilling than that.

**Rachel:** There has to be space in our brains for those two things to coexist, right?

**Griffin:** Absolutely.

**Rachel:** The part of your brain that is like, you know, "We are still under the stranglehold of this pandemic and we are in a situation where more resources could really help us."

**Griffin:** Yep.

**Rachel:** And also it's important to go to space and put a very expensive telescope up into the atmosphere and hope for the best because doing both things is part of the human experience, you know?

**Griffin:** Yeah, sure. I mean there is— We have gained so much as human beings from our, like, endeavors into space, from a technological standpoint, and a scientific standpoint.

But also, I don't know, from a philosophical standpoint, it is— I think it's deeply important.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** It is a way of unifying the human experience, which, like... There aren't a lot of ways to do that. To really be able to zoom way, way, way, way the fuck out and see this infinite cosmos, like, beyond us.

Obviously, that is very pie in the sky sort of thinking. But it's— I think there is something essential about it. And it's just... This is the most exciting thing that I can remember seeing sort of in that regard in my lifetime.

**Rachel:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Griffin:** And that's very cool. I cannot wait for more of these images to come out.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And that's never happened either, where it's like, you know, they'll have some deep space probe.

It's like, "Hey, we got pictures of Neptune."

And I'm like, "Woah, cool! I'll check those out." But it is Neptune.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** This is like the curvature of space-time that I can sort of make my fucking desktop background, which is just the coolest shit ever.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Anyway, that's the James Webb telescope, and can I steal you away, please?

**Rachel:** Yes.

**Griffin:** Thank you.

[ad break]

[ad break ends]

**Rachel:** This feels a little bit like when you watch the news and they have to shift gears, you know?

**Griffin:** Yeah, sure.

**Rachel:** Like they talk about this big, impressive thing...

**Griffin:** Well, you've done that to me so many times—

**Rachel:** That's true.

**Griffin:** ...where you're like, "Here's this poem that's going to make us both cry."

And then I'm like—

**Rachel:** Skittles!

**Griffin:** Fritos!

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Um, so I guess this is on the lighter side.

**Griffin:** Oh, boy.

**Rachel:** Mine also has to do with Joe Biden, tangentially.

**Griffin:** [skeptically] Okay...

**Rachel:** Because I'm going to talk about White House pets. [laughs]

**Griffin:** Okay. I guess that is sort of tangentially— I don't know anything about. [whispers] I don't care about White House pets, so I don't really know anything about...

**Rachel:** So it's like me and space and that is completely fair.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** You know, I am not super interested in space.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Which I would say is on equal level as White House pets.

**Griffin:** I think in the minds of a lot of the people who consume the things that we create, my general ambivalence towards pets is probably way more sacrilegious than your ambivalence about space.

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

**Griffin:** Sorry, folks.

**Rachel:** That's fair.

**Griffin:** They're cute. I like looking at `em.

**Rachel:** We do not have a pet right now.

**Griffin:** We don't.

**Rachel:** And we have not for a while now. And so we're kind of like falling out of the pet circle.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** But I think our ultimate plan is to get another pet at some point.

**Griffin:** At some point, yeah, once we've settled down in DC.

**Rachel:** When we have settled and our children—

**Griffin:** And we don't have two human pets.

**Rachel:** ... [laughs] our children are a little more self sufficient.

**Griffin:** Yeah, absolutely. I'm sorry I referred to our children as human pets. That's a really creepy way of saying that.

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

**Griffin:** I'm saying the level of exhaustion and destruction that is wreaked is—

**Rachel:** That also makes me kind of, like, a cat in a cardboard box.

**Griffin:** A sort of brood mother.

**Rachel:** [laughing] Yeah.

**Griffin:** Yeah. I don't like it.

**Rachel:** I don't either.

So I was kind of interested in this because I've always been kind of fascinated with how the White House works, you know?

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Like how the residence is maintained and specifically how pets, like, factor into that.

**Griffin:** I mean, yeah, I mean you watch West Wing, you can't help but be a little bit more curious about the day-to-day operation, like where does Toby do his stuff?

**Rachel:** Well, and I just think about... Again, this is me being very practical at all times. But, like, how does that work?

Like, for us, getting a pet is a big decision because we have two young children.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** To be the president...

**Griffin:** How much interfacing with the dog are you actually do- Yeah, I don't know.

**Rachel:** Like, to make a decision of, like, "I have to care for a pet" and then that be such an important part of being president.

Because in the history of the presidents, going all the way back to George Washington...

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** ... there have only been a few presidents that have not had pets.

**Griffin:** And we say pet. It's dog. Right? Like, it's almost... no?

**Rachel:** No, that's what's really interesting.

**Griffin:** Ooh, boy!

**Rachel:** You go back far enough and there's all sorts of exotic animals.

**Griffin:** You're kidding me?

**Rachel:** So James K. Polk, Andrew Johnson, and Donald Trump were the only presidents to not have pets.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** And they even say—

**Griffin:** A, uh, a very exclusive club.

**Rachel:** This article even says, "Although we should be fair, Andrew Johnson did find some mice in his bedroom and he did take care of them and feed them." So we could technically call them pets.

**Griffin:** Hey, Andrew Johnson. That's fucking wild, dude. That's way wilder than having a pet, I think.

**Rachel:** But yeah, like, if you go back, Wikipedia, of course, has an article about all the presidents and their pets.

And if you go back to George Washington, there are pets listed. This is since the beginning of the presidency.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** It became kind of a media focus with Warren G. Harding and Laddie Boy.

**Griffin:** Laddie Boy was this dog? Was it a Scottish terrier?

**Rachel:** Airedale terrier.

**Griffin:** Okay. I don't know what that is.

**Rachel:** Born in Ohio.

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** Um—

**Griffin:** The dog or Warren G.?

**Rachel:** [laughs] The dog.

**Griffin:** Okay. Warren G. Harding, I should specify.

**Rachel:** [laughs more]

**Griffin:** Do you think he ever said, "Regulators roll out"? Like, do you think he ever did...

**Rachel:** "Mount up," Griff.

**Griffin:** What- Oh, I was thinking of Transformers.

**Rachel:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Griffin:** Sometimes I get Optimus Prime and Warren G. Harding mixed up in my head.

**Rachel:** That's fair. No, there was a lot of media coverage. This is when they started using the expression "The First Dog."

**Griffin:** That's ridiculous.

**Rachel:** They had a whole process around the... managing the dog. The dog had his own hand carved chair to sit in during cabinet meetings.

**Griffin:** Cool. Cool and great.

**Rachel:** The White House had birthday parties for the dogs.

**Griffin:** That I paid for. That I paid for and you paid for.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Well, it was 1920, so maybe our ancestors paid for.

**Griffin:** You know they're still doing dog parties. Like, it'd be ridiculous if they weren't doing dog chairs now.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Before I get into some of the variety of pets, I will say that I was surprised to find out that since the 1970s, there has been a chief groundskeeper and what they call "dog whisperer extraordinaire" in this article.

**Griffin:** Is it Jackson— Well, Jackson Galaxy was a cat man.

**Rachel:** Yeah, he was a cat man.

**Griffin:** Who is the dog one?

**Rachel:** Caesar Milan.

**Griffin:** Thank you.

**Rachel:** No, so Dale Haney has been managing dogs in the White House since the 70s, as I mentioned.

**Griffin:** Bet there's some stories there.

**Rachel:** You'll oft- Yeah, right? You'll often see some pictures of him out on the White House lawn with the dogs.

He's been on this since Richard Nixon, which is crazy.

**Griffin:** Did- What did Tricky Dick have? Did he have a dog?

**Rachel:** Oh, a few pets. The dog in particular is the Irish setter King Timahoe.

**Griffin:** Some names on these presidential pups, huh?

**Rachel:** Uh-huh. But, I mean, Nixon is kind of famous for Checkers, which was the cat.

**Griffin:** Oh, right.

**Rachel:** That he got for his kids. Actually, it wasn't a cat, it was a cocker spaniel. Sorry. A lot of dogs. Lot of dogs in the history.

**Griffin:** That's too many dogs, I feel. Do you think Haney ever is just like, someone rolls up with, like, eleven dogs and he's like, "God, really?"

**Rachel:** [laughs] So I wanted to highlight a notable president, Teddy Roosevelt, who had six kids and thus a lot of pets through the presidency.

These pets include a pony.

**Griffin:** Oh, wow.

**Rachel:** We have a lizard. We have a snake called Emily Spinach.

**Griffin:** That's good!

**Rachel:** His daughter Alice named it Emily Spinach because it was green as spinach and as thin as her Aunt Emily.

**Griffin:** That's so good!

**Rachel:** More ponies. Dogs. Uh—

**Griffin:** More p- You can't just say more ponies, dogs!

**Rachel:** There's several ponies.

**Griffin:** That lived at the White House?!

**Rachel:** Yes!

**Griffin:** Where?

**Rachel:** I mean, there's a lot of grounds.

**Griffin:** That they just converted into stables?

**Rachel:** I mean, they can do whatever they want when they're president.

**Griffin:** I guess so.

**Rachel:** There was a small black bear named Jonathan Edwards. [laughs]

**Griffin:** [incredulous] There was a what?!

**Rachel:** A small black bear from West Virginia named after the religious leader Jonathan Edwards, as an ancestor of Mrs. Roosevelt, and eventually sent to the Bronx Zoo.

**Griffin:** What... I have a lot of questions. Wasn't that also the guy who did the like—

**Rachel:** Crossing over?

**Griffin:** ... medium crossing over shit?

**Rachel:** Uh-huh.

**Griffin:** And was also, like a—

**Rachel:** And then the—

**Griffin:** ... debaucherous senator?

**Rachel:** Uh... Yeah.

**Griffin:** Okay, cool.

**Rachel:** All these things are true.

**Griffin:** Just a lot of great... Just a lot of really stand up Jonathan Edwardses.

**Rachel:** Teddy Roosevelt also had a pig, a rat, a bull terrier, a rabbit, cats, a hyena, an owl.

**Griffin:** Oh— A hyena? A owl?

**Rachel:** Bill, a hyena named Bill, which was the gift from an emperor from Ethiopia.

**Griffin:** Well, you can't say no to that.

**Rachel:** Right?

**Griffin:** I get it.

**Rachel:** And then Fierce, a one-legged rooster.

**Griffin:** That is the wildest menagerie-

**Rachel:** Mm-hmm.

**Griffin:** How have I never heard about this? That we had a president who had many ponies, an owl, a hyena...

**Rachel:** I mean, we've also... Calvin, Calvin Coolidge, also had a lot. I mean just looking...

**Griffin:** Did he have a bear?

**Rachel:** A raccoon, a donkey, uh... a bobcat.

**Griffin:** Why, guys?

**Rachel:** Mm-hmm. Another... yeah, he did have a bear, a black bear from Chihuahua, Mexico.

**Griffin:** He did have a bear!

**Rachel:** Bruno.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** But Mrs. Coolidge sent that one to the zoo.

**Griffin:** Okay, but like... Did we have... Did we used to have bears, as a people?

**Rachel:** Uh, I mean I don't think your neighbors would have a bear, but I think important—

**Griffin:** If you're president?

**Rachel:** ...important people were probably gifted bears occasionally.

**Griffin:** And that's why they... He was like, "I gotta become president so I can have a bear and people won't say shit, except my wife! What'd you do with my bear?"

**Rachel:** If you go forward in history, then it's just a lot of dogs and cats.

**Griffin:** Boring.

**Rachel:** Yeah, you don't see anything too crazy after JFK. JFK was kind of... kind of the last...

**Griffin:** What'd he have?

**Rachel:** Uh, ponies.

**Griffin:** He have a bear?

**Rachel:** Ponies. No. [laughs]

**Griffin:** He had several bears. He had a small army of bears.

**Rachel:** Yeah. No, ponies and dogs and a rabbit and a horse and...

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** You know.

**Griffin:** All right. I guess... You made it, right? Like, you did it. So I guess you can have as many animals...

**Rachel:** So one, there is a presidential pet museum in 1999 that was developed...

**Griffin:** Oh boy. Talkin' like taxidermy? Like...

**Rachel:** ...but it was closed for renovations.

**Griffin:** Oh.

**Rachel:** Just a lot of pictures, like, telling stories about the presidential pets.

**Griffin:** Oh, okay. Cool.

**Rachel:** The reason that I kind of got on this is in January 2022, the Bidens brought a cat to the White House.

**Griffin:** Just for a day, though.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Just so they had a guest pass.

**Rachel:** It's a cat— Actually, Jill Biden was giving a speech in Pennsylvania on the campaign trail, and this cat like jumped up on the lectern.

**Griffin:** And was tackled immediately.

**Rachel:** She was giving a speech in a barn and, like, this cat— And so then the owners of the barn were like, "You can have the cat. Clearly the cat is interested in you. So here."

**Griffin:** That's wild.

**Rachel:** "Here take this cat."

**Griffin:** That's pretty wild.

**Rachel:** I thought so, too.

**Griffin:** If I'm... If people... If the President's ever giving a speech at my house and one of our kids runs up and shoots silly string at him or whatever?

**Rachel:** "It's your kid now."

**Griffin:** "It's your kid. He clearly likes you."

**Rachel:** I was reading... So I was reading about, like, where can this cat go? What's the deal with the cat? So they... the cat is primarily restricted to the residence on the second and third floor.

Willow, the cat, particularly enjoys the solarium, which is a bright space above the South Portico.

**Griffin:** Yeah, no shit. It's a cat.

**Rachel:** [laughs] But they also like, will load her up into Air Force One when they go on vacation. They went to the beach and they brought the cat with them, which is...

**Griffin:** To the beach?

**Rachel:** Yeah, which is wild. That's the thing. A lot of— throughout the history of presidents, a lot of them take a lot of responsibility for these animals, you know?

**Griffin:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** There's stories about Barbara Bush when her dog had puppies, like, staying up all night with the dog and the puppies to make sure everything went okay.

So, like, it just... It really... It's how hands on you want to be, I guess.

**Griffin:** I guess so.

**Rachel:** Um—

**Griffin:** There may be some other things that I would rather our nation's elected leaders—

**Rachel:** [laughs] They focus on?

**Griffin:** ... to kind of pull up their fucking sleeves and do some stuff.

**Rachel:** I will also say in this article, they talk about how Willow is allowed in the East Wing, and it has been known to take naps on the desk of the press secretary.

**Griffin:** That's got to be hugely insulting.

**Rachel:** [laughs] Yeah. Somebody else I was reading about for the Obamas... oh, here we go. Michelle Obama's press secretary said that Bo was at her job interview.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** So she's, like, sitting in Michelle Obama's office, and the dog comes running in first before the First Lady.

**Griffin:** That's kind of a big dog, right? What was Bo?

**Rachel:** Yeah. Oh, gosh. What is the... What are they called? It's like a very specific... A Portuguese Water Dog.

**Griffin:** Whoa.

**Rachel:** They got Bo first and then Sonny, who was also a Portuguese Water Dog.

**Griffin:** I don't know that one. I know Bo.

**Rachel:** Mm-hmm.

**Griffin:** I know Bo.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** That's interesting. I've never thought about it before because I didn't know it was something I should think about.

But knowing that we have had bears in the White House—

**Rachel:** [laughs] Well...

**Griffin:** Which is the plot of, like, a pretty good movie, I think?

**Rachel:** I don't know for sure they were allowed inside the White House, but I see—

**Griffin:** You can't tell a bear where not to go.

**Rachel:** I see what you're saying.

**Griffin:** It's a bear.

**Rachel:** Yeah, let me—

**Griffin:** If it wants to go in the White House, it will.

**Rachel:** Now that we're talking about it, let's just get— Let's get real. So Thomas Jefferson had a bear. Teddy Roosevelt had a bear. Calvin Coolidge had a bear. And that is it.

**Griffin:** That's three bears.

**Rachel:** So the three that I happened to speak about.

**Griffin:** That's the *We Bare Bears* reboot that we've all been waiting for.

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

**Griffin:** Um, okay. [laughs] Okay.

**Rachel:** So those... Those are your presidential pets. It's an important part of the presidency. Clearly—

**Griffin:** The most important part of the presidency.

**Rachel:** ... given a lot of attention. I will say John Quincy Adams had silkworms and an alligator. So this is a rich vein. This could be multiple segments, ultimately, if you think about.

**Griffin:** Why did he have a... Why did he have a alligator?

**Rachel:** It was said to have belonged to the Marquis de Lafayette and housed for two months in the East Room.

Although this story has been widely circulated, the lack of evidence from contemporary accounts or official records suggests an apocryphal myth.

**Griffin:** I did not think you would have an answer to that. Literally...

**Rachel:** Some of these have a lot of details.

**Griffin:** ...at the hip. Ready to go.

**Rachel:** Um, yeah.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** You know what's fun is if you go back really far, like George Washington, for example, he had some fox hounds. One of them named Sweetlips.

**Griffin:** Okay. That's a pretty good name for a dog, I guess.

**Rachel:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Griffin:** Hey. Thank you to Ben and Augustus for the use of our theme song, "Money Won't Pay." You can find a link to that in the episode description, description...

**Rachel:** Mm-hmm.

**Griffin:** If you so choose. We have some shows coming up, you can get tickets.

**Rachel:** Very soon.

**Griffin:** It's very soon. You can find links to that, I think at [bit.ly/mcelroytours](http://bit.ly/mcelroytours).

We have merch over at [McElroyMerch.com](http://McElroyMerch.com).

And of course, there's a whole bunch of other shows on the Maximum Fun network that we would highly encourage you to check out at [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org).

Shows like a *Triple Click* and shows like a *Stop Podcasting Yourself*, if you so... If you...

**Rachel:** We should say—

**Griffin:** I need to stop saying "if you so choose", I don't know why...

**Rachel:** We should say on those tours, the Portland and San Diego shows are sold out.

**Griffin:** One of the San Diego shows- Are there still tickets for TAZ? Or did that sell out too?

**Rachel:** No, that's sold out, too.

**Griffin:** Oh, beans. Sorry, gang. Okay, well—

**Rachel:** So, but if you are—

**Griffin:** Hey, good news, Salt Lake City!

**Rachel:** Yeah. If you are in or around Salt Lake City on July 20, there are still tickets available.

**Griffin:** Yeah, that's coming up very soon.

Okay. That's it. No episode next week as we uproot ourselves.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** We'll be back, I guess, on the week of the 25th or something like that. And then we'll skip the next week after that one.

**Rachel:** It'll be, uh, yes, the week of the 25th.

**Griffin:** Yeah. But then we're going to be coming at you with that DC energy. We're going to be rubbing elbows with all the presidential pets.

**Rachel:** Our podcast will be recorded while we are walking and talking.

**Griffin:** Yep, that's an important part of it.

**Rachel:** [laughs]

**Griffin:** Hey, thanks for listening.

**Rachel:** Yeah!

**Griffin:** We sure do appreciate ya.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Griffin:** And um... the... Yeah. Have a good one. Have a good one. Thinking about you! Thinking about you today.

**Rachel:** That is a nice shirt.

**Griffin:** That's an— I thought you were talking to me, and it was maybe the most excited I've been today.

**Rachel:** [laughing] No, I was speaking to our listener.

**Griffin:** Okay.

**Rachel:** Who is wearing a nice shirt today.

**Griffin:** Yeah. Yeah, you hate... [fake crying] You hate my shirt.

**Rachel:** Your shirt's fine!

**Griffin:** [whines]

[theme music plays]

MaximumFun.org

Comedy and culture.

Artist owned.

Audience supported.