

Wonderful! 243: Our Love Defies the Science

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[theme music plays]

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hey, this is Griffin McElroy!

Rachel: And this is *Wonderful!*

Griffin: Fresh off the road, Rachel and Griffin. Got the stink of the road still on 'em.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: They've traveled back from, uh—from Dragon Con 2022, where we glad-handed, [fake chuckles] pressed... the flesh, as they say in this industry. You made a face that—

Rachel: Yeah. I don't like that expression. I mean, I get it? I just—

Griffin: Well, we got to say "hey" to lots of people, and they, like, came up and said, like, nice stuff about our show.

Rachel: That was great.

Griffin: And we said nice stuff about the costumes they were probably wearing.

Rachel: But I didn't, like—I didn't touch any of them.

Griffin: You—oh, you didn't.

Rachel: No.

Griffin: Oh. Well then, yeah, you didn't press the f—I guess I did most of the flesh pressing.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: For both of us.

Rachel: Yeah. Thank you, I guess, for that.

Griffin: It's part of the contract is you have to press the flesh. It says it. And then it says in, like, asterisk, like, "What that means is up to you."

So maybe yours was sort of, like, an emotional flesh press.

Rachel: Yeah, I'd like to think that happened.

Griffin: But, uh, it was good to see everybody. Thanks for coming out and saying "Hey," if you did do that. If you didn't, that's okay. Um, don't worry. Don't worry about it. [pretending to hold back tears] It's not like we were excited to see you or anything.

Rachel: I had a lot of people talk about how they listened to... this show, *Wonderful!*, specifically when they were trying to sleep.

Griffin: Oh, that's interesting.

Rachel: Or relax. Which I think maybe back in the early days I would've felt like that was some kind of slight, but I get it, man.

Griffin: No, it's a—

Rachel: I get it.

Griffin: It's—I de—and let's be quieter, I guess.

Rachel: Oh, yeah. Chill vibes.

Griffin: Nobody said anything but, like, there was an undercurrent of like, "But keep it down. Some of us are trying to sleep over here."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, do you have a small wonder? [pause] Because I do, if you're not ready.

Rachel: Yeah, go ahead and go first.

Griffin: Uh, we just streamed *Fortnite*, me and Justin and Travis. That game is... so preposterous. That game is so ridiculous.

Rachel: I thought it was all—all about, like, the shooting.

Griffin: Even the shooting is, like, kind of cartoony. And, like, I mean, it's guns so, like, whatever. But also, like, I was Goku and I was like—I had, like, a grappling hook and I was swinging around, and then I landed on the back of a big pig, and I started to ride that, and then me and Justin and Travis got in a car and were driving, but we ran into Darth Vader who used the force to pick our car up and throw us through the air.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And it's like, what? What hap—what—what was this game?

Rachel: So all the little toys that Henry gets that are *Fortnite*-themed...

Griffin: Those are all very real.

Rachel: They're, like, playable characters? Or, like—

Griffin: [simultaneously] Yeah, for the most part.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: There's a lot of characters in that game. John Cena's one of 'em. I gotta—one of these days he's gonna show back up in the rotation. I'll spend as much money as I need to secure him. But it's just so silly. It's such a silly, silly game. I don't play it that often. I only play it basically when we stream it, and every time I do I'm reminded, like, it's a—it's a marvel that this game exists where I can ride on a pig until Darth Vader throws my Jetta into the sky.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, was that enough time?

Rachel: It was, yes. Uh, so I made this thing for lunch that I had made before, and the recipe is enormous.

Griffin: Oh boy.

Rachel: And so it basically is going to be my lunch probably for the rest of the week, unless you dip in also, which is okay.

Griffin: Okay, okay. Well, tell me what it is.

Rachel: Uh, so it's quinoa, which I know—

Griffin: I'm good.

Rachel: I know you're mixed about.

Griffin: I'm good.

Rachel: [laughs quietly] Uh, and it's got chickpeas and cucumber, and uh, red onion, and parsley.

Griffin: Raw red—raw red onion?

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: And, uh, parsley and, uh... garlic and olive oil and a red wine vinegar.

Griffin: Sounds hearty.

Rachel: It's delicious.

Griffin: Hearty and kinda funky.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And healthful—healthful. Get you—

Rachel: You can put some feta in there. I didn't happen to have any vegan feta on me.

Griffin: No, and why would you?

Rachel: But, uh, [laughs] it's really good.

Griffin: Uh, I have had this before. I don't hate quinoa, I just need it to—I need it to soak up a *lot* of flavor.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Like, a *lot* of flavor.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: For it to gain entry into my—my sacred body...

Rachel: Uh-huh?

Griffin: It needs to come with a lot of flavor as its, like, special guest.

Rachel: Uh-huh?

Griffin: And, um, it sounds like this might get me. You know what? I'll eat some. I'll eat some of your food.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I'll eat some of your quinoa food.

Rachel: Well, that was clearly my hope.

Griffin: Uh, you go first this week.

Rachel: I do.

Griffin: Do you want to hit me with it?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: What you got?

Rachel: So, my thing this week, uh, is chemistry, specifically chemistry between people.

Griffin: [clicks tongue] Ooh, yeah. Oh, you feelin' this? I can feel it in the air.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Pun—pungent. The chemistry is visible stink lines.

Rachel: Um... okay. [laughs]

Griffin: I'm just saying what I see. I don't know why—

Rachel: You see visible stink lines between us right now?

Griffin: Pungent stink lines of—of tension. Of... the romantic variety. And...

Rachel: This came up for a couple reasons for me.

Griffin: [crosstalk] Okay.

Rachel: You can stop. You can stop.

Griffin: Oh, thank you.

Rachel: [laughs] Um, one, Griffin and I continue, despite probably self-preservation instincts, to occasionally watch *Married at First Sight*. And I keep trying to put my finger on what it is exactly about this show that keeps pulling me back. Uh, and I think some of it is this idea that you could match people based on traits, and it could go so horribly wrong.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Or it could start good, and then immediately fall apart.

Griffin: As is almost always the case.

Rachel: And I think some of that is... can be best described as chemistry.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Um, I tend to be pretty logical, so for me I don't know that I entirely believe in chemistry as a thing? But I know that I—

Griffin: Well, you believe that if you put, you know—

Rachel: Yeah, okay. [laughs] I know that if you mix—

Griffin: An alkaline—

Rachel: —chemi—[laughs]

Griffin: I'm trying to think of one chemistry thing to say! If you put in NA and Cl together...

Rachel: Bases, acids, and... bases.

Griffin: It does make—it's a salt. And some of 'em's poison.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Lots of 'em's poison.

Rachel: Um... but yeah, I know that that—like, that feeling when you meet somebody and you're like, "Oh, wow. This feels like there's an energy here."

Griffin: Oh yeah. I'm gonna be insufferable this whole segment.

Rachel: [laughs] I'm realizing that right now.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Um... uh, and there's—so there's not a lot of study on this, but there is just enough, I would say.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: I will also say that if you Google what I did, which was "chemistry between people," you get so many sites that try and distill it to, like, a number of items. Here we go.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: So I have six traits that cause romantic chemistry, 17 signs of chemistry.

Griffin: Well, is it six or is it 17?!

Rachel: 30 signs of good chemistry.

Griffin: Jesus!

Rachel: 18 signs of intense chemistry. 28 signs of good chemistry. Uh, chemistry between two people, co—er... parentheses, (13 undeniable signs). [laughs]

Griffin: Okay. So, just a lot of... we need to get together and decide on what the correct number of...

Rachel: Which makes me wonder, are there people that enter a relationship and are trying to decide if they have chemistry? Like, who are these lists for?

Griffin: Yeah, I don't know.

Rachel: Like, "Wait a minute. Do we have chemistry? Let me see how many of these traits we have."

Griffin: We're both pretty logical people. The thought has never occurred to me to try to... *score*, our—our love value in some way.

Rachel: [laughs] I know this is a thing when you are a teen, in the magazines.

Griffin: Yeah. Oh, of course.

Rachel: It's like "15 signs your relationship will last," or "Take this quiz and find out if this is the right partner for you."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh, but yeah, as you get older it starts to seem, like, less relevant, I think.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Okay. So, the research I did find... so, there was an article in the *Association for Psychological Science*, December 2021. Uh, and they found a few things out about chemistry. Uh, specifically chemistry is an emergent phenomenon, so it emerges from interactions rather than attributions, expectations, or biases.

Griffin: That makes sense.

Rachel: Yeah, which makes sense. Like, you can't really know if you have chemistry with somebody when you see them across a room. You know?

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh, it is a—

Griffin: I mean, I did. With you.

Rachel: Okay. [laughs quietly]

Griffin: I did with you.

Rachel: You saw me and you were like, "Ooh, chemistry!"

Griffin: Well, I mean, uh, my hearts—my eyes turned in a heart shape, and then I went "Hubba, hubba, hubba," so loud that you heard me.

Rachel: [laughs quietly]

Griffin: Um, my head becomes—became a wolf head, for a—for a few minutes.

Rachel: I mean, attraction is part of it.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Yeah...

Griffin: I went "Boing." Pants got tight. [speaking quickly] I went "Boing" and my pants got tight and my head turned into a wolf head. You remember all that?

Rachel: No, I don't. Maybe I looked away when all this was happening.

Griffin: I do not blame you. I had to go in an ambulance.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, chemistry is a relationship effect, so it can be related to liking, but is broader than that. It encompasses the feeling that a given relationship is special and different from other relationships.

Griffin: I feel that. For sure.

Rachel: That's a big thing for me, honestly. Like, I don't know what it is about the way my head works, but I need to feel like "This is different, guys. This is special."

Griffin: Yeah, of course it is. That's not just you!

Rachel: That's probably not just me.

Griffin: That's—that's every—I would hope it's everyone, right?

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah, you're probably right.

Griffin: Even if you haven't found that special someone yet. Like, I don't know, you gotta at least acknowledge that that feeling... of "This is a different one than the other one" is true.

Rachel: Yeah, and that is something with *Married at First Sight*. Like, you can tell how willing these people are, and in some cases, like, dependent on this being a thing...

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: ... very quickly.

Griffin: *Married at First Sight* is when two highly unqualified matchmakers come to you and drop you next to someone, and then they tell you, "[forcefully] You have chemistry."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: "Whether or not you figure out why is up to you."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: "Good luck!"

Rachel: No, there is this mystery. Like, "Well, they must have matched us for some reason."

Griffin: "We used to have a sex expert, but she's gone now, so you're on your own in that department too. Bye!"

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, chemistry is often embodied, like eye contact, mimicry of facial and bodily expressions, synchronous movements. [laughs] Stop!

Griffin: What?

Rachel: You know what? I do remember when we were getting a ride back to my place when we were with our friends, and we both had our head on the back of the car and we were talking about Chicago.

Griffin: Mmm.

Rachel: I felt very connected to you in that moment.

Griffin: We had our head on the back of the car?

Rachel: We both were, like, leaning our head back on the backseat of the car.

Griffin: Ohh. We were so drunk.

Rachel: [laughs] [quietly] That's not true.

Griffin: We just could not—

Rachel: You were probably thinking about how badly you had to pee, because you did—

Griffin: That's true!

Rachel: —because you did immediately run into my house and do that.
[laughs]

Griffin: I did. It's a baller move. Y'all can use that one, too.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: If a girl you like is dra—getting dra—you're getting dropped off, or she's getting dropped off first, you can be like, "Hey, let me just dip on in there. And wreck your bathroom."

Rachel: It was pee.

Griffin: It was just pee, guys!

Rachel: [laughs] It was just pee. Uh, the last thing from this is, chemistry is different from other connections. Uh... [laughs] so, for example, family members, friends, coworkers. [laughs] Uh, and then again, an intense and immediate physical attraction might be conflated with chemistry, but relationships with chemistry have additional unique characteristics.

Griffin: Fun!

Rachel: So, the other thing I read—so that was called the interpersonal chemistry model, and that had all of these different—like, it was a matrix that included, like, different elements of the chemistry model, which include, like, repeated moments of connections, individuals' personality traits and goals, perception of shared identity, effective positivity to other. [laughs] All of this is very romantic.

Griffin: Yeah, for sure.

Rachel: Uh, the other thing I read is [through laughter] a *Good Housekeeping* article.

Griffin: Now, here's where we're gonna hit some real good research.

Rachel: Uh, Dr. Helen Fisher of the Kinsey Institute looked at MRI scans of 17 subjects as they looked at photos of their loved ones. Uh, and identified basic styles of thinking and behaving, and then developed this quiz. Did you take this quiz?

Griffin: I did take this quiz.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: I bet we got, like, the exact same—

Rachel: I don't—I was kind of down the middle on a lot of things. Maybe unsurprisingly.

Griffin: I don't know if I still have my results pulled up. I do.

Rachel: Okay. So, this—it's theanatomyoflove.com. [laughs quietly]

Griffin: This does not sound—this sounds like a Geocities...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It sounds like it could be a few different things.

Rachel: So, there are different types here. There is the explorer, the builder, the director, and the negotiator.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: I took this twice, because the first time I was so down the middle that I was like, "I've gotta take this again, because... "

Griffin: Yeah. You gotta stand for something, Rachel.

Rachel: Yes. So I ended up with the negotiator.

Griffin: Interesting!

Rachel: What'd you get?

Griffin: I got the builder.

Rachel: Ohh, okay. I was really close on that. Negotiator was... 58%, builder was 52%.

Griffin: Uh, I got 69% negotiator. It's just I was extremely a builder.

Rachel: Wow!

Griffin: I was hugely a builder. Builders—famous builders include Queen Elizabeth, who I have always thought...

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah?

Griffin: ... uh, and then also Colin Powell. Uh, huge. And then some famous—my sub-personality is director, like Steve Jobs and Hillary Clinton.

Rachel: Okay, so that was the thing. So it told me negotiators are often attracted to their opposites, directors.

Griffin: Huh. Yeah, it—yeah. That's weird!

Rachel: So, my famous negotiators are Bill Clinton and Oprah Winfrey.

Griffin: They don't have a lot to pull from, it doesn't seem like.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: All we both—I think we can agree on is that neither of us are explorers. My explorer rating was garbage.

Rachel: My explorer was actually my second highest.

Griffin: You're kidding me!

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Well, then maybe this is g—maybe this is good.

Rachel: It's good for us to have this conversation. Well, here was the tricky thing, right? Like, obviously I'm not super adventurous.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: But they asked me about, like, my desire to seek out new experiences, and how I get bored if I do the same thing all the time, and that's true. Both of those things are true.

Griffin: None—that's not true for me. I am, of course, fascinated by new experiences, but the amount of ol' elbow grease I'm willing to put into hunting them down is quite limited.

Rachel: Uh... [laughs] I guess that's fair. Uh, yeah, 'cause when I think about when we go out and do new stuff, usually I, like, look it up and figure out the directions, and then suggest—

Griffin: Well, yeah.

Rachel: —the day and time we go there.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: [laughs] So I am a negotiator. I am a philosopher, which probably won't surprise you.

Griffin: Whoaaa.

Rachel: Uh, I am imaginative and intuitive, and I have superb language and people skills.

Griffin: Okay, well—

Rachel: What about you?

Griffin: I'm a builder, a pillar of society. Most likely highly expressive of the serotonin system of the brain. They are traditional and conventional, as well as cautious, calm, and often social. Meh, maybe I took the quiz wrong. [wheezes]

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: They can be very modest when discussing their achievements.

Rachel: Okay, that's true.

Griffin: Uhh... on a date, a builder is likely to engage in tangible conversations about food, travel, sports, the weather, TV programs, and movies. They are often good at small talk, short conversations on concrete topics. Yeah, alright! Some of that works for me.

Rachel: So, my builder and explorer were tied. I got 52% for both of 'em. My lowest one was actually director.

Griffin: Then how did you end up... how did you end up getting director as your result?

Rachel: No, director was supposed to be my match.

Griffin: Ohhh, okay.

Rachel: This is the whole *Married at First Sight* philosophy.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Of, like, "Oh, you need somebody different from you."

Griffin: Well, I'm sorry, baby. I need to go out there and fight a Ford Explorer of my very own.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [sing-song] Later! End of show. Bye-ee!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Just kidding. I would never.

Rachel: Uh, famous explorers, John F. Kennedy and Angelina Jolie.

Griffin: And Magellan.

Rachel: Often put together in conversation.

Griffin: Absolutely. Our love defies the math, and the science.

Rachel: [laughs] I really did think we were gonna get a similar—

Griffin: I did, too.

Rachel: A similar one. 'Cause I do think that we are similar. I would describe you as somebody that has superb language and people skills, and is imaginative and intuitive.

Griffin: Yeah, sure. I feel like a lot of personality quizzes, no matter what you get it's gonna mention some positive characteristics that you would *loove* to be true about yourself.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, but no. I mean, I don't need a—I don't need a fucking matrix to tell me how much I love you, my wife. And how deeply into you I am. It helps.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It helps to have the data. Just to show other people. Be like, "Oh yeah? Boom! How do you like them apples?"

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, yeah, so that's chemistry. I don't know. There's a hundred more things I could say about it, and a lot of traits on the internet that I could describe in detail. But I felt like I would just leave it there.

Griffin: Yeah, let's leave it there.

Rachel: It's mysterious.

Griffin: Set it down. It's a mystery. What is that? I don't know. Can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

[ad break]

Griffin: I have a tumbletam here, and I would love to read it, because it is for KT, and it's from Lil Chilly, who says:

"Dear KT. You know what's wonderful? Living together! I'm so glad we can finally snuggle up and watch some *Bake-Off*, *Old Enough*, or listen to those good, good McElroys any time we want. If we survive vacation with my dad, we can survive anything! Happy early/late birthday, or whatever recent holiday is coming up/has just passed. Love, Lil Chilly."

Rachel: Man, I need some more *Bake-Off*.

Griffin: Yeah, I would love a *Bake-Off*, *Old Enough* mashup show where they make, like, little six-year-old Japanese children try to make, like, a croquembouche or something.

Rachel: Or they have to go get the ingredients...

Griffin: And then whatever they bring back...

Rachel: Uh-huh!

Griffin: This is a hit show waiting to happen.

Rachel: It's like, "Oh, my child didn't bring the chocolate for this chocolate cake, so... "

Griffin: "Ridicule him!"

Rachel: [laughs]

[Maximum Fun ads play]

Rachel: So, what's—what's your thing?

Griffin: "[singing tonelessly] Biiicycle, biiicycle, I want to buy a bi—" I don't have a bicycle. I'm close to buying one. You just bought a bicycle, and my thing is riding a bicycle, and how fun it is!

Rachel: This says a lot, actually, about me and Griffin. Um, I was like, "I need a bike. It just has to work, and preferably it doesn't cost a lot of money."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And so I just found somebody on Facebook Marketplace. [laughs] And I did buy a boy's child's bike. [laughs]

Griffin: Did you know it was a child's bike when you bought it?

Rachel: [through laughter] No! No!

Griffin: Excellent.

Rachel: I bought it from somebody who I think was a student, uh, because I was in a college area when I picked it up. Uh, and I saw the bike, and I said "That looks like a nice bike."

And I reached out and I said, "How tall are you?"

And she said that she was my height. And I said, "Great."

Uh, and that was that, and then I picked it up, and then I did see the label on there that said, uh...

Griffin: Had to get you... on it.

Rachel: [laughs] But Griffin—Griffin instead has spent a lot of time researching, and—

Griffin: Right. I want—I'm gonna get a car—like, an e—an electric cargo bike that I can tool a child around in.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: One of ours.

Rachel: Yes. [laughs quietly]

Griffin: Uh, and I test rode one the other day. I rode your bike home from the bike shop. And—

Rachel: It is a child's bike. [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah, it wasn't easy.

Rachel: It works for me because I am a small person, but it is not meant for an adult.

Griffin: I will say this. When you're going downhill, all bikes are basically the same.

Rachel: [laughs] That's fair.

Griffin: All of them are just, like—just speed machines, and I do like that. Uh, but I think I'm ready to pull the trigger on one of these e-cargo bikes.

They're very hip. All the parents at the school that I drop Henry off at every day—

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: —just pull up in their electric two-wheeled whips.

Rachel: We live in, like, a very kind of walkable neighborhood, but it is pretty hilly.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And so I think that motivated a lot of people saying, like, "I'd like a little help." [laughs quietly]

Griffin: Yeah, sure. But all that said, it's just one of those things that—riding around a bike here in DC and just, like, seeing all the people on bikes here in DC has just reminded me just how much I enjoy it. We used to live in an, like, unbikeable neighborhood. Like, super huge hills everywhere, when we were in Austin.

Rachel: Yeah, but remember our first house? We both—we both—

Griffin: We both loved it. We lived on flatland.

Rachel: We both hit the hills with the bike, yeah.

Griffin: Um, so I—I enjoy so many things about the bike. Uh, there are so many things I'm excited about about having this new e-bike. You can go places without parking, which is great, 'cause I think—I'm pretty sure DC has, like, 20 parking spaces for everybody to kind of share. Uh, to call—you have to call dibs on them. You know, I say that. There's a dope app here, I think that's called Park Whiz.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Where you can reserve parking spots in advance.

Rachel: That may exist in other places. I don't know.

Griffin: It may exist in other places, but we used it for a trip into the city with Rachel's parents, and knowing that we could, like, park pretty close to the museums and not have to sweat was, like, actually a pretty load off the ol' noggin. But you don't even have to do that when you bike. You just need something you can chain your shit to. Um, you get to wear a helmet, which makes you look like a cool—like you're in Tron.

Rachel: Oh yeah, you like that? I always feel like a big nerd in my helmet. And I know that that is an unsafe way of thinking.

Griffin: You don't look—no, you look like—you look like a cool Tron guy.

Rachel: Oh, okay, good!

Griffin: Like some sort of cyber skater. And that absolutely does it for me. Uh, you get in a ni—you get in a nice little workout. Uh, which, like, I don't care so much about, but it does feel nice after you've just finished riding a bike where you're like, "Ah. Need to go hit—hit the showers."

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah, the shower after a bike ride is also very nice.

Rachel: I just did a bike ride today, uh, to pick up my prescription. And... most of it felt like it was uphill.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh, which I didn't like. [laughs quietly]

Griffin: No.

Rachel: And I always have the thought of, like, "Should I just get off the bike and walk? Like, should I—" but then I feel like everybody's watching me.

Griffin: Absolutely they are!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Uh, emissions! No, thanks. Bike don't emit. [quietly] I don't think. I don't think electric bikes emit. What would they emit? Electrons?

Rachel: Uh-huh. [laughs quietly] Radio waves.

Griffin: Radio waves. You get to pass by other bike riders and give 'em a little nod, as if to say "Ahh. [laughs quietly] Me too."

Rachel: I haven't tried that, but again, I do have a child's bike, so...
[laughs]

Griffin: [laughs]

Rachel: It doesn't—

Griffin: There is—when I do see somebody whose fee—usually for me the litmus test is if their feet are attached to the pedals, I'm not on their level.

Rachel: Yeah, that's fair.

Griffin: I'm not on their level.

Rachel: If they have, like, an outfit specifically for biking—

Griffin: If they have butt pads in their, like, elastic pants, like, they're doing—they've gone somewhere I could never follow. And I don't want to follow them. Uh, when you go down a hill on a bike without having to pedal it makes you feel like you're on, like, a little... just a little urban roller coaster. And that's fun for me.

Uh, or when you're, you know, not in the middle of the city. You get that fresh wind whipping in your face. That's really good! It's just you and nature, all just part of one big, beautiful tableau.

Rachel: I like, too—I didn't really realize that Google Maps has, like, you can look up bike directions. So sometimes you can, like, you know, go—go a way you wouldn't normally be able to go in a car.

Griffin: Yeah. And then it'll be like, "There's a—there's a plywood board downed that's formed a sick ramp. You can use it to launch up on top of the roof of this building."

Rachel: Cut three seconds off of your travel time.

Griffin: Yeah. Collect the letters for "skate" as you go and get 20,000 points. Um, the history of bicycles... is pretty wild, and fun in ways that you could probably expect. The first chain-driven bike was introduced in 1885, and since then, like, it hasn't evolved too terribly much. Like, we've gotten new, like, specialized forms for, you know, dirt—dirt biking and city biking, and...

Rachel: Yeah, no. I feel like the bike I have now, uh, and the bikes I have had in the past, like, could've existed really at any time in the, like, 20th century.

Griffin: It's just a frame and gears and a chain and handlebars. And brakes.

Rachel: Uh-huh, yes.

Griffin: Like, there's not a whole lot more to it than that. But it is fun to look at bikes from before 1885, because it's just, like... what were we thinking? And I know that this is easy to do when you look back at the history of invention and say, like, "Get it fuck together, guys!"

But with bikes, it just seems like somebody had to invent one of these things, and then one person got on it like, "[sucks teeth] This is not it! Keep trying, 'cause this can't be right!"

Uh, some of the earliest, like, bicycle-looking vehicles—in the early 19th century, we got the Laufmaschine. Or the, uh—sometimes it was called the dandy horse. And the dandy horse was a bicycle, typically made out of wood that, get this, didn't have pedals? You just kind of straddled it, and you just kind of Fred Flintstoned...

Rachel: Oh! That's like the kids with the balance bikes. That's the thing, now. Like, all the research says, like, don't give your kid training wheels. They won't really learn how to ride. Instead, get them a balance bike, so they can—

Griffin: That's interesting.

Rachel: —they can learn how to, you know, get used to navigating the, like, two wheel system.

Griffin: Yeah, that makes sense.

Rachel: Uh, but yeah, no pedals on that thing.

Griffin: But—but for a grown-up to do that, it feels...

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah, no, it would look pretty funny.

Griffin: At distance, too. Like, imagine trying to go up a hill on one of those, right? Like, you miss one step and it's like, "Oh, whoop! There I go, bye!"

Uh, after that we got the velocipede, which sounds so cool. Uh, and technically that includes those bikes with, like, one huge wheel and one small one.

Rachel: Oh, of course.

Griffin: But for a while after we figured out, "Hey, pedals on this thing make it go good," uh, we got halfway there, only the earliest pedal bikes just positioned the pedal on the center of the front wheel? So you were just turning the front wheel with your legs out in front of you, and the back wheel was just, like... "Do whatever back there, I guess. You just follow me, okay, back wheel?" I don't know how you go about stopping one of those, which is probably why shortly thereafter we did get the chain model that we all know and love so much.

Um, yeah. Again, like, I know it's mean to judge. 'Cause I'm sure when the dandy—the dandy cycle came out people were like, "This is it! This is the future! This beats walking so much!"

But, like, man. I think five years after that they were like, "Do you guys remember when we used to—you remember this?"

"What is that?"

"It's a dandy cycle."

"Where's the pedals?"

"I don't know, man."

Rachel: [laughs] It was a different time.

Griffin: "We were all excited. We had half a bicycle and we were like, 'Doesn't get better than this!'"

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, I just like biking. I like biking. Not in any kind of way that I think could—I could call myself a biking enthusiast.

Rachel: Yeah, you're not gonna, like, really double down on this and, like...

Griffin: Well, I am going to buy an expensive electric cargo bicycle, so I kind of will have to...

Rachel: Yeah, you will have to use it.

Griffin: But I think there are a lot of ways that I could use something like that. There's a lot of times where... there's, like, a middle distance between walkable and public transitable or driveable that so much stuff, I feel like, exists in here in DC.

Rachel: That is very true. Like, we went out and we got the double stroller, and that has been helpful. But, like, you don't really wanna push that thing for more than ten minutes.

Griffin: Right. So there's, like, this middle ground that—you know, this city is just so bike friendly. It feels like a waste to kind of not take advantage of that.

Rachel: I'm excited about this. I can't wait. I can't wait to see, uh, big son sittin' in that little... that little carrier.

Griffin: [simultaneously] Yeah. Just holding on for dear life.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: As I stunt.

Rachel: [holding back laughter] Trying—trying desperately to talk to you in a very quiet voice.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Just over and over.

Griffin: While I do wheelies. And just hitting nonstop ramps.

Rachel: "[mumbling indistinctly]"
"What?"
"Daddy, [mumbling indistinctly]."

And then you, like, stop and pull over and he's just like, "Who do you think would win in a fight? Bulbasaur or Charizard?"

Griffin: He... I know that you're... making a joke right now.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: But I hope you know that our son would never... *need* to ask me that question.

Rachel: Okay. [laughs quietly]

Griffin: Like... I understand your point.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: But to suggest that Henry would need to ask that question...

Rachel: [holding back laughter] Uh-huh?

Griffin: ... is an insult... to him and myself. 'Cause, like, what kind of dad would I be if my son was running around asking people that question?

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Not a very good one.

Rachel: He knows more about the types, uh, than I do.

Griffin: Well, yeah.

Rachel: Like—like, he will sometimes talk exclusively about types with Griffin, and I just—I sit there.

Griffin: You're over there just, like, trying to get him to...

Rachel: Just like, "Hey, remember when we read books?"

Griffin: That's not fair!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: He loves books too!

Rachel: [through laughter] He does. I can't—I'm trying to think of something that's mine.

Griffin: Our son is incredibly well-rounded.

Rachel: I know.

Griffin: And you have lots of things that—

Rachel: I guess he likes drawing. Maybe I could lean back into that.

Griffin: Yeah!

Rachel: And that could be my thing. And then we can talk about different—

Griffin: Or you could get into Pokémon.

Rachel: —different shades of blue. And then I can really...

Griffin: It's way easier to learn about Pokémon than art theory. [snorts]

Uh, hey. Thanks to Bo En and Augustus for the use of our theme song, "Money Won't Pay." There's a link to that in the episode description. And thank you to Maximumfun.org for having us on the network. You can go to Maximumfun.org, check out all the great shows that they have there, and just start clicking on stuff, and you'll find yourself on a page, and click the play button on it, and then sit still for one hour and let it wash over you.

We have stuff over at mcelroymerch.com. We got some shows coming up at bit.ly/mcelroytours. Uh, coming to San Jose, and Denver, and Detroit, and Cincinnati, and DC. And, um...

[both make high-pitched hums]

Griffin: That was fun!

Rachel: [through laughter] That was fun! Maybe not sonically, but it was fun to do.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Yeah. I mean, there's merch, too.

Griffin: I said that.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: You can say it again, though!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: The more—math—scientifically, the more we mention our merch, the more people do buy it.

Rachel: Okay. I mean, it's September, you know. You gotta get Halloween gifts...

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: ... for people.

Griffin: Uh-huh!

Rachel: You know?

Griffin: Buy enough be—new *Besties* t-shirts [emphatically] to hand out to every child...

Rachel: [laughs] Yeah.

Griffin: ... who comes to your door this Halloween.

Rachel: Or maybe you want to dress as somebody that enjoys the McElroys for Halloween.

Griffin: Hopefully you don't have to dress like that. Hopefully you just are that... anyway. Uh, anyway, that's our show. That's it, and I have—we do—I—we need to go. We're having a lot of fun here today, but we do need to go. We have things to do.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: This is one of the things that we need to do, and I'm glad we did it, 'cause I have a lot of fun doing it.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: But... you can't just sit around and do podcasts all day.

Rachel: Well...

Griffin: Well...

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: [high-pitched] We kinda do, but... pshh. It's my secret!

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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