

Wonderful! 254: Cast Him on Boiling Water

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[theme music plays]

Rachel: Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hello, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is *Wonderful!*

Griffin: Ho, ho, ho. We're comin' on down that chimney of— of your— is it December when they hear— no, it's November 30th. Ho, ho, ho. We're perched... atop the chimney. Uh, on the roof.

Rachel: We've got a satchel full of candles.

Griffin: Yeah, up on the rooftop. Click, click, click. That's the lighter. We're lighting some candles up here.

Rachel: Pocket full of dreidels.

Griffin: Pocket full of kryptonite.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Everything's coming—

Rachel: Two pockets.

Griffin: Tupac... is also here.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And it's a whole holiday sort of, uh, extravaganza.

Rachel: When you start an intro like that do you think to yourself, "Well, if I do this now, then I don't get to do it again next week. This is my one shot."

Griffin: No, 'cause you can actually— people forget.

Rachel: Oh, okay.

Griffin: After, like— honestly, it's not even a week. After, like, two days, everyone forgets everything that they listened to in the podcast two days ago.

Rachel: And you just warm that intro right back up.

Griffin: Yeah. We actually have been republishing the same episode for... like, four years now.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Griffin: I shouldn't say that. That's probably a pretty mean critique that people lay at our show— feet of our show sometimes.

Rachel: Oh no...

Griffin: But listen. It's... it's here. It's *Wonderful!* It's a show where we talk about things we like, things that are good, things we're into. I have had a shocking suffusion of holiday spirit.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Uh, over this past week. Snuck— crept right up on me. 'Cause we usually do it— we usually put the tree up Black Friday after Thanksgiving.

Rachel: True, true.

Griffin: We didn't have one this year, 'cause we got rid of ours before we moved.

Rachel: Yeah, we did the thing when you move across country where you're like, "Oh, I don't wanna pack this. I'll just get another one." And then it got to be Thanksgiving and we were like, "Uh-oh."

Griffin: [laughs]

Rachel: We don't have any plans for our holiday spirit.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Um, except for a small tupperware bin. Not tupperware, rubbermaid.

Griffin: Rubber— I mean, it's the same.

Rachel: A plastic bin.

Griffin: Yeah. We don't need to give them free prom— free advertisement.

Rachel: [laughs] Of ornaments. But no, no tree.

Griffin: No tree to hang them on, but we rectified that. Got a beauty.

Rachel: Yeah, very quickly.

Griffin: In the living room. While we were putting it up and decorating it, our big son did look up at us while, you know, one of the slower numbers from *Charlie Brown Christmas*...

Rachel: We were listening to music, as you do when you assemble your tree.

Griffin: And decorate the tree. And our big son looks up at us and he says, uh... "Why is this, like, sad?"

Rachel: No, no, no. He said "The music is almost making this more sad."

Griffin: And we were like, "What do you mean, honey?"

He was like, "No, not sad. But, like... emotional?"

Rachel: No, he said happy. This is what was confusing. You could tell that he was trying to figure out what this, like, sentimental, like, warm feeling was. And he was like, "Not happy, but sad?"

And we were like, "Ohhh. Yes, we know that one."

Griffin: "Ohhh, you're feeling Christmas emotions."

And he was like, "Yeah. I'm feeling a lot of, like, emotions for Christmas right now."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: And we were so charmed and delighted by our own offspring. Which I guess happens constantly every single day.

Rachel: Yeah. I think that's kind of the goal, in a way.

Griffin: But dangit if that didn't just shoot my right into the Candlenights atmosphere. Lovin' it. Do you have a small wonder?

Rachel: [sighs] Oh. Uh, hmm.

Griffin: I got one.

Rachel: Please go.

Griffin: I'm gonna jump on it.

Rachel: Please go.

Griffin: The other day— what was it, Saturday, maybe? Blues, St. Louis Blues were playing— who did they have that big crazy comeback against? The Panthers.

Rachel: Florida Panthers.

Griffin: The Florida Panthers. Blues, pretty bad losing streak, and then a pretty good winning streak, 'cause they're the most buckwild team in showbusiness. They were— they had a dogshit first and second period in this game. Went into the third period, down one to four.

Rachel: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Griffin: And a three goal deficit in hockey is a lot of goals.

Rachel: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Griffin: A great deal of goals. And over the course of the next—

Rachel: 'Cause periods— periods, by the way, I mean, not including stoppages, are only 20 minutes. So you don't have a lot of time to make up...

Griffin: A deficit like that.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But the St. Louis Blues went from playing pretty bad, I would say, to the shit hottest hockey I have seen those gentlemen play in a very, very long time.

Rachel: I watched that overtime goal by Kyrrou, like, five times.

Griffin: Yeah. Jordan Kyrrou is very fast man.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: He skates super, duper fast. That's his, like, thing. Only sometimes, particularly in the last couple seasons when he, like, gets a good breakaway and just zooms through the defense, he looks for a pass instead of, like, trying to go for the shot himself, which people critique him for. In this period, this one period, he was— it was like *Angels in the Outfield* out there. He was just zooming up, scoring goals left and right. I think Tarasenko scored a goal from behind the net! I don't even know... how that physically— it was fuckin' rad.

Rachel: It was great.

Griffin: And then they went into overtime and Kyrrou won it in overtime, and had one of the better popoffs I've seen in hockey in a long time.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: So good. And your parents were in town. Your dad is, like, die-hard Blues fan for life.

Rachel: For sure.

Griffin: And getting to, like, have that, that communal popoff was really nice, really nice.

Rachel: Yeah, it was nice. I'm gonna give a shoutout to the *Bluey* stage play that we saw.

Griffin: *Bluey's Big Play!*

Rachel: Yeah. We had talked to Henry about it, and he said he was interested, even though honestly we— as much as Griffin and I love *Bluey*, big son is kind of indifferent about it.

Griffin: When he gets into it, he gets really— like, if we start watching *Bluey* in the morning, we'll watch *Bluey* for a very long time.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: But it's not an every day—

Rachel: He doesn't request it.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: He doesn't have a lot of, like, merch associated with it. But he indicated he wanted to go to the play, and Griffin and I were very excited about that. And it was just as charming...

Griffin: So darling.

Rachel: ... and, like, gorgeous as we were hoping it would be.

Griffin: We're talking about, like, chest-high puppets of the main four dogs, each puppeteered by two people.

Rachel: Although there are— there is an extra dog in the show.

Griffin: There is an extra dog. Let's not spoil it, though.

Rachel: Let's not spoil who it is.

Griffin: I'm not gonna spoil who it is. It's who you want it to be.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: But I'm not gonna spoil who it is. And it's just an episode— it's like a 45 minute long episode of *Bluey*!

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: With, like, dancing, and games, and bubbles.

Rachel: Some of your favorite, like, bits.

Griffin: Oh, god. The Edith and— when they are old ladies driving a car.

Rachel: Yeah, the old ladies, yeah.

Griffin: Oh, so good. Anyway, it was delightful. It has a big message about being a big—a big sibling.

Rachel: Oh god.

Griffin: Uh, which we were hoping would find purchase in Henry's mind. But then he got some birthday presents for his birthday that he felt, I would say, quite territorial about.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And maybe so much of *Bluey*'s messages did not penetrate as deeply as we would have hoped.

Rachel: I had this concern that it had the reverse effect, in which it had not really occurred to him that he was being put out by being a big sibling, and then the show was all about that, and then he came home and was like, "Hey."

Griffin: "Actually, fuck this!" Yeah.

Rachel: "You know what? It does kind of suck sometimes." [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah. But, uh, boy. Sweet boys. Love these boys. Love this show.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Who goes first this week? I do not know.

Rachel: It's me.

Griffin: Alright.

Rachel: It's me. I know the last episode we put up was a live show.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Which I believe you went first at.

Griffin: I did go first at.

Rachel: And then I think the week before that you also went first.

Griffin: Oh, man! I'm sorry, babe.

Rachel: No, it's alright.

Griffin: I just won't do this. You do two bits in a row.

Rachel: No, see, I didn't prepare for that.

Griffin: Oh, okay.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, speaking of our DC live show, which was awesome...

Griffin: Yeah, very fun.

Rachel: ... first of all. Uh, there was a topic I did not get to cover.

Griffin: Yes!

Rachel: And so here, cutting room floor, my topic this week, which is, um...
hmm. I'm trying to think of a general way to talk about this. Um, I'm gonna say
the, uh— the statues on the Washington National Cathedral.

Griffin: The statues on the Washington...

Rachel: I mean, I'm gonna say gargoyles.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: But we're gonna talk about some things that aren't gargoyles.

Griffin: Well, I mean, if it's a statue up on top of a tall building, I think it's a gargoyle.

Rachel: Oh, that's where you'd be wrong.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: There is another name for those. So, a gargoyle— not to, like, jump ahead too much, but a gargoyle's a very specific thing.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: And if it is not a gargoyle, it is called a grotesque.

Griffin: A grotesque!

Rachel: Yes it is.

Griffin: That's cool.

Rachel: I know!

Griffin: That's really cool, actually.

Rachel: So in advance of our DC live show, I felt a lot of pressure to kind of educate myself a little bit more about this city that we have only been in for a few months now.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: So I went to the Washington National Cathedral, did my own little self-guided tour.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: They have this, like, app you can download to, like, read about little facts as you walk through the various rooms.

Griffin: That's cool.

Rachel: Um, and you know, there's a lot of history there. There's, like, a tremendous amount of history. So the Washington National Cathedral was designed to be a national house of prayer, open to all and supported by people throughout the world. Uh, it does not receive federal or church support. And so there's a lot in there from a variety of faiths.

Griffin: It doesn't receive church support.

Rachel: No, it's supposed to be a— like, a house open to all faiths.

Griffin: I had no idea.

Rachel: Yeah. So there are a variety of services. I mean, granted, the Christian iconography is pretty intense.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: But there is a lot of kind of—

Griffin: We love gargoyles.

Rachel: A lot of other elements. [laughs]

Griffin: We love these scary man-bats.

Rachel: We love the television show *Gargoyles*.

Griffin: We do love— Christians do love the television show *Gargoyles*, though.

Rachel: I never watched it.

Griffin: It was pretty badass.

Rachel: Yeah?

Griffin: Yeah. It was Keith David's, like, masterpiece, I think.

Rachel: So a lot of what came out of that was a lot of, like, private donations.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Which is kind of how the gargoyle came about.

Griffin: Okay... I feel like you are tiptoeing around gargoyles.

Rachel: Well, there's a lot— there's a lot I want to talk about. Because—

Griffin: Take your time, baby. I'm not rushing you.

Rachel: Okay. [laughs]

Griffin: I love that sweater, by the way.

Rachel: Oh, thank you!

Griffin: It's fetching. This shirt's dirty, though.

Rachel: Oh?

Griffin: Don't tell anyone!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It's very warm.

Rachel: Okay. So, um... all gargoyles are grotesques, but not all grotesques are gargoyles.

Griffin: I understand this now.

Rachel: So, gargoyles were designed specifically to prevent rainwater from eroding a building, and so they have a little spout built in.

Griffin: They could have just had a sort of... gutter, though. Yeah? Like, I get that engineering—

Rachel: You want, like, a rain gutter around a cathedral?

Griffin: Well, or just a sort of... you know, vaulted— like an incline to let the water fall... huh. Yeah, I don't see how a scary statue of a bat monster is, like, engineering-wise the best solution.

Rachel: Uh-huh. Well, I mean, think about your eyelashes, how they keep, like, dust out of your eyes.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Rachel: Like, you need some kind of protrusion to kind of, like...

Griffin: Right.

Rachel: ... keep the water from collecting and damaging the stone.

Griffin: And I totally understand that, and I feel you on that.

Rachel: You want a cathedral built like a slide.

Griffin: But the only difference is that my eyelashes aren't shaped like scary bat monsters. Do you know what I mean?

Rachel: [laughs] Uh-huh.

Griffin: Like, they're just kind of like hairs. And I'm not— I'm saying, like, a hairy cathedral is also a weird look. Um, but I have to believe there was an easier way.

Rachel: Yeah. There's, like, a suggestion— the history is kind of inconclusive as to whether or not they built these fantastical creatures to, like, you know, ward away—

Griffin: Scare the devil away, yeah, sure.

Rachel: Yeah. Like, I don't know that anyone can say that for a fact.

Griffin: There were probably some, like, you know, Dark Ages sculptors who were, like, working on it, and they finished a cathedral and looked up and were like, "But what is Spider-Man going to jump off of?" Like, you know what I mean?

Rachel: Uh-huh. [laughs] [pause] Um...

Griffin: That's the end of my bit I don't really have more to the skit than that, the Middle Ages sculptors who like Spider-Man.

Rachel: I imagine there's one listener that really enjoyed that.

Griffin: Yeah, for sure.

Rachel: Uh, okay. So, a bulk of the gargoyles at the Washington National Cathedral were created 1960's through 1980's. And so individuals could donate a gargoyle or a grotesque and collaborate on the design.

Griffin: Huh.

Rachel: And so according to a, like, historic cathedral newsletter, prices for donating or adopting gargoyles and grotesques have ranged from \$700 to 15,000 over the years.

Griffin: Damn, good for whoever could get in there for 700!

Rachel: I know, right?

Griffin: I think probably— when you say over the years you mean from 60's to 80's, right?

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: 'Cause I have to imagine, if this were to be a thing that was available today, like, 15,000 would be quite a low number—

Rachel: [simultaneously] I know, right? Can you imagine?

Griffin: —to get a gargoyle up on the National Cathedral.

Rachel: Yeah, 'cause you could— I mean, you could basically indicate whatever you want, and that's what I really enjoy the most about the gargoyles and the grotesques, is they are all over the place.

Griffin: Oh, that's great.

Rachel: Like, there's an alligator, there's a bulldog, there's a ram, there's something called—

Griffin: There's a alligator?!

Rachel: Oh, babe. I'm just getting started.

Griffin: [excited] Oh!

Rachel: Uh, there is what is, quote, "the ugliest monster," the donor requested just an ugly monster, and so it is a four-armed human figure with a beard, long hair, and a mustache.

Griffin: Cool!

Rachel: There is the grandsons. Now, this one... is a little judgy.

Griffin: Okay?

Rachel: So the donor wanted a statue that would kind of resemble their grandsons, and one has a halo, and one has a cookie and a stolen cookie jar.

Griffin: That's fucked up.

Rachel: Right? It's like, "Alright. We want one for the good grandson [through laughter] and one for the bad grandson."

Griffin: Yeah. I want to enshrine in stone forever... in the nation's most hallowed, sacred place, the fact that Dylan is a thieving shit.

Rachel: [laughs] I know.

Griffin: And Michael is great.

Rachel: I know!

Griffin: That way when people of any faith come to celebrate or bow their heads in contemplation, they will look up and be like, "Dylan is a shithead, though. I hate that kid. Michael is great, though."

Rachel: And what a called shot, too. Like, you wonder how old these grandsons were, you know? When this was done. Like, because they are depicted to be children, you know? So it's just like, "Oh, at age four I knew."

Griffin: What if Dylan goes on a date to the National Cathedral and his date looks up and says, "Is that you— are you the shitty kid?"

Rachel: Like, "No, I'm the good one."

Griffin: "Are you the shitty kid in that gargoye?"

"No, man. That's totally Michael."

"No it isn't. Michael's the angel, clearly."

Rachel: Um, other gargoyes and grotesques include a crooked politician, which is a little statue that has a pinky ring and a cigar, and hundreds in his coat pocket.

Griffin: Love it.

Rachel: Uh, there's a horse—

Griffin: Timely.

Rachel: [laughs quietly]

Griffin: [laughs]

Rachel: These clowns in Washington.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh, a horse skull, a duck with a photographer coming out of its mouth...

Griffin: Yes!

Rachel: So, this was supposed to be, like, kind of poke fun at the tourists a little bit. Of like, "Look at this photographer willing to get inside this duck to... "
[laughs]

Griffin: I am so sick of these people with cameras trying to climb inside our ducks.

Rachel: [laughs] I don't know that I totally understand that one.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: There's a unicorn, there's two hands gripping a golf club...

Griffin: Excellent.

Rachel: And then there's a dentist working on a walrus tusk.

Griffin: Cool.

Rachel: But the one I want to talk about was the result of a contest in the 1980's. It was a "draw a grotesque" contest, the National Geographic World Magazine, which was the precursor to National Geographic Kids, asked young readers to submit designs for a new sculpture. 1400 kids from 16 countries responded, and the winning artwork was a Sagacious grotesque, which was a toothy man with an umbrella designed by a 12-year-old. But third place finisher is the one that I think is most remarkable, which was Darth Vader. There is a Darth Vader grotesque on the side of the Washington National Cathedral.

Griffin: Wait! There's— can you do that?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Did George Lucas have to give a thumbs up on that?

Rachel: At some point I read some interview saying that they had, like, asked him. Like, "Hey, did you know?"

And he was like, "No, I didn't." [laughs]

Griffin: I mean... okay. I guess of all the characters from *Star Wars* to have on the cathedral... well, no. I mean, Darth Vader's a pretty bad guy, most of the time— like, he kills a lot of people!

Rachel: Yeah. Well, so that was the thing. It was instructed to kind of— you know, that this was gonna be kind of a scary thing, that traditionally gargoyles and grotesques were kind of ominous figures.

Griffin: Yeah, but they haven't, like, famously killed people. And then you put that up on a church, you know?

Rachel: Well, I mean, there's a Cerberus and an alligator. Like, you know. It's not like everybody up there is friendly.

Griffin: I guess that's true. Alligators are the only evil animal.

Rachel: So for you, it's not the fact that it's Darth Vader, it's Darth Vader's goodness that is a concern for you.

Griffin: I'm saying... I'm saying— I don't know. It makes sense, right? It's Darth Vader.

Rachel: It's like if, like, Freddy Krueger was up there. [laughs]

Griffin: If Freddy Krueger was up there. I wanted— I think it would be fun if, like, Jek Porkins from *Star Wars* was up there. We go for a bit of a deeper cut.

Rachel: Uh-oh. Uh-oh.

Griffin: Don't you think?

Rachel: I don't know what you're talking about.

Griffin: Jek Porkins? It's probably my favorite *Star Wars* name, but how can you choose? There's so many good *Star Wars* names, babe. One day I'll show you some of 'em, and it's stuff like Depp Boopley. And Shh... ett Jizzley. [pause] And they're all— they all play space jazz, which is called jizz.

Rachel: Okay. [laughs quietly]

Griffin: I... can't believe I have not gone to this cathedral.

Rachel: Here's the thing about these grotesques and gargoyles. Like, this is a very tall cathedral, and there are 112 gargoyles. So it's not like you can walk around the bottom and really see these guys. It's almost just like a little insider, like, hint. So next time you're there, you know, I don't know they— they have a gargoyle tour. Like, when you show up you can do the gargoyle tour, which I did not do.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: Um, but there is, like, an observation deck, and maybe you can see some of them from there.

Griffin: Do they have a carillon there? The bells? Bell tower thing?

Rachel: You know, I don't know.

Griffin: I think they do.

Rachel: I don't remember seeing it. It's under construction. There was, like, a pretty serious natural disaster that kind of compromised some of the construction, and so there's some work going on there.

Griffin: Make some more gargoyle space.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I'll drop 15 large to get Jek Porkins up on the National Cathedral forever. Can I steal you away?

Rachel: Yes.

[ad break]

Griffin: We have got a really great Porkorosso here, and it is from Alec... no. It's for Alec. Alec didn't send it. Alec received it.

Rachel: [laughs] Perfect.

Griffin: And William is the one who did send this message to Alec.

Rachel: Perfect, perfect.

Griffin: "Happy B-day. Every year gone by, you are more beautiful and wise. I'm proud to watch you become the Storm of DMing, tarot, and academia that I always saw in you. If this is 30, by God, I can't wait to see 60. Your friends say they love you and are lucky to have you too. They're here for you. Love your eternally infatuated husband, William."

It stands to reason that 60 is twice as good as 30.

Rachel: Oh, I like that.

Griffin: You know? As we get older, stuff just keeps getting more badass.

Rachel: So it's not like 60 is the new 30. It's like 60 is— is—

Griffin: Is two 30s!

Rachel: Two 30s. [laughs]

Griffin: You have the wisdom and strength and excitement of two 30-year-olds!

Rachel: Why have one 30 when you could have two 30s?

Griffin: Well, when you're 30 it's like being two 15-year-olds. That's terrible! I don't wanna be two 15-year-olds at all.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh, that means that I'm two 20-year-olds.

Griffin: That's... I mean, sure.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I don't think anything we've said has made sense—

Rachel: Should we keep going?

Griffin: No. I mean, math is fun.

Rachel: [laughs]

[music plays]

[music plays]

Dan: Hey! I'm Dan McCoy.

Stuart: I'm Stuart Wellington.

Elliott: And I'm Elliott Kalan.

Dan: Listen. You like podcasts, right? Sure you do, don't try and lie to me. You're listening to one right now. So why not try a different one called our one, *The Flop House*?

Stuart: Uh-huh. And on *The Flop House*, we watch a movie and talk about it, and then sometimes we also do other stuff.

Elliott: It's all meant to be funny and fun, and we think you'll have a good time. And just to be clear, the name of the podcast is not Our One: *The Flop House*. It's just called *The Flop House*.

Dan: [laughs]

Elliott: I do a lot of correcting Dan.

Dan: *The Flop House*: a lot of correcting Dan.

[music and ad end]

[music plays]

John: Hey, it's John Moe, inviting you to listen to *Depresh Mode* with John Moe, where I talk about mental health and the lives we live with all kinds of people. Famous writers...

David Sedaris, welcome to *Depresh Mode*.

David: Thanks so much for having me.

John: Movie stars...

Jamie Lee Curtis, welcome to *Depresh Mode*.

Jamie: I am happy to be here.

John: Musicians...

I am in St. Paul, Minnesota. I'm talking to Aimee Mann.

Aimee: Great to talk to you.

John: And song exploders.

Hrishikesh Kirway, welcome to *Depresh Mode*.

Hrishikesh: Thanks so much for having me.

John: Everyone's opening up on *Depresh Mode*, on Maximum Fun.

[music and ad end]

Griffin: This is a easy one. This one's a layup. This is gonna be one where when you hear it, you'll be like "Dang. I wish I didn't— I didn't— I hadn't— I wish I had thought of that one, 'cause that is a easy one." Macaroni and cheese.

Rachel: Ohhh!

Griffin: Macaroni and cheese. I felt like for sure we had talked about macaroni and cheese or Kraft dinner on this show before.

Rachel: Yeah, it seems like we should've.

Griffin: But I went through the backlogs, by which I mean Wonderful.fyi, I didn't see it on there. Macaroni and cheese. Henry used to love it. Been off the game for a while. Just got back into it last night, and when he did, I also did.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: 'Cause I ate some of it.

Rachel: Now, I will say, this is something about our fancy son that is worth noting. We got Henry hooked on the Deluxe.

Griffin: Kraft Mac and Cheese Deluxe.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: He will not eat just, like, powdered cheese. He wants the, like— the squeeze— the squeeze bag of cheese.

Griffin: I prefer the powdered cheese.

Rachel: Oh, really?

Griffin: I do. And it's like a... like a nostalgia thing. I genuinely think the texture and flavor is better.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: The Deluxe just doesn't stick to the noodle quite as much as I want it to.

Rachel: It's a very different experience.

Griffin: It's different.

Rachel: It's like two distinct meals.

Griffin: Anyway, you don't need us to explain what macaroni and cheese is, 'cause the name of it has two of, I would say, the three main ingredients of macaroni and cheese.

Rachel: You ever— you ever eat a whole box yourself?

Griffin: Yeah?

Rachel: In one sitting?

Griffin: No. Well, I don't think so.

Rachel: I think I definitely have.

Griffin: I— I— you know, I say that. I probably have.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I had a—

Rachel: You didn't— see, here's the thing. You have not spent a lengthy time living alone, and so when you live alone you can do that kind of stuff.

Griffin: I ate a lot of macaroni and cheese, though, when I lived with Travis in Batavia, Ohio. Which was sort of like an ultimate solitude. But, uh, if this recipe was called macaroni and butter and cheese, I feel like aliens visiting from space could cook it. Like, they could land and be like, "Okay, macaroni, butter, and cheese, huh?" It's not like a technical challenge on *Bake Off*. You're like, "Oh, it's—"

Rachel: That is true, but I mean, if you've melted cheese before you know, like, you can't really get that...

Griffin: There is a margin of error there.

Rachel: ... that texture without using some kind of assistance.

Griffin: Uh, lots of people and cultures have discovered that it's good to put noodles and butter and cheese together.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Most of them, I would say, have discovered that at this point. The first, like, known reported discovery is delightful, though, because it is a recipe from the medieval times, by which I mean the times and not the restaurant. Uh, there is a casserole recipe that was in an Italian cookbook in the 14th century called *Libro de Cucina*, which I probably mispronounced. Of course I did. And it had a

parmesan cheese and pasta dish. There was also a 14th century medieval English cookbook called *The Forme of Cury*, C-U-R-Y, maybe not like curry as we know it. Uh, that was called makerouns, which is confusing, 'cause that's already a thing.

Rachel: Yeah, for sure.

Griffin: Uh, which includes a fresh, hand-cut pasta, which was sandwiched between a mixture of melted butter and cheese. That recipe— there was an excerpt of it that has survived to these days, and I would like to read it in Middle English, because it's fun.

Rachel: Okay? [laughs quietly]

Griffin: "[pronounces words phonetically] Take and make a thynne foyle of dowh, and kerue it on pieces, and cast hym on boiling water and seep it wele. Take chese and grate it, and butter imelte, cast bynethen and abouven asy— Iosyns; and serue forth."

Rachel: Oh, I love that.

Griffin: Just do that. Can you imagine, like, a—

Rachel: Cast on boiling water? Is that what it said?

Griffin: Uh, cast him on boiling water and seep it well.

Rachel: Cast him on boiling water and seep it. I love— that's very— that's a pleasing sentence to me.

Griffin: To translate it to modern English: "Make a thin sheet of dough and cut it in pieces. Place them in boiling water and boil them well. Take cheese and grate it and add it, and place butter beneath and above it, as with iosyns, a dish similar to lasagna, and serve."

Rachel: I have to imagine, like, 80% of our listeners right now are, like, racing to their pantries to figure out if they have macaroni and cheese.

Griffin: Hey, great news! You have some.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I would say it's, like, famously shelf stable.

Rachel: No... I mean, yes, but I think once you have children, the likelihood that you have it is much higher.

Griffin: That's fair. Um, so mac and cheese hit the scene in the US in the 1700's. It was viewed as a very, like, high society meal, because it wasn't easy to have all of those things on hand. But then Industrial Revolution made, like, you know, the factory production of all those things much, much, much easier and much more accessible, and then it was— you know, then it was macaroni and cheese. Figuring out how to stabilize cheese was a big deal in helping—

Rachel: [simultaneously] Yeah, for sure!

Griffin: —Kraft Dinner come about. During the Great Depression there was a man from St. Louis. He was actually from Scotland, but he lived in St. Louis— named Grant Leslie. Have you heard of this fella?

Rachel: [laughs quietly]

Griffin: I don't know! He invented fuckin'... Kraft Mac and Cheese, basically.

Rachel: No.

Griffin: He started selling boxes of Macaroni attached with a rubber band to bags of dehydrated grated cheese.

Rachel: Wow. No, no. There was a moment where I thought you were, like, asking me if I knew his family or something like that.

Griffin: Do you know the Leslies?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: No. In 1937, the National Dairy Products Corporation, also known as Kraft, started to sell boxed mac and cheese as Kraft Dinner, and due to war rationing and it wasn't super easy to get a lot of meat in those times, people went just apeshit over it. Particularly in Canada, where in the late 30's refrigerators weren't in every home, and so this box that stayed shelf stable for 10 months and

could feed your entire family was, like, pretty great. Uh, Kraft sold 50 million boxes of mac and cheese during World War II.

Rachel: Wow.

Griffin: That's so much. Uh, further cementing the Kraft Dinner legacy, in 1954 Kraft had I would call one of the great advertising masterstrokes, where they changed the box from its bright yellow cheesy color to, you know, the iconic Kraft Dinner dark blue. And did that change alongside an ad campaign that encouraged children to ask their parents for the blue box.

Rachel: Oh yeah, that's still a thing.

Griffin: "Just get the blue box, Dad." It's so smart. And, you know, manipulative. But...

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: It worked, clearly, because it was super successful and continues to be. It continues to be, like, the unofficial official meal of Canada, where people eat an average of 3.2 boxes of Kraft Dinner every year. Which doesn't sound a lot for one person, but when you consider the number of people who aren't eating any Kraft Dinner...

Rachel: That's true.

Griffin: ... uh, that's... a wild— that starts to skew the numbers in some wild ways. Our mom made it a lot. Like, a lot, a lot, a lot.

Rachel: Oh yeah.

Griffin: Uh, then when Easy Mac hit the scene...

Rachel: Yeah, what are your feelings about that?

Griffin: Loved it. I mean, it was huge. It democratized the power of macaroni and cheese and put it in my hands and the microwave's hands, 'cause I could cook it now, without having to, you know, produce a bechamel or anything like that.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I didn't have to whip up a Zooey Bechamel.

Rachel: Yeah. You know... [laughs] making it in the microwave, though, I always felt like "Oh, there's not way this is gonna taste as good."

Griffin: But it does. It does. It did.

Rachel: But yeah, it basically does.

Griffin: Because it's hot water, noodles, and powder. Like, that's basically all that you need to get the Easy Mac going. And, um, yeah. For me it was always like a... an exotic—

Rachel: [laughs] Exotic?

Griffin: —luxury. A delicacy.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: 'Cause, you know, it wasn't like a baloney sandwich. It was Kraft Dinner.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: In the palm of my hands.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: I would dump— I would decant it into my hands. [laughs quietly] And eat it like a little piggy.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, when mac and cheese is available as a side, I'll get it every time.

Rachel: Oh, gosh, I know. Yeah, we've talked about this as a family a few times, because when we travel with our children, we will go to a restaurant, and they will present macaroni and cheese as a kids option, and there's always that

moment of like, is this gonna be like that fancy stuff with the bread crumbs on top? Because our child will not want that.

Griffin: Which I love that shit, too. If you want to whip up—

Rachel: Yeah. Oh, for me.

Griffin: —a fancy four-cheese gruyere, you know, nutmeg, like, whatever the fuck you want to throw in there. Yeah, it's gonna be good and I'm gonna eat it. I'll eat Kraft Dinner. I'll eat leftover Kraft Dinner Deluxe from my son's half-eaten bowl. Uh, because it's very good to eat macaroni and cheese. When you put these things together, it's pretty much always good, and I think that that's a special food.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Keep it up, mac and cheese.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um, that's it for the show. 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. It's a great network. We're very proud to be a part of it, and you should be too, if you also make a podcast... that is on the Maximum Fun Network.

Rachel: Or, let's say, if you donate to Maximum Fun.

Griffin: If you support Maximum Fun, that is also—

Rachel: You are one of us, in a way.

Griffin: —you are a part of— you're one of us.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Gooble gobble, gooble gobble. You're one of us.

Rachel: Do you want to talk about Candlenights?

Griffin: I do want to talk about Candlesnights. It's coming up very, very soon. [pause] It's on December 17th, 9 PM Eastern Time. It's gonna be virtual again this year. Tickets are on sale now at bit.ly/candlesnights2022. All our shows, we're doing bits and skits and sketches. We're doing our shows, also, kind of in short form format. Uh, Rachel and I put together I would say a pretty authoritative holiday gift guide—

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: —that hopefully you will find very useful and actionable. It's a great thing and it's for a great cause. All the ticket sales go to benefit Harmony House, which is an organization from our hometown of Huntington, West Virginia that works to end homelessness in the area. And, uh, it's a lot of fun every year.

Rachel: It's— yeah. It's honestly one of my, like, favorite new traditions. Not just making it, but then watching it.

Griffin: Watching it, yeah.

Rachel: Like, it's a real treat. There's a lot of heart in it.

Griffin: There's a lot of heart in it. We have stuff over at mcelroymerch.com that you should go check out. Uh, and also I wanted to say, 'cause I don't think we mentioned it on this show, *The Eleventh Hour*, the next *The Adventure Zone* graphic novel, comes out pretty soon now. February 21st.

Rachel: Oh, wow.

Griffin: 2023. You can go to theadventurezonecomic.com to preorder it. I'm extremely proud of this book, and how it turned out. And I am— it's been a little bit longer between books than we have done for previous entries in the series, and so preorders are incredibly important for sort of getting that groundswell, and for [holding back laughter] convincing booksellers to stock our books.

Uh, and so you would be helping us a lot if you went to theadventurezonecomic.com to preorder if you were, you know, planning on getting the book. And if you weren't, please maybe do it, instead. I am good at mar— I am the Kraft Dinner—

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: —of marketing. That's it.

Rachel: Thank you to everyone that came out to the Washington, DC live performance of *Wonderful!*

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: It was a real treat.

Griffin: We did have a great, great time.

Rachel: Any time that I can stand in front of a large group of people and talk about poetry and have them cheer as if it were some kind of rock music, uh, is a good time for me.

Griffin: Well, I was doing— I was doing, like, backflips behind you while you were reading the poetry.

Rachel: Oh, that was nice of you.

Griffin: So I would say half the audience was, like, you know, having emotional poetry feelings, but then the other half was like...

Rachel: How many backflips?

Griffin: Uhh... I mean, I could really only do the one. And then... after a very brief hospital stay, I can maybe eke out a second one.

Rachel: [laughs] Okay.

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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