

Wonderful 11: Fraggles Food Chain

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[theme music plays]

Rachel:

Hi, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin:

Hi, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel:

And this is Wonderful!

Griffin:

Oh, yeah. Welcome back to Wonderful. What do we— [whispers] Which one is this again? Which one is this again? Is this our Formula 1 podcast?

Rachel:

Uh, it's our fan cast for the show, Small Wonder.

Griffin:

Welcome to— Is it Small Wonder or Small Wonders? It's our...

Rachel:

Single. The singular.

Griffin:

It's just the one robot...

Rachel:

Yes.

Griffin:

... girl. Anyways— So this is the Small Wonder. So this episode we thought we'd talk about the technology. Is it possible? Is it real? Are there people around this...

Rachel:

She gets wet again. Oh, no.

Griffin:

She got wet again and uh-oh! Now she's just reciting the digits of pi. And I guess my question is this real and are there really small wonders all around us? Uh, isn't everyone you know a small wonder and you're the only not small wonder?

It's kind of fucked up to think about really, but, um, I just think, I see a lot of people who have never seen 'em swim, so. Their love is real, but they're not, and they can't eat food or spinach 'cause it gets caught up in their robot parts. I've never seen you swim or eat spinach, so.

Rachel:

I think that's not true.

Griffin:

I've seen you do both those things at the same time.

Rachel:

[laughs].

Griffin:

Rachel likes to do what she calls spinach parties and that's where she gets in a pool by herself and she gets angry if anybody else comes outside and she eats a bunch of wet spinach.

Rachel:

[laughs]. It's little Popeye inspired.

Griffin:

Well it's hippopotamus inspired. You, like, let the spinach float on the surface and then you get underneath and you pop up above the pool surface and you eat all the spinach.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

And then you, you know, you shut down 'cause your robot body didn't know how to any of this stuff. AI was a heck of a movie. Anyway, so...

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

...this is the Wonderful podcast where we talk about things that we think are really great and really good. And we should just do the damn thing 'cause we're...

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

...doing this while Henry's at daycare so we can be loud, but we also have a pretty hard out, which is the time that we have to go get our— retrieve our son from daycare. He's not a **Small Wonder**, right? No.

Rachel:

No.

Griffin:

We were both there when he was sort of organically manufactured.

Rachel:

Ooh!

Griffin:

If you know what I'm saying.

Rachel:

It's your turn to go first.

Griffin:

Okay. Well, the first thing that I wanna bring to the table is a video and the video is on internet and you can watch it there with your, uh, web browser. And the video is called "Inspiring! People Describe The First Time They Drank Gatorade." This is—

Rachel:

Oh, you've shown this to me before.

Griffin:

This is possibly my favorite...

Rachel:

[laughs].

Griffin:

... internet video. Uh, it's from ClickHole, which is sort of the, uh, sort of BuzzFeed-esque parody brand from the Onion, which specializes in sort of making a mockery of, like, content, internet content designed to go viral. And uh, across the board, like, ClickHole has done some really brilliant work in the past.

I think like there was a period there where if you saw me laughing and I was on my computer and you said, "What are you laughing at?" The answer pretty much a 100% of the time was some thing that ClickHole did because they are really, really, really good at what they do.

Uh, they... Especially, I wanted to highlight like one of the brilliant things they do is a series called Click Venture, which is just a series of, like, webpage based, choose your adventure games. Uh, two recent ones include Get Fucked Up On Gin And Build A Gazebo For Your Neighbor, um, and Can You Help Your Dad Lose His Virginity At The Super Bowl? Like...

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

It's extremely good. I was hesitant to talk about this because I feel like talking about things that are already pretty funny is kind of, like...

Rachel:

Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

...entertainment poison in a way. Um, but I couldn't— Like, when I was thinking about what I to talk about this week and I think about the types of things that we talk about, like, I don't usually talk about things that I think are genuinely very, very funny and I think "Inspiring! People Describe The First Time They Drank Gatorade" is extremely funny. It is a three minute and one second long sort of encapsulation of the things that I think are funny.

Uh, it sort of fits into this model of videos that are based on sort of viral Facebook videos, specifically like inspirational testimonial videos, which were extremely hot for a very, very long time, uh, where they just play some soft, pretty music under people talking about something very earnestly.

And the premise for "Inspiring! People Describe The First Time They Drank Gatorade" is pretty apparent, I feel like based on the title. And like the things that are funny about this video, I could, I could list them out. Like that premise alone is extremely, uh, extremely good.

Rachel:

Well, and I think, and this, and this may not be true, but I find it to be true. Um, nobody really likes the taste of Gatorade, right? Am I wrong on that?

Griffin:

I— So I have a, I enjoy it in very specific situations. Really, after I do some exercise or I have diarrhea, which is like, I'm not...

Rachel:

[laughs].

Griffin:

...doing much exercise at all. Those are the two times in which I drink Gatorade.

Rachel:

Like, what, the appeal is that it's a sports drink for sportsmen doing sports, right?

Griffin:

Right. And or people who have very, very bad diarrhea, um, I enjoy it 'cause you do, you do it after sports and it's like, oh, I've earned this flavor and you do it when you have diarrhea, and it's like, this is gonna help me with my diarrhea. And so there's a certain gratitude that you feel towards Gatorade. Another thing is we cannot talk about Gatorade and say anything even remotely as funny as this video...

Rachel:

Yeah. True.

Griffin:

...was, uh, because this video is all about talking about a fairly mundane thing in absurdist terms, which is like my jam. It's like my favorite comedy shit, and to that point, here's a short list of some of the things they call Gatorade in this video: football milk, the sweet neon soup, the bright red neon soup, beautiful blue syrup or sweat potion...

Rachel:

[laughs].

Griffin:

... which is all fucking fantastic. Um, the writing in general is just like super, super, super funny. And it adheres to this style, uh, like without swerving or breaking, even for a second. Uh, one line includes, "I took a sip of the Gatorade and I could feel the electrolytes turned my body into strong, wild, garbage."

Rachel:

[laughs].

Griffin:

Um, what I really like about it, and this is something that I feel like I try to incorporate in the stuff that we do, uh, the comedy stuff we do in the other

podcasts. Maybe not Adventure Zone, that's a little bit on the nose. Uh, but it does a lot of... In the three minutes, really there's only like a one minute section of it where it really hones down on this is lore building. Like it does so much to sort of—

It introduces this concept that there is a world in which people drink Gatorade and the experience is so powerful and memorable that they have a testimony to deliver in this video. And then it adds onto that world by introducing, uh, the concept of Gatorade scientists who develop the Gatorade...

Rachel:

[laughs].

Griffin:

... and they develop the Gatorade by doing deadly experiments on, quote, "the football players."

Rachel:

Well, and it also plays a popular McElroy game, which is let's come up with a new name for something and then let's see how many names we can come up with [laughs].

Griffin:

Yeah. And it does that really well, but in terms of, like, establishing this fiction of, there are football scientists in the secret Gatorade laboratory...

Rachel:

[laughs].

Griffin:

...who are doing experiments on football players, that, uh, it does kill them, uh, but is that cost worth the great taste of this neon soup? Like, it— I also really, really like that. And that's like, I feel like a thing that I try to do in all of the comedy stuff that we do, 'cause I think it's, like, it's a lot easier to get somebody to laugh at something if they are invested in the joke or the world of the joke that you've created and the way that you get them invested is by fleshing it out, like, almost like you would do with like a traditional fiction narrative.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Which sounds like, uh, maybe I've gone way too far up my own ass in talking about it like that, but, um, I feel like this video gets in and tells a bunch of jokes about Gatorade and then starts to explore this Gatorade obsessed world and the high cost of living in it, um, before landing it with like more jokes. Like I think it is like a perfectly constructed thing. And we have now absolutely done the thing where we've ruined...

Rachel:

[laughs].

Griffin:

...the comedy of it by talking about it too much. Um, but it's just the way that they say all of these completely, completely preposterous things in a unswerving deadpan delivery is the funniest shit in the world to me. And I watch this video on a monthly basis and I think it's extremely good. And, um, let's play a clip of it, 'cause I think even if you can't see it, you can imagine sort of what the tone of this piece is just by hearing some of the things they say about Gatorade.

[audio clip starts]

Speaker 1:

The power of the football milk took me on a vision quest to the Gatorade laboratories, which are in hell. And in my dream, I saw the Gatorade scientists doing exercise experiments on all the football players and they were dying. The sweat professors killed the football players with their Gatorade experiments.

Speaker 2:

I know the Gatorade scientists are running exercise experiments on the football players and that many of them get killed in the laboratories. But I don't care because I need the electrolytes for my tantrums.

Speaker 3:

Every night since I took my first sip...

[audio clip ends]

Griffin:

I'm curious to hear what you brought to the table this time.

Rachel:

I like our listeners picturing this actual table in which we pass our wonderful things back and forth.

Griffin:

How dope would it be if you actually just brought Gatorade or Powerade?

Rachel:

That will never happen [laughs].

Griffin:

You really don't admire this flavor— Imagine like you're painting the house and you get all... It's a hot summer day and you're painting the house and you get like a deep thirst going...

Rachel:

Lemonade. Water.

Griffin:

Yeah. Yeah. Good point.

Rachel:

Either of those.

Griffin:

Yeah. Good point.

Rachel:

Scrabble.

Griffin:

[laughs]. It took me a second, 'cause I was like, "You don't drink Scrabble— Ohh. Scrabble."

Rachel:

[laughs] that's my thing.

Griffin:

Scrabble brought us together, babe.

Rachel:

I know! I have been a Scrabble enthusiast for, gosh, I don't know, 15 years maybe?

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Uh, and it is something that Griffin and I did together before we were really officially together.

Griffin:

Our first like date, technically, our first, like, private hangout sesh was over some Scrab.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm. I went over to Griffin's place and played Scrabble and it was just the two of us.

Griffin:

That's true. Earlier that night I had come over to your house 'cause, uh, we had found a... or you had found a board game of Sweet Valley High at a garage sale or a thrift shop or something like that. And we had gone over to... I had gone over to your house because, uh, you wanted to play it, but really it was sort of a thinly veiled excuse for us to hang out. Our friend Grace was there...

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

... sort of as a mediator, I think to make us feel more comfortable, but I think she read the room and literally—

Rachel:

Almost immediately.

Griffin:

A minute after I got there, she left. So it was just the two of us. And also I had no idea how to, like, go over to somebody's house that I was interested in and hang out.

Rachel:

[laughs].

Griffin:

Um, and Grace had said that I should bring some beer and I had no idea what a normal amount to bring was 'cause again like this was not anything I had experience in. So I brought like a 12 pack or a 24 pack, like a complete... And you both saw it and were like, "What are you doing— what are you doing?"

Rachel:

I know. It wasn't, like, the nighttime. It was like, early, afternoon.

Griffin:

Yeah. I was a dunce.

Rachel:

And you barged in with your 12 pack and then you suggested we continue the party at your place.

Griffin:

Well, it's because you said you wanted to play Scrabble, but you didn't have it.

Rachel:

Yeah. [laughs].

Griffin:

So maybe you're not that big of a Scrabble fan. Also because the Sweet Valley High board game was very bad and we were missing a lot of the pieces.

Rachel:

[laughs]. Uh, so Scrabble started in 1938. Now I'm gonna warn you, the creator of Scrabble's last name is Butts. So I want you to get ready 'cause I'm gonna say it a few times. Okay?

Griffin:

[holding back laughter] Hold on. Okay. Oh God. That was a really close one.

Rachel:

His name is Alfred Butts.

Griffin:

[laughs]

Rachel:

I know. He originally invented a game called Lexiko, which uh, was transformed into Criss-Cross Words [laughs].

Griffin:

Not as good.

Rachel:

I know.

Griffin:

Lexiko's a really, really good name.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

I think I might like better than Scrabble.

Rachel:

And then in 1948, James Bruno, um, bought the game from Butts. [pauses]

Griffin:

No, you only get two.

Rachel:

Oh, okay.

Griffin:

Yeah. I'm over it now.

Rachel:

Uh, and basically kept it the same, moved some of the premium squares around and changed the name to Scrabble, which is a real word that means to scratch frantically.

Griffin:

Yeah. That doesn't really describe this. I think so this dude bought it from Butts and basically, let's be honest, probably ripped him off? Like there because this is—

Rachel:

Well, he gave him royalties.

Griffin:

Oh, okay. Well then we're good. As long as he's getting his residies

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

I love you, just put your computer down. "I know everything else about Scrabble off the top of my dome."

Rachel:

[laughs]. Well, no, I think, you know, I could talk more about the history, but I really wanted to focus on why I like the game so much.

Griffin:

Yeah. Why do you like Scrabble so much?

Rachel:

Uh— I— There, there's a puzzle aspect of it, natch— I mean, I imagine everyone knows how to play Scrabble, but you just make words and you have to use the letters from the previous words that have been put on the board. Uh, and there's some strategy involved because high value letters like X or Z, if you put those on like triple letter score...

Griffin:

Right.

Rachel:

... pieces, you get extra points. Uh, I play a lot of Words With Friends.

Griffin:

You play more Words...

Rachel:

[laughs].

Griffin:

This is another thing we've talked about this before, where like, uh, Rachel does not play a ton of games...

Rachel:

No.

Griffin:

... but the games that you do play, you play more than I've ever played any video game ever, including Two Dots and Words With Friends. Literally every time I see you and you're looking at your phone, you're playing with...

Rachel:

Uh-huh.

Griffin:

... someone.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm. Uh, and I don't, I just, I really enjoy it. Um, I think it's good for kind of building your vocabulary and also I know all sorts of two letter words now, you know.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Za, for example, is in the dictionary.

Griffin:

I just can't believe that, that's acceptable.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

That's— There's two things that kind of stress me out about Scrabble. And one is that there, in order to be, like— To really play it at the level that you're playing at, like, I have to know all of these, I'm sorry, bullshit words.

Rachel:

[laughs].

Griffin:

Um, and then there's always a lot of argument about whether or not something is an actual word or not, but also it just kind of stresses me out. Like it's one of those games where I feel like I can only feel satisfied if I get the most amount of points I can possibly get on any given move, which is unreasonable. Like if...

Rachel:

No, that's fair.

Griffin:

...you use a Scrabble solver to see like what the actual highest score word is, 'cause there's like computer programs that can let you do that. It's shit that you— You don't know the word, you would never think to put it in the way that it would be, but I'm always, I always feel compelled like I have to do that, and so I take, like, 15 minutes to take a turn and you're like, come on, and then I...

Rachel:

[laughs].

Griffin:

... spell, like, dog.

Rachel:

That's the thing. That's why I like playing it digitally more than in-person. Um, because you can kind of take your time. You don't have somebody sitting across from you having to play.

Griffin:

I think it's such a, like, a brilliant construction for a game because like, it's just words. Like, all you need to know is, all you need to know is words. There's not, I mean, there's an element of chance in like, whatever tiles you draw, but mostly it's like, what words can you think of to, to put down here?

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

One game I really like that I think solves a couple of the problems that I have with Scrabble, which I still love, but I don't play that much anymore 'cause it, again, it kind of stresses me out is Bananagrams.

Rachel:

Yeah. It's a fun one.

Griffin:

Bananagrams is a good one where you have to use your tiles to basically create a crossword on the fly and use every letter that you have, uh, and force— As you, like, use letters, you draw new letters and you force your opponent to also draw letters. So you try to—

Rachel:

And there's no board.

Griffin:

There's no board and so you try to bury them in tiles, um, but there's none of this, like, extra bonus spaces and there's no, like, sort of formula you have to stick to. You just have to make sure that everything fits and that everything is a word and it's timed so that the games last, like, a few minutes, uh, which I like. It's like you get in, you get out, and there's none of this sort of like constant deliberation over like, oh no, this isn't gonna be enough points.

Rachel:

Yeah. So I just, I thought that I should bring it to the council, uh, because I have enjoyed it for so very long and I don't see myself ever getting tired of it.

Griffin:

We used to play it a lot, like a lot, a lot, a lot. We used to have friends over to like play it with us.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

And I feel like that can't be fun for them because I feel like you and I both get pretty...

Rachel:

We're intense about it.

Griffin:

... pretty intense about it. I get intense about almost every board game that I play and Scrabble is, uh, one game that you also—

Rachel:

See, I don't, yeah, I don't— Most games I kind of tap out almost immediately, uh, because I'm not super competitive unless I think I'm kind of good at something.

Griffin:

Yeah. Well, that's the secret. You just have to think you're kind of good at all board games.

Rachel:

[laughs]. Yeah.

Griffin:

You're good at board games, though. Like you win a lot of shit.

Rachel:

Yeah. I guess so. I guess so. I think Scrabble is the equalizer for me.

Griffin:

Yeah. Um, you know what, it's the great equalizer though?

Rachel:

What?

Griffin:

Huh, money. [chuckles, petering out] And then he died.

Rachel:

Oh, no [laughs].

Griffin:

Yeah. He died. That was Mr. Richman and he had all the money in the world and he thought it was so funny how much money he had. And he always

talked about how money's the great equalizer and he would laugh really hard, it was, like, his favorite thing to do. Then he did it too hard, he died. All—

Rachel:

Does that mean we're never doing that stinger anymore?

Griffin:

Yeah. He died. Well, maybe he might come back from the dead. Uh-oh.

Rachel:

Ooh, spooky.

Griffin:

Next Halloween. [laughs]

Rachel:

Next Halloween! A year from now!

[ad break]

Griffin:

Hey, do we have any jumbotrons on this one?

Rachel:

We do. This message is for Alice, it is from Maxwell. "Alice, thank for being an extraordinary wife and my closest companion. I can say with certainty that you have shaped me into a better bird than I have any right to be and that you are a great mom to our badly named cats, Warmy, Pillbug, and Face."

Griffin:

Those are great.

Rachel:

"I hope this surprise public proclamation of my affections brightens your day. I love you."

Griffin:

That's so sweet. I thought we specifically said no birds though. 'Cause when birds come in, they, you know, they get their seed everywhere and they're excrement, don't even get me started. And the feathers stink. You ever smell a bird out in the wild? They stink, Rachel.

Rachel:

[laughs] When did you become so anti-bird?

Griffin:

[laughs] I think they're great when they're up in the sky, but then they fly close to your nose, you're like, "What's that smell? What—"

Rachel:

About cats? You still like cats?

Griffin:

Cats are great. Cats are great. Cats are great.

Rachel:

Okay. Just anti-bird.

Griffin:

Birds, their feathers though, they— What are they flying through? Garbage hoops? I'm sure you're great though, Maxwell. Here's another one for Morjo and Katie and it's from Susie who says, "I love both of you so much and am so happy we've been friends for seven years, starting from our blunder high school days. Uh, I'm so proud of you, Morjo, for uh, starting med school and for Katie, uh, for starting her new job. I know we'll be far apart, geographically, but you'll always be close to my heart."

That's so sweet. And I really hope I was saying that name correctly, Morjo or perhaps Morzho. Either one is beautiful and it drips right off the tongue and congratulations on your great friendship. And you know, don't let the distance keep you down. It's just space, you know?

Rachel:

Ooh, that's true.

Griffin:

It's just space.

Rachel:

It's just space and, you know, the amount of time it takes to travel that space.

Griffin:

You can always hop in a car and go wherever, unless you live in Hawaii, you wanna come to, you know, the contiguous areas. That's when you need a boat or a plane.

Rachel:

[laughs]

[Max Fun Ad]

[cartoon gunshot]

April:

Oh, sorry about that. Just had to dispatch some goons real quick. Hi, I'm April Wolfe, lead film critic at LA Weekly and when I'm not kicking butt, I'm hosting the new Maximum Fun podcast, Switchblade Sisters. Do you love genre films? Do you love female filmmakers? Do you love discussions on craft?

If your answer is yes, you'll love Switchblade Sisters. Every episode, I invite one female filmmaker on and talk in depth about their fave genre film and how it influenced their own work. So we're talking horror, action, sci-fi, fantasy, bizzarro and exploitation cinema. Mothers lock up your sons 'cause the Switchblade Sisters are coming for you! Available MaximumFun.org or wherever you find your podcasts.

Griffin:

Can I do my second thing?

Rachel:

[laughs] Yes please.

Griffin:

I'm so excited about it. I talk about things being, like, my favorite on the show a lot. And I try to keep that, like, legit. Like I try to, when I say something is my favorite thing, this is my favorite funny internet video about Gatorade.

Rachel:

Can I say something?

Griffin:

Do I do it too much?

Rachel:

You are the most enthusiastic man I've ever met.

Griffin:

That's probably true or...

Rachel:

And I love that.

Griffin:

... alternatively, we're gonna run out of stuff to talk about this show 'cause I really do talk about stuff I think is my favorite. I wanna talk about literally my favorite place on earth.

Rachel:

Whoa.

Griffin:

This is not, uh, this is not, like, hyperbole, I feel like— Do you have like a favorite place on earth like if you thought about it in your head?

Rachel:

I think that would be a really hard call for me.

Griffin:

I think I know it. Um, it's my favorite place on earth. I think about it all the time, I'm dying to go back there. It is the Hakone Open-Air Museum in Hakone, Japan.

Rachel:

Oh, that's definitely top five for me.

Griffin:

Uh, so originally I went to Japan on our honeymoon back in what? 2013, 2014?

Rachel:

Be '14

Griffin:

Jesus Christ. That was three years ago.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

Uh, this month it was, it was three years ago. We went in November and we went to Tokyo and Hakone and Kyoto and it was the best trip ever and it was like life changing and genuinely the most, one of the most fantastic experiences of my whole life. And the highlight of that was the Hakone Open-Air Museum.

Rachel:

Yes.

Griffin:

So, uh, Hakone is, uh, sort of a short train ride away from Tokyo. I think it was about an hour on the high speed train. Um, and it is located in the Fuji Hakone Izu National Park on Lake Ashi, which basically means like it's right up against, uh, Mount Fuji, which is, you know, the big radical mountain.

Uh, and it's supposed to offer you these, like, incredible views of Fuji wherever you are, which are, uh, sort of a big tourist attraction, unless it is, like, really foggy and rainy, which is always the whole time...

Rachel:

Yeah. It was overcast the whole time.

Griffin:

Uh, we got a couple of, uh, okay looks at it, but for the most part we were denied that. But it's still, like, a really fantastic place. Uh, Hakone is sort of a hot spring resort town that's built like into a mountain. There's countless hot spring locations, whether it is like, uh, um, you know, old inns with hot springs in them or, like, actual like hot spring places that you go just for the hot springs and they don't have lodging or anything like that.

There's a place we went called Yunessun, which is a hot spring water park, which is fantastic that has a bunch of different scented, uh, pools. Like there was a red wine hot spring, which was great and...

Rachel:

And coffee.

Griffin:

Coffee and yogurt hot springs...

Rachel:

And green tea.

Griffin:

... which maybe sound gross to you, they were just like, sort of scented infused waters. It wasn't like we were boiling in yogurt. Although that might still also be pretty dope.

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

There's also a hot spring water slide, which is, like, I think a thing that everybody needs to do before they die is go on a hot spring waterslide.

Rachel:

Yeah. Someone will fall.

Griffin:

Um, there is, there, one of the sort of characteristic things about Hakone, and I'm gonna talk about this specific place in Hakone here in a second, but I wanna kind of set the scene. It's all very, very natural, it's well outside of the city, uh, it's a fairly small town, uh, and because it's sort of built into the side of the mountain and there's all these sort of geographic, uh, features.

There's something called the Hakone Freepass Loop which, uh, includes all of these different modes of transport that you pay for a Hakone Freepass and then you can take all of them in a loop around the town.

And so there's like a, uh, old rail car that weaves through the mountains that leads up to a cable car that takes you way up the main mountain. And then once you're at the top of that, you take a ropeway over the mountain where you can stop at this sort of volcanically active, uh, a pool where they boil eggs and you can eat the eggs there, uh...

Rachel:

And add years to your life.

Griffin:

Add seven years to your life and do some hiking up there. And then you can take another rope way down to Lake Ashi, where you can board an old pirate ship, which you can ride across the surface of the lake and then get on a train that leads you back to, you know, the beginning of the loop, uh, which is, it takes a whole day to do all that, but it's such a cool way to like be outside in nature and see all these like different cool parts of the town.

And the coolest part of this town is the Hakone Open-Air Museum, which is, uh, a sculpture park with over.. They have over a thousand works of art, but they have 120 sculptures on permanent display across the park. The park is like, uh, I think the website said it's like 60,000 meters. It's a huge expanse built into, uh, the mountain. And, uh, you— It has this incredible scenic

overlook into the valley, uh, where you can just see for miles and miles and miles.

Um, and even without all the art around, it's like one of the most beautiful places I've ever been in the world. Um, they have all of these sculptures and I love a sculpture park because I am not, uh, like, an art enthusiast or I know nothing...

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

... about art and I feel sometimes, um, a bit disappointed in myself when we go to a museum, 'cause I feel like I don't know how to really appreciate the things that I'm seeing correctly, which I recognize is, uh, just a...

Rachel:

I've heard a lot of people say that. I think that's interesting. I maybe it has to do with exposure because I've never felt intimidated or felt like there was a certain way to appreciate or feel when you looked at a piece of art. Like, I don't feel like, like I'm not getting enough out of it, you know.

Griffin:

My favorite is the Chicago Museum, the Chicago— Whatever it's called the...

Rachel:

School of the Art Institute?

Griffin:

Yeah. The Art Institute.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

'Cause I mean, there's something about seeing like Nighthawks and it's like, "Oh, fuck." Like, okay, I get Nighthawks. I get Starry Night. And, like, I see those and it's like, it's kind of undeniable. But a lot of the time, like it's just

like, oh, that's a really cool thing and I feel like I struggle to really, um, uh, feel this deeper connection with it because I feel like I am being, uh, inauthentic in it because I don't really understand it.

But I don't feel that about sculpture and I don't feel that about sculpture parks, which feels so interactive and they feel so accessible. And it's a very, like, what you see is what you get. And this is not a judgment on non-sculpture based art...

Rachel:

[laughs].

Griffin:

...it's just sort of how I have come to, uh, consume the art that I see. I did not grow up, uh— Huntington has a museum that was pretty great and it showed off, like, local stuff. But like, I don't know. It did not instill in me this, like, deeper...

Rachel:

They have sculptures, though, at that Huntington Museum.

Griffin:

They do. Yeah, sure. And I...

Rachel:

And like out in the grounds.

Griffin:

We mostly played on them 'cause there's a theater up there too and so when you're a little kid and like you're not on stage, you would like climb around on the sculptures, which is probably not...

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

... great. Um, so there's all 120 sculptures in this like incredible lawn, uh, overlooking the valley, which is beautiful, but they have a couple of buildings with, uh, other forms of art in it, including a Picasso Pavilion.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

And the Picasso Pavilion, uh, again, like I don't— I feel like I don't know enough about art to say like, "Oh, I'm a huge Picasso fan." But it was kind of revelatory...

Rachel:

Interesting.

Griffin:

...because it includes, like, a lot of his lesser known works and includes a lot of works that he gave up on, like, works that he just did not finish 'cause he's like...

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

"...Oh, this sucks." Um—

Rachel:

Well, and a lot of late in life, like, pottery stuff—

Griffin:

A lot of experimental shit that he got into that didn't really get caught up in the public eye. There are also a lot of, sort of, like, uh, never before seen photos of Picasso and a sort of biography of him that takes you through his different sort of, uh, styles that he experimented with.

It was really, really, really fascinating and huge. Like they have so much stuff and you don't really expect to be in this sculpture park in a small town

in Japan and then they have this huge comprehensive collection embodying Picasso's whole, uh, body of work.

Uh, they have a bunch of interactive spaces, especially for kids. There is called Zig Zag World that is just sort of this, uh, I don't know how to describe it, but almost like sculpture of netting hanging from the ceiling over like a foam...

Rachel:

Yeah, it's, like, everything— Everything was made from yarn, almost. And then there's these kind of large like crawl spaces and it's...

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

... it's really cool. You're supposed to take your shoes off if you go in there and there's mats and—

Griffin:

There's like a geometric sculpture of tunnels, like clear tunnels that kind of looks vaguely like a snowflake when you're inside of it.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm.

Griffin:

Like, it kind of seems like you're in this like ice palace, but kids can just, like, climb through it. There's this weird one where you climb down a tunnel in the ground and then you're underground and it's...

Rachel:

Oh, yeah [laughs].

Griffin:

... completely dark except for a single hole looking up into the sky, that one freaked me the out. Um, but again, like, it's really accessible because there's a lot of stuff you can just like get in, like you can get inside.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Um, the highlight of it is, uh, what's called a symphonic structure, which is a massive stained glass tower, uh, with this spiral staircase inside of it that you climb up and then you, there's a viewing platform that lets you see the entire park in the whole valley and mountain in every direction that is, like, being inside of that one, like piece of art, that one massive intricate stain glass tower was like, uh... I'm getting— I get chills kind of when I think about it, 'cause I think about being inside of it and they call it a symphonic structure because the acoustics inside of it are so unique. And I remember climbing that tower and like whistling...

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

... while climbing to the top of the structure and hearing it ping pong all over this enormous structure and thinking, like, that it— It was a moment of like gen— I don't wanna sound like a— This is what I'm talking about when I feel like I'm being inauthentic, but it was this moment of like genuine, like beauty that I...

Rachel:

Oh, my gosh. I know.

Griffin:

...had never really experienced before. And then you get to the top of it and boom.

Rachel:

[laughs] I know. It's incredible.

Griffin:

Here's, like, the most breathtaking view of nature you've ever seen. Um, it's really, really fantastic. We have a— I think a— We bought a bunch of stuff at

the gift shop [laughs] because I remember thinking like, oh, this was a day that changed—

It changed my life. Like it legitimately did make me want to, um, appreciate art in a different way, which I think is sort of the objective of most museums. And this was the first place that really knocked me the fuck out. We have a table runner that looks like the stained glass symphonic structure.

Rachel:

It's actually given to us by the Plants.

Griffin:

Oh, the Plants are so sweet. Oh, yeah. They went to it too, didn't they?

Rachel:

Uh-huh.

Griffin:

Um, so like I love sculpture parks, like I said. And this is my favorite one of those, there's just so much to see, there's so many exhibits, there's so many incredible views of the natural surroundings around you, like, looking around and appreciating all these things that people have made, positioned in this incredible place that people did not make is like a sort of, uh, it's a really incredible phenomenon.

Um, and so you walk around all of it and you climb this huge tower and you— There's a lot to see and you walk the whole 60,000 meters of the park and you get super tired. What's that right in the middle of the park? It's a big foot bath. Fuck yeah, Hakone Open-Air Museum.

Rachel:

[laughs].

Griffin:

You're the best place on earth. I want to go back there so badly. If you go to Japan, um, since we talked about going, uh, to Japan on our honeymoon, people are always asking for recommendations, like go to this place, it changed my life, it's— It will change yours too. It's fucking fantastic.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

It's my favorite place on earth.

Rachel:

And if you're not going to Japan, um, my other favorite sculpture park is Laumeier, in St. Louis, Missouri.

Griffin:

Yeah. Laumeier's great, too. Yeah.

Rachel:

Yeah. I used to go to art camp there every summer. Um, I love a sculpture park.

Griffin:

Me too.

Rachel:

Yes.

Griffin:

Uh, you wanna tell me about your second thing?

Rachel:

Yeah. Okay. My second thing, you probably knew this was coming one day, is Fraggles Rock.

Griffin:

Oh, Fraggles Rock!

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

We don't watch so much Fraggle Rock, we watch— We've started, Henry's gotten very into Sesame Street.

Rachel:

Yes. Uh, Fraggle Rock, actually, you can watch on HBO Go.

Griffin:

Weird place for it to live.

Rachel:

Yeah. It used to be on Hulu, now it's on HBO. It was actually the first original series on HBO.

Griffin:

I did not know it was an HBO show.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Huh. Okay.

Rachel:

Uh, it's a Canadian show came out in 1983, uh, created by Jim Henson.

Griffin:

Thank you, Jim.

Rachel:

Natch. Uh, tons of Muppets. Lasted for five seasons—

Griffin:

Is that all?

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Hmm.

Rachel:

Uh, and is an interconnected ecosystem of Fraggles, Doozers, Gorgs and human beings.

Griffin:

I adored Fraggles Rock when I was younger.

Rachel:

Yes.

Griffin:

It's been a very long time since I've watched Fraggles Rock, but I was like obsessed with it when I was a little one. I don't think I appreciated the world that they had built, necessarily, I just thought the characters were so, so, so great. And I wanted to be friends with all of them and I wanted to live under the ground with all of them.

Rachel:

The more, uh, I learned about Fraggles Rock, the more I love it. Like, obviously, I loved it initially. Um, so the Fraggles are just kind of your standard Muppet kind of— Seemed like they could exist in the Kermit world. Then there's the Gorgs, which are these huge kind of larger than life Muppets, they're more kind of a Big Bird, Snuffleupagus type, uh, bigger than a person. Uh, and they are kind of the royalty. They assume that they are Kings and Queens of the universe.

Griffin:

Do they eat the Fraggles?

Rachel:

No, they're always trying to thump them.

Griffin:

Oh.

Rachel:

So the Fraggles go into the Gorgs' garden to get radishes and to visit the trash heap, which is the kind of the wise all knowing...

Griffin:

The oracle of— Yeah.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

So they thump 'em, they don't eat 'em?

Rachel:

No.

Griffin:

Because I was thinking, I was thinking of like a trolls parallel.

Rachel:

No, they're always trying to catch 'em.

Griffin:

Well, that's wasteful. I think if a Gorg got me I'd want 'em to at least eat me.

Rachel:

Well, they kind of treat him like pests, you know?

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Like, you wouldn't necessarily eat a rat if you caught it.

Griffin:

I wouldn't, that's right, babe.

Rachel:

Mm-hmm. Uh, [laughs].

Griffin:

[laughing] Unless I was a little kitty cat, then I eat 'em up good.

Rachel:

And then in the Fraggverse...

Griffin:

Meow.

Rachel:

... which is subterranean.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Uh, there are Doozers and Doozers are little workers in the universe. They create, these little structures out of Doozer sticks, which the Fraggles like to eat.

Griffin:

That always weirded me out a little bit. Are the Doozers compensated by the Fraggles or do they have their own sort of ecosystem?

Rachel:

They just work for the sake of work. They're just hard workers.

Griffin:

That makes me feel deeply uncomfortable.

Rachel:

They're kind of like ants in a way, if you think about it.

Griffin:

Yeah. But ants probably gets some sort of like jelly or something from the queen for the things that they do, right?

Rachel:

I, you know, I don't know a lot about ants.

Griffin:

They're called Doozers 'cause they do and I get it. It's just, like, I wanna make sure that they're taking care of. If they're happy great. I just wanna make sure...

Rachel:

I think that they are.

Griffin:

I just wanna make sure that they're not being exploited.

Rachel:

Uh, and then there's uh, human beings which exist kind of through this hole in the Fraggles universe, which is kind of like a mouse hole in a building.

Griffin:

And they eat the Gorgs.

Rachel:

No.

Griffin:

So they eat the Gorgs, the Gorgs eat the Fraggles, the Fraggles eat the Doozers. And the Doozers don't...

Rachel:

No. Griffin, so this show was created to show that different creatures from all walks of life could cohabitate peacefully.

Griffin:

Without eating each other all the damn time.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Okay. Well, I mean.

Rachel:

Uh, the human beings are called the Silly Creatures and they live in what the Fraggles call Outer Space.

Griffin:

Yeah. That all, that all tracks.

Rachel:

So here's the thing that kind of cemented Fraggles as is my favorite in the world. Um, one of the writers, uh, Jocelyn Stevenson, gave an interview. And I've also seen this in kind of the special features of my Fraggles Rock DVDs.

Uh, but Jim Henson tasked the other writers on the show to say that they wanted to create programming that would stop war. So their big hope for this show was that children would grow up and learn about existing peacefully with, you know, different creatures and people in the world and understanding each other better. And that, through that understanding, you would raise a generation of people that would stop war. Which, how can you not love that?

Griffin:

Yeah. It didn't maybe necessarily pan out, but it's a— It's like the most altruistic.

Rachel:

Exactly.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Exactly. Like it wasn't a show about selling merchandise, although I'm sure that happened.

Griffin:

I definitely have me some Fraggles Rock merchandise.

Rachel:

Yeah. Uh, and so one of the shows or one of the episodes that I like is actually the second to last episode, it's called the Honk of Honks. Uh, and it has, uh, Cantus who was one of Jim Henson's only characters on the show. He only did that and uh, Convincing John. So he kind of came in as these, you know, one-off characters. And Cantus is this kind of wandering sage that comes in and, and presents the Fraggles with wisdom.

And the Honk of Honks is all about, uh, creating this one musical instrument that would then start off the song of songs. And in order to do this, Gobo, who's one of the big adventurer Fraggles, has to go find all the pieces to create this Honk of Honks. And so he travels throughout all the ecosystems, like the Doozers, and the Gorgs, and Outer Space to put this together. Uh, and it's an incredible episode.

Uh, there's, there's a scene between, uh Gobo and the Silly Creature that is so moving. Um, I just watched the episode again today, before we did this ep— This, uh, recording. But he— they realize that there's this whole universe that exists outside of themselves, uh, and how interdependent they can be on each other without even, you know, knowing of it is existence.

So I just, I— Every time I return to it, I'm so filled with this kind of spirit of optimism of just, there are people out there creating these things because they have these huge lofty goals.

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

Uh, and it, it really resonates with me still. And it's one of those shows that I'm excited for Henry to get to...

Griffin:

Yeah. It's just about to ask, like how—

Rachel:

...when he gets a little older.

Griffin:

I'm really excited for him to watch it.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Because, again, like I never watched much Sesame Street, it was more of a Eureka's Castle man. Um, and I really enjoyed watching it. I feel like I'm getting like an education in something that I never really tapped into.

Rachel:

Yeah. I love Muppets, I love the music, I love the lessons. The lessons are so big, you know, it's not just a about, like, this is what a banana is, it's like, how can we—

Griffin:

[laughs]

Rachel:

How can we coexist with...

Griffin:

See, that's why I was a Eureka's Castle man. A lot of gravitas. Do you know who was the— You know who was the lead writer on R. L. Stein, co-creator? Oh, shit—

Rachel:

[laughs]

Griffin:

I just said it. R. L. Stein was the co-creator of Eureka's Castle.

Rachel:

I didn't know that.

Griffin:

Isn't that interesting?

Rachel:

Uh...

Griffin:

He can spook you, but then he can take you away to a magic world of puppets.

Rachel:

I think it just gives kids a lot of credit, you know?

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

It's like, we don't have to just teach kids the alphabet, we can teach 'em these larger life lessons that become important for the rest of their life.

Griffin:

And that's the thing, like, I feel like, and I don't wanna go too deep down, like an Andy Rooney hole, but like, it feels like there's a lot of educational shows out there, God knows we've watched a lot of them.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

Your Little Einsteins or what have you. And there aren't a ton of them that are like, it's not just about teaching you the alphabet and your colors and your shapes and your foods. Like, I feel like there is something to like teaching you also moral lessons in a way that is not ham fisted and...

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

...you know, preachy and gross. I think Daniel Tiger, from what I've seen of Daniel Tiger, Daniel Tiger does this in a nice way sort of following in the tradition of...

Rachel:

Well, that's Fred Rogers. Yeah.

Griffin:

...Mr. Rogers. Right. Um, but yeah, I— Man, I love Fraggles Rock.

Rachel:

It's just, yeah. It's motivated by kindness and getting along and curiosity and understanding each other. I mean, it's the fundamental things that make a person interesting their whole life.

Griffin:

Right. Uh, how about some submissions from our friends at home?

Rachel:

Okay.

Griffin:

Here is one from Jess who says, "I wanted to share my love for theater and more specifically my high school drama department. We just finished our opening weekend of the Crucible and it makes me so incredibly happy to see a show come together in a matter of weeks, due to the sheer dedication and talent of the casting and crew. There's something really magical about opening night and knowing all of the work we did was very much worth it. Shout out to Queen Anne's County High School. What's up Queen Anne's County? Barracudas."

Rachel:

Ooh, this is like a, this is like a sneaky jumbotron is what it is.

Griffin:

Oh, damn. You're right. But it's also true, like, I really like this one just 'cause I love plays and being in it with all my friends, get up there and just, [laughs] you know.

Rachel:

Yeah. I know that about you.

Griffin:

Yeah. You never did one? I thought you were in like Oklahoma or some shit.

Rachel:

No, I— Our senior class did a senior play and I was in a one act kind of thing.

Griffin:

I love it.

Rachel:

That was it.

Griffin:

I mean, it's not a real play if it doesn't have like, you know, music and dancing and singing...

Rachel:

[laughs].

Griffin:

... but I still love it. Uh, here is another one and please don't message me, I was just kidding about that. Here's another one from Curtis, "My family always celebrates Thanksgiving at the beach in Florida and we love to spend Thanksgiving day out on the beach playing lawn games. Bocce, Kubb and Horseshoes are our favorites. Love how accessible lawn on games are to me and my family members, regardless of our age or coordination level, lawn games are great." Beach Thanksgiving, I've never even considered before.

Rachel:

Yeah. I've known people that have done that before.

Griffin:

I love getting out and exercising on Thanksgiving. We used to always go out and play basketball in our basketball hoop that we inexplicably had behind our house before Thanksgiving...

Rachel:

[laughs].

Griffin:

... whip up a powerful hunger, just doing turkey dunks. You know what those are?

Rachel:

Um, I imagine there's gobbling involved.

Griffin:

No, it's just, you do a big dunk and you spend a bunch of energy and you fill your belly up with turkey.

Rachel:

Oh, see, I liked— I liked the—

Griffin:

Yours is better.

Rachel:

Gobble.

Griffin:

Here's another one from Isaac who says, "In the mid to early two thousands when DVD sales were just starting to dwindle, a lot of companies try to incorporate little secrets in the option menus to drive up sales. You'd randomly press buttons on the remote until something happened and then get to look at concept art or play a little flash game. I still remember my little brothers and I freaking out after, uh, discovering the Finding Nemo extra when I was 12. And whenever I happened to pop in a DVD with one of those crazy menus, it brings me right back to that beautifully nostalgic day."

Rachel:

Oh, I remember that.

Griffin:

Oh, God, every DVD you bought, it was like a little journey, a little national...

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

...treasure book of secrets. I mean, it was the national treasure book of secrets DVD and there's probably shit all over that one.

Rachel:

Do you remember when CDs used to have bonus tracks and you had...

Griffin:

Yeah.

Rachel:

...to let the last song play for like 10 minutes and then you...

Griffin:

That was the best.

Rachel:

...find another song? Yeah. It's like that.

Griffin:

Mike Dody had an album like that, that had a really good track, but you had to let it just roll, which is great. Unless you fall asleep listening to it and then it's the fucking worst thing ever, 'cause you fall asleep and there's nothing and then it's like, "Bang, bang! Here's a secret song."

Thank you all so much for listening to Wonderful. We have to go right now because we have to go pick up the baby from daycare, but thank you all so much for listening. Go to MaximumFun.org, check out all the great podcasts there. Thank you to bo en and Augustus for the use of our theme song. And

you can, uh— It's called Money Won't Pay and you can find a link in the episode description. And is there anything else?

Rachel:

Uh, you know, if you haven't joined our Facebook group, I really recommend it. Uh, a lot of people get on after the episode and talk about the things that they like and it's pretty great.

Griffin:

It was like Pie City there for a bit.

Rachel:

Yeah.

Griffin:

And I'm very, very into that. Uh, okay. That's it. Thank you all so much for listening, got to go, bye!

Rachel:

Bye!

[theme music plays]

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James:

What's up? I'm James, the co-host of Minority Korner.

Nnekay:

And look at that, I'm Nnekay, the other co-host of Minority Korner.

James:

Girl, guess what?

Nnekay:

What?

James:

We just hit our 100th episode!

Nnekay:

What!? And what do you think is gonna be in store for the next 100?

James:

Probably some more feuds with Jennifer Hudson, [imitating Jennifer Hudson] and I'm telling you, I'm not...

Nnekay:

We'll probably do more investigative reporting too like we did with the Kodak and their racist film.

James:

Not to mention exposing the truth, like, how we did with the ugly history of the Texas Rangers.

Nnekay:

But we always lightened the mood with splash of pop culture.

James:

Olivia Pope's new wig. Have you seen that?

Nnekay:

Yeah. It's popping.

James:

Just like your lip gloss.

Nnekay:

And Janet Jackson.

James:

And you know we like to put our nerd glasses on and talk about things like Marvel.

Nnekay:

It's true. That's it? [laughs]

James:

I don't speak about DC [laughs].

Nnekay:

Ah, but you just did. Whaa!

James:

All from a perspective that's black, queer...

Nnekay:

And ladylike.

James:

So come on over and learn, laugh, and play and join the Korner. It's a lot of fun.

Nnekay:

I'm having fun right now!

James and Nnekay:

[laughing] Minority Korner!